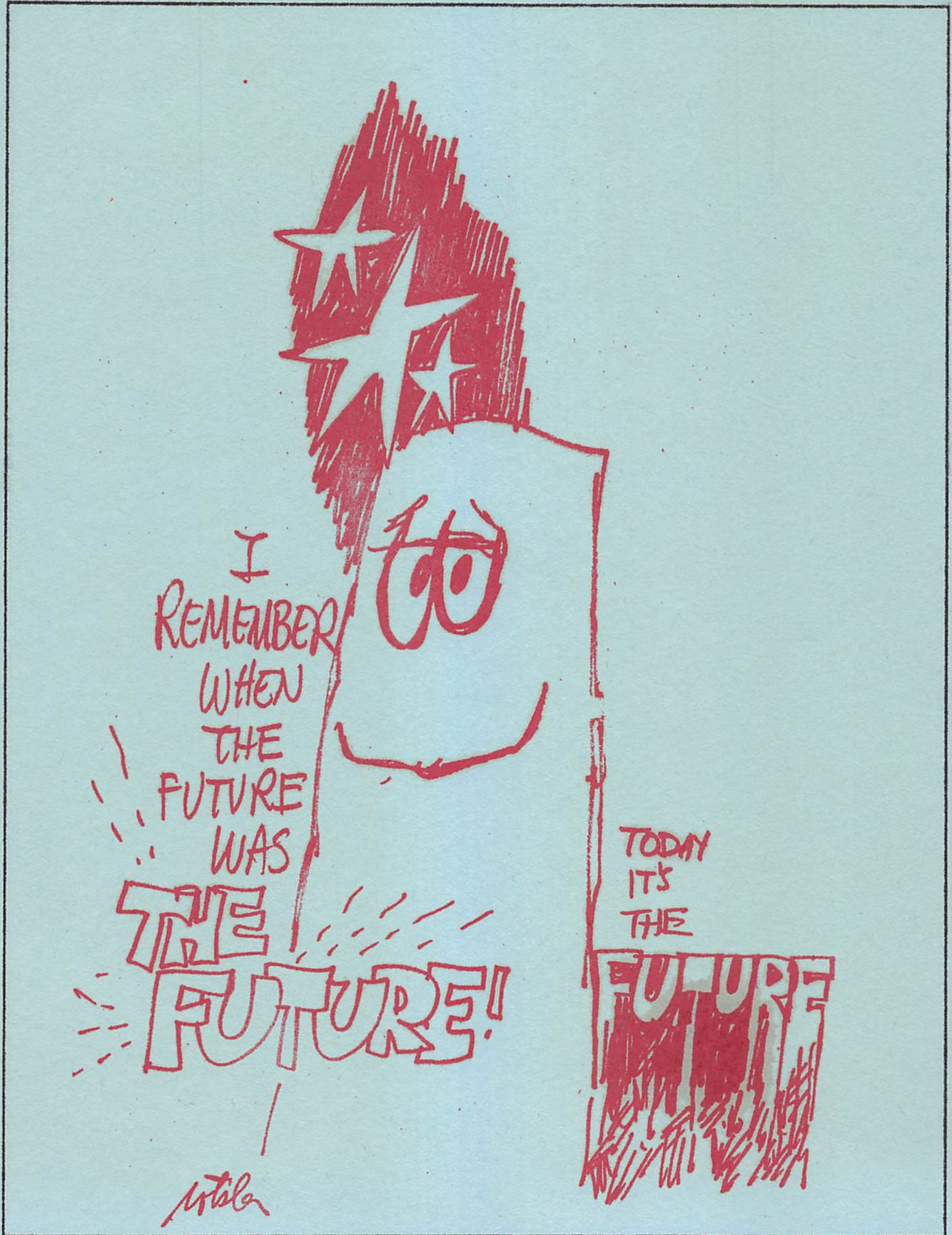
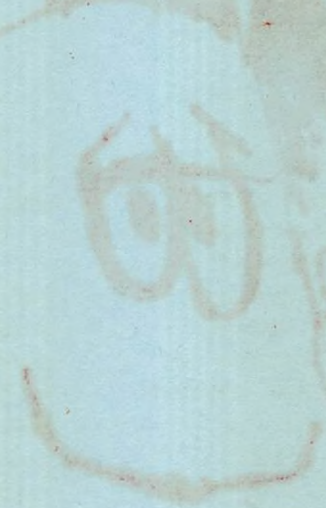


MICHAEL FOUR



DOUGLAS HALL FOUR



I
REMEMBER
WHEN
THE
FUTURE
WAS

THE
FUTURE

THE
ITZ
TODAY



1951

MICHAEL 4, November 1979, is edited, written, and published by Mike Bracken, PO Box 387, O'Fallon, IL 62269. MICHAEL is a very irregular personal-zine, distributed primarily on editor's whim. No advance subscriptions are accepted, but copies of issues 1, 2, and 3 are available for 50¢ each. Letters of comment, while appreciated, may never see print. Artwork and articles should be submitted for use in KNIGHTS, as any outside work that may see print here is culled from the KNIGHTS files.



