

SPENT BRASS

The frequent fanzine that shouted, "Din, Din, Din!" Published by Andy Hooper and Carrie Root, 4228 Francis Ave. N #103, Seattle, WA 98103, members fwa. Available for the usual. This is Drag Bunt Press Production #139, 6/24/92. Material this time comes from Andy, Ted White and our readers. Art is by Jeanne Gomoll (title), Teddy Harvia (pg 4), Catherine Mintz (pg 6), Margaret Organ-Kean (pg 1), Tracy Shannon (pg 7), Stu Shiffman (pg 2), and Pat Virzi ("Blowback" logo).

As a dysfunctional wolfchild, I was shunned by whites and Indians alike.

WELL, MR. PRESIDENT. IT'S THE BEES AND SPIDERS AGAIN...
by Andy.



Seeing as this fanzine has broken the traces and swollen to twice its normal length, I might as well wrap up a few odds and ends that have come across the fannish affairs desk. Readers should still avoid looking to us for breaking news, but we can tell them that hope is fading as there is still no word from Chinese Gordon or his garrison at Khartoum.

It's important to remember that in fandom no good deed goes unpunished, nor any crime unrewarded. In the wake of our less than glowing report on Norwescon we figured that it was not likely that the committee would break a sweat trying to get us interested in returning. We figured we could save

the money and vacation for use at Corflu Ten.

So it was quite a shock when Jane Hawkins brought word to our regular Thursday night bowling group at the beautiful Leilani lanes that she had been asked by the Norwescon committee to be their Fan GoH for 1993. I wish I could report that I responded with "Congratulations! About time someone honored you!", but Jane said she as getting used to people saying "Damn! Now I have to go to the thing." Then I realize: This is the greatest test as the Fortress Roscoe method is liable to face. I plan to consult with Geri Sullivan, the Sebastien Vauban of fan-room design. The moats will run neck-deep in home-brewed blog....

Speaking of fan-lounges and foolery, those fen with a passion for golf should remember their putters if Orlando enters into their summer plans. The East Quotidian Memorial Miniature Golf Classic awaits.

We had to replace our keyboard, as the bugs had finally eaten both of the shift keys. I had occasion to think of Bill Kunkel's cartoon "The Retrow family" in Folly #15 when we tried to find a replacement; you try to call the tech-support number in the manual for our Leading Edge Model D-1, and you get the Hollywood Psychic Hotline. The keys on this "new" one are as stiff as L. Ron's dialogue, and I can't find a brand-name anywhere; I think the thing may have been made in Madagascar.

We hope some more of you are going to vote in the 1st. Spent Brass Poll. Remember, pick your favorite: 1.) Fanzine, 2.) Fanwriter, 3.) Fan-artist, 4.) Convention, and 5.) Letter-hack. Don't vote for me or Carrie or SB, because we're not eligible. I hope to hand out some of the awards in person at Magicon.

While you're voting in the poll, you might have a chance to stay on our mailing list at the same time. Those of you who have a little red "X" on your mailing label need to let us know that (con't. on page 8)

Warning! The fall of the empire and the death of little MU are imminent!



UFFISH THOTS :
THE ATROCITY EXHIBITION
 By Ted White

So picture this: It's about 1:15 in the afternoon of Sunday, May 24th -- the middle of Disclave. For some silly reason I have agreed to do "a reading" at 1:30. I had originally intended to read "Only Yesterday" a story of mine which has been anthologized twice since its original appearance in AMAZING. But it occurred to me earlier in the convention (i.e., Saturday) that I might attract a slightly larger audience if I read the manuscript of my piece "The Bet," due to be published this summer in MIMOSA. That way at least a few of my friends might show up. At some point I checked the schedule of readings for Sunday and discovered that the reader preceding me, at 1:00 pm, would be Mark L. Van Name.

Thus it was that at 1:15 I tracked down the reading room (the one farthest away) and opened the door. I wanted to meet Mark L. Van Name.

Van Name, you see, is something of a fanzine publisher. Well, not a fanzine precisely, but one of those review-zines, semi-pro: SHORT FORM. And Van Name doesn't exactly publish it, in the sense of paying the bills: Orson Scott Card pays the bills. You might say that Van Name edits SHORT FORM, except that in fact he doesn't really do that, because he doesn't believe in editing, which he equates with the imposition of a single point of view, and seems to regard as propagandizing. Mark L. Van Name assembles SHORT FORM and takes no apparent responsibility (editorial, moral, legal) for its contents. Indeed, in its last issue he upbraided Steve Brown for editing SF EYE.

