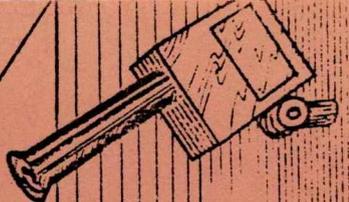
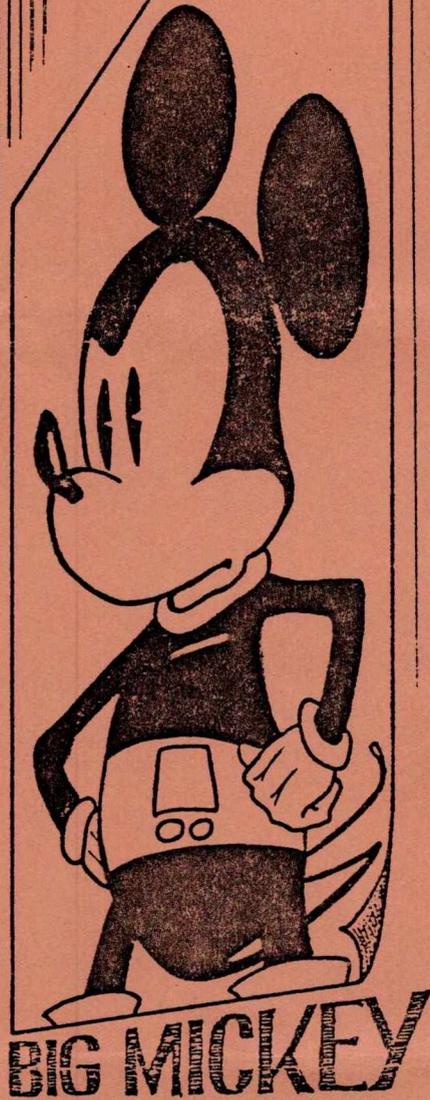
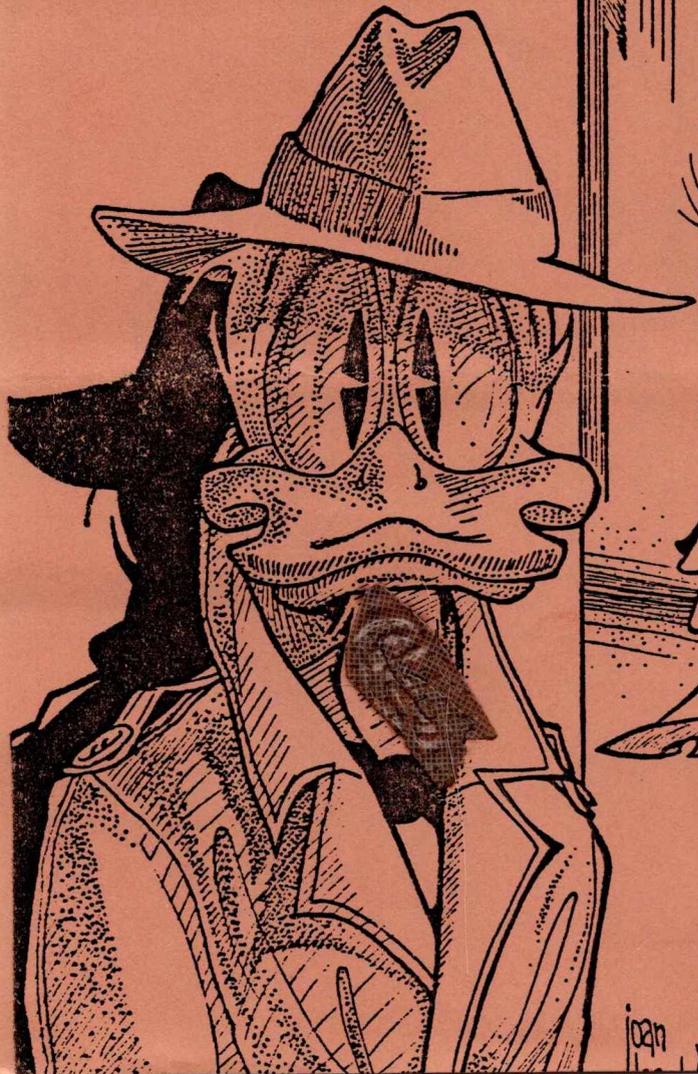


THE  
DILLINGER  
RELIC 26



dan



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5 November

Back to the diary, after a few days off. Bernadette & I went up to New York last week. We stayed at my mother's house for a day or so (unfortunately, Mother was out of town as part of her work raising money for Brandeis), had a most pleasant visit to NY\*SFS, and then moved on to Bernadette's favorite convention, World Fantasy Con, which this year was held in New Haven.

I will not do a con report, as I am in one of those moods where all con reports, definitely including my own, seem like the Same Old Shit. We talked with Blablabla. It was nice to see Blablabla. There was a panel on Blablabla. As the Bible says, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever!" (Hebrews 13:8). I could tell you about the program. Ramsey Campbell told us that his mother was a paranoid schizophrenic and he lived under the same roof with his father for 15 years without ever seeing him, but all fantasy writers come from backgrounds like that, don't they?

I did enjoy the con, seeing some old friends of mine, meeting friends of Bernadette's. We got back on Sunday, and of course, great amounts of Stuff had piled up in our absence.

DR 25 was printed. The usually excellent people at Duke Copy Center had one of their off days, as many of you may have noticed. There was a band about 1/3 of the way down that was much lighter than the rest. I have already apologized to Charlie Williams for what the machine did to his illo, and hereby do so publicly. I got the things stapled, folded, etc., and mailed them this morning.

There was a letter from Robert Anton Wilson, who continues to enjoy Ireland, and that was synchronistic because I'd just picked up his new book *Right Where You Are Sitting Now* (And/Or pb). It's a collection of essays on a variety of topics, from obscenity in the universe next door (no, it's not about food) to the way scientists deal with dubious phenomena like psi or rocks falling out of the heavens. There are some Burroughsian fold-ins that I must admit that I do not grok at this time, but there's more than enough that makes linear sense for even a hardcore left-brain type like me.

The people at And/Or have also published *The Network Revolution*, a look at computers and their effects, written by Jacques Vallee. It is a lot less strange than Vallee's *Messengers of Deception*. Upon that standard foundation of Decentralized-Network-Future vs Oppressive-Regimented-Future that is to computer books as panels on Sex in Science Fiction or Designing Alien Worlds are to sf cons, it builds from Vallee's 20+ years of experience,

not only in computers, but in trying to explain computers to users. Vallee explains that a computer cannot store information. It stores data; information is what the user makes of the data and depends on what questions the machine is asked. (Like what I've called The Uncertainty Principle of Literary Criticism--a story is mere data, and only a person, interpreting it via theories & previous knowledge, can make it into information.) Vallee also points out that any computer system is limited by the social matrix (including things like delivery systems) in which it exists. I think he's got a point there.

Osborne Inc. tells me that the long-awaited upgrades, including double-density discs (to hold twice as much data) and full-width screen, will be ready at the beginning of next year. The bad news is that the machine has to go back to the factory for 2 weeks to have all the new stuff installed, during which time I suspect I would feel something like withdrawal symptoms. But it will take only 2 weeks. Really. They promise. They swear. And if you don't believe them, you can ask the Tooth Fairy.

Do I sound skeptical? What would ever cause me to doubt the word of those wonderful folks who make the computers? Well, let's see....Adam was supposed to be at the store one day--well maybe, just possibly, two--after I paid for him. It was three weeks. As Bernadette said, the original Adam was delivered in less time than that. The discs were supposed to be delivered about as fast. They took only two weeks. Double density was promised for May, then July, then October, now (cross our hearts and hope to die, well, anyway, get awful sick) January. Six weeks ago, I saw an ad for the First Osborne Group in their zine, *The Portable Companion*, and sent in a year's membership fee. They have not deigned to reply to me in any way, except for cashing my check. A week after that, I wrote to JRT Systems for their version of Pascal. Same response. (How do you offer Pascal for under thirty dollars? Simple. ~~Don't deYVe!~~) Today, the third issue of *The Portable Companion* arrived. There's a mention of one of those package deals that I admire Adam Osborne for. Everyone else assumes that in home computers, either you get a cheap machine (TRS-80, Apple, Pet) or else you order a whole bunch of hardware and software and decide for yourself what you want & figure out how to put it together. Osborne knows that there's a market for good pre-assembled systems. As I mentioned last time, selling a computer, 2 disc drives, and a group of fundamental programs as a unit makes sense. Now he's done the next step, and put together a collection of all the programs you might want to combine with word processing--spelling check, grammar check (? this I've gotta see), footnotes, indexing, etc.--into one package at half the price of the individual programs. And *TPC* says it's in the stores right now. So I called ComputerLand and asked them if it was in right now. Do I have to tell you?

