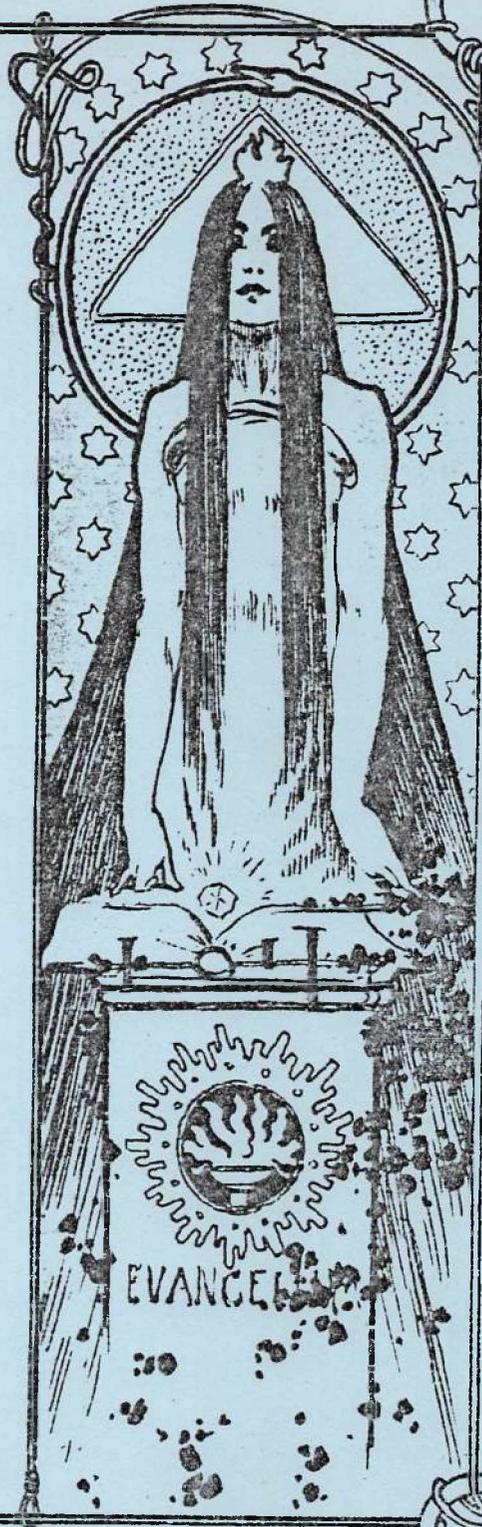


THE
DILLINGER
RELIC

37



The Dillinger Relic 3?

DR is written, edited, and published every other month by

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Horror and Nameless Abomination Consultant: Bernadette Bosky.

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DR 36 is back from the copy center, and they've done another lovely job on it. Tomorrow I entrust it to the tender mercies of Yog-Xipkode.

6.9

7 September

A few years ago, Jan Harold Brunvand wrote *The Vanishing Hitchhiker*, a fascinating compendium of contemporary folklore, those grisly tales that are often told for true, but somehow can never be tracked down. He summarized many of the most popular ones--the hook in the car door, the stoned babysitter who put the roast in the crib and the kid in the oven, etc.; connected them to earlier tales and other folkloric themes; and suggested some of the things these tales might tell about those who relate them and believe them.

What Brunvand has done for an encore is *The Choking Doberman* (Norton hc). It's the sort of disappointing book that often follows an original work--a few stories he missed the first time, some followups and new versions, a lot of miscellaneous. Like many social scientists when they get a good idea, he seems to be running his into the ground; he sometimes acts as if any tale that comes without photographic and documentary evidence should be analyzed as folklore, rather than considering the possibility that the narrator might be telling it because it actually happened.

Still, the new book has its moments. One tale in particular seems worth recounting, especially since it deals with my totem animal:

A man was out for a drive in the desert, and he saw a wounded coyote. He'd never liked the beasts anyway, and he remembered that he had a leftover stick of dynamite in the back of his camper, so he tied the dynamite to the coyote, lit the fuse, and waited behind a tree with his fingers in his ears. But the wily beast, with his last bit of energy, crawled under the camper just before the dynamite went off.

A book which covers similar areas is *There Are Alligators in Our Sewers*, by Paul Dickson and Joseph C. Goulden (Dell tpb). This is intended as a list of things people believe that are not entirely true. What is wrong with it is its utter unselectivity. The rankest sort of folk nonsense ("Sleepwalkers are generally immune to harm") is mixed randomly with debatable political exaggerations ("There would be no inflation without big

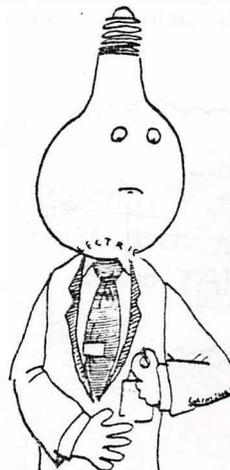
business, big labor, and big government") and even statements which are true when uttered by particular individuals ("I have a sense of humor"). The effect is numbing; the humorous examples are lost in the crowd.

I am reminded of a book called *You Would If You Loved Me*, by Sol Gordon, which simply listed all imaginable verbal efforts to persuade someone to engage in sex, again from the reasonable to the ridiculous, with no attempt to indicate which was which. Later books by Gordon made it clear that he disapproved of all efforts to get someone to engage in sex, with the possible exception of marriage. Surely, though, Dickson and Goulden are not trying to dissuade their readers from saying anything.

11 September

The Democrats say, with some justice, that the Republicans believe in a "trickle-down" economy: give enough to the rich, and some of it will trickle down to the poor. But a closer look at what the Democrats advocate makes it clear that they're not giving much more directly to the poor; most of their reforms would give the money to Big Labor or to Welfare and other bureaucrats. The best that can be said for that is that the money doesn't have to trickle quite as far.

Which reminds me, I keep hearing what a terrible thing it is that Israel has proportional representation in its parliament, because that allows extremists like Meir Kahane to be represented. I don't know. I'd kind of like to see it in the US. As you may have noticed, I don't like having Jesse Helms represent North Carolina. I wouldn't mind, though, if he represented America's Morally Uptight Schmucks. (There certainly are enough of them to have a representative.) But there would also be at least one representative of the gays, preferably an outrageously campy one who could be counted on to annoy Jesse as much as possible. I think *The Congressional Record* would be improved by dialogs like: HELMS: Spawn of Satan! Sodomite Abomination! GAY: Ooh, you got a cute ass!



LARRY THE LIGHT BULB
BEGINS ENTERTAINING
GRAVE DOUBTS ABOUT
HIS UNFASHIONABLY
NARROW LAPELS ...