4/29/78 -- CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

When I entered fandom it was all the rage to publish fanzines devoted to reviewing other fanzines, and fanzine review columns pervaded many of the genzines as well. It seemed to me at the time that there were so many reviewzines that all they managed to do was review other reviewzines.

Of course, it wasn't like that in reality, but fanzine review columns were a staple in the faneditor's diet. Having a fanzine review column was almost as important as the editorial, and the editor who published a fanzine without one was very much out of fannish vogue. Fanzine review columns have become a much less prominent feature in today's zines, however, and between then and now many fanzine reviewzines, like Ned Brooks' bi-monthly IT COMES IN THE MAIL, have bitten the dust.

Gone are the days of the "it was good, get a copy/it was bad, burn your copy" reviews running page upon page. Nowadays the majority of reviews that see print are long, thorough pieces.

Because of this change in fandom it has become harder and harder for the new faneditor to see his fanzine reviewed. Unless he publishes a few spectacular issues, or some incredibly stupid ones, his fanzine is unlikely to come under the critical eye. The average, the mediocre, and the new are left to their own devices.

Limited by time and space, the reviewers practicing today turn to the fanzines they are most familiar with; the fanzines where they frequently appear as loccers, writers, or artists, or fanzines edited by fellow members of a fan club. Since the number of reviewers is limited, and since their circle of friends frequently overlap, what happens is that the same group of fanzines get reviewed endlessly by the same group of people and, while these fanzines may deserve to be reviewed, other, equally deserving fanzines are excluded. Only occasionally does a fanzine appear that is so good it cries out for praise, or so absolutely horrendous that it deserves a public slap in the groin. These may also get mentioned.

What we need right now is an old-fashioned reviewzine, done with a fair amount of intelligence, that reviews a great many of the available fanzines. My reasons stem,

in part, from selfishness. When I was a neo, editing my first fanzine, I had no idea what was available to me in trades. I could go to the reviews, however, and ferret out enough names and addresses to start a fairly impressive mailing list. Today, though, the neo editor is likely to find only a handful of fanzines reviewed, and those come under the critical eye with extreme frequency. Not only would a good reviewzine help newer fans establish a mailing list, it might help some of us older fans rejuvenate our readerships by telling us of the new influx of faneditors.

In the end, I think a good, frequent reviewzine, encompassing many reviews of moderate length, would be a benefit to much of fandom. I can't do it but I wish someone could.

They have! Written more than a year ago, this article was accepted by a fanzine which folded before the article ever saw print. Since the article was written, a number of reviewzines and review columns of the nature I describe have come into being, most memorable of which are Brian Earl Brown's THE WHOLE FANZINE CATALOG, Leigh Edmonds' BUNCHY WATCHES FANZINES, and Carol Kennedy's "Fanfaronade" in RUFF.

However, while I see the need for the fanzine listing and quick comment type of reviews, I very much prefer the type of review I outlined in "Reviewing Fanzines" in DNO 18.

It's hard to have it both ways.

5/25/79 -- LET US NOT MOURN THE DEAD

The following is a letter of comment/short article I wrote for Mike Glycer's FILE 770. I received it back a few months later with the note: "Space prevents me from pubbing it in full, although I have considered doing so."

Thanks, anyway, Mike.

Dear Mike Glycer,

As the editor of one of Victoria Vayne's "In Contention" examples in FILE 770:13, I feel the need to throw in my two dollars worth on the topic.

I've been in fandom for nearly six years, and during that time I've noticed no over-abundance of "giant genzines". At any given time there have been a handful of genzines obviously in their prime in terms of quality and frequency. At the same time there were genzines that had yet to fulfill their promise, and others that had shifted to a sporadic life, perhaps as a signal of impending death.

Yes, ENERGUMEN, GRANFALLOON, and OUTWORLDS have died. And as they were dieing, Victoria's SIMULACRUM, my KNIGHTS, your SCIENTIFRICTION, and others were growing and developing. They were there to fill the gap when the others died. Victoria's genzine is gone, KNIGHTS and SCIENTIFRICTION are sporadic; yes, but there are others waiting in the wings to fill whatever gaps we will leave when we allow our genzines to disappear. JANUS has become a major factor in "giant genzine"dom in the past few years, and both ROTHENIUM and XENOLITH show promise of being frequent enough and of high enough quality to move up in the ranks. With any luck they won't be flash-in-the-pans like SCINTILLATION was (an excellent genzine that apparently burned its editor out way too soon).

