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THE DILLINGER RELIC

22

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6 March

Back to the diaryzine after a week's absence. I remain in Durham, still living happily with Bernadette, but there have been a few little ironies in the intervening time.

For one thing, my health. Sunday, I was writing letters saying that I had not had an asthma attack in weeks. This statement was true, but misleading. What I had been having was asthma symptoms, which I'd been warding off with ever-increasing doses of medication. In any event, Sunday night Hubris met Nemesis, and I had an asthma attack that even huge medications would not help. Monday morning, Bernadette took me to the hospital, where it was discovered that the usual quick-fix treatment would not work because of all the medication I'd taken, and so I had to suffer through the whole thing. And so I spent a bad day, and a less awful night, at the hospital. But that has turned out to be a good thing because it cleared up the symptoms, and now I am on a preventive program & not suffering from asthma symptoms and not using the medications that I overused before.

You may remember the computer (Osborne-1) that I ordered. That has finally arrived at ComputerLand. The catch is that it's a weekend, and the thing has to be checked before it can be given to me (and most reasonably so, I presume), and it will be ready around the time I leave for the Conference on the Fantastic/Tropicon in Boca Raton this coming week. And so I have asked ComputerLand to hold my machine for me until I get back, not merely from Boca, but from my trip the following week to NY for Lunacon. I have put this request in writing & mailed it, as well as delivering it over the phone, just to be on the safe side.

Yesterday, Bernadette & I visited sf writer David Drake & his wife Jo for dinner. We had a simply delightful time. I do not know if Dave has ever written a work of fiction that did not have at least one bloody battle in it, but his conversation has a good deal more variety to it, including a wide knowledge of such topics as history, classical literature, and art.

Today we entertain for the first time in the new place, as a couple of Bernadette's colleagues and a student of one of them will be coming over for dinner.



Philip K. Dick is dead. *(NOT HIS USUAL TAKING I)* Neil Belsky called up the other night to announce that he'd heard that Dick had checked out of consensus reality with a stroke.

I am saddened but not surprised. Dick portrayed himself in his last years as a Horrible Example of what bad street dope can do its users, including physical damage, and that may well have been part of what did him in. I am saddened because, after the wretched A SCANNER DARKLY, which seemed more a symptom than a portrayal of the drug problems it was supposed to deal with, Dick made a comeback with the remarkable, if highly flawed, VALIS, and I am told that THE DIVINE INVASION, which I have not yet read, was even better.

But I mourn Dick as the inventor of what is now my favorite kind of sf--the philosophical kind. The emphasis on him as a drug writer has always been a misleading form of sensationalism. I suspect that none of the many people who describe THE THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH (perhaps his masterpiece) as "the ultimate acid book" have ever tried acid. Dick's subjects are more like metaphysics and ontology. There is little agreement as to which of his books are the best--indeed, I do not always agree with myself on this matter--but MARTIAN TIME SLIP, UBIK, SOLAR LOTTERY, and A MAZE OF DEATH remain in my mind.

Dick leaves a couple of heirs to his tradition. One is my old pal Rudy Rucker, whose SOFTWARE I recommended last installment. The other is a man who gets a whole lot less recognition than I for one think he deserves--Barrington J. Bayley.

Bayley is an unusual writer in a variety of ways. One can see him as a strange sort of amphibian, in that he has been most published by NEW WORLDS and by DAW. He is not a writer one seeks out for literary merit, characterization, elegant prose, adventure, or sex. If anything, he can be compared with writers like Clement, Niven, and Hogan, who seek to do only one thing in their sf. But while the others speculate scientifically, Bayley deals with philosophical and spiritual questions, matters of the essence of reality.

Bayley has been largely concerned with the nature of Time in his writings, and perhaps his two best books until now, COLLISION COURSE and THE FALL OF CHRONOPOLIS, presented new approaches to this problem. More recently, he has incorporated such occult studies as Gnosticism, alchemy, and the Tarot in his work. A recent collection, THE KNIGHTS OF THE LIMITS, offered a variety of remarkable inventions.

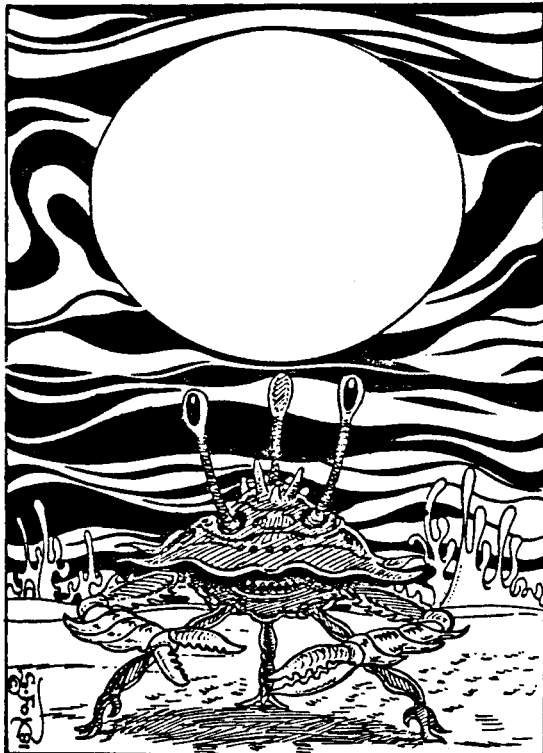
His latest, THE PILLARS OF ETERNITY (DAW pb), may be his best. He pulls together a number of themes from his past writing, adds some new & startling possibilities, and ties them all together into a satisfying resolution. If you like philosophical sf, don't miss this one.

7 March

With a bit of a discontinuity since last I wrote, I've got to try to figure out what I meant to tell you & didn't. First, very good news: My friend Julie Scott gave birth to a healthy 7-lb/11-oz baby boy on Valentine's Day. She & her husband Ken named him Alexander Morgan Scott. Best wishes to all of them.

On the fannish front, I got a progress report from Balticon. For one reason or another, I've never been to a Balticon, and I don't think that's about to change. One rule that makes sense to me is don't go to a con where the concom sounds terrified of the hotel, and that would appear to be the case here. There's a no-weapons policy, which is OK with me, but that's just part of a general mass of warnings. The concom also reminds us of nudity laws, laws against sleeping in public areas, laws against drinking at the wrong times, etc. We are further informed that the con itself will enforce these laws. On top of everything else, the hotel has instituted that favorite form of con harassment, the "corkage charge" for bringing anything edible into your room. In other words, NO SMOKING, NO DRINKING, NO SEX, NO DRUGS, NO SMILING, NO TALKING, HAVE A NICE DAY. This is a scared concom in a hostile hotel, and I wouldn't go to a con like that if they paid me.

It occurs to me that perhaps I should start reading newspapers again. I have at best a vague idea of what's going on in The Big World Out There, and while such knowledge may not be the most joyous in the world, it would give me a source of smartass in these writings. I do not want to see DR turn into another fanzine in the sense of being about nothing but fandom. I don't know what paper I'll read, though. Bernadette tells me that the most popular one down here has the charming & tasteful habit of printing not only the names but the addresses of rape victims. Blech.



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8 March

Like I said, Bernadette & I don't read the newspapers, and so things may sort of pass us by. Fortunately, we do have some sources, like the Belsky Death Report. Neil calls us up whenever somebody famous dies. (You mean you *don't* have friends who are interested in that sort of thing?) I told you he called us with the sad news about Philip K. Dick, and a few days later he informed us that John Belushi had shuffled off this mortal coil. This evening, the phone rang, and Bernadette picked it up & said, "Hi, Neil." I was tempted to shout out, "Who died this time?"

Ayn Rand. There is a temptation to say, "You mean somebody noticed?" Certainly, the most charitable interpretation would be that her life's work was behind her, and that her recent statements of undying loyalty to "Charlie's Angels," or her belief that Gerald Ford was the nearest thing America had to an Objectivist Hero, did not add to her luster. Indeed, I got a zine the other day from Michael Grossberg, in which he mentioned dreaming of Rand's death, and the combination hardly even seems worthy of mention as an interesting coincidence.

The Greek poet Archilochos wrote, "The fox knows many things. The hedgehog knows only one thing, but it's a goodie." Isaiah Berlin made a distinction of 2 kinds of thinker on that basis. Rand was a hedgehog, and the one thing she knew was that what she called "altruism"--a form of oversocialization which replaces the natural solipsism of the child with the belief that one is an interchangeable nonentity, no different from, or better than, anyone else--is a Lie.

The fate of the hedgehog is to be treated like a Saviour by those to whom one's truth is just what was needed, while others treat the message as evil (because they are not ready to receive it) or as pointless (because they have not suffered from the problem the message corrects). In Rand's case, the problem was exacerbated because she was so two-valued in her approach to all questions, and so dogmatic about her own possession of the Truth. She built a Church with herself as infallible pope, and excommunicated at the drop of a heresy.

My own reaction to Rand was, perhaps, anomalous. I read her not as an impressionable youth, but a couple of years ago. The flaws in ATLAS SHRUGGED were all too obvious to me. And yet, at the same time, she did indeed make a few points that had been sorely neglected in my intellectual development. I know of no one who has refuted her point that a culture reinforces what it rewards, whether it wishes to do so or not, and so insofar as a culture practices "to each according to his needs, from each according to his abilities" (and the American State does in fact practice that, tho not consistently), it is encouraging people to have needs and discouraging them from having abilities.

I suspect that she will be remembered not unlike HP Blavatsky or Mary Baker Eddy, as a fascinating minor religious leader, and one who had more good stuff to say than you might think from a superficial description.

15 March

Bernadette & I have just returned from a most enjoyable week in Boca Raton. One reason for that was the kind hospitality of Tony Parker & Judy Bemis, who offered us lodgings & transportation to & from the activities. But the Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts and Tropicon were quite interesting.

