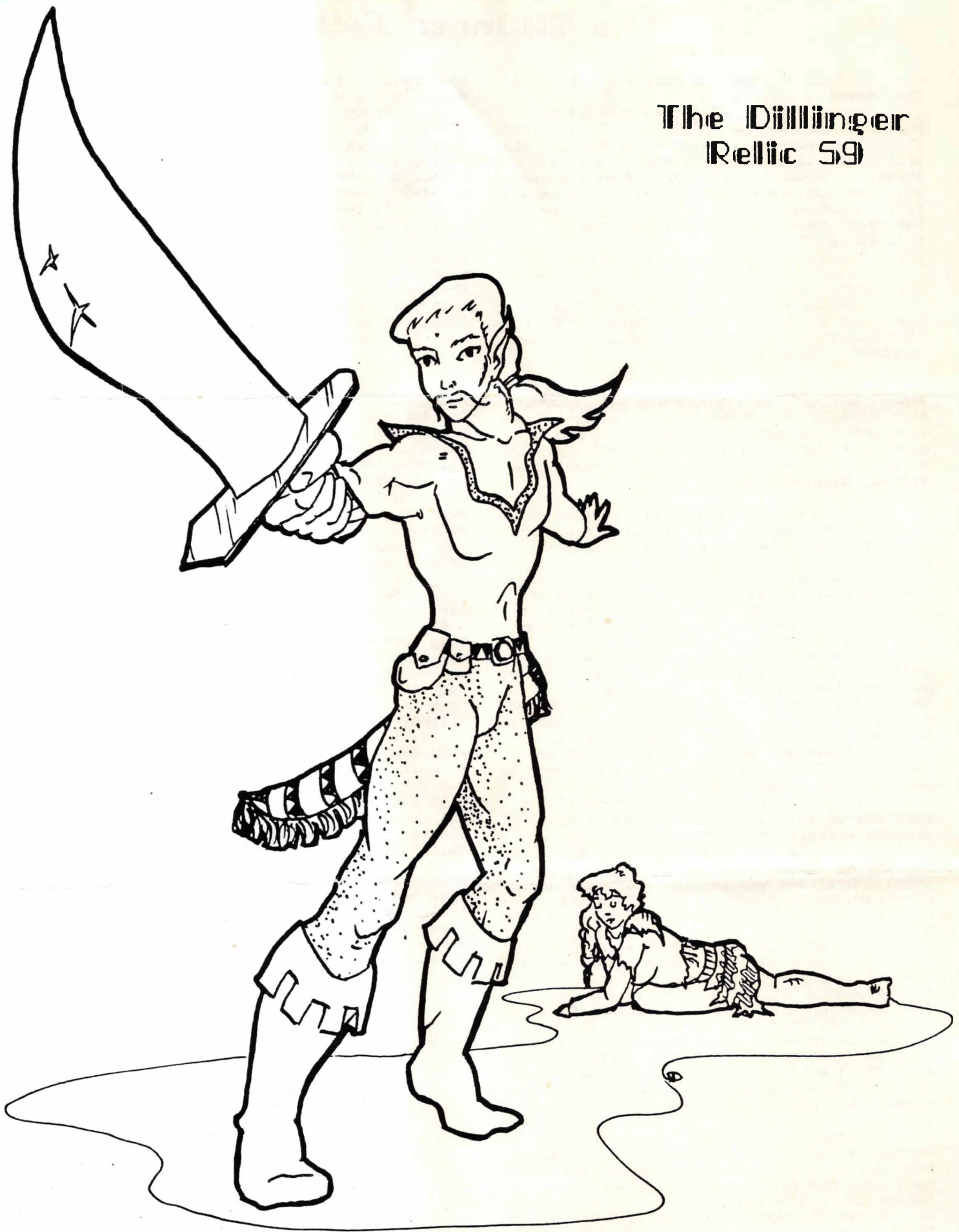


The Dillinger  
(Relic 59)



# The Dillinger Relic 59

DR is written, edited, and published four times a year by

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Abomination Consultant:

**Bernadette Bosky**

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Mental Ward Cast: Bernadette Bosky, lover and spouse. Victoria: Victor VPC II (IBM-compatible) computer. Kadmon: Kaypro 2X computer. Ruby: cat.

Well, here we are again. I am now at school again, studying Library and Information Science at the University of North Carolina and thoroughly enjoying it. I still have some time for nonscholarly writing, and am happy to present another, somewhat abbreviated, DILLINGER RELIC.

We're coming up soon on the time to do something so obscene that the government makes you do it behind a curtain--that's right, election day.