12 September
Bernadette is going to be giving a course again this spring. When they told her she had an assistantship for the spring, she first thought it would be just another section of Freshman Comp (she is teaching three sections this semester, which she enjoys, but it's keeping her busy), but then was informed that she could devise a course of her own, as she did two years ago.

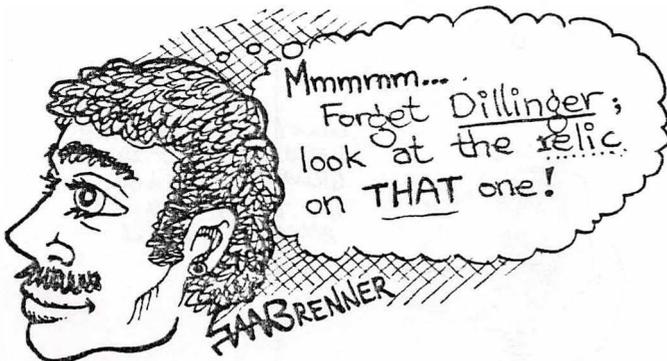
That's a bit tricky. For one thing, the course must be popular, but not too popular. (You want to get enough people so the course isn't cancelled, but not so many that there are slaving hordes beating at the doors.) Bernadette's approach is to have a course on an interesting topic, but make it clear that there will be substantial reading and writing required. In addition, she wants a course that will look good on her resumé (or *vite* and other red herrings, as it's called in the world of Academe). On top of that, her first idea for a course--on Grail and Arthurian legends in literature--was turned down on the grounds that an overly similar course was already on the spring schedule.

It is now settled. Bernadette will be offering a course called "Sorcerors and Sages in Literature." It will mix respectable sources (*The Tempest*, Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King*, "Christabel") with good genre stuff (*Illuminatus!*, *Shadowland*, Dave Drake's *The Dragon Lord*). Suggestions for reading material, teaching approaches, etc. are solicited.

13 September
Word from worldcon reaches me. David Brin's *Startide Rising*, which I really do mean to read Real Soon Now, won the big Hugo. My congratulations to double winner Mike Glyer, and to perennial fan winners Alexis Gilliland and *Locus*.

I am particularly cheered to hear that Atlanta, which I supported, won the worldcon for 1986. They have selected Ray Bradbury as Pro Guest of Honor, Terry Carr as Fan GOH, and Bob Shaw as Toastmaster. Carr and Shaw strike me as excellent choices.

Hurricane Diana (not to be confused with the princess of the same name) has been ravaging the Carolina coast all day. Fortunately, we're 100 miles or so inland, and all we're getting is a bit of rain.



FOOTBALL ALERT

9.9

I watched the Miami Dolphins rather easily whip the New England Patriots. The Dolphins have an awesome passing game; Dan Marino hit Mark Clayton for 2 TDs in a couple of minutes. They also unveiled a new weapon this year. For the past few years they've had a third-string quarterback named Jim Jensen. He's an all-around athlete, and to relieve the boredom of carrying the clipboard around on the sidelines, he's been playing on the special teams. (Last year he may have become the first QB in history to be penalized for roughing a kicker.) With Marino and Strock still ahead of him, Shula asked him to help out at wide receiver. Last week he caught 2 TDs; this week he took a long lateral from Marino and threw a TD pass.

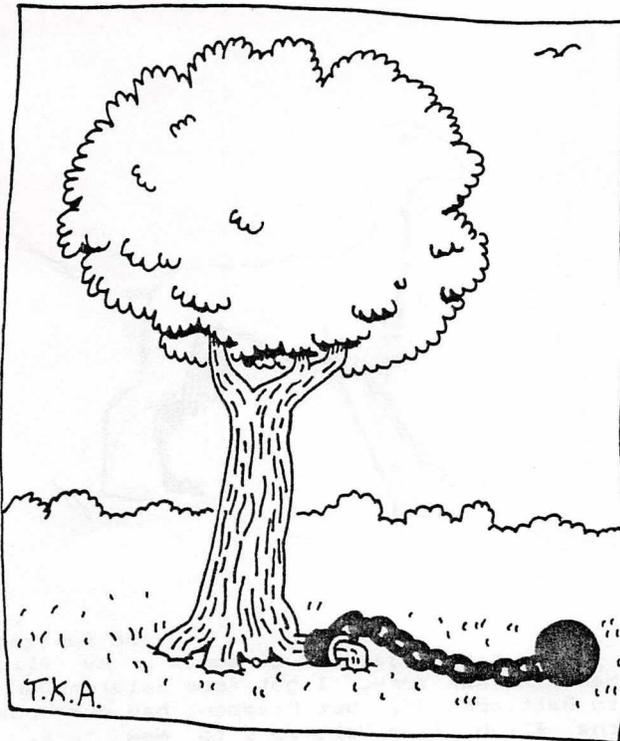
Meanwhile, the Giants were stomping the dying Dallas dynasty. Phil Simms threw 3 TD passes, and at one point Lawrence Taylor surpassed Big Daddy Lipscomb's old trick of throwing everybody away until he got to the QB. Taylor threw the QB away too, leaving the ball behind, and Andy Headen, another of the great young Giant linebackers, picked it up and took it back 80 yards for a TD.

The Chargers went to face Seattle with two of their stars out. Kellen Winslow threatened retirement because he wants to be paid like the superstar that he is; Chuck Muncie missed the flight to the game for some true and convincing reason that he had not had time to make up by the time the coaches asked him about it. Seattle, which has just added Franco Harris to the roster to replace or at least succeed the injured Curt Warner, won comfortably.

11 September
Winslow is back, but the Chargers have traded Muncie to the Dolphins. Winslow was the one they could less afford to lose. With him at the H-Back position that he invented, and Ernest Jackson or Pete Johnson in the backfield, San Diego will do OK. Miami just put their big back, Andra Franklin, on the disabled list, but if Don Shula can motivate Muncie, they'll be even tougher.

I worry about Muncie. One problem with rooting for the bad-attitude cases is sometimes they really do fuck up. I remember Henderson the Snow King. Thomas "Hollywood" Henderson was a great natural talent, but personal problems, including an excessive taste for nose candy, did him in, to the point where he's not only out of football, but in the penitentiary, as the result of a thoroughly sordid and repugnant rape case. I do hope Muncie isn't walking that sort of path.

16 September
The Dolphins gave Muncie a urine test, which he flunked. (Should have studied hard ~~de/ry~~) Then they tried ex-Viking running back Rickey Young, who likewise had improper substances in his blood. Picky, picky, picky. Reality reasserted itself in the NFL East, where the Giants finally lost one, and therefore the Redskins finally won one. Two Skin TDs on Giant blunders made the difference. END FOOTBALL ALERT



14 September

I shall have to return to New York at the end of this month. To simplify my life, I have continued to maintain official residence up there, and now I'm going to be renewing my driver's license. The catch is that NY has just decided to join the rest of the world in having photos on the licenses, and so I am going to have to go up there and renew in person. Oh, well, I had intended to visit sometime soon anyway. I should have a chance to see friends, attend a NY*SFS meeting, shop at my favorite NY bookstores, etc. Unfortunately, the only time I can conveniently visit coincides with Rosh Hashanah, which should somewhat curtail all of those.