The interfaces, contrasts, and confluences of conference & con will be the subject of a sizeable article in LINES OF OCCURRENCE, but let me say right now that your friendly neighborhood Pontifex (Pope Guilty I, speaking *ex cathedra* from the oval throne with the hole in the middle) saw bridges being built between Academe and fandom, and saw that it was (mostly) good. At its best, the conference combined the precision & knowledgeability of the true scholar with the casual but caring attention of the fan. Or as James Gunn said on one panel, "The ideal critic is someone with full academic training & skills who has been reading & loving sf since the age of eight." There seemed to be more of those around than you might think.

More personally, Bernadette & I enjoyed the cons, tho we found the length of the activities a bit wearing. *NAMEDROP ALERT* We had a chat with Brian Aldiss about Gurdjieff & Ouspensky, and how Aldiss used them in BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD. We saw some old friends like Alexis Gilliland (whose fiction may have me putting NAMEDROP ALERTs before his name in a few years), Gail Higgins, and Chauntecleer Michael. I also ran into Peggy Dolan, whom old-time DR readers may remember from the lettercol a few years ago. We'd never met, and I hadn't heard from Peggy in quite a while. It now turns out that she had been busy studying for a CPA degree, which she now has, and she is apparently returning to fandom, which is good news.

I also spent some time with Brad Linaweaver. He gave me a copy of the March, 1982, AMAZING, because it contains his story "Moon of Ice." I found it an extremely imaginative speculation about an alternate universe in which the Nazis got the A-bomb first, and thus fought the US to a draw in WWII. Brad does some very interesting things with the personalities & ideologies involved.

Returned to one pleasant minor surprise. I'd asked the PO to hold up our mail, as nobody would be home to receive it. Back in NY, that would have meant that when I got back, I'd have to go down to the PO and pick up the mail that had been held. But they interpreted it as meaning deliver it all today, which they did. All manner of goodies in it. I've mentioned the numbered Dianes, 2 women I've met at a couple of cons. They have decided that what the world needs is more Djanes, and so they are offering the opportunity for others to become Dianes, and lest they face an equal-opportunity suit, they have permitted men to become Dianes as well, and so I wrote to them, and I now have the honor of being Diane 23. *And the operation didn't hurt at all!*

Also received a most interesting letter from Olivia Jasen, along with a delightful illo which will probably be the cover for the next LINES OF OCCURRENCE. Livy is branching out from the Starflakes which have been her trademark. And one of FAPA's best writers, Art Widner, writes to thank me for some back issues I sent him. He asks what I have against politics. Well, politics is the attempt to manipulate large intractable systems, or large, even more intractable masses of people. And it does not work. It corrupts whatever it touches, and it has little positive effect. What matters, I become more & more convinced, is things like consciousness, communications, science, and technology. Opening up the skies, both to get at the riches out there, and to let out the Conquistador types who are indispensable on a frontier, but when trapped in a closed system ("spaceship", i.e., prison, earth) become thugs, captains of industry, generals, commisars, or some other form of parasite, is worth far more than either establishment or radical politics. Changing consciousness, using the leverage that comes with influencing the best communicators instead of trying to moving the masses from the bottom, is the only way.

16 March

I must confess that I have sunk to something lower than usual. I have bought a copy of PEOPLE magazine. I rarely feed my mind that sort of empty calories, but I noticed that this issue contained an article about singer Angela Bofill. I've mentioned before that I once spent a year impersonating a public school teacher, and that Angie was one of those who were subjected to my efforts. I liked her, and wish her well, and so from time to time, I try to follow her career, wondering if I had any influence on her. The PEOPLE article quotes her as saying, of her new boyfriend, "I kept asking the Lord when I was going to find a man into raw food." I do hope that isn't my influence.

PEOPLE also reports that Eldridge Cleaver is studying to be a Mormon, thereby (one is tempted to suggest) adding a letter. I find this interesting, as the Church of the Latter Day Saints has traditionally had about as high an opinion of Blacks as he has of women. Speaking of which, PEOPLE reports that he is still married to Kathleen, but she is currently living across the country from him, which should cut down on her bruises, if nothing else.

I also, as promised, look at a newspaper. It said that the government has just *denied* any plans for a military intervention in El Salvador. Uh oh.



FRANK LANGELLA,
EAT YOUR HEART
OUT!!!



I knew there was something from the con I had repressed. I have fallen into a fannish form of corruption, and joined a worldcon bid committee. Atlanta in '86, y'all. Committepeople Gail Higgins, Chauntecleer Michael, and Joe Celko gave me the impression of having thought through their bid, and planned for the kind of facilities that the current size of worldcons demands, rather than just saying, "Hey, isn't it time we had a worldcon around here? Anybody know a hotel?"

I've spent part of today looking at vile, putrid, sick, loathesome, offensive cartoons, and I don't see why you people should escape a similar fate, so I'll tell you that there's a new Gahan Wilson book out--IS NOTHING SACRED? (St. Martin's/Marek pb). As ever, the hideous appearance of Wilson's creatures adds immeasurably to their charm, but one particular cartoon can be described--a sign which reads,

You are now entering
EAST OAKTON

"where every prospect pleases, and only man is vile."

INQUIRY, the cryptolibertarian zine, has finally noted my CoA and sent me their latest issue. The highlight is an article by former NATIONAL LAMPOON editor PJ O'Rourke, attacking safety, from the automotive bondage devices promoted by the Marquis de Nader to "child-resistant" medicine caps, which as Bob Wilson has pointed out before him, only children have the patience & curiosity to open. I like the way this man writes: "Some newer-model automobiles actually have prerecorded voices that speak about one's feckless habits in the tone used by wives during NFL playoffs."

And a review of Patty Hearst's EVERY SECRET THING leads me to wonder whether 5 years from now we will have a new book describing how she was kidnapped, imprisoned, and brainwashed by a publisher and forced to lend her name to a book which was a boring bunch of shit.

While we've sunk to this level, I wonder if Saturday Night Live did a bit about the "John Belushi School of Drug Safety." I think he would have liked that.



24 March

RETURN TO *FNORD* NEW YORK

The stress symptoms began somewhere over Newark. Well, no, that's not fair. Actually, the stress symptoms had been going on for a few days, as I'd faced two Adventures (plane flights) with a Responsibility (an apa & zine mailing) in between. (I am reliably informed that people actually seek out both Adventures and Responsibilities, and not even for masochistic reasons. No accounting for tastes, as they say.) Thus I had not written in these pages in a while. The main news that I missed reporting was the return of Mike Gunderloy, who called me the night before I left. Mike had been legendary for his participation in every apa that he could find, and while he is remembered for his reports of car repairs, he contributed some truly brilliant Discordian strangeness to these apas as well. Then personal upheavals and (you guessed it!) car troubles forced him out of fandom. And now he has returned. He has, like all of us, changed and not changed. He too has discovered computers, and is working with networks & communications systems. He remains Discordian, hanging out with the likes of Semaj the Elder, Amphigoricus the Turgid, and even Ukelele the Short. It was most pleasant to talk with him.

But now I was on my way back to NY, looking towards it with mixed feelings. I hate the city for its crowds, its noise, its crime, its overgovernment. I love many of the people who choose to live there or nearby. A visit would be nice, in the words of the old cliché.

And I was looking forward to seeing Adrienne Fein & Neil Belsky. They had just given me the good news that they have taken a further step in building a life together. A larger apartment in the building Adrienne had been living in opened up, and they are moving in there together. I wish them all the best luck and happiness. To celebrate this move, I bought Adrienne a copy of INVERSIONS (Byte pb), Scott Kim's remarkable book of calligraphy that is something more, and which I recommend to all.

The flight was, alas, an adventure. First I had to wait in Raleigh-Durham Airport because the plane was late. The flight had begun in Atlanta and was delayed there for an hour, as all takeoffs were messed up. (THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THEY PUT ME ON THE BID COMMITTEE!) Then I arrived in NY, and waited for the limo back to New Rochelle. They told me it would be there in 20 minutes. They always say 20 minutes, perhaps because that's the largest number they know. But eventually I got back.

There I practiced my disgraceful habit of reading while I eat. I picked up an old SUNDAY TIMES MAGAZINE and found a William Safire column which said:

5

Bosky

Four stars are hereby awarded to Mimi Sheraton, *The Time's* restaurant critic, for the year's most mouthwatering, double-entred use of an archaic word.

"Set amid the bosky elegance of Washington's Embassy Row," was her beginning of a sentence about a hotel in the nation's capital. Bosky?

The formal meaning of "bosky" is "wooded," or "covered with bushes." "In this bosky wood," wrote George Peele in 1583, "bury his corpse." Sure enough, in Washington, the strip of old estates on Massachusetts Avenue known as Embassy

Row is tree-lined, verdant with boxwood, and undeniably bosky.

The slang meaning of the same word, two centuries old, is "befuddled with drink; tipsy." Norman W. Schur, author of "English English," speculates that "the meaning of 'dazed, muddled, slightly drunk' most likely came about from the idea that if you were wandering through the woods, you would probably be dazed or lost."

What a delectable confluence of meanings: Stroll down the shaded lane of Embassy Row some evening when the round of embassy cocktail parties is in full swing, and you will find yourself in the world's center of boskiness. ■



Adrienne & Neil offered to drive me to the con, but they would not be able to leave until late afternoon or evening. Fortunately, Adrienne was able to invoke the power of VISA to make the hotel hold my room until I got there. Sure enough, they picked me up & we drove to the hotel. We didn't notice it at the time, but the people who had just repaired Adrienne's car had once again botched the job, and it would give them trouble all weekend.

But now we had no trouble getting to the con or checking in to the hotel, and we arrived in time for me to set up a Discordian business meeting for my room at 9 PM Friday, as I try to do at every con I attend.

And it was a good one. There were VelmaJ Bowen, Mark Richards, and Paul Birnbaum, who have announced that they plan to get married. I congratulated them and offered my ministerial services, should all the standard-brand clergy they run into have the usual vulgar prejudice about the maximum number of people for a marriage.

