





**DON-o-SAUR 55**

(August 1989)

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**Contents**

American Educations .....	3
Artwork Offer .....	14
Fanzines Received .....	16
Moorcock Bibliography Update .....	20
Letters of Comment .....	21

From Simon Nicholas Hawke, Howard DeVore, Robert Coulson, Teddy Harvia, Mike Glicksohn, Richard Freeman, Harry Warner Jr., Ron Salomon, John Thiel, Sheryl Birkhead, Pavel Gregoric Jr., Berislav Pinjuh, Roy Lavender, Clifton Amsbury, Richard Dengrove, Tom Jackson, Harry Bond, Steve Miller, Dave D'Annassa, J.E. Pournelle, Avedon Carol, Joyce K. Jensenj, SKEL, Alexander R. Slate, Steve Larue, Garth Spencer, Joan Weber, Tom Digby.

Also Heard From .....	41
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Harry Andruschak, Ruth Berman, Carl Bettis, Richard Brandt, Brian Earl Brown, Lester Boutillier, Brad Foster, Fred Jakobcic, Ben Indick, Colin P. Langeveld, Chris Mills, Ken Ozanne, Alan J. Sullivan, Charles Thompson Jr., R. Laurraine Futihasi, and B. Ware.

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## American Educations

The theme of this issue is education, and I can think of no better way to begin than by telling about the important lesson recently drummed into me concerning word processing and computers. It's very simple, and I may be one of the last to have absorbed it, but I think I've got it now:

**ALWAYS MAKE A BACKUP.** I thought I knew that; in fact I thought I was doing it, but when the system froze up as I was putting the final touches on the main, non-LoC portion of DoS 55, I had to shut off the power and start over. I got the "*document damaged, restore backup*" message and then was informed that no backup existed for that document.

So ... this issue of DON-o-SAUR is a little later than I'd planned, and it may be a few pages shorter because I don't believe I can reconstruct from memory everything I said the first time around, and that is probably just as well. Or it may be longer if I think of things I forgot the first time.

I have found my attention drawn increasingly to educational issues lately--in fact much more so, at least on the generalized, abstract level, than when I was actively involved in the U.S. educational system myself. When I was teaching, I was confronted almost daily with the fact that many of my students had no clear idea of what a sentence is or how to use a dictionary or the library and seemed appallingly ignorant about politics, history, math and science. But it was all part of the territory. I did what little I could daily to dispell some of the fog in the minds of individual students and didn't let my own mind dwell on the possibility that what I was seeing was merely symptomatic of a national educational malaise.

Perspective changes with distance. Now that I'm no longer in the midst of the trees, I can start to see the outlines of the forest.

In addition to the horror stories I see regularly in the newspapers about the sad state of American education--how U.S. students do so much worse on standardized tests than students in almost any other industrialized country, and how kids graduate from high school without being able to read street signs or simple instructions and can't fill out job applications, etc.--the issue has become focused for me by an exchange of letters with two Yugoslavian high school students, Berislav Pinjuh and Pavel Gregorić Jr.

The first of their letters appears in the LoC section, and I invite you to skip ahead and read them if you haven't already. They write quite acceptable English, don't they? (I edited the letters only in the sense of leaving out some portions of Pavel's loc). I couldn't help wondering as I read those and subsequent letters how many U.S. students of that same age (17) could express themselves so articulately in any foreign language. I was reminded that in all my own years of formal schooling, I was never exposed to any foreign language except Latin, which I passed only because ... well, I've never been certain why I passed; it certainly wasn't because I'd mastered the subject.

The contrast between Yugoslavian and American educational standards became even more dramatic in subsequent letters. In one of his letters, Berislav tells of a friend of his who was in the U.S. for a year. "He's not much of a student and not too bright, but he said he was the cleverest?- in the class, for he said that his American colleagues were quite lousy in all subjects but sports. I wouldn't believe him too much if his sister wasn't there as well. It's what we call the 'American complex of grandure.'"



He adds:

Here, children start school at the age of 6 or 7, and go to the primary school for eight years. That's the obligatory part. Then, a big majority of them -us- enter secondary, high schools which last for four years. Then we go to the university, that lasts four to six years.

We pay much more attention to general academic knowledge and much less to the physical education. We, as a small nation, learn many foreign languages. I learn English, Italian, German and I used to learn Latin and ancient Greek, which are not for conversation, but nevertheless interesting.

In one of his letters, Pavel tells of spending two days with an attractive 16-year-old American girl who was visiting his uncle:

I noticed how poor her general knowledge is. She lives with her grandma and grandpa on a vast farm nearby a small town in midTexas. She says she doesn't read much, she has never heard of, for example: Sigmund Freud, Stephen Hawking, Isaac Asimov (yeah, Heinlein too), F.M. Dostojevski, Pink Floyd, Leonardo daVinci...

I remember when we entered Zagreb Cathedral and there was a giant cross, with Christ on it and on the top of the cross the initials I.N.R.I. I said: "You've read the Bible, you're a christian, you certainly know what I.N.R.I. means, do you not?"

"No," she said. "I don't. I'm stupid, you know. We are all stupid..."

I didn't quite understand what "we" referred to. Did she mean all young people in the world or just young Americans?

I was tempted to rush off a letter to Pavel saying the young lady probably meant only that all Texans are stupid (except that I've never known a Texan to admit to stupidity), and that if she'd been from Colorado or Wyoming she would undoubtedly have impressed him more favorably, but I was feeling pretty stupid myself about the meaning of I.N.R.I. I asked Carolyn if she knew what I.N.R.I. stands for. "I've never claimed to be a Christian," she retorted. "I never took Latin. You're the one who should know." (How many of you, the readers, know what I.N.R.I. on the cross stands for? I had to look it up in my Unabridged. Catholics, at least, should know.) At least I could identify Pink Floyd (Carolyn couldn't).

Well, I've always been painfully aware of gaps in my own education, and I've become even more sensitive to some of them recently, especially in areas of geography and language. I told Pavel in my first letter to him that I could never hope to learn his language; he responded by sending me a "Teach Yourself" book of Serbo-Croatian lessons, saying in effect, "Sure you can; give it a try," and so I have, for the first time in my life, been studying a foreign language. I bought a small Serbo-Croat dictionary and a set of the Berlitz tapes to get a clearer idea of the punctuation, and I've been learning.

I've also been collecting newspaper clippings about American educational shortcomings and achievements; and I've developed a few ideas and theories and suggestions for how things could be improved, and I may touch on them briefly toward the end of this essay.

But you know me: I like to keep things specific, concrete and personal. So instead of giving you a scholarly, abstract discourse on "education" in general, I'm going to compare my formal education and Carolyn's with that of our parents and then of our children. Watch for trends, but be slow to see any universal principles, OK? (It should go without saying that I invite my readers to share their educational experiences. With a large enough sample we may eventually be able to draw some valid conclusions about education.)

Geography, incidentally, becomes an important factor in this at the outset, in comparing the educational attainments of my parents with those of Carolyn's.

My parents were born with the 20th century in the mountains of Virginia, in the heart of the Appalachians, where their ancestors had settled around the time of the Revolutionary War. Russell and Buchanan and neighboring counties remained relatively isolated and inaccessible until the 1950s, but of special interest to linguistic scholars who wanted to study original Elizabethan speech patterns and vocabulary. The school systems lagged accordingly, clinging to a decaying past.

Carolyn's parents grew up on the wind-swept plains of South Dakota, in communities and on farms that were, in a sense, as isolated as the Appalachians and no doubt amid hardships as daunting, but certainly with a far greater sense of openness and of forward movement. They were automatically part of the pioneering spirit. Both of Carolyn's parents completed high school and college. George Hollister went on to get a doctorate in primary education, which is easy to say but took more than 10 years to achieve (interrupted by World War II). Both George and Helen were teachers.

My father, Bert Thompson, completed fifth grade in a one-room rural school in Russell County, Va. He had learned the fabled three R's -- readin' 'ritin' and 'rithmetic. His mother died when he was 14. He hated his stepmother, so he left home, took jobs ranging from logging, mule-driving, mining, farming, etc. (one brief stint with a circus, even) staying with various relatives until he was old enough to get work on the railroads. The big locomotives became the enduring passion of his life. I probably never really appreciated how much skill and intelligence (to say nothing of courage) was involved in operating those monsters. My father's attempts to instill in me some of his love for them failed utterly.

My mother, Iolet Duty, six months older than my father, was born in Buchanan County, on the other side of Big A Mountain. Both her parents died before she was 10, and she was raised by assorted relatives and foster parents -- including Uncle Aut (Arthur, but never called anything but Aut) and Aunt Bess Thompson, who were, of course, among the relatives that Bert stayed with.

Iolet, through sheer perseverance and stubbornness, managed to get a pretty good education, considering the time and place. She attended boarding school at Council and got a high school diploma (with four years of Latin, plane and solid geometry, algebra, and a lot of literature, in addition to a great deal of independent reading). She became something of a Biblical scholar in her own right. She also managed two years of business college, learning typing, shorthand and similar skills, before marrying Bert in March of 1923, after first making sure that her two younger sisters had completed their education. (She took her maiden name, Duty, seriously.)

I was the second of three children born to Bert and Iolet. Nope, that's wrong. I was the third of four. The first, Helen June, was born prematurely in October 1923 and lived only a couple of days. Laura was born in April 1925. I followed in November 1927, and Polly came along in October 1930. (She was named Barbara Wallace Elizabeth Ann; the parents had been told she had to be the last baby, so they gave her every name they could think of that they could squeeze onto the birth certificate--there wasn't room for Carol Virginia--but she was never called anything but Polly and finally had that legally added to the other names.)

Our early schooling was a problem for all three of us, and I'm sure my difficulties were no greater than those of my sisters, but since it's mine that I recall...

Part of the problem was that it took me a while to figure out where "home" was. By 1927, my parents had settled permanently in Laramie, Wyo., where Bert was a fireman on the Union Pacific Railroad. But by the time I was ready to start first grade (there may have been such a thing as kindergarten in Laramie at that time; I don't know; neither my sisters nor I ever attended), the Great Depression was in full swing, and work on the railroad was slow, as was any kind of work anywhere in the country. When Bert would be laid off the railroad and couldn't find any other kind of work in Laramie, the key to survival was the railroad pass, which enabled him to take the family back to Virginia, where he owned a few acres of land adjoining his father's farm.

So first and second grades for me (third and fourth for Laura) were divided between the relatively modern, relatively progressive Lincoln Grade School in Laramie (with all the amenities of urban civilization, including indoor bathrooms, running water, central heating and electricity and classes of about 20 students all studying the same thing at the same time), and that one-room shack in Russell County, with its outdoor toilets, wood stove, pumped water and coal oil lamps and a single teacher trying to supervise 35 or 40 students in five different grades. I recall the teacher writing things on the board and having students copy the sentences or numbers, but I was seldom certain which ones I was supposed to be copying, and none of it really meant anything to me. My mother tried to give me reading and writing lessons at home to make up for the obvious lack of results at school, but I was a reluctant pupil. I was confused and dispirited and took some pretty sharp whacks rather than cooperate.

When I started third grade in Laramie, I found myself totally out of my element. We were supposed to have learned what the letters i-n-g did to the end of a verb, and I hadn't a clue. I had to go home with the sad news that I'd been put back a grade. I felt disgraced, and it took me many years to get over it. It was a major blow to my ego. In later grades, when I would sometimes excel in English or journalism or speech or dramatics and would start feeling superior, I had only to remind myself that I was, after all, a full year older than most of my classmates to bring myself back down to earth. But by taking second grade over again, I was able, finally, to learn the rudiments of reading and writing, though I seemed to have missed something crucial about understanding arithmetic, and I never did really catch up with that. And as long as I attended Lincoln School, I felt at a distinct disadvantage. The other students and the teachers knew that I'd lost a grade and assumed that I was a bit retarded or stupid or slow. I felt slow and stupid.

It wasn't until we moved to 1120 Sheridan on the east side and I started fifth grade in Whiting School that I started gaining a little confidence. Miss



Milroy, my fifth-grade teacher, was the first one to treat me as though I might have a little intelligence. If she knew I was a year older than the others, she didn't show it. She was kind and sweet and beautiful, and I was willing to work to earn her praise. School in general seemed easier and more enjoyable from then on.

Not that my problems were over. The Depression was ending; the frequency and duration of our trips to Virginia diminished, but I continued missing a great deal of school for unrelated reasons. I was a sickly kid. All kids miss some school because of mumps, measles, chicken pox and occasional colds and flu; that's one of the fringe benefits of childhood. But I got not just all the usual childhood diseases but a lot of fairly uncommon ones and was sicker with them than you're supposed to be, and the string of illnesses went on far longer than for most kids. At age 12 I got rheumatic fever in the wake of a strep throat infection and the whole family had to move to Denver for a year while I recovered and had a second tonsilectomy to dig out the roots left from the first one at age 5. I was still having heart murmurs from the rheumatic fever a few years later when I came down with scarlet fever, which in turn led to a severe ear infection, which resulted in a mastoidectomy, which had to be repeated within a year. There were two favorable aspects to all this, from my point of view and at least one from any point of view. I got a lot of sympathy and extra attention; and I was excused from physical education classes; that's what I most liked most about the situation. The other benefit was that in spite of my early difficulties with reading and writing, I learned, in the long idle days of quiet convalescence to love both activities.

I was able to keep up, or catch up, with some of the missed classes. I had little difficulty with English and history and any other classes that required a lot of reading, but I was so weak in even the basics of math, and I was totally intimidated by algebra and geometry. I seem to recall that I started both subjects, but had to drop them to avoid an F and never did get around to completing them. I was granted a diploma even though some required subjects were notably absent from my transcript. I took a summer class in the theory of electricity (no such thing as electronics in those days), which I barely passed, and I think that was accepted in lieu of math credits. It could just be that the principal thought I was going to be dying soon and would never have any use for a high school diploma anyway and gave it as an act of charity.