Although I know voting just encourages them, I will recidivistically do it, in the traditional posture--pulling the lever with one hand, and holding my nose with the other, as I vote for Michael Dukakis.

I am almost uniquely qualified to judge the pucoming contest, as I spent six of my formative years among the preppie elitists, followed by four among the Swarthmore elitists. Believe me, the latter are better. Besides, we are told that Dukakis is "cold and passionless," whereas Bush has temper tantrums. Curiously enough, this argument is made by Bush supporters.

In the belief that a balanced ticket consists of an Eastern preppie and a Mid-western preppie, Bush chose as his veep R. Danforth Quayle III, a pretty face best known for having found the least interesting and least courageous way to avoid the late unpleasantness in Vietnam. Dukakis's selection of the mediocre Lloyd Bentsen once again puts him ahead.

Perhaps the main way in which Dukakis is a less unpleasant candidate than Bush is the unlikeliness that he will fill our nation's courts with smut stompers and fetus fans. The greatest argument against Dukakis is the likelihood that he will destroy the economy by spending large amounts of government money on social programs. Perhaps, but Bush could easily flush an equal amount down the Star Wars program. The choice seems clear. Not pleasant perhaps, but clear.

Meanwhile, the most successful inadvertent advertising campaign in years has been pulled off by the funny mentalists who have made the film of *The Last Temptation of Christ* a hit by condemning it. (Note that I do not use the word *Christian* to describe these people. For an intelligent defense of

the movie by a devout Christian, see Garry Wills in THE NEW YORK REVIEW.) They've made a breakthrough in Know-Nothingism. We've always known that these wowers condemn books they haven't read, either for fear of corruption or because their lips would get tired, but now they have graduated to warning us against movies they haven't seen.

The least savory aspect of this whole show is the way some of the film's enemies have focused on the one Jew involved in the production with unsubtle suggestions that the perfidious Hebrews are once again crucifying the Lord. As the historical record indicates that the Romans were responsible for the original crucifixion, it would be more consistent for them to pick on director Martin Scorsese.

We had an adventure the other day. Tony Parker, an old friend of ours, works for the Immense Blue Monolith, which sends him to places all over the country. One of those is Research Triangle Park, a few miles from us, and when that happens, and Tony has a bit of time to spare, we have dinner with him.

He'd called and said that this was such an occasion. We suggested a Japanese restaurant roughly between RTP and us, and upon being reassured that it serves cooked, as well as raw, food (I wouldn't go there otherwise), he agreed to meet us there.

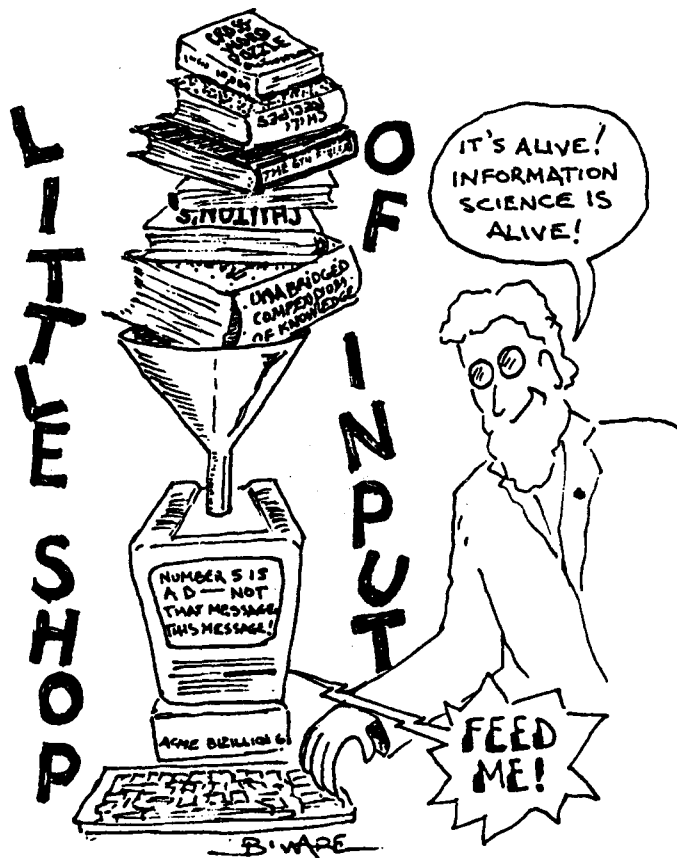
Shortly after the appointed time, we were waiting in the restaurant, with our car parked in the lot outside. It turned out that Tony was late because I had given him bad directions. (He eventually found his way and was forgiving.) Perhaps our punishment for this was what we learned when a woman came in to ask who owned the Toyota with Illinois plates.