There too were other old friends like Vicki Rosenzweig, Leslie & Larry Hurlburt, Cathy Silverstein, Mark Blackman, Brian Burley, and Dan Lieberman. There was Sam Robinson, whom I don't believe I've mentioned in these pages, but who has been enlivening Discordian business meetings for the last couple of years with his jaundiced view of the State and other aspects of the Reality Principle. There was a new friend, second-generation fan Miriam Rogow, whose mother (Roberta) is a well-known filker and *fnord* Trekfan. There was Eric Raymond. Eric has a way of being very certain of things. This doesn't bother me most of the time because he's usually right, but now he was disagreeing with me and thus being pig-headed, dogmatic, and fanatical. Specifically, he was warning me that if I did any programing in Basic, it would stunt my growth, and cause hairs to spring up on my palms. What he recommended is LISP, a language noted for its multitude of parentheses. I've dealt with similar languages in the study of symbolic logic, and found that, as with the writings of Gene Wolfe, the subtleties of the message are overcome, for me, by the difficulty of having to pay that much attention to what I am reading. In other words, the language thuckth. We disputed this in much friendlier manner than I suspect my tone would indicate.

I also ran into Kurt Cockrum and Martha Koester and got to spend some time with them. Then there was Adrienne's APA-69 party, at which I mainly talked with Vicki. Vicki is at Yale, but is thinking of transferring to a school in New York City, as most of her friends are there. The thought of anyone making efforts to live in NYC sort of boggles my mind, but I can see her point, as there are, as I said, quite a few people there whom I like. But I loathe the city, and as far as I am concerned, there is a majority of one in Durham.

I partied in the evening. The blonde woman in the con suite looked familiar, and I noticed that she had an infant with her. That was a sufficient hint for me to recognize Laurie Mann, and I said hello to her. She had no such clue, and so she turned to her husband and said, "You remember Robert Whitaker." Ah, well, Laurie and I have been exchanging letters, zines, and apa comments for years now, but our only in-person encounters had been a get-together after Pghlange 2½ years ago, and waving to each other across a room at Noreascon. Once we got the identities straightened out, we had a most pleasant chat. There too was Jane Jewell, product of two of my favorite elite groups (Swarthmore College, as well as fandom), and it was nice to see her again.

Sunday, I returned, as Adrienne's car heroically made it back to Westchester.

I had a bit of time left, and I submitted to *taxatio*. To me, the main difference between the IRS and a private robber is that the private robber does not make the victim do all the work, or hold the victim responsible should the theft not amount to enough. It is not unlike a rapist demanding that his victim get on top.

Then too I packed some books to bring down with me. I now have the works of Spider Robinson, Robert Coover, EL Doctorow, Octavia Butler, and others close to hand.

And now I am back. Tomorrow begins the second phase of my life in Durham, as I expect to pick up my computer. Indeed there are all manner of goodies to keep me occupied. Just before I left, I received the 2 volumes of Bander & Grinder's *THE STRUCTURE OF MAGIC*, which I am looking forward to reading. (Those people really do Know Stuff.) There are a couple of apae awaiting comment, and in my absence letters have piled up, from interesting people like Janice Gelb, Joe Celko, and Brian Cimmet.

26 March

Adam is here. As I sit at this desk, typing, I could, if I wished, turn 90° and face another keyboard and work on my new Osborne-1.



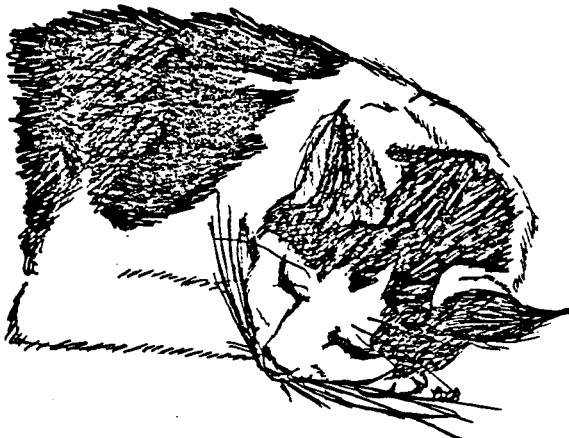
Yesterday morning I was finally ready to pick up the machine. I did not proceed directly to ComputerLand because New York had made me sick again (who's scapegoating?); specifically, my nose is stuffed up, and so I stopped at a drugstore to purchase some generic pseudoephedrine and a nose dildo.

Thence, to ComputerLand, where the Osborne-1 (and an Epson MX 80FT printer) awaited. I filled out a variety of forms, including an Osborne user survey. There is something about such things which calls out to the imp of the perverse in me (I know--there is something about most things which calls out to the imp of the perverse in me), and so when they asked me to list 3 magazines I read regularly, I answered truthfully, but probably was the first person in their history to list SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, PRO FOOTBALL WEEKLY, and PAGANA. (Had I thought further about the question before answering, I would have been even more obscure, citing HOLIER THAN THOU, rather than SFR.)

Having picked up the machine, I then had to go thru various mundane matters to get it ready. I needed another table for it, and Bernadette & I went over to a used-furniture shop she likes, where we found an excellent desk for \$60. When we got it into the light, I discovered to my joy that it was painted shiny gold. (Remember I'm the one who thinks that the word "garish" is a compliment.) Bernadette does not mind. We (mostly Bernadette) finally found a suitable arrangement whereby we could have 3 desks in the study without being (or even seeming) overly crowded. Then there was the matter of plugging the machine in. It seems that the prong and the hole were incompatible (a problem that is by no means usual in our household). Fortunately, Bernadette was able to purchase a suitable concave-&-convex device to make the connection.

We plugged in and got a confusing signal. Bernadette went to check the connection and in so doing, cut her foot rather nastily. The machine then worked. The idea that it requires a blood sacrifice does not cheer me.

Tommy Gunner



In any event, I followed the instructions in the Manual supplied with the machine, and ran a few simple programs & instructions & such. I am, thus far, most favorably impressed by the Manual. As I've mentioned before, instructions that come with computers tend to one of two extremes. Some assume that the reader already knows how to operate the machine, or at least is familiar with computer operations in general. I am not. The other sort assumes that the reader knows absolutely nothing, and thus are written in such a condescending style that, as Eric Raymond says, they should be printed on droolproof paper. I suspect that an example of the latter is the TRS-80 Color Computer. POPULAR COMPUTING's review of it says, "The term 'manual' is almost inappropriate in this context--it sounds too technical, too dry. These texts are as engaging as the Sunday funnies. They're the friend you always wanted to have at your side when you embarked on something a little scary. And let's face it--using a computer for the first time can be a little scary." Marvy-poo! if you happen to be literally or mentally under the age of ten. For the rest of us, I suspect that Tonstant Weader would fwow up.

But I did not get very far. The Osborne people wisely suggest that one should copy the CP/M, BASIC, WordStar, and SuperCalc disks before doing anything with them. Doing such requires blank disks, which are not provided with the machine. And so I checked with ComputerLand, and they are out of disks, but the disks are being shipped from California--they are sure of this--and will almost certainly be in within a few days. (Why do I have this sudden feeling of *deja vu*?) Today I called the other local computer store and found that they do not stock disks that fit the Osborne.

Speaking of interesting phone calls today, I discovered that I was down to my last ribbon cartridge for this machine, and so I called IBM's Office Supplies Division to order some more. This was the first time I had gotten in touch with them since moving, and when I gave the representative my new address she--working for IBM--informed me that this might lead to difficulties as their computer was not terribly good at dealing with CoAs.

Running to a halt in the work on the computer gave me a chance to catch up (somewhat) on my mail, and I sent out a bunch of letters, but of course one never catches up. I knew I'd left something out of my Lunacon report, and it was meeting Pagan APA colleague Ellen Willig. Today, as if to remind me, there was a letter from her, promptly commenting on the copy of DR 21 I gave her at the con. Then there's LASFAPA left over from before Lunacon, and Minneapa arrived today....

Another adventure coming up *along with dinner*. At Easter I will be flying to Chicago with Bernadette for a few days to meet her family. They sound like a most interesting bunch. And I won't be there for long, but there is the possibility I'll have time to meet Bob Shea, an experience I've been looking forward to, and maybe see some Chicago-area friends like Ed Zed & Dennis the Prophet.



29 March

INPUTS: Charlie Williams sent some of his delightful illos, including the one above. D Carol Roberts sent a portfolio of her work, as an offer to some faneds. I most eagerly accepted it, and hope to have some of her work in this issue. Diane 2 passes along this bit of alleged humor:

What's position 68?

You do me, and I'll owe you one.

Allan Beatty says that he is perfectly willing to believe that Adam is not named after Adam Weishaupt, but what about Adam Selene? Ron Salomon sends a CoA (41 Centre St., Natick, MA 01760). Michael Bastraw, asst editor of NIEKAS (an excellent zine which he tells me is supposed to arrive in my mailbox any day now), sends me a joke which is thoroughly cruel & offensive, and unbecomfitting the dignity of a deputy sheriff, which what he does in real life. Read on if you must:

Why didn't Natalie Wood need a bath?

She washed up on the shore.

You all read it, didn't you? And I'll bet most of you laughed, except the ones who'd seen it before. I got a belated contributor's copy of THE WESTERFILK COLLECTION (my contribution is "The Derrière-Garde March"). It's got a bunch of good filks in it, and will cost you \$7.50 from Off-Centaur Publications, PO Box 424, El Cerrito, CA 94530. The Sharper Image, a very high-tech gift company, apologizes for not getting around to sending the biofeedback device I ordered from them. You guessed it--computer malfunction. Do we see a pattern here? And locs from Jean Rossner, Elly Freeman, Neil Rest, Lee Pelton, Harry Andruschak, Leslie David, and Ian Covell. Keep 'em coming.