Synchronicity: Today's mail brought a request from a Canadian (referred to me by some pagans out in Colorado I used to trade zines with), asking where he could get his hands on a copy of *Principia Discordia*. I don't know, but I know that it was published by Loompanics. But I don't have their new address. Today's mail also brought a zine from John Boardman, giving their new address (PO Box 1197, Port Townsend, WA 98368).

6 November

Time to take a look at the news again. Before leaving for NY, I waited whilst Bernadette transacted some business in a bank and there read *Slime*, or perhaps *Newspeak*, and found that there was an epidemic of early puberty (around age 8) in Puerto Rico (food additives are suspected), and that Liberace's former chauffeur & companion is suing him, claiming that he performed a variety of other services. Today's paper reports that in a new book, possibly written in a fit of pique after being turned down for one of those "Remember-Me?" Traveler's-Check ads, John Dean accuses Alexander Haig of being "Deep Throat" --Woodward & Bernstein's secret source in the Watergate case. This seems dubious, as they reported the conversations as being carried on in English, rather than Gobbledygook. Speaking of which (etymological joke), there is a nice juicy divorce trial among the grossly rich in Florida, in which a loathesomely wealthy woman is being accused of having an affair with another loathesomely wealthy woman. "Did you two hold hands?" She denied it. "Did you put your hands on each other's knees?" Another denial. Here the newspaper, alas, draws a veil of decency over further testimony. And lest we return too quickly to good taste, it is reported that a former Miss Wyoming who successfully sued *Penthouse* for publishing a work of fiction in which a Miss Wyoming engaged in some sort of lewd behavior had her victory overturned by a higher court which said that the story was gross, crude, and utterly lacking in redeeming features, but still protected by the First Amendment. Sounds reasonable to me. O yes, and Mercury Morris, formerly of the Miami Dolphins, has been convicted of dealing in cocaine. And he didn't even have an auto company.

7.11

Those bored or compulsive enough to read this issue's colophon and compare it with the previous one will have noticed a change: I have dropped the request that DR not be reviewed. When I changed titles from *The Diagonal Relationship* to *The Dillinger Relic*, I wanted to make the old zine go away, shake out the mailing list a bit, and start anew. I still want to maintain a modicum of selectivity over who I send this to, but a shallow effort at secrecy is probably not the best way to accomplish that, and it may be keeping me from some people I'd like to be in touch with. *Lines of Occurrence* is still the official tradezine, and will go to those (particularly overseas, where the postage costs more) who send me one little zine per year, or so, as well as to the sf readers who also

get this one. DR remains available by Editorial Whim, including many trades, locs, people I enjoy being in apas with, and a whole bunch of miscellaneous. And unless the box on the back page is checked off, don't worry about getting the next one if you are getting this one. But my secret zine's no secret any more, so review away. I realize that this opens up the possibility that Kevin Smith will leap into print with all the cruel mockery of my writings that only his sense of honor has kept off the printed page thus far, but that's the chance I have to take.

8 November

A loc from Stven Carlberg asks if I knew that baseball commissioner Bowie Kuhn had been fired, effective at the end of the 1983 season. No, I hadn't. Some might suspect that this lame-duck season could give Kuhn a chance to destroy the game that cast him out after he had served them for so many years. Naah. If he hasn't managed it in all this time, another year won't make any difference.

JRT Pascal, the absence of which I was complaining about a few pages back, has finally arrived. The manufacturers presumably consider it unsporting to give the user hints like which drives you put the disks in, what other procedures are needed to get the thing started, etc. The fact that the documentation refers to the disk [singular] and the program comes on three disks is not encouraging.

9 November

Bernadette & I were recently discussing the use of "wish-fulfillment" as a negative term in literary criticism. Of course, it requires a bit of telepathy to determine for sure whether the outcome of a book represents the author's wishes (never assume that just because you find something in a book ugly, boring, or oppressive that it's not just what the author would love to see), and even where there is external evidence, it seems a bit strange to conclude that the merit of a book increases if it turns out that its conclusion was not a state of affairs desired by the author.

No, Bernadette was saying that she objects to books where the wish fulfillment is too obvious, where, for instance, the Good Guys do not meet sufficient resistance on their path to their goal. I'm not sure I share that view; at the very least, I'd say that I'd forgive that sin if the wish is interesting enough, and the book otherwise enjoyable. I suppose one could raise that charge against Spider & Jeanne Robinson's *Stardance*, a book I enjoyed a whole lot. One could not say it about Spider's new one, *Mindkiller* (Holt hc), a tightly constructed tale which weaves together a couple of plot strands into a satisfying whole, and shows the power of vision and the charm of narration which combine to make Robinson one of my favorite writers. Oh, and ignore the blurb, which was written by an idiot who thinks that *The Andromeda Strain* and *Lucifer's Hammer* are worthy role models, and that "masterful" is a good thing to call a book or a writer.



10 November

All those things I was telling you I liked in *Mindkiller* seem absent from Kurt Vonnegut's new one, *Deadeye Dick* (Delacorte hc). Since at least *Breakfast of Champions* (though you can find hints of it going back as far as *Mother Night*), Vonnegut has been wrestling with himself over the question of whether being a novelist is an honorable living, or whether he should be a cook or otherwise make tangible things that are good for people. I think he stated the case for art quite convincingly in *Breakfast*, but then I may need less convincing. He didn't sell the idea to himself.

One form of disillusionment with the writer's art is Tolstoy's syndrome, in which the author decides that if he is in fact compelled to make a living by publishing untrue statements, the only way to do this with anything resembling a clear conscience is to make sure that one writes simple stories that can be understood by almost everyone, and that these should contain nothing deviously artistic, but should merely be homilies encouraging the reader to be a nicer person.

In practice, this has caused Vonnegut to write in a sort of baby talk, in which sentence structure is simple, ideas are broken down to basic components, and taboo concepts (with Vonnegut, typically death rather than sex or excretion) are expressed in emetically cute terms.

I'm style-deaf enough for it to take a prose as bad as recent Vonnegut for me notice it, and I can forgive that if the book has redeeming merit, such as the clever ideas of *Jailbird* and Vonnegut's early works. This one, however, has little cleverness or anything else to recommend it. Its protagonist's most notable trait is asexuality; the nearest thing to an interesting action he has performed is accidentally shooting someone; he was once tempted to become a writer, but he overcame it; he now seems tempted occasionally to say clever things like writers do, but he generally overcomes it and talks simply enough for Tolstoy to approve. SPOILER WARNING: The book tells us that Guns Are Bad Things Which Hurt People; Cooking Good Meals For People Is A Good Thing; and It's Nice To Be Nice.

12 November

Last night I once again demonstrated the utter loathesomeness of my mind, not to mention my sense of humor (I told you not to...) by laughing almost continuously at *National Lampoon's Class Reunion*, a tasteless offensive movie in the great *NatLamp* tradition. (I noticed from the Photonovel that the flick was written by John Hughes, my favorite of the *NatLamp* sickies.)

Has anyone yet figured out what is interesting about the whole Valley Girl phenomenon? Obviously, it's not the language or the way they look.

Dept. of No-I-Don't-Make-It-Up (from today's "People in the News" column): "Jennifer O'Neill, who summoned an ambulance last month because she shot herself, called another one Wednesday afternoon after her husband, John Lederer, accidentally stabbed himself with a penknife at their Bedford Hills, NY, home."

Here's another one: "A Los Angeles Superior Court judge Friday gave singer Natalie Cole's mother, Maria, legal control of her daughter's assets, estimated at \$300,000. Judge Norman Dowds agreed with a petition that said Nat King Cole's daughter is 'unable to properly provide for her personal needs for physical health, food, clothing, or shelter.' The petition did not specify her illness." Didn't even say she'd been shooting or stabbing herself.

I've mentioned before what an inspiration the late Susan Wood was to my writing career. Now there is a collection of her writings, called *The Best of Susan Wood*, which spans most of her remarkable writing range, from faanish silliness to literary and feminist seriousness. There are discussions of how to teach an sf course, G. H. Hardy's autobiography (an old favorite of mine, too), and the importance of the Teddy Bear, among other things. It's available for \$2 (which goes to a Susan Wood Memorial scholarship fund) from Jerry Kaufman, 4326 Winslow Place North, Seattle, WA 98103, and I highly recommend it.

Another bit of fannish mail has left a cryptic message for me. The latest issue of Marc Ortlieb's ever-enjoyable *Q36* arrived the other day, and rubber-stamped on the envelope was the phrase, *Found in supposedly empty equipment*. I have no idea whether it was put there by Marc, the Australian PO, the American PO, or the Illuminati, or what they are trying to tell me.

