

# TRAP DOOR



# Trap Door

Issue No. 16, August 1996. Edited and published by Robert Lichtman, P. O. Box 30, Glen Ellen, CA 95442 USA. Please send all trade fanzines and letters of comment to this address. Founding member and Past President 1991: fwa. Also a supporter of afal. This fanzine is available by Editorial Whim in response to The Usual, or \$4.00 per issue (*reviewers please note!*). The Usual includes your letters, accepted contributions both written and artistic, and accepted trades. If there's a printed or written "X" or "?" on your mailing label, this may be your last issue (and/or it's been too long since I've heard from you). All contents copyright © 1996 by Trap Door with all rights reverting to individual contributors upon publication.

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This was originally going to be the April issue and although I was running a little late, I was just about to go to press when — to paraphrase the bumper sticker — shit began to happen. This is not your ordinary why-this-issue-is-late story. It's been delayed because I've been mourning the loss of two long-time friends.

On the evening of April 24th, following dinner with Dave Rike, Redd Boggs experienced severe stomach pains, was rushed by ambulance to hospital, and operated on the next morning for a ruptured stomach. Unfortunately, there were complications, and it was soon determined that his condition was inoperable. Though Redd couldn't talk because he was on a respirator, he was able to communicate through head movements and notes, and he remained lucid until the last day or so. I visited him frequently, as did Dave Rike and Jeanne Bowman, and was the last of his friends to see him alive. He passed away the morning of May 9th. Redd told us not to disclose his condition to fan-

dom. So Dave, Jeanne, Don Herron and I were the only ones to know until a few days before his death. Jeanne, Dave and I spent the day of Redd's death at his apartment, missing him, talking about him, and doing an initial sort of some of his stuff. That evening I called Redd's two closest correspondents, Jim Harmon and Jean Young, to break the sad news. That was hard. The morning after Redd's death, I sent out a brief announcement to about fifteen people who figured prominently in his life.

Two of Redd's brothers — Jerry and Bill (and Bill's wife Alvina) — drove down from Minneapolis. I missed meeting them because they came on the weekend and only stayed about 24 hours. They took lots of family photos (Jeanne reports them exclaiming over pictures of kin not lately seen or spoken of) and other family mementos. Jerry said Redd had told them several years ago that he didn't ever want to go back to Minnesota, even when he died. Redd wanted his ashes spread down at Big Sur, so some sort of memorial expedition will no doubt eventually be organized.

On May 12th and 13th, Dave, Don, Jeanne and I cleared out Redd's apartment, working long sweaty hours together to get it done. We were amazing.

A few days later, I had a call from Charlie Brown, who ran a short item about Redd in the June *Locus* along with a memorial article by old friend Arthur Jean Cox.

Charlie asked me to characterize Redd's place in fandom. Without having to give it much thought, I said, "By his quiet but impressive example, he raised the level of both fanzine production and fanzine writing."

My comments didn't make Charlie's final cut, and anyway they were narrowly oriented towards Redd's impact on fandom. I might also have said about Redd that he was a very nice man. I'd known this for years through our in-person contact — I first met Redd when he moved to L.A. in the early '60s — and it was brought home to me again and again during his final days. When I met with the woman who runs the El Verano post office to make arrangements to collect Redd's mail, she told me what a nice, friendly, cheerful person he was. Even in the intensive care unit, everyone who interacted with him said the same thing.

Plans are afoot to publish a memorial volume of his writing. I would think several thick volumes would be possible: his critical pieces on science fiction and his more fannish/personal material. Besides his prodigious fanzine production, at Gretchen Schwenn's urging Redd began a daily journal in 1965 and kept it up. These handwritten notes fill 96 sizable volumes, and are fascinating reading, revealing the person as well as the fan. We and his family are looking for a suitable repository for them.

In closing, let me share with you some remarks from people who received the initial announcement of Redd's death. Jim Harmon's comments are off to the right.

Also, Len Moffatt writes:

"I wish I had Redd's command of the written word to express how I feel. In those rare moments when I think there might be an afterlife, I envision the friends who have died having an ongoing relaxicon, continuing to write and publish and perform as they did while still in mortal form. Then we can hope that Redd has rejoined his beloved Gretchen, and can sit around and chat with Rick, and Ron, and Terry, and Tedron, and all the others who have gone on before. Such thoughts are some consolation, albeit small, to those of us who are left behind to mourn the loss of old friends."

"Like Bob Bloch, Redd was among the last of the great postcard correspondents. A card from Redd might carry a friendly comment on your fanzine, a friendly correction, a question, or an answer to a question — but whatever the content, they were always welcome. His abilities as an editor and publisher are unequalled. A Boggs zine was always a joy to behold as well as to read. Even when you didn't agree with everything he had to say, his way of saying it commanded your attention and respect."

And Lee Hoffman sums up how I feel: "He is already missed."

## Jim Harmon on Redd Boggs

Redd Boggs was the ultimate in being a science fiction fan. He may not have been a great success in the commercial world, but his words always brought light to any subject he discussed — works of science fiction or general literature, the activities of other fans and pros, just the stuff of everyday life. The kind of thing Andy Rooney would gripe about on TV, Redd could analyze and make you see why it was that way.

I wrote my first letter to Redd when I was twelve, and received a reply. There were a few breaks in our association, but we continued to relate to each other for the next fifty-one years. Robert Lichtman reports he read my last letter to Redd during his final hospital stay and that he "seemed to enjoy it." We liked each other's company.

For years many of Redd's friends, including Jim Blish, thought he should become a professional SF writer. I think he could easily have done that or even become a mainstream novelist. Talent and insight filled his fanzine contributions. He read the books that a lot of us just like to have on our shelves, hoping to "get around to sometime" and, in the meantime, impress visitors. I was able to get Redd to write the only published material he was ever paid for. When I was editing an Ackerman competitor, *Fantastic Monsters of the Films*, he did two short-shorts of a fantasy nature for me. I have been criticized for having Redd collaborate with me on a sex novel called *Passion Strip* (the strip was a comic strip), for wasting his talents on that. I had hoped he would see the value of writing for paid publication, although he did not. Of course, he was starving at the time, living on canned mackerel, the next thing to pet food. The money he made helped him live long enough to meet his long-time mate, Gretchen Schwenn, who brought more money into the household before her death some years ago. I tried as recently as six or eight years ago to get Redd to collaborate with me on a Stephen King-type horror novel. I didn't think I could produce as many words as those long novels. He said he would — hard to get Redd to say "no" to anyone — but in fact would do nothing.

I believe Redd Boggs had a chronic depression, from which he suffered greatly. He believed Armageddon was coming. If it is, it will be after his death at seventy-five. His one great love before Gretchen did not turn out well for him. There were reasons, but without them he would have still had the dark cloud over him. At least he fought his horrors and did not leave us before he had to. Of course, both his father and mother lived to be ninety-eight, so it's possible he might have had another twenty years. But for the time he had, he sat by the road and observed, and was a friend to Man — and Woman.

— Jim Harmon, June 1996

By the end of May, I'd revamped this issue to make room for Redd's final "Penseroso" column and rewritten my editorial to include the preceding comments. I carried a final draft copy of it to show my editor, Carol Carr, when I visited her on the three-day Memorial Day weekend. I arrived home late Monday night ready once again to go to press only to find a solitary message on my answering machine. It was from Ed Burbee, the oldest son of Charles Burbee. Charlie, Ed reported, had passed away that morning. This wasn't as out of the blue as Redd Boggs' death - Charlie's decline over the past few years was quite noticeable - but it still came as quite a shock and, of course, threw my publishing plans into disarray once again.

My acquaintance and friendship with Charles Burbee goes back even farther than mine with Redd. I don't recall exactly when we had our first meeting. It might have been in February 1959, when Elmer Perdue came to a LASFS meeting and passed out copies of *Burlings c/w Elmurmurings* "No. 4 or 5 or possibly 7" - I was meeting Elmer for the first time that night, and don't have a clear memory of whether Burb was there, too, or was just represented in the fanzine Elmer handed me - but by the summer of 1960 I'd most definitely been to one or two parties at his home in Whittier, tasted the famous chili of his wife Isobel, and heard the watermelon story for the first time.

We also appeared in a movie together. That was the summer that Unicorn Productions, a group of film-happy LASFSers, went to Calico Ghost Town on the Mojave Desert outside of Barstow to film "The Musquite Kid," a faanish Western flick based on a piece of faan fiction by Lee Jacobs. Charlie and I were part of the cast - I remember a scene shot in the bar where I utter, "I never drink in the same bar as sercon lovers," and Burb declaims, "I don't like sercons!" - and we shared a ride back to Los Angeles in the same car afterwards. On the way, I told Charlie of a shop in my area that had some piano rolls, which naturally caught his attention. When we got to his house in Whittier, he invited us in for a glass of (you'll never believe this) ice water. We intended to stay for only a few minutes, but ended up hanging out over an hour with Charlie and Isobel. For the next five years, we occasionally exchanged letters and I attended numerous parties at his house, always enjoyed myself, always felt welcome.

Then I moved to the Bay Area - and later Tennessee - and didn't see Charlie again until the 1984 L.A. worldcon, where I remember being part of a floating party that also included Elmer Perdue, Terry Carr and Moshe Feder. We resumed a steady but sporadic correspondence after the convention. Following the

death of Elmer Perdue in 1989, I asked Charlie if he would care to write some reminiscences of Elmer for these pages, and he agreed. (Of this, more later.)

By 1990 Charlie had moved to the Pechanga Indian reservation outside of Temecula, where he spent his final years. He married Cora, whom he'd known for many years, on Valentine's Day 1991 in Las Vegas. In November 1992, Cora wrote to say that Charlie wanted to give me the remains of his fanzine collection. I've written of this extensively in *Trap Door* No. 12, so no need to tell that story again, but my journey to collect the fanzines between Christmas and New Year's marked the first of a series of visits - always at the same time of year - that became a regular and much-anticipated annual event. I also saw Charlie and Cora at a number of conventions in Las Vegas and at the "Pechangacon," a weekend party in August 1995 whose attendees also included William Rotsler, Arnie and Joyce Katz, Ken Forman, Tom Springer and Tammy Funk, and Charlie's sons, Ed and John. Plans were afoot for a second Pechangacon this summer when the sad news came.

When I called Ed back, he told me about Charlie's final days and that he'd wanted to have his ashes spread at the Amboy Crater, in the middle of the Mojave Desert, about halfway between Barstow and Needles. He didn't say why, Ed said, but that's where he specified, and that's where it'll happen.

So a few weeks later, on June 14th, I flew to Las Vegas, and the following day Rotsler, Arnie and Joyce, Ken Forman, Ben Wilson and I drove out to the Amboy Crater to "send off" Charles Burbee. (You'll recall Ben as the fan for whom Charlie served as best man when he and Cathi got married at Corfu Vegas.) We were met by Cora and numerous members of the Burbee clan. (All three Burbee offspring - Ed, John and Linda - and numerous grandchildren. Also Don, Linda's husband, and Dick and Sunny Bouchard, elderly relations of Charlie's who live at Pechanga and whom I'd met before.) Unfortunately, Charlie's first wife, Isobel, was unable to make the trip. Too bad - I would like to have seen her again after 32 years. It was 112° on the thermometer outside the Amboy Cafe, where we all gathered before going out to the crater. At 11 a.m. we caravaned out to as close as we could get to the crater itself, which is a large volcanic outcropping - very prominent - in the middle of a lava field.