30 March

The nice people at Phoenix Publishing Co. have sent me a review copy of POSITIVE MAGIC: OCCULT SELF-HELP, by Marion Weinstein.

To discuss it, I have to start with a few points. A book on Christian theology may be written by a Catholic, a Protestant, or an unbeliever. The latter may well think that the proper term for his bias is "objectivity."

Similarly, a book on magick can be written from any one of a number of sectarian viewpoints, and one thing that will matter is the match between writer's bias and reader's. Weinstein writes from the Wiccan point of view, which is not mine.

Wiccans worship nature, and natural processes. Things like the changing of the seasons are important to them. They love fertility, and consider the male/female distinction so basic to the universe that it is reflected in their choice of gods. At best, this approach leads to a wise respect for natural processes, and a knowledge that attempting to impose human will upon them is stupid & dangerous. At worst, it leads to the kind of knee-jerk technophobia that is so prevalent amongst the antinuke set.

The reason I'm telling you all of this is that one's attitude towards magick will be influenced by the sort of sectarian considerations I am talking about. For instance, Weinstein warns against any religion whose practices include dancing counterclockwise (widdershins) because that "is designed to go against the turning of the Earth." To me such a prohibition is no more valid than, let us say, the Orthodox Jewish prohibition of ham. (At least two of the people I respect as much as anybody in the world obey the kosher laws, and I wouldn't dream of trying to make them change, but I realize that such laws are valid in their reality, but not mine.)

My disagreements with the book are mostly sectarian in this sense. Weinstein takes astrology seriously; I do not. She accepts the Threefold Law, which says that any negative magick one does comes back three times as bad; I consider that a moralistic boogeyman. (Though I believe that using one's mind for negative magick is at least as dumb as using any other valuable precision tool for a task that will harm it.) And so on.

Weinstein covers the ideas of the Aquarian Age, of planes of existence (I'm afraid the phrase "Earth plane" makes her sound to me like a Flat Earther), occult dangers, the history of Witchcraft, and the idea of Karma. In the second half of the book, she discusses specific techniques, doing a particularly good job on the Tarot.

And so for me, the book on the general subject that has the most value is still PEI Bonewits's excellent, witty, and thoughtful REAL MAGIC (Creative Arts pb). But for those who find Wicca a useful image, who are comfortable with the terminology & practices of nature worship, this is an excellent book.

A while back, John Sladek wrote a couple of novels--MECHASM (alias THE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM) and THE MULLER-FOKKER EFFECT. They were published as sf, and indeed they dealt with the sfnal question of machine consciousness & evolution, but to some they bore more resemblance to the nonmimetic mainstream books of people like Coover & Pynchon than to traditional sf. They featured sharp satire, word games, and a jaundiced view of just about everything, and I loved both of them and have been recommending them ever since. Since then, Sladek has done a bunch of short stories, a debunking book on the implied sciences, and at least one mystery (BLACK AURA). Although, as I say, Sladek has not quite fitted into the standard sf categories, some of the hipper editors, like Terry Carr & Dave Hartwell, have published him whenever they had the chance. And now Sladek is back, with RODERICK: THE EDUCATION OF A YOUNG ROBOT (Timescape pb), reportedly the first of a trilogy. It is the Sladek mixture as before--a bunch of strange people doing strange things, with its innocent protagonist learning the ways of the world, from television, voyeurism, and kindergarten, among other things. I enjoyed it a whole lot.

Tracy Kidder's THE SOUL OF A NEW MACHINE is and is not a book about computers. It is really about the computer biz, and the pressures of change in the world of high-tech machines, and the kind of driven men (and an occasional driven woman) who survive & who prosper in this kind of world. I'm very glad to be on the other end of the business.

31 March

I'm not sure who had this phone number before us. It's not quite busy enough to have been a whorehouse or a bookie, but it was apparently someone with a busy social life. In any event, we get a lot of calls for our predecessors, plus a few wrong numbers and some unclassifiable. Today, someone called asking if this was the operating room.

Haven't got much further with the computer. The shipment of new disks to ComputerLand is apparently contingent on Hell freezing over, or somesuch. If this goes on, I check out Raleigh & Chapel Hill to see if they have any computer stores with blank Osborne disks.

I've started a new very minor organization. It's called the Society of the Unbroken Name, and it's for people who like to be called by their entire first names, and not some abbreviation, nickname, etc. Bernadette & I are the founders, and we are offering membership to Matthew Tepper, Richard Onley, and Patrick Nielsen Hayden, among others. (Why do I wish to be known by my entire first name? Just habit, I guess. If I hear someone call me "Art," it takes a moment of adjustment to realize that the person is talking to me.)

I read Somtow Sucharitkul's short-story collection MALLWORLD (Starblaze pb) on the assumption that it would show some of the wit he has in person and in his FANTASY NEWSLETTER column. I was not disappointed. I'm going to use the ugly word "promising." This is a pleasant book by a man who may well do a whole lot better.

1 April

My biofeedback device from The Sharper Image finally arrived. It's a little thing with 2 metal grooves that you put your fingers on, and it emits a high-pitched tone, and then when you relax, it lowers the resistance of your skin, and the tone gets lower. I tried it this morning. Either I didn't relax at all, or I'm even more tone-deaf than I thought, or both.

What I also did this morning was to find out that there is nothing listed under "Computers" in either Raleigh or Chapel Hill, except for a couple of Radio Shacks, so it looks very much as if I wait until ComputerLand gets blank disks. Also I found the main branch of the public library, which was nicer. They have a copy of Dan Jenkins's new book, BAJA OKLAHOMA. It is not a whole lot different from his classic, SEMI-TOUGH, except that it is not about football. What it is about is country music and sport-fuckin' and booze & drugs and mainly Texas, and there's a whole lot of smartass in it, and I had a lot of fun reading it, as I always do whenever Dan Jenkins does a new book.

I should mention that one of the honorary officers of the Society of the Unbroken Name is Richard Burton. He once said that he did not wish to be called Dick because "that's an appendage, not a name."



2 April

Janet Malcolm's PSYCHOANALYSIS: THE IMPOSSIBLE PROFESSION is a most interesting book, at least as much for what it does not say as for what it says. She has chosen to focus primary attention on "Aaron Green," an undeviatingly orthodox Freudian therapist.

Green accepts the Freudian axioms that human nature is largely fixed at the Oedipal period (age 3-5), and that those who have come through that particular phase with traumas can be cured only by going back over it with a therapist who is purely objective, living through the transference reaction, and accepting a mature role in the world. He talks about the real sacrifices he makes to be the properly objective therapist, how he is tempted to play nice guy, but knows it would interfere with the therapeutic process.

He's right, in a way, and yet....MORALITIES OF EVERYDAY LIFE, a book I talked about last time, mentioned that in some truly evil situations, like Nazi Germany, bending the rules to be kind can seem to be a temptation, with the path of strictness seeming like a kind of self-sacrificing virtue. And while psychoanalysis is certainly not that evil, those who practice a more personal approach can point out that being the objective (almost Godlike) Doctor is a temptation, too. There is also the fact that those who have given up something they are tempted by find it very hard to accept the possibility that their sacrifice was in vain. (Priestly celibacy is an obvious example of this sort of thing.) The Sufis say that the highest form of renunciation is to give up sacrifice.

Karl Popper says that two things that a would-be science can do in the face of contradiction both fail to deal with it. One is to explain it away, and the Freudian practice of defining disagreement as "resistance" is well known. The other is to narrow down the field, and that is what this book describes. Green points out that most therapists lack the discipline to do it his way. He also mentions that orthodox Freudians agree that many types of "mental illness" are not subject to their method. In other words, the Freudian approach works if and only if it matches up analyst & patient who are ideal for it.

For a long time it was believed that Newtonian physics worked for all situations. Einstein demonstrated that it did not work at speeds approaching that of light, and came up with an improved version of physics which covered all of Newtonian and added to it. One can say that Einstein did for Newtonian physics what what Jesus said He did for the Old Testament: He came not to overturn it, but to fulfill it.

Thus it would appear that Freudian psychology needs the same sort of change. Indeed, most of those who have offered new approaches, from Jung & Adler to Berne & Szasz, claim to be building on what is best in Freud, rather than utterly abandoning it.

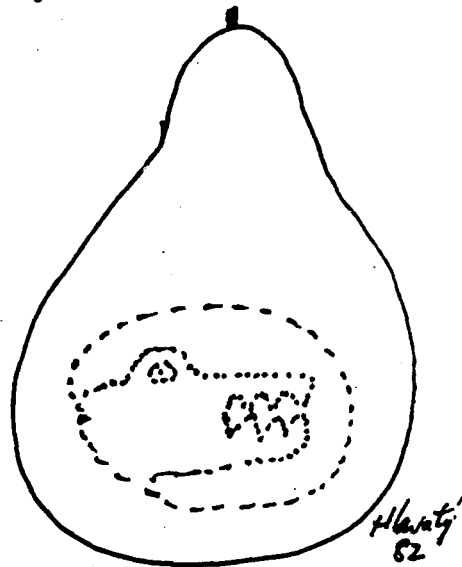
An approach to this that I've mentioned before is Bandler & Grinder's Neuro-Linguistic Programming. I recently read their 2-volume THE STRUCTURE OF MAGIC. It offers several interesting approaches, including the idea of using Chomsky's transformational linguistics to study speech in the therapeutic context.