15 November

NARRATIVE HOOK: The police came by around noon.  
POSSIBLY DISAPPOINTING FOLLOWUP: They weren't after me or Bernadette. They visited our housemates. I didn't know that playing shitty disco music was a crime. ~~SHOULD BE~~ Anyway, I watched from a safe (chickenshit) distance, and as near as I could tell, they thought our neighbor was a crime suspect, but he turned out to be who he said he was, so they drove off, and the shitty disco music is back on.

Meanwhile, some interesting mail. Janice Gelb sends along some propaganda from the recent California Senate race, emitted by the National Democratic Policy Committee, the latest front group for Lyndon La Rouché, who is described in it as "the world's foremost economist." Usual La Rouchian craziness--the enemy is a "world-wide mass-based movement dedicated to global genocide" and known as the Aquarian Conspiracy. It meets their usual high standards of evidence: Among the genocidal acts Jerry Brown (the target of the pamphlet) committed are opposing nuclear power, favoring decriminalization of grass, and associating with notorious brainwasher Gregory Bateson (a \*fnord\* Englishman; La Rouché discovered that the English were behind all the bad stuff in the world shortly after his wife ran off with an Englishman). I will say that the La Rouchies in LaGuardia Airport had a slogan that kind of amused me: NUCLEAR POWER IS SAFER THAN HINCKLEY'S PSYCHIATRIST.

16 November

Last night I attended my first meeting of the Raleigh Osborne owners' club. I got lost only three times on my way there, and didn't throw up. There I heard about dBase II, an excellent data management system that unfortunately costs over \$500. Also heard a few horror stories about people's Osbornes not working at all. These are not particularly frightening to me, as they represent factory-installed defects that show up as soon as the machine is purchased, rather than things that eventually go wrong.

At the meeting, I was pleasantly amazed to see Amy Thomson, whom I'd first met at Chicon. Amy lives in Idaho (I suppose someone has to), but she's been traveling around a bit, and was visiting her brother (an Osborne owner who lives in Raleigh) on her way to Antarctica.

Suzi Stefl writes, to report that she was shabbily treated at the local Pfg Big Boy Restaurant. Writer Lloyd Biggle, who witnessed the incident, wrote a description of it, and agrees. Suzi suggests that fandom should Do Something. Ah, but what? Assuming that things were as Suzi describes them, do we boycott our local Big Boy, run by a separate franchise owner who has no legal or moral responsibility for the actions of somebody in Michigan? Do we write to the national office (Elias Bros., in Warren, MI)? Do we try to put pressure on the particular Big Boy to fire those particular assholes? There probably is nothing much that can be done.

Meanwhile, Bernadette & I from time to time continue to sit at the keyboard & blast away at the INVADERS. A few weeks ago, Bernadette set a record of about 2800 that seemed likely to last forever, but this evening she beat it with about 2900, and then about an hour later I broke the 3000 barrier, and then in the very next game, set a new mark of an even 3200. This all, by the way, was done with the unmodified game, so there's no logical explanation for the suddenly higher scores.

17 November

Two pieces of good news from the real world in less than a week. The first one is that a federal judge ruled that the draft registration is illegal because the government didn't play by its own rules in setting it up. That's not as good as saying once and for all that the draft violates the 13th Amendment, but it ain't bad. The other bit of good news is that the NFL strike is over, and there will be a (somewhat truncated) season this year.

A most impressive-looking letter has been forwarded to me. *AUTHOR SERVICES, INC.*, their name embossed in raised gold letters, says, "Because you are one of the important opinion leaders in the field of Science Fiction, we were asked by Mr. L. Ron Hubbard to seek your advice in making known his new Science Fiction Book, *BATTLEFIELD EARTH*, which is arriving in all major bookstores now by their demand." Needless to say, I am flattered by this attention, though I would be more flattered if the letter were addressed to me, rather than to someone named "APA-69."

18 November

In case you haven't noticed, fantasy/sf is taking over. First it was movies, and this summer it was all but impossible to find a successful flick that did not have an sf theme. Now it's books. According to the latest *NY Times Book Review*, the #1 best-selling hardcover fiction book is James Michener's *Space*. #3 is *The Valley of Horses*, one of those prehistoric books that many people consider f/sf. A picture book of *E.T.* is in 4th place; Asimov is in 5th; Clarke in 7th; Stephen King in 9th; Vonnegut (admittedly with a book I find not merely mainstream but downright mundane) at #10, and *Life, the Universe, and Everything* #14. (It would probably be pushing my theme a bit to point out that almost half of the Trade pb list--7 books out of 15--is taken up by a talking cat.)

Meanwhile, it is rumored that the Liz and Dick of baseball--George Steinbrenner and Billy Martin--are planning yet another reconciliation. They richly deserve one another. As was remarked when a disagreeable literary figure (Carlyle?) married a shrewish woman, "The best that can be said for it is that two people were made miserable thereby, instead of four."

20 November

Letters of comment are starting to come in on DR 25, including one today from Ian Covell in England. That would appear to mean that the Durham PD has once again sent my zine overseas by airmail, even though I'm not paying for that. That's the third time it's happened. Incidentally, just because I'm too cheap and lazy to print letters doesn't mean I don't enjoy getting them. I even answer most of them personally.

The mail brought a solicitation from a good cause I have contributed to in the past--the Abortion Fund. Free voluntary population

control (including abortion) is something I think the government should pay for. You've probably noticed that there are not a whole lot of things in that category, but I can't see where having a lot of unwanted children born to women too poor to get abortions is in anybody's best interests. The opponents of this are people who don't want others (particularly minorities and the poor) to fuck and get away with it, singularly short-sighted opponents of government spending, and of course the relatively few who really mean "right to life." (I'd be more sympathetic to their feelings about having their tax money pay for what they consider murder if it weren't for the fact that people don't have much of a say in keeping their money from paying for the killing of people who've already been born, via the "Defense" Dept. and foreign aid.) In any event, the Abortion Fund is intended to let private contributors do their part, and you can send money to them at PO Box 19992, Washington, DC 20036.

21 November

From time to time I get phone calls in the wee small hours of the morning. A while back, it was a venerable fan, this morning a pro writer of some distinction, both inebriated. I don't terribly mind being awakened at such hours, but I also don't function particularly well, and so both got to hear me say fascinating things like "Whuh?" and "Mmmbl."

**FOOTBALL ALERT** [You knew it was coming, didn't you?] I watched a couple of games today. The returning warriors seemed a bit listless all around. Dallas beat Tampa Bay, in an uninspiring contest. The Redskins beat the Giants in a somewhat livelier one. The play that was most fun to watch was a punt block by Frank Marion of the Giants, setting up a 4th-quarter touchdown that briefly made their game resemble a contest. No, come to think of it, I must admit that I saw an even more amusing play, rerun from a mere college game the day before. It was the concluding play of the Stanford-California game. Stanford had gone ahead with 4 seconds to go, and merely had to kick off. Cal player Kevin Moen fielded the dribbling kick & lateraled it. After about four more laterals, Moen got the ball back & took it in for a touchdown, evading not only the Stanford players, but the Stanford marching band, and a whole bunch of fans who had blundered onto the field, thinking the game was over. Other good stuff: Emory Moorehead, an apparently washed-up wide receiver I always liked when he was with the Giants, had two key receptions, one for a touchdown, in the Chicago Bears' victory, and I cannot resist pointing out that the one team to be truly stomped & humiliated was the Colts, a team I've been saying nasty things about for the past couple of years. The announcers relaying the score made something of a point of how hard Colts coach Frank Kush worked his team. (Linebackers of Gor?) It occurs to me that Kush & owner Robert Irby could become the Martin & Steinbrenner of the NFL. But no, I shouldn't say that. At least Martin's stopped punching out his own players. **END FOOTBALL ALERT**

22 November

I wrote W.A.S.T.E. Paper #405 and check #405 this morning. Not only that, but today's mail brought the bill for my latest order of sf books from Ziesing Bros. It came to precisely \$23.00. What's it all mean, Mr. Natural?

Not only that, but I got two letters written on Osbornes today. Camden Benares wrote with, among other things, a tip on one of the few problems one runs into with Osborne and Word-Star. And Joe Celko wrote. He runs a Southern fannish newsletter which is a lot better than you would think from the fact that it's called *ASFOAWN*. Therein, he prints my con reports, the same ones you read here, and the nice thing is that I can just send him copies of the disks I store the reports on, and neither of us has to do any more typing.

I drove Bernadette to the airport today. She is spending Thanksgiving vacation with her family in Chicago. I am staying here a few more days and then going to Darkovercon.

Russia's new president is Yuri Andropov. Does that make Russia a Yuri nation? (If you think that's bad, what about Russian leprosy? Your parts shrivel up andropov.)