Cora led things off with a few very brief comments. The brevity wasn't intentional. As she explained in a letter I got shortly afterwards, "I was surprised when the time came that I had so little to say. I had a speech, careful wording and all, practiced and ready to recited. But when the time came, I only thanked all who came and then said, 'A chapter completed, a page

turned, a life well-lived, a rest well-earned.' Then I broke down into sobs - and I had promised myself I would be dry-eyed. I guess it comes under the heading of being human. I thought my tears had all been spent. I was wrong." But for me, at the time, her brevity and emotion were honest and moving, and "A chapter completed ..." particularly powerful. Cora spread a circle of Charlie's favorite roses from their garden on the side of a lava outcropping.

Following Cora, Ed Burbee delivered the eulogy which appears to the right. No one else in the family was able to say anything. Ed then opened it up to us fans. Bill, Arnie, Joyce and I had little to say, but Ben Wilson spoke eloquently for all of us. Out of a pocket he produced a can of beer, popped it open, and said "I'd like to take this occasion to share one last beer with Charlie." With that, he took a big chug, then handed it to Ken Forman, who also took a swig. Ben walked over to where Cora had spread the roses in a rough circle and poured a circle of beer inside them. It was a magical moment.

Then we all took turns spreading Charlie's ashes. They were in a metal urn inside a plastic bag with a scoop rather like those that come with boxes of laundry detergent. (This was all new for me and I feel a compulsion to report it completely.) Beginning with Cora and Ed, everyone in the family who wanted to spread some of Charlie's ashes got their chance. When it was my turn, I spread two heaping scoops in semi-circles around me standing atop a big lava rock and thinking good thoughts about both Charlie and Redd. I felt a strong sense of sadness and closure.

Because of the heat and its effect on some of the older attendees, we didn't linger. The service was over in a little over half an hour. Afterwards we all went back to the Amboy Cafe to cool off and to have lunch together. Amboy is a tiny place - signs at the edge of town claim a population of 20 - and the cafe owners said we were the largest crowd they'd ever had there.

We had all been pretty "up" on our drive from Las Vegas to Amboy, talking and joking and saying "Charlie would have wanted it this way." We were much quieter most of the way back.

Since the last issue death has also visited my personal family. My father passed away last September. He was 81 and had been in a convalescent hospital since January '95. The funeral service took place in Hollywood. My brother John and his girlfriend Karen drove up from San Diego; my brother's daughter Nancy and her husband and 13-month-old daughter came up from Carlsbad, near San Diego; and two of my four sons, Art and Gabe, accompanied me. Two people also came from my parents' old neighborhood in Los



## Oration at the Scattering of My Father's Ashes

by Ed Burbee

Thank you all for coming to this send-off for our Father, Charles Burbee.

The family also wishes to thank his recent wife, Cora, for looking after him when he needed looking after during his final years.

I know many people loved, respected, or even venerated our Father. We have invited only a handful of those people here today because our Father wished a simple send-off, if anything at all. For the most part, he lived a life without frills. He liked talking, writing, reading books, wooing the ladies, listening to music, gambling, and drinking beer, and not much more. So this send-off reflects his life.

By his personality and in his writing, however, he went beyond himself. In our time of conformity and homogeneity, he distinguished himself and stood out, much as Amboy Crater forever lifts itself above this desert valley floor. He and this place fit together.

Please know that our Father suffered only a short time, and then left his suffering behind like a man. He told me in his last year that he was not afraid to die. He prepared himself to go. Would that each of us may do the same to face our end.

On his deathbed, my Father obviously felt pain, and indicated so when I mentioned it. Wanting to relieve the pain, I asked him where he hurt. He said "Never mind." As he did all his life, he bore his pain on his own terms to the last.

I feel sad at my Father's passing, but also relieved that his suffering has ended. Now I will try to carry out his wish that we remember him as he lived.

- Ed Burbee, 15 June 1996

Angeles. John and I agreed it wouldn't be a good idea to tell our mother — whose Alzheimer's is pretty far along — about his death. She hadn't asked after him for a long time and it would either confuse her (if, as is likely, she doesn't remember him anymore) or upset her (if she does).

There's no one left of his generation on my father's side of the family — he outlived his brother and two sisters — and their offspring have disappeared into the abyss of non-communication. John called our mother's two brothers (in Cleveland and in Phoenix) about the funeral, but neither of them could come on such short notice. There are no family friends. My parents (read, my father) seemed to prefer a largely solitary life; the last people they socialized with died in the '70s.

After the funeral, I took off with Art and Gabe to cruise by my parents' old house (and my fancestral address). This is something I do whenever I find myself in Los Angeles. The house is rented out now and for the first time, I saw the current occupants: a short, skinny black woman and her two kids. The kids were playing in the front yard, on the path to the front door. I experienced an intense flashback/déjà vu type thing where I superimposed over the scene photos of my brother and me at those kids' age. In one photo, brother John and I are in roughly the same positions in the yard, while my mother poses in the background for the cameraman, my father, in approximately the same location as the woman. These images were fresh in my mind because I have all my parents' photo albums and had looked at them thoroughly over the past year.

Later, back at the motel, we stayed up late reminiscing about my father/their grandfather. Art and Gabe had their own stories to relate; it wasn't all me.

The funeral had been mid-afternoon, but it took until late evening to finally put my father to rest.

Life has its way of karmically balancing all accounts. Just five days before my father's death, my oldest son Ben and his fiance Lycee announced they were expecting a baby in April. Arianna Celeste was born a little late, on May 2nd (also my mother's birthday — she turned 85).

Stay tuned for grandfather stories.

The "Pensero" that follows concludes the series. As I've explained in previous issues, Redd published a fanzine of the same name during his five-year stint in SAPS and gave me permission to reprint it all. The material in this installment is taken from 1987 issues.

"Memories of Elmer" is Charlie's final article, and it must be pointed out that it's a work in progress. He began writing pieces of it in 1989 but due to the deterioration of his health he was unable to bring it to

completion. During my 1994 holiday visit, he turned over to me all the different pieces he'd produced and invited me to spin it together. This I've done, and I believe the result does justice to Charlie's intent. Please note that while I determined the order in which the various vignettes appear, the writing is Charlie's.

"Al Ashley, Atomic Survivor" appears thanks to Linda (Burbee) Markstrom, who encountered it "with some odds and ends in a box" of Charlie's stuff. "I don't know," Linda wrote, "if he published it or not." Since the manuscript was headed with a colophon for *Shangri-L'Affaires* No. 35, March 1947, I went to my files and pulled out that issue. The editorial therein was different! I had no tribal memory of this particular Al Ashley yarn, but not trusting that I went on to peruse the Shaggs that follow No. 35, and then checked out *Burlings* and various other publications for the next few years. I checked with a few other fans, none of whom remembered it either. So, delayed nearly fifty years, here's the final installment of the Al Ashley legend.

I've held over articles by Richard Brandt, Sidney Coleman, Christina Lake, Dave Langford and Steve Stiles to make room for Redd's and Charlie's contributions and not to cramp the lettercol too much. With this backlog, the next issue should appear in (for me) record time. I plan to have it out before Corflu Wave next March. So don't put off writing that letter of comment for too long!

A recent stray thought: It's time to start making the necessary adjustments in the Worldcon rotation cycle so that South Gate Again in 2010 may come to pass.

And another: After due consideration, I cast my top votes for the fan retro Hugos for 1945 for *Shangri-L'Affaires*, Charles Burbee and William Rotsler. Though the other nominees are all worthy, to me this trio's fanac represents my favorite part of 1945 fandom.

Here are the fanzines received stats for 1995 and a bunch of prior years:

|           | '95 | '94 | '93 | '92 | '91 | '90 | '89 | '88 | '87 |
|-----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Australia | 12  | 13  | 16  | 18  | 16  | 16  | 12  | 15  | 32  |
| Canada    | 16  | 14  | 12  | 17  | 1   | 2   | 2   | 1   | 4   |
| U. K.     | 52  | 60  | 51  | 44  | 30  | 61  | 51  | 33  |     |
| U. S.     | 143 | 109 | 91  | 104 | 85  | 68  | 55  | 67  | 58  |
| Others    | 0   | 2   | 2   | 2   | 1   | 5   | 0   | 4   | 3   |
| Totals:   | 223 | 199 | 171 | 191 | 147 | 115 | 130 | 138 | 130 |

The spike in American fanzine production can't entirely be blamed on Andy Hooper: he did 26 issues in '95 but that's not many more than the 23 issues he managed in '94 despite not starting up until March. No, the

blame must be cast in the direction of Las Vegas fandom with its monthly clubzine, *Situation Normal!*?, nearly monthly *Wild Heirs* (including many double issues), a fat fanthology, and more scattered output from various individual fans and the *Nine Lines Each* gang (gangs in fandom?!) — the latter proved the postcard fanzine is still not dead, although they seem to be temporarily giving it a rest. I hope my mentioning those Las Vegas fanzines by name don't cause them to suddenly dry up and blow away in the desert wind. Last issue I lauded Arnie Katz's *Swerve*, which promptly disappeared. (I won't even name his latest solo effort lest it suffer the same fate.) And even *Wild Heirs* has slowed of late.

In addition to Las Vegas fandom's awesome level of fanzine production, I must thank them for Silvercon 4, a most enjoyable convention. Aside from the many Vegrants, out of town attendees included the Vicks, the Speers, Tucker, Donaho, the Haldemans, Rusty Hevelin, the Burbees, Widner, Fitch, Pelz, Hooper, Gonzalez, Richard Brandt and Michele Lyon.

Burbee and Tucker met face to face for the first time since the Pacificon (1946) and I was a witness to it. I was sitting next to Burb carrying on a conversation about Walt Liebscher and Laney when Tucker came in, walked over to Burbee, and just stood there. Burb didn't quite recognize him until Tucker asked him to tell the watermelon story. Burb immediately got it, and Bob went on to explain to the rest of us that back in 1946 he'd taken a temporary job with a studio when he came out for the Pacificon and ended up working in Hollywood for five months. Every time I saw Burbee, Tucker said, I would ask him to tell the watermelon story. Once, twice, even three times a day sometimes. Burbee got thoroughly sick of it and, according to Tucker, got Real Tired of telling it. He wasn't about to tell it that evening, either. I told Tucker I last heard it in 1962 or maybe '63 and I only remembered part of the punch line. Tucker said that's all he remembered, too. Later, Bruce Pelz and I were talking about the last time we'd heard the watermelon story and realized it might have been at the same party.

I had a good time at Silvercon 4, but it apparently burned out its main organizers (Ken and Aileen Forman) and at this point there will be no more. However, the Vegrants have assumed the mantle of local con givers and a few weeks from now will be hosting the first Toner, a four-day convention/party August 23 through 26—the weekend before the Worldcon. I refer to it as a convention/party because of what Tom Springer wrote in the first progress report: "We're talking about a party here. There will be subtle convention-like aspects to this party, but let there be no

mistake that it is a party." Mentioning that a meeting-type room will be available at time, Tom warns, "Because we have a meeting room at our disposal should in no way influence anyone to believe that we might conduct convention-like assemblies in said hall. I hope no one will presume that we would have anything like a panel, or a fanzine reading, or maybe a trivia contest of some kind. Still, these activities may occur so I think it's fair to warn you that there may indeed be convention-like features to this fannish gathering I'm calling a party so I warn you now, be prepared, we might even have badges."

