

Quodlibet 24

Well, I am aware of the rumblings in the interim, and I'm extremely glad of the passage of time. Consider mumbles made about wounding heels, u.s.w.

Westercon 40 (XXXX) happened this past weekend, and, no, I am not going to do a con report. As you may have heard, this convention surprised some segments of conrunning fandom by not being a disaster. It seemed fairly dull to me -- like, unfortunately, a lot of northern California conventions of late (notice I haven't been attending many, either). But there was apparently a flurry of worry about it among some of the Permanent Floating Worldcon Committee.

I understand that this Westercon committee was a loose confederation among East Bay SCA and Mythopoeic types, but that they somehow managed to alienate the conrunners in the Bay Area (I wasn't even included in the Bay Area Fandom Directory, but they managed, somehow, to alienate Tom Whitmore enough that he wasn't working on the convention). Another source of rumors has it that the concom was at each others' throats terribly. Alan Bostick thinks this Westercon will be a watershed because it raised for the first time the possibility of disaster for the Westercon.

When you think of everything that could go wrong, I guess the concom was lucky (luck does work both ways, you know). The almost total lack of experience on the part of the concom affected the average attendee (not, say, someone whose main delight at these things is, say, the masquerade or Regency dancing) only in a certain lack of forethought for the comfort of the attendee. F'rinstance: I did most of my hanging out in the rooms devoted, ostensibly, to fannish programming. There was a "fanzine" room, but it appears to have been set up by someone who had heard of fanzines but had no direct experience of people devoted to them. It was a room and tables and chairs ... and no production facilities of any kind. There was no concession to the special needs of the fanzine devotees present.

Then, too, there was the problem of the smokers: the ashtray was in the hall, which meant that smokers had to go out in the hall, which meant that anyone having a conversation with a smoker had to go into the hall, which created a certain amount of traffic congestion. In the meantime, the fanzine room was left with fewer people than were in the halls. Hall fandom used to be a feature of crowded room parties.

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Now, half of the rooms supposedly devoted to fannish programming were empty. One of them could have been converted into a smoking lounge. But that's not the kind of thing you think of unless you know how high a percentage of faneds still smoke.

Not, he said, polishing nails on his shirt, that I am still among that select group, Hemm-haw (smokers, not faneds!), having given up the evial weed two years and twenty-six days ago as this is being written. Hmm, plus twenty-three hours and forty-one minutes ago, counting from the lighting of my last cigarette. Ghasp!

I did it with ~~myself~~ hypnosis, a method which only works when you are absolutely ready to do it but don't know how to mobilize your forces. That was my situation on June 9, 1985. The cigarettes just didn't taste good any more, and it was just inconvenient to have an undesired habit.

I had earlier noticed a classified ad for a hypnotherapist in a local throwaway newspaper and had called on impulse. Got an answering machine, so I left a message. Waited until the next day. No call. Left another message. Waited another day. Still no response. Hell with it.

This pattern has become distressingly familiar since then.

My response hasn't changed. If you don't want my business enough to return my telephone call, I need your attitude less than I needed the service I was calling about.

Through circumstances I will detail later, I control placement of about \$2 million worth of service contracts per year.

Think about it.

At any rate, I went to the Yellow Pages (trusty Yellow Pages!) and came up with the name of a hypnotist who would return my call and set up an appointment -- providentially for the same day. So I taxied over and into a neatly kept apartment-office with a neatly-kept fussy little old man whose questions immediately irritated me by hidden assumptions that didn't apply, as if I were to be poured into a mould of expectations. I have long ago given up trying to explain, finding it easier and generally more satisfactory to let people have their preconceptions, as they are going to have them no matter how much time I spend educating them to the contrary. Generally, it makes not a jot of difference in the end.

Making a long story short, we finally got to the session phase. At the hypnotist's direction I took off my glasses and left my half-pack of Benson & Hedges green on his reading table, then sat comfortably on his couch, hands resting at my sides, palms up on the cushions, eyes closed, while he began speaking in a voice halfway between a whisper and normal conversational volume.

