

## HITCHHIKE



HITCHHIKE #24 is published by John D. Berry for the usual small circle of friends. HITCHHIKE, "the fannish access catalog," is a personal journal, centered on that "marvelously unorganized" communications web known as science fiction fandom, but extending from this center in all directions. You can get HITCHHIKE by any show of interest that also interests me: preferably a letter of comment, after that your own fanzine in trade, or, if all else fails, a small amount of money (25¢ will do) in cash or US stamps. No long-term subscriptions, please. My tentative address over the summer is c/o Paul Novitski, 1690 E. 26th Ave., Eugene, OR 97403, but use this for personal letters only, please (letters of comment definitely included); fanzines and anything that can wait should be sent to Box 504, Edgartown, MA 02539 (my mother's summer address) until September, after which, if you haven't heard from me, use my mother's winter address, 35 Dusenberry Road, Bronxville, NY 10708. Got that? The date as I begin writing is June 10, 1975. Roach Press Publication #88.

---

"Any successful revolution is three-quarters rumour." --Susan Wood

---

The sun is setting over the prairies of Saskatchewan and the rooftops of Regina. On the stereo is Canadian music, by Fraser and deBolt. Beside the typewriter is a half-empty bottle of O'Keefe Ale (or "Bière O'Keefe," as I came to know it last winter in Québec). I'm using Eli Cohen's electric typewriter, and these words will come to you on 20-pound blue paper with Canadian Christmas stamps on the back. In the next room Susan Wood is wrestling with a new installment of "The Clubhouse," and she occasionally comes out into the kitchen to make herself a cup of tea and work through a block in the writing. I may find myself wandering into her study, or the bedroom where Eli is, with a cup of tea in my hand, when I hit a block in the writing of this HITCHHIKE.

The primary reason I'm doing a short issue now, here, is to tell you that I've left Washington and that I'm liable not to be settled down anyplace for the next several months. I'm roughly on my way west, since I'm planning on traveling with Susan when she takes the train to Vancouver later this month, then heading down the coast to the Westercon in Oakland on July 4th weekend. But the summer is a very open-ended one, not having any set time for return as I had last year, when the worldcon was in Washington. I would like to spend some time in Oregon visiting Paul Novitski and seeing the country around there, so you may be able to reach me care of him later in the summer. But since I didn't win the DUFF race, which means I won't be going to Australia in August, there's no particular structure to the rest of the summer. I want to do a lot of writing.

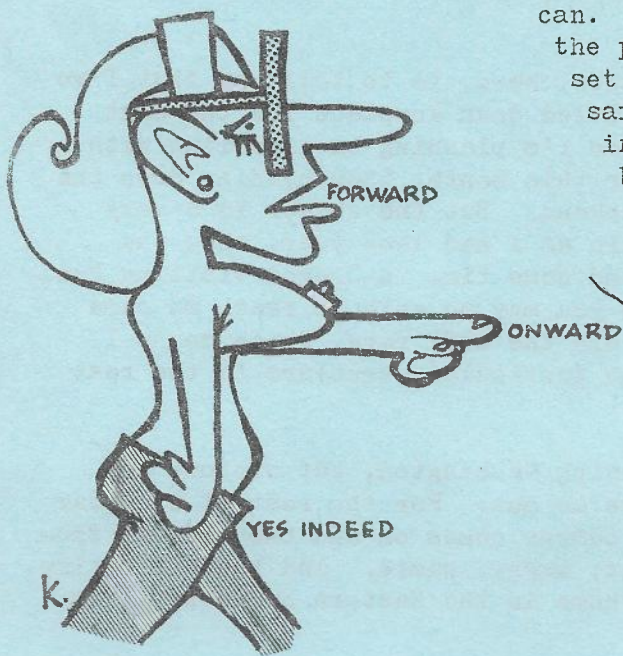
There are a lot of personal reasons for leaving Washington, but without any other reason in the world the climate would drive me out. For the rest of the year the city is bearable, often beautiful, but when summer comes on and the wind is from the south, it becomes truly a Southern city. Hot, muggy, humid. And then it's time for me to get out. I have never felt really at home in the Eastern humidity, even



though I grew up in the East. When the summer came, my family would leave New York and, after one godawful day on the road with a full hour moving through the streets of Providence, RI, from stoplight to stoplight in the glaring sun and honking, screaming traffic, we would end up on Martha's Vineyard island, off the southern coast of Massachusetts, where cool breezes blew off the Atlantic and the sunlight mingled with a frequent fog. And I well recall the first night back in Bronxville at the end of the summer, right around Labor Day because my school began just after the holiday, when I would lie awake on top of my bed with the covers thrown off, tossing and turning in a damp swamp of sweaty sheets and trying to get to sleep. No, I don't like hot, humid weather. When I first moved to California, to go to college at Stanford, it took me a long time to get used to it but I fell in love with the dry, spare western land. With its semi-desert plants mingled with eucalyptus and redwoods, California felt to me like a Japanese brush painting: a few simple strokes, with a clarity I had never found in the lush, green East. Although I moved back to the East, and I've lived in northern Virginia and in Washington for 2½ years now, I still feel most at home with the land in northern California, even in the places where I've never been before. Since most of what's happening for me these days is happening in Washington, I feel torn -- and of course I still have the roots I grew out of in New York and on Martha's Vineyard. (Home is a lot of places.) It annoys me that just as the weather in Washington is getting unbearable, everybody seems to be coming out of winter hibernation and everything starts moving again, but my choice is to get out and leave.

I've been enjoying the dryness of Saskatchewan, and the coolness that means that if I went out right now I'd need to put a jacket on. I've even been enjoying the endless wheatfields, which are not my natural element, for their expansiveness, their sense of space. The sky is big and wide and clear out here. I'm only passing through, but stopping long enough to get to a new place in my head, and to publish this fanzine.