"...I don't think they owe me a sum of money for perpetuating an outdated form of fanac," you note in your afterword to Victoria's column. I don't see how a quality genzine, with an attractive appearance and quality contents is an outdated form of fanac. Publishing a genzine that is not only neat and legible, but which contains appealing graphics, is as hard, or harder, than writing, illustrating, or any other form of creative fanac. Having pride in what you publish is never, or should never be allowed to be outdated. I'm ashamed of what I send through the mail, but that's only because I work in the printing/publishing industry, and I know what I *could* do if

only I had the time and the money. But I also know that, in terms of appearance, KNIGHTS is as good, or better looking than the vast majority of other fanzines that grace my PO Box.

Yes, I enjoy the letters I receive, but I also enjoy the subscriptions. Without the letters, KNIGHTS would have no lettercolumn, but without the subscriptions, there might be no KNIGHTS. You note that you prefer letters than subs to your genzine. In my view, one subscription pays for the mailing of two other copies to loccers. It is a cause-and-effect relationship, and I do not wish to slight either type of reader.

Actually, my pride and joy are those people on my mailing list who continue to write long, interesting letters, and who are also willing to part with a few dollars. I'm not rich by any means, so that's why you'll see classified and display ads, and flyers for KNIGHTS. I'm attempting to reach those people willing to subscribe. The cost to produce an extra 150 or so copies to sell is minimal in terms of the potential return on those issues.

I doubt that KNIGHTS will ever make money--I'm not as idealistic as I was two or three years ago--but there is no reason why I should turn my back on subscribers, and there is no reason why I shouldn't make some small effort to reach them, and let them know what I have to offer. You must understand that yourself--after all, I've seen the classified ads for FILE 770 in LOCUS, and a newszine is just as likely to need a solid subscription list to help pay the bills as a genzine is.

How much money I lose on an issue of KNIGHTS will remain in my accounting books for Karin and I to cry about, but let me note that Victoria's estimate seems low. Somehow unrealistically low. I know that Victoria's estimates were based on her experiences with SIMULACRUM, but KNIGHTS has a mailing list larger than Victoria's entire print run, and so the costs increase proportionately. In some ways having a large mailing list is both good and bad. For example: two copies cost twice as much to mail as one, but two copies cost only a few more pennies to print than one. And that's where subscribers come in again--if your subscription base is large enough to defray a good portion of your out-of-pocket expenses for those initial copies, the ones you trade or give away cost you very little. It makes me feel a little better about the whole publishing experience when I know that my subscribers are helping me pay the bills, and my other readers are helping supply me with suitable contents.

I suppose that all of the above was said in order to support two conclusions, the first being that there will never be a lack of "giant genzines" simply because there are other, newer fans out there who will publish and who will stick around long enough to grow and improve. Then someday, in a newszine of the future, it won't be Taral comparing KNIGHTS to the deceased OUTWORLDS, but some other reviewer comparing some as-yet unknown genzine to the deceased KNIGHTS. There will always be a certain amount of turnover. It is to be expected and it is to be encouraged. Let us not mourn the dead, but instead help the newer editors to take our places in the future.

The second conclusion is that subscribers are just as important to fanzines as loccers and writers and artists. Each and every one of them serves an easily definable purpose, and I encourage *all* of them to be a part of what I do. You should too.



LETTERS

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

Until I'm reincarnated as a woman, I probably won't understand how they feel about the traditional name for a married woman. But I do suspect that the custom of officially considering a woman as Mrs. John Doe derives more from an intent to avoid confusion in paperwork than from a desire to make a woman feel subordinate. How often do you hear anyone refer to her as Mrs. John when speaking to her? If she has a child in school, the parents' names will probably be shown on school records as Mr. and Mrs. John Doe but even the most chauvinistic principal or teacher will speak of her as Jane Doe and will most likely call her Jane when they meet. I bear the same name my father had, except for the Sr.-Jr. difference, and I've never felt anything but pride in it, certainly not any sensation that I don't exist in my own right. After all, children are given the same family name as parents, and I've never heard any child psychologist or children's rights advocates contend that this creates an inferiority sense while the children are growing up.

I think Karin best summed up a reply to your letter the other night when she said, "When you're a girl, you go from being your parents' daughter, to your husband's wife, to your baby's mother." The "intent to avoid confusion in paper work" you cite, does make a woman feel subordinate, intentionally or otherwise. In the year and a half we've been married, my wife has been called Mrs. Mike on many occasions, simply for reasons of convenience.

I like your inclusion of publishing data. It's growing so hard nowadays to distinguish between various reproduction techniques, and the few fanzines that announce how they're put together will make life much simpler for fanzine index compilers in the future.

I should probably begin including that information in KNIGHTS. Issue 20 was my first entirely offset issue and no one noticed. I don't have much trouble telling mimeo from offset from ditto from photocopy, but, because of my job, I have to be able to tell them apart. Not many fans have the time or the inclination to bother learning the subtle differences between each reproduction technique.

D. Gary Grady, 612 E. Maynard Ave., Durham, NC 27704

As a former bank employee (I am now a consulting programmer in Duke University's Computation Center), I discovered why the tendency to use credit cards as a means of identifying people. Many many time a day a large store will get burned by people writing bad checks. Why not prosecute? Many do, but a lot feel the expense of going through the legal system is too great, and they just don't feel they can take the time away from work to testify in a \$50 case. But what they can do is send your name to a credit bureau. A bank isn't going to yank your checking account, even for a fairly large number of overdrafts, if you pay the overdraft fee. But it is inclined to pull your charge cards. Hence, the reason for the credit card ID: It's not to identify you, it's to identify your credit rating.

You are, undoubtedly, correct. It bothers me, though, that they don't come right out and say that. Stores ask for your identification, they don't ask for your credit history.

Brian Earl Brown, 16711 Burt Rd., #207, Detroit, MI 48219

I was struck by your comment at the end of "Eight Ball In The Side Pocket" that perhaps now you can put Fort Bragg Fandom out of your mind and adjust to present day fandom. But I gather from that statement that you really don't want to, that no period of time since has equalled your days in Fort Bragg. Is it that contemporary fandom is so dull, or do you miss the day to day interactions of "next door fans".

Over the past few years fandom and I have both changed. When I published my first fanzine, I was a high school junior, with no cares and no worries. Now I'm 22 years old, married, with my first child due in January. Just the day to day events in my life are so dramatically different now, that my whole outlook on life has changed. I publish my fanzines now for a vastly different reason than I did in the beginning. And, even though there are fans locally, we have a vastly different relationship than Joe Walter and I had. I no longer have a 'let's wander the streets and see if we can experience something for a fanzine article' type of relationship with anyone. For example: when Rick Wilber and I got to know each other it was on a fannish level. I wanted him to contribute something to KNIGHTS. Over the years our relationship has transcended fandom and has become, I hope, a very personal friendship. Yet, the closest we come to discussing fandom when we are together is when we discuss the sf markets. The few other fans I have met, like Gerald Brown and Marty Klug, are into "other" fandoms. And much as I would like to get to know both of them better, I work a shift that allows me almost no time to visit with other people. The two fans I have met locally, who were/are most likely to provide the kind of stimulus you mention are David Klaus, an active convention fan with a vast knowledge of fanzine fandom who has moved to California, and Mike Stern. Mike Stern, despite being the best man at

MICHAEL 4

my wedding, knows very little about fandom. Yet, if anyone would provide me with the kind of material Fort Bragg Fandom did, it would be Mike. Maybe, just maybe, there is still hope.

11/3/79 -- AFTERTHOUGHTS

This issue of MICHAEL has been more concerned with my views on fandom than on mundane things. While the two pieces of my writing were written for other publications, they were things I feel needed saying when I wrote them. Since they did not appear as intended, I felt the desire to publish them myself.

Future issues of MICHAEL will contain a wide variety of things. I may, at some time in the future, use this as a medium to reprint some of my professional writing. Or I may print some of my unsold fiction. Or I may write more essays on fandom, or on the world of mundanes. We shall see.

Also Heard From Were: *Harry Andruschak, Seth Goldberg, Laurie Mann, Ron Saloman, and R. Laurraine Tutihasi.*

ART: cover by William Rotsler, Page 1 by Simon Agree & Lindsay Stuart, page 4 by Grant Canfield.

Print run: 100

Technical: Typed on an IBM Correcting Selectric using the 12 pitch Elite 72 and the 12 pitch Light Italic typeballs. Printed on an AB Dick 438 mimeograph, using AB Dick's color-change kit. Paper used is a Blue, sub 24, bond.

Mike Bracken
PO Box 387
O'Fallon, IL 62269

First Class Mail
Address Correction Requested
Forwarding and Return Postage Guaranteed