In grade school, one of my great ambitions (other than to somehow develop muscles like Tarzan) was to become a chemist or astronomer. When I discovered how much of a math background was required for those subjects in high school, I soon decided I'd rather become a politician or journalist. (For some reason, perhaps starting with Miss Milroy's encouragement in fifth grade, I'd developed a slight talent and a considerable liking for standing up in front of groups and reciting poems or "readings;" I loved the applause. When Velma Linford got hold of me in high school and introduced me to the wonderful world of oratory and dramatics, as well as the complexities of government and politics, my horizons widened.)

What science I learned in high school came mostly from my reading of SF magazines, supplemented by popular science books on physics, astronomy, anthropology and paleontology. The only science class I took was biology, which required no math. I don't recall that I learned anything from it that I hadn't already picked up from my own reading (well, I did read some of, and do a book report on, Darwin's "Origin of Species," which I probably wouldn't have dipped into otherwise). We could have studied sexuality the second semester, but the

girls in the class voted it down, so we focused on evolution. At least there was no nonsense about NOT studying evolution, or granting equal time to creationism.

As for languages... well, I did take two years of Latin and somehow bluffed my way though. Maybe just the fact that I was pretty familiar with Roman and Greek history helped. I wrote a story set in Roman times and used it to get credit in Latin, English and typing.

I did some high powered faking in typing and shorthand, too. Those classes of course were geared to secretarial careers and were taken mostly by girls. I convinced the teachers that I was going to be a newspaper reporter or freelance fiction writer and it was a waste of time for me to do all the business letters that constituted the usual exercises. I typed the written work that I did for English and American problems, and that was enough to get me a passing grade. (Actually, I had already taught myself touch typing and the high school classes merely built up my speed a little.) I had to actually learn a little shorthand in order to pass, thinking I would be able to use in newspaper work, but you know, I never did. I don't think I can even make a "that" or a "the" in shorthand anymore.

(Speaking of wasted time... my mind goes back to grade school and the countless hours spent taking "penmanship," which consisted of alternately making circles and up-and-down scratch marks and which was intended to make our handwriting not just legible but beautiful. I never understood how, or why that class was required, and I've never known anyone who claimed to have benefited from it--well, maybe one. It still angers me a little when I think of the many ways in which that time could have been better spent -- such as studying languages at an age when learning a foreign language would have been easy and fun, or getting a better grounding in math or geography. Oh, well.)

I think both of my sisters had a somewhat easier time, with fewer interruptions, in grade school and high school. Laura, at least, had a far more active social life and probably got better grades than I did. Polly got better grades while taking tougher classes. But both my sisters got married almost immediately after graduating, and both eventually helped their husbands get college degrees. They got the same education but none of the academic credit.

My typing skills paid off very promptly when I entered the Army right out of high school. The fact that I could type 40 words a minute was enough to get me classified as a clerk typist in the Medics instead of as a foot soldier in the infantry. I got cushy office jobs instead of having to lug a rifle around for 18 months. I learned to hate rifles in basic training.

The fact that I got into the Army at all was a bit of a surprise, considering my history of illnesses. But the medical exam was cursory. I was effectively deaf in my left ear, but the Army didn't notice that until I was discharged. If I still had any remnants of the rheumatic fever heart murmur, no one noticed, and it was never a problem, either in the Army or at any time since. This was in 1946, recall; the fighting was over and the armed services were demobilizing at the same time they were worrying about a Soviet threat. They were taking virtually anyone who volunteered--and for conveniently short periods of time. (I had volunteered because it was expedient for me to get out of town, having disgraced my parents by being arrested for burglary just before I graduated from high school. That's a whole 'nother story that I've told in previous issues of DoS and don't have time or space to repeat here.)



I did continue my education in the Army, but realize now that I could have made much better use of the time to learn from some of the people I met rather than taking classes in speech, journalism and radio, snap courses that I knew I could ace, building up a few college credits, but learning nothing new. My new knowledge came from my exposure to young men from widely different backgrounds than mine.

For instance, one of my best buddies while I was stationed at Madigan Hospital near Tacoma, Wash., was a musician who could play a dozen or so instruments and who was an ardent Gilbert and Sullivan enthusiast. He was a one-man musical-appreciation class.

At McCornack Hospital in Pasadena, where I spent the last half of my enlistment, I had two close friends: one, Ted Pinsky (of Jewish-Irish descent) was a pharmacist; the other, Johnny Koshak, a Yugoslavian newly arrived in the states with harrowing tales of guerrilla warfare in the mountains with Mijalovich, hair-breadth escapes from Tito after the war and a perilous passage to the U.S., was studying (on his own) to be a physician. He had an impressive collection of lavishly illustrated medical books and was systematically memorizing the Latin names of all the muscles and bones of the human body. Ted and Johnny could talk for hours about matters medical, and I learned from them more about the female anatomy and reproductive system (a subject of endless fascination for all of us) than I could have in a high school biology class.)

Johnny's English was still somewhat halting and uncertain, and I often found myself in the position of translator. "Vy don't you come in the meedle?" he once asked a prostitute with whom we were sharing the back seat of a taxi. In response to her startled, quizzical expression I explained, "He wants you to sit between us." "We only got a couple of blocks to go, honey," she said.

Johnny loved to talk about his homeland, but I was so wrapped up in my own petty concerns that I failed to learn as much from him as I could have. I neglected to probe for details about his native language, culture and religion. The fact that he was Greek Orthodox rather than Roman Catholic could have told me something if I'd followed up on it, but I missed the opportunity. (I could have started studying Serbo-Croat then instead of waiting until now!) But I really loved the home-made sausage his grandmother send him occasionally. Johnny was another music lover--particularly the operas of Verdi, Puccini and Mozart, and if nothing else I absorbed from him an enduring appreciation for *Rigoletto*, *Aida*, *La Traviata*, *Don Giovanni* and *La Boheme*. (Because I displayed no musical talent, I had missed any opportunity there might have been in school to learn anything about music.)

One important thing I learned from experience in the Army was that I had an impressive capacity for alcohol and that I really loved what it did to me. Fortunately, the opportunities for carousing were limited by the low level of Army pay and the fact that I had an equally strong compulsion for book-buying and reading. I could get almost as intoxicated from reading Isaac Asimov, Balzac, James T. Farrell, James Branch Cabell, Robert Heinlein, Rabelais and James M. Cain as I could from sopping up manhattans and gin fizzes and the other sickening concoctions Johnny and I favored. It didn't occur to me that I might be an alcoholic or even an obsessive-compulsive personality.

I suppose that when I got out of the Army I could have stayed in Southern California and used the G.I. Bill to attend just about any school I wanted to, and my life might have been entirely different, but I chose to return home,

since I was still (or again) welcome, and attend the University of Wyoming. It did cut 'way down on expenses.

College was much more enjoyable than high school, and not too much of a challenge, but I still avoided the hard courses. Ironically, by opting for a bachelor of science degree in journalism, rather than a BA, I was somehow excused from taking both foreign language and science (except biology).

I graduated from the University of Wyoming in 1951 with two important acquisitions. One was simply a generalized sense of self-confidence, a feeling that I could probably do just about anything I set my mind to and learn anything I needed to know.

The other was a wife.

I'd first noticed Carolyn in a summer-session introductory English lit class, to which she arrived directly from archery instruction. With her bow and arrows slung on her back and wearing shorts displaying a set of delightful legs, she was just irresistibly cute. I couldn't keep my eyes off her, and it didn't take me long to notice that she was also the smartest and best informed student in the class. That impressed me at least as much as her good looks. It was at least another year before we were dating steadily (I was still pretty slow about some things), but we were married during the spring break before my final term. Carolyn had finished her work the previous quarter. Our first "home" was a student-housing Butler Hut. Sort of like camping out.

Carolyn's educational background impressed and intrigued me from the beginning and even more as I got to know her better. She was obviously much better grounded in most subjects--literature, history, geography, math and languages--than I was. (I may have known a little more about science, in a generalized, non-math, theoretical sense, just from my SF and popular science reading, but in everything else, Carolyn was clearly ahead of me.) Yet her grade school and high school years had been even more chopped up and irregular than mine had been. During the war years, especially, following her father from camp to camp, she'd hardly been able to complete a full year in any given school. She did a lot of the required work via USAFI correspondence classes. But you must remember that both her parents were teachers, and she was an only child. Such things do make a difference.

I'd done so well in college and enjoyed it so much that I wasn't ready to quit with a bachelor's degree. I was accepted for a graduate assistantship at the University of Wisconsin; and so, following an uncomfortable summer sojourn with a small paper in Newcastle, Wyoming (at which time Carolyn learned the meaning of "morning sickness"), we moved to Madison, Wis.

Getting a masters degree (MS, of course, still with no science) was even more fun than the BS had been, and I would have loved to have gone on for a doctorate, but the G.I. benefits and university financial aid had run out, and anyway Carolyn wouldn't have stood for it.

"I've just finished helping my father get a doctorate, and I refuse to start all over again with you!" she'd said, in effect.

So that was the end of my formal education. After that, I had to go to work and unlearn most of what I'd been taught about journalism. It was also an opportunity to learn the truth about child-rearing.



All three of our kids are better educated than I am. They all can cope with higher math, and all took some of the "hard science" courses. They all took at least one foreign language. Bruce learned ancient Greek. All three of the kids excelled in music each can play at least two different instruments. They know where the Chesapeake Bay is. They probably know what "I.N.R.I." stands for. (I'll try to remember to ask them.)

The reasons for their superiority are easily identifiable. For one thing, they all attended the same schools all the way through high school. We weren't moving around from job to job or city to city. Our lives had stabilized by the time we'd moved to Denver and the kids were school age. For another thing, Adams County School District 50 was, at that time anyway, decently funded, with good teachers and a sound program. More important than that, I'm convinced, is that summer vacation, for our children, was not a total break from education. As a special treat, they spent at least part of the summers with their grandparents in Laramie; they attended classes at UW, where Grandpa George was an elementary education professor. So they automatically associated school with love and security and achievement. One other factor, I'm sure, was that they had a library in their own home. We had encyclopedias, unabridged dictionaries, almanacs and all kinds of other books and magazines. All three of the kids learned to read at an early age, in self-defense and out of simple curiosity, to find out why their parents seemed to get such a kick out of it.

Our offspring did not all end up with an equal amount of education. Our older son, Bruce, born in January 1952, spent nearly a year as a San Francisco hippie (with my blessing and full approval) after graduating from Ranum High School in Westminsterr, then attended Metropolitan State College in Denver, where I was teaching by then. After getting his BA in philosophy (with a lot of hard science courses), he went to the University of Denver for a Master's, also in philosophy. That must have been in about 1974 or '75. A year ago, he finally finished work on his doctorate, still in philosophy, from the University of Colorado. He has just moved with his wife and two boys to Erie, Pa., where he'll be teaching at Maryhurst College (a small, formerly all-girl Catholic school) after delivering a paper at a Harvard philosophy seminar early in September. He'd been teaching this past year, and during several previous summer sessions, at Texas Tech, in Lubbock. Fortunately for the family finances, Bruce's wife and her mother, who lives with them, both have full-time jobs. During the dozen or more years that Bruce worked on his doctorate, he was teaching part-time when he could and occasionally putting on puppet shows (a skill he had learned in San Francisco); one summer he drove the miniature train at Lakeside Amusement Park, to the delight of his grandfather Bert.

Our daughter, Claudia, born in December 1953, also elected to attend Metro after her graduation from Ranum. She majored in history, after resolutely resisting the blandishments of the Music Department. (She has a beautiful singing voice). She spent one year as an exchange student in Scotland. Scarcely pausing to take a deep breath, she then enrolled in a graduate program in Library Science at the University of Denver and got her Master's at the same time that Bruce received his. It had occurred to her that there isn't much you can do with a degree in history except teach, and she was determined to NOT do that. There were already enough teachers in the family, thank you. It turned out there's not much you can do with a Master's in Library Science, either. There was no crying demand in the nation's public and private libraries for qualified librarians. Most of her job applications were turned down on the grounds of overqualification. She worked for several years, at abysmally low pay, for a title research company in Denver, and finally, gratefully, accepted

a pay cut to accept an entry-level position in the University of Wyoming Library archives. She's been there for about six years now and has finally worked her way up to a supervisory position, still grossly underpaid, but happy with the opportunity to pursue her passion for Western history. She writes books in semi-secrecy, but I'm counting on her to be famous someday.

Our younger son, Douglas, the tagalong born in May 1959, is the least educated (and therefore?) the highest paid of anyone in the family. He was also an honor graduate from Ranum. (Well, all three of them were honor grads; it was taken for granted that they would be and the fact hardly seems worth mentioning. Doug ranked slightly higher in his class than Bruce or Claudia did.) Doug broke with tradition in declining to attend Metro. The University of Colorado has a better College of Engineering, and it was the one that offered him a freshman scholarship. We'd always assumed that Doug would pursue a career in something involving a lot of mathematics, because he was counting before he was talking, but I was just a little surprised when he chose the uncharacteristically practical field of engineering. I might have been a little surprised that he quit with just a bachelor's degree, but I could understand why he did when Bechtel offered him a starting salary higher than mine was at Metro after a dozen or more years of teaching. He has sometimes talked about going after a master's if he should ever be laid off from Bechtel, but they seem to like him, even though they failed miserably in their attempts to make him more talkative. (In one of his early job evaluation reports, he was advised to join Toast Masters in order to improve his communication skills. If he did, it didn't; he still talks in monosyllables.) After a year in the home office near L.A., Doug was assigned to the Palo Alto nuclear plant near Phoenix. He's now almost the only Bechtel engineer still there. He's been offered an equivalent job with Arizona Public Service Co. any time he cares to make the switch, but he's happy with Bechtel, at least as long as they let him stay in Phoenix. He owns two houses there and likes the climate.

If there's a lesson in all this, it would seem to be that, beyond a certain point, more education does not guarantee more income.

But of course that raises the big question: What is an education for?

And one of my personal theories about American educational ills is that, as a culture, we've been giving the wrong answer to that question.

I saw it daily at Metro. A high percentage of the students were in their late 20s or older; they'd been working for a decade or so and had decided to complete their education. Why? The answer was almost unanimous: "To get a better job." Any attempts to broaden their interests to such matters as literature or the philosophy of science are met with resistance and resentment. They know what they want--more money. Don't distract them with frivolities. (There were exceptions, of course; I loved them; some of them are still among my best friends.)