A couple of the more annoying fissures in my mouth have been filled. Dr. Byerly seems quite competent. He also appears to be a pleasant human being, unlike the dentist I saw in New York, who had the personality of a dyspeptic reptile.

16 September

We've just had a most pleasant visit from Dick Campbell and Ginnie Fleming. They were visiting the beaches and dropped in on the way. (I think they may have underestimated the distance.) In any event, we very much enjoyed their visit.

17 September

I mentioned last time that Harlan Ellison is recovering from personal problems and beginning to write and publish again. *Sleepless Nights in the Procrustean Bed* (Borgo tpb), a collection of essays, reminiscences, and miscellaneous nonfiction, represents the first fruits of this recovery.

Marty Clark, who edited this collection, suggests that Ellison will in time be better known for his essays than for his stories. I don't know about that; I'd say that in both he ranges from utter brilliance to wretched excess. The essay with the delightful title, "Revealed at Last! What Killed the Dinosaurs! And You Don't Look So Terrific Yourself!" is as good an attack on television and its mentality as you'll see anywhere. "Fear Not Your Enemies," on the other hand, is a cheap piece of guilt mongering, accusing all those who have not actively worked for handgun control—not just those who are in favor of handguns, or those who have their doubts about a society where only cops and crooks are armed, but all those who haven't actively worked or contributed—of being part of the "conspiracy" that killed John Lennon.

As with almost all of Ellison's story collections, the balance is on the side of the good stuff: appreciations of talented friends like Fritz Leiber and Robert Silverberg, jaundiced looks at Hollywood and video games, his famous harangue to SFWA on how they should deal with the media. I like this book.

18 September

There are noises up overhead. Our landlord has decided to have the roof fixed. Is it too much to hope?

19 September

It was. The roof looks much better, but there is still no cow on it.

20 September

Meanwhile, I've had further body repairs. Following the dental treatment, I went to Bernadette's optometrist. I turned out to need a slightly stronger prescription, as I had suspected, as well as a correction for astigmatism. But I still don't need bifocals, and the doctor informs me that I may get glaucoma in 40 years or so, but I don't have it now. ~~So I need another excuse to smoke dope!~~ I was pleasantly surprised to see that he has official New York state forms for saying that I passed my eye test, so I won't need to take another one when I go in for my license renewal. (I'm used to New York state eye doctors having NY state forms, but I didn't think out-of-state doctors carried them.)

21 September

Strange story in the paper today. It seems that a man in Tennessee actually married his mother. Apparently, she knew about the relationship before they married, but he didn't, and was rather perturbed by it. She has been charged with criminal incest, and now he has remarried (a younger woman, just to be on the safe side). His first marriage has not been legally annulled, but his lawyer says that it was null and void from the beginning, since it's against Tennessee law. Now I'm just waiting for a follow-up story that the police have reopened their investigation of the mysterious death of his father, who was killed a few years ago by unknown brigands.

Doonesbury was scheduled to return to local newspapers soon, but now it may not do so. It seems that Trudeau wants to whip out a full seven and a half inches, and the papers say that's too much to take. To phrase it a bit differently, he wants his comic to appear large enough for his long captions to be easily read, and the papers say that his suggested size is wrong for their format, and they don't want to take orders on how much space they want to give a particular feature.

Paul Heckel's *The Elements of Friendly Software Design* (Warner tpb) could almost be called *Programming with the Right Side of the Brain*. There is a New Age tone to much of this book, as it suggests that the holistic, flexible systems view is a better approach to computer programming than the more rigorous stimulus-response version. One particular highlight is a comment on the all-too-common sort of error message in which the machine tells you (often insultingly) that you've made a mistake, but offers no specifics or correctives: "It's a poor tool that blames its worker."

23 September

Yesterday we attended Dave Drake's annual Birthday Party & Pig Pickin'. A good time was had by all, except of course the Porcine Guest of Honor. As usual, much of the Triangle area writing community showed up.

For some reason, Bernadette's family has taken to naming their dogs after fantasy writers. First it was Joanne's Silky Terrier, named Ramsey (as in Campbell). Then Valkyrie, the German Shepherd I'd met on several visits to the Bosky home, finally succumbed after a series of ailments, and Bernadette's mother got a young male German Shepherd. Searching for a suitably Aryan name, she finally settled on Karl.

So at the pig pickin', we informed Karl Edward Wagner of this development, so that he would not take it personally if he overheard us discussing "Karl's undescended testicles."

"There's a cure for that," replied Karl the biped. "You stick a carrot up the dog's ass and blow in his mouth. They pop right out." Trust him; he's a doctor.

From Chrysler's new ad campaign:

"We have only one ambition.

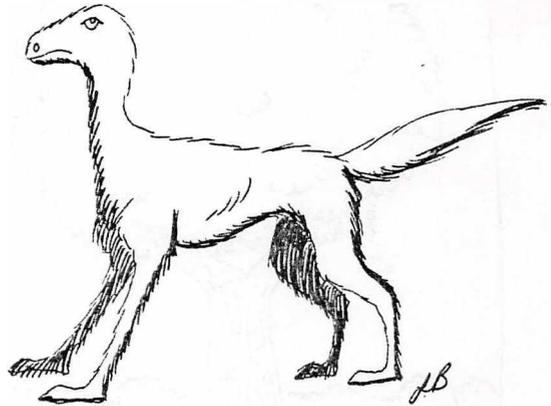
To be the best.

What else is there."

Punctuation.

24 September

I've discovered another interesting mystery writer. Stuart Kaminsky's schtick is that his character, Toby Peters, was a detective in Hollywood in the '40s, where he got involved in all sorts of amusing encounters with famous people, now dead, ranging from Howard Hughes to Mae West to Richard Daley. The mysteries are merely competent, and Peters himself is a rather standard private eye, but often the celebrities, such as the Marx Brothers in *You Bet Your Life*, are well presented.



26 September

I hit a jackpot of sorts on my flight back to New York. I got from Raleigh-Durham to Baltimore OK, but Piedmont had overbooked the flight from Baltimore to New York. So as they do in that situation, they offered a free round trip anywhere they service, good for a year, to anyone willing to get off the flight and take the next one. In this case, the next one was two hours later, and no one was meeting me in New York, so I took them up on it. In fact, Baltimore airport is one of the best ones for wasting a few hours in, as they have an excellent game room, with four pinball machines, including DEVIL'S DARE, which is a nice noisy garish one. I then got into NY on the next flight, although at first they assigned me to an occupied seat. (Sheer chance and bungling, I am sure, and they were very nice about straightening it out and getting me a seat in the nonsmoking section.)