Throughout most of the session, I was in a state of grim, almost forced acquiescence. I wanted this to work, so I felt as if I were enduring the bullshit where my consciousness was going "that's not true" every few seconds.

I understand that this is a fairly common feeling, though I didn't completely recognize it at the time. What I had heard is that you feel you're going along with the gag and can break out of it at any time you want. I felt, instead, that I was having to keep myself in by stern reminders that I might not get anything out of this, but I certainly wouldn't if I followed my impulses to stand up, say "this is ridiculous," and leave.

Toward the end of the session, the hypnotist began a *Post*Hypnotic*Suggestion: "When you waken, you will go over to the table, take the package of cigarettes into your hands, take out a cigarette, shred it into the trash can, and say 'I don't need this any more.'"

Right.

When he finished, I walked over to the table, put on my glasses

(showing a solid grasp of priorities), picked up the pack, took out a cigarette, and looked at it for a long minute.

"You know," I said conversationally, "I have absolutely no inclination to shred this cigarette." I put it in my mouth and lit it.

Silence from the chair.

We had a short talk. I pithily told him I thought it had absolutely no effect whatsoever (smoking the while), paid him his fee (\$40 -- cheap) and left.

When I got out of the office/apartment, I lit up another cigarette and looked at my watch to find out whether I had time for lunch. It was 1:32 p.m. I walked toward Van Ness and decided I had time to grab a sandwich before heading back to the office.

Well, okay, that was a failure, but I could at least cut back somewhat. I knew I could go up to eight hours without a cigarette because I did it fairly frequently. I would just try the pure will-power route (laugh again). I would try to break the habitual part of the addiction by waiting until I really wanted one. I placed no restrictions on myself: I could have one if I really wanted it.

I walked back to work -- a distance of almost three miles. Fine, no overwhelming desire to have a cigarette. But I could have one whenever I wanted it.

I carried the half-smoked pack of Benson & Hedges menthols around with me for six weeks, the pack getting crumpler and crumpler. By the time I finally threw it away, I had called the hypnotist and apologized.

I still got (still get) flashes of craving for a cigarette, but the intervals between cravings are longer and longer. At first the really hard time was not after meals (which I had expected), but when I got off a bus (which I had not). The impulse to light up the moment the doors closed behind me was very strong. I expected to have trouble keeping my hands occupied (the failure that led to taking up smoking again in 1976 after pneumonia forced a temporary quit), but that wasn't such a big deal (not that I don't have the occasional impulse to play with one when I'm around a friendly smoker ... so round, so firm, so fully packed ...)

I did take to eating vast quantities of junk food -- only partly due to the smoking. I was going through unpleasant living situations at the same time -- and I picked up about fifty pounds in addition to my usual avordupois. I cannot afford to carry fifty additional pounds indefinitely, but I have had only limited success at stabilizing my weight. And it stabilizes at a higher level. *Sigh*

Now, your first impulse was probably to suggest hypnotism for that. Well, I thought about that. After a bit I girded up mental loins and called the hypnotist. He knew immediately what I was calling for (it's not hard to guess, after all) and suggested that a cassette tape would do the trick. After all, I had managed to quit cold turkey on only one session, so there must be something working. I sent away for the tape and played it faithfully for a month.

All it accomplished was to make me dreadfully thirsty before going to bed, so I would drink half a gallon of water and wake up two or three times during the night to visit the loo.

After a few weeks of that I gave it up in disgust and concluded that I just wasn't as ready for that as I had been to quit smoking.

After that I got busy for awhile, and I'm only now coming to the state of mind I recognize as "ready enough" for hypnotism. But I won't go back to the same hypnotist. I don't think he likes me any better than I like him, and I don't see any point in perpetuating an uncomfortable professional relationship.