I clipped an item from the *Rocky Mountain News* of June 16, 1989, about a proposal for the Denver public schools to eliminate all remedial classes and place slower students in "more challenging courses." That may or may not be a good idea, depending on definitions and details (it's hard to learn much from a newspaper), but it was this comment by deputy superintendent Evie Dennis that caught my attention:



"The time has come for us to take a hard look to see where we are falling down... I'm tired of business people saying, 'We have to train your graduates when they come to us.'"

I groaned aloud, but since Carolyn was sitting at the breakfast table with me and tends to react with pitying glances when I respond vehemently to newspaper articles, I voiced my own counter comment silently. Under more appropriate circumstances, with a more appreciative audience, I'd have said something like:

"But damn it, Evie, of course businesses have to train new employees. If they expect the schools to do that for them, then they have entirely the wrong impression of what schools are for!"

I mean, I got a degree in journalism and I worked on newspapers for some 30 years, but it wasn't the schools or universities I attended which trained me as a copy editor; each newspaper I worked for had to do that, according to its own specifications.

I asked my son Douglas, after he'd been working for Bechtel a couple of years, if he ever used any of the esoteric math and engineering courses he had to take at the University of Colorado. His job, to the best of my understanding, consisted primarily of reading wiring diagrams, comparing the blueprints to the actual installation. He grinned and replied, in effect: "Oh, no, they could probably take someone off the street and train them to do what I do; the degree was just evidence that I could be trained."

And I recall my father's long and successful career as a locomotive engineer with no more than a 19th century style fifth-grade education. He never mentioned anything about the Union Pacific complaining about having to train its employees.

However... As I say, you can't learn much from reading newspaper articles. It may very well be that what Evie Dennis was referring to was employees' complaints that they often have to teach new workers how to read and write and use arithmetic. I have heard of such complaints. I have heard about complaints that new employees sometimes have to be taught the very concept of work.

What IS education for? At various times I have had fairly comprehensive answers to that question. The longer I've lived and the more I've learned, the more tentative my answers have become. I'm in the process of rethinking the whole subject.

And right now I'm going to stop talking about it and invite your comments.

## SPECIAL ART OFFER

The following letter from Thomas Recktenwald of Sprenger Str. 107, 6635 Schwalbach, West Germany, could have been included in the Loc Column, but I think you'll understand why I'm setting it apart:

Dear Don,

I found a note about your fanzine in the May issue of *SF Chronicle*. In most cases it's a bit complicate for me to order fanzines or other things in the USA because I have no credit card, and therefore I was pleased to find the hint that your trade your zine for art works.

I myself have no artistical talent, but I know some German fan artists, and I have permission to leave their illustrations to fanzine editors outside of West Germany. On the other side, I've very interested in material from foreign fan artists for my own fanzines and our semi-prozine SPACE. Are you in contact with such people?

Because it's very expensive to send copies of all the illustrations via air mail, I made reduced versions and gave them numbers. HS stands for Hubert Schweizer, CH for Christian Holl and HK for Heidi Koch. If you or other fanzine editors would like to use some of the pictures, then I need only the numbers, and I'll send copies in original size (8"X11").

I would be glad if you could duplicate and distribute these reduced copies or write a note in your fanzine. Perhaps there will be other editors who would like to trade their zines for illustrations.

The next page is a sampling of the artwork Thomas Recktenwald sent me. There's much more. In all, there were 39 pieces by Christian Holl, 26 by Hubert Schweitzer, and 13 by Heidi Koch.

Here's my offer: Send me \$1 to help pay for postage and repro expense, and I will send a copy of the complete packet Thomas sent me. You can then order specific illos from Thomas. (I'm ordering a few myself.)

"Are you in contact with such people?" Thomas asks.

I don't know.

Maybe this is one way to find out.



CH 18



HS 20



CH 27



CH 38



HK 9



HS 15





**ZINES RECEIVED**  
**IN EXCHANGE FOR DON-O-SAUR**

Be it understood, please, that this is not a review column, and just because I can't resist saying nice things about some of the zines mentioned here, that doesn't mean I'm under any obligation to describe all of them in detail or that I'm passing any judgments. The only real purpose of this section is to provide a record of the editors I'm trading zines with. If you are sending me your zine but don't see it listed here, please let me know. In some cases, my comments here may serve as substitutes for the locs I might like to write if I had time. These will be in alphabetical order, I hope:

**A & A 17, 18**, (Jan. & Feb. 1989) Fred and Francis Valery; a production of the non-profit French Space Academy, c/o Frederique Pinsard, 11 rue des Vignerons, 33800 Bordeaux, France. French language fanzine, 8 1/2 X 11 folded and stapled. Attractive looking, with reviews and commentary. I don't read French, but it seems that if I'd just try hard enough, I could.

**AIRGLOW #7**, T.L. Bohman, Box 14, East Thetford, VT 05043-0014. "An eccentric personalzine published for those suspected of being tolerant of the publisher's pretensions." Bohman has a relaxed style of writing and a tolerant outlook on life. His tales of rural Vermont are strange and wonderful.

**BCSFazine #192**, with **FICTIONS Free for All #2**. Monthly publication of the British Columbia SF Association, P.O. Box 35577 Stn. E., Vancouver, B.C. V6M, 4G9, Canada. Fiction supplement "contains mature material" but nothing risqué that I could find. And I looked. Surprisingly good writing, considering the general level of fan fiction. Also **BCSFazine 193 & 194**.

**BARYON #41**, Winter '88-89. Barry R. Hunter, P.O. Box 3314, Rome, GA 30164-3314. Ten-page perzine consisting almost entirely of reviews by Barry and others.

**CONVENTION LOG #54** April '89; R. Laurraine Tutihasi, 3876 Bowcroft St. #4, Los Angeles CA 90016. Perzine, 11 pages of con reports, letters, etc., including a thought provoking review and commentary on The Fatal Shore, a history of Australia by Robert Hughes, focusing on a particularly enlightened proposal for the treatment of criminals.

**THE CO-OPERATIVE CAULIFLOWER (#1)** Harry Bond, 6 Elizabeth Ave., Bagshot, Surrey, GU19 5NX, England. 38 pages (8 1/2 X 11). The successor to **Nowhere Fast**, which Harry says wasn't very good. TCC contains mystifying vituperative references to the "Ashley-Carol-Whiteoak" furore that could be either amusing or offensive if one but understood the context.

**DE PROFUNDIS #207**, April '89: Clubzine of LASFS, 11513 Burbank Blvd, North Hollywood, CA 81601, edited by Jeni Burr. Minutes of the Previous Meeting, by Secretary Mike Glycer are the highlight of the publication.

**8 1/2 X 11 Zine #6**, David Thayer/Teddy Harvia (the first is an anagram of the second), 7209 DeVille Dr., NRH, TX. Subtitled "Committing the Cartoonist to Paper," this 8-page semiannual publication is rich in sketches, sketchy in prose, but with some interesting comments on "Vietnam withdrawal."



**FACTSHEET FIVE** #30, Mike Gunderloy, 6 Arizona Ave., Rensselaer, NY 12144-4502. The mind boggles. A whole huge fanzine (105 pp of very fine print) devoted almost exclusively to zine reviews or news about fanzines and other small press publications. Available for trade, \$2 for sample copy or locs. Suddenly indispensable! Published five times this year, six next, it says.

**FILE 770** #79 and 80, Edited by Mike Glycer, 5828 Woodman Ave. #2, Van Nuys, CA 91401. This newszine is the reason Mike Glycer is a perennial nominee and frequent winner of the Best Fan Writer Hugo. (His name is indeed on the ballot once again.) And File 770 is itself a nominee as Best Fanzine.

**FOSFAX** #137, March '89, Ed. Timothy Lane, P.O. Box 37281, Louisville, KY. Clubzine of the Falls of the Ohio SF Association, devoted more to reviews and locs than to club news. 44 pages. Interesting and easy to read despite the small type. A Hugo nominee.

**FROM SUNDAY TO SATURDAY** #89, Don Fitch, 3908 Frijo, Covina, CA 91722. A special 10-page report in diary form on Corflu 6, with background on Don's re-entry into fanzine fandom.

**G'NEL** #66, Marc Ortleib, P.O. Box 215 Forest Hill, Victoria 3131, Australia. Ten pages published for ANZAPA, with a note to anyone receiving a copy who is NOT a member of ANZAPA to please not tell anyone. Don't tell I told.

**HERMIT CRAB** #1 and 2, Carl Bettis, P.O. Box 32631, Kansas City, MO 64111. An impressionistic perzine that I picked out of **FACTSHEET FIVE** to favor with a free copy of DoS, in return for which I received these, plus an earlier publication, **The Slapdash Hackery Factory**. Carl is more poet than SF fan, but his zines are pleasantly weird.

**IBID** #66, Ben Indick, 428 Sagamore Ave., Teaneck, NJ 07666. An apazine for the Esoteric Order of Dagon. This issue contains an article by Ben about the already legendary Whitney Museum publication of Stephen King's **My Pretty Pony**, illustrated by Barbara Kruger, selling for \$2,200. Makes me want to own a copy!

**IT GOES ON THE SHELF** #5, Published by Ned Brooks, 713 Paul St., Newport News, VA 23605. Locs and reviews. Ned reads some *weird* interesting stuff and gets commensurate locs. 14 pp. One of the last of the twilltones? [Also received from Ned Brooks: **The Newport News** #123, done for SFPA, and **Reagan Lives!?**, a two-pager for Slanapa]

**JOURNAL OF MIND POLLUTION** #26, edited by Richard A. Dengrove, 2651 Arlington Drive #302, Alexandria, VA 22306, 12 pp. Perzine reviews Geordano Bruno & the Hermetic Tradition and The Rosicrucian Enlightenment; highly educational. #27 continues a diatribe about New Age nonsense, with some kind words about Robert Anton Wilson.

**LAN'S LANTERN** #28 and 29, edited by George "Lan" Laskowski, 55 Valley Way, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48013. Issue 28 (34pp) is an Arthur C. Clarke special, and #29 (58 pp) is devoted to William F. Temple and Lester del Rey. **LL** is a Hugo winner and perennial nominee.

**LAST OF THE SPIRIT DUPLICATORS**, edited by Harry Andruschak, P.O. Box 5309, Torrance, CA 90510-5309. This issue of Andy's purple prose is devoted entirely to zine reviews. (He has kind words for DON-o-SAUR.)

**LIFE IN THE PAST LANE: New Orleans SF Fandom from the 1960s to the Present** by Lester Boutillier, 2723 Castiglione St., New Orleans, LA 70119. A scholarly (though apparently incomplete) article rather than an actual fanzine for anyone who wants to know how NolaCon II came about. 22 pp.

**LIGHT IN THE BUSHEL** #6, Richard Brandt, 4740 N. Mesa #111, El Paso, TX 79912. 16-page perzine with locs and lotsa nice artwork by the likes of Brad Foster, Sheryl Birkhead, Wayne Brenner, Bill Rotsler et al.

**MMOSA** #6, Dick & Nicki Lynch, P.O. Box 1270, Germantown, MD 20874-0998 (a new address). Another twilltoner, very fannish, with articles by David Kyle about the Great Exclusion Act of 1939 and by Harry Warner Jr. about the House on Summit Ave. Also lots of artwork by Teddy Harvia (both front and back covers and several cartoons), Charlie Williams, Kurt Erichsen, Birkhead, Foster, Rotsler, Rowe, Scott and Stiles. A very friendly and enjoyable zine.

**PROBE** #75, February 1989, Neil van Niekerk, P.O. Box 2538, Primrose 1416, South Africa. Quarterly, 74 pages (5 $\frac{1}{2}$ X8 $\frac{1}{2}$ ), the official publication of Science Fiction South Africa, and South Africa's only fanzine. Heavy on fiction and reviews, with attractive layout and artwork. Available for the usual.

**THE RELUCTANT FAMULUS** #2, #3 and 4. Thomas Sadler, 422 W. Maple Ave., Adrian, MI 49221. Available for the usual. Tom is still sort of feeling his way along, but the zine is developing a strong letter column. Issue 4 begins a 2-part article by John Thiel about the fantasy elements in William Golding's *The Inheritors*.

**RENAISSANCE FAN** #6, May '89, Rosalin Malin and Dick Pilz Jr., 2214 SE Portland, OR 97215. An "amateur fanzine"--20 pages (8 $\frac{1}{2}$ X11), mostly fiction with some attractive splotches of color here and there.

**ROGUE RAVEN** #39, Frank Denton, 14654 - 8th Ave. S.W., Seattle, WA 98166. An unpretentious, relaxed, smoothly written perzine published whenever Frank gets the urge. Ten pages this time; available for the usual.

**RUNE** #79, A production of the Minnesota SF Society, PO Box 8297 Lake Street Station, Minneapolis, MN 55408. A long-lasting and very high-quality genzine which also manages to be a clubzine and a forum for a wide range of opinions. 56 pages this issue, available for the usual, including money.

**SCAVENGER'S NEWSLETTER**, Janet Fox, 519 Ellinwood, Osage City, KS 66523-1329; "A marketing co-op for sf/fantasy/horror writers/artists interested in small press. Prices \$10/yr (12) \$5/6 mo bulk mail, \$14, \$7 1st class. \$1.50 sample. Canada \$12, \$6 1st class. Overseas \$18, \$9 air mail."