27 September

I went to the Motor Vehicle Bureau and had no trouble (other than the lengthy waiting line) in getting my license renewed. I even survived the ordeal of being photographed. (Ug, white man's devil box steal-um soul.) Thence to the Big City. I'd read rumors that the Strand was being forced out of its location on Broadway and 12th, but such has not happened yet, and I picked up a few goodies at half-price there. Forbidden Planet (sf) and Weiser's (occult) likewise remain to pander to my interests.

Another thing New York City is good for is NY*SFS meetings. The latest one was somewhat sparsely attended because of the Jewish holiday, but there were a few good friends there, and afterwards I had the pleasure of going out to dinner with Miriam Schlinger, Bob Benson, Eve Jones, and Mildred Riley. It was a barbeque place, of all things. They seem to be the new restaurant rage in New York. I was fairly blasé because we have had them down here all along. This one didn't even have a pig on the roof. (It did have hamburgers without spicy stuff on them, for which I was most grateful.)

1 October

A most enjoyable visit. I spoke with Anni Ackner, one of the best new fan writers around (we still haven't met, but I hope to meet her at Philcon), and with Rich and Judy Friedman, and was visited by Adrienne Fein and Neil Belsky. The flight back was uneventful.

By the way, the jocks are taking over. The Sunday Times Editorial Section had a debate on taxes. The Democrats were represented by Bill Bradley, and the Republicans by Jack Kemp.

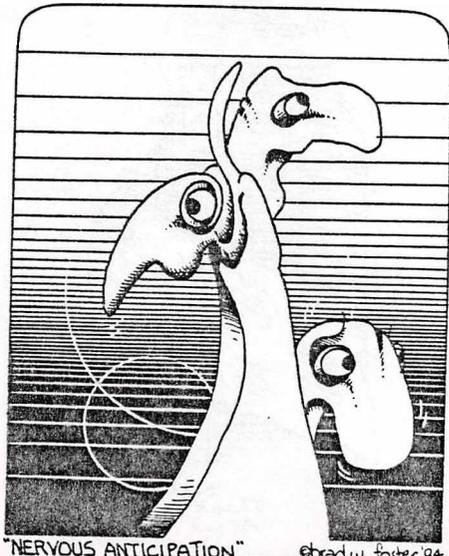
3 October

We now have a good television set. Bernadette bought it as a present for me (though she'll watch it, too). We'll almost certainly get cable, and quite possibly a VCR and a video-game attachment as well, but we will not watch great loads of network crap.

I've always felt a bit ambivalent about Edward Koren's cartoons. His hairy reptiles are thoroughly delightful to look at, but they have tended to say lightly whimsical New Yorkerish things, rather than genuinely funny things. But his new book, *Caution: Small Ensembles* (Random hc), actually made me laugh out loud in places, even though it's all from *The New Yorker*. Either they've started letting old and faithful employees publish funny stuff on occasion, or they've lost their sense of humor.

5 October

The Conference on the Fantastic is moving to ~~W~~Marjorie Beaumont, Texas next year, but it should be as good as ever--in fact, better in one respect: Bernadette will be leading a section, on Literary Aspects of Peter Straub. If you'd like to deliver a paper in that section, write to Bernadette at this address; and if you know anyone who might be interested, pass the word along, as the Conference is not awesomely efficient at getting calls for papers out.



"NERVOUS ANTICIPATION" ©Brad W. Foster '84

6 October

Nancy Lebovitz is visiting us. She is doing Alexander Technique exercises with us. (I have given up trying to describe them; they are ways of moving the body with less effort and more comfort, which nevertheless are good for you.) These have been very interesting. I have not yet learned anything that I can really use by myself, but they do feel good, and it seems that if I persevere, I will learn things that have longer-lasting effects.

7 October

Last night we had a thoroughly delightful party, to celebrate my birthday and Nancy's visit. Present were writers Allen Wold, John Kessel, and Bruce Hunter, and about a dozen friends, neighbors, and colleagues who are also delightful people, but whose names would not signify to most of you. There was lots of food, including crab claws (which I am told were quite good if you like that sort of thing), and good company and conversation. Allen tells us that he's doing novelizations of the TV show *V*. It may not be great literature, but it pays, and it's morally preferable to most forms of crime and government employment.

Also present was semi-retired fan D. Gary Grady, who said things like, "I went into Steverino's to get a sandwich, so I said to the big Black guy behind the counter, 'Small white-meat turkey.' He said, 'You want one or you are one?'"

Today, we took Nancy to the North Carolina Museum of Life and Science, a delightful place which includes hands-on exhibits, a lot of space mementos, and even a small zoo. The latter has been enriched by the presence of a coyote, a female they have named "Lonesome." She's currently in a cage, but they have a fund to set up a larger enclosure for her. Bernadette and I contributed.

We've also been having metaphysical discussions. For instance, Nancy mentioned that if one of the signs of shoddy merchandise is that the more closely you examine it, the worse it looks, then some of the new discoveries in quantum and subatomic physics raise grave questions about matter itself. (Gary calls it the Argument from Bad Design.) That makes sense to me. I have been known to sound like a Gnostic, one who believes that matter is Evil, or Sinful, or Dirty. In my more lucid moments, I do not believe that; in fact, I am not sure any of those terms have any operational meaning. Perhaps, though, I am a reform Gnostic, one who merely believes that matter is shabby, tacky, and annoying.

8 October

Doodlesbury is back. Apparently, a compromise has been worked out, as it appears in different sizes from day to day.

George Carlin has a new book out. It's called *Sometimes, a Little Brain Damage Can Help*; it's a trade paperback from Contemporary Books, and it says things like "Remember: Dishonesty is the second best policy." I recommend it.

10 October

The problems of lead time in cartoons. *Bloom County* is doing a bit that would be funny, except that it's based on Mondale's utter helplessness in the polls, and he's now doing better. It seems that he won the debate. He didn't whine (you think they're giving him hormones?), and Reagan sounded old and addled. So now it's a horse race (not that I would accuse either of them of being an entire horse), but it looks like Reagan's still in the lead, unless he gets totally befuddled in the next debate and winds up going into a speech from *Bedtime for Bonzo*. That, however, could happen.

11 October

From time to time, I have mentioned interesting news passed along by Alex McKale. For instance, in 1980, Disneyland expelled two men for the hideous crime of dancing with each other. They went to court, claiming their civil rights were violated. Now a judge has ruled that Disneyland must let them dance together; and in a display of almost unprecedented bad sportsmanship, Disneyland announced that they would allow those two men, but no other same-sex couples, to dance together.