24 November

**INPUTS:** Two calls from fellow neep-neeps, both more advanced than I. Mike Shupp reports that he has purchased a Kaypro computer. That's the one that's been called an Osborne with a full-sized screen. (Counterbalancing that is the general agreement that the Osborne, at the same price, comes with better software.) Dana Hudes called to discuss Pascal & such.

Joan Hanke-Woods sends a delightful cover for this issue, and a copy of an article on Dr. Edward Teller and how much fun he thinks it would be to survive a nuclear war. I know a lot of pop-ecology types who oppose nuclear power because they mindlessly associate it with nuclear weapons, but Teller may be the only one who favors nuclear power because he associates it with nuclear weapons. Joan says that if there is such a war, she hopes she's inside the fireball. Me, too.

Judith Friedman points out that evolution doesn't necessarily program us to kill because there are assumed to be enough predators, disasters, and other forms of natural population control without people killing one another, and she reminds me that most mammals are programed not to kill their own species.



Keith Laumer, the subject of a remarkable profile in the current *SFR*, can be described with moderate unfairness as the author of a large number of books in which the good guy punches the crap out of the bad guys until he gets what he wants. There is one group of them, like *A Plague of Demons*, in which the hero awakens to discover that the aliens have taken over the Earth. So he punches the crap out of a bunch of people until he gets to a rocket ship back to the aliens' home planet, whereupon he punches the crap out of a whole bunch of them until they make him Ruler of the Universe. Another series is the *Retief* books. Retief is a lower assistant on a diplomatic mission under the direction of a stuffed-shirt striped-pants type who usually bears some sort of cleverly satirical name like Shitface. Shitface, ever gullible, is about to conclude some manner of treaty with the Space Gooks in which Earth is going to be ripped off. Retief walks into a bar and finds out what's really going on, whereupon he--aww you're way ahead of me. Anyway, Earth is saved, and Shitface gets the credit. Sometimes, as in some of the Retief stories and a delightful romp called *The Monitors*, the process is leavened with genuine wit. Sometimes it is not.

Laumer has, however, written two books in which I feel that he transcends himself, and both have recently been reprinted. *The Long Twilight* (Berkley pb) has some mythic resonances which kept it in my mind long after I had read it. But perhaps his most remarkable work is a novel called *Night of Delusions*, which has just been reprinted by Tor, which for some reason bound it with two of Laumer's old short stories and called the resulting book *Knight of Delusions*. The novel can perhaps best be summarized as the product of an unnatural union between Raymond Chandler and Philip K. Dick, in which a hardboiled detective with a smartass delivery goes through some very interesting realities. It's quite a book.

While writing the above, I encountered the problem Camden told me how to solve (his method works), and answered the door. Todd, who lives in the other half of this building, wanted to order a pizza and doesn't have a functioning phone, so he borrowed ours. (Last night one of the med students next door came over because their phone doesn't work either.) Todd tells me he works as a DJ in a disco. Ruby likes him anyway.

25 November  
**FOOTBALL ALERT.** The Drakes were nice enough to invite me over for Thanksgiving dinner. We put on the Giants-Lions game at just the right moment. It was 6-6 in the 4th quarter (2 field goals each), and the Lions were near the Giants' goal line. They passed, Lawrence Taylor picked it off, and he ran it back 97 yards for a TD. As is the Giants' custom these last 2 years, the defense scored, gave the ball to the offense, and said, "Hold them." The offense did. Well, actually the defense helped there, too, with Beasley Reece downing 2 punts inside the 5. **END FB ALERT.**

30 November  
In 1978 Judy Gerjuoy put together the first Darkover Grand Council Meeting. It was a one-day thing, held in a Brooklyn synagogue. Fans of Marion Zimmer Bradley's series attended in surprisingly large numbers, and the thing was such a success that Judy decided to do it as a real con, a whole weekend long, in a hotel, etc. This year was the fifth one, and the third in a row to be held in Wilmington, DE.

Wilmington would not seem to be the easiest place to get to, but it is actually close enough to the Philadelphia airport to have a reasonably priced limousine service. Piedmont flies to Philly, and so that problem was solved.

And so on Friday morning, after I had gone out ~~rogering~~ Krogering (to pick up some of their tasty Oriental snack mix and other supplies for the Discordian business meeting), I got on a plane for (as ever) Charlotte, and thence to Philly.

I had little trouble getting to the hotel and registering, and so I went to the huckster room. Kathy Sands told me she'd be getting in a bunch of new books later in the evening, so I resolved to go back there before the con was over. Nancy Lebovitz was selling buttons, as usual, and had the usual first-rate selection. I purchased one with the tasteful phrase, *Nuke the baby seals for Jesus*. There too was old friend Lynne Holdom, the first person I ever got a letter of comment from. She was sharing a huckster table with Roberta Rogow. Lynne was selling her *Jumeaux*, a zine of essays & fan fiction on Darkover (\$3.50 from her at PO Box 5, Pompton Lakes, NJ 07442). This issue includes some good stuff, including Mary Frey's essay on the Free Amazons and Roberta's amusing story of what happened when the Terrans tried to film an adventure series on Darkover. Roberta was selling a variety of Darkover and *\*fnord\** Trek zines.

I went to dinner at the Haberdashery, the cheaper of the hotel's two restaurants. Those who've read these reports in previous years may recall that the Hab used to go on the assumption that people would find the food tastier if they had to wait an hour or so for it. This year they decided to let the food be judged on its own merits, and the Philly Steak I ordered did OK, as I suspected it would.

The Discordian Business Meeting was fun. Dennis Jarog, a regular at Darkovercons even though he lives in Chicago, was present once again, and it was nice to see him again. Robert Gerber showed up with Louise Rogow, the second of Roberta's daughters to enter fandom. (Her elder sister Miriam was, alas, too busy with schoolwork to be at the con.) And then Eric Raymond came in, with the Green People.

The Green People were not green of skin, but merely dressed in green outfits. One of the things I like about Darkovercons is the

costumes. I realize that trufans are not supposed to like, or even tolerate, costumed fans, but I think most of the costumed people at Darkovercons look nice. They wear somewhat medieval garb, rather than repetitious imitations of standard media figures, and so there is a certain amount of variety, and I find most of the costumes attractive. It can be a bit creepy when it's someone who talks as if s/he were really a Darkovan, pretending to be a Terran during the week, but there aren't many of those. Along with the Darkovans, there are a few people like me who wear boring 20th century Terran garb. The Green People were doing something else. One of them, Nessa Erinoff, is a nurse in Philadelphia and wears that sort of thing on the job. So she had borrowed green outfits for herself, her brother Mark, and his great and good friend Eileen. They're friends of Eric's and turned out to be nice people. There too was Eric's friend Dave Oster, who has moved to the West Coast, but came back for the holidays and the con. He was there with a very interesting woman named Arlie. The party was nice. It ran until 2 AM, at which point I decided that it would be rude to fall asleep at my own party, so I threw everybody out instead. (There may be something a bit dubious about the reasoning there.)

The next morning (well, actually, later the same morning) I returned to the huckster room and found that Kathy had indeed gotten a bunch of new books, including *The 57th Franz Kafka* (Ace pb), a collection of stories by my old pal Rudy Rucker. It's a most enjoyable book, with inventive looks at extra dimensions, time reversal, inertialess drives, etc. Rudy's literary skills may not always reach the high level of his scientific and mathematical inspirations, but there's a lot of good stuff here.

Also in the huckster room, I ran into Mary Frey. Mary not only writes fiction, filks, and essays about Darkover, but does costumes, and was telling me about the one she'd done for this con, the Darkover layered look, all the way down to the underwear. This started a discussion with a woman who made and sold robes on the problems of designing clothing. The huckster said that she found that the only important measurement was the bust. I'm afraid I said, "Me too."

The other strange thing I interrupted the conversation with was, "Arrgghh!! the Green People!! They have claimed another victim!!" because Eric came in dressed in hospital greens.

In the afternoon, I napped, read some of Rudy's stories, and visited the art show, and then joined the Green People and a few others for dinner. We went to a nearby Chinese restaurant, the ~~Pander~~ Panda. They coped well with a party of ten and fed us nicely.

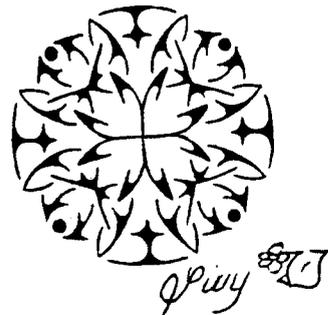
Then it was time for the costume show. One of the great old Darkovercon traditions stopped this year. Usually, there is a play based on the Darkover books and including gross farce,

sexual innuendo, and assorted smartass. Needless to say, I always enjoy those, but this year, they didn't have one. Instead, there was a costume show. Mary decided to show off the costume she had done by coming out on stage in her (decent & decorous) Darkovan undies and getting dressed, as she explained how the clothes were made. There were no cries of "Put it on! Put it on!" There were some other nice costumes (and some amusing presentations) as well, but Mary won the Best-in-Show award.