Unless of course the second hypnotist doesn't work out, in which case the first one will be a "fallback position."

One of the things which has kept me busy is job hunting and finding. In October of 1985 I left the Aliotos when it became obvious that I could keep the job, if I really wanted it, only by going on the offensive and actively fighting with one of the partners. So I bowed out as gracefully as possible (the third partner wanted me to go back to being a secretary, which I point-blank refused to do, as that would be Capital-D-*Death* on the resume).

Although they abolished my job in favor of an Administrator who hadn't the faintest idea of how to administer a law office, I trained him as much as I could before leaving. I had an idea that I could take the litigation support ideas I had been developing and turn them into a litigation support company, with a little bit of luck.

That particular bit of luck never materialized, so I went back on the temp circuit (that is, clerical temporary) and got a bit of a shock.

Back in the early '80's, the demand was fairly constant. I was a highly qualified and exceptional temporary. I worked as much as I wanted to. In 1985, wordprocessing temps were so expensive that employers routinely called in a temp for a week and kept him for only a day or two, thereby cutting out his availability for other positions. I was working only a day or two per week, taking home an average of \$150/week.

I tried to tough it out with the agency I had been with before, but the market was just killing. Other temporaries were doing better as freelancers or with cooperatives that didn't charge as much (about 60% of the temporary agencies' fees, on the average), so they could get regular employment. But the agencies were not giving an inch, and they were killing themselves as well as their clients.

As well as me.

Eventually I accepted the first secretarial position that came across my desk. Boy, was that a mistake.

I was with Heller, Ehrman only about three months, and it was a trip from word one. Rather than go through all the whats and whys and wherefore, I'll just say it is the worst-managed company I've ever run across. It was literally managed by committees from whom anyone who could make a difference had been ruthlessly excluded. They had made an absolutely terrible decision about the wordprocessing equipment the entire 300-person firm was to use, and the scuttlebutt had it that one of the partners got a kickback. They eventually had to upgrade to the level of a contemporary wordprocessor at a cost well in excess of what they would have originally paid with a rationally-made decision in the first place.

The only good thing I got out of the experience is that I was able to begin playing Bridge again, and I've actually learned enough to go from rank tyro to the outer edge of the beginner phase of the game. I have become a Bridge fanatic, playing at every opportunity. This past westercon I had the pleasure of a rubber as Tom Whitmore's partner. Tom is a very capable player. Made me feel stupid. The fact that I was suffering a debilitating brain fog and couldn't keep score properly didn't help. I really do know how to score, Tom! Really ...

In September I left Heller, Ehrman, completely unable to cope with the artificially lowered pace. I worked for some old friends at their new law firm, Sturdevant & Elion. They were having unusual problems getting capable secretarial personnel and needed to stabilize their workload. I was with them for about six months, then had an unusual opportunity thrust upon me.

By then it was nearly a year and a half since I had last done anything managerial (except redesign the billing and cost-reporting system used by Sturdevant & Elion). I was offered the position of

office manager and administrator for

MELVIN M. BELLI

King of Torts

I took it.

I had been offered an earlier version of this job before -- just after I left Alioto & Alioto, in fact. But Belli's reputation is so (deservedly) bad that I turned it down flat, preferring to work as a secretary. In the last seventeen years he's had 80 office managers, for an average tenure of two months. He's known to turn around and ask what you do around here, then tell you to get off the premises.

But this time they had increased the responsibility (the "Administrator" part of the job) and added a layer of insulation between the position and Mr. Belli, and were willing to pay my minimum price. It might actually work this time ... and, besides, I needed to get back into the managerial aspect of law work.

So I took the job on March 14 and have now passed the third month. I have reason to feel fairly secure -- which reason I won't go into now -- but am still looking forward to the sixth month as the real watershed.

And that is how I come to control placement of \$2 million worth of service contracts.

