

CHALLENGER
TEN



CWILLIAMS

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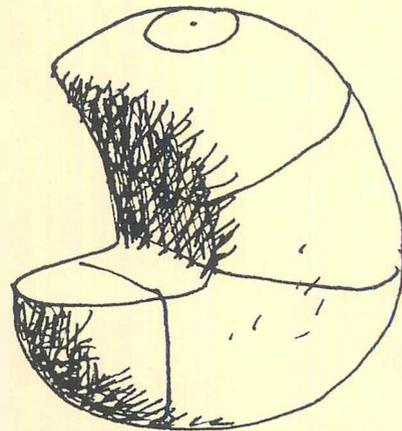
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TALKING / POWER'S

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Allie Copeland is the firstborn of my friends Liz and Jeff Copeland. She is now in high school.

ALLIE'S STORY

Allie Copeland

Before I tell you how things changed after Columbine, let me tell you how things were before. People who had talked to me in elementary school followed me down the hall shrieking "Goth!" People found it amusing to make jokes about me and tell them in front of me. I was repeatedly asked if Satan talked to me. My friends at Fairview were beaten, had their windshields smashed in, were asked not to change in the gym locker room with everyone else. (You have to keep in mind that they assume if you're a Goth you must be gay.)

There was so much more harassment, stuff of every type of harassment you can think of. And of course, the administration refused to do anything because of course, it must be our fault. The perfect example of the administration not caring is at some point while I was at Summit a large group of people decided that it would be a great idea to run up and surround my friends and myself and then throw stones at us. I walked away from it, barely, but bruised and with a mild concussion. And all that happened to the offenders was that the assistant principal, who I talked to quite frequently and am now on a first name basis with, told them that maybe they should go a little easier on people.

So now that you have the history let me tell you what happened after Columbine. First of all we, the "Goths," all walked into school the next day having gotten hardly any sleep because we were all very upset and traumatized. None of us were stupid enough to wear black at all for three or four months, and we still don't wear all black. But we do get things like, "You wore a trench coat or black: you killed people." I am not kidding this actually happened. People no longer follow me down the hall, but people who used to talk to me don't. Then of course the counselor at my middle school pulled me aside and asked if I was getting any trouble because I was, as she put it, "Umm ... a ... ummm ... Goth, and all ..."

And now that a little more than a half-year has passed everything has returned to the way it was before Columbine and the umm ... Goths are the only ones who even remember what happened and what pain it caused. We still talk about what we can do to keep it from happening again, and how horrible it was when it did happen.

THE FIRST AMENDMENT

CONGRESS shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the Freedom of Speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

EDITORIAL: BE TRUE TO YOUR SCHOOL

"From Paradise to Pandemonium, / there's only one make of man, not two / screaming at the gates of Kingdom Come: / "Be good to us; we'll be good to you!"

Christopher Logue

It seems to me that the ugliest part of becoming an adult is learning not to trust the world. Life is a thing uncertain and perilous; betrayal of trust is only a matter of time. It happens to individuals, it happens to generations.

Generation to generation, the fundamental betrayal of innocence seems to come earlier and earlier, from closer and closer — and to hurt more and more. Our parents thought the oceans distanced America from the chaos and terror of Europe and China. Pearl Harbor. We didn't dare believe that America herself would embrace folly overseas so desperately that she would refuse to see the light and slaughter whoever did not support her. Vietnam, Kent State. Generation X -- our kids, and that's what hurts most -- thought that whatever happened elsewhere, a peaceful, plentiful home would keep them safe. Columbine.

It's not like Americans don't try to be good parents. The older generation always tries to protect the younger from the savagery that caused it such pain. Our folks tried to keep us from the poverty of their Depression childhoods by adopting the work ethic as a way of life. We tried to keep our offspring safe by forsaking vague and fuzzy anti-guerilla wars and adopting tolerance as a way of life. But the terror always sneaks in from an unexpected direction. Richard Nixon still went crazy under pressure and commanded our destruction when we questioned his dictates. Klebold and Harris still embraced unfocused violence. Life's ugliest lesson, that nothing is certain, always has its day.

So what do we say in reply?

All I have left of high school is my yearbook. **The I-Eshu**, it was called, and I brought it down after Columbine and thumbed through it. I was a little surprised that I could find it so easily among the piles of books and kipple that dominate my apartment. After all, I graduated from Ygnacio Valley High School in Concord, California in 1967. What does it say about me that this memorial to my adolescence was still so accessible, so close to the surface?

Nothing unusual. I imagine a lot of us looked back on adolescence when the news came out of Columbine High School. It would stand to reason that people trying to understand the incomprehensible would contrast the horrible images and the horrible stories on the TV with memory.

Esquire — I keep coming back to my favorite magazine in this amateur nonsense — approached the Columbine massacre in an interesting way. In their July issue they asked six writers to remember where they were and what they were doing when the news broke. Myself, I almost missed it. When Klebold and Harris began their murderous stroll through Columbine I was on my way back from a visit to a female inmate in Cottonport, a tiny country burg north of Baton Rouge. I was on a two-lane highway, noshing down a chicken breast, and at about the same instant as the first shots were being fired, found that I'd let my Geo Metro drift over the center line and that I was about three nano-seconds from smacking head-on into a white electric company pickup truck.

That was just enough time. I swerved back into my lane and to the accompaniment of his horn, the electric company truck swerved to the shoulder and disappeared in my rear view mirror. The rest of that drive passed in a sharpened, frightened mood. I kept thinking about my ex-wife, my nephews, the things I loved, the things I'd learned, the things I hoped for, and how all of that almost ended up a glob of grease on a highway in rural Louisiana. For the distraction, I was grateful that a bearing went bad a bit closer to home. When I got home I turned on the television, and saw what I had lived through the day to see.

Columbine did not make sense, and it still does not make sense, months later. When I began to think about this issue of **Challenger**, there were lots of themes I could have chosen: the newcentury/millennium, the many anniversaries 1999 represents in my life, for two. But Columbine was, somehow, insistent. I had to talk about it. I had to listen to what other people like me — fans; y'all — had to say.

Some of the response is predictable. Like me, a lot of people greeted *Columbine* by looking back into their own adolescence, and some speak here of bitter memories of rejection and dismissal, associating their pain with that of Klebold and Harris. Their all-too-common agony brings to mind one of the more interesting books I've read since we last talked. It deals with adolescence, specifically high school, in American culture. It's **Our Guys** by Bernard Lefkowitz.

Our Guys focuses on a hideous incident that occurred some years ago in Glen Ridge, New Jersey. You remember: several members of a high school clique made up of athletes — jocks — took a girl they'd known all their lives into a basement playroom and there talked her into putting on an impromptu sex act. One guy got her to blow him. The others got her to insert a bat and a stick into her vagina. The girl did these things voluntarily, but she was mentally retarded, and the jury agreed that the boys had taken criminal advantage of her. They were convicted of rape and imprisoned.

Lefkowitz felt he knew who -- or what -- to blame. In the manner of intellectuals throughout the second half of the 20th Century, he blamed social mores. The jocks who raped the retarded girl were revered and protected and spoiled and pampered by our society, which allows athletes to get away with almost any



Charlie Williams

perfidy in which they wish to indulge. Their society, our society, convinced those kids that they could do whatever they wanted to the girl without consequence. They were accepted, revered. She was a misfit. In this country, the misfit is fair game. So, the Glen Ridge boys were guilty, but so was America — so were all of their kind.

Yes, there are stories of pain and anguish here, as *Challenger's* contributors address the question of the Misfit. I want the *names* of the slime who threw rocks at Allie Copeland. But there are also stories of unusual, off-the-wall people who have made this planet a *better* place. Check out Joe Mayhew's tale of Katharine Anne Porter, Jodie Offutt's story of her child's teacher, Sue Higgins' account of her own retreat into sanity from society. I like to think of such people as our species' answer to Klebold and Harris ... but affirmative misfits are not the only answer. Ordinary people are too.

I have to make my point with an anecdote, which is weak argument — but isn't that what Lefkowitz did? Isn't it true that this is the way any truth is advanced — one example at a time? At long last I return to my high school yearbook and what it tells me about Columbine, 32 years later.

I never had any trouble with student athletes at my school. The most prominent was Gordon Gravelle, who later played pro football for the Steelers, Giants and Rams. He got into a lot of fights with jocks from other schools and once leveled the principal when the poor schnook tried to stop a brawl at a basketball game. But that had nothing to do with me. The only time we spoke was one time when he stopped me from peeping into the girls' locker room. No, the troubles I had in school seldom came from affluent or rewarded people, but from the lost.

However easily I remember high school, it seemed a miserable mystery to me then. No, not even a mystery — something worse. I thought I'd scoped it out. There were the people who were "in" and popular and the people who did not matter. Life belonged to the pretty people and the rest of us got what they left. They had happy lives with which I had nothing in common, with which I could have no connection, ever, to which I would always be alien. Hell, change a few of the attributes of the lucky — from pretty to rich, say — and I still feel that way. Never the twain shall meet. It is sad but it is so.

Or is it so?

The night of my high school graduation in June, 1967, was devoted to what was called the Senior Party, held at a bowling alley. Sovereign among the incidents I particularly recall from that evening is my first tongue, which belonged to a tall blonde named Diane and God bless you, Diane, wherever you are. But I also remember blearily adding my copy of *The I-Eshu* to a stack being signed by others of my class — including some jocks. Including the kid I'll call Danny Scott.

Danny was a typical enough high school athlete, square good looks (his photo reminds me of the actor Barry Atwater), beautiful girl friend ... only his girl friend was Betty Stauffer. She was unspeakably cute — an apple-cheeked cheerleader and homecoming princess (I voted for her) — but she was also whip-smart (she ended up at Stanford) and sincerely sweet. Had I been capable of judgment beyond my own miserable insecurity, the fact that such a class act had fallen for Scott would have spoken well of his fundamental character. But I needed to learn that in another way.

Anyway, when we former seniors at YVHS weren't fogging the ozone with at-long-last-*legal* cigarette smoke -- that was a big deal to many -- or stealing a few moments of post-graduate study, thank you Diane -- we sat around a pile of yearbooks and blearily, for it grew very late, worked our way through them, signing our pictures and penning the usual memorabilia. Even those of us who didn't sneak beer grew pretty groggy. It was probably days before I read all the notes, and I know it was years before I fully appreciated Danny's bleary handwriting, and his clear and shining words.

It's people like you who make the world great. I think you're going to go a long way if you don't just give up. Most people don't realize that you're a very sensitive person, just like most people don't realize that I am one too. I keep wishing and keep kicking myself for not putting out a little more to get to know you, because it's finding people that makes my little miserable life worthwhile. You try very hard to hide the fact that you are a very sensitive loving and wonderful person, but I'm afraid you don't hide it very well. You're

just bubbling over with nice if you just care enough to look for awhile. I wish you the best of luck and hope that we will meet sometime again and maybe get to know each other a little better.

Do you see what he was saying? Danny knew what high school life was like — he was in it. The fact that he was a jock and had a great girlfriend didn't blind him to the chasms that high school established between people. But he wanted to reach across that gap. For some reason, God knoweth what, Danny Scott saw through my bullshit to a value within ... and really regretted that we hadn't been friends. I don't think I've had many better compliments in my entire life.

Danny Scott was a better person than I was. He was a better person than I *am*. He knew that the world was richer and more terrible than our silly little adolescent bubble. Even in his allegedly exalted position, within that bubble, he dreamt of liberty and believed in love. He was as far removed from the rapists described by Lefkowitz as diamonds are from dirt. If we looked at him and simply thought, "Jock," then we were missing — as I had missed — a deep and hopeful human being.

Who knows what happened to the guy? I certainly don't. I hope he married Betty and that they're still married and have fifteen children who honor them daily. He deserved her and he deserved that.

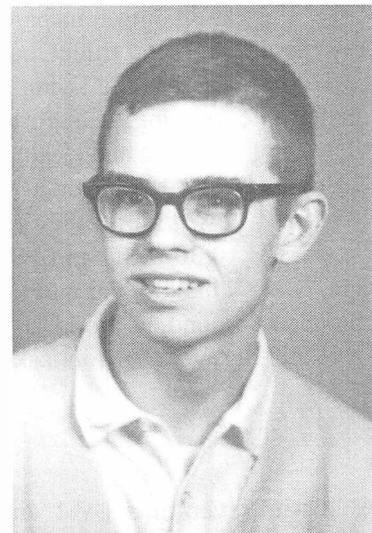
So I *don't* recommend the Lefkowitz book. Sure, no one would dispute that Americans enjoy sports and admire those who excel in them. But the book's contempt towards the kids who wear letter jackets is fundamentally unfair. **Our Guys** is right about the criminality of the lice who molested that girl — they should have been horsewhipped — but ugly and wrong and unfair about *why*. Those creeps didn't abuse the retarded girl because they were jocks. They abused her because they were criminals, without empathy or compassion, selfish, indifferent, and cruel. Yes, American culture admires and rewards athletes far beyond their contribution to the well-being of the society, and often confuses jock prowess with personal character. (Viz: Simpson.) But that fact should not blemish an athletic kid. Sensitivity and character arise in people of all sorts. It arose in Mark McGwire, in Sammy Sosa, in Walter Payton. It arose in Danny Scott. So, were these guys atypical, misfits themselves? So what? Everyone's a misfit.

In the question of the Misfit this **Challenger** found a theme which struck a nerve in the SF community — so I'm going to keep it going. Future issues of **Challenger** will be more eclectic in their subject matter — next issue will focus on the **legal system**, and I invite thoughts and experiences with the law — but the place of the different person in society is one I'll always want explored in these pages. Here people may always talk of the pains, penalties, and rewards of being different. Maybe it's one way *this* different person can help make things better.

One more thing ...

I did my first fanzine 30 years ago this summer. It was called **Alack**, and it was a group activity done at a party held by and for the New Orleans Science Fiction Association shortly before the moon landing. As are most "oneshots," as such things were -- and still are -- called, it was a mess, various NOSFAns each taking a turn hacking out paragraphs filled with absolute meaninglessness ... Me, I tried to wax profound over my favorite novel of the past year, R.A. Lafferty's **Past Master**. The novel remains splendid. My words on it are so pompous and insipid that they're now pure agony to read.

Agony or not, my part in **Alack** was instantly addictive. In November — almost exactly 30 years ago as I write this — I began the GHLIII Press. No month has passed since without a new entry in its log. Thirty years it's been since I caught the debilitating, exhilarating, mutilating and eternal Fanzine Bug. It is still with me. Thanks for being with me, too.



*Right: GHLIII, age 16. *yihh**

MISFIT

Charlie Williams

There are many beginnings to a story. Start anywhere and follow the threads of character and circumstances to what seems, in hindsight, an inevitable conclusion. A long, thin thread connects me to western Kentucky and Michael Carneal, teenaged misfit and murderer.

1. Up Home

My paternal ancestors settled in western Kentucky in the 1840's in an area about ten miles out past Paducah. Their farms and plantations made up a wide community in McCracken County, just south of the Ohio River and the Illinois border. Little neighborhoods grew up, like Lamont, Heath, and the hopefully-named Future City. To this day, scores of my relatives still live on the same properties and farm the same land. Six generations of my family have lived on the same spot where my great-great grandparents built a cabin. The McKindree Methodist churchyard and old Bauld Knob cemetery are filled with familiar names — ancestors that my cousins and I hold in common.

Tweolla married Kelley, Kelley married Hill, Hill married Williams, and produced my grandfater Ed. He moved his wife and young son to Tennessee in the 1930s, leaving behind the landscape of his youth. His annual vacations were always trips “up home.”

2. December First, 1997

It's nearly nine-thirty in the morning, and I'm up early. The slanting sunlight coming through the dining room window is bright, warm, and cheerful. Thanksgiving holidays are over, and it's Monday. Kids are at school, and Sylvia will be off teaching French at Pellissippi State University until noon. I've got deadlines: one piece is due this evening. Coffee and a bagel, the newspaper, and the day's first cigarette. Headlines on CNN, then downstairs to the studio.

I left a design laid out on tracing paper last night after my “second shift.” I tape it down and start inking the illustration onto transparent acetate. At five minutes to ten I realize I've left my Zippo behind, so I cap my rapidograph and trudge back upstairs.

Halfway across the living room I hear the Breaking News fanfare, and then the voice of the CNN newsreader. He's saying “... reported schoolyard shooting near West Paducah, Kentucky ...”

I grab the remote and kick up the volume. “There are reported injuries at Heath High School ... that's some 11 miles west of Paducah ...” I light the filter tip of a Tareyton 100.

After a few minutes they're repeating the same information, so I surf to the other nets, and CBS is there, too. By 10:30 ABC and NBC have interrupted **Jerry Springer** and **Card Sharks** and joined the coverage. CNN cuts to local news from Paducah, and unedited video of grim police and terrified parents is being broadcast around the world. I grab the phone and call my parents, six blocks away. “Are you watching this?” “Watching what?” Mom asks. They've got on the Nashville Network!

3. Prayer Meeting

It was seven-thirty AM, and Heath High was open for business. Thanksgiving holidays were over, so the turkey-and-pilgrim decorations were coming down. Dwayne Stone was a freshman this year.

Outside in the cold, cars and busses emptied, and students crowded the sidewalks and lawn. Dwayne came in through the Commons, where dozens of kids met before classes commenced. Within the Commons

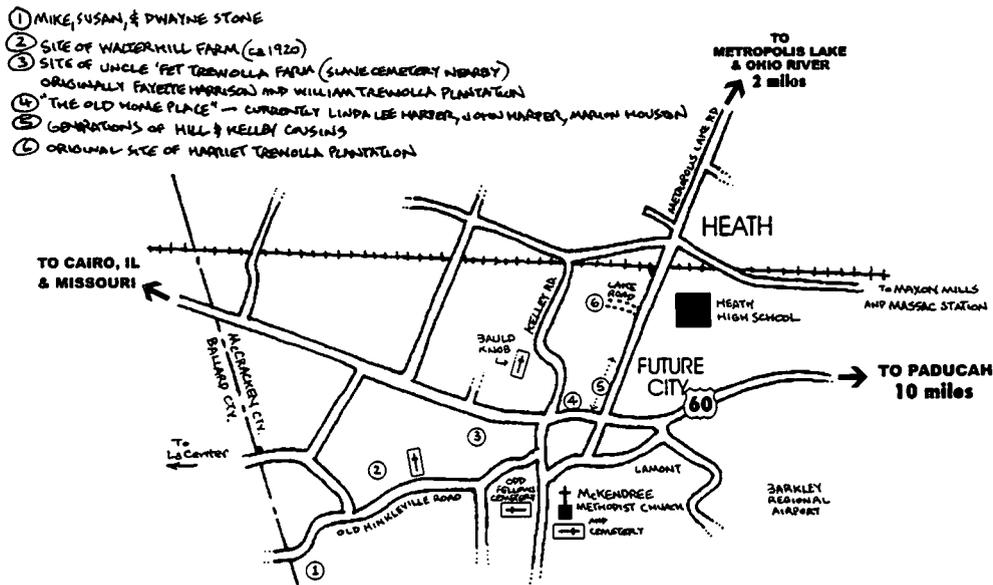
was a zone of quiet where the Christian Youth conducted its morning fellowship and prayer. Dwayne paused to watch a moment; until just before Thanksgiving he'd been a participant in their morning services. He moved to join the group but saw them link hands and form a circle. Too late. Dwayne shrugged and went off to his locker, around the corner and down the hall.

Dwayne and his combination dialed and was just opening the door when he heard firecrackers around the corner, then wild screaming. "That's not funny!" he thought, and slammed the locker door. He ran back towards the Commons, where the screaming had become like thunder, like a siren, almost unbearable.

He was buffeted by a mob, running past him. He bounced off someone and spun into the wall, then recovered and charged around the corner.

There were people on the ground, on the marble floor. There was a big crowd across the room, struggling, and teachers were running in from out of the office. Dwayne could not recognize anyone, although their faces were familiar. He smelled gunpowder, and then he saw on the wall nearby a spray of blood, like paint, like something in a movie. Blood was running across the Commons floor, and where it pooled near the big glass doors it steamed.

Someone hit the fire alarm, and Dwayne made his way outside, careful not to get blood on his shoes or jeans cuffs.



4. Out Old Hinkleville Road

It was not quite eight o'clock, and Susan Stone was leaving for work. She was a clerk at the McCracken County Courthouse in Paducah, and it was a good twenty minute drive into town. Sometimes Susan made it in fifteen.

Mike, her husband, had been at work before daylight. He'd taken the pickup out over to his mother's property, part of the acreage he farmed in corn, tobacco, wheat, and soybeans. Dwayne had caught the bus over to the high school, as usual.

Susan was about to pull out of her driveway onto Old Hinkleville Road, when a neighbor tore by at what was — even to Susan — excessive speed. The neighbor braked sharply, fishtailing all over the road, then slammed into reverse and pulled back, blocking Susan. "There's been a shooting over at Heath!" screamed the driver, a woman Susan knew but suddenly didn't recognize. The woman accelerated away, disappearing around the corner.

Susan felt her heart and lungs freeze, but she floored the gas and roared out of her driveway, spattering gravel into the trees. She ignored the stop sign at McKindree Church Road and Highway 60, then, weaving

around slower traffic. Hurtled up to Metropolis Lake Road on the left. A corner of her mind had been reassuring her that nothing was wrong. *I'll get to the school and it'll be all right, Dwayne's okay, this is all a dream.* But there were too many cars at the school, other parents, and it was worse than the crowd at the homecoming football game. Susan swerved onto the shoulder and leaped from the car. Only after she'd slammed the door did she remember to reach back in and shut off the engine. She ran toward the school, where police and ambulances were parked crazily on the lawn. More sirens wailed in the distance. A Lifestar helicopter hovered overhead, searching for a landing zone.

"Momma!" cried a familiar voice. Susan plunged into the mob of students and parents, shoving aside a sobbing woman still dressed in her housecoat. She grabbed Dwayne and crushed him against her, and only when the tears came did she remember to breathe.

5. "Michael Germs"

It's rough to be a high school freshman, especially if you're 14 and look 11. The Seniors are all giants: grown-up men who smell tough and shave and walk with a swagger; grown-up women who smell like sex, but they're completely untouchable ... you don't even dare speak to them. You're the Low Man, Less than Zero. You get in their way and you're *Runt, Shithook, Loser*. You join the Pirates Marching Band and they assign you the baritone, and it might as well be a tuba; at five feet tall and a hundred pounds soaking wet, you *disappear* behind the horn, until you screw up, and then the Seniors scream at you, "Get in *line*, you little turd!"

Those smug, preppy *assholes!*

So when you walk past the water fountain you're gonna get sprayed, and they'll laugh. In the cafeteria they'll spit in your lunch, and when you bring a sandwich from home they'll steal it. God help you if you have to go to the bathroom, so you don't; you save it up until you get home, every day.

And even the freshman girls, the ones your own age, they cringe away, giggling that you've got "Michael germs." Someone makes sure the school gossip sheet is left on your desk, an article circled in lavender ink: "Michael Carneal's a faggot" is all you can read before the tears start.

Worse, your sister Kelly, she's a Senior, and she's popular and pretty and smart, and I'll bet Mom and Dad would've been proud of their daughter, their *only child*, because you were an *accident!* So you spend a lot of time in your room, surfing the Net, playing Quake and Doom, and watching your favorite cartoon show, the Smurfs. Your life is *smurferrific!*

Just before Thanksgiving break, you were in study hall, doing your homework with someone who actually treated you like a regular person: sweet Nicole Hadley. Things were going well; she's getting friendly, nice smile; then she noticed that you bite your fingernails down to the quick, and just as you're about to frame a reply the bell rings and she's gone. Couple of days later you see her at that morning devotional thing in the Commons.

Ben Strong is there. Big Ben, a minister's son, he's a preacher wannabe, but he can hardly put two words together. Still, he's got down the cadences, Lord, and he's memorized all the Magic Words, yes, Jesus, and I'll bet he's get laid *every Saturday night!* And they all join hands and recite their empty prayers and profess their love and fellowship, and after homeroom you're still doggy-do under Bill Strong's shoe! And lookit how he's holding Nicole's little hand just a bit too long! *Something big will happen*, maybe next Monday. You tell a few guys in class and in the band that they'd better watch out. They sneer and chuckle.

So, Saturday night you dress in dark clothing and sneak out. The late November cold is bracing at first, but then you start to sweat. You break into your next door neighbor's garage and locate the unlocked gun rack. You quietly steal two shotguns, two semi-automatic rifles, a pistol, and several hundred rounds of ammunition. Sunday night you take your Daddy's two shotguns as well.

Wrap it all up in a shower curtain, just like Lee Harvey Oswald! Put it in Kelly's Mazda for the ride to school. Tell her it's a science project. Carry it all into the Commons. *Look here*, you'll say, *I'm declaring war on the Preps!* But no, all you can say to the three guys who notice you're there is, "I got some guns, here." Big deal — every kid in McCracken County knows guns. Dwayne Stone shot his first deer before he

was ten. Shrugs. "Yeah, sure, Michael." Uh-huh.

So you reach into your backpack where you've cached the Ruger .22 and whip it out. They'll notice me now! Safety off, two-handed grip, like in the movies. But you close your eyes as you squeeze the trigger. The gun jerks in your hand, again, and again, and it's much louder than you imagined it would be.

The little circle of the Christian Youth Fellowship disintegrates. The very first bullet kills Nicole Hadley — you didn't even *see* her there! Kayce Steger and Jessica James fall, dying, and five other kids are hit, as well. Between the explosions you can hear the slugs impact, *smack! smack!* Open your eyes, Runt, and see what you've done!

There's blood and brains everywhere. There's the principal, Mister Bond; you're really in trouble now! And amid the screaming chaos there's Ben Strong; why didn't you shoot him? But instead you hand Ben the gun. "Kill me, please," you beg, before you're surrounded and restrained. The screaming and crying drown out the world. Someone knocks your glasses off and then tenderly puts them back on your face. "Sorry," says a quiet voice in your ear.

6. Family Ties

I finally reached my cousins by telephone in the late afternoon. Linda Lee Harper was at home, and she'd had time to calm down by the time I called. Linda teaches at Ballard Memorial, over in LaCenter, ten miles further west. She'd been in class when someone came to her room to inform her of the Heath High shooting. Linda arrived not long after cousin Susan, and found her son John Harper also unharmed. John was a sophomore and on the other side of the building when John started shooting. Linda and John and Linda's mother Marion live on the site of the cabin occupied by our great-great grandparents, maybe three miles from the school.

"You've never seen such a crowd," she told me. "And I mean the TV people!"

"I know," I said into the phone. "I'm watching you on CNN right now." Just on the other side of Highway 60 is the Barkley Regional Airport (where uncle Eddie Owen Hill lived during the McKinley administration), and so there was easy access for media crews from, well, everywhere. For nearly a week this little corner of Kentucky would be the center of the Universe, every private grief exposed and explored. I watched Ben Strong interviewed endlessly, the titular "hero" of this sad story. I watched as the dead girls' funerals preempted all other programming. If I never hear the song *My Heart Will Go On* again it will be too soon.

I was startled to hear the name "Michael Carneal." It seemed oddly familiar. Then I remembered my last trip "up home" to visit my cousins, and a tombstone in the McKendree Methodist churchyard ... somebody "Carneal." I turned to my copy of Dad's extensive genealogical research. Sure



enough, my great-uncle Maurice Hill had married a Gladys Carneal. And, consulting a map, I find that a mile and a half north of Heath on Metroplis Lake Road is Carneal Chapel Church. So the pathetic little creature is nearly *kinfolk*, after all!

Michael Carneal's lawyers claim he went a little crazy and shouldn't stay locked up forever. They're probably right, at least about the first part. He's a *dork*, and far too immature for his years. If he'd gotten a little tolerance, or even had one real friend, he might not have stolen those guns and killed those girls, especially the one he dreamed about because she'd been kind to him for twenty minutes one rainy autumn afternoon. Michael's story has more in common with *Carrie* than with *The Basketball Diaries*. Michael wasn't a soulless monster like the schoolyard killers in Jonesboro, Springfield, or Littleton. Mike was just a misfit.

High school is hell for some kids. Others consider that time the best years of their lives. *I* had a *wonderful* time: I was never excluded or picked-on. My only claim to "misfit" status was an addiction to science fiction and comic books. Many of my best friends read the same books and dreamed the same tightbeam, warp-speed dreams *I* dreamed. I was a fine but not exceptional student. I exploited my talents in the arts and drama and music. There were good buddies and there was manly companionship. There were pretty girls, and if they weren't "preppy" cheerleaders or sorority types, they were smart and lovely and sometimes eager. If anything, I would have been one of Michael's potential targets.

If only Michael could have held on until he was a senior, when that status alone would have been a distinction and a source of self-esteem. If only Michael's neighbor and his dad had secured their arsenals safely away from this clearly depressed and tormented child. "If Only" won't help Kayce and Jessie and Nicole, or the other kids who were hurt or crippled for life.

So keep crazy Michael where he can do no harm. But pray God that, in the snakepit of High School life, let there be less hateful ridicule, and that the loving acceptance professed by the Christian Youth Fellowship be manifest in everyday life, not just in church, or for fifteen minutes before the morning bell rings.





HOME SICKNESS

Wm. Breiding

I can't go home. Not because you can't go home again, but because this is America, and I am an immigrant. It was destiny itself that pulled the burden of proof donkey-wise through time to produce myself and an entire culture removed from its roots. Humans are a nasty bunch. Our short aggravated history of conquer and kill, explore and move on is the guarantee. I was born into the bright, bloody dream, then permanently dislodged, fractured down to a small chip of myself, without much of a family, sense of belonging, and no home at all. Homelessness is the real history of America, and this, briefly, is my story in that history.

My maternal grandparents moved often within a small area of southern Ohio: out to the country when times were lean, into town when jobs were to be had. Mom's Dad was a lusty, restless soul, a cabinet-maker by trade. They were less than dirt poor, because they had no dirt to call their

own. My father was born and lived in the inner urban steel town of Wheeling, West Virginia. In the summer his parents sent him to a relative's farm. Dad's family were steel-mill workers and a bunch of nasty drunks, but they were property owners.

Neither my mother nor my father really had that place they could call home, the home-place. The home-place, that little piece of security, for all intents and purposes, died in modern America. There are vestiges, certainly. All we have to do is look south of the Mason-Dixon line; much of the ideology of the Confederacy is linked to Home. Some Northerners also have their sense of place, such as the denizens of Manhattan. But these are the lucky few. Both of my parents experienced that classic syndrome of family decay which was part of the American Dream, but now is no longer the American norm: upward mobility. Mom and Dad went on to higher education and then got the hell out. That they got out together is a tragedy. As individuals they were unsuited to family life; as a team they were mismatched entirely. Dad was a self-absorbed nature boy, happier among birds than he was other humans. Mom was a bohemian at heart, and having missed Paris in the 1920s, should have run off to Greenwich Village, rather than remaining stifled in a small town and a small town marriage. By the time I was born, in 1956, the youngest of six, the Depression, a wake up call to the future, had already happened and been nearly forgotten. My Dad was an unhappy sadist and alcoholic by the 1960s and my mother was an abused housewife having affairs with college students. The decay of home and family life for this particular little group was well under way.

In Wheeling, West Virginia, where I was born, my family lived in a house on state owned property, a perk my father received working for the State Park system. In 1963, when I was six years old, my father accepted a position at West Virginia University in Morgantown. Instead of purchasing a home at that time my parents rented a three story cinder-block house that was painted gray and built into a wooded hillside. The reasons my father never bought that house, when offered, remains uncertain. It was a beautiful house, and certainly big enough. Why my father never bought a house, ever, is an enduring mystery. Instead he bought a 101 acre wilderness tract to protect a hybrid warbler, a bird uncommon to the area. This was, perhaps, a reflection of his own sense of alienation. When I was eleven my mother deserted, after an unsuccessful divorce filing, and hauled all six of us kids to San Francisco, and of course, she did not buy a house.

Since that time I have lived in a series of 20 rented apartments. Add to this the houses of my youth and you tally twenty-two places in 40 years. As a young man I reveled in this sense of homelessness. I had few possessions and frequently threw out what little I did own when I reduced my life down to a hitchhiker's backpack. This was the ultimate experience and expression of freedom: where ever I happened to be I called my home. This was my American heritage, this was the way of the cowboy, and I embraced it fully. From as early as thirteen, I began drifting around my home, the United States of America, and felt fully alive, in my skin, and secure only when I was on the road.

In my very early thirties I began to miss the home I never had, that place I could point to and say, that is mine, this is my family, and feel a sense of belonging. My family was dispersed: my father was a stranger who never owned property and my mother moved every couple of years. I couldn't go home and dawdle in the nostalgia of my old room, sift through faded belongings to get a sense of self and place, because none of this existed. In a sense I did not exist either, except in the flow of time and in my own utter aloneness. There was neither heritage nor heirloom, and really, very few memories to anchor me in any place but the here and now, or possibly, an unknowable future; an orphan adrift. With their self absorption and obsessive hatred of each

other my parents had little time for building a spiritual home and place of love, let alone an actual one.

I see now that my constant traveling, my pilgrimages to nowhere, were subconscious searches for home. Every few years I would abandon an apartment in San Francisco and travel "home", walking in a wild and mostly fabricated rhapsody through the streets of Morgantown. I would linger outside the gray house on 8th Street, heart full of tension, my head tugging and nagging. I was hungry for home and grabbed at anything that would bind me. My vivid memories of home are views from the street, never the boredom or suffocation of interiors, but a fist pounding on a door, screaming: "let me in!" There is no extended family or web of friends, just the streets and a memory that fades with the years, ghostly but indelible.

I have walked the streets of San Francisco as if I owned them and know intimately the city's heart. Somehow I have always been estranged. I was always leaving. Unceremoniously I dumped whatever life I was living, acting as if the leaving was permanent, always pretending I was looking elsewhere to live. I traveled everywhere in the lower 48. Inevitably this road took me to West Virginia and cities that harbored friends: New York, Kansas City, Chicago, Boston, Toronto, Detroit, Portland, Cincinnati, Gainesville. My search for home was always half-hearted, however. I would lose my vision-quest and begin to hunger for the streets of San Francisco, and after a few months I would return, get a new job, get a new apartment, and more or less, resume my life without having changed or changed anything. I never deeply questioned why this was. If asked, I would answer simply that San Francisco was still the best place to live.

The year of 1994 was little different, though perhaps more extreme. The urgency I felt to leave San Francisco was almost scary. I left under a cloud of confusion with no plans. I drove in jagged lines through my country and my heart and came to a desperate understanding: West Virginia was not my home. It was only where I was born and spent the first eleven years of my life. There was little there for me but the wonder of the land and the hard work of fragile family ties. As the memories fade and the present exerts itself, the shock of what really exists in Morgantown is like a knife in my heart: most of my family returned to this small town, and it is crowded with brothers and sisters who walk circles around one another, cautiously, or not at all, and parents who live separately, eternally estranged and embittered. I enter the homes of my siblings and parents and see myself reflected at each turn, yet I find myself nowhere: lost in a void. At my mother's house I dig through scrapbooks searching for myself. In the pictures and clippings I try to grab on to my past, the people that we all were, looking for understanding: seeking a heritage. At my father's house, whom I have kept at arm's length my entire life, I immerse myself into his past, trying to imagine where it is I fit in, where the me inside of him resides. But it is useless. Their homes are not mine, their lives I have not lived or shared. We are separate. I try to reach into my family, and when I do, pull out only hands of blood, blood that has little to do with relations, and if it is thicker than water, then it has coagulated into a gleaming fury of mock stillness. There was no place for me in Morgantown. My friends, the life I had lived, had been in San Francisco. Coming to this understanding automatically led me to a conclusion: San Francisco must be my home, even though I had spent most of my life convincing myself it was not. I believed this for a couple of months, but every time I told myself "San Francisco is your home," I felt empty inside. I felt no sentimentality for the place. Lying astride this was my displeasure and disappointment for how San Francisco had evolved. It is now, without a doubt, a metropolis, but still carrying with it a small town mentality, rife with extreme racial tensions and a bonafide class structure. In some way or another, I have always disliked San Francisco, and I might always feel that way: it is my house, but I have never embraced it as my

home. And here I am, on the road, searching for home, and again, I am returning to San Francisco. But it will not be a returning to the place that I belong.

“Wherever it is good for me is my home.” A bad translation of a Latin proverb by Predrag, who is a Serb from Yugoslavia (“I believe in unity,” he said, when queried on the subject), and the husband of my good friend, Christina. How we got on to the subject of home, I’m uncertain, except that it might have been on both our minds, for very different reasons. When he suddenly popped that translation out while we were driving down Archer Road, in Gainesville, Florida it gave me pause, for San Francisco had been mostly good for me. I have friends there who are tolerant, flexible, forgiving and kind, some who have stood by me for nearly 20 years; lovers who have been sparkling jewels in a long darkness, and who’ve been integral to the shaping of my consciousness.

Life is a collection of memories. For lack of place and sense of belonging to that place, these memories must be the framework for my house. The lover’s kiss must be my home, the embrace of a friend my place of belonging. Being homeless in the soul, but having been happily housed and safe, I sometimes worry about losing my grip on reality and becoming not only homeless, but houseless, living on the street, just barely, a raving maniac for real, instead of just inside of me. In my darkest moments this appears to be my truest home. I live on the inside, alone and restless, wandering a twilight landscape of partial thoughts and half feelings, once removed, an orphan, a vagrant, a hobo, searching for warmth, security, and protection. I walk zigzag up the back of abandonment, knifing my insecurities, talking back to the devil, slapping the face of god. I kill my family one by one with the sawed off shotgun of my anger. I grab the moon and whistle down alleyways thinking garbage cans are the long result of time and I fit just nice into them. I trudge endless miles, exhausted, hoping to find the track I lost long ago, the one that leads me toward home, that brings me peace. But there are only endless yellow fields and above this the blue horizon. And beyond: the welcoming hand of death. [Gainesville, Florida: December, 1994]

Postscript, 1999:

I did return to San Francisco, in January, 1995, after nine months on the road. To find that life had gotten even more difficult than I had ever imagined in my city by the bay. I was homeless for six months. I was unable to find work, and ended up, aptly, a temp. San Francisco was jangley and rotten on my nerves. I expected to be mugged at any moment, and once employed and housed expected to lose my job and apartment at any time. Life was tenuous at best. At 40 years old I was nowhere and economics were about to get the best of me. My sense of anxiety about San Francisco was no longer a matter of the heart, or an intellectual concept: I could no longer afford to live there. San Francisco is now rated as the single most expensive city in America. I was living by a single thread, dangling over the precipice of homelessness.

So I left. Again. And, finally, for good. My friend Christina, now living in small town Iowa, and divorced from Predrag, invited me to join her. I lived in Iowa for a year. Then moved to Tucson. Now in Tucson for nearly two years, I still have not found my home, though West Virginia remains upper-most in my mind, and, as my parents grow into their eighties, I begin to wonder how I can go about making peace with them, and my brothers and sisters. In a way the tide has turned. I had always rejected San Francisco as my home. When I had finally decided that it was the closest thing I did have to a home, San Francisco cast me out into the confusion of America. I couldn’t return now even if I wanted to. West Virginia continues draws me like a strong magnet. I don’t know if it’s real or just a crazy ideal, but I still search for my home.

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From “Passages”

Janet Larson

I can't help throwing in my two cents' worth about the high school mass murder epidemic. The one in Conyers Georgia happened to be the school which my son Chris' girlfriend attends. I have a couple of theories about this trend. The tragedies to these kids, both victims and perpetrators, sickens me. The easy answer is that violence is a natural extension of the decline of morality in our society. You can see this decline everywhere, from the acceptance and even glorification of adultery in the White House, to the increase in unwed mothers, and the proliferation of drug use in our culture. The adults are more violent, why not the kids? Look at Waco, Oklahoma City, Serbia, Kosovo. American people crave violence, and it sells, just look at any movie marquee or video game. There are more mass murderers now than at any other time in history.

But also, you have to consider our odd attitudes towards children. It seems like kids are under more pressure now than ever in history. They're more sophisticated than ever; technological advances are exploding, and so much information is available. Where once the TV was used as a babysitter, today it's the Internet. The world can be so distant and unreal, and there's so much pressure to perform, succeed, and learn. On top of it all, the kids have to parent themselves, usually both parents are working, or there's a single mom in the household. Is it any wonder kids get frustrated and lash out?

It seems like these kids in the news have a lot in common. They're white males, middle class, attending larger suburban high or middle schools, and generally are disenfranchised misfits. Kids can be extremely cruel, and you wonder how much hatred these kids have been subjected to and internalized.

There's a lot of talk about the breakdown of the family. When in history before now has there been the concept of the unwanted or disposable child? It seems like so many people don't talk to their kids, and they expect the schools to teach everything, including morals and manners. On the other hand, we tie the hands of the educators. We can't punish the kids, and they're not allowed to fail. Their only punishment options are expulsion or suspension; talk about incentive! The curriculum is so watered down, it's no wonder our country's work force is losing the competitive edge.

Finally, add in the crowding factor. Whose idea was it to lock up thousands of hormonally unstable adolescents into a small building and expect them to perform intellectually? If you put enough rats into a small cage, they'll start chewing on each other. Here's my thought: why can't all the schools be magnet or alternate schools? Those schools historically get the best scores and passing rates. And bring back the community school. Break the kids up into smaller groups, make the school experience more personal.

While we're wishing for smaller neighborhood schools and a decrease in the student/teacher ratio, how can we make parental involvement mandatory? The parents, so important for academic success, are so often missing from the equation. They're too busy, or don't care, or too wrapped up in themselves to spend time helping their kids learn.

My last pet peeve is losing the arts from the school curriculum. Studies have shown that kids involved in arts are better motivated, perform better academically, and progress further in school. And yet, the arts are the first to fall to budget cuts.

So have I solved all our problems? Smaller schools, more magnet schools, required parental involvement, and emphasis on the arts. In a nutshell, I think that would solve the problem with our students.

Janet Larson is a physician and a long time veteran of Southern fandom. This page first appeared in Passages #1 in the Southern Fandom Press Alliance.

ΠῦΥss'Ωφε'Ω' Θη

PAINTING MRS. PORTER'S CASKET

Joe Mayhew



My mother and Katharine Anne Porter became buddies (if that's the right word) when they lived in the same high-rise on the edge of Greenbelt Park.

One day Mom told me, "Mrs. Porter would like you to paint something for her. Could you go up and talk to her?"

Well, certainly. I would like to meet the author of *Flowering Judas*, *Pale Horse*, *Pale Rider*, and *Ship of Fools*, whose short stories and poetry I had studied in high school. "What does she want me to paint?"

"I think you'd better let her tell you herself."

So Mom took me upstairs to Mrs. Porter's aerie, a huge double apartment on the top floor, introduced me and went back down, smiling wistfully.

Mrs. Porter was around 80 at the time, but was the soul of charm and rather attractive for all her years. Imagine Sian Phillips in the role.

"Mom told me you wanted me to paint something for you."

"Yes," said Mrs. Porter. "It's right here in the closet." She opened the door and pointed to a large wooden box. "It's a Mexican casket," she explained. "I'd love it if you could paint it up bright and cheerful."

"What's it for?"

"Me. I'll probably need it soon." She smiled gracefully (I suspect she enjoyed how I fumbled with my shock at what she had just said. "Do you think you could decorate it for me?"

"Bright and cheerful?"

"Something for a party."

"Like a pinata?"

"Exactly."

"Well, I could paint it bright yellow and cover it with flowers like you see on Mexican folk art."