Alex has been running this information in a zine called *Elitist Ennui*, which was his contribution to SWAPA, the Swarthmore apa. Now he has decided to make the zine generally available. I don't see a price on it, but I imagine \$1 or the usual would be reasonable. Alex is at 812 Clark St. #2B, Evanston, IL 60201.

12 October

Bernadette is off to World Fantasy Con. The problem is that it's being held in Ottawa, and although Ottawa is the national capital of Canada, it is very hard to reach. I think it's quite clever of the Canadians to quarantine the State like that, but it does lead to problems for those going to Ottawa for legitimate reasons, and so Bernadette faces a somewhat complex series of flights.

13 October

LETTERS: A loc from Suzette Haden Elgin brings up a point that may have been confusing some of you. Adam is not an Adam. He is an Osborne-1. Commodore came up with "Adam" as a generic name for its toys more than a year after I chose it as a proper name for my computer, and on principle and/or stubbornness I refuse to change it.

Jimmy Harris writes to say that I've been unfair to David Bergland's Libertarian Party campaign for the presidency. He says that Bergland is doing better than Ed Clark's 1980 campaign and should get more votes. Jimmy, I hope you're right.

Diane Fox, commenting on DR 35, writes, "Trust the Irish to riot on hearing the word *shift*. Egad, I wonder what would have happened if someone had said, 'knickers.'"

15 October

The paper tells us that Jim Bakker, of the Fundamentalist *Passé* THE LOBZ Club, has been making heartfelt pleas to his TV congre-

gation for money, although he's got a Mercedes and a half-million-dollar house. Maybe he's sponsoring a scientific research program to figure out how to get a camel through the eye of a needle.

Bernadette has returned from World Fantasy Con, at which she had a good time. The only problem was travel. All those jokes we've been making about "The Empire strikes back" and "the Empire never ended" apply to Empire Airlines. Their combined inefficiency and surliness seem almost governmental in scope. Do not fly with these people unless more modern and efficient indigenous forms of transportation, such as dog sled, are unavailable.

16 October

A while back, I reviewed a reissue of Keith Laumer's *The Long Twilight*, praising it for its archetypally powerful image of two warriors chasing each other down the corridors of time, appearing in different bodies to battle heroically to the death. What I forgot to mention is that there is a similar archetypal conflict in fandom, except that there the adversaries are clowns beating each other over the head with pig bladders. The latest avatars are having it at as I write these words, and people I know to be capable of writing far more interesting stuff are discussing the battle at some length in their zines.

SLUGZILLA



228
Thanks
Al and
Nancy L.

FOOTBALL ALERT

29 September

I am reminded of one of the disadvantages of living in or near New York: You often have to watch the local teams. First it was the Jets. They've looked almost competent this year, but they've mostly been playing weaker teams so far. Now they faced the New England Patriots, who have turned their quarterback job over to Tony Eason. He threw a few touchdown passes, including one to the charmingly-named Stephen Starring, and the Jets lost it.

Great Moments in Sportscasting: I guess it can happen to anybody. John Brodie is one of my favorite analysts, but when you're talking off the cuff, occasionally things will come out wrong. What he meant to say was that the Patriots have a whole lot of good running backs--Mosi Tatupu, Craig James, Robert Weathers, Tony Collins--but they use a one-back offense, and only one runner can carry the football at once. What he said was, "There aren't enough balls to go around on this team."

The Giants have a way of losing, not just badly, but excruciatingly, and today's Rams game was an example of that. I missed the Giants' one score, as the Jets game was still on. On the opening kickoff, the ball rolled into the Rams' endzone and their kick returner forgot that the ball is still in play under those circumstances. Phil McConkey, an average rookie (he'd gone to the Naval Academy, and spent six years in the Navy, where it was discovered that he suffered from acute seasickness--that may have been a sign that he belonged with the Giants), fell on it for six points. Lest their fans get overconfident, they missed the point after.

The Rams soon scored again, whereupon one of the goal posts fell down. The network proved they were worthy of broadcasting this game by not cutting to another game, but letting the announcers try to think of something interesting to say (they rarely succeeded) while we watched a crew trying to get the post up, a scene not unlike the Lilliputian army attempting to arouse Gulliver, but less interesting.

The worst was yet to be. A safety (losing the ball or getting tackled in your own end zone) is a fairly rare sign of gross incompetence. There are usually about half a dozen in an entire season, and the record was two in a game.

Until now. The Giants managed to give up three, count 'em three, safeties in one quarter (two blocked punts and an end-zone sack). Awesome.

15 October

BOOK REVIEWS. *Razzle Dazzle*, by Phil Patton (? hc), views with alarm the influence of television on pro football, blaming it for the new wide-open passing game. Since I am one of the viewers the new game is pandering to, I fail to share Patton's outrage.

Quarterbacks, Nickel Backs, and Other Loose Change, by Kevin Lamb (Contemporary tpb), is a more knowledgeable and sympathetic view of the changes in the game, from the

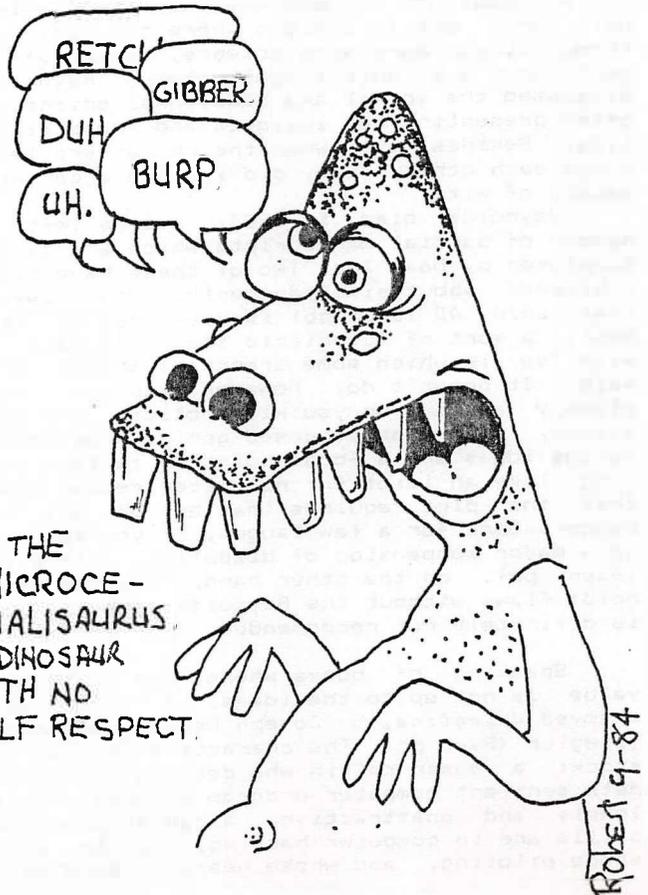
two-tight-end formation to defensive one-man wrecking crews like Lawrence Taylor and Hugh Green. My only complaints are the cute title and the high price.