It seems that her car had collided with ours. But just as we were safely away from the accident at the time it occurred, so was she. She'd left the car at the top of a hill and it rolled down, colliding with ours and putting an ugly dent in our car's door. She was quite reasonable about the whole thing, agreeing to pay for our repairs.

At this point, the witnesses came into the restaurant, and unaware that we were involved, started talking about the accident. It was strange, they said, how this driverless car came down the hill. I now see how we can get something out of this mess. I'll write it up for the supermarket tabloids and headline it,

GHOST CAR TERRORIZES MALL  
Was Elvis Behind the Wheel?





The whole thing began August 30, with registration. Actually, my main worry at that point was the Chapel Hill parking situation, about which I knew little except that it was horrendous. I imagined myself missing registration as I circled endlessly, like a landlocked Flying Dutchman, forever seeking a parking place. But at 8:00 AM, shortly before registration began, there was still room in the main downtown parking lot, across a street from campus.

I've since checked into the possibility of obtaining a campus parking permit and got the impression that they require one to be at least a handicapped minority member who has given the school a large donation. On the other hand, buses turned out to be far more plentiful than I had imagined, with one running from Durham to Chapel Hill, and several others from areas in Chapel Hill where one can park easily and for free, so getting to and from school has not been much of a problem.

Having thus dealt with the scary part, I reached the School of Library and Information Science (which I'd already located months earlier). There I joined my classmates (there are roughly 80 thereof, at about a 3:1 female:male ratio--it used to be higher) that, in apparent violation of the laws of probability, there was another science

fiction fan, indeed another fanzine publisher among us. He is Richard Llewellyn, who did a zine called CULLOWHEE COMMENTS in the late 70s. We'd never met, but we used to trade and remembered each other's work. He, like the zine name, comes from Cullowhee, NC, compared to which the Triangle Area seems oppressively urban. I've since enjoyed meeting a number of other classmates of mine, including LISA GOLDMAN, who says she'd like to see her name in print.

We were greeted at some length by Evelyn Daniel, the dean of the school, who also teaches Foundations of Information Science, the intro course we all take (though many of the other professors in the department also lecture in the course). She welcomed us and introduced the faculty. After that, registration itself went quickly and efficiently. It is not axiomatic that departments which teach high-tech computer stuff know how to run their own computers well (indeed the opposite is usually true of companies that sell high-tech computer stuff), but this one does. I knew what I wanted to take, and my assigned advisor, a visiting professor who was probably less familiar with the catalog than I was, did not impede me. The whole procedure took less than an hour.

Dealings with the rest of the school were simple and reasonably pleasant. Departmental registration had taken care of almost everything that school registration required. I picked up my textbooks; since there was only one for each of the four courses and one book was available in used condition, the cost was only a little over \$100.

Foundations of Information Science meets Friday morning for three hours. A major paper is required, and we have to submit preliminary suggestions, first drafts, etc., then critique other people's papers afterwards. (I plan to do a paper on software copyright, a subject I have some familiarity with and find interesting.) This seems bearable. The textbook seems less so. It is written almost entirely in jargon, with the sort of inept prose that is so annoying and yet so pervasive and corrupting that one longs to see someone's foot impact the author's ass.

(I've since learned that the course used to use Jeremy Campbell's *Grammatical Man*, a well-written and insightful book on how new views of information are changing our sciences, our arts, and almost everything else. I imagine they dropped the book because it was believed to be popularized, journalistic, and insufficiently rigorous. Well, maybe so, but that book inspired me to think of Information Science as something both important and fascinating, something I wanted to be a part of. I can't imagine our current text having that influence on anyone at any time.)

The opening lecture was enjoyable. We learned about how librarianship (there must be a shorter, more pleasant-sounding way of saying that) is becoming a profession after years as a "feminine semi-profession" like nursing and social work. As a profession, we

are developing Good Things like a theoretical base of knowledge and codes of ethics and professional recognition. Our statement of professional ethics seems like a good one: I) Offer good and courteous service to all; II) resist censorship; III) offer confidentiality to the users of our services; IV) support due process and equality of opportunity in our own field; V) distinguish between our own views and those of the institution we work for; VI) avoid situations where personal gain would conflict with the goals of our institution. Makes sense to me.

The second meeting of this class was a valuable lesson to me. I tend to go overboard in my enthusiasm for computer-stored data over old-fashioned paper. This lecture offered a corrective, though I don't think it did so on purpose. Instead of just printing out an outline of what was being discussed and handing it to us, the professor used a fancy new device which projects a computer screen onto a movie screen. The computer screen had all sorts of words about information science in different colors, moving in different patterns, etc. In order to show us this screen, they had to turn out the lights, which made it almost impossible to take notes. I'd rather they'd given us a print-out, instead of or in addition to.