"No. Not yellow. I've never looked good in yellow. But the flowers would be nice. Don't go to a lot of trouble, as I plan on being cremated in it."

And so I came back the next day and began to cover it with bright sloppy flowers. It was the first casket I had ever decorated.

Mrs. Porter was as charming a Southern Belle as I had ever met. She was rather awesome in her graceful, world-wise way.

As I painted, she told me, "Yes, I'm rather curious about death. I want to be awake and alert when it happens so I can fully experience it."

She told me she was working on a novel about Joan of Arc, and hoped to finish it before she died. It was to be her final philosophical statement.

"Your mother told me you are studying to become a Catholic priest, even though your family is Protestant. You know, my family sent me to a convent school in New Orleans. It was very strict and it gave me something to push against, I guess. The Church is good for that. I'm still a Catholic. That wasn't easy.

I was excommunicated for my involvement with the Cruzeros in Yucatan, and had to do public penance when I got back to New Orleans. Sack cloth and ashes, so to speak.”

I said, “Last summer I lived in a church down in Yucatan. We had a couple Mayan villages called Dzilam de Gonzalez, and Dzilam de Bravo on the gulf coast.”

“I don’t think I know them.”

“Not surprising. The only fame Dzilam has is that Jean Lafitte, the pirate, is buried there.”

“It must have been interesting.”

“Yes, ma’am. I saw my first murders there.”

“So did I!” she smiled.

“I saw them gun down two pentecostal ‘Alleluias’ from Mexico in Bravo’s town square. They’d been preaching against pirating — still a current problem. The fisherman often came back with two boats, one with Cuban markings. Well, these Mexican evangelicals objected to the Catholic priest blessing those stolen boats at the annual Regatta, which was when it happened. Just as Father Noh’s ancient jeep toddled into the square, we heard two shots and saw two men fall. Later we learned that the bullets had come from a Guarda Costal rifle. When the Mayas talk about ‘Mexicans,’ they mean people from Mexico City. They don’t much care for them, particularly government types.”

She nodded sympathetically, “They felt the same way back in the Twenties. I lost a lot of good friends in that war. I was so young and idealistic, it all seemed so important. That’s what got me in trouble with the Church.”

“Perhaps it was.”

She told me stories of working with the great Mexican Muralist, Diego Rivera, and of many of her famous colleagues. She had translated Rivera’s “The Guild Spirit in Mexican Art”. I had seen some of his artwork at Chapultepec.

She was living in two apartments with a piece of an adjoining wall removed for a passageway. They were filled with mementoes of her long career: a hand-made harpsichord, photos of her literary playmates, a collection of rather extraordinary decorated eggs, curious antique furniture, and of course, an impressive library. She enjoyed giving the tour. Each item had a story.

I was utterly captivated. Mother told me, “Joe, i think she really enjoys men. She doesn’t have many women friends.”

“What about you? How did you meet her?”

“Mary heard that Mrs. Porter’s nurse was going to be away and that she needed someone to give her shots.” Mom had been an RN, and my aunt, who was working part-time at the reception desk, had told Mrs. Porter, “I have a sister who could do it, she lives here, on the 6th floor.”

So, Mom started giving Mrs. Porter her shots. Mom was a good listener, and so they became friends. Mom had all the cunning of a Virginia belle, tempered by the good manners of her Pennsylvania mother, so she never introduced her to Dad. Southern Women are a people apart. It’s safer that way.

Years later, when I was working at the Library of Congress, some of my friends in the Hispanic Division had Katharine Anne Porter memories of their own. They had gossip about her scandalous “gentlemen friends.” Diplomats, noblemen and even librarians. Like Mom said, she enjoyed the company of men.

I was saddened to learn that Mrs. Porter died after a gradual decline into coma, that she hadn’t been “present” at her death, as she had hoped. She left a lot of her memorabilia to the University of Maryland, which had established a Katharine Anne Porter room in its graduate library in nearby College Park. She told me that she was rather fond of College Park. One night, standing on her balcony facing the town she had said, “Look at those lights! It’s as fine a sight as Paris at night!” She didn’t say what she thought of the daytime view.

A few years ago I saw a photo of her casket in the local paper. It hadn’t been used to cremate her after all, and it now had a place of honor in the Katharine Anne Porter room. So I got in touch with the McKeldin Library to let them know how it had come to be made.

It was a jarring experience. The officious academic in charge wanted any correspondence I might

GROWING UP WRONG

Sabina Becker

Once upon a time, there was a princess.

Only she didn't know she was a princess; her parents never told her so. They sent her to a normal public school, in the hope that she would grow up the same as everyone else.

But she wasn't the same as everyone else; she was highly intelligent, and she couldn't help it. Still, she tried very hard, and in a perverse way, she succeeded: her schoolmates (who all fancied themselves to be nobles) took her for a peon because she was so quiet and humble. So, when it turned out that the "peon" was brighter by far than they, and made them all look like the ninnies they were, they vowed revenge.

They didn't beat her up in the schoolyard; that would have been too much trouble. If she squealed on them for that, there would be too much proof in the form of cuts, scrapes and bruises. No, their revenge would have to be more subtle. Invisible ...

I didn't ask to be smart. I did not go up to the Gods before I was born and demand an inordinately large share of the brains they were handing out; I did not storm and tantrum until it was given me. I got to be this way without asking, with conscious effort on my part. Is that so wrong? All right, so I didn't "earn" my high marks at school with the sweat-on-the-brow most kids are supposed to experience. Whose fault is that? I simply answered the questions as I had learned to do. It's not my fault that I was quicker on the uptake than just about everybody else.

And it's not my fault that I wasn't much to look at, either. It's not as if I didn't try, but somehow my efforts all turned out wrong. If I wore lipstick, however subtle, I got ragged on; my eyeshadow was always the wrong color, although how they saw it from behind my glasses (since they didn't look me in the eye) was a mystery. I really did wish I was pretty, back then; it would have made life so much easier. I said I wanted to be a doctor, a writer, but those were secondary wishes. I really just wanted to be liked.

But ugly ducklings aren't liked, even if they're smart and nice, as I surely was. Ugly ducklings are shunned for the stupidest reasons: for scrawniness, for frizzy curls, for being "four-eyed," for walking around with their shoulders slumped and their heads ducked in anticipation of the blows they feel are sure to come. Wanting to minimize their ugliness, they hide, but the hiding only draws attention to them. People saw by my Quasimodo posture that I was a ready victim, and they took advantage.

The miller's daughter looked at the princess, and got an idea. "I know," she said. "Let's go down to my father's mill." So she and a gaggle of her girlfriends went down to the mill. There, they plotted their revenge against the princess.

They had never been inside the mill itself; they preferred to hang out in the bushes by the mill stream instead, drinking and smoking and fucking with their boyfriends. (They were early starters, just as the princess was a late one.) They had scant idea how the mill worked, being only moderately intelligent and incurious to boot. But the miller's daughter knew one thing: If you poured something in the funnel at the top of the mill, it would come out all different, in a fine powder, at the other end. So she and her girlfriends climbed to the top of the mill, one by one, then gathered around the funnel.

They could see the big water wheel turning, could hear the slow crunch and grind of the great gears, could feel the ponderous rumble of the millstones below. They were a little scared — the miller would whip them all if knew what they were up to — but because they were so many of them, not one of them dared suggest that they back out.

Besides, they were determined to get back at that princess, that ugly little snob! They'd show her for thinking herself so much better than they were!

One by one, they shouted things they hated about her into the funnel: I hate the way she looks at me! I hate that she didn't giggle about sex in health class! I hate that she got 101% in French! I hate that she's

a prude! I hate her hair!

They yelled their hates into the funnel, around and around the circle, until no one could think of one more thing to yell. Then they clambered one by one down the ladder again, and waited at the bottom for the results to come out.

They did not have long to wait. Soon, a fine gray powder trickled out the spout at the bottom of the mill. It whispered maliciously as they caught it up in a bag. They waited for every last grain of the gray powder to trickle into the bag, and then scurried away to divide it up amongst themselves.

Next Monday, they all took their powder to school with them.

I don't know who first accused me of being gay, but I now realize it was the commonest way to degrade someone you didn't like in school. Too bad I didn't then; I honestly feared, at thirteen, that I was. It was hard not to when guys avoided you like you were carrying some kind of virus, and bitches like Colleen M. called you "a little queer."

Later in the school year, I accidentally glimpsed another bitchy girl, Denise L., changing in the washroom — inconveniently, I glimpsed this in front of half a dozen witnesses. Denise glared at me. The others all tittered and whispered. I backed out, stammering incoherently in fear, but the damage was already done. My image was cemented in their eyes. Though every bit as heterosexual as any of them, I was now gay.

The girls waited until recess. Then, when they spotted the princess walking -- alone, as always -- in a dark, pine-sheltered corner of the schoolyard, they sneaked up behind her, surrounded her and, in unison, dumped their bags of powder all over the princess' curly head. Then they ran away laughing.

The princess, however, wasn't laughing. She was terrified. For when the powder fell in a gray insubstantial shower, all around her ears and shoulders, she heard malicious voices in it, sneering and whispering false accusations. She shook her head, but the powder clung to it like static electricity. The voices stuck with her as she stood under the shower that night, scrubbing and scrubbing, sobbing with frustration and terror.

The malicious powder seeped into everything she thought and did; it poisoned every bite of her meals at home and her school lunch. She lost her appetite and grew thin, but still the voices stuck with her.

One day at school, she grabbed the miller's daughter by the arm as she was flouncing out of class. "Why did you do that to me?" the princess asked. "What did I ever do to you?"

The miller's daughter sneered and looked smug. She did not answer the question. She just shook off the princess with a snarl: "Queer!"

The princess hid herself in the school washroom, trying not to cry. She succeeded in holding back the sobs, but the tears would not stop coming.

"I'm not a queer," she whispered soundlessly. "I'm not, I'm not ..."

But there was no one there to hear, and no one would have believed her anyway. The only reply was derisive laughter from the voices, which were still clinging tenaciously in the crevices of her ears. They would take a long, long time to fade away.

The "queer" accusation was just one among many. I single it out because it was the most false, and because it hurt the most. And for a reason which resonates in a more sinister manner today: it is the same accusation that was hurled at Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, the perpetrators of the massacre at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado.

Even now, though those two troubled boys are dead, some people are still whispering that about them. This is grossly unfair; they can no longer defend themselves. Given the drastic "solution" they chose for their problem, they were ill able to defend themselves in the first place. Kids who feel truly empowered would not, I think, choose to go in with guns a'blazin'.

If malicious whispers could so completely devastate me, I can well imagine what they did to Harris and Klebold. The difference between them and me? I did not believe that violence could solve my problems.

Somehow I was able to grow up around my problems, or through them. I poured out my anger and my grief to my teacher; we would walk together when she was on yard duty. This helped keep the bullies at bay.

And my teacher, Joyce Latchford, was a truly amazing lady. She had access to insights that I could never have found on my own. Yes, Jason M. always bugs you, she said, but that is not your fault. His parents are getting a divorce.

Jason sat in front of me in class; she had put him there on purpose, to isolate him from his smart-mouth buddies (he was a ringleader), and in the hopes that some of my intellect would rub off on him. I don't know if it worked. He just kept turning around and teasing me, intimating that he and I were sexually involved. Nothing could have been more ludicrous, and I was all the more embarrassed.

This had been done before in the sixth grade, I was supposed to rub off on Peter D., another class smartass. I don't know to what extent I succeeded, although I do think I eventually gained some of his respect, for he stopped bugging me and started talking to me normally. I will never forget that. Neither, I think, will the kids who treated Peter, who wore a silver Le Mans bomber jacket, as the epitome of rebel cool. Too bad Peter's cool didn't rub off all that much on me, it would have made the transition from puberty to high school so much easier.



The princess somehow toughed life out. Eventually she and the other girls were separated, as they went to different high schools the next year. That was a bit of a relief for the princess, but there were other bullies waiting to take the first ones' placee — they saw that the princess was forever ducking, as if to ward off an assault from above.

It's very hard to get out of that hunkered-down stance once things start. But I persevered. I got

through high school with the help of a lucky accident: I broke my pelvis at 14, after being hit by a car crossing the road one morning.

With my sudden, temporary disability came empathy, and cards from people I didn't know were my friends; later, exemption from gym class, which had been my chief torment — the changing-in-the-bathroom incident happened after gym. Suddenly I no longer needed to prove myself cool through athletics, since athletics were out of the question in my condition. No one expects you to jump and run when your pelvis is shattered in four places and there's a big bone spike pushing up into your pelvic cavity. I could walk normally, and I was not expected to do more than that. I got a written make-up assignment instead; I chose to write about gymnastics. It was something I had always wished I could do; now that I could no longer do it, I chose to write about it.

Writing turned out to be my salvation in more ways than one. Mrs. Latchford had noticed that I was a good writer, and had made me yearbook editor in the 8th grade. From 10th through 13th I was on the staff at *The Westerly*, my high school newspaper. My poems and humor items and short stories and essays all got people to look at me differently — as a person with talent, not just another homely little geek. I walked with my head up now, and I dressed and wore my hair stylishly in spite of my glasses.

In my final year I got contact lenses, and suddenly dates appeared out of the woodwork. Took them long enough! But I still managed to stay sexually uninvolved through my first university degree; the right man hadn't come along.

And somewhere down the line, I looked into the mirror and realized that the ugly duckling I was turned out to be a cygnet, for I was now a swan. I'm still facing I'm still facing up to that undreamt-of reality: not only can I write damn well and sell what I write, I'm actually quite an attractive young woman. (I can say that without conceit, having gone through so much self-hatred to get there.)

Maybe the people who bullied me saw that potential before I did, and that's why they took their anger out on me. Nobody likes to look mediocre. I never meant to upset them, but it was inevitable: They saw someone more naturally blessed than they, so they struck out.

A pity Harris and Klebold never realized that. They were both so bright, yet their intelligence was wasted on Hitler-fetishism, violence and mayhem. Rather than use their creativity for good, they turned it to bitter ends. They drew up a hit list of those who had offended them, but nobody on that list was killed; in the end, it seems, they picked targets at random. They blew it in every conceivable way. Not only did they fail to teach their oppressors a lesson, their whole lives and those of a dozen others were down the toilet. What a pathetic waste!

I am continually, daily, actualizing the potential I was born with; the princess is becoming a queen. It is hard work, but I am realizing that my strange form of royalty was not merely thrust on me from birth; in the end, it still has to be earned the hard way. But because the ability has been with me all along, I have confidence that I will do it.

“Eric and Dylan, I wish you had known what good you possessed, as it would have made you strong enough to survive, the way I did. Like you, I was in terrible danger of growing up wrong. If I had only known you when you were alive, I would have told you my story and hoped it would snap you out of the nightmare you were living. I'm sorry I wasn't there ...”

The young queen turns off the TV with a weary sigh. So much bad news, and so much falsity in entertainment. It's hardly worth it to watch anymore. But this is her realm: if she would rule it wisely and well, she must pay attention to what is going on in it. She must listen to all messengers, even the ones whose style she despises, and use her hard-won wisdom to sift between the grain and the chaff. And most of all, she must use her special skill, her writing, to ensure that her own message does not go unheard.

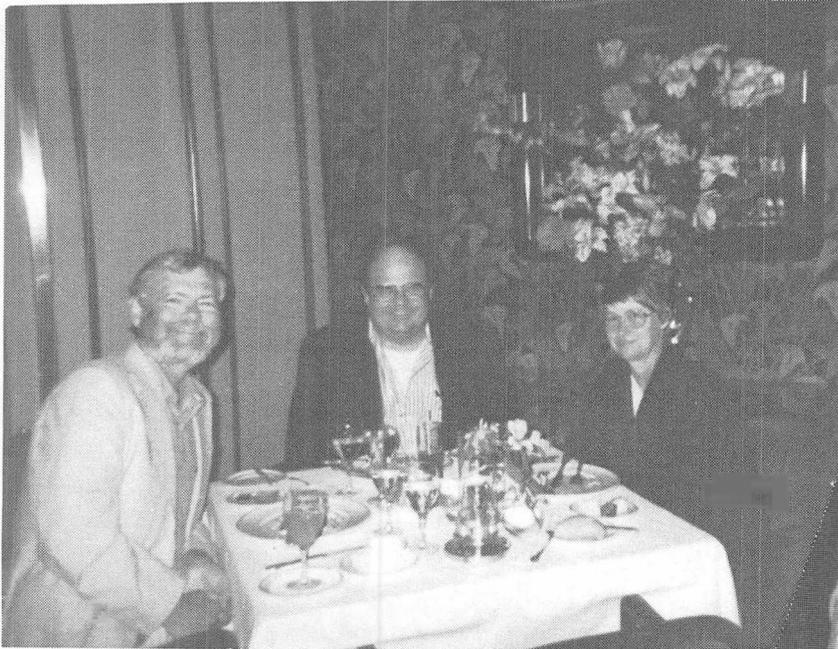
She flips a paper airplane out of the tower window, wishing it happy landings.



VISITORS and VISITED

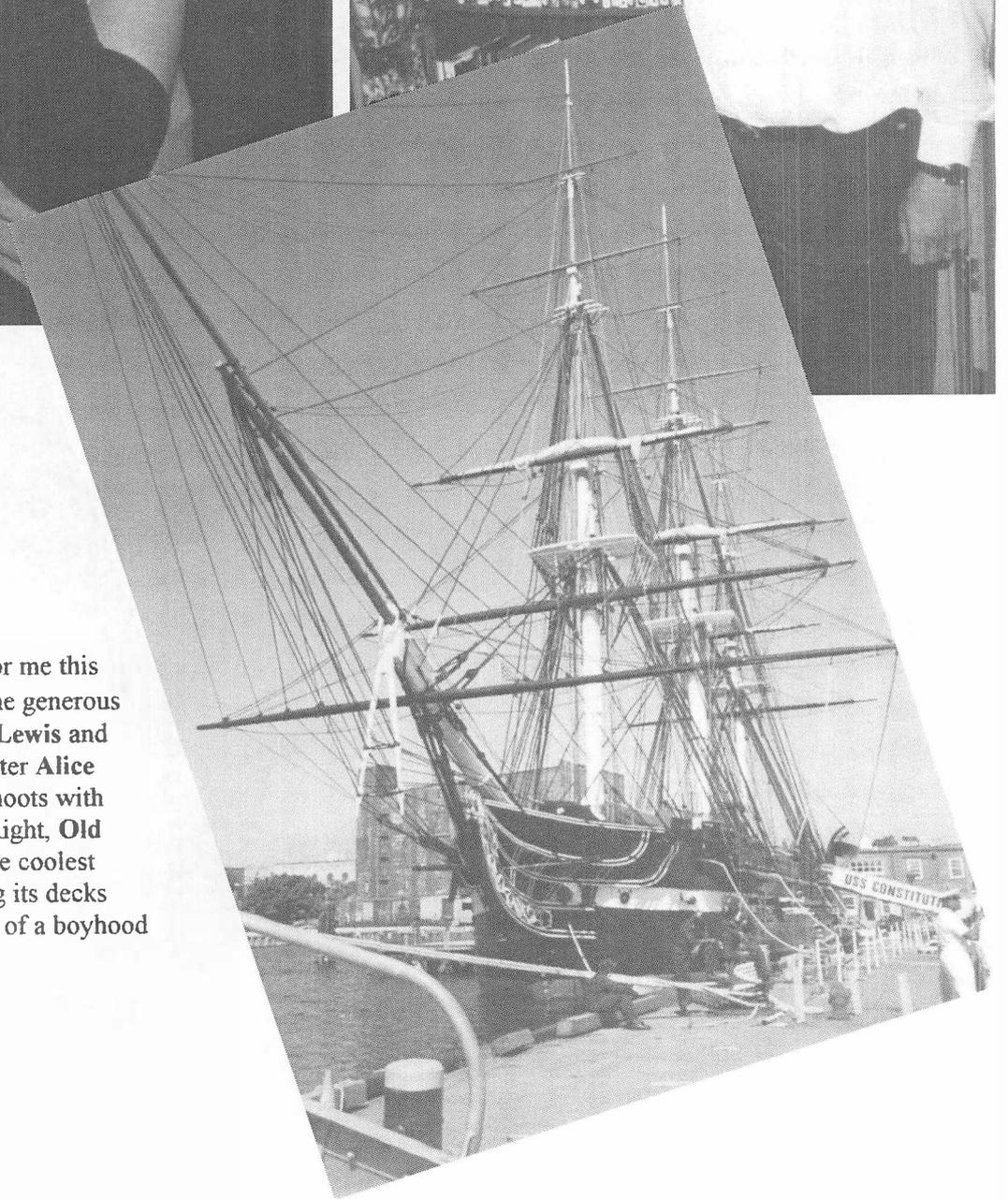
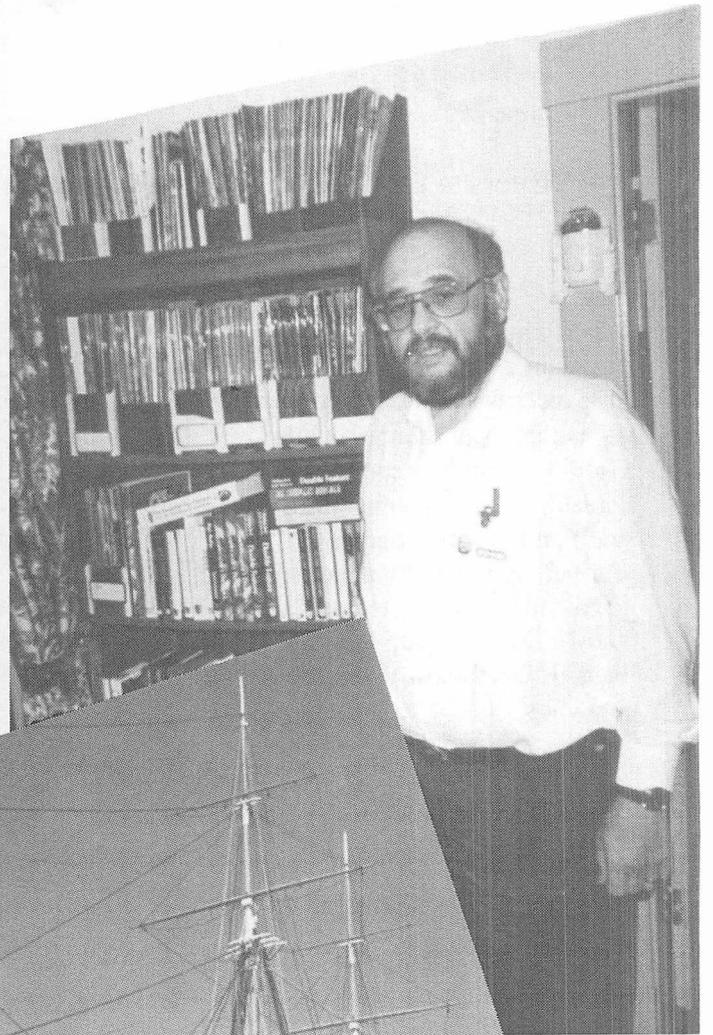
Visitors to the Crescent City — and victims of a visit from GHLIII — since last we met.

When **The Thirteenth Floor** — based on a novel by New Orleans' own Daniel F. Galouye — had its local premiere, **John Guidry** arranged a special screening for **Carmel Galouye** and family. Here John & Carmel are joined by the other locals lucky enough to have known Dan — **Doug Wirth, Ken Hafer, Justin Winston** and yhos.



Gracing New Orleans for a wonderful evening this summer were **Greg Benford** and **Elizabeth**, here generously enduring GHLIII at the French Quarter's magnificent Louis XVI restaurant.





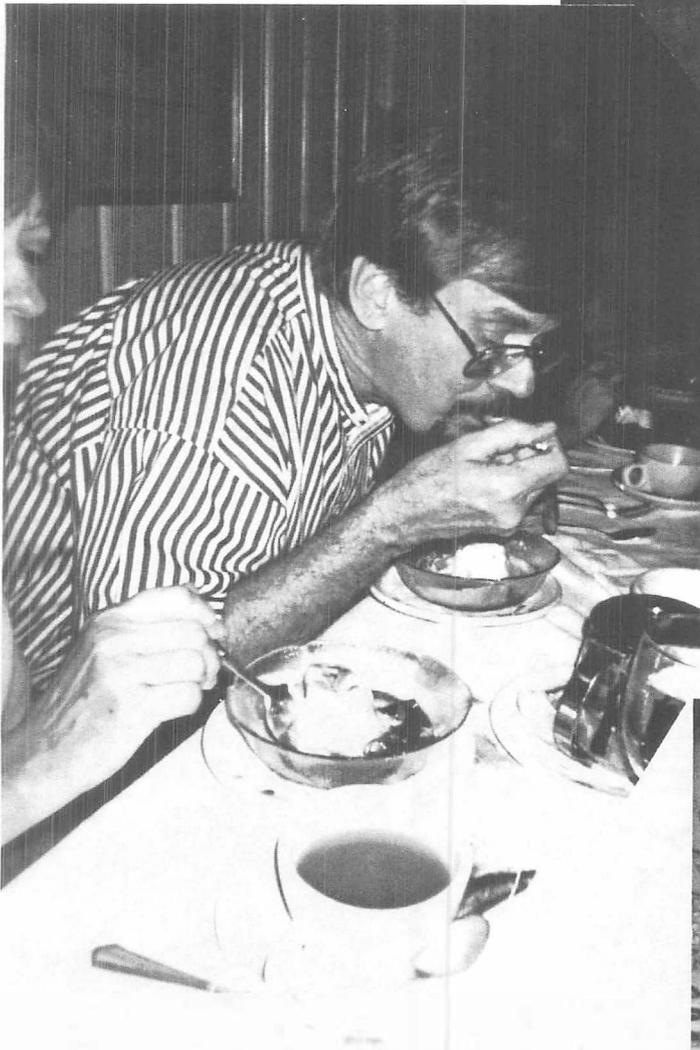
To Boston for me this summer, thanks to the generous hospitality of Tony Lewis and his wonderful daughter Alice Naomi, snuggling snoots with lucky Mib above. Right, Old Ironsides, simply the coolest ship afloat. Walking its decks was the culmination of a boyhood dream.

PAY ATTENTION
NOW!



Breakfast at Brennan's

is the great New Orleans culinary experience. During the **DeepSouthCon** I had the honor of hosting such luminaries as Lew Wolkoff, Ned Brooks, John Guidry (back to camera), Suzanne & Steve Hughes and Carol & Mike Resnick, among other lucky diners ... dutch treat, of course. Left, Fred van Hartesveldt digs into Bananas Foster, a Brennan's invention and tradition.



Among the yankees, Southern expatriate Elizabeth Stewart, now living in New Jersey, with a pal from the good old days.



The CHALLENGER Tribute

JOY to the World!



JOY MOREAU has shared memories of her family's life in the Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus with fandom for years, through Joe Maraglino's **Astromancer Quarterly** and now, through **Challenger**.

She lives near Niagara Falls in a wondrous house festooned with posters, costumes, props, and memorabilia of all sorts — destined for a circus museum, but delightful to all who have come to visit. Joy, you live up to your name!



Joy's articles on circus life were a mainstay of Joe Maraglino's great fanzine, Astromancer Quarterly. "As I told my mother, we may have more information than anyone else and we owe it to our heritage to save the knowledge."

GARGY

Joy Moreau

John Daniel is not exactly a household name by anyone's standards. Few now have even heard of the pair of mighty gorillas who shared the same name more than seventy years ago.

In 1921 the original John Daniel was brought from England by John Ringling at a cost of \$30,000. Tragically, he died of natural causes a few weeks after his arrival at New York's old Madison Square Garden, in a human bed in the Garden tower, away from the public's view. He was only the third gorilla to even be in the United States of America.

The next gorilla was named Sultan, but this was changed to John Daniel the Second. Commencing in 1924, he traveled cross-country, at that time, the only gorilla most people in North America had ever seen.

This was a time when the adventurous photographers Martin Johnson and his young wife Osa filmed their journeys through Africa, unexplored Borneo and other exotic locales. For most, this was their only exposure to the now commonplace nature documentaries. Even films or photographs of gorillas were a rarity until Johnson's acclaimed *Congorilla*.

John Daniel the Second was big, a magnificent and awesome example of his species. He had a perfect gorilla face, more benign than frightening. His home was a spacious wagon in the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus menagerie where, inevitably, he was the star attraction.

My father was a child of the Big Top, his father having worked in the front office wagon. Legendary elephant trainer supreme George "Deafy" (pronounced Deef-y) Denman gave my father the moniker Sabu, which is Sanskrit for Elephant Boy, because of his unfettered enthusiasm for the gentle giants. This ultimately led to his place as an Elephant Historian. Although there have been and continue to be a number of such historians,



my father was the only person to be presented with a Life Time Achievement Award for his many years of dedication and record-keeping.

In August 1985, after twice overcoming long struggles with gangrene, my father lost his right leg when a third attack could not be stopped. That autumn, as he was learning to walk again, he knew he would not be able to attend the annual Elephant Workshop and Seminar conducted by the Elephant Managers Association. The following year the Workshop was to be held in Calgary, Alberta. Although he was walking well by then, he had doubts about attending. However, a friend insisted on taking him, which pleased both my mother and me because we wanted his life to be as normal again as possible. Unknown to my father, his attendance was necessary because they intended to surprise him with this unique award.

Still, despite my father's primary interest in elephants, John Daniel the Second made an indelible impression on him, perhaps because he seemed to be a loving creature. It inspired my father in his youth, giving him a respect for those great hairy simians as well as his ponderous pachyderms.

When I was a child my father frequently spoke to groups of all ages, telling and retelling countless animal stories. Although most were about elephants like Alice and Snyder, a few were menagerie stories. His stories about the two John Daniels made me feel as if I had really known them, although both had died before I was born.

Around this same time a mother gorilla — a coastal or perhaps a mountain gorilla, depending on whom you believe -- gave birth to a baby, probably no bigger than a few pounds. He came by way of the Cameroons, brought there by a native who had traveled an unknown distance, and had come into possession of the 35-pound infant in an unknown manner. Perhaps the native stole him from his gorilla mother, perhaps the mother had died and the child was saved from starvation. If this native told the missionary couple to whom he traded the young gorilla, they did not relay the information to Captain Arthur Phillips of the S.S. **Humhaw**, to whom they sold the baby for four hundred dollars. The ship's log recorded the transaction on November 5, 1932, while the American-West African Lines ship was docked at Kribi in the Cameroons.

Captain Phillips had been engaged in a baby gorilla sideline for a while, buying them cheaply in places like Kribi when opportunities appeared, then selling them in North America. His reputation presumably was established, or why else would the missionary couple have been waiting in anticipation on the dock for his vessel with the young gorilla in hand?

Captain Phillips promptly named the youngster Buddy, even though it was impossible to determine a gorilla's sex at that size. Buddy he stayed until he became **Gargantua**, the gorilla of my childhood.

Many young people today probably have never even heard of **Gargantua the Great**, but there was a time when he was as well known as **King Kong** and every bit as frightening. **King Kong** was created by special effects artist Willis O'Brien, but **Gargantua** was created by life itself.

Despite the purchase of Buddy which turned him into Captain Phillips' property, the captain treated him as a special guest. Life aboard the S.S. **Humhaw** was good for Buddy as they crossed the Atlantic. He played with a rubber ball, slept in a bunk, was well fed. On Christmas Day he was given the same holiday dinner being served to the passengers, complete with a card reading "Merry Christmas to Buddy from the Steward."

Most of the people on board seemed to enjoy his simian antics and playfulness. No one feared him. The only anomaly in his character seemed to be his preference for meat, and gnawing on bones until he got the marrow out, rather than the fruits and vegetables most gorillas preferred. With him, they were left till last. Eventually, meat was removed from his diet except for spoonfuls of liver extract and later, a little cooked liver.

Captain Phillips had expected to sell Buddy for three thousand dollars, but that unexpectedly changed one terrible night in Boston, where the ship came into port. A sailor jumped ship that night. Unfortunately, this member of the crew had been reprimanded and harbored a hatred for the captain strong enough to induce an act of unmitigated horror.

Buddy's bunk had been renovated with a box to protect him from drafts. He was from a hot climate, transported to New England during a cold season. Captain Phillips appeared to have tried to do his best for Buddy to keep him comfortable and healthy.

That night, Captain Phillips checked Buddy and noticed his eyes were closed, but found nothing actually wrong. It was not until the next day that he realized Buddy could not see. The ship had already left Boston and could only continue to New York. Captain Phillips radioed for help upon docking. A nurse met them, applied olive oil to Buddy's eyes, and the first turning point for the young gorilla's personality had been reached. It was later determined that nitric acid in a 50% solution had been thrown into his face. Although he did regain his vision, his face was permanently scarred, the snarl forever in place.

Buddy was no longer worth \$3000. By special arrangements with Washington, he was appraised at a mere fifty dollars, the absolute minimum allowed. This set duty on him at only \$7.50. At that point there was every expectation the poor beast would die. But he did not. He was made of hardier stuff than that.

Offhand, gorillas and St. Bernards don't seem to have much in common, beyond gorillas being the largest of the apes and St. Bernards being particularly big dogs. At this point, Mrs. Gertrude Lintz entered the picture, bridging the gap. Mrs. Lintz's Herculean Kennels of St. Bernards had won a multitude of best-of-breed awards at Westminster shows. Her animal trainer was German Dick Kroener, who almost quit when she brought home her first chimpanzee. Then she brought home Buddy. She also brought in an oculist who prescribed eye drops and salve. Recovery seemed near.

Dr. J. Y. Henderson described Gargantua as his own worst enemy, which is best demonstrated by the efforts Mrs. Lintz and Kroener made at medication, at a time while he was still young, lightweight Buddy.

The first time Mrs. Lintz attempted the medication was the only time Buddy actually bit her. Kroener was not a weak man, yet he was unable to hold Buddy still for Mrs. Lintz. They finally sorted to the bizarre and risky ritual of her lying prone on a table while luring Buddy with a pear. At the critical moment, Mrs. Lintz would squirt drops into his eyes.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Lintz had gloves on the gorilla's hands to keep him from picking at the healing scabs, but this was to no avail. He constantly reopened the sores which delayed the healing process to six months. The scars by then were unavoidable. However, his spirit was not scarred. He was still friendly, still playful. There seemed no indication of future malevolence. Perhaps he simply had not gained enough stature, maturity and, most importantly, strength.

Mrs. Lintz apparently thought a gorilla was simply a big chimpanzee. She did everything to and with a gorilla that has been done with a chimpanzee, who looks so cute. I don't believe she ever realized that by dressing him in coveralls, little shoes with taps, riding in her car with her, she was playing with dynamite.

He did have occasional bursts of temper, which she controlled by wearing a grotesque Chinese mask she called the bogeyman. Later she carried a doll's head in her pocket which she would bring forth to control misbehavior. The theory has been expressed that these items reminded Buddy of a frightening African bat from his infancy.

Mrs. Lintz exhibited Buddy, another gorilla and some chimpanzees at the Chicago Century of Progress in 1934. Two years later she took Buddy to Miami, where a boy Mrs. Lintz had fired angrily poisoned the gorilla. The mixture of sugar-syrup and disinfectant damaged his stomach badly — enough that it was five weeks before he could eat solid food again.

But still Buddy was friendly, although his strength was growing and he was becoming a volcano, waiting to erupt.

Buddy was shedding his milk teeth when he appeared at the Steel Pier in Atlantic City the following year. That was when Mrs. Lintz did something little that I personally believe was pivotal in Buddy's personality change.

I had a little dog act, performing at birthday parties, Christmas festivities and schools primarily. When I started teaching my first dog, Tulsa, I was told by experienced trainers to never, ever play tug-of-war with a puppy because the experience will almost inevitably result in a dog that lunges at people. Well, guess

what Mrs. Lintz, in effect, did. To help Buddy with the loss of his milk teeth, Mrs. Lintz gave him a strip of burlap, let him bite down on it, then jerked it away. Shortly after this, Buddy playfully killed a stray kitten while petting it, bewildered by the sudden death. Then his major bewilderment began. Abruptly, Mrs. Lintz realized his strength and became fearful of taking him out of his cage. No more excursions, no playing around the house.

This sudden turn of events enraged him. Finally, observing his lengthy tirades of fury, Mrs. Lintz understood what she had on her hands.

He stayed in his cage until the night someone forgot to padlock the cage door. A thunderstorm awakened Mrs. Lintz, she heard footsteps, then strong simian fingers touched her shoulders. She got out of bed, telling the gorilla they were going to get a banana. She maneuvered Buddy back into his cage. He never again was uncaged until after his death.

All Mrs. Lintz wanted then was to get Buddy a new home. She had Kroener contact John Ringling North. Although she asked \$25,000, she accepted a counter-offer, \$10,000 for Buddy, two chimpanzees and Kroener's contract. John Ringling North and his brother, Henry Ringling North, lost no time.

Professor R.M. Yerkes of Yale, a noted expert on great apes, was asked to inspect the animal. Except for the facial scarring, he said Buddy was in excellent condition.

The next was to give him a new, more impressive name. (Strangely enough, Henry Ringling North's nickname was Buddy — that was what he was called when my mother and I were introduced to him. He obviously liked animals because he coaxed a giraffe into lowering her head so I could touch her velvety nose.) John Ringling North rejected "Buddha" which Mrs. Lintz had sometimes called him because he would sit for hours in the obvious position. Buddy North remembered *Pantagruel* by Francois Rabelais, written in 1535. This satirical romance told the story of a gigantic king named *Gargantua*. *Gargantua* he became.

The first cage the circus gave *Gargantua* had been designed for a rhinoceros. It had huge bars eight inches apart. He easily reached between the bars. First he attempted to kill Roland Butler, chief of the press department of Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus. Orders were issued that no one go within reach of the cage, but an elephant handler stepped too close. Dressed to go out, he was wearing a necktie, which *Gargantua* grabbed and used as a towline. Fortunately the tie ripped and the handler slithered to safety. Ridiculously enough, while John Ringling North was demonstrating what had happened, he himself was grabbed. *Gargantua* bit him on the right wrist — all the way to the bone. Supposedly, on his way to get a tetanus shot, North stopped by the press department, calling out, "If I don't die, it's marvelous publicity!"

When, in relatively quick order, *Gargantua* tried to kill Dick Kroener, the only man who thought he could go near him by now, everyone knew something had to be done. Kroener's crippled arm was a silent reminder. A new cage was made.

(Kroener was injured a number of times, his arm having been permanently injured in that early encounter. He also suffered the loss of two teeth, a broken cheekbone, and ripped skin from his wrist. Still, he would not allow anyone to speak badly of his beloved *Gargantua*. He called him *Gargy*, and so I learned to call him, as a child. To this day, he is still *Gargy* to my mother and me.)

Gargantua's new cage was in itself a wonder for its time. It cost twenty thousand dollars, weighed eleven tons, and had an air conditioning system made by Carrier which kept the temperature at 76 degree fahrenheit with a constant relative humidity of fifty percent. The ceiling and front and rear walls were made of three-eighths inch steel plate. The floor was oak. The sides were made of one half inch plate glass with an air space of one half inch in between. (The idea of a glass-enclosed cage was not new, although hardly common. Earlier menageries had carried snakes in wagons with large, sometimes round, windows, through which patrons could safely view the reptiles without risking their slinking hither and yon. During the days of daily circus parades, such wagons would have a glamorous costumed girl seated within, wearing an impressive snake as a feather boa, which, of course, had originally been named for the similar-appearing reptile.)

The center compartment of *Gargantua's* cage was twenty feet long, seven feet wide and seven feet high. It allowed for an excellent view of *Gargantua* in the menagerie tent, one which my mother will never

forget.

One day back in the '40s she was waiting in the menagerie for my father Sabu. He was over by the elephants and, of course, talking and taking longer than expected. My mother idly stepped back and forth, then backwards, avoiding the milling patrons. My father came in, glanced in her direction and realized with horror that she had not noticed where she stood. He ran towards her as fast as he could, while she slowly turned ... and discovered herself face to face with Gargantua the Great. Forgetting for the moment the seven-eighths inch thick bars set only two inches apart between a double pane of shatter-proof glass, she ran. Sabu followed in quick pursuit. He used to enjoy telling people she ran between the legs of a giraffe on her wild escape, but that was a joke. My mother is now 83 years of age, but her memory is still great, and she will never forget her blue eye to black eye contact with Gargantua.



Gargantua had only been with Ringling Bros. for around a year when he was leased to the British circus Bertram Mills for a winter exhibition. The *Queen Mary's* hatches were not wide enough to accommodate the cage whose exterior measurements were 26 feet by 8. Of necessity his voyage to England was aboard a Dutch freighter.

From the day Gargantua removed his overalls for the last time, he never again walked upright. Sadly, the only teaching of Mrs. Lintz that remained with him was his desire to clean himself daily, even washing his armpits. He had become the frightening feature of the menagerie that fascinated even the most powerful of humankind ... including Joe Louis and Gene Tunney, both heavyweight champions viewing him as an opponent they could never face in a boxing ring.

Butchers hawked the booklet *The Strange Story of Gargantua*. A stark black & white photograph of his sneering face appeared on both covers, front and back, which conveniently showed to customers whichever way the butcher held it up for display. The white on red lettering drew attention, yet made the booklet appear totally different from Ringling Bros.' annual program book.

Written and copyrighted in 1940 by J. Bryan III, it sold for ten cents. Bryan also penned the sequel, *The Starne Stories of Gargantua and Toto* the following year.

In the 1940 booklet, Bryan presented Gargantua as big for his age, weighing 450 pounds and standing 5 feet 6 inches tall. He emphasized that though many of the ten gorillas in captivity at that time were larger, they were also older, pointing out that Gargantua could easily gain another 150 pounds by maturity. Gargy's reach was nine feet at that time, and if one looks at the plethora of pictures in the second book, which shows his arms to better advantage, it would be difficult to doubt.

One anonymous article scoffed at the many various weights given for Gargy, but gave his actual weight at the time of his death at 312 pounds, admitting that he had probably lost a few because of his terminal illness. I would say quite a few. Fred Bradna, the highly respected Equestrian Director for Ringling Bros., whose American career dated back to the Barnum & Bailey Circus, said in his book *The Big Top* that Gargantua weighed 550 pounds. My father knew Fred Bradna, and if the renowned Mr. Bradna said Gargy weighed 550, you can bet he believed Gargy weighed 550 when he was in full health.

Dr. "Doc" J.Y. Henderson, Circus Veterinarian extraordinaire, was a close enough family friend that I named my chocolate poodle Little J.Y. in his honor. Doc maintained maintained in private that Gargantua

weighed over 550, as well as in his own book, *Circus Doctor*.

Ringling Bros. Intended to breed Gargantua with the perfect mate.

In 1932, an American sportsman, E. Kenneth Hoyt, shot a big male gorilla in the Belgian Congo. His native bearers speared the five females in his harem for meat. While they were skinning the last female, an infant of about eight weeks was discovered clinging to the dead body. The baby, too small to cook and in danger of starving to death, was taken to Hoyt's wife who hired a native wet-nurse for the nine-pounder.

On the Hoyts' return to New York, by way of Paris, Toto, the young gorilla, caught pneumonia. Although the baby recovered, the doctor warned the Hoyts that Toto could not survive a cold weather winter. The Hoyts did not hesitate. They moved to Havana, Cuba, where Toto first had her own bedroom, then — as her weight reached 150 pounds — her own house.