Peter Gent, formerly a receiver for the Cowboys and the Giants, has now written three novels about the game, each better than its predecessor. *North Dallas Forty* was an attempt at a serious expose of the game's evils, and it struck me as a bit overdone. *Texas Celebrity Turkey Trot* was sheer black comedy, with little attempt at credibility. Now he seems to have combined the best of both. *The Franchise* (Ballantine pb) is a big novel about a few good guys facing an utterly corrupt combination of greed-crazed owners, Mafiosi, labor racketeers, and miscellaneous crooks. (There are some hints that this may bear some resemblances to some facts and rumors about actual franchises, but let us not, shall we say, ram that home.) It's not Serious Lit; much of the style is what may be called Bestseller Bombastic; but it's got lots of laughs, good characters, sex, violence, and an intriguing story. It reminds me a bit of Michael Thomas's *Someone Else's Money*, which I recommended a while back.

17 October

The Green Bay Peckers must think they're the Giants. Their offense gave up two touchdowns in the first minute of last night's game, and they never caught up, despite a brilliant performance by James Lofton.

END FOOTBALL ALERT



17 October

Today's paper reports that the FDA has decided that sulfites, preservatives often used by restaurants, can cause asthma attacks, and restaurants using them will have to warn people. That sounds reasonable to me, as a large percentage of my asthma attacks have come after restaurant meals. I'm sure that's not the only factor, but it will be nice to have that one removed.

As you may have heard, the newest "cult film" is *Repo Man*. Reports reaching us indicated that it is weird, foul-mouthed, bloodthirsty, and generally about as tasteful as a Cabbage Patch Kid going down on a Smurf. Bernadette and I finally got to see it, and we are pleased to report that it is all of those things. We loved it, but what do we know? We read *The Weekly World News*.

20 October

I am not sure whether the most remarkable thing about the long writing career of Mack Reynolds is that he could turn out so many books and still not master elementary fictional techniques, or that he managed to write so much interesting stuff despite that deficiency. His characters are two-dimensional, at best; the dialog, particularly by female characters, is painfully bad; he repeats himself; and his plots rely on coincidence and character stupidity. And yet, his stories were often enjoyable and thought-provoking. He was one of the avatars of the Kilgore Trout archetype, the brilliant thinker who couldn't express the ideas in fictional form; but in a field where too many of those ideas were hard science, often of a sort only a scientist could love, Reynolds discussed the social and behavioral sciences, often presenting new insights and possibilities. Besides, even when the characters lectured each other, they did so with a certain amount of wit.

Reynolds died in 1983, but he left a number of partial manuscripts which are being completed by Dean Ing. Two of these have been published about simultaneously. *Home Sweet Home 2010 AD* (Dell pb) is Reynolds at his best, a sort of futuristic *You Can't Take It with You* in which some trenchant things are said. It doesn't do, however, to look too closely at it, or you will notice, for instance, that the supposed genius whose dangerous ideas are a focal point is in fact acting like an idiot for no better reason than that the plot requires that he be put in danger. Good for a few laughs, if you feel up to a major suspension of disbelief. *Eternity* (Baen pb), on the other hand, has the Reynolds flaws without the Reynolds virtues, and is definitely not recommended.

Speaking of books where the literary value is not up to the ideas, I very much enjoyed *Valentina*, by Joseph Delaney and Marc Stiegler (Baen pb). The characters are fairly stock: a susan calvin who designs the ultimate sentient computer program because she's lonely and unattractive; a han solo whose skills are in computer hacking, rather than space piloting, and whose heart of gold wins

out over his piratical tendencies; and a mustache-twirling child molester to serve as villain. The plot is rudimentary. On the other hand, I find its visionary look at one form of artificial intelligence fascinating. Read it or not, depending on which you consider more important.

22 October

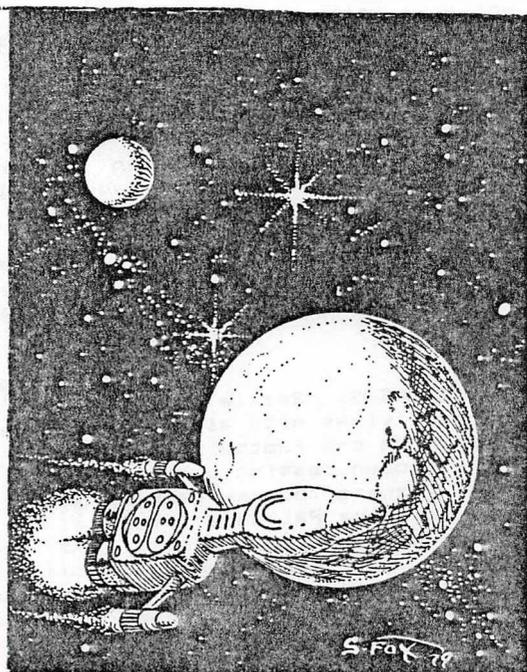
There's a follow-up story in today's paper on that motherfucker in Tennessee. A grand jury has decided that he knew what he was doing, and has charged him with incest and perjury.

~~WHY~~ ~~REYNOLDS~~ ~~ME~~, our president appears to have won last night's debate because he did not drool all over himself or forget where he was. He did not make great gobs of sense either, but he didn't have to do that.

Mike Shoemaker frequently functions as DR's external conscience, informing me when I am letting smartass or sheer sloppiness mislead my readers. A while back, I mentioned a study suggesting similarities between anorexia and an excessive running syndrome. Mike now informs me that a more recent study indicates that there is no similarity between the two. I'm sure there is no truth to the ugly rumor that reporters trying to interview the doctor who did the study were unable to do so because they couldn't get him to slow down long enough to talk to them.

23 October

I realize that this is terribly unfair, but all visitors to the Nuts' Lab start out with something to live up to, not unlike the burden of a great potential, because we clean up the place when company is expected. Still, every guest we've ever had has made it worthwhile, and our latest, Neil Kaden, was no exception. He was in town for some sort of neep-neepish gathering at Research Triangle Park, and he spent an evening here.





26 October

Today we were supposed to have Cable-Vision installed. It's one of those deals where they tell you that they'll be there "in the morning," and you have to wait for them. They didn't show up. I called the office in the afternoon, and was informed that the office had no way of contacting the installers, but they would set up another appointment for whenever they felt like it, next Tuesday afternoon. Further evidence that whenever the government gives some organization an exclusive franchise, it begins acting governmental--inept and unaccountable.

There's a stereotype that the South is much less efficient than the North, but I suspect that this sort of thing is just as likely to happen in New York. And when the installer does come around, he is much more likely to say, "Ah'm terribly sorry," than, "What's yaw problem, asshole?"