If the very idea of badges doesn't put you off, you might want to show up. Whatever you want to call it—convention or party—I'll be there and hope to see some of y'all, too.

And if not there, then at the Worldcon. Look for me in the fan lounge or the usual smoke-filled rooms.

Returning to my opening paragraph, I feel that the period of mourning I've gone through was necessary to give my sadness and sense of loss its due. It's very hard to lose old friends, and especially to lose so many in such a rapid-fire way. I'm including Bob Shaw and Ethel Lindsay here, though my personal contact with them was far less than with Redd and Charlie.

I'm not sure I ever actually met Bob Shaw—I have a dreamlike memory of a brief meeting in a con hotel hallway, but I've never been able to pin it down (it may have been just a dream)—but he's been on my mailing list since the very beginning and in recent years sent me articles along with short letters containing concentrated doses of personal egoboo. I met Ethel during her 1962 TAFF trip, and for several years before that I was the U.S. subscription agent for her fanzines. Though she was about twice as old as me at the time, thanks in part to the non-ageist nature of fandom but mostly to her sunny, open nature, our rapport was immediate and seamless. I drove her around L.A. in my huge '55 Olds 98, which so impressed her that she mentioned it specifically in her report. On my own TAFF trip in 1989, Ethel was unable to come to the Eastercon and I didn't have time to include a visit to Carnoustie, but she sent me a gift delivered by Peter Mabey and I called her on the last day of my stay in England to thank her and to let her know how much our association meant to me.

I tried several times to return to this column only to find that I wasn't ready. Meanwhile, I continued to take small steps towards getting the rest of this issue together, and finally words came to me. The process of getting this issue out has reenergized me, fannishly speaking, and I think that would please Charlie and Redd and Bob and Ethel.

/-RL, August 1996]

## *The Ice Cream Reward*

"I need six volunteers for a work detail," the staff sergeant said, coming into the barracks and grinning drolly at the lot of us. All us new recruits were relaxing, sitting or lying on our bunks after a hard day of basic training. Most of us were too pooped even to get up and stumble over to the P.X. We looked at him apprehensively. "You and you and you!" he said, pointing at cringing G.I.s within easy reach. "Thanks for volunteering, guys! You and you and you!" At the sixth "you!" he prodded me in the ribs with his finger. I had been in the army air forces only ten days or two weeks, and this was my first experience at being a volunteer. I didn't think I was going to like it much. With a groan I pulled on my shoes again, wincing at my sore muscles.

Reluctantly we followed him outside. This was at Jefferson Barracks, near St. Louis, about seven months after Pearl Harbor. Once, in the days of the Old West, this had been a cavalry post. Back in 1868 it was regimental headquarters for the Seventh Cavalry—the regimental ranks were organized here—and presumably General Custer visited her at one time. After that, another sixty or seventy years had gone by without anybody of importance being stationed here. But now things were looking up: I had arrived on the scene, along with about a million other raw recruits, for Jefferson Barracks had become an air force basic training center.

Missouri in mid-July is hot and humid. Even at 5 a.m. when we turned out for morning rollcall, with the sun barely above the rooftops, it was almost too hot to endure. The sultry heat at 3 or 4 o'clock in the afternoon was unbelievable. But tonight, around 7 p.m., was relatively cool for a change. We breathed the fresh air and felt a little better about the unwelcome task we had "volunteered" for. The sergeant led us to the supply room where we checked out a shovel apiece, and then walked us to the edge of camp. We trudged along resignedly, with shovels over our shoulders instead of rifles. War, we were discovering, is a lot more than fighting and shooting. It is also a lot of miserable hard work.

"I'm sorry, fellas," the sergeant said. He was an easy-going, rotund man, a lot older than any of us, and seemed like a pleasant sort despite the corduroy road of service stripes down his sleeve. He was the first regular army man I had encountered. "I hated to turn you out like this, but the Cap'n wants some truckloads of dirt, and by god we'll give him dirt, won't we? Lots and lots of dirt!" We grumbled our assent, and he laughed. "It's no big deal. And afterwards—well, I got the mess sergeant to give us a canister of ice cream. You'll get it when we're finished here."

## PENSERO



### A Column by REDD BOGGS

I was an ice cream fanatic, but I wasn't thrilled at the news. I had had experience from my first days in the army with the army's version of ice cream. It is—or at least it was, in those days—ice cream pressed into a flat little square brick, individually wrapped in paper, and it was invariably vanilla flavor. But as the sergeant said, the work detail was no big deal. An olive drab dump truck was waiting just below the little hill we climbed, the driver sitting crosslegged in the grass beside it, smoking a cigaret. (Everybody in the armed forces smoked in those days, except me.) A big notch had been cut out of the side of the hill, exposing loose sand and gravel into which we sank almost to our shoetops. Glumly we leaned into our shovels and began to toss the Captain's "dirt" down into the bed of the truck. The sergeant slid down the hill in a small avalanche of gravel to chat with the driver, and didn't even bother to urge us on or to oversee our labor.

It had been a long hard day. All of us worked slowly and methodically except for one well-muscled rawboned young draftee they called Ozark. He must have been a farmer till he was inducted a few weeks before. Maybe this seemed like a vacation to him. He worked like a well-oiled revved-up dirt-throwing machine. Talk about eager beavers! He was more like a gopher or a prairie dog. He hurled down more dirt than the rest of us combined. I figured that he was throwing three shovelfuls to my one. It made me tired just to watch him.

We filled one truck, and another backed up to receive a load. We filled three or four trucks. The sergeant climbed the hill again and hunkered down

nearby, idly tossing pebbles in the air. After watching us a while he went over and tapped Ozark on the shoulder. "Hell, that's enough, kid," he said. "You can take off now. The rest of you birds, keep working." Ozark threw down his shovel and wiped sweat from his brow. He seemed mildly annoyed at reaching the end of his labors. The sergeant went over to the ice cream canister, which was packed in dry ice and sat in the long grass nearby. He fished out two bricks of ice cream and handed them to Ozark. On second thought he gave him another one. "Good work, kid. Now get outta here." Ozark loped off into the twilight.

The rest of us filled the truck before we stopped. By now it was getting too dark to see. "That'll do it," the sergeant said. "If the Cap'n ain't happy, the hell with him. Right, fellas?"

Gratefully we sank down into the grass and rested while the sergeant dragged over the canister of ice cream. He passed out a brick of ice cream apiece, then he tossed another to each of us. It was indeed G.I. ice cream, nearly tasteless, only marginally palatable, but at least it was cold. He kept offering us more. The supply seemed inexhaustible. I think I ate at least ten or twelve of them, and the rest did too. We lounged on the hilltop in the summer starlight, relaxing and slurping mushy ice cream. A cricket began to sing somewhere in the night, just as if this were peacetime instead of in the middle of a war. Nobody said much of anything. We were all too tired to converse.

I started to chuckle. The G.I. leaning on his elbow next to me grunted, "What's so funny?"

"Poor old Ozark," I said. "He works his tail off, and as a reward he gets three hunks of ice cream. We don't strain ourselves, and we get enough ice cream so it runs out of our ears."

The other G.I. considered this. "That's because we're smarter than Ozark," he explained. "We've learned about the goddam army. We know this is how the army works. Ozark - he don't know from shit. He won't last out the fuckin' war if he keeps on like that. He's lucky to get three bricks of ice cream. Next time he ain't going to get nothing except a rupture. Hey, you want this hunk of ice cream? I can't eat no more."

### *The Things We Fan By (3)*

The best collection I ever saw of lettering guides, shading plates, styluses, and other such tools for mimeography belonged to Bruce Pelz. He lived in Santa Monica then, and had the guides displayed on a large pegboard in his livingroom. I suppose this was handy for him, for in those days (circa 1964) he was a Publishing Giant, but the sight of it made me feel grumpy. I told Gretchen afterward that such a display was sheer

ostentation. She said I was just envious, and of course she was right. Bruce owned, I think, virtually every lettering guide there was: every letter style, and every size imaginable. It made an impressive array. He was married then to Dian Girard. I don't know what she thought about such unlikely artifacts decorating the livingroom, but she was, and is, a fan and perhaps didn't mind.

The Pelz collection must be matched or exceeded by that of Ted White, who is the great master of mimeography. He told me, a few years ago, that he has "so many guides, so many styles" that he might never get around to using some of them ever again. I have a fairly large arsenal of such things myself, but nothing quite so grand and comprehensive as these others. When I acquired my first mimeograph from Montgomery Ward in March 1947 the purchase included, at no extra charge, the very first lettering guide and stylus I ever owned. I still have them, years later, but at first I tried them without success. I had typed hundreds of stencils during my years in the armed forces during world war 2, but had never been asked to use lettering guides. I had never even seen them used. I was completely baffled by the things for some time.

Then I wrote Ward's to asking about purchasing new kipads for the mimeograph, intending to do some color work, and was referred to Heyer of Chicago, manufacturer of the machine and the few mimeo tools I had received. Heyer sent me a catalog that among other things pictured and offered for sale numerous lettering guides and styluses, and from studying this I realized that the stylus provided with the mimeo was not intended for use with a lettering guide and can't be used for the purpose. Instead it was a ballpoint stylus meant for drawing or signing your name on stencil. The usual comic-strip light bulb went on over my head, and I said "Aha!" or something of the sort. From the catalog I purchased a hook-shaped stylus, as well as a number of other lettering guides, and taught myself how to use them efficiently. Unfortunately I have largely lost the knack of using such things through lack of practice. Also, stencils have changed over the years, having lost most of their waxiness, and no longer take stylus work as they once did.

Properly cared for, such mimeo tools will last forever, I suppose. I never had a stylus break or a lettering guide crack, at least to the extent of rendering it useless. Starting with those Heyer products my collection grew to include stenciling equipment made by Speed-O-Print, Gestetner (some in sickly green envelopes, some in red-and-white envelopes, all labeled "Made in England"), A. B. Dick (even one or two of the old "Wrico" series), a couple Pickett draftsman

guides, and a few items completely without manufacturers' identification. I also have the circle, oval, and square guides that were given as premiums by Master Products when you purchased their Masterweave paper. (I was missing one of those guides—I forgot which one—but discovered it at last among Gretchen's art supplies.)

One curious item is a little kit in a blue box that consists mostly of five styluses with changeable points. The box is labeled "Sun-up," along with a string of Japanese characters, and I seem to remember that Bjo was importing the kits from Japan circa 1962 and peddling them to fans for a modest price. The kit I have must have belonged to Gretchen, for the styluses are of minimal use to anyone, like me, who already owns an array of American- or British-made styluses.

The date I acquired some of the tools is scribbled or stamped on some of the tattered envelopes containing them. I note that I bought three shading plates on a single day, 10 December 1957, and another on 3 January 1958. The prices, too, are still scrawled on a few envelopes. I paid \$1.85 for Gestetner lettering guide "F.C 3/8 in." and \$1.40 for Speed-O-Print plastic shading plate #956 (basket weave). The prices seem modest enough now, but were quite exorbitant years ago.