After Mr. Hoyt's death in 1938, Toto became even more the pampered darling. She even had her own Christmas tree for her playhouse, to go with her dolls, her hammock, her other possessions. Although she naturally had a good temper, her Cuban trainer, Jose Tomas, treated her with such love and affection that they were the best of friends.

In 1940, a friend visited Mrs. Hoyt, but Toto became fearful that her mistress might be in danger. Toto shoved the woman so hard that she broke both of her wrists. Mrs. Hoyt became concerned that Toto might accidentally injure someone seriously. She sold Toto to Ringling Bros. Circus with the stipulation that Jose Tomas go with her as well as Principe, her pet cat. After Dick Kroener's death, Jose Tomas became Gargantua's keeper as well as Toto's.

Unfortunately, the breeding of Toto and Gargantua was hardly a success. February, 1941, was as close as they ever came. Her new cage, identical to his except for being three inches longer and possessing furniture, was placed end to end with his. The doors were opened so that only two rows of bars divided them. Gargantua picked up a piece of celery and offered it to Toto. She not only rejected it, she ranted and raved. Gargantua slunk into a corner. They never became friendly, much less affectionate.

Although some claim Gargantua was always exhibited in his glass-enclosed wagon, this really is not accurate. The Circus Fans Association, in the Dec-Jan 1938 issue of their publication *The White Tops*, reproduced a photograph captioned "Gargantua the Great, appearing with Bertram Mills Olympia Circus in London." The gorilla's huge left hand is clearly grasping a bar, while his other arm dangles between bars. Definitely, these bars are not nestled between two layers of shatterproof glass.

In Gargantua's early days with Ringling Bros. And Barnum & Bailey Circus, his glass-enclosed cage was drawn around the hippodrome track during the performance because he really was the star of the show. The glass-enclosed cage was certainly already in use by the time Toto arrived, although some might think otherwise if they read newspaper headlines from April, 1941. That was when Gargantua made himself even more famous as a cad.

Mrs. Hoyt was present in Madison Square Garden at the show's rehearsal. She particularly wanted to be with toto at this big moment in her life. The two gorilla cages were placed end to end, with only the *double row of bars* between them, one row in the end of each wagon. Mrs. Hoyt went inside Toto's cage to play with her former baby. Toto now weighed 430 pounds, although she stood only five feet two. (This is almost exactly my height. Somehow, this really makes me appreciate her massive body.)

At the end of Mrs. Hoyt's visit, she backed away as she was about to leave the wagon, not noticing that Gargantua was in his sleeping compartment nearby. Gargy reached through the double row of bars, yanked at her dress, and suddenly the millionairess was publically exposed in her underwear. She escaped unharmed from Toto's wagon, and a circus employee gave her his jacket to wear.

Whenever they wanted to move Gargantua from his main compartment to his sleeping quarters was desired, a little stuffed snake was dangled in front of him. The mighty gorilla was afraid of snakes and would immediately change rooms, even closing the door behind himself. This was how his quarters were cleaned, including changing his covers. Every night Gargy was given a brand new blanket. He would spend up to an hour flattening it, removing even a trace of a wrinkle. Eventually, when he was satisfied it was perfect, he would curl up on it and go to sleep. Upon awakening in the morning, he would methodically shred the

blanket. The circus bought his blankets by the gross.

Although Jose Tomas and Dr. Henderson began to suspect that something was wrong with Gargantua in June, 1949, it was actually the blanket ritual that made them realize his ailment was serious. Gargy became careless with smoothing out the wrinkles. He also stopped eating.

Doc and Jose knew they were losing him. They could only watch helplessly. Doc Henderson sincerely wanted to give Gargantua the good medical care he gave all of his other patients, but in 1949, veterinary options were fewer than they are now. Doc could not get near Gargantua. He literally could not touch him. Doc could never give him an anesthetic. No one could get close enough to jab Gargy with a syringe and accurately estimate the necessary proportion of fat to body weight. Even Doc Henderson's hugely successful squeeze cage, which safely held lions and tigers in position for medical treatment, could not be used — Gargantua was far stronger than the squeeze cage was or could be. And this was why he died.

Only after Gargy was dead were they able to confirm the cause of death. His autopsy at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore disclosed bilateral lobar pneumonia, complicated by a kidney disorder and four rotten wisdom teeth, which was clearly the reason he had virtually stopped eating and had obviously lost considerable weight. One need only compare the autopsy picture with older photos to see the size variance.

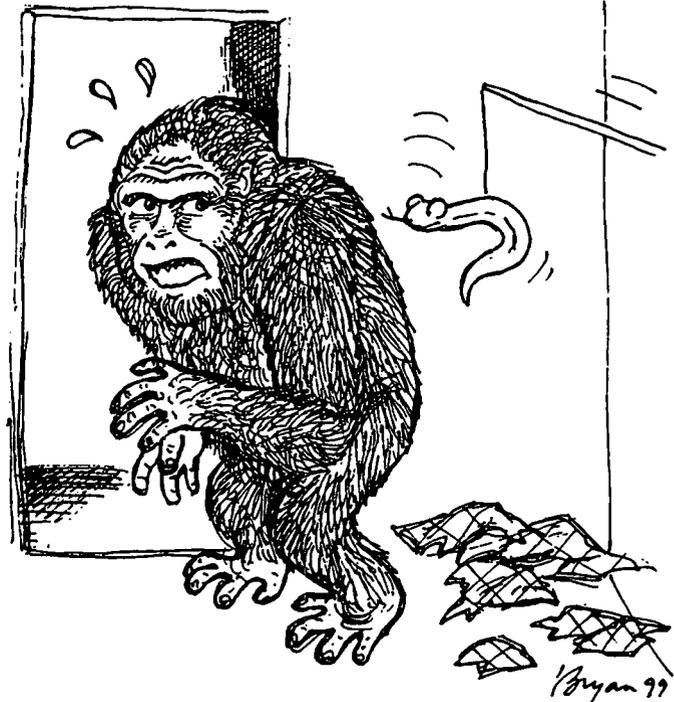
After Gargantua died, M'Toto, as she was sometimes called, continued to live in her large cage. The circus obtained two gorilla babies, Gargantua the Second and Mlle. Toto, both relatively small, to live with her.

Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus historically played New York and Boston in their respective Gardens, then the remainder of the season under canvas in the classic circus Big Top. When the Ringling Big Top folded for the last time in 1956, their traveling menagerie ceased to exist.

The exhibit animals appeared only in Madison Square Garden, the remainder of the year spent in a New Jersey kiddie zoo. When the latest Madison Square Garden was built atop Penn Station there was inadequate space to display a full old-time menagerie. I remember seeing a giraffe there — I think her name was Ingrid. But the huge Ringling Bros. menagerie had become a memory.

My mother and I saw one of the gorilla cages once at the Royal American Shows at the Florida State Fair. I don't remember who was living in it. I do remember, though, seeing a doting Jose Tomas giving Toto her very own untrimmed Christmas tree to play with at the old Ringling Winter Quarters in Sarasota. Years after Gargantua's death, Jose said Toto still missed the mighty gorilla. Although the general consensus has been that the acid thrown into Buddy's face was the tragic catalyst which turned him into the vicious Gargantua, I have a problem with that explanation. If that were so, how was it that Buddy spent all that good, gentle time with Mrs. Lintz? He displayed no personality change until after he accidentally killed the kitten. Was it the death of that animal at his growing hands that triggered the change, or was it the replacement of love with fear that Mrs. Lintz gave him? Was it the abrupt cessation of pampering and the loss of her friendship? How would *you* react if your mother dropped you like a hot potato?

Gargantua the Great was probably unique. Gorillas are more visible now than when he was touring. Wildlife documentaries and zoos are commonplace. However, only Gargantua had the face that struck fear in the heart of virtually anyone who saw him. Yet although Gargy died November 25, 1949, fifty years ago, he is still remembered fondly by some of us.



A SECOND EDITORIAL

As Allie Copeland hinted at the beginning of this issue, the most atrocious result of Columbine has been the evisceration of the civil rights of American adolescents, and there has been no more obscene example of this trend than the case of Chris Beamon in Denton, Texas.

Chris is a 13-year-old 7th-grader who was assigned to write a scary Halloween story for a class. His efforts were rewarded with a high grade — and five days in jail. Associated Press ran his essay, and here 'tis.

Spelling like that really is scary, but in all seriousness ... *prison?*

Fantasy filled with drugs, gunfire

Text of Halloween essay

My flashlight went out and I heard someone right behind me and I turned in a very slowly scared way and boom the lights came on and the door bell rang. I walked very slowly and creepy and turned the knob ding dong the door bell went again. I said just a minute and I will be right there and I looked through the little hole in the door and Robin said Boo. I told him to come in and have a seat and we both wated and wated for Ismael because he was supposed to bring the ounce so we could get high but half an hour later still no Ismael so I got the idea of freeon and we grabbed a bag and a knife and ran out back to the airconditionar. We through the bag over the nstle and covered it tightly and used the knife to press the volv. We started

to hear something after we got high so we ditched everything we quickly run to the door to see who it was and there wasn't anybody there ther we heard someone at the back door to see who it was I thought it was a crook so I busted out with a 12 guage and Ismael busted out with 9 mm and we step off the porch and this bloody body droped down in front of us and scared us half to death and aboqt 20 kids started cracking up and (vulgar-ity) me off so I shot Matt, Jake, and Ben started laughing so hard that I accsedently shot Mrs. Henry. Ismael saw somebody steeling antifreeze so Ismael shot over ther near the aircondonar and hit somebody (indecipher-able word) also scattered out and went home and my mom drove up and everything was back to normal but they didn't have any heads.

In all true seriousness, what happened to Beamon is a textbook study in Mob Rule. Either classmates' parents or the teacher involved — stories conflict — read Chris' tale and, Columbine in mind, reported him to authorities, authorities which panicked and had the kid arrested. A juvenile court judge picked up the panic and, basing her order on Beamon's disciplinary record, had him arrested, handcuffed, and jailed for five days. Defense lawyers, I am proud to say, demanded and got his release.

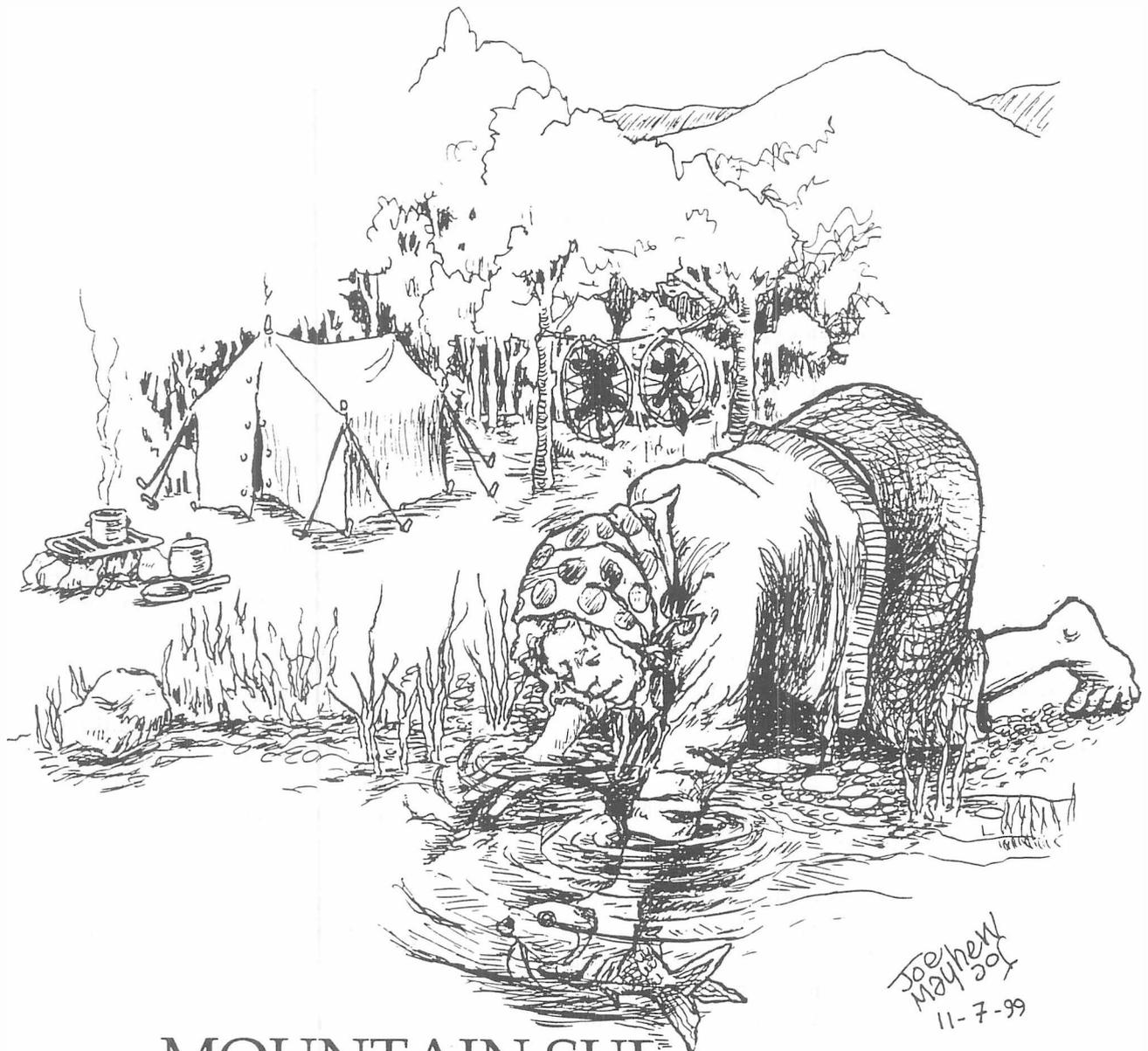
The utter stupidity of the public officials involved in this horror defies description. Let's leave the piddling concerns of the First Amendment — quoted, again proudly, *supra* — out of it. Alas, kids are not entitled to full protection of their rights in a school setting. But simple common sense shows the foolishness of the city's actions.

What lesson did this school district offer here? Beamon himself said it best on Today: "Watch what you say." In short, hide your feelings. Be secret. Don't let anyone know what you're really thinking. Don't express your darkness and expiate it in the light. Hold it close — and let it grow.

The violent fantasies he voiced need to be addressed -- but of course, with counseling, not punishment. The public officials — school staff, judge, prosecutors, police -- who treated the kid in this fashion should be *torn* out of office. Frightened people in positions of responsibility are dangerous enough, but frightened, *stupid* people are a menace to every hope and promise western civilization wants to represent. I'm astonished such lummoxes are allowed to graduate from an American school district, let alone run one.

I wrote mayhem-packed stories starring my classmates when I was Chris' age, too — violence and grossness are about the only kind of catharsis adolescents appreciate. Of course, in my masterpieces all the real people, even the jerks, were good guys. (I did give the bullies tough-guy roles as cops.) The boy who wrote this piece obviously has some real problems. But that only proves that the class assignment and his performance were completely worthwhile. Beamon released powerful inner demons in his Halloween essay, bringing disturbing resentments and fears into the open. Far better to expiate such feelings through writing than through gunfire.

Denton, Texas has taught Chris Beamon, and whoever else was listening, just the opposite.



MOUNTAIN SUE by *Susan R. Higgins*

When my husband slapped our three year old son off his chair for making a mess while eating his dinner, I decided it was time to leave him.

I packed all I could and walked out with my child in tow. I stayed at friends' homes and friends of friends, and people I really hardly even knew.

It was a tense few months while I waited for Social Services to get the paper work together for us to get some food stamps. But time passed and we were approved for the most minimum amount, which was below the lowest standards considered for poverty.

I was able to find a house in which I could rent a room for far cheaper than staying at any friends of friends. The room was a very tiny 6x4 space and into it I squeezed my son, and all of our belongings.

I was now able to afford real food for myself and my son. Healthy food too. Vegetables, fruit, beans, meat and potatoes. We ate a lot of vegetables and dried beans because they were cheap, but at least we were able to afford some non-food items now.

It seemed that everyone in the house was a vegetarian. at least that's what each and every one of them told me. There were ten rooms in the house, and they were overflowing with people. There were at least thirty folks living in this house. Some of them crammed into the rooms, the rest slept on the floors, chairs, sofas and each other.

It seemed that once again I was different than everyone else around me. When I was very young, just a toddler, I was different. While I was growing up, and especially in High School, I was different. My mom always said that I marched to a different drummer than everyone else. I guess I did, and I'm doing it again. But I'll always stay true to who I am.

It wasn't easy growing up being different than others. I was always picked on, made fun of or even unaccepted by all of my peers. I felt lonely, isolated and depressed. I was determined through it all to still be who I was inside. A kind person who never made fun of someone else because they looked, acted or were different than myself.

Somehow I managed to get through my childhood and teen age years. Now I was twenty-one and still on the outside, looking in. I was never going to change. I was never going to be like one of them. It was just too cruel to be like the kind of people who made you feel like an outcast, when you were just different than them. People changed, I thought, but they never seemed to. I knew I wasn't and people were just going to have to accept me for the way I was. If they didn't, they would never know what a nice person I really was inside, and that's a shame.

I struggled with the vegetarians in the house and others who wanted me to join in their silly games. Finally they got the picture that I wasn't like them and left me alone. One person told me that I was too different to fit in and that if I didn't change, I'd go on to live a very sad and lonely life. I almost believed her. She was right in a way, but I wouldn't sell my soul to be anything like her or her unaccepting friends.

One cold winter night, after a snowfall and just before a great blizzard, I walked eight miles into town to get some groceries and other supplies. I had gotten a ride back with a friend who owned a Land Rover, which was able to cut through the snow of the yet unploughed road. If I had to walk home, it would have taken me at least eight hours to trudge through the snow. When I returned, I was startled to smell the aroma of cooking meat filling the house with its distinctive odor. I heard voices and so entered the kitchen.

When what to my wondering eyes should appear, but many vegetarians standing over the stove. They were all hunkered over the cooking stew, and taking turns tasting it too. Others stood guard with forks and spoons. But no one was keeping an eye out for me.

Apparently these so-called vegetarians didn't expect me back so soon. Shocked, wild-eyed expressions were the give-away on that factor. As well as stuttering and mumbling voices of excuse. I'm quite sure that I startled and scared the be-jeebers out of them.

"Oh, how nice," I said. "You cooked my dinner for me."

The pretend vegetarians stopped in their tracks. They turned and stared at me, their mouths dropped open.

"Ah ... we ... well ... We thought it was *Bobby's* stew meat. Sorry."

"I thought you were all vegetarians. At least that's what you told me. And if that's the case ..."

I took the stew from the stove and poured it into a bowl.

"I'll just enjoy my meat and save you vegetarians from the eating of dead flesh."

No one objected as I took my meal and went upstairs. As I left the kitchen, I could feel hungry eyes stare at the back of my neck. What should I care. Vegetarians don't eat meat.

After that, I kept my frozen meat on a roof outside my upstairs window. I made a snow igloo and put my meat inside it. The meat kept all winter, as well as other frozen foods that I cared to eat. I also managed to make up a locking device so that no one could get into my room.

As soon as spring arrived, I borrowed a tent. With permission from the landowner, I moved into the tent about a quarter of a mile up the mountain behind the landlord's house.

I leveled a section of the ground, removed pine cones, rocks and twigs, then set up the 10x16 tent. It was a mansion in size compared to the room I had been staying in, and it had a floor and a locking device for the zipper door. My son and I were in heaven.

Within weeks I was set up nice and cozy. I had a Coleman stove, lantern and heater, as well as two thirty degree below zero sleeping bags. These were my emergency devices and I only used them when it was too cold, or stormy out. The lantern made it easier to read or write in the evenings and

soothed my son's worries about the dark.

Outside I had built a really nice stone fireplace and used an old oven rack to place my pots and pans on while I cooked. It was very useful. I even built a lean-to over it to keep out the rain on some of the less stormy days.

With my trusty-rusty 410. shotgun, I was able to have quite a variety of fresh meat. Squirrel, rabbit, muskrat, raccoon, grouse, pheasant and deer. Nothing in the world tastes as good as fresh meat. Nothing! My son and I sure didn't starve. We ate good. Real good.

I also had quite a selection of wild herbs and spices. Wild dill, rosemary, thyme, basil, peppermint and mustard. I also had a selection of fresh wild berries, wild scallions and onions, tree fungus called witch's butter, parsnips, dandelion greens, wild choke berries, crab apples and mushrooms.

Oh, let's not forget the fish. About a half mile away was the Espous Creek. There were rainbow, speckled and brown trout. There was also bluegill, perch, bass, crayfish, pike and a host of all sorts of other edible fish. Since I didn't have money for a fishing pole and netting fish was illegal, I had to catch them by hand. Needless to say, I think my quarter Cree Indian blood came in handy. I was able to not only catch fish, but I did so every day and ate fish every morning.

Fish with eggs for breakfast. Fried squirrel for lunch and roasted rabbit with mushrooms, wild onions and herbs for dinner. Of course, I didn't eat this everyday. I had canned goods to replace most of the meals. Hunting was good, but not that good. Besides, I didn't want to hunt out all the game close by. It was a lot easier to travel short distances with a small child than it was to go longer distances.

My son helped me out a lot, and together we made a good place to live for the summer. He helped me dig holes for toilets and gather firewood, berries and mushrooms. He also helped keep the tent and surrounding area clean.

I didn't have much money, so I tanned the hides of the animals I shot for our meals. About a mile down the road was a local tavern, where I sold them or traded them for more ammo or other supplies that I needed. When I discovered that I could get more money for the hides if I made things out of them, I set up making purses, vests and other items that sold quite well at boutiques and shops in Kingston and Saugerties. I was then able to buy flour, salt, sugar, baking powder and maple syrup. This made breakfast more interesting. I was now able to make flapjacks and other flat breads to go with our meals.

Bathing was another thing. I'd have to go down late in the evening so as no one would see us. If they did, I'd be arrested for indecent exposure. My son and I used the sand to scrub our bodies. Using too much nice-smelling soap attracted biting insects, so we avoided this like a plague. After all, the forest surrounding our tent home was full of enough insects to devour us to a point that our bodies would never be found.

People were the biggest problem out in the woods. Not the wild animals like mountains lions, lynx or bears. Not even the poisonous snakes. It was people that held the most threat against us. They'd do as they pleased and not care. Animals only did what they did to live and protect themselves or their young.

So, when uninvited guests arrived, I got out my shotgun. They'd say, "Hi, you OK up here alone?" I'd



say, "I'm fine, will be better when you leave. You're chasing all my game away, unless *you* got some meat on your bones."

Then they would leave rather quickly, stumbling over rocks and roots, nearly falling down as they ran down the mountainside. Funny how that was. Anyone who ever came to visit, always seemed to run away with this wild look in their eyes. Oh, well.

It wasn't easy living like this with a child. I had to be strong. I had to be brave. I had to do it alone. There was no one to help me and no help could be found anywhere I looked. Lord, I tried and looked everywhere too. Even the welfare program said they couldn't help unless I moved into town. How could I do that? I wasn't working. I had no other place I could go. Who would watch my child? Poppa or Momma Bear? I don't think so.

I told the welfare office that I had a child. They still told me that they couldn't help me. They also said that if I continued endangering my child's safety, that they would take him away. It was a Catch-22 situation here and I was losing.

After nine months of living in the woods, I was able to save enough money to move into town. I earned it by selling the items I made of animal hides and whistles carved out of tree branches. I also was able to make some wreaths woven out of wild grape vines. Those sold really well. Luckily for me, the welfare office couldn't find my tent and so didn't take my son away. I was able eventually to get a job and earn my keep. I did miss the woods, but it was a better life for my son.

I now had a one bedroom apartment, a kitchen / living room combo and a real flushing toilet! A shower with a tub and best of all, Tannersville creek was just twenty yards away. Teeming with fresh fish, ready to be caught by hand and eaten when things were tight. Yes, it was heaven. Noisier, not as safe as the woods, but it was a place where my son could grow up with other children nearby.

It's been some twenty-five years since then and I don't regret a single moment I spent out in the woods. I learned a lot about myself and learned to accept who I was no matter what anyone else thought of me. I had matured faster in that regard than those who had treated me as an outcast. They were the ones who were suffering for the way they had been and I felt sorry for them. They would never know how to love themselves or to forgive themselves for how they acted. That was the past. Let it go and move on with your life. Be true to who you are and you'll never be alone. If it worked for me, it can work for anyone.

IIIQIIIx TYTYxIII

FOR CHALLENGER #11 ... I already have two articles about court experiences on hand, so the legal system shall serve as one of my themes for my spring issue. I'm also promised an article about one family's Y2K preparations, so here's another idea for **Chall #11** — where you were and what you did for the big moment on 12-31-99/1-1-00, and what your predictions are for changes in politics, medicine, technology, and especially culture — what humans think it means to be human — for the new year, the new decade, the new century, the new millennium. If these suggestions strike you as hackneyed or boring, write whatever you damn well please. I hope to publish in April or May.

As usual, I need your recommendations for Hugo nominations, having read little SF this year. Stanley Robinson's *The Martians* has provided two or three deserving nominees for the short fiction categories, but I've opened nary an SF *novel* in '99. Lay'em on me. Best Dramatic Presentation should see superb fantasies like *The Sixth Sense* and perhaps even *The Blair Witch Project* tapped, but who am I kidding? We all know what will take home *that* Hugo. In the other contests, especially the fan categories, I urge everyone to *work* on their ballots, to name new and unheralded nominees, in short, to *spread the wealth*. Only in the fan artist listing do fans seem to be open to new names, and that's simply not right. GHLIII

CALLIE

Robert Whitaker Sirignano

I had a friend who had an odd roommate.

Allison needed someone to help her keep her expenses down. She had been bumping from job to job, her career choice having been sidelined to keep her sanity (she had been a teacher at an inner-city school). A job with Avon turned into a nightmare and dwindled her savings account. She asked some of her friends and friends of her friends, and she got two roommates.

One was father-supported and read books all day while trying to find out what she wanted out of life. The other was a pallid, spooky college girl with no facial expression, skin like bread dough, thick glasses and long straight blonde hair. Her name was Callie.

She dressed as a druid, full time, attending her classes in garb and saying things like "Odin wouldn't like that" under her breath. She was not in the apartment much. She stowed her stuff, books and gear. Set off one corner with plastic milk containers, cinder blocks, boxes filled with books and knives, sets of D&D games, and bags full of clothes. The apartment was interestingly cluttered.

Someone noticed that she had a number of scars on her arms. She said that she'd made them, offering her blood as ritualistic offerings before an exam.

One day she brought home a bird in a cage. It was not a domestic bird. It was a wild starling.

About a week later it was dead.

Callie obtained a bat and put it in the bird cage.

Within the week the bat died.

She got a hamster and put it in the cage. She had not bothered to even wash the cage since the starling's death. The hamster died. She didn't know when it died, assumed it was alive somewhere in the strips of balled-up paper it had used to make a nest. Allison knew it was dead because it had started to rot and smell. The flies were another indicator.

In roommate protocol it is difficult and unwise to tamper with someone else's belongings even if it is a decaying maggot-infested rodent. Allison wrote a note: "Remove the hamster. It died" and placed it on Callie's pillow. The cage vanished.

Somewhere Callie got a dog and tied it up in the kitchen. The dog did live longer than a week, but got out of hand by gnawing on the frames of the cabinets and the kitchen table. After ingesting too many splinters and chips of wood, it died.

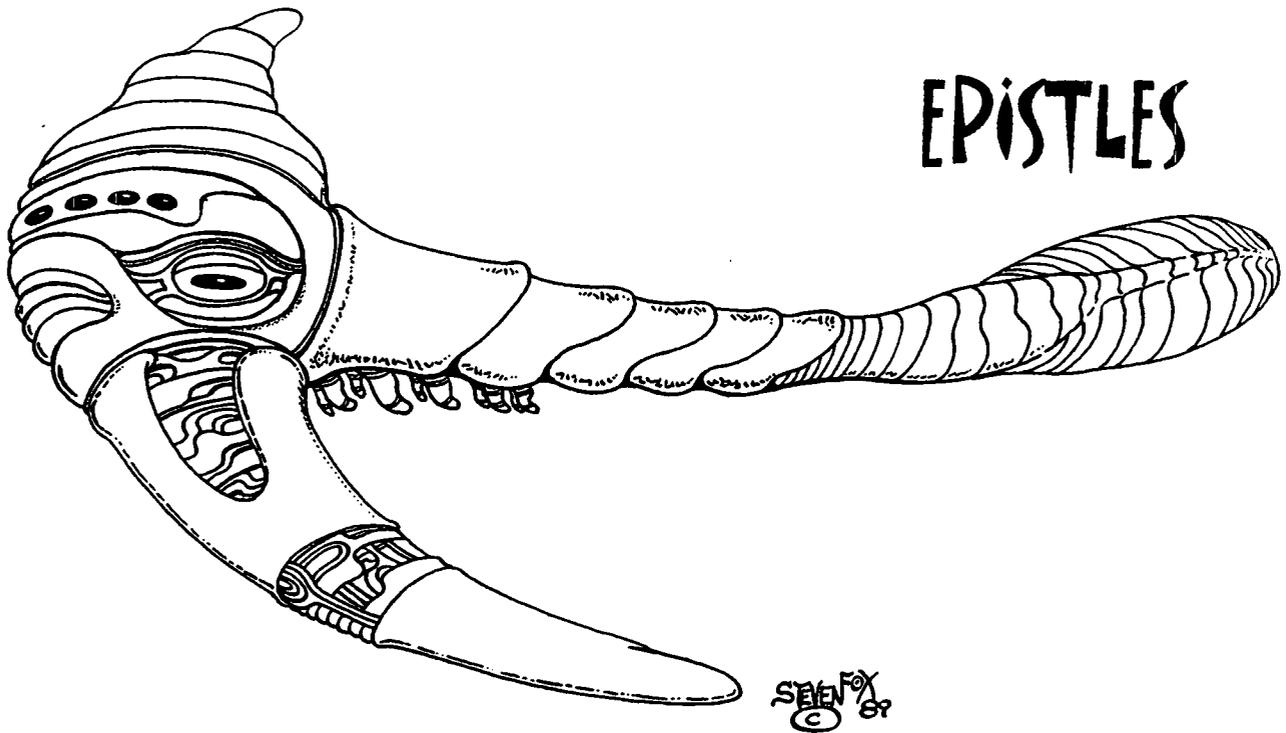
A cat was given to her and after two weeks leapt to freedom from the third floor's apartment's open balcony. People in the know claimed it committed suicide.

Allison didn't know what to make of this streak of perversity/bad luck. She claimed it wasn't her business to order anyone not to have a pet. She herself had two cats, both of which went into hiding after Callie moved in. Once in a while you could see the eyes of the two under the bed or behind the couch. They ate and used the litterbox and stayed out of sight.

One day Allison came home from an unsuccessful job hunt and found a large pot on the stove. It was boiling. "Smells good," said Allison. "What is it?" Callie opened up the pot and pulled out a *dog's head*. She said blandly, "I found it on the road this morning. Isn't it beautiful? I want the skull."

Within 24 hours, Allison had packed up everything and left Delaware and moved back in with her parents in upper New York State.

CHALLENGER 10



(EPISTLES)

Fred Chappell
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Chall 9 your best so far -- especially your "On the Job" pieces. I hope you'll make a book of these one of these first days.

I thought that some of your readers might like to know of the death of Wilkie Conner, especially since so many of them have written to you about Lynn Hickman.

The two were always close; so close, in fact, that I am persuaded that Lynn's death contributed to Wilkie's demise. Of course, he was already in declining health, well into his seventies, and, on the basis of his correspondence with me, I think he'd been plagued with health problems for a good long while.

But after Lynn's death his letters showed an immediate and precipitate deterioration. Depression overcame him. Before this point, his letters were clear though rambling, cheerfully chatty. Afterward, they were disjointed, abrupt, brief. He would recount again and again one or two anecdotes about Lynn and himself at one convention or another, usually the last Pulpcon held in Asheville, NC. Sometimes he would write only to say that he had nothing to say.

He wanted desperately to write professionally. He dreamed of seeing his name in, or on, a book. He read almost incessantly in the how-to journals like **Writers Digest** and must have submitted over the years some scores of stories -- westerns, crime, SF -- to the pulps. His success was limited: a regular column on gospel music in the local paper, some scattered articles in the minor writing trade journals, a fair amount of fanzine publication, especially during the 1950s.

His authorial hero was Arthur J. Burks and one of his most vivid memories of World War II was marching the parade ground with Colonel Burks in the reviewing stand. He was an old friend of Marion Z. Bradley, from her **Mezrab** days, I believe, and followed her career with an interest so intense it bordered on jealousy.

Yet there was little of that in his nature. He felt too defeated, coming from a background of rural poverty and spending his adult life, and much of his youth, on the line in the textile mills in Gastonia. He blamed his faulty education for his lack of writing success, but I'm not sure that is accurate. I tried to collaborate with him on stories, but in order to make them salable would have had to re-create them top-to-bottom. That would have hurt his pride even more.

He was a diffident, evasive, almost unnoticeable person, particularly when in the company of Lynn. But he enjoyed the company of fans, the promise and atmosphere of the pulps, the harmless hijinks of his friend. A gentle presence, one that I shall miss, is gone from the world.

I thought folks would like to know.

Joe Mayhew, FN
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Challenger No. 9 was a delight. I particularly enjoyed the illos Bryan Norris did for your "On the Job" article and Charlie Williams' stuff. My favorite CW is the panty-raiders on page 27. In fact you usually have a superior mix, and I am honored to be among your illustrators.

Curt Phillips' article about Civil War fandom touches my own experience. The first question I was asked by my classmates when I entered Junior High was, "Are you a Yank or a Reb?" It seemed to be the defining issue. But I couldn't answer it easily.

Both my parents were born in West Virginia. Dad's people came down after the War of 1812 to help General Putnam found the first U.S. town west of the Ohio, Marietta. They left Martha's Vineyard (off the coast of Massachusetts) and became Whigs., then Republicans. Several of his relatives fought for the Union.

Mom's father came from an old Virginia family which had crossed over the mountains from East Virginia sometime after the Revolution, held slaves, were active in the Democratic party, and fought for the Confederacy.

But Mom's mother was from a family of Quakers who had participated in the Underground Railroad. So my family history didn't give me either Yank or Reb status.

Your Andersonville article brought to mind my great grandfather's brothers who were captured at the Battle of Manassas (Bull Run) and put into Libby Prison in Richmond, I presume as traitors. They were Virginians fighting for the Union. Both survived long enough to come home and die. It had been a hellish place, particularly during the siege, when the people of Richmond didn't have anything either. My great grandfather was 15 when the recruiting train came to Parkersburg, Virginia, and he got on with his older brothers, but his sister Becky pulled him off the train by the ear, so I'm here to tell you about it.

Like many Virginians (including Robert E. Lee) Mom's family had freed their slaves before the war. Their war was essentially against colonialism, as it had

been back in 1776. The North was using the Federation to take economic control of the South, among other things. The Yankees seemed a lot like Tories.

So what could I say, when asked? Saying "Gee, guys, I thought it was over" only got me grief. As I had kin on both sides of the Battle of Gettysburg, I'd say so, and some would just shrug, but it was like being a Jew in Northern Ireland, "Fine, but are you a Catholic Jew or a Protestant Jew?" History wasn't involved. It was just proto-gang rhetoric. Some of the kids who made a lot about it were from families who had become Americans after the Civil War. It was all about belonging, not history.

I was born in Maryland, which was a Southern state before the war. But it was kidnaped by Union troops and has become, more or less, a Northern State. That too, adds to the ambiguity.

Fortunately Civil War buffs don't want to hash it over again, they just want to reenact the battles as social theater.

Now, when it comes to fandom, I guess I'm part of the fannish network which extends up well past Boston and south to Richmond. Lots of us go to each other's cons, where we rarely see many Southern fen. They travel north, but tend to go to the mid-west instead of to the east. (Thus, the worldcon rotation system doesn't reflect fannish reality, but, what the heck, what we're about is fiction.)

Is it any easier in the Deep South?

Not since I found out that John Lillian, my great-grandfather, came from Indiana. We know nothing of his father or grandfather, and it could well be ...

Hey. I was born in California.

IS YOUR 20 MM
CANON AN OERLIKON

?



Greg Benford
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'Twas great fun, that dinner. [Greg refers to a wonderful summer evening he, his lady, and I spent here in Nawlins this year. See my "Visitors and I'isited" section elsewhere.] I'm endlessly fascinated by your professional life, and the moral issues you confront -- so keep the stories coming. You should eventually make a book on this foundation, particularly the changes it implies we should make in a system that seems often both harsh and wasteful.

I still disagree about the gladiator model of lawyering, wherein the taxpayer pays both sides to fight at all costs (ours) for people whom all largely know to be guilty. Better spend the money on rehab, if it works, than making lawyers well off.

An oddity of the Colorado shootout is that nobody in the foaming-at-the-mouth media circus supposed that the two kids *were insane*. Not representative of anything, that is, but pathology. Not typical. Even the crazy had a tough time in their teens ...

"Watching Paint Dry" was meaty and artful -- hard to do, indeed. The tradeoffs in technology shape our world more than most know. For example, the 747 optimizes many factors, so that jets smaller and larger would cost much more in seat/mile per \$. Supersonic travel is several times more expensive, and suborbital will be even more so. The world optimizes for us, and only the engineers have an innate experience of how heavy the hand of reality is. Politicians don't perceive this at all, just think spending more money and shouting will do the trick. (Now you know I'm a true son of John W. Campbell. In fact, I mentioned this to his widow, who came to Fairhope Alabama to retire. I was quite surprised to be introduced to her by my parents at a cocktail party...)

Good pieces by you on Berkeley & Eve Ackerman -- her piece should've been titled "Nice Tits, the Doctor Said."

I like the old Erg covers inserted -- fun with fandom's past. Terry Jeeves is about 50 miles north of where I sit in Cambridge typing this, & we've never met.

Richard Dengrove
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We can understand Curt Phillips' predicament. He is a son of the South and the Civil War is in his veins; it's part of his tradition. That is why he is into **Civil War re-enactment**. We are the sons of the future and the future is in our veins. That is why we are science fiction fans.

The Post Office has something else in its veins; I hate to say what it is. A social worker friend who

counsels postal workers would have confirmed in spades Robert Whitaker Sirignano's "Sick Time". She told me the Mail Room was a "Male" Room, everyone on up trying to prove their assertiveness. Ultimately, you come to the head honchos and their rather vicious adversary relationship with postal workers and unions. Even, as Robert shows us, in matters of life and death.

There are other adversary relationships, like among the **Berkeley fraternities**. And apparently between them and the rest of humanity. I am sorry, I cannot sympathize, even with Cloyne Court. Even though they were deprived of their extra summer break. That was no excuse for barbaric behavior, like water fights, grease in driveways, mass panty raids. So much for when we were young people's age. So much for the year 1956.

I hope not all the frats are that way. A friend of mine in college made up the phrase "Get Greeked." It meant nothing. But the behavior Dan Eisenstein reported threatens to give it meaning.

Certainly the frats were not boring. Not like watching paint dry. Of course, Gary Robe, who knows his paint, finds that quite interesting. A lot of things we consider boring may be quite interesting when we observe them informed. My wife Heidi is quite interested in horses jumping fences, dressage. And if she is there to explain things, it can interest me too. Also, I found that when you are informed about the issues, Congressional hearings can be interesting ... Those old frauds!

Another thing that has interested me is **free will**. I am sure that Brian Bibb may have had reasons for killing his wife and kids, e.g., his perfectionism -- maybe. The idea behind free will is not that we don't have reasons. It's that we can overcome them. Even if the reason is Dimetapp, that would not necessarily be insurmountable.

I have some comments on the comments on my article on **Hamlet's Ghost**. The commenters may not have been wrong in interpreting Hamlet's ghost as a ghost rather than a demon, i.e., the Catholic ghost rather than the Protestant ghost. Every era interprets Hamlet in its own way. Just as the African tribesmen Darrell Schweitzer mentioned.

On the other hand, I disagree if commenters were saying an Elizabethan audience would not have immediately identified the "ghost" as a demon. There is too much evidence. Certainly they would not have interpreted the ghost as The Holy Ghost, as Gene Stewart wonders. In fact, they would not have called Hamlet's ghost a ghost at all but a demon. Because the term, "Protestant Ghost" in the article confused people, I decided to call it a demon here. The name Elizabethans would have given it.

There is an additional reason why Shakespeare's ghost was a demon. While Harry Warner, Jr. may or may not have been right that Shakespeare disbelieved in ghosts and demons, he is right that the demon as ghost was a convention of Elizabethan drama.

Darrell Schweitzer and Gene Stewart also speculate that the Catholic ghost was adapted from the ancient Roman, pagan ghost, the daimon or daemon. All the authorities would claim is that it was a folk ghost. The ancient Roman ghost took a lot of revenge. The Catholic ghosts of Shakespeare's era refrained from that, lest they look too much like demons.

When did the ghosts of ancient times, the daimons, become demons, the Devil's soldiers? The situation is complex. It is true the 16th Century Protestants were the first to preach to the masses that ghosts were demons. But Saint Augustine, in the third or fourth century, turned the daimons into demons in his *City of God*.

Gene wonders how Marley's ghost could be a Catholic ghost; Charles Dickens was not Catholic. As I intimated, the distinction between Catholic ghost and Protestant ghost, i.e. demon, waned after 1660. After that, a good Anglican could believe in a ghost like the Catholic ghost. By Dickens' time, the Catholic ghost and the Protestant demon ghost had become hopelessly muddled.

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Challenger #9 is excellent, as usual. Besides, it is a pleasure to see a large, thick, reads-the-stuff zine in which the interesting LOCs are not followed by right-wing screeds.

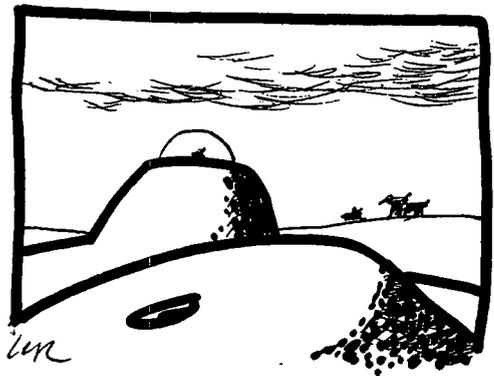
I enjoyed your zine reviews, especially your kind words about my own work, but I will point out that *For the Clerisy* was originally about Baltic (Latvian), not Balkan, matters.

One of them furriner-type places.

I join David Drake in lamenting the move away from the shorter forms in SF. Actually, you could see it as a general and continuing trend in the field: In the '30s and '40s, there were mostly short stories, with the novels being either fix-ups or serials. Then in the '50s, more and more work was originally done as novels, sometimes without cliffhangers 1/3 and 2/3 of the way through. In the '60s the novels started getting longer, and we began to get trilogies. Then Piers Anthony made his lasting contribution to the field: the discovery that a trilogy needn't stop at three books. Thus to the series and the megaseries, with the two big franchises,

Star Trek and *Star Wars*, joined by individual epics like Asimov's *Foundation/Robots/whatever* he left out (which is now itself being franchised to other writers) and David Brin's *Uplift* universe. This isn't entirely a bad thing: it allows deeper exploration of ideas, and I wouldn't want someone like Vernor Vinge to have to start anew with each book and not use any of his old ideas. But it would be nice if there were more new short fiction, and more markets for it. As it is, there are about half a dozen short-SF venues, and two of them -- a leading prozine and the biggest Year's Best anthology -- are run by the same person.