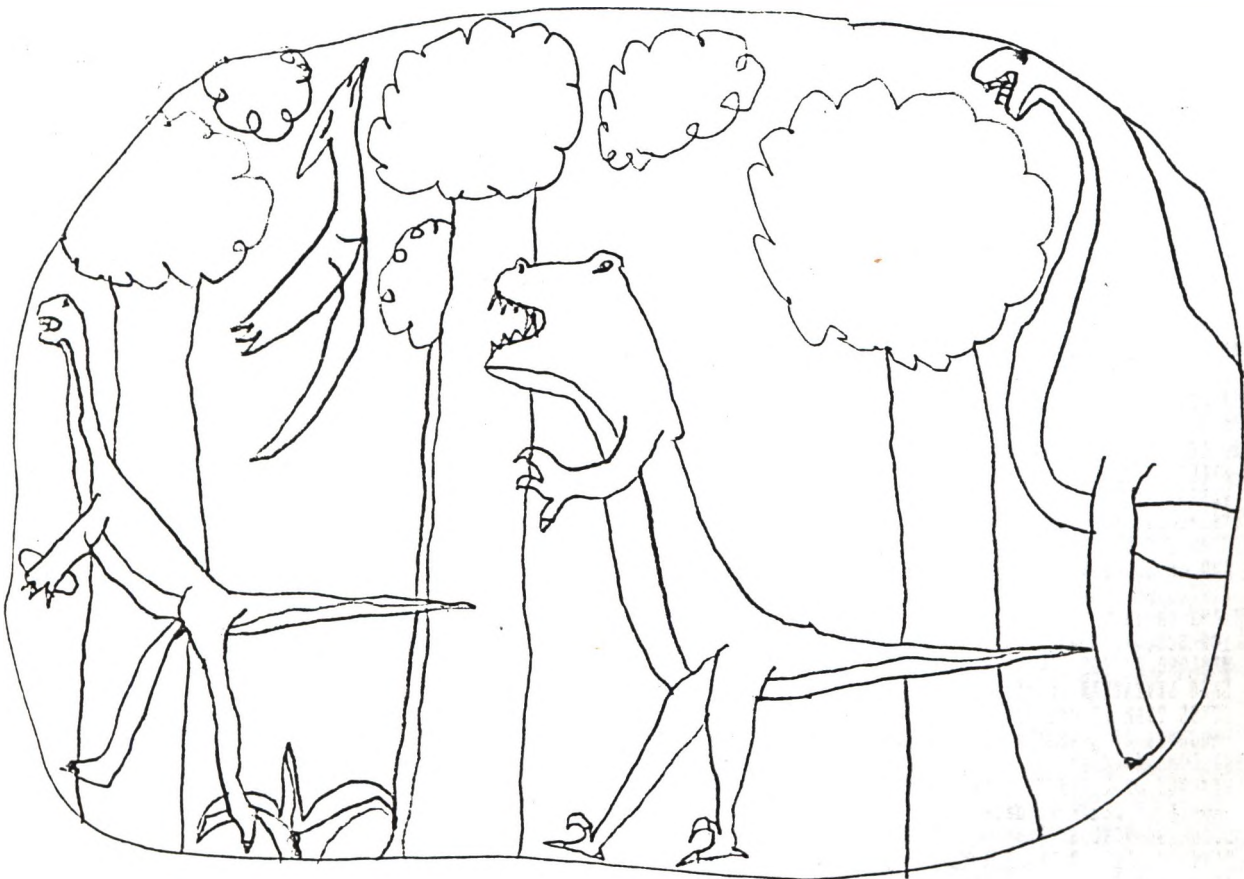
**SCREWED UP LETTERS** #5, Alan J. Sullivan, c/o 13 Weir Gardens, Rayleigh, Essex SS6 7TH, England. Available at editorial discretion. 24 pages, 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ X 11 folded. Interestingly, the theme of \$5 is the pet-peeve/irritation brand of anger. (It irritates me just a bit to see "whose" misspelled as "who's," as in "Who's Mouth Is It, Anyway?")



**SFSFS SHUTTLE**, #50-52, Official newsletter of the S. Florida SF Society, P.O. Box 70143, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33307-0143. Mostly club news, as is to be expected, but the thing I like about it is that it publishes the addresses of such Honorary Members as Walt Willis, George R.R. Martin, Gardner Dozois, et al, etc.

**THE TEXAS SF INQUIRER**, Published by FACT (Fandom Association of Central Texas), P.O. Box 9612, Austin, TX 78766, Scott Merritt, editor. A clubzine that's a perennial Hugo nominee and sometime winner. Six-issue subscription is \$6. Samples for \$1.50 or the usual.

**TWILIGHT ZINE** #40, a publication of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology SF Society, Room W20-473, 84 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, MA 02139. Another excellent combination clubzine/genzine, heavy on book reviews. 44 pages, with interesting disclaimer of any connection to *Twilight Zone*™.



DON-o-SAUR

BRENDON

(By Brendon Thompson, a special grandson)

Here's the latest revision of the Michael Moorcock bibliography that appeared in issue 54. Column A is a list of the books by Michael Moorcock that I have; Column B is the list of Moorcock books that I know of but don't have. Column C is for YOU to fill in with books of his that I don't even know about.

COL. A

A CURE FOR CANCER (Holt)  
 THE CONDITION OF MUZAK  
 THE ENGLISH ASSASSIN (Quartet)  
 THE FINAL PROGRAMME (Mayflower  
 and Avon)  
 AN ALIEN HEAT (Harper & Row)  
 THE HOLLOW LANDS ( )  
 BARBARIANS OF MARS (Ace)  
 CITY OF THE BEAST (NEL)  
 (also as WARRIORS OF MARS (Ace)  
 THE MASTERS OF THE PIT  
 THE LORD OF THE SPIDERS  
 (Lancer)  
 BEHOLD THE MAN (still can't find my copy!)  
 BLACK CORRIDOR (Ace p & b)  
 BREAKFAST IN THE RUINS (NEL)  
 THE BULL AND THE SPEAR  
 THE OAK AND THE RAM  
 THE KING OF SWORDS  
 THE QUEEN OF SWORDS  
 THE KNIGHT OF SWORDS  
 THE SWORD and THE STALLION  
 THE BROTHEL IN ROSENSTRASSE (Carroll & Graf)  
 COUNT BRASS  
 THE CHAMPION OF GARATHORN  
 THE QUEST FOR TANELORN (Dell)  
 THE CHINESE AGENT (Ace)  
 CITY OF THE BEAST (NEL)  
 THE ETERNAL CHAMPION (Ace)  
 THE DRAGON & THE SWORD (Berk. and Ace)  
 (Berkley & Ace)  
 THE SILVER WARRIORS (Dell)  
 (Phoenix in Obsidian)  
 ELRIC OF MELNIBONE (Berk.)  
 THE DREAMING CITY (Lancer)  
 STORMBRINGER (Mayflower)  
 THE STEALER OF SOULS (Lancer)  
 WEIRD OF THE WHITE WOLF (DAW)  
 THE SAILOR ON THE SEAS OF FATE  
 THE VANISHING TOWER (DAW)  
 (The Sleeping Sorceress)  
 ELRIC AT THE END OF TIME (DAW)  
 THE END OF ALL SONGS (Avon)  
 THE FIRECLOWN (The Winds of Limbo) (Paperback Lib.)  
 GLORIANA (Avon)  
 THE ICE SCHOONER (Berkley)  
 THE WARLORD OF THE AIR (Ace)  
 THE LAND LEVIATHAN (Doubleday)  
 THE STEEL TSAR (Doubleday)  
 THE LAUGHTER OF CARTHAGE (Random House)  
 MOTHER LONDON (Harmony)  
 THE RITUALS OF INFINITY (DAW) (The Wrecks of Time)  
 THE SHORES OF DEATH (Sphere)  
 THE SUNDERED WORLDS (Paperback Lib.)  
 THE TIME DWELLER (Berkley & Mayflower)  
 THE TIME OF THE HAWKLORDS (Warner) (with Michael Butterworth)  
 THE TWILIGHT MAN (Berkley)  
 THE WARHOUND AND THE WORLD'S PAIN (Timescape)  
 THE CITY IN THE AUTUMN STARS (Ace)  
 THE JEWEL IN THE SKULL (Lancer)  
 THE RUNESTAFF (DAW)  
 THE MAD GOD'S AMULET (DAW)  
 SWORD OF THE DAWN (DAW)

in **The Cornelius  
 Chronicles** (Avon)

**Dancers at the  
 End of Time**

Edward P. Bradbury

(**Chronicles of Corun  
 Berkley**)

**Castle Brass  
 series**

**Eternal Champion**

**Elric Saga**

**Bastable series (in  
 Nowads of Time (Dbl)**

**Hawkmoon**

**History of the  
 Runestaff**

COL. B

ADVENTURES OF UNA PERSSON AND CATHERINE  
 CORNELIUS IN THE 20TH CENTURY  
 AVILION  
 BANE OF THE BLACK SWORD  
 (Elric series)  
 BLADES OF MARS  
 (Edward P. Bradbury)  
 CARIBBEAN CRISIS  
 (Desmond Reid)  
 THE COWARD  
 THE DEEP FIX (James Colvin)  
 THE DISTANT SUNS  
 DYING FOR TOMORROW  
 THE GOLDEN BARGE  
 THE JADE MAN'S EYES  
 LEGENDS FROM THE END OF TIME  
 LETTERS FROM HOLLYWOOD  
 LIVES AND TIMES OF JERRY CORNELIUS  
 MESSIAH AT THE END OF TIME  
 MOORCOCK'S BOOK OF MARTYRS  
 MY EXPERIENCES IN THE THIRD WORLD WAR  
 THE NATURE OF THE CATASTROPHE  
 PRINTER'S DEVIL  
 QUEEN OF DELERIA  
 SOJAN  
 SORCERER'S AMULET  
 VOYAGE ON A DARK SHIP  
 THE FORTRESS OF THE PEARL  
 (newly published Elric novel) (Gollancz)

COL. C



## DONO-LoCs

Simon Nicholas Hawke  
(once Nick Yermakov)  
Denver, CO

I hope no one else starts sending me fanzines as thought-provoking as yours, otherwise I'm liable to come down with "Lovecraft Syndrome." Here I am, working on a proposal for a big historical novel, a mainstream fantasy, a proposal for a mystery series, plus I'm running late on the latest Time Wars novel and I have six more novels to write under contract this year, not to mention a collaboration I'm involved in on a science fiction thriller. The workload is absolutely crushing, but DoS arrives and I drop everything to read it. Early in my professional career I had some exposure to fan press and found nothing but pointless, juvenile ramblings about the latest SF film or who slept with whom at some convention (actually, it was a lot like the SFWA Forum) so I got disgusted and pulled back from the whole thing, but you and your correspondents actually discuss things of some import, issues that matter. Yes, Virginia, apparently there is a consciousness out there.

Your piece on anger was especially thought-provoking. Actually, there hasn't been much anger in my life. Fury, yes, but nothing so pedestrian as anger. Politicians make me furious. In the last election, I voted under protest for Dukakis (a question of choosing the evil of two lessers) because I recalled what a disaster Bush was in his days at the UN when he was U.S. ambassador and I figured even if I disagree with liberals more often than not, at least the Duke could speak in complete sentences. So I'm furious at a system that doesn't offer the intelligent voter any choice to speak of. I'm furious at fast food chains that buy their beef from South America so they can sell their burgers five cents cheaper, meanwhile subsidizing the razing of the rain forests and driving the American cattle rancher out of business. I'm furious at an irrelevant educational system that is producing a nation of illiterates. I'm furious at the short-sightedness of people who think that gun control will solve the crime problem when the issue, as such things usually are, is far too complex for such band-aid solutions. The media make me furious when they lie about the gun issue and sensationalize crime. (Ex: one always hears about "plastic guns" that can escape detection at airports, when no such thing exists, and in the recent case of the maniac who gunned down school children with an AK-47, no one in the media mentioned that the killer had numerous felony arrests which should have prevented him from purchasing a firearm and landed him in jail, only they were all plea bargained down to misdemeanors, so no felony convictions appeared on his record. So much for the usefulness of a "waiting period." And, when their sensational reports about that incident spawned a spate of "copy cat" shootings and created an overnight market for assault rifles, which gun dealers practically couldn't give away up to that point, I didn't hear anyone talking about "news control." And one never hears reports of criminals stopped in their tracks by armed citizens defending themselves and their homes, though such things happen all the time. But that would send the wrong message, I suppose...)

I'm furious about U.S. support of Israel, a country that makes a mockery of civil rights of Palestinians and repays our support of its economy by spying on us; I'm furious about my tax dollars going to support the Contras and obsolete weapons systems while the average American can't even afford decent health care; I'm furious about pesticides and chemicals in my food and the rape of the environment; I'm furious about Christians who worry about unborn kids while those who are born unwanted live in hell; I'm furious about psychopathic Satanists who kill animals and children; developers who are turning this country into

a sea of malls and crackerbox condos; polluters who poison our water and our air; I wish to hell we'd declare war on Iran and have done with it; I could go on and on and on.

The question is, what good is it? What can anybody do? Well, in point of fact, there are things one can do. Little things, perhaps, but at least it's something. One can support Greenpeace, the NRA, the Sierra Club and Audubon (as I do); one can write letters to legislators; one can talk things up with friends; argue issues; encourage literacy and awareness; combat misinformation and attack apathy. One can feel anger or even fury, because at least it will remind you that you're capable of feeling something. And most of all, one can reach out and communicate one's anger, rather than giving up or letting it fester. One can take responsibility for one's own life and the choices that one makes. It's okay to be angry. Because, as we used to say in the '60s, "If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem." We can disagree on solutions, but we can all, I think, agree on the necessity to make our lives count for something besides BMW's and Ralph Lauren fashions. (Or, for that matter, escapist literature.)

*[I might be able to support the NRA on certain issues, up to a certain point, under certain circumstances (though, frankly, I can't imagine what those issues or points or circumstances might be), if only the NRA would concede that hunters don't really need or have any right to use AK-47s or other kinds of assault weaponry. The NRA claim that every citizen has a constitutional right to possess any kind of firearm does not impress me. I agree that the whole question is much more complex than the media give any indication of. At the same time, I think "the media" are a much more complex set of issues than the critics seem aware of. And most definitely I agree with Nick that action, even if futile or misguided, is better than inaction; that caring is better than not caring; that anger is better than apathy.]*

Howard DeVore  
4705 Weddel St.  
Dearborn, MI 48125

Having known Buck Coulson for over 35 years, it does not surprise me to learn that his grandfather was electrocuted, altho I think hanging was the usual method in those days.

DON-o-SAUR was delightful, and when it leaves opportunities like the above, you can bet I'll read it word for word.