In Chomskyan linguistics, a sentence has a surface structure, and from that, a linguist can more or less derive the deep structure. Bandler & Grinder apply this approach to the sentences uttered by clients in therapy. They suggest that people apply three processes to their thoughts in expressing them--deletion, generalization, and distortion--and that it is the job of the therapist to undo these. An example of deletion is "I'm scared." The therapist restores the missing part by asking, "Of what?" A generalization is "Nobody listens to me." [Nobody at all?] A distortion is something like, "My spouse makes me mad," with its implication that someone else has the voodoo power to influence another's thoughts. In each case, the therapist tries to undo the harm done by restoring the deep structure and showing the client how to change. (Of course, all of these devices for restoring deep structure are used all the time in intelligent & meaningful conversation, though there are limits outside the therapeutic situation on how much one may suggest that the words of another do not represent the other's thoughts without transgressing bounds of good taste & politeness.) Interestingly enough, Malcolm gives an example of the deep-structure approach, but it's used by an internal critic of the Freudian movement to show how *analysts* can misuse the language.

I'm by no means sure that NLP is to Freudianism as Einsteinian physics is to Newtonian. In science, there is a kind of progress: No one attempts to revive the phlogiston theory. In the human studies, it may not be that simple.

Every conservative worships a dead radical, as they say. Buddha rebelled against the rigidity & hierarchy of Hinduism. Within a hundred years of his death, Buddhism was rigid & hierarchical, in most ways no better than what it had replaced. One can say the same of the teachings of Christ & Mohammed.

Today Freudians, if they work very hard, can do well what Freud could do well--a real, but limited area of success. Perhaps in a hundred years, NLP will be a dogmatic church with worshippers following exactly what the founders did, and rebels doing something else.



Forms of Natural Camouflage. 1: The Alligator Pear.

4.4

Yesterday, Duke restored my respect for them. They sent Bernadette a note informing her that next year she will once again be receiving an assistantship from them. Under the terms of it, she will be teaching two courses a semester. This is a Good Thing in two ways. For one thing, it is a sign that Duke recognizes Bernadette's value, and will pay her something like accordingly. For another, it means that she will once again have the opportunity to do one of the things she like best--to teach. (In fact, she has always sought assistantships, rather than fellowships, because of the teaching opportunity.) She will be teaching the standard *fnord* Freshman Comp first semester, but second semester she may have the opportunity to present a literature course she herself designed & suggested. She has also mentioned the possibility of inviting me to appear before one or more of her classes, no doubt as a Horrible Example.

After a bit of confusion, we are once again getting the local paper, or at least I think we are. There have been some misunderstandings, but yesterday we got the paper. There is nothing much new in the news to report; the big headline seems to deal with the fact that the Social Security system is bankrupt, but this has been true for the last few years, or ever since it was begun, depending on which accounting system you use. More important, the paper has GARFIELD and THE WIZARD OF ID, but lacks ANDY CAPP, BC, and DOONESBURY. This latter reminds me that there is a new Doonesbury book out--ASK FOR MAY, SETTLE FOR JUNE. It goes back a couple of years, dealing with Uncle Duke's Iranian captivity, Rick & Joan's wedding, and a whole bunch of good stuff like that, and is of course a whole lot of fun.

Last night Bernadette & I went to see QUEST FOR FIRE, a prehistoric movie with grunts written by Anthony Burgess and gestures by Desmond Morris (really!). This movie tells us about the origin of important stuff like fire, exogamy, and the missionary position. Caveman movies are not exactly my first choice of entertainment, but this was certainly not bad for what it is.

Got a letter of comment from Jon Singer today. There seems to be a definite positive correlation among Computers, NLP, and DRAWING ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE BRAIN, and Jon, like quite a few other friends of mine, is interested in all of them, tho he suggests that the Drawing book may run some of the right brain/left brain imagery into the ground, a problem that seems to be going around quite a bit lately.

I spent most of today writing LINES OF OCCURRENCE. It is, as promised, a report on the Conference on the Fantastic in Boca, with a whole bunch of thoughts on the whole question of the fan/academic interface. It's 8 (reduced) pages, plus a delightful Livy Jasen cover (I believe I may have mentioned that before, too). Now I've got to see about getting a bulk-rate mailing permit to send that stuff out. Anyway, I think there's a bunch of good stuff in it, and just about everyone I'm sending this to will also be getting LO.



6 April

I've been taking care of a variety of real-world necessities. Yesterday, I went back to the clinic, as scheduled, for tests. They found that my breathing is not perfect, but is not seriously bad, and that I have no severe allergies. I'm relatively OK, will keep taking medicines, and don't have to go back for another couple of months.

Today, after a bit of confusion yesterday, I got my bulk mailing permit. I had to pay a \$40 fee for a new permit, as well as the \$40 annual fee, but 2 mailings of this, and one of LINES OF OCCURRENCE, and I'll be ahead on the deal. (Bulk rate costs 10.9¢ apiece for up to something like 4 oz--much more than any of my zines are. Mailing this would cost 37¢ each, first class, and now there's no such thing as third class for 2-oz. zines.) The PO person I talked with seems friendly & competent.

Yesterday's mail brought a letter from Ziesing Bros., saying that they had shipped the sf books I ordered, and later the same day, UPS brought the actual books. If you buy sf books by mail, I would recommend that you try them. They send orders out quite promptly (by UPS, not the Postal "Service"), and they don't charge for shipping on orders over \$25. That's Ziesing Bros., 768 Main St., Willimantic, CT 06226.

Today's mail brought an announcement from Neil Rest that he and Susan Gail Robin are marrying next month. I wish them the best.

Also in today's mail was apa-v, with a classic example of what blind, phobic anti-nukism can do to an otherwise intelligent mind. This otherwise intelligent person had been warning about the menace of radioactive smoke detectors. Someone else asked how radioactive the things were. (Not very, from what I've heard.) The answer was, "It doesn't matter. It's radioactive, and that's bad." But of course, everything is radioactive, including thee and me. The word "radioactive" is like "poisonous." Enough of any substance can kill you, so you could call just about anything poisonous--certainly such substances as aspirin and alcohol. But they are useful, and so we take the risk. In the same way, some radioactive things are quite useful, and so it is essential to ask how radioactive they are, so that we can make an intelligent decision as to whether we want to use them. But radioactivity is a relatively new kind of poison, and it's scary for that reason. In addition, it's connected in many people's minds with the horrors of nuclear war. But to be antinuclear because nuclear war is a bad thing is like saying, "I've been antielectricity ever since they gave grandpappy the chair."

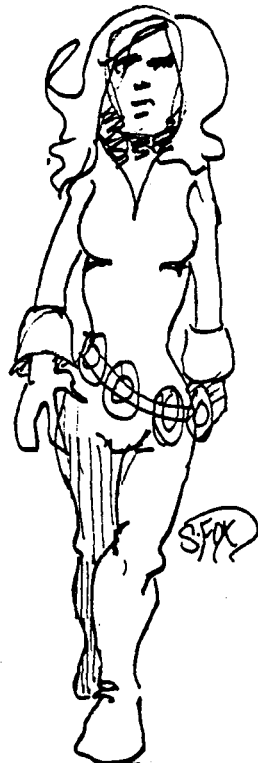
8 April

Today I take off for Chicago to visit Bernadette's family. I am looking forward to meeting them. I am not looking forward to meeting their giant Nazi dog, but I am informed that the beast will not tear me limb from limb, but will merely act that way. I am of course not looking forward to the Adventure aspects of getting there. I still think there should be some way of getting from place to place other than travel. I will have a real good day, as Andy Breckman says.

The trip has already complicated my life. The other day, I went to the post office to have my mail held up while we are away. That marvelously efficient organization has you hold up your mail by filling out a change of address form. Perhaps for that reason, I got the dates wrong, and did not have mail delivered yesterday. I was able to straighten this out by going down to the PO again & picking it up. It included a zine from Mike Gunderloy, a nice letter from Wendy Becket (of Bermuda Triangle--I've been sending them my zines for a year or so), and the bill from IBM for my typewriter ribbons, which--you guessed it!--was sent to my old address.

Other than that, I've been busy with mailing trivialities & such. I'm getting envelopes with my return address & bulk rate stuff on them.

As I prepare for this adventure, it occurs to me that ILLUMINATUS!'s distinction between neophiles & neophobes is another one that doesn't work for me. I am wondrously neophilic in the realm of Mind--I eagerly look forward to having new thoughts and new ideas. In the realm of body, however, I would most definitely rather be left alone, to find a place, surround myself with My Stuff, and leave it as little as possible.



11 April

I have returned from the visit to Chicago. I didn't throw up.

Well, it was better than that. Unsurprisingly, Bernadette comes from a surprising family. She is the third of 4 siblings, all female. Her eldest sister, Marie, is a Chicago police officer, a convert to Orthodox Judaism, and a brown belt in tae kwon do. The second sister, Anita, is a graduate student in Special Education at the University of Michigan. The youngest, Joanne, is a divinity student (Episcopalian) at Vanderbilt. Though Bernadette occasionally refers to "my sister, the Father," Joanne is merely studying for a master's degree in theology and does not plan to be ordained at this time.

Bernadette & I traveled by way of Charlotte. One thing that first visiting, then living in, Dixie has taught me is that the effete Northern custom of having covered walkways to get from the plane to the airport is by no means universal. It was raining in Charlotte, and so the Piedmont personnel offered us umbrellas for the trek into the airport. Travel was thoroughly messed up, and the wretched Charlotte airport was even more overcrowded than usual. (They promise a new airport in April, but have not specified which April.) Bernadette remained cheerful. I suspect that it is not difficult to tolerate virtues one does not have (as Bernadette tolerates my early rising--and waking her to go to class--and I tolerate her equanimity in the face of adventure), as long as the other is not *cheerful* about the virtue in question.

The flight was a bit delayed, but we eventually arrived at Chicago's O'Hare Airport, where we were met by Joanne (who had arrived earlier) and their mother. Back at their house, Anita soon arrived, and I very much enjoyed getting to know the three of them. I also, and more surprisingly, coexisted with the aforementioned giant Nazi dog, and with Goober, their pathetically outer-directed spaniel.

Friday Anita, Joanne, Bernadette, & I went to visit their father, who had made an excellent French stew. That was most enjoyable. In the evening, we visited their grandmother. She has another giant Nazi dog, who steals candy out of people's hands, but otherwise doesn't attack.