Since then, classes have been mixed in interest. In one, for instance, we learned about what might be called metalibrary materials, books and periodicals where one could look up information about libraries. We were given an assignment in doing that which I rather enjoyed. In another, a visiting professor from Texas challenged some standard assumptions about subject classification. The problems Bernadette and I have trying to figure out which of our own books go on which shelves indicate that he's got a point there.

Introduction to Computing in Information Science meets Tuesday evenings. This was the course I wasn't sure if they'd let me take, as I knew it would include some material I'd done on my own. I had some sort of vision of being told, "You shouldn't be taking this course; you know too much of it already." But as I mentioned, my advisor didn't question any of my course selections.

The professor, Barbara Wildemuth, opened the class by showing us a Baskin-Robbins taste spoon and saying that was how much Computer Science we'd get in the course. We'll be introduced to spreadsheets, data bases, and word processing, using Lotus 1-2-3, dBase III+, and WordPerfect, respectively. I have some experience with the first two of these. Also, my favorite software company, Borland, specializes in low-cost software that imitates \$500 programs like those three. I already have and use Quattro, their generic Lotus 1-2-3, and Reflex, their version of dBase. This means that the assignments will not be terribly new to me, and I may be able to do some of them at home with my own equipment, rather than having to go to the lab.

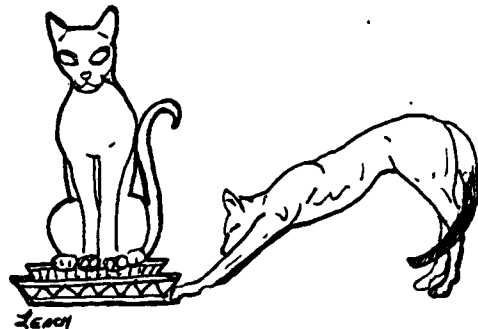
I'd never worked with WordPerfect and don't own a copy of it. But Borland has just introduced their new word-processing program, which emulates half a dozen \$500 WP programs,

including WordPerfect. It usually sells for \$200, but they have an introductory offer of \$99 for loyal old customers like me, so I've sent for that. WordPerfect also supports some nice desktop-publishing stuff, and the computer lab has a laser printer, so I can make the work look extremely pretty. The best part of that is that one of the suggested term projects in the course is to produce a newsletter with desktop-publishing techniques. In other words, DR 60 will be my term project.

(No sooner do I decide to switch word-processing programs than the makers of PC-Write announce that they're finally about to come out with their improved version, which will take care of the things I dislike about the current PC-Write, such as not telling you automatically what page and line you're on. I'll be getting that as part of my original PC-Write purchase price, so I'll have to decide which one I want to use.)

It turns out, incidentally, that I am by no means the only one in the class to have done some of this before. For instance, several of my classmates are university employees who've been using Lotus 1-2-3 to run their offices for the last few years, so I don't feel that I have too much of an unfair advantage.

The third course is Robert Losee's course in Information Models, which meets for an hour and a half Monday and Wednesday mornings. That too looks good. It will involve some math, but not too much. The first class was mostly devoted to definitions of information, such as Shannon's, which grows out of the idea that information is measured by the unlikeliness of a piece of data (i.e., something that surprises you contains more information than something you could have guessed) or the economic model, which suggests that it is possible in principle to attach a monetary value to information, so that, for instance, two bits might be worth two bits. The second class, I managed to arrive 20 minutes late, when for a while my dread parking fantasy appeared to be coming true. Fortunately, the class was discussing probability, most of which is familiar to me. In fact, I've taught some of it. Once again, I feel sorry for those (about half the class, I would guess) who have been conditioned to go, "Oh, ick! Math!"