This evening I stumbled upon Regina's central spot for gay cruising. It was just about sunset, and I went out walking just to get some exercise and to clear my head out before sitting down to write. I wandered down to Victoria Park, which is a small, manicured city park that Susan had taken me through a couple of times before. It was cool, but the mosquitoes were biting. I walked on the grass a bit, then I sat on the edge of a concrete-and-stone trash can. I was simply looking at the evergreens and the poplars and the planted flowerbeds and the sunset, when a man walked up to me. I nodded and said hello. He was short and balding, perhaps in his late thirties, and dressed very straight but casual. He opened by muttering about the police who were walking into the park at that moment, saying that they're always doing that. He asked me if it was like that all the time. I replied that I didn't know. He gathered that I was from out of town, and I told him I was from Washington. As we talked a middle-aged man in blue was walking slowly past us, and the man talking to me said, "Yup, that guy's gay. He's probably checking you out." At that point I realized what was going on. I said, "I didn't know that. Is this Regina's main place for cruising?" "Yes, I guess it is." He looked at me. "You aren't gay, then?" "No." We made some more small talk, then he looked





1'autostop---iii

at the man in blue again and said, "If you want a blowjob you'd get it from him." "Yeah, well, I'm not particularly interested." He didn't shrug. He said he thought he'd go over to the hotel bar across the street and see if there was any action. He wished me a pleasant stay in Regina as he walked away.

I left the park. It didn't bother me that the place was a cruising spot, but I didn't like being looked over and approached, when all I wanted to do was sit around and enjoy the evening. The mosquitoes were biting, too.

In a way, it's encouraging to know that Regina has a gay cruising place. And that somebody would be so civilized about making a pass. But still. Quand même.

My first three days here were like a convetion. I arrived at the Regina airport after a multi-leg journey via two airlines and several cities (remind me to tell you about the first part of that journey, in a subsequent paragraph), and Susan met me at the airport. We launched immediately into a non-stop conversation that continued late into the night and turned into a three-day orgy of talking. Our minds and bodies went on convention time, and we found ourselves watching the sun come up and muttering, "Let's hit the coffeeshop," "Hey, where's the pool?" and "Such a nice Torcon."

Late one evening, we went out wandering and Susan showed me The Frog. The Frog is the work of a class at the Fine Arts Dept. of the university ("an unauthorized class project," Susan told me, "with the emphasis on 'unauthorized'"), and I understand that it simply appeared one morning in the middle of the grass and trees around the old university building. It's a giant concrete frog, nearly as tall as Susan, inlaid with irregular multi-colored tiles. I tried clambering onto its neck and riding it, and we decided that it would make a very fannish equestrian statue. She wished that we had somebody like Dan Steffan there to draw it.

This will do as a subsequent paragraph. Have you ever had the ineffable experience of flying on Allegheny Airlines? You have, eh? Then you would have been among the chorus of friends and utter strangers who chortled and wished me luck when I mentioned that Allegheny was the airline I was traveling on to Toronto (where I would connect with Air Canada to Winnipeg, and eventually to Regina). There are no direct flights from Washington to Toronto, so the best I could do was to get one that stopped in Philadelphia and Erie, Pa. The flight began by being delayed a quarter of an hour in DC because they "had to change a wheel"; I pictured the plane jacked up by the side of the runway and a couple of crewmen standing around with a wrench. My confidence in my fantasy went through some changes as we were boarding the plane and I saw a huge hydraulic jack lying on the tarmac just beyond the plane.

In Philadelphia the plane filled up, and a white-haired, stocky businessman sat down beside me. We struck up a conversation. "It's ridiculous when the only daytime flight you can get from Philadelphia to Toronto is a puddle-jumper like this," he said. "I expect nothing but trouble from this flight. I'd rather set myself on fire than entrust myself to Allegheny." With that beginning, we passed on to conversation about our destinations, and finally to reading.

We made it across the state of Pennsylvania all right, and came down in the rain in Erie. The businessman sighed and looked at me. "Well, that's one down," he said.

An unbroken sea of clouds covered the Great Lakes. We took off in a most businesslike fashion, but coming into Toronto we descended until we could see the ground under the clouds, then abruptly pulled back up again. All I had seen was green farmland, which hardly looked like the outskirts of the second biggest city in Canada,



les belles heures de jean, duc de berry--iv

and I wondered if they had managed to lose the airport. In a moment the captain's voice came over the loudspeaker. "Sorry about that, folks. We couldn't land that time around because the traffic didn't get out of the way fast enough." We flew around and tried again. The businessman and I exchanged glances. As we came down again, a woman behind me kept saying, almost chanting, "I don't like Allegheny. I don't like Allegheny. I don't like--" The clouds parted, and there was the farmland again. But so was a runway. We hovered a few feet above it for an interminable time, while I wondered if we were just going to pick up a mail sack and fly on to someplace else, but at last the wheels touched down. We rolled to a halt before the terminal.

I still had to fly Air Canada across half the continent from Toronto to Regina, but somehow it seemed as though the worst part of the trip was over.

It may be that this issue will reach overseas fans before the last one does. I'll be taking advantage of Canada's super-cheap international Air Mail Printed Papers rate, which means the overseas copies might easily arrive before the North American ones do. I thought I was doing the same with the last issue. The issue before that, you see, was mailed from Ottawa because I was on a trip to Quebec City and Ottawa, and I had just finished up the issue in the week before the trip. While in Ottawa, I commented on the wonderfulness of Canada's postal rates to Will Straw, whom I was staying with, and he promptly offered to remail the overseas copies of the next issue for me, if I could mail them in bulk to him and send him the money for postage.