Bob Shea was in Oklahoma or somesuch, and Dennis Jarog was at Minicon, but we were able to get together with Ed Zdrojewski on Saturday. Ed & I appear to represent different wings of the Neo-Garish Movement in men's clothing. Ed was attired in a 3-piece blue-gray suit, a dark shirt, and a chain-mail tie. Well, no, not quite. Actually, it was some kind of silver metallic links. Ed, Bernadette, & I went out to lunch, and then decided to visit the Museum of Science & Industry, where there was an exhibit of Viking stuff.

I remembered the museum somewhat vaguely from a visit many years ago, and indeed it still has a lot of things that light up & talk & otherwise offer some sort of mix between education and entertainment. I did not find the Viking stuff terribly fascinating, as it struck me as a bunch of old rotten rusty metal, but that's a matter of taste. There were also fun things like a display on the press where you could answer questions about how you would run a newspaper, ask questions of Howard Cosell & other celebrities (via videotape, you pressed a button for the question of your choice), etc. There was a giant heart

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that we walked thru, toy trains of massive extent, and one of America's grossest museum exhibits--the sliced pygmy. (That's a human figure cut in about a dozen cross sections, with a few slices the other way.)

Afterwards, we went to Billygoat's, a legendary Chicago tavern frequented by Mike Royko and others. It's the sort of place that has so much atmosphere that only a spoilsport would expect the food to be good as well, and indeed the greaseburgers were barely tolerable.

The three of us returned to the Northern suburbs, and rejoined Anita & Joanne to visit their father again. This led to one interesting discussion. Joanne has to write a paper on THE CLOUD OF UNKNOWNING, an anonymous old tract on mysticism, and she was reading some of the more interesting parts to us. The unnamed author seemed to have something of a fascination with noses, to the point where he could almost be called nasal-compulsive. In addition, he warned in somewhat strange fashion about various meditative practices which could lead to turning the brain inside out. Warming to his task, the anonymous author alleged that the Fiend has only one big nostril, in the middle, and if one looked up it, one could see only the flames of Hell. Now Ed not unreasonably looked a bit askance at all this, and Joanne remembered earlier favorable references to Witchcraft, decided that she'd made a faux pas, and apologized if she had many remarks offensive to his Satanist faith, and said that had she been thinking, she would never have referred to his deity as "the Fiend." Ed reassured that he was not at all offended, not being a Satanist, but that he did think much of THE CLOUD was a bunch of shit.

Ed had to leave shortly thereafter, to get back to Benton Harbor, and so he had the good fortune to miss the following entertainment. Bernadette dug out a bunch of pictures (2 scrapbooks plus a whole mess of loose ones) dating back to her earliest years, and showed them off. It has long been my contention that no one has had an interesting childhood. I have now seen unmistakable evidence that Bernadette is not an exception to that theory. You may have noticed that Marie has not been mentioned since I introduced her. She was on duty most of the weekend, and attending Passover services when she was not on duty, and so she had not had the chance to meet us. Now she was at her mother's & so she called us, and we managed to tear ourselves away from the detritus of Bernadette's formative years (it was quite easy for at least one of us), and return. We hunted for Easter baskets. (I was pleasantly surprised that I found mine without taking an hour or so. That's the sort of thing I tend to think of myself as hopelessly inept at. Maybe I actually got smarter in the last thirty years.)

Today we once again coped with Piedoff Airlines, and now we are safely home. I expected to find Bernadette's family to be the kind of brilliant, delightful people that genetics would tell me to expect to find among her next of kin, and I was not the least disappointed.

12 April

Bernadette reminds me that I forgot to mention two Bosky family pastimes I joined in on. One is watching the raccoons & possums. Bernadette's mother likes the little beasts and puts out chicken necks & other such goodies for them. As a result, a number of large fat raccoons & possums drop by every evening. I like raccoons, when they stay outside (one snuck into my house back in New Rochelle, and lived in the attic for a month or so), and so I enjoyed the show. The other thing we did was dyeing Easter eggs, or perhaps I should say, Easter eggiweggs, to indicate the amount of regressing one has to do to get into the spirit of this sort of thing. Well, I did get into the spirit of it, sort of, and did things like putting on a transfer picture of a cute little furry animal flying a plane and drawing a mushroom cloud under it. But crayon on egg is not a particularly good medium, and I still haven't read DRAWING ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE BRAIN, and so I was compelled to caption one particularly unsuccessful effort, EQUAL RIGHTS FOR THE BADLY DRAWN.

Getting back into things. Today seems to be some sort of ersatz holiday, known as Easter Monday. It was certainly not a holiday up North. (Like most idle people, I dislike holidays.) Carolina Copy Center, where I was having my envelopes printed up, is closed. And the copy center on campus, which was supposed to print up LINES OF OCCURRENCE, didn't get around to it.

But the mail was still delivered--four days' worth. There was FLAP, an invitational apa I belong to which has some of the most intelligent discussions in fandom. Old pal Rudy Rucker writes to thank me for my praise of his writing & to say that I seem like the same foul-mouthed sex-crazed degenerate he remembers from his college days, except that I seem to have broadened my knowledge of substance abuse since then. Funny he should mention. Bob Shea writes to Bernadette mentioning the story that Robert Heinlein writes out his novels in longhand & then cuts out about half of them. That dovetails with the rumor I've heard that he became sick unto death shortly after he wrote I WILL FEAR NO EVIL, and his wife sent the manuscript into the publisher before he edited his first draft. D Carol Roberts offers to do a cover for DR. It will be on this one if she has one lying around, or on the next if not. Mike Wood never got his copy of DR 21. Camden Benares, Velma J Bowen, Joyce Scrivner, and Jean Weber all have interesting & encouraging things to say.

I just called ComputerLand. They say they've got the disks.



And they were telling the truth. I bought the disks, I copied the programs, and now I am embarked on the Great Adventure. Needless to say, I am scared shitless.

Well, no, of course it's not that bad. Let's start at the beginning. I drove over to ComputerLand & found out that they really did have blank disks. They had Dysan disks, which are more expensive than some other brands, and may or may not be better. The person I talked to was an idiot. Now I realize that I am a Northern bigot who may excessively question anything he hears in a Southern accent. But even correcting for that, he impressed me as one who not only could not figure out how to pour piss out of a boot without detailed & explicit instructions, but probably would not be able to follow the instructions. After his coworkers had explained to him how to make out the receipt, I took the disks home.

And copied 4 of them, but could not make the machine copy the BASIC disk. I don't know what the problem is. I'll take the BASIC disk in tomorrow, and see if they have any idea what's wrong. In the likely eventuality that either they can't figure out what's wrong or they can't do anything about it, or they say (correctly or otherwise) that it's All My Fault, and furthermore Tough Shit, I will call various people who have offered semilegitimate assistance.

But that didn't affect the possibility of using WordStar, and so I began with that. I followed the instructions. I hereby take back everything I said about the Reference Guide being easy to follow. They have no sense for what mistakes beginners are liable to make. They should have guides for dealing with just that sort of thing. They don't. The thing is confusing in other ways. They spend 2 pages telling us how to use the DEL key. Then they tell us that there really is no DEL key. (No shit, Sherlock! Good to know that I'm not really going blind.) But maybe they should just make the manual a bit easier, because let's face it. Using a computer for the first time can be a little scary.

No, not really scary. But I see myself at the bottom of a very large mountain of knowledge, and I can see a long hard climb ahead. But new things always look scary to me, and I'm looking forward to this.

Oh, I also plugged in the printer and tried it for the first time (which actually I could have done before I had the blank disks) & now I have a pretty graphics test pattern up on my wall. That too will take a bit of learning, but I'm looking forward to it.

This may or may not be the point to mention that I heard from the College Board, and they implied that they could send me my test scores if I sent them \$3.75. So I did so, and have applied to join Mensa. Some say that being in Mensa could cure even me of intellectual elitism. We shall see.

14 April
My mental strife with the Osborne people and their accursed manual continues. When last we spoke, I was learning WordStar. Yesterday, I got a bit further. I wrote a few paragraphs, and added & deleted words therein. But it occurred to me that it would be nice to have actual hard copy of the texts I had created. Nowhere could I find instructions for printing out a text. There was gobbledygook about changing the format for printing a text, but nothing on printing.

So I resolved to get a popular introduction to WordStar, and I picked one up at a bookstore. It is published by Osborne. (Do we see a conspiracy here?) I gave it the proper instructions and nothing happened. Apparently the machine was not properly connected to the printer.

Meanwhile I returned to ComputerLand, and they told me that the BASIC disk was indeed fukkedup, and that I could copy it anyway by following a particular instruction in the manual. I returned home and discovered that I could not make head or tail of the instruction in the manual. Back to ComputerLand. The dumb person waited on me again. He could not figure out the instruction either. The smart person made a copy for me. The dumb person told me what adjustments to make to get the computer to talk with the printer, as it is designed to talk with a different sort of printer.

I returned home again. I found that the BASIC program worked, or seemed to as far as I could tell, and I even did a rudimentary program, getting the machine to "print" (on the screen) the phrase "Fuck ComputerLand." I then turned my attention to the WordStar again and discovered that the instructions I had been given gave me no idea of how to tell the machine to talk with the printer when it is doing WordStar. (Or so I believe.) *SIGH* I will call Eric Raymond this evening, and see if he can offer any advice.

Meanwhile I took a look at SuperCalc. That's fun. It basically sets up big rectangular displays that you can write messages in and otherwise fool around with. Not only that, but the person who wrote the manual chapter on SuperCalc appears to have violated Rule One and made the chapter intelligible & sequential. So I fooled around for a while. Tomorrow I pick up a popular intro to BASIC & begin programing with that for a while. The nice thing about the computer is that it is at least three instruments/tools/toys in one, and if I am temporarily frustrated in my dealings with one, I can try another.