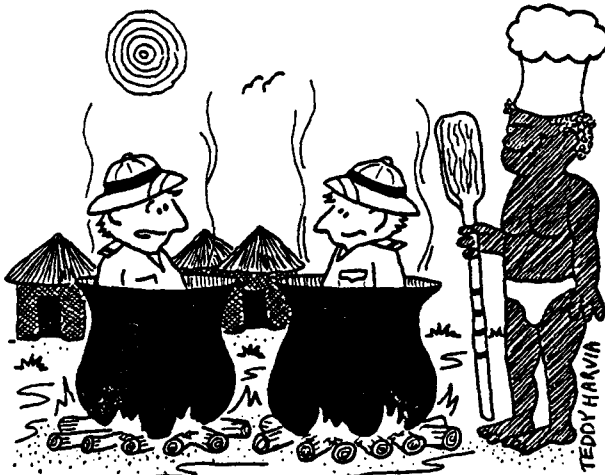


## WORLDCON

The fourth course is On-Line Data Bases, which meets Monday evenings and is taught by Judith Wood. I found out about it last because the first Monday was Labor Day, so the class didn't meet. When it did meet, it immediately cured me of any tendency I might have towards overconfidence. What we're supposed to be learning is how to go through the technicalities of calling up one of these services via modem, and then figuring out the best ways to ask the questions so that one gets all the data and only the data one wants. The first assignment worried me; either I'd utterly missed the point and had no idea how to go about doing it, or it was surprisingly simple. It turned out to be closer to the latter.

This seems as though it is going to be the crucial class. It's stuff I haven't done before, and it looks at least somewhat difficult. On the other hand, if I do master that, I suspect that it could be a major step towards an Information Science career.

Fortunately, the more I work with the rules for dealing with on-line databases, the more sense they make to me. Furthermore, I've now done several different sorts of data search, including use of a CD-ROM to pick out articles I could use for my copyrights paper; the aforementioned search for information about libraries; and a recent On-Line assignment where we did the presumably less interesting search through actual books and bound journals, preparatory to asking the same questions via on-line search. I find that I really do enjoy finding out where information is, whether I'm looking in books, CD-ROMs, or on-line databases. I think I always did, but it used to be that, when I found the information, I had to go through the tedious and laborious process of copying it out by hand. Not being a medieval monk, I am much happier that now one can photocopy the relevant parts of the book, or have the CD-Rom or on-line system print out the answer.



What's the expression again? Are we being done or had for lunch?

Flying to New Orleans and this year's World Science Fiction Convention, I could imagine myself between past and future. The future, however, was the one that was behind me, since I was flying direct from my first class at the UNC School of Library and Information Science.

Suspended in the air, I was in some suspense as to whether I'd be appearing on a panel within a few minutes of my arrival. This worldcon, more than most, was eschewing the sort of rigid and unfannish anal retentiveness that enables one to know in advance where and when program items will be taking place. Mike Glycer and Rick Foss had been forced to create virtually all of the programming for the con *ex nihilo* in a few weeks, and their admirable efforts had left a few problems, such as the two official con documents I had received, which agreed that I was to discuss Electronic Fanzines at 5 PM, but differed as to whether it would be Friday or Saturday.

In any event, I took a taxi to the main hotel from the airport and got to the Green Room at 4:45 PM Friday, to discover that my panel was scheduled for Saturday. That wasn't too disappointing, and I was beginning to see old friends. Mark Blackman, who'd been on the panel that was moved into the spot mine was originally scheduled for (or perhaps it was a bit more complicated than that) was there, as was Janice Gelb, who was making heroic efforts to bring order out of the scheduling chaos.

From there I went to the Fanzine Room, run by P. L. Carruthers-Montgomery, who had stepped in at the last moment after a misunderstanding between the concom and the person they thought had agreed to run it. This meant the pleasure of finally meeting Eve Ackerman, after failing to do so when we had both been at Worldcon two years ago.

Back then, it had been held in the South (Atlanta) in the summertime, and we'd been buffeted by cold winds and rains every time we went from hotel to hotel. For this Southern Worldcon, it wasn't cold, but the atmosphere was so humid that one had to look carefully to see whether it was raining, as it was more often than not.

Nonetheless, I joined a Martin Morse Wooster Food Expedition. Martin is a knowledgeable tourist who seeks out good cheap restaurants in the vicinity of any con he attends. What he found this time was Mother's, a few blocks away (and the rain had let up), so a dozen or so of us (Ed Zdrojewski, Laurraine Tutihasi, Gavin Claypool, and Miriam Benson, among others) had a good dinner there.

You'll notice, by the way, that I haven't mentioned Bernadette thus far in this report. I think I am going to commission a button from Nancy Lebovitz which says,

*She'll be here tomorrow,*

as it always seems to work out that Bernadette gets to cons the day after I do, and the first question people ask me is, "Where is she?"

This time, she was in Durham, not because of her own work, but because her

mother was visiting, the capricious gods of scheduling having decided that Worldcon and the visit had to coincide.

After dinner, I went to a party with a number of the people I have good memories of from *Contraption*: Maia Cowan, George Laskowski, Dr. Halina Harding, Jamie McQuinn, and Dave and Diana Stein, among others. I also got to meet Ruth Woodring, after years of enjoying being in apas with her. I fear that I will lose some credibility with fannish purists when I say that she was wearing a badge she won (and deserved) for Best Hall Costume. Ruth is in SCA, but appears to have no other bad habits.