That, however, is not what most distinguishes the last published issue of SHORT FORM.

It seems that SHORT FORM has been running for several issues a Q&A column by Harlan Ellison. and in the last -- and most recent -- issue, published two years ago, Harlan devoted several thousand words to libelling Andy Porter.

It was an amazing piece of work. Provoked by a letter from Porter which, in very few lines, essentially asked if the Q&A format bespoke a paucity of ideas on Ellison's part -- albeit in a smart-alecky manner -- Harlan took the opportunity to do a job on Porter the likes of which no one had ever seen before. In his response, Ellison mocked Porter's sex-life (or its absence), ridiculed his competency both professionally and as a human being, and stated that not only did Andy have no friends, everyone who knew him laughed at him behind his back. And I abbreviate; Harlan went on for pages of double-columned small type. It was unspeakably cruel, vindictive, and nasty. It was totally over the top. And although this concluded a long column, Harlan opened the column with a boast of what was to come, a piece of macho posturing that underlined the fact that this was more than a moment's gut-reaction to a supposed slight: This was a calculated performance in which Harlan gleefully demonstrated his skill at completely demolishing another human being.

Most editors, confronted with such a column, would have protested to its author that it was unpublishable. Not simply because it libelled someone --and legally the editor/publisher is as vulnerable to action -- nor because it was so incredibly hurtful. Most editors would have read it for what it was and said to Harlan, "I can't publish this, out of friendship to you. This is not something you will want in print over your name."

Van Name told me that he had "a deal" with Harlan: to publish Harlan's columns as written, or not at all. He failed to consider using the second option.

He also failed to send a copy of that issue to Porter. He was too much the coward, although he claimed to know both Porter's address and phone number. Andy found out about it at a convention, when Dave Hartwell showed him a copy.

It hit Andy like a pole axe. You see, he'd never written the wise-ass letter attributed to him.

Yes, it was a hoax letter, written by some king mixer who hoped to stir things up. "I called him three times about the letter," Van Name told me, "but I just got his answering machine." Porter apparently never got the messages, never knew about the letter.

But that was two years ago. What's happened since?

That's what I hoped to find out at 1:15 pm, Sunday, May 24th, when I walked into Van Name's "reading."

He looked up as I came in, and must have recognized me, although we'd not previously met, because he told me, "You can start early. I'm not doing a reading."

Looking around, I could see why. The only other people in the room were three women and a very little girl. The little girl was his daughter, and one of the women was his wife. The other two were friends. "They've all heard what I was going to read anyway," Van Name said, fingering a laptop computer.

Lenny Bailes tells me Van Name is a Big Name in the computer field, but it turns out there was some problem with the laptop and Van Name could not have read his works-in-progress if he'd wanted to. And that, I thought, was a metaphor for the basic problem with the man himself.

I sat and talked with him for ten or fifteen minutes, during the later part of which time, Lenny and Walter Mills wandered in (part of my audience -- and two thirds of it as it turned out, Rob Hansen completing the trio soon thereafter). After Van Name made a hurried departure, Lenny remarked, "Now there's a replicant!"

I wanted, first of all, to find out what was happening. Had there been another issue of SHORT FORM? Had Harlan apologized? And what did Van Name think about it all?

It turns out that Van Name is aware that, in some intangible, abstract way, something wrong was done. He takes no responsibility for it, and does not seem to grasp its moral or legal parameters.

"Harlan is kind of public property to my audience," he said, "I think they took it in stride." His audience, he says, is "around eight hundred."

Van Name sees no particular harm to Harlan's own reputation in his column, implying that people expect that kind of thing from him. As for Harlan's putative victim, Van Name sees absolution for himself in his half-hearted attempts to contact Porter. He tried. He left phone messages. But what he did not do and apparently never considered doing was resorting to hard copy: sending Porter a Xerox of the letter by mail, for confirmation that he'd written it. Instead, he forwarded it to Ellison, setting in motion the remainder of the events. About the pain suffered by Porter from this attack Van Name feels no responsibility and appears oblivious.

But he is aware of certain obligations. As he understands it, Porter and Ellison were to agree upon the wording of an apology to be written by Harlan, and when it is written he will publish it -- in the final, wrap-up issue of SHORT FORM. "The issue will be about ninety pages," he said. It's all done -- on disc -- except for the Ellison apology. It's been waiting for that apology for more than a year, now.