And whilst all this was going on, I picked up my impressive-looking bulk rate envelopes and then the printed copies of LINES OF OCCURRENCE (which came out very nice) and put the copies in the envelopes, then arranged the envelopes in Zipcode order and bundled them, and today I took them over to the PO, where the nice people weighed them for me, and so they are now on their way and all is well--oops almost forgot....

YOG-XIPKODE NEBLOD ZIN
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15 April

Harry Warner, jr., writes, In this matter of the freedom to use sexual words which you mention. Aren't you forgetting the simultaneous de facto censorship of many words which everyone used to speak and write without objections? I long for the good old days when I wasn't inhibited from including in my vocabulary such words which have now fallen into complete disgrace as "girl," "feminine," "Negro," "moron," "mistress," and "electric."



19 April

"On another occasion when he had trouble with discipline [Auden] threatened 'to cut my prick off' if the boys continued to fool about. He bought a suitable piece of meat from the butcher, and, next time a hullabaloo broke out in class, opened his fly, brought out this meat, and appeared to be actually carrying out the threat with a sharp knife--to horrified cries of 'No, sir! Don't do it!'"

--Humphrey Carpenter, WH AUDEN: A BIOGRAPHY

Electric? Well, Harry, I think you're talking about several different phenomena here. I think I agree with you about "moron." Many people do believe that we should avoid terms imputing stupidity, craziness, or viciousness, in favor of a pseudomedical vocabulary. This approach doesn't work, for a whole lot of reasons that Thomas Szasz & others have pointed out. On the other hand, I think some of the changes you talk about are good things. For instance, the word "girl" is quite acceptable if it is used with the proper precision, to refer to human females who have not reached puberty. "Feminine" carries the mistaken implication that certain traits are or should be restricted to women, and as such is no better than ethnic stereotyping. "Negro" is no longer acceptable because it has been rejected by the people to whom it applies. (Try saying "sci-fi" in some of the circles you & I hang out in.) The censors of more traditional obscenity cannot claim the same justification unless they say that they themselves are fucks, shits, etc.

I wonder if that would have worked when I was teaching at Hunter. Probably not. I don't believe I've mentioned this, but Auden was a classmate of mine. He received an honorary degree from Swarthmore the same year (1964) I received my allegedly earned one. It was a big year for the school, and they dragged in all manner of celebrities to get honorary degrees. Then-Pres. Johnson was another, but we don't talk about him.

"The violent train accident in the first part was paralleled in the second by the equally horrific rape of one of the male characters by three choirboys. Auden liked to read aloud to his friends from this unexpurgated text, though he claimed that the rape was the one poorly described episode because of Upward's heterosexual ignorance about such things."

--Ibid.

My computer studies continue on the same three fronts. I have diddled around a bit with WordStar, but still do not know how to get the printer to print. The computer doesn't give full instructions because its manufacturers have no idea what sort of printer it will be connected to. The printer doesn't give instructions because it could be connected to any sort of computer. Obviously the (\$70) cable I bought should give the appropriate instructions, and the printer manual refers to the instructions that come with the cable, but mine had no instructions with it. In BASIC I successfully ran a bunch of rudimentary programs for things like adding any two numbers you give it. I even taught it to ask Bernadette her name, and upon being answered, to make a lewd & indecent proposition to her by name. (As some of you know, that's an elementary 2-line program.) SuperCalc remains fun, but I can't think of anything to use it for, other than Langdon diagrams.

Computer study continues. I still haven't gotten the printer working, but I've written a bunch of programs in BASIC, changing bits here & there from the ones given in the book & seeing if the thing still works, which it eventually always does. (Why have the arithmetic -testing program greet a wrong answer with I'M SORRY, BUT I GET A DIFFERENT ANSWER. WOULD YOU CARE TO TRY AGAIN? when you can have it say BULLSHIT?) Today, at the library, along with the Auden book, I picked up a book of pre-written BASIC programs and discovered that almost all the instructions in these programs made sense to me.

I suppose it was inevitable. Poor old Winnie the Pooh has been used for everything from Latin exercises to Frederick C. Crews's excellent satires of literary criticism (THE POOH PERPLEX). And now, what you've all been waiting for (or not, as the case may be)--THE TAO OF POOH, by Benjamin Hoff. It's at least as cute (in the worst sense of the word) as you would expect from the title, and it appears to represent the sort of vulgar Taoism which says to overly verbal intellectuals like me that the best cure is lobotomy or at least dropping some manner of large object on the skull.



Bernadette & I have just returned from Raleigh, where we heard a reading by John Barth, from his forthcoming book SABBATICAL: A ROMANCE, which will be published this spring. Judging from the excerpts he read, the book is funny as all hell, and I'm locking forward to reading it. A while back, I wrote a DR article in which I implied that Barth & Heinlein had written their ultimate terminal book & would not know what to do next. It appears that they both are simply going on to write other books, and at least in Barth's case, I think that is a Good Thing.

22 April

I dropped in at the hospital again yesterday. A cold and (once again *sigh*) injudicious self-medication led to an asthma attack, not as serious as the two that led to my last 2 hospitalizations, but this time I had decided not to wait until things were that bad. The hospital treated me with benign neglect; whilst they tried to figure out what to do with me and to get a real live doctor to treat me, the asthma subsided. The doctor suggested an increase in my theophylline dosage, as there did not seem to be enough in my blood to ward off asthma attacks. (Theophylline is not a *fnord* artificial drug, but a natural substance found in tea, so the increase does not seem to be a Big Deal.) Today, I have a cold *sniffle*snarf* but no asthma.

Computer studies continue. I'd run into a few blank walls, and so I gave Eric Raymond a call the other night, and he was unsurprisingly most helpful. One problem was in the random-number generator. I'd put a crap-game simulation on the machine, and I noticed it was fixed. It always gave the same sequence of "random" numbers. Eric explained that the random-number generator will work if and only if you give it a random number to start out with. (I am reminded of the story of a much-recruited high school football player. College coaches kept telling his mother how they would build his character; and when Bobby Dodd of Georgia Tech came around, she asked him about that. He replied, "Well, I don't know about that, ma'am, but if you give us a good boy, we'll give you back a good boy.") So I'll give it random numbers. Maybe I'll pick up a set of D&D dice. Or next time I'm back in New York, I'll get my father's D&D dice. He had them long before there was such a thing as D&D; they represented regular solids. (But of course, if certain bornagin types had their way, the possession of such paraphernalia for the Satanic scheme known as D&D would be unlawful anyway, and don't give me any of that crap about "higher mathematics." We're investigating that stuff too. If God had wanted us to have more than three dimensions, He would have given them to us.) Anyway, the remaining problem with the computer is the printer hookup, and Eric & the people at ComputerLand & I seem to have narrowed that down to a connection that I have to make by unscrewing things & taking stuff apart & working with tiny little switches & things like that. Fnord! I like the kind of machine that you "repair" by throwing out one Black Box and putting in another one.

Amanda Cross's latest mystery, *DEATH IN A TENURED POSITION*, has just come out in pb from Ballantine. Cross (real name Carolyn Heilbrun) is a female professor of literature whose detective, & also a female professor of literature, is a delightful person. The formal mysteries per se are never very good in Cross's books, and this is no exception, but for me, character & commentary more than make up for that. One interesting note: This book does not take place at "a large unnamed university." It takes place at Harvard, and Cross does not think much of Harvard's attitude towards women.

B. Kliban has done it again, with *TWO GUYS FOOLING AROUND WITH THE MOON* (Workman pb). Sick, weird, fucked up, etc. I love it. Did you know that God brushes His teeth with our minds twice a day?

TAKE MY
ZNARFhod,
PLEASE!



23 April

Another day of minor annoyances & such like. My nose continues to run. Yesterday, I picked up an extension phone. The car then developed a flat tire. Today the gas station was supposed to call us when they were coming over. They came over and said that they'd gotten a busy signal. Sure enough it turned out that the new extension had somehow managed to entangle itself in the radiator & short-circuit itself. Yeucchh! I still haven't gotten up the nerve to tackle the delicate repairs in the printer--STOP! There may be a much simpler explanation. After I wrote that, I decided in sheer frustration to try the repairs and discovered that the connection of the cable to the printer does not look right and does not appear to match the semicoherent description in the printer manual. So I would go over to ComputerLand and see how the printer should be connected to the cable, except that the car is still being fixed.

Last night I had a sciencefictional dream. In it, telepathy had been established, and there were people who could do it very easily. And so they decided to find out psionically if there were any signs of consciousness in fetuses. My prejudices remain in dreams as in waking hours, and there were none.

Rick Brown is going to jail! Well, actually, he's going to be working in one, as a librarian. He'll also be something of a law-enforcement officer, and will be trained in the use of guns and *ahem* restraints. Have fun in jail, Rick!

"If builders built buildings the way programers write programs, then the first woodpecker that came along would destroy civilization." Eric Lindsay Bullshit, Eric! As my own experiences are demonstrating, it's the hardware that's fucked up.

APA-69 is late. Does that mean it's knocked up?

26 April

An interesting weekend, as the Chinese would say. The tire was fixed and returned to us Friday evening. Well, actually, it wasn't fixed (once again I crave word processing), but they put on a spare that would last a day or so. Bernadette dropped me off at ComputerLand to get instructions on plugging in the printer & went off to the tire place to get a new tire. That took a while, and I was standing in front of the computer place, eagerly waiting to get back, so I could try the new connection. Finally, the tire was ready, Bernadette picked me up, we went back home, and of course the new connection didn't help at all. (I've decided I'm just going to take computer, printer, & cable into ComputerLand, and scream, "HELP!" I'd do it today, but the weather is thoroughly rotten.)