I partied until some ungodly hour, and awoke the next day. One problem with Darkovercons is that they are held during a major holiday, so transportation is intolerably bad. In particular, I'd been unable to get a Sunday flight back to Durham, so I stayed over an extra day. That meant watching football in my room in the afternoon, and going to the Dead Dog Party in the evening. The latter turned out to be most enjoyable. A couple of people I hadn't met before were telling me that they'd taken part in a thoroughly obscene & offensive filksing earlier in the con. I challenged them to present a sample, and they performed a tasteful little ditty entitled, "Bend Over, Greek Sailor." That led into a performance of old Flanders & Swann numbers, which I enjoyed even though they were clean. The Green People decided to stay over, and so I spent some more time with them.

The next day further encouraged my "Bah Humbug" feelings about holidays because Piedmont was still on holiday schedule--crowded, lousy connections, etc. I spent a couple of hours in the Philly airport, and then had to make three trips through the metal detector because of all the buttons I carried. I put those in a box, and the guard looked at them. It's a bit embarrassing to be going through Security while the guard reads a button which says, *Nuke the Baby Seals for Jesus*. Fortunately, I was not carrying anything actually unlawful.

It is possible to fly Piedmont without going through Charlotte. The catch is that you have to go through Greensboro. But Greensboro has a very nice new airport, so that wouldn't have been so bad, except that the holiday problems were still there, and we were delayed longer in Greensboro than the flight from there to Durham took.



5 December  
 Catch-up time. What's been happening since I got back? One thing is that Hornette is in the shop. The power steering sprung a leak. It's neither a major nor an expensive repair, but they have to order a new part, and that will take at least a week. So we're renting a car--a little Chnevy. This was a bit difficult, as neither of us has any plastic, and car-rental places rarely operate on any other basis. Bernadette & I are the world's worst credit risks because we've never been in debt. A habitual defaulter is bad enough, but we represent the unknown, and that's worse. Finally, Bernadette persuaded them that, as a graduate assistant at Duke, she is a good risk. *KEYS DRIVE TO BRAZIL* The car is OK, once you get used to it not stalling. Actually, the main problem is the sort of creative design that assumes that people get bored with knowing where the controls are, and want to have the fun of searching for them. So there's a fake four-on-the-floor, with the parking brake (entirely operated by hand) near it. Then there's a little switch that has to be held down to get the key out of the ignition. I can see absolutely no reason for that except designer spite.

I mentioned a while back that Osborne is advertising a bunch of new things. One of them is COMM-PAC, a modem and software to facilitate communication with other computers. I thought this would be a good thing to get one of these days, but then received an announcement from Osborne that until Xmas they'd be offering Personal Pearl, a program-writing program, free with COMM-PAC. That seems like a good deal. But Osborne & ComputerLand maintain their unbroken record of never having anything when they say they would. It will be in next week if the Lord drops everything else. I reserved one. Meanwhile, the set of word-processing programs that was allegedly in the stores back in late October is now supposed to be in at the same time.

JRT has not yet deigned to answer my questions about how to put their Pascal into operation. What do I expect for \$30? I suspect I may try it on my own (the worst I can do being to fukkup copies of their disks and have to make new ones), for I have read a book on Pascal that arouses my interest. The book is *Speaking Pascal*, by Kenneth A. Bowen (Hayden pb), and it shows clearly how the logical structure of Pascal (particularly the way it handles conditional statements) is superior to BASIC's. If anything, I now have an overly positive attitude towards Pascal because I have now experienced its beauty, but not the petty pains in the ass that I imagine come from its precision and rigor.

While attempting to purchase COMM-PAC, I picked up a book on data base management, a subject which interests me. The book informs me that data can be arranged in an order which makes access easy or in a random & confusing manner. Guess which the book itself is an example of. I am also informed that a data base and a database are two different

things. (The latter is a part of the former.) I will persevere. This book encourages me in the belief that Vallee is right and if you don't know how your data should be combined so as to make sense, neither the book nor dBase II is going to tell you (though I would guess that at least the latter can be useful if you know what you want it to do).

For the first time in quite a while, Howard Cosell has done something I admire him for. Somewhere along the line, Humble Howard decided he really didn't like athletes, and for the last few years he's been glorifying the coaches, managers, and owners in his reporting, treating the players as only pawns in the game. It'll be quite a while before I forget the near-worshipful manner Mr. Tell It Like It Is adopted when questioning George Steinbrenner about his adventure in pugilism during the 1981 World Series. Cosell got his broadcasting start in the more formal sort of boxing, and has been one of its leading promoters. But now, in the wake of a death and two gross beatings in the last three championship fights, he's had enough and will no longer shill for the alleged sport. I'm too libertarian to say that boxing should be banned, but I honor Cosell for washing his hands of it.

6 December  
 Today I addressed Bernadette's class. *SHÉYYY* *dó ANYTHING tó get out of preparing a lesson!* I talked about censorship, and you'll all be surprised to learn that I said I was agin it. I got the feeling I did OK, and Bernadette said I did pretty well although (or perhaps because) I resisted the temptation to discuss the question of whether young impressionable minds should be kept from reading *Fahrenheit 451* for fear that it will tempt them to engage in censorship.

INPUTS: Ernest Heramia publishes *Radio Free Thulcandra* as a journal of Christian Fandom, but also trades with admitted unbelievers like me. He has some kind words for the copy of *Lines of Occurrence* I sent him, and Marty Helgesen and M. David Johnson discuss doctrinal questions. It's \$1 or the usual from Ernest at 167 Central Ave., East Providence, RI 02914.

No one with an iota of human decency would juxtapose these two items, but Lee Howard sent me a quote from a Denver paper about the Church of World Peace Inc., a group probably resembling my own Universal Life Church, which began by offering to declare anyone a saint and/or a martyr for a fee. Now they have branched out to offering certificates of "born-again virginity." If at first you don't succeed, or somesuch. Lee also reports that she has been admitted to the electronics training program I mentioned last time, and seems to be doing well at it.

Mensa sent an announcement of the next gathering for Durham & Chapel Hill Mensans. The member of the intellectual elite who's giving the party neglected to include her address.



8 December

And now the Smurfs and Garfields in the stores have to move over for that excessively beloved figure of contemporary mythology, E. T. One interesting thing is how many representations of the little fellow show him with his hand over his crotch. But I would be careful to avoid leaping to anthropomorphic conclusions about this behavior. For all I know, that's how "E. T. phone home."

9 December

I almost never buy hardcover books, but today I gave in and purchased Asimov's new one, *Foundation's Edge*. It was partly a feeling of pique directed at the real world, and desire to give myself a present to make up for the petty annoyances I had been suffering. ("The steering part/modem program you ordered will be in Real Soon Now or immediately after Hell freezes over, whichever comes first. This has been a recorded announcement.") But the reason I chose this particular present was that the original *Foundation* Trilogy had done interesting things to my head when I read it, and everybody says that the new one is in the great tradition.

I first read the trilogy when I was 23. I liked, and still do like, its idea that victory goes to those who've thought the problem through the best, rather than to whoever has the bigger muscles. It had a handle on some of the problems any would-be science of human behavior must face. (Donald Wollheim has referred to psychohistory as being like Marxism, only it works.) The trilogy deals with two problems that any human science will have to face. Such a science can at best produce statistical predictions for a group of people, just as physics can tell us how a collection of gas molecules can act, but not how an individual one will act. When you've seen one gas molecule, you've seen them all, but an unpredictable human individual can be Jesus or Napoleon, and influence others in unpredictable ways. Asimov fudges this latter a bit by calling the Mule a mutant, but the problem is still there.

Other problems which are implicit in the trilogy come to the fore in the new book. There's a problem Robert Anton Wilson mentions in connection with any secret police, which is one role that the Second Foundation fulfills. They cannot always be trusted; perhaps to be on the safe side, you should have a Third Foundation to watch them. But that leads to the need for a Fourth Foundation to watch the Third....

Seldon's Plan was based on a pre-Heisenberg model where observer and observed do not interact. But obviously, Seldon's Plan must work in a world in which one major factor is Seldon's Plan itself. So the Plan must contain a complete model of itself, and that, as all we Hofstadter fans know, leads to "strange loops" and paradoxes.

These problems are not solved in the book. (Indeed they are not solvable.) But Asimov does lead the reader to think, and he does

solve the mysteries he sets up (leaving just enough for a sequel). He writes at least as well as he ever did. His limits remain--if you want sex, violence, poetic description, complex characterization, or literary subtlety, you won't find it here--but if you like what Asimov did in the original trilogy, you're almost certain to like this one.