So where is that apology? How long does it take to write a hundred words or less? What's hanging Harlan up?

One might hope it is embarrassment. One wishes, as someone who has known Harlan for nearly forty years and considered him a friend much of that time, that Harlan now feels a sincere and genuine regret for what he has done to Andy Porter. And I can tell you that, as someone who has known Andy for nearly thirty years and considered him a friend much of that time, I did not enjoy the sight of Harlan trashing him, nor do I laugh at him behind his back.

When Steve Brown first showed me the SHORT FORM in question, then told me that he'd learned Andy hadn't authored the letter, I predicted, cynically, that when Harlan apologized, he'd try to portray himself, with Andy, as the innocent victim of a vicious hoaxer, to divert from himself responsibility for what he'd done. I'd like to hope I'm wrong in that prediction. I'd like to hope that Harlan will be a mensch and rise to the occasion.

Hotel accommodations for our columnists provided by the Tucker Hotel

If Andy Porter didn't write the letter that set Harlan off, who did? The letter was postmarked Manhattan. It's not hard to think of at least one Manhattanite who strongly dislikes Ellison, may not be that fond of Porter either, and has resorted to such hoaxes in the past, but I won't name him since he may have put such pranks behind him years ago.

I think Van Name is right to kill SHORT FORM, despite the very real need for such publications. He is the wrong man for the job. His moral obtuseness, his refusal to accept editorial responsibilities -- on principle! -- and his willingness to let a man like Orson Scott Card pay his bills, all confirm this fact.

Recently PULPHOUSE WEEKLY (which is not published weekly) has begun reprinting Ellison's columns from SHORT FORM. There is no word about the possible republication of the attack on Porter.

Van Name's parting shot before leaving was to ask me, as a "supporter of Steve Brown," in what way the attack on Card as a "Mormon baby killer" in SF EYE differed from Ellison's attack on Porter. "they're both ad hominum," he said. All other distinctions escaped him.

Sigh....

-- Ted White



THE SPENT BRASS LETTER COLUMN

ROBERT LICHTMAN

Once again, I quite enjoyed Peter Larsen's fanzine reviews. Though he doesn't run on at any great length about any given zine, his assertions are honest and convey the feeling of the zines. The only place where we veer is his assertion that "SF fans need to read stuff (like Holy Titclamps) to keep their heads out of their self-referential ghettoized asses." I'm not sure just who he's talking about, but it doesn't sound like me, even though I can be as self-referential as the next oldphart if I choose to exert a little effort in that direction (and I do,

occasionally). Thing is, I enjoy Novoid just as much as I do Folly, and for many of the same reasons. (Strong editorial personality, good material, good production values.) Fannish fanzine fandom, as it exists in Folly and a few other zines (My own included, in part, and yours) is the ultimate role-playing game -- a tiny splinter group in the vastness of fandom -- probably no more than 150 truly active participants at the present time, these days, with that many more on the fringes -- but it's our little splinter group and we still love it. That doesn't mean, however, that our interests lie only there and we're incapable of carrying on a discussion in person or in print about Holy Titclamps or anything else that strikes our fancy.

Enjoyed Ted's review and commentary on BEDEC and generally agree. This was certainly a kinder review than Michael Ashley's in his Salironia #8, in which he trashes Walt and James for many pages. This is the same Michael Ashley who is quoted in Nigel Richardson's Sluberdegullion #2 as saying, "Yes, I now have a mandate to be unreasonably rude about Walt Willis every issue for one year. ...Nietzsche proved right: Ghod is dead." So Ted seems quite generous by way of contrast. (P.O. Box 30, Glen Ellen, CA 95442)

(Andy here -- You know, I have been reading about Michael Ashley, the latest claimant to the the Britfan Hyper-criticality title, for about four years now, but I have never seen a word of his writing in its original form. Can anyone help me correct this situation? How about you, Michael?)

MARK MANNING:

...you can perhaps understand why, after hearing of your plans to attend Norwescon this year, I had a nightmare. A literal nightmare.

In this nightmare, I was waiting in a line that stretched up two flights of stairs at this end of the con hotel, then along a corridor, then down two flights of stairs at that end of the hotel, then across a lobby, then into the huckster room.