Buck Coulson  
2677W-500N  
Hartford City, IN 47348

I hadn't thought about specific past angers until I read David Bates' letter this time [about the 1960s]. I suppose the angriest I've ever been was in 1953, when I was denied a room at a convention hotel because I had a black woman with me. Gene, Bev and I had driven over to Indian Lake, Ohio, for Midwestcon--which would have been my second-ever convention. And there was no room at the inn, despite the fact that we'd made reservations. Well, I've told that story often enough. Interestingly, the anger didn't hit immediately; the first reaction was shock, and frantic mental searching for a way for us to stay at the con. The anger came when the search proved fruitless, and stayed with me on the drive home. Which was just as well, I suppose, since I arrived home, after taking Bev and Gene to their respective locations, at around 7 a.m. I was much too furious to be sleepy.

At least that sort of thing doesn't happen these days. I'm still in touch with both Gene and Bev, though Bev is currently helping her husband run a business and doesn't have time for fandom. In the fall of 1953, Bev, Gene and I,



along with Juanita, Eleanor Turner (since gafiated) and Bob Briney, drove to the Philadelphia worldcon. And got rooms... Bev shows up at Windycon now and then, to keep in touch.

Juanita used to bitch at me about not stopping on trips, but eventually I learned. More or less, anyway... Besides, I'm getting older and tired, and I have to stop more frequently.

The worst of the anti-racketeering law is that it's being used against pornography. Find a store selling a dirty book, close it down and sieze all the books in the store. Comics fans are up in arms about it, since several comics stores have been raided. Of course, pornography has never been legally defined, except by "community standards," so bookstore owners have no guidelines; guess wrong, and they're out of business.

We definitely need more prisons. Too many states are relieving the stress by putting those convicted of lesser crimes back out on the streets. Indiana's governor (a liberal Democrat) recently abolished the state's "work-release" program because a prisoner let out of prison for the day so he could work at his job, murdered his wife. Since he'd said in advance that as soon as he got out he was going to kill her, the officials responsible are being investigated; they say they did nothing wrong and followed the state law. They probably were following the letter of the law, which is the horrifying part. Officials aren't required to have common sense....

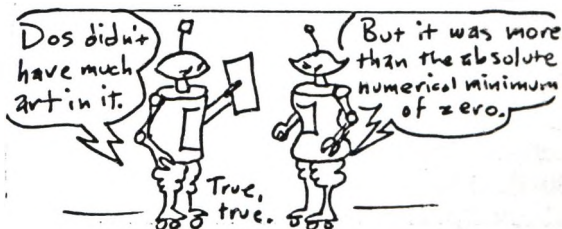
*If there were less crime there might not be such a need for more prisons; if drugs were decriminalized, removing the profit motive for gangs, the crime rate might decline. This seems so obvious that it always astonishes me when others don't see it.*

**Teddy Harvia**  
7209 DeVille Dr.  
N. Richland Hills  
TX 76180-8257

I read DoS from back to front (we left-brain individuals have strange ways) and didn't discover why I'd gotten it until I read the inside front cover. So you were just padding your mailing list

to reach the magical 200 dictated by the post-office. Amazing how numerical limits rule our lives. It reminds me of the "Twilight Zone" episode in which the stewardess says to the main character, "room for one more." But then, DoS isn't going to crash on take-off, is it?

Your colophon gave me an interesting dilemma. You ask for either a call, loc, art or trade. Since I often do all four in response to fanzines that come in the mail, I had trouble deciding. But as you can see, I did -- sort of.



**Mike Glicksohn**  
508 Windermere Ave.  
Toronto, Ontario  
M6S 3L6, Canada

As always, a thoughtful and thought-provoking editorial. I sense that by and large we view the world, its troubles and our possibility of making an impression on things in the same light. The difference, though, is

that I tend not to feel guilty about my inability to summon up effective righteous anger at the injustices of the world. I acknowledge that it is possible for an individual to make a difference. However, I also acknowledge that it takes a certain kind of individual and that such individuals are very few and far between. I am not a crusader. I refuse to feel guilty about that fact of

nature. (I'm not a child beater or a wife abuser either and while I'm glad I'm that way there's nothing to actually be proud of since it's just the way I am. I figure the two attitudes balance each other out.) I have enough trouble trying to keep my own life in order and trying to ease the lives of the people I'm in direct contact with without feeling obliged to worry about other people and their problems. For me, the attitude that we should feel responsible for The Big Picture is an artificial worldview. Let me clean up my own nest and then, if I feel like it, maybe I'll broaden the scope of my efforts. In the meantime I'll try to do my very best not to exacerbate bad situations but I won't feel personally responsible for setting the world's wrongs to right. Nor will I feel guilty about feeling that way.

Over the years I've had a fair number of caricatures done of me but I seriously doubt I could find them or remember what they were which is a shame because I enjoyed your fanhistorical retrospective along those lines.

I tend to agree with you on the importance of place settings at least sounding realistic. If a book is set in Toronto and has major mistakes about the physical realities of the city my reading will be interrupted. But if a book is supposedly set in Denver and uses realistic names and descriptions then practically nothing will interfere since I know nothing about the geography of Denver. On the other hand, I can't abide fictitious countries plopped down into the real world and generally don't read such books. (I can live with Castle Rock because it just might be there somewhere in Maine but I can't accept Marines landing behind the Iron Curtain in the commie land of Valpasia which I know damn well isn't there.) (Unless the book is clearly an alternate world, of course, which makes for a whole new ball game.)

Interesting to observe from your locs that I'm not the only cynical nihilist around!

Name duplication is something I'll never have to worry about. As far as I know, there are only seven Glicksohns in the entire world and all of them are related to me (or are me if you're a pedant.) Sometimes I check the phone books in new big cities just on the off chance there might be others of a similar name but I've never found any on three continents. On the other hand, my friend Bob Mason recently published his second novel (after his best-seller **Chickenhawk**.) I mis-remembered the one word war-oriented title as **Warrior** when the book is actually called **Weapon** so I asked my local bookstore to get it for me. He came up with Robert Mason's **Warrior for God** (or something similar) and assumed that was the book I was looking for. Happily he checked with me first but the coincidence struck me as rather unusual.

Richard Freeman  
130 W. Limestone  
Yellow Springs, OH 43085

Thanks for Don-o-Saur #54...think I wrote to you before about anger...how I suffer from low blood sugar (or those around me suffer from the effects of it on me...how

it changes one's perceptions when it's found that the most righteous anger can be stopped by a piece of cheese...that french fries burning can cause an explosion equal to wiping out the whales...if our best anger is really chemically controlled...(and think of the drivers coming home from work...in low blood sugar states...one more reason among many that I don't drive...along with being day blind & night blind & having poor depth perception & no direction home...)

It's true that this is an awful age...at least for most types of art... but, like the Roman Empire, it's a golden age for satire & historical writing. And any age that gives us good wrestling, excellent porn (with vcr's to watch it on) Charmin toilet paper, dust busters, correct-tape ribbons for one finger typists like myself, and dental floss can't be all bad. It is an age of unintentional humor...but isn't that often the best kind of all...



In other words, it's the perfect age for me...and fuck everyone else if they can't take a joke (though I say this without the slightest trace of anger).

*[I can't argue with that attitude: If you can't be angry at all the idiocy surrounding us, at least be amused. Laughter can accomplish more than fury.]*

**Harry Warner Jr.  
423 Summit Ave.  
Hagerstown, MD 21740**

This is April's 18th day, this loc is the 17th I've written so far this month, and so far I've received in April 19 fanzines that deserve locs, plus one angry postcard from a fan wanting to know why I never loc his publication. You can't win, I tell you, but the new Don-o-Saur is interesting enough to justify immediate response.

That brings up Tom Jackson's query about how many locs I've written. A while back, I tried to make an estimate. If I remember correctly, I decided the total must be somewhere between 8,000 and 10,000. I've been doing it for a half-century now. In my best years, I must have turned out 300 or so locs annually. But there were 10 or 12 years from the mid-1940s to the mid-1950s when I wasn't very active in fanzine fandom outside FAPA, and didn't write many locs. I've probably hit the 250-loc mark in several recent years. There were two accidents in the 1960s that kept me *hors de loc* for several months and I probably slacked off while writing the two fan history books, too. So a precise estimate is hardly possible. That's the bad news. The good news is that a substantial proportion of all those locs were never inflicted on fandom in general because they went to fanzine editors who didn't publish them or suspended publication or didn't run locs in their fanzines or lost them.

You're right, of course, about reformers' inability to foresee the final consequences of their accomplishments. I believe Dickens regretted late in life the effectiveness of his early novels in illustrating the horrors of early 19th century criminal justice and prison life in England, because the changes resulted in criminals enjoying better opportunities to commit crime and escape severe punishment. But nobody can guess the good or the bad that may come from any of his actions, even actions that aren't connected with reform. If I obey the posted speed limit, I may save someone's life because a pedestrian will have time to cross a street instead of being run down by the driver behind me whom I've been holding back, but that driver behind me may be so infuriated at my adherence to the posted limit that he will try to pass me on a hill and collide headon with an oncoming vehicle. All a fellow can do is listen to his conscience and hope for the best.

Obviously, something must be done about the inability of government to expand prisons fast enough to cope with the increasing number of criminals. Maybe it would be better to penalize the less dangerous criminals in non-confinement ways: impose a surtax on their income from all sources for five or ten years, prohibit them from owning a motor vehicle or driving one for years, prohibiting them from going more than five miles from their place of residence for a long period of time, and so forth. The boredom that would result might be a bigger crime deterrent than a prison sentence. Or a more radical procedure would be permanent ineligibility to receive government money for any felony conviction, including welfare, social security, unemployment compensation, and similar sources. If the individual refused to work under those conditions and starved to death, it would be his own fault, not society's.

We've never met but I've seen enough photographs of you to feel sure the caricatures are good ones. You should be proud of possessing the face and the personality distinctive enough to be perpetuated in this way.

I wish there were a special term to cover books which aren't set in a real place but invent a setting that has obvious ties to a real locale. Conrad Richter wrote a couple of novels about this part of Maryland and nearby Pennsylvania that fall into this category: some real place names are used, others are invented and the reader can't be sure if the latter refer to actual places or exist only in the author's imagination. I can't remember the title of a fine mystery novel by Elizabeth Peters that does the same for a portion of Maryland just southeast of Hagerstown; it's the one about the sudden appearance of fairies (Lewis Carrol's kind) corporeal enough to be photographed in the Maryland countryside.

I second David Bates' nomination of **Before the Dawn** as among the finest novels about dinosaurs. I believe it was reprinted in either *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* or *Fantastic Novels* [FFM Feb. '46 -- dct] where I first read it. For that matter, John Taine's literary output as a whole should be made available again. Most of today's fans who haven't reached middle age have probably never heard of him, and there was a time when on almost everyone's list of the 10 finest authors of science fiction.

Ron Salomon  
1014 Concord St.  
Framingham, MA 01701

Enclosed is a photo of what's been keeping me busy for about 13 months now. Because of David I discovered myself to be mortal, a situation I don't like and have no control



over. I become really angry because I am self-destructive by way of food and know that chances are David won't live with a father as long as I did. I hope soon to find The Answer to postpone things as long as possible. Why is it so hard to find you do have control to a larger/bigger degree? I think I must gain this knowledge or die. Literally. I ain't a happy lad sometimes. Maybe it will come to the AA-similar org called Overeaters Anon--I don't know. I do know I'll shortly be contacting my doctor and get a letter allowing me to spend \$ which will be tax deductible to lose weight and be able to afford to. If it's a medical necessity the IRS is on "your" side, so my accountant confirms. Wish me luck.

I guess that's my real anger--not knowing yet knowing I have more control, whether it be a response to a boss's needless wisecrack, my forking around, getting things done to my satisfaction in various aspects. Aaargh.

I'm sure I've gone on many a feeding frenzy to burn off un verbalized anger. Yes, writing it out is a great help/substitute.

John Thiel  
30 N. 19th St.  
Lafayette, IN 47094

Some nice likenesses this issue of the person I saw at Autoclave II. I think Gibson's graduate picture is the best job, although Shiffman's sketch, which looks like you are at the Autoclave, would be better were it not for that shortcoming. Oh, I see it was done at that time. I just looked it up in my program book and found the reason I didn't remember it was it didn't reproduce as well in the program book, had no frame either and wasn't as impressive. Oh, there's my ad in the back of the program book. It brings back some memories.

You wonder whether Mohammed foresaw the Ayotollah or Cat Stevens and this gives me the impression that you are talking about the Last days in relationship



to your feelings. It's the only parallelism I find between those individuals you named. It'd be easier for me to write a letter about that topic if it weren't abstruse to your general text.

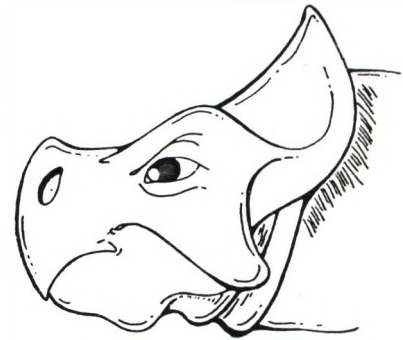
Halfway houses still exist in Lafayette, though I've always wanted to call attention to the meaning of the term in Dylan Thomas' "Sonnets" sequence ("altar-wise by owl-light in the halfway house") where it is a house of the dead. Dame Edith Sitwell defined it as a place where autopsies were made in her analysis of Thomas' poems.

**Sheryl Birkhead**  
23629 Woodfield Road  
Gaithersburg, MD 20882

Boy, when you jump back into pubbing, you do so with a vengeance! Yet another Don-o-Saur has arrived! I did some small illos for you and then got to playing with a copying machine--so I'm enclosing the whole lot for you.

Okay--to start with--I really like the cover AND the reducing you did to have it by the return address -- just a tad aslant, but that is a truly minor quibble. Nicely done!

I'm sure the whole country is aware of the killings (and so forth) going on in DC right now. I'm not certain, but I believe at least two or three additional prisons are in the planning stages with the current facilities overflowing. Now, at times like these, I suppose one could look at the increasing percentage of the population being incarcerated and decide on one of several courses of action -- change the laws (after all, not ALL those people could be wrong -- right?), or penalize the rest of the populace by raising taxes to cover the construction costs of the new facilities. I know there are in-the-middle solutions (like halfway houses, but as you mention, no one wants them in THEIR neighborhood). I'll keep my peace on my own solution, mainly because I feel it is an impossible one, given that people are what they are.