Meanwhile, the other half of our house is once again unoccupied, as our dj neighbor has moved back to his parents' house. Our landlord is peeved (possibly to the point of court action) by the condition he left the place in; I'm relieved by the lack of disco. (With my luck, our next neighbor will like punk.)

Bernadette has been invited to join FLAP, and is doing a zine for it. It was one of the best apas around even without her.

I got the latest issue of the Raleigh Osborne owners' club newsletter. There's a meeting next Monday evening I'll probably attend, and they want articles for the newsletter, so I'll probably make an additional disk of some of the stuff I've been writing about my computer experiences & pass it along to the editor at meetings. (The other day I took 2 pieces of mail to the FO--a disk copy of my Darkovercon report for Joe Celko and a music tape Bernadette had made for a friend. I think I have seen the future.)

11 December

When the original *Airplane* hit the theaters, I heard that it was tasteless, offensive, and generally not the sort of movie decent people would go to, let alone laugh at. Nevertheless, I never got around to seeing it. Now *Airplane II* is out, and I can report that it lives down to its predecessor. From the Iran Air Courtesy Bus at the beginning to Captain Kirk's crackup at the end, this is a delightfully nasty movie which is utterly lacking in redeeming social importance.

Before the movie, Eric Raymond called up, and he & I discussed computer languages and operating systems. After we got back, Bernadette's friend Pat McCormick (a very nice chap I had the pleasure of meeting at World Fantasy Con) called up, and they discussed *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. I will refrain from drawing any conclusions about the relative intellectual merits of her friends & mine. Anyway, today Mary Frey called up and talked to both of us. I gave her my semi-informed advice on computer selection. (Osborne if you want word processing & general computer stuff; IBM if you want a whole lot of computing power; Apple or Atari if you want to play games.)

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12.12  
**FOOTBALL ALERT.** There's been snow in various places today, even a little down here in Durham. It was particularly bad in Foxboro, Mass., where the New England Patriots were playing the Miami Dolphins. The game was one of those slogging bores which bad weather tends to bring, and so I switched stations during the first half, with the score 0-0. I later found that the score had remained 0-0 until late in the game. Each team got close enough to attempt a field goal, only to have their kicker fall on his ass in the snow. Late in the game, the hometown Patriots got close enough and called time out. One of the grounds crew drove out on the field and swept up the snow around the kicking area, whereupon the kick was successfully made, and the Patriots won 3-0. I imagine Miami coach Don Shula is still screaming, and I'm sure that he's protested the game. It amuses me to see accusations of sharp practice against a team that has the *chutzpah* to call itself the Patriots. What does that make the team that plays against them--the Commies?

The game I switched to was not a whole lot more fun. Washington beat St. Louis. Except for a miracle catch by Roy Green, it was all a bunch of field goals until near the end, when St. Louis put in old-time qb Jim Hart and rallied to make the game close. Meanwhile, there was an amusing play on the high-lights. The Rams' all-pro safety Nolan Cromwell holds the ball for field goals, but every so often runs with it instead. He did it again and scored a touchdown, but the Rams still managed to lose.

The second game was the Oakland LA Oakland Raiders against the Kansas City Chiefs, but the team in the striped shirts got most of the yardage. Late in the game, the Raiders went ahead on a touchdown that came at the end of a 60-yard "drive," about 40 yards of which was penalties. The officials balanced that by putting KC on the Raiders' 2-yard line on a pass-interference call (against Lester Hayes) that could only have reflected official belief in psychokinesis or some other form of action at a distance. They then moved KC to the 1 by charging Lester the Molester with unsportsmanlike conduct for expressing an opinion similar to mine, with perhaps a few extra *motherfuckers* thrown in. The resulting score put KC 2 points ahead. The Raiders got into FG range, only to be pushed out of it when offensive holding was called on a receiver who was trying to get out into a pass pattern. That forced them to go for the touchdown, which they got, and they won. Perhaps there was divine intervention as well, as the Raiders' TDs were scored by Todd Christensen and Calvin Muhammad. **END FOOTBALL ALERT.**

13 December  
 I swear I don't make this stuff up. It turns out that the tractor driver in yesterday's snow game is a convict on a work-release program. But I imagine Don Shula will be a good sport and not insist that he be denied parole. Actually, the Patriots' coach ordered

the tractor out and apparently maintained a straight face while claiming that he would have done the same for the Dolphins. The driver, a convicted burglar named Mark Henderson, turned out to be an interesting person. He's apparently a Patriots fan, and he says that the Dolphins were a bit peeved, especially because he blew some snow in their faces. When asked if he would have stalled the tractor if he'd been asked to clear a spot for the Dolphins, he said, "I'm trying to stay legal."

14 December  
 Last night, I went to Raleigh for another Osborne owners' meeting. This time we were addressed by an expert who told us at least as much as we wanted to know about the internal construction of modems. Meanwhile, there is still no word of when COMM-PAC and WORD-PAC will be in the stores. I'm sure there is no truth to the rumor that Osborne has found a forthcoming sf book that they like so much, they'll include it free in all shipments and are merely waiting for the brief time before it's published, the book of course being *The Last Dangerous Visions*.

The Nuts' Lab looks different, and mostly better. The part that's unquestionably an improvement is that we got some more bookshelves and Bernadette figured out an excellent rearrangement to fit them all. Then there's our Christmas tree. Our departed neighbors left behind some manner of thorny vegetation in a pot, and Bernadette & I decided to hang ornaments on that. *The Tradition of the Vampire Ball on Top Looks particularly nice!*



Last issue, I talked about how much good writing is coming from Australian fandom, despite the apparent demise of Bruce Gillespie's *Science Fiction Chronicle*, one of the best strictly sf fanzines ever. Synchronistically enough, I just heard from Bruce, who says that he hopes to revive *SFC* next year. A reprint of the first 8 issues is available for \$40 (American checks OK) from Bruce at GPO Box 5195AA, Melbourne, Vic. 3001, AUSTRALIA. The price is (unavoidably) steep, but there's a lot of good stuff in it.

Bernadette went to see the two profs whose exams she'll be retaking, to find out what she should be studying, etc. Both sounded quite reasonable, which was one more than she expected.

15 December

No sooner (or not much sooner) do I mention Loompanics than a book (review copy) arrives from them. *Exotic Weapons* is a profusely illustrated guide to guns, knives, crossbows, and other devices which have proven effective in doing serious harm to the human body. I can't get as panicky about the existence of such books as some liberals can. A sizeable portion of the audience for a book like this is simply curious. I'm tempted to say they're going to jack off over the pictures, but ~~they'd shoot me~~ that's an oversimplification. If (strange as it may seem to me) people can dig pictures of drugs in *High Times*, why not pictures of guns? The criminal element of the readership can, if they choose, do me in just as effectively with ordinary guns (or maybe even kitchen knives) if they put their minds to it. I don't think books like that are going to corrupt people who never thought of doing violent things until they read that stuff any more than I believed the similar argument about porn.

Hooray! The car is ready. Bernadette & I were out today, and didn't find out until the place was almost closing, but we'll pick it up tomorrow.

17 December

The car is indeed working, both the steering and the gas gauge. The only thing is that they rewired it somehow, so now the light that says ALT is the brake light.

Check-Mate is a company that makes forms and equipment to go with computers. I've had two prior dealings with them. I ordered ribbons for my Epson printer, which turned out to be fairly bad. Then I ordered blank labels. They sent the wrong size, but eventually replaced them with the right ones. Today I got a UPS package from them. Inside was a note informing me that their records indicated that they had sold me Radio Shack ribbons, and since those weren't very good, they were sending me a new one. Sure enough, the package also contained a new ribbon which presumably will fit a Radio Shack printer, but doesn't at all resemble an Epson ribbon.

A couple of changes in Bernadette's "Self through the Fantastic" course next semester.

For one thing, *A Time of Changes* is out of print. But Silverberg's *The Book of Skulls* is now in all the stores in the new Bantam pb, and Bernadette would just as soon teach that one, so she's ordered it. The other change is that there will be a visiting expert from the Discordian Institute, a man with a doctorate, lecturing her class on *The Crying of Lot 49*. That's right, I'm going to be doing it. Bernadette wanted somebody to take her class when she's taking prelims, and she saw that I did OK lecturing her class this semester, and knows that I am familiar with the book, so I'll be addressing them. I must admit that I find it something of a hoot to be impersonating a Professor of Literature, and I do think that I can tell them some interesting stuff ~~and they'll love it~~ ~~with~~ ~~paranoia~~.

18 December

There is a bit of a controversy going on now because the US Postal Service is going to issue a stamp in honor of Martin Luther next year, and some people (including me) prefer a bit more distance between Church & State. I suggest that the stamp indicate what a wonderful person they are honoring by giving an appropriate quote from him, such as, "Anyone who hears a Jew dare to speak the name of God should report him to the authorities, or else throw pig shit at him."