The junkies won't tell you what they like about junk? Basically, it's two things: feeling better and not feeling at all. Lenny Bruce said the heroin rush is "like kissing God." Obviously, one cannot live in that state all the time, but the thought of getting through the more tedious and unpleasant aspects of life unburdened by



feelings seems more plausible. There are limits there, too, and some reach those and persevere until they can't use the stuff at all. A smaller subset realize that they've hit that point and quit entirely, as I did over six years ago. Junk is easy to explain. What I still don't understand is cigarette smoking, even though I used to do that too.

Joseph Major: I loved "Riders of the Purple Wage" when I first read it in *Dangerous Visions*, and I still think of it as a Road Not Taken. When *Stand on Zanzibar* was published shortly thereafter, I hoped Farmer would expand "Riders" into an even better work of the same sort, with even more social and stylistic innovation. But at least in this universe, he wrote a couple of little stories in the same milieu and then called it quits.

As everyone knows, Farmer's early work was revolutionary in its sexual themes, and in "Riders" gave those themes revolutionary stylistic treatment. It's by far the most interesting and successful story of the New Wave. His career afterwards ... well, I love Burroughs and admired A Feast Unknown, but

found Lord Tyger revolting and the Riverworld series unreadable.

Gene Stewart: Why are most genre writers incapable of writing convincing and humane scenes of love and sex and humanity? Well, if you remove the word "genre," the question remains.

Gene also says that media SF and print SF are worlds apart and getting further apart all the time. I doubt that. More and more print SF is media SF, translated to the page.

Please note the stamp on this letter, if you have not already done so. Rather than get all pissed off about the Ayn Rand stamp, as Chris Barkley did, I would rather savor the irony of her being honored by a government-protected monopoly like the Postal Service, which is very much the sort of thing her political philosophy wanted to remove from the world. (Rand herself was a stamp collector. I don't know if anyone brought this contradiction to her attention, but if so, I am sure that she rationalized it at great length.) I am,



however, very much in agreement with Chris in wanting to see real SF writers and editors on stamps, and it could happen. It may not seem likely now, but when I was a teenager listening to that "jungle music for juvenile delinquents," I never expected to see Elvis on U.S. stamps, let alone Clyde McPhatter and Muddy Waters.

I flash on the reporter at St. Louiscon in 1969 who tried to sound knowledgeable about science fiction, so kept mentioning Rod Serling. (I gave him an E for Effort.) Betcha the stamp series idea would sell better if a well-known quasi-genre writer like Serling was included.

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Life is full of dilemmas: a new **Challenger** and a new **Banana Wings** arrive on the same day -- which

to read first?

I tend, for some reason, to read the letter column first in a zine. In this case I detect a pattern. Your use of "harlequin" from the Nolacon prompts half a dozen readers to say, almost in the same words, how much they enjoyed the New Orleans Worldcon. Perhaps it really is time for New Orleans fandom to consider seriously another bid. Given the attractions of your city, even a moderately higher level of organization could result in a memorable event.

I'll just pretend you didn't say that.

Also from the lettercol, I loved Darrell Schweitzer's anecdote about the Africans explaining Hamlet. If it's not a true story, it ought to be.

My fannish "family" continues to grow exponentially. Alex Slate and I have joked about being secret twins because of the similarity of our zines; recently I've wondered if Aussie fan Karen Johnson is not another long-lost cousin; now you claim my **Twink** as a sibling to **Challenger**! A younger and lesser sibling, to be sure, but I'll take any compliment I can get.

Twink is neither younger than Chall nor lesser; it's an excellent personal genzine produced with skill and confidence ... and a funky typeface.

I do not know Laura Modine, more's the pity, but a striking photograph. One assumes that's an opaque design on a translucent body-stocking, not a (painfully extensive) tattoo, right?

I wish I knew.

Milt Stevens asks, "What is the weirdest thing you do that you could discuss in a family APA?" Another toughie. I pour Italian style salad dressing over boiled potatoes, but I can't really call that weird: I can't see why other people don't like it.

When companies send me advertising trash with one of those "no postage necessary" envelopes, I clip their junk mail into confetti and mail it back to them, but again I would have difficulty terming that habit "weird". Since they have seen fit to pollute my mail box, I can't see any harm in claiming the same privilege for myself.

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Once again, many thanks for the monster issue of **Challenger**. Nice to get such a hefty issue, but take care that you don't overdo it and run out of steam or lolly.

I liked the cover; was it done in scraperboard? [I believe so.] Interior art also well up to stanard and nicely brightening up the issue. Best pieces beiong those for the Civil War article. I also enjoyed reading the piece on Willy Ley, but was surprised to see that

although it mentioned his science articles, it did not mention the fact that he also wrote some SF fiction, albeit under a pen name -- Robert Willey.

So you use an old 386 PC. Me too, with only a 4M of RAM and a 40M hard disk. What I paid for it some six or seven years ago would now buy me an all singing, all dancing model with umpteen times the memory. Progress, bah!

I now have a newer, faster computer, allowing me Net access at my home. Of course, the thing is broken half the time, so ...

I was both fascinated and frightened by your accounts of sundry law cases. What really puzzles me is, how do you manage to defend someone who you know for certain is guilty of some heinous crime. I can understand mitigating circumstances and aiming for a lighter sentence, but when there is little or no excuse, how can you fight for a not guilty verdict?

American law is based on the precept that it is the duty of the government to prove a person's guilt before that person is punished. It must do so before a neutral body and adhere to rules designed to insure that only relevant, material, probative evidence is heard. The meaning and reliability of the evidence must be established in order to affirm the justice of the finding. Defense lawyers are the system's insurance that the evidence is reliable, that the rules are followed, that any reasonable alternative to the government's analysis of that evidence is heard.

That's a duty. Whether or not the defense lawyer believes his client may be guilty is utterly beside the point; the lawyer never makes the finding of guilt. He insures that the protections guaranteed to every person accused of a crime are given to his client, and that the client's point of view is expressed. Besides -- a guilty client is the easiest in the world to defend.

It's the (admittedly rare) innocent ones who haunt you, keep you awake nights, make you worry, make you sweat. If a guilty defendant is convicted, that's only right. If an innocent one is convicted ... that's an atrocity.

The other thing which gave me qualms was that "three strikes and you get life" system when comparing a murderer with a petty shoplifter. Apart from it seeming unbalanced, surely there's a possibility of a criminal with two offenses behind him, thinking, "I may as well try to shoot my way out as I'll get life anyway if I'm caught."

I like the idea of getting more SF bods onto stamps. Surely the very first one should be John W. Campbell with Hugo Gernsback a very close second. Frank R. Paul is worth consideration in that line. As a long-term collector of American stamps (used ones always appreciated) I have three albums of'em and would appreciate adding JWC to their pages.

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Thanks for **Challenger #9**. Congratulations on the webpage. I hope that it increases your reach and you get response out of it.

Not open yet, but that's what the new millennium is for!

Not being a fan, I'm apt to class "fan art" with other contradictions in terms like "brass band music" but I must admit the illos you use are certainly good. I especially liked the [Steve Stiles] screaming heads on your editorial page (though I don't recognize anybody) and the banner title picture [by Charlie Williams] of Eve Ackerman passing out.

I had mixed feelings about "Sick Time". The history of the United States Postal Service is pretty closely connected to a military way of doing things. And the stories about what management put down before the workers got organized are terrible. Partly because of those dark origins, it's certainly not an ideal place to work. But, like Mr. [Harry] Andruschak said in the letter column, the USPS is so huge its unwieldy bureaucratic organization is inevitable. From the article, I inferred that supervisors are always the donkeys, while the clerks and carriers are the blameless lambs. Well, what can I say but, "pooh-pooh." And again -- pooh.

Why then is the phrase "surly clerk" almost an idiom (an expression that never changes) when people describe postal clerks? Gene Stewart's story about the surly clerk getting zinged to the tune of \$100 through prickly ignorance of IRC's must have brought a smile to the lips of those of us who have suffered the slings and arrows of surly clerks and vengeful carriers. E.g., the clerks who are not only so dumb they don't know what "U.K." means but are proud of not knowing, not to mention the carriers who carry grudges if their Xmas tips aren't big enough.

Brothers and sisters, I'll testify, right now, I play my harp in post office Heaven, because I've spent my time in post office Hell. Here's what the devil do hate. the truth: for three years I dealt with evil posties who were trained under the Soviet system. When I lived in Riga, Latvia, and published a zine, I often had to



beg, coax, cajole clerks to help me. The Central Post Office were the worst -- in fact, there was a clerk there who was notorious in the city for being detestable ever since the Brezhnev era. She more than once almost brought me to tears of rage. The clerks were odious, of course, because their wages were so low and they got paid whether they worked hard or not. The job was so lousy they had trouble attracting people who could add. The P.O. was the Soviet system in one of its worst manifestations.

As for the stealing, well, it just doesn't bear thinking about. Weird stuff like the contents of my mom's Care packages coming with bizarre artifacts such as Barbie dolls and ugly plastic kitchenware. I sometimes got letters that had been opened but then sealed in little plastic bags (word for the day: violation of the mails = *perlustration*). In 1996 I was so enraged I published a curse in my zine:

"I don't like having my mail fiddled with, especially by post office clerks that have quite enough to do without opening my incoming mail, which is pure as the driven snow. I'm angry ...

"O scourge of the Wicked, Defender of the Innocent, hear me! I have been sorely tried by the Latvian post office! My friends' letters have been disrespected, their epistles ill-treated. I beg that what I ask for my enemy shall come to pass:

"That the South wind shall scorch their bodies and make them wilt! That the North wind shall chill their blood and breeze their muscles! That the West wind shall not leave their hair grow and that their fingernails shall fall off and their bones shall crumble! That the East wind shall make their minds grow dim and their seed dry up so they shall not multiply!"

So be it. I won't stand for my mail being fiddled! (Nod of the head to the voodoo chapters in *Mules and Men* by Z.N. Hurston.)

The comparatively high level of courtesy in the USPS cannot be compared to the Soviet / East European post office when I was there (I'm certain reform is effective and ongoing). Further, the USPS charges less than most advanced countries. I didn't publish a zine in Japan because the international rates were so bloody expensive.

Lastly, readily warning that I'm not a nice guy, when I read such job woes, I can only mutter, "Well, it's ungodly, it's hellish, it's even stressful, you're utterly right, management stinks, it's a soul-destroying place, gonna give you a coronary by age 45. But. Postal workers enjoy remuneration, bennies, pension plans, union representation, and job security that most -- that's 'most' -- of the U.S. work force can only dream of. Like, if posties got all those things and looked forward to going to work to boot, the universe would go out of

balance. Can't have it all, for the sake of harmony."

Speaking of going postal, that creature Ayn Rand on a stamp. How did our country tolerate those Reaganistas who dug Rand so much? The same way, I guess, that we choked down the Savings & Loan scandal, the biggest theft in the history of the world. If we are really going out of our way to court divine retribution for celebrating the producer of an immoral philosophy, why don't we all just wear a sign on top of our heads, make it easy for Heaven to see: "*Smite me first!*"

Got to catch my breath.

Well, old pard, your zine puts me through changes, I'll say that. Your job stories are the best. They raise questions that could not be more pertinent. I think our culture is an amoral unethical mess because of materialism and individualism run amok. I would have thought that a little intelligence or common sense would help our country think issues through.

But I fear that our mediocre education system, another thing we have tolerated too long, is catching up with us. It's come to this. Because a few, a couple, can't do something right, all who do use it right are denied access. Tragedies occur and many say that all gun owners and hobbyists -- even if they are responsible -- must be stripped of their guns, just like they imposed gun control in the U.K. and Oz. A handful of goofs abuse marijuana so thousands and thousands who would benefit medically must go on suffering. Literally suffering, because our country cannot seem to think straight about dat ole debbil Mary Jane.

What happened in our country, that such fuzzy thinking about serious issues seems the order of the day? My point (thought I didn't have one, right?) is in our culture I do look hard for evidence that somebody else is thinking about this stuff. And I find that evidence in *Challenger*.

Enough. Out of your face until next time.

I didn't dare interrupt you, but I have to say that -- knock wood -- in recent years I've had very few problems and no substantial gripes with the post office. The local clerks are courteous and, most importantly, not particularly persnickety about the exact definition of Book Rate.

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Lovely cover on *Challenger* # 9. Wonderful feeling of fluidity and movement.

Looking forward to seeing your website, and I love your line "I barely understand *pencils*." (Gotta make a note of that.)

Good article by Curt Phillips on Civil War re-enactments and how he was inspired to get involved

when he was 12 years old. Good answer to the question of why, btw: "Why do anything that involves getting further than ten yards away from the refrigerator and the TV? Very good illustration by Joe Mayhew to go with the article.

I also enjoyed Willy Ley's brief bio, the new post office expose, the panty raid, uh, college co-ops piece, zine reviews, "Watching Paint Dry" (Gary R. Robe made it interesting), LOCs, the commemorative US postage stamps (SF artists, authors, and editors nominees) article, and, as always, your case histories, with all their drama and suspense and empathy. Excellent end editorials on the Colorado shootings and Sara C, the gutsy survivor.

And I loved the fantastic variety of photos and artwork. I think this is the most lavishly illustrated issue of a zine I've ever seen.

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Reading: I tend to prefer niche mystery novels; historical ones, primarily. For example, I was very annoyed to learn that John Maddox Roberts's S.P.Q.R. novels were no longer being marketed in the US, but were doing wonderfully well in Germany, where five more in the series had been sold. As it is, I devour Lindsey Davis's Falco novels and Stephen Saylor's Gordianus novels.

I once said to Arthur Hlavaty and Bernadette Bosky that I did not care much for military SF (Drake, Stirling, Pournelle [and ghostwriters], etc.) because I had read too much real military history and understood the improbabilities of the situation. Reading true-crime books and forensic works has similarly biased my opinion of most detective novels. The alcoholic detective on the chief's bad side is not going to crack a case that requires checking DNA (the Simpson murder-case jury was *too stupid* to consider the DNA evidence), tracing the provenance of fibers, analyzing motive from the staging of a murder scene, etc. That nice outsider (novelist working on a book like that, auto mechanic with a lot of time on his hands, kindly old nun with cat) is far more likely to be some sort of killer him/herself! And -- I think you yourself may have observed this -- murders rarely have six respectable upper-middle-class suspects (able to pay the detective's/lawyer's high fees readily) all with a good motive, reasonable access to the method, and a plausible alibi.

DUH-UFF: At least you did not accuse the DUFF candidates of only bringing out fanzines for the

campaign.

One Small Step Across Time: Imagine, a century or two from now, astronaut recreationists, who pose in antiquated, carefully-restored "space-suits" on the surface of the Moon, recreating the epochal First Step! Not surprisingly, recreationists are among those who suffer the scorn of the arch-Philistine Sharyn "All *my* fans are lawyers with six-figure incomes" McCrumb for wasting their time on hobbies when they could be putting that effort to something that would make money.

For further reading check **Confederates In the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War** by Tony Horwitz (Random House; 1998; 406+x pages; ISBN 0-679-43978-1; \$27.50).

I think Curt has -- perhaps unintentionally -- stumbled onto a fundamental disconnect in education. Education theory is generated by those who are, of course, fully educated. As a result, it is aimed at their own level. Therefore, grade-school children are presented with arcane theories of "people's history" in history class



just as they are made to work with set theory in math class and "gestalt" whole-word recognition in English. Without the basic tools with which to understand these materials, their comprehension is nil. The people who create these teaching texts have a lapse of empathy. Do they themselves even get the thrill of *communicating* that Curt gets?

Inge's World: A report from Venice, the most Nawlinsish of world cities. And they say that "sci-fi" has improbable settings.

Willy Ley: And talk about "timebinding" - so short are our memories, to let pass in to near oblivion someone who was once such a crucial figure in science fiction. Reviving this is worthwhile in and of itself.

THUD!: Once upon a time I proposed to the Lynchies that they do a special illness issue of **Mimosa**. I thought of this after seeing their articles on Richard Brandt's toxic shock syndrome and the time Steve Stiles was the only participant in the proposed orgy who failed to get food poisoning because he was the only one who

passed on the oysters. They said no, even though I *promised* a thorough-going article on the diagnosis and treatment of Crohn's Disease (also known as ileitis) as seen from the one on the receiving end of the colonoscope.

On the other hand, at the time I was sorry I missed meeting Eve at Bucconeer. But now, maybe not.

A Cheap Place to Live: I suppose that things were not so bad at U of L after all. The dumb jock (if that is not a redundancy) who lived down the hall and had decided that I would be his target for "fun" could really have gone to town had he been able to stick a fire hose into my room. No, as a football player he was a protected species and any effort, by me to retaliate would have been strictly punished. I wish I had thought of that bit with the grease. Maybe motor oil would do just as well?

The Zine Dump: I am afraid that it is so about MSFire. Let us all weep, for the fall of a dynamic duo set up there with Carl Brandon. Rodney Leighton, who professes himself an expert on multiple personality disorder writing, says he had it figured out all along.

The Angolite: I remember reading about the Portuguese Inquisition. They sold guides to the sentencing of batches of prisoners. One of the more popular sentences was exile to Angola.

LetterS DAMMIT: A further thought on Andersonville courtesy of *Confederates in the Attic*. A woman named Ann Williams broke *into* the camp one day. Before they got her out, she had had sex with six of the prisoners. Georgia hospitality?

I agree about "Rose is Rose" being a great comic strip. It is a pity the local papers do not have it. The fantasy scenes are beautiful. However, the strong religious content may disqualify it for some.

Darrell Schweitzer laments the absence of an ad from the Rosicrucians in the revived *Weird Tales*. Perhaps they should have run the ad by Robert Bloch in similar format for *Key to the Editorials of John W. Campbell, Jr*

Tim Kirk: Well, good to know that you have indeed gone on to something financially rewarding.

Lloyd Penney: The annual Dayton Sherlock Holmes/Arthur Conan Doyle Symposium has on several occasions discussed the Granada productions of the Sherlock Holmes stories with Jeremy Brett. The consensus is that Brett was the Holmes for the eighties (no one taking Marvin Kaye's decidedly bizarre opinion that he was one of the worst Holmeses ever) and that the last few Granada productions, after the departure of the former producer, had distinctly fallen off. Part of this was the expanding of episodes to two hours by the introduction of new and distracting subplots.

Brett got into the character; reading not only

the original works but some of the voluminous Holmesian literature, and even writing a play about Holmes. (William Gillette, the Holmes for the first part of the century, did as much). As an interesting side-note, in the play "The Crucifer of Blood", Brett played ... Watson.

Harry Warner: Claims about Huck being black are made because of the nature of literary studies. A Ph.D., not to mention post-doctoral work, has to be based on original research and be an addition to human knowledge. This last reduces to "say something new and different". Making absurd claims about literary works, supported by selective readings of the original texts, is "new and different". This is why deconstructionism has become so popular. It gives the professor the chance to write at length about his favorite topic, himself.

Janine Stinson: "And remember Armstrong's story about his next door neighbor, and the *last* words he said on the moon." I thought the "Mr. Gorsky" story had been debunked as an urban legend.

On The Job: The current campaign to acquit Jeffrey MacDonald stems from the presence of one wig fiber in the house. MacDonald identified the leader of the hippies who committed the murders as a woman who was wearing a blond wig. The fiber is said to be of a type used in human wigs, not in doll hair. How this explains the staging of the murder scenes and the disparity in injuries between him and his family remains to be seen.

Colorado: Determining the blame here reminds me of the Thomas Nast cartoon about Boss Tweed and the Tweed Ring. The members were standing in a ring, as it were, each pointing at the man on his left. The caption was "'Who stole the public money?' 'He did.'" So, "'Who set off the Columbine shooters?' 'He did.'" This is a broad failure of social norms.

Not just guns. Remember, they had bombs all over the school. Some of the victims bled to death because the police had to enter carefully, out of concern for bombs and room-to-room gun conflict.

Already the Internet has put its spin on things. The first theory I saw explained that the alleged shooters were actually more of the victims; the real shooters had changed clothes with two of their victims, then slipped out with the students. This went on to theorize that they were Mind Control targets, dispatched by the NWO/ZOG/CIA/MKULTRA/etc. Vast Conspiracy. By now (May 10, 1999) the theorizing is probably even more extreme, and by the time this letter is published, Columbine will certainly be on the list of conspiracy murders.

I think we need stories like that of Sara C to remind us that life can be better.

WIG WAM WIG WAM

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In **Challenger #9**, you mention having a web site created for **Challenger**. My first attempt at creating a website (www.sccaa.com) just went on-line this past week. It's a web site for the Southern California Crime Analysts' Association. I actually did the composition work in December 1998, and the officers of the association didn't bother to have me update it before they finally put it on the web. The need for updating will probably occur to them in a month or so.

The SCCAA effort is pretty basic with only a few animation thingies thrown in. It's amazing the number and variety of animation thingies which are available for free on the web. SCCAA wishes to maintain an appearance of professionalism, so I couldn't entirely indulge my penchant for low humor. The fanzines I've looked at on the web (which aren't very many in number) haven't tried to make use of animation or music. I imagine those are areas which will develop after fanzines have been on the web for a number of years. I don't know of anyone in fandom who could convert fannish art into animation thingies. It must be possible, since other people manage to do it. Since Rotsler's cartoons are simple (in terms of the number of lines used), they would seem like illos which could be animated without a tremendous amount of work.

Reading "A Cheap Place to Live," made me almost glad that I couldn't afford living away at college. Based on my own experiences, commuter colleges are much more nose-to-the-grindstone sort of places. Everybody I knew was carrying a full academic load and working half-time or so as well. There wasn't enough energy left over to do anything that wasn't required. I know I didn't even go out on a date during the last two years I was in college. There were about two dozen political radicals on campus, but collectively they couldn't manage to stir-up a cup of coffee. In total frustration, the radicals finally invited a Nazi to speak on campus just so they could protest his presence. Everybody else just went on ignoring the radicals.

"Watching Paint Dry" confirms my belief fans will never abandon their quest for exotic entertainment. The line "In the late 60's the air in Los Angeles was approaching the point that it no longer supported human life" caught my attention. So that was the problem. I had thought it was iron deficiency anemia like the folks on TV said. As a native of Los Angeles, I've never been bothered by smog. Aside from my scales turning green in the springtime, I've never noticed any effect of smog at all. Gary Robe does miss one important reason for paint. He says the reason for paint is to make things

prettier or to keep things from decaying. To one part of the population, the reason for paint is to put graffiti on every surface in the known universe. In some neighborhoods, pedestrians have to be wary lest they become the target of a curbside paint job. I've heard that graffitiists do what they do as a sublimation of the desire to mark their territory with their feces. Viewed from that perspective, graffiti may not be great, but it is preferable to the alternative.

In the letter column, Harry Andruschak mentions his AA sponsor considered LASFS to be spiritually sick. Harry must have told him about The Great Green Frog matter. Some years ago, Harry was writing in Apa-L about his disbelief in God. He said that postulating the existence of God was like saying the world had been created by a Great Green Frog who lived on the back side of the moon. As might be expected, half of Apa-L converted to Great Green Frog worship on the spot. Soon, colophons began proclaiming "The Great Green Frog Saves." In Bags Bunny, the comic strip which attempted to unite all the topics currently under discussion in Apa-L, Bags becomes a 23rd level D & D player whereupon he is inducted into the Bavarian order of Illuminati. As part of his induction, he is told that the power of the Illuminati comes from the Great Green Frog who lives on the back side of the moon. I can sort of see how a conventionally oriented AA type might think a club filled with Great Green Frog worshipers was spiritually sick. I hope Harry didn't tell him about the Secular Ceiling Worshipers.

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Civil War re-enactors. I can't help but feel that if Civil War veterans were able to come forward in time and view the re-enactment phenomenon, they would be repulsed. They'd find it obscene that somebody is making a way of life -- or sport -- out of their pain. This is obviously not the intention. You can even make the argument that Civil War re-enactment is a kind of national therapy to help heal the wounds of this war -- which will never be fully healed, I am convinced, until our mobile civilization so homogenizes the USA that regional identities disappear -- but we must keep in mind that the Civil War was actually the worst thing that ever happened to our country, the one time when Americans were so incensed at one another that they began mass-killings of their fellow Americans. This potential is always there. There were a few people who felt like that in the '60s, more who felt that the killings at Kent State weren't such a bad idea because the demonstrators had the wrong ideas. Today we have anti-government militias. So let us not forget that the pot is always

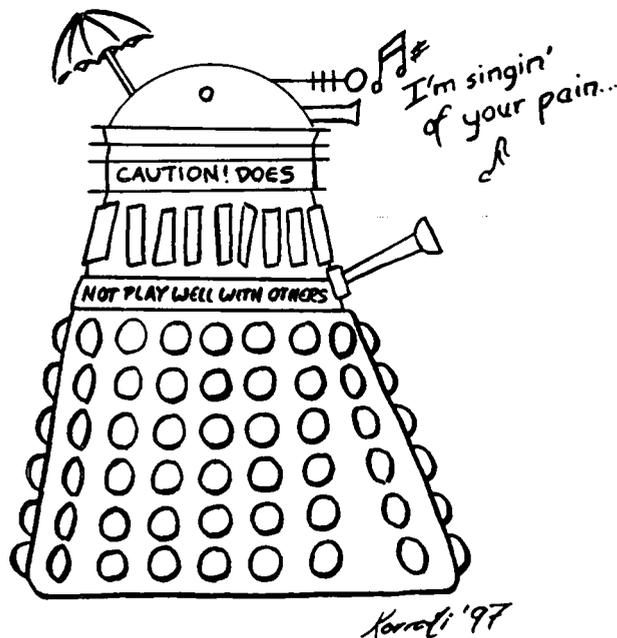
simmering. In 1861 it boiled over, to great cost, and this must be looked back upon with great sadness and solemnity, as a catastrophe, not as something glorious.

Do other countries have re-enactors? I've heard of the English doing their own Civil War that way. It is, I suppose, safely far removed in time. But I can't imagine the Spanish doing it. Will there one day be Vietnam re-enactors? I profoundly doubt it. Instead we have the Wailing Wall on the Washington Mall. In Vietnam there is (I saw on a documentary once) a marker at My Lai which merely says (number approximate), "In this place the Americans killed 150 people." It's only the truth. The truth about Antietam is (I forget the numbers), "in this place 30,000 Americans were killed in an afternoon, by one another."

The Vietnam Memorial is much more than a wailing wall, and even if so it serves a noble and ennobling purpose. It helps us grieve for all we lost in Vietnam, all the people behind those names, all the innocence and naivete behind our commitment there.

A country like a person must grieve to get beyond a loss. The Wall is our way of doing so.

Postal commemoratives. Get real. SF is still a very small part of the cultural landscape. Its imagery has completely pervaded popular culture and to some extent popular religion (i.e. UFOlogy), but SF as written literature has not gone very far. I suspect most Americans could not name three living science fiction writers. I suspect most American college English



professors couldn't name three, after they'd disqualified all the "good" writers like Vonnegut and Le Guin. The only two on the list given who have the faintest chance are Heinlein and Asimov, and I think I'd narrow that to Asimov since he was of a minority group (Jewish), which is always an advantage, and his political opinions were not particularly controversial. Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* and *Farnham's Freehold* could not only remove him from a stamp, they could get him kicked out of schools and even libraries.

I wish they'd throw Farnham's Freehold out now. It's the ugliest Heinlein.

Hamlet's ghost (again). It seems, upon reflection, that the "Protestant" idea of a ghost didn't really take, even in England. I don't know what precisely Church of England theology says on this, but England remains very rich in ghost lore. If you stay at an old inn which does not have its resident ghost, you need to ask why. Every English city has its popular ghost tours. I recall five competing ones in York. The popular concept of a ghost remains very much what Hamlet's father claimed to be: a perturbed spirit, the soul of a dead person, which cannot rest because something is left undone. or some just hang around for the fun of it. When I was in York, the inn I stayed at had a rather innocuous ghost, who thumped around in the 11th century basement once in a while, and sometimes smoked a pipe down there and filled the building with pleasant tobacco aromas. The ghost's name was Albert. One of the ghost tours pointed the place out as a haunted inn, but did not mention Albert. The guide asked me to let him know if anything suitably spectral happened. I was very tempted to make up a story with some very distinctive element, maybe a ghostly hand which reaches through a wall, then withdraws suddenly, leaving a ring from one of the fingers -- which might remain recognizable after many retellings and eventually find its way into the guidebooks. But I guess my "integrity" restrained me. Or maybe it was Albert.

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I've read *Challenger 9* and enjoyed every page, particularly Eve Ackerman's account of her duel with mono. (I'm glad she won!) The Civil War re-enactment story was also interesting--made me think of the people who do similar things up here, only ours re-enact the War of 1812 mostly. (That's the one Canada won. Gloat, gloat.) Some of our best tourist attractions are also the oldest -- Fort York in Toronto, Fort Henry in Kingston. I used to live in a house that was built by a Loyalist colonel (his name was Zaccheus Burnham) who fought in the War of 1812 after being dispossessed of his family estate in -- get this -- Virginia!

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I especially enjoy receiving **Challenger** because it bears a whiff of one of our favorite cities. However, I also enjoy it for itself, a literate, intelligent and beautifully printed zine. Mine are relatively neat, although some readers claim they were much more fun back in mimeo days, when my errant fingers and inability to read blue stencils easily led to some wonderful typos, of such quality they would be nearly impossible to create on the spot.

I am enclosing the new **Ben's Beat**, and hope you enjoy it. This issue brings my Theatrical journey up to date. I appreciate your gracious words in C-9 about the series. With a little luck I may be "forced" to write a sequel yet, but I would lay no bets. I have it in two places, one being a top NYC company, but that one in mere courtesy. I have suggested it (for now) as a fund-raiser. Heck, *I still have not sought rights*, and would rather have a company name behind me when I do.

I have probably admitted, without embarrassment, that my play reviews are primarily for me and my wretched memory, in case I want to check something (it has happened.) Still, people do love theatre, and that is why it survives, on or far off Broadway, and why so surprisingly many read the column. Next issue (not this) will have **The Iceman Cometh**, with Kevin Spacey; it was marvelous. Whatever else this year was, it gave us the very peak of Miller and O'Neill, and a young, fledgling and exciting Thomas Lanier Williams, before he became Tennessee and discovered the Garden District, the Vieux Carre, and his voice.

Since I am prehistoric PCwise, I have no e-mail, no internet etc. I am often tempted, but hesitant. **Challenger** deserves to be on the Net, for the many potential readers. You may be flooded with response and may be sorry but I think not. Good for Brandt!

Your Obit column is part of each of us as we get older, although I have read obits for years and years, always surprised I did not find myself there. This **Ben's Beat** is dedicated to two special friends. It still pains me especially to know my Shavian friend, editor and mentor, Fred Crawford, is gone, only 51. Add to these losses, too late for the issue, my good friend, an editor like the others, Jim Turner, formerly of Arkham House, a very unexpected loss. I had just printed a letter from him which expressed his exasperation with Frank Long when he had to edit Frank's book on HPL into shape.

I'll have to show Curt's Civil War article to my daughter and her husband. They used to live in Centerville VA, and now live only a few miles away,

still near Manassas and the Battlefield, which I have visited. The article was good. The battlefield is quiet and sadly beautiful, fortunately distinct from the town, which is nondescript. It surely was no better in the 1860s.

Your mailbox is crammed with zines, which makes me not quite wistful for those days, decades ago, when mine used to be like that. It was too much, since I felt obligated to respond to each -- if the kids worked that hard, even for crudzines, that inelegant but often appropriately-named sub-class, they deserved courtesy from me. I finally begged off, and became instant emeritus. Now you take care of it for me.

Now the essence of **Challenger**, the legal part, your equivalent of my **Broadway Beat**, but far more significant, often dealing with life, death, imprisonment, and sadly, not infrequently, horror. The Bibb case is nearly beyond belief, but in a world which has that Colorado high school, and the Manson case, and the Kosovo tragedy, anything is believable. I must support strict gun control, if for no other reason than the ease with which those unstable boys obtained weapons. There will always be killers, who will find guns, but perhaps a few people will live because some potential killers could not obtain them.

Now, judge, here is a question. As I have written before in my zines, during my years working in a pharmacy I was robbed at gunpoint seven times. I retired in 1992. A week ago I dreamed ---- *dreamed* --- I was in my pharmacy (that it was unlike any I have had, in shape, did not matter.) A guy came in, and I was suspicious for some reason. Sure enough he pulls out a small pistol (I distinctly said "Shit!" to myself) and demands mv money. Now usually I would empty the register regularly, leaving about \$30, enough to buy the robber some crack, which is what most of them wanted. They would take it and leave, as a rule. This time, I suddenly recalled I had not emptied the reg. I opened it, and sure enough it was flowing with bills and change, stuffed as no cash register of mine ever was. In my usual way, I turned to the guy to reason, and asked that he leave me something (I asked for \$100) so I could operate the store. As in the waking world, he says only "Give me the money". I did, and woke up. The question is: can I include this on my record, an eighth robbery?

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It's always a pleasure to receive a new issue of **Challenger**, because it's bound to be full of good ideas, involving reading and a variety of opinions, plus a slice of real life. Issue 9 is here, and here is some commentary

from me ...

It's interesting how many fans turn to the wide area of crime/detective/mystery/suspense fiction, should they tire of science fiction and fantasy. When SF loses its wonder, and it will for many readers, mystery and its allied genres will continue to give them the same mental exercises SF&F did.

I turned 40 on June 2. I'm taking the attitude that it's just a number, and doesn't make much difference



that I was 39 the year before. Besides, most people I meet think I'm in my late 20s or early 30s, and I shall not persuade them otherwise. I will grow older, but I will not grow up; a statement for the Peter Pan in most fans.

*To my delight I found that I didn't mind turning 50, just as I really didn't mind going bald. I considered both events cosmic jokes on myself — and when a costumer constructed a rather limp sword out of cloth at the DSC masquerade, merged the incident with my birthday in a subsequent speech to earn a laugh. Ha. Hahahaha. *sob**

Now that rocketry and science fiction have drifted apart to some degree, I find little overlap between the two, other than some fans with an interest in the International Space Station project. In Toronto, there used to be many people connected with space advocacy organizations. The International Space Development Conference took place in Toronto some years ago, staged by Canadian organizers, but hosted by American organizers who took all the membership monies and dumped the bills upon the Canadians. To no surprise, space advocacy nearly died here.

I had a fine laugh with the stories of the UC Berk frats. My polytechnical in Toronto had a couple of fraternities on campus, but the usual competition was between the various engineering faculties, trying to out do one another. The centre quadrangle had within it the facade of the old school that once stood on the site; one engineering faculty placed a Volkswagen Beetle on top of it with no apparent explanation of how it got there. The next day, another faculty had placed a garage around the car. The faculties would compete each year to be the host of the

annual Engineering-Nursing social ... there was a giant uproar when the nurses told the engineers where to go, and had their social with the Photo Arts Department!

I know many of the fans in the Buffalo/Niagara Falls area, and many of the membership of the Buffalo Time Council, including Dennis Blake, who may be helping with the Toronto in 2003 bid. Yvonne and I attended Eeriecon 1, and we had a fine time there, renewing acquaintances with many.

Next summer, if I visit my family in the Buffalo area, let's get together! There's no way I'm driving north from there, though, in the winter!

Given that Atlanta's Dragon*Con is an event that can pull in more than 10,000 people, I am concerned that it is planning to move from the July 4th weekend to the Labour Day weekend. How will it affect the worldcon? Will this permanently scuttle any future Atlanta Worldcon bids?

The Poul Anderson special issue of *Lan's Lantern* is indeed out, and I'm sure you'll agree with me that it's a true labour of love, as have been all of *Lan's* special issues. They are the closest to a reference work a fanzine can be, IMHO.

Pounce is a fine powder used to prevent ink from spreading, or a powder used for making stenciled patterns, according to my Webster's Dictionary. You must see the odd nutria in your area, Guy! They're just giant beaver-type animals.

That's what many tourists say ... before the poison spit hits and the 9-inch fangs come out!

New Orleans in '06? Perhaps they just need some encouragement or instruction. I spotted a website for a bid for 2004 from Charlotte, NC, and I've sent e-mail to both the addresses listed; mail has bounced back from both addresses. I'd also heard something about a New York bid (Nieuw Amsterdam in 2004), but Charlotte is the first official bid for that year, as far as I can tell.

I have to agree with Milt Stevens about fan funds. I wanted to learn about them, and I wanted some experience with them, so my wife and I ran for CUFF, the Canadian Unity Fan Fund. Our administration is not exceptional, but it is a learning process. However, the tight-knit groups that surround fan funds, and the ferocious fan politics, plus the fact that I've been told to my face that I would not be a suitable candidate for anything like TAFF or DUFF, would preclude me from running for any further fan funds.

Good to see Tim Kirk's name again. I've enjoyed a lot of his whimsical cartoons over the years.

Hey, Brad! I'm certain I LOCed the issue of *The Texas SF Inquirer* you and Cindy edited. As various fans will tell you, I'll LOC shopping lists.

Like Harry Warner, I am saddened by the lack

of ads from companies offering training for trades, but I don't think it's because of a lack of people who want to learn those trades. Most companies, when they are looking for new staff, will not train. They want a perfect fit they can drop into an empty slot, and immediately start working. Training has become an unnecessary expense for them. Many training programmes are very expensive, and even if you're well-off enough to take the training, most jobs require training and experience, even for entry-level positions.

We've been on the Interstate between Detroit and Cincinnati, and we've sped by the Armstrong Museum. There are several miniatures of booster rockets like the Saturn V standing a short distance off the shoulder.

How can I meet Armstrong? Three of the 12 guys who walked on the moon have passed on, I've seen three in person, and I want to get a first-hand gawp at the other six ... especially him.

I think Spacecon was canceled due to lack of response.

Chris Barkley's idea of an SF postage stamp site sounds good. I hope he'll relay the URL next issue. Three areas for the site come to mind ... space, with plenty of stamps from the USSR, science including the A.C. Clarke stamp recently issued by Sri Lanka, and comics, including the series of five Canadian comic book heroes released a couple of years ago.

I don't think I could be a lawyer. I'm a bleeding heart. I would become too involved with my clients, and I'd worry about them too much.

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I was extremely pleased, as was Megan, my Dearly Beloved Wife, to receive #9 in the mail. You don't pub often, but when do, it's definitely something to savor.

Diana Sharples' cover illo is very nice... it sets off the issue quite well.

Curt Phillips' article on historical re-enactors was quite well done; I have a little experience in this, having worked with Megan in costuming in the past. Megan and I went to the re-enactor gathering in Jackson one year, which is reputed to be the second largest of its kind, behind only Gettysburg, PA. The sutler's row (equivalent to a dealers' room, except it's outdoors, under canvas) is a sight to behold, even to someone who's been jaded by the gargantuan gatherings of gewgaws in the typical worldcon dealer's room. And, on top of it, they usually have a recreated battle; in recent years, they brought in horse cavalry and period field

artillery pieces.

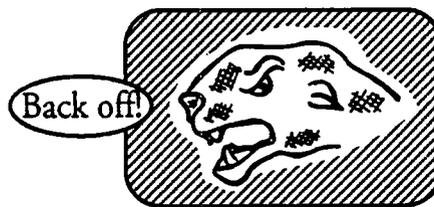
Inge Glass, whom I had the chance to have a few nice conversations with at Bucconeer, wrote some nice e-messages about her travels. New Zealand? Venice? The most exotic place I can say I've been is Winnipeg, Manitoba... or, maybe, Sandusky, Ohio.

The reminiscence of 1950's college housing does remind me of the times I lived in a dorm/university housing. Some of those times I won't comment on, since I'm not sure the statute of limitations has expired; some I'm not sure I remember correctly (you see, I used to do amateur biochemistry experimentation on myself, when I was younger and much more stupid), and the rest are just too damn boring.

Gary Robe's article on paint was just the sort of twisted techie-nerd thing that appeals to me in fanzines; he should write more.

The pieces about your work as a lawyer were interesting, although I found out about myself long ago that I didn't want to be a lawyer... I wanted to be Clarence Darrow. And your regular correspondent, Bob Sirignano, telling about his experiences working for the Post Office in Delaware... Harry Andruschak could probably tell him some stories from the land of the lotus-eaters, Howard DeVore and I both could tell some about this district area consisting of Detroit and environs, and so on, and so on. The bullshit is the same most everywhere; the elephants come, and the elephants go, but the circus keeps right on rolling.

"Gargantuan"? "Circus"? You've been talking to Joy Moreau!



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I was so proud of myself when I finished reading the 106-page ninth issue of **Challenger** in a rather short time after its arrival, permitting a prompt LOC for once. Then everything went wrong. I still hadn't found at that time this Smith-Corona to replace my deceased manual typewriter. Then I got sick, not once, but twice, the second time very sick. And Hagerstown had what will probably be its hottest summer on record. The temperature in my house hovered around 90 degrees most of the time and I was simply afraid to

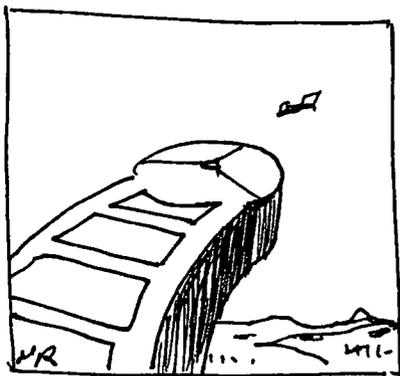
type much when the radio was advising all old people without air conditioning to avoid exertion. I'm very sorry it happened ...

It was a splendid issue, of course, as it hardly could have avoided being with your lineup of contributors and all the fine art work. Curt Phillips gave me some idea why people engage in Civil War re-enactments. I had always thought this was as strenuous and unrewarding as a LOC-writing career but he apparently enjoys it. It goes on all the time in the Hagerstown area, thanks to the nearness of Antietam and Gettysburg, and even small skirmishes have been promoted to battle status in order to stage re-enactments in other area communities.

The Willy Ley article, no matter which John Berry wrote it, is a badly needed reminder of what a fine man and writer he was. Not long ago I happened on a paperback reprint of some of his prozine science articles and I was amazed at how well they held up, nearly a half-century after publication. I think it would be possible today to put together an interesting anthology of these articles. Some could be reprinted without changes, while others would need a few paragraphs of updating.

I don't think I'm up to commenting on Eve Ackerman's narrative yet, because of my own recent physical problems. I don't think I have mononucleosis but I underwent a lot of the symptoms that Eve describes.

Dear me, it's a shame I am still feeling the ill effects of that illness and must revisit another article on sickness, the one by Robert Sirignano. His account of how it happens to post office workers reminds me of the female reporter I used to work with. Her time of the month was so hard on her, she told management, she couldn't work on the day it was doing its most damage to her well-being. After about a year I noticed a pattern and I kept a close watch on these days off for the next year. Sure enough, each and every period caused her to miss either Friday or Monday ...



Researchers into the psychology and psychiatric aspects of mid-century college education will undoubtedly pounce some day onto "A Cheap Place to Live" as a priceless batch of information about the situation in California. But there is a distant descendant of its water fights thriving in a medium-sized Pennsylvania town north of Hagerstown, Waynesboro. Once every four or five years, the townspeople decide it's time for another night of fun with water. The general public is warned to stay out of downtown if they don't want to participate. On the evening in question, everyone from fire companies to individuals is invited to throw water, shoot water, drop water, in every direction in the designated blocks of downtown. If water bombing occurs from a window, it is kosher to toss or fire water into that window. Nobody ever gets seriously hurt, but those who didn't take care in their choice of clothing may need to replace part of their wardrobe after their participation. The nicest thing about this particular type of riot is that there is virtually nothing to clean up. I don't know of any other city anywhere that has this tradition.