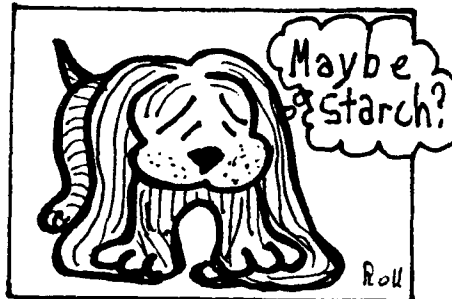
From there I went to a party thrown by Chris Kostanick, possessor of one of the most imaginative and twisted minds in fandom. Perhaps some of the admirers of his writing will be disappointed to learn that none of the hors d'oeuvres moved, or seemed to be made of things like eye of newt, or worse. Nonetheless, it was an excellent party.

Onward to Sam Konkin's Libertarian suite for the Heinlein Wake. I was too late for that, but not too late for a loud argument on whether Heinlein would have wanted to be called a libertarian writer. \*sigh\*

Here I ran into a bunch of friends from the Southern Fandom Press Alliance, one of my favorite amateur press associations. They too had a suite, and I went up there with JoAnn Montalbano, Ruth Judkowitz Brosh, Kyla, George Inzer, Steven Carlberg, and others for some more reveling. After all this time, I finally got to meet Don Markstein, prime Good Example of how nice and open much of sf fandom was to this newcomer 11 years ago.

The next day, I got up sometime in the morning, checked out the dealer's room (from which I managed to escape without too much money spent) and had lunch. Early afternoon was David Schlosser and Kay McFarland's LAS-FAParty, for one of my former favorite amateur press associations. Chris Kostanick, whom I'd first met in LASFAPA, was there too, and he showed courage above and beyond the call by volunteering to go out to buy party supplies with me despite a particularly nasty bit of New Orleans weather. Somewhat soggy, we returned from the local Woolworth's with edibles and drinkables for that evening's Discordian business meeting.

It was now time for the panel on Electronic Fanzines. That wasn't exactly the idea I'd suggested; I preferred "Computers and Fanzines," so as to discuss how fanzines have been influenced by current trends in computers. The panel included Linda Bushyager and Janice Gelb, long-time fanzine and apa fans who are now discovering computer nets; Elst Weinstein, a fanzine fan who has switched from more traditional zine production to desktop publishing, via Macintosh; and Grant McCormack of the successful and enjoyable fanzine FOSFAX, which may branch out into nets. "Electronic Fanzines" would appear to mean the current computer nets, in which case those at the panel most qualified to discuss the topic, such as Chuq Von Rospach, Mark Leeper, and Eric Raymond, were all



in the audience.

In any event, I'd had some ideas on where I thought the panel should go, and I decided to follow those. My theory is that computers are leading fanzines in two directions: the nets leading to a kind of ultimate apa where the qualities of easily available context and instant response reach their greatest extent, and desktop publishing leading to the fanzine as work of visual art, with fans printing their zines up and sending them out to show off. (Amusingly enough, this is how apas got their start, though in those days the technology being displayed was letterpress.)

My fellow panelists cooperated; Janice talked about how she enjoyed getting fast replies on the nets, while Linda complained that this encouraged sloppy writing, as opposed to the days when fannish fanzines were carefully crafted examples of the essayist's art. (See *Folklore Motif X-2393: The Lost Eden*.) The people in the audience who knew more than we panelists did offered information and didn't complain that they belonged on stage. It was a good panel.

Afterwards, I went looking for Bernadette, who was supposed to have arrived. After failing to find her in a few likely places, I heard her voice out of the dank mists as I crossed the street. We went to dinner with David Bratman, a close friend of his who is the sort of superior person who has the name Bernadette (perhaps as a result of paying too much attention to this, I've forgotten her last name), Amy Thomson, Gregg Cox, and others.

We began planning for the Discordian Business Meeting. Because we'd originally planned to arrive before the con started, we could not stay at one of the con hotels. (That was one of the nonstandard things about this worldcon.) This turned out to be a good deal, as our hotel was an extremely pleasant place, just around the corner from the main event, and no more expensive. But we felt it would be a little out of the way as a party location. Eric Raymond was staying in a suite at one of the main hotels and offered that as a party venue. This should have been a simple change, but between indecisiveness and disorganization, we changed plans something like five times before moving the party to Eric's. In any event the party struck me as a success, with many of the people I've already mentioned, plus Mike Weber, Adrienne Fein, Brian Burley, and others.