The French "pill" has taken a lot of flak and the last I heard is only to be sold in France at clinics. Of course that doesn't stop other researchers... I don't think the abortion issue has been laid to rest -- not quite yet.

I don't think I'd characterize your grin as silly, but you do, thankfully, sport it quite often...

Just a question that I honestly do not know the answer to--could Dvorkin have used the names (etc.) he did to avoid libel? Just wondered.



*[So have I wondered, and I also honestly don't know, but it was my impression that he was inviting libel suits by using names so closely resembling those of real people. Fortunately (or un-), the rich and powerful don't read science fiction.]*

Your comments about Cramer's science are interesting. I had to re-think my own "philosophy" on science presentation in a story and come up with the fact that I enjoy it as long as it happens to lie within my fields of knowledge and seems understandable. Now, while that works for me, it poses a serious problem

for everyone else--obviously fields of knowledge may overlap between individuals but they could hardly ever be considered to be identical. So, nothing earth-shaking--just my own observation. As long as the science is understandable and necessary (and plausible) I like it being there.

Tell Rich I empathize with him. The yo-yo syndrome is no fun and the anger (yes, it IS anger) can so easily be inner directed about not being able to lose (or keep it off, take your pick). People who have never had the problem DON'T understand and never will. The comments about will power are interesting in that one may have a completely structured and capably dealt with life in all areas but this one-- does that mean one does not have will power? No, I won't keep going-- but I could, so obviously this touched a sensitive topic with me.

If the Asian driver phenomenon is "local" it is also localized to the East Coast as well as the West - just adding for completeness.

I don't like smoke either, but I'm not militant about it. It does tend to make me feel sick, and that tends to make me say something--and usually that is all it takes. So far, I've found smokers to be fairly considerate when they realize I'm not about to drag out a soapbox!



**Pavel Gregorić Jr.**  
**Tuškanac 22**  
**4100 Zagreb**  
**Yugoslavia**

I just...just don't know why I like you so much. It seems we're similar kind of souls. But let me go from the beginning - to illustrate what I mean.

(Only one note: please don't mind my unperfect English. I'm just 17 years old and English nothing

but my second language and a big ambition. Try not to follow my words, but follow my thoughts.

I received DoS on 24th of March, but important is what happened on 23rd of March, Wednesday. [When I got home from school] I saw my dad sitting by the phone and...crying. "Waitaminute..." he said, "I have to explain to Pavel," and put the receiver down. "A car bumped grandpa... Our neighbor went too fast and he didn't see... Your grandpa...he...he is in bad condition."

Around 1:45 a.m. grandpa died.

In morning editions of newspapers all around the country the headlines were: "Dr. Pavle Gregoric dies," "Accidental death of Dr. Pavle Gregoric," etc.

Let me tell you a word or two about him: My grandpa, Pavle Gregoric-Brzi (Brzi means fast, quick) was born in Zlatar in 1892. He is a graduate of National Medical University in Graz, Austria. He joins October Revolution in Russia in 1918 after some successful operations in World War I. In 1921 he returns to Yugoslavia and becomes establisher of Yugoslav Communist Party together with Tito and few close friends. He in 1936 he fights in Spanish Civil War. From 1938 to 1941 he was arrested two times and spent years in the most outrageous prisons in the country. There he meets Tito, Eduard Kardelj, Koca Popovic, Mosa Pijade and many, many others. After World War II he was a Federal Minister of Health, President of Financial Commission, and ambassador in Rome. Yugoslav Red Cross names his a life-long President of Honour. He's a member of Federation Council and many, many more. But that is not important. Important is that he has been a humanist and Yugoslav-oriented man, everywhere welcomed. People loved him because he was hearty, noble and simple. Always moving, walking and running around. On Friday evening concerts are held in Vatroslav Lisinski (the biggest music hall in Zagreb) and row 11 seat 15 has been waiting him since the hall was built. He loved Beethoven, Liszt, Shubert, Stravinski and



other classical masters. He had subtle feeling for music in spite of his years, for which everybody admired him. He has never, never taken official cars though he could ask for it whenever and wherever he would like to. In recent years of his life he had damaged sense of sight and couldn't read or write. And it was strange to see a 95-years-old man walking faster than me, 15-years-old youngster. Bad sight couldn't prevent him to go on foot or sometimes by train to listen his concerts and to enjoy the music (it is worth to mention that the music hall is about 5 miles from here [I say here bcoz we live all together in this house]). Grandpa and grandma lived at the ground floor, my uncle and aunt on the first floor and my dad and I live at the attic. We were a happy family and there were always good vibrations in the air. Grandpa was ever cheerful and hearted man, he was a kind of spiritual core of the house, its gem. There were moments when his visual cheer diminished - while watching TV news and having political conversations with my father and his friends. He was aware that this country is falling into pieces, shivering in political pluralism and sinking in a higher and higher inflation. I said his cheer diminished, but never his optimism and altruism. Believe me, it was very sad to see a man watching his country, the country he built with his own hands, decaying because of stupidity and ignorance. And after all that, a bare car accident finished his life.

Grandpa has survived World War I, Russian October revolution, Spanish Civil War, World War II and all possible risks existing in counted occasions, and he got killed in front of his house while crossing the street. By our neighbour's hand. What an irony! THAT makes me ANGRY!

Y'know, Don, you're the first American I know who publically confess American defeat in Vietnam, and says it was a great mistake. I think the Vietnam War was a beginning of declination of United States of America as the most powerful political, economical and armed state in the world. It probably still is the most war equipped country, but it surely isn't any more from the aspects of politics and economy. Please correct me if I'm wrong, but nobody can convince me that American war operations in Vietnam weren't a solid proof of American national arrogance and confidence in its omnipotency.

However, America is rich-resourced country and I'm not worried about its future development. I don't know whether you know anything about present political situation in Yugoslavia. Sigh! I could write you twice as more as I have to this very paragraph, about what's going on in this poor country. It's rived apart in political pluralism, there's a great lack of practical democracy and high inflation is devastating areas of economy. I'm ashamed to say, but it's higher than 380%!

And a country with undeveloped economy can't have developed culture. And, you know, I miss that damn culture the most. Let's take SF for example. Our authors are totally unimportant; they edit stories in "Sirius" and "Alef," our SF magazines, and rarely in some juvenile magazines. I didn't say there aren't some good stuff and some good authors, but I, personally, like foreign authors like Isaac Asimov, Fredric Brown, Bob Heinlein, etc. There are not more than 200 books translated since 1948 up to now. Of that 200, 80% are impossible to find bcoz they're edited years ago. But what to do? There are three second-hand bookshops in the city in which you can find, from time to time, English books and (indeed not very frequently) among them some English SF books. And books in seconds are not so extremely expensive as those in standard bookshops. For example, untranslated "Isaac Asimov's Guide to Mod-ern Science," which I found in a special bookshop for foreign literature, costs 250.000 dinars. It's about \$24. And monthly salary of an average Yugoslav work-er is 800.000 dinars. So, tell me, please, how can he possibly buy the book? Perhaps I could get it for my birthday (which was one week ago), but I cannot afford that to myself with my monthly pocket money which is 90.000 dinars (\$9, sometimes \$10).

Sending letters to the fandom is becoming a luxury, too. One air mail letter to America, like this one, costs me 6.500 dinars, which means I'm able to send only 14 letters monthly. But there are some lucky circumstances: There's a man called Vincent Clarke, who's editor of Pulp (really nice fanzine!) and he sends me few times a year parcels containing 7 or 8 SF books which I've very fond of. Oh, boy, I'm so happy to receive one and to look what's in! And then read, read, read. But I try not to read only SF bcoz I want to know as much as possible. I want to accomplish a certain level of culture, common-culture. And I think I cannot get it by reading only SF.

I emphasize culture so much because I really miss it in this country, but I can understand. Average Mirko with 800.000 dinars salary has scarcely got to feed his wife and three little children and he doesn't care is it Tolstoi, Shakespeare or Hemingway he should read. (Don't forget that I'm talking about average salary; there are ones exceeding 5,000.000 dinars (\$500), but there are some of only 300.000 dinars (\$30) as well.

What's opposite of culture? Primitivism? Good. Primitivism angers me, as well. There's an aspect of primitivism *congenito* concerning Americans and Britishers. They say: "Why would I speak some other language, when all the world speaks English?" It is wrong. People are lazy, I know that, but each language has its own characteristics and peculiarities. For me, the most beautiful language is English. Definitely. But I don't speak only English, but also Italian, Esperanto, Serbo-Croat and I can read Latin. All that is for the sake of communication and self-education, which is, I think, very important part of each individual. My opinion is that everyone should know/speak at least one foreign language. What do you think?

*[I have written Pavel a personal letter responding to some of his questions and expressing my sympathy and admiration for him. I'm also sending some books and would suggest that anyone else who has any extra copies of SF or science classics might consider donating them to Pavel or possibly Berislav Pinjuh, whose letter follows. It arrived one day after Pavel's, and I've written to him, also .]*

**Berislav Pinjuh**  
**Krklecova 9**  
**41090 Zagreb**  
**Yugoslavia**

Dear Mr. Thompson,

Have you ever heard of the lightning out of the clear sky? Well, that's exactly what happened to me when I opened my mail-box and found DON-o-SAUR 52. I was really surprised because I've never heard of DoS before. (There are two rather strong reasons for it: first is that I'm in fandom for only a couple of years, and the other is that I'm only 17½ years old, so when DoS 51 came out, in 1978, I was starting elementary school.

Then, for a minute and three quarters, I thought nothing can surprise me. But as I glanced into the loc section, I was SURPRISED. I saw all those locs with dates from 1978! I thought there was something wrong with my eyes. I thought you made a mistake. Then as rational explanations were used, I realised it really passed ten years since the last issue. Ten years of troublesome life for you, but not only for you (my parents divorced about four years ago.)

Now, I must apologise for not writing sooner but I hope you'll understand since I'm in the 3rd grade of a high school and have 20, yes 20, subjects (every week and about five or six every single day - except for Sundays).

Oh, yes, one more thing: That Mr. Thompson I wrote at the beginning is there because I have lots of respect for you - not only for your age, but for your wisdom, experience, for you as a man and as a zine editor and for your having guts to discuss your problems in public. You know we all have our problems, but are not always ready to talk about them.



Roy Lavender  
2507 E. 17th St.  
Long Beach, CA 90804

I would disagree with John Thiel about the non-existence of poltergeists...but that's another subject...

Buck Coulson and his newspaper thief. He doesn't have the nasty mind of an Ohio farmer of Welsh descent. In a somewhat similar circumstance, yesterday's paper was wrapped around a carefully selected cow flop. One with a nicely sun dried outer crust, but still squishy inside. If you lack a convenient cow, consider STP oil treatment. For those not familiar with oil additives, think snail snot. A saucer of the stuff placed where groping hands will find it...

Ruth Berman. As a card carrying life member of the NRA, I am amazed at the effort to blame the organization that has backed mandatory jail sentences for any crime involving the use of a gun.) Behind the fact of Mr. Purdy gunning down those school kids in Stockton are these facts: He was previously arrested at least seven times on felony charges, two involving the use of a gun. In each case, he was able to plea bargain the charge down to a misdemeanor. Since he was not convicted of a felony, he was able to legally purchase the two guns, even with the 15-day waiting period. Do we see that in the major papers or hear it on the 6 o'clock news? Instead, we get another law blaming the gun, to add to the 20,000+ such laws around the country. This latest one banning AK-47s and other semiautomatics effectively declares that some millions of law abiding gun owners have suddenly become criminals.

Do such laws work? Since passing a gun control law, Washington, D.C., has become the murder capital of the world. New York has had the Sullivan Law since early in the century. Care for a stroll through Central Park? Such laws guarantee the criminal an unarmed victim.

Doesn't that make you curious? Did your version of history mention that in Czechoslovakia, before WW II, a simple gun registration law was passed. "If your gun is stolen, it can be returned to you." There wasn't even a fee for registering. Of course, when the Nazis invaded, they knew where to pick up every weapon. There was no really effective underground active in Czechoslovakia during the war. We made a half-assed effort to parachute in cheap single-shot pistols using a .45 ACP, but it was never more than a token effort. I'll leave it to you to figure out why they selected .45 ACP, caliber instead of 9 mm, which could have been stolen from the Nazis.

For my part, I'd like to see a law that makes any judge accepting a plea bargain an accomplice to any future crime by the same criminal.

Ned Brooks. I also wish there were no need for a death penalty. However, in the absence of a better solution, let's get it over with quickly and cleanly. It would at least cut down on the repeaters. We can't afford to build and maintain prisons for the criminals we have in custody. We're dumping criminals back out on the streets because our prisons are overflowing. Still we save the worst ones as if they were precious.

The ancient Chinese curse is upon us. The times are getting more and more interesting.

The 'room temperature' fusion business for one. The more I read, the more I think they've really done it. Scientists are lining up and choosing sides.

The physicists are upset because the equipment didn't cost a few billion, didn't need temperatures like the surface of the sun and produced no dead graduate students. The chemists are upset because nuclear reactions are not classical chemistry and neutrons were detected.

Jerry Pournelle held forth on the subject at LASFS and what he said is close to what I've been reading. Some of the fans I talk to at LASFS are working in the field, and being fans are not as narrow as the 'ordained' scientists.

Martin Fleishman (U. of Southampton, England), and Stanley Pons (U. of Utah at Salt Lake) are two of the top men in their fields. If some other scientist

had made the announcement of room temperature fusion, those two are probably the ones the various societies would have chosen to check and duplicate the experiment. Absolute top bracket men.

When they chose to go public instead of the usual channels of preparing a paper for acceptance in one of the major journals, it gives one to think. They really laid their reputations on the line. It seems obvious they are afraid of something.

They may have something there. I remember when a Russian physicist came to MIT to talk about their Tokomak fusion experiments, the NRC grabbed table cloths and covered his blackboard, then classified the whole proceedings. To keep it out of the hands of the Russians?