I can't share Darrell Schweitzer's preference for computer-born fanzines in comparison to the old mimeoed ones. In general, I find today's fanzines harder to read than the ones that were being published a half-century ago. Too many of today's fanzine publishers choose to reduce the typeface to an unreasonable extent, a postage-saving trick that was hardly possible before the general availability of computers and office copiers. Others choose a body type which is extremely thin and looks faint on the page, compared with the plumpness of characters that had been cut into stencils with typewriters. It is particularly serious when a fanzine editor in 1999 chooses to use colored paper, which doesn't permit computer-generated print to stand out as well as it used to do in mimeography on colored paper. Obviously, there are exceptions to this general situation in both eras; none of my complaints could apply to the fine reproduction you provide in **Challenger**. Twiltone and other varieties of mimeograph paper don't rot away if the publications are kept in boxes or envelopes where light can't cause rapid deterioration of the paper stock.

Milt Stevens is inspired by my socks-in-bed admission to ask others about the weirdest things they do. I could confess to another aberration but I'm afraid it wouldn't mean much to people who live in most parts of the nation and in foreign lands. As a boy, I loved to eat raw ponhaus. Ponhaus is a delicacy which as far as I know is confined to the general vicinity of the Pennsylvania Dutch cookstoves. It is normally enjoyed in fried condition and everyone who heard about my love for it in raw condition thought I was doomed to a happy but short life.

I was touched by Curt Phillips' offer to watch over me in the LOC section and during my worst days of illness I started wondering if I might need to take him up on it. But then practical considerations came to mind. I believe Abingdon is a rather small town at the lower end of Virginia. If I showed up down there in whatever condition with all my fanzines, books, and records and other hoardings, the town would need to expand to create enough room for them and me and this would probably create friction among the residents who want to remain a small, friendly community and those who think that progress even in the form of someone's massive collections is inevitable. So let's hope that I drop dead from a stroke or heart attack instead of declining slowly and needing a caretaker.

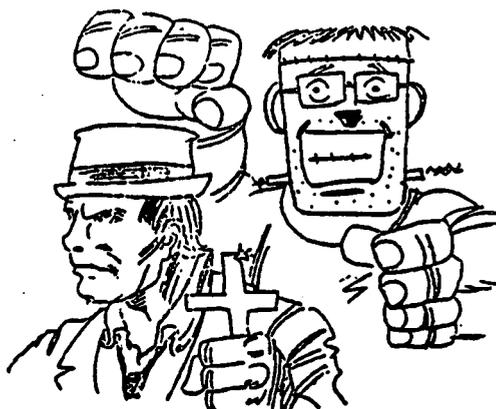
I used to think the earlier attempts to get commemorative stamps issued for people in science fiction were useless because only a small part of the general public knew about them. But the United States has been honoring so many obscure people in recent years that it might stand a better chance now. I don't think C.L. Moore or Alfred Bester, two names suggested by Chris Barkley, are widely enough known to be so honored. But it might be possible to get a series of commemoratives devoted to science fiction people who are closer to household names: Heinlein, Asimov, Ellison, Bloch, and Clarke, for instance, all of whom were seen often on television or had movies based on their fiction.

Since stamp subjects have to have been dead for ten years, Ellison and Clarke, who are still living, might object to being so honored, and Clarke might not qualify since he's not American. As for Bester, he's well enough known to have been mentioned on The Simpsons, as part of the ABCs of science fiction without which no SF library is complete. "But what about Ray Bradbury?" "I'm familiar with his work."

As usual, I'm helpless in trying to comment on the fine art work. But I might advance the probably erroneous suggestion that Diana Sharples' front cover couple might have been modeled on the Sweethearts of the Rodeo.

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I'm amazed you can publish a 100+ page fanzine as often as you do. Nicki and I couldn't do that. I really liked Curt Phillips' article on Civil War battle recreation; it's a fandom I knew little about until now. We've published two of his articles in *Mimosa* and one thing I write about his writing style is that he



can involve the reader such that it becomes a vicarious experience, as if you're actually taking part. I also like Eve Ackerman's article; Eve is a mostly undiscovered talent. She has the ability to make even the most prosaic topics, like being sick, interesting and entertaining to read about. On the other hand, [there were articles which] could well have been left out, as they didn't add much to the issue. One other thing I saw that seemed to detract from the overall seamlessness of the issue was your use of several different fonts for the main body of the fanzine. More is not necessarily better; it left me wondering if there was some kind of point that I'd missed.

Only that I was forced by circumstances to run off my masters on two different printers ... and kind of liked the look.

And then we come to the fanzine reviews. I guess I take exception to your review of *Mimosa* 23 in which you say, "the Lynchi have grown tired of hauling Hugos home every year and are thinking of retiring the title." I don't now where you got that from, but it's way out in left field. Let me restate what was in my editorial comments in *M* 23: "This was the fifth time that *Mimosa* has won [the Best Fanzine Hugo Award] and we're only too aware that some of the voters think that's at least four too many. We neither encourage nor discourage anyone to vote for *Mimosa*; we don't campaign for honors, but we don't turn them down either. I can sympathize that many of the non-winners deserve their moment up there on the stage, and I hope that someday they will all be able to take home at least one rocket. We've enjoyed the ride over the past seven years, and as soon as it ends, we'll be appreciative of the next fanzine that wins everyone's favor."

We've never expressed anything like your comment of "growing tired of hauling Hugos"; we've not tried to put ourselves about fandom in any way whatsoever. It's true that *Mimosa* probably won't be published beyond issue 30, but it's not because we feel

there are "no worlds left to conquer." The reason we started the fanzine in the first place, preservation of fan history, is as relevant now as it was back in 1981. The reason we may have to end the fanzine has everything to do with time and resources, and nothing whatsoever to do with ego. We're grateful that other fanzines, your included, are also starting to emphasize fan history. That makes any decision by us to end publication (which is still not final, by the way) all that much less painful.

I heard that you were planning to can Mimosa from one of our mutual contributors; that you were moved by weariness at winning the Hugo was my own poor attempt at humor. No one who knows you or Nicki would ever accuse you of doing anything out of egoism. If you're asking if I think multiple Hugo winners in certain categories should limit their years of candidacy to give others a chance, I can only refer you to my frequent comments on that theme to Dave Langford. I do believe in spreading the wealth.



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Many thanks for *Challenger 9*. And although I'm sure you're by now well on the way to producing your next issue (aren't you?), there are a couple of

things I'd like to say before it all becomes too dated....

Starting with your review of Brant Kresovich's *For The Clerisy*. "It's grown from a newsletter about the Balkans...." you say, continuing a few sentences later with a remark that you "very much want to hear what Brant has to say about the war in Kosovo, as he has taught in the region". A hideous geographical gaffe, as I'm sure several people have already pointed out to you -- since Brant taught English as a Foreign Language in Riga, the capital of Latvia, which is in the Baltic, several hundred miles from Kosovo. Smacked bottom for you, for getting the Baltic confused with the Balkans!

Responding to your review of *Twink*, its editor E. B. Frohvet suggests that "Doubtless you will find any number of 'fannish' fans who will ardently deny that my fanzine is fannish" -- and adds: "That group will be closely congruent to, though not identical to, those who use 'sercon' as a pejorative." In saying this, he largely repeats a proposition he's asserted before, in both *Twink* and in correspondence with me, and in so doing wilfully ignores the corrective response I crafted. Smacked bottom for him, too. But, just to get it on the record one more time: although there are fannish fans who automatically sneer at anything which mentions science fiction, just as there are sercon fans who have no time for other than indexing and reviewing, their numbers are small. The real distinction is not between fannish fans and sercon fans but between fans who discriminate in their choice of reading matter and those who are so besotted with science fiction that they have lost all sense of judgement and proportion, and give every appearance of thinking that all of it is good just because it bears the hallowed label -- with the inevitable result that their fanzines are simply valueless as any sort of critical guide to the genre. Reprints of antique so-called Golden Age classics which weren't much chop the first time around are given equal treatment to new works by today's far superior and more sophisticated writers ("equal treatment" meaning, nine times out of ten, a squibby two-paragraph plot summary); no-talent bottom-dwellers are interviewed at length by people whose lack of knowledge of literature in general is matched only by the groveling sycophancy they display towards their subjects; barely thought-through editorials about (say) the failure of politicians to allocate enough money to build a space station to fulfill the sacred dream of sending heavily armed men to Mars (or whatever) pretend to a topicality that might give the package some sort of socio-political relevance.

Perhaps it's just another demonstration of Sturgeon's Law: that 90% of everything is rubbish. Ergo, 90% of sercon fanzines are not worth the paper on which they're printed -- although, off the top of my

head, I can think of a surprisingly large number of good sercon fanzines published during the past thirty years: for example, John Bangsund's *Australian SF Review* in the '60s; Bruce Gillespie's *SF Commentary* in the '70s and '80s and his *Metaphysical Review* now; the Webb/Blackford/Foyster/Rousseau *Australian SF Review. Second Series* in the '80s; Jim Goddard's *Cypher* in the '70s; and Peter Weston's *Speculation* in the '60s and '70s. And there are probably several more that this rushed listing has overlooked or forgotten. (Although I didn't overlook the British SF Association's *Vector*, published on a semi-regular basis since the early sixties, which I omitted because some editorships have inevitably been less successful than others; ergo, the fanzine has not been consistently good.) The hallmark of all these publications has been (and, in the case of those still published, remains) *discrimination*: the ability to tell the good from the bad, *and why*, and to spend time celebrating the good and showing why it works rather than waste space on the bad (except, occasionally, showing why it is bad and therefore why it should be avoided). What, otherwise, is the point of criticism? And why do so many of those who call themselves sercon fans have so much trouble emulating it?

Speculative answer: because many of them suspect they're simply not up to it -- either because they haven't read widely enough, or because they haven't got (and haven't the will to develop) the requisite critical faculties, or because they suffer from the inverted paranoid snobbery of those who have convinced themselves that all science fiction is good because it's so different from "the mainstream" that it must automatically be better, or because ... something. Either way, attacking other fans' preferences simply for not being the same as theirs -- and at the same time misrepresenting the reasons for those differences of preference by inventing an artificial sercon/fannish split -- strikes me as little more than an attempt to divert the argument away from themselves: as if by changing the subject they can persuade people to overlook their obvious inadequacies as writers and critics. But in the long run, no one can ever make themselves look good by setting out to tear down others; the attacks will eventually begin to pall, and the attackers will then be faced with demonstrating what it is they can do which is so much better than their so-called opponents. Most of those who call themselves sercon fans seem never to grasp this point; in consequence, they merely compound their lack of discrimination and critical judgement with their sour prejudice against those who have it and are not afraid to display it. Which is not something I had hitherto suspected of Frohvet.

After all, it's quite possible to be both a sercon fan and a fannish fan: to discuss fan history (or

denounce it as little better than hero-worship and anecdotalised chronology -- but that's another story) and to write incisive book reviews. In my case, I edited a reviews magazine for the BSFA for six years, and still write reviews for the BSFA; but does this make me exclusively a sercon fan? Clearly not -- otherwise why would I be on the mailing lists of so many fanzines which contain not a sercon word from one year to the next?

Still, only those who trumpet their status as sercon fans can explain why they hold the anti-fannish views they do. Perhaps they should be encouraged to explain them in more detail, so that we can see whether they are actually the critics they think they are -- and although that may sound close to setting out to tear them down, the fact remains that unless and until they do learn to discriminate they will continue to be spurned by those of us who do.

I'm too restricted in my SF reading these days to qualify as a sercon fan, but I do enjoy a good discussion of the merits of the genre. Discriminating tastes, I must insist, differ -- thus my near-worship of Phil Dick and Ray Lafferty may impress another fan as baffling foolishness while his genuflection towards the works of Larry Niven or Jerry Pournelle could make me cringe. I don't mind that: its scope is what makes SF fun. And what pray tell is the matter with instinctive reactions to a work of fiction?

Sheryl Birkhead
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Once again, a hefty issue. I suspect that when the statistics are released after the Hugos that you will find **Chall** continues to hang in there and edge upwards.

We missed the ballot by six votes -- but look at you! You (and Peggy Ranson) came within two nominations of making the short list!

I'd like to see the cover in a bit heavier stock so it resists "damage," but that's a minor notation and, in the long run, will add weight and increase the postage.

Rick Brandt is a good person -- 'nuff said. Maybe someday I'll go on line, but if that happens, it is still far in the future.

From the Hugo nomination list for Fan Artist -- any idea who Freddie Bauer is? I've heard several rumblings, but not from anyone who actually knows who the artist is.

Eve Ackerman is lucky -- usually an increased appetite, weight gain, and increased fluids (in and out) go along with steroids. I'm told this is a steroid euphoria, but I have no idea about that. Glad she's back to feeling human.

Arthur Hlavaty is a fine fanwriter -- but to win

a Hugo, I presume he needs (ahem) more exposure. I don't know how extensive his mailing list is for **Derogatory Reference** but I don't know when I last saw his writing elsewhere.

Ken Cheslin's reprints *are* terrific!

I enjoyed **MSFire** -- and even if the whole staff was made up of pe names, that in itself is fannish! I hope Lloyd Daub puts out his own zine!

Karen Johnson won the FAAN Award for new fanned this year at Corflu.

Deservedly.

Zines -- I get 20/104 [of those reviewed], or about 20% -- which is good for zine pubbing health (i.e., there are more zines than ever out there).

I'm not sure about the process for the commemorative stamps -- there is a *standard* process for suggestions from the "public" and I'm not sure if the SF "group" suggestions are considered that.

Adolescence is the pits -- I doubt I need to expound on that or explain that I was *not* a cheerleader. I'd rather not be reminded of it -- yet I see teens now who seem to *love* their times.

Howard DeVore
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Your latest issue triggered some memories, starting with the piece on Willy Ley at Detention in 1959. In 1959 Willy was a consultant for a model company that made space stations, vehicles etc. and we [the Detention committee] intended to use Willy to get publicity.

We worked a three-cornered deal with J.L. Hudson Co., Detroit's biggest store. We would provide an autograph session with various writers, and J.L. Hudson would give us a front window display for thirty days. We'd also provide promotion for the model companies and they would distribute flyers about the convention to every model shop in 3, 4 states. Everything fell apart!

The manager of the Hudson bookstore said his last autograph sessions had drawn about six people and he spent the day apologizing to authors. He backed out and canceled the display. Willy would be interviewed on the 11 o'clock TV news, so we reminded him "It's the Pick Fort Shalby hotel; mention it as often as possible." We took Willy to the TV station and he sat in the waiting room. Twenty minutes before the news broadcast, some bastard in the Pontiac police station admitted "I'm the one that shot the cop!" Do you think they still wanted to interview Willy? They thanked Willy and sent him back to the hotel.

Our display at J.L. Hudson's was canceled so it did not include stacks of the boxes of models (I think

maybe they were Revell models). The model company did not put up posters in all the model shops but they did send their promotion man to Detroit and he and his girl friend got a free weekend on the company expense account. He set up a display of maybe 200 boxes and posters in the lobby of the hotel.

So, it's Monday afternoon and I'm in the lobby, the promotion man stopped to thank me and say Goodbye. The display was still there and I asked him what he was going to do about the display. He explained that the top ten boxes actually had models in them, the others were just empty boxes and he was going to leave them -- if I wanted them I could help myself. I stacked the top ten boxes under my arm and passing fans asked what the company was going to do with the models.

I explained that the company was giving up the models, if you want some just take them. I went off to my room leaving fans grabbing stacks of them! This might be one of the reasons why I was known as **Big Hearted Howard** in those days.

I've greatly enjoyed "The Postal Zone"; it triggers memories. In 1964 I took a job at the P.O. as a clerk. I was going to spend the winter inside where it was nice and warm, then in the spring I would go back to construction work. For the first year or so it was less than pleasant but by working tremendous overtime I was making a decent living and then I started working as I pleased and I wound up spending twenty years there, retiring in 1988.

I've always maintained that if you stood up to them and fought them you could windup the winner. I did my work well and simply refused to do some of the stupid things they tried. Oh, it didn't always work but eventually they learned that firing me would be more trouble than it was worth and mostly they simply ignored me and let me do my work.

About 1970 I had 3 days training in bulk mail, then the man in charge of the job was loaned to Detroit for a couple of weeks and I was put on the job till he got back. He never did come back and I was forced to learn the job because no one else in Dearborn knew anything about it. Eventually someone with seniority wanted the job and they had to give it to him, so I had to train him and he got it. The problem was that he was an alcoholic and they never knew if he would show up. If I didn't see him in the office I would simply punch that time card and start working. Eventually the foreman would see me working there and ask who authorized the higher pay? I'd tell him that I'd authorized it because I wasn't going to wait 3 hours and then try to catch up on the work. Eventually they all got used to the idea that I did what I wished but the work did get done and they didn't have to answer to the postmaster.

At least once Art called from the doctor's

office, saying the doctor said he had to take off 2 days sick leave (you could hear the band playing in the background). He took 10 days sick leave and no one asked me a thing about it. The Superintendent had once been a close friend so they let him finish out his last four years and retire and I was the babysitter. I should have then got the job but Stanley wanted it because it would add \$15 per month to his retirement and he would do anything to get the money.

So, the union insisted that Stanley get the job although he was incompetent and was afraid to bend any rule even slightly. He was deadly afraid a postal inspector would find that he'd broken some rule and fire him, he needed 3 years to retirement. In one case he held up 100,000 pieces of first class mail (from Ford Motor Co.) for a minor technicality. The Superintendent called me to his office asked what the trouble was. I told him and he asked if I could send the mail out. I said "Joe, I can find a rule in the postal manual that allows me to do anything I want, but don't you ask me how I did it." Stanley went to lunch, I punched my card and sent the mail out.

One time the printer brought over about 100,000 copies of the Ford Motor stockholder report. Stanley refused it and told the printer it had to be reprinted (cost maybe \$100,000). I explained to Stanley how this could be done legally but he did not understand it and again refused. I sent it out, the printer sent me a by-god *gallon* of Jack Daniels. If some supervisor gave me a stupid order I would tell them "Joe Bryan doesn't want me to do that. Why don't you call him?" Joe would tell them, "Look, Howard works for me. You take care of your people and leave Howard alone and let him do whatever he wants to." It doesn't take much of this to provide a cover.

Technically I reported to the floor foreman, the head of accounting and Joe Bryan. Early in the eighties we got a new head of accounting, a young black woman from Detroit who had used affirmative action to cover her own incompetence. Management in Dearborn was almost all white and they were afraid of her and she instituted a reign of terror. She tried to look good by writing up nasty reports on everyone under her, but I was already eligible for retirement and could leave at any time and we had many fights. I would have retired but would not be run off any job. Stanley had retired.

Now, only two of us knew the job and the other man was going to Hawaii for five weeks of vacation. I had told Gwen that eventually I had to have a prostate operation "I'll let you know when the doctor schedules it." One Friday morning I told her that the doctor had ordered me to be at Oakwood Hospital at 10 AM Monday -- one hour after the other man caught his plane for Hawaii. Later Joe came to my office saying

that I was entitled to all the sick leave I needed but it would help the scheduling if they had some idea how long I would be gone and I told him that I had 1200 hours of sick leave and I was sure I would not use it all up. He looked at me and said, "Now, it's your turn to screw her?" and I replied, "You watch me Joe". I spent 3 days in the hospital, then drove myself home, stopping at two garage sales on the way. I then spent 5 weeks recuperating, watching cartoons and going to garage sales. Meantime she'd transferred two people from the midnight shift and paid them overtime for five weeks to handle the job I'd been doing alone. A month later I told her that I'd forgotten that I was scheduled for two



weeks vacation but had used sick leave for my recuperation. You could not carry over more than six weeks vacation from year to year. No matter what the emergency they cannot refuse to let you use up any excess. *Nobody* is allowed to use vacation time during the month of December. However during that December I would work two days, then I'd be off for five days and the next week I would do the same thing. The word went around the P.O. "Howard is giving Gwen one final screwing for Christmas." I'd finally gotten her off my back. I retired the following summer simply because I'd decided I had had enough.

As I mentioned Dearborn management was afraid of her but 3 months after I retired Detroit sent a team of accountant inspectors to Dearborn to investigate her. They came in at 10 AM and at 3 PM gave her a choice. Take a job as a bottom level clerk on the midnight shift in Detroit or be fired. You see management in Detroit was black and they were *not* afraid of her. She was an alcoholic and had been covering her mistakes for four years by faking figures. If she got \$6,000 income from window sales but needed seven thousand for the bank deposit, she only put in 6 grand but changed the figures to show she had deposited seven thousand.

I could do several more pages on such things but doubt that you have room to run this anyway. Last week was my 74th birthday and one of my daughters gave me a T-shirt. In bold letters it says CRAZY

ENOUGH FOR A POST OFFICE JOB.

I have my own bulk mail permit for my own use. It is Permit #1 and as I tell people WHEN I WORKED THERE I WAS NUMBER ONE AND I'M STILL NUMBER ONE.

I intend to wear the shirt every time I go to the P.O.

I don't think you want me on a jury. Twenty years ago I was. Old man on his way to work lightly struck a car, so the injured sued the insurance co. It was obvious that he wanted money and was a deadbeat himself. I tried to declare him innocent but the others wouldn't do for that. Sleazy lawyer suggested "at least \$100,000." At 3 PM the judge sent us home. Next morning I had two packs of cigs and 3 books on the table and started arguing "Give the lazy bum five dollars." Finally they settled on \$14 G's and I went along. Later the insurance lawyer gave me the details he couldn't present in court. Four docs, four lawyers etc. and he still hadn't paid the original \$10 doctor bill after 12 years. I told him I didn't want to give anything and was sorry he got 14 G's. Lawyer was happy, he'd offered \$40g's and the man had turned it down. If you want an article I can do one someday showing what a SOB I can be.

I'd never believe it.

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Just in case you have not caught on, the reason the USPS makes such a fuss about sick leave is money. Just money. Postal workers get 13 days of sick leave a year. Depending on our length of service, we get 13, 20, or 26 days of regular leave per year. If you retire with regular leave on the books, the Post Office must pay you for the unused regular leave. If you retire with sick leave on the books, it all reverts to the Post Office and you get nothing. If you have a lot of sick leave when you retire, the Post Office gets a nice windfall and you still get nothing.

And that is the real reason why the PO does not want you to use sick leave when you are sick, just regular leave. So you are "encouraged" to use regular leave when sick. Not that this applies in my case, since I go on a lot of vacations and rarely have much regular leave on the books. In my case, I have had no trouble ...yet! ... when using sick leave when I am really sick.

Turning 50 on 20 July? I turn 55 on 4 October! I guess the best way to cope is to look at all the money you are going to save. It used to be that senior discounts started at age 65. But in many cases that has been lowered to 60, 55 and even 50. Heck, you can join

AARP at age 50! 10% discounts at Kentucky Fried Chicken and other fast food places! See, it is not all doom and gloom. And there is always Viagra...

As always, Eve Ackerman's article was a hoot. However, I am not sure I understand that bit about mono was something most people got in their 20s from "hedonistic lifestyle". As far as I know, I have never had mono, in spite of a lifestyle many people (including fans) would not approve of. Then again, maybe I did get a mild case and just confused it with a cold. Although if I did get mono, and stayed home, do you think I might have an honest chance to eliminate that huge pile of unanswered mail?

Kurt Erichsen
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You remark about turning 50 ... It occurred to me, when you and I first "met," I was about 17, making you 23, or 135% of my age. By all rights, that should make you 67 today. I think you should just be glad that your rate of aging is slowing down.

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Thanks for **Chall #9**. Herewith, for your delectation, a LOC -- of sorts.

I was going to start with some commentary on your editorial. However, strangeness set in here. You see, I normally read zines whilst sitting in my recliner. The computer sits about 3 feet from this recliner; so, when I find something in a zine about which I want to comment, I just move from the recliner to the chair in front of the computer and type it into whatever letter-of-comment template I have on the screen. Well, many things in your editorial section had me almost wanting to say something about what you had written, but I just could not think of exactly what it was I actually wanted to say in reply. After I finished what you had written, all that I could think to write about what you had written was the above non-germane paragraph. Maybe I should do something else for a while until I can get my brain in gear.

Robert Whitaker Sirignano writes about assholes in the Post Office. I worked at the Post Office about 40 years ago - I guess that it was either different then or that I did not work there long enough to experience the kinds of problems he mentions. Not that it was any great shakes as a place to work, but nothing I saw was as bad as he mentioned. The major griping amongst the clerks was the mail counting which started a bit after I started my job. The Post Office told us that they were "just trying to get some information about

how fast the mail was being sorted" and "we are not going to set any standards and nobody is going to be judged by this." Right. Some time after the "trial runs" the Post Office instituted minimum sorting speed. At this far remove, I do not remember if I had any problem making the minimum acceptable speed. I left the Post Office because I was offered an opportunity to open a retail tobacco store.

Um, um, um -- your review of *No Award*. Well, Guy, I think that my creeping with your statement about the zine, "Great issue of a zine that sings with the vitality and verve of LASFS," is that I see no great vitality and verve with that club. Sure, I go to the club every Thursday, but mostly just to talk to Pelz, Glycer and a few of the other members whom I know -- I usually get there early and leave when the meeting begins. The vitality and verve which you find in the zine is that of the wonderful local contributors to the zine. The overwhelming majority of the club members are club (and con) fans and express no interest in zines. Back when I first joined LASFS one of the major activities of the members was putting together (and arguing about) APA-L every Thursday evening. Nowadays, with many more members than in those days 24 years ago, APA-L is a thin shadow of those days, and LASFAPA has only 3 local members.

Anyway, the riot described in Ed Green's piece was in Los Angeles, not Texas (as you write). There really is a difference 'twixt the two places, there really is.

In your review of *Opuntia*, you ask, "Who knows what 'pounce' is?" If you pronounce that "pounce" (with the double o being pronounced like a long u), pounce is a bag of rosin-like material used to "set" drawings prepared by draftsmen. And I have also set type by hand. And also built a crystal radio set. Nowadays, progress in technology has probably made more words and terms obsolete, faster, than at any other time in history. In a sideways way this sort of leads into a gripe of mine -- that of the changing of the meaning of venerable old words by the ignorami who create computer things. I am not so much writing about the non-helpfulness of those who write those abominations which mislead you when you are trying to learn a piece of software (and that topic can get me going for way too many pages). No. I am talking about the fools who have so twisted the meaning of words like "format" that I have trouble making some people understand what I am talking about when I use it in its original meaning. "Oh - you mean *layout*!" No, damn it, I do not mean layout, I mean format, which is absolutely not the same damn thing, you ignorant lout.

Sorry about the rant. Well, not really.

In your mention of scanner mis-scans you remember one: "Fart of a fiendish scheme." This



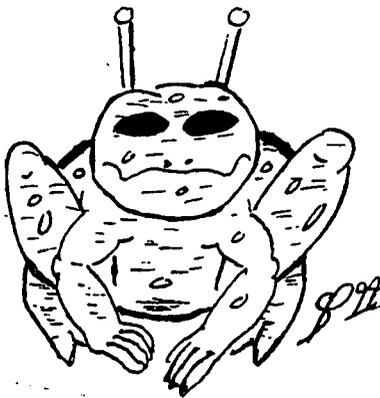
reminds me of a flyer which we were we were sorting one day back when I worked at the Post Office. The flyer was for a small market; amongst the other things it advertised was "Chicken Farts." As I remember it, nobody brought this to the attention to any management type person and it got distributed.

Gary R. Robe writes, "Technology can make things possible, but it never makes them simpler." Wrong! Technology *may* make things more complicated for those who produce the products, but it often makes things much easier for the user. I would never have gone back to producing a mimeo'd zine had not reinvented mimeography. The new machines are much more complicated than the old ones (and I have used both) and tremendously more expensive. Still, the new machines are more hassle-free than the old ones and have all kinds of bells and whistle which give them more versatility than the ubiquitous instant-print machines. They are *very* easy to use. And, turning to computer technology, computers are much more user-friendly than they used to be. Nowadays, to print your zine all you have to do is either point-and-click or use control-P on your keyboard. You used to have to type a line of code to get your printer to work -- which meant lots and lots of memorization, all of which is no longer necessary when one is end-using a word processing programme. Point made. Still, Gary produced an interesting article -- and, at the least, gave proof that paint developing technology is more complicated than it used to be.

You need advice on how to turn 50? Easy. Pay not much attention to it. Turning 50 was not a problem for me -- it was just another day in my life. The only birth date which has had any significant meaning for me in the past few decades has been the one I "celebrate" next year, my 65th. Actually, I *may* have to work for a year or so after my 65th birthday so that I can retire without having to work part time. However, I have

gotten so burnt out with the daily grind of work every day that I just may retire from full time work when I turn 65 next April and fiddle-faddle around with some part time work to supplement my retirement funds and Social Security.

Milt Stevens asks, "What is the weirdest thing you do that you could discuss in a family apa?" and then goes on to say that he eats mayonnaise on french fries. My own weird food things are probably not all that weird. I like vanilla ice cream on pancakes (something I picked up in Australia) and I like thousand island dressing on baked potatoes. Actually, what is probably my weirdest food thing is that I like to put a dish of vanilla ice cream into the microwave for 30 seconds before I eat the ice cream. This only works with high fat ice cream - to me this wonderful stuff tastes even better cool than it does cold. But, speaking of french fries (as did Milt), I prefer them prepared in a way seldom found in this day of crisp and tasteless chips -- like Bob Shaw, I like them soft, greasy, and green.



Guy, in a comment to Curt Phillips you state that you believe that net fanac will eventually do in print fanzines. I certainly hope that this comes to pass after my time (if it comes to pass at all). I may very well be one of the last fans to get on-line (and I *do* intend to get on-line one of these years), but this dinosaur just cannot see giving up paper fandom. It is not just that this book reader finds the feel of paper in hand more convenient and pleasant reading than looking at words on a screen (even though I love producing zines on my computer). No, it is more that, unless postage costs do me in, I truly enjoy the production of a paper zine and I like what I produce to be something that I, and like-minded people, can have, hold, cherish, and collect. Knowing me, I know that I will truly enjoy what I find on line when I eventually get there. I also know that this book and fanzine collecting person cannot be happy unless he is producing paper zines. At least, if I find I cannot afford to produce zines, I also like letterhacking. Well, if I am

reduced to letterhacking, you will be getting some very fancy LOCs as the graphics experimentation I use for my zines will just have to have another outlet. Of course, you (and the other faneds) will have to be still producing zines.

Gene Stewart, on another tentacle, has entirely misconstrued the whole Old Wave/New Wave controversy. Many of us on the Old Wave side were not decrying the New Wave for introducing good writing into SF as any objective reading of Old Wave would discover good writing there. Maybe not enough of it and not everywhere, but many of those called "Old Masters" were called that for very good reason -- they wrote good fiction. No, many of us focused our attacks on the New Wavers because they were concentrating on the frippery exterior of the frosting rather than on the solid substance of the cake itself. In other words, the New Wavers were forgetting that the thing that drew so many SF readers to the field was the very stuff of story-telling -- the plot, the story itself. Too much of New Wave writing was just writers playing with words and totally forgetting to tell a story. But I argued this for years in *Holier Than Thou* and I really do not want to get into all of this again here.

Well, Guy, I gotta admit it. As others have written in their LOCs, you are one of your better contributors. Hell, in your writing, you almost make lawyers seem human!

Let's not get carried away!

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Thanks for sending along the copy of *Challenger 9* and for the good words about *Kronos*. My favorite illo is the one by Steve Stiles above the editorial. Possibly illustrative of how the net can suck you in???

Looking at the people who have recently passed reminds some of us of just how quickly the years are passing by. At least Buck -- as illustrated by his letter, which led the LOC section -- totally had his formidable wits about him when he slipped away from this big blue swirling marble.

On Curt Phillips' "One Small Step", I really don't know who is hardier -- or a little crazy: the men in their woolens or the ladies in their multitude of heavy petticoats during high summer. Sometimes I volunteer for our state museum and once during a special event I had the chance to help one of the staff members, who also partakes in re-enactment's with her husband, get dressed. I pretty much decided then the only way I would ever don something like that in Nashville heat

would be with a portable air conditioner underneath the clothing.

Just hope Eve Ackerman doesn't go through another experience like that. Good to hear she is on the road to recovery. It is really a lot of fun when you have some type of mystery infliction and passed back and forth between specialists.

I can also attest to prednisone's benefits and to its affect on mood swings. Prednisone is sorta like having Guido for a friend. You really hope you don't have to see Guido to often but when you are in a tight spot you are really glad Guido is there for you even if Guido sometimes gets on your nerves.

Guido was the name given me in junior high school Spanish class. Thanks for the tolerance.

Once after a bad spell of inflammation the doctor after a first thing in the morning visit started me on a double dose of prednisone. Even though I really hadn't had a lot of sleep the night before (I spent the night dozing on the couch, while in between I tried to lift my spirits by watching MST3K during bouts of painful wakefulness) I decided with that large a dose of prednisone there is no way I could sleep; so I decided to just go into work. Well let's just say I was a little grumpier than usual. Sorta snitty even. One of the guys finally came over and asked if I was on "that drug" again. When I told him I was and on a double dose he said something like "Woman, you need to put up a sign warning us when the docs do something like that."

"Cheap Place to Live" was amusing in more ways than one and sad too. So much better to settle differences with fire hoses instead of guns. And so many believe the 50's were bland and dull.

On **Mimosa** coming to an end ... the Lynchi (at MidWestCon) said there would be at least two more issues. After that it is a little uncertain. One of the main reasons is Richard's quest to introduce capitalistic business opportunities to the former Soviet satellites and all the travel and time it eats up. Also, Mike Resnick was bemoaning his lack of Hugos [*kiddingly, I'm sure, since he has four of them*] while commenting on the Lynches' wealth of them. Richard then pointed out that when Resnick wins his Hugo it will increase his earnings, while their winning Hugos just costs them more ... because then *everyone* wants **Mimosa**.

Roger Waddington
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You won't believe how glad I am to see this issue of **Challenger**; yes, even more than usual. Recently John D. Owen, of fond memory, sent a postcard with the news that he was relaunching his

fanzine **Shipyard Blues** in electronic form, exclusively on the Net; and here's me without a browser or even a phone line to my name! I don't suppose he's even the first either, and he certainly won't be the last; but that doesn't do much for the rest of us dinosaurs, does it? Well, I'm not quite in the primeval swamps; as evidence, the fact that I'm tapping this out on my computer, but the next step is still as far beyond me as the Moon. I have the disadvantage of being unemployed, and so surviving on the bare minimum (explaining my computer, that was bought back in 1990 and with 512k capacity wasn't even state-of-heart then). And being without the wherewithal to have a telephone installed or (when they arrive) a TV with Internet access, it's more an academic question to me whether the Internet will be all-triumphant.

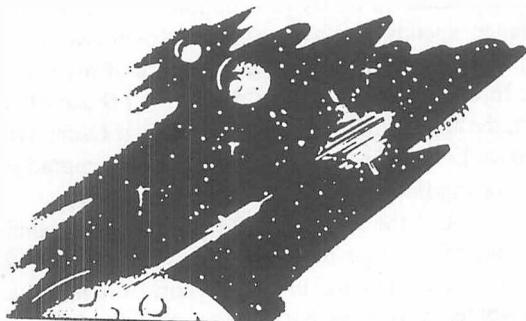
Mind you it's very debatable, even if I could afford all the bells and whistles, whether I would log on. Even with all the time available, unemployment's greatest benefit, I do try to keep things in some sort of balance, spending an average of just over two hours a day in front of a keyboard; and in spite of my resolve, the Internet would surely take over. All those sites to visit, the information I could gather; was it Oscar Wilde who said, "I can resist everything; except temptation"? I'm praying that I never get the opportunity.

And then, I'm not so sure about proclaiming the end of the Age of Caxton (or Gutenberg); what about all the millions, in Third World countries and elsewhere, who don't have access to computers and probably never will? There'll still be a need for information in the form of paper and print; and what about the ease and availability of books, accessible without a power source or a screen; or even - more subjectively -- the sheer pleasure of handling books? Not to mention all the memories that can come with them, my particular case in point; my bookshelves are a biography in themselves, marking every point in my life. Some have been with me from childhood; others are the very first paperbacks I ever bought; there's a handful



acquired in my London years when I first started work together with my very first SF magazines; all just a few stations of the way.

It's why I can look on the race to be the first to develop the electronic book with equanimity; although with a small, nagging doubt. You see the one way I've been able to keep my books and bookbuying under control is that in this finite space (two-up, two-down) for every new book I buy, an old one has to go; usually off to one of the local charity shops. (Which is my main source in the first place.) Unfortunately, I've now reached the bedrock, and every book that's left in my collection is one which means something to me or marks a particular period in my life (see above) and I can't offload any more. So books that you could download, wipe when you've read them, and download some more, would be one solution. But I can't help thinking we already have a remarkably similar system; isn't it called the public library?



If I can look at it dispassionately, I'd say the case of Sara C is a prime example of the survival of the human spirit, the will to live; and Pittman, if there's any parallel, of the evil that's endemic in any human being. And also perhaps a sense of wonder, that you and your colleagues can deal with cases like this and not be changed.

Well, maybe not quite the same sense of wonder as with SF. I've been able to come a bit nearer to the legal system thanks to a spell on jury duty, although that must be over ten years ago; when they discharge the jury here, they really mean it as it's usually the one and only time for most people. (Although there's nothing to prevent us from coming back and watching proceedings from the public gallery.) And yet even before coming across science fiction, I had an interest in crime; both real and fictional. The real was mostly satisfied by the volumes of the **Famous British Trials** series, the fictional by a host of different authors; but somehow the reality never sank in, that here I was happily reading about the most atrocious things one human being could do to another and treating them as

entertainment. So why do we have this fascination, this obsession with the darker side of life? I've seen it described as just the enjoyment of a good puzzle; but my recent crime reading has been back over my Rex Stout collection, and there at least the puzzle element has long gone by now.

Fascinating glimpse given by Curtis Phillips into the world of the re-enactment societies. We have several over here, most in evidence on public holidays when they give displays; they cover most eras from the Roman legions through the Wars of the Roses up to our own Civil War. Of the latter, the Sealed Knot must be the most famous; though it's a curious thing, I've yet to find any societies for reenacting later events or periods past the Civil War. (That is, unless the WWII Military Vehicles Group can qualify.) I might be a prime target, as my interests lie as much in the past as well as in the future, but I'm not ready to join one of the societies; the main reason being that I would find it far too limiting to be confined to just one period, when the whole of history's there to be explored. Mine is an interest that can't be explained very well, either. I suppose it's a curiosity about those who lived and loved and knew the same landscape in the centuries before us; and the discovery that their lives were very like our own.

Some have their interest satisfied by historical novels; I like to go right back to the source, to the chronicles, diaries and letters that were written at the time. Not so much by the powerful and the famous — although as they were the only ones who could write in the earliest of centuries, they can't be avoided — but the more humble annals. One particular favourite is **The History of Myddle** by Richard Gough, so well-used now as to need replacing. He was writing in 1701 about his Shropshire village; he wasn't known outside it, but he left us his recollections of his own and the other families, and they're as real as if they were living today.

Short-term memory loss is something that's hardly worth bothering about (what was I saying?) unless you've left the gas on, but long term, i.e. holding on to family photos and the like is a different story; if we don't remember them, who will? My answer, faced with a similar problem, has been to write everything down, all that I can still remember. It really started when I realised that so many memories of childhood were slipping away from me, over the edge into oblivion, and they needed a rescue operation. In fact, I ended up with four periods of my life where the memories were disappearing; there was the childhood in a country village, the years at boarding school, the London years (I can share your title of A Cheap Place To Live, but not much else) and when we first moved to this present address.

I suppose a list of key words might have been sufficient, without any relevance or meaning but

providing instant recall to me alone; words such as Trex, Hanging Hill and pot eggs. However, faced with this user-friendly computer where I can edit away, alter and insert without a single sheet of paper being wasted, the writer in me couldn't resist the temptation to expand and polish those memories, and make them equally accessible to other people. Not that I was writing for anyone else, as I've no plans to publish or make them available elsewhere; just that they'll be found among my other papers after my demise, if my executors take the trouble to look through them rather than dump them in a skip. So now, I can happily lose all those memories, maybe make room for more, confident that they've been saved from oblivion.

Milt Stevens has to admit to putting mayonnaise on his French fries? He must have a Belgian branch in his family tree, as that's an accepted habit over there. Mind you, after the recent revelations about dioxins in their animal feed, I'm not at all surprised. What might be even more off-the-wall is one of those childhood memories; that, when faced with a hard-boiled egg, I used to scoop the yolk out and replace it with a spoonful of strawberry jam -- or jelly, as Americans insist. It wasn't that I didn't like the yolk, I always ate that as well; but I've yet to see any parallel elsewhere, outside pregnancy.

And I haven't yet descended to watching paint drying, though I'm sure I'll be better equipped to do so now, thanks to Gary Robe's article. My next best thing recently has been watching bees fly in and out of a hole in the ground; I've got it up to ten minutes, but after that my attention begins to wander. Although there's still a long way to go before I can match our patron saint; wasn't it St. Jerome K. Jerome who said, "I like work; I can sit and look at it for hours"?

Gene Stewart
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Nice semi-Medieval Celtic-flavored cover. The lute player looks lost in a moment of his own in the stress of her regard as the dancer with tambourine glances his way. Perhaps it's the net beneath her things. That they were a real couple is clear; great work, Diana Sharples.

Can't wait for the Chall web page, although it can never replace, only supplement, the hardcopy. The [Steve Stiles] illo on the editorial looks like something from Unknown, which isn't a bad reference, come to think of it.

Lincoln at Gettysburg by Garry Wills is an excellent book, one I devoured when it first hit trade pb. And yes, his thesis is presented convincingly. I've got some cousins who are Gettysburg re-enactors -- can

that be the term? -- so I'm pleased to read Curt Phillips' "One Small Step Across Time". It's the closest we can get to getting a real glimpse back in time, at least until physicists get off the pot and actually come up with time travel.

Did you catch the op-ed piece in the 5-30-99 New York Times, a black novelist's angry impressions of Gettysburg? Nothing but wrath and contempt -- not only for the Confederate dead, but the Southern living who had also come to visit. A guy whistling "Dixie" almost put him into apoplexy. He's lucky he wasn't there when I was.

Inge Glass does get around, and her concise reporting is a refreshing breeze.

As for "Sick Time", there are those who'd argue that it's sick *being* at work when there are so many more compelling things to do, like watch Win Ben Stein's Money or mow the curly larry (?).

Berkeley again -- just found our recently that the Cult, of which I'm a member, nastiest bastards in fandom and publishers of Fantasy Rotator, now in its 755th issue, is actually a dire plot hatched by the Barrington Hallers at Berkeley. And now we discover that GHLIII hails from there, too. Hm. Now we know why the cops targeted that school so intensively in the Flower Power days -- a hotbed of radical thinking, indeed.

By "the Barrington Hallers" you must mean Terry Carr and Ron Ellik, who lived at that magnificent dump on Dwight Way and published Fanac there in the '50s. I have quite a story to tell about my SFnal experiences at Barrington ... In fact, someone with more experience than I should pen a history of Berkeley fandom. It would rock the world.

One hell of a "Zine Dump", as usual. Is that SEX on page 33 [in Cara Sherman's illo]? If so, start a tradition. Any zine that reaches 33 pages must depict sex of some sort on page 33.