Another inscription that appears, although dimly, on one of the lettering guide envelopes (the one for A.B. Dick #1497, Modern Display) is the word "Priest's." This was written there by Rich Elsberry one day circa 1951 when he was using my stenciling tools. He was merely checking the proper spelling before committing the word to a stenciled heading in *Snulbug*.

To my dismay some valuable items of my once-considerable collection have disappeared over the years, mostly from lending such things now and then and not getting them back. I was perhaps too generous with them when I was living in Shangri-LA, but it's more likely that most of them disappeared when I lent them to nonsans in Berkeley. In my early days there—when the Free Speech Movement, the Vietnam Day Committee, and Peoples Park were current—I aided and abetted considerable amounts of political publishing in and around campus, although Dave Rike was then the real Mimeographer to the Masses hereabouts. Since many of the people to whom I lent stenciling tools were affluent graduate students at U.C. Berkeley, they were probably careless of the things. Mimeo tools are precious to me, but probably seemed to them of small worth. Also I was remiss in lending such things without collateral and even without keeping careful records. At any rate, things disappeared during my Los Angeles and Berkeley days, and to prove it I have a number of

empty green-and-white envelopes that formerly contained lettering guides and plates, and even my cherished double-ended A.B. Dick stylus is gone forever.

Once in Minneapolis I even sold off a couple of lettering guides, an unlikely act that still amazes me when I remember. One of them was a special favorite of mine, and I can still see in my mind's eye a heading for *Sky Hook* done with that guide. It was for "The Affective Language of Fandom" by Francis T. Laney. Except in memory I haven't seen that particular issue in a quarter of a century. Why I sold those items I don't know, but perhaps I offered them to Joel Nydahl of Marquette, Michigan, because of my admiration for his leading fanzine, *Vega*.

I actually sold those lettering guides to Nydahl, although for a pittance, but on the other hand a few such items have been bestowed on me as gifts. One (Speed-O-Print #201, lower case, 1/8 in.) was sent to me in a letter from Peter J. Vorzimer for no particular reason I could assign. I hadn't asked him for it. Another one (Old English letters, 3/8 in.) was given me by the late Ron Haydock of Los Angeles, perhaps in payment for running off some material for him. But those were small gifts compared with those given me more recently by Dick Ellington and Dave Rike. These items, which partly replaced some of those missing from my collection, included styluses and lettering guides, and even a Gestetner shading plate, pattern number 2. I thank them both for their great generosity.

Back in Minneapolis circa 1960 I conceived the notion of adding to my stenciling tools by writing to a number of ex-fans and asking them for the lettering guides they were no longer using. I didn't have any luck. Some of my letters were returned, address unknown. Most of those that were not returned went unanswered. The few responses I received contained the not-unexpected news that such equipment was stored out of reach or had been lost or given away many years before. Norm Stanley replied, I remember, pointing out that the headings in his fanzine, *Fan-Tods*, were all done freehand, not with a lettering guide—something I knew but had forgotten. In any case my inquiries elicited no material response.

I am still interested in acquiring such antique equipment. Now that the word processor and the copier have largely supplanted the mimeograph in fandom and elsewhere, lettering guides, shading plates, and styluses aren't of much use anymore. Only the dwindling few of us who still utilize the stencil duper as our voice to the world have any need for such tools. If anyone has such things gathering cobwebs in the attic or rust in the basement, please ship them to me. Such things contain fannish magic. Some lettering guides and

shading plates are green, and some are even ruby in color, but most of them are translucent amber plastic. When you use them atop a lighted mimeoscope they turn your fingers to gold. I have spent too many happy hours during the past forty years with golden fingers while I lettered headings and traced Lee Hoffmann, William Rotter and ATom illustrations to allow such ancient tools to go the way of the wooden moldboard plow and the Paleolithic hand ax.

### *Hank Bissell Rides Again*

"There goes Hank Bissell!" I said to myself the other day when I heard a distant whistle tooting over the rooftops. Suddenly I realized that I have been saying that (usually silently) whenever I hear a factory or a train whistle blow ever since I was a small boy. I don't usually talk in something resembling Cockney riming slang, but this is one exception.

It all goes back to a story told us by our mother when we were small kids. She was talking about her own childhood in the early days of the century and many thousand miles from the sound of Bow bells. Her father, my grandfather, Chalmers Robinson, was an Iowa farmer (despite his highfalutin name) in those long ago days. It was his custom to come up from the fields for the noonday meal — it was called dinner, not lunch; the evening meal was called supper — when he heard the noon whistle echoing across the meadows from the town of Massena, not far off. Grandma Robinson always had the food ready on the table so he could wolf it down — at work since dawn, he was always ferociously hungry — and return to his chores.

Now you may wonder, as I once did, why he did not consult his watch and not have to keep an ear cocked for the faraway hoot of a whistle. A pocket watch cost no more than a dollar in those saintly days. A silver stemwinder that was about the size of a millwheel fit neatly, nevertheless, into the watchpocket every pair of overalls had then, and perhaps even now. If you didn't have a silver chain to go with it you fastened it with a leather thong or a shoestring. And you may wonder even further why there was no timepiece in the house ticking away on the mantel or a grandfather clock like the one in the song, standing on the floor because it was too tall for the shelf. Perhaps a clock was somewhere in the house, but not in plain sight of the kitchen. Or perhaps not. Farm families rose at dawn and went to bed at dark. They had no train to catch, no time clock to punch. Down on the farm in those days they had a different attitude toward time.

One day as Grandma was preparing the meal my mother, little Ellen, then a girl of four or five, was standing by the front window, pensively looking out at

the road running past the house. She saw their nearest neighbor drive by with his team and wagon, heading for town. "There goes Hank Bissell," she told her mother. She noticed that her mother suddenly redoubled her efforts to get dinner ready, but she thought nothing of that. A long time afterward, while the meal sat waiting on the kitchen table, my grandfather tromped in. While he was washing up Grandma said peevishly, "You took your time getting here. Dinner's almost cold."

Grandpa looked puzzled. "I came up right away. I heard the noon whistle blow just a few minutes ago."

"How can that be?" Grandma said. She turned to innocent little Ellen. "Why, you said at least half an hour ago you heard the noon whistle."

"No, I didn't!" she replied in astonishment.

"You did too!" Grandma insisted. "You were standing there by the front window and you said, 'There goes the noon whistle.'"

"Oh, I know!" my mother said, light dawning at last. "I saw Hank Bissell drive past and said, 'There goes Hank Bissell.'"

My grandmother looked at her speechlessly, while my grandfather boomed with laughter. It became a family joke in the years that followed. My grandparents are gone these many years, and Hank Bissell too, I suppose, but he still goes rattling by in his farm wagon eighty years or more after that noontide, as ghostly and as legendary as the Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow. I see him in my mind's eye, every time I hear a distant whistle. "*There goes Hank Bissell!*"

### *Ya, Minneapolis! (1)*

When Poul Anderson first contacted fandom I was standing at the door (quite literally) to welcome him. For all I knew I was the very first science fiction fan he ever met, and certainly I was the first who was involved with fandom itself. I was also probably responsible for his attending his first fan club meeting. I hope he doesn't hate me too much for that.

It was long ago and far away: Minneapolis, in January 1948. When John Chapman, secretary of the Minneapolis Fantasy Society, recently revived from its wartime hibernation, asked me for the addresses of any prospective new members in the Twin Cities area I knew about, I supplied several including that of Poul himself. He had a letter printed in "The Reader Speaks," *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, December 1947, and from this I acquired his address: c/o Mrs. A. W. Anderson, Carleton College Library, Northfield, Minnesota. After some criticism of the "science" in recent stories he said nice things about "the current issue" of TWS, and opined that "Could be the Good Old Days of science fiction are coming in the immediate future."

By that time Poul had had two stories published ("Tomorrow's Children" and "Logic," both in *ASF*), but I'm not sure whether he had any inkling that he himself would contribute greatly to the "immediate future" of science fiction. At any rate, he sounded like a good prospect for the MFS. By the time he came to the meeting he was living in Minneapolis and attending the University of Minnesota.

The MFS, in those days, was meeting in a room of the downtown YMCA. When I arrived early that subzero evening I encountered in the hallway just outside the room a tall young man with a big shock of hair who beamed amiably at me through thick lenses and introduced himself to me. It was none other than Poul Anderson. I'm not sure what I said — probably "Uff da!" — but I was suitably impressed.

The next person to show up that evening was Clifford D. Simak. In the frigid weather he had had trouble with his car. I hadn't seen Cliff in about five years, and had trouble recognizing him, so bundled up was he in cap, earflaps, gloves, overcoat, and overshoes. But I had the opportunity of introducing two of the leading sf writers to each other on that memorable occasion.

Anderson in those days wore a long tasseled stocking cap and a "Wallace for President" button on his coat collar. The button referred, of course, to Henry Wallace, not George. On a later occasion, when someone commented on the button, Poul remarked, rather offhandedly, that he was not too certain after all that Wallace was an acceptable candidate. I have the impression that the button soon disappeared from Poul's collar, and I suppose he didn't vote Progressive party that November.

You will be completely overwhelmed to learn that Poul and I shared a double room at the Torcon in July 1948 after six of us MFS members traveled to the con in a car belonging to Poul's parents. We saw little of one another at the con, being involved in activities at the con that didn't often intersect, and even less in the years that followed. I remember that Poul lived in north Minneapolis for three or four years before he married the former Karen Kruse and moved to the Bay area. (It was about fourteen years later that I learned from Long John Magnus that "Kruse" was pronounced in two syllables!) During the time of his bachelorhood Poul became a very prolific writer, riding the crest of the wave in the early 1950s much in the way Bob Silverberg did a few years later. He started selling to *Planet Stories*, *Super Science Stories* (I always thought "Flight to Forever," *SSS*, November 1950, was an especially good story), and other magazines, as well as to Campbell.

It must have been at the Pacificon II (1964) that I met Poul once again. Although I didn't attend the con itself, as chronicled in "The Fan on the Mezzanine," *Bete Noire* #10, but at the post-con party at Dick and Pat Ellington's (they lived on Oregon street, Berkeley, in those days) I encountered Poul. He was sitting on a sofa beside Ruth Berman, who had been only about three years old when Poul and I first met. He looked very familiar, beaming enthusiastically and making his characteristic gestures as he talked. It hardly seemed as if sixteen years and more could have passed since I first saw him in his stocking cap and his Wallace button one cold winter night in Minneapolis in January 1948.

#### *The Things We Fan By (4)*

"Boy! You sure got a lot of pencils there!" I wish I had a nickel for every time someone has said that to me. I would have the money to acquire a computer, all the hardware, software, and beware. I'd still need the "pencils," though, for convenience, to make notes in my pocket notebook when I'm away from my desk. A man remarked on my "pencils" only the other day when I pulled out my Papermate to jot down something. I selfconsciously pulled my jacket closed to hide my shirt pocket, where all my "pencils" are, and said "You bet," and hurried away as fast as I could.

A few years ago, in a con report, someone wrote slightly of a fan observed at the con (it wasn't me) who had an array of (as I recall) six pens in his shirt or jacket pocket. I was astonished to learn that such a pocketful is, apparently, the sign of a nerd. Embarrassed, I wrote hastily to the fan reporter to ask how many pens I was allowed to carry without being stigmatized, but received no answer. I suppose I am a nerd, although I carry only five pens, not six, at present. And despite the oft-repeated exclamation about "all my pencils," I don't carry any pencils at all.