A couple of scientists in a Southern university physics lab reported they had duplicated the Fleishman/Pons experiment, then withdrew the announcement with the lame excuse that they forgot to ground the apparatus. That's when I decided F&P knew what they were doing.

Measuring power input and temperature rise needs a precision thermometer and a quality watt hour meter. Neither require grounding. If you get more heat out than you can account for from electrical power put in, you have accomplished something interesting and maybe even useful.

Maybe it is fusion, maybe it is a previously unknown chemical reaction. Who cares? A dozen labs around the world have already achieved results. F&P left out some of the details in their report and yet other experimenters were able to fill in the blanks and make it work. That should say something, too.

The Southern universities that are back pedaling get most of their research grants from Chase Manhattan. CM has a trillion or so invested in the Middle East. Remember the Shah? He bet on \$30 per barrel oil and lost. The Aytollah is betting on \$20 per barrel. Recently oil was down to \$18, but since then we have a grounded tanker, a big refinery fire and a North Sea drilling platform blowup and oil is back to \$20. Strictly coincidence, of course.

F&P used palladium and deuterium (heavy hydrogen) in the form of a palladium rod, inside a coil of platinum wire and immersed in heavy water. They applied six or nine volts, which made the left over oxygen to to the blatinum and bubble off. The deuterium went into the palladium atom crystal structure.

The announcement made the platinum market jump (Pt ore contains about 2% Pd.) The price of palladium jumped and all stock disappeared from the lab supply houses.

If I'm remembering right titanium shows the same behavior with hydrogen (or deuterium). The titanium market will only flutter slightly, though. Ti is not rare. In fact it is only about number 10 for rarity. After all, we use it to paint fences. Also expect some frantic backing and filling by Chase Manhattan.

Oh, yes... the no dead graduate student. In the "standard" thinking of physicists on fusion, the reaction releases lots of neutrons. You may remember the howl about neutron bombs, designed to kill the population but not destroy the factories.

This reaction produces very few (detected) neutrons.

Random thought, courtesy of Jerry P. ...are we exchanging control of the world's major energy source by followers of a religion that allows multiple wives and worships Allah for one that allows multiple wives and worships God?

Clifton Amsbury  
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So the theme for 54 is guilt--or, if I'm to believe the cover, Original Sin. I'm probably the right one to discuss it because I have a deficiency in that sector.

But first, bless your dear little ACLU/NOW soul, I have another fish to fritter: namely someone else's guilt. Back in the '60s some psycho types (cred-



entialed) did suggest that many of their resident psychos (committed) would be better off unwarehoused, because they'd belatedly and collectively and suddenly noticed a degeneration process often referred to as Institutionalization Syndrome, but mostly due to neglect due to underfunding.

How much better off they'd be in their home communities with regular visits and care by county mental health clinics. Oh, it was known that many of them had been committed because they were nuisances, burdens and generally unwelcome among family, neighbors and local authorities, but local community care was the Way to Go. (Also much cheaper--just appropriate to the county clinics half or a third what the institutional care might be. Also where absolutely no other lodging or support existed, let county welfare keep them alive.)

And now! Now those crazies could also be unloaded. It wasn't halfway houses, it was clinics and find your own home. Needless to say, with no state funds, the counties scanted on clinics. If any.

Within the last year or so, the spate of papers read at anthropological association meetings finally culminated in a major paper in a major journal. It wiped out the argument that crazies are the homeless. It conceded two things: 1) Homeless people do tend to accumulate emotional problems, which are more noticeable than among people with homes to hide them from general observation; and 2) as the housing crisis mounted, landlords took action faster to rid themselves of peculiar and "problem" and disconcerting tenants, and were very selective in taking on new ones.

And then, of course, about that time here in California came Proposition 13 whereby the landlords and businesses and industries cut their tax bill scandalously. (Two years later here at the Contra Costa County budget hearing the county administrator said, "It used to be that we figured out the absolute minimum we needed to run the county, then set the tax-rate to meet the expenses. Now we figure what is the most income we can expect, and then figure what expenses we can afford to meet.")

Let me tell you how I know about my lack of guilt feelings. I do make mistakes; occasionally I kick myself for doing someone wrong and say "Don't do that again." Until I noticed it, and for a time after I noticed, there was one thing over which I suffered guilt feelings.

Other people at times thought I should feel guilty. What guilt I felt was that I was unable to satisfy their wishes. Once I realized the source of my shame, of course, I was eventually able to give it up.

*[I guess what I would like is to somehow instill a sense of collective guilt in those people who see the homeless, the emotionally disturbed, the uneducated, the poor, the deprived, the abused, as none of their responsibility and none of the the government's. The attitude of "My comfort is more important than anyone else's misery" seems to be at the root of a lot of problems. And I don't know what to do about it.*

**Richard A. Dengrove**  
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If the theme of DON-o-SAUR #53 was anger, the theme of #54 is doubt--about the anger. Am I the type to do anything about my liberal causes, you ask. Will they backfire? The

whole problem here is we think we must be a specific part of something when simply being any part is sufficient. We think we must be the soldier when there's a place for farmers and shoemakers and scribes. Certainly, being a soldier, a doer and shaker, is a good thing, but there's a place for visionaries, who think up the doer's ideas. And there's a place for the skeptic who challenges the doers' and shakers' program; the skeptic forces that program to reflect the real

world better. Is cutting off South Africa the best way to get rid of Apartheid? Is banning saccharine the best way to get rid of cancer? Maybe. But maybe not. The skeptic is the hardest person to fit into the whole; he seems like he's outside it. But given how many causes in the past have backfired, maybe he has a place. And yes, there's a place for the apathetic. They force the doers and shakers to listen to the skeptics.

About ACLU, I'm in favor of civil liberties for all: even high school students, even crazy homeless people, even illegal aliens, even Nazis, even Arabs. But civil liberties, as they are now known, are not a top priority with me. I think we have more than enough rights which allow people to remain apart. Now we must have rights which allow people to live together. Maybe the adversarial justice system is not a good idea for settling disputes. Maybe we should opt for a system of arbitration. Most divorces certainly should be arbitrated rather than ending up in court. Maybe competition and the market aren't the best way; maybe we should negotiate prices and investment between business, labor, government and consumers, similar to European and Japanese practice. Maybe matchmaking isn't such a bad idea, but one that has to be adjusted to this place and time for people who aren't beautiful or eloquent. Maybe students shouldn't be judged on how they compete against each other, but on how they work with each other. Perhaps on how they teach each other. Just some suggestions. What do you think?

[I think the suggestions are worth thinking about.]

**Tom Jackson**  
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Thank you for sending me a copy of DoS 54. I am a single parent now and don't have much time to be active in fandom, so I appreciate people such as you who are willing to send me fanzines. Besides, I really like your zine and I'm pleased to see it coming out again.

In your editorial this issue, you asked, speaking of the prison overcrowding problem, "I can't help wondering myself: How many communities are going to be receptive to corrections facilities in their neighborhood. Someplace else, sure, but not here."

Well, Don, the solution to that problem is to ruin the economy so badly that some communities will welcome anything that will produce a few jobs, including a new prison. In Oklahoma, several different communities are lobbying the legislature for a new prison, and the Comanche Indian Tribe wants to locate a prison at the now closed Fort Sill Indian School here in Lawton. Oklahoma has been in a recession for years. Perhaps Colorado is doing better than we are.

After I read your review panning **Twistor**, I read the Algis Budrys review in *F&SF* which praised it. Your review is more convincing. Budrys is not the worst reviewer around, but he is certainly the most overrated.

If you are going to continue to write about science fiction in your zine, I hope that sometime you will get around to talking again about Theodore Sturgeon. (I remember that years ago you talked about meeting Sturgeon at a convention, and how pleased you were when he praised an issue of DON-o-SAUR that you sent him.) I have been thinking about Sturgeon lately because the *New York Review of Science Fiction* is running a two-part interview of Sturgeon which David Hartwell recorded in 1972. In his introduction, Hartwell calls Sturgeon's stories "the best body of work in shorter forms thus far written in SF... Of all the giants of SF, Sturgeon is the Artist."

This manifesto made me feel ashamed, because although I've enjoyed everything by Sturgeon I've run across, I'd actually only read two books, *More Than Human* and *Sturgeon Is Alive and Well*. I tried to repair that by reading *The Golden Helix*. What a marvelous collection! It seems shameful to look at the SF



section of a bookstore and not be able to find any of Sturgeon's books in print.

Just recently I picked up Hartwell's huge new anthology, *The World Treasury of Science Fiction*, which includes two Sturgeon stories, including my favorite, "The Man Who Lost the Sea."

[I really don't think we need to worry about Sturgeon's post-humous reputation. Neither publishers nor readers are willing to let him die. "The Man Who Lost the Sea" is also reprinted in *THE GOLDEN HELIX*, a story collection published at \$3.95 in January by Carroll & Graf, who had previously reprinted *THE DREAMING JEWELS* and *VENUS PLUS X*. Also, "The {Widget}, the {Wadget} and Boff" is one half of a new Tor Double, along with Asimov's "The Ugly Little Boy." I suspect there either is now or soon will be more.]

**Harry Bond**  
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It always makes my day when an unsolicited fanzine arrives out of the blue--especially if it's a good and interesting one such as DON-o-SAUR.

Vietnam War movies just make me feel ill. I'm extremely squeamish with regard to celluloid violence (as opposed to that in books)--you may be reading a loc from the only fan never to have watched *ALIEN* all the way through; four or five scenes had me cowering with hands over eyes. A very close friend who watches such films as *PLATOON* regularly to work off her innate violence (she reckons) recently did an amateur psych job on me and sat me down in front of *FULL METAL JACKET* for the ostensibly same reason. I didn't last very long.

At any rate I'm glad you've grasped the ethnocentrism innate in such movies --the evidence is that not many of your fellow-countrymen (mostly not fans, tho', happily) find it beyond them. Take *GOOD MORNING, VIETNAM* (please). Central to it is the assumption that the Vietnamese kids must be taught the American Way of Life -- an assumption never once questioned. I could detail at length my stupefaction at such an unstated tenet, but I don't want to get you embarrassing visits from the CIA.

"Where is our national sense of justice?" Whether the US has ever had one, I don't know; certainly, if Britain ever had one, it's either dead or dormant.

**Steve Miller**  
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I'll take you to task for your (apparently) off-the-cuff comment re Michner calling Maine Chesapeake. I waded through much of "Chesapeake" and I've fished, swam, crabbed and camped on the Chesapeake Bay. I live in Maine and can tell you that your Sense of Place is off if you think the Maryland and Virginia tidewaters are interchangeable with Maine's coastas regions.

The character of the people living in the two regions is similar, I grant. Isolated fishing regions using similar technology will tend to share some similarities, I suppose, especially when the original colonies had similar sources and goals.

The geography of the areas are very different. Maine's coast is a rocky, deep-water coast. Sandy beaches are at a minimum in Maine; in the tidewaters and DelMarVa coastal regions they are the rule. The tidewater islands and peninsulas are low and flat, mere natural barrier constructions of sand. The islands of Maine have hills -- some with peaks as high as 1,000 to 1,200 feet -- while tidewater islands and lands are frequently barely more than a dozen feet above sea level. The coastal marshes -- where there are any in Maine -- tend to be a few acres in area and are nestled into the sides of hills. In the tidewater the

marshes cover many square miles. Arguably the "tidewater conditions" I've spoken of actually extend up the Chesapeake nearly to Baltimore as well as up and down the barrier coast from Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, to Cape May, New Jersey. Maine public relations officials would commit many sins to have an ocean front three-mile-long sandy beach 300 yards wide.

Now as to why that little error made me angry, I don't know. Maybe it touches off my "but I know better!" button. Maybe there's more to it. Sharon and I have been invited to submit a place-specific short story and I've been trying to make the place real to me, having spent a grand total of less than a week in the place -- counting back to childhood visits. The odd thing is that the childhood visits seem to serve up much better "place" material for the story than do the adult visits. I suspect that's because as an adult I went with a purpose and as a child I was dragged along and saw everything without anticipation. I guess I'm also afraid that my use of maps, photographs, local authorities etc. will fail and I won't make the place feel real -- so I "defend" the places I do know about with unreasonable vigor. I guess.

*[Mea culpa! I am guilty of the same sort of geographic ignorance that often makes me angry. Perhaps I should have read, or tried to read, "Chesapeake" before so casually referring to it. At least I should know where the Chesapeake Bay is! All I can say is that it isn't even the worst of my geographic boo-boos. I once put the University of New Mexico in Tempe, Ariz. Roy Tackett caught that one.]*

Dave D'Amassa  
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I was pleased and honored to assist you in reaching your bulk-mail quota, for which you paid me with an interesting read. Anger is an important topic to me, since I have had problems with it myself; also fascinating is studying the different definitions of and balms for anger that your readers shared, for the exposure to the diverse way in which individuals see and respond to emotions.

And then there is driving.

After nearly two years of being licensed to risk my life on the roadways of the Ocean State, during which I have received one speeding ticket and been involved in a high-speed accident caused by a stupid hick in a pickup, I have decided that I enjoy driving very much. Automatic or standard, sedan or wagon, sporty or practical, I love operating an automobile, and make an effort to be a safe and competent driver.

I am assertive of my right of way, but not reckless; I enjoy driving fast, but caution comes first. Speaking as someone who has nothing against hurtling down long stretches of highway at 70 to 80 miles per hour, it irritates me to see the drooling idiots who fancy themselves fast drivers weaving their way around freeways and interstates without a speck of consideration for the other drivers on the road: no signals, not slowing down for sharp curves (with the resulting centripetal force sometimes pulling them into another lane) cutting too close when passing other cars, and not replacing their lights when they burn out. Cars with only one headlight should not be driven at night, and cars missing brake lights have no business on the road.

I am a terribly angry person. Even as a small child, I saw a psychologist on and off for a few years because I was this grinning little monster who, on the inside, was boiling over. As I've developed, I've had problems dealing with my anger, but by now I've learned how to keep my fairly violent temper under control. Most of the time.

