

Rec'd
26 May '83

Microwave 5



Atom

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Atom

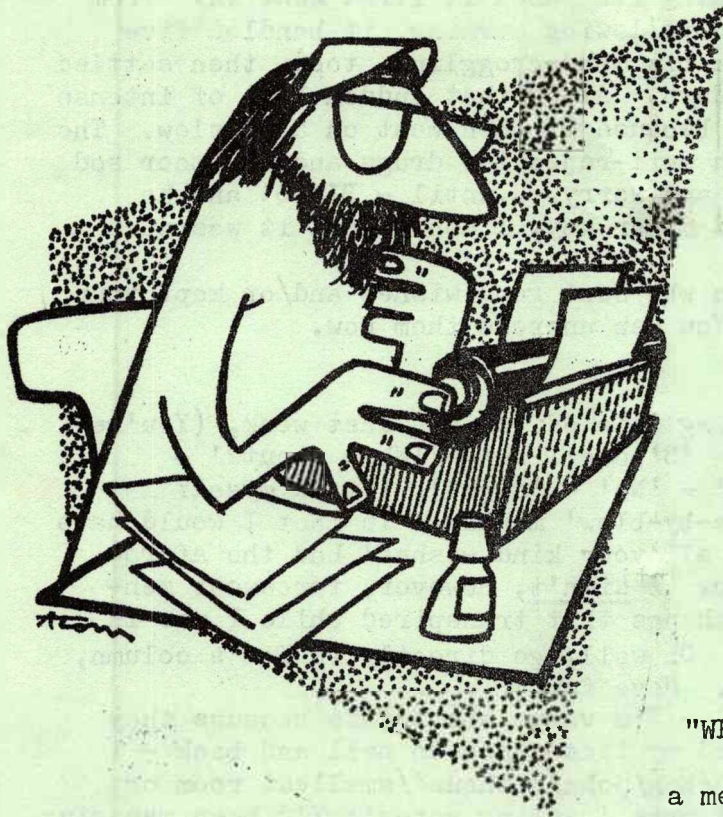
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ART

John Cook - 22,23,28,29,30,31,32,46.
 Lee Hoffman - 3,47.
 Terry Jeeves - 10,11.
 Dave Wood - 21,27,32,53.
 Cover by ATom who, as Tame Staff Artist, also supplied numerous other illos and headings.

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A dark, sombre building looms forbidding through the mist. A coach rattles to a halt. A small, hunched figure struggles out with his baggage, and, ignoring the driver's outstretched hand, shuffles painfully towards the great oaken doors. He fumbles with the key, then eases one of the studded doors open, and surveys with pleasure the Great Hall beyond. The Master has returned to Castle Microvore. He turns to greet his Lady.

"And where the hell do you think you've been these past two weeks, uh?"

Magnetronics

"WE HAVE SOME GOOD NEWS....."

Many years ago, when I was but a mewling babe (or perhaps considering taking the educational system by storm) Eric Frank Russell wrote to.... Sorry? Oh. Eric Frank Russell was once a filthy pro (sadly no longer with us). He was

also one of that extremely rare breed - a writer of very funny s.f. (Humorous, I mean, not odd. For that, see the subject of Ted White's column.) He was also, at least part-time, a fan.

Having enlightened those of you who are as ignorant of the genre as Martyn Taylor, I'll return to what I was trying to say.

EFR once wrote to a fanzine pointing out that whether or not the reader enjoyed the fanzine depended on the physical/mental health of the recipient at the time. If the zine arrived on a day when you were in the grip of a hangover/migraine/pre-menstrual tension or even worse, then the ghastly rag was liable to get short shrift.

It occurs to me that the same applies to writing. Were I to try to write an editorial whilst afflicted with a bout of dysentery, the result would probably be a bit intolerant and unpleasant. So, whenever I feel the malaria attacks returning or the sores begin to itch unbearably, I don't write editorials.

On the other hand, now seems a particularly good time to write one. As I write this (March 15th), I am feeling just a touch elated. Only a couple of hours ago I had a phone call from my brother to say that his equipment once more has another use apart from stirring tea and frightening young girls into spinsterhood. In the last 24 hrs., he passed 775 ml. of urine. Not a lot to you or me but to someone who has spent the last couple of weeks

struggling to produce less than 100 ml. per day it ranks alongside walking on water. It means that his new kidney (formerly mine) is back on the job. 'Back on the job', because it was working fine when it first went in. From the evening after the 'op' round to the following morning, it handled five gallons (yes, gallons - I found that a bit mind-crogging, too), then settled down to a more normal rate for a few days. Alas, that sudden bout of intense activity must have caught up with it, because it then went on a go-slow. The doctors dosed him up to the gills with anti-rejection drugs and the poor sod had to lie back and wait, and wonder, and worry....until - BINGO! and he starts to feel alive again. And, in a minor key, I don't feel it was such a useless gesture any more.

Many, many thanks to all of you who sent good wishes and/or kept your fingers crossed for the both of us. You can uncross them now.

WHO GOES THERE?

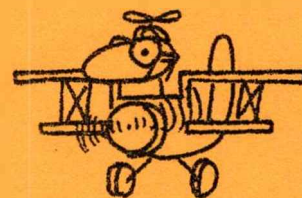
When I was thinking about writing this editorial, last week, (You're going to have to write an editorial' - 'S'pose I am' - 'What about?' - 'Dunno, got any ideas?' - 'No....You?' - 'No' - *sigh*), I told myself I wouldn't write about the 'op' in a 'blow-by-blow' manner. In fact I would have confined myself to a mere 'thanks for all your kind wishes' had the aforementioned bit of good news not come up. I didn't, however, forswear mentioning any of the other interesting things that transpired while I was in hospital. (Don't you wish that I had? Oh well, go directly to Ted's column, do not pass go etc. See you next ish. Have fun.)

A couple of days after the 'op' - I'm vague about this because they had me on some painkillers that screwed my time-sense to hell and back - I realised that I hadn't been to the loo/bog/john/outhouse/smallest room or whatever for quite some time. I don't mean 'passing water'; I'd been managing that ok, into their little cardboard boxes - you don't get a 'bottle' these days, just a hardened papier mache imitation - that wasn't the problem. No, I needed a crap. The more I thought about it, the more I needed it, and NOW! My exterior was sore and full of stitches and my interior was feeling decidedly 'bunged up', so I knew I'd got trouble. Just how much, I didn't fully realise. Foolishly, I reasoned that as I was feeling that 'full', a mere relaxation of the right muscles should empty me out easily. So, full of confidence and shit (Who said, 'So what's new?'?), I summoned a passing commode and planted myself on it for long enough to read and enjoy a long article in BOONFARK 7. I suppose it was about half-an-hour later that I realised it was going to take a little more than just relaxation, that I might actually have to risk a little pain in my side in order to get rid of what was now a considerable pain in my rectum. I made my plight known to a passing nurse, who suggested suppositories. These were duly found and inserted, the second making an immediate getaway like a cork from a champagne bottle. After waiting for more than the required interval, I again drew attention to my discomfort - in the form of a series of ghastly low moans, if my memory serves me correctly. It was decided that there was only one option left open....an enema (now you understand the heading, don't you?). I lay there waiting for the enema to arrive; I'd heard about the things, and I knew that in some circles they are even enjoyed, but I wasn't feeling in the mood to put a new kink in my sex life - so I just waited. And waited. And waited. When it finally arrived it was explained that they'd had to scour the hospital to find one - apparently they don't use them much these days. Huh, my first enema, and it probably wasn't even fresh! I cannot for

the life of me see what anybody could find sexually arousing about having an enema. Whilst I am, I admit, hardly blessed with a vast experience in the area, I find it impossible to believe that a sensation akin to having boiling surgical spirit squirted up your arse can turn someone on. It did, however, do the trick. A mere four hours after I started the whole fiasco, I managed to produce half-a-dozen meatballs in a very thin chili sauce. Hoping that that would be sufficient to clear the way for a more normal performance in the morning, I collapsed into bed, exhausted.

That could have been the end of the story, but no....they were determined to 'help' me further. The following morning I was presented with a small measure of a clear viscous fluid...and regularly every few hours after. This fluid was called 'Lactulose' and that seems to follow their theory that it is a laxative. I, however, have my own opinion. I believe that the stuff is made by concentrating the syrup from tinned peaches, adding as much sugar as they can without it actually congealing, and then boosting it with as large a dose of artificial sweetener as the Geneva Convention will allow. The result is a 'liquid' of such consistency that when 15ml. is measured into a glass, you can't drink more than 10ml.; the rest of it is left clinging to the sides like the proverbial to a blanket - I think they eventually sand-blast it off. It has no unpleasant taste, but did I mention it's sweet - like trying to drink a Barbara Cartland novel. It is my firm belief that this substance has no laxative effect whatsoever, except that the patient is so nauseated by having to try to swallow the sickly gooey mess, that the thought of having to force some more of the revolting stuff down in a few hours time literally scares the shit out of them!

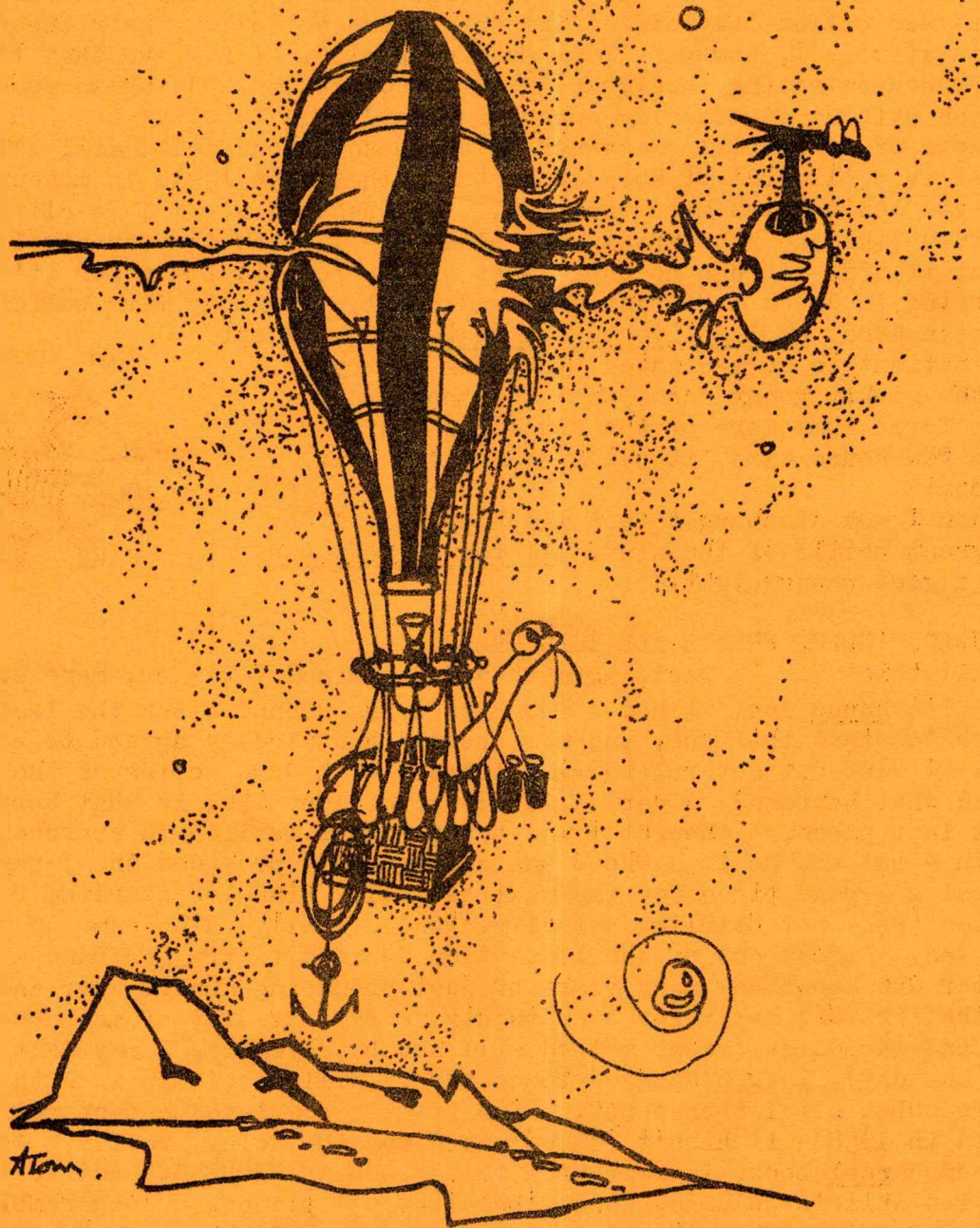
When I was discharged from the hospital, I was given a great bottle of the stuff all for my very own. It makes a good paperweight.



'ULLO, 'ULLO, 'ULLO, WHAT'S ALL THIS THEN?

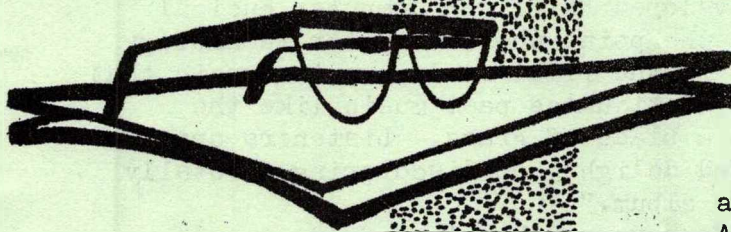
'All this' is, in fact, more than I bargained for - or, more correctly, more than I'd hoped for. I had a few bits lying around after the last ish with which to start this one, and some people had already agreed to send stuff in. I sent out several begging letters with some copies of the last iash. And what happens? A veritable deluge of contribs. is what happens. After his last piece, I thought I was being rather foolish in approaching Skel again - but no, he is a Ghood Man and not only provided the 7-page piece herein, but a 3-page piece for the next as well! Likewise sterling fellow Jon Wallace (well not Stirling actually, Dundee really) also came up with a brace of Mss. Almost out of the blue, ATom decided to try his hand at writing again after Ghu knows how many years of just producing superb art, and comes up with the firstGDA story for over twenty years. By dint of much begging, cajoling and wheedling (exact method will not be revealed, I may want to use it again one day), I even managed to coax Walt Willis to join in with something more substantial than a LoC. Vin/ finally completed a book review that he started in 1958 - it hasn't 'dated' much for the delay, really. And it is a review of a real book, I swear upon this stack of HYPHENS. Add to that the first of Ted White's columns, three 'Legalise It' pieces, a long ramble from promising youngster Ashworth and goodies from Lee Hoffman, Pete Presford, Chuck Connor, Sid Birchby & Terry Jeeves and I think you'll agree I've been

spoilt for choice - so you get a nice big annish. Oh, and a few masochists wrote in complaining 'cos I dropped the music quiz (they never even mentioned it when it was running) so that makes a special, one-off, token re-appearance. But you didn't think it was all good news, did you?



ID

EST



by

TED

WHITE

"THE GOLDEN ERA OF SCI FI":

To the sounds of rockets blasting and a swelling fanfare come the immortal words, "It's Buck Rogers!" A chorus of cheerleaders chants the name: "Buck Rogers! Buck Rogers! Buck Rogers!"

The music rises to a new crescendo. The computer-linked Fairlight CMI sounds exactly like a cheesy orchestra. "It's Flash Gordon!" the female voices cry, and then the chorus echoes, "Flash Gordon! Flash Gordon! Flash Gordon!"

I looked askance at Steve Brown.

"It gets better!" he chortled.

More radio-serial music, and: "It's Superman!" The chorus chimes in on cue: "Superman! Superman! Superman!"

"I'm not sure I can take much more of this," I said.

"Buck Rogers! Flash! Superman!" the chorus exhorts, and again: "Buck! Flash! Superman!" The music climaxes. "Come back!" the voices scream.

Steve Brown and I looked at each other. "That's it?" I said.

"Here." Steve said, handing me the lyric sheet. I read it. That was it. That was the entirety of "Golden Era of Sci-Fi," a recorded composition by Tamla Arbuckle and Leon Klatzkin. The lyrics were by L. Ron Hubbard. Yes, the L. Ron Hubbard.

We were listening to an amazing record which Steve had picked up at the book and record store where he works. It is called Space Jazz, and was released in the fall of 1982 on the Applause label. I would guess it is the only release on the Applause label, since it is numbered "APLP 9000 TM." (Why they trademarked the record number is a mystery equal to several others surrounding this remarkable album.)

Now I have an album in my record collection called Space Jazz. It was released around 1960 and was made by a band led by composer George Russell, featuring polytonal piano duets by Paul Bley and Bill Evans and, aside from its title, is an excellent record. I also have three albums of melodic progressive rock by a French group called "Space Art" which came out in the 'Seventies.

Space Jazz is quite unlike those albums, as the quotes from the opening track may have made obvious. The cover shows, against an interstellar blue background, a color photograph of the book Battlefield Earth, below which in large letters is the line, "Composed by L. Ron Hubbard." In smaller lettering below that is "Played by Leading Artists," and, below that, in medium lettering, "The Soundtrack of the Book!"

Yes, Space Jazz is an album designed to tie in with Hubbard's recent "comeback" novel, and this point is amplified on the back cover, which is bannered, "First Time Ever, A Soundtrack for a Book! Read the Book! Hear the Music! A new Experience Awaits You!" The actual label of the record also shows a photo (in full color) of the jacket of Hubbard's book.

There has been a lot of talk in the media lately that L. Ron Hubbard may be dead. His son claims that either he is dead or he is a captive pawn of the Scientologists, a parallel of sorts with Howard Hughes' last years. Perhaps in an effort to refute these rumors, L. Ron is shown in full color sitting before a recording console on the album's back cover. Below this photo is a caption which tells us that "L. Ron Hubbard is the originator of Space Jazz and the composer and lyricist for the album. His concept of a soundtrack for a book is another first from a man whose life has been a series of firsts in numerous fields. . . . His millions of fans worldwide will find this soundtrack stamped with the impress of his unmistakable style now translated into musical terms for the first time."

Another back cover blurb tells us that "Space Jazz is an original musical form based on the recently developed Fairlight Computer Musical Instrument (Fairlight CMI). It marks the point where computer technology caught up with musicians. Space Jazz is the first real computer music that will appeal to mass public. [sic] It antiquates past music like the cathedral organ wiped away blowing on a blade of grass. Listeners are treated to the adventure and unexpected delights of discovering a totally new musical concept in this innovative album."

The hype continues on the inside covers (the album folds open): "Space Jazz is a completely new musical sound destined to be hailed as the music of the future. . . . Think of the 'Star Wars' sagas, and 'Raiders of the Lost Ark,' mix in the triumph of 'Rocky I,' 'Rocky II' and 'Rocky III' and you have captured the exuberance, style and glory of 'Battlefield Earth.' . . . Consider the magnitude of the challenge Hubbard set himself. Conventional musical instruments and even huge symphony orchestras have their limitations. He turned to the technology of the future -- computers. . . . Hubbard has applied his awesome ingenuity to the state of the art computer technology in creating a new, exciting musical style and sound. Literally, the sound of the future. . . . So there is something new under the laser beam, and you can't afford not to experience it, for it has set the trend of our music for decades to come."

Hubbard takes credit for "composing" ten of the thirteen tracks on the album, and he takes credit for all the "lyrics." Yes, every word of "Golden Era of Sci Fi" was written by L. Ron Hubbard -- and not only that,

every goshdarn one of them is printed on the record's inner sleeve. Thus it is possible to ponder at one's leisure the depth of Hubbard's genius as a lyricist.

I'm fond of "March of the Psychlos," myself. Here are its lyrics, in full:

"Psychlo, Psychlo, Psychlo!"
"Kill 'em, kill 'em, kill 'em!"
"(Repeat)"

But what, I can hear you asking, does Space Jazz sound like? Tell me, Ted, you must be saying, about this music of the future. All right. But it won't be easy. I've been writing professionally about music for the last twenty-four years, but I've never had a task like this.

To begin with, there is very little "jazz," despite the presense of Chick Corea on four tracks and Stanley Clarke on five. (Both Corea and Clarke are Scientologists, in case you're wondering about their association with this record.) Other "special guest artists" are Gayle Moran (a close friend of Corea's) and Nicky Hopkins. But most of the music is played by "Golden Era Musician" Rick Cruzen, who evokes from the mighty Fairlight GMI the typical sounds of a Farfisa organ, a String Ensemble, and a Hammond organ -- surely sounds of the future if ever I heard them. (Actually, I think I could duplicate 98% of what the Fairlight did on this album with my PolyKorg, a semi-synthi.) Cruzen has really plumbed the depths of the Fairlight.

But then again, Hubbard's "compositions" rival his lyrics in cliches and banality. Maybe there just wasn't room to do anything interesting with the fairlight. This "music of the future" certainly deserves to be ranked right alongside Battlefield Earth.

One of the instrumental tracks, "Windsplitter," is a cowboy tune complete with sound-effect hoofbeats. Curiously (because there are no lyrics) Hubbard is credited both with the composition and "lyrics."

Then there's "The Mining Song," which has this chorus:

"Gold! Gold! Gold!"
"Gotta get Gold! Gold! Gold!"
"Gold, more Gold!"
"Need more Gold!"
"Gotta get Gold!"
"Right Now!"

But for sheer poignancy, nothing else on the album rivals the final track, "Earth, My beautiful Home," of which these are the full and complete lyrics:

"Oh, my beautiful home."
"Oh, Earth, I love you!"

Sheer poetry!

After we had listened to the entire album with numbed amazement. Steve said, "Well, I guess this proves Hubbard is dead."

"How do you mean?" I asked.

"Well," Steve said, shrugging, "no living person could have come up with anything like this."

I had to agree with him.

THE CANNABIS SMOKESCREEN

STEVE GREEN

"Penalties against the possession of a drug should not be more damaging to the individual than the use of the drug itself; and where they are, they should be changed. Nowhere is this more clear than in the possession of marijuana in private for personal use."

Pres. Jimmy Carter,
U.S. Congress, 1977.

I once introduced a newspaper feature on the then-illegal CB radio with an admission that during the course of my research I had myself listened to CB transmissions and therefore broken the law; my editor demanded that the foreword be re-written on the grounds that it threatened the article's objectivity. I disagreed, but the re-write took place.

On this occasion, however, I have no intention of copping out behind a pretense of journalistic impartiality and so I open with an admission: For several years I, along with at least five million other citizens of this so-called free country, have risked up to five years imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine for the crime of smoking a drug which has yet to be shown to be harmful. Cannabis.

Successive governments have defended this idiotic law by cultivating a smokescreen of misinformation: cannabis, the public is lead to believe, is addictive, damages the smoker's health and leads to use of "hard drugs" such as heroin or LSD. Fortunately, the truth is beginning to pierce this veil of lies and scare tactics.

Despite being one of the world's most intensively studied drugs, cannabis remains innocent of the charges laid against it. No evidence exists of physical dependancy nor reliable evidence that it causes brain damage, a heightened susceptability to disease or genetic abnormalities. In contrast, there is undeniable proof that nicotine causes lung damage and cancer, not only in those who smoke tobacco but potentially in those continually exposed to smokers, and yet the Government confines its actions to ordering the tobacco companies to issue tiny health warnings on cigarette packets. No doubt the reluctance of Parliament to launch an effective campaign against a genuine health risk is totally unconnected with the massive revenue

accrued from taxes on tobacco.

The Government's position becomes even more indefensible when you realise that much of the case for the legalisation of cannabis has been researched by taxpayer-funded bodies. In 1968, an advisory committee on drug misuse published the Wootton Report, concluding: "There is no evidence that this activity is causing violent crimes or aggressive anti-social behaviour, or is producing in otherwise normal people conditions of dependence or psychosis requiring medical treatments... In some parts of Western society where interest in mood-altering drugs is growing, there are indications that it may become a functional equivalent to alcohol."

Nor does the argument that cannabis smoking leads to the use of cocaine, opiates or LSD contain any credibility. Certainly, a number of my friends use other controlled drugs in addition to cannabis, but this is hardly proof of a causal relationship, any more than chronic alcoholism can be linked to drinking coffee. Indeed, in 1972 the Shafer Commission stressed this: "The fact should be emphasised that the overwhelming majority of users do not progress to other drugs." But the smokescreen persists.

Cannabis became illegal in this country in 1928, three years after Britain signed the International Opium Convention; the drug was included as a result of pressure from the Egyptian delegates, who claimed smoking cannabis led to "chronic hashism", a so-far unproven syndrome. In 1961 Britain reaffirmed its stand by signing the UN's Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, which listed cannabis as "a risk to public health" having "strong addictive properties", curiously ignoring the advice of a government committee under Sir Russell Brain which had reported only three years before that "in our opinion, cannabis is not a drug of addiction; it is an intoxicant." The Single Convention provided the basis for the 1965 and 1967 Dangerous Drugs Acts, giving the police controversial stop and search powers (the widespread abuse of which would provide an excellent subject should Terry ever start a series of columns under the blanket heading of "Abolish It").

It would be possible to legalise possession and cultivation for personal use without breaching the terms of the 1961 treaty, but the complete removal of this repressive law would require its amendment. At present, however, the Government continues to do that for which it appears best-suited: ignoring the wishes of the electorate.

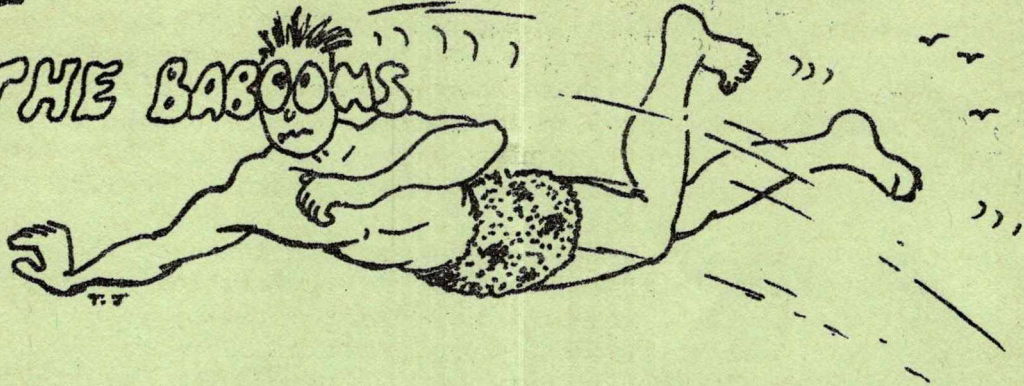
//////The Legalise Cannabis Campaign believes that the use of cannabis is a matter of personal choice in which the criminal law should play no part. Details from 2, Blenheim Crescent, London, W11 1NN, or you can telephone them on 01-727-8805. ////

I AM ALL WHELMED OVER WITH GUILT

NARTAZ

OF THE BABOONS

by
Terry
Jeeves



"Hooooo...ooo...eeecey!" The spine-curdling battle call of Nartaz of the Baboons ricocheted through the jungle glades, cannoned off the breadfruit trees and finally vanished into a pocket in the rocks. N'Godli, the savage, quivered in his kraal. N'Tidi, the water buffalo, winced in his water hole. Even N'Fair the cheetah, quivered among the cumquats lining the banks of P'Toocy the river. Full well did the jungle denizens know and fear the mighty call of Nartaz...the call which presaged a combat to the death, inevitably fatal to the one luckless enough to lose his life in the forthcoming encounter.