If it would help me avoid nerdship I suppose I could get along with only four pens, but one is a backup to my regular Papermate (medium-point, blue ink). These days Papermates don't last very long before requiring a refill and usually run dry when you're scribbling an important notation. The other pens include a Parker Jotter, a fluid-ink pen, the kind that some people, curiously enough, call an "inkpen." Dave Rike cleaned and revived my old silver-barreled Parker, a beautiful and relatively expensive pen that Gretchen gave me as a birthday gift years ago, but my little Jotter serves me so well that I hesitate to change pens just now. Then there's a Papermate with black ink instead of blue, and a Flair thin-line felt-tip with red ink. All are useful upon occasion.

Sometimes in a bureaucratic office I am given a

form to sign or fill out, and the bureaucrat searches for a pen to offer me. It usually turns out to have been lost or swiped by somebody else. While he fumbles helplessly I fetch a pen from my pocket and start to write. He is usually impressed and amazed that someone actually carries his own pen.

Once I was in the examination room of an Oakland clinic, waiting as usual a weary interval for the doctor to arrive when my eye centered on a soiled and crudely handlettered sign posted on the back of the door. In red felt-tip it said, "Remember - this is room #3." This struck me as ludicrous, for there were only four rooms in the clinic and none was occupied at the moment except the one I was in. Waiting chilled and uncomfortably dressed in a paper garment with my feet getting cold I improved the time by pulling my felt-tip pen from my nearby heap of clothes and adding a numeral ahead of the "3" in the sign so it read "Remember - this is room #23." Nobody inquired about the room number when I left the clinic, but I thought of the poor patient on a later occasion who is asked, "Which room were you in?" "Uh, number 23," he says. "Look, no jokes," he is sternly warned. "What room was it?" "Room 23!" he snaps. The thought of such an incident cheered me a little while I waited for the doctor. That's one reason for toting a red felt-tip.

Behind the lineup of pens, which are contained in a pocket protector, I carry several loose 4 x 6 sheets of notepaper folded in half. These are for my current daily notes that aren't intended for permanent record. They serve their purpose for a day or two and are discarded. In my other shirt pocket - I hate shirts such as dress shirts that have only one pocket! - I carry two items: a small address book and a black vinyl notebook, both bought at Woolworth's. The address book is an ordinary item, although it may have your name, address, and phone number in it. Some years ago in FAPA (August 1982, mailing #180) I wrote about my pocket notebook, and it hasn't changed much in the interim. It has a papercovered insert which when it is filled can be removed and replaced with a new one. I file the old inserts away since they're filled with gems of wit and wisdom I make use of from time to time. In the FAPA mailing referred to I published a selection from these notebooks (and earlier ones in a different format) as *Scintillas from World's End*.

Thus accoutered with writing materials whenever I sally forth I am ready to jot down any wayward thoughts that occur to me all day long. The only time such a work of genius escapes me is when I am too lazy to reach up to my shirt pocket and take out a pen and notebook.

### The One Who Has Written

You have something to say, and seizing paper and pen you say it. There was an inner compulsion to express something, and you had to comply. Whatever it was, it strikes you just then as amusing, interesting, or perhaps even important. But then comes a moment of self-doubt. Even in the throes of writing, possessed of the gross egotism of creation, the writer may sense that the piece of work is not quite up to his standards. The savor is not quite what it should be. Or he supposed that unwarily he has strayed into someone else's field, and the other person would have said it more brilliantly or cogently. What then? What is one to do?

If he is a professional writer with an established reputation the writer can sell the piece even if it's secondrate. After all, it has his hallmark smacked into it, however untidily. With his loyal fans he can do no wrong. In any case the money is important. Critics often assume that a writer should discard inferior but still salable work, but that's ridiculous when food, gas, and electricity are so dear.

If he is an amateur, with his own fanzine - in SAPS, say - the writer has less impulse to rush into print with something that strikes him as below standard. But even here one feels the need, often enough, to fill a few pages. After all, in SAPS you owe twelve pages a year. Francis T. Laney once remarked that anything that gets banged into a mimeograph stencil is sacred and should be printed. I feel almost the same way about words scribbled onto a sheet of newsprint.

And of course foremost in one's mind is the recollection that a piece the writer himself thinks of small worth is sometimes highly prized by his readers. Bret Harte had tossed his poem "Plain Language from Truthful James" into the wastebasket, and fished it out only to fill a hole in a page of the *Golden Era*. Since the poem made him famous, one can only wonder what would have happened had he filled out that page with some blather about renewing your subscription. One writes and one publishes the results. The readers like the piece, or they don't. When you have a manuscript in hand it is not the moment to be timid. Nothing would be published if one got terminally faint-hearted in that awful moment of self-doubt. So, there is this little piece you have written. What must be done with it? Throw it away? No, of course not. You put it into print. Q.E.D.

- Redd Boggs 1987

# Memories of Elmer

by Charles Burbee

Having known Elmer Perdue for over forty years, I feel semi-qualified to write about him.

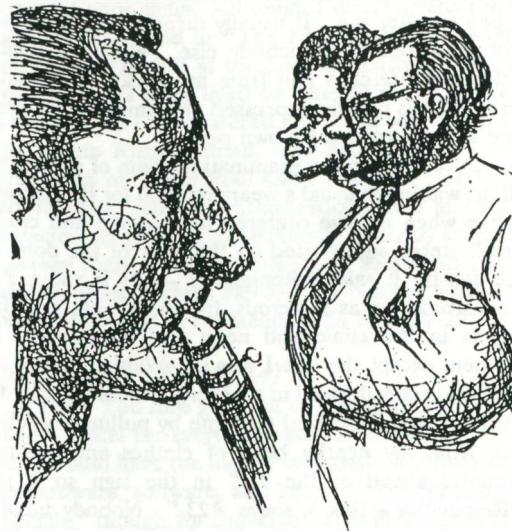
Elmer's attempts to make home brew were ludicrous. His main problem, I think, was that he would not follow directions. He procured a home brew recipe from a source I don't recall, bought a six-gallon crock and, after bottling his batch, put the bottles into the refrigerator. After a couple of weeks, one of the bottles blew up. Fearing for the rest, he quickly opened the refrigerator, threw in a large pipe wrench, and swiftly slammed the door. A week or two later, he cleaned up the broken glass and mess.

He thought he'd try another batch. After he bottled it, he placed the full bottles back into the crock and filled the crock with ice cubes. Weeks later, when he returned from work one day, he found that all of his bottles had blown—and along with them the crock. He didn't try anymore.

Elmer liked my home brew, though. I was something of a home brew master at the time, having successfully made about sixty batches. Elmer used to come to my house for the weekend and drink eighteen to twenty quarts—yes, quarts—of my delicious home brew. He could have had my recipe, but he never asked for it. Instead, he went through defeat after defeat.

Elmer's house was built on one of the steepest hills in Southern California, and cheaply. It was splitting in two between the kitchen and the back bedroom. Bob Bradford made a deal; he'd shore up the splitting-off part, doing the work on his days off, if Elmer would keep his refrigerator full of beer.

The basement was loaded with stuff he got at county auctions: netsukes, diamonds, steam engine that had an electric boiler, all the twenty or so non-Oz books written



by L. Frank Baum (like *Dot and Trot in Merryland* and *The Sea Fairies*), other books, magazines, 78 rpm records (after he'd put them all on tape). He got some old phonographs and tape recorders, but never got a VCR because he was waiting for one to show up at a county auction.

He bought the lot next door to keep somebody from building there and thus being able to peek down into his kitchen. He bought Jimmy Kepner's house—next door to his own—when Jike was about to lose it to loan sharks who wanted a balloon payment he didn't have.

For a long time, whenever I visited Elmer I would enter to find him on the phone with Betty ordering him to stop associating with me. She lived rent-free in Kepner's old house—she just never paid any and he wouldn't dun her.

Elmer once paid \$500 to a fellow to print copies of an L. Frank Baum playlet the guy had found. He put it through FAPA. But the fellow didn't mention Elmer as an angel, so when he later asked Elmer if he had extra copies—Elmer had a couple hundred left—Elmer said, "All you want at \$2.50 each."

Elmer was a shrewd poker player, even when drunk. But it was difficult getting a game together at his place. I went there with Lee Jacobs and we knocked on the door. No answer. Lee Jacobs was highly unathletic, so I jumped the fence and went in the back door. Elmer was sound asleep.

I called Elmer another time. Let's play poker, I said. I can't, he said. I'm lying down. I'm lying on the kitchen floor. I'm drunk.

Onetime he met Kris Neville at the door naked, drunk, down on hands and knees. Kris had him taken to the hospital to get dried out. Cost \$900. Elmer called me

about two months later to tell me he had diagnosed himself in need of drying out, had dried himself out personally, and had thus—he said gleefully—saved another \$900.

Another time Gordon Dewey tried to get him off wine onto whisky. Elmer drank super-sweet wine—Angelica. A liquor store in his neighborhood carried it just for him. When they went out of business he started buying it by the case.

Elmer, stinking drunk and in his lower-plate-shooting-out stage, was once run down by another drunk. He was taken to L.A. County General Hospital. Both Laney and I visited him. To cheer him up I said, "Elmer, just think! This may be the very ward Jelly Roll Morton died in."

He must have quit drinking a hundred times. (A whole article in itself.) He would call. "My fourteenth day of sobriety, Meyer!" Would keep track on a calendar. But it never lasted. At parties he would give his spectacles to somebody and then crash, carefully, to the floor. He did this at one big FJA party to avoid the possibility of fucking Irene.

Elmer Perdue had a strange love life. He fell in love by mail with Patti Gray (Pogo) some time in the late '30s. They corresponded extensively and planned to meet at the Denvention in 1941.

But this is actually Pogo's story. Bob Lichtman was in touch with her by mail around the time of the fiftieth anniversary FAPA mailing, having been given her address by Forrest J Ackerman in the course of following up leads to try to locate the charter members. When he told me that, I inquired whether he had asked her to write an article about Elmer. I mentioned that their first date would make a good story. I know the story, but don't want to write it. It's better told by the woman who experienced it.

Bob hadn't asked her that. He gave me her address and I wrote to her, but never heard back.

"Take out your cock, Meyer, I want to look at it," I said to Elmer Perdue one day many years ago. He was wearing only a skimpy gray pair of shorts at the time, so it was no trouble to flip out his cock. Back of the head was a quarter-inch band of skin that seemed overly tight.

"What the hell is that band of skin doing there, Meyer?"

"It's the skin left over from a botched job of circumcision, Meyer."

"Doesn't that bother you like hell when you get an erection, Meyer?"

"It hurts so much I can't complete a fuck, Meyer."

"How long has it been like that?"

"Since I was seven, Meyer."

Elmer's sex life was severely restricted. He told us all that he and Rachel fucked a minimum of four times a day. But Rachel said that in the four months of their marriage they hadn't done it once.

He paid for two abortions for Mary, or so he said. She

said once, "How can I take seriously a man who answers the phone, 'God speaking'? Why do you ask him to your parties? Everybody else is so nice and he's such a creep. Whenever I think of him, I see a bathtub full of magazines and newspapers."