I differ with Buck Coulson in that I do become angry about "racism, sexism, governmental stupidity" and other Grand Injustices. Moreover, although I don't



mean anything against Buck, one of the main reasons they are flourishing is the very cynicism he ascribes to himself. Why shouldn't we expect justice, dammit? There will be plenty of corruption in even the best of the moral tides, without the majority tolerating it as part of their wretched existence, completely beyond their control. Justice is something you have to fight for. I know I sound idealistic; but it is that mass cynicism that makes it idealistic, and that in itself is a constant frustration of mine.

**J.E. Pournelle**  
**12051 Laurel Terrace Dr.**  
**Studio City, CA 91604**

A short note to thank you for DON-o-SAUR and to say I do appreciate getting it even if I don't respond very often. Putting four kids through college--well, three now, and one

graduating this June, thank Heaven--turns out to require more work than one might have thought, or perhaps I should say as much as one fears it will. That leaves little time, and what time I do have gets used up with stuff such as you see on this letterhead [*Lunar Society*].

Also, in looking through your letters column, I see a reference to my introduction in 1978, when I was Toastmaster for WESTERCON. The reader asks what I said. If you remember, please tell me. I always speak from notes--generally very sketchy notes at that--and those have been lost. I can't imagine what I said to introduce you. I hope you didn't dislike it. Presume you didn't since I've been getting your zine.

Regarding NOLACON and the Baptists, I couldn't resist (well, I had probably had one julep more than I should have) singing in the lobby while the Baptists pretended not to listen:

#### **That Old Time Religion**

It was good for Jimmy Swaggert,  
 well we know he is no braggart,  
 and at sex he's not a laggard,  
 but he's good enough for me.

*[Unless someone was recording the Guest of Honor rites at that Westercon (and I didn't notice that anyone was), Jerry's Introduction may be lost forever, because I recall very little of it myself. He made some mention of my SF collection, comparing it favorably (but quite unrealistically, of course, to Forry Ackerman's. In any case, I know I was not displeased.]*

**Avdeon Carol**  
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I still believe in social responsibility. I believe that, if nothing else, you have to hold the line against the other side. I don't believe that any of us can be pure and wise and perfect all the time, or that we can ever really live up

to our ideals. Phil Ochs once said, "I could never be as moral as my songs," and he sure got that right, but damn, I'm sure glad he didn't let it stop him from writing those songs. He did what he could. So do you.

How can I resist Steven Addlesee's letter. Face it, I can't. So for Steve, here it is, the example of Men Who Don't Realize That Women Are Too Good: I'm walking down the street in DC one day when this guy grabs me by the arm--total stranger. I'm so shocked I just turn a cold eye on him and say, "How dare you?" And it doesn't even cross his tiny mind to think he maybe has no business grabbing strange women in the street, of course. He says, "You think you're too good for me!" I can't say for sure whether there was a silent "because I'm

black," in that exclamation, but he damn sure didn't tumble to the fact that, like all women, I really am too good to have people grabbing me out of the crowd as if I had nothing better to do with my time than entertain them. Steven, it doesn't matter what you look like--you could bloody be Tom Selleck, Sam Elliott, Tom Cruise (Gregory Peck, Robert Plant, Paul Newman, Robert Redford...pick your type), and it wouldn't make any difference. The minute you demand a strange woman's attention in the street, you have demanded something you have no right to, and of course she looks disgusted. That's because you are being disgusting. How do you know she isn't on her way to meet her lover, or considering the theory of relativity, or having all sorts of fun inside her own head that she didn't need you to interrupt? What makes you so sure your interest is any replacement for the thoughts you just interrupted? Or is that what bothers you--the idea that a woman might just think there was something more important in the world than you?

Joyce K. Jensen  
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I have to take issue with your concern about the woman who's in "an excellent position to have herself appointed the unofficial censor of network sitcoms." While I agree

that such crusades can be carried too far, we're in an unfortunate position, in this country, of having the lowest possible moral and artistic standards foisted on us by the media. By moral I don't mean necessarily sex, although that's sometimes part of it. People do have a right to express such feelings; sponsors, equally, have a right to disagree with them. I express my feelings about television by virtually never watching it. That seems passive, but we did an Arbitron diary several months ago, which made my expression of how I feel about TV's low standards an active stance.

*I have no desire to limit anyone's freedom of expression. But who decides which artistic and moral standards are to be upheld? I do wish TV execs had more guts and integrity and some artistic standards, but I don't trust self-appointed citizen-censors, either.*

**Skel**  
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England

Speaking of the suspension of disbelief, as you were doing in your comments on Ursus in DoS 54, I have a develish job suspending mine over the demonstrable fact that I never responded to DON-o-SAUR 53. I know I didn't, for I've just yanked it out from near the bottom of the ZTMNBFUIHRTT pile. That is 'Zines That Must Not Be Filed Until I Have Responded To Them,' if you're feeling acronymically sub-par this morning. It's quite a large pile, growing larger every week, and it sits there in the corner, peripherally mocking my LOC-writing inadequacies every time I sit down at the keyboard.

The main reason for my disbelief is that your theme was such a natural, and were someone to calculatedly design a theme to generate maximum response from folks in general, and me in particular, I'd have said that was it. On my off-days I seem to get angry about so many things, I could have gone down in fannish history as the creator of the first thousand-page LoC. But I refrained. Manfully. Deliberately. "The boy done good," my manager would have said in the ungrammatical way that managers have with their after-the-match comments. The thing is, at the end of the day, reliving past angers, however tenuously, is not what I'm in fandom for.

Having said that I was about the launch, belatedly, into a LoC on DON-o-SAUR 53, before I caught myself and switched my brain cell back on. What did I say? That topic has an almost siren-like lure. Get a grip here Skel. On to 54.



Crime and Punishment (there's an idea for a novel in there somewhere) is another topic that I suspect will ring Pavlovian bells and cause much cerebral salvation. I am intrigued by the repeated phrase "cruel and unusual punishment," which seems a bit airy-fairy for a legal concept. The word 'and' is the kicker I think. 'Or' would have been more humanitarian. With 'and,' even the cruelest of punishments is perfectly constitutional, provided it is not also unusual. You could subject criminals to unspeakable physical and mental torture, provided you did it to more than 50% of them, for then the punishment would not be both cruel and unusual. Are you sure you quoted this correctly?

Anyway, getting back to basics...does a society have a right to protect itself from 'deviant' individuals who reject its mores? Surely anyone brought up in a democratic or consensus environment would answer this question with a 'yes.' I for one could not exist in an environment where anybody stronger than me could simply walk up and in effect say, "You have something I want, so I'm taking it." If you accept this moral premise (and I can't even speak the same ethical language of anyone who doesn't), then you've made your first compromise on the rights of the individual.

It's like the joke where the guy asks the woman if she'll sleep for him for a million bucks, and she says 'yes.' He then asks if she'll sleep with him for a dime and she says, "Certainly not! What kind of girl do you take me for?" and he replies, "We've already settled that. We're just haggling over the price."

What price is society prepared to pay, in both an ethical and economic sense, to protect itself from individuals who reject its standards? I suspect that the ethical question is both more interesting and more complicated, but even the economical side is a can of worms, and takes me back to that remark you cite that "Hell, prison ain't supposed to be a luxury hotel." Whenever I read the statistics about how much it costs to maintain one prisoner I have that old 'suspension of disbelief' problem again. If I had to pay to put myself and my family in prison, I couldn't afford it. It would cost more to keep us in prison than it costs to keep us outside, in what I have to admit is, whilst not the lap of luxury (we can't for instance afford a car, or holidays), a pretty OK life.

Nitty gritty time. Societies do not have botgtomless wallets. In the UK, and to only a slightly lesser extent in the US, every penny that society spends on what it defines as 'criminals,' on those who've rejected its consensus values, is a penny not spent on health and welfare for those who have supported its values. The criminal is in direct competition with the sick, the aged, and the infirm, for our tax dollars. Who would you give it to? How would you explain to someone who's waited years for an operation to cure an increasingly painful condition, that funding cuts mean they'll have to wait even longer, so that (to quote your example) convicted criminals won't have to sleep four-to-a-cell? How do you explain to some senior citizen that yet again this winter they're going to have to choose between eating and keeping warm, because you can't increase their already inadequate pensions on account of you're spending the money building better toilet facilities for convicted felons?

That's the 'economics' side, and that, believe it or not, is relatively straightforward. If you don't mind, I'll pass on the 'ethical' side. I'll let better minds tangle with that.

Why are your zines always so fucking fascinating?

Alexander R. Slate  
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Concerning prison crowding (or overcrowding, if you prefer), there is a question in my mind as to whether crowded conditions in prison constitute "cruel and unusual punishment."

There are decent, law-abiding people in many of the inner cities who exist in conditions more crowded than those found in the prisons. Furthermore, prison

populations at least have a roof over their heads and get fed properly, something thousands of homeless or just plain poverty stricken Americans cannot claim. I find it hard to sympathize with the "plight" of prisoners over these conditions. As to the "rights" of prisoners, remember that the Constitution does not say that people will not be deprived of their rights and liberties unconditionally. It says that people will not be deprived of their rights or liberties without due process of law. Convicted felons have had their due process.

*[The issue of criminal rights will have to wait until I get our education problems solved, but I'm certain there are good arguments on both sides, and I sense a link between the two issues.]*

**Steve Larue**  
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I'm a long way from retirement--still in my 30s--with a mortgage due every month and similar responsibilities. It all seems so far away before some of those will be gone. Yet it's very encouraging to read some of the lettercol in #53, where a number of writers are at or near retirement age, and they still sound the same, as if they haven't changed, which--I should know this--they probably haven't. Now they know who they are and how they want to spend their time.

I certainly had to smile how, in #54, you got into a review of Mother London and ended with your best shot at a complete bibliography for Moorcock. I've gone the same thing; I only wish I had more time to do a better job. I've got so many books now, I don't have any idea of what I actually own anymore. I could relate to Don Fitch's letter in #53. I have "collecting man-ia." I'm running out of room in my basement to even walk around--but I will maintain some semblance of order down there, so I can find stuff when I need it.

**Garth Spencer**  
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It is almost a law that reformist legislation, public outcries, new-broom movements are largely for show, not for permanent effect; that the most powerful criminals go untouched while scapegoats are thrown to the

media wolves. It is almost the same law that reform legislation must not prepare for the consequences of its actions.

I agree there are drawbacks to freedom of speech; that one man's righteous wrath, sufficient to motivate a letter-writing campaign and another media crusade, is someone else's pernicious self-righteousness.

I should know. Up here in Canada we are only now thrashing out the battle over abortion you fought out in Roe v. Wade x many years ago. We have one free-standing (non-hospital) abortion clinic in Vancouver, and every day some psalm-singing self-righteous churchgoers are blocking the doors, even chaining themselves in the way. Here are people so scared of being blamed for any abortions taking place in the community, when/if they face the Big Don in the Sky, that they can't mind their own business, make rules for themselves to observe, and leave others alone; too superstitious, frankly, to realize they live in a civil, not a Christian community.

Either civil societies can, in crises, produce sufficient motivation for people and groups to oppose extremists and irrational movements, or they cannot. Which is is going to be?

*[Good question! Since now, in the post-Webster era, we have the abortion issue to thrash out again, state by state this time.]*



Jean Weber  
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The things that make me angry can all be lumped into the general category of "hypocrisy, shortsightedness and simple stupidity," as you put it. You've mentioned the drug/gang situation, and unequal justice; I agree with all you've said. Your comments on the Vietnam War, and "American national arrogance, selfishness, self-centeredness" sum up a lot of the reasons why I left America in 1974 after several years of political activism ("America - Love It or Leave It sounded reasonable to me) and am now an Australian citizen.

The things that really make me angry are a subset of hypocrisy etc.; they are things that affect me personally. Many could be lumped under "sexism," and are things that many feminists make a big deal about. The idea that someone else, especially some government (and doubly especially some government under the influence of some religions) should tell me whether I must carry an unwanted child to term, make me the angriest. Especially since the people who oppose abortion are frequently also against easily-available contraception, sex education, affordable pre-natal care and welfare payments for children once born, and are also in favor of the so-called "traditional" family which all too often is a haven of domestic violence, against both the woman and the children. One doesn't have to be in favor of abortion to support a woman's choice in this matter.

Tom Digby  
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On the lack of mass movements to legalize drugs, I get the feeling there are more people favoring that position than the Establishment media like to admit. Some high official (Reagan himself?) in a speech once disparagingly referred to "a handful of people" who wanted drugs legalized: At about the same time some poll reportedly placed that "handful" at about 18% of its sample. Maybe someone in that Administration had very large hands.

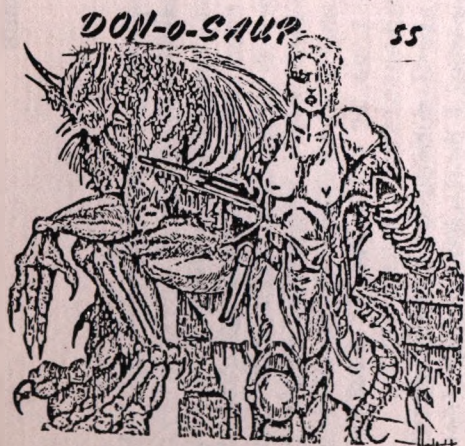
I think that disagreeing with the official line on The Drug Problem has become taboo. There may be many who do privately disagree with the Party Line, but each thinks there is nobody else around sharing similar feelings, so the safest thing is to keep quiet.

In a way it reminds me of the early stages of the Vietnam anti-war movement when the prevailing feeling in many respectable workplaces seemed to be that "everybody" felt that anyone who disagreed with "real Americans" was a traitor and might even be looked askance at come employee evaluation time. Therefore I think the task at hand is to look back at how the anti-war movement came out of the closet during Vietnam and see if there are lessons that can be applied to the drug situation.

### **ALSO HEARD FROM . . .**

Harry Andruschak, Ruth Berman, Carl Bettis, Richard Brandt, Brian Earl Brown, Lester Boutillier, Brad W. Foster, Fred Jakobcic, Ben Indick, Colin P. Langeveld, Chris Mills, Ken Ozanne, Jack Speer, Alan J. Sullivan, Charles Thompson Jr., R. Laurraine Tutihasi, and B. Ware.





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