The position of law office Administrator is a fairly new one in the profession. Until quite recently there was only a small number of positions available in law offices: lawyer, secretary, clerk, book-keeper. During the summer, law offices would hire law students as legal assistants to do research, organize documents, and sometimes write briefs. This gradually became a full-time occupation, and the position was occupied by the professional paralegal. Large law firms began giving some of their key personnel administrative responsibilities until a recognized professional class of administrative and managerial people came into being.

The office manager was often the only person with direct experience and comprehension of all the administrative and managerial work going on in the firm. Whereas he had started out as a strictly hands-on facilitator, he was called on to orchestrate all the functions that keep the firm running, including fiscal and financial planning for the future. The law office administrator is a management specialist for the law firm.

The Belli position combined both administrator and office manager functions. One cannot be done at the expense of the other, because both are important jobs. So I spend a variable fraction of my time arranging for the coffee service and ordering supplies and tracking personnel and benefits programs, etc. But I also spend a certain part of my time arranging the information flow around the firm, designing software for litigation support and supervising the implementation, figuring out where our client trust accounts get the best rate of return, and designing systems to keep the administrative hassles out of Mr. Belli's hair, under the direction of the firm's managing attorney, who does all the remaining administrative and case management work on top of his law practice. (By the Bar Association's canons of professional conduct, non-lawyers are strictly limited as to the bossing they can do for lawyers, and rightly so).

And that's what a law office Administrator does.

The job is particularly hard because there are a lot of prima donnas and sacred cows in that office. The Belli law firm is one of the few major law offices that is still dominated by a Personality. I might be able to see clearly what a problem is and how it should be solved for maximum efficiency, but I still can't implement it if it runs afoul of a sacred cow.

It does have its compensations, however: Eldridge Cleaver just walked into our reception area. He's now sharing space with "Brother Bob," the street crazy who harangues us with tirades of brotherly love.

For the recent celebration of Mr. Belli's 80th birthday, the staff of the San Francisco office gave him a very unusual gift: the Chief Justice's chair from the California Supreme Court. It's 6'4" high, made of solid California fumed oak and olive green leather and in excellent shape for its age, exactly like Mr. Belli. It's a very solid thing, a little higher than the ordinary run of chairs, so he doesn't sink too far down into it and have difficulty getting up. We have placed it where the floor slants a bit, to help him up (the building is a historical landmark you would have to see to believe. It was built in 1857 and is one of the few buildings left that float on a redwood raft rather than foundation pilings). He reads the paper in the foyer in the morning and keeps an eye on the comings and goings of the staff.

We presented it the day before the celebration, when there was "just family" around, with a large, calligraphed presentation card that read: "For more than 50 years Melvin M. Belli has practiced, standing, before this seat, the Chief Justice's chair of the Supreme Court of the State of California. After all this time it is only fitting that the Court should return the favor. 'Have a seat, Mel!'"

He liked it as a chair before he read the card: he liked it more as a historical piece. He joked about it being a hot seat and understanding why so many of the Court's decisions were slanted.

And that's how you go about giving a multi-millionaire a birthday gift.

* * *

I recently finished reading The Net, Loren MacGregor's first published novel and one of Terry Carr's last choices for his Ace Special series.

It always causes me apprehension to read the writing of a friend or acquaintance, for fear that I will be called upon to say something pleasant about it and not be able to find anything honest to say. There are times when a discreet silence is more damning than any conceivable gaucherie, and that's one of them.

So far I've been lucky: I've found only one of these books that really deserved honest condemnation (Alongside Night by Neil Schulman). My luck continues to hold with The Net, because it is a very readable, very creditable first novel, and there are a number of pleasant and remarkable things to say about it.