So that's what I did. I finished the issue shortly before the Disclave, but I wasn't sure if Will was coming down for the con, so I bundled up all the copies in two large packages, mislabeled them "Books," and mailed them off to him in Ottawa.

Will didn't come down for the Disclave, but Richard Labonte did. I told him about this wonderful arrangement. He complimented me on my foresight and so forth, then he told me that Will had left for the Northwest Territories for the summer. The Northwest Territories? Yes. Richard kindly offered to go by Will's house and pick up the copies when they arrived, then to remail them himself. I gave him the postage money before he left.

The other night Richard called here, and he said the copies hadn't reached Ottawa yet. I've heard from Will, who is staying in Yellowknife, the capital of the Northwest Territories, but he said no word about HITCHHIKE. I keep having the unsettling thought that perhaps Will's mail is all being automatically forwarded.

So if the overseas copies of the last issue have arrived when you get this, you have Richard Labonte to thank. And perhaps Will Straw, too. If they haven't arrived, just sit tight; they'll get there eventually, somehow. And maybe we'll get a column out of Will about life on the shores of the Great Slave Lake, and the True History of the Carleton Student Co-op Houses from Richard. If we're patient and we don't wish too hard.

Last night I went to a Canadian fandom party. Not Canadian sf fandom; Canadian culture fandom. You might almost call it CanLit fandom, from the number of people there who were connected with the university, but the members of Humphrey and the Dumptrucks, Saskatchewan's own homegrown country and western band, were there, and so were a lot of other assorted non-lit people. The occasion was the publication of The Meadowlark Connection, a novel by Ken Mitchell (also known as The Moosejaw Kid) which he had been paid \$500 by the Ontario Arts Council not to publish, then had turned around and spent the money on having this private edition printed up. (Don't ask; it would be much too long a story to try to explain.



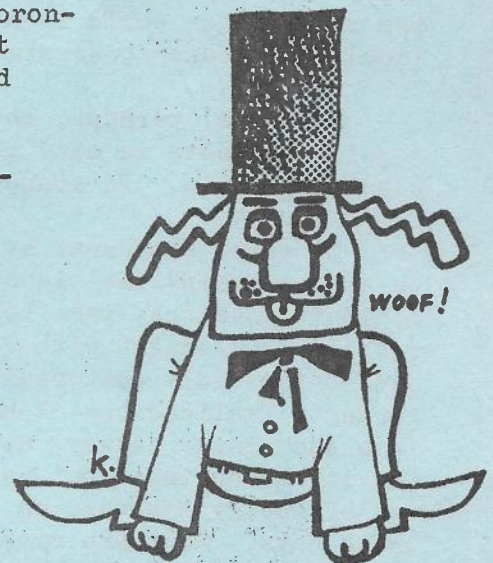
metric minutes--v

Besides, I don't understand it myself. Ken is a published novelist and playwright, but he chose to publish this one himself after a series of hassles with Eastern publishers.) Susan kept calling it Ken's fanzine -- which is very much what it looks like, printed offset with illos and bound with a plastic ring binder -- and she was convinced right up until the last moment that the evening would turn into a collating party. It didn't, though. All the copies were collated and bound, and Ken was cheerfully selling them everybody there and paying very little attention to actually getting the right amount of money from people. Naturally I bought one. You can't walk away from a publishing party without a copy of the fanzine, can you?

All the interesting and freaky people in Regina were there, or so it seemed. They mostly broke up into fluctuating groups and talked, with occasional music on a stereo in the corner. It was very much like a good room party at an sf convention. I began to understand the feeling that friends of mine must get if I take them to a fannish party or con: they're sitting around with a lot of interesting people, watching and listening and sometimes getting into a good conversation, but every once in a while everybody else will start going on and on about "Hugoes" and "fanzines" and who's bidding for the '77 worldcon. I got that feeling a lot when Susan and Burton the blind Milton scholar and Ken and flashy Rick and the guy who's moving into Susan's office started talking about the ins and outs of the English Department at Regina University. But then I would end up talking about rubbing milk on the leaves of waxy-leaved plants with Cathy Spafford, the Crazy Lady in Red, or learning from her husband Dick, who runs the used bookstore in town, the story of his friend who went to Victoria for a couple of years and founded the Church of the Divine Afterbirth, then took the money he made in that venture and opened a porno bookstore in Saskatoon. And I got to drink Old Vienna, "the happy, lazy lager beer."

The house resembled ones I've been in in Berkeley and Palo Alto: that same kind of old, comfortable smallness. The walls were hung with fine paintings by people that Ken and his wife Roula knew; the shelves contained a few objects, simple and elegant. Roula, who is Greek, laid out a magnificent spread of small Greek pastries filled with meat and cheese and spinach, strange and exotic dips, and different kinds of salad. One of the dips turned out to be caviar. We all drank, smoked, and overate.

There was a certain excitement in the air, because this was a gathering of some of the most creative people in Saskatchewan. Right now the West of Canada is trying to work out its own identity, waking up to the fact that it has an identity separate from that of Toronto and Montreal, and there was a great deal of talk about breaking away from the cultural monopoly of "those damned Easterners" and asserting their own identity. The party seemed to break down into two groups, not hostile but mostly separate: the people who had grown up in the province and loved it, perhaps left and come back again, and the people who were from other parts of Canada and found themselves in Regina because that was where they could get a job. Ken had grown up in Moose Jaw, a fact which caused great delight and earned him many a free drink when he was in England, and he had gone East and Made It Big and done that whole trip, then he had come back to Saskatchewan. Dumptruck had gone East to make a couple of records, but they had decided that they belonged at home and had come back to stay. It was part of the emerging scene in the province. Although she was one of the expatriates from the East, Susan preferred the company of the Westerners,





and I found that I agreed. They seemed more rooted in the here and now. As Susan said last issue, the people in Saskatchewan -- the ones who stay, or who come back -- aren't trying to be anybody else; they know who they are. Ken published his own book himself because he chose to. Dumptruck record their own records now. Not because nobody else will publish or record them, but because they want to do it on their own terms.

It is also a part of Canadian regionalism. Its most obvious manifestation is in Quebec, but Western Separatism is becoming a well-known cry in Canada too. The whole thrust of the country is toward recognition of the different regions as different, tied together into one country without losing their own separate identities. It's something I remember Andy Main talking about eight years ago, when he was about to become a Landed Immigrant: in Canada different groups retain their difference; Canada has no tradition of the "melting pot." Susan has talked about this some in the AMORs she's published since she came to Regina; it's one of the reasons the life she described here, despite the long, cold winters, seemed exciting and full. It's the excitement of a culture that's waking up to itself, and it was evident last night. At that party I felt as though I was on the growing edge of the Canadian West.

That is the whole thrust of my attempts to understand the United States. It becomes things like an over-simplified discussion of the difference in the quality of life between New York and California, and it matters intensely. To understand my country as a working relationship between the regions that make it up seems to me a worthwhile undertaking, even though -- or perhaps especially because -- the United States has forgotten about regionalism. The idea was current in the Thirties, during the Depression, or so I've been told, but it has been buried under the postwar deluge of homogenized, pasteurized, vitamin-D-added suburbs. I'm not satisfied with an America that's all the same. We are getting back in touch with the land we live on, and we are regrafting ourselves onto our abandoned roots; in the process of this we should be becoming aware that that land is not interchangeable, that the roots that go down into it grow differently in one place than in another. It is those differences that are important: if you try to remove them, you can't fully succeed, because they are a part of us; but inasmuch as you do succeed, you reduce us to a paler version of what we could be.

What I'm saying could be extended to the whole world -- and should be especially by Americans, since it is we who are doing our missionary best to transform the rest of the world into our image. But the realization begins with a small, local, particular understanding of your own self and the ground from which you sprang.

Which is, perhaps, why I wander across the face of my country and others, why I put down roots in many places and always come back to them, but why I always go wandering again. To stand in a different place and look back.

My terse statement at the end of the last issue that EGOBOO "is not likely ever to appear again" has piqued some people's curiosity. I meant to lay it to rest, but I didn't have the space to explain. There is an issue of EGOBOO (which, you will recall, I co-edited with Ted White) sitting in Ted's basement, entirely stencilled except for Ted's editorial. It has been there for over two years now, and by this spring I realized that I had no interest at all in publishing it. It would be a lame duck issue anyway, since Ted's interest in co-editing a fanzine is almost nil (he likes the idea, but he seems to have lost the desire to do anything about it), and my energy has gone on to HITCHHIKE, which much better expresses where I'm at these days. So there simply wasn't much point in publishing that issue of EGOBOO. I wanted to rescue Calvin Demmon's two pages, because I thought they were brilliant and deserved to see print, but the only other part of the issue that might be of in-



ten degrees and gettin' colder--vii

terest at this late date is the lettercolumn. There were some good letters. My editorial, while long and blessed with some good lines, is nothing that I want to have see print any more. There was no Rotsler column, because, although Bill had sent me a lot of issues of KTEIC and they were all fascinating, they were all so fragmented that nothing in them could really be excerpted for use in a column. We were going to reprint Burbee's "I Was the Captain of a Spaceship," a gem that had been neglected by the fannish reprinters of recent years, and we hadn't told Burbee about it because of a schtick we had worked out, but in the time the issue was languishing in the basement, Lee and Barry Gold reprinted THE INCOMPLEAT BURBEE and made our reprint unnecessary.

So there's no point in trying to revive EGOBOO. I tried to send the last issue of HITCHHIKE to all the people who would have gotten that final issue, but if any of you know of someone who should have been on the mailing list and didn't get HITCHHIKE, let me know. And you can go now and have your file of EGOBOO bound, if that's what you like to do. It certainly was a wonderful thing.

Now for your part of the dance. I hadn't gotten many letters before I left Washington, but what I did get cry out to be printed. First comes a letter from Peter Roberts that arrived just a few days too late to be included in the last issue. I give you the

## LETTERCOLUMN



PETER ROBERTS: Okay. Places of power: can't say I've ever honestly come across any. There's Cornwall, of course, but that's more a universal and total source of power -- not quite what you had in mind, I think. Now smells are another matter: they can be most important and peculiarly nostalgic to me. No, I'm not being silly again, there's a good reason for it. A smell, faint or strong, can't be reproduced on demand: you can't revisit an old smell! The result, therefore, is that a particular smell can drift through the air at any time and suddenly remind you, more forcibly than anything else, of a past time or incident. Look, the smell of the back garden in the house I lived in twenty years ago -- what's it like? I can't even think about it -- there's nothing to visualize, no accessible memory of it. Yet I might wander out of this room tomorrow and walk down the road and suddenly, dramatically, there's that scent from long ago. Smells of Power! Hmmm.

I like your colour-coding of the Fifties as "pure puffy, cotton-candy clouds of white." Where did you grow up? America, I presume, Land of Plenty. Now I didn't have a tough childhood, by any means, though it wasn't a nice middle-class one either (that came later); but when I think of the Fifties, I think of thin drizzle and dull, gray streets with dull, gray people, and everything wrethced and drab and miserable and mashed turnips & gravy for dinner. Things improved by the end of the decade, but I remember playing in the bomb sites and sweet-rationing -- the whole thing had a depressed, 'utility' feel about it. Looking back on it, I feel it's someone else's memories, someone else's life; it doesn't connect at all with the seventies -- just a vestigial memory, like a dismal half-remembered dream.

I'm surprised at Jonh Ingham's gloomy look at life in Britain. America looks much worse to me. But there you go -- it's all standard British complacency: nothing





we'll keep rolling on 'til we get to vancouver--viii

can happen here, because everything is stable, as it always is, and if things look bad at the moment, we shall all pull through. I can't raise any real objection to that view, even though I should, logically. "The random violence quota here is getting quite heavy," says Jonh -- well, so they say. I haven't seen any of it, thank goodness, and I don't live in an ivory tower, but a bedsitter between Paddington and Notting Hill. Certainly, any violence gets into the news -- but it's minimal compared to anything in America; that's small comfort, I know. The strange fashions of young British teenagers aren't particularly new -- there were skinheads five years ago and mods before them: all violent to a degree, all looking like some alien army, mostly working-class, mostly living in council flats and doing shift-work in the factories now. Pathetic. Sad. Nothing new though, just a strange manifestation of a class-based society. It's very temporary too -- it just affects a small early-teen group before they leave school (at the earliest possible opportunity). They used to fight on the beaches in the Sixties; now they fight at football matches. Depressing, particularly since it's a complete rejection of all the values held by the counter-culture -- anti-intellectual, violent, conformist (identical dress), racist, you name it.

Damn me, this is all pretty gloomy, isn't it? Zippety-doo-dah, zippety-ay... If my record player was working I'd listen to some Shorty Le Blanc, Beach Boys, and Linda Lewis to cheer me up. It isn't though. Poo.

Never mind, we're not dead yet and I enjoyed HITCHHIKE, even if I seemed to be distracted down sunless paths when commenting on it. Thinking of the drizzly Fifties is what did it....

(6 Westbourne Park Villas, London W. 2, ENGLAND)

((I sometimes wonder what's happening to England. We tend to accept the British' own view of themselves, that they'll muddle through somehow, even when we would make no such assumption about ourselves. (I mean "we" Americans.) But there seems to be a growing feeling, at least among the people I know (I'm not sure what the media are saying), that England is slowly and majestically going down the tubes. Just what lies at the end of the tubes is an unanswered question.

You're very right about smells triggering memories. I delight in this form of restimulation because it's so random. We're not used to cataloging our memories by odor -- unlike, say, a dog -- so we have no control over the evocation of those memories, yet they are stored away in our minds and can be summoned up at the oddest times.))

ALEXEI PANSKIN: Last time around -- issue 22 -- I had this immediate impulse to write a thoughtful, well-considered letter responding to HITCHHIKE. But I didn't do it immediately -- and wound up not doing it at all. I'm not going to make the same mistake again. HITCHHIKE is filling an important gap in my life right now. That is, it's the only place I know of that's bothering to wonder about how we are living and how we might be living, that acknowledges that something important was happening in the Sixties along with a lot of shit and is trying to sort it all out now, and that admits that it is now 1975 and so far there haven't been any Seventies that anybody in his right mind would want to claim to be part of. These are important things that aren't being discussed elsewhere. I'd better get aboard.

Perhaps the key is not to talk about current life styles. Nobody is living quite like anybody else. Cory and I are living in a carriage house on a farm in Bucks County, Pennsylvania -- as we have since the summer of 1969. We didn't exactly choose it -- we were directed here by the hidden processes of the universe. Considering that we haven't had any money, that Nixon has been President, and that all the societal verities of my Forties childhood have been crumbling around us, this has been a beautiful haven. We couldn't have asked for a better one. But our life style has been an exception to the world around us. It isn't valid in itself.



another storm on the way--ix

At times, in spite of its advantages and benefits, we have found it difficult -- isolated, marginal and uncreative. We wouldn't recommend it as The Way to anybody else, even though it seems as attractive and rewarding as anything we hear about in HITCHHIKE. We wouldn't for a minute trade it for your gypsy existence, say, or for the joys of building a new bathroom in Falls Church, or living in the past in Regina, or having one's worldly possessions burgled in New York, or shaving one's head in El Cerrito.

Are we all marking time while we wait for the Seventies to start? I have this continuing feeling that we've all needed to get away from each other -- each of us living in his own way as best he could while he reorders his own values. Reading Zen, or Sufi or Taoist literature. Trying to separate the real and the true from the false. Off on excursions -- into vegetarianism, into dope, away from dope, into middle-class living, country, suburbs, city, travel, divorce, and other radical self-experiment. Not much of it done in company, and where there has been company -- as in the communes -- it hasn't lasted.

Nonetheless, while we've all seemingly been going our own ways and nothing has happened, much has changed. Nixon is no longer President. The Nixonian persecutions that seemed to spell the death of the hopes of the Sixties all failed. Nixon's cohorts have gone to jail or been discredited. The Vietnam War -- our great continuing agony for you-count-the-years -- has ended at last. (And can you imagine what would have happened if Nixon had still been President when that final crunch came?) But much more important things have happened on the immediate personal level. Less than six years ago, I got jeered locally for the length of my hair. But no more. I see on tv that even junior high school kids in rural Kentucky have long hair now. People who were straight when we came to Bucks County are now professional dope dealers with pride in their merchandise. Instead of our trash being dumped in the woods for lack of an alternative, we take it to be recycled every month. And you have Loren MacGregor in #23 writing about his sister and her husband who reject filthy hippie perverts, but who eat organic food, bicycle to work and recycle. It seems to Cory and me that the hippies, who lost every pitched battle of the Sixties, have quietly been winning the war in the Seventies without anyone in The Establishment or The Media quite noticing the fact. The changes haven't come in such a way as to give any of us who were committed to them in the Sixties any great sense of personal satisfaction. Our headlines are still filled with macho comedy-of-errors ludicrousness like the Mayaguez fiasco, or CIA assassination plots, or American businesses buying politicians foreign and domestic. Cory and I are dissatisfied, disheartened and depressed when we try to come to terms with the immediate stumbling blocks of our lives -- lack of money, inability to get recognition of our work (even from our agent, who still hasn't read our most recent book after two months of holding it), getting fucked over by people with power and not having the resources to do anything about it, and so on and so on. But we also know that in spite of the horrors of the moment, there has been immense change. We realize this particularly when we see news clips from ten years ago, or when we turn on the Dick Van Dyke situation comedies on rerun and discover that head-states have changed so greatly that we can only watch for three minutes before we are embarrassed into turning the tv off. Things are not the same as they were. And whether it is this month or later this year or whenever -- but soon -- those changes are going to bear fruit.

So instead of talking about life styles of this moment and making each other defensive about present comparisons, why not point out some hopeful on-goingnesses? Things that are real and truthful. Things that might be the Seventies emerging. Groovy as the Whole Earth Catalog is, it has two limitations -- it's a museum of the Sixties and it doesn't reflect change-in-being. I can't say beforehand that I could list as many as ten things that give me hope, but for the first time in years there are on-goingnesses that provide me with some nourishment.

For one, I haven't had any current heroes for a long time. At the moment, I have three: Muhammad Ali, Bob Dylan and Lily Tomlin. All three are people who are stretching their limits and succeeding, growing and creating. They are positive



north thompson river--x

examples of being human beings in 1975. I need examples like that -- people who can demonstrate for me that I'm not stuck with being what I have been. That this moment isn't all. That it is possible to change and grow. Two of them are Sixties people, too. This seems to be a moment for Sixties people to re-establish themselves. Baez has a new album out, clearly the best record she has made in years. And Roger Zelazny, who has been writing pernicious tripe in the Seventies, has come back with a third Amber book that transforms the first two and gives me hope that he may again do work as important to the moment as the stuff he was doing in the Sixties. There are other people returning, too. I wasn't able to read his book, but Chip Delany is back. And I expect we will see others.

Interesting things are happening in comic books. Not everywhere. Not consistently. But certain artists and writers are doing work that outreaches anything I've previously seen in the medium. More imaginative. Deeper. Less linear. More mystical. Less culture-bound. I can only wonder what it is doing to the heads of 12-year-olds. Opening them, I think. But beyond any question, Dr. Strange and Killraven and some of the others are leading in directions that are completely different from the comics of the Sixties, like Spiderman and the Fantastic Four.

And then there are some very interesting new record companies like Folk Legacy, Rounder and Flying Fish that are cooperative ventures more interested in putting out good work that would otherwise be unavailable than in commercial product for commercial profit. (Gordon Bok, of course, is on Folk Legacy -- not Folkways.) I was a folkie before rock came along. And although rock swallowed much of folk music whole, rock never managed to have that sense of truth-telling that I valued in folk. Well, apparently, some of that has continued to live. The Philadelphia Folk Festival, which takes place not far from here, has continued to flourish, even grow, in the Seventies. And there are other folk festivals you never hear of. We need to regain our sense of integrity -- and folk music and the Rounder Cooperative and their cousins have been caretaking it unsung. Rounder -- so it is claimed -- issues as many records as some so-called major labels. And so what if they wear rags to do it.

Most of tv continues to be a desert. But there are good and true things there, too. On Public Broadcasting, besides Sesame Street and its brothers, there is a kid's show called Zoom. Kids only on camera. More of a sense of the truth of being a kid than I've ever seen on tv anywhere else. To take its true measure, all you have to do is compare Zoom with the plastic puppets on Mickey Mouse Club, which is now in syndication. Also a show called Hot L Baltimore -- a Norman Lear show which apparently has been canceled, though episodes are still being rerun. It takes outcasts of society living on dog food, whores, a Watergate dropout-of-society, a Black pamphleteer -- and makes them into a family. And -- when you ain't got nothin' you got nothin' to lose -- allows them to speak truth.

The Seventies -- the true, real, up-lifting, creative Seventies I want to live in and take part in and contribute to -- haven't yet revealed themselves. But I think that they are out there. Perhaps when they've really got under way, we'll be able to look back and see that the true stuff was there back in 1972 and 1973, here and there, but that we just didn't have the perspective to recognize and appreciate it then.

(RR 2, Box 261, Perkasio, PA 18944)

((This is a letter that I'm going to have to let percolate slowly through my unconscious for a while longer. Then, I'll probably be replying to something entirely different and find myself responding to your ideas. I think I may be better able to respond after this summer.))





ERIC MAYER: Where do I start? Lifestyles? There, then I've started. Lifestyles.

I've changed my attitudes toward living in general quite a bit in the last few years. I no longer try to justify my interests, for example. Last night I finished writing a story, my second in the last couple of weeks. Up until the last few weeks I hadn't written any fiction to speak of in two years. I had given it up because it seemed an unjustifiable waste of time, resulting in nothing but rejection slips, draining off valuable energy. It was obvious to me that I had very little chance of ever selling a story, let alone making a living as a writer, so I threw it in.

Today I have no illusions about my writing ability, which is just as negligible as it was two years ago. I continue looking for some useful occupation. Perhaps I'll go back to school and take up law. I've had some contact recently with the lawyers at the local Legal Aid Society and they seem like decent sorts, doing what they can to help people defend themselves against some of the corporate and political jackals roaming the area. That's a worthwhile sort of thing, and it fits nicely with what I know of my abilities. But whatever I end up doing for a living, writing remains my first interest.

I know it is because I tried to pretend it wasn't for two years. It is sort of embarrassing to have to admit that your main interest in life is something you're not especially good at. I've never had much of a knack for originality. In grade school I did illustrated versions of the stf (there you are, Ted) books I read and branched out into condensed, written versions of them in Junior High. I can't begin to count the number of times I rewrote Rebirth. I've spent my whole life retelling other people's stories, and it's too late to stop.

The story I have sitting on my desk is not justifiable. Despite my best efforts to the contrary, it is little more than a combination of Kuttner and Wodehouse, but of course far inferior to either. No one in particular is going to read it, and if I were to submit it it'd be bounced as fast as the first reader could stuff it into the return envelope. Unjustifiable. But I had a hell of a lot of fun doing it! And I've found that when I have a story in progress, no matter how awful it might be, I am happy. I am glad to get up in the morning. My tea tastes better when the cup is beside the typewriter and I enjoy listening to records more after I've filled a few sheets of corrassible bond. When I don't write I tend to become depressed. So I intend to keep writing no matter how useless it might seem.

Maybe I've gone on at too much length to explain something rather simple, but it's something that's important to me. I don't intend to restrict my interests and actions any more by worrying about whether they are "mature" or "practical," or whether they are interests someone such as myself should have.

I've been asked, "Why do you follow the Yankees? Sports are useless. You never even liked gym. Baseball players are morons. Baseball fans hate people with long hair. So how can you be a baseball fan?" When I was at college I saw many people limiting themselves by worrying about such questions. They adopted, as Susan Wood mentioned, a role they had seen represented somewhere, and fit themselves into that role, pruning off any facets of themselves that didn't fit. They expected others to do likewise. Since I had long hair and liked rock music I was a "hippie," and everyone knows that hippies don't follow the Yankees. But Eric Mayer does. He also enjoys professional wrestling. And other ridiculous things. He also continues to write.

Loren MacGregor says he was in a shell for 17 years. I was in one for longer than that. When I entered Junior High school and my friends' parents suddenly began to shape their lives, putting them into Little League uniforms rather than letting them organize their own games in the largest backyard available, dressing them up and sending them to dance parties on Saturdays rather than letting them meet friends in smaller groups more or less by accident, something inside me revolted. I couldn't do those things. Why, I can't say. I started to grow successive layers of neurosis, self doubt and what have you -- shells that I'm only now beginning to peel off, painfully. (Maybe another one is coming off as I write this.) I have been



la guerre, yes sir!--xii

rather surprised actually at what I've found underneath.

I have however lost considerable time. And I am utterly asocial. I never learned how to react at social functions, and when confronted by them I am still the 7th grader at his first formal dance. Maybe this explains the peculiar propensity fans have for underestimating my age. I think of Susan's mention of me in The Clubhouse as a "younger" writer along with Aljo Svoboda. "Newer," but hardly younger. I'm about the same age as you and Susan.

Those school years that put me in my shell were spent in Dallas, PA, a place I can't help thinking of as a typical suburban community. Needless to say, I loathe the suburbs. I'm sure there are good suburbs as Ted White says. Interestingly enough, Kathy spent a few years in the Arlington area and claims it's one of the most pleasant places she's ever been and not at all comparable to this region. So since Ted's painted a picture of a good suburb, let me paint the other aspect.

Dallas is incredibly parochial and small in population. Perhaps the percentage of individuals who feel out of place there is the same percentage as anywhere, but in a city that small percentage can amount to a community; in Dallas it amounts to scattered loners who usually don't manage to find one another. When I was growing up there I didn't find anyone. My family, the community, the school supported by that community, appeared to me as a monolithic entity, all attempting to shove me into the same mold. There was no room for dissent. The forementioned institutions had a monopoly on worldview, and if you didn't like their worldview there were no alternatives available. You could either buckle under or build walls around yourself. I did the latter. This parochial outlook supported and maintained by the small and largely homogeneous population is one of the great drawbacks of suburbia.

I often listen to my father tell stories about life in Dallas when he grew up. At that time it was a rural community. The contrast is interesting. It reflects badly on the "suburbanites" who have moved there. More and more meddlesome busybodies seem to move in each year. My father had a pet goat when he was young. I can even remember my grandmother keeping a few chickens behind the house. Now farm animals are zoned out and, as a recent newspaper attests, God help anyone who tries to put a little chicken coop in back of his house, out of sight of the street! Irate neighbors clamoring about property values will have the matter in front of the Town Council in a flash. Sure, some zoning may be desirable, but we're talking here about lots a half acre or an acre in size -- the same size as they were 40 years ago when my father had the goat, the same as they were 18 years ago when my grandmother had the chickens. The houses on the street are the same. Only the people in them are different.

The people who lived on the street where I lived grew old and started to die. The new people moved in. You could see the street changing. Down came trees, flowerbeds were filled in, they left nothing but big flat lawns easy to mow with a riding mower. We used to play tag, running through everyone's backyard, and no one cared. Now the fences are going up as soon as the new owners move in. There's even a ten o'clock curfew. And believe me, there is no crime to speak of in Dallas, but human nature being what it is some teenager is apt to break a window every few months, and it's better to have that siren clearing them off the streets at ten than worrying about broken windows.

My father talks about some of the characters who used to live in Dallas. One man spent all his time on a street corner, pretending to jot things down in a notebook and talking to passersby, all of whom he knew. Every morning the proprietor of the local drugstore gave this fellow a cheap cigar, and he'd chew on it all day long. He never hurt anyone. Never cost anyone anything (except the drug store owner) and was probably reasonably happy. Today there are anti-loitering laws and such people aren't tolerated. No one gives them cheap cigars. They end up in Institutions, "where they belong."

Nope, I can't stomach at least one suburb. I'll consider myself lucky just to recover from it.

Now all this did spring, in one way or another, from HITCHHIKE. I wonder if



you can see the connections, or is this an incongruous kind of loc?  
(RD 1, Box 147, Falls, PA 18615)

((Yes, I can see the connections. To repeat and expand on the question I asked you last time, where is Falls in relation to Dallas? And how is it?

Getting involved with the local legal aid society does sound like something worthwhile -- that's one of the reasons that when I decided to do secretarial work I ended up working in public interest law firms, then for the National Legal Aid & Defender Association. But one thing I realized in the course of that work is that any kind of public interest law is always an uphill battle, always too few people with too little time and too little money trying to do too much. You can get sucked up by that way of thinking, and end up living a constant life of crisis, a continual state of siege. It's not a healthy way to live. Ask people who have been in it long enough to start seeing their friends die off of overwork. You can also start reflecting exactly the way of thinking that you're fighting: you become a mirror image, working toward the opposite goal but seeing the struggle in the same terms. So do it, if you wish, but bring to it your own sanity; you'll need enough for yourself and everybody else.))

JAY KINNEY: Got HITCHHIKE in the mail today and skonked thru most of it, read all the letters and a "portion" of the first section (will read more later), and got urge to write back to the sounds of Region IV by good ol Karl Stockhausen which makes me feel like I'm sitting in a satellite or maybe a submarine at Disneyland.

To jump into this melee about the subculture/counterkultur/lifestyles/Steve-stiles/and rhutabagas (how is Rudy these days) I'd say that things aren't what they used to be because of the multiple-parallel-cycle factor. Everybody is one of the numbers on the odometer but everyone is rotating at a different speed, but SOMETIMES a lot of the numbers go "goink" and you get interesting formations such as "66666" (dangerous occult implications...i.e. Altamont) or the airlinesque "7272727" or the mystical "777s." Well the late 60's was one of these and everybody's "number was up" -- at least everyone who thought their number was up (and as you know a psychic fact is as good as a physical fact -- in the psyche) and so "goink," but as is inevitable all the numbers kept revolving in their rates and the feeling of unity occasioned by such shared illusions ("we're all number '7's'!!!") dissipated as everyone discovered that they were also all the numbers. And even some of the folks who they were sure were 3's were also 5's and even 9's. This is the strict mathematical approach.

Now speaking sociologically and psychologically, I think that what considered itself the counterculture was built on a number of weak stilts as well as some strong ones. Some of the strong ones being "Make Love Not War" (also always popular on 42nd street, by the way...), "Don't Bogart That Joint," and "I'm not a chick I'm a woman." Some of the weak stilts were "Don't trust anyone over 30" (an aphorism with a built-in self-destruct mechanism, sort of like a Detroit car), "Paul is Dead," "Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice" (now was that Goldwater or Mark Rudd?), and "Spare change?" In otherwords, due to an influx of psychic energy from acid, grass, the Secret Masters, black power, and Jimi Hendrix, a lot of people got a glimpse of their "Selves" together, and then, in some instances, got into identifying their "ego" with that "Self" and got caught in the bushes when all the lizards came running up from the Unconscious. Other folks decided "aw fuck it" I want to buy into the American Trip, after all I'm an American and was raised on hamburgers. These people usually wear platforms and don't have bricks in their toilet tanks. And then there are the folks who are struggling on and every now and then hook back into the timeless-spaceless expanse of ping-pong ball-like



hitchhike--xiv

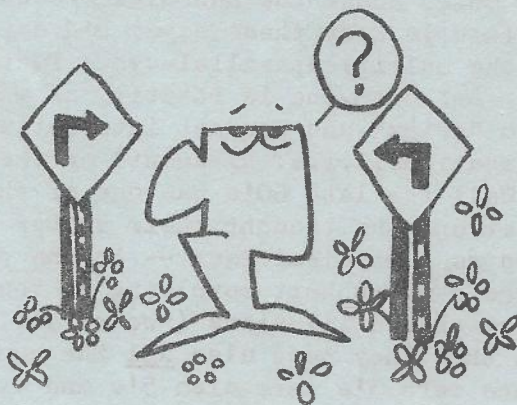
microbits, mutter "oh yeah," and keep on breathing. This doesn't account for those who have descended into whirlpools of negative energy (black holes of the human mind) and have brown auras and consistent bad breath, but the less said about them the better.

At any rate, that's how it looks to me off the top of my head, but don't quote me out of context. For my part, I admit to all numbers and attitudes, though I have my favorites. Suffice it to say that the late 60's were a big meal which we are only now digesting in time for the bicentennial which will either be another big show or poop out.

This letter is at least  $\frac{1}{2}$  serious.

(480 30th Street, San Francisco, CA 94131)

CODA: Finishing up the issue to the sound of Stringband, a down-home country band from Toronto who play banjo, guitar, fiddle, and a lot of other acoustic instruments. Their music has a simplicity and a crispness that reflects the state of mind I prefer to be in. Their album, Canadian Sunset, is essentially homemade: it's Nick Records #1 (yes, number one), and I believe you can get it by sending \$3.00 to the Stringband fanclub, 324 Clements Ave., Toronto, Ontario, or by asking Richard Labonte to get it for you in Ottawa. Last night I watched a prairie sunset, when Doug Goodhue drove us out to Pense to see the Woolly Mammoth that inhabits the roof of the school in Pense. It's a full-size sculpture in plastic string and wire. There was also a concrete turtle inlaid with glazed ceramic tiles, and we swung the sun down into the wheatfields on the school swings. We heard meadowlarks and got bitten by mosquitoes, too. I've realized why it was so easy to stay up until dawn the first nights after I got here: the sun rises at about 4:00 in the morning, and it doesn't set until 10:00. Far north! :: Art this issue by Jay Kinney, except the cartoon below by George Foster. Anybody got an address for George? June 16, 1975.



---

John D. Berry  
Box 504  
Edgartown, MA 02539  
USA