A nice thing about nightmares about SF cons is that all the usual nightmare images become less threatening. While working my way up the two flights of stairs, for example, I realized I had forgotten my pants. Just then, someone dressed as a Wookiee walked by, and said

to me, "Cool hall costume!" My dream self thought, "Right! It's no problem after all, just as Blake said."

(I don't know what this Blake reference meant, though. I plan to check for references to Blake in the Bollingean edition of Jung's writings.)

After seeming geological ages of waiting and shuffling had passed, we finally reached the end of the line. A grubby-looking, angry-seeming little guy sat there behind a table, on which sat stacks of TSR's game tie-in fantasy novels by writers I'd never heard of.

"I don't want any of these," I told him.

"Neither has anyone else this whole damned weekend," he grouched. "Next year I'm taking my stuff to Minicon instead. And wait till you hear how much they charged me for this dinky space...."

Thank Ghu I woke up then.

But poor Andy and Carrie! You went to Norwescon in reality, didn't you? If the con became a nightmare, you couldn't just wake up from it then, could you? (1709 South Holgate, Seattle, WA 98144)

BRIAN MCNETT

Seems I've heard of this Seattle. Can't remember...someplace east. Across a body of water by boat. Something about a spruce noodle (can't make any sense of that one). So, sorry. Having difficulty collecting my thoughts. They scramble around the floor and I have a hard time coaxing them out from under my dresser (or was that my socks?). (P.O. Box 4229 Bremerton, WA 98312-0229)

(Carrie here -- since meeting you at the last meeting of the Nameless Ones, I'll accept the idea that it was thoughts, not socks, under your dresser.)

BUCK COULSON

I recall one Wiscon where Juanita and I were Fan GoH and were not introduced at opening ceremonies until several fans in the room pointed us out. We thought it was funny, but perhaps Siro's takes himself more seriously. Afterwards, as I recall, someone (Hank Luttrell, maybe? I can't remember) ceremoniously introduced us to the conchair, who was quite embarrassed.

I'd have thought the elevator incident was funny, too, if it had been me. I think it's even funnier because it wasn't me, of course, but it makes a good story.

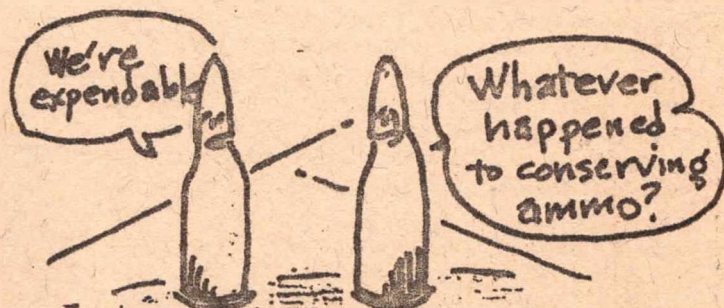
Inconjunction, when it had Marion Zimmer Bradley as GoH, put her on the party floor. Marion likes to sleep at night, and announced very firmly that there would be no parties on her floor. There weren't; the parties were held elsewhere. (2677W-500N, Hartford City, IN 47348)

SHERYL BIRKHEAD

I figure that by now, if the two parts of my letter will manage to get to you, they have done so. I have no idea how the post office managed to tear it so ...um...completely.

At Christmas, we always did up a huge batch of homemade sugar cookies in Christmasy shapes and then got turned loose with the various bowls of icing. I remember, quite vividly, that my brother always chose the weirdest color schemes. Of course, part of it was that they are so ugly they HAD to be eaten right away rather than sit around and let anybody see them. Maybe there was method to his madness. Almost the same thing would happen at Easter when we colored eggs (although the eggs were merely turned into egg-salad -- not nearly as appetizing as gobs of iced cookies!) and he would end up with the yeechiest colors. (2829 Woodfield Rd. Gaithersburg, MD 20882)

(Carrie here -- yes, we got both halves of the letter, and put it back together. It was like something from a detective story -- we were disappointed that it neither revealed who really killed the Lindbergh baby, nor gave a clue as to why it had so outraged the post office.)



"I always say, if he's so famous, why isn't he dead?"