Sunday morning we awoke and managed to get to brunch (at a nearby Holiday Inn) with Bob and Miriam Benson.

In the afternoon was the second of my panels. This one was entitled, "Where Have All the Science-Fiction Fanzines Gone?" This one was, unlike many program items, held where and when it was originally scheduled to be. On the other hand, two of the originally scheduled panelists--Guy Lillian and Terry Dowling--didn't show up, and Patrick Nielsen Hayden was added at the last minute, joining Nicki Lynch and me.

In one sense, the panel title is absurd. Three of the fanzines on the Hugo ballot--THE TEXAS SF INQUIRER, LAN'S LANTERN, and FOSFAX--deal primarily with science fiction. On the other hand, there are an unprecedented number of zines about science fiction outside the traditional fanzine categories. For instance, publications like LOCUS and THRUST have moved up to semipro status. There are now academic publications like FOUNDATION and THE JOURNAL OF THE FANTASTIC IN THEARTS.

Patrick himself is involved in one of the more interesting experiments, a "little" magazine (done by some of the former personnel of the truthfully named THE LITTLE MAGAZINE) devoted to the discussion of sf. This one is called THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION. The first issue includes some excellent material, such as parody by John M. Ford, reminiscence by Daniel Manus Pinkwater, and reviews by the Nielsen Haydens and Gregg Cox. I don't mean to suggest that it's perfect; it also presents a lengthy screed demanding that we abandon the current moderately precise meaning of the term *hard sf* in favor of using it for works whose approach to science the speaker favors, even ones by J. G. Ballard, who all but prides himself on making up the science as he goes along and using words like "quasar" for their sciencey sound, rather than any meaning they might have. Nonetheless, this is a promising publication, and I wish it the best of luck.

At 5 PM I went to a scheduled program item--a discussion of future worldcons--which I was supposed to chair. Or at least I tried to. I discovered that, unbeknownst to me, it had been moved to 11 that morning, so I'd missed it. (I've heard that something like three out of all the panels actually took place when and where scheduled with the personnel listed in the program book.)

This enabled me to spend a bit more time at Peggy Rae Pavlat's FAPA party. The proverbially stodgy Oldest SF APA continues to include a great number of people I like. One I was particularly glad to see was fellow librarian/information scientist Fred Lerner, with whom I talked such shop as I had managed to learn this early in my career. He made the suggestion (which I have since followed) that I join the American Society for Information Science.

Bernadette and I went to dinner with Art Widner, Lee Hoffman, and others, but had to cut it short when we realized it was almost time for the Hugo awards.

We found it a bit difficult to get to seats in the Nominees' section, but apparent-

ly we were much better off than those in the main area. The ceremony started about 20 minutes late. The foreign and fannish awards have crept back into the ceremonies, but it wasn't too much longer until I learned that for the ninth consecutive time, a nominee other than me had won the Best Fan Writer Hugo.

There were definitely some good things about the ceremony. Mike Resnick was a most amusing toastmaster. The committee gave a special Hugo to a richly deserving winner, the Science Fiction Oral History Association, which is taping the reminiscences of writers and others involved in the sf scene. I was reminded of a discussion I had with Kim Stanley Robinson, who complained that while Academe is finally recognizing a few selected sf writers (Philip K. Dick, Ursula K. Le Guin), many others of comparable ability are being forgotten. The SFOHA is working against that unfortunate trend. (Robinson, alas, saw neither of his nominated novellas win an award, so he now has the second longest current string of unsuccessful Hugo nominations, with eight.)

After the ceremony, Bernadette and I ran into Janice Eisen and Ken Meltsner, and went with them for dessert. We then shopped the French Quarter. It would appear that New Orleans's leading product is t-shirts. They are for sale wherever you look. This gave me a chance to indulge one of my dubious tastes, a love for shirts with crocodilians on them. (It started when I was a preppie and wore shirts with little gators on the pockets and has now gotten completely out of hand.) A bought one with a garish multicolored gator, and one with a bright green crocodile on a bright purple background, representing the "Hard Croc Cafe." (There's also one for the "Hard Duck Cafe." I wonder if there's one with a rooster on it.)

But neither of my shirts would now qualify as the one Mental Ward shirt that most rose above good taste. Bernadette took care of that by buying one that showed a smiling condom, and was captioned, "WRAP THAT RASCAL. New Orleans Safe Sex."

It used to be that the convention was considered over after the Hugo Awards on Sunday night. People would stay over, but programming would be ended. No more. Bernadette's one panel was on Monday morning.