First, this is the only Delaney-influenced book I've ever seen that I wouldn't regard as pastiche but a legitimate heir of Delaney's methods. It even has a number of Delaney's characteristic problems. MacGregor brings off almost everything he attempts, which is greatly to his credit. The only complaints I wish to register about the influence is that the serial-numbers aren't quite filed off. There are a number of points that are just too "obvious," that disturb as the novel proceeds and never quite win acceptance. The pseudo-Greek names were too much Nova -- like the excess of quotations Joe Dante put into Gremlins. And the trick of reversing the gender of the names was too obvious. A man's name always denoted a woman, and vice versa.

The Net was a little too obviously a long short story expanded out to novel length: it contained only one dramatic incident, and was very restricted as to the number of characters. It gained its length by the very difficult process of accreting detail rather than by the easier and less wearing-on-the-reader process of creating subplots. This is very much a method I would expect to see Delaney attempt -- and bring off -- but it also causes the book to seem as if it is composed entirely of long, wandering bridge sections.

MacGregor definitely has a feel for a telling phrase and a convincing detail. Why, I was very definitely convinced that I was in certain areas of San Francisco through some sections of the story. Oh ... er ... that wasn't supposed to be San Francisco? Sorry. Well, most people won't recognize the locales, but I still think the detail needed a little more reprocessing. It was a little too specific to one time and one place.

Let me make one final caveat: I do not in the least believe in Captain Horiuchi and her supposed background. But taking her for her present, she is quite ... er ... present-able. I also don't believe in Bear the coloratura -- or, more precisely, I don't believe in her background. Like Captain Horiuchi, she's quite believable as a character in living action, in present time.

These quibbles, though, do not destroy the credibility of the work as a whole. As first novels go, The Net is quite a polished product and one which is suitable to launch a very distinguished career. Congratulations are in order ... and, of course, purchases.

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Well, I was going to talk about The Witches of Eastwick, but I think I promised Art Widner an extended piece about it.

Other recent viewings are Innerspace and The Untouchables.

I nearly walked out of The Untouchables -- not because of the quantity of violence, but because of its setting. dePalma -- or at least this film -- seems to have a naive faith in the redemptive qualities of violence. I mind particularly the disgusting defenestration of Frank Nitty, in which Ness shows what he has told us in an earlier scene: that he has become that which he loathes, that he has reached the bottom of his soul. The audience laughs and applauds as Nitty goes over the edge.

And, worst of all, he walks away from it supposedly without being affected.

Pfaugh. I remember the fofooraw about The Exorcist being an immoral influence. That harmless fantasy piffle had nothing against it. This film, this brilliant acting, this incomparable direction, this enduring work of art, is as great a force for moral evil in the world as Jerry Falwell.

Innerspace was one of those mellers that can't quite give up its original intention of being a comedy. Martin Short gives an excellent performance as Jerry Lewis and was charming in a way Lewis never quite managed. Quaid is every somuch more Right Stuff than Tom Cruise. He could make a career out of this kind of role. In fact, I believe he has made a career out of this kind of role. One of several.

Personal Services had a lot of funny bits, but suffered from choppiness and lack of continuity.

84 Charing Cross Road was warm and funny. Ann Bancroft and Anthony Hopkins were very charming, attractive people. This helped to disguise the fact that nothing happens in the movie.

The summer's sleeper is Adventures in Babysitting. A very lightweight story, it throws together some very suburban young people and then throws them all into the late-night south side of Chicago, a la After Hours. Blanche DuBois is not the only one who has always relied on the kindness of strangers.

Don't look for a plot -- it doesn't really have one, though it abounds in subplots. The film is a kind of salmagundi that relies on charm, warmth, the coincidental resemblance of the lead to the current Playboy centerfold, and occasional wit.

But that's a very good combination to rest on.

* * *

This past weekend I attended a Bobs' concert.

The Bobs, for the benefit of almost everyone else in the world, has absolutely nothing to do with the Church of the Subgenius or J.R. ("Bob") Dobbs. It's another religious order entirely, a singing group which characterizes its style as "new wave a capella." Now you know as much about them as you did before, right?