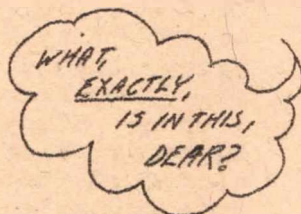
"All good work is done in defiance of management" -- Bob Woodward

BERNI PHILLIPS

A plague of weddings? I didn't realize that the marital state was a disease. One of the nice things about being married is that you know what box to check on forms. I've never seen one that said "shacked up." My old high school, one for Catholic girls, publishes a nice newsletter, and urges its alumni to write in and say what they are doing nowadays. I have not yet done so, being unable to come up with suitable phrasing. But there are times when, after reading all these cheery little paragraphs about Mary Frances, who married Patrick and has a brood of five little choir boys, I'm really tempted to say that, not having set foot in a church since Jimmy Carter was in the White House, I belong to Planned Parenthood and I'm living in sin with a Jewish agnostic.
(1161 Huntingdon Dr. San Jose, CA 95129)

CATHERINE MINTZ

(1810 South
Rittenhouse
Square, #1708
Philadelphia, PA,
19103-5837)



DAVE RIKE

You probably didn't intend it that way, but I feel you made an invidious comparison with that obnoxious fan who all the time hung around with NAW ready to light his cigarettes and such like and Don Fitch at Corflu-9. If it wasn't for Don there wouldn't have been a consuite and we would have had to hang out with the folks leafing through fmz or playing mah-jongg in the upper room, or stand around watching the Regency dancers do their thing in the lower room. Don, virtually single-handed, created the ambience that allowed us to hang out and have a good time with each other. He deserves our unstinting praise for his efforts.
(Box 11, Crockett, CA 94525)

(Andy here -- I agree with you completely in your assessment of Don's contribution to Corflu 9 -- in my opinion he pretty much was the convention. Nor did I mean to demean the profession of short order cook, for that matter, as I have held the job myself in the past. It was the juxtaposition of fannish tendencies in the mundane and mundane tendencies in the fannish which made the comparison...although I wish it wasn't so that "service" seems to be something of a mundane trait to me.)

JEANNE MEALY

Yay, an article by Andi Shechter! Just keep her away from the cookie dough. With ideas like Andi's Broccoli Chip, Avocado Creme sandwich and who knows WHAT else, she's DANGEROUS. So far, no marketing samples have appeared in my mailbox; I stand ready with the badminton racquet and the fly swatter shaped like Australia just in case...
(4157 S. Lyndale Ave. Minneapolis, MN 55409-1446)

??????????

To: Editors of Spent Brass

You claim that your fanzine jumps down, spins around, and picks a bale of cotton. We of the General Nuisance society decided to test your claim. We took your fanzine out into a field of cotton. First it refused to jump down off the tractor. Finally I threw it into the dirt and waited for it to spin around. I just lay there and of course it failed to pick a bale of cotton. And I'd been counting on it to pick my cotton while I lounged back with a beer. I ended up having to pick the cotton myself. You will be hearing from Tweedledee and Tweedledum, the lawyers for the General Nuisance Society, concerning your false advertising for your zine.

Insincerely yours,
Elmer Fudd

(Andy here -- mostly we've been wondering who we know in Evanston, where this was published, and whether it was Evanston, Indiana or Illinois...the second letter in the postmark abbreviation is too smeared to read. Good luck getting this issue to quote Kipling, by the way.)

FEELIN' A BIT
SPENT MESELF!

RS

HARRY WARNER JR.

I've been racking my poor old brain to figure out what an earth berm construction project might be. I know I'm on Earth and I used to use berm in newspaper stories until the management decided the general public didn't know it's meaning but wouldn't advise me on what would be an acceptable synonym, so I just stopped writing about things that happened on berms unless they were too sensational to ignore and then I referred to shoulders and nobody complained. I've never been comfortable with shoulders in this sense since Lee Hoffman almost became hysterical with merriment during an auto trip when she saw a sign that said: SEEDS SHOULDERS. (423 Summit Ave. Hagerstown, MD 21740)

(Andy here -- I think "berm" is being used in the context of home construction to mean an artificial mound of earth, smooth on one slope, and precipitous on the other, in which the bulk of the house is imbedded. And those news executives are probably the same ones behind the disappearance of "macadam" and "chatoyancy" and "peripatetic." If these people have their way, no one will be able to play a decent game of Scrabble in this country anymore....)

WALT WILLIS

Thanks for the Spent Brasses. What does the title mean? Ordinarily I wouldn't ask this, out of a fear that you might already have explained this and I will be remonstrated with for not paying attention, but it occurs to me it must be irritating to think of a clever title for your fanzine and never be given the opportunity to explain it. Though I do remember once being asked whether I had ever noticed that the title Hypphen could be read as "Hi, fen."