Cara -- a Kapa-Alphan, Mr. Miracle fan and trekkie -- drew that illo on stencil for me in 1974. Very nice girl and good artist. I'd love to find her again, hinthinthint.

Laura Modine sure knows how to dress. That picture was pure page 33 material.

Damn Gary Robe for having taken the eternal mystery out of watching paint dry. Now what am I going to do with my weekends?

David Drake is right to lament the lack of major SF editors working to bring us great short fiction, and right, too, in praising Gardner Dozois, who does a great job despite his inexplicable reluctance to publish any of my own brilliant stuff. A blindness many share, I might add ...

Ben Indick's experience of **Bleak House** by Charles Dickens differs from mine. It's one of my favorite Dickens, and I found it a breeze to read, compelling and amazing by turns, and often both. Dickens is my favorite writer, too, and not just because we share a birthday. Yes, I'm 187 years old.

Ben's response to **Trainspotting** underscores Dickens' adamant rejection of cynicism in literature. His books are about hope, about redemption however rare or difficult, and about altruism and all that is noble in the human spirit, and yet Dickens by no means left out the dark or bad side of things. As Ben says, read **Bleak House** as a lawyer for his description of Chancery and the Circumlocution Office. Also, **Hard Times** offers a scathing condemnation of the factory model of schooling that stings as sharply today as when it was written.

So, Ben, is your play Shavian? Dickensian? Or perhaps Indickian?

A multitude of cheers for the superb **Erg** covers. Jeeves is something, ain't he?

Gene Stewart's LOC was, as usual, almost identical to what I would have written.

Ed Meskys mentions Van Gogh having tinnitus. Hadn't heard that. Almost sounds like a joke in poor taste, doesn't it? What I've heard is that he cut off his ear and sent it to a local prostitute for some obscure romantic reason. Ah, young love ... or in his case, middle-aged love.

The world's oldest woman was once interviewed about her girlhood, when she worked as an attendant in her father's paint store, and she sold some materials to Vincent Van Gogh. She said he was dirty, rude, and stank of booze. Ah, but he was Vincent Van Gogh, they said. Ah, but I am 121 years old, she [might have] replied.

First let me say that your "On The Job" stuff is exceptionally well-written and compelling to read. You're in Ann Rule country. Publish a book already, GHLIII. The true-crime racks await.

Brian Bibb was a control freak thrust into a situation he couldn't control, so his last act of control was to kill. Hell yes he *chose* to do the crimes. It was pure volition, the imposition of will upon others. Small town boy overwhelmed by big city & culture shock? Yeah, that defense might have worked to mitigate sentence, but it wouldn't have gotten him off.

There was surprisingly little effort by the prosecution to get Bibb executed. For once, I think, those cynical and primarily political people were simply sickened by the case they had to present. The jury felt the same way; they didn't debate the penalty very long, nor try very hard for a consensus. They just wanted to distance themselves from sin and

sinner and get the hell out of there.

The three-strike rule is indeed an atrocity, and shames USA's ideals. All attempts to standardize the application of law crushes the individual, and for what? So we can put petty criminals in jail for life? Duh. You're right to blame fear — look at what overreaction and draconian measures the Columbine massacre is inspiring in schools across the country. Adding fear and pressure will only push more unstable kids in need of some help toward cracking violently.

Sara C's story is heartbreaking and she is the bravest of the brave. May she thrive.

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Thanks for **Challenger 9**. Quite the door stop, certainly compared to my zine (**The Kuarley Knews**).

TKK appears three times as often as Chall and is three times as skillful and friendly!

You should, of course, be more than willing to forgive the poor handwriting since I am still adjusting to writing with my left hand following that unfortunate incident you witnessed with the alligator in March. Seriously, though, I hope I didn't impugn your honor too much with my ATM story in the last **TKK**. It was too good to pass up.

At least I didn't get my hand caught in it!

The article on sick leave with the Postal Service is yet more examples of brain-dead management that seem to crop up more and more these days. I've been fortunate to avoid bosses that were that bad.

Having watched my great uncle battle the effects of Alzheimer's for nearly twenty years, I know it can be done. He swam almost everyday and was constantly taking classes. Unfortunately when he needed extensive treatment for cancer he rapidly deteriorated within weeks.

Someone must have forgotten their history since I clearly recall that Sputnik crashed back to earth on Gilligan's Island during one of their regrettable **Return to ...** movies.

The Mammoth Cave dining room/picnic area is in the Snowball room. You can either carry your own lunch or buy one their. See <http://www.mammoth.cave.national-park.com/hike.htm> for more information.

I don't understand Brad Foster's comments on his sole issue of **The Texas SF Inquirer**. While it certainly was not in the style of Denton or Slate I thought it was a fine issue. Lots of nice artwork and good content. I'm sorry to hear that the powers that be did not appreciate it and have since let the zine

completely die (as far as I can tell).

Robert Lichtman
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Challenger no. 9 plopped into my mailbox the first part of the month, but has had to wait for me to publish my own ish before I could turn my attention to it. But before I get to that, I wanted to thank you for the belated copy of **Challenger** no. 8 you kindly sent my way, which was much enjoyed but hey, a LOC on two 100-page fanzines is a little more than I can manage tonight.

Turning to no. 9 ("... no. 9 ... no. 9 ..."), that's a wonderful editorial heading Steve Stiles provided you. The cover is also pretty eye-catching -- is that a self-portrait of Ms. Sharples [*the artist*] holding the tambourine? [*No, but except for the pointy eers it's the spittin' image of a Jefferson Parish Assistant D.A.*] Your editorial says the models were "a genuine couple," but question arises, was she half of it? Anyway, congratulations on some nice artwork scattered throughout this issue, with which I'm definitely including the item on page 44.

An interesting reading list you present here. Largely I don't read much fiction (let alone science fiction), but recently I found a paperback copy of Fredric Brown's 1951 crime novel, **The Far Cry**, and went through it pretty quickly. As with all of Brown's fiction, I found myself enjoying it all the way through, although I thought the deus ex machina ending rather contrived. But most of what I've read lately has been non-fiction. One particularly enjoyed book was Richard Longstreth's wordily-titled **The Drive-In, the Supermarker, and the Transformation of Commercial Space in Los Angeles: 1941-1951**. This is the much-anticipated (at least by me) sequel to his equally long-titled 1997 work, **City Center to Regional Mall: Architecture, the Automobile, and Retailing in Los Angeles, 1920-1950**. [W]hat these books did for me was to explain a lot of the urban landscape in which I grew up (I was 7 in 1951) as well as provide hundreds of wonderful photographs and drawings of said landscape.

It turns out that I lived as a child near a pioneering shopping center, the Broadway-Crenshaw Center, now well within the boundaries of "South Central" but then in a sort of urban suburbia and the place where my parents did almost all of their shopping. Longstreth, an architect who's made the study of retail space his specialty, writes much more interestingly than one would think, and I recommend both of these books highly, particularly the earlier one.

Another recently-read work was the final

collection of Allen Ginsberg's poetry, **Death and Me**, which includes a moving foreword by fellow poet Robert Creeley and other writing about Ginsberg by people close to him in his final years. Returning to Fredric Brown once again, I recently put out some big bucks to get a copy of the unexpurgated edition of his semi-autobiographical novel, **The Office**, published in a limited edition about a decade ago by Dennis McMillan. The edition incorporates material, mostly sexual in nature, though innocuously so by "contemporary standards," cut out of the original 1958 publication by Dutton. A highly enjoyable read!

I heard Ginsberg read in NY in the early '70s and a decade earlier had seen him manning the cash register at SF's City Lights Bookstore. The hip kids in my high school group exulted over him, but I didn't know who he was.

Speaking of highly enjoyable reading, the top piece in this issue from my point of view is Curt Phillips' "One Small Step Across Time." I already knew about Civil War Re-enactor Fandom, of course, from my time spent in the South in the '70s, but I've never before been just one paper thickness away from meeting one in person. The experience was most interesting. Curt writes about the amount of time and money he devotes to this hobby, which to me compares to the avid

That's not what I said...
er...wrote.



convention fan who's also into costumery in just about every way. His confession that he's slipped away from SF cons to re-enactment activities I compare to Harry Warner Jr.'s confession of leaving a worldcon to attend a baseball game. Even his concluding remarks -- that timebinding works, despite the truth of the situation as regards the actual Civil War (the deaths, the broken families, etc.) -- ring true. Thanks to Curt for sharing this with us.

John Berry's little piece on Willy Ley was most illuminating. I used to have Ley's **Conquest of Space**, illustrated by Bonestell, and in a way it was one of the books that led me towards science fiction and, in a strange way, toward fandom. I'd better explain that last. I discovered fandom through Robert Bloch's "Fandora's Box" column in the October 1958 **Imagination**, but

what attracted my attention to a particular issue was the headline on the front cover. "Special Science Feature: What We Will Find on Venus." I'd been primed to be captivated by that article by Ley's book, and indeed when I read it I found much of interest. It wasn't until a few weeks later that Bloch's column caught my eye and led to my sending away for my first few fanzines.

I also liked John's airmail stickers elsewhere in the issue. I remember these being on some letters I've received from him over the years, but hadn't known he created them.

I remember reading Eve Ackerman's article when it first appeared in her SFFA zine, and rereading it her gave me the same combination of compassion and queasiness I experienced then. Sure, she lost ten pounds, but what a way to go about it!

Your byline on "A Cheap Place to Live: Tales from the Berkeley Co-ops" somewhat confuses the fact that much of the article was actually written, or spoken, by Dan Eisenstein. Being a frequent visitor to and former resident of Berkeley myself, of course I have good mental images of these particular co-op houses. My oldest son Ben, who went to UC Berkeley, lived in one of the USCA houses for several years. The particulars of her experience there may have varied somewhat from Dan's accounts, but the *spirit* was the same. Thanks for your lengthy survey of recent fanzines, and most particularly for your praise of *Fanorama*. I don't know if it was "the fanzine of the year" -- I think I'd reserve that for Bill Bowers' epic, 150-page *Outworlds* No. 70 -- but I'm happy I was able to get Walt Willis' *Nebula* columns back into print. As for your desire for the dates of the columns, that can more or less be figured out by the clues in my opening remarks -- that *Nebula* began in the fall of 1952 and folded with the June '59 issue -- and the context of what Walt's writing about.



You mention that *Kerles'* 450-copy circulation is "enormous to me," which raises the question of what *Challenger's* circulation might be. To answer for my own fanzine, the last seven issues of *Trap Door* have had a circulation ranging between 225 to 230, and all but No. 16 (the Boggs/Burbee memorial issue) have had a press run of 250. That's enough copies for me!

I print 250-300 copies, enough to cover fanzine trades, contributors, my apas, girls I want to seduce and BNFs I want to brown-nose.

The "unfamiliar names" in Bill Danner's *Stefantasy* letter column aren't unfamiliar to me. Besides being in our fandom, Bill has also long been active in "mundane" *ajay*, a field with which I had my own flirtation back in the early '60s, so most of the names are quite familiar to me. I find *Stef* a more pleasant bridge between the two communities.

The late Buck Coulson's account of visiting his father, whose "mind went before his body did," reminded me of my last couple visits to my own late father. During the course of a conversation, I would be me, a friend of his from his Navy days in the '30s (who I recognized from the tales he used to tell me when I was a kid) and then me again, all without missing a beat. I also got to go through my parents' stuff while both were still alive, because they became too out of it to continue to live on their own in Los Angeles and my brother brought in round-the-clock caretakers. I came away with boxes full of family photos dating back to the '20s, documents, 55 years of back-and-forth birthday and anniversary cards between my mother and father (you know those huge cards you see in card stores and you wonder who would buy them?-- my parents, for one), and much, much else -- including all my *Oz* books, some miscellaneous SF books and mags I'd left when I moved out in 1965, and even my paperback copy of *Pornography and the Law*.

Regarding John Berry's comments to Harry Warner Jr. about not worrying about succumbing to senile dementia, and John's observations about himself and his wife's mental acuity, I've been reading lately that one of the factors helping to prevent dementia and Alzheimer's is continuing to be mentally active. Since I've never read of a fan sinking into Alzheimer's or dementia *unless* as the result (in the latter case) of a series of strokes, I think that one could say that fandom is, indeed, a way of life, or at least an avenue to mental health.

Lloyd Penney writes, "I did know the name Robert A. W. Lowndes, although I never had the pleasure of meeting the former editor of *Fantasy and Science Fiction*." Just in case he thinks Doc was the former editor of *F&SF*, let me chime in that it was Tony Boucher who held that honor, followed by Avram

Davidson and then a host of others. Lowndes edited a whole series of mostly second-string SF magazines: **Future Science Fiction**, **Science Fiction Quarterly**, **Dynamic Science Fiction**, **Science Fiction Stories**, **Original Science Fiction**, and a bunch of others. Considering the minuscule budgets he had to work with, he did amazingly well with these magazines, and one must give him extra credit for including a fan column wherever possible.

Julius Schwartz
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John Berry's bit about Willy Ley in **Challenger** #9 reminds me of my favorite Willy Ley story:

At a Hugo banquet several years ago, Willy was asked, "How do you pronounce your name, 'Villy' or 'Willy' Ley?"

He stood on a chair, raised his arms aloft and in a booming voice responded: "'Villy Ley' or 'Willy Ley' ... vot's the difference?"

Illustrating this section of Challenger: Steven Fox, Alexis Gilliland, William Rotsler, Joe Mayhew, anonymous, Scott Patri, R'yann dar Korreti, Sheryl Birkhead, Terry Jeeves, Teddy Harvia, Peggy Ranson.

Let's not forget



Bryan Norris
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A MOMENT FOR WALT

It was not unexpected news that Walt Willis, dean of fan writers, had passed away, but it still hurts. No, I never met him, but I'd read **Warhoon**, and **Fanorama**, and those supremely decent and encouraging LOCs I've received ever since starting **Challenger**. That encouragement meant a lot. Now to be worthy of it ... and to pass it along.

As I said for Lynn Hickman, I say for Walt: let's do it like Willis.

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Thanks, people.



You are damned for all time.

You will suffer unspeakable agony. Your flesh will be seared, and your eyes doused with kerosene.

Are there any questions?

THE ZINE DUMP

Let's begin with a letter ...

"Just a note to let you know the reason you haven't received **Stefantasy** #134 is that it isn't. Started it just after Xmas and then we had two very cold spells that made the cellar unlivable. When it warmed up a bit it was too late to get an issue out on schedule, but worse, I'd found I'd slowed down so much that transferring a stick of type was slow and hazardous to the type. So I took the hint and called it quits after 55 years.

"The shop is to go to a nephew who, like me, had a high school printing course, and he has said he might resume publication of **Stef** so who knows. He's an artistically-inclined guy who makes beautiful wood-carvings of old western figures, so there's some possibility he might make woodcuts for illustrations.

"I miss working with the type, but heaving all those cases and chases is just too much for an old wreck of 93. Maybe Tom, when, as and if, will bring new life to the shop. Who knows?

Sincerely,
William M. Danner,
 R.D. 1
 Kennerdell PA 16374"

Zines listed in italics were not received since Chall #9, but for reasons of my own I felt like mentioning them again. All are available for trade if not otherwise noted. This issue's cutoff date: Halloween!

Aces #12-13 / Paul McCall, 5801 W. Henry St., Indianapolis IN 46241 / pmccall@indy.net / \$10, no subs, limited trades / Such is McCall's commitment to quality that he republished a page from #12 he considered botched in the initial printing, and sent it forth in a special mailing ... just so it would be *perfect*. One must hail such dedication. One must also hail the complete product, now as ever a colorful, art-rich, impeccably-researched, joyously written paean to the pulps. #12's cover erupts on the eye with a startlingly vivid cover by McCall of a zeppelin from WWI bursting in battle. #13 adopts a more somber tone, depicting on its front a dark portrait of Solomon Kane. Within, a splendid appreciation of the great **Shadow** illustrator

Edd Cartier, a gallery of William Brigham's pulp work, and a reprinted interview of Farnsworth Wright by The Man, Julius Schwartz, following up the A. Merrit chat from #12. Can you say "Treasures"? I knew you could. I almost hate to start every column with **Aces**, because it sets a standard hard for any zine to meet, and my enthusiasm says so.

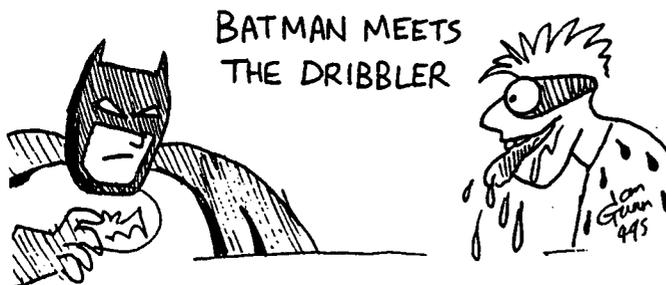
Adventures in Crime & Space Vol.5 No. 5 / Lori Wolf, 609-A West 6th St., Austin TX 78701 / e-mail: acs@eden.com; web: www.eden.com / Making a welcome return is the newsletter of Austin's premiere genre bookstore. Long lists of forthcoming books and accessories (including Endless figurines -- I miss

Sandman) and columns by Lori and Sarah Felix.

after/shock/thoughts / vol. 1 no. 1-2 / Sabina E. Becker, 670 King St. E., Cobourg, Ont. K9A 4J8 Canada / coldfire@sympatico.ca / \$2.50@ Cdn/US / First issues of a powerful personal journal, #1 keyed to homophobia and Littleton, an event which resonated north of the border almost as much as in the USA. In her extremely well-written editorial Sabina focuses on the victims of high school bullying, with the barest suggestion of the empathy which can overwhelm such nonsense. You see my response about you. The followup issue takes on mean local buzzards (a clever essay), President-Presumptive George W. Bush (or "Shrub," as my liberal buddies call him), guns, the degeneracy of modern times, and much else. Well-written raves, all, and even if like me, you find the bitterness the slightest bit affected, this is a strong pub, worthy of following.

The African Princess / Bruce Pelz, 15931 Kalisher St., Granada Hills CA 91344-3951 / bop@deltanet.com / Deee-lightful trip report following Bruce and Elayne hither and yon about what used to be called The Dark Continent. Beautifully illoed with evocative and exotic color photos, as well as customs stamps and other esoterica, Bruce gives a lively account. I wanna see Victoria Falls!

Ansible #142-7 / Dave Langford / 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5AU, U.K. / U.S. Agent: Janice Murray, P.O. Box 75684, Seattle WA 98125-0684 / SAE or. / Multi-phasic Hugo winner, replete with all the news that fits and much more, amusing, inclusive, too many obituaries, including Jean Hoare, Chuck Harris, MZB, James White. #146 showcases a delightful report on the 9/98 DiscWorld Convention in Liverpool, #147 lists the Hugo winners and briefly exults over Aussiecon. *A new downunder bid is rumored for 2007!* Langford's regular feature, "Thog's Masterclass", is a necessity for those of us who try to conquer the Queen's English. She, both Queen and language, will only stand for so much inventive nonsense and no more.



ABV 1 a.k.a. The Anti-Backuious Vaclash / Amanda Baker, Bridget Bradshaw, Vicki Rosenzweig, 33 Indian Rd., 6-R, New York NY 10034 / Trade / Three brilliant ladies assemble across the ocean via e-mail, and over the course of a year (4/98-5/99) assemble a fanzine. It's inspiring, and fun to read, even if it deals with matters ("Is it just Lilian Edwards who finds Eastercons increasingly reductionist?") far from my ken. (Some bits, "Stressed Rats" for instance, hit all too close to home.) The trio of editrixes (whatever) brings in a squad of Brits to report on the con, Intuition, bombarding it and us from all angles. An original publication, to say the very least.

As the Crow Flies / Frank Denton, 14654 8th Ave. S.W., Seattle WA 98166-1953 / bearlodge-@msn.com / Trade / How wings it, Frank?

Aussiecon Three progress report #3-4 / Mark Loney for Aussiecon Three, P.O. Box 266, Prospect Heights IL 60070-0266 (U.S. address) / info@aussiecon3.worldcon.org / It's all over now, but I had to praise these last pre-convention publications as neatly turned, info-full and accessible. Since I couldn't be there, I await arrival of my copy of the program book — rub it in, Ozzies, rub it in.

Banana Wings 13-14 / Claire Brialey, 26 Northampton Rd., Croydon, Surrey CR0 7HA, U.K.; Mark Plummer, 14 Northway Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 6JE, U.K. / banana@tragic.demon.co.uk / I must begin notice of #13 with an item from the very end of the zine: a photo from a British gathering (Festvention) in 1951. It depicts almost every active fan publisher in the UK, including Walt Willis and Vincent Clarke (the only one without a necktie). I don't know enough about the precursors of modern British fandom, but the picture is a joyful sight. Inside, the editors divide their zine into sections on Fanzines, SF, and Conventions, with very thoughtful commentary on the first by Paul Kincaid, who even reviews **BW**'s earlier issues. Later, rich brown and Paul argue about fanzine exclusivity as expressed in **crifanac**. I think my favorite piece in the issue is Maureen Kincaid Speller's metaphorical tour of Science Fiction via a tour of San Francisco. The SFs, topography and literature, are in illuminating complement to one another. I wonder what life would have been like had I remained in the Bay Area. **BW** #14 is an even better issue. Mark Plummer is well represented, with editorials, reviews, arguments, and the text (or is it the art?) to a *unique* con report a la Gorey ("N is for Nicholas / Buried in coal") which I loved despite knowing only a few of the names. Claire contributes strong critical reviews and edits the lively

lettercol. I see only a small percentage of British fanzines, but if there is a better continuing series than **Banana Wings**, it would have to be excellent indeed.

Barmaid 7 / Yvonne Rowse, Evergreen, Halls Farm Lane, Trimpey, Worcs., DY12 1NP UK / yvonne@hallsfarm.softnet.co.uk / trade / Breezy, fun Britzine in a big, soft, feminine typeface that's not only easy but fun to read. Easy, fun contents, too. First, the author takes us to Reconvene armed with her particular rules for survival. Some I will never need, such as how to handle men staring at one's chest ("buy a hat to wear your badge on"), but it's always a good idea to avoid program items you're not part of, and drink slowly. Yvonne laments her resume (she has a metallurgy degree that she sarcastically calls "How useful!" -- try a Masters in Fine Arts if you want "hah! useful"). This is followed by a juicy complaint on controlling one's Inner Slut -- by a committee of her personality parts. (I hope I.S. escapes one of these days; I may not be Tasty, but I *am* a Guy.) There's a good lettercol touching on management and morality, Chip Delany's old porn embarrassment **The Tides of Lust**, Worcestershire Sauce (loved it as a child, along with 1890 salad dressing), hamster deaths, and the news that Joseph Nicholas likes to wear skirts. Some nice "preaching" about building a better world (love thy neighbor, stop screwing up your kids) closes a charmer of a zine. It can't hold back the night, though: Yvonne barely mentions learning of her father's cancer, but the news obviously pains her deeply, and I wish her godspeed.

Batteries Not Included Vol. V #12, Vol. VI #5-10 / Richard Freeman, 130 W. Limestone St., Yellow Springs OH 45387 / \$3@ / There's a different, angry slant to issue VI#6 of this enthusiastic and thought-provoking study of video smut: editor Freeman reads an article about porn in **The New Yorker** and laments that "Porn is Dead". While pornography can never die as long as there are inward taboos to question and outside taboos to flaunt, I see his point. When mainstream intellectuals start taking a gutter genre seriously, it's time to flinch. Continuing in that vein, David Steinberg contributes "To Be a Sexual Son", an extremely disturbing piece about his relationship with his mother, laudable for its honesty but *shudder*ful nonetheless. Fun returns in #7, when contributor Richard Pacheco reviews a fluck flick made by the above-mentioned intellectuals (you can imagine) but seriousness returns with a very thoughtful piece on pubescent sexuality, and the "perverts" who photograph it and celebrate it, in #8. I once saw and ran retching from Roger Lovin's private collection: I can't be impartial here. #9 features a thoughtful and entertaining interview with performer

James Bonn (oh, *really*), #10 a hilarious and — *please!* — apocryphal "Diary of a Porn Star", which makes me plead for a quick, painless nuclear war. But it also includes a column by Lisa Falour on "The Death of a Favorite Trick" which is sad, compelling, moving stuff, as simple humanity surfaces and reasserts itself in the midst of all the ugly obsessiveness.

Bento #10 aka The Poky Little Bento / David Levine and Kate Yule, 1905 SE 43rd Ave., Portland OR 97215 / david.d.levine@intel.com; kyule@spiritone.com (COE-A) / the usual, including "fawning gratitude" / Spiffy hand-sized genzine, proclaiming zestfully on bagels (toasted with butter only, thanks), flying fine print, the Bradbury Building (best seen not in **Bladerunner** but "Demon with a Glass Hand", Ellison's terrific **Outer Limits**), Yule's lively diary (mine is, by comparison, stodgy, depressing and dull), the couple's delightful personal glossary, fine LOCs (but without addresses, fie and shame and fie once more!) ... Levine and Yule pack more life into a teensy little **Bento** than I can wad into a leaden **Challenger** six times as big. Levine does hit us with a gloomy prose poem called "Purgatory", asserting that his life is miserable, but I don't believe it.



Be patriotic--
adopt an MX Missile.

Ben's Beat 55-57 / Ben Indick, 428 Sagamore Ave., Teaneck NJ 07666-2626 / Indick's FAPAazine is a wealth of interest. #55 features a rich installment of Ben's theatrical memoirs, which are savory, and the followup issue takes us to Paris, where he and his have a *ma*hvelous time (despite the Louvre being closed by a strike). A fine account of the auction of Sam Moscowwitz's collection follows -- among a zillion other treasures, Sam had a copy of **Fahrenheit 451** bound in asbestos! (It sold for seven large.) Reviews of horror fiction precede tight notices of plays seen since the last issue; theatre, after all, is Ben's great love. #57 features a wonderful cover -- a photo of Ben as a WWII GI -- fiction, thoughts on Lord Dunsany and others, and a review of Stanley Kubrick's pointless soft core porn fiasco, **Eyes Wide Shut**. I've seldom seen a flick that made less sense, although there *were* scenes in the movie when Tom Cruise could have shoved a carrot up his nose and I wouldn't have noticed, or cared.

The Cat's Cradle / Mandy Pack, 227 Leonard Place, Knoxville TN 38917 / Knoxsf@aol.com / *Journal of the Knoxville Area S.F. Association* / 4 issues, \$2 /

Chicon 2000 Progress Report 3 / Terry Patch, Chicon 2000, P.O. Box 642057, Chicago IL 60664 / chi2000@chicon.org / membership / Barring World War, I'll be there.

Chimneyville Almanac / Johnny Lowe, 1152 W. 24th St. #1, San Pedro CA 90731 / Johnnyrb@aol.com

Conferring with Earthquakes #4 / Brin-Marie McLaughlin, 247 19th Avenue Apt. 6, San Francisco CA 94121-2353 / brininsf@aol.com / The summer issue of a nifty perzine. Brin (I imagine no one calls her "B-M") expresses *enthusiasm* over the work of comic artist Lea Hernandez of **Clockwork Angels**, *angst* involved in pitching some of her late mother's property, *terror* over a scary breast-lump (benign, if nauseating), and *relief* over beating a neat-addiction to nasal spray. Obviously the lady packs emotion aplenty into four pages, and does so with brisk Brin-ish brie.

Council Times / Dennis Blake, 11 Henley Road, Buffalo NY 14216

Crifanac / Arnie Katz & Ken Forman, 7215 Nordic Lights Dr., Las Vegas NV 89119 / crifanac@aol.com / A silent "cri" of late!

Cube / Hope Kiefer c/o SF³, Box 1624, Madison WI 53701-1624 / CubeNews@aol.com. / SF³ membership

DeepSouthCon 37 / **Crescent City Con 14** / Program book for the DSC, which was held in a New Orleans suburb over the first weekend of August in conjunction with a local media event. Nicely turned publication, with apt pieces on the guests and my own blurb on traditional DSC awards, but it needs a title page: I can't even find the address! Well, what matter; despite a con suite that wouldn't allow people to carry Cokes outside of its doorway and the welt I caught on the temple when I ran into a light fixture, everyone seemed to have a great time. (My expedition to Breakfast at Brennan's -- an ultimate Nawlins feast -- went particularly well.) My friend Dany Frolich, recovering from a mild coronary, won the Phoenix Award from chairman Robert Neagle -- it's given to a Southern professional of noteworthy accomplishment. LibertyCon's Tim Bolgeo won the Rebel, for fan activity south of the Mason-Dixon, and George H. Wells was targeted with the *Rubble*, for fanac done to, not for, the South. (In George's case, it was introducing our region to the works of P.T. O'Leary [**The Clones**] and Arthur N. Scarm [**Werewolf vs. The Vampire Woman**].) Next year: Son of Beachcon, 5/19-21, Jekyll Island, Georgia! (P.O. Box 1271, Brunswick GA 31521-1271.)

Detours / Louis Russell Chauvenet, 11 Sussex Road, Silver Spring MD 20910-5436 / *Detoured*.

De Profundis / Tim Merrigan, LASFS, 11513 Burbank Blvd., N. Hollywood CA 91601 / *It's been more than a year since I saw an issue. Isn't DeP still publishing? Did I piss somebody off? Send me something!*

The Devniad / Bob Devney, 25 Johnson Street, N. Attleboro MA 02760/ On-line fanzine of one of fandom's most eclectically-minded writers, recent entries reviewing **Cryptonomicon**, Neal Stephenson's immense follow-up to **The Diamond Age**, Ellison stories, much more. If fandom at large bothered to read fan writing before voting on the Hugos, Devney would have the recognition he merits; till then, he'll have to make do with annual nominations.

Each Charter'd Course: Vol. 4 of Fables of Irish fandom / Ken Cheslin, 29 Kestrel Road, Halesowen, W. Midlands B63 2PH, U.K. / \$5 suggested / *And encouraged! I have to get the other volumes, and so should you!*

Erg Quarterly #145-6 / Terry Jeeves, 66 Red Scar Dr., Scarborough, N. Yorks. YO12 5RQ U.K. / The. / I can't get enough of Jeeves' Gernsback-ish illos, nor his nostalgic articles about SF and fandom from the days when science fiction was *science fiction*. Here he

reviews wackiness from old mechanics' magazines (home-made diving helmets and the like, and articles such as "Shall We Reach the Moon?"), ancient aircraft designs, and the wonderful old SF magazine **Scoops**, of which Terry was a devotee in his youth. Nice columns by Penelope Fandergaste and "KFS". Say, Terry -- now that **Stef** is finis, is **Erg** the senior fanzine in these pages?

Fanorama: Walt Willis' Fan Columns from Nebula
· Robert Lichtman, P.O. Box 30, Glen Ellen CA 95442
· \$10 · I just wanted to hail this gemstone again, and urge its purchase, just in case Robert has some copies left. It's a joy, and an essential.

File 770: 130-132 / Mike Glycer, 705 Valley View Drive, Monrovia CA 91016 / MGlycer@compuserve.com / \$8 for 5 issues / A terrific Rotsler fronts Mike's 130th issue, which contains lots: a review of Corflu SunSplash, Hugo, DUFF and hoax news, good locs and much more. The center of #130 is an article by Chris Barkley attacking **Entertainment Weekly's** ridiculous list of the top 100 moments in "sci-fi" history. It sings with outrage. Chris is also in #131, "singing" about **Phantom Menace**. Mike sings about **Chall** -- the longest and most personal review yet written by anyone who knows me. I myself would sing with gratitude if I could carry a tune. #132 features Barkley again, campaigning for liberalization of the Hugo rules -- as if the powers that be would ever embrace generosity over rigid control -- loads of news and con reports (John Hertz's Westercon report shines here, and sports a magnificent illo by Steven Fox), fine LOCs, Hugo news. Looks like **Chall** came pretty close to the ballot this year. A minor creeb: I don't like the typeface in this issue. It looks cramped and it hurts the eye, and it distracts from the excellent stuff herein to be read.

Flashback #1 / Jerry Page & Jerry Burge, 193 Battery Place NE, Atlanta GA 30307 / trade / Here's an extremely welcome publication, successor to Page's **Spicy Armadillo Stories**, by two of Atlanta's most revered fans. The emphasis is on pulps, the artwork (by two-time **Chall** cover artist Mark Fults, Burge, and several others) is superb, the material is entertaining and enlightening. Central to this premiere issue is "Pulprack", promised to be an ongoing column about a particular theme in pulp fiction. There's also a cool portfolio of jungle art, a salute to artist Clinton Spooner, a reprinted piece by Sam Moscovitz and a page on a publication by Fred Olen Ray, whom I will always hail as the director of **Attack of the 60-Foot Centerfold**, starring J.J. North, who would enliven any pulp cover. It is grand to see the Jerrys back in amateur

publishing again. But I want to see new artwork from Burge, whose beautiful early Finlayesque pieces are still famous in the South.

The Floating Fan Vol. 1 No. 4 · Pamela Boal, 4 Westfield Way, Wantage, Oxon, OX12 7EW, U.K. · PJBoal@aol.com · Trade / Don't tell me it sunk!

For the Clerisy Vol. 6 No. 34-5 / Brant Kresovich, P.O. Box 404, Getzville NY 14068-0404 / kresovich@hotmail.com / \$2 or trade / All right, all right, *Baltic* matters ... that's the subject Brant's intelligent and ever-more-entertaining zine has dealt with often. (I said "Balkan" before. What do you expect from a product of the inferior California public school system?) Nothing distant about the subject he tackles first in no. 34: *spots* (that's how Louisianans pronounce "sports"). The connections he draws between enjoying athletics in the early '70s and supporting the war in Vietnam are mostly right-on, but I must point out that when the Miracle Mets won the World Series in 1969, all of Berkeley cheered. A fascinating article on the persecution of composer



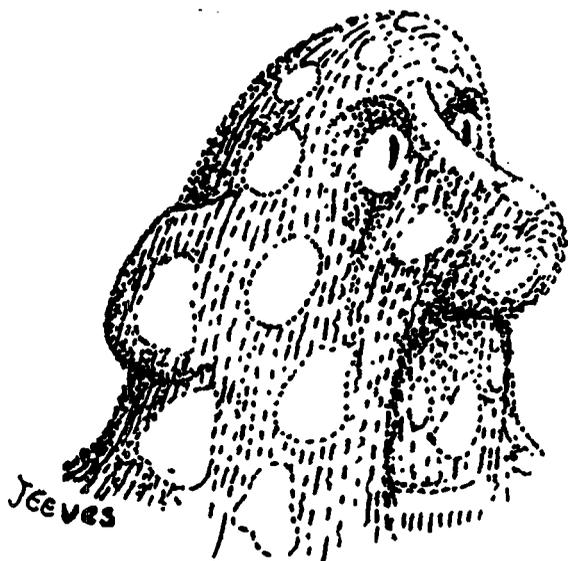
Dmitri Shostakovich, under the Communists follows, good reviews of unfamiliar, politically-oriented zines, and an extremely evocative multilog with a number of LOC writers. The succeeding issue muses on odd words and their possible (ha) meanings, the proper way to Read (Brant can't surrender his teaching habits), the life of Christopher Marlowe (best known to modern moviegoers as the guy killed offstage in **Shakespeare in Love**), **The Good Soldier** (by Ford Madox Ford, an obscure contemporary of James Joyce), the novels of Ivy Compton-Burnett (who is even more obscure), and zine listings (he is too kind to **Challenger** ... and I gotta read **Oop**). Again, intelligent LOCs, befitting an

unusually intelligent zine.

For Dickheads Only / Dave Hyde c/o Ganymedeadean
Slime Mold Productions, P.O. Box 611, Kokomo IN
46903 / Dave ... please ... I gots the fever ...

Fosfax #195-196 / Timothy Lane c/o FOSFA, P.O. Box
37281, Louisville KY 40233-7281 / \$3 or. / A negative
review of Aussiecon's runaway Hugo winner, *To Say
Nothing of the Dog*, somehow stands out amongst the
hundreds — well, dozens — of other sheets of small
type in these two epic — but typical — zines from the
prolific Kaintucky kahn-servatives. I will not dispute
this notice except to say that I found Connie Willis' time
travel story consistent in tone and treatment, very well-
written, charming as all get-out, and in story, regrettably
slight. But it *was* only the 10th rocket-winner I've
placed first on my ballot since I began voting, 31 years
ago. Interestingly, it was also the only fiction victor that
would have won the Hugo under the old, plurality
system. All of the short fiction Hugos would have gone
to other contenders had the former plurality rules been
in effect. Anyway, we were reviewing Fosfax, were we
not? Well, I hardly ever agree with so much as an
apostrophe in Fosfax, but its energy and scope are
awesome, and readers will find a lot of quality fanac
amidst the winger thickheadedness. Say, George W. is
talking like a Rockefeller Republican these days, as he
attempts to scrub the rich-right-wing-frat-boy smell off
his clothes. Where will the conservatives go in 2000?

The Freethinker / Tom Feller, P.O. Box 68203,
Nashville TN 37206-8203 / ccws74a@prodigy.com /
unstated



The Frozen Frog / Benoit Girard, 1016 Guillaume-
Boissat, Cap-Rouge Quebec G17 1Y9 Canada
frozfrog@clic.net / C'mon, Benny; thaw!

Gegenschein / Eric Lindsay, P.O. Box 640, Airlie
Beach, Queensland 4802 Australia / old e-mail:
eric@maths.uts.edu.au / Trade.

The Geis Letter #s 63-68 / Richard E. Geis, P.O. Box
11408, Portland OR 97211-0408 / CompuServe:
100313.3440; Internet: 100313.3440@compu-
serve.com (in ASCII) / \$1@. / Following typical but
on-target rants about Kosovo, Dick turns his eye to
Littleton. Not surprisingly, his take on the tragedy
centers on the medications afflicting Harris and Klebold,
quoting Ian Goddard on the dangerous anti-depressant
in Harris' system and the fear that the feds will
eventually seek to medicate every miserable kid they can
find. There are not enough needles. Good reviews,
good LOCs, surprisingly fannish, and a scary personal
note regarding Dick's friend Paulette. Get better, m'am.
In later numbers, Dick returns to fantasies about TWA
800 and the like (one imagines Egyptair 990 will
reinforce them), in many ways more comforting than
concerns about Columbine, which no conspiracy theory
will ever explain. #68, on the other hand, is downright
fannish, eulogizing MZB and James White, reprints
Vince Nowell's hilarious "Rules for Writers" ("No. 10.
No sentence fragments."), many reviews, many LOCs,
with only some predictions for the millennium to sustain
the zine's constant political emphasis.

Green Stuff / Murray Moore, 1065 Henley Street,
Mississauga Ontario L4Y 1C8 Canada COA/
murray.moore@encode.com

Ichthyoelectroanalgesia / Sean McLachlan, P.O. Box
3734, Tucson AZ 85722-3734 / e-mail:
c638125@showme.missouri.edu

Idea / Geri Sullivan, Toad Hall, 3444 Blaisdell Ave. S.,
Minneapolis MN 55408-4315

Interesting! / Rich Sagall, 747 S. 3rd St. #3,
Philadelphia PA 19147-3324 / interesting@pobox.com;
rich.sagall@pobox.com / \$1.50 for sample issue, 6 for
\$8, 12 for \$14

International Revolutionary Gardener No. 2 / Judith
Hanna & Joseph Nicholas, 15 Jansons Road, South
Tottenham, London N15 4JU U.K. / The quality of a
fine fanzine doesn't come from the quality of its outside
contributors, but from the strength and passion of its
creators. Certainly that's so here, in a zine written

entirely by its editors, which doesn't knock itself out to entertain but strives zealously to express feelings and opinions of clarity and sense. **IRG** really is about gardening -- and about vegetarianism, politics, books, and fandom. Quite possibly the most powerful pages in this powerful zine come from Judith, "Chundering in shoes...", a denunciation of Michael Ashley's nihilistic **Saliromania**, which she calls "[s]elf-destruction as page-filler," and which indeed reads from her samplings like soundings from the depths of alcoholic depression. Judith not only rails at Ashley for his self-pity, but laments the image of Brit fandom as booze-soaked and despair-ridden, especially if it's true. Personally, I find writing like Ashley's valuable, but Hanna's reaction is even more so, because it fries away the romantic, hedonistic posturing of self-destructive behavior. It's the way we should also treat drug use. Am I convinced by **IRG**? No -- but I continue to be impressed by it.

It Goes on the Shelf No. 20 / Ned Brooks / 4817 Dean Lane, Lilburn GA 30047-4720 / nedbrooks@sprynet.com / <http://home.sprynet.com/sprynet/nedbrooks/> / SFPazine also spread about for general distribution, the Nedster strutting his stuff with acquisitions to his enormous collection. There are 17 solid pages touting new books, all of which it seems Ned has read; I knew he'd have too much time on his hands after he retired from NASA. He notes that he failed to change the issue number in the colophon of the previous issue ... then doesn't do so again! Considering that Ned still calls Bill Danner "kid," it's not surprising. Great zine, by the way.

The Jezail / Andy Hooper, 4228 Francis Ave. N #103, Seattle WA 98103 / fanmailAPH@aol.com

Jomp Jr. #19 / Richard A. Dengrove, 2651 Arlington Dr. #302, Alexandria VA 22306 / dengrove@erols.com / <http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Rampart/7076/> / t.u. / It's an old ('92) Teddy Harvia satire of Rich's signature icon -- the devil a'squat on a toilet -- but the lead illo to Dengrove's latest publication is still hilarious. Theming this issue on "the Great Explorers", Rich lays on the facts on the search for the Northwest Passage and other voyages about our planet Earth. It's an interesting subject, and as the fact that Dengrove's a long-time contributor to **Challenger** should tell you, I enjoy his style. Good lettercol, too.

Kerles / Tommy Ferguson, 40 Deramore Ave., Belfast, BT7 3ER, Northern Ireland / kerles@net.ntl.com / t.u.

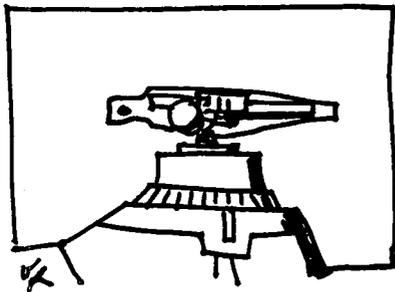
The Knarley Knews #75-77 / Dr. Henry Welch, 1525 16th Ave., Grafton WI 53024-2017 / welch@msoe.edu

or LethaWelch@aol.com / \$1.50 @ / Dandy stuff from the professor. I'm amazed at how often he churns out a fine publication. And with such good ongoing contributors, too! Alex Bouchard and Charlotte Proctor are usuals, and #75 also features Rodney Leighton and the great Terry Jeeves (as well as a valuable piece by Knarley himself on credit cards). The 76th issue sports Mayhew on the front, an article on electric cars (by Jeeves -- a joy), a fable on fanzine Hugo-nominations (by Bouchard), a UK trip report and loads of other goodies; #77 has a cute Birkhead cover, a moving eulogy for Lan, another Charlotte Proctor article (she's slated for **Chall** #11) about various do's about Birmingham (I mourn for Vulcan, the giant iron statue being dismantled for refurbishing), Alex Bouchard on "The Essential Literature of Fandom". These items include revered works by Willis, Shaw, Tucker, Burbee, and James White, but only one contemporary fanzine, **Mimosa**. Not much to argue with there. In the extensive lettercol (half the issue), Joe Major continues to campaign for WigWam Village in 2003. **WIG WAM WIG WAM** (NOTE: I will have a major announcement concerning the WigWam Village bid in the next issue of **Challenger**. Breathe shallowly.)