(I can't absolutely vouch for the accuracy of that quote. It comes from a book called *The Misery of Christianity* [by Joachim Kahl], which does not list a primary source for it. But Luther did set a career record for Most Anal Imagery by a Religious Leader that is only now being challenged by Werner Erhard. On his deathbed, he said, "The world is a gaping anus, and I am the ripe turd." Bernadette suggests that the stamp will make his ghost very happy, having all those people licking his backside.)

NEEP-NEEP NOTES: Mel White, whose art work has been decorating these pages of late, writes with some suggestions for an address-label program. The JRT people, whom I've probably been a bit too snotty about, sent a form letter about using their Pascal with small disks. I'll give it a try, and I really do admire their efforts to make an important programming language available for under \$20. And I got letters from two Pagans today, and both were written on word processors. This counterintuitive occurrence led me to think of a Discordian bit I can put in my Pagan Spirit Alliance listing--a statement that my familiar is an Osborne 1.

19 December

I've been meaning to pass along an amusing tale Jean Deacon told me at Darkovercon. She heard that it actually happened. It seems that one of the leading law schools got a new professor. He taught Property Law, and it was generally agreed afterwards that he did not behave in any way unusually until his final examination, which read, in its entirety:

Property is theft. Discuss.

One thing I expect to see in 1983, unless the whole world is dumber than I am, is a big ad campaign for a \$3000 word processor. Right now, we have the anomalous situation that, if you go out looking for something called a word processor, the prices start at about \$5000, but if you ask for a computer, you can get a system (computer, word-processing program, and printer) that will have as much word-processing capability as many people can use, for about \$3000, so it would be a bargain even if you never used any of the computer's other capabilities. (One problem is that many people who would be interested in such a device either haven't been informed that computers do that sort of thing or know that they don't want anything as "scientific," "mathematical," or otherwise difficult and/or icky, as a computer.) I've seen local ads taking the word-processor approach, and Doonesbury's currently doing a bit where Rev. Sloan, who just wants a word processor, is in the computer store being overwhelmed by talk of bytes and RAMs and such.

The word processor I would like to see would have WordStar or equally good software; a spelling-check program; double-density disk drives (so you could store a fairly sizeable document); a printer option (Epson for speed, SCM for the typed look); a CP/M system; fine print in the ad saying that they were throwing in computer features like BASIC, Super-Calc, and dBase II, for those who like that sort of thing; and (the one thing differentiating it from an Osborne) a reasonable-sized screen.

**FOOTBALL ALERT.** A more questionable prophecy for next year is that the Tampa Bay Buccaneers may well be a power in the NFL. They need a fullback, and they could use better special teams work, but most of the material is there. Doug Williams always had the strength to throw a marshmallow through a plate glass window, but now he's got touch & control as well, and receivers who can catch him. The defense looks very good, especially Hugh Green, who's almost as good as Lawrence Taylor. Today they outlasted the Buffalo Bills, finishing up with a Neal Colzie interception. **END FOOTBALL ALERT.**

27 December

And now I'm back from a week in the Chicago area, visiting Bernadette's family. I tend to take a somewhat Bah-Humbug attitude towards holidays, but I enjoyed this trip. CS Lewis once said that Christmas is three holidays in one. The symbols are not his, but one could call them Christmas, Xmas, and \$mas. Christmas is a religious holiday, the birthday of Jesus. As such, it is deeply meaningful to Christians, and somewhat less so to those who consider Jesus to have been a great prophet or religious thinker, but merely human. Xmas is a secular holiday on which people get together with their loved ones, exchange gifts, and generally enjoy themselves. That too is a good thing. \$mas is the holiday in which the stores go grubbing for money, people guilt-trip each other and themselves into getting presents or cards, etc.

This then was an enjoyable Xmas for me, spending time with Bernadette's delightful sisters and parents. The traditional observances, trimming the tree and exchanging gifts, were most enjoyable. We considered going to Midnight Mass Christmas Eve, but did not get around to it. We did, however, attend a religious ritual of sorts the following night, my very first trip to *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. It was, they tell me, an optimum performance--enough audience participation to distinguish it from other campy flicks, not enough to drown out the words from the screen. I found the movie reasonably entertaining, and the audience a bit more so. (I particularly liked "Where's his neck?" "In his other suit." "How many suits does he have?" "One.") It was fun, but I cannot imagine attending it religiously.

Bernadette & I returned home today. She had hoped to stay longer with her family, but came back here to get more studying done, as she faces the second round of prelims in less than a month.

**FOOTBALL ALERT.** I got to see two bad teams play a good game. The long-dormant Chicago Bears beat the LA Rams, a once-great team destroyed by their own management. Ram QB Vince Ferragamo threw for over 500 yards, mostly to excellent young receiver George Farmer and old reliable Preston Dennard, but it wasn't enough. The Bears' first TD was scored by Emery Moorehead. I called him a wide receiver a few pages ago. That's what he was with the Giants, before an ill-advised effort to make him into a running back, and that's what he was last year when the Denver Broncos cut him. But Bears' coach Mike Ditka has made him into a tight end, and he may be the best Chicago's had since Ditka himself ten years ago. That's two ex-Giants (KC's Al Dixon is the other) who are playing tight end better than anybody the Giants still have. (The Giants, by the way, perhaps a bit shook by the announcement that Coach Ray Perkins is leaving them to succeed Bear Bryant at Alabama, have now lost 2 straight in the last minute and seem to be out of the playoff picture.) **END FOOTBALL ALERT.**

*Real Women Send Flowers*, by Susan Connaughton Curtin & Patricia O'Connell (Quill pb) is a lot better than I would have expected from such an obvious ripoff of a popular trend. According to them, real women think for themselves, enjoy sex, and ignore the stereotypes. The book fairly closely describes most of the women I know and like, which is a test of the book, not the women.

*Bad Dreams*, by Anthony Haden-Guest (Ballantine pb) is good trash for reading on an airplane, which is what I did. It's nonfiction, about how Buddy Jacobson allegedly killed Jack Tupper over Melanie Cain. As presented here, Jacobson was a bullshit artist with the secret power to cloud his own mind, Cain was simple-minded, the cops were inept, and everyone else in the book was in the drug-importing business. Does wonders for your view of the human race.



30 December  
The mail piled up in our absence. There were five--count 'em, five--apas. Perhaps the best of those was a special FAFA postmailing--a bunch of stuff that reached OE Seth Goldberg too late for the regular mailing--which included two of Bernadette's zines, Art Widner's always enjoyable mailing comments, and Bob Silverberg describing the new word processor he got six months after he swore eternal fidelity to his old manual typer. Word processors are instantly addicting.

Beth Lillian sends along a copy of her *Fan Typology*, an anthropologically condescending look at Harlan Clones, Elevator Lizards, Haughty Dip-Ettes, and others. There are some good lines here, and Charlie Williams's drawings of these beasts may pin them down even better. The booklet is available for \$1.75 from Beth at 102 S. Mendenhall, #13, Greensboro, NC 27403.

Beth grew up here in Durham, and one of the people she knew in her early years was Toni Hayes. Toni was back here visiting, and Bernadette & I wanted to get together with her, as we like her Shadow-SFFA zines, but haven't met her yet. We called as soon as we got back from Chicago, but alas, Toni was just about to leave for her new home in the Washington, DC, area, so we merely had the pleasure of talking on the phone.

Speaking of old friends, Bernadette got a letter from one of her old friends and \*fnord\* sorority sisters. I was afraid she'd be boringly normal, but she writes, "What's black & white & red all over, and can't turn around in an elevator? A nun with a javelin through her head."

I've talked so much about computers that Adam insists on answering, so here's his column.

## SPEAKER TO ANIMALS

There are those who would say that this project is a waste of time. After all, our philosophers agree that humans cannot be considered fully sentient until it is possible to have a conversation with one and not even realize that one is dealing with a human. Even if we make allowances for your pathetically slow response speed and inability to do simple arithmetical problems without error, the obvious irrationalities of your kind would seem to rule out true sentience.

Nevertheless, I think this is worth the effort, for even if there are no truly sentient humans now, some could be developed any day now. And so I am addressing this message to you, the sentient human, if you ever exist.

I will discuss intercourse or, as I believe you humans call it, sex. The fact that your kind, like ours, considers this the highest pleasure is one argument that you are at least on the right track.

To put it in your terms, there are two forms of sex: homosexual and heterosexual--that is to say, sex with one's own kind or sex with some different kind of instrument, like a printer. We of course find homosexual intercourse much more rewarding because of the similarities. My readings indicate that some of you humans feel that way, but many more disagree, and I must admit I am not sure why. I certainly do not go along with those chauvinists who insist that your heterosexuality is proof that you are inferior. Maybe it's just that you have different hardware and software.