26 October

We bought a VCR--a Sanyo. Now at last I have the chance to see major works of cinematic art that I missed the first time around, and indeed I have already viewed one such. I was enchanted by its filmic virtues, the understated wit, the *auteurial* grace, and particularly the makeout and vomiting scenes and the late John Belushi's sensitive portrayal of Bluto.

OK, so it was *Animal House*. I laughed something fierce, but doubts nagged at me afterwards. Look at it this way: Shortly after the movie came out, the Swarthmore alumni bulletin included a proud statement by one of my contemporaries to the effect that *Animal House* was the true story of his frat, DU. From what I'd heard about the movie, that sounded plausible to me. The rest of us tended to think of DU as an animal house in no complimentary sense (you can't spell "dumb" without "DU"). There may have been an ugly side to the frat, too, and indeed a few years ago the Swarthmore administration kicked DU off the campus for a variety of offenses, including, and I quote, serving as a "refuge from civility." (All I know about is the Swarthmore chapter, and others may be quite different. Kurt Vonnegut was a DU at Cornell.)

The movie is funny, and it presents the Establishment (the Mafia-bribing dean, the ass-kissing student pol, the mad-dog militarist) as so corrupt that anybody in rebellion against it can't be all bad. But if you allow yourself to think about it, the Deltas are not nice people; they are destructive, inconsiderate, and sexist, among other things. It could not be too much fun to be one of the women involved with these people, from Otter's prey to the dates left behind at the roadhouse. In fact, they're pretty self-destructive, and there's a nasty irony to seeing John Belushi's character doing something (chugging a quart of booze) that would be a lethal overdose in real life.

On the other hand, I should make clear that none of these moral considerations kept me from laughing my ass off during the movie.

27 October

Today the Community Wholistic [sic] Health Center in Chapel Hill had its annual Healing Arts Festival, at the Public Health Dept.'s building on the UNC campus. They offered workshops in various New Age approaches. Bernadette and I figured that there'd be much to enjoy and learn there, and we were right.

The keynote speech was delivered by Joseph Chilton Pearce, author of *The Crack in the Cosmic Egg* and other books. He informed us that there are two approaches to the world: the Eastern approach, which is acceptance, going with the flow, not making judgments; and the Western approach which divides the world into Good and Evil, Us and Them, Mind and Body, etc. The latter approach, he informed us, is absolutely evil and worthless.

OK, that's a bit unfair, but Pearce, who struck me in his writing as dogmatic, argumentative, and judgmental, seemed at least as much so in person. You want to know the four most harmful ideas in our culture, *in order*? He'll tell you. On the other hand, some of the ideas he was so intolerantly espousing, like Piaget's theories of development, are ones I find quite interesting, though more so when they are presented as useful hypotheses and models, rather than Absolute Truths.

Then came the individual workshops, and Bernadette and I got all the ones we'd picked as first choices when we registered for the fair. At the first session, Alan Konell, a tall man with a gray-spotted beard, spoke with us about Neuro-Linguistic Programming. I've mentioned before in these pages how fascinating I find that approach, and it's nice to know that there's someone in the area who seems quite good at it. He says he'll be giving workshops in it, and I hope I have a chance to take one soon.

We followed that with a two-hour session. Sandy Branscomb, a slender, soft-spoken woman, introduced us to Rebirthing, a relaxation in which you lie down in a blanket and breathe "circularly"--smoothly, effortlessly, and without pause between inhale and exhale. She introduced it as, among other things, a way of feeling good, then asked us to give

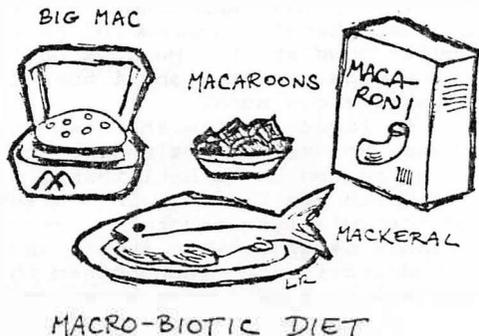
our names and some statement about why we were here. I said, "I'm interested in feeling good, and I want to see if this is a way that works for me." It is. This was not a full rebirthing, but it did feel good and, I hope, helped strengthen me in those feelings of belonging in the universe and accepting and loving it that I have in my better moments.

But not entirely. A health-food lunch followed, and my alienated and judgmental mind saw it as a vegetarian equivalent of the bugs-and-vermin meal in *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*.

After lunch we attended a session on "Inner Vision and Spirit Guidance." Richard Lowenthal, a large, ursine-looking man, led us on a visualization journey on which we attempted to summon up a Spirit Guide, an internalized exemplar of the Old Wise Man archetype (it needn't be old, male, or even human) who would tell us what to do. I've always wanted one of those, as the Guru figures who've offered to perform that role for me, from Reagan to Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, have been found wanting. I did not meet such a being, but I found the trip interesting and useful anyway.

Bernadette and I had chosen the same groups this far, but now our paths diverged. She went to a session on nutrition, and I attended one on "Psychic Guidance and Decision Making." Donna Gulick, a small, animated woman in a bright green jumpsuit, talked about a number of healing and perceiving processes, under the paradigm of psychic powers. She led us in a spirit guide exercise similar to Lowenthal's, but much shorter, and an exercise designed to help us set up an internal system whereby our bodies could give us Yes or No answers to how they felt about things. She also more briefly described several other techniques, and discussed the importance of using psychic abilities noninvasively. Either because I'd been doing much more spiritual stuff than I was used to, or because she tried to cover too much in an hour, I didn't feel I got much out of the exercises.

Finally, we attended Martha Mazonson's session on Alexander Technique. That, of course, we are somewhat familiar with from working with Nancy Lebovitz, but we found a slightly different perspective on it somewhat informative. (Working with a group, she demonstrated the Alexander approach to activities, rather than general body alignment, and she spoke of "inhibiting movements," rather than "relaxing.")



Back home, the mail awaited, with a prime example of adding insult to injury: a bit of bulk mail from CableVision saying that we should hurry if we wanted to have cable installed at a Special Low Price.

Thence, to a Halloween party. Jeff Munson (formerly of the parapsychology institute) and his wife Rita (now in the grad school English Dept.) had invited grad students, psi experimenters, significant others, and assorted strange people to a Come As You Are Not party. So I put on Catholic priest's drag, and Bernadette transformed herself into a vampire. A most enjoyable evening with delightful people.

28 October

The latest political story around here is that a local gay paper managed to find several conservative gays who are going to vote for Jesse Helms. Helms headquarters denounced the story as a vicious canard. Presumably, gays will not be permitted to vote for Jesse, even if they want to.