Nartaz himself did not tremble..Not he, his ear drums had long since shattered from the strain of his war cry. Instead, he stood rooted to the spot as if paralysed by the emotion which had evoked the battle call. Raised from a child by a faithful wart-hog, the young Lord Branestroke faced his fearsome opponent...Kaput, the man-ape. For many years, a bitter rivalry had existed between these two. As children, they had happily battered away at each other with stone axes..or playfully pushed one another into the crocodile infested streams which fed the mighty P'Toocy. During all those long, danger-filled years, Kaput had secretly yearned after the amulet which hung in polished sleekness at the end of a leather thong encircling the neck of Nartaz. Years ago, whilst diving for oysters in the mighty P'Toocy, Nartaz had surfaced with a handful of rare stones...a diamond or two, an opal, a krugwort and a miki. It was the latter which Kaput had snatched when Nartaz had removed it to take his semi-annual bath. The jungle lord invoked the ancient ritual.. Kaput and he must fight....

"Aaaa...ooo...agh", Kaput's own battle grunt shook the whispering grasses, dislodging their ink-like spots, as the man-ape charged. His mighty arms opened to crush the young Lord Branestroke. His yellow fangs gaped ready to rend and tear. His long, pointed claws unsheathed to slash and rip. All in all, he made a most unpleasant picture, but even as the arms closed, the fangs snapped and the claws raked out, Nartaz acted. Mighty thews creaked and twanged as he leaped upwards in an arc designed to take him clear of the attacking Kaput..and well it would have done, had it not instead taken him slam bang into the hefty branch of an overhanging tree.

"THUNK!", Nartaz's powerful skull shattered the solid branch as if it were a straw. With a half-dazed jungle cunning, the brainstruck Branestroke yet found the ability to perform a quick entrechat followed by an Immelmann turn before landing squarely across the broad shoulders of his enemy. His powerful, jungle-trained fingers sought for and found their holds in the shaggy, matted fur covering Kaput's body. His flashing teeth sought for and found dozens of little many-legged wriggling things as they squirmed for safety beneath the ape-man's pelt. Refreshed by his snack, Nartaz transferred his teeth to Kaput's throat. All could have ended there, but the ape-man was wily. Stocky legs galvanised into action. Backwards into a nearby wonkli tree ran Kaput. There was a sickening crunch, wonkli berries flew in all directions and the man-ape felt Nartaz's teeth relax from his throat. Quick as a flash, or perhaps even faster, Kaput turned, seized the half-stunned Jungle Lord by the ankles and flailed him round and round against the hollow trunks of the wonkli trees. Something about the "tink--tonk--tunk" made by the impact of Nartaz's skull against the wonkli trees appealed to the primitive sense of rhythm in what passed for Kaput's mind...so he did it again. To the "Tink, tonk..tunk" of Branestroke's skull against the trees was added a gentle, accompanying.."Tinkle..tonkle..tunkle" as the Jungle Lord's teeth scattered to the jungle floor. Fascinated, the man-ape began to improvise variations on his simple melody..he had never been able to carry a tune like this before.

Many a lesser opponent would have succumbed to this treatment. Weaklings would have felt decidedly ill..but not Nartaz..no, not he, not at all and like that. From some inner well of strength known only to the simple-minded children of nature..from that difference which set Branestroke apart from the rest, Nartaz rallied. Once again, the forest echoed to the cry of.."Owwwww-www!" a slightly modified version of his battle cry caused by the loss of teeth and extreme discomfort of his predicament. Nevertheless, the call still throbbled with the mighty power which drove N'Gainly the giraffe to flight and which made N'Funni the hyena cry in his sleep.

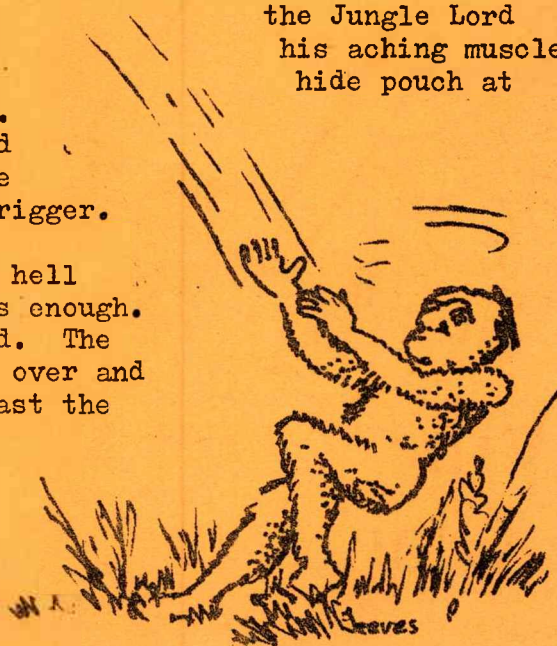
Then Nartaz acted.

Though bruised, battered and bewildered, yet found the strength of will to force to one final effort. From the porcupine-his waist, Nartaz withdrew his .75 mm Mauser. Flipping the action to full automatic he used the last of his failing strength to place the muzzle to Kaput's hairy chest and pull the trigger.

the Jungle Lord
his aching muscles
hide pouch at

Ninety-seven steel-jacketed messengers of hell thundered through the ape-man's body. It was enough. The vice-like grip on Nartaz's ankles relaxed. The centrifugal force from Kaput's spinning took over and carried the Jungle Lord high into the air..past the nest of N'Sanitary the water fowl...through the web of N'Asti the spider, and SPLAT! into the muddy waters of P'Toocy the river.

N'Kindli the alligator slid smoothly forward and gave thanks to N'Holi the



Provider for this unexpected breakfast. There was a brief flurry...a quick gobbling sound and a couple of burps...then all was quiet again on P'Toocy the river.

The precious miki stone, cause of all the trouble, together with its leather cord, was lost forever....which only goes to show that it isn't worth making a thong about somebody taking the miki.

THE END....for now.

A Forgotten Masterpiece



by

Vinç
Clarke

An unfortunate air of levity - of non-seriousness - seems to have crept into MICROWAVE, with the insidious stealth of King Kong falling from the Empire State building. My young friend Mr. Hill, though the proud owner of a set of AMAZING STORIES back to No. 1 (a damn sight more than I have, after 47 years collecting, the lucky ****) seems unable to comprehend that an s-f fanzine should have something about s-f in it, something serious that treats it as the Literature of the Future-minded Intellectual, that Transcends....well, you know all that.

It should therefore be a double pleasure to you that I am about to rectify Mr. Hill's grievous error and at the same time announce the discovery of a magnificent work in our field which has been unjustly neglected - THE PERFECT WORLD, by Ella Scrysmour (Eveleigh Nash & Grayson. 1920) - which contains such treasures that I can scarcely type for the tears that fill my eyes. From the first sentences "An English summer! The birds sang merrily, and the trees bowed their heads, keeping time with the melody." you know that you are encountering an unforgettable experience.

It's a pity that the stark introduction of sentient vegetables (the mobile trees) so many years ahead of its time in s-f is not followed through, but the authoress has riches enough to compensate. There follows a brief summary of the plot, in which I have quoted some of the glorious prose to show the nature of Ms. Scrysmour's genius.

THE PERFECT WORLD opens in the English village of Marsh fielden, in

pre-Great-War years. Two cousins, Desmond and Alan ("Ours is rather a romantic story" said Alan. "Our mothers were twin sisters...") are helping their Uncle John to build a revolutionary aluminium airship. "The machine itself is complete" went on Desmond enthusiastically, "the balance is perfect and its engines are supposed to be of wonderful velocity, but no known power will raise it even an inch from the ground."

Whilst they are labouring over this trifling defect, Marshfielden and the outside world ("The London papers were burning with excitement.") are disturbed by the disappearance of various living beings from the village - children, the Vicar, (no, no, it's not that sort of story) even a cow. And then Desmond. After him, a quiet period. Then, six months later, there is an explosion in the local mine workings; Alan, trapped underground, is rambling around a series of caverns, and is captured by naked purple midgets. The book doesn't lack incident.

About to be sacrificed to a monstrous flame in a huge underground temple, Alan is rescued by a beautiful purple midget with long golden hair, Kaweeka, the Chief Priestess, and in her rooms whom should he meet but Desmond.....

"The woman is a fiend...she admitted me into a kind of harem in which I am...." he laughed bitterly, "her chief husband."

"My God" said Alan hoarsely. "You have married her, Desmond?"

Desmond nodded. "I suppose that's what it is....."

The arrival of Alan raises Desmond's moral tone somewhat, and they investigate the origins of the tribe. By a lucky chance - "we both used to know something of Hebrew in the old days at college" - they decipher some hieroglyphics and find that the midgets are descended from some Old Testament patriarchs whom the earth swallowed in the Good Old Days. These investigations take time, and eventually Kaweeka, a midget scorned, goes mad and throws herself into the sacred flame, and Desmond and Alan flee to the outer caverns pursued by the tribe.

The story now gathers pace.

Guided by a friendly native, our Heroes fight BEMs, find the Tomb of the Ancients....naturally, packed with jewels....and after much wandering reach the surface. Well, not exactly the surface; the bottom of an Australian mine shaft. It's not an especially deep mine....they've just wandered a long way.

The Aussies are somewhat surprised by the appearance of the Friendly Native "...she looked almost inhuman with her purple skin and protruding horn..." and probably relieved when she crumbles to dust on exposure to sunlight. Saves all that trouble with the Immigration Authorities. Our Heroes, made of tougher material, recover their health, sell some jewels, learn with astonishment that there's been a War on - they've been underground for five years - Desmond marries his Aussie nurse, and the first half of the book ends with their departure for England.

Back at Marshfielden, Uncle John is still toiling on his airship, now named the 'Argenta', and the intrepid explorers plus the nurse, Mavis, arrive just in time to go on a trial flight. They find the ship fitted luxuriously for a straight-from-the-drawing-board job (but then, so was the Titanic), with "electric light, electric fans, electric stoves, a pianola.... even a gramophone on board". A cupboard full of transparent blocks turns out to be the rations of water - "I call this concentrated essence of water." Uncle John has evidently found a method of de-hydrating it....another great discovery is "another dynamo for generating an inexhaustible supply of air."

There is a great deal about the air system, and how "the used-up air sinks to the ground" and highly technical stuff like that. "Why, it's like a fairy tale" said Mavis'....taking the words out of the reader's mouth.

After this quiet chapter ("Science had won yet another brilliant victory.") the author injects a little action into the plot. Four days after the trial flight, the Argenta encounters a tremendous storm; Mavis bears a baby; the newspapers give news of an 'epidemic of earthquakes' ("... a serious earthquake has occurred in New Jersey...Tennessee and Vermont have suffered considerable damage also...." "It seems all over America" said Alan lightly. "I'm glad we don't go in for these merry little sideshows in this country.") and down the sides of Ben More soon lava is rolling The whole party takes off in the Argenta, and in a masterly six or seven paragraphs worthy of the gigantic vision of a Stapledon* civilisation collapses ("The whole of England was a flaming mass..... they watched Europe sinking....") followed by the world ("The whole world shook and for one moment was a living ball of fire. Then it shivered violently, split into a thousand pieces....") and the Argenta is hurled into space.



Displaying a grasp of astronomical science as great as her knowledge of physics, Ms. Scrysmour takes three chapters to bring the party to Jupiter ("One of Jupiter's poles lies in the very heart of Draco, and the other is close by the Greater Magellanic Cloud.") Drawn by a beam of light ("The light is like a magnet - it is drawing us somewhere"), which, I might add, anticipates Doc. Smith's GALACTIC PATROL tractor beams by some 18 years, they find themselves in a paradisiacal scene - "a glorious azure sea" "wooded islets" "buildings like the chalets of Switzerland" - and confronted by white toga-clad men "beautifully moulded", who address them in English. They are soon given something to eat and drink ("steaming liquid, neither tea, coffee nor cocoa, but with a reminiscient flavour of all three") told that the natives have the 'gift of tongues' which enables them to converse in any language, and in a casual aside the cause of the Earth's destruction is noted - "...you believe that the end of the world was caused through the failure of the fire in the centre of the earth?" - which thereby ties the first half of the book to the second.

The social system of Jupiter is, as you might expect, quite simple. It's a Monarchial Communism. Ruled over by a King and Council, but no one can earn more than that sum which has been allocated to someone of his station in life. Surplus (the profit of shopkeepers, for instance) is sent to the King who pays his councillors and other non-profit-makers from the common fund. Station in life? "According to the station in life in which he has been born, and from which he has sprung, so he learns to take his part in life." Objections that there might be some rebellious spirits are waved aside..."We are happy...why should we complain?" In this Perfect World, everyone is happy..."We live in harmony with our birds, our animals, and even our fish. They are all our friends."

Undeterred by the thought that a world without fish and chips can hardly be called perfect, the travellers are settling down when Alan meets

* Bert Stapledon, a warehouseman I used to know.

the beautiful only daughter of the King; and instantly falls in love. His feelings are so strong that they infect a Prince with uncontrollable passion, and in a chapter of stark sexual power ('The Unforgivable Kiss') Ms. Scrysmour unlaces her corset and lets herself go:

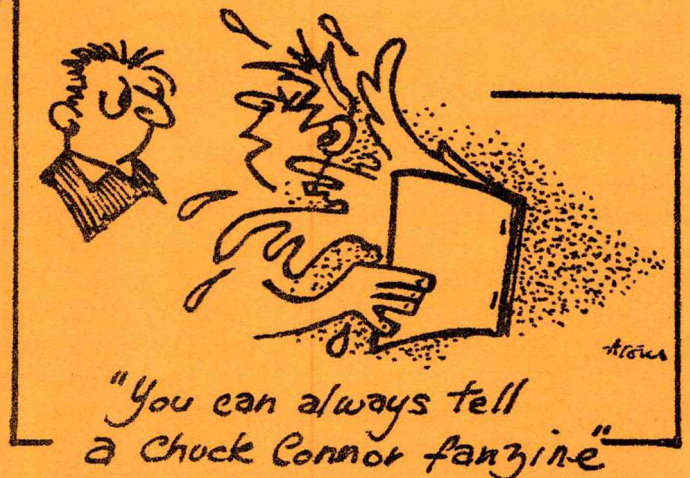
"But I want you-you-you-"and Kulverman strode close to her and placed his arms about her.

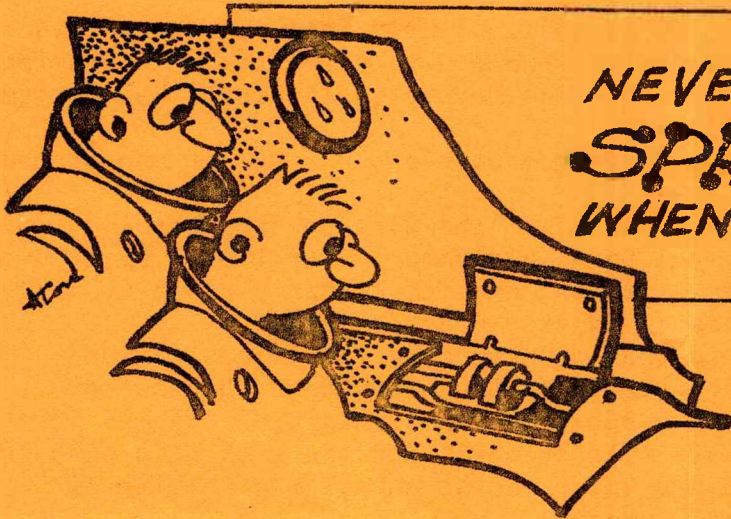
"Let me go" breathed the girl -but his lips were seeking hers.

"No-no-no" she cried "Not my lips - Kulverman be merciful. My lips are sacred until I wed - spare my lips....In the name of Mitzor the Great, leave my lips" she cried, but the madness of passion was upon him."

Alan rescues her, but she is then kidnaped by the Prince. Alan rescues her again, Kulverman is despatched by the wraiths of the ancient Kings of the country (one of the many sub-plots and background details I've omitted for the sake of whoever cuts this stencil) and the book ends with the beautiful little daughter of Alan and the Princess childishly talking of marriage with the son of Mavis and Desmond.

I bought this book some years ago. At times I wonder about Ella Scrysmour. Who was she? Somehow I visualise her as a spinster of about 50, born during the staid and steady Victorian era when you knew your station in life, cloudily remembering Victorian science, possibly infected by the new-fangled motion pictures, having just lived through a War that was the greatest in human history up to that time, seeking an escape in imagination to a Perfect World. I wonder what became of her - did she come across an imported AMAZING STORIES six years after her book was published, and recognise that she had trodden, albeit clumsily, those unknown frontiers of Science Fiction? Did she live into the Atomic Era, when the possibility of an exploding world came a little nearer? There's only one thing of which you can be certain: here was a lady who liked to exercise her imagination to the full and was practical enough to get paid for it. A fascinating creature, born before her time.





NEVER CHANGE A
SPREGGLE
WHEN IT'S RAINING

PETE E PRESFORD

Many factors are involved with the reading/writing of a good story. Do we put plot before characterisation, or vice versa? Each to their own method of judgement, of course; but I'm sure you will all agree that the reader must 'relate' strongly with the writer at some point for it to be a good story.

Do we relate with descriptions of 'hard-ware'? Is it the thought of gleaming machinery sounding technically perfect that grips our minds? Maybe such books as 'Ringworld went down well with most s.f. fans because of the sheer size of the thing and their amateur maths just didn't stretch that far. In other words....if you have to write 'hard' s.f. without too good a knowledge of the technicalities involved....give it 'em BIG.

But no matter how big/gleaming/fast/implausible a machine is, the human element involved can soon cut it down to size. And to me that is the crux of any story....the human element.

When we are younger most any human emotion can catch our heart-strings. Or if you don't fancy heart-strings, remember this kinda line.... "as she twisted in his firm grip, her bosom heaved with....". Yer! You do remember, don't you? "Ah!" you say, "There ain't much emotion in that"; no, of course there isn't. But because you're young it conjures up lusty thoughts as to what our her/villain should do with that firm grip. The science wonders of the story we take for granted straight from the kick-off. But as we grow older and a little wiser, I should hope we might retain a little of that 'sense of wonder', because once that goes we might as well go over to reading phone-books.

I think it would be fair to say that the basic s.f. reader is no squelch when it comes to understanding the basics of science; if they read enough s.f. they should know what is plausible and what isn't. In any case, some things are now taken for granted by writer and reader alike. I mean... when was the last time you read about the 'warp-drive' in intimate detail? It just isn't needed any more; only when the actual thing is flinging us between the stars will it really come back into the plot.

SCENE 1. Pair of her es-to-be, rushing towards the scene of crashed U.F.O.; alien in trouble; anything that isn't government-orientated.

Car screams around bend in road, mud splatting against windows as red light shrieks into existence on dashboard panel, causing driver to slow over to side of road.

"Oh no!" the driver sighs, "Bloody fan belt's gone."
"Don't tell me you haven't a spare?" remarks Sidekick.
"Sure I have."
"Well, let's change the damn thing."
"Have you ever changed one on a Cortina?"
"Er...No."

Remember the old Morris with the tight-up radiator?"

"Oh shit!" groans the Sidekick, recalling that car all too well.

And so too readers that have owned Cortinas and very old Morris Minors (or know folk that have); they all shrink down in their chairs at the horrors to be found in changing on said cars. They are with the writer for a time; they relate with the character; they know about the screams and bloody knuckles.

SCENE 2. Flashing all this over to the year 2465; and our intrepid pair are heading for Alpha 311g6 in Sector 12. Could be that the Feds are trying to wangle a batch of Zarnoff seeds into the blackmarket drug scene. But instead of the fanbelt going, the inter-spatial link motor that holds the drive in sync with the guidance system goes 'scrutch'. And as the ship is an old Ford/Opel/Bredd/Thorn model, they ain't got much chance of changing it inside 72 hours. Any reader that had an old FOBT will cringe in his zero-chair just at the thought of struggling with an interspat.

Relate....relate....and even RELATE.

No matter how good the plot or background detail, it all falls flat for me if the characters don't behave in a decent human manner. That means supplying them with anger/hate/greed/love....these are things most of us should know. Some we will never experience in their fullest form; some of them I don't think we would wish to anyway. Not too many moons ago, I was reading a pretty non-descript Fantasy story, but one of the characters did **have** a little meat about him. One scene suddenly clicked....and, sure as hell, I 'related'. I was in there with the guy, blood pounding in my temples. What was it? Anger.....

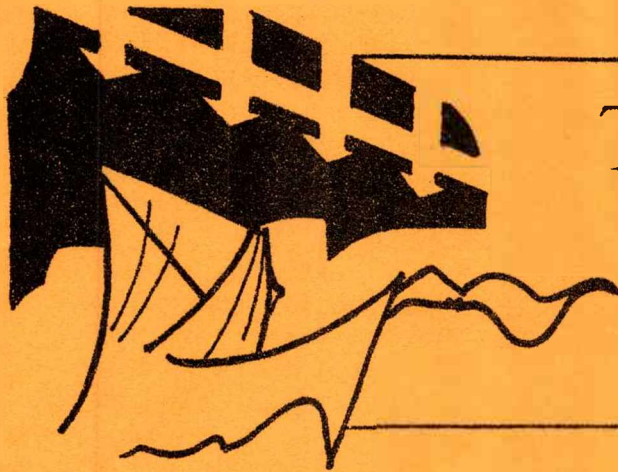
Plain, honest-to-God anger, of the sheets-of-red type, which flashed my mind back to the summer of '80. That was when the Presfords trolled over to France for a working (enforced labour) holiday with....with, 'boys in care'....to be kind.

One of them, Carl, a lad of dark complexion, had a real adult/hate complex. There was no way he'd do anything first time for an adult (or anyone else if it came to that); not if he could help it.

An assembly of forty odd souls compiled the party....twenty-three kids in care, and the Staff and their children. As Anita's spouse, (she was one of the real staff), I was given full staff status with the kids, which also meant full staff work-load. What the hell! The holiday(!) was free for all four of us.

Being dumped in a forest about twenty miles from (South) Bordeaux with temperatures pushing into the nineties placed a strain on everyone. The 'boys' hit their peak towards the end of the first week, and started to push the adults just to see what they could get away with. Outside the half-built (I should say renovated) farmhouse we had a cold-water tap, with a hose-pipe attached. The boys were banned from going near this for obvious reasons. But this particular day Carl was determined to make his impact with streams of cold water.

After telling the little creep twice, I finally lost my cool and hauled him off by the ear, dumping him in one of the sleeping tents. End of



Through The Portcullis

by

Margaret

Hill

Things were unnaturally quiet in Castle Microvore. No radio blaring, no tip-tap of typewriter keys echoing round the stone walls, no thumping of hefty feet rapidly retrieving the post from the doormat as if it might mystically vanish if left there for more than ten seconds. I

didn't have to run outside each morning to raise the Standard on the flagpole; the master was not in residence.

It was the first time we'd been separated for any duration since our marriage. That fortnight seemed endless - cigarette-endless. The ashtray was washed the evening he went. It sat empty on the window-sill, a silent brooding monument to the battle he was fighting far away. They say that it's the little things that get on your nerves. That ashtray drove me bananas, but I just couldn't put it away in the cupboard. I bagged some visiting friends to use it, then left it for days. It was no comfort - they were the wrong brand.

I tidied the house. It stayed tidy. I couldn't summon the enthusiasm for the annual turning-out of cupboards and drawers I'd planned. They remained untidy. I went shopping, wandering round and round the town, purchasing minute quantities of food, and whiling away the time until I had to go home, which I dreaded. Then the vain hope would come that maybe when I got there the drawbridge would be down, the candles lit, and a cheery fire burning in the hearth. It never was.

I felt totally lost.

With very little else to think about, it was only natural that I should reflect on the past year, Terry's first "fannish" year. It's been quite an eye-opener. For instance, I naively thought that, in order to be a fan, one had to read science fiction. Not so, it seems. Indeed, with my very meagre consumption of Heinlein, Asimov, Eric Frank Russell, and C. S. Lewis, I seem to be more in a position to call myself a fan than many, if that were to be the criterion. It's not that I don't like science fiction; it's just that I can't read it to the exclusion of anything else, as Terry does. Perhaps surprisingly to those who know me, my preferred reading matter is horror stories; not the Gothic Edgar Allen Poe type, but the contemporary sort that Stephen King and John Saul produce. I can't stand romantic fiction but I'm quite partial to the odd thriller and biography.

During the course of this last year, we've met, corresponded, or chatted on the phone with too many new people to mention personally. I've also made a couple of trips to the Tun with Terry. It's funny how one's mental image of someone based on their writing seldom tallies with the actual person. Take Chuck Connor for example. On the phone he sounds fairly normal. Yet when he visited Castle Microvore, he quite willingly submitted himself to a whole afternoon and evening's entertainment (?) from Terry's weird record collection. I seriously doubt the sanity of anyone who does that. One wonders if he volunteered for his current South Atlantic tour of duty on the strength of it. Terry did invite him to stay again.....(Really, Chuck, we hope you come home safely real soon now, and we're looking forward to you dropping in for a weekend or so when you get the chance.) I think we have made some very good friends. It seems a pity that we cannot make Albacon II, although I have no great desire to visit Glasgow again, for we would like to meet you all in person. Maybe in 1984.....it has an ominous ring about it, doesn't it?

Castle Microvore itself has altered little. We did manage to redecorate the dining room in honour of Keith's christening in May, but the black mould on the bathroom walls has returned with a vengeance, although I've scrubbed them until the paint has peeled off, and now it's invading the kitchen. I try to close my eyes to it, since it cannot be cured without radical structural alterations, which we cannot at present afford. It's rising damp from the dungeons, Terry says. We're considering digging a deeper moat down the back garden, not to keep marauders out, but to keep the child in. The stonework of the battlements needs repointing, Terry, as you said last spring, and my little patch of ornamental garden would be improved greatly by those half-dozen paving slabs you promised me for my last birthday. Perhaps I should keep quiet about that, since I haven't yet bought him the trousers I was supposed to provide at Christmas. Still, he did get a duplicator in February...