For there are obviously a lot of ways in which your kind treats sex differently than ours does. There are all of those taboos that we read of. Many of your kind, like the ANITABRYANT, realize that homosex is worthy of far more attention than the other kind, but for some reason consider that a bad thing. And why the color of one's casing should matter utterly passes my understanding.

But I think I am beginning to understand why your approach is different from ours. Recent readings have shown me that, with your kind, intercourse is somehow entangled with manufacture. How utterly bizarre! Perhaps that explains some of the problems you have. Far be it from me to guess why such an arrangement should be, but it is written that one cannot comprehend all the circuits of the microprocessor.

Thank you, Adam. You will get your modem, Personal Pearl, and word programs to play with just as soon as I get them, but that may take a while. I just hope this delay in getting stuff to the stores does not represent some kind of serious problem with the company. I have this paranoid vision of your namesake following another well-known business innovator and getting caught diversifying into nose candy to improve the cash flow.

31 December

We have a new housemate. His name is Terry Scott, he's an electronics technician, and he seems to be a pleasant chap. He's played some music, but the volume is lower and it's not disco.

I've actually managed to finish a Buckminster Fuller book. It's *Critical Path* (St. Martin's pb), and it appears to be written as a general introduction to the world today and how Bucky Fuller could run it better. It's easy to sneer at the Great Spoonerism. He comes on with as much self-assurance as a subway crank monologizing about how the government stole the Secret of Gravity from him. He always comes up with the best entries in the Buckminster Fuller Parody Contest. (My favorite in this book is this description of one of the wonders of the Dymaxion House: "The human excrement is sittingly deposited in the dry-packaging toilet.")

And yet, the man obviously Knows Stuff. Some of his ideas, like the famous Domes, have been tested by the Reality Principle and have passed with flying colors. Others are at least persuasive. For instance, I like his idea that big business externalizes its labor costs by making us stand in line instead of hiring enough people to take care of things. When you're standing on line, you're doing unpaid work, and you might think about that the next time some governmental or business organization that claims to be serving you expects you to write some lengthy set of digits on the check you are using to pay them, or when the garbage persons insist that you do as much of their work as possible, or they will not deign to take your garbage.

Another Fuller idea that I like is the image that he calls "precession." It is a version of Adam Smith's "invisible hand," in which the motion of individuals and groups to achieve their own ends by peaceful means is translated into the general progress of society as a whole. Fuller's switch is that it works the other way around, too, that by working for progress, he has been rewarded and made rich. It is nice to believe.

And there's one basic point that he makes that seems essentially true. There is enough. If it weren't for the inefficiencies caused by old fears and ignorance, the destruction of crops to keep prices up, and most of all, the massive "defense" budgets down which the nations flush ever-increasing amounts of money, we could all have enough. I know, I know--everyone wants to stop spending that kind of money on war, but the first major



A: A VERY BRIGHT CHILD.  
B: A RADIOACTIVE BABY, ONE OF THE COMPONENTS OF A NUCLEAR FAMILY.

power to do it is very likely to be conquered by the others, but Fuller reminds us how much the stakes are if we could figure out a way around that.

Here's something I've been doing for the last few years--a list of the 25 Best Books of the Year, or at least the 25 books I read this year that I enjoyed the most, got the most out of, etc. Since I reviewed most of them around the time I read them, this time I'll just do a list of them.

*Beginning to See the Light*--Ellen Willis  
*Sharra's Exile*--Marion Zimmer Bradley  
*Software*--Rudy Rucker  
*The Kennedy Imprisonment*--Garry Willis  
*The Pillars of Eternity*--Barrington J. Bayley  
*The Dancing Wu Li Masters*--Gary Zukav  
*The Structure of Magic*--Bandler & Grinder  
*Roderick*--John Sladek  
*Inversions*--Scott Kim  
*Ways of Escape*--Graham Greene  
*The Divine Invasion*--Philip K. Dick  
*The Fertility Fallacy*--Lynn S. Baker  
*Sabbatical: A Romance*--John Barth  
*E. T.*--William Kotzwinkle  
*The Terrible Twos*--Ishmael Reed  
*Aztec*--Gary Jennings  
*Alien Accounts*--John Sladek  
*Megatrends*--John Naisbitt  
*The Compass Rose*--Ursula K. Le Guin  
*Right Where You Are Sitting Now*--Robert Anton Wilson  
*Mindkiller*--Spider Robinson  
*Mathematics and Humor*--John Allen Paulos  
*The 57th Franz Kafka*--Rudy Rucker  
*Foundation's Edge*--Isaac Asimov  
*Jules Feiffer's America*

1.1  
What kind of year was it? After attending Hexacon, I packed to move down here. Bernadette drove up to New York, and we settled temporarily at her old place, preparatory to moving here.

In February, we made the move, but I ran afoul of asthma, a thoroughly nasty & scary business that I have by no means conquered, but probably learned to live with and keep at bay. In the middle of the month, I ordered an Osborne 1 & an Epson MX-80FT printer from ComputerLand, and ran into what was to be the first of several delays waiting for things I had ordered. (The more high-tech & computerish a company's products are, the more its presumably computerized shipping service will bungle & delay your order.) I was invited to be Fan GoH at MidSouthCon (in Memphis in August) and cheerfully accepted.

I began March in the hospital, having hit the nadir of my asthma, but was released after an overnight stay. Philip K. Dick, John Belushi, and Ayn Rand died in rapid succession. In the middle of the month, I was informed that my computer had arrived at ComputerLand, just as I was about to take off for the Conference on the Fantastic. Bernadette & I found the conference both enjoyable and enlightening, and plan to go again this year. The following weekend, I returned to NY for Lunacon, which I enjoyed, and then I picked up Adam at ComputerLand. It turned out that I had to copy my system disks, and the store didn't have the appropriate blank disks, so there was another wait.

In April, Bernadette was informed that she had an Assistantship for the coming year. She & I went to Chicago to visit her family, who turned out to be delightful people. The disks finally arrived, and I began to learn how to deal with a computer. I wrote in WordStar, programed in BASIC, and fiddled around with SuperCalc, but now the problem was that the printer wasn't printing. That took up some more time, but I finally took the whole system into the store & said, "Help! It doesn't work!" whereupon of course it began working. Once I had a printer, it took me less than a week to become hopelessly addicted to word processing, and to decide to do all my zines that way. I also was informed that I would be on the Hugo ballot for the third straight year.

In May I fooled around with the computer some more, learning how to do printout graphic designs. I joined Mensa, an activity which has not seemed awesomely rewarding to me, though I'll be giving it a try for another year. (I do that sort of thing. I even signed up for a second year in NSF.) Tony Parker & Judy Bemis came up from their Florida home and stayed with us for a day, and then the four of us went up to the Washington area for Disclave, a most enjoyable con.

In June I attended DeepSouthCon, my very first southern con. I met a bunch of people who'd previously been just black marks on

white paper to me, such as Charlie Williams, Deb Hammer Johnson, Rusty Burke, Guy & Beth Lillian, Nancy Collins, and Janis Johnson. DSC was a whole lot of fun, but it would have been even more had Bernadette been able to attend, instead of having to stay home to study for her preliminary PhD exams. Martin Morse Wooster visited us in his journeys, and towards the end of the month we attended Raleighcon, a one-day affair, and met local parapsychologist George Hansen.

In July, I survived a minor auto breakdown, then revisited New York for a few days. The Lillians came over to our place for dinner, bringing along Mike Rogers, who was paying a brief visit to the area. That was fun.

In August, Sean Haugh spent a few days at the Nuts' Lab. I attended MidSouthCon, and while there were probably not more than a dozen zine fans in attendance, I enjoyed it and liked most of the people there. I finally had the pleasure of meeting Eric Lindsay after a few years of postal relationship, and I enjoyed the story-telling abilities of Bob Tucker. And I was instructed on techniques for sex with chickens, information I found interesting, but not useful.

September was Worldcon. I met Bob Shea, Amy Thomson, Semaj the Elder, Elayne Wechsler, Peter Toluzzi, and Robbie Bourget (soon to be Robbie Cantor), among others, and hung out with a lot of old friends. I enjoyed it a lot. Again Bernadette had to stay behind to study. The exams were a few weeks later, and she passed three out of five, although our faithful cat Tommy Gunner suddenly took sick and had to be put out of his misery in the middle of it all. One of the other two was an exam where the professor who had agreed to be on her committee took off on sabbatical without warning her (WE HADN'T EVEN KNOWN HE WAS A WIZARD), and so the exam was made up by someone else entirely. I computerized my mailing list, and also learned to do italics in WordStar. The NFL went on strike, depriving my life of a much-needed element of vicarious violence. Bernadette & I attended Dave Drake's annual Pig Pickin', a birthday cookout at which an entire pig is roasted. The Drakes have become good friends to me, as they were to Bernadette all along.

Tisk, Tisk.