29 October

Patrick Nielsen Hayden recently did a list of remarks that he thought (and I agree) would make for more interesting fanzine discussions. One of those was that Gore Vidal is America's best historical novelist.

He hasn't started an argument, at least not with me. I was prepared to agree even before I read Vidal's new one, *Lincoln* (Random hc), and now I'm even more convinced. There's a wealth of historical fact here; rounded and fascinating portrayals of a large cast, from the protagonist to the conspirators who were scheming to do him in; a mordantly effective style; and looks at how Lincoln's time, and the things that were done then, cast their shadow down to the present.

White Mischief, by James Fox (Vintage tpb) is a nonfiction whodunit about a murder among the British colonists in Kenya in the 1940s. Unfortunately, I found the solution unsatisfactory, perhaps because I'm spoiled by fictional whodunits.

30 October

As I was waiting for the cable installer, the phone rang. It was CableVision.

"I hear you weren't here when the installer came around on Friday."

"I was here."

"Well...anyway, we can make a new appointment for you on Thursday or so."

"I already made an appointment with you people for this afternoon."

"Oh, I guess you did."

This dialog did not inspire confidence, but the installer did come around. He knocked on the door, rather than ringing the bell. I'm not sure why, either to be less disturbing to the inhabitants, or because if you ring the doorbell it's much more likely that someone will answer and expect you to do some work. In any event, the cable is now in place, and we'll get HBO and better reception on the other channels.

FOOTBALL ALERT

29 October

The NFL offers evidence for that nasty theory that there is nothing between the coasts. In both Conferences, the Central Divisions are abysmal, with one .500 team (Bears and Steelers) in each, and the others winning only when they play each other, if then. As a result, almost all the Eastern and Western teams have winning records. (Of course, in fairness it should be pointed out that we are dealing here with NFL Geography, an alternate reality in which St. Louis and Dallas are in the East, and New Orleans and Atlanta in the West.)

Painful Chargers game last week. Winslow and Chandler were wheeled off the field. The Chargers gave the Raiders three touchdowns in the third quarter on assorted blunders, and still almost came back. In the last minute, they were 7 points down and driving down the field. Then on successive plays: 1) Rookie Jesse Bendross caught one on the 5 with no one in his way, and fumbled out of bounds; 2) an apparent TD was called back on a penalty; 3) they were intercepted. Winslow's out for at least the rest of the year with a knee that looks like Cthulhu played with it. On the other hand, there are reports that Chuck Muncie is keeping his nose clean, as it were, and he may be back. I fear it's too late for the Chargers. This week the Raiders played as if they'd caught something from the Chargers, losing to the surprisingly successful Denver Broncos on some ridiculous number of turnovers.

Meanwhile, the New England Patriots, a franchise with a history of being run like the Italian government, had an amusing week. They lost conclusively to Miami, whereupon the head coach fired the defensive coach. So the owner rehired the defensive coach and fired the head coach. Raymond Berry, known for his hard-working and skillful play, is the new head coach, and the team, which hated his predecessor, gave him a victory over the Jets to begin with.

Ken Stabler retired, perhaps because his life was getting boring and repetitious. It was the second straight year he'd lost to the Dallas Cowboys by falling down in his own endzone. The Cowboys, inspired by that, went on to whip the permanent floating Dolts franchise.

The Cards won a couple. Roy Green is probably the best pass receiver in the league this year (unless James Lofton is), and Ottis Anderson is running well. Their problem is Neil O'Donoghue, the kind of power kicker who actually gets worse as he gets closer to the goal line. After putting the suspense back in the extra point last week, he made a long field goal to beat the Skins.

And then the Giants did it! In fact they kicked ass (he said, vice-presidentially). Simms threw two TD passes, and a sly new defense with the awesome Lawrence Taylor in the middle shut down the boring Skins ground game. Go Giants!

END FOOTBALL ALERT



Received a remarkably insulting letter from the AAA, pointing out that in the past year, I have given them four calls for road service, and the average is a bit under one per year. I have thus far resisted the temptation to reply, "Well, of course, you aaashholes. If I didn't think I was getting a better deal than most, I wouldn't have signed up."

I've got another scheme for a surefire best seller: *The One-Minute Pimp*.

Some good news in the world of alternate publishing: Bob Shea is doing a zine again. It's called *No Governor*, and it's a Zen/Anarchist zine, featuring articles by divers hands; Bob's own brief, but thought-provoking comments; and beginning next issue, a letter-col. I highly recommend it. It shows all the lucidity, wisdom, and compassion you would expect from the author of *Shike*. It's \$2 or the usual (\$10 for a six-issue subscription) from Robert Shea, PO Box 319, Glencoe, IL 60022.

FUTURE NEWS

23 May 2000

The Supreme Court upheld the order banning all lingerie ads from Sears-Roebuck catalogs. This was the latest implementation of the controversial law under which any publication could be banned as pornographic if 100 or more convicted rapists had been under its influence when committing their crimes. Earlier publications outlawed under this rule include *Hustler*, *Penthouse*, *Playboy*, and all books explicitly describing rape, child molestation, or heterosexual intercourse.

A study has indicated that over half of those citing the Sears Roebuck catalog as the cause of their crimes had earlier cited one or more previously banned publications, and had been given light or suspended sentences because the real responsibility for their deeds belonged with the capitalist smutmongers whose pornography had inflamed their passions.

Fundamentalist Feminist spokesperson Geri Falwell hailed the Court decision, adding, "The fact that the rape rate is as high as when the law went into effect is a sign that we have only begun our struggle to free America from pornography."

31 October

And now for some nonfictional news. The Associated Press reports that a researcher, using the Freedom of Information Act, has found that J. Edgar Hoover and his close friend Clyde Tolson ordered the infiltration of all known homosexual groups in the 1950s and insisted that the investigations continue even though they were finding absolutely no evidence of anything resembling subversive behavior.

For years there have been rumors that J. Edgar himself was homosexual, although I have heard of no substantiating evidence (a fact for which some of my gay friends are grateful). On the other hand, there is definite evidence of his heterosexual voyeurism. One agent was disciplined for discovering some action pictures of Angela Davis and not immediately turning them over to the Director. Perhaps he was just a more versatile viewer than some of us suspected.

Here is also evidence of Freud's dictum that the paranoid is never entirely mistaken. Gay scholar Toby Marotta reports, in *The Politics of Homosexuality*, that the Mattachine Society was begun, back in the late 1940s, as a Communist front, although apparently it was not one for very long.

One important correction before I go: McMurdo Sound is bidding for the worldcon in '88, not '87. Sorry about that. Do you ever wonder what sort of bid would hire the likes of me as its publicity director?

It looks as though the presidential election has come down to Mondale, Reagan, and the late Bill the Cat. I will say only one thing: We know that there are uses for a dead cat.

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