After all that (this is now Saturday), I picked up the mail. ANSIBLE, the British newszine, arrived, filled with incomprehensible accounts of some manner of pro feud involving Ian Watson & Brian Aldiss. There too was SAPS, which seems to be falling upon bad times once again. Charlie Williams & Rusty Burke have dropped out, and Deb Hammer Johnson didn't have a zine in this time. So I decided I did not have a whole lot to say to SAPS this time around.

In the evening, we visited the Drakes. The good news was that I met Karl & Barbara Wagner, enjoyed one of Jo Drake's first-class meals, and after dinner watched a couple of Dave's tapes of Fawly Towers, which is awesomely funny. The bad news is that I still had the cold (it seems to be almost gone today) and was coughing something fierce, and laughing as hard as I did at those tapes is not good for a cough, and so we left early before I deafened everyone else for life.

Yesterday, nothing much happened except that I erased all the BASIC programs I had written. This was not a particularly big deal, and I learned some stuff from it, on the level of "Label your disks" and on the level of how to tell what programs are stored, etc.

Today things continued in the usual fashion. I awoke and on going out discovered that They had sneaked in Daylight Saving Time on me, so it was an hour later than I thought. And I managed to go around in a couple of extra circles going to the post office, the library, and the bank. And as I said above, it's raining something fierce.

With all of this bad stuff going on, I really ought to mention one good thing that seems to be going on in the big world outside. From a whole variety of sources there suddenly seems to be springing up a healthy & reasonable fear of nuclear war & armaments. This includes the demonstrations in Europe, the Ground Zero movement in America, and various other healthy symptoms like Jonathan Schell's new book, THE FATE OF THE EARTH, which seems to be getting a large & favorable reaction. Every so often, people notice the fact that there is a good chance of humanity blowing itself up in a war (the last such, if memory serves, followed DR. STRANGE-LOVE), and some good comes out of it (last time: the test ban).



27 April

As you can see, I now have the printer working. I can't do too much real fancy word processing yet, but that will come soon. I'd been trying all sorts of things suggested by ComputerLand, but nothing seemed to be working, so I just took everything in to the store, and of course it all worked just perfectly there. Amazingly enough, it still works here.

I believe that one of the corollaries of Murphy's Law is "It always works in the store." I felt a little embarrassed that it did work OK in the store (and in fact it was the one whose intelligence I do not respect who got it to work), but since it did continue to work here, I didn't mind that too much, and now I can finally get under way on word processing.

I don't know whether I will word-process this zine or not. The word processing certainly looks a lot clearer than I expected it to, and if I use good repro it should stay that way. The above paragraph is sort of a test to see how well it reduces.

Now all I have to do is figure out why it thinks 2¹³ is 8192.01.

Vintage has published a pb reprint of A MENCKEN CHRESTOMATHY, the Sage of Baltimore's own selection of his best work. I ran a collection of Mencken one-liners in DR a few years ago, and received 2 comments on it: Robert Bloch said that it showed that Mencken was still, as they say, "relevant," and Buzz Dixon said that I'd shown just how dated Mencken was. This collection shows both of those sides. The opening discussions, on the battle of the sexes, are hopelessly dated. The best that can be said for them is that they were a response to even dumber views. Likewise, Mencken's view of a godless, mechanistic Universe, so daring then, now has become a form of orthodoxy, harder & harder to defend as new views of physics (particularly at the subatomic level) lead us to believe that matter itself is by no means materialistic. Other parts of his theory are a bit more controversial. Mencken was an unabashed believer in genetics, and was convinced that Liberal schemes to raise the downtrodden by improving their environment would at best change nothing and at worst drag everyone down to the lowest common denominator. Some still question this view.

But there remains the Mencken style--the skill with which he heaps abuse on his foes, as in the famous dyslogy (opposite of a eulogy) for William Jennings Bryan. There remains a man who, whether history & knowledge have passed him by or not, honestly called them as he saw them, facing his conclusions his ideas led him to, no matter how unpleasant. Perhaps Mencken is by now reduced to historical importance, but this book does offer pleasures in return for reading it.

It usually begins with Ayn Rand.

That's a true statement in some circles, and the title of a most enjoyable book written about 10 years ago by Jerome Tuccille. It is the story of Tuccille's political odyssey, beginning as a Catholic patriot, then deprogrammed by Ayn Rand, then moving past her, when he perceived the rigidity in her thought, to libertarianism. It is a funny book, at times maliciously so, in its treatment of a variety of political views & personalities, mostly right-wing. (And Sam Konkin, who appears anonymously in it, testifies that when truth and humor conflict, humor is not sacrificed.)

But it did not end with libertarianism. Tuccille went on to study the prospects of physical immortality, as he said carrying on his libertarian struggle against "the final tyrant," and from there to a cheerfully technophilic futurism exemplified in his 1975 book, WHO'S AFRAID OF 1984?

That book contained what can be seen, in hindsight, as evidence that the conservatism of his youth was tempting Tuccille again. There was a lengthy diatribe aimed at Eleanor Roosevelt. Negative fascination with her, beyond her significance as Liberal and Uppity Woman, seems to characterize the true conservative. William F. Buckley has now told the story about suggesting a picket line around her house (to use her pro-labor sentiments to keep her from going out & making trouble) so often that one suspects that he might recommend, just to be on the safe side, putting up a picket line around her grave.

In any event, two years later, Tuccille renounced libertarianism and returned to what he had once described as "the motherly arms of William F. Buckley and the fatherly embrace of Ayn Rand." As Winston Churchill said after a similar peregrination, "Anyone can rat, but to rerat takes some doing." When next heard from, Tuccille was an investment advisor, still optimistic about 1984.

It was the question of National Defense, rather than some wholesale conversion to moral majoritarianism, that inspired Tuccille to rerat, and from time to time I wondered if the old libertarian who cried out for tax revolt was still in there somewhere.

I still wonder. And now there is a new book by Tuccille, called INSIDE THE UNDERGROUND ECONOMY. In it, he talks about tax refusal, tax evasion, and tax minimization. He covers everything from respectable movements like Jarvis-Gann and the National Taxpayers Union to methods of working in the countereconomy. He virtuously says that he is not counseling anyone to evade the law, merely suggesting legitimate tax shelters, but he gives fairly complete instructions on how to evade the law. And he closes the book with the pious hope that Our President will make all this nasty tax evasion unnecessary by cutting taxes, eliminating waste, and deregulating (but not, I suppose, doing too much to that fat-assed & wasteful bureaucracy in the five-faced funny farm). It's ambivalent.

It usually begins with Ayn Rand. Where does it end?

28 April

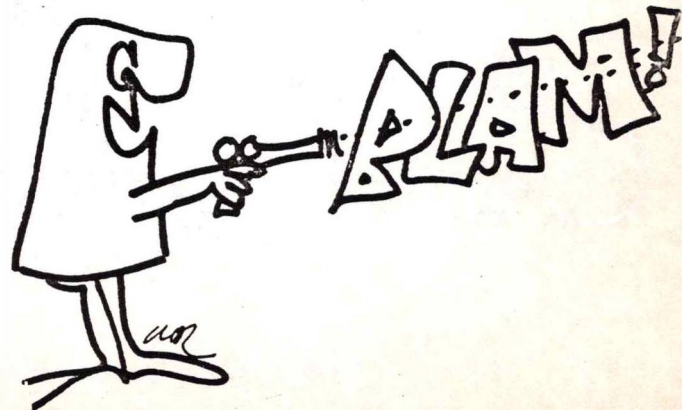
Last night Bernadette & I went to see NATIONAL LAMP-POON'S MOVIE MADNESS. It's typical snotty, sick, & otherwise enjoyable NATLAMP nastiness. It consists of 3 parts, each funnier than the previous one. The first is a parody of the contemporary movie about Finding Oneself, and begins with the husband making his wife desert him & leave him with the kids because everybody knows that's how a married man Finds Himself in the movies. The second is about Sex & Success & like that, or as the heroine says at one point, "I had gone from a wealthy Greek tycoon to the President of the United States... That's funny; it's supposed to be the other way around." Finally, there's the Joseph Wambaugh cop movie, with the old cops all a bunch of cynical drunks (and one who blows his brains out), and the young cop who starts out wide-eyed & idealistic but soon Learns Better. For those not handicapped by an excess of good taste, this is a delightfully funny movie.

Computer ~~play~~ research continues. I wrote a brief smartass letter, which I can modify to send to particular people by changing the salutation and adding a specific PS.

For those who weren't here when I was doing ADH, a warning: I like pro football. Since many of my readers do not share that taste, I have been prevailed upon to warn you when I am talking about this particular topic by changing typeface. Here goes:

FOOTBALL ALERT: The NFL held its draft today. The big news was perhaps the Bert Jones trade. Jones, noticing that he was playing for a dying franchise whose schmuck of an owner had finally found a coach even more repugnant than himself, screamed to be traded. The Rams are not that much better than the Colts, but at least Ram coach Malavasi does not hit his players and then lie about it. Russ Francis, who left a slightly less fuckedup New England franchise for a year of retirement, hit the jackpot by being traded to the San Francisco 49ers, Super Bowl champs with one of the 2 best offenses in the league. Meanwhile, the Giants, who needed another running back, drafted one named Butch Woolfolk on the first round. The Giants could be for real. END FOOTBALL ALERT.

*Jones' new team



29 April

The phone rang last night, and it was someone from the Chicon committee, informing me that, for the third straight year, my name will appear on the Hugo ballot in the Best Fan Writer category. As ever, it's nice, and I'd like to thank all of those who nominated me. I may not sound enthusiastic, but as I say, it is the third time around. I really am pleased. I wouldn't blame the voters for being a bit blasé by this time. There are only four of us on the ballot this time, and it's the four survivors from last year's ballot, all of whom were also nominated the year before. I guess it's a sign of the stagnation of the field, or something. There are a whole lot of people writing good stuff, but they show up only in apae, or somesuch.

But it is nice to be recognized, and that's a good note to end this zine on.

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*Hail Eis,
Arthur*