There was a restaurant owner lady who asked him to visit her and play on her organ. She meant the one between her legs as well as the one in the front room; she liked the double meaning.

I told Elmer I knew two guys who went to play with her organ and they said she was very demanding. One said, "She comes like a man!" Incredulously.

Elmer pleaded drunkenness or something like that. I asked him if he'd humped her during that visit.

"I respected her singleness," was his reply.

"You mean you didn't fuck her?"

He looked at me with a big smile and laughed his hee-hee-hee treble laugh and said, "You mean I goosed again?"

"Yes, Elmer." I thought: goosed with Irene. Kicked out of Disneyland for drunkenness. Goosed with lady he went to Seattle with. Suspected him of inability to fuck.

"You can get it fixed," I said, referring to his cock. I offered to drive him there and back. But he never did get the operation. Fear of knife.

I went to see my old pal Elmer one day in 1958. We went to South Gate in '58. It was my considered opinion that a woman named Rita had gone there to fuck or be fucked by Elmer. I told this to Elmer.

"But Meyer—" He started to give reasons why this was probably not so.

"Do you want to fuck her or not, Meyer?"

"Yeah, I do," he said, so I told him—we were in the rest room at the time—to go out and buy a bottle of I. W. Harper. It's her favorite whisky, I said. She drinks it when she can afford it, but mostly she drinks wine.

He said he didn't know where a liquor store was. Right down this block, I told him. You can go right out this door to the street, buy the bottle, stick it into the breast pocket of your coat, and come back and sit with us in the booth. Then, after ten or fifteen minutes, ask Rita if she wants to see the room with the art show and offer to take her there and show it to her.

"But what if she says no?"

"She won't say no."

"She'll go with you."

"What if she won't?"

"But she will. I told you, Elmer, that she came here to fuck you, soon as she heard you had a room of your own. Elmer, do you want to fuck this girl or not?"

"Yes, Meyer!"

But it never happened.

One memory remains pretty clear to this day. Elmer and Jimmy Kepner were describing to each other devices they had built to help them masturbate. Elmer described one that he had built using a pair of suspenders—to give it, he said, a return bounce. Neither Kepner nor I understood his description.

On another occasion, I remember Elmer describing a device that included a glass milk bottle and a piece of raw liver, but the rest of the details are lost.

He hired a couple maids, black, and paid them \$10 each for doing his laundry. One Christmas he gave them \$20 each as a bonus, and they wanted more. Once he hired a fan girl named Audrey Clinton. Her job was to cook his dinner once a day for \$10 a week.

Once a week or so, an old-time jazz man, Muggsy Spanier, used to come over and would spend half an hour in her bedroom while Elmer would pace up and down by the door listening to the joyful sounds from within. Then Muggsy would go to his car, whose engine he had left running the whole time, and take off. (Once he'd had trouble starting his car so, thereafter, he never stopped his engine when he parked.)

At intervals, Audrey would borrow \$20 or so—to buy clothes, she said, to visit an old boyfriend who was in jail for molesting a 13-year-old girl.

"It wasn't his fault," she said. "The little bitch seduced him."

Most of her stories started with the word "like." "Like I'm sitting in Barney's Beanery and three guys were trying to seduce me, so I figured the only way I could get out from under was to get twice as drunk as everyone else, and this I proceeded to do."

I said, "So you went home with one of them and spent the night with him."

"Well, yes," she replied.

Once Elmer arrived at a ragtime club meeting two hours late. "I had to do my laundry," he explained.

I said, "You still have two girls doing your laundry for \$10 apiece?"

Nod.

"Seems to me you're the one getting screwed."

—Charles Burbee

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## Al Ashley, Atomic Survivor

[unpublished editorial for *Shaggy No. 35*]

by Charles Burbee (1947)

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I encountered a great deal of trouble getting out this issue, but I am going to spare you all of the details.

Instead, I would rather talk about Al Ashley, who has two brains but only one head (at last report) and who is always good for a dogmatic statement on any subject. The other night I got talking with him about the Bomb, Atomic, M-1. He did not wish to argue about whether it was going to drop or not. He seemed to think it would. He expressed no misgivings about living in this metropolitan area, 2½ miles from the picturesque City Hall. In fact, he was rather proud of his don't-give-a-damn attitude about the whole thing. Sure, said Al, the bomb will drop and the whole city, we'll say, goes up in a noisy flash of light. Maybe two or more bombs will score hits here and in the suburbs. So there will be nobody left alive in all Los Angeles except me and perhaps a handful of others. Well, I said, what do you propose to do about scrabbling for a living? It'll be kind of easy at first, but the food stores will be sought after like mad, and there'll be some rough fighting over stuff like Spam, you know.

I don't anticipate trouble there, said Al. And if there is any fighting, you can be sure I can handle that part of it.

Yeah, about what about those marauders we read about in *Complete Novels of the Future* where lovely girls

(of which you no doubt are well-stocked) are the prey of cockmad individuals? No law, you know. Every man for himself.

Oh, said Al. I'd get along.

But how are you going to fight off, say, a band of twenty men who are all armed in one way or another. They come up on you and demand all your food and all your women and will not refrain from shooting you down if you raise your voice above a hoarse whisper. What'll you do then?

I'll handle them, said Al. There is a way to handle every situation.

Yeah, but how will you handle these guys in this case?

Something will occur to me. Talk 'em out of it, maybe. Of course, if they want to get rough—well, that's their lookout. He yawned and stretched to his full length of 5'5", and seemed bored with the subject.

Al, I said. Would you take over the job of ruling the area? I mean, are you a big enough man to do it single-handed?

Nothing hard about it, said Al.

I could see he meant it so I said, All right, Al, let us now go on with this chess game. I'll admit, you are invincible. The terrors of the wild are as nothing to you. You are unbeatable, impregnable against the combined might of the rest of the world.

Ten minutes later I shoved my Queen forward two spaces. Checkmate, I said. Checkmate, you invincible man.

—Charles Burbee (March 1947)

# THE CRACKED EYE

BY GARY HUBBARD



... So here I am, in a hotel room in Las Vegas. I'm looking out the window. Directly below me, Fremont Street stretches off into the distance. And although I have never been here before, it all looks familiar somehow: the Golden Nugget, Lady Luck, that neon cowboy mindlessly waving his arm back and forth like a metronome. Familiar sights, implanted in my brain by countless movies and TV shows set here in Glitter City.

Except it appears that someone has built some kind of giant erector set affair over the entire street. It brings to mind a section of the skeleton of a zeppelin, or perhaps something from a cyberpunk movie. Very *sfnal*.

This is my first visit to LV, but (to tell the truth) the Hubbard family has had a presence in this town for quite some time. It all started with that time the Old Man ran off to Vegas for the weekend without telling anyone about it. Let's see ... that was back in '75, I think.

Mom was, of course, distraught when he failed to come home that evening. Until he called her long distance from his hotel room, that is. After that, she was pissed ... mightily pissed.

She stayed pissed, too, for a long time after the Old Man got back home, despite the fact that he had brought back with him a bunch of souvenirs with which to mollify her anger.

But, at length, she did forgive him, and the next year they went to Vegas together, and she loved it. From that point on, my dear, old, frugal, gray-haired mother was hopelessly hooked on the place ... as well as the slot machines. Thereafter, my folks went back there year

after year in order to blow their life savings. Even after the Old Man died, Mom continued their annual pilgrimage on her own and has scarcely missed a trip since then these past twenty years.

I turn away from the window and plop myself down on the bed. Jeez, am I ever tired! I haven't even bothered to unpack my bag. It's Friday evening, and I've been on one plane or another since early this morning (whenever that was, a couple of time zones ago). I should get down to the con, but I feel so beat. Is this what they call jet lag? I thought that only happened when you went east. I think I'll give myself just a few minutes.

I decide to call Bess. It'll be late back home, but she would want me to call, nonetheless.

The phone rings a few times, and then what I hear is this:

*"Hello seeker. I don't know how you got this number, but by dialing it you have surely changed your life forever. To record your message, after the beep, please leave your name and telephone number, and we'll try to get back to you. Seek on, seek on."*

That's my answering machine.

That means Bess is either out somewhere or asleep. I'll try again later.

I guess I should get down to the convention. I wonder what's on TV?

Not much, as it turns out. There isn't even a movie channel. Fuck, what kind of a hotel is this that it doesn't show skin flicks? I might as well get on down to Corflu.

... A most confusing place. I got lost in the casino. This hotel—Jackie Gaughan's Grand Plaza—consists of two circular towers joined together by a bunch of business in between. Corflu is over in the South Tower, while my room—for some reason—is in the North Tower. When I ask for directions, the guy at the front desk says I should just cut through the casino.

The casino out to be nothing at all like I pictured Vegas casinos to be. I had always pictures these gambling dens as large, well-lit places where glamorous spies and movie stars sat around playing baccarat and drinking champagne out of those funny-looking glasses. But this is more like a dimly-lit warehouse. It is crammed with slot machines which are seemingly placed without any apparent regard for order, and this gives the place a labyrinthine quality. Of course, every labyrinth has its Minotaur, and this one has a guy in a cowboy hat, who is standing on a stage at the far end of the room doing piss-poor imitations of country and western singers. No one in the room is paying much attention to him. They are mostly just standing or sitting in front of the slot machines, mechanically feeding them coin after coin. These people don't look much like either spies or movie stars, though. For the most part, they appear to be paunchy, middle-aged white people in baggy shorts—they sort of look like my relatives. See ... that chubby lady over there holding a plastic cup full of quarters in her hand could be my mother.

After a lot of Brownian Movement back and forth through the casino, I do eventually find my way out of there and stumble onto Corflu. Turns out it's up a flight of stairs in a sort of large hallway that serves as a connector between the two towers. (At this point, I want to say that people in LV are not to be trusted for directions anywhere. Whatever you ask them, they always direct you to the nearest slot machine.)

#### Fans.

Ah, yes, when's the last time I've seen a fan?

Kalamazoo's got its share of Trekkies and SCA types, of course, along with the usual gang of cyber-punks and faux beatnik vampires. But no *real* fans, as far as I can tell. So finding myself among *real* fans, at last, is an interesting experience.

Being neither movie stars or lumpy Middle Americans (although, of course, some of them are lumpy), these fannish types seem out of place here in Las Vegas. The natural environments for fans, it seems to me, are community college cafeterias and Ramada Inns located in towns like Madison or Seattle.

Fans are extra-crunchy. Take, for example, this guy over here with the dirty blond beard and loud suspen-

ders. He's carrying on about a role-playing game he's been developing that's based on Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*.

"Actually, it's more about German expressionist movies in general," he says. "I want to make it possible for players to role-play Dr. Mabuse, Nosferatu, or Peter Lorrie—with the city of Metropolis as a common background. I think Steve Jackson might be interested."

The first person I run into who knows who I am (although this is the first time I've met him) is Eric Lindsay. It sort of amazes me that he's come all the way from Australia just to be here. And, you know, it kind of cheers me up, too.

You see, up till now, I've been a little grumpy over that long plane ride from Kalamazoo. I really hate flying. The seats are too cramped, the air is bad, the food is bad, and I tend to suffer from alternating waves of anxiety attacks and hemorrhoids. But, compared to all the horrors Eric must have endured flying across the Pacific, my own few hours of discomfort diminish greatly in significance.