It was on "Who Reads SF?" and it may have typified Nolacon II. In the Green Room we were informed that scheduled panelist Gordon Dickson had been replaced by publisher Tom Doherty. I don't know if Doherty was informed of this change, but he did not show up. Charley Brown was replaced by a similarly invisible panelist. That left Bernadette, writer Don Sakers, and agent Ashley Grayson. The latter moderated, asking for and receiving audience confirmation that the sf readership, or at least that portion of it that shows up for cons, somewhat matches the stereotype of the sf reader: likely to be male, in science or engineering, etc. Bernadette offered some remarks based on her experience teaching sf, but then we were hustled out early, as the concom frantically tried to prepare the area for the closing ceremonies.

PROOF THAT FANZINES DO DISCUSS SF. OR AT LEAST FANTASY. OR SOMETHING.

So the handsome young \*yawn\* man has to \*ho-hum\* slay the dragon...and he finds \*yawn\* the magick \*zzzzz...\*

This generic fantasy plot is brought to you by one who is admittedly unfriendly to the fantasy genre as a whole. Yes, I know that some of the stuff I find boring has interesting scenery or characters. Yes, I know that science fiction has its share of formulaic, repetitious junk fiction. (See Del Rey Books, *passim*.) But even fantasy lovers will admit that there is a lot of the same old stuff.

On the other hand, there are some fantasy books which expand the boundaries of the genre, works like Lisa Goldstein's *The Dream Years*, R. A. MacAvoy's *Tea with the Black Dragon*, and Randall Garrett's Lord Darcy books. Fantasy haters like me join fantasy lovers in enjoying these.

Esther M. Friesner has been working on this sort of book. A recent effort, *Elf Defense*, had some delightful moments, but suffered from a sort of identity crisis; it seemed unsure from page to page whether it wanted to be a light-hearted confrontation between Faerie and Exurbia, a work of moral seriousness, or a melodrama replete with portentous foreshadowings and characters remembering bad stuff *in italics*.

Friesner's latest, *Druid's Blood* (Signet pb), strikes me as a breakthrough. Like the Lord Darcy books, it is a creative revisioning of history, in this case a Pagan England ruled by a different Queen Victoria. Also like the Lord Darcys, it mixes fiction with fact; the narrator is our old friend Dr. Watson. Charles Dickens, Lord Byron and his daughter, and others join in the fun. There's an ingenious plot which explores the book's assumptions. There are also a few faults of tone, and (as Algis Budrys points out in a laudatory F&SF review) Signet has given the book an artistically and commercially inept cover. Nonetheless, this book is a joy, for those who hate fantasy, for those who love fantasy, and presumably for those who don't care.

I've heard it said--and I believe it--that the missing link between the apes and civilized humanity is us. If so, there is another missing link, between the apes and us. These still-living subhumans are not quite Cro-Magnons, but the similar species of Pro Magnates--the owners of professional sports franchises.

For instance, *insanity* has been defined as "continuing the same things you've been doing and believing you'll get different results." I could not help being reminded of that definition when George Steinbrenner hired Billy Martin as his manager, for the fifth time. Martin proceeded to alienate umpires, overwork his pitching staff, and bring about tidal waves of bad publicity through barroom brawls and other unpleasant behavior, just as he had done the first four times, whereupon Steinbrenner, acting shocked by this presumably unpredictable behavior, fired Martin yet again.

Over in the NFL, there's no owner who fires and rehires the way Steinbrenner does, but Colts owner Robert Irsay, last in the news when he sued SPORTS ILLUSTRATED for saying he's Jewish, indicates a continuing desire to grow up to be Steinbrenner, insofar as that is not a contradiction in terms.

No doubt looking for a field general in the Martin tradition, Irsay hired former New England Patriots coach Ron Meyer. In New England, Meyer had started out well, then, after he'd alienated most of his players, kept losing until he was fired.

Meyer's Colts tenure started with a three-game winning streak, which may have been his work, and may have had something to do with the simultaneous return from the injured list of QB Gary Hogeboom.

For that or other reasons, Meyer now has a grudge against Hogeboom. When second-string QB Jack Trudeau was injured, Meyer snubbed Hogeboom and went to raw rookie Chris Chandler, who'd been drafted in the pious hope that after a few years of training, he might become an NFL QB. Predictably, the Colts are now 1-4.

Maybe I'm misjudging Steinbrenner and Irsay. Perhaps instead of trying to hire good people, they are trying to hire people who will be perceived as worse assholes than their employers. If so, they are to be congratulated on a difficult publicity feat.

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ART INDEX

Diana Stein--cover, 7  
Cathy Howard--2  
Bill Ware--3  
Linda Leach--4  
Teddy Harvia--5  
Henry Roll--6