They are four singers, none named Bob (hence the name), two tenors (Gunnar Bob and Matthew Bob), one bass (Richard Bob), and a very pleasant, bluesy soprano (Janie Bob). The bass has a good range but little support for his tone. Matthew Bob's tenor is pleasant but otherwise ordinary. Gunnar Bob's voice, however, has an amazing plasticity, and he is responsible for some of the weirder sounds they produce. His striking platinum blond hair and clownish stage presence helps make their concerts much more lively than their recorded performances. In "straight" singing, his voice blends perfectly into Janie Bob's, which can be eerie.

Part of the Bobs' repertoire consists of more or less "straight" arrangements of standards -- such as Sam the Sham's "Little Red Riding Hood" and Smokey Robinson's "You Really Got a Hold On Me" (Matthew Bob [or Steven Matthew Bob, as he is known locally] has a voice that is just a tad too "white bread" for the effect) -- but they begin by departing from conventional arrangements and wind up on the far side of paranoia, a kind of singing cross between Gary Larson and Gahan Wilson. One of their best numbers, for instance, is about an urban cowboy who doesn't fit in with the shitkicker crowd because he doesn't have "Cowboy Lips." Another is about a man conducting a creepy love affair through the walls of his apartment complex:

We never met face to face
But I feel like I know you well.
You have the place next to my place.
I could see you by ringing the bell.
But I hear you through the walls.

I hear you in the morning shower.
How can you sing that song at that hour?
Press my ear to your wall to hear your coffee perk
and watch from the window when you leave for work.
And I hide behind the walls.

Your boyfriend is really a jerk.
Will he ever learn to play the saxophone?
He plays that same song over and over.
Your boyfriend is really a jerk.
Watches daytime shows.
The sound is loud.
Watches daytime shows.
Watches daytime shows.

I can't wait till you're home from work.
I like Saturdays best of all.
When your exercise records play
the pictures shake on my walls.
Send a dozen leg lifts my way.
'Cause I feel you through the walls.

I heard how you balked when they raised the rent.
It's the closest I've come to losing you.
Just fifty a month and it's money well spent
To keep you beside me. It's the least I can do
'Cause I need you through the walls.

Your boyfriend is really a jerk.
Will he ever learn to play the saxophone?
He plays that same song over and over.
Your boyfriend is really a jerk.
Watches daytime shows.
The sound is loud.
Watches daytime shows.
Watches daytime shows.

I can't wait till you're home from work.
And I feel you through the walls.
And I feel you through the walls.
And I need you through the walls.

See what I mean? That combination of paranoid creepiness with unexpected humor is very characteristic. There is a touchstone you can use to tell whether you would probably like them. If you liked Warren Zevon's Excitable Boy album, you'll probably go crazy over the Bobs. They have nothing obvious in common, so I don't quite know why this touchstone should be. But it does. Be, I mean.

Anyway, the lyrics are all well and good, but their sound is very special. They not only sing a capella (which has been done and done and done) but they provide their own accompaniment. Remember the Swingle Singers and their classy scat? The Bobs have developed that to perfection and beyond. Sometimes it is vocalizing that provides the counterpoint and background, but just as often it is a sung word that provides the "right" sound combination -- such as Richard Bob's unforgettable "hematoma" in "Little Red Riding Hood."

I first heard about the Bobs perhaps eight or nine years ago. Someone -- probably Gary Mattingly or Patty Peters -- brought a tape of their arrangement of "Helter Skelter" to one of Jim Kennedy's and Shay Barsabe's regular skiffy nights. That is one of their numbers that gets its big effect from cognitive dissonance (what am I saying: cognitive dissonance is their big effect) in the arrangement. It sounds like a calliope gone cheerfully mad. I pasted myself to the speakers and listened to it over and over.