We chat for a little bit, and then I say, "Hey, you know, I saw this movie recently that takes place in Australia."

He looks at me guardedly. "Not *Priscilla*?" he says, with a sort of rueful laugh.

"Well ... yeah," I reply.

"It's sort of a fantasy, don't you think?" he says. I get the impression that he may be less than thrilled by the subject.

Personally, I really liked it.

I had seen *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* just a few weeks previous to Corflu in Ann Arbor, where I'm taking some classes. It was an interesting experience. I'd say that about ninety percent of the audience was gay, with a few straight people and myself making up the difference. Just before the movie started, this young guy dressed in a lavender shift and a feather boa sort of shyly crept out onto the stage.

"Welcome to this performance of *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* ... God, I'm so embarrassed. This is the first time I've ever done drag."

There was a sort of collective "Whoop" from the audience, along with several shouts of encouragement and much hand-clapping. I suspect this probably only served to make him feel even more embarrassed but, nonetheless, he managed to stumble through his introduction, which included an announcement that after the show there was going to be a drag show at Nectarine's, a night club across the street. I enjoyed the movie, but had to give the drag show a pass. You see, the place where I'd parked my car closed at 11:00 p.m. and the

movie didn't get out until a quarter to. (Or, maybe, I was just too chickenshit.)

The next familiar person I run into (not literally, you understand) is Richard Brandt. Richard is a fellow Space Turkey fan who once had the good taste to reprint my own favorite *Cracked Eye* – the one about Captain Flash.

Here's a kind of interesting story about me and Richard:

I had corresponded briefly with Richard a while back, but hadn't actually met him until a few years later, when I went to a con (Relaxicon, I think) in Cincinnati, where Richard introduced himself by making a Space Turkey reference. But, you know, I couldn't for the life of me figure out who he was. I just kept staring at his name tag and saying to myself, "*Who is this guy? Why is his name so familiar? Is he an artist or something?*"

I didn't want to admit that I couldn't remember who he was, you know. So I just sort of nonchalantly chatted away as if I did.

Our paths crossed several times during the course of that con, and after each encounter I would say to myself, "*Who is this guy?*"

I didn't figure it out until after the convention was over and I was driving home. But by then it was too late.

At Corflu Vegas, I do not make this same mistake, and Richard introduces me to his lovely female companion ... whose name I've forgotten.

The next person I meet is Art Widner, and we have a long talk. Art reminds me, gently, that I have never written him a LoC or an article, even though he's asked several times. This is true, and I do feel sort of bad about it. I should get on the stick and do something. I don't know why I haven't. I'll get around to it – real soon now.

While I'm with Art, a few more people I know come around, and at some point someone introduces me to Joyce and Arnie Katz.

All I know of Arnie Katz is that these days he's a big computer game guru, but – back in the early seventies – he and Joyce used to pub a fanzine that I LoC'd once or twice. Arnie refers to this, and it flatters me that he even remembers.

An hour or two is passed in this fashion, and I'm having a pretty good time. My mood is definitely elevating, but I have to pee. So I do.

By now it's starting to get dark outside and, rather than going back to the con, I conceive a great desire to take a little stroll up Fremont Street to experience a

little of that famous Las Vegas night life. Just a quick look around. Won't take long.

I'm out on Fremont now, and I'm looking up at that remarkable latticework that surrounds the entire block. It's a fantastical structure. Back at the con, someone told me that they're planning to enclose the street and turn it into a sort of mall. I'm not sure why they would want to do this. When I left Michigan this morning, it was cold and rainy, but out here in the Nevada desert, it's about 89 degrees and the sky is as clear as a bell. Does the weather ever get so bad out here as to make it inconvenient to walk around outside? And, even if it does, can it really be such a problem that they have to take such a measure to counter it? I'm not sure I understand the motivation here.

And once they've got Fremont Street enclosed, what next? Will it end there, or will this thing start putting out branches and spreading like a bramble until it covers the entire city? Then what? Will they end up constructing a dome over the whole place and then gold-plating it?

Most of the establishments out here on Fremont are gambling dens, and thus of scant interest to me, because I don't gamble. Not that I want to sound snooty or something. I'm just as foolish with my money as anyone. It's just that slot machines are not a meaningful way for me to squander my dough. This is sort of like the time Bess and I went to Barbados. She had a good old time shopping for clothes and cheap artwork, but there just wasn't much there for me. And this is much the same. What I need is a book store, or a place that sells videos, or ...

Uh oh ... I'm standing in front of a place called Glitter Gulch. The entrance is a sort of cavernous maw festooned with photographs of nearly nude women. Loud music pours from the darkness beyond. Now this has possibilities. I take a step toward the entrance.

But wait a minute. I'm about to enter a topless bar, a strip club, a clip joint.

How can I possibly justify this?

Well ... I can't. And, what's more, I don't feel particularly compelled to. I'm probably a sexist and, no doubt, will burn in hell for it, but, hey, life is short.

Rather, I would refer the reader to the feminist writer, Pat Califia, whose essay, "The City of Desire," explains in better words than I can come up with why not only am I going into this place, but why I must.

I step into the velvet darkness where I am greeted by an 800-pound gorilla in an Italian suit. Apparently the dog is off-duty tonight.

The gorilla hits me up for a couple of bucks and summons up a waitress who is wearing a sort of French maid outfit. This woman functions as a sort of psychopompos, and she guides me through the inky darkness, past a throng of shadowy masculine souls, to a place where she bids me to sit.

"Something to drink?" she asks.

"Uh ... just a Coke."

"Four bucks."

Four dollars for a Coke? It must be the real thing. But when it comes, it turns out that the glass is so full of crushed ice that there could hardly be more than a couple of fingers of liquid in the container.

"What about my tip?" she replies sharply.

Here I learn another Vegas lesson. Back home, tipping is a discrete, unstated activity, usually rendered when the service is over. Here, they're more up front about it — if not actually a little rude. And it's pay as you go.

Nonetheless, I give her a buck just to get her off my case. So, in fact, this four-dollar Coke turns out to be a five-dollar Coke. I guess I'll just nurse this for awhile and then split.

A sort of curved runway spans the length of the room. I can't be sure from my angle, but I suspect it's shaped like a dollar sign. This runway is the only lighted area in the whole room, the light being provided by a bunch of spotlights that serve to illuminate the activities of a group of women who are dancing on the stage. The one nearest to me is dressed in white boots and a cowboy hat. I'm not a judge of choreography, but she appears to be a skillful exponent of the terpsichorean art.

As I lift my glass to take a careful sip of my drink, I notice that a woman in red underwear is walking in my direction, and she's wearing a propeller beanie on her head. I don't remember seeing her at Corflu, so my guess is that I'm probably not the first fan to visit Glitter Gulch. I suppose someone else has been here and lost his hat.

She comes right up to my table and sits down.

Since I'm not the sort of guy women go out of their way to be familiar with, I figure she's going to hit me up for a lap dance.

"Hi," she says, "I'm Beatrice, your Muse."

I'm a little hard of hearing, you know, so I wasn't sure what it was she said. It sounded like either "muse" or "amuse."

"What?" I reply.

"I said, I'm your Muse," she replies casually, crossing her legs and blowing on her fingernails. "I'd think you'd be glad to see me."

"Muse? I've never heard it called that before. Is

that a local expression?"

"You're trying to be smutty in a cute sort of way, aren't you? But that's not really your best area. You've got a certain feel for irony, but sophisticated sexual innuendo is a little bit beyond you. Mind if I take a sip of your drink?"

Somehow, this is not the sort of reply I was expecting. The conversation seems to be taking a bizarre turn. She's also taking an alarmingly large sip.

"What?" I say.

"You see, your problem is that your mind isn't nimble enough for cleverness. You're too slow-witted. Zeus knows I've tried to be a good inspiration to you, but you don't give me much to work with."

"Am I missing something?"

"Without a doubt. But I'll explain it again. I'm a Muse, a guiding spirit of creativity."

"You sound more like an English teach to me."

"I was an English teacher. But this pays better. By the way, your drink's all gone."

Actually, it was still full of ice — about three dollars worth.

I realized now that I had left reality and slipped into a world of metaphoric experience. Just like that guy in *The Naked Lunch*. That would explain why the waitress is turning into a giant cockroach.

"So, Beatrice, you're the Muse of fandom, huh?"

"Another Coke?" the cockroach rasps.

"Later."

"No, not fandom. I'm your Muse."

"My Muse." Actually, I didn't know I had a Muse. "But, if your name's Beatrice, aren't you Dante's Muse?"

"I was. But he hasn't done anything for a long time. That's why I was assigned to you."

I nod. That makes sense, I guess.

"That's flattering," I say.

"Personally ..." — and she looks at me with a very hard expression on her face — "I am of the opinion that it was some kind of clerical error. You haven't done anything lately, either."

I nod. "That's true, I guess. But if you are my Muse (and this isn't some sort of gag), then how come I've never seen you in Kalamazoo?"

"Hey, Vegas is where the action is."

I allow that this makes some sense.

"So," she says, sliding her chair next to mine. "Are you ready?"

"Uh ... for what?"

"To be inspired," she says in a funny voice. She sounds a little out of breath.

I, of course, want to do nothing but flee.

"Uh ... er ... um."

"C'mon," she says, placing her hand on my knee.

"Jeez," I exclaim, shrinking away from her. "Uh... look, Bea, I don't think this is such a good idea." (And I don't think Bess would think this is such a good idea, either.) "Anyway, I don't think I need a Muse this weekend. I'm not working on anything. I'm just in town for a little slack."

"Oh?" she says. She seems part way between insulted and amused. "Are you sure?"

"Yeah," I say, trying to regain the upper hand. "Look, I appreciate the offer and all that, Bea. But maybe you should go back to Dante. I'm not so sure I even want to have a Muse, you know. I mean, I really don't like to write. In fact, I think it's sort of a dreary way to spend the time. Actually, it wouldn't bother me if I never wrote anything again."

She doesn't say anything for awhile, but simply stares at me, sort of sphinx-like. Then, at length, she says, "So, are you saying that you spurn the Muse?"

"Well, that's kind of a harsh way to put it."

"I think you're making a mistake."

"Maybe so," I reply, crossing my arms. "But that's just the way it is."

"Well... in that case, would you like a lap dance?"

"Okay."

• "It's twenty bucks, and no touching."

Later, back in the hotel.

The con site is pretty much deserted now. There are just a few people hanging around the registration desk. They inform me that most everyone else has gone up to the Hospitality Room and instruct me on how to get there.

There are actually two Hospitality Rooms, one for smoking and one for non-smoking. Even though I would prefer the non-smoking, it seems like the most interesting people are hanging out in the smoking, so I gravitate towards there, where I run into Mark Kernes. We have never met, but we share a common interest. So we chat for awhile.

Also in this room is a TV and a VCR, and someone has put on a tape of Proctor and Bergman's movie, *J-Men Forever*. Ever see it? It's one of my favorites. They take a bunch of scenes from these old movie serials and dub their own dialogue in to create a story about a plot by the Moon Men to take over the minds of America's youth with cheap drugs and rock 'n' roll. They use extensive footage from some of the Commando Cody flicks, but change his name to "Rocket Jack" — a characterization which I sort of stole for a story I did for Leah Zeldes-Smith.