It seems to me there are similarities between the attitude of old time fmz fans to BEDEC and that of Jews to the New Testament.

(32 Warren Rd. Donaghadee, Northern Ireland BT21 OPD)

(Andy here -- It's fun to be asked about our title, because there are so many ways to answer. "Brass" means all these things at once; confident hubris, authority, money, even a fanfare of horns. Referring to these things in the context of their being "spent" made me think about the money we would be spending to publish the zines, the degree to which we would try people's patience with the things we published, the authority within fannish fandom we would try to seize by publishing our opinions, and the sheer pleasure of putting words down on the page.

Of course, there is another meaning for these two words; they refer to the empty shell casings that are left on the ground after a gun fight.

Making a conscious reference to mayhem like that may seem a dubious gesture, but when I first conceived of the zine, we were still feeling the shock waves of a terrible fan feud in this country, a conflict which dominated my first two years as a fanzine fan. I still feel like it is inappropriate for me to talk about that war straightforwardly, because of the pain it causes some people. I never wanted to be a vector for that kind of fighting.

So this is funny kind of zine, I suppose. We are willing to cover some of the less pleasant elements of the faanish world, but this is not a newsszine. We would rather do analysis than direct reportage. And we would far rather go around picking up spent brass and trying to figure out who shot who -- and freely assign blame as we see fit -- than get in and blaze away ourselves.

If this seems cowardly or lacking in imagination, just look at all the trouble we have in printing our mail as it is....)

WE ALSO HEARD FROM THESE FINE PEOPLE:
Bill Bodden, David Bratman, Gary Deindorfer, Cathy Doyle, George Flynn, Teddy Harvia, David Haugh, Ben Indick, Elise Matthesen, Ron Saloman, Tracy Shannon, Candi Strecker and Pat Virzi.

Well, I admit it would be nice to finish ahead of "No Award."

(ANDY, continued from page 1.) you are still interested in receiving this fmz. We have picked up a bunch of new addresses, and figure to make room for some of them soon.

We said goodbye to another Stfnal personage recently, the biggest of the big boys, Dr. Isaac Asimov. I'll miss Asimov most of all for the odd TV appearances he used to make; brought on as a scientific personage, they asked him the most moronic questions, and he always responded with bemused restraint. He was a great front man for our genre.

I find myself wondering; how will the man's works survive him, what will people think of them after no one is left who remembers what a delight the man was? Will their limitations be accepted in the way that we allow for the period conventions of Dickens, Hawthorn, Moliere?

We kept up a monthly pace for a modest string here, but I'm afraid it's over for the moment. By the time you get this, I will be attending the Clarion West SF writer's workshop, which lasts for six weeks. I'm afraid I'll be just a little too busy during that stretch to help publish an issue of SB. But we hope to be back in August; Peter Larsen has promised us another column of fanzine reviews, so make sure your civil defense arrangements are in order.

By that time, we ought to have some word on our anti-trust proceedings against Folly, for their restraint of trade in chaining up all the good columnists of fandom in some dank Las Vegas dungeon.

Thanks to Mark Manning for all his help in publishing this fanzine.

CIVIL WAR FORUM: The struggle had not been much on our minds when we took a trip out to Discovery Park a few Sundays back, for a stroll in the piney woods. But when we got there, we found that the park contains within it the Ft. Lawton military reserve, and within that is the post cemetery. I have a strange fascination for these sort of places, so a quick perusal of the place was in order. And among the senior bandsmen and Philippine expedition veterans, the Italian and German prisoners so far from home, we found the grave of Colonel William Robinson, long-time commander of the Seventh Wisconsin Volunteer Regiment, of the fabled Iron Brigade of the West. We just stood there in the dappled heat, wondering at the way we had moved two thousand miles away from this man's old parade ground, and somehow happened upon his final rest only three months after our arrival. Our own history is as interesting, and improbable, as any alternative version we can contrive. -- aph

SPENT BRASS # 13
C/O Mark Manning
1709 South Holgate
Seattle, WA 98144 USA

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

BULK MAIL U.S. POSTAGE PAID SEATTLE, WASHINGTON ZIP CODE 98144 PERMIT NO. 765

0
Lee Hoffman
401 Sunrise Trail NW
Port Charlotte, FL 33952