Kronos / Debra A. Hussey, 115 38th Ave. N., Nashville TN 37209 / dah2@hotmail.com / Pleasant, chatty on-line news pub, updated monthly. Local club picnics, con reports (Rivercon's penultimate outing featured the return of Roger Sims and the usual errant fire alarm), the loss of Lan and Marion Zimmer Bradley and Irvin Koch's worldcon bid for Charlotte NC in 2004. Debra notes the mention of Wig Wam Village in a recent **Travel and Leisure** magazine. Also noted: the forthcoming Smofcon here in NOLA, December 10-12.

Lan's Lantern #47 / George "Lan" Lascowski, 2466 Valleyview Dr., Troy MI 48098-5317 / george_lascowski@cc.cranbrook.edu / The Poul Anderson issue of one of the outstanding genzines, featuring page after page of praise upon praise for genial, generous Poul, by contributors such as Joe Haldeman and Stanley Schmidt, Greg Bear and Harry Turtledove, Gordon Dickson and Jerry Pournelle, as well as a number of familiar fanzine names like Robert Sabella. Lan's bibliography of Anderson's 50-year career is the first I've seen. Wonderful memories sparked, not only of tremendous science fiction (my favorites, if no one else's: "The Sharing of Flesh" and "Starfog", which doesn't seem to have made Lan's list) but of a terrific and patient fella at the bar beneath the overpass by Spengler's [sic] in Berkeley, filling the air in my earliest days in fandom with great conversation, along with the rest of the Elves, Gnomes, and Little

Men. *Skal* ... to Poul and to Lan, a distinguished practitioner of this hobby, who won two Hugos for *LL*, but who will likely be best remembered for the Hugo he had to give back. You know the story ... it was the peak moment of *MagiCon*, when a staff member scanned the wrong line in the Hugo tabulations and wrote down *Lan's Lantern* as winner of the Fanzine award, when actually, it was *Mimosa*. Accordingly, Lan was first called to the podium to accept the Hugo ... and then, to surrender it to Dick Lynch. Which he did with a grin. He specialized in focused appreciations such as this *Lantern*, and they were all outstanding. Class act, all the way.



Lofgeornost #55-56 / Fred Lerner, 5 Worcester Ave., White River Junction VT 05001 / fred.lerner@dartmouth.com / A particularly literate *FAPA*zine, #55 opens with "Reflections on *Lolita*"; I've seen both film versions but never read the novel. Unlike what it did for Fred, the Jeremy Irons movie didn't "sweep away" my memories of Kubrick's '62 version; James Mason's performance struck me as the best of his career. In a new twist, Fred compares Nabokov's account of a man losing control with the works of Kipling and makes a good point. Going on, he mourns Buck Coulson, notes Lafferty's incapacitation, and natters on "love of the land", a segment that borders on the poetic. #56 hauls us along to the Netherlands, where Fred and his family seem to go on a whim, and a fun five pages it gives us.

Mainstream 17 / Jerry Kaufman & Suzanne Tompkins, 3522 N.E. 123rd St., Seattle WA 98125 / jakaufman@aol.com, suzlet@aol.com / \$5 or trade / There are to be no future issues of this superior journal, which is too bad, but which lends this issue a peculiar editorial *oomph*. From the magnificent Teddy Harvia front & back covers throughout the contents, (Gary Farber's piece on his house fire -- attention Vicki Rosenzweig -- is particularly good), a sense obtains that this is one that matters. How could a zine with great specially-wrought Steve Stiles illos give up its ghost? I defer to Glycer's review of this fine pub in *File:770*, but echo with enhancement his desire that the editors

change their minds and publish again.

MarkTime #57-60 / Mark Strickert, c/o John R. Sally, 2891 Canyon Crest Dr. #58, Riverside CA 92507 (COA) / \$2.00@ -- that means "each", trades, or. / Mark reports computer disk-aster as the first version of one issue was gulped down an electronic esophagus; he recreated his natter and retyped the letters he hadn't trashed. *Always save on a floppy*. #59 is much jollier stuff: It's mainly devoted to LOCs and zine notices, given sparkle by his nifty interlinos, and the interesting news that he's forsaking Illinois and its cool fibreglass cows for Riverside, California. I went to junior high school there, as did Rusty Hevelin before me, but I don't think that's the reason. A new title is promised. Lotsa baseball talk, which I love; I visited Cooperstown this June and saw one of Mark McGwire's shoes -- about the size of my car, but don't be impressed; I drive a Geo Metro.

Mimosa #24 / Richard & Nicki Lynch, P.O. Box 1350, Germantown MD 20875 / e-mail: lynch@access.digex.net website: [http:// www.smithway.org/mimosa](http://www.smithway.org/mimosa) / \$4 or. / From the top of the fanzine pyramid comes this latest edition of the perennial Hugo winner, themed on "communications". Seems like a regular issue of *Mimosa* to me, but that's good enough: moving memorials to Vincent Clarke (by Ron Bennett) and Ian Gunn (by Teddy Harvia -- illustrated by Joe Mayhew, two great fan artists hailing a third), more reminiscences by 4E Ackerman and Dave Kyle, Part 3 of Mike Resnick's "Worldcon Memories" ... plus, Curt Phillips on road racing, Eve Ackerman on recording books on tape, and a terrific piece by a young Polish lady named Malgorzata Wilk recalling fandom under the Communists. As rumor has whispered, the Lynchs are thinking of folding this venerable publication -- Rich says so in an editorial. On that day, as Spock says, I shall mourn.

Muse 134 March 1997 / Stephen desJardins, 1711 Massachusetts Ave. NW #134, Washington DC 20036 / steven@desjardins.org

Never Quite Aboriginal / Christina Lake, 12 Hatherley Road, Bishopston, Bristol BS7 8QA U.K. / christina.l@virgin.net / Trade / This was the year of Australia, all right, and here is an enormous account of Christina's '96/'97 journey downunder, epic in every sense, niftily illustrated with well-reproduced photographs. This zine makes for an intriguing companion piece to *Out of the Kaje* No. 4, a native's tour-zine of Oz, in that *that* zine talked about the topography and *this* zine concentrates on the fans. Read

them together and you'll expect to see the Southern Cross after your next sunset. Great cover by Dave Mooring, exceptional energetic writing by Christina ... the world through fanzines, what else is this hobby for?

Niekas / Ed Meskys, RR #2 Box 63, 322 Whittier Hwy.,
Center Harbor NH 03226-9708 /
edmund.meskys@gsel.org

No Award / Marty Cantor, 11825 Gilmore St. #105, N.
Hollywood CA 91606

Notes from Oblivion #41-43 / Jay Harber, 626 Paddock Lane, Libertyville IL 60048 / Trade / Jay has told me that he doesn't want his journal of graphic, powerful testimony and commentary on his neurological illness reviewed ... and I guess I just went ahead and disobeyed his wishes. I pray he'll forgive me, because it's with sincere admiration for his strength and wit. #43 is hand-writ except for a sheet on Dr. Who. Jay's drawings are striking. No surrender to oblivion here.

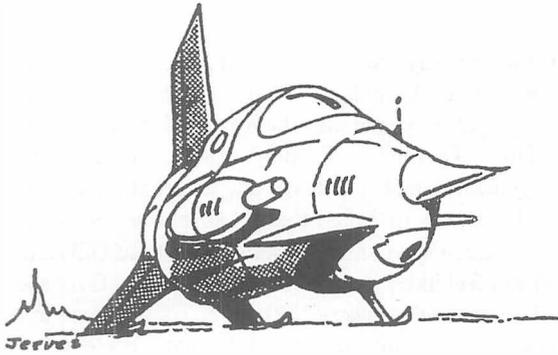
Nova Express / Lawrence Person, P.O. Box 27231,
Austin TX 78755-2231 / e-mail: lawrence@bga.com /
4/\$12 U.S.; 4/\$16 Canada & Mexico; 4/\$22
International.

Opuntia #42-43.5 / Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, T2P 2E7 Canada / \$3 @ or. / Lee Gold contributes a terrific reprinted article on the history of filksinging to this issue of Canada's most prolific genzine. I wonder if she ever heard Don Walsh's "Instrumentality" series, and if so, how she resisted gafiation. ("*Drooooo-OH!-mezoa when the wind comes whipping off the plain / and you know in your hearts / you'll soon grow parts / but the drugs, will wipe away the PAIN ...*") Good LOCs, including one from Carolyn Clowes (author of the best Star Trek novel, **The Pandora Principle**). Dale contributes a 19th Century look at a Y2K-type problem. He's got to be making that up. Enclosed is **Sempervivum** #9, a sheet devoted to "mail art listings" which is beyond my poor understanding. 43.1B lists zines received, some of which I don't get (and some of which don't arrive in my mailbox, hahaha), natters about rubber stamp art, and reviews a book about British Do It Yourself (or DiY) culture, direct action revolutionaries of wildly divergent, often berserk sorts, using tactics from lawsuits to dance. The latest issue, 43.5, takes its readers on an exultant tour of Calgary. There is no content more varied than that of **Opuntia**; when that distinctive envelope with the rubber-stamped beaver shows in my mailbox, I never know what mad profundity will be entertaining me anon.

Out of the Kaje No. 4-5 / Karen Johnson, 35 Mariana Ave., Sth Croydon, Vict. 3136, Australia / karenjji@labyrinth.net.au / the usual, whim, trade, or \$3 / The "Travelling Edition" of a terrific Ozzie per/genzine, a'glut with maps and travel and local color — I bleed because I didn't go to Aussiecon, but at least I have Karen's evocative writing and Bruce Gillespie's, and so I feel like I'd made the journey from Bundaberg to Toowooba (To-*where*-ba?) myself. The photos in the back of Mt. Buffalo show rock formations elegant and anthropomorphic, Henry Moore sculpture in the outback. God, what a beautiful country! There's more to **OotK** than **(Inter-)National Geographic** stuff — there are fannish LOCs from many names familiar and not, reviews of books familiar and not, funny headlines, amazing Australian facts, a Sheryl Birkhead cover, and more. #5 is a thin issue prepped for Aussiecon III distribution, with responses from readers on the ten items *they'd* take to Mars, a fannish glossary, Hugo nominee reviews, lotsa LOCs, and the hope that Aussiecon IV will indeed come to be in 2007!

PhiloSFy #12-13 / Alexander R. Slate, 8603 Shallow Ridge Rd., San Antonio TX 78239-4022 / slateal@swbell.net / \$1 but trade preferred. / Behind a charming Sheryl Birkhead cover — she missed the Aussie Hugo ballot by two mere nominations; let's fix that in 2000 -- Alex Slate is back with another provocative study of Morality and Ethics, with Alex refereeing righteous discussions of our all-but-forgotten impeachment spectacle and the proper treatment of AIDS victims. (Cuba isolates the HIV+ in camps of such luxury they say some losers *try* to catch the virus.) #13 continues the debates, reviews a Harry Potter novel among others, and in its lettercol mentions James Joyce and pushes this English major's major academic button. Not surprisingly, **PSFy** has one of the liveliest and most thoughtful lettercols going, as the fanzine world debates the issues in his issues. I also like Alex's diary of his mundane life, envious as I am of his kids and their karate classes and upcoming bar mitzvahs and so forth. Of course, being a Methodist, I guess a bar mitzvah is out of the question, but ...

Poor Richard's Almanack #1 / Millennium Philcon / P.O. Box10 / Huntingdon Valley PA 19006-0310 (NEW ADDRESS) / Handsome first p.r. for the MMI (2001) worldcon, with a neat Harvia cover. Not much in the way of content — site selection numbers, membership map and list, a few things to do in Philly — but it's early yet. If #1411A be, #1411A will be there. Lew Wolkoff of this worldcon was at DeepSouthCon here last August ... How'd you like Brennan's, Lew?



Potlatch Nine b/w Corflu 2000 / P.O. Box 31848, Seattle WA 98103-1848 / ianh@scn.org, fanmailaph@aol.com, squib@galaxy-7.net / First progress reports for these two specialty conventions, to be held on succeeding weekends in Feb/March, 2000. The Corflu half of this ace double features a report on Sunsplash by Andy Hooper: fanzine fandom spent its weekend chasing hermit crabs. Any reason to cavort on the beach: attend the '00 DSC on Jekyll Island!

Proper Boskonian / Lisa Hertel, c/o NESFA, P.O. Box 809, Framingham MA 01701-0203 / pb@nesfa.org / NESFA membership + a \$16 subscription, \$3 issue or.

QUANt Suff / Joyce Worley Katz, 330 S. Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas NV 89107

Quipu 10 / Vicki Rosenzweig, 33 Indian Road, 6-R, New York NY 10034 / vr@interport.net / Trade / Vicki's perzine starts with "An Early Morning Adventure", actually a fire in her apartment house, a scary bit o'business. It's a relief to find a funny Lewis Carroll parody by Ken Walton following, and some thoughts on Design which, frankly, sail over my baldness. I have better luck getting the point of Vicki's reflections on positronic robots and the limits of the Three Laws.

Raw Goof / Bill Bodden, P.O. Box 762, Madison WI 53701-0762

The Reluctant Famulus #53 / Thomas D. Sadler, 422 W. Maple Ave., Adrian MI 49221-1627 / E-mail: tomfamulus@dmci.net / Or \$2.

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

Scavenger's Newsletter No. 184 / Janet Fox, 519 Ellinwood, Osage City KS 66523-1329 / foxscav1@jc.met / \$2.50 per sample copy / A "monthly marketletter for SF/Fantasy/Horror/Mystery writers and artists with an interest in the small press." Listing of a

multitude of such publications, many of which sound interesting but few of which sound like they'd trade for **Challenger**. I continue to be crogged by the number of outlets for amateur writing.

scopus:3007 / Alexander J.L. Bouchard, P.O. Box 573, Hazel Park MI 48030-0573 / ae019@detroit.freenet.org / What's new, Alex?

SFSFS Shuttle No. 138 / Carlos Perez, c/o SFSFS P.O. Box 70143, Ft. Lauderdale FL 33307-0143 / Lively clubzine with good, varied contents. Editor Perez starts off complaining about his eval computer, Edie Stern describes a Vegas bar with a Star Trek theme, Mitch Silverman reviews a play, Joe Siclari a Corflu (and illumines a fan history project), and the great Joe Green, from whom we hear too little lately, contributes a solid piece "On Energy". A few LOCs, a few flyers ... the South Florida Science Fiction Society rocks on.

Shooting Stars / Mike Siddall, 133 Duke Street, Askam-in-Furness, Cumbria, LA16 7AE, U.K., & Dave Hicks, 1 St. Woolos Place, Newport, South Wales, NP9 4GQ, U.K. / mds@askamite.demon.co.uk or little.jim@dial.pipex.com / Shot?

Sivullinen Newsletter 2/99 / Jouni Waarakangas, Kaarelantie 86 B 28, 00420 Helsinki, Finland / Trade / Where did this come from? Angry, creative, anarchist to the core, blasting the welfare state from Boston, cheering on squatters in Athens, advertising lots of other punkzines, punk bands, punk poetry, from all over Europe ... "Buy Our Books! By supporting the small presses you are ensuring the future of underground art and literature movements." You heard him! I like the illos by Yves Albrechts, an amalgam of punk, comics, and Picasso.

Skosh / Steve Stiles, 8631 Lucerne Rd., Randallstown MD 21133

Southern Fandom Confederation Bulletin Vol. 7 Nos. 3-4 / Julie Wall, 470 Ridge Road, B'ham AL 35206-2816 / jlwall@usit.net / SFC membership or. / Another excellent issue of the guide to Southern regional fandom, with con listings and reports, fanzine reviews, zine notices, a comprehensive club catalog, and locs. Laura Haywood continues her account of North Carolina club history, and Julie worries about printing costs. (Check out CopyMax, which gave **Chall** #9 a phenomenal two cents/page rate.) At DeepSouthCon, on my suggestion, the SFC cut back its publication schedule to three times a year instead of four, but whenever it appears, the **Bulletin** is a zine rich with

information and tradition.

The Space Cadet Gazette / R. Graeme Cameron, 1855 West 2nd Ave. #110, Vancouver BC V6J 1J1 Canada / graeme_cameron@mindlink.bc.ca

Splish Splash Autumn 1996 / Joy V. Smith, 3403 Providence Road, Lakeland FL 33809

Squib / Victor Gonzalez, 905 N.E. 45th St. #106, Seattle WA 98105 / squib@galaxy-7.net

Starfire / Wm. Breiding, P.O. Box 2322, Tucson AZ 85702 / wbreiding@juno.com

Tangent / David Truesdale, 5779 Norfleet, Raytown MO 64133 / internet - 103133.1350@compuserve.com; <http://www.sff.net/people/Dave.T/index.htm> / \$5 @, \$20 one-year sub. / Check it out on the web!

Thyme #126 / Alan Stewart, P.O. Box 222, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Victoria 3005, Australia / a.stewart@pgrad.unimelb.edu.au / The or \$A 3; subscription \$A 15. / I was disappointed that Aussiecon didn't honor its national newszine with a Hugo. It's a vibrant publication, uniquely structured, handsomely assembled, featuring "Faces of Fandom" (has Craig Hilton grown a beard as well as moved to Queensland?), lots of art, news, squibs about local fandom, LOCs, listings, the works. Included: a Ditmar ballot, tantalizing with unfamiliar names of undoubted talent and quality. 2007? Can't come soon enough.

Trap Door no. 19 / Robert Lichtman, P.O. Box 30, Glen Ellen CA 95442 / locs2trapdoor@yahoo.com / the usual or \$4@ / Bob's genzine is a clean, readable work without rough edges, beautifully illustrated (by Dan Steffan, Brad Foster, Steve Stiles, Craig Smith &c.) and produced. And written. Lichtman's editorial laments that his leaving SFPA, and I hope it'd please him to know that he'd be welcome back any time. Ron Bennett, Lucy Huntzinger (on electronic fandom), Langford (good to see an actual article from him), Richard Brandt (on a close traffic call — see this issue's editorial for my response), Charles Burbee, a crazed "lost" article from the early '70s by Gary Deindorfer that I might have understood back then but cannot make hide nor hair of now ... *Trap Door* is tight, disciplined, professional without being in the slightest stuffy or restrictive. One sincere howl: Bob doesn't give the addresses of his LOCsters. Bad, bad, bad! How else can a faned increase his circulation unless he borrows the readership of others?!

Trash Barrel Sep.1999/ Donald Franson, 6543 Babcock Ave., N. Hollywood CA 91606-2308 / Trade / Welcome return of Donald's zine of fanzine reviews, some of fascinating international titles I don't receive. I wonder if his is the first word of acclamation for *South Gate* in 2008. Sign me up as a presupporter!

Tripe Reportcard / Bruce Pelz, 15931 Kalisher St., Granada Hills CA 91344 / They keep on comin', from places far and farther, a trip themselves, a putrid pun on the back of each card, which Customs should forbid.



Twink #14 / E.B. Frohvet, 4716 Dorsey Hall Dr. #506, Ellicott City MD 21042 COA / The u. / A fine Taral cover leads off an excellent read, rich with opinion. Eeb kicks right in on the first text page, worrying about the future of the worldcon, and seeming to advocate the elimination of fringe fandoms from the worldcon's purview. On he goes, challenging traditional wisdom on How to Do a Fanzine, interviewing Sharon Lee and Steve Miller and publishing strong book and fanzine reviews. (I'm pleased he liked *Chall* #9.) Bob Sabella chimes in with thoughts on SF and literature — and why the twain resist meeting — J.G. Stinson talks about improving one's fanzine, Rodney Leighton reviews anthologies, and the LOCs flow like wine. The last page, a jumble of "Miscellany," is signature righteous fun. #15 follows a Teddy Harvia cover with a

Guy — No one else on the planet uses the word "fubbo". What does that make you? Unique, cryptic, alone.



provocative article continuing Frohvet's analysis of the treatment of blacks in SF (great illo by Sue Mason), an interesting piece on theme anthologies by Lyn McConchie, book and zine reviews (which beat me to the punch on many of mine), LOCs a'plenty, and a nice, nice paean to a lovely local lake. Love that *Twink*, a very personal genzine, as are all the best ones, and yet I still don't know anything about the editor!

Vanamonde Nos. 303-327 / John Hertz, 236 S. Coronado St. No. 409, L.A. CA 90057 / Trade. / Every week John treats Apa-L to a one-sheet zine of mc's and polymath opinion. Unlike me, he never repeats himself. Let's see ... the Feast of Lots, WWII propaganda stamps (I know, it *wasn't* a fun time), LILAPA (I once saw a copy in the back seat of Alva Rogers' car — he fretted that he'd let an outsider, even a protégé, see it), the Legion of Super-Heroes (God bless, Neal Pozner!), Senor Wences ("S'all right!"), Chinese poetry, teaching Regency dancing in Virginia, the giant of Greek folk music ... the breadth of fannish interest finds voice in this weekly one-sheeter. With mailing comments to Apa-L, of course.

Vega #6-12 / Joel Nydahl, 119 S. Front St., Marquette MI / 50 cents for #12, usually 15 cents / Thanks to Curt Phillips for the xeroxes. Now I know. I eagerly await issue #13.

Violet Books Jessica Amanda Salmonson, P.O. Box 20610, Seattle WA 98102

Visions of Paradise #80-81 / Robert Sabella, 24 Cedar Manor Court, Budd Lake NJ 07828-1023 / bobsabella@nac.net / My comment in the last **Challenger** about the superiority of fantasy to science fiction earns a rousing rebuttal in this issue of **VoP**. He still agrees with me about **Lives of the Monster Dogs**. Sabella's diary entries, which open each issue, touch on topics personal, professional, fannish. I'm pleased to see that he thinks as much of Michael Bishop's work as I do. #81, the "double anniversary issue," features more diary entries, lotsa excellent reviews and musings on science fiction (his thoughts on the **Hyperion** quartet are particularly apt), commentary on our Kosovo air war by Lu Wang, apparently a Chinese friend of Sabella's (who is, remember, a bona fide scholar), more book-inspired thoughts, smart and specific LOCs, and finally, a moving eulogy for Lan Lascowski. In an insert Bob announces that **VoP** is now online at <http://users.nac.net/bobsabella>; I am livid with envy.

The Wordsmith/Eclectic Collector Vince Nowell, P.O. Box 1258, Simi Valley CA 93062-1258

The Wrong Leggings / Lilian Edwards, 39 Viewforth, Edinburgh U.K. / L.Edwards@ed.ac.uk

Xenolith / Bill Bowers, 4651 Glenway Ave., Cincinnati OH 45238-4503 / xenolith@iname.co. Bill's major concern of late has been his on-line auction, in which goodies of all sorts have been peddled. I myself have been too broke, but it's been fun to watch the electronic gavel action.

Zero-G Lavatory / Scott Patri, Box 1196, Cumberland BC V0R 1S0 Canada

Zighn #s 1-2 / Jae Leslie Adams, 621 Spruce St., Madison WI 53715 / Jaeleslie@aol.com / t.u. / Old -- '98 -- but still welcome perzines showing lots of rich personality. I much enjoyed the zen-style illos of the first issue, with its fine descriptive writing and various views of Corflu (my favorite, a hilarious letter to the editor's mother on Jae's '93 Fan GoH speech). Lovely page on literature inspired by Gerturde Stein. Near the end, the name of Hank Luttrell leaps from the page. (Once a SFPAn ...) Issue #2 continues Jae's fannish odyssey, coupling it with that most dire of mid-life events, the High School Reunion, a trip to San Diego, a scary nuclear holocaust dream, and a stack of LOCs.

Illustrators tapped for this section of Challenger are: Kurt Erichsen, Steve Stiles, William Rotzler, Terry Jeeves, Joe Mayhew, and Teddy Harvia.

LEGENDARY LOU

Mike Resnick

He had a thick shock of hair as white as new-fallen snow, a jaw that Bob Kane would love to have drawn on the Batman (and frequently did), and a gravelly voice that sounded like a wire-haired terrier being combed against the grain.

He was my friend, the legendary Lou Tabakow, founder of First Fandom and God Emperor of CFG (Cincinnati Fantasy Group), and I'd like to tell you a little about him.

We knew him before we moved to Cincinnati back in 1976. You couldn't be in fandom and *not* know Lou, because he was just about the friendliest and most accessible fan in the world. He made sure that CFG always had a round-the-clock hospitality suite at worldcons (a practice his successor, Bill Cavin, has continued), and sooner or later just about every member of the con would wander through the suite and run into Lou.

We moved because we had purchased a huge boarding and grooming kennel. It closed at one in the afternoon on Tuesdays, and Lou took it upon himself to make sure we became acquainted with our new town -- so every Tuesday at noon, he'd pull up in his station wagon and wait for us to close up shop so he could give us that day's tour. (After awhile he got tired of sitting in the lobby, and most Tuesdays ended with Lou feeding dogs and cleaning runs so we could leave at one sharp.)

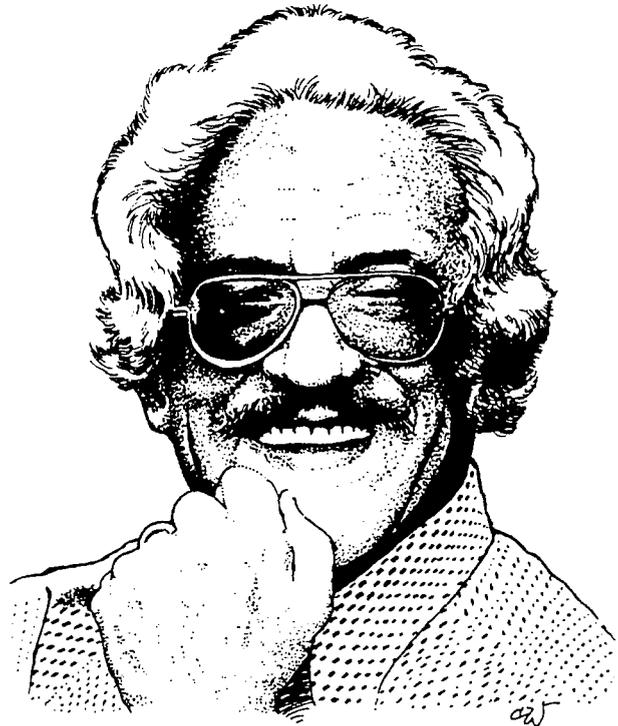
Now, a tour with Lou wasn't like a tour with anyone else. First of all, Lou loved to eat, but he hated meals -- so we'd stop every 60 to 90 minutes for coffee and maybe a piece of pie. Second, the word "upscale" was lost on Lou; his food of choice was whatever he could find at the nearest White Castle. Third, Lou had what at best be termed a quirky sense of direction.

How quirky? Well, I remember that once we were driving to Detroit for a convention, with Lou at the wheel. Detroit is four hours north of Cincinnati. Indianapolis is two hours west. Somehow, when we pulled into the Marriot *five* hours after we started, it was the *Indianapolis* Marriot.

Lou founded Octocon. Seems there was a funeral for a fan up north of Cincinnati, and everyone had such a good time at the funeral that Lou decided they should do it every year. So he found a hotel in Sandusky that had a swimming pool, a bowling alley, and exceptionally bad food -- three of his absolute musts for anyone living the Tabakow version of the Good Life -- and it became an annual event. Sandusky is a five-hour drive from Cincinnati. We didn't know that the first two years we went, because Lou drove us, and we mentioned to Margaret Keiffer that we had no idea Sandusky was *11* hours away. (Well, eight hours, plus five stops for coffee-and.) Margaret remarked that she did it in five without breaking any speed limits, but that someone else found a new route that could shave an hour off that time. So the third year *I* drove, and sure enough she was right.

I think CFG members went to more conventions when Lou was around. He wouldn't permit them not to. He loved conventions, and he loved company, and he would do whatever it took to get people to go.

Once, when a girl remarked that she wanted to go but couldn't afford a room, Lou made a proposition



to her: a single room cost \$32, and a double was \$36. He was going regardless, so if she'd put up the \$4 difference he'd order a double and give her a ride. (And no, if you're thinking this was a sexual come-on, you didn't know Lou; he was too busy partying to have time for sex at a convention.)

Another time, Carol and I were still showing collies, and we told Lou we couldn't go to a Marcon in Columbus because we were going to be in a dog show in the same town that day. So he badgered the hotel until they agreed to let us keep the collies in the room with us *and* give us a convention rate. Then, when the show was over and we arrived at the hotel, he hunted up Sid Altus and a bunch of other fans and had them walk our dogs every couple of hours so that we'd have time to party.

Lou loved banquets. Lord knows why, because all he ate was dessert and coffee, but he'd travel just about anywhere to attend a con that had a banquet. That's probably why MidWestCon's only official function is the banquet. In our 50 years of existence we've never had a Guest of Honor or a program -- but we *always* have a banquet.

He also loved gambling. I used to go crazy trying to get him to see the beauty that I saw in horse-racing. Never did. To me it was Seattle Slew vs. Affirmed, locked in a classic head-and-head struggle, two superb athletes giving their all; to him it was the 2-horse and the 5-horse, and all he cared about was the odds.

He had a system for beating blackjack. He would deal out 10,000 hands, maybe 12,000, and when he knew he'd gotten all the bugs out of the system, he'd take a wad of cash to Las Vegas, prepared to break the bank.

I don't think he ever won. It was the damnedest system -- it only worked in his living room in Ohio. In any state that allowed gambling, it was a dud. He could never figure out why. He did a lot better playing pinochle with his cronies at the local bowling alley, which was where you could find him any afternoon (unless he was at the track).

He lived for fandom. Every night he'd sit at his desk and get all his First Fandom business and CFG business up to date. Then, about one in the morning, he'd phone me -- I was the only other CFG member he knew who'd be awake, since I write far into the night -- and ask if I wanted to meet him for coffee. I'd finish the page I was writing, hop in the car, and meet him at one of the half-dozen all-night eateries that existed between our two houses. We'd talk for a couple of hours, load up on coffee (and Lou would have a piece of pie; I don't know why he never gained weight), and then go our separate ways.

One night he mentioned that he had a neat idea for a cute science fiction story. Ordinarily I wouldn't have taken much interest, but he was a friend, and more to the point, he'd sold some stories before.

(In fact, Lou won the 1955 Hugo for the "best unpublished story" of 1954. The story was "Sven", which made the cover of *Other Worlds*, but was bumped when Isaac Asimov walked into Bea Mahaffey's office and offered to write a story while she waited. The magazine soon died, and "Sven" was never published. The "Hugo" was an Oldsmobile hood ornament.)

Anyway, the story had a cute gimmick, but I couldn't see any way to get more than a thousand words out of it without a lot of padding -- and then it occurred to me that we could do a *lot* of stories like that if we got a continuing character, something like Ferdinand Feghoot without puns. I suggested the name "Isaac Intrepid". Lou wrote a letter to Isaac Asimov requesting permission (Lou was one of the last people to still call him "Ike"), Isaac consented, and we sat down and ground out nine 600-words in the next week or two, all based on science fiction premises. (Like, what happens if you travel into the past and shoot your father before you were conceived? Nothing -- if your mother was unfaithful. That kind of thing.)

We started sending them to Stan Schmidt one at a time, and he bought four of them for *Analog* and Lou was back in print after a quarter of a century. (After his death, I sold all nine -- four reprints plus five Stan hadn't wanted -- to another magazine, and surprised the hell out of Lou's granddaughter by sending her a check for half the money.)

Carol made a number of worldcon masquerade costumes for us in the 1970s, and Lou, who was soon spending almost as much time at our house as his own, caught the costuming bug. So Joan Bledig, who was practically a member of our family, drove out from Chicago to visit, and decided to collaborate with Lou on a costume for the 1977 worldcon. It was a very funny, very faanish costume (as befitted Lou) entitled "TAFF and DUFF, Two Visitors from the Planet FLAWOL", and it won awards for Best Presentation and Best Alien.

Lou bragged about that for the next couple of years. He also realized he might lose the next time he wore a costume, so he decided to retire undefeated.

Besides, costumes were just a sidelight. Lou loved fans, and he spent his conventions at three locations: an easy chair in the hotel lobby, where he could spot every friend who entered; a chair in the CFG suite, where he could party all night; and a booth in whatever coffee shop was handy.

I still have so many memories of him. For example:

The Christmas Day he couldn't find any fans who were willing to leave their families to visit with him. He wound up treating Carol and me to dinner and taking us bowling in the middle of a blizzard.

We had a three-acre pond behind our house. A deep pond. When Carol didn't want to be bothered by the kennel staff (which at one point numbered 21 young women who could swear like sailors) she would take a rowboat and go into the middle of the pond where no one could bother her. One day I took Lou out in the rowboat. He remarked he hadn't been swimming for a couple of months, and he missed it. Next thing I knew he'd jumped overboard and, surrounded by ducks and geese and a turtle or two, field-tested the swim-worthiness of the pond for us.

The night that a nice, mindless summer entertainment called **Star Wars** opened, Lou somehow got free passes for every member of CFG, then did it again for **Alien**.

I remember that Lou practically owned the coffee shop at the Fontainebleu Hotel, home of the 1977 worldcon. I kept count on one day, a Saturday; he had coffee and pie with 15 different groups of friends.

I can still recall every detail of a meal Carol and I had with Lou at the 1978 worldcon. Lou had heard of this very nice rooftop restaurant. (We assumed he meant "penthouse"; nope, he meant "rooftop".) We got there, took an elevator to the roof, and stepped out into the rays of the late afternoon sun, which was more than hot enough to turn the tar on the roof into wet black goo. Lou and I immediately took off our jackets and ties. By the time the salads arrived, Lou had unbuttoned his shirt; it was gone before we hit the main course. Then, as the sun continued to beat down on us while we waited for dessert, stately, dignified, white-haired Legendary Lou looked around, saw that all the other diners except Carol were males, announced that Carol was officially a Tabakow and hence beyond embarrassment at what came next, and proceeded to remove his pants, finishing the meal in his shorts. He was unquestionably the most comfortable diner there.

And I remember the day he got his death sentence. He'd been slurring his speech a bit and had developed a slight limp. It looked like a tiny stroke, and he went in to find out what could be done about it. After a series of tests, they laid it on him -- he had ALS. Lou Gehrig's Disease.

No one ever took it better. He knew he only had perhaps a year to function (and possibly a lot longer to live, which is the absolute horror of ALS, for the mind remains clear as a bell while the body loses all power), so he increased his fannish activities. He went to more cons, more parties, and I began getting an invitation to coffee at one o'clock just about every night. When he was no longer capable of driving, I'd pick him up and take him out to one of his favorite all-night restaurants.

His last con was the 1980 worldcon, in Boston. He'd finally given in to the inevitable and started using a cane that Ray Beam had brought for him. He was given the First Fandom Hall of Fame Award, and he partied later into each night than usual, as if he knew this was his last hurrah.

And then, with striking suddenness, he was gone. First to the general hospital for a tracheotomy to help him breathe, then another surgery that inserted a feeding tube when he could no longer eat, then off to a home where he spent his final days growing more and more feeble physically while remaining mentally alert as ever, and then, mercifully, it was over.

I still miss him. Not a day goes by that Carol and I don't think of him.

I tell people -- and it's true -- that if he had been alive these past 18 years, dragging me away from the keyboard for coffee four and five nights a week, I'd probably have produced a dozen less books.

You want to know something?

I'd rather have Lou than the books.

Challenger 10

THE REVOLUTION IN NIHILISM

Joseph T. Major

Fifteen students lie dead in a Colorado high school, and fingers are pointed. And this is not the first of such incidents. Immediately, people start asking “why?”

To begin with, let us eliminate the usual suspects.

Was it violence in TV/movies/games? Sorry to rain on people’s parades, but mock violence in children’s lives existed during those supposedly sunny American-century Fifties, and well before as well as since. Indeed, it might well be said that gruesome computer-game violence is as inhibiting to the imagination as computer portrayals of anything; imagining the enemies du jour being blown apart in a game is by its nature more bloody than seeing on the screen what the game designer imagines that being like.

And so on with media portrayals. How many shootings were portrayed in those white-bread, clean-cut, “family” westerns of movie-house Saturdays and idiot-box nights? If anything, modern films, by being more realistic about violence, are more discouraging of it. Seeing Marshal Dillon draw his trusty Colt and drop a bad guy with one shot, as he falls to the ground with maybe a red stain on his shirt, would (to me, anyhow) seem to make the view far more anesthetized to the impact of violence than to see the Man with No Name do the same, and watch the victim gasp, and tremble, and blow out foam as he died.

Was it guns? Er ... there have been marksmanship classes in schools. Children have grown up around weapons for most of the past century. The opportunity has existed; the impetus did not.

Was it empty homes? The story of the stay-at-home mother, exploited by diverse political movements to advance their own agendas, was more of a fable than an actuality. Investigating my own family has turned up a substantial number of working mothers. Most of them were teachers, but there were a variety of other jobs, including one who went back to school in the Fifties, in her fifties, and became a nurse. And anyone who imagines that a farm wife does not work can be classified as somewhere between naive and stupid.

Was it that ol’ *eeevil* Internet, exposing kids to bomb-making instructions and other provocations to violence? The Internet has made access to all sorts of information easier, but it wasn’t that hard to begin with. Kids blowing themselves up with bombs made of match heads did not have to log on to www.bombs-at-home.com to find that out. And similarly with violent material, sexual material, and so on.

Was it cliques at school? This was pretty thoroughly debunked almost immediately; the so-called “Trenchcoat Mafia” of Columbine had nothing to do with the killings. Klebold and Harris were not in their clique of the non-cliqued; not their type, not the type of those who are “not their type” of the in-groups.

So what, then?

Hint: the lawsuits filed over the Columbine shootings, “include one by Tom and Susan Klebold, Dylan’s parents, who maintain that the authorities knew that Eric Harris, thought to have been the instigator of the shooting plot, was dangerous and they should have warned the Klebolds to keep their son away from him.” (*People*, November 8, 1999, page 60.) Which is to say that his parents did not think themselves responsible for being aware of their son’s acquaintances.

Now we are closing in on something. Responsibility. In the therapeutic, caring, post-modern state, no one is responsible. The root causes of any ill now stem from society, the environment, the community. From considering the additional external factors that influence an individual — no more of this “people who are disadvantaged want to be that way, or they’d get themselves out of it” — the focus has now shifted to denying that anyone is responsible for anything he/she/it/they does/do.

And in the end, everyone around — parents, teachers, administrators, police, government — stands in a circle, pointing to the next person, in imitation of Thomas Nast’s famous cartoon about the Tweed Ring. Only the question is no longer, “Who stole the public money? HE did” but “Who is responsible for this? THEY are! Not me!”

No one is responsible any more. People are disconnected from their own actions. “Nature abhors a vacuum” — and this vacuum of responsibility is filled by violence.

And no one dares to answer Hannibal Lecter’s taunting question: “Can you say I’m evil?”

*The following may be tough reading. Please accept that as true before you start.
No real names of any person or place are used in this article save some first names, some fans not
connected with the case, a politician or two, and the names of major cities such as Memphis.*

EDDIE

Guy H. Lillian III

PART ONE

It is February 9, 1992. I am a public defender in a Louisiana courtroom. I work in two courts of the 29th Judicial District, handling the general run of felony cases. As I leave, my boss, Richie, calls me to his seat in one of the rear pews.

“Congratulations,” he says. “You are now the proud father of Eddie -----.”

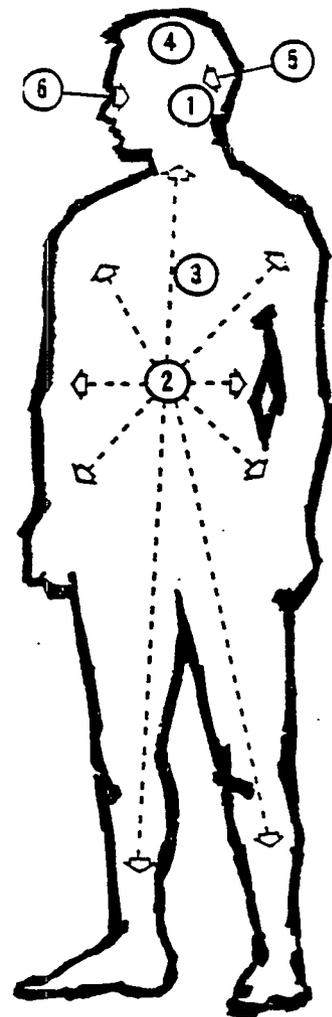
The name is familiar. It’s been reported in the press. The alleged “black bike rapist” had terrorized a working class neighborhood in Jefferson Parish between April and December the year before. I remembered stories of the crimes -- five rapes and two attempts -- descriptions of a bad-smelling white man riding a black bicycle, the local panic, and TV stories about the arrest of this guy Eddie in Mississippi. A short, husky dude with a moustache, eyes downcast, shackled, shambling through the airport between two cops I know, Del Tyson and Sue Fearing, Miss America. The lotteries of court allotment and the attorney-assignment system of the public defenders’ office has landed him in my lap. Still very green, it is quite a responsibility.

“Go see him,” says Richie.

I am in an interview room of the Jefferson Parish Correctional Center, the jail. Despite the windows through which the deputies can keep an eye on us, I feel claustrophobically entrapped. I couldn’t handle prison. They bring in Eddie.

Eddie has a strange physical presence. He isn’t tall, perhaps five eight. But his shoulders are extraordinarily wide, and thick, and there is an immediate impression of strength. His face at first is not very interesting. He has dull, sullen eyes, long, shaggy, dark brown hair, eyebrows, and moustache. Then I notice that the moustache has a part in it, bespeaking a harelip.

His eyes are still downcast but he is cooperative. He tells me about his arrest in his home town in Mississippi, just south of Memphis, while shopping for a car with his mother. Sue Fearing and another lady cop suddenly at his window, pistols in his face. He tells me about the hours of voluntary confessions he gave to Tyson and -- especially -- Fearing, that very day, at the police station, at the airport, on the flight to New Orleans. He tells me about being met by the Jefferson Parish sheriff and taking him on a tour of the rape sites. He tells me the reason all this happened is



because he had himself been raped by a sheriff when he was a prisoner in Tennessee. But he doesn't want that mentioned. He doesn't want other prisoners to think he's a punk.

I know at once that I can't make him that promise. Because one phrase coils to the surface in the turmoil his story swirls in my brain: *Not guilty by reason of insanity.*

I am in the Indigent Defender Board office, a large box open in front of me. I have obtained it from the district attorney's office in the courthouse across the street. The chief deputy D.A., Harley Fish, is in charge of the case. He's a small man but he has a strong ego and a smile I'd describe as nasty. The box he gave me is packed with audio tapes, a single video tape, and reams of paper. Discovery: the state's case.

The video tape is of the lineup where Eddie was identified by the seven victims. The tape shows nothing but the lineup room. It shows no one but the six men in the lineup. Time and again they are marched in, told one-by-one -- by Fearing, I recognize her voice -- to step forward, say a line, show both profiles, step back. Each time the line is different, and I realize it is something Eddie said during each attack. "Shut up or I'll cut you." "This is a gun." "Where did you get that scar?" After the six are trooped back out of sight, Fearing's voice asks each victim to mark an identification on a paper. Occasionally there are questions. The individual, distinctive, anonymous voices of young women. I have the papers. All but one positively identify Eddie. One other has another number scratched out before Eddie's number is listed.

A substantial percentage of the papers are transcription of the taped confessions Eddie made in Mississippi, Memphis, and en route. They are full, candid accounts, and they are devastating. In most of the confessions Eddie describes a crime that is organized and deliberate. Except for once, he is not impulsive. He watches the victim and waits for her moment of maximum vulnerability. He sometimes wears a kerchief over his face. He always plans an escape route. He is always in control. People only accept insanity as lack of control. These things squash it.