Well... I can't miss this, so I park my car on the couch and start watching.

Suddenly, a large apple-checked object wearing a funny-looking goatee blocks my view. He puts out his hand.

"Hi, Gary. I'm Dan Steffan."

And, of course, he is. Who else would look like he was drawn by Dan Steffan?

"Hey, Frank, I've found him."

The next thing I know, Frank Lunney is standing there next to Dan.

I don't know what to do. Should I laugh? Should I cry? Should I embrace each of them in a manly (but chaste) hug? Or, should I tell them they're blocking my view?

Well... I suppose I can see the movie some other time. It's not like I haven't seen it before, after all. So, I smile and greet them both.

They ask me about when it was that I got in and what I think of the con. I tell them about the rotten flight and give them an outline of everything you've read so far — with the exception of the metaphoric encounter with the Muse. I wouldn't want them to accuse me of writing fan fiction.

Dan asks me if I want to go up to Arnie's room, and off we go.

But, who should we run into on the way but a tall, sardonic fellow with a mustache who turns out to be Robert Lichtman!

You know, one of the main reasons I even considered coming all this way was in anticipation of this moment. It's like Stanley and Livingstone meeting in the hallway of the J. G. Plaza Hotel. But I don't think I say anything particularly witty.

Up in Arnie's room, Ted White is presiding over a meeting of the Secret Masters of Fandom.

This place is like the Lost Elephant's Graveyard of BNFs, and Frank and Dan are showing me off to them like I was an item in some sort of fannish scavenger hunt. They all make a little bit of a fuss over me, which I find a mite intimidating. I fear I won't be able to think of anything witty enough to say to impress them, and thus be exposed for the true boob that I am.

As it turns out, though, I need not have worried about it.

Because every time I open my mouth, someone else jumps in with something to say, and the conversation goes off on a tangent. These are fans we're dealing with here.

Speaking of which, why don't we freeze this scene right here and step back for awhile?

What?

Oh no, it's easy. This is another metaphorical experience we're having here.

So... what have we got, now?

Well, over here is Grant Canfield. He's got a pencil and a pad of paper in his hands — these artist guys, they're always scribbling. Looks like we've caught him in mid-stroke. Let's see what he's doing. A cartoon of some bald guy with a long nose — I wonder who that's supposed to be?

Over in the center of the room, Ted White is frozen in expositary mode. His hands are poised in mid-gesture. He must be saying something he finds amusing, because there's a ghost of a little chuckle on his face.

Dan and Arnie are just a couple of dark, immobile lumps. This is not just a result of their being frozen in time, either. When we start things back up, we will find that they remain dark, immobile lumps.

And over here we have Frank Lunney.

Frank is a relic of my first reentry into fandom.

I was pretty active in fandom when I was a teenager back in the early sixties, but I dropped out when I joined the Army in '64 and decided to devote my time to serious drinking. Unlike many other fans, I didn't know how to combine the two activities. But after I got out of the service, I decided to get back into fandom, which I did through the agency of the NFFF. That's where I first made acquaintance with Frank, who happened to be on the Welcommittee at the time.

(Yes, believe it or not, both Frank and I were witless Neffers.)

We had both, I suppose, gotten connected with the N3F in the usual way. We had both answered that little ad that Seth Johnson used to run in the back of *Fantasy and Science Fiction*.

(Back in the timestream, I will mention this to Frank, and he will reply that he heard that Seth was pretty weird. He will say, "I heard that he used to soak his typewriter ribbons in oil to make them last longer." True, he did. I tried this trick out, myself, and it didn't work too badly, either. I doubt that it would work on a laser printer, though.

(Seth, you know, was the last of a dying breed of fans who carried on their fanac mainly through personal correspondence, as opposed to pubbing zines. (I don't recall anything about him writing for zines, either.) Seth corresponded with so many people that all his money was tied up in postage stamps. A lot of correspondence was carried on with young neophytes. I suppose that if he were alive today, he'd be trying to pick up little kids on the Internet.

(Not that I want to imply that Seth was a child molester, or anything like that. But, I'll tell you, my folks had certain misgivings about my exchanging letters with some mysterious old coot in New Jersey. And not without reason, either. Besides the usual run of fans,

Seth also corresponded with some people who were into some pretty weird shit even for the sixties, and some of these people Seth introduced to me. So I guess I was corrupted at an early age.)

But let's get back to Frank (who must be getting tired standing here like a statue).

When we first started exchanging letters, I was in my early twenties and Frank was but a giddy teenage morphodite whose approach to fandom was classic goshwow. But soon he was pubbing *Beabohema* and, you know, he turned out to be a pretty good fanned. I may or may not be right about this (indulging in a bit of nostalgia supported by a bit of faulty imagination), but I believe that Bab established a "look" for fanzines that persists to this day.

One thing that I particularly liked about Bab (he adds with great modesty) was that Frank was pubbing my stuff.

Of course, most of it was pretty bad. Frank published some things of mine that I would be very embarrassed to see come to light — that thing about Zelazny stands out in my memory as particularly wretched. But Frank had a way of making my stuff appear better than it was by mating it with really fine illustrations. Notably those that Danny Frolich did for some of my proto-*Cracked Eyes*. I really enjoyed what Danny's pictures could do for one of my stories.

Of course, Frank did a fair amount of editing, too. In some ways he was pretty lenient with me, but he wouldn't let me get away with just anything. If I wrote something really crappy, he'd call me on it. Thanks to Frank's guidance and encouragement, I was able to develop my basic *Cracked Eye* (this somewhat long in the tooth column) style.

There's one other very important thing ...

You see, Bess goes for creative guys, and I was able to use my published body of Bab and Syndrome writings to good advantage in our courtship ritual (sort of like my etchings, you know). Another reason for which Frank has my undying gratitude.

But, having said all that about Frank, here's a funny thing:

When we step back into time, I will spend a considerable amount of time talking with Lichtman. (Mostly just getting acquainted stuff. Robert has also had a profound influence on my development as a fan writer. But he didn't help me get laid, so I don't have quite the effuse praise for him that I have for Frank.) I will also have an interesting conversation with Dan about sex comics. And Ted, Arnie and I will discuss the various faneds who published nude photos of prominent fans. (I had known that Tom Reamy — of sainted memory — had done this, but apparently he wasn't alone in this.)

But with Frank I will actually have very little to say.

Because, I think, I really don't know who this current version of Frank Lunney is. Oh, I know he's had his share of triumphs and tragedies, but I guess I'm having a hard time relating this cool, adult version of Frank with the gosh-wow kid of my memories.

And now it's Saturday morning.

I am awake with the mother of all coffee jones's, and I must seek caffeine.

But before I do that, I had better try again to get in touch with Bess.

This time I have better luck. She's home.

I say I hope she's having a nice morning, and she informs me that it's past noon there and that I got some dirty comix from Rip Off in the mail. I say good, and fill her in on my Corflu adventures to date — including the metaphorical encounter with the Muse. (You don't think I keep things like that from my wife, do you? In any event, she edits all my stuff, so she'd find out anyway. As a matter of fact, in the future — when she is editing this — she will say, "I like the part about Bea, especially the part about no touching.")

Having that out of the way, I go downstairs looking for coffee.

As it turns out, this big old hotel just has this dinky little coffee shop, and there's this long line to get in.

I'm about to resignedly take my place in line when, fortunately, a couple of fans come by and inform me that there's free coffee and pastry up in the Hospitality Room.

So I hotfoot it up there, only to find that they're fresh out of coffee, but that someone is making a fresh pot. So I end up waiting in line, after all.

In front of me is a girl in a buzz-cut, whom I don't know from anybody. But she smiles at me and I smile at her. It's a fannish moment.

Now I'm coffeeed-up and wandering around when I hear someone say the name "John Benson," and I wonder if he's talking about the same John Benson that I knew back in my Wayne Third Foundation days. So I join the conversation and, as it turns out, he is indeed talking about my John Benson.

It takes me several minutes before I realize that the person to whom I am talking is Gary Mattingly — another old Wayne Third alum. I didn't recognize him. It's been a long time, I guess — a fact that I find sort of disagreeable, since I don't like to think of those Wayne Third days being a long time ago. But I guess they were.

Gary (who was more often referred to as Mattingly) married Patty Peters, and they subsequently moved from Detroit to San Francisco. Patty was one of the

Triple Goddesses of the old Wayne Third, the other two being Diane Drutkowski and Leah Zeldes.

Let's see ... who else was there?

Well, there was Benson, of course, and Cy Chauvin, and Todd Bake.

I wonder whatever happened to Todd? I remember him as a good cartoonist with a deplorable diet. He would only eat plain, unadorned hamburgers — just a bun, no condiments, no veggies.

I remember this time when a bunch of us were at a convention in Toronto, and Todd dragged us all over the place until he found a restaurant that would make a burger to his exact specifications.

There were a lot of other people involved with the Wayne Third, but I've pretty much forgotten who they were. A case in point: there's this guy named Joe Wesson who occasionally sends me his fanzine, in which he's written extensively about the Wayne Third. He seems pretty knowledgeable about events, so he must have been there. But I'll be darned if I can recall who he was.

The conversation around Mattingly gradually turns to other topics and I start to wander off to another part of the room, where I discover Jay Kinney sitting by himself, writing or perhaps drawing something.

I really admire fanartists, you know. This may make me sound like an apostate, but I really don't think much fan writing is exactly what you would call deathless prose.

You know how it is. You get a fanzine in the mail. The first thing you do is pluck out the staple, then you fold it over flat in the opposite direction, so it'll stay flat. Then you head for the bathroom where you first skim it quick to see if anyone's mentioned your name. Then you turn to the lettercol to see who LoC'd the previous issue. (If you're like me, you always read Mike Glicksohn's letter first.) And, lastly, you may read an article or two, then throw it on top of the fanzine pile, with the intention of sending them a letter — someday.

If anything from that zine sticks in your memory as you go about your subsequent activities, it's probably not the words but the pictures — all those little AToms and Rotslers and Steffans. You know that if you are sitting around reading a fanzine, you're ten times more likely to turn to the Wife and say, "Hey, hon, look at this marvelously witty rendering by Grant Canfield," rather than, "Hey, Bess, listen to what's got ol' Ted's bustle in a knot now."

I've never met Jay Kinney, but I've admired him from afar for years now, so I do not hesitate to go up and introduce myself.

We are having a pretty good conversation — getting on well, you know — when I do one of those things that

explains why Bess seldom lets me out on my own. I say:

"Hey, are you still publishing that *New Age* magazine?"

Jay gives me a bad look.

"It's *not* a New Age magazine," he replies.

Oh ... I goofed.

Let me take this space, Jay, to say I'm sorry that I called *Gnosis* a New Age magazine. I realize that term carries a certain derogatory connotation, and that sometimes my foot flies into my mouth, that's all.

On the other hand, in Kalamazoo New Age is not yet a pejorative term — at least not among the Wife's cronies. Bess was raised on astrology and stuff like that. Both her parents were heavily into the occult. Plus, Bess has studied Eastern Philosophy extensively and has many contacts in Kalamazoo's quite extensive esoteric community.

Me, I'm pretty much a skeptic, but I've resigned myself to coexisting with tarot cards and