I knew the Bobs were kind of in the San Francisco underground of music recording, but I was not well connected in that crowd and somehow never got around to researching them further. In 1981 or 1982 I attended a benefit concert given by Firesign Theatre. Several groups and individuals opened for them: Jane Dornacker did one of her Hostess Snowball bits. I seem to recall that Sister Boom-Boom made an appearance. And the Bobs did a few numbers, including "Helter Skelter." I was in heaven. Firesign Theatre was anticlimactic.

Somehow I lost track of them again until last summer when Tim Kyger and Thia Kellner Hill called to tell me that the Bobs were performing at The Great American Music Hall and would I care to come with the group they were getting up.

Is the Pope Catholic?

The house was packed, but the crowd was pleasant and more or less orderly. When the Bobs finally came out, they gave a wonderful concert and announced that they were about to take off for a European tour, concluding with a national tour, winding up back in San Francisco by November. They also had their first album for sale. I received the benison from the hands of Janie Bob herself, and she autographed and passed it back to the others for their autographs.

They have in common with Al Stewart that their live performances are much more lively and enjoyable than their recorded sessions. The audience was deeply appreciative, resorting to that demanding, rhythmic applause to coax additional curtain calls. First

time I've heard that, though I've read of it for years. I should add that the demand wasn't terribly effective. Apparently, they operate by a very strict schedule and do only material which is carefully prepared -- I don't like it, but I can sympathize.

I now have a trick to find their next performances: I watch the pink sheet in Sunday's Datebook. The Great American Music Hall always details their acts for months in advance, so I have plenty of advance notice of the next concert.

I've seen them twice now in the Great American Music Hall. They appear here once every six months or so and always pack the house. Rafters ring. Etc.

This time they had two opening acts, the ever-popular Ears (a marching drum trio straight out of Ernie Kovacs' most derangedly fevered imagination) and the Buttonflies, a group of UC Davis students who specialize in the sincerest form of flattery. All their material is a capella arrangements of standards, but they have a very good countertenor.

This concert was to introduce the Bobs' second album, a live album, which contains a number of their concert favorites -- "Banana Love," "Let Me Be Your Third-World Country," "Mopping, Mopping, Mopping," "Helmet," and so on. They went straight through the album, interrupting at the break between sides 1 and 2 for a Bob's Lip-Synch contest. They got suckers from the audience to lip-synch to their numbers. The audience applause decided the winner (Gunnar Bob acting as applause meter) and awarded as prize the Actual Helmet (!) used to illustrate the album cover (which was a picture of Gunnar Bob mopping up the ocean in the "Helmet" helmet. The Stark Fist of Retrieval strikes again. They ended the album making "My Shoes" an audience participation "rock anthem." Montes laboriunt parturiunt muscum.

They also did a few new numbers. They are working now on a new song cycle about laundry (hey, their first song cycle was about weather). The first number is a gospel song sung by a man about his woman who has developed her arms by beating laundry on river stones. When she hugs him, he, too, feels "Pounded on a Rock." (I tell you those people are going to B*U*R*N for that). The second song is a duet for two lovers who met in a laundromat and decided to "Share a Load." I can't be sure, but I think it's a parody of those duets Sonny and Cher did in the '60's. It has a characteristic amphibrachic motive which is suggestive.

The ninety-minute set was too short. They did no requests this time, but they did "Cowboy Lips" and the two numbers I talked about earlier from their laundry song cycle.

I had bought the album when I first stepped into the Great American Music hall. I took it immediately to Steven Black's house party, where he recorded it. I then recorded it for Kyger before listening to it myself. This album has the distinction of being pirated twice before its owner heard it.

When I opened the jacket, a postcard labeled "FOB" (for "Friends of the Bobs" fell out. Oboy. This time they have let us know their agent's location, so I can get information about their appearances. I've never belonged to a fan club before, but I'll go out of my way for this one.

* * *

As I seem to have forgotten everything I may once have known about selvaging fanzines, I will simply tear it off here and mail it away.

July 20, 1987
Happy Space Day!