Keith of course has grown somewhat. It seems strange to us that two fairly lethargic parents should have been blessed with such a livewire of a child. He gets around on two legs now, well, most of the time. His favourite possessions are his books, so he seems to be following in the family tradition. He also enjoys posting things....the carrots down the back of the vegetable rack, the onions and his toys through the cat flap. One slightly worrying tendency I've noticed is his fascination for my red satin knickers. I never get to wear them. He whips them off the airing rack and chews them, so they have to go straight back in the washing basket. Obviously a case of "like father, like son" (no, Joy, Terry doesn't nibble my underwear), but at fifteen months??

MICROWAVE itself has developed beyond recognition from the original edition, which was nothing more than a statement to fandom that Terry existed and wanted to "do his bit", so to speak. He has succeeded in keeping the tone light and mildly humorous as he intended. The majority of the response has been very favourable. Perhaps those who find it not to their taste haven't made any comment. One thing I have discovered is that those who criticise most cuttingly are also those who themselves cannot accept even mild criticism; they back into corners muttering inanities and looking cross. I think Terry takes censure reasonably kindly, and listens to it. Not that he always takes too much notice; much of it is irrelevant to what he is attempting to do with MICROWAVE. He doesn't want it to have any deep meaning or cause much soul-searching. It is merely meant to entertain. He's lucky

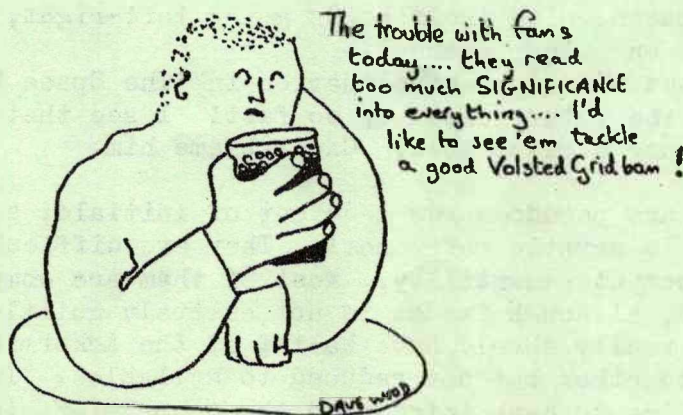
in that the material being submitted generally seems to be the sort he's after; he doesn't have to cause bad feeling by rejecting much. And he's getting very adept at writing begging letters for contributions.

As for my part, well, I provide the sustenance that keeps the typing fingers active. I also usually proof-read and correct the script, although I haven't had the time or the energy to closely inspect the most part of this mammoth issue. I have censored one piece of the editorial matter, and Terry has since agreed that I was correct in doing so. Otherwise he has the final say on what is included and what isn't. Always. Sorry, Arnold, I'm not co-editor at all, and never intend to be. This is Terry's hobby, not mine. I'm willing to help and advise if required, but that's it. I don't want to be involved to any great extent. After all, I might get a share of the blame, too. Of course, the best ideas are always mine!

The momentous day came at last. No more lonely days, no more freezing cold nights. It was exactly a fortnight to the day that the Lord of the Manor went A.W.O.L. I was preparing to visit him at the front when the phone rang. "Would there be room in the car for another person with a small suitcase?" my spouse asked. A couple of evenings previously, his younger brother Kevin had ferried another patient home to Gillingham, so I immediately assumed that another prisoner was to be allowed compassionate leave for a day. "Well, yes, I suppose so. Who?" Then it struck me. "You mean, you're coming home....are you....are you really....you are, aren't you?" I babbled away. "Yes", said Terry. And, strangely for that time of night, the sun came out around Castle Microvore again.

My personal thanks go to those people who helped me stay reasonably sane through this difficult time. To Terry's family and mine, our neighbours, Vinç, Atom and Elda who phoned and visited, Colin who provided me with transport to the hospital, the girls at work who were there when I needed them, and my best friend Gillian who stayed with me on the day of the operation and who sent me flowers when I was down - all I can say is a heart-felt thankyou. I'd never have made it without you.

Margaret.



Something

Sgt. Burchley

NOTHING

GOOD MORNING, BRITAIN? The arrival of Breakfast TV was inevitably called the greatest thing since sliced bread, and in terms of thin limp slices of aerated mush, it probably is. No offence intended to anyone whose day is made brighter by the sight of Frank Bough's woolly pullover rising over the horizon like a burnt-out nova, seemingly made of the hair of the Mo, which, as knitters know, should never be washed in case it clogs. I think Buffey knows it, too.



BREAKFAST TV.

Or, on the other channel, the chance of waking in bed with David Frost may be as alluring to some of you as the Piper at the Gates of Dawn, and no offence to you, neither. Personally, I view both both channels (or, rather, don't view) like getting out of bed with a choice of toothpastes --garlic or curry flavoured -- but not everyone does, I know. For instance, there's a man in my office who rises early in order to cycle to work (and park his machine near my desk). His wife also

gets up and cooks their breakfast, and there they sit in the black winter pre-dawn, crunching cereal and bacon, with their heads going left-right, left-right, between two TV's, one on either channel.

When Fred Pohl forecast this type of situation in 'The Space Merchants', it was a black farce. Pity the future crept up so fast! I see that Fred has now retreated, story-wise, into a black hole. Can't blame him.

THE DREADED WAHF. Acronyms are pseudo-words made out of initials; as it might be, from ACR, meaning 'a cryptic reference'. They are difficult to keep up with, unless you have a computer-mentality. Most of them are computer-terms, as might be suspected, although fandom is not entirely guiltless, with its GAFIA's and WAHF's. We really should have halted at the Ackermanese level, where words are run together but not reduced to syllables. In MICRO-WAVE 4, Forrest modestly claims to have introduced the term Sci-Fi (meaning SF) in 1954, but he was doing equally good work long before that. Did he not

coin the word Scientifiction? All hail to Fojak!

Now will someone please tell me what WAHF means?

THROWAWAY GADGETS. Have you noticed that this has become the Throwaway Age? Have you thought where it will stop? Permit an example: I am now the last engineer in a large design office who still uses a slide rule, once the supreme symbol of my profession. How proud I was of my first slip-stick, as used by all the best heroes of all the best science fiction stories in those days! But everyone else in the office has long since changed to mini-calculators, and today I saw someone tapping away on a neat credit-card-sized item from his local garage, price £3.99. However, when the batteries fail, he will have to pay about £3.00 for new ones, so that we are almost at the throwaway calculator stage. Imagine that! A marvel of technology, and it's almost cheaper for a machine to make a new one than for a human being to do a repair - or to fit new batteries. First, it was throwaway flashlights, then butane lighters. What next? Wrist-watches? Transistor radios?

Ultimately, people, and make no mistake. Machine-production becomes cheaper, skilled labour more costly. So far, in Britain, we have more than 3 million throwaways. The total is still growing. It has been called a shake-out of industry, forsooth.

LEAVE 'EM SMILING! Please don't go away weeping. Remember the old song:

"Smile though your world is ending, smile though the pain's unending..." There is always something to laugh about, even nuclear warfare. What a good thing there wasn't a germ war! Somehow, Life will Go On, and I bring you this heartening quote from the "Derby Evening Telegraph" about the attempts to induce pandas to mate:

"They will both be put in the panda pit again today and zoo officials will take a closer look at each other."

+++++
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When Olaf the Viking Chief commissioned Fred the builder and his assistant Joe to construct a dream dwelling on a remote island, they found that the only method of transportation of the materials was a small rowing boat. It made the work ten times as difficult, and they soon became disillusioned. Knowing Olaf to be extremely myopic, they improvised here and there. Confident that the Viking would not notice. However, they were slightly concerned that he would notice one fitment was not quite right. In the bathroom, they had had to substitute a brick-carrier for a wash basin because it had been accidentally omitted on their supplies order. They needn't have worried; when Olaf inspected the completed property, he was quite content with their handiwork.

"There, Joe," said Fred, "I told you a hod's as good as a sink to a blind Norse."

- M.



Chuck Connor

FEB 27th - ten days after Ascension -
and a letter arrives direct from Terry.

The op is on and he goes into hospital very soon. Oh, and if I'm not doing anything for my own mag, would I mind doing something for Microwave? The man is on the verge of having his insides rearranged by some Jack D. Ripper, and he's worried about the next issue?! There is something wrong with this lad, I thought. Damnitall, I wouldn't have someone poking around inside me, especially when we haven't even been properly introduced!!

Okay, for those not 'in the know', I should point out that I'm in the Royal Navy, and it might not come as a surprise to find that, as I scratch this out, the ship I'm on is heading for the Falklands Patrol Zone. I will try to use English, but you never know what may slip past.

One Step Beyond? You could say that, especially when you realise that as we sail to protect our furthest piece of the (now crumbled) British Empire, we have to CROSS THE LINE. Y'see the Mob (a.k.a. Andrew, Pusser, Navy) runs on tradition (though sadly much is being lost) and tradition states that, as far as is humanly possible, everything stops when you enter the Kingdom of Neptune, and Cross The Line.

The silliness starts the night before the actual event, with the boarding of Neptune's reps, which includes the Master of Ceremonies, who reads the Proclamation, and personally hands out the summonses to those who haven't Crossed The Line before and are in need of initiation. The trick here is to play along as best as possible, otherwise names are secretly noted and men become Marked. The part of Ambassador was played (obviously) by the Jossman (a.k.a. Navy Policeman - very simplified explanation as it would take too long), who for once got into the part and laid it on with a shovel - even to the point of having a piece of frozen fish as his Staff of Office. It also doubled as a very good offensive weapon, though he had guts to carry it without wearing gloves.

Most of the Ambassador's speech is in a kind of Pantomime Rhyme, and to give him fair comment he did a pretty good run until he blew it all out and couldn't find a matching for "Piss off" - hardly Milton, but amusing all the same.

With the preliminaries over (around midnight - or Dub Dubs - or Oh-oh-oh-oh local), everything settles back to the monotony of routine watchkeeping. The Comms department is, as usual, dipping out (ie, not dipping in) by being in Defence Watches already (that means 5hrs on, 5 off, 7hrs on, 7hrs off, and start again - you cannot close down Comms. Yes, it's a mug's game).

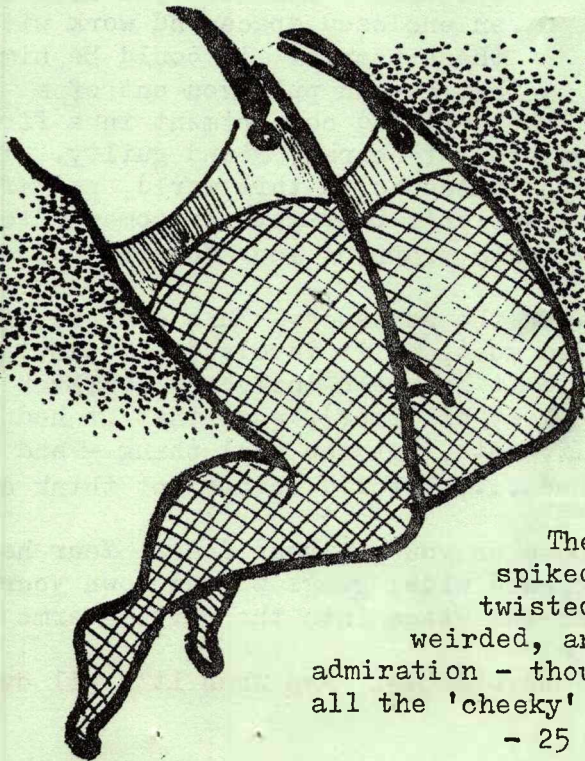
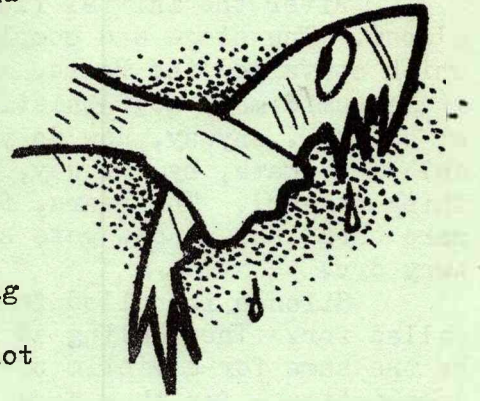
The following (Tuesday in this case) and at least 90% of the ships company secure at 1100 (all time in the RN is on the 24 hour clock, and always local - except Comms which is Zulu/G.M.T.), for the start of the ceremonies. One peculiarity was provided by some loonies who actually skydived onto the line to signal the start of it all. Personally I find parachuting a neat form of suicide at best, and wondered if the jumpers were drunk when they'd agreed to jump over water. Not a pretty sight if things go wrong, and the bottom of the big blue swimming pool is several miles below the water-line. Thankfully nothing went wrong, and they were well-received by all; "F---ing O.D.'s" being the usual comment of approval (in this case).

The chefs, for once, did a very good lunch, considering that on a trip like this supplies have to be limited and it was still a few days until we hit Ascension. Then it was all hands to the Flightdeck for the show: rig, Pirate (ie non-uniform).

Now, being an old hand of many a Sod's Opera (end-of-trip concert), I thought I was prepared for the 'social event', wearing a pair of swimming trunks, a jockstrap over the top, and a string vest which came down beyond my knees. The jock and the vest were borrowed from a Messmate and he, being smaller than myself, gained an extra ten points from me for kinkiness.

But I was outdone!!
Stockings and suspenders - what kind of a man carries that kind of thing around and doesn't get arrested?!

The whole lot was topped off with a spiked and dyed wig. Yes, my somewhat twisted sense of showmanship had been outweirded, and I must admit to a small amount of admiration - though I didn't envy the sore thighs from all the 'cheeky' suspender strap twanging.



After the initial flutter and bustle, things got more organised. Well, almost. The stage was completed, but this version had a pool in front of it, which contained the Bears, and then Neptune's full Entourage are seated on stage (amid many wolf-whistles at the handmaidens - look, after 20 plus days at sea.....anyway, how do you think sailors acquired the nickname of 'Skate', eh? The skate, by the way, doesn't find it as good a substitute for the real thing either). The Bears, for the record, serve two roles. The first is to make sure that no one gets hurt, and the second to ensure that you don't walk away dry.

Silence is called for and the first victim -- er sorry -- initiate, is called for. The feeling as friends and workmates scramble away from you must be the same for a victim of the Plague. But this is just the start of the degradation - for then come the Secret Police.

Two people, prior to the event, have been given your name, on a list with others, and they are your Angels of Death (so to speak). They, in turn, don't know who is going to get them up onstage, so they try to make sure they get their own back, just in case it's you. Revenge is, if you're lucky to

get one of the buggers which got you, sweet. It is, of course, a little futile to try and run (where do you go in an enclosed area miles from land?), but it does add to the sport.

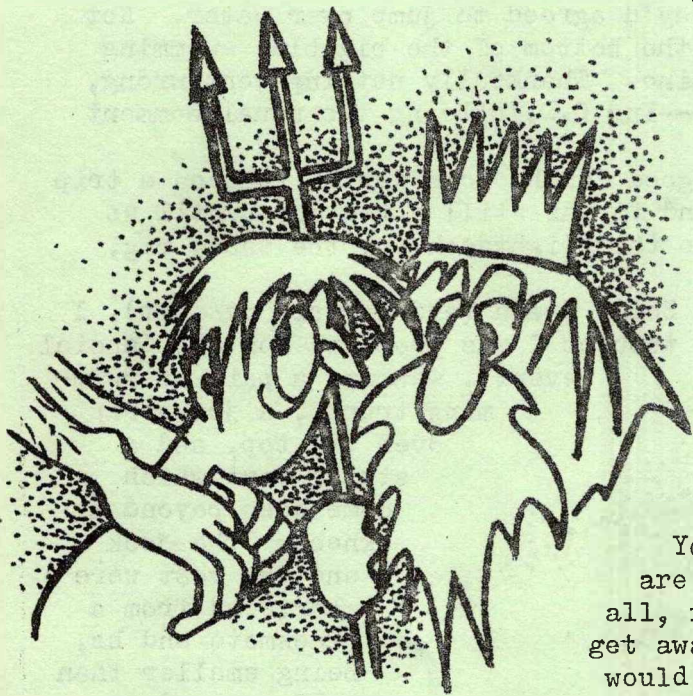
After being dragged before the Jury, you are accused of any crime, or crimes, that someone has stitched you up with. It can range from 'Granny Trapping' to getting a Dear John (though I should point that it is never malicious or spiteful - remember you live in an enclosed space and work with these people. It could be him that has to pull you out of a smoke-filled compartment in a fire).

You are, of course, found guilty. There are no innocents in this world, and after all, it wouldn't be right for someone to get away with trapping your Mother, now would it?

Then the sentence. This was the time that I feared most, as it involved, in part, taking some 'medicine'. Some rumours said it had been 'silvered' (Silver Nitrate - a mean form of laxative at the best of times), some that it had been 'flashed' (spiked with Chili - not Chilli, note, but the real thing - and the like). Yet others said that the chefs had.....but I'd rather not think on that one.

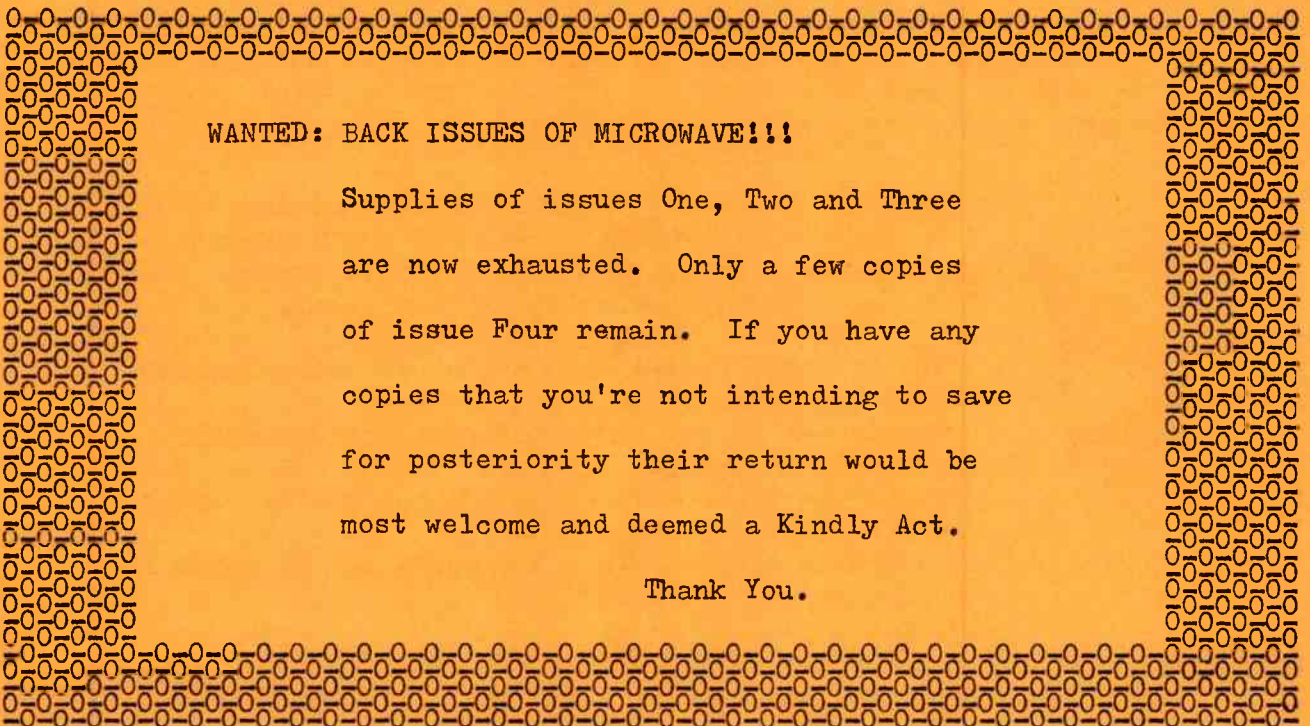
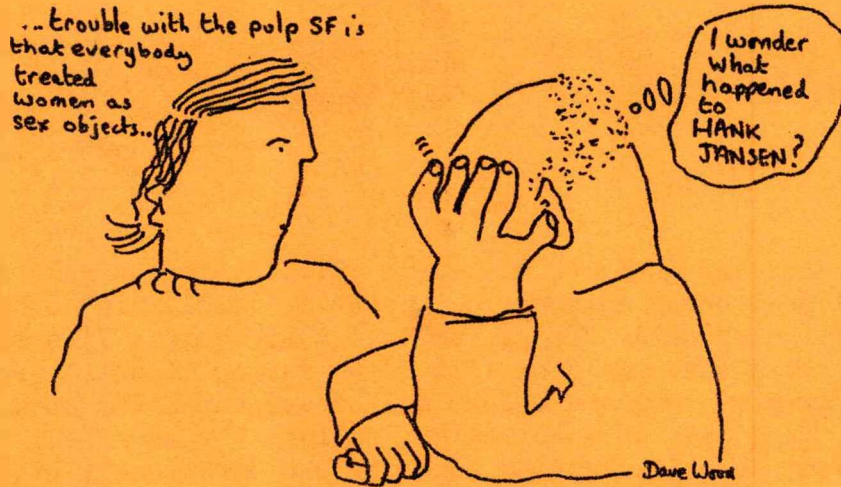
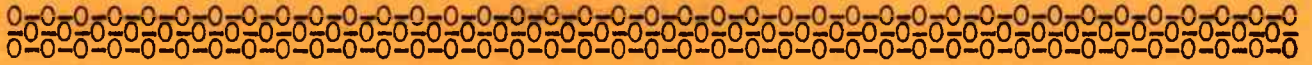
The final part of the Ceremony comes as you get your dose. Your head is held back, your nose pinched, mouth opened wide, gunge poured down your throat, then you are pushed backwards off the stage into the waiting arms of the Bears.

It's quick, simple painless, and unavoidable. And when it's all over, you have crossed the Line.



As an event, it was a little like a village fete - chatty, amusing and beery. As a break from routine, it was bloody fantastic. It was my first, and will, I expect, be remembered even if I have to do it again.

What's the Line? The Equator. And one step beyond is madness.



WANTED: BACK ISSUES OF MICROWAVE!!!

Supplies of issues One, Two and Three are now exhausted. Only a few copies of issue Four remain. If you have any copies that you're not intending to save for posterity their return would be most welcome and deemed a Kindly Act.

Thank You.

B Requests

Edwin Garvey

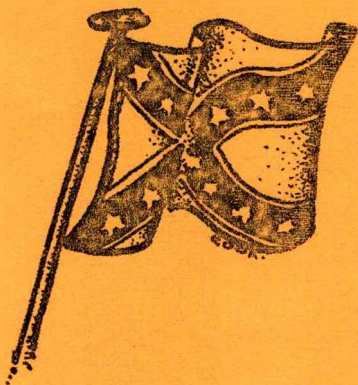
When I announced the death of the music quiz, I started getting letters from people who had previously managed to ignore it, complaining about its demise. One in particular said, "Bring back the music quiz. I've said it before and I'll say it again. In fact I'll go on saying it until you do, and if you don't I'll stamp my foot and scream and scream until I'm sick. You have been warned." This chap used to review fanzines for the BSFA, but is now taking the cure at the 'St. Fannish Home for the Chronically Literate' and may be almost human by the time you read this. Good luck, Martyn.

So here's a special one-time-only re-appearance of the quiz. Sixteen questions, some in two or more parts, cunningly presented with enough extra background information and clues to make you think you must be dumb 'cos you don't know the answers. You can also play 'Complete the Lyric' if you want/prefer. Oh, when I called the last quiz 'And The Band Played On' some smart-ass wrote in to tell me where it came from. Right! Come on then! Where did this title come from? Clue: it is a record title.

--oo000oo--

- 1) This is the B-side of a single that didn't do particularly well in 1971 for a well-known American group with a distinctive sound. Name the A-Side, the B-side and the group.

The violence spread down south, to where Jackson State brothers
 Learned not to say nasty things about Southern
 policemen's mothers.
 Nothin' much was said about it, and really next to
 nothin' done.
 The pen is mightier than the sword but no match for
 a gun.



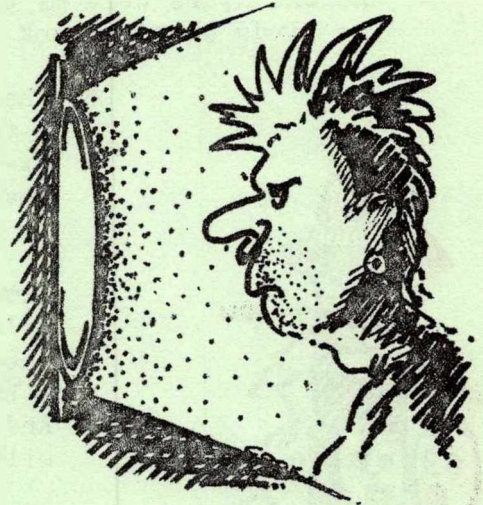
- 2) The A-side of a 1970 hit single, so you get no more clues from me. Name the title and the band.

The radio is blasting, someone's knocking on the door.
I'm looking at my girlfriend, she's passed out on the floor.
I seen so many things I ain't never seen before.
Don't know what it is, I don't wanna see no more.

- 3) This hit single A-side was written, produced and arranged by David Bowie in 1972. Some bands get all the breaks, eh? What was the band's name and what was the record's title?

Television man is crazy,
saying we're juvenile delinquent wrecks.
Oh man, I need T.V.
when I got T. Rex.

- 4) A-side of a minor hit for a local group that had a run of success in the early '70s. All the members came from Maidstone or the surrounding area. Their success didn't last as long as the payments on the new equipment the local dealer lumbered them with. Who were they and what was this disc called?



Good grief Christina, how come you never heard of rock 'n' roll?
Good grief Christina, how come it never made it to your soul?

- 5) Another B-side; this time from the only hit of a band noted for 'unusual' songs and performances. Issued in 1968. Give title(s) and name the band.

'Cross the mountains of your chest
I will stick a Union Jack.
To the forest of your chin,
Through the holes in your string vest.



- 6) In 1969 a bunch of unknowns had their one and only hit. Pete Townshend (of the WHO) 'discovered' the teenage lead guitarist, and produced the record. I believe the pianist was actually a policeman. This is the B-side of the hit single. Name the A-side, the B-side and the band.

Wilhelmina is plump and round, plump and round, plump and round.