But they also indicate a pattern. Eddie went out on his raids after a fight with his live-in girlfriend, Taffy. And they also contain incredible contradictions. Several times Eddie would attempt to follow his assault with conversation. "Where did you get that scar?"

I send the shrinks in on Eddie. One psychologist runs the standardized tests. I am thinking of Warren Beatty's excellent *Parallax View*, where such tests revealed psychopathic violent tendencies that would fry the paint off the walls. But Eddie's come back more placid than mine would. Better results come when I bring in Felice, a tiny lady psychotherapist who often helps IDB clients. (See "My First First Degree" in *Challenger* no. 2.) She talks with Eddie about his family.

(Eddie's attitude towards Felice is calm, attentive, cooperative, flattered — as if pleased that a lady should pay him the slightest attention.)

Eddie writes out his history for Felice.

The first words he writes about himself are, "premature" and "harelip". He had an operation to correct the harelip at age 2. It left a permanent scar.

He was a bed wetter until he was 10-11. His stepmother would punish him for it.

He went to six different schools before he dropped out in the 10th grade.

His father's name was Carson. He was hot-blooded and believed in stern discipline — and often got "carried away." He had often beaten Eddie and his brothers with the buckle end of a belt. Nevertheless Eddie liked living with Carson in the country, hunting, fishing, wandering in the woods. All that ended when at 12 his father had kicked him out of his house for skipping school, and he went to live with his mother and stepfather in a suburb south of Memphis.

Eddie started doing drugs and pulling petty burglaries as a teen. First legal trouble was at 10 when he was falsely accused of whacking another boy with a pipe. At age 16, after joyriding in a stolen car with other boys, he did 30 days in a juvenile facility. First sexual experience around that time. Girlfriend he loved quit him. Taffy was the sister of a guy he hung around with. They talked about getting away, and so they did, to Georgia, Florida, Tennessee. Eddie pulled burglaries to support them. After one burglary he was captured and sent to jail in a town called Olsen, Tennessee. The sheriff there was named Jack Flatt.

Eddie's handwriting changes when he starts to write about Flatt. It was rounded before, it becomes jagged now, as if he was writing faster, as if he wanted to get what he wanted said down, quickly.

I don't believe it would be ethical to reprint Eddie's exact words, which is too bad, because his writing, his voice conveys something absolutely compelling. The very first day he met the sheriff, Flatt took a special interest in Eddie. He explained that it was because he'd known Eddie's father, Carson, in school. In such a situation Eddie was relieved to have a friend of his father's in control. Surely that was why Flatt gave him the run of the jail and started taking him out to feed his horses and visit his friends. Rumors of Flatt's homosexuality he put down to prisoner slander. Until the night of course that Flatt took him out and began feeding him beer and grass.

His handwriting and spelling become spastic as he recalls that night. He is reliving the panic as it grew, grew with the dawning realization of what was going on, a clumsy but insistent seduction. The sheriff kept suggesting Eddie take off his clothes. Eddie kept suggesting they smoke another joint, hoping to stall Flatt until the cook showed up for the morning meal. Frustrated, Flatt finally came to the crux of the deal, how no one would believe Eddie and if he tried anything Flatt had every right to use his gun.

Eddie was frightened out of his mind. He let Flatt have his way.

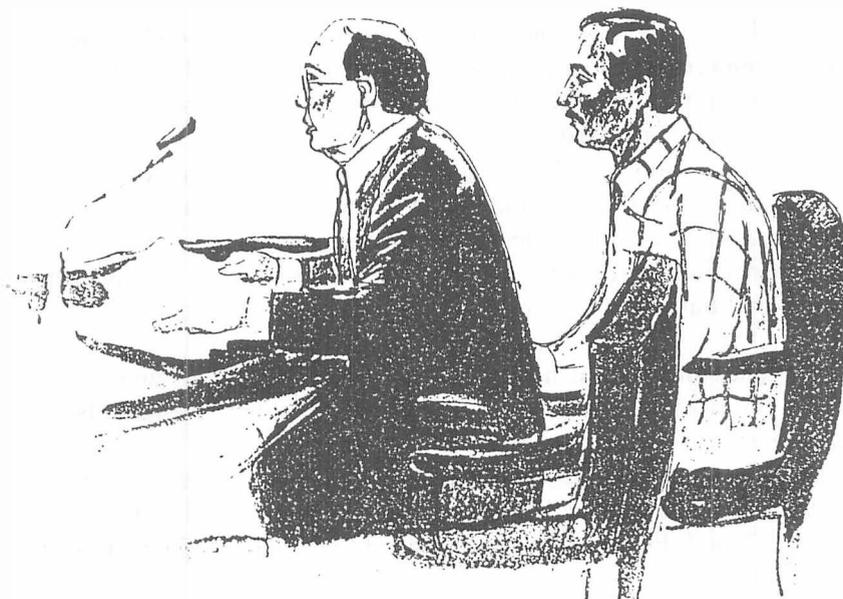
Flatt threw him a towel, told him to get dressed and go back to his cell. There Eddie was left to sit and think. It happened two other times. Each time Eddie was left alone afterwards to sit and to think. Think about betrayal, and power, and his father, and brutality, and sexuality turned literally inside out. These things began to mesh in his mind, to merge.

Before Eddie knew Flatt he had never committed a violent criminal act.

It is June, and I am in Opal, Mississippi, on the Eddie highway. A long weekend is available and a convention coming up in Knoxville. A circuitous route will take me through places important to Eddie's life and by people who can tell me things. In Opal I meet Taffy, and Eddie's son.

Taffy is a short woman, not pretty. Eddie's son looks like him. He is almost unnaturally quiet during our meal at a local restaurant, and has a bandaged foot. Taffy's story is about as Eddie related it to me: she felt oppressed at her home, got into drugs, met Eddie, together they careened about the South. Eddie worked as a skilled laborer and later as a welder, but even that good pay wasn't enough to support her habits. She knew he became a burglar to keep her in dope. She hadn't known the other thing.

Not for a while, anyway. Taffy doesn't want to tell me something. I guess it. Eventually -- months after they had left Louisiana -- she had admitted to herself what else Eddie had done after learning to break into houses. And she had made the call to Sue Fearing.



It is later that day, and I am north, in Norman, Mississippi. In a mall there I have found the office of an aged pediatrician named Taylor. He is Taffy's stepfather, and he is very interested in the case. His office is decorated with dozens of photos of young children ... not blood relations, but patients. He is diffident, as if the sadness of the matter didn't penetrate somehow. He liked Eddie. He thought he was good for Taffy.

I am in Verne, Mississippi, more northerly still. Verne is a bedroom community for Memphis, which is just over the state border. The suburb is nice, this house is clean and modern. The higher parts of the walls are decorated with deer heads and the mute menace of antlers, at least a hundred points. Eddie's stepfather Wallace, like Eddie, is a hunter. Wallace is a nice man, Eddie has told me, and I find him so ... but no disciplinarian. Eddie, a middle child, felt like he had to take care of the family himself. Be the daddy.

His mother Glenda is quite beautiful. Eddie spent a lot of time with her; all, he says, that he could. They would argue a lot and he almost always got his way. Glenda tells me that she almost thought of Eddie as a brother. She says she could never defend him against Carson's rages. She says that Eddie was a boy of incredible energy. There would be times when she would be speaking to him, turn away, turn back, and he would be gone. He would tear off his shirt and go running, running, running into the night. Running, just running.

Glenda shows me a studio photo of Eddie with his brothers. He's distinctive for the lighter color of his hair and his smaller stature, and it is very disturbing to see a photo of him as a smiling, scar-lipped child.

Glenda and Wallace are so puzzled and so worried. Their silhouettes outside the house bid me farewell. They have no hope but they tell me they have faith in me.

The next day I am heading east. I see a dog clipped by a truck and wait with him on the shoulder until a police car, and then an SPCA car, come by. The bitchy SPCA worker tells me the mutt is covered with mange and is sick as well as hurt, so not to have any illusions that he's destined for anything but gas, but I see the relief and the animal pleasure in the little pooch and the moment makes it all right no matter what happens.

At the federal courthouse in Memphis, I buy a copy of the transcript of the federal trial of Jack Flatt. Eddie's testimony covers almost 70 pages of questions and answers.

I am east, in the middle of Tennessee, south of Nashville. It is pleasant, pretty country, hills people describe as "rolling." The town of Kent runs through these hills, and it too is pleasant and pretty. At a family restaurant there I meet a large, boisterous man, jowly, wrinkled, smiling, in a cowboy hat. His name is Sam Hester, and he wants to *get* Jack Flatt.

He's known Flatt all of his life. He'd noticed he was off, strange, when Sam was 15. Flatt, who was older and who worked for important people in the county, had abducted a classmate of Sam's and molested him. Flatt worked for important people. The sodomy charges were suppressed.

The same thing happened the following year.

Six years later, Sam was "away" for three years. Army or jail, I wondered. When he returned he was told that Flatt had raped Sam's 16-year-old brother. Sam had almost killed him. The brother never got over the rape. "Terror," Sam said, "never heals." He was in prison for murder.

Flatt used his connections to become a deputy, then sheriff. Sam ran against him and lost. His accusations divided the county but Flatt prevailed and prevailed until Sam's protests finally reached the FBI.

Sam gives me a stack of xeroxed newspaper stories and headlines and police reports about the investigation and trial that followed. Among them is a photo of Jack Flatt. He has a beefy face, squinty, flat eyes, a thin mouth that almost smiles, long-lobed ears.

I read Eddie's testimony in his trial. The key words say that he was scared to do anything because Jack Flatt, sheriff, and friend to Eddie's father, had all the power. There were five other witnesses against him, all inmates he had raped. Though Flatt got ten years, federal time, none of the men who put him away was offered counseling or any help at all.

All were petty burglars and dopers and thieves. None had been violent before. At least three -- besides Eddie -- were now imprisoned. Two -- besides Eddie -- became rapists.

Turn the rage.

I realize as my trial strategy forms that I have not only a legal problem with the strict definition of insanity, but a problem with contemporary social posture. In the early '90's we are the height of Victimization. Irrational guilt over the AIDS epidemic has forged a benevolent image of the homosexual in our culture. Even in a conservative venue like Jefferson Parish, I will still be fighting a very powerful and unreasoning fad. To shift some of the jury's righteous anger towards Eddie for his atrocious acts towards Flatt could very easily seem like fag-baiting.

But forget Quentin Crisp and the nice young man down the hall who likes opera. Flatt was the gay experience as men like Eddie -- and the other witnesses -- have to live it: a *dominant male homosexual*, with helpless men under his control. Hemingway once explained to Gertrude Stein that his attitude towards gay people had little to do with the harmless aesthetes they knew in Paris. It was born of being a 15-year-old boy working the iron boats on Lake Superior, and having to carry a knife so he wouldn't be interfered with. A more generous stereotype has replaced an angrier one in today's pop culture, but both have their truth.

This truth, this meaning, is clear to me. Jack Flatt *infected* Eddie. He stripped away his manhood and in its place, planted violence and the need to control through violence. Evil begat evil. Thus I will direct the jury's anger back to the lycanthrope who had truly caused Eddie to himself become a monster. But how? I have to make it clear that I am not trying to *excuse* Eddie, because there is no excuse for rape, but I can, must, will *explain* him. Very few people can make that distinction. What to say? What to do?

I go east. Knoxville awaits, and a terrific little science fiction convention called Con*Cat. My pal Janet Hoffman is co-chair, my fannish mama Quinn Yarbro is Guest of Honor, my impossible dream Laura Modine is Fan GoH. The convention abounds in sweet ladies and generous laughter, and ice cream, Con*Cat's signature. Every open field in Tennessee throngs at twilight with God's happiest creation, the firefly. Thus restored, I return to New Orleans.

It is spring 1992 and I am in the office of the Assistant District Attorney in charge of the case, Harley Fish. On my request he has checked with one of the other states where Eddie faces rape charges, a state which has become notorious for its use of the death penalty. Does Eddie risk the electric chair there? Telling me no, he asks for a plea. The sentence would be five consecutive life terms plus 100 years. I demur. Fish gets tough. "I'll see to it he does his time in Parchman," he roars, naming the Mississippi State Penitentiary, supposedly third-world primitive. I didn't attend Berkeley for nothing. See you in court, I tell him.

There is some refreshing news from the D.A.'s office. Joining Fish in the prosecution is Anne Durham, who is sober, reliable, a genuinely fine lady. There will be no theatrics from her.

It is summer 1992 and I am in court, fighting motions in the Eddie case. The first has to do with *venue*, determining the proper site of the trial. I have the law on my side as I ask Judge McIver to move our case to another parish. Has there been too much publicity, abetted by the government, with too much effect on the community to insure a fair trial? Of course there has. During Eddie's Jefferson Parish rampage, our sheriff -- the immense and controversial Harry Lee -- had held daily news conferences, urged citizens to bar their doors and stay inside at night, conducted house-to-house and once car-to-car searches ... the "black bike" rapist was the only thing they talked about in that part of the parish for a whole year. After incredible hassles with subpoenas I obtain a year's worth of news reports on the case from the three local stations and present all, including personal testimony from Sheriff Lee, to McIver. He puts me off. Let's see how *voir dire* goes, he says, referring to jury selection. If the jury pool can't set aside their memories of the case, he'll consider moving the case out of Jefferson.

The other hearing is more important. It is August 17, 1992 -- the 23rd anniversary of Hurricane Camille. In Judge McIver's courtroom the D.A. schedules Eddie's Motion to Suppress Identification Victims.

JEFFERSON PARISH SHERIFF'S OFFICE
TRANSCRIBED AUDIO TAPE STATEMENT CONTINUATION FORM

EDDIE [REDACTED]: Huh?

LT. [REDACTED]: Was she already in the house when you got in?

EDDIE [REDACTED]: Yea, she was asleep.

LT. [REDACTED]: She was asleep?

EDDIE [REDACTED]: Asleep on the bed.

LT. [REDACTED]: Did you have any weapon?

EDDIE [REDACTED]: I uh...I...I got a knife from her kitchen.

LT. [REDACTED]: What kind of knife was it?

EDDIE [REDACTED]: Uh...uh... Like a steak knife, I guess.

LT. [REDACTED]: Were you disguised?

EDDIE [REDACTED]: Uh..I think I had uh..uh...uh bandana on my face.

LT. [REDACTED]: What col..what color?

EDDIE [REDACTED]: Uh red I think.

LT. [REDACTED]: Were you wearing any baseball hat or anything?

EDDIE [REDACTED]: Uh...no.

LT. [REDACTED]: So, you broke into the house through the back window?
And you checked the house out to see if anybody was there?

EDDIE [REDACTED]: Yea.

LT. [REDACTED]: You unplugged the phone?

EDDIE [REDACTED]: Yea.

LT. [REDACTED]: And..and you took a knife?

EDDIE [REDACTED]: Took it from her kitchen, yea.

LT. [REDACTED]: O.K. Did you...did you go into her bedroom?

EDDIE [REDACTED]: Yes.

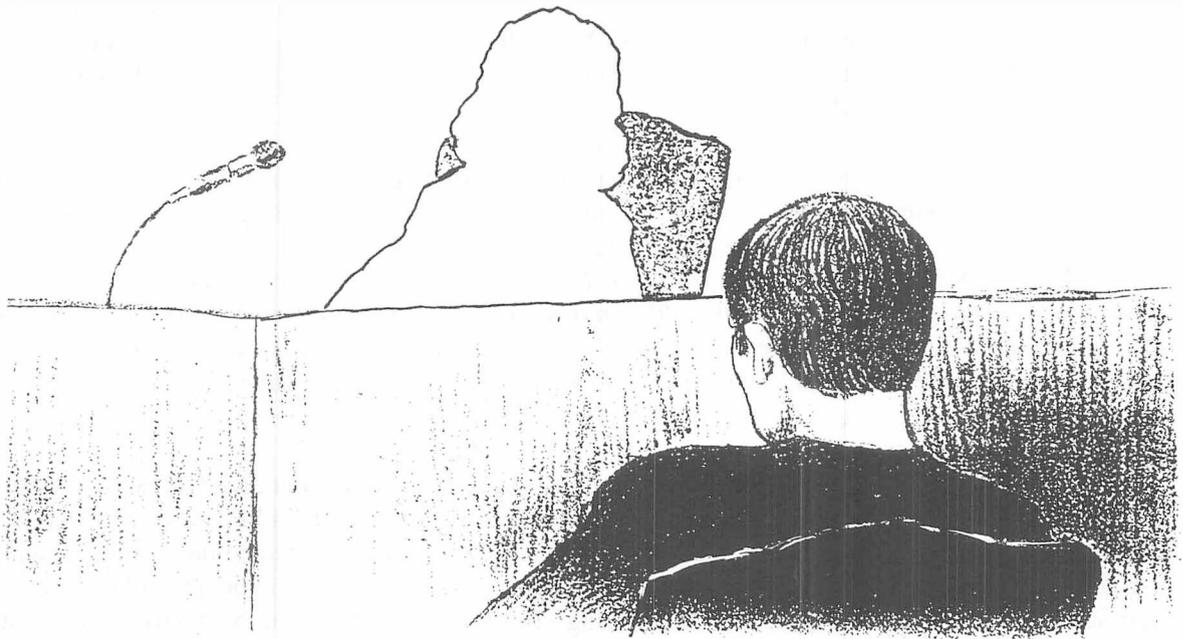
LT. [REDACTED]: O.K. And what happened when you got in there?

EDDIE [REDACTED]: Uh...I just walked beside...beside her on the bed and uh...
I placed my hand on her uh...mouth.

A lawyer must often defend a rape case. There is no question that a man accused of such an ugly, ugly offense is like any other citizen accused of a crime: innocent until proven guilty. Proof needs to reach the standard of "beyond a reasonable doubt" before the accused becomes the convicted. Reasonable doubt means questioning the veracity and the certainty of the most important witness -- the victim -- to the limit of the law. Now, the cliché that attorneys insinuate promiscuity to rape victims is usually nonsense -- the facts usually make such considerations irrelevant, and the law only allows questions about the victim's previous relationship with the accused. So the lawyer has to attack the victim's certainty that she has made a positive identification — otherwise he is not fulfilling his obligation to his client, or to the law itself. It is America's truest claim to greatness that no person is imprisoned without full and complete due process of law.

So I will question the victims strongly — but without abuse. Farley wants me to attack the women, using their probable coaching by Fearing and Anne Durham as a defense. I won't. My villain is Jack Flatt, not these hapless people.

Eddie sits beside me, staring darkly at a photo of Taffy and their son. He hadn't known about the operation on his foot. During the long proceeding he never looks up.



One by one the women come to the stand. Four I note with particularity. There is a tall blonde — my fellow IDB lawyer and onetime mentor, Farley Jenkins, practically beams at her. There is a tall brunette with wonderful rich hair, who nevertheless impressed me as almost slow. There is a young Cuban girl. There is a petite redhead I will call Wendy, Eddie's first Jefferson Parish victim. All are *beautiful* — especially the girl from Cuba, Luisa. She is the sister of Carlos Chavez, another IDB lawyer.

Her story is the wildest and yet the easiest to take, because Eddie did not succeed with her. In many ways the attack was atypical. She lived on a tree-lined street a few blocks from Eddie. She was unloading her car one day when he biked past. Being a friendly soul, she waved at him. He came back. Outside and in broad daylight — a first — he jumped her, and tried to drag her away. She screamed. She fought. Eddie slugged her — which he had never done before. She slumped unconscious, but a neighbor came running, and Eddie fled. She is the bravest of the ladies — she looks right at me when she answers my questions, which means she looks right at Eddie, bravely and without flinching. The others don't.

At an earlier hearing her brother had come in to present a motion in another case. He kept eying

Eddie, slumped in the jury box, with a mixture of astonishment and loathing. How could anyone do such a thing to his beloved kid sister? "C'mon, Carlos," I said, aghast, "let me handle this business for you." "No," he insisted. "No. No." When he talked to his own client he had to stand within a couple of feet of Eddie. Eddie didn't know who he was, so he simply sat there in his usual oblivious depression, but Chavez's expression was one of absolute anguish. I never felt sorrier for a human being in my life.

The tall brunette is quite dumb. She has no answer when I ask her why she changed the number of her identification in the lineup to match the others'. Clearly, she was coached. Perhaps something to bring up at trial. Everyone else does well ... especially the first victim, Wendy. Harley Fish, the Assistant District Attorney in charge of the case, has told me that, a heavy Christian, she was a virgin at the time of Eddie's attack. Yet she handles herself with aplomb, and when I leave, walking past the victims gathered around Anne Durham, and I say, "Don't say anything in front of me!", she grins and claps a hand over her mouth.

The issue here is not who committed the crimes. Eddie committed the crimes. The aim is not to free him. He's too dangerous to be freed. The issue is whether he should be punished with jail or committed to a mental hospital. I see my duty as promoting the last.

I do *not* have the law behind me. Louisiana does not recognize irresistible impulse, demented compulsion, as insanity. It has mired itself in *McNaughten*, the ancient case which established the ability to tell Right from Wrong as the standard for legal insanity. The case predates Freud by a hundred years. It is *ludicrous* that its tenets would still apply.

One break for us: in an insanity case, the defendant can introduce almost any evidence on that subject that he wishes. So even though I know Eddie would fail the *McNaughten* test — he wore a mask, threatened his victims, made good escape after escape, obviously knew he was committing wrongs — I could still give the jury the story of Jack Flatt, and *turn their rage*.

Imagine being in a place where you are helpless, and having a man who knew your father assure you of his trust. Imagine having that man — like your father — prove himself a brute and a coward. Imagine having your sexuality — your deepest sense of self — twisted and ripped by this man, and even when you put your faith in the greatest authority there is, the federal government, finding yourself used to get a conviction, and then abandoned. Imagine yourself being shown nothing but abuse, nothing but mockery, nothing but lies, all down the line, by everyone you have been told to trust ...

Would this put Eddie in a mental hospital instead of the state penitentiary? I wasn't foolish enough to think so. But I had a duty, not merely to Eddie but to the truth as I saw it, and I had seen enough of Eddie's to think I was fundamentally right. Nothing would excuse these crimes. Seeing the victims — and Carlos, in truth — had knifed me with the pain Eddie had brought them. You can't look people in the face and ignore their suffering. You must respect human suffering. But Eddie's suffering at the hands of Jack Flatt would *explain* the victims' pain. And understanding Eddie might send not only him to a better place than Angola Penitentiary, it would *help the victims heal*.

It is late August, 1992. We are set for trial this week, but Harley Fish asks for a delay. There is a hurricane in the Gulf and he is palpably nervous about it. Actually, he probably has a scheduling problem, but I don't care about his motives. Any delay suits me.

It is March, 1993. Preparations continue. The incredible pain in the ass that is subpoenaing out-of-state witnesses — Glenda and Wallace, Dr. Taylor, Sam Hester — eats up hours. I work with the psychologists about the compulsion aspect of the defense.

It is March 15, 1993. Judge McIver tells us he will not leave the courthouse until our jury is selected. I move the court to allow individual voir dire — questioning of the jury pool — and am refused. Probably a good idea — individual questioning would take weeks. As it is, it takes ten hours.

The very first juror called is a woman whose sister had been raped. She begs to be excused. "I can't even look at him!" she cries, and practically runs out of the courtroom. Off to a wonderful start.

Later, a pompous college kid huffily demands to be excused from the panel because he has to concentrate on his classes. McIver flushes red as two beets and orders him to sit in the rear of the courtroom until the entire jury has been chosen. The other jurors also astound me. Few claim to remember the black bike rapist or the hurlyburly that beset the parish in his wake. Jeeze, where *were* they?

Where am *I*? Although I spent hours the night before scripting out my *voir dire*, I am fuzzy, stupid, getting lost in my sentences. Fish and Durham object and object to my line. But I get my point and my question across: Could the jurors consider a verdict of NGR1 -- not guilty and not guilty by reason of insanity? Could they take into account a rape committed against the defendant before he committed any rapes himself?

Ten long, long hours after we begin, we finish, with twelve jurors and two alternates. The next day we begin.

Eddie's trial begins with Fish's opening statement — but none from me. I ask the judge if I may withhold my opening until the start of my own case. Then Fish's technician sets up the audio tapes and the rest of that day, and much of the next is spent listening to the drone of Eddie's voice, admitting to nightmare. The first witness for the prosecution is a tall, blonde, very handsome detective named Del Tyson, who took some of the statements ... and a special letter.

During his orgy of confession, Eddie asked Tyson if there was some way he could apologize to his victims. It measured his distance from reality that Eddie could even imagine that would help. Tyson said sure — write them a letter. I'll see that they get it. They never did.

"You told Eddie you'd give it to the victims, right?" I ask him.

"Uhh, yeah," Tyson says.

"And you didn't give it to them, did you?" I ask.

"Uhh, no," he says.

"So you *lied* to him, didn't you?"

Fish hits his feet, squawking. I withdraw the question, since I don't really care about the letter and know it won't blunt the effect of the confessions. But it underscores the theme of my defense: Eddie had been misused by authority. His father was a shit. His father's friend, Jack Flatt, had raped him. The federal prosecutors had used him to jail Flatt, then dumped him onto the street without help. Tyson had offered him trust, and used his silly but apparently sincere expression of regret against him. Turn the rage.

Actually, I feel bad for Tyson, who seems hangdog when he leaves the stand. Well, it's part of the job. It might even have been effective. The trial ends the next day.

Harley intercepts me as I'm going into the court the next morning. "This is a waste of time," he says. "Talk to me," I reply.

All along a possible deal has been on the table. It will sound ridiculous. Concurrent sentences — *one* life term instead of *five*. Thus holding out for Eddie the possibility, however faint and distant, that, as an old man, he might someday be pardoned by the governor. My request along these lines has, to date, been met with scorn — but now Harley has had his headlines, and has seen my defense. So we troop into McIver's chambers and set up the deal.

Eddie agrees immediately, especially once I tell him that "the ladies," the victims, won't have to testify. I won't have to ask the jury, in my closing argument, *If, someday, one of these women commits a terrible act, when it's a probability that she would not have done so before, would you not want the fact that she was raped brought up in court? Wouldn't you think that was fair? Shouldn't we take such a thing into account? That's all I ask for Eddie ...*

Fish lends us his office, me, my boss Richie, Farley Jenkins, and Eddie. We fill out the Boykin form waiving Eddie's trial rights and pleading him guilty. Later, from the witness stand, McIver reads it to him again, and when the judge asks him if he's satisfied with my efforts as his attorney, Eddie says, "No one could have asked for better."

It is a definite moral victory that, when we're finished, the lady clerk stands and says, "Good luck, Eddie."

I've been giving TV interviews all week; I look like a hard-boiled egg sprinkled with pepper. After the plea I am presented with a microphone one last time. "How could you allow Eddie to plead guilty," asks the reporter, "if you think he's insane?" Wisenheimer. The mikes immediately turn to Fish and Anne Durham. Anne later compliments me on my demeanor and appearance on the tube, contrasting it with herself. She says she looks like Hitler on a bad hair day. Well, bad hair or not, both she and Fish go on in subsequent years to win judgeships in Jefferson Parish, their prosecution of the Eddie matter a common campaign boast. I go on to Drug Court.

Eddie goes to Angola, the Louisiana State Penitentiary, and we see each other twice more to date. In early years we communicate often. That story is for next time.

In the meantime, as everything else is pending, I go on to other cases. With a souvenir. As prisoners do to pass the time, Eddie has unraveled a sock, and knitted it or knotted it into a tiny cross. He gave that to me. Is it impossible to understand why I will always treasure it?



This article was illustrated by Bryan Norris and by illustrators from local television networks.

Dear Mr. Lillian

First of all I would like to thank you for your true concern and greatly needed assistance, I feel no one else from the I.D.B. could or would have done as much for me as you, no matter how this turns out, I know you done everything possible when I didn't leave you anything to work with. I would like to give you this Key Ring Cross I made myself from Sock string, to show my gratitude for your help, I know it is not much or adequate.

But is only to represent my faith in that something good will become of this in any way possible. I would also like to say to you, Jefferson Parish and the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's office that I am truly sorry for all the trouble I've caused them and especially to the victims, but feel nothing I could do or say can totally replace what I took from them and can only hope that they seek counseling to help them live a normal life without fear or hate following them thru their lives.

Thank you

Eddie

EDITORIAL THREE

We've come to the end of this ... different issue of **Challenger**. It tells a lot of stories ... many of them pretty unhappy. It's one of the great mysteries of mankind how our civilization has managed to make so many people comfortable, even fat, and yet so abounds with bitterness and dissatisfaction. Of late I've been thinking that it's because our expectations are so high. I'm not talking about financial expectations; I'm talking about emotional ones. Could it be that we are so angry at each other because we expect too much of each other? How much tolerance and acceptance and love do we have a right to demand? Maybe we should demand less and offer more.

Joseph Major's pointed essay earlier — purposefully placed right before my article on Eddie, in case you're wondering — reminds me to mention the summer's most mind-blowing fictional experience, **Hannibal**, by Thomas Harris. Its horror elements *sail* over-the-top, especially in the penultimate dinner scene, when pure lunacy conquers all, but the style is wonderfully literate and the characters are American classics. Particularly, of course, Hannibal Lecter. As he was for the Tooth Fairy in **Red Dragon** and, to a lesser extent, Buffalo Bill in **The Silence of the Lambs**, Harris isn't afraid to give his misfits human reasons for their actions. The trauma the child Lecter endures, for instance, might make a monster of anyone, as he waits for the sound of the axe.

This summer brought me another remarkable book, trying to deal with the most horrible misfit of them all, another guy who thought he had the world's best reasons for hating people. Ron Rosenbaum's book is called **Explaining Hitler**. The author's attempt is almost foredoomed, not only because the obscenity he is attempting to account for is so extreme, but because no one can agree on how to go about the explaining. It's a fascinating challenge -- but it's like nailing smoke. The experts can talk about Hitler's past, his joyous, *creative* criminality, his revenge and his rectitude ... but they finally can't explain anything. There's propaganda film of Hitler you may see occasionally on A&E, which is practically an all-Adolf station. He's smiling and petting a dog. The dog shrinks from his touch. *He* knew. That pooch could tell, in his natural wisdom, that the creature before him was something completely *umatural*. Something without explanation, something new on the face of the earth. Something not only evil, but *consciously* and *joyously* evil.

Hitler himself is nothing more, nowadays, than a few fragments of bone in the KGB archives. I tremble lest someone spill a drop of blood on them and, in smoke and flash, he stands to shout, *I live again*. The truth is that he never died. He is still wreaking havoc and causing pain. The latest scoop on Columbine involves videos left behind by Klebold and Harris. They suggest a motive far more sinister than feelings hurt by high school cliques. They hated more popular, more acceptable kids, all right — but they killed for *fame*. They didn't want acceptance and normality, or even revenge. They wanted cult hero status as neo-Nazi gods. And as such they sound less like children damaged by the thoughtless cruelty of their peers than criminals using the pain of others as an excuse for their own aggrandizement. Nothing could be more Hitlerian. A friend once said that Hitler was the great *enabler* of evil, in that he gave focus and justification to an army of sociopaths. It's still on the march. Wherever people strike at one another out of hatred, Hitler lives.

My generation, the Boomers, always envied our parents their enemy, their terrible, clear, powerful, undeniably evil enemy. Well, he is our enemy too ... and worse, far worse, he's the blood enemy of our children. He struck at them at Oklahoma City, at Heath High School, at Columbine. His conscious, creative, cynical, joyous evil lives on. Hitler the anti-Christ? He'll do for now.

So: how do we fight him? To avoid the *ad hominem* metaphor, how do you fight the hatred and the cynicism that moved him — and Klebold and Harris, and for all we know, McVeigh? And the next one or one hundred or one thousand who shoulder arms and march to their private armageddons?

Let me pause with news of an old friend. Y'all will remember Denise, the house-wife-turned-hooker

I profiled in **Chall #8**, who went on a drug binge/crime spree and ended up facing 13 years in prison. Now she's a heroine, at least partially responsible for the conviction of a desperate serial killer. Once, during her lowest streetwalking days, she allowed herself to be picked up by a cab driver whose tastes ran more towards the violent than the sexual. She escaped, eventually gave evidence at his trial as to his *modus operandi*, and off he went forever. Her current lawyer is trying to convince a judge to reduce her sentence in gratitude, and I hope he succeeds. Isolated from the street and its poisons, Denise is her old self again, sassy, lively, bright, sexy. It'd be nice to think that she would stay like that.

Another misfit. So many misfits in the world I'm surprised there are any "fits" at all. I'd hoped in this fanzine to present a balanced picture of the person who just can't fit in. To contrast the unhappy child with the loyal fannish friend, the brutal rapist with the brilliant writer and the generous teacher. Well, obviously that's too neat and pat. The horrible is almost always more weighty in impact than the benevolent. But maybe her story contains a suggestion on how the malevolent misfit can be bested.

What did I say earlier? "Everyone's a misfit"? There's your first step. Your own Danny Scott is out there. Realize that you are *not* alone, that life is *not* decided, that it is 99.99% likely that the other guy has either been there too or can understand ... because he's more like you than you think.

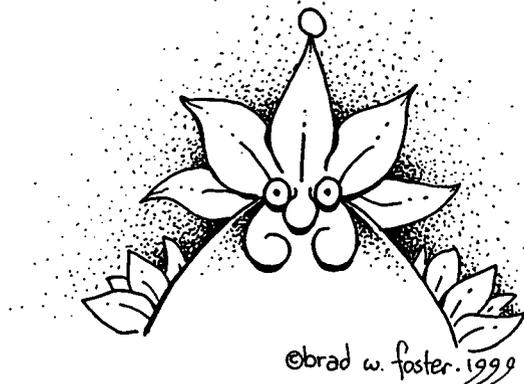
Earlier I talked about losing trust as the ugliest act of adulthood. Regaining it is the most difficult. But it is there to be had. I do believe that in this realization is the germ of true maturity and adulthood.

Fandom often teases itself for being the antithesis of adulthood, since we're a bunch of silly twits exulting about spaceships and posturing in costumes and all the rest of our kooky act. But for dealing with alienated people I think fandom is splendid, because here, all you need to belong is to let other people belong. The genre which brought us together is indeed marvelous fun. But the social glue which keeps us together is tolerance, humor, and a literal faith in the future. Good stuff! Ted White was absolutely right in his Timebinders musings. Had Klebold and Harris found our fandom instead of the vacuous fascist fandom they did join, they might have come out all right.

So we're in a uniquely valuable position. But it shouldn't be our hobby that makes us reach out and touch someone. We should do that because we're human. Have faith in the human heart. *Love thy neighbor* as thyself. Because he *is*.

Jeeze ... hallelujah, preacher! Tell you what ... I'm closing this issue with a piece that says everything I just did, only indirectly, and therefore, better. The answer to Hitler is Mrs. Jayne.

To close. I don't know where I'll be at midnight, December 31st of this year — could be overlooking Niagara Falls, could be right here — but wherever *you* are, I wish you a happy new year, a happy new century, a happy new millennium ... and most importantly, a happy new *day*. That's a hope you won't have to wait another thousand years to feel.



A note from the author:

"Haldeman Elementary School included quite a few misfits and Mrs. Jayne handled and nurtured them with care, love and a strong sense of fairness and humor.

"In some ways, my son Chris was one of those misfits. Chris recently received a writing award from Morehead State University from an endowment fund set up by an alum. Chris turned the \$500 award over to the county library to be used to buy books in memory of and in honor of Mary Alice Jayne."

MRS. JAYNE DIED OF OLDNESS

Jodie Offutt

When our oldest child, Chris, started to school in 1965, he came home the first day and reported that his teacher's name was Mrs. Jayne and he liked her. At the end of the first week of school, Chris said, "Mom, I hope Mrs. Jayne doesn't die of oldness before Jeff starts to school." By Christmas, Chris announced that he loved Mrs. Jayne.

Not another person outside our family has affected us, individually and as a family, as much as Mary Alice Jayne. She taught all of our children to read and write. She taught Andy and me how to be good school parents. She gave us all an enthusiasm and love for learning and school. She gave us a solid foundation in education that sustained us through grade school, high school, college, and (for some of us) graduate school. Mrs. Jayne possessed an enthusiasm for teaching and a belief in her students that was constant and consistent. She loved her students and never showed favoritism.

During the second half of the first grade, Chris announced he was sick and couldn't go to school one day. I was suspicious of this sudden malady but Chris insisted that he couldn't go to school. Andy stopped at the school on his way to town to discuss Chris' condition with Mrs. Jayne, who was just as baffled as we were. When we got to the bottom of it, it turned out that Chris had been told to hold his index finger a certain way to help him learn to form one of his letters or numbers. He had held his finger so tightly and with such intensity against the paper and desk that his entire hand and wrist ached. Mrs. Jayne worried about being misunderstood and she never forgot it, although she did laugh about it many years later. Chris still holds his finger "wrong."

Many of her students visited Mrs. Jayne regularly for years after they were out of school. One September a former student sent her a bouquet of flowers with a note saying that she thinks of her first grade teacher every Fall when school starts. During a Christmas visit a couple of years ago, my son Jeff reminded Mrs. Jayne that she had caught him in a lie when he was in the first grade and took him aside to tell him how disappointed she was that he'd storied to her. He never forgot that and never storied to Mrs. Jayne again. She was proud of all her students. "Jeff is my first Ph.D.," she said when he got his doctorate.

When Scotty started to school, Mrs. Jayne told us how refreshing it was to see an Offutt who didn't like having dirty hands, since the boys did not care how dirty they got. One day she called to say that Scotty had gone too close to the creek behind the school, slipped and gotten her clothes and herself wet and muddy. Scotty wasn't hurt, but would I bring a change of clothes to school? Haldeman Elementary School is a three-minute drive or a five-minute walk from our house and Scotty had her clean, dry clothes in minutes. My children were in grade school when bussing was supposed to be the answer to all our school and social problems and this incident made me realize how unwise it is to truck young children across the county. Being close to home carries a strong sense of security to a sick, injured or dirty little girl.

By the time it was Melissa's turn to begin first grade, she was more than ready to be in Mrs. Jayne's room and learn to read and write.

We gave the kids' teachers homemade pimento cheese for Christmas and the favorite teachers continued to receive it after Offutts left their classes. Mrs. Jayne was one of these favorites. After she moved from Haldeman Elementary to the school downtown as principal, some or all of us delivered cheese to her at home during the holidays.

I'm not sure when it started, or why, but at some point, I began visiting Mrs. Jayne regularly. She lived close to campus and I stopped by after classes (as a student and later, when I taught). I usually went to see her on Friday before going to the grocery. Sometimes we went shopping to an antique store to buy wedding or birthday gifts that one of us needed. We went to Wal-Mart a few times or to lunch. But mostly we sat and talked. That's when *my* education from Mary Alice Jayne began.

Mary Alice belonged to an old established Morehead family and her sense of history and knowledge of the community were keen. I heard so many stories about our county and its people. A few favorite tales I've committed to memory, although most I don't remember. That may be just as well, but in no way diminishes the pleasure of hearing them.

She was non-judgmental, accepting people and situations without question or comment. After reading Chris' first book, she said she just sat and thought about Chris writing those "bad" words. He told her that he learned some words outside her classroom, on the playground from the bigger boys. During a visit, Chris asked about the Lifeline hanging around her neck, and Mary Alice explained that older people who live alone can press the electronic Lifeline if they need help. It rings an alarm at the hospital. When she asked him about his next book, Chris told her to hang on to her Lifeline when she read it -- she might need to call for help.

Mary Alice was enthusiastic and optimistic about everything and everybody. She went through magazines and cookbooks looking for interesting recipes to try until the day she died. She loved kitchen gadgets and never stopped buying — and using them. You'd think an 85-year-old woman didn't need another roasting pan or cake plate. Not Mary Alice. She took great pleasure in buying — and using — new things. She was very generous with her equipment. Many times, when planning dinner parties, I borrowed Mary Alice's casserole, the one with a silver stand. I borrowed the electric roaster, cake pans, and once, the neatest little tapered glass holders. They look like candle holders but are sunk in the top of a cake and filled with brandy as a toast. (The idea came right out of the '50s, I'm sure.) I used them when I was a graduate student to celebrate a fellow student's birthday. Three of us went to the kitchen to bring in the dessert and were so charmed by pouring brandy in the tiny glasses and draining them that we had a good buzz on before we got the cake and ice cream to the table. Mary Alice always expected detailed reports of my entertaining.

Mary Alice put together a quilt during the last year of her life. It had been started by her grandmother. She was so family oriented although she had no children and her husband died in 1965. She never pressured me to visit or to stay longer (although sometimes it was hard to get away since she so loved to talk). I usually let her know when we were going out of town for conventions, even though she assured me it wasn't necessary that I feel obligated to do so. She liked to rearrange things in her house and it wasn't unusual for her to ask me (or anybody who came in) to move a photo — the house was full of pictures — or a plant or a small piece of furniture from one spot to another. She once sent me out in the garage for something, telling me where to look. I couldn't find it and she said, "Jodie, your children were better listeners in first grade than you are now." And she got up and got it herself. She seldom called Andy anything but Mr. Offutt, no matter how many times he and I both told her to call him Andy. Somebody (her cousin, I believe) gave her a Polaroid Swinger that she kept in the living room. She often asked visitors to take photos of her and her company.

When she had her first heart attack several years ago, I reported it to my children. In a clear indication of how closely connected we all felt to Mary Alice, Melissa said, "Mom, when Mrs. Jayne dies, will I forget how to read and write?"

I believe this is why her students remembered her: Mary Alice always looked for and stressed the positive in people. One important lesson that I learned from Mary Alice was not to worry too much about things. I never saw her show any concern about children — her great-nieces and nephews and my grandchildren — breaking anything. If somebody broke something, not to worry, it can be replaced. If not, that's OK. Things are to be used, not put up. If you break or spill something, clean it up and go on.

Mary Alice taught me to view life with a sense of humor. She seemed always to focus on people rather than situations and enjoyed interaction with people of all ages. I've watched her converse easily with a six-year-old and the 36-year-old parent. She appreciated my visiting her regularly and I honestly believe she had no idea how much I gained from spending time with her.

She did not want to go to a nursing home, nor did she want someone to live with her. She'd lived

alone for over 30 years. For the last weeks of her life somebody was with her all the time. During her last trip to the hospital, she was given a pacemaker and she perked right up. When she returned home, she directed the woman staying with her to bake pies and cookies, and the day she died, she told her to tell me that she needed my daughters' addresses; she wanted to work on Christmas cards. Because she seemed to have gotten new strength from the pacemaker, it was a shock when she had a massive heart attack and died that night.

Even more than that pacemaker, what kept Mary Alice going was an active mind that was always making plans.

Chris was one of her pallbearers. He took a photo of his first grade class to the funeral home. The six-year-olds sat at attention in their desks and Mrs. Jayne stood against the wall, so proud of her class.

After I knew her for about twenty years, I told Mary Alice about Chris saying he hoped she didn't "die of oldness." I could have told her a lot sooner; she loved it. I did tell her that Melissa asked if she'd forget how to read and write. She liked that, too, and repeated it to several people.

My children — and many others — won't pick up a pencil or open a book without thinking about their first grade teacher. Mrs. Jayne died of oldness last November. I still miss her — especially on Friday afternoons.

MARY ALICE CALVERT JAYNE

April 17, 1912 - November 11, 1998

