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1 September

I am on my way to Chicon tomorrow. My beloved, Bernadette Bosky, is, alas, not on her way to Chicon, as she has to study for her preliminary PhD. exams. That's the last barrier between her & writing her dissertation (on Sir Thomas Browne) and thereby getting her degree. (She learned today that she had passed her Spanish exam, and thus is officially decreed Competent in two languages, as the degree requires.)

Today was her first day of the year teaching Freshman Comp, which she always enjoys and has not had the chance to do for a while. I never took Freshman Comp. When I was at Swarthmore, it was not a requirement, as it was assumed that we were already competent in fundamental English-writing skills. The only people who had to take Freshman Comp were foreign students & engineers. (I'd better explain that factual cheap shot. Swarthmore was trying to attract engineers, and so it was much easier to be admitted as an engineer. This led to the Affirmative Action Syndrome, in which all the majority-group members were there because they qualified, and many of the minority-group members were there because they had the advantage of belonging to the right disadvantaged group. Thus, for that particular selection out of the population, the minority group--in this case, engineers--really was inferior. I have since learned that this does not hold true in the real world.)

12 September

And now I have returned from Chicon. I enjoyed it. If I do a con report, I'll run it in *Lines of Occurrence*, so all I'll say here is 1) I met Bob Shea & a whole bunch of other people I'd just known from print, as well as meeting some utterly new people, and seeing a whole bunch of old friends; 2) I did not win the Hugo for Best Fan Writer (Dick Geis unsurprisingly did); 3) I purchased an *Illuminatus!* game from its inventor, Steve Jackson of Steve Jackson Games, and also from him a button saying, LIFE IS LIKE AN ANALOGY.

I did not purchase a button saying NUKE THE SMURFS, but I like the idea. (It may have been originated by Mark Blackman.) One cannot walk into any of a number of kinds of store without being surrounded by Smurfs & Garfields. I still like Garfield, but it's getting to be a bit much. Now here's my plan: a poster with Garfield riding a unicorn and blowing away a smurf, while the unicorn tramples a smiley face....

One major accomplishment (though that makes it sound like work) was reading *Aztec*, by Gary Jennings (Avon pb). It presents a wily old Mexican trader, telling the conquering

Spaniards & their priests the tale of his life and people. It's been a rich & busy life, filled with sex, violence, spectacle, betrayal, adventure, and human sacrifice and worse. The narrator is a fascinating, three-dimensional character; the splendors and miseries of his world are told in rich detail; and the ironies of cultural interface are brilliantly presented. Try it.

13 September

Today Garfield, doing his usual anti-Monday schtick, announced that he is not getting out of bed because it's Monday the 13th. It's a bad day for cats. Yesterday evening, one of the medical students who live next door to us came over to say that Tommy Gunner was lying in the bushes, looking very sick. We rushed him to a vet with emergency hours. Today, while Bernadette was facing two exams, I called the vet and learned that Thompson had feline leukemia and should be put out of his misery. When Bernadette got out of the second exam, she agreed, and we went over to say goodbye to him. We'll have Ruby tested for it, and if she's OK, we'll get another cat to succeed Tommy Gunner, because as Jefferson said about Franklin, no one can replace him.

14 September

Today the pressure caught up with Bernadette. She had a ghastly sore throat this morning and did not feel up to taking her last test. She called the head of her dept. and got the test postponed until Thursday, and then I drove her over to the Student Health Center, where we found that she merely has a cold, and should be all right in a day or two.

I believe I am on the verge of finding one of the minor grails of my life. Today's mail brought a flyer from the Check Mate Co., which makes stuff that goes with computers, and they listed labels. I called their 800 number and verified that what they had listed there would indeed work in an Epson MX-80, and so I sent off an order.

A minor theme of the last DR has been the search for a way to program my mailing list. Now that I will be able to print labels, that becomes a matter of more immediate concern. Now I think I've got it. The labels are printed two across. Since the printer will not back up, that means I have to work with 2 combinations of name-address-city-state at a time. WordStar does not handle that sort of thing very well. BASIC can do that, but it's very difficult to add or subtract entries in the middle of the file, as I would like to do, though that is quite simple in WordStar. It now turns out that it's possible to write and edit a BASIC program in WordStar (in fact I did a couple of simple ones last night), and thus I can get the best of both.

However I wind up printing the labels, the search for a program produces a lot of interesting ideas, and further knowledge of the machine. I'm now working on a disc I can run to show off the machine when people visit, with MAD LIBS, a Russian Roulette simulation, and good stuff like that.

Speaking of computers, the more eagle-eyed among you may have noticed something different on the first page. That's right, we now have *italics*. I finally got up the courage to tackle the INSTALL program for italics & condensed type, figuring that the worst I could do was mess up a copy of my WordStar program, and even then I'd probably be able to copy it again on the same disk. Well, that's what happened. The first time I tried it, I bungled it righteously, but I recopied the disk & tried again, and now it works. (Well, not entirely. I was hoping to add double-width letters, but that didn't work out.)

I was hoping I would receive the new issue of *The Portable Companion*, Osborne's zine for users of its computer. Instead, yesterday's mail brought a note billing me for my subscription to *TAC*. I looked it up, and as I had suspected, I had paid for my sub, and the check had been cashed. The thought that the billing department of the company that made my computer is making computer errors is not a cheerful one. (What do you mean, the chef has ptomaine poisoning? Actually, I know that 99% of all "computer errors" are human errors blamed on the computer, so I'm not too worried.)

Well, I've admitted that I like *Holier Than Thou*, and that I belong to apa-nu, so no one should suspect that I have an excess of good taste. But should any doubts remain, I will confess that I just got the new *National Lampoon*, the special issue mostly devoted to OC and Stiggs and What They Did on Their Summer Vacation, and I just about busted my ass laughing. From the minor pleasures like boning & dope to the major ones like ordering a dozen lobsters to make food monsters out of in classy restaurants, these two loathesome and swinish creatures never fail to crack me up.

15 September

I've been thinking about Godless Evolution. As you probably know, the Moral Majorettes think it is a terrible thing and something should be done about it. It occurs to me that if it were not for the inconvenient preponderance of scientific evidence in favor of the theory, I'd be tempted to agree with them.

The thing is that if evolution is true, then belonging to an evolving species means that one is programed to do three things--kill, breed, and die. You battle to determine which is the fittest, then those reproduce, and then they die off to make room for their presumably superior offspring.

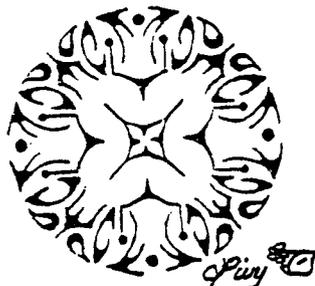
Human behavior lends a certain credibility to this Sweeneyesque scenario. The prevalence of the desire to kill seems obvious, in our continuing history of wars, in the violence of our entertainments (time to reclaim our TV set from the Drakes, as the NFL season has started), and in Mr. Reagan's budget, to name just a few of the more obvious examples. The desire to breed is likewise not in doubt, as shown not only by the horniness of our

species, but by all the preachments in favor of reproductive forms of sex. One reason for the opposition to gays is that they enjoy themselves (and each other) without breeding; and the evolutionary perspective explains the apparently contradictory fact that many (though not all) right-to-lifers believe that the fetus is sacrosanct until birth, at which time it becomes fair game for war, starvation, and other natural means of population control.

If it were merely a matter of wielding the pork sword and the metallic one, evolution wouldn't be so bad, but there's the third factor: We are programed to die. A superficial look at human biology makes it clear that planned obsolescence was not something invented by the auto manufacturers, but ever-redundant nature has built in a backup system. Consider what people really want. Beside sex & violence, which we have already discussed, it is amazing how lethal most of our prized pastimes are: sugar, caffeine, nicotine, alcohol, heroin, cocaine, fast cars (today's newspaper reports the vehicular deaths of Princess Grace and John Gardner), and assorted adventures. Should a particular entertainment prove to be insufficiently dangerous, it is improved. Just in the drug field, opium was supplanted by morphine, which in turn yielded to heroin, and ordinary nose candy was not lethal enough, so someone thought up free basing.

Is there any hope? Maybe. Edward De Bono says there are two kinds of thinking--linear & lateral. Linear thinking goes straight to the goal; lateral thinking leaps off in different directions. Perhaps there are lateral & linear evolution. As linear evolution makes some of us ever more efficient predators, there is also the lateral leap of evolving intelligence, and some of us will take that pathway. Indeed, there are some pleasures which are not fatal, and those are the pleasures of the mind, from grass and acid to intellectual discussion and the reading of poetry.

Sometimes I think that's what space is for. An evolving species needs *lebensraum*. If that is the case, then we should encourage the exploration of space, not only for the raw materials and business opportunities, but also because it will get those nasty evolving mammals out of our way.



16 September
A further note on Princess Grace's death. It was originally announced that she was driving, and had merely suffered a broken leg, and that her daughter, a passenger, had been treated and released for minor injuries. Now we know that Princess Grace is dead, and her daughter was apparently driving (illegally), and she may still be in the hospital. I find it cheering to see that tiny Monaco can lie just as well as full-sized States.

17 September
And now Bernadette's ordeal is over, or at least the tests are. Next week we find out whether her committee realizes that she is worthy of the degree.

20 September
It looks as though there is going to be a football strike. Sports strikes are one kind where I'm on labor's side. The players are the game. The owners provide almost nothing. Even the stadiums are usually paid for by the cities. There was a headline about Ronnie stepping in to end the strike, but it's just some railroad strike, or some kind of crap like that. This is important.

21 September
The continuing saga of the labels: This evening UPS brought them. And they're the wrong size. The assholes even wrote on the package what size they are supposed to be. This means that I will have to call them tomorrow, and I may even have to be *fnord* assertive, and I may have to go to all sorts of trouble to send the bloody things back, and they will get off relatively easy. I have this irrational feeling that the sumbitches have complicated my life, which is the ultimate sin, and they should suffer for it.

Meanwhile, in the anticipation of having labels, I wrote up my con report, which almost all of you will be getting, as *Lines of Occurrence 6*, if I ever get labels to send it out with.

22 September
I just called Check-Mate and spoke to a very nice, reasonable person. They are sending out the right size labels, and they will have UPS come over here and pick up the wrong ones. I am no longer pissed off at them. To err is human; to forgive, divine. They have erred, and I have forgiven them.

23 September
Yesterday Bernadette found out how she had done on her prelims. She passed three out of five. One of the others--Victorians--was the area where the prof who'd agreed last year to be on her committee took off this year without deigning to tell her. She has passed those three areas for once and for all, and will retake the other two exams in three months or so.

We celebrated--if that is the word I am looking for--the conclusion of her exams by going to see *Pink Floyd's the Wall*, a sicko flicko that I found rather well done of its

kind. Perhaps the sheer unrelieved nastiness of the film--in discussing it afterwards, Bernadette mentioned "one of the few positive moments in the movie, where he picks up the rat"--enabled me to distance myself from it, and appreciate it for what it was. It's the story of a rock & roll star whose childhood of personal loss and institutional oppression leaves him hating himself, hating women, flirting with becoming what had oppressed him, and generally not coping. Some skillfully vile and gynophobic cartoon sequences by Scaife add to the general impression.

We have received the announcement of next year's Conference on the Fantastic. I do not find it cheering. The "major authors" who will be subjects of individual panels include such well-known fantasy writers as Norman Mailer, Charles Dickens, Emily Dickinson, and Tennessee Williams. (Yes, I know that Williams's first published work appeared in *Weird Tales*.) Another annoyance is that they have started an academic association to which one must belong to present papers. The flyer gives officers' names and dues for the closed shop, but neglects to mention its name. If we do go to the conference, we'll be staying at the grossly expensive hotel, as our hostess of last year, Judy Bemis, will be giving birth around that time.

Our new housemates appear to be about half a dozen male Dukies (was that a popular scatological term when you were in kindergarten?), or maybe one or two with lots of friends. One of them coughs a whole lot. That's a karmic debt for me, as I probably kept our former neighbor up at all hours with horrible respiratory noises our first month here.

24 September
Today's mail brought four--count 'em, four--apae, which is a record even for a degenerate apahack like me. One was C/RAPA, a Pacific Northwest apa which Amy Thomson, a delightful person I met at Chicon, talked me into asking for a spec copy of. I like it so much I am joining it despite its regionally bigoted membership policy. One interesting item in it is from OE David Bratman, who mentions a conversation with Chicon Fan GoH Lee Hoffman, in which he asked her how much sf she'd read before becoming a fan. "Answer, rather little (which may be why she's credited with the invention of the 'fannish fanzine,' the one which has little to do with sf)." There too was SWAPA, the Swarthmore apa, which is doing quite well for its age (3 months). Also MENTAT, the computer apa, which I will probably drop. I sent in a couple of things I'd written about my computer experiences because a friend offered free repro. But the apa is terribly small and inactive, and the only response I got was from someone who knows so much more about computers than I do that I do not understand him and he does not understand me. Finally there was SEMIPROZINE APA, which may or may not be an apa, depending on how strict your definition is, as its editor, Richard Russell simply photocopies letters he receives. It continues the discussion of the Fan Hugos.



26 September

Yesterday, Bernadette & I went over to Dave Drake's annual Pig Pickin'--a birthday party at which an entire pig is cooked outdoors. Many of the usual people were there--Karl and Barbara Wagner, Manly Wade Wellman--and we had the pleasure of meeting John Kessel, a new writer whose work I've heard good things about. [Yes, Dave does know some people who don't write.]

Today, as the NFL strike deprived me of the proper & civilized way of spending Sunday, I computerized my mailing list. I'd like to have a fancy program that would divide it up by who gets this zine, who just gets *Lines of Occurrence*, etc., but I wound up simply marking separate files. Now I just have to wait for the labels to get here.

Meanwhile, looking over *Lines of Occurrence*, I see that I left out a few interesting things that happened at the con. For one thing, I met Sheryl Smith. When I was just getting into fandom, she wrote some of the best essays on sf around. I got a few locs from her in my first year, but she dropped out of fandom about then and now says she's coming back. It was nice meeting her.

And my old friend Eva Chalker Whitley has been in the news. It seems she got kicked out of a local restaurant for breast-feeding her baby at her table. The manager told her she could do it in the ladies' room, but she replied, "How would you like to eat in the toilet?" She is now suing the restaurant, demanding the right to breast-feed. I'm of two minds about that sort of thing. I think the restaurant is being stupid & petty, but I also think that people should be allowed to have stupid & petty restrictions on behavior in their stores, and pay for it by loss of business, rather than by having to go to court.

27 September

Today's mail brought a reminder of Chicon, in the form of a few kinky rubber stamps I ordered there, including a sinister, corrupt-looking Santa Claus captioned ELVES IN BONDAGE.

Speaking of sinister and corrupt, this newspaper has learned that a certain Freshman Comp class at Duke is being led astray by being forced to read & discuss a selection from Hagbard Celine's *Never Whistle while You're Pissing* (specifically, the thought-provoking discussion of Classification as Damnation in the appendix to *Illuminatus!*). It might be pointed that this is the sort of thing one might expect from a school whose football team is known as the *Blue Devils*. (I don't know why the "moral" "majority" bothers to play records backwards when there's all this stuff right out in the open.)

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30 September

Indeed do many things come to pass. Since the last entry here, I've gotten the correct labels at long last, and after a bit of annoyance, I managed to readjust the label-printing program in ways that I will not bore you with at this time, printed up the labels, and mailed out LO 5. I also printed two dozen name-and-address labels for the OE of each apa I belong to, so I won't have to address packages to them individually. (Now watch them all move.)

Then I got the Chartech program for adding Greek letters, mathematical symbols, etc. to my writing. (See the end of the previous column for most of them.) I installed that, with some difficulty, and discovered that it included a bunch of alleged improvements, such as turning off the automatic text justification. Some of the improvements really are improvements. For instance, the standard WordStar displays a whole bunch of instructions, and so when you set a control character, you have to wait for the display to change. It no longer does that, and I consider that an improvement. It also now displays the text on the screen in double spacing, which I feel kind of neutral about. But I do like justification and hyphen help (a device to hyphenate long words at the ends of lines and dehyphenate them if editing moves them to the middle of the line), and I would like to have those automatic. Also as a result of this change, I've lost the ability to do automatic slashouts with "/" and cannot run the program that changes that. It may be possible to do something about all this, and I've written to the company about it.

Meanwhile, the car has ceased functioning and is at the shop. Bernadette says that she (the car) is peeved at me and won't work unless I'm nicer to her. *Φ* As I recall, this idea made for a lousy situation comedy, but I guess that doesn't stop it from happening in what passes for real life. The car should be fixed by this afternoon.

That is nice, because I put a new ribbon in the printer this morning. The ribbon, which I bought cheap from those wonderful folks who sold me the labels, immediately tangled, as did another from the same company. So I don't know how long it's going to last, and when it breaks down, I go out to ComputerLand (if the car is working), and buy a new ribbon that costs more, but works right.

Some cheery news. *File 770* reports that Victoria Poyser, who won the Fan Artist Hugo the last two years running, has announced that she will not be a candidate next year, as she does not do a whole lot of fan art any more. Well done, Vicki. [Later] The car has been fixed.

1 October

REV. JIM JONES HAS A HEADACHE

"...I use new Extra-Strength Tylenol with cyanide. It makes my headache go away. Forever. I like it so much, I'm going to recommend it to my whole cult."

2 October

Our social life tends to bunch up, for some reason. Yesterday, George Hansen, our parapsychologist friend, invited us over to his house for an excellent lasagna dinner (eat your heart out, Garfield), and then the three of us went to a party for Bernadette's department and miscellaneous others. Bernadette's sister Marie will be visting us in a few days, and George has promised us a tour of his lab.

The other day, *Byte Magazine* arrived, and while Bernadette sat at Adam's keyboard, putting together a glossary of salacious terms from 17th-century drama, I was reading it. It strikes me as the best general computer magazine around. I personally get more from *The Portable Companion* (by the way, the second issue did arrive), but that's specifically for Osborne owners.

First I noticed an ad for a version of the PASCAL language for under \$30 (sold by JRT Systems). That's a "What's-the-catch?" price, but it seems worth a try. Many of my hardcore computer friends tell me that PASCAL is the best computer language around, or close to it, and I've wanted to look into it, so I sent them an order.

A bit further on was Jerry Pournelle's regular column. Computers are one of the topics on which Pournelle seems reasonable to me, and while he occasionally knows too much for me to understand what he's talking about, I frequently find his columns interesting.

This time around, he was discussing some remarks made by Edsger W. Dijkstra, who is apparently a fairly awesome expert in programming. In the course of a series of scathing critiques of computer languages, Dijkstra says,



It is practically impossible to teach good programming to students that [sic] have had a prior exposure to BASIC: as potential programmers they are mentally mutilated beyond hope of regeneration.

I've heard this before. In fact, Neil Kaden sent me a copy of the Dijkstra article a while back, and Eric Raymond has given me somewhat milder warnings.

Pournelle discusses this. He points out that in a language like PASCAL, you have to be something of a programming expert. If you do not know precisely what you want the program to do, and state it precisely enough, the program will not run.

BASIC, on the other hand, is a much sloppier language. The programmer can get away with some imprecisions and be specifically warned off of others. Of course, this is relative. I have run into things like the fact that BASIC treats "TAB(30)" as a perfectly reasonable instruction and "TAB (30)" as an abomination which causes it to stop running and sputter apparent irrelevancies. But to be fair, English makes similar distinctions on the basis of apparent null signifiers, such as between "therapist" and "the rapist."

From the point of view of programming as a specialized science, Dijkstra is pretty much right. No one would want to do advanced serious programming in BASIC, and learning it probably does inculcate habits that would have to be overcome if one went deeper into programming.

But as Pournelle and Ted Nelson and others have pointed out, to leave it at that is to treat programming as a "priesthood"--a group to which only those with years of specialized training have access. When John Kemeny & his group invented BASIC, they were presenting a different approach, one which would bring computer literacy to everybody.

Everybody? Well, like Pournelle (as I learned from this column), I did my first programming in machine language on an IBM 650. It was Godawfully hard & dull, and that probably had something to do with the fact that I gave up programming for about 20 years thereafter. One reason that I tried it again now was the thought that there were languages that were a lot easier & more fun to learn. (In fact, a few years ago, I did a bit of studying in BASIC and determined that I probably could actually program in it if I had a machine to work with. That turned out to be correct.)

Intelligent people are beginning to realize that working with computers is not necessarily "math" or "science" or "engineering," and that it can be done by people who "do not have mathematical minds." (Whether there are intelligent people who do not have mathematical minds is another question. It is my belief that being highly intelligent in verbal matters and unable to do math is, like "glove anesthesia," a condition that comes from

6

beliefs about oneself, rather than a neurological condition. That is an unproven conjecture on my part.)

I mentioned a while back that Bernadette uses the computer. That takes a bit of explaining. She doesn't program, and maybe she never will, but she has learned to use WordStar for word processing (very handy when you want to do a glossary and insert words in alphabetical order without rewriting).

I think Adam Osborne had an excellent idea in selling a computer-and-software package to the market in between those who just want video games, and the harder-core computer types who want to create their own system. My computer, as I've mentioned, came with BASIC, WordStar, SuperCalc (an excellent spreadsheet program), and a CP/M system to run the machine and attach other software to. Other computer-and-software packages are being sold. I've seen an ad for a new one in which the list price of the software is higher than the entire price you pay for the computer. (It's a similar package to Osborne's with the addition of a spelling-check program.)

Some of these new software programs seem very useful in promoting computer literacy. I would imagine that spreadsheet programs can be learned very quickly by most intelligent people and will give them an easy means of doing their own data processing. Another interesting thing in the current *Byte* is a report on a new program called TK Solver, from the inventors of VisiCalc (which I believe was the first spreadsheet). What that does is to take equations and let you plug in numbers, so that you can get an answer without having to solve for the variable you are looking for. (It will also do some trickier things.) Another way of bringing computer literacy to large numbers of people.

One thing TK Solver might help is a problem I ran into the other day. I was picking up some ditto masters for Bernadette to prepare material for her class on. I didn't want a whole box, so I asked the salesperson for the price of individual ditto masters from an open box. She noted that a box of 100 cost \$8.50, applied the calculator at the checkout stand, and concluded that a single ditto master would therefore cost \$1.18. It took a while to persuade her to divide \$8.50 by 100, rather than the other way around. I suppose that TK Solver would make that sort of mistake impossible.

Reading that story could lead you to conclude that the salesperson was either a brainwashed victim of a society that told her to trust machines blindly, or else a plain old dummy. I'm not at all sure which. But that brings us to our next question.

The idea that we will be ruled by a "computer priesthood" seems unlikely. The software I've been talking about will make computer literacy as easily accessible as plain old literacy ever was. But how easy is that?

At first, reading and writing were known only to the priesthood. After a while, they became more generally known. But there was never a time when everyone was literate. In this century the United States has attempted to institute universal literacy, and in fact now almost 100% of the adult population can read short words if they absolutely have to.

But are they really literate? As Isaac Asimov, among others, has pointed out, only a small percentage of the population will turn voluntarily to the written word for entertainment or information. The rest have been called "letterate," but are not truly literate.

The religion of Equality says we should ignore this difference, and in fact that is being done. Old-time DR readers may remember about 5 years ago, when I ran a headline about the New York City school system firing seven illiterate principals. The headline was quite genuine, though it was probably a bit unfair for me to suggest that they were singling out a few and making examples of them. Lest one think that is utterly atypical, there have been studies showing that the average urban schoolteacher now reads at the same level that the average 8th grader did a generation ago. Connections and the ability to tolerate years of "education" courses are more and more replacing intelligence as the way to get teaching jobs.

True literacy, once it had been freed from being a priestly specialization, served as a way to distinguish the intelligent. It no longer is so. Computer literacy is becoming something available to any intelligent person who was not hopelessly stunted in childhood, and it may become an opportunity for all the intelligent to get ahead, regardless of external trivialities like race and sex.

4 October

It has been an interesting couple of days. We met Marie at the airport Saturday evening. Hornette seemed much more unwilling than usual to carry us, but we made it to a restaurant, then home. Yesterday, the automotive difficulties continued. We walked over to Duke's East Campus and took one of the free buses that connect the two campuses. On West Campus, we went to see Duke's famous chapel. This was the first time I'd seen it, and I found it most impressive, especially the stained-glass windows. As far as I know, it is the world's only Methodist cathedral. From there, we wandered through the famed Duke Gardens, where many roses & other attractive flowers are still in bloom, and then returned home, where the Drakes met us, and we all went out to the China Inn for dinner.

Today, things were a bit challenging. Marie had discovered that something here (probably Ruby) was bothering her allergies, to the point where she decided to spend the rest of her visit at a hotel. Hornette barely started, and refused to leave the driveway. Bernadette took off for her classes. I called a new repair place, as we have not been par-

6 October

ticularly pleased with the old one, and they said they'd bring a towtruck. Happy ending. They fixed the car, and the entire bill, including tow, was what the other place would have charged just for towing. I was able to get the car in time to pick Marie up at her hotel and Bernadette at school, whereupon the three of us went to the Foundation for Research on the Nature of Man, where George works. He showed us some of the psi testing devices, including a computer on which Bernadette took a test and scored considerably above chance. He also showed us how to play various space-wars games on the computer, as well as Raster Blaster, the computer simulation of pinball. That was fun, too. We went out to dinner, and now Bernadette & Marie are watching *Andy Warhol's Frankenstein*.

Letters: David Palter reminds me that the "brainlocks" I mentioned in the last DR are examples of what Douglas Hofstadter refers to in *Godel, Escher, Bach* as "strange loops." Janice Gelb points out an example of great minds running in the same gutters, a *TV Guide* article which suggests that for stamina in TV viewing, one should "always eat from the five major food groups: sugar, salt, grease, carbohydrates, and alcohol." Steve & Reen Brust announce the arrival of their twin daughters, Alieria Jean and Carolyn Rozsa. Best wishes to the whole Brust family. Oral Roberts says he's sure that I want to give him a \$100 donation. Perhaps he's been talking to that 90-foot-tall apparition of Jesus who told him to build the City of Faith (the bankruptcy of which is one reason Rev. Roberts keeps writing desperate letters to the likes of me). Maybe you just can't trust 90-foot Jesi.

Patrick & Teresa Nielsen Hayden are doing a new zine to pick up where *Pong* left off--fannish, short, frequent. It's called *Izzard*, and it's available for \$1 or the usual from Patrick & Teresa at 4337 15th St NE, #411, Seattle, WA 98105, and it's got some unsurprisingly excellent writing from Patrick and Teresa in it. Ted White does a Chicon report in which he nominates Yale Edeiken for an "Asshole of the Convention" award for general high-handedness in running programming. As Edeiken was responsible for kicking my panel off the program (we eventually managed to have it restored), I won't argue with that.

Today I am 40 years old. I am tempted to wax philosophical, but not very much so, as I tend not to regard birthdays & holidays as a big deal. I was a very small child when I first noticed that the real world does not give a shit if it's your birthday. I did get some nice presents from the Bosky family. Marie gave me a pad of sheets which read, *From the Desk of*

ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL AND INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE IN THE WORLD

I'm glad someone finally noticed. Joanne sent me a birthday card with a Teddy Bear on it, saying how wonderful it is that now I'm a big boy who's 40 years old. (She drew in the zero all by herself.) Alice, Bernadette's mother, sent me a set of alphabet-block rubber stamps (the frog, umbrella, cat, and kangaroo look very nice together). And this evening Bernadette bought me a stuffed alligator wearing a shirt with--you guessed it!--a little preppie on it. We're calling the gator "Skip" on the assumption that, like all preppies, his official name is three Anglo-Saxon last names followed by a pile of Roman numerals, and the name everybody calls him by is a dog's name. What may be worst about all this is that I really like all these presents, which may be a sign of what living with Bernadette has done to my mind, but more likely is what my mind was like all along.

Today's mail brought SPELL, not a form of computerized Witchcraft, but a low-priced spelling-check program. Like all spelling-check programs I know about, it works by comparing a word-processed file with a list of correctly-spelled English words, and listing those it doesn't recognize. One can then mark a word it listed as incorrect, or tell the program to ignore this particular instance of the word, or tell it to add the word to its dictionary. (It will note proper names, technical terms, and any other words it hasn't been taught for some reason, and one doesn't want it complaining about the same words all the time.) So I turned it loose on earlier sections of this zine, and some other recent writings of mine. Here are some of the words I have taught the program: apa, asshole, fanzine, fnord, fuck, GoH, Hlavaty, Illuminatus!, IQ, masochism, Mensa, NUTS' LAB, OOK, prelims, scatological, sf, symbolism, worldcon. I feel like some sort of hideous dirty old man, contributing to the delinquency of an innocent young program.

But will it play in Peoria?



7 October

Our neighbors remain more amusing than oppressive. Bernadette is offering to take up a collection to buy them another record, as they keep playing the same one, a disco thing called "New York at Night," over and over. The nearest thing to a real problem with them is the driveway. They share a wide 2-lane driveway with us, and they sometimes have half a dozen cars parked here, and at times it is impossible to get our car in or out. They are always quite polite about moving cars when this problem is called to their attention, but they keep doing it. Today one vacant-faced frosh had his car in the middle

of the driveway, and when I suggested that I had to leave, he moved it onto the lawn. And he isn't even the one with the bumper sticker that says, TIGHT BUTTS DRIVE ME NUTS.

John Sladek has done it again. His latest book is a short-story collection called *Alien Accounts* (Granada pb). This is one in which, as the author points out, the aliens are all Terrans. It begins and ends with a novella of bureaucracy. The strangely disturbing "Masterson and the Clerks" (what is going on there?) was familiar to me; the screamingly funny "The Communicants" was not. These two stories are further evidence for my conviction that Sladek is an authentic satirical genius, as are the "New Forms" and "Anxietal Register B," in which the questionnaire becomes an art form. The book is a British pb, and I ordered my copy from Fantasy Centre (*sic*, SPELL, *sic*) in England, and don't know if any dealers have imported it into the US, but I recommend picking it up if you can.

8 October

Today's mail brought birthday presents from Janice, a very nice print and a Boynton button showing two baby possums hanging from branches with their tails wrapped around them, in the traditional manner of the species, while a third is clinging to the branch for dear life, a terrified look on his face. The caption reads, REASON WILL OVERCOME INSTINCT. Boynton is a most fannish cartoonist in the noninvidious sense of the word. Though she does not often get written up in fanzines, I get the impression that almost all fans like her work.

I also got a postcard from Alexei Panshin, commenting on *Lines of Occurrence*. He unsurprisingly likes the title, and mentions that he did turn down nomination for the Best Fan Writer Hugo after he'd won it once.

That reminds me that I bought a copy of Alexei's new book from him at Chicon. He and his wife Cory have started a new publishing company called Elephant Books, and their first book is *Transmutations*, a brief collection of Alexei's stories, essays, reviews, one-liners, etc. The Panshins have been writing about personal change, and about a new paradigm for sf that will deal with such change, for quite a while. They seem to be looking for a lot of the same things that I am. They have found some of what they are seeking in the writings of Idries Shah and other Sufis, and Alexei talks about that in this book. He hasn't found answers, but he's asking better & better questions. I recommend this book to you. It's \$8 from Elephant Books, Box 999, Dublin, PA 18917.

9 October

Last night, Bernadette & I belatedly celebrated the end of her prelims with dinner at a fancy Chapel Hill restaurant with the appetizing name of Slug's at the Pines. Surprisingly enough, the food (I had prime rib, and Bernadette had shrimp scampi) was excellent. I wonder if it would be better with a more pleasant name.

11 October

I mentioned my fascination with pinball games a while back. It continues. BLACK KNIGHT seems to develop problems. It has broken down so often at Aunt Sue's that it has been taken out there, and the one at Northgate is down more often than not. At Chicon, I discovered what may be my favorite of all pinball games -- a three-tiered one called HAUNTED HOUSE, with that meretricious excess of lights, bumpers, and flippers that makes a pinball machine truly first-rate to me. Unfortunately, I have not yet found it here in Durham, and I make do with XENON, ELEKTRA (dare I say it's a complex game?), and BLACK HOLE, among others. I suspect that my doing well in a pinball game has to do more with my getting into the right groove than with any intrinsic properties of the game. I've done quite well, winning 2 extra games at once, with FLASH GORDON, a game I consider merely the least boring of the few functioning pinball games at Northgate.

What I was doing in that game room was that Bernadette was playing the video games. As you know, video games were all based on vicarious war & other violence, until the PAC-MAN folks discovered there was money to be made in gluttony. In any event, Bernadette enjoys several of them, including FROGGER (an admittedly nonviolent game), BERZERK, and a new one called HOLEY MOLEY, which brings us New Horizons in symbolic cruelty to animals. There are 9 mole holes, and moles appear in them at unpredictable intervals, and the player has to hit the mole over the head with a mallet before it retreats. An added element is that from time to time, a mole's rear end appears instead of its head, and the player loses points for that. I will leave the symbolic significance of the game to the reader.

Bernadette has done well enough at all three of these (she finds PAC-MAN boring) to get the honor of inscribing her score & initials on the screen. That apparently is a game in itself, and by the time one has figured out the intricacies of that test of skill, one may be immortalized as AAA or ZZZ.

And now video games have come to our very home. The Osborne-1 is not precisely a video gamer's delight. The one thing skimped on was the screen, a tiny monochrome one. (The company promises the big-screen adaptation soon. Is there a Programmer's Time, analogous to Libertarian Time, CPT, and Real Soon Now?) But now games for Adam's tiny screen are beginning to appear. The first is INVADERS, a generic version of the first successful arcade game, SPACE INVADERS. I purchased one today (it costs \$20 and is made by Software Toolworks) at the local ComputerLand. I've been enjoying it & slowly getting better at it. (I shudder to think of how many quarters I'd've pissed away if it had been in an arcade.) But it asks you to record your name, and doesn't tell you how to correct typos (neither the WordStar nor the BASIC method seems to work; another thing Osborne left out was the DELETE key) and so the current puny

record score is entered under the wrong initials. and thus is a constant inspiration to me to improve, or something.

12 October

And now I've removed the offending initials, with a slightly better score.

There was an avalanche of mail today, as a result of the alleged holiday yesterday. It included three apae: FLAP, an invitational apa, includes some of the best writers in fandom, including Dave Locke, who sums up ET as "a tale of how a small, cute, silly alien, with a head that looks like a foot, can touch the hearts of obnoxious kids and their ineffectual mother." LASFAPA is also a highly enjoyable apa. One amusing thing in this mailing is Celia Chapman's report that she saw a license plate that read "WTZUP-MD" on a VW Rabbit. I also received apa-v.

Along with LASFAPA came the 14th issue of Marty Cantor's *Holier than Thou*, and it's as delightful as ever. This issue features a remarkable multicolor cover drawn & printed (via linoleum blocks) by Marc Schirmeister. It's available for \$1.50 or the usual from Marty at 5263 Riverton Ave., #1, North Hollywood, CA 91601. Marty has some good news in LASFAPA. At Chicon, he met a very pleasant Canadian woman named Robbie Bourget. She came down to LA to visit him, and that worked out so nicely that she's staying and they're going to get married soon. Best wishes to both of them.

The nice people from Chartech heard my plea for help in undoing some of the changes in WordStar that their program has wrought, and they sent instructions on how to do that. It'll take a while to get up my nerve, but that'll happen one of these days. I would point out that I sent an order to Escape Engineering (for screen graphics) and a membership application to the First Osborne Group at the same time I sent the original order to Chartech, and have not heard from either of them. (See snotty remark above about "Programer's Time.")

Sometimes you get solicitations with a business-reply envelope in them. If I don't want whatever they're peddling, I throw out the envelope unless it's the "Moral" "Majority" or some similar group, in which case I mail the envelope back empty & let them pay the pottage. (You used to be able to stick them on a brick & make the recipients on that, but apparently you can't do that anymore. One elegant idea I came up with a bit too late: I got mailings from the Republicrats and the Demicans. I should've sent them each other's crap.) There's a new gimmick now. Some organizations send an envelope with a stamp on it, presumably because someone got the idea that that looks better than a business-reply envelope. What I do with those if I don't want them is stick a label over the address and mail them to somebody else. That sort of thing is a veritable windfall for the Post Office, which makes a nice profit on all the stamped envelopes which are thrown away.



Which certainly makes me wonder why the libertarians are doing it. I received a letter from someone in the Libertarian Party, asking me to stand up for the side of Truth and Justice in the incomprehensible intramural squabble I mentioned last issue. (Something about the worldcon bid in '86...no, that can't be right.) And it contained a postcard with a 13¢ stamp on it. So I mailed it to them without a signature, but with a smartass remark about how they were raising money for the PO.

And I heard from Camden Benares, who is a Discordian, a sex-freedom person, a Mensa member, and an Osborne owner, among other things. Obviously good people. He's also the author of *Zen without Zen Masters*, a book I've recommended here before, and he reports that it may be back in print soon. I certainly hope so.

13 October

Camden also is working with John F. Carr on an eight-volume Future History, to be called *The Crying Clown Celebration*. A prequel to the series, called *Carnifex Mardi Gras*, has been written by Carr, and published by Pequod, a small California press; they sent me a review copy.

It is a strange and fascinating book, set in a future of sexndrug freedom, combined with as much violence as contemporary urban society, if not more. It is not, imao, a novel so much as three successive and overlapping novelettes, connected at the end with a little story which, like the vertex of a double cone, brings together the elements from before and then begins to open out again to the future. There are some remarkable moments here, and it what it looks forward to could be even more wondrous.

14 October
Bernadette's teaching career continues. She is now in the midst of determining midterm grades, on the basis of an examination (the aforementioned study of the works of Hagbard Celine) and a paper on *Winesburg, Ohio*, among other things. The system under which she teaches requires that she have individual conferences with the students to discuss their work. This is in some ways the most gruelling part of the job--explaining that the standards under which they got As in high school are no longer operative; that even if logical transitions mar the alleged beauty of their styles, the things must be included; sometimes that essays must be about something. She is not helped (he understated) by the prevalent grade inflation which encourages students to consider anything less than an A a punishment. But of course, the conferences are by no means all bad. They offer an opportunity for the sort of one-to-one feedback that any communications system can profit from. The pains are part of the price you pay for being a teacher, and Bernadette is paying it.

15 October
Life, the Universe, and the Same Old Shit (no, that can't be right, can it?) is the third volume of the *Hitchhiker's Guide* series. I've heard that author Douglas Adams didn't want to do this one, and I think he had a point there. The series appears to me to have reached the "enough, already" stage. Almost all that is left is the repetition of bits that got laughs in the first two books, and the unending whimsy that has been the hallmark of this series. [It occurs to me that you may well utterly disagree with this review if you like whimsy. To me, whimsy is to real humor as Tab is to Coke. At its best, such as in the work of S. J. Perelman, it inspires me to think "that's funny," but not to laugh.]

Bernadette got the midterm grades in today, with a bit of an assist from me & Adam. She wanted to weight the first papers as each 2/3 of the third one. It was quite easy to write a program to calculate averages on that basis.

17 October
Today I tried to edit the CHARTECH disk in the manner suggested and ran into new problems. I will probably try some more things with it, but meanwhile I have decided to go back to using a WordStar without the special symbols for most uses. But I decided I liked the extra speed I got from having the explanations of the keys eliminated. (After all, if I don't remember them, I'd rather look them up on the printed list I've posted above my desk than try to find them on a layout that's wider than the screen.) So I modified the WordStar to include that. I notice that as I go back to the Osborne manual, I am doing things that they say are included in the manual for the benefit of "computer experts." This cheers me, except that I have noticed that the Osborne manuals wisely follow a policy of "Invoke Often" and thus

start telling you how you are mastering the computer around the time you first figure out how to press the RETURN key.

18 October
INPUTS: An example of the kind of niceness you sometimes find in fandom. Bernadette mentioned in an apa that she was interested in Morris dancing, but didn't know any place closer than England where it was being done. The other day, Dan Goodman called with a list of names & addresses of Morris-dancing groups in our area (the nearest being in Virginia).

Yesterday, two of my favorite people called--Eric Raymond, to chat about computers and Witchcraft and other subjects of common interest, and Rick Brown, to say that he's applying for a librarian job at Duke. It would be very nice if he got it.

Mary Wolf, the woman who decided to write to me when a pendulum she held over a Pagan Spirit Alliance list gave off good vibes over my name, has now decided that the pendulum was right, and sends a friendly reply to my letter and zine.

Lee Howard has started a diaryzine, called *The I-25 Conspiracy*. She talks about her travels, friends she has met along the way, and the CETA program which accepted her to train her in computer technology, and is now having second thoughts for no discernible reason. Perhaps they have already had one success this year and fear that a second would set a standard they'd fear having to live up to. The zine is available for \$1 or the usual from Lee at 122 N. 7th St., #5, Colorado Springs, CO 80905.

A CoA from Dave Locke & Jackie Causgrove (to 6828 Alpine Ave., #4, Cincinnati, OH 45236). They are particularly good people who've been having some hard times, and I hope this is the beginning of a change for them.

The User's Guide has nothing to do with unlawful substances (something I have to remind myself every time Nancy Lebovitz refers to herself as a "dealer"). It's published by the creators of CP/M, the operating system used by the Osborne and many other computers. The idea that programs from one computer should work on another is one of those ideas that are perfectly sensible & self-evident, and therefore considered Bad Crazy by large numbers of people (like the idea that decisions should be made by people who know what they're doing). CP/M is a major step in this direction, and their zine is the sort of thing I would expect from such people. The workings of the CP/M system are explained simply & clearly.

Bernadette & I are going up to New Haven for World Fantasy Con at the end of this month, and I've made the arrangements for getting there. We're flying on New York Air, one of the new cheapo-cheapo airlines. This necessitated my first (I think) trip to a travel agent, as NY Air does not mail tickets. I have survived.

20 October
 BOOKS. Brigid Brophy once said that T. S. Eliot had run a particularly clever scam on the critics. He labeled some of his poems "minor," and so they assumed that the others were major. John Brunner's books can be divided in the same way without any ploys on the author's part. The big, mosaic-pattern books are of course the major ones. I would say that *Stand on Zanzibar* belongs in any all-time top 10 sf list, and I would not put *The Jagged Orbit* and *The Shockwave Rider* very far behind. (*The Sheep Throw Look Up* seems to me major and bad, as the mosaic method seems to work best with a diversity of material, rather than that book's unrelieved gloom and doom.) But those are by no means the only enjoyable books Brunner has given us. There's also *The Whole Man* and *The Long Result*, excellent treatments of telepathy and human-alien contacts, respectively; the delightfully witty *Timescoop*; *The Stone That Never Came Down*; and others. And now another of the first-rate minor Brunners has returned, one that I think has never gotten the attention that it deserved. *Bedlam Planet* (del Rey pb) is a book about an Earth mission to another planet that is forced to go native, even though it may drive them mad. (Some will be reminded of Bradley's *Darkover Landfall*, which came later. I think Brunner handles the theme a lot better.)

Fritjof Capra's *The Turning Point* (Simon & Schuster hc) is the sort of Wretched Excess we have come to expect every few years from Theodore Roszak. Beginning with the controversial theories of subatomic physics that he introduced many people to in *The Tao of Physics*, Capra comes to a place many have reached by other paths--the realization that the world is not a bunch of isolated things bumping into each other, but a network of interconnected systems, subsystems, and megasystems, and that the old view led to an attempt to impose our will by force upon "all that stuff out there" which is utterly counterproductive in a systems world.

Having realized the folly of force, and having made some very good points based on this realization, Capra goes on to make the same mistakes Roszak, Philip Slater, and Joseph Chilton Pearce made. He assumes that submission to the systems in which we find ourselves is the only alternative to the rightly discredited policy of conquest. Two errors seem particularly typical. One is that he fails to distinguish between *system* and *closed system*. Like many technophobes, Capra cannot imagine that there can be anything useful out in space. (Perhaps some day "empty sky" will supplant "flat earth" as the archetype of blind refusal to see what is ahead.) The other mistake is the assumption that cybernetics technology must be energy-intensive because it isn't labor-intensive.

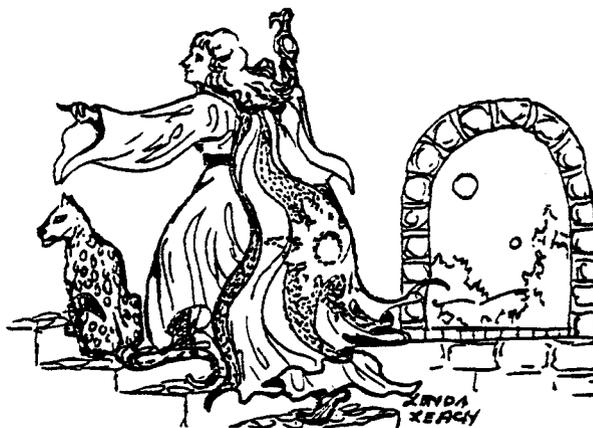
John Naisbitt, the author of *Megatrends* (Warner hc), knows better. Near the beginning of the book he points out that the labor theory of value (which Capra swallows whole without even mentioning the constraints Marx added to

it to keep it from being transparent nonsense) has been replaced by the information theory of value. Naisbitt is aware, in ways that the technophobes seem incapable of grasping, that mind and information are parts of the systems that we live in, and that by transcending the desire to conquer the other parts, we can help to guide the systems in the ways we want them to go.

Naisbitt gives us ten megatrends: 1) the step from an industrial to an information society; 2) "high touch"--an addition of personalizing elements to what would otherwise be the coldness of high tech; 3) a global economy supplanting national ones; 4) the replacement of short-term by long-term planning; 5) decentralization; 6) self-help; 7) participatory democracy; 8) the replacement of hierarchies by networks; 9) the move to the Sun Belt; 10) either/or choices being replaced by multiple options. This is not a great book, and is not even particularly well-written, but it says some important things about a desirable future that we can help make and live in.

One-Night Stands with American History, by Richard Shenkman and Kurt Reiger (Quill pb) is a delightful compendium of historical trivia, smartass, silliness, and weirdness. Here's a quote from *Poor Richard's Almanack* that may not have been in your Civics textbook: "He that lives upon Hope dies farting."

My Voice Will Go With You (Norton hc) is a collection of the "teaching tales" of Milton Erickson. It has the same problem as many books about sages, gurus, Zen masters, etc. Erickson did much of his work by the force of his personality (literally hypnotic by some definitions), and that of course can only be hinted at on the printed page. Erickson's powers seem to have derived largely from close observation and understanding of those he worked with and a fearless belief in what he was doing. (The sort of power he wielded can be downright scary; he was at least as good as Charley Manson at establishing control over people, but he used his talents to serve and strengthen his patients.)



21 October
 SWAPA arrived today. It is turning into a first-rate apa and generally good place to hang out, which is just what I would have predicted for the intersection of my two favorite elite groups. Maybe three, as almost all of the zines seem to have been done on computers.

What's wrong with INVADERS is what's wrong with this country, he said pompously. If you set a new scoring record, you are invited to record your score. If you do not, you have lost, regardless of your score. There is no such thing as a good score that is not a WINNER. This is a pervasive foolishness: You're the best, or you're nothing.

John Brodie, one of the more interesting people in pro football (you remember pro football) had an article on the NY TIMES Sunday sports op-ed page a few years ago in which he pointed out that when a team loses the Super Bowl, it's called a LOSER. But in fact, that team has finished ahead of all of the other 26 teams, and its players are ahead of all those who wish they were playing in the Big Time, but aren't. They're not losers; they're second-place winners. I feel that way myself. I don't feel that I've been any more of a "Hugo Loser" in these last three years when I was on the ballot than I was all the years when I didn't even come that close. This idea that it's no good just to be good, you've got to be the best, strikes me as a prime form of bad craziness. I suspect that it's a big part of the grade inflation that's making some of Bernadette's students so miserable, and making her life difficult.

Speaking of Bernadette and studies, she has prepared the book list for her course in "The Self through the Fantastic in Literature." Assuming a perfect correlation between the *Books in Print* map and the Books in Print territory (a pious hope, at best), the course will assign *Childhood's End*, *Steppenwolf*, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, *The Crying of Lot 49* [partly my sinister influence], *A Time of Changes*, *More than Human*, *The Centaur*, and *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. Those of us who are not Duke students will not get to take the course, and I for one envy the Dukies.

There will also be some short stories in the course, but as there does not seem to be a collection or anthology with more than a couple of the stories she would like to teach, Bernadette will probably have the stories in question photocopied.

I am told that this is legal, and given the unavailability of the stories, I find it morally unobjectionable, but I wish there were some way the writers could be paid for their work. While the royalties would probably be about a penny a student, if that sort of thing were done in every class, it would add up.

That is an example of a sort of problem that is appearing more and more. I mentioned the Information Theory of Value a while back. One

drawback to it is that information is easier to steal from its creators and rightful owners than work or energy. If photocopying otherwise unavailable stories for classes is one end of the scale, the production and sale of things like bootleg records and tapes is at the other--a procedure that strikes me as no different from theft. And there are, as ever, gray areas in the middle.

Computer software is an area where this is a problem, and where it seems almost impossible to draw lines that everyone can agree on. It is good practice, encouraged by the manufacturers, to make a copy of any software item you buy, so that if something happens to the copy being used, you can make another one. With a program like WordStar, one might want to make several different copies, with different features (like the one I'm using, and the one with Chartech characters, but several drawbacks that I have not found out how to deal with). If I let Bernadette use Adam and my WordStar program, I think I am not violating any laws, but if I were to make a separate copy of WordStar for her to use, that might be different. And if I made a copy of WordStar for a friend to use on a different machine, that would almost certainly be a no-no. (And if I made a copy and sold it, I'd feel bad about it.)

It seems, though, that when everyone is approaching the problem with good will and a desire to be fair, the technicalities of paying royalties may be more easily solvable. Ted Nelson (to return to the Swarthmore theme) has been talking for years about a system he calls Xanadu. From a fanocentric point of view, one could call Xanadu the ultimate apa. It would be a giant data base to which anyone could contribute, and anyone could see anyone else's contribution for the payment of a small service fee which would include a royalty payment. (Though I imagine it would be possible for people to make arrangements not unlike all-for-all zine trades, in which they could waive royalties for each other.) It's a nice thought.

We are sometimes tempted to believe that America has a monopoly on stupidity, but that is not the case. In Switzerland, the government recently began issuing a set of stamps representing the signs of the Zodiac. A Swiss minister has recognized these as *fnord* pagan symbols, and thus a hedonistic insult to God. Rev. Rolf Schum said, "We have enough problems with drugs and other sinful pursuits, so we don't need stamps to corrupt the public further." At least there has not yet been a Swiss Martin Gardner to demand the removal of the stamps lest they lead children astray into the pseudoscience of astrology.

22 October
 GRAFIXWRITER, the program for doing screen graphics with the Osborne, arrived here today. It does not work, or at least I have not been able to get any visible signal on the screen with it. I have written the manufacturers a more or less courteous note about the problem.

From June 1966 to June 1968, I worked with a bail project in San Francisco, interviewing prisoners to determine their eligibility for pretrial release. It was a major experience in my life, both for living in San Francisco and for being exposed to the criminal law in some of its workings. I am to this day something of a criminal-law buff, and I read books about it, comparing what is described with my own experiences. An excellent book called *Confessions of a Criminal Lawyer*, by Seymour Wishman (Penguin pb), brings back memories of those days.

Wishman has few, if any illusions, left. Not about his clients, most of whom are people who have in fact done very bad things. Not about the police, not about the courts, not about the jails, and not about himself, as the book is mostly a matter of his questioning what he has been doing as a successful defense attorney. He recognizes the role of incompetence in the whole system, as it is often found in perpetrator, victim, arresting officer, judge, and counsel on both sides. He makes a valid point that I do not recall seeing before--that when a criminal is set free because of "loopholes" in the law, the problem is not with the "loopholes," which are generally protections of our fundamental rights, but simply a sign that a cop or judge did not do his job right. We see incompetence, corruption, and fraud. We see cops perjuring themselves as a matter of course. We see Wishman trying to get one client declared "not guilty by reason of insanity" as a paranoid schizophrenic, and failing, partly because the judge himself is somewhat paranoid, though probably not certifiably schizophrenic. We see Wishman himself getting a client off on a rape charge by accusing the plaintiff of being a prostitute (a charge he later decides is as likely as not to be false).

It sounds right to me, from my own limited experience and from all I know about the workings of the law. I read the police reports and discovered not only man's inhumanity to man, but man's incompetence & bungling. I got over the romantic belief that those arrested were all good guys, or heroes, or at worst, simply victims, before I interviewed a young man who beat a barber to death for spilling a drop or two of hair oil on his suit. But the criminals are also victims, often having been brought to their crimes by the misery of their lives. The police are cynical & sometimes as crooked as those they arrest. The courts are overcrowded, and so they resort to plea bargaining in the hopes that the overly lenient sentences will balance out the overly severe ones. The jails are snake pits, and do little that bears any resemblance to rehabilitation, but what are you going to do about people as nasty as some of those Wishman describes? I remember feeling a paradoxical relief because some of those I helped were guilty of at worst victimless "crimes," and thus in that one aspect of the job, I was on the side of the angels. Wishman soft-pedals that part, but does mention the satisfaction of getting justice for

a Puerto Rican client accused of assaulting police officers when in fact it was the other way around.

In the end Wishman winds up with two of the clients he cares for getting severe sentences, while the alleged human being who beat his 2-year-old daughter to death and might now be willing to consider that action an unfortunate excess of discipline gets off fairly easy. Wishman decides, and I agree with him, that there should be lawyers who will fight for even the worst clients, and that these should be good at what they are doing. And at the end, I think of what a judge said to him earlier in the book, in reply to his plea for a light sentence for a convicted client, on the basis of the client's wretched background: "Mr. Wishman, I'm not going to change the sentence I was going to give your client, but I want you to know that you've succeeded in thoroughly depressing me."

24 October
I owe the nice people at Escape Engineering an apology. I said that GRAFIXWRITER didn't work. I made another copy of it, adding programs from other disks so that it would start automatically (a standard procedure I am sure many of you do not wish to have explained to you), and lo and behold, it works. I can now draw pictures on the screen with either type symbols or special graphics characters, and if I use the type symbols, I can print a copy of the result on paper. (In fact, I'll probably run a sample in this zine.) So now I have another ~~to~~ scientific device.

Earlier today, Bernadette & I went to a nearby night spot (in the daytime) with the Drakes and friends Sharon & Bob to watch a musical comedy act called Herb and Potato. They favored us with tasteful remarks ("What's the difference between being gay and being Black? You don't have to tell your parents you're Black.") and songs ("There's a kind of hush all over Beirut tonight/No one left to shoot tonight."). Needless to say, we enjoyed it.



The Compass Rose (Harper hc) is a new collection of short stories by Ursula K. Le Guin, but the author's versatility is such that if we didn't know better, it could probably be passed off as an anthology by up to twenty different writers, many of them first rate. The author of "The Author of the Acacia Seeds" resembles Borges at his best, and the creator of the brilliant "SQ" is comparable to Sladek. The author of "Diary of the Rose" has great compassion; and whoever wrote "Mazes" has remarkable insight. "Sur" has a charm all its own. "The Pathways of Desire" combines sensawunder imagination and an understanding of relationships as well as anything since Tiptree's "A Momentary Taste of Being." Not all the authors are at this level, of course. "The New Atlantis" preaches a bit; "Some Approaches to the Problem of the Shortage of Time" is almost as cute as its title; and others are a bit trivial, obscure, or otherwise annoying. This is much better than you'd expect one author to do.

25 October
 MELBOURNE IN '85! Today's mail brought a couple of letters from Australia, which in turn brought the realization that Australia now has a fanzine culture second only to America's (even if, as I've heard, Bruce Gillespie's *Science Fiction Commentary* has breathed its last). Eric Lindsay's been writing well for years; Marc Ortlieb (author of one of today's locs) does the delightful *G36* series; Jean Weber's *Weberwoman's Wrevenge* discusses feminism seriously but not boringly; Peter Toluzzi's *The Peter Principle* is the best new zine I've seen this year. Some other people, like Keith Curtis, Ken Ozanne, and Mark Loney come up with good stuff from time to time. And they've got some good loc-cers like Diane Fox, who writes,

I've greatly enjoyed the puns in the Xanth books, but Piers Anthony's tendency to make irritating sexist comments resembles a large fat blowfly buzzing around the room while one is listening to a good piece of music or watching a pleasant comedy on TV. It doesn't spoil the goodness of it, but distracts from any pleasure in that goodness.

Re the comments on Trooper Whitt's views on bank accounts, John has a bankcard, and although I'm an agnostic I can agree with Whitt's viewpoint. For all practical purposes, anything that makes it so easy to get into debt is Antichrist. Or at least friendly towards this unpopular entity.

When one thinks about the amount of borderline S/M written in media fanfiction by female fen, it becomes obvious that sadism and masochism are not purely male traits. I'd be inclined to say that a warped culture will condition all its members, whatever their sex, and S/M is simply an extrapolation from civilized sexual attitudes as such (not merely western sexual attitudes).

It certainly makes me wish I could send my zines to Australia as cheaply as I can send them to the US. And are you sure New Zealand isn't a part of Australia? They've got some good people too.

A few pages ago I jokingly suggested that now that I had printed up labels for the OEs of the apas I belong to, they would all move. Since then, I have received announcements of moves from the OEs of two apas, and a third, which has 2 OEs, has told me to send zines for the next couple of mailings to the one I didn't print the labels for.

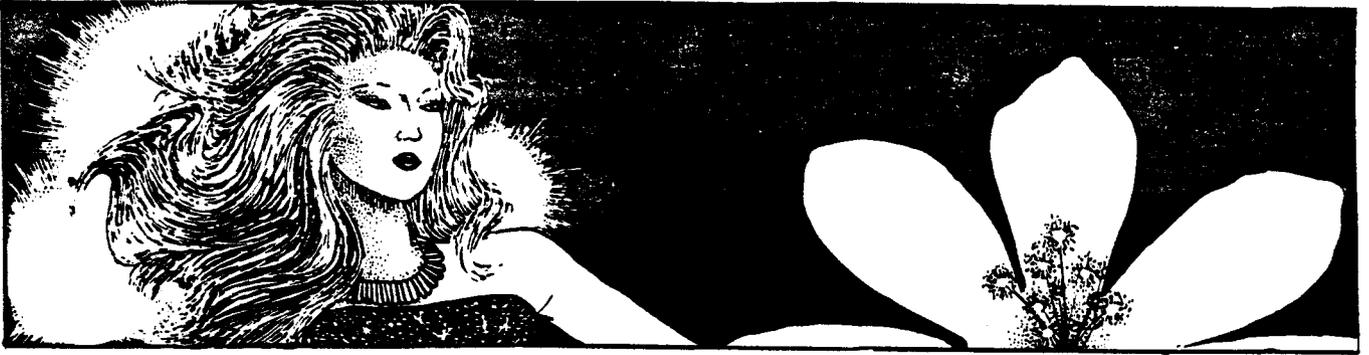
That's a lead-in to some thoughts on discontinuity. I'm once again trying to get in touch with the news. I called the Raleigh News & Dispatch a few weeks ago, and they informed me that people living in Durham could get home delivery of their newspaper, which appears to have about as much news as the local papers, and a better selection of comic strips. (You may remember that we tried and failed to have one of the local rags delivered. After that, I picked up a paper when I got around to it.) So I wrote to the Raleigh paper, and it's been almost 3 weeks, and I have yet to have had a paper delivered.

I do want to keep up with the news. Partly that's a feeling that we live in a political world where events far away can get at me at any time. Partly it's like H. L. Mencken's stated reason for remaining in the United States: "Why do people visit zoos?" In any event, I feel that I have been cut off from the news, that things are happening that I don't know about. I WANT IT! TAKE A TYPING TO CALM DOWN!

I picked up a paper today, and noticed that most of the rest of the world, from Ronnie on up, still seemed to be there. And the NFL strike is still on.

I haven't even seriously considered watching college football for the duration. What I miss in football is certainly not the violence, and not even the beauty of the plays, but the continuity. Of course teams change from year to year; players quit, or get traded or dropped; sometimes the league itself expands. But there is a continuity. Teams evolve, rather than turning into something they never were before; in that, they resemble living entities. When the Cowboys play the Dolphins, I see the ghosts of Larry Csonka and Duane Thomas. Upon this background I project my current feelings about the game and its participants, cheering the teams that play a wide-open passing game that's fun to watch, booing Frank Kush and all of his bon-dage-and-discipline ilk, remembering the pleasures that watching the skills of Kellen Winslow and Lawrence Taylor has given me, and no doubt including in all of that a mish-mash of more-or-less conscious superstitious feelings and associations, latent homosexual desires, and the gods know what else.

It is this complex structure that I build upon when I watch a pro football game, and a college game just cannot offer that. Even the all-star games that the players wanted to bring in would barely fit with that. I'd watch them, but it wouldn't be the same; it wouldn't have the continuity. Maybe I'd just watch them out of spite.



As I've said before, I sympathize with the strike. The players are the game. How much would you pay to watch owners play?

Nonetheless, I like this strike less than player strikes in other sports. Everywhere else, the players have fought for the freedom to move from team to team and to make the best deal for themselves, and against compensation for signing free agents. (Compensation punishes owners for bidding up the price of players. It is therefore the favorite way in which the owners and their tame commissioners try to deal with the threat of having to live in a free-enterprise system.)

Not the NFL Players Association, and their representative, Ed Garvey. They are fighting for the sort of thing Big Labor wants--a share of profits, fixed salary scales, as little as possible of that nasty competitive stuff. As I said last year, the NFL thinks it's the AFL.

There are those who would say that Ed Garvey made a mistake a few years ago. At that time Garvey appeared to have the owners by the short hairs. Armed with two major court decisions that the current arrangement between players and owners was a racket on the owners' part, Garvey managed to walk away from the bargaining table with a compensation agreement that enabled about one player a year (generally a malcontent second-stringer) to benefit from free agency. A few years ago, no team even made an offer to Walter Payton, then the best running back in the game. One suspects that ending compensation would change that, as it has done in baseball & basketball.

Garvey unsurprisingly says it wouldn't. He points out that the football owners have a share-and-share-alike arrangement which baseball and basketball do not have, and under that, it would be in their best interests to make a "gentleman's agreement" (a term owners tend to prefer to the vulgar "conspiracy in restraint of trade") not to mess with each other's players, even without the threat of compensation.

Maybe. On the the other hand, all it would take is one greedy egotistical asshole of the Steinbrenner variety to become convinced that

he could buy himself a Super Bowl, and the whole thing would fall apart. There might not even be the need to import one. Robert Irsay, of the Baltimore Colts, shows great promise in that direction....But it won't happen. And I'll be disconnected from football a while longer, and it'll take a while to reconnect.

Speaking of continuity & change, I think of DR. It's survived a name change, perhaps changed direction. But it remains, with people who've been on the mailing list since the beginning mixed with new ones. A couple of artists show up in my zines for the first time. I've known Giani Siri for years; I met Mel White at Chicon. New friends, like Kris Kampmann & Liz Stewart, write after having been added to the mailing list.

This evening has been somewhat hectic. I'm finishing off this zine a few days early, as I'll be off to World Fantasy Con in a day or so, and I'd like to have this at the printer while I'm gone. First it was UPS, with an early Christmas/Birthday present I got for Bernadette--an Olivetti Praxis, a typer somewhat like the Selectric, but a whole lot cheaper. While we were unpacking it & figuring out how it worked, the phone rang repeatedly. A whole bunch of stuff. One thing that came up was Hexacon, an excellent con being held in Lancaster, PA, the weekend of Nov 11-14. I've been to all of them & enjoyed them all, but the sheer complexity & expense of getting from Durham to Lancaster overwhelms me this year, and I won't be there. It should be a good one even without me. I guess I'll be going to fewer cons because of the move--but it's still worth it.

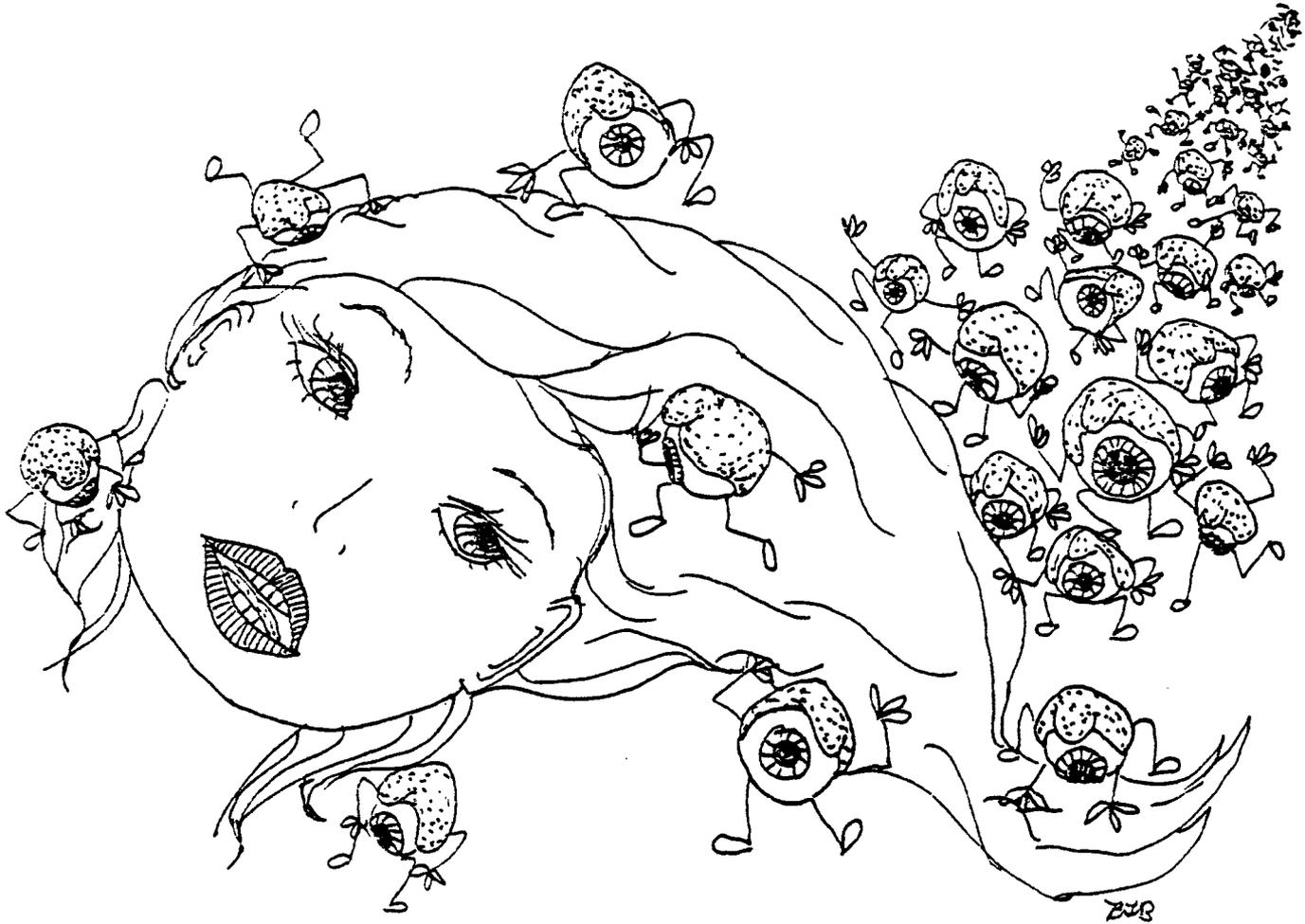
O yeah, almost forgot

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This has been W.A.S.T.E. Paper #393. Art Index: Cover--Steven Fox; 2--Olivia Jasen; 5--Giani Siri; 7--Mel White; 9--Charlie Williams; 11--Linda Leach; 13--Wayne Brenner; 15--D Carol Roberts; 16--Bernadette Bosky.

If this box is checked, please let me know if you wish to receive further issues of DR.



"Thousand eyeballs under hoods have you by the hair."

George Meredith, "The Woods of Westermain"