Geka and Peter and Fritz and Hans,
ask her permission to put up the banns.
All she says is "Nein, nein, nein,
no wedding bells for me.

Each day they get keener on plump little Wilhelmina,
the pride of the Zeider Zee.

- 7) Recorded on a record label that John Peel was involved with, these lyrics come from the A-side of a 1971 hit. Give the title, the band's name and the record label.

With my boots on my feet and my hat in my hand,
I started out to travel 'cross this land,
And the stars were my charts,
The birds were my rock 'n' roll band.

- 8) The B-side of a 1971 single from an ex-member of a very famous group. This verse refers to another ex-member of that group. Name the A-side, the B-side, the artist performing, the artist referred to and the group to whom they both used to belong.

Lives on a farm, got plenty of charm. Beep, beep.
He's got no cows but he sure got a whole lot of sheep.

A brand new wife and a family.
And when he comes to town I wonder if he'll play with me.

- 9) If you got the band right in No. 3, you're half-way there. David Bowie was not involved with this 1973 A-side. Name the band and the record.

Well, I got to Auriole, y'know it took a month,
And there was my guitar, electric junk.
Some spade said "Rock 'n' rollers, you're all the same."

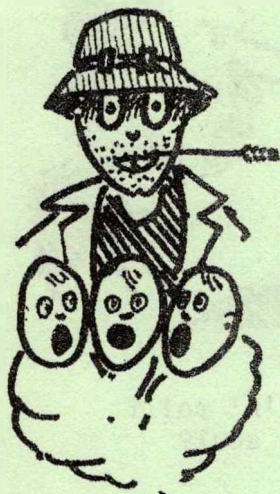
"No, not your instrument." I felt so ashamed.

- 10) The writer, producer and arranger of this 1974 A-side recently gave us 'Zero, Zero', a musical on Channel 4. What was the title and what was the band's name? And who was the clever-dick who seemed to do everything?

We have the solution,
To the pollution.
I think it is easy to guess.
It is so amazing, instead of just lazing,
We certainly sweep up and clean the best.

- 11) An ex-Goon (no, not John Berry) did sterling service on this 1975 A-side. What group was he helping out. what was the title of the song and who was he?

On looking round this little room,
There's nothing I could see,
But a woman's shift and apron,
That were no use to me.

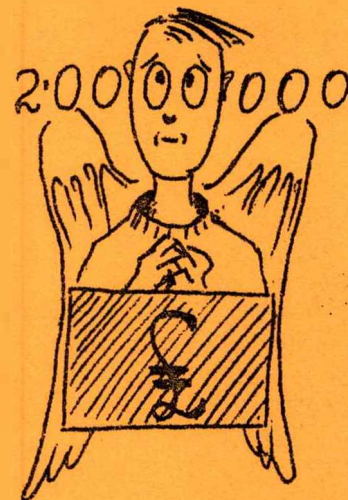


12) This is the B-side of the only hit (possibly the only record) this oddly-named group produced. It was released in 1975. Name the A-side, the B-side and the group.

Put your 'X' against my name,
All the rest are all the same.
The trouble with the world today
Is much too plain for me to say.
Politician is my name,
I'm in for power and fame.

13) From the A-side of a 1975 single. This band is well known for not having a medical practitioner in their line-up. Who are they and what's the song?

I'm not a bad person.
I don't drink and I don't kill (that's hip)
I got no evil habits,
And I probably never will.
I don't sing like Elvis Presley,
I can't dance like Fred Astaire (I can)
But there's one thing in my favour (what?)
I'm a millionaire.
(that's beautiful)



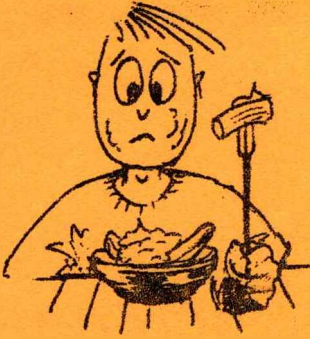
14) Once described by Kenny Everett as "the sweetest little song to ever not be a hit" this came out in 1976 and sank without trace. I agree with Ken. What's the song and who sang it?

Sweet silver angels over the sea,
Please come down flying low for me.
One time I trusted a stranger
'Cos I heard his sweet song
And it was gently enticing me
Though there was something wrong,
But when I turned
He was gone.

15) This is taken from an L.P. by a 'manufactured' female group. One of the members went on to greater things as a solo artist. What was the 'group' name, why were they 'manufactured', what's this track called and who was the artist who made it on her own?

I can put you in the
Talking Pictures
Talking Pictures,
Know what I mean?
I don't want your wit
Just a little bit of thigh
And a tiny bit of tit
And a close-up of your bum
Pointing at the sky.

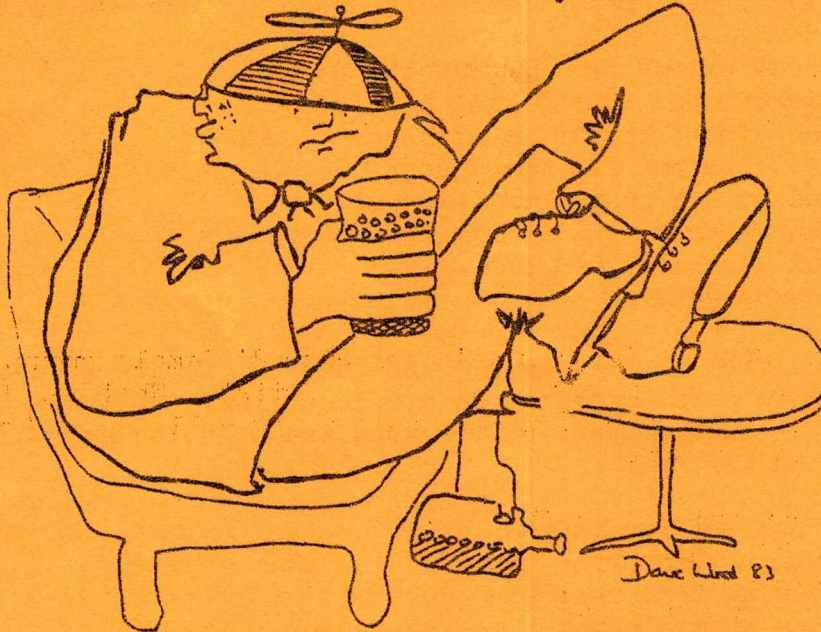
- 16) From the album 'The best of, Vol 1' with an original production date of 1966. I just love this writer's style and flair. Name the group and the song.



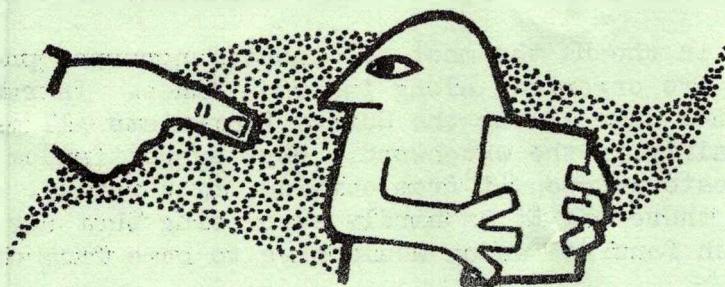
I was down in Savannah,
Eatin' cream and bananas,
When the heat just made me faint.
I begun to get cross-eyed,
I thought I was lost, I
Begun to see things as they ain't.
As the relatives gathered,
To see what's the matter,
The doctor came to was I dyin'.
But the doctor said "Give him Jug Band Music,
It seems to make him feel just fine."

That's it. Answers next ish - if you're very, very good.

I lost my Sense of Wonder when I found out
That the space ship owed much of its charisma
to phallic symbolism



SORRY, WRONG NUMBER



.....BY
SKEL

First off, I think you should all sit down. Also, if you're holding anything breakable then you should put it down somewhere safe. This next bit is going to give you one hell of a shock -- I'm going to quote Ted White..... and the word 'standards' isn't going to come up anywhere. If you've any strong drink on the premises I recommend a stiff belt or two, purely for its anti-shock theraputic value of course. Are you ready?

"The attempts to organize fandom have always foundered on the simple fact that those who want to do the organizing were not people anyone else wanted to be organized by."

Actually Ted was almost certainly wearing some rose-coloured spectacles when he typed that piece. Oh, it's true enough when you look at fandom from the long view, see the big picture, etc. But when you zero in on the detail you see large numbers of fans looking for clubs to join and queues to stand in. Not so much here in Britain, but take a look at the USA.

Ted, of course, was aware of this, as will be evident from this second quote taken from the same source ('The Politics of Fandom' in WARHOON 29). Talking about a fanclub called the Lunarians he says that, back in 1959 or thereabouts:-

"Meetings opened with formal business sessions, with minutes to be read and approved, old business and new business, reports from committees, dues to be collected, the treasury to be reported on, etc."

The thing is, US fandom doesn't seem to have changed one whit. Where-soever two or more fans gather together they immediately charge each other dues, elect each other President and Treasurer/Vice President and submit formal reports to each other about what they've been doing since they saw each other earlier in the afternoon. At least, that's the way it looks from over here.

It may be because so many US fans seem so much younger than their UK counterparts. Ted also asked:-

"What was to be gained by making fandom over into an analogue of the mundane world in which they went to school or worked? Where was the enjoyment in trading one petty bureaucrat for another?"

What indeed? The answer I think lies in the fact that so many US fans are schoolkids, where they are organised whether they like it or not. They see in fandom, particularly in the official clubs, a chance to pretend to be grown-ups. Not only that, but a chance to be a significant part of an organisation. At school they have as much real say in things as a nigger on a plantation, but in the club they take part voluntarily, they pay dues, they

get to vote - on the same basis as everyone else - and sometimes they even get to be *important*. Thus it seems to us that whenever US fans organise themselves into groups they almost invariably do it in the context of a formal club.

By way of contrast here in the UK the most prominent fangroups, prominent that is to a fanzine fan, are organised along informal lines. In ratfandom there was no official King Rat. Among the Surrey Limpwrists all members are equally limp. Informality is the watchword. Why, Gannettfandom even had its 'official' name bestowed upon it from outside, by a ratfan.

Given all the foregoing therefore it is hardly surprising that any real attempt to organise British fanzine fandom would have to come from without....and come it did.

And I ran head first into it.

o-o-o-o



I still like to think of myself as a fannish St. George who strode casually away from the defeated bureaucratic dragon but I suspect the situation was more like where one of Keith Laumer's almost omnipotent war machines, whose attack circuits had malfunctioned for but the briefest instant required for it to target onto a passing gnat, and which had corrected themselves so that the behemoth swept imperiously by with no memory of the incident and thus no knowledge that it had missed.

It came about like this:-

Back in 1970 I first started publishing a fanzine, jointly with Brian Robinson. This was called HELL. "Gosh," you would have said, amazed, if Arnold Akien hadn't spilled the beans last issue. Never trust an arthritic dwarf! The fact is though, as you already know, HELL wasn't the greatest thing since sliced bread. Not surprising really, as the only fanzines we'd seen when we decided to publish it were a couple of copies of Terry Jeeves' ERG. Not the broadest of fannish backgrounds. Now, at that time, Terry was a member of OMPA and so it was only natural that we too joined that organisation. Terry has a lot to answer for, when you really think about it.

Pardon? OMPA? OMPA stood for 'Off-Trails Magazine Publishers Association'. It was an apa, OK? The British apa in fact. So there we were publishing HELL through the offices of OMPA and....pardon? Apa? An apa is an Amateur Press Association. What happens is that lots of faneds get together and form an apa. Then they send a certain number of copies of their fanzine to the OE by a specific deadline. The OE.....alright then, the Official Editor takes these (say)thirty bundles of thirty-one copies of a single zine and mixes them up so that he has thirty-one bundles each of which contain thirty different fanzines, thirty of which he then sends back to the folks who sent them to him in the first place. Why? Bloody Hell! That's an article in itself. Besides, the only bloke who ever really understood WHY was Albert Einstein and even he gave up trying to explain it and moved on to something easier like 'Relativity'. If you must have a reason settle for the fact that it saved on postage.

"Ah, but what happened to the other fucking bundle?" you are doubtless asking. Fans can be such clever-dicks. Dirty-talking clever-dicks at that. Well you can just watch it. This is my article, and I'm not having language like that in one of my articles. I'm sorry, but I must be firm.

"Sorry," you say, ".....but please, oh wise and wonderful one, pray tell us what happened to the other bundle of spiffy little fanzines." Well OK, I'll tell you (see what you can do by being polite?).

The extra bundle went to the 'Principal Keeper of the Printed Books' at the British Museum. He was entitled to a copy of everything published in this country. Copyright law required it. That's how your material got to be copyrighted, by sending a copy to the 'PKotPB'. One had visions of a crotchety old clerk making scratchy entries into a dusty old ledger with a quill pen. You'd get back these Official Receipts, printed in a gothic script, which left you feeling that you'd just won the Hugo. Effectively what it meant was that the British Museum was going to cherish my fanzine for posterity, filing me somewhere between 'Shakespeare' and 'Tennyson'.

Ahh, how the past has chains to bind us. Writing in one of those 'secret' fanzines, the very existence of which must never be hinted at, let alone any mention be made of its name, PIG ON THE WALL, another ex-OMPAn recently wrote:-

"I had a few spare moments in the British Museum, so out of amusement I had them dig out some fanzines: to be precise, the 36th OMPA mailing. It came to me all wrapped up in brown paper and tied with coloured tape. Every fanzine in the bundle was stamped with an impressed British Museum date mark, and every one had the library press-mark carefully written on its cover"

o-o-o-o

The story now moves on to mid-1975. HELL is now a thing of the past, as is my membership of OMPA. I am now publishing INFERNO which was even then in the throes of changing its name, over the course of several issues, to SMALL FRIENDLY DOG. Well, if 'Astounding/Analog' could do it, why shouldn't I? Of course I was still sending a copy to officialdom. However, The Principal Keeper of the Printed Books had been made redundant. Now the copy to establish copyright went to some anonymous clerk at the British Library. Of course it might simply have been a change of title. The zine might have ended up in exactly the same place.....but it didn't feel the same. The cachet had been lost. One now had visions of faceless people keying one into some enormous databank, yawning the while, reducing fannishness to a string of on/off impulses.

Bureaucracy and, dare one hint it, Eurocracy, was poised to strike.

Doubtless to make the filing faster (and eventually the regulating easier) books were given an 'International Standard Book Number'. Then, drunk with power they turned their attention to periodicals. The 'International Standard Serial Number' was the secret weapon which would lead the assault on the anarchy that was the periodical publishing industry. Of course, what they were after were the really big magazines like 'Time', 'Readers Digest' and 'SFR'. The British Library cast its nets wide and, to their amazement, one of the things which turned up in their catch was INFERNO. Nonplussed they passed my name and address onto their heavy mob who proceeded to make me an offer I couldn't refuse. as witness this quote from INFERNO 9 in July 1975:-

"I got a letter from the UK National Serials Data Centre. They want to categorise me, compartmentalise me, file me, cross-file and reference me, and give me a number. They want to know who I am, what I am, and how frequently I



am. Also, how much I am, if at all. I was all set to thwart their bureaucratic schemes when I noticed their reference at the top of their letter - 'our ref:KGB'. I quickly told them all they wanted to know and implicated every other fane I could think of. It seems to have taken the heat off me, because I got another letter telling me:-

'The journal in question, which has been registered under the title Inferno (Stockport), in order to distinguish it from another journal of the same name, has been assigned ISSN 0306-932X.'

I notice that the reference on this last letter is no longer 'KGB'. I think I might write to them though and try to find out something about this other magazine which is otherwise indistinguishable from little ol' friendly dawg here. Then again, maybe it'd be better just to be filed and forgotten. Do I really want to draw their attention to myself once more?"

Little did I know.....

I was now on file.

Listen, there are lots and lots of official organisations out there folks, and they talk to each other. The baffling thing is that with World Population Problems, War on Want, Nuclear Proliferation and, no doubt, The Year of the Gay Whale, they were all talking to each other about INFERNO (STOCKPORT). Soon I was getting letters from seats of learning from all over the civilised world. Toronto too. The nearest I could figure it out was that somebody, presumably the United Nations, had passed a resolution and henceforth any degree issued by any university anywhere in the world would be considered worthless if they didn't have a copy of INFERNO in their libraries. "Send two sample copies," they'd say, "...and bill us." My print run at the time was around 100. There was no way I could help them out, and yet I felt guilty. It was almost as if my refusal to share the bounty of INFERNO with them might in some way be responsible for extinguishing the feeble flame of civilization which flickered in some remote corner of Seattle. Fortunately they all seemed to take it with good grace. I never received any letters, scratched onto a bison's hide with a burnt stick, blaming me for their lapse into savagery. A good job really, as things were getting pretty heavy much closer to home. I received a letter from the enforcer for some of this country's biggest ~~hubs~~ centres of learning. He hit me with the full force of the Copyright Act and to make sure I took him seriously he reprinted sections from the Act on the reverse of his letter. His letter, the sections of the Copyright Act, and my reply to him are quoted pretty much (though not necessarily completely) verbatim from SFD 13 in late-1976.

"G. W. COPP (the agent for the libraries of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, The National Library of Scotland, and the Library of Trinity College Dublin) 7 & 9 Rathbone Street, London.

On behalf of the authorities having control of the above-named libraries, I request you to deliver to me, in compliance with the provisions of the Copyright Act, 1911 (1 & 2 Geo. V, Ch. 46, section 15), as set out below, four copies, one for each library, of the following works (including all parts, if any, which may be subsequently published).

If you consider that any of these works lies outside the terms of the Act, or if you have already supplied direct to the libraries, I shall be obliged if you will return the list, stating on the margin the reason for the exemption.

INFERNO. First issue for 1976., subsequent issues to date and all

future issues as published.

(Previous applications have been made for the above, but the copies have not been received, neither do I appear to have received a reason for their non-delivery. Would you please give this matter your earliest attention.)

RELEVANT SECTION OF THE COPYRIGHT ACT

Section 15 - (1) The publisher of every book published in the United Kingdom shall, within one month after the publication, deliver, at his own expense, a copy of the book to the British Library Board, who shall give a written receipt for it.*

(2) He shall also, if written demand is made before the expiration of twelve months after publication, deliver within one month after receipt of that written demand or, if the demand was made before publication, within one month after publication, to some depot in London named in the demand a copy of the book for, or in accordance with the directions of, the authority having the control of each of the following libraries, namely:

The Bodleian Library, Oxford.

The University Library, Cambridge.

The National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

The Library of Trinity College, Dublin.

In the case of an encyclopaedia, newspaper, review, magazine, or work published in a series of numbers or parts, the written demand may include all numbers or parts of the work which may be subsequently published.

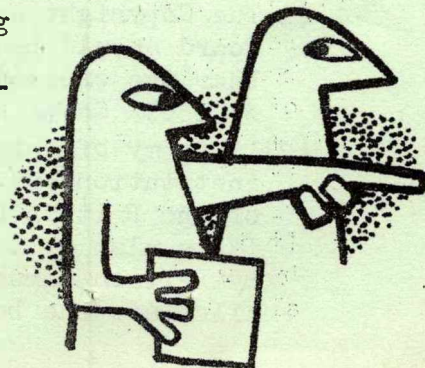
(7) For the purpose of this section, the expression 'book' includes every part or division of a book, pamphlet, sheet of letter-press, sheet of music, map plan, chart or table separately published, but shall not include any second or subsequent edition of a book unless such edition contains additions or alterations either in the letter-press or in the maps, prints, or other engravings belonging thereto.

*Copyright Act, 1911. Section 15-(1) as amended by Section 4 of the British Library Act, 1972."

o-o-o-o

Back in his article in WARHOON 29 Ted White also said :- "Fans resent being organized." Too bloody true! Nail-on-the-head time there folks, and after reading Mr. Copp's letter I was beginning to feel organised, to quote one of my father's colourful but semantically unsound expressions, "from arsehole to breakfast-time". (I still don't like to see language like that in fanzines mind you, but I was always brought up to show respect for my parents).

Now at this time Gerald Lawrence was staying with us for a while, practising the quaint Olde English custom of sponging his way through university. Realising that he had to be good for something I sent him forth with, for him, complex instructions. "Go." I said. "Go to Reference Library. Take xeroxes of the Copyright Act. Bring them back." Within mere weeks he was back, grinning triumphantly. The copyright act now



held no secrets - unfortunately. There were a couple of other sections which seemed to have a bearing on my case (Already it was a 'case' in my mind. I could see myself in the dock, my barrister making moving but futile pleas for leniency whilst the judge looked on, unmoved, from beneath his black silken headgear). These sections were:-

"Section 15 - (4) The copy delivered for the other authorities (than the British Library) mentioned in this section shall be on the paper on which the largest number of copies of the book is printed for sale, and shall be in the like condition as the books prepared for sale."

This condition I deemed to be 'non-existent' as were the copies of INFERNO prepared for sale (thank Christ for that good old fannish 'no subs' policy!). Here I thought was my get-out. At this point I considered myself to be in the same position as when I received his first peremptory demands, which I ignored because I knew of no law that required me to waste time and money entering into a correspondence with someone for their own convenience. However, there was this one other paragraph in the act:-

"Section 15 - (6) If a publisher fails to comply with this section, he shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding five pounds and the value of the book, and the fine shall be paid to the trustees or authority to whom the book ought to have been delivered."

I didn't like that bit, especially the bit about "on summary conviction". My dictionary defines 'summary' as 'Dispensing with details or formalities', and 'done with dispatch'. Hmm, if one of the trivial details and formalities that was dispensed with at my conviction was 'a fair trial' then I would be 'done' with dispatch indeed. Discretion it seemed was indeed the better part of valour. I decided that I'd better drop him a line, explain my position, and hope he'd take a reasonable view of the whole matter. What? Me? Chicken?

Cluck.

I hastily composed the following letter which I will quote absolutely verbatim.

o-o-o-o

Dear Sir or Madam,

With reference to your letters I must advise you that the Copyright Act does not apply in this case because (see Section 15-(4) enclosed) no copies of INFERNO have ever been sold or offered for sale. The circulation was restricted 100% to persons I wished to receive it and no fee whatsoever was involved. I published the magazine entirely as a hobby for a circle of friends and acquaintances, entirely at my own expense. If however you still feel legally entitled to copies of INFERNO I will remit them when certain conditions have been met:-

- (1) The Copyright Act only states that the copy to the British Library Board should be sent at my own expense. You will therefore have to bear the expense involved in getting copies of INFERNO to your office. Cash in advance, naturally.
- (2) It is my official policy that all copies of INFERNO sent either to institutions or their accredited agents, with the sole exception of the British Library Board, be despatched by personal messenger. It is also my policy that this messenger should travel first class by British Airways wherever possible, with suitable companions to alleviate the boredom of travelling. The messenger and companions

would of course have to stay overnight at an expensive London hotel as well as find themselves suitable entertainment whilst engaged on your behalf. Therefore, whilst there is absolutely no charge for INFERNO itself, I must insist on a levy of £200.00 per issue solely to offset my additional distribution expenses incurred in sending your copy.



I no longer publish INFERNO (too many harrassments from official bodies) and so there are only 3 (three) issues involved for 1976. These would of course have to be despatched seperately so as not to place an undue burden on the messenger. I await your instructions (and cheque for £600.00) but must advise you that any further correspondence must be accompanied by an SAE if you require a reply. You already owe me 8½p for this reply.

I remain your most humble and obedient servant,

Paul A. Skelton.

o-o-o-o

I still wonder occasionally about it though. I haven't seen any ISSNs in any fanzines of late, and I don't get any periodicals from the real world. Were they just some brilliant boondoggle or are ISSNs still going strong out there in Readers Digest land? If the latter, are all fanzines now illegal, a true underground press?

Pardon? Oh, what was Mr. Copp's reaction to my letter?

He never did reply, and so I slipped through the net. Oh, I hung around waiting for that cheque but it must have gone astray in the post. It's a shame it didn't work though, because then I'd have waited until the University of Mustique wrote requesting a copy and I'd have made them the same offer. I'd quite cheerfully have spent the rest of my life ferrying copies of SFD to some tropical college.

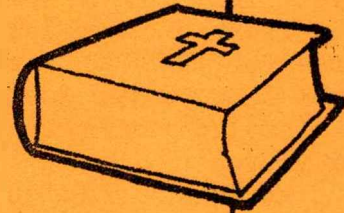
I'd have published a damn sight more issues too, you betcha.

I'M STILL LOOKING FOR THE FLOOR IN ONE OF MY BEDROOMS

I DRAW THE LINE AT WRITING TO A CAT

IF YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN YOU'VE LEARNED TO WALK PROPERLY

A KIND OF IMMORTALITY



Walt
Willis

I never had much time for relatives. I remembered them from my childhood as peculiar strangers wearing black clothes and smelling of camphor, who appeared from nowhere at irregular intervals to exclaim foolishly about how one had grown, as if one had been confidently expected to dwindle and eventually disappear.

The only two who were at all real to me were my great-aunt Martha and her husband Matt, who lived behind a tiny shoe repair shop in the working class district of Ballymacarrett, about half a mile down the road from us. I used to visit them occasionally with messages from my mother and they were always very kind to me. Aunt Martha fed me seed cake and engaged me in tripartite discussions with her canary ("He knows you strange," they would always begin) and my great-uncle would let me watch him repairing shoes with little brass nails he produced mysteriously from his mouth. He never said very much, no doubt on account of the brass nails, but his meticulous craftsmanship spoke for him, as did the fact that when he had finished soling and heeling a pair of shoes he would invariably polish the uppers. For the rest of my life his seemed to me to be the only way to do a job right.

But apart from those two I thought very little of my relatives until a few years ago when my mother died. Then I found among her papers the fly-leaf from the family Bible. Well to be strictly accurate it wasn't the fly-leaf, it was the title page; and it wasn't even a Bible, it was "A Guide to Family Devotions for the Morning and Evening of Every Day in the Year", apparently a Wesleyan Methodist publication. However on the blank side of this title page were duly recorded the births and deaths of all the children of Robert Davidson and Margaret Alexander of Ballymacree, Killinchy, Co. Down, from 1856 to 1873. Deciphering with mild interest the terse entries in faded handwriting I was brought up short by the following:--

Mathew Hall Davidson. Born 1st of February 1870, year of our Lord. Baptised by the Rev. Mr. Cowdy, Wesleyan Minister.
Mathew Hall Davidson. Departed this life Wednesday morning May 3rd 1871 at about 8 o'clock a sweet child and affectionate with Dimples.

That last unexpected phrase impressed me deeply. Here were no dead

dull relatives, but a woman whose love had transcended propriety and a child of such exceptional charm as to evoke this unique entry in the family records.

I began a search for my ancestors among the little green hills and winding roads of mid-Down, a countryside of deep tranquillity which has to my knowledge not changed an iota in 50 years. Eventually in an overgrown graveyard I found a comprehensive headstone indicating that the entire Davidson family had migrated to Belfast, and I even found my grandfather's original house there, on the eve of obliteration by a motorway. But by that time I had begun to realise I had fallen victim to one of the perils that tend to beset science fiction fans.

Why did I feel so let down, I asked myself. What had I really been looking for? The answer was that I had been subconsciously hoping for some sort of time travel experience, an actual encounter of some sort with Margaret Davidson; who with no good reason I believed to be the one who had written the words which so affected me; who I imagined to look a little like Greer Garson, and whom I was already a little in love with.

It was, I realised, exactly the sort of mental quirk which was responsible for the fact that I had no less than 11 radios on my premises, all working. That, I had come recently to realise, was because I was subconsciously convinced that one day I would come across a radio on which I could get Aldebaran, or at least the Jack Benny Show. I had to accept that this was unlikely to be the case, and that I was equally unlikely ever to meet Margaret Alexander Davidson and sympathise with her on the loss of Mathew Hall.

So I folded the old page and put it away carefully. But not before I had read it again and noticed something I had forgotten. This was that another Mathew Hall Davidson had been born, on July 25th 1871. In those days of high infant mortality you didn't waste a perfectly good name: and also I like to think that Margaret was secretly hoping that the sweet child and affectionate with dimples would somehow reappear. Alas he died three days later. But there was yet another attempt, apparently successful. Mathew Hall Davidson Mark III was born on July 13th, 1873, and his was the last entry.

Thinking it all over I made what was to me an important connection. The third Mathew Hall Davidson was of course my great-uncle Matt, the craftsman. Suddenly I felt much happier about the short life of the original Mathew Hall. To have been born three times; to have inspired a love that could leap a century from a line on a page; and to have shown a little boy how to do a job right....that's enough for any Mathew Hall Davidson.



I WOULDN'T KNOW AN IRON MINE FROM A HOLE IN THE GROUND

YOU CANNOT MESMERISE ME -- I'M BRITISH!!

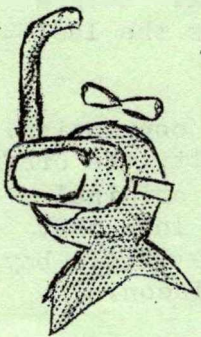


UNCONVENTIONAL

CHRISTINA LAKE

Terry asks me what I would most like to see legalised, and of course the answer is obvious - science-fiction conventions! Those of you old enough like me to remember those glorious celebrations - I was about to say our love for S.F., but as I recall it was never quite like that - will understand. Those glorious, open, legal binges that masqueraded for so long as an innocent penchant for reading about aliens and dressing up in weird costumes, which were finally revealed for what they were by Dave Langford when he sold out to the News of the World.

Just thinking about how different the last Eastercon was makes me sad. I need not mention how great a strain it was pretending to be a party of accountants all weekend, not even able to sit down at the same table for breakfast with people we've known for years for fear of being thought 'abnormal' and rousing suspicion. We all suffered from that. We all had to carefully suppress high spirits, once the prime cathartic element of conventions, as we made our way surreptitiously to that rather excellent bar the committee were running on the 6th. floor (apparently they bribed a porter to smuggle in the booze - not a risk I'd have cared to take, and typical of their irresponsibility, but it seems they got away with it!). The attendance was naturally only a fraction of what it used to be in the old days, partly because of the risks, but also due to another of those tragic fiascos we're so prone to these days. For anyone who hasn't been able to get hold of a fanzine lately, I'll just explain that a certain group of people misread the clues given in FEETRIX* to the location of this year's Eastercon, and ended up in Weston-Super-Mare by mistake, so they were all arrested on suspicion of trying to hold a convention (but let's not dwell on this unpleasant affair - all donations for the defence of the Weston 20 can be sent to Box No. 35, High St., Cricklewood.

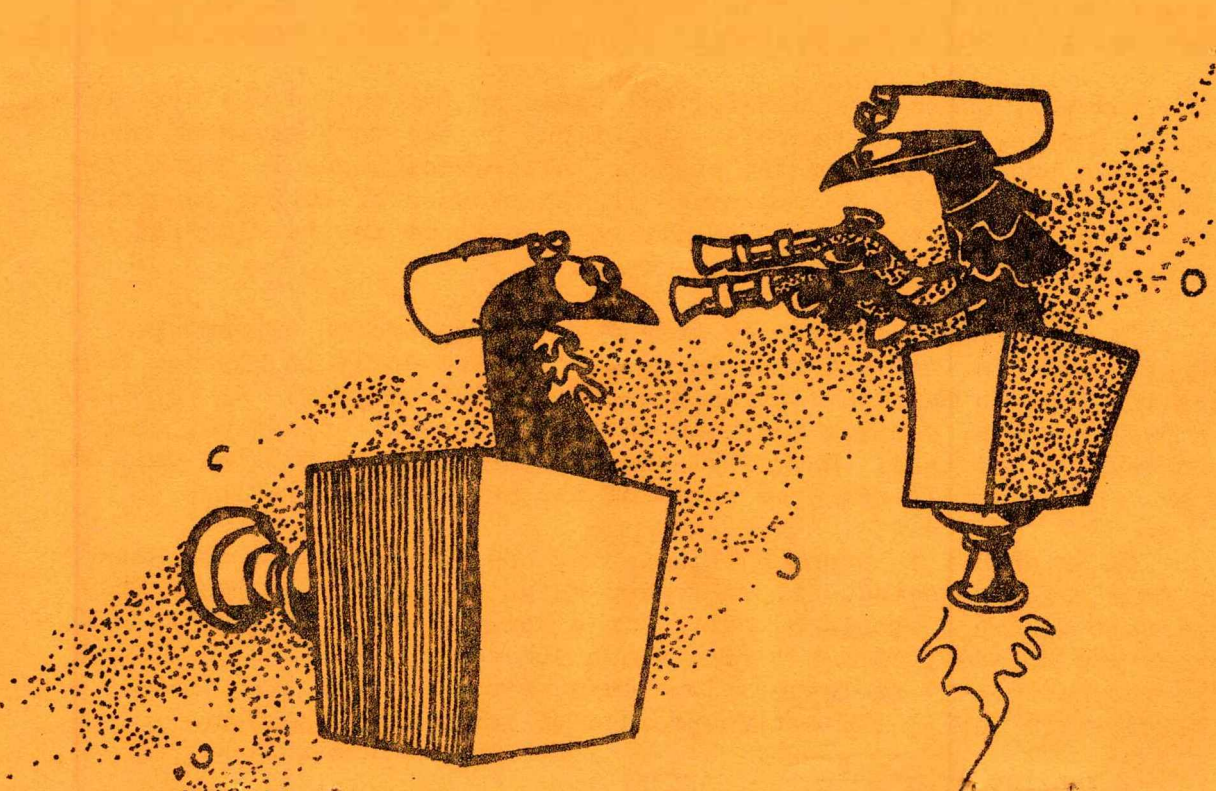
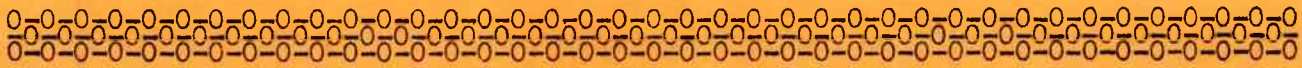


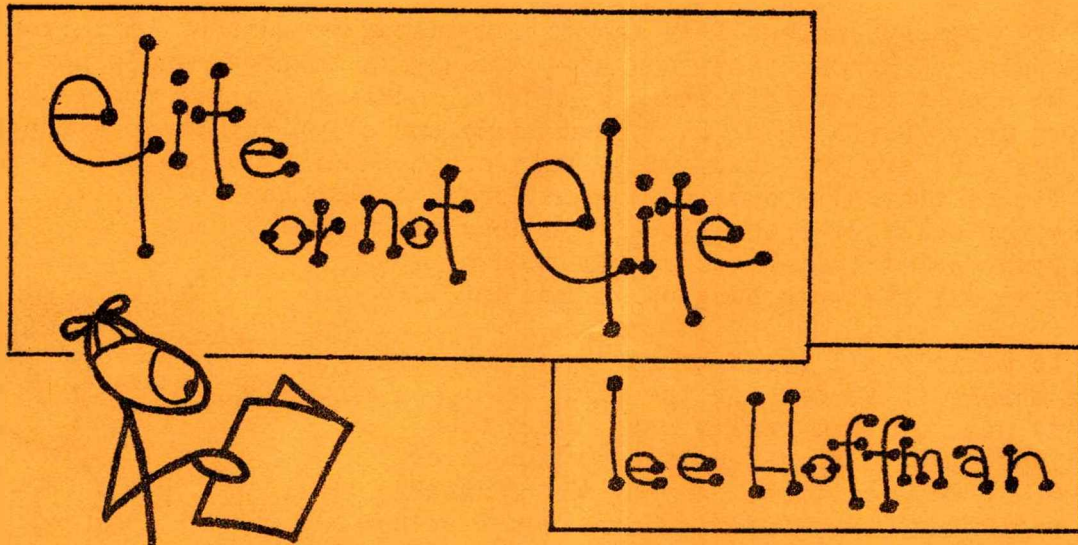
Many people I've spoken to on this subject maintain that the extra excitement of the underground conventions more than compensate for the risks involved. After all, it could be argued, prior to the intervention of Her Majesty's Government, conventions were becoming hopelessly commercialised, attracting all the wrong people and getting to be more and more like bad ITV variety shows. Now it's all fresh and exciting; only the committed come, the

*Official fanzine of the British Slipper Fetishist Association

under-18s are kept out unless they can do convincing accountant imitations and it's a point of honour to attend programme items to prove one's not afraid to be caught flagrantly and blatantly discussing science fiction. So people dress up as Darth Vader in locked rooms and climb out their windows to parade on the fire escapes; they distribute coded fanzines disguised as the Financial Times; they slip down to a sound-proofed basement to laugh hysterically over the latest Bob Shaw talk and they run around substituting science fiction artwork for all the normal pictures hung up in the hotel.

But to me it's all false bravado. I suspect people are mainly in fandom for the thrills nowadays and none of them really care about true fannish values like tearing fanzines to pieces or falling over at room parties. Anyway the midnight raids are beginning to get wearing, the hotel authorities more cunning and the effort of masquerading more trying (one day someone will ask to see my tax codes, I swear). I have this nostalgic longing to sit down quietly with friends in the corner of the bar without being perpetually on guard, forever afraid of the hand on my shoulder, the trip to the nearest police station, exposure and shame (what would the neighbours say!). One day perhaps....





According to Webster's Unabridged, Second Edition, a volume of great weight in literary circles, the word "elite" comes from a Latin word meaning "to choose" and in modern usage means "the choice or more carefully selected part of a group, as a society or profession." Or else, "a size of type for typewriters, equivalent to 10 point."

As my once-eagle-sharp vision has begun to blur, I have come to appreciate why 10 point type should be more carefully selected than, say 12 or 14 point type, but indeed it seems to me that 8 or 6 point type should be even more elite than 10 point. And the old hardrock agate/ruby of $5\frac{1}{2}$ point should never be elite at all. As to 10 point being called 12 pitch on a typewriter and 12 point being called 10 pitch, that's really beside the point.

However, choice and careful selection go far beyond the typewriter. According to Darwin, Elitism (careful selection) is the very basis of evolution that has brought us from the state of blue-green algae to human estate. Even so, we continue to employ it in the process of buying vegetables and automobiles, and to pay a kind of lip service to it in the election of public officials.

In the primordial soup of Eofandom, there were an extremely limited number of fanzines and fans to read them, yet early in recorded fan-history a tendency to fannish elitism began to come into play. As fanzines and fans proliferated, certain factions advocated careful selection, even in the editing of fanzines. They felt that a fan-ed should publish only the "choice or more carefully selected part" of the material available.

In an effort to counter this trend, and to keep their own submissions from being rejected, others formed an anti-elitist faction. They advocated that fanzines should be edited in a totally unbiased manner, with all manuscripts tossed into a hat from which the editor, while blindfolded, would dip enough to fill an issue. Some even advocated that the editor remain blindfolded during the entire process of publishing the zine.

When members of an anti-elitist faction published a fanzine by this method, it proved highly successful and achieved much critical acclaim. The editors, realizing that the very fact of the zine being acclaimed among the best was brought about by elitism on the parts of the readers, withdrew into a large blue communal funk and were never heard from again.

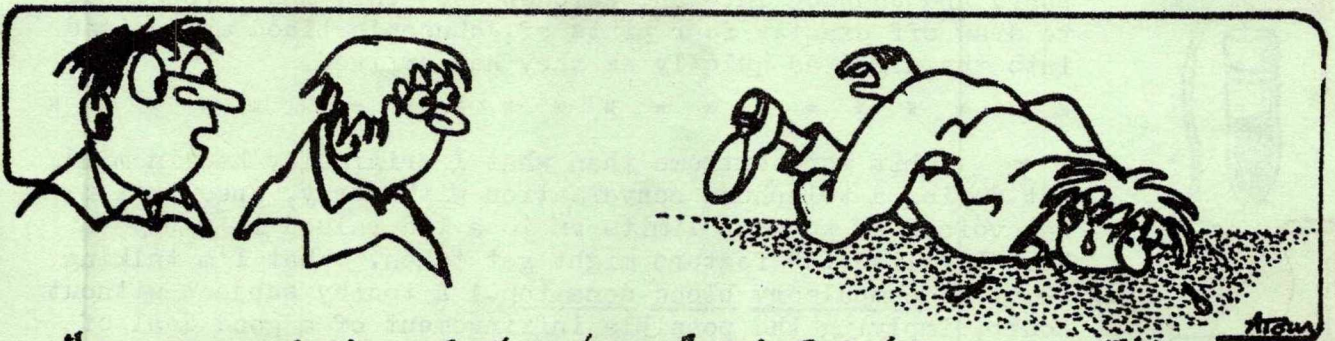
Anti-elitists remaining in fandom suggested that if the readers as well as the editors were blindfolded throughout the entire process, such an unfortunate happening would not recur. Some difficulties occurred during the implementation of such a program and several fans returning from rural mailboxes failed to arrive at their destinations, so eventually the project was abandoned. No further experiments in this line have taken place.



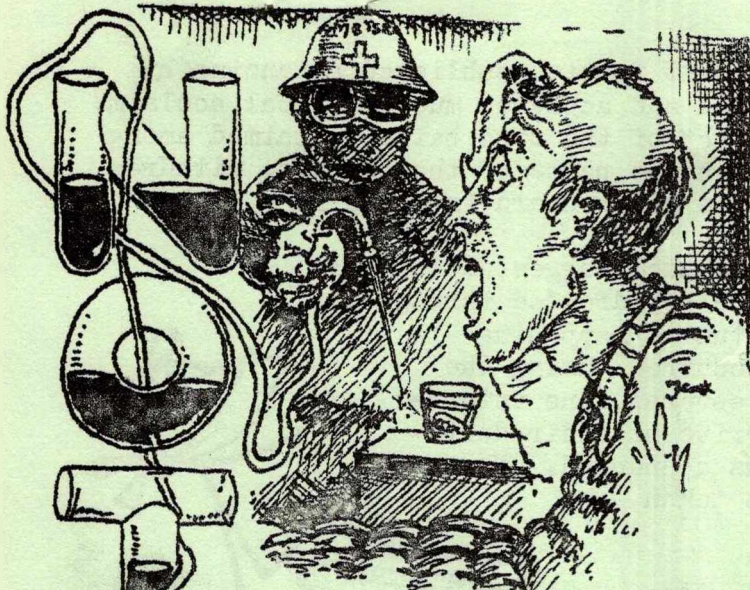
However, some fan editors avoid the stigma of elitism by simply publishing all the material available to them, regardless of quality, and sending their zines out at random, whether or not they receive a show of interest from the recipients. But even this will not guarantee against elitism on the parts of readers. Some readers react by tossing out the unsolicited fanzines unread. Others are so imbued with the spirit of elitism as to write to editors giving suggestions about criteria for making careful selection of material to publish.

In fact, there are some fans who feel that, given the size and complexity and variety of today's fandom, elitism is absolutely essential and that a fan should choose the fanzines he reads, the apas he joins, the conventions he attends, even the individuals he corresponds with every bit as carefully as he selects a head of lettuce in the market.

As to the criteria for one's elitism -- that's another matter.



"Another victim of the Langford Pole!"



DAVE HICKS

Johnson awoke suddenly to find two big shapes moving above him in the early-morning darkness of his bedroom. He reached for the light but one of them beat him to it. Still half-blinded by sleep, he perceived two very powerfully-built men, dressed like something out of the SAS, only with a variety of medical equipment strewn about their persons. One was waving a plastic tube, with a rather vicious-looking needle attached to the end of it, in his direction.

"Arthur Johnson? Resident of this dwelling, namely 76 Spong Road, Croydon?"

inquired one of the men in a clipped, authoritarian accent.

"Y-yes," spluttered Johnson, still only half awake but responding to the commanding tones.

"The Arthur Johnson who recently underwent major pile surgery at St. Vlad Dracul hospital, and required during said operation four pints of standard issue blood, type O (Rh positive)?"

"Yes." He really had no idea what could be going on.

"We've come to get it back."

"What!?!"

They produced identity cards.

"We are officials of the recovery and reclamation department of HM Blood Transfusion Services. It has come to our attention that under Section 2, Subsection 67, Paragraph D of the new 1983 Lifeblood Act, you were not entitled to such red cells, platelets, and antibodies as were infused into your person last January 12. We are therefore here to recover such fluids."

And with that the other man chopped Johnson neatly across the throat, sending his head crashing into the bed board and Johnson into unconsciousness. They then proceeded to draw off exactly four pints of Johnson's blood and exited into the night as quietly as they had arrived.

* * * * *

A bit more extreme than what I originally had in mind, but during a telephone conversation with Terry, speculation was voiced as to what limits an idea I'd raised in reply to his "Legalise It" feature might get taken. What I'm talking about is compulsory blood donation. A touchy subject without doubt, implying the possible infringement of a good deal of personal liberty by a large organ of central government, the NHS, although a lot more so to people who don't currently

donate blood than to those who do.

The only reason that people don't give blood, aside from a medical one, is laziness. It's the easiest thing in the world to put off until tomorrow; I know, it took me nine months of tomorrows to get around to donating blood in a clinic that was no more than fifty feet up the corridor from the laboratory in which I was working at the North London Blood Transfusion Centre.

There's no workable way of dragging people into clinics to extract blood from them if they don't want to go. Also, prosecuting and fining/slapping various court orders upon people not donating, although quite acceptable to me personally, would be absurdly complicated and expensive when you consider the vast numbers of people involved. Nor could you, under any circumstances, deny blood to an injured person who needed it to remain alive (although private medical schemes in other 'free' nations of the Western World mean just that can happen). I believe I have the basis for a workable way of solving this problem. Since what we're dealing with here is laziness, and not anything remotely like criminality, what is required is not any cast-iron form of enforcement, but merely the right incentive.

What I propose is this: anyone who, for no acceptable medical reason, does not donate blood, but at some stage requires it themselves, because of injury or a surgical operation, should be charged the entire cost of providing the blood they receive. An extremely conservative estimate of providing about 500 millilitres of whole blood would be £30. When you get onto special blood products, such as anti-tetanus plasma, or particular clotting agents which can be separated out, the cost of special laboratory staff and equipment, and special storage facilities (some blood products have useful lives of as little as twelve hours), then you're talking about amounts far in excess of that. This would encourage a lot more people to do something about donating blood now instead of next week, and I doubt many people would have to be stung more than once in order for them, when well again, to start donating. The system would be relatively easy to enforce; all blood donors being on a central computer these days, it would be the work of a few moments to check as to whether somebody was or was not a blood donor. The extra paperwork would be fairly minimal, and this could be paid for with the charge for the blood.

Nothing like enough blood is ever donated. While there is enough to prevent anyone ever dying from the lack of it, more blood would help to cut down the long waiting lists most hospitals have for anybody requiring routine surgery. A lot less suffering would occur. I think this scheme, given enough thought by some people with a reasonable amount of grey matter between their ears, would be an effective way of seeing that an extremely stretched blood transfusion service would be able to cope a great deal better.

In the meantime (ie: until I get to be Prime Minister), anybody reading this who isn't a blood donor: please remedy the situation, it's a simple and easy thing to do, and it really doesn't hurt!



For the new reader...and fanhistory buff.

The Goon Defective Agency came into being in the Fannish Fifties. John Berry, a fan living in Belfast, wrote a humorous story of a fannish detective called the 'Goon' who solved cases connected with fandom. John Berry was at this time a detective in the Belfast police force. Arthur Thomson, who did the illos for most of Berry's stories at this period, came up with the idea of a fan detective agency, with the Goon as boss. John agreed, and the G.D.A. was born. Berry and ATom formed the Belfast and London offices. In America, Steve Schulthies, Chick Derry, Dick Ellington, and Greg Benford, (yes, Greg Benford) became GDA operatives. A fanzine, Retribution, was started and featured cases by the above fans. An actual 'live' GDA caper took place at the '57 Worldcon in London. The con chairman announced that the con couldn't be opened because the official gavel had been stolen. It was recovered by the GDA after a shoot-out across the packed con hall, involving GDA agents ATom and Steve Schultheis and gavel stealer James White, as well as members of the audience who got carried away and joined in. Now read on.....



The phone rang. The phone rang? It couldn't have, there it was sitting facing me and there wasn't a quiver coming from it. It rang again. This was crazy, the only other phone was the one away down in the unused GDA office at the other end of Brockham House. Nothing had been ringing down there for twenty years. The bloody thing rang again. It was the GDA phone, faint, but definite.

I walked down the hallway and stared at the cobwebbed door. The faint lettering on the dusty frosted window still read GOON DEFECTIVE AGENCY. LONDON OFFICE. ART THOMPSON. I noticed again, that the sign writer had misspelled my name, as usual...all those years ago. I distinctly remember telling him then that the 'p' was silent, as in Bath. Nobody ever listens.

From behind the door the phone rang again. I cleared away the cobwebs, forced the door open, crossed the dusty room and picked up the phone.

"Duuh", I said. (I've put 'said' there because Chuch Harris has always castigated Berry and myself for forever "growling" "grunting" or "hissing" when typing dialogue. Once he even phoned to tell me to stop hissing in public...it was a bad line and by the time I'd explained that I'd never pissed in public, not even on anyone's shoes, fannish though it was, it had got all too complicated to sort out.)

"Duuh", I said.

"Is that you, Art?" a voice said.

"Yeah", I said.

"Art, it's Walt", the voice said.

"Walt", I said, "your handwriting is atrocious."

"Art, I'm speaking on the phone", said Walt.

"I know", I said, "but I've always wanted to tell you about your handwriting."

Walt Willis never swears. A mild "Bloody Hell" when he goes into the rough maybe. So it must have been a crossed line at that moment with some foulmouth on it. I nearly put the phone down.

"Listen, Arthur", Walter said calmly.

"I've got a job for the GDA."

"The Goon has retired", I said, "He's living in seclusion in Hertfordshire on the proceeds of that last Belfast Capèr ...forget I said that, Walt", I said.

"Never mind the Goon, you're still around and I've got a case for you", he said.

"For me?" I said, my voice rising.

The irate crossed line gent came on again.

"Art", said Walt. "We're worried

Chuch, BoSh, James, and myself have had letters come in purporting to be from Vinç Clarke. Now you know that Vinç stopped fanning over twenty years ago, so they just can't be from him. We think it's a ploy by that fan called Terry Hill who lives in Kent, not far from Vinç. We think he's up to something connected with Vinç, like getting hold of his fanzine collection and all those prozines he has from right back in the thirties. We're sure he has an ulterior motive. Something like that."

I made a mental note to look up 'ulterior motive' in the dictionary as I could....did it mean that Terry Hill had some sort of foreign car?

Walt was still speaking.

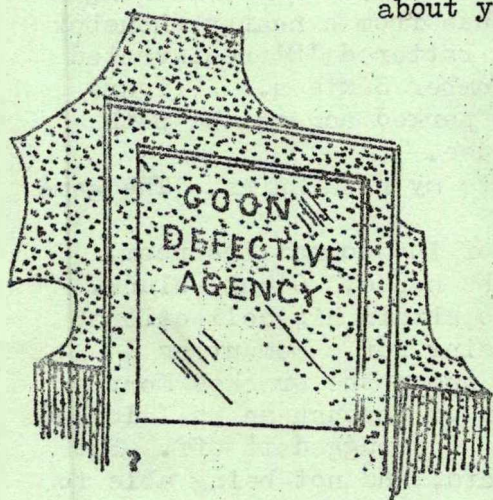
"We want to put the GDA on to the case and find out just what's going on. I don't want to lose the chance of finally getting hold of the April '43 Asf from Vinç to complete my collection. I don't want it vanishing down to Maidstone with the rest of his prozines."

"But Walt", I said, "The GDA hasn't had a case in twenty years...I dunno...."

Walt put on his Walter Alexander Willis Editor of HYPHEN voice.

"Arthur", he said, "AS OF NOW YOU AND THE GDA HAVE BEEN REACTIVATED. CAPISCHE?"

(I do wish he wouldn't use the Gaelic.)



The phone clicked, and I was left staring at the silent receiver. I sat down in the chair, automatically putting my feet up on the desk top in the classic Goon pose. I even started to hiss and grunt, just like the old days.

"Cor", I hissed.

"Reactivated", I grunted.

I got up and went over to the coatstand and tried on the old trenchcoat and battered fedora.

I swung round, in one easy movement pulled the plonker gun from the coat pocket and fired at a spider on the opposite wall. The plonker went straight through the window. Hell!

It was eight hours later. I'd kissed Olive goodbye and tried to calm her down...she'd been hysterical when I came up the hallway with my GDA gear on. I was now parked across the street from 16 Wendover Way, Welling, Kent. The Clarke domicile. There had been a light in a downstairs window since it had got dark, but only one shadow had shown up, so far. I knew something should be happening soon. I'd phoned the Hill house from a nearby phonebox an hour earlier and got no reply. Sure enough, a battered 'P' registered car had coasted silently up and stopped outside Number Sixteen. A figure left the car, climbed over a wrecked Morris Minor parked across the path leading up to the door and vanished inside the house.

I felt that old thrill run up my back and into my neck hairs. The game was on. The caper running.

I could now see two shadows on the curtains of the downstairs room. A peculiar yet somehow familiar sound came from the house. Clunk, clunk. Was Hill beating Clarke to death, torturing him to obtain his collections? I slid quietly out of the car (the horn only sounding for a moment as I brushed the button with my arm), across the road, under the wrecked Morris Minor and up to the front window. I felt a shiver go through me as I looked for a chink in the curtains. Was I going yellow? I shrugged it off. But remembering Walt's stern injunction to get the facts, and not being able to see anything barring vague movement in the room, I decided it had to be the classic Goon showdown...it was the only way.

The noise had stopped; all I could hear now was the sound of people walking to and fro. I slid along the wall and up to the front door. I was sure they hadn't heard the dustbin fall over and roll against the Morris... a minor matter...the door opened easily to the old GDA lockpick...a cunningly bent stylus. Inside the darkened hallway I crouched behind what appeared to be a large litho machine. Whatever was happening in that room, I had to get in and clear up the case; that was the GDA credo.

I eased the plonker gun from my coat. Gripping it in both hands I dropped into the shootout crouch. Three deep hyperventilating breaths, a quick couple of puffs at my cigarette and I was ready.

I screamed the 'Hiaki' cry and threw myself at the door. Just as it opened.

I went right past a burly geezer with a beard who was holding the door open. I skidded across the room, over one mimeo and into two others parked on the floor...I noticed one was set up for green ink...we're trained that way...to notice things. I finished up nose-deep in a pile of duplicating paper and inky slip sheets.

"Hello ATom", said Vinç, "We're just collating the MICROWAVE ANNISH. Have you come to give a hand?"

"Uh, yeah, that's exactly what I've come over for." I said. Rule three in the GDA handbook...don't rock the boat.

"You're just in time", said Terry, "there's only sixty pages to go."

He pulled me to my feet, though why he only used one hand and my coat collar had me thinking. He pushed me into line and the three of us started trudging round the stacks of paper, collating.

"Back fanning, then, Vinç?" I said.

"Yes", he said, "Terry contacted me, got me interested again, and I'm back in the game."

"Still got all your prozines upstairs?" I hissed as Terry trudded round the green ink Gestetmer.

"Sure", he said, "I'd have been fanning a bit more these past years, but I've spent most of the time sorting through the books looking for an April '43 Asf for Walt....I'm sure to find it one day."

I felt great. I could put in a completed report to Walt, and tell him that one day he might even get his Asf from Vinç.

Later that night I arrived back at Brockham House.

"There's been some phonecalls and a couple of letters for you", said Olive, "I made a note of the calls and left them on the GDA desk for you."

I went down the hall and into the office. I threw my hat at the hatrack. It missed, just like always.

I read the phone memos. It was obvious that the word had gone out that the Goon Defective Agency was back in business. The first call had been from Joe Nicholas. He wanted me to find out who was sneaking into his house and playing with his typewriter...every time he went to use the typer, the ribbons were worn out. Next call had come from Greg Pickersgill. Someone had stolen the Gorilla outfit he wore to cons, he wanted it found...he said he wasn't going to let some little F r make a monkey out of him. The letters were interesting. Dave Langford required my services to track down the remaindered copies of some book to do with fighting in the future. The second was from Chris Atkinson. She was being pestered by a malefan in drag, who wanted to join her female Apa. She gave a brief description...small and beautifully marked. I felt I could find the malcontent no bother.

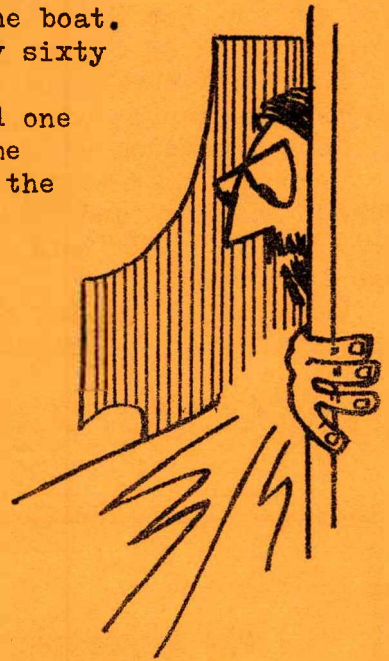
I stuck the old feet up on the desk and blew a smoke ring at a cobweb on the desklamp. Maybe I could recruit a couple of the younger fans to do the tedious legwork for me and pass on to them all the skills and know-how of the Agency...it was good to be an old fan and not retired.

.....

In a small terraced house in Maidstone, Kent, Terry Hill smiled in satisfaction as he gazed at the completed MICROWAVE Annish, and listened again to the tape on which he'd impersonated Walt Willis's voice speaking on the phone to Art Thomson at the GDA London Office.

His Master Plan was working.

He peered at the list of names pinned to the wall...Vinç Clarke, Art



the penal institution and his cell number; it also left out some vital information. But I'll come back to that...

The plan was, on the face of it, simple. I warm up the swapper (did I mention that it's illegal as hell?), animate a warder's body long enough to let Joe out, then retire immediately. Sounds simple, but then most plans do, when you make them.

The machine worked perfectly. I found myself in command of a body that looked like a genuine Persian rug with a bad case of fungal rot, but in my line of business you learn to live with worse. Then I went to look for Joe's cell. I was at a cell marked 88, Joe was in 90. Two doors up and... I found cell 3, one door up from that was 42. Something was wrong here.

A quick rummage through the residual memory of 'my' body gave me the answer. Cell allocation was controlled by Computer Central, each warder tended to his own list of cells. The terminal a few steps away was persuaded to disgorge a print-out covered in what looked like green, hairy mould. I ran one of my eyes over it (literally, this race 'reads' via a tactile sense). My numbers were 50-100, excluding 60-74, 82 and 93. A quick glance (feel?) at the map gave me Joe's cell position in the block--along with the warning that prisoners' cell numbers were re-allocated at 1200. That made me stop and check my residual memory again.

This planetary system has had a lot of trouble with what they call "Jailer/Jailed Syndrome", that is, the development of sympathetic relationships between captive and captor, culminating in extreme cases, in a lot of jailed jailers and a lot of free captives. To put a stop to this, they changed the system. Now, the warders are given a set of cell numbers to watch permanently, the cells are numbered arbitrarily, and the numbers changed regularly. Joe, of course, had given me the number of the cell on the day that he was put into it. Now, only the Computer knows which one that is, and it won't tell a mere warder.

So here I am, pacing slowly down a long corridor, lined with eccentrically numbered doors, wondering to myself...

"Am I my brother's keeper?"



Snotty kid... going on about
how he'd been discussing
Koestler with Dr Stableford...
soon zapped him down... told
him how I knew John Brunner
when he was Gil Hunt!

NONSENSE

and

INSENSIBILITY

The Tender Romantic Reminiscences of a Golden Age Groupie.

MEL

ASWORTH

Have you ever noticed how everything - every damn thing - that has ever happened, is in the past? I guess you'd maybe excuse things for not happening in the future; but, for goodness sake, surely some things could have happened in the present! But no, every damn one of them is in the past, and no amount of demanding a recount does any good. I dare say, in very truth, that I could get used to even that state of affairs - it's just that most of these things, not content with

simply being in the past, are in the distant past, and getting more so all the time. Leeds University is among those things - my Leeds University is, anyway. Thank you and goodbye, Leeds University.

The way I got there was compounded of Life's usual arbitrary bric-a-brac and included a 36" water pipeline, Ken Potter and the Vinland Map (fake that it was, as I always held, it served to find me a place in the Halls of Academe). It was a roundabout way and got me there sixteen years late, but nobody seemed to notice, least of all me. I was living at the time in half of a huge ancient farmhouse in a too-good-to-be-true Dales setting; at night nothing but stars (No, Virginia, not even any satellites in those days), owls and the rushing of the river 200 yards away. (Walking down the vast, precipitous, rock-strewn hillside behind the house I was picked up by the returning farmer in his Landrover. After a minute or two of silence - "'Ave yer motored down 'ere before?" he asked.) I packed in the wild, wicked - or banal and boring, depending on whether you go for Image or Reality - world of Advertising, and went to work on a pipeline around the Dales beauty spot of Bolton Abbey. It was - how you say - somewhat preferable, and I was a fairly happy pauper while I notched up A-levels, chopped firewood and sank homebrew. Once I'd demonstrated my star-begotten Slan mentality and shown that I could distinguish between a 21 foot by 36 inch diameter steel pipe and a Mars Bar, I was rapidly promoted from Clerk to Works Inspector and from a comfy office in the old Bolton Abbey railway station to Ypres-style mud-filled holes on storm-blasted hillsides. And I got an extra £3 a week. My mother was mightily impressed by this astronomic escalation in status, until the day I went to see her straight from work in Wellington boots, donkey jacket and clay-covered eyebrows. "Oooh" she quavered, "I didn't think a Works Inspector dressed like that!"

Comes on the stage - though you wouldn't have knowed it was a stage back then - Ken Potter, wild young Fifties fan, publisher of BRENNSSCHLUSS, husband of Irene (who may have been the finest fan humour writer of all time),

now a leading Literary student at the shining new Lancaster University and, of course, publishing its magazine, CONTINUUM. "Write me a piece on the Vinland Map", Ken (knowing my interest in Icelandic sagas) gritted in his best, silver-tongued, 'if ya wanna stay healthy' style of persuasion. I researched, I laboured, he published. Not longly, but shortly, afterwards, interviewed was I being (whenever you think your readers are getting bored out of their minds and about to defect to the Letter Column, invert the style; they think "Aha, he's made a mistake" and carry on reading, hoping to catch you out) - yes, being interviewed was I, by the Sub-Dean of the Faculty of Arts for a place on the General degree Course at Leeds University (back-door stuff, this. The acceptance level onto the direct English Lit. specialism was about 5%). How did I think I would get on among all those young people? Now there is a certain etiquette about this sort of game, according to which participation in teenage pot-parties is, for some reason, as illegitimate a counter-example as is a recitation of the number of Kama Sutra postures successfully accomplished with a young, nubile, blonde mistress. I got it just right, however. "Well", I ingratiated, "I've got friends from the age of 3 to the age of 80 so I think I'll be OK". Hmm. (This is known as 'Interview Technique', something of which a Principal Lecturer I know regretted his lack when telling me how he had failed a crucial interview when he couldn't answer the very first question they asked him - how old he was.) Well, it was a particularly gruelling course in the First Year (I had to give him truth on this: four distinct areas, in my case English (Language and literature), Philosophy (including Logic), Greek Civilisation, and History (two separate periods) - and one had to pass in all of them. Learning Anglo-Saxon was, I figured out later, a one sixteenth part of the course. Some poor sods actually tried to do it and were never seen again.) - if I was accepted, and then failed to make it at the end of the First Year, and we had 'to part company', no hard feelings eh? Check, bwah. What about interests? Well so-and-so, and so-and-so and so-and-so, and Icelandic sagas. Ah hah! Now this gent, as well as being the Sub-Dean of Arts, was also Reader in Spanish - and anyone and everyone with any Spanish connections has a most deep-seated, heart-wrenchingly personal stake in Big 'C' Columbus - not Eirik the Red - having been the first European to see the Statue of Liberty. Did I know anything about the Vinland Map? W-e-a-l-l-I, a very little, I allowed, settling comfortably into a half-hour disquisition. Glazed, he more or less agreed to accept me on the course on the strength of my fortune on the back of a weight-ticket and never mind the GCEs. One up for the Gulord.

(I trust I am not writing to heathens and that you plainly acknowledge that this incomprehensible Universe we inhabit has the form of a battleground of Cosmic forces, with the Gulord on one side and the Nemesis Critters on the other? The Nemesis Critters jumped me later, usually waiting for a hungover morning when agility levels did not allow sneaking round a corner to get out of the way.)

I was IN. At last I would have access to the Fine Minds who would guide me in solving the many Cosmos-shuddering problems I had brought back with me out of an LSD trip (and Stafford and Golightly published a volume entitled LSD: THE PROBLEM-SOLVING PSYCHEDELIC. Problem-solving! Ha! Reminds me of Ken's Nice One; he kept his acid in a small box left over from his fanning days, labelled "Correcting Fluid". Nice, that.) I was IN. To celebrate, I had my gall-bladder out.

In the interests of complete unvarnished - well, not very varnished - truth, I should also admit that I had knocked on the doors of the Lancaster

Academic Emporium too. Ken had done some sterling groundwork there on my behalf among his many English Department staff friends, with the result that I got the bum's rush before you could say "Wordsworth wets his pants". The actual specific mockers were put upon me by the subsequently well-known Glaswegian Marxist, Doctor David Craig. At my interview he had it set up as a Mutt and Jeff scene - you know, the Soft and Hard cop routine. His subversive 'oppo played the Softie while the good Doctor silently gimletted me for 20 minutes until I let slip the name 'Kafka'. "Whut wud ye say to the idea that Kafka's work can be seen as portrayin' the decay of decadent bourgeois capitalist society?" he crackled. I gulped back the observation that, naive as it may seem, I had always rather associated them with the inhuman bureaucracy of a monolithic communist totalitarianism, and instead decided to zap him with a flash of pure intellect. "Why not?", I snazzed, "As well as a number of other equally valid alternative interpretations." I heard later that he thought I had a 'grasshopper mind' so at least he didn't get it all wrong.

But at Leeds, at least, I was IN. The pace hots up. We are into the late 60s, kidz, and you know what happened then, don't you? Just EVERYTHING. Sergeant Pepper blew the whistle on the Blue Meanies and Lucy bespattered the Sky with Diamonds. And I was there. (It's things like this, you see, that occasionally make me think I must be some sort of Golden Age Groupie - Fifties Fandom, late Sixties Hippiedom, mid Seventies Real Ale scene, etc., etc. Gad, I've lived, I tell ya!) I was talking to a girl in the 'Pack Horse' a couple of years back, a current Leeds University student, and when she found out I'd been there in '67 to '70 her eyes lit up with the wonder of that legendary time: "And everybody had long hair, didn't they?" "Well - some of us still do", I ventured, fingering what was flopping around my shoulders. "Oh, I mean really long hair".

Well, yes, we had long hair, but it didn't happen quite overnight, y'unnerstand. It was a time of long hair and short skirts, and that's a pretty unbeatable combination (though not on me, I hasten to add). But the zeitgeist didn't reach all corners instantaneously, though; Country Boy that I was, it took me a few minutes to realise this. On my first day at University I raced for the Union shop; at last I would have access to all the underground magazines which had been so thin on the ground in Appletreewick. "Have you got International Times?" I queried, bright-eyed. "I don't know, just a minute luv. Doris, have we got the International Edition of The Times?" Almost on bended knees I begged her to forget it.



Well, at least there were the Fine Minds. Baillie, for instance. Five of us students, including Baillie, and a tutor in a ding-dong, free-for-all philosophy seminar; an hour's knock-about argy-bargy on all aspects of Life, the Universe and Everything, opposing views ten-a-penny. Finally, the tutor, desperate to include him: "Well, Mr. Baillie, what do you think?" Silence. "Well - do you agree with what's been said?" A slight flicker - "Oh, yus, I agree wiv it". "Well - er - what do you agree with, Mr. Baillie?" "Oh I agree wiv it all".

Yeah, well, let's be serious, like. It's the really Fine Minds I came here to find. That's going to mean top-line academics, isn't it? I mean, my Logic Professor for instance, what a mind he must have; a student

of Wittgenstein's, acknowledged as the top logician in the country with the possible exception of Arthur Prior at Manchester. If anybody's going to be able to help me over the problem of the transition from the totally inter-linked, ever-shifting latticework of sub-conceptual thought-experience to the cloddish, almost-static process of normal conceptual thought, it will be him. The next night I eagerly follow the talk to the Philosophy Society by an eminent visiting Oxford philosopher and my expectations rise as Question Time comes. Eventually I leave, still dazzled by the subtlety of that final debate between the Don and the Logic Professor: "It is" - "It isn't" - "It is" - "It isn't" - "It is"....

But the Gulord looks after his own. Guides to deep inner-space cosmology and the outer reaches of psychic intellect may be rather few and far-between, but out of His great beneficence he did at least send me somebody to get drunk with. Ken Potter, having wrested a B.A. from a mesmerised Lancaster University, had arrived to put the screws on Leeds for an M.A., and Ken never did have an equal as a body with whom to cry into, over, around and under one's beer about Life ("But WHY, for Christ's sake?"), the Universe (But WHY, for Christ's sake?) and Everything (But - I mean - WHY, for Christ's sake!). All very well for the idle rich like J. Alfred Prufrock to measure out their lives in coffee-spoons; we traced ours - at least as far as the edge of the table - in beer mats.

Betimes to one such Tetley-saturated long afternoon Ken brought with him a fellow-student from his course, a tall, slim girl called Hazel with dark hair down to her waist and the best legs in the world generously displayed by the minutest of mini-skirts - would you believe $10\frac{1}{2}$ "? (Leap forward with me 13 years to the Saturday night at the Brighton Channelcon, when I persuaded (would to God I could remember how!) Hazel - yes, indeed, I give the game away, do I not? - to resurrect and wear her red patent-leather hotpants from those far-off steamy days, and I venture to think that my assessment of her legs may be the one fact in this uncertain world on which Brian Aldiss and John Brunner would actually agree. On such slender matters (!) may rest our only hopes of lasting world peace.) Ex-University Beauty Queen and England finalist (I discovered later) with a B.A. Hons. behind her and an M. Phil. in front of her, as well as several pints of Mild, she turned out to have a raunchy and irreverent sense of humour. Something happened between us that had everything and nothing to do with Life, the Universe and my quest for Fine Minds disappeared into a dusty niche in my lower memory-banks. Fine Minds, I found, anyway, are - idiotic as it seems to say it - where we find them, and a few pages of Alan Watts did more for me than most of the minds I ever met, all lumped together. Hazel, too, dug him with delight, and took to General Semantics and Pogo with avidity. Golden Days in a Golden Daze, with the Gulord beaming benevolently on a few square miles centred on Leeds University.

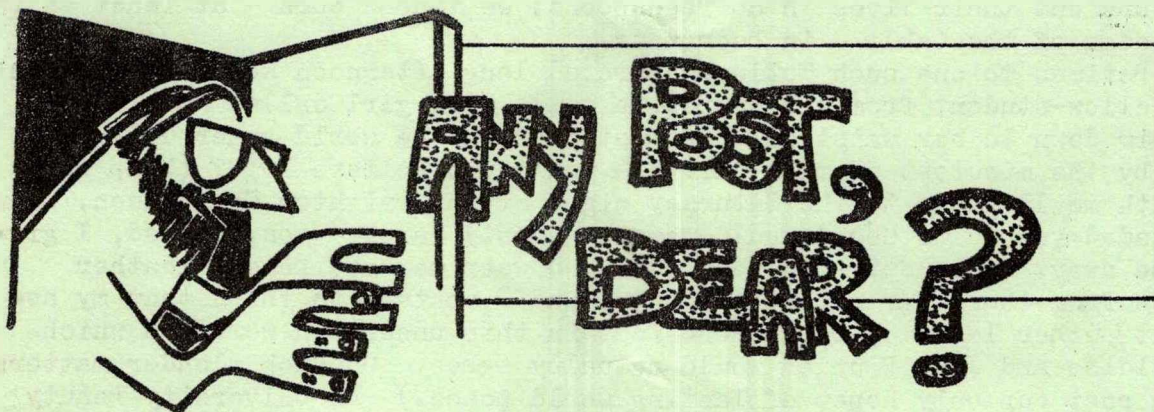
Now if there is one thing that attracts a Nemesis Critter faster than a minnow attracts a pike, it is a Golden Daze - and every rose, they do say, has its thorn. Hazel's thorn happened to be 6' 4" of homicidal husband (I think 'Jaws' in the James Bond Films was his little brother), whose playful habit of wrecking bars, pubs and people - on the days when he wasn't feeling mean, of course - had earned him a certain notoriety, and rapidly earned me the status of a ticking parcel hastily deposited by a gentleman with a Dublin accent. "Oh, we all admire your taste, Malcolm", said a particularly close Philosophy Department friend of mine, "It's just your discretion we're rather worried about" - and he joined the ranks of my close friends who

invariably discovered something of mind-mesmerising enchantment on the far side of the road whenever they saw me coming. Oh, they'd wave in friendly-enough fashion, they just didn't care to put their lives on the line by being seen actually talking to me. So much for your modern philosophers. I bet Socrates would have talked to me.

Breathless, then, you see the cameo. Leeds University and its attendant pubs acting as the stage for a drama of Sophoclean proportions, the whole suffused in a golden haze which is occasionally shot through with bolts of murderous lightning, the human actors playing their allotted parts according to the whim and temporary ascendancy of the Gulord and the Nemesis Critters, sensed, rather than seen, off in the wings, above and beyond the mire of human passions.

Do you ever feel, as I sometimes do, that the finest examples of literary creation are those which don't fill in every detail to give a complete and total picture, but which, like Chinese paintings, rather leave something out in order to engage the reader's imagination in completing it for himself?

Aesthetically so much more satisfying, isn't it?



Okay, my intrepid explorers, if you've made it this far you'll now find yourselves once more on familiar territory. The LoCcol! Like I said before, some of you like it, some of you don't - I'm pleased that to date those in favour outweigh the miserable sods by a considerable factor. And I wouldn't want you to get the idea that the zine is completely without critics though:

DAVID LANGFORD, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5AU.

I envy you one thing, boss. When I was a rising black hole in the fannish firmament and all that, and people sent me mounds of mail saying how wonderful and terrific my fanzine was, I would suffer attacks of modesty and carefully edit this mere praise from the letters. Not so in MICROWAVE! Me, I am less modest now, but unfortunately no one sends me overwhelming praise for my monthly issues of TWLL-DDU any more. The research department is trying to work out why. Perhaps if I hired Saatchi and Saatchi?

((I'm sad to hear that TWLL-DDU has reverted to monthly schedule - I seem to

remember that just before you refused to trade it for this ghastly travesty, it was fortnightly - it seems that, even in fandom, our idols have feet of clay. As for editing out the praise, well, the few critical letters that I've had so far (and there were a few) tended to be less well-written and interesting than the rest. Still, I tried to present a representative balance of opinion (no, I haven't checked back and tallied up 'fors' and 'against's'); in future, though, I will try to whittle out more of the mere praise (but don't let that stop you saying nice things if you want to - I like it - I just might not print that bit, okay?), and concentrate more on the really pithy, poignant and relevant ~~ramblings~~ points that only the cream of fandom's letterhacks could produce.→

CHUCH HARRIS, 32 Lake Crescent, Daventry, Northants.

In Chatham High Street, (when I was in the Navy) there used to be a little nautical museum full of scrimshaw, Turk's Heads, figureheads and a mermaid in a bottle. I was - to say the least - sceptical, but the time-served Petty Officer in charge of our mess swore in all seriousness that he had seen 3 mermaids during his time at sea, and I'd pause before I called him a liar. No, not manatees. -- he'd seen shoals of bleeding manatees in the Caribbean. Two off of Madeira, and one off Jamaica....all within sight of land. All blonde. The Caribbean one?...you think she'd be brown.... no, blonde.

"Don't laugh at me, Lofts," (I'm 6'3" and everyone from the First Sealord downwards called me 'Lofty') "College boys don't know everything. You remember at school you sang a song about mermaids?"

One Friday morn, when we set sail
And our ship not far from land
And we did espy a fair pretty maid
With a comb and a glass in her hand.....
And the raging seas did roar,
And the stormy winds did blow
Whilst we jolly sailor boys were
Up and up aloft, whilst the landlubbers
lying down below.....

That ain't a song, Lofts; that's a lesson."

He ignored the incredulous looks and went on, "Serious; long before they started handing out seamanship manuals with the first round hat, they could only teach anything by repetition, - like the two-times table - and the easiest way was to sing to them. You've taught them it's a terrible thing to sail on a Friday (even now we avoid it if we can): that mermaids are coastal creatures and harbingers of storms; and, most of all, if you're a jolly jack tar you get up and reef and haul instead of puking your guts out below."

"You mean that bloody thing's a mermaid then?"

"No, that's a dead monkey stitched into a codfish tail...but off Madeira...."

However did we get into that? (Incidentally, BoSH - and this is quite true - spent his formative years speculating if the glass was full of Guinness or some inferior booze,....but then, he would, wouldn't he?)

I wonder if there's enough material for a series....NUANCES AND SEXUAL EXPLICITNESS IN THE ENGLISH SEA SHANTY....Next thrilling issue: "Blow the map down."

I can't really understand those people who dislike letter columns. Any worthwhile fmz is like a good meal. After the more substantial courses you inevitably toy with the fruits and nuts before zizzing in the armchair. So, I'll try to be concise(!!)(Hi, Vinc), I won't write in red ink (do you have a phobia about bank managers?), and I'll appreciate any help from Margaret with the old spelling (but just who was "Heilline" in Arnie Akien's letter?) ((Arnold was making an oblique reference to Robert ~~Wid~~ Heinlein's political leanings - Heil-line, geddit? I thought it was quite good....for Arnold.))

First, old mate Terry Jeeves. Trufan extraordinary! Star-begotten and loyal. What the bloody hell does he mean "Our Voting System Stinks!" Our voting system is 'One man, one vote'. This works admirably throughout the whole of the civilised world and the larger part of Sheffield. Whilst we will nod respectfully if he is thinking about proportional representation, is there something else to replace the outmoded stench in the Jeevesian paradise? Double votes for paid up N3F members and a Privy council (and I use the term advisedly) of the BSFA?

Joy Hibbert is always a pleasure to read - sure-footed, sensible and informed. I agree that most firms discriminate - and I'm not altogether sure that this is always a bad thing. Altho' most big firms ask for a photograph and ethnic origin of job applicants they need these details to implement quotas under the Equal Opportunities Act.

Or so they say - in practice they tend to prefer young white married men with a family and a big mortgage, and a good attendance record in their last job. People who use the photocopy machines illegally or try to slip crafty envelopes into the postal franking machine needn't bother to apply, so sit down Vinc.

Acherley, I'm a bit worried about 'Ol' Vonc. We were exchanging weekly letters until Christmas. Then, full of festive joy and cameraderie, I said I would pop down to visit him and borrow his new fmz goodies like the Harry Warner opus.

Instant silence.

"Perhaps," I thought, "he's having problems with the fatted calf or the pennants. Perhaps the neighbours thought the CHUCH IS COMING AGAIN banner was filthy or, worse still, wishful thinking. Letter tomorrow, maybe."

No letter. No word. Silence - and I'm now beginning to think the bugger is fortifying the front room and digging a moat around the property.

If you see him, tell him there is nothing to fear. I will give him a receipt for all I take....just like the receipts on all the empty shelves I cleared years ago.

Back to Joy Hibbert.... The sect that aren't allowed to join a Union - or anything else for that matter - are the Plymouth Brethrenbut never imagine they are an asset to any workforce. They are spiritual paupers, worshipping a God that hates them, comforted only by the fact that they will see us burn. They are alone, aloof, and devoid of team spirit or that love of humankind that distinguishes Quakers, Atheists International, and members of 6th Fandom, and I can't imagine anything more disruptive to an office, a shop floor, or a well-run wheelk stall.

And whatever has upset Harry Warner that he wants to leave us after all these years and spend eternity in heaven? No way - Harry will be right



there with the rest of us where the ink clogs, the self-feed jams, and none of the typewriters ever have "I" keys.

And, if you peer through the smoke, there's 4e Ackerman in the corner signing up Asmodeus for Monster Fandom. "I've been an atheist since I was 15, and don't believe in you for one minute....but a deal is a deal."

((Are you sure that you mean what you say about Joy, Chuck - I've always found her ability to take anything seriously one of the chuckle-raising things about her letters. You'll be telling me next that you like the German sense of humour!))

((There were a couple of late LoCs on No. 3 Here's one of them))
MARC ORTLIEB, P.O. Box 46, Marden, S.A. 5070, Australia.

This issue is one of the funniest zines I've seen in a long while. However funny fanzines are rather difficult to LoC, though I must say that the Bit about Stable Manure did have me laughing out loud. Incontinent Ballistic Missile strikes me as an ideal name for a fanzine. ((Dunno, if you sent it to any C.N.D. members they might think it was propoganda and chuck it out before they'd read the title properly))

Lace making huh? The only example I can think of is the beaver in Carroll's 'The Hunting of the Snark', but, having said that, there's not really much to add to it. I'm sure that someone with the putridity of Marty Cantor would have something unsavoury to say about beaver lace, but, being a decent British fanzine, I'm sure that you'd have nothing to do with such comments.

With all due respect to Steven Green, there are pedantic fanzine critics who try to force silly restrictions of fanzines. Ted White, for instance, has a thing about fanzines printed on A4 paper, claiming that they are not as good as those on quarto, or on American quarto. ((I wouldn't say they're not as good. Personally, I prefer quarto or $\frac{1}{2}$ foolscap (MICROWAVE would be $\frac{1}{2}$ f/cap if it wasn't so much more work), and feel that zines on A4 are a little clumsy to handle. Zines that stick to A4 and white paper (worse still, no illos) always seem a little boring, but that's just my aesthetic preference - not a complete condemnation of such.))

With regards to Eric Bentcliffe, while I will agree that Mimeo is my favourite means for duplicating fanzines, I feel that it is a mistake to complacently assume that there is no possibility of improving on it. Indeed, the mention of a rice paperfanzine printed with edible ink gave me a wonderful idea. What about a fanzine which when placed in water, dissolved into a first-class bheer - chauvinistically I'd be tempted to say Carlton Draft, but I'd be willing to accept Lowenbrau as a compromise. That way we could eliminate these elitist types who insist on collecting fanzines, as, unless hermetically sealed, the water vapour in the air would eventually dissolve the zine; and the rest of us would receive double pleasure from good zines, and even a crudzine wouldn't be a total loss.

TOM TAYLOR, 268 Tottington Road, Harwood, Bolton. BL2 4DN

'Legalise it' is a common shout from my otherwise silent lips. The only political view to which I fully subscribe is that Government should be confined to those things which only Government can do, and that is very little. As Government increases its control over our lives (and MT has not rolled back the borders of Government in the slightest), we are all more likely to be in breach of the regulations, making criminals out of us all. The police have more laws to enforce and it is hardly surprising that they

become unpopular and there is obstruction.

I trust you realise you are in breach of copyright for printing the lyrics of the baby song without permission! ((Copyright! I don't send this to the British Library mob, so if you've read Skel's piece, you know I could be in trouble over that. Anyway, what's a slight infringement of Copyright between friends?)) This is indeed a worthy song, with sentiments very like my own, and should act to focus attention on one of the most misinterpreted of political philosophers, Swift.

- 1) There are too many people in the world.
- 2) The best ones to get rid of, using the most efficient utilisation of resources, are babies.
- 3) The most efficient use of the excess is human consumption.

The only problem is how to decide which babies to eat. The natural way to develop the race is by applying active selection: about 98% of conceptions are, I believe, aborted or killed before maturity, so the fairest way is to increase this percentage by maximising natural selection. I do not fancy any appointed official deciding who is to survive, this must be done objectively and on sound ecological grounds (by which I mean the individual should be best-suited to the environment, without restricting the gene pool). Here we have two opposed aims, maximising the gene pool without creating over-divergence and non-adaptation, and the optimum solution must be a trade-off between these two.

Mythology states that the Spartans used to put children on a rock so that only the strongest survived. This will dispose of sub-standard babies in an objective manner; once the standards are set, all babies, from whatever source, should be subjected to the test. However, if only one test is used we are in fact breeding for ability to pass one test which will again restrict the gene pool. A better solution would be to have a series of different tests, from which the baby must pass one or more, chosen at random.

Implementation of these ideas would remove the fear of overpopulation and that of the rapid breeding of unsuitable stocks, and would ensure that only those sufficiently fit to contribute to society rather than being a drain would be given the opportunity to survive.

The policy is an admirable one and should be introduced into this country as soon as possible. ((What if they back-date it and decide to eat you retroactively?))

ETHEL LINDSAY, 69 Barry Road, Carnoustie, Angus. DD7 7QQ

....a little about the first Edinburgh SF Convention. One of the things that struck me as nice was to find so many Glasgow fans helping out with innumerable chores. In the "outside" world there is a sort of mock-rivalry between the two cities; and it was good to see that this was not to be the case in fandom. The first convention put on by a group is always the hardest but Edinburgh had been lucky in getting Harry Harrison as GoH as he really put himself out on their behalf so helping to make the convention a success. It was the smallest con I've been to in years and it brought back happy memories of the days when I knew just about everyone there. It certainly makes for a friendlier convention when numbers are in the hundreds instead of the hundreds.



One fan who had travelled from London was Gerry Webb. He gave a talk on WILL WE GET TO THE STARS AND HOW WILL WE GET THERE? Some of it was a bit technical for me but the ship he postulated seemed something like Clarke's RAMA. The part that really amused me was when he said that the first people to go would be the "nutters". He gave as an example - America. First people there were on the East coast but the "nutters" kept heading West which, he said, explained why California was full of "nutters"! ((Extend that argument a bit more and the 'nutters' end up in Japan. (Ultimately they end up back where they started) Could be right though, the Japs do open their day with a session of bracing calisthenics at the crack of dawn before starting work!))

LAWRENCE DEAN, 12 Wilmslow Ave., Sharples, Bolton, Lancs. BL1 7AX

I see you have a middle initial, as first intimated by the recumbent letter J in your monogram on No. 1's cover. Some of the people I know get very embarrassed when asked about their middle names. What's yours, Terry? ((Thank you, I'll have a cider.)) (I trust it isn't 'Jeeves'!)

I'm glad to see that, after a temporary aberration in issue 3, the interlineations have returned in force. I was afraid that they were fast becoming, like the manatees, an endangered species. Is Lee Hoffman trying to start up another of those animal fandoms? I hope not. A strong case is argued for the removal from protected status of all real estate agents.

You obviously wanted to stir things up with the lyrics to "A Modest Proposal", and you might get more than you bargained for from the vegetarian lobby. You said yourself in an interlineation, "Never put anything wider than your elbow in your ear." Let's hope you haven't put your foot in it. ((Very few of the readers made any comment on that piece, which only proves Marg wrong - some of you can recognise bait when you see it.))

Sid Birchby introduced, in his Phoenix Burning column, the concept of the Alternative Convention for invited members only. I see this as a good idea, even though I know that I myself would be exempted from invitation to such an event. You wanna know WHY I like the idea? Well, Terry, I realise the life of a dedicated fan revolves, of necessity, around fanzines and conventions (plus one or two other things I've omitted to mention). Now, what you and Vin have done is bring back into fandom a good number of older generation fen (and we are glad to have them back) who find the thought of such large conventions as we have nowadays rather daunting. Add to this the number of fen - some of who have turned pro, like BoSH - who have stuck around fandom in the meantime, and who perhaps look longingly back to the cosy, one-big-happy-family atmosphere that cons used to have in the '50s, and you have a lot of dissatisfied customers.

Okay, if I thought that holding such an event would tend to lure all the older con-goers away from attending the cons I get to, I wouldn't agree with Sid's suggestion AT ALL. However, I don't believe that this would happen, as the only ones we'd really be missing would be those who, like Sid, haven't started going to cons again anyway. The rest would (I Hope) simply add this one to their con calendar. And perhaps Sid might then go on from there to attending other "smaller" cons, like BECCON. ((The only con that I even might be attending in '83 - and then only as a day trip. This is a public service announcement for all those who asked)) Which is why I think Reunicon (or the 'Class of '53', or whatever) is a good idea.

The major problem one forseees is where do you draw the line when choosing who you're going to invite? But that's surely a problem for other people to worry about, not me.

DAVE ROWLEY, 11 Rutland St., Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire. ST1 5JG.

....will the fannish kidney exert its influence over your brother? Will we be subjected to MICROWAVE Mark II? ((Ah, yes, 'the body remembers' - now who said that?))

As for the piece at the top of 6 - disgusting, - whatever is wrong with rat tart? By the way, how much are bullwhips and black satin sheets? If the whips cost too much, and if you attend NovaCon, it would be in your interest to visit a shoeshop near the Grand Hotel on Colmore Row. Besides shoes and shoelaces it also sells riding crops. So get along to NovaCon and have a 'cracking' good time (comment from Joy - you can usually get whips fairly cheap by mail order from one of the advertisers in SADIE STERN magazine).

How about a real estate agent cull? I don't normally approve of this, but exceptions can be made for the good of the environment.

Sid - have you never heard of Silicon? Not the element, but a fannish invitation-only con held in Newcastle-upon-Tyne over the August Bank Holiday weekend.

'It's all in the mind' - you ain't kidding! Although I find steam engines fill me with a sense of *sigh*, I found I was bored to tears by our local museum (BBC 1982 Museum of the Year Award). Stoke-on-Trent must boast (if that's the right word) the widest collection of ceramic ware, due to the area being known as 'The Potteries'. I HATE bloody pots and cups. Familiarity certainly did breed contempt for me there! There are also almost obligatory Natural History and Industrial Archaeology sections too (comment from Joy - knowing how few of the Roaches Wallabies there are left, I hope the stuffed one in the Natural History section died naturally. They only put it there to confuse the tourists anyway). When you've seen one you've seen them all.

Unfortunately I can't find anything to say about the local, so I'll skip to the bacover which leaves me with - have you ever attended a con? Even one at Brighton? Or is your preference for the other major bid (I'm not aware of any other) purely due to Brighton being on your doorstep? By the way, what is Southgate in Eightyeight? ((Ask Rick Sneary (If you find him tell me where))

HARRY WARNER, JR., 423 Summit Ave., Hagerstown, Maryland, 21740. U.S.A.

The fourth MICROWAVE is one of those fanzines which a reader is reluctant to open up, because the front cover is so superlative that everything else threatens to be an anticlimax, sight unseen. Now I'm glad I don't discourage easily and went ahead and looked at the remainder of the pages.

Except, of course, the ominous material on page two about your brother's problem and your generosity's impact on yourself. I hope everything went well, in whatever way it went, if you've already donated the kidney. Most MICROWAVE readers won't have the same special thought that came to me when I read that page: how far into the future we've gone. Any fanzine which published an item about a kidney transplant when I was a neofan was publishing a piece of fan fiction, not a portion of an editorial. And when you've been in fandom for forty years or so, what non-fiction material in the latest issue of someone's fanzine will cause you to marvel and think how it could only have been published in that despised fan fiction back in the early 1980s?



A brand new fanzine article by Lee Hoffman is a thing to be cherished, read and re-read. This one in particular, though, has touched off severe confusion in my memory areas. I've been trying frantically to remember something I should be able to recall about manatees and can't. Was there a famous fantasy story in which a manatee appeared as a main character or was mentioned in the title? Or am I thinking about some famous poem or other? Somewhere, somewhen, I read something about manatees that stuck in my mind but didn't give me the knowledge of the creatures which this article provides. Just while typing this paragraph, I began to wonder if I'm thinking of an old folksong with a sea setting. ((The only title I can think of is 'To Save Hugh Manatee', but what it's the title of....))

Sid Birchby's little paragraphs were also thought-provoking. FISTFA is the best "short punchy acronym" in fandom known to me, but it isn't a fanzine title. Nosfann doesn't sound to me much like a villain in *The Magic Flute*. The baddest male in that opera is Monostatos, and to the best of my knowledge, the female villain's name doesn't appear in the libretto, which describes her only as the Queen of the Night, whose German equivalent isn't similar to Nosfann. Maybe Sid was thinking about Nosferatu, the title character in one of the first movies about vampires.

Forry Ackerman croggled me with that attribution to me of "mad mundane mass". At first I couldn't think what he was referring to, even though the phrase sounded sort of familiar. But now I think I must have used those three words in one of the "poems" I wrote to introduce each edition of Bob Tucker's yearbooks back in either World War One or World War Two (I can't be bothered about remembering minor details like that). Each of my contributions was a fannish parody on some famous poem or other by a real poet. Maybe "mad mundane mass" survived unchanged from the poem I was transforming or maybe I created it. ((Oh well, perhaps Forry knows what he was talking about. Do you, Forry?))

ELDA WHEELER, 197 Merton Road, Bearsted, Kent.

I think everybody's covered what I'd like to say except: legalise euthanasia. People who want to be put down if they go senile or receive serious brain damage should carry a card saying so, like organ donors. I can see that this might cause problems with greedy or self-centred relatives but if a person has deteriorated to a state of cabbage-like existence it won't make any difference to the victim if they are alive or dead. The same should also apply to handicapped babies, (that sounds vague, it would have to be decided what actually constitutes badly handicapped) if the Mother decides the baby should be destroyed that is up to her; after all she's the one who will have to spend her life looking after it. ((This is one thing that has recently worried me about 'whooping cough vaccine'. The 'official' line is, do it, since the chances of your kid becoming a semi-sentient lump of protoplasm are very small. If that was backed up with a guarantee that if your child was brain-damaged they'd look after it for the rest of its natural, perhaps more parents would believe their claims and have their children vaccinated.))

I can't think of anything pleasant I'd like legalised except, perhaps, cannabis because I can't see that it's any worse than tobacco. That's not saying I think tobacco should be legal but anything like that should be left up to individual choice, like wearing a seat-belt. ((If a sub-clause was inserted into the seatbelt law to say that people who were involved in accidents while not wearing their seatbelts were to only have treated the injuries that they would have received had they been wearing them, I might

agree. One side-effect of the seat-belt law is that there are fewer 'stiffs' available for transplant purposes - but if a greater percentage of people carried donor cards.....)) The Government should mind it's own business and not introduce more laws interfering with our civil liberties. What I was going to say before I got side-tracked was that I agree with Niall totally, particularly his views on victimless crimes. The trouble with this society is that it cares more about property than lives.

Onto another subject. A suggestion for Vin. He should take his car along to the local Boro' Council's transport Dept. and there they will give it a totally unbiased MOT at no extra cost, and if he flashes his legs at the tester, like wot I do, they might not even charge him if the gar fails!

What a sensible suggestion by Jonathan King! But how do we decide which babies to keep and which to eat?

Do we eat the babies of the unemployed coz they can't afford to keep them? It would give the families on the dole a profitable side-line in breeding for personal gain. I like that idea! We could wipe out unemployment overnight by offering the unemployed a wage for breeding like rabbits, and it would placate animal activists. We could let all the cows etc. free and live entirely on babies! Great, how soon is the law passed?

I shan't say much about the Harry Turner piece coz you already know I think it's fantastic, but what I'd like to know is if it's only ruins and such that leave him feeling non-committal, or does nature leave him cold as well? The reason

I ask is that I get the feeling he must never have visited such places as Dartmoor (not the prison) or the Highlands of Scotland.

To visit these places gives exactly the same feelings as visiting places of history, particularly pre-historic sites. The utter strangeness and weight of history contained in isolated and/or ancient places wipes out our modern lives totally. There is nothing on Earth to compare with sitting out in the middle of Dartmoor in the drizzling rain, with nothing in sight but squat watchful rocks. I wouldn't suggest this as a sensible pastime for manic depressives - the body would never be found - but if you really want to be at one with nature and understand why witchcraft still flourishes, Dartmoor is the place to go.

One last word about M4, please think up some more of your own puns and discard such feeble attempts as the story by Dave Rowley; your faithful readership expects better from you!

MARC ORTLIEB, still in the same place.

....I do feel that there should be a law against such pieces as Sid Birchby's. In two pages, he runs the outlines for five different articles, each of which could have run to five or six pages. That is not a bad thing in itself, but it makes life difficult for the rest of us. I, for instance, had been considering writing a five or six page article on fanzine names, but, if I were to do so now, people would just sneer and say "That's all very well, but Sid Birchby did it first in MICROWAVE 4" It's something you bloody British keep doing. I mean, look at H.G. Wells. He writes a series of hack novels, each touching on what is bound to become a classic theme in science fiction, and then every author who writes a novel on the same theme is branded by the "Wells, of course, covered this in....." ((I think the idea of

such short little pieces is to spark of trains of thought in those who can write six-page articles. Go on, write your article, submit it to MICROWAVE if you like. I mean, just because someone else made a wheel first doesn't stop Fords putting them on their cars.))

Lee Hoffman's piece was most enjoyable to read. For some reason, I've always had a soft spot for animals which seem evolutionary dead-ends, and the manatee certainly seems to fit my criteria. True, it's not quite as fascinating as a peripatus, or a platypus, but it would be sad to have mermaids, no matter how ugly they may seem to the majority of people, disappear from this planet just because a few idiots in ski boats want to escape from their mundane lives. It's times like this when I'm almost tempted to agree with Ray Bradbury's evaluation of progress. (Mind you, the thought of the creatures congregating by the hot water outlets from nuclear reactors is rather mind-boggling. It's certainly not something I've ever encountered mention of in those pro-nuclear arguments. Perhaps someone should pass the info on to Jerry Pournelle.)

I'm afraid that Dave Rowley telegraphed the end of his Feghoot early in the piece. For a moment, I thought it was going to be a little more clever, as the story seemed to end at the bottom of page 17, without giving the punchline, but then I turned the page, and there it was, staring me in the face. It does, though, lead to an interesting speculation. What if someone was to write a Feghoot which did deliberately leave out the anticipated punchline.... ((There'd probably be more dead Feghoot-writers than there are at present.))

Being an ex-apahack, who has now cut down from six apas a day to three, I feel much healthier for it. I do miss the things though. For me an apa is one of the best ways to keep in contact with a particular group of people whom one doesn't see regularly. Thus Stipple-apa kept me in contact with a number of Minneapolis fans, with whom I've lost touch since dropping out. Similarly, TAPA kept me in touch with Toronto fandom.

I think the best kind of apa, for me, is a local area apa. I enjoy being the token Australian in such an apa, and it gives me an insight into different ways of fanning. True, apas do promote sloppy writing, and may have contributed to a decline in fanzine fandom, but they have merits too. Apas act as letter substitutes, and many of them are regular. There are few monthly fanzines which manage to keep to their correct schedules.

As to why I dropped three of my apas, well, SPINOFF dropped out from under me, and I dropped TAPA and STIPPLE because the cost of airmailing material to and from the U.S. was getting more than a little ridiculous. My philosophy on apas is that I like to get as close as possible to hitting every mailing. If one doesn't do that, then one is missing out on a lot. It's rather like trying to participate in a conversation while only listening to one in every three sentences.

Arnold Akien certainly makes a good point when he talks about the unrealistic expectations of fanzines. This seems to me to be my main point of contention when it comes to reading pieces by Ted White on what fanzines should be. Personally I've found very few fanzines which have been total write-offs. I prefer to look for the good points in zines than to trash them. I'll admit that there have been one or two over the last five or six years that have been totally abysmal, but generally my faith in zines has been rewarded by some good point or other, i.e. I've gained something from almost every fanzine I've read. I pity the super-critical. They miss out on this. If you go into a zine expecting it to be shit, then that's what you come out with. Fine, if you are the sort of person who enjoys digging out shit, but if you're not.....

TERRY JEEVES, 230 Bannerdale Road, Sheffield S11 9FE.

With regard to Lee Hoffman's piece on manatees...well, for openers, I haven't a clue what a manatee might be...but if Real Estate agents outnumber manatees in Florida...the simple answer is to train manatees to be real estate agents...then they will proliferate.

Agree (page 12) that Cons are too big and impersonal these days.... and also agree with the back page that I'm sick to the stomach with Brighton-Cons. No...I've never been to one...it costs too damn much...Train fare around £25 plus hotel, food and drink...and you're through £120 BEFORE you start to spend...and what twit thinks Brighton is convenient to get to for anyone North of London anyway??? Roll on the old, small Kettering con...where fans had their own huckster tables to sell mags, models, brooches, plaques, fanzines, etc. etc....along the sides of the Con hall...so they could enjoy items and still keep watch on their goodies. ((My (personal) argument against Brighton is that it's too close to make taking a room a necessity and too far away to make day trips an economical alternative.))

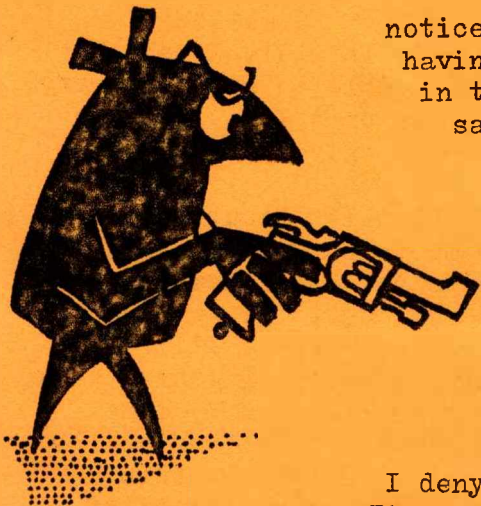
Ogod...what have I started...just read Pastime...and that ending...ooh...luvverly, but I can see that you are determined to carry the torch of Feghootism. ((Terry was the only reader who was impressed with Dave's piece, so be warned. If you are thinking of sending in a 'Feghoot' for MICROWAVE, it'd better be good. Signing it G. Briarton is no guarantee of acceptance, either.))

MARTYN TAYLOR, Flat 2, 17 Hutchinson Square, Douglas, Isle of Man.

Glad the MATRIX column is serving some sort of purpose not altogether removed from my intentions - i.e. to encourage folks to get their grubby little paws on zines whatever I might happen to think of them (or not think, if you believe Lisa Tuttle!). The notion of an 'authoritative' review in any context is a trifle flakey (now ther's a novelty... er, sorry, but I've just been put on a low cholesterol diet and I've got chocolate on the brain. It should scrape off quite easily when it dries.) ((Dried Brain - now that sounds appetising!)) and when applied to anything quite so determinedly, bloody-mindedly idiosyncratic, as a fanzine loses any semblance of reality it ever had in the first place. Anyway, where is the fun in K'ing TF? Why bother? The time would be better spent rolling your own, so to speak.

One of the principal reasons why I've given my notice on the MATRIX job is that I've found myself having less and less time to LoC anyone and, as I say in this latest column, I'd need to LoC every zine to say what I have to say. The restrictions of the format of the column (determined by myself, I hurriedly add) is that most of the comments turn out cryptic. Or should I say 'enigmatic'? No, I don't think I should say 'enigmatic'. According to my Collins (I can't afford the Oxford, sniff sniff) an enigma is '...a person, thing, or situation that is mysterious, puzzling or ambiguous;'. Come on, with my figure I could never be mysterious, and as for puzzling and ambiguous, I

I deny it! ((You're not - your reviews however.....)) It came apart in my hands, officer. Honest. What I



thought I was saying was that anyone who wanted a triffically fannish zine that wasn't about to exert too much strain on the old grey matter needed to look no further than MICROWAVE, and if it wasn't exactly my cup of tea, what the hell? I drink coffee most of the time anyway!

As for MICROWAVE 4, what I said about 3 goes in spades. The artwork goes on getting better and the words sink into an undifferentiated morass. every time someone seems to be getting their verbal act in gear, they stop; and as for the LoCool...sorry, boss, but it didn't make sense to me, and the lack of sense wasn't even inspired madness. Exempt Lee Hoffman from the previous sentences.

I'm trying to LoC all the zines as they come in, even if it is only with something as mysterious, puzzling and ambiguous as this. Keep up the good work, Squire. After all, who cares what I think? Not me, that's for sure!

NIALL McARTHUR ROBERTSON, 47 Collingwood St., Barnhill, Dundee. DD5 2UF

I recently returned from my first Con (at 29!) in Edinburgh and can say that I enjoyed myself despite some difficulty in getting the hang of what was going on. Luckily, I was with the Dundee group and/or Ethel Lindsay (geographically, my fannish neighbour) who's the perfect guide in all things fannish. Harry Harrison was a great GoH and kept pulling the programme along when it sagged due to inexperience. I kept bumping into old friends and might easily have made some new ones. There were a few absolute pains around, but you get them everywhere the booze flows. But what really got me was a seminar of the 'we are the fannish elite' variety, with Alan Dorey and pals doing their utmost to appear absurdly pompous. It turns out that the BSFA is fandom, which consists mostly of getting pissed with an elite few at Cons, and producing the occasional zine, which would then be passed around among the cognoscenti to see if it comes up to scratch. I made an incoherent 'let's face it KTF writing always was crap you're taking yourselves far too seriously let's face it fandom is just a goddam hobby' speech and got some hard looks. ((Slagging off the BSFA is a pointless pastime. They ignore it and persist in believing that they are fandom and everything else is a pale imitation of the real thing. You could try talking to multi-storey car-parks.))

JOY HIBBERT, 11 Rutland St., Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire. ST1 5JG

Ted Tubb's "Legalise It" - prostitution is not illegal. The setting up of the bargain, i.e. soliciting, is illegal, but the actual act is not. Living off other people's immoral earnings is also illegal. So you get this ridiculous situation where women are punished not for prostitution (which you could make out a case against) but for the setting up of an arrangement, something most of us do every day or so.

Ted White - there has been some relaxation of laws over there as you say, but I understand things are going backwards now, and I understand that even oral sex is illegal in many states. ((They won't even let you talk about it?!!!!))

To a certain extent I agree with Harry Warner, but I do like the occasional drink, and prohibition would be one of the things that many people would agree with as long as it only applied to everyone else. One good reason for legalising pot is that then there would be less need for alcohol. This next point may just be attributable to the people who use the different substances, but I've never heard of stoned people getting into a fight like I've heard of drunk people getting into fights; indeed I've heard of a few men who

go out for a drink and to look for a fight on Saturday nights deliberately. Unfortunately, on the one occasion I took pot, I suffered a severe attack of claustrophobia, which made me unable to stay inside, even in a room with no-one else. Hopefully, that was only caused by the other circumstances, but it will probably make me wary of trying it again.

Women are expected to be housekeepers, producers of supplementary income, masturbatory machines, yespeople, producers of future workers and breeders and now this man suggests that we produce food as well? What happened to all these improvements in women's situation? From the practical viewpoint, I assume that eating babies would produce the same problems as eating other dead animals - to produce 1 pound of meat, you have to feed it (or its mother) on twenty-one pounds of plants. In this case this would be made worse, since most meat animals are herbivores, but this is an omnivore, and would thus be eating stuff that had previously had twenty pounds of food wasted on it. Since I have refrained from eating dead animals for the past 9 years, ((NO! Not while they're still warm and wriggling, surely!)) I'm open to correction on the next point, which is that babies have too much fat and too little muscle to accord with the third verse. And of course, since men share the blame at least equally and probably more for the excess production of babies, and since they generally have more muscle and less fat than either babies or women, I suggest that they would be a better source of nutrition.

I see that Green is one of these people that demands that APAs have only one purpose - the one he thinks they should have. He doesn't seem to consider that an APA could have many purposes - somewhere for special interest groups to talk to each other is the one that immediately springs to mind. His abuse of friendly APAs - 'cosy little backwater in which to cultivate in-jokes and an air of elitism', could be directed equally well at such sf groups as Solihull. I suspect that Steve's dislike of friendly (rather than critical) APAs is currently being exaggerated by the way he feels threatened because he can't join the British women's APA.

Far be it from me to take any man's side against any woman (within reason) but it seems to me that if Margaret didn't mind you printing 'The Internal Triangle' which implies that she is being cuckolded in her own house, she shouldn't object to you writing about the things that you did before you met her (presumably). Come on, stand up for yourself.

Terry J - no-one said the electoral system was perfect, and if they did, it wasn't me! All I said was that even though you have very little influence over who gets in, you should use it anyway.

I'd like to make a correction to Dave's letter. He reports that I 'scampered' downstairs. This is of course a load of crap. Since I am unable to leave the post lying next to the door, but must immediately go and see what it is, and since I'm not the sort to be bright and breezy in the morning, it would be more accurate to state that I 'staggered' downstairs. "Either I'm a creep or very boring" - let's have a vote. ((o.k. All those for creep.... ..1,242.....boring.....1,242. There. Hang about....someone put their hand up twice....We'll have to have a recount. Creep.....1,2,3,4,5,.....))

I'm not one to criticise artwork, but with all due respect to John Cook, I'd like to suggest that the cartoon on page 22, while capturing the decor of the Royal Angus perfectly, is a less than accurate representation of Kevin K. Rattan. ((Neither John nor I have met Kevin so John sort of guessed - he did better with Pamela Boal as you will see later.))

Some people do go in for kinky religions. The rest of us just carry on being kinky without the need to rationalise it. Perhaps you should tell

Arnold that you did have a female contributor - until you rejected my article. Liked Arnold's letter.

'Sex at 8, while it's still safe.' I know it doesn't rhyme.

BOB SHAW, 2/L 244 West Princes St., Kelvinbridge, Glasgow. G4 9DP

Well. I love the repro. The notion of two colour stencil fanzines is an old and oft-respected goal. I think that the hand of veerryy oooldd timer Vin/ should be here suspected... ((And a very old duplicator - the green run was done on a Gestetner No. 6....how many of them do you know that are still running?))



Nevertheless, the presentation of your zine is, I'd suggest (being a mere neo of a 70's fan), quite up to the best 50's typographical and repro standards. The simple question remains: is a 1980's fanzine actually required to ape the old and muvverly past to that degree? I think not, and would suggest that a more modern (and personal) style would be a good idea. ((I'm not trying to ape 50's zines. True, in part MICROWAVE resembles some aspects of some of the 50's zines, but there was no mutually accepted format for zines then, any more than there is now))

Don't get me wrong - the few 50's fanzines in my collection are well-nigh the most honoured aspects of that august assemblage, BUT I do doubt the sense of an 80's fan attempting to recreate his elders' style....

Even so, I liked thish. However, the odd vaphorisms from the Editor fail to make the mark; whilst in general a good idea, I do think that before slagging modern fanzine fandom you should make sure that you're a part of it....((Where'd I do dat, boss?))

The best part of thish (much like your mentor's,) is the lettercol. You've managed to attract a remarkable and quite disparate audience, and ranging from the merest neo to the darkest old-timer. Damn good, says I!

The individual letters are hardly great, but what the hell; I'm glad to see they're all alive and I sure as hell hope they all continue reading your zine....

ARTHUR THOMSON, 17 Brockham House, Brockham Drive, London. SW2 3RU

So alright, when do I get to meet Elda Wheeler?

To specifics. Magnetronics...your piece about your brother was absorbing. This type of informative yet personal comment is the nub of fanzine writing. Surely the best thing in the issue.

LeeH's piece about the manatees seeking out the nuclear hot water seemed a bit fishy...until up on tv came a nature programme featuring that very thing. But then animals aren't balmy. You've only got to look at cats that are out on a cold night; they'll go and sit under a recently-parked car... where the exhaust and engine are still hot. Why, there's stories of cats that have crawled right up into the engine for warmth, and then got carried for miles when the car has driven off next morning. I don't know about fish... I haven't heard of any actually doing that.

I took my jeweller's lupe to Harry Turner's heading illo, just in case he'd drawn in any subtle pieces....I particularly liked the little creature with the curly ears that appeared to be brown-nosing the guy with the neck-lace. (Oh, you've gone to look)

'Any Post, Dear?' Surely the best thing in the issue. That Niall

Robertson...grab him for a regular...he can write. ((And will. Regretfully his piece came in too late for inclusion this time, but he'll be among the line-up for No. 6 or 7)) Ted Tubb's sage comments on what makes a fanzine are heartily endorsed from here. Vin's letter was lovely....'arch villain' indeed, beautiful. Surely the best thing in the issue.

Harry's cover illo. Nice. The only I might have is the juxtaposition of the front part of the sword and the beings genital region. (Oh, you've gone to look)

So there. I'd say that with this issue you are starting to achieve the style of fanzine that MICROWAVE will be....a blend of all the right ingredients to give pace, interest, and enjoyment. Also, to my mind, an important part of any good fanzine....a definite editorial personality throughout the magazine.

So c'mon, when do I get to meet Elda?

((Since writing this letter, Arthur has met Elda Wheeler. Unfortunately, I made the mistake of leaving them alone together for a couple of hours. When Arthur's wife rang me to tell me he was in coronary care, I knew I'd done a Bad Thing. He's now making a good recovery and seems much his old self again. He's on an Elda-free diet though.))

W. GIBSON, 3180 W. 3rd Ave., Vancouver, B.C., V6K 1N3, Canada.

Lee Hoffman neglected to mention the manatee's fab mode of dentition, a kind of wisdom-tooth overdrive, in which heavy-duty molars are continually erupting at the rear of the jaw, gradually moving forward and wearing down to nubs, then dropping out. I'm in some envy of this, as my own rear molars recently had to be rebuilt with all-too-precious metal (not to mention labor). ((William tells me that he nearly always hits the WAHF column. That's skewed his batting average.))

TED TUBB, 67 Houston Road, London. SE23 2RL

The letters tend to be too sickly, like those in the back of the Radio Times. To me it seems the BBC has a corps of writers all issued with 'acceptable' superlatives, all primed as what to say about which programme needs the most bolstering. So we get rave letters about crud all apparently written by the author, the director, the producer or relevant friends. Or I could be wrong - the Beeb could just send out wads of form-letters with the appropriate blank spaces; - "I really must write to tell you how much I enjoyed..... A truly satisfying work of genius equalled only by.....on your other channel. My gratitude and humble thanks to you for having given me such wonderful enjoyment etc., etc., etc."

The odd thing is that most of these letters of praise seem to have been written before the damned programme has been screened - or has the BBC a special post and production facility?

Anyway, praise can be a killer, like applause. Not that there is much of that around and too many owe too much to too few - laugh-records, I mean, it's getting so I can almost pick out the cackle-artists. Take your average comic. He comes on the screen to the sound of riotous laughter. He turns -more shrieks of mirth. He sits - hysteria. He opens his mouth - and waits for the laughter to die before he says something. What doesn't matter - a friendly hand on the control has already blasted the air with maniacal glee.



Of course they tell us that the giggles are genuine and all comes from a studio audience. True, at times we do see a studio audience - But when Yarwood does his face-to-face multiple impersonations what the hell is the audience looking at? And what the hell are they laughing at? Moving cameras? Backdrops? Double projections?

In any case, when a sitcom is shown - what is there to laugh at anyway?

It has been said, by me if no one else, that singers make bad actors. Maybe. But actors can make good singers. Apparently good and we're back on the box again. With the equipment they use they don't have to be able to sing. A monkey could do as good, what with mime, synthetic noises and all the rest of it. Look at some of the groups and try to figure out what, if anything, they are playing. Moving their fingers over strings, yes. gyrating certainly, opening mouths and snarling, sure - but actually doing anything to produce words and music?

The laugh-record again with a slight difference. All we see is phoney - or why isn't it live?

Like politicians. Robots who mouth platitudes and are programmed never, ever, to admit the truth. Does lead cause harm to children, sir?

"Well, the whole thing must be kept in perspective...."

What is the perspective of a mother with a brain-damaged child? A new-made widow? An orphan? Doesn't it matter if only one half of one percent get killed on the roads or by muggers or by carelessness or big business making a fast buck? Or doctors with a yearn to experiment? Or a boy-wonder fresh from university with a brand new job - courtesy of Dad and his influential friends - and who is itching to play with his new toys?

People who've got what every power-hungry bastard wants to get - authority without responsibility.

The prize at the top of the tree.

Doesn't Swift's song prove it?

A joke, sure, we all know that - but what kind of humour finds eating babies funny? But those who do laugh have the power to change it - 'We'll pass a law etc.,'

More laws. More regulations. People now have less personal freedom than they did a couple of decades ago. Those growing up will have even less. Democracy? A joke -but, after all, we must keep things in perspective. At home, anyway - but it's all right to shriek 'unfair' when other governments do exactly what ours does. 'Perspective' stops at Dover.

MAT COWARD, 7 Arkwright Road, London. NW3.

It's not just Indian doctors. Not just doctors for that matter. When I moved to London from the West Vinglun a few years ago I found it extremely difficult to understand London barmen - especially as most of them were Scottish. The chip shops are all Greek, and everybody else is from North England. I can't understand a word any of them say. The last time I went back West I got on a bus and told the conductor my destination. "Grtferdhfyrt" he quipped. I ended up giving him a pound note, and suffering nasty looks and mumbles for that, because I had no idea how much money he actually wanted from me. Do you find your "Sorry?" limit alters with the situation? The nasty-looking tattooed Greek in the chip shop I only ask once. Then I just give him a quid and hope it's enough. Golden Rule: NEVER look at the cash register to find out the price. They think you're checking up on them. V. Dangerous. ((Not just non-Brits either, you can get some very funny looks from British shopkeepers if they catch you looking at the till

readout. -T. But I always look - those cashiers at Tesco's get tired by 6.30 p.m. you know -M.))

Legalising victimless crimes is a bit difficult innit? Supposing there's this drug called Splodge which gets you pretty high but also kills you a lot. Taking this currently illegal funtab is a victimless crime, so legalise it. But what about the geezer that sells it knowing it is nice, but fatal? This is a victimful crime. You can't legalise Splodge and then say it's illegal to sell it cos that's silly. Zo we find zat all crime is interdependent. There is an answer of course - nationalise all such substances under workers control. Then the supplier will be the State and, since all Government is a crime anyway, we'll be all right. On Niall Robertson's point about objecting to being arrested being another reason for the police to suspect you: did you see that PUNCH cover recently which showed the huge fiery dragon guarding the entrance to its cave, and the knight saying to it, "If you've got nothing to hide, why won't you let us inspect your cave?". I think smoking tobacco should be legalised. At time of typing, this is a bit premature, but the way things are going, by the time you publish this, it may not be.

MAL ASHWORTH, 16 Rockville Drive, Embsay, Skipton, North Yorks.

My rubber stamp should be ready in time for your next issue; the one saying "MICROWAVE is terrific - even better than lasttime, though I don't see how you do it" That's rather a lot of words to get on a rubber stamp so they will have to be so small that you won't be able to read them, which is why I'm telling you now what they say - so that when, next time, you get a letter of comment consisting of just an indecipherable black blob you won't be tempted to think it is just an indecipherable black blob and drop me from your mailing list. OK? ((I would have just assumed that blind Pugh had taken out a sub.))

The fact is Walt was right (Good God, what a ludicrous tautology! Of course Walt was right! I mean, he's Walt isn't he? WILLIS! How could he possibly be wrong? How could he even conceivably be wrong? I mean, it isn't even possible to imagine any parallel fannish universe in which anyone could even conceive of Walt Willis ever being anything but right. And every other eulogistic word to be found in Roget. A friend of mine once said to me of the Delta Blues Singer Robert Johnson, "Hell I'd even buy an LP of Robert

Johnson blowing his nose". Well, it's like that with Walt. You know how people used to rifle Dylan's dustbin for souvenirs

('My friend, that fly you see flying around this very room - I never open the windows, of course, and have double airlock-style doors to keep it from escaping - grew from a maggot that once ate a piece of chicken that Bob Dylan threw away! How about that, huh?) Well, like I say, it's like that with Walt Willis. Do you know that True Collectors have been known to kill just to get hold of one of his shopping lists? No note outside the Willis household saying 'Two pints today please' lasts for more than five seconds and there are bruised and mangled bodies strewn all down the road in the wake of the successful collector who manages to get away with it.

In fact people spend whole winters training on the North Face of the Eiger and the terraces at Manchester United just for that one event. Did you know that a fan who wishes to remain anony-



mous is bringing out a facsimile reprint of all those bits of paper which Walt has used over the last thirty years to wipe the ink off the end of his ballpen? So - I ask again - how could he ever be anything but right?) (That little bit is in case you include D. West on your mailing list). ((I don't, but maybe one of his friends(?) will ~~read~~ show it to him.))

As I was saying - Walt is right. You're going to have to stop publishing about Issue No. 6 unless you find some way to halt this exponential expansion of excellence. If you like I could name a few fan-writers who may be able to help you there.

Truth to tell, my own suspicion is that there will be no problem since I don't think you'll make it beyond this Annish. You young fans just don't know about all the hidden snags in a thing like that, the reefs and shoals upon which many a promising fanzine has foundered (which is why I always delayed publication a year or two beyond when the Annish was due). I mean, look at this publication of yours. This is where it's going to show its true colours. Certainly you have shown all the right fannish instincts up to now. There isn't one of us who doesn't have high hopes of you - and yet - one little slip - and Pfui! It may just be some oversight - like failing to include a Playboy-style centre page foldout of Elda Wheeler for instance - and we shall all sink back with a susurrus of sighs - "He put up a good show for a while, but the fakefan showed through in the end". So if you want my Mature Counsel (thank you Niall McA. Robertson; I have added your name to the mailing list for ROT No. 6, despite the expense of producing five copies instead of four), you will get cracking on that Centrefold and the hell with the rest of the magazine. ((You're right, I've failed you. The truth is we were going to include a 3-D centrefold of Elda and supply little red/green glasses with each issue - but we couldn't get a 3-D lens with enough depth of field. Sorry.))

(Mention of Elda makes me think that maybe I have been Born Again into Fandom at the right time after all. I always did feel that faneds should have a Divine Right to the sort of gratuitous grace that runs - or rather, slinks seductively - through THE PERFUMED GARDEN, but it never happened. The most that ever came my way was Ron Bennett - and of all the many descriptions I have at various times been tempted to apply to Ron, 'Kouri' was never one.)

Anyway, I'm determined to do my bit to ensure that you retain a sense of balance. I'm gonna quit being surprised at the scintillating galaxy of All-Time Greats you keep flashing nonchalantly at us innocent readers from your coruscating Contents list - Lee Hoffman, Harry Turner, Sid Birchby, etc. Not to mention the Letter Column. Go ahead, I don't care; I'm not even taking any notice. Phooey anyway; it's all been done before. Us Born Again Fifties Fans have seen everything, everything I tell you. Why, I remember one issue of NIRVANA which....But, no - Ken Bulmer would never forgive me; that tiny select band of us on that particular mailing list have been sworn to lifetime secrecy. I could find a few crucial, gilt-edged pages missing from my next issue just for having mentioned its name in public.

I have another technique to handle this hubris of yours anyway. It seems to me that what you need is a Challenge; it's all been too easy for you up to now. So, say, Terry, what fandom needs right now is a joint piece by Don Wollheim and Sam Moskowitz on "Fun and Friendship in New York Fandom"; think you can manage it, huh? ((You got their addresses?)) It would also be nice if you could get Gertrude M. Carr to write about her years as a Grateful Dead Groupie; and we have waited far too long to read F. Towner Laney on "The Technique of the Limp Wristed Handshake". Then you could get Bob Bloch on

ice, Bob Shaw on the wagon, Burbee on.....How about it, huh? Of course I don't expect to see them all in the next ish; relax a bit - take a couple issues over it, huh? Heh,heh.

Howsomediver, Lee on Manatees and Real Estate Agents (and why did no one ever think of the combination before; so obvious once you've had it brought to your attention, isn't it?) was lovely. I always did think that bit about them being the origin of the mermaid legend (manatees, that is, not Real Estate Agents - though they're probably the origin of all those shark legends) was pretty fishy - unless the sailors knew some really rough women in those days! (I dunno, though - I could take you to a couple of pubs in Colne where the women would drive you into the flippers of the nearest manatee in three seconds flat). Yup, lovely stuff, this.

Since Sid Birchby brought up the subject, I can get in my two pennorth on the Buckingham Palace Intruder Entertainment Feature. I enjoyed this Show a lot for its utter Englishness. I mean - an apparently pretty ordinary citizen beats the whole security system at the most prestigious building in the country, twice, has a private chat with the Monarch in her bedroom, reveals the most woeful failings in Scotland Yard, gets the Queen's personal bodyguard exposed as a homosexual and bounced into obscurity, so we put him - the ordinary Joe, not any of the others - in a nuthouse! It's true, we are still a great country; what other nation could have achieved such flair, such originality, such sheer inventiveness in dealing with a public scandal. Charles Fort would be agog with admiration.

Two further thoughts occurred to me on this. I trembled for a while for Koo Stark (no - not for that reason): I expected to hear any day that she'd gone away for a lobotomy; and the other was about that body guard and the lamentably inefficient means by which he must have been chosen. They'd never have had that trouble with a Yorkshire lad. He'd have been on duty all hours of day and night, cheerful and efficient, with never a thought of chasing after the boys - nay, nor even the girls. Just as long as they'd let him keep his favourite sheep with him they wouldn't have had a minute's trouble.

PAMELA HOAL, 4 Westfield Way, Charlton Heights, Wantage, Oxon., OX12 7EW

Each edition goes from strength to strength, with articles fannish, fun, and also giving the little grey cells something to work on. The post-bag will I suspect be the envy of many a more (or at least longer) established editor. Great illos. I particularly liked John Cook's on page 16. Mind, I'm curious to know how he knew I had a crooked index finger but didn't know I have short hair. ((John's omniscience is, as yet, a budding talent.)) Now there's a challenge - patent designs; you suggest a purpose, such as bathing a baby, ask readers to submit designs and your artists to work them up into decent illos. Though judging by the letters, suggesting a purpose to readers with such fertile imaginations would be a little de trop. Just sling out the word Emmet and see what happens. ((Emmet, anybody? C'mon... anyone at all. Emmet.... EMMET!))

BOB SHAW, 90 Albert Road, Grappenhall, Warrington, Cheshire. WA4 2PG

I don't think Chuck Connor's request for the originator of the revers-ibla face has much hope of success - those things have been around for a long time - but I would like to know who started the business of totally misusing the word "hopefully" in current English. Broadcasters are the worst offenders, with their insistance on saying things like, "Tomorrow I will hopefully be

talking to Joe Doakes" when they mean, "I hope to be talking to Joe Doakes tomorrow". For some reason I have an idea it might have been John F Kennedy who began it all. (Mind you, the days when the BBC could be regarded as a bastion of good grammar have long since passed. Quite recently I heard a newsreader declare, with no trace of shame, "B.P. are cutting its fleet.")
((I must confess that I had to look at that twice before I saw what was wrong. And I thought a year of playing this game had improved my grasp of grammar!))

((And finally, another late LoC on No.3!))

MOIRA J. SHEARMAN, Top Flat, 25 Scott Street, Dundee, DD2 2AH.

I find a lot of things amuse me and I can often be seen reading something or watching telly with a smile on my face. However, it takes something unexpected to elicit the genuine cackle of amusement. The good pun (or even the real groaners) or (I confess) the sick joke, are good examples of things which can have me rolling around convulsed with laughter. There are certain books I cannot, to this day, read in public. Things ranging from Gerald Durrell books to Bob Shaw's EasterCon speeches. All good stuff.

It's strange that these things should actually make me laugh out loud. I had a friend who studied psychology at university. In our third year she was one of the people I shared a flat with. In one of our (rarely) intellectual discussions she informed me that people only laughed out loud when they wanted to attract someone else's attention to what it was they found funny. So when you hear someone laugh you are supposed to put them out of their misery by saying "What are you laughing at?" The person concerned can then share the joke. Simple, huh? Well she was very proud of this theory till I stated that I often laughed at things I found funny, when I was alone..... Well, they thought I was weird anyway. ((I've found myself doing that, but I usually realise I'm being really foolish when it dawns on me that I'm looking round for someone to share the joke with.))

So it should come as no surprise that I should find Vin^c mistaking lace making for face making, or your own subheading of "Put another Muslim on the fire, Marg, it's getting cold." appealing to my sense of humour. Seriously, I once visited a lace-making factory in Brussels. Well, it wasn't so much a factory as a shop (I don't think they let us tourists into the real sweatshop). There was a lady sitting ruining her eyes over a cushion stuffed with pins which supported a network of tiny threads. I think if they had supplied her with a decent magnifying glass she might have got on better. As it was, the piece of lace was not nearly as beautiful as a wedding veil I saw a few years later in Shetland. This particular example of a (sadly) dying art was so fine it could be pulled through a wedding ring and yet, unfolded, measured about 2 yards square. It was, of course, knitted, which I must say was what most impressed me.

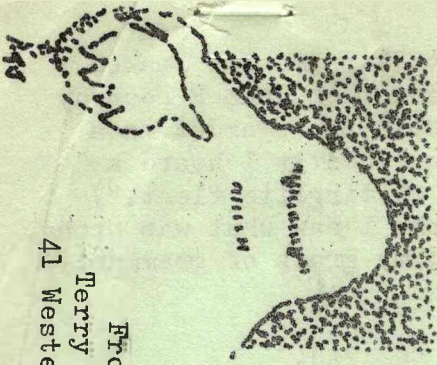
((Space decrees that we stop with the letters already, jus' when they wuz gettin' inerestin'. The rest become mere WAHFs (that's We Also Heard From, Sid!). Bob Shaw (fake), Dave Wood, Blackie Fortuna, Steve Galagher, Arthur Thomson, Vin^c Clarke, Ted White, Mal Ashworth, Chuck Connor, Jon Wallace, Sid Birchby, Wm. Gibson, Syd Bounds, Bill Temple and Joy Hibbert. Many of these letters I would have dearly loved to share with you but we's a-runnin' outa room, lookit how the bottom of the page is rushin' up to meet the writin'. How much of a litter is you figurin' I's gonna scrunge up into that, huh? Sa good job that Joe Nicklus don' rite to me (hell, he don' even talk to me) it'd never fit no-how! Y'all write soon tho, y'hear? >

PRINTED MATTER - REDUCED RATE
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 PRINTED MATTER - REDUCED RATE

BAQUOTES

DID YOU RECEIVE INTERESTING LETTERS WHICH LOOKED LIKE THEY'D BEEN WRITTEN AGAINST A TREE?....IT HASN'T GOT THE RING OF TURKISH STEEL....WILL YOU PLEASE STOP TALKING ABOUT ME IN THE PAST TENSE....IGNORING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT BECAUSE HE COULDN'T GET IT TO TAKE ANY NOTICE OF HIM....LET'S ORGANISE A 'SEND YOUR OLD KIPPERS TO FERRY' CAMPAIGN....WHAT'S AN "UN-FASHIONABLE ANNISH"?, AND DON'T SAY THIS IS....IT MAY NOT BE ON A PAR WITH SURVIVING A PLANE CRASH AND EATING THE STEWARDESS BUT WE DO THE BEST WE CAN....READING THIS IS LIKE PUSHING RICE PUDDING UPHILL....NOT AS GOOD AS I EXPECTED, BUT THEN I DIDN'T THINK IT WOULD BE....THIS DISGUSTING CONVERSATION HAS BEEN POSTPONED UNTIL A LATER MEAL....IF HE MUST BE OBSESSED WITH PARTS OF THE BODY, WHY CAN'T THEY BE INTERESTING ONES?....MY CASE COMES UP NEXT WEEK, AND SHE LED ME ON A LOT, GUV'NOR....IF YOU'VE NEVER HAD YOUR NO-END TICKLED, YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE MISSING....I RATHER SUSPECT YOU ONLY SENT ME THAT ARTICLE SO I COULD REJECT IT....I'D BE LOST WITH THE OLD CLAY TABLETS A SHARP BIT OF STICK....PAUL ENEVER USED TO HAVE A TRIFFID NURSERY....YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED THAT I'VE STARTED USING APOSTROPHES....Baquotes from (in no particular order): Dave Rowley, Joy Hibbert(3), ATom, George ATW Charters, Bob Shaw (fake) (2), Mat Coward, Terry Jeeves, Mal Ashworth (2), Eric Bentcliffe, Skel, and other obscure sources that I have now forgotten. If you have anything suitable for use as a baquote or interlineation, send it in, I'm running short. Of course, I'll still lift them willy-nilly from the text of your carefully crafted LoCs and ignore your cries of protest.

IT'S NOT GOOD, BUT IT'S OBSCURE



From:
 Terry Hill,
 41 Western Road, Maidstone, Kent. ME 16 8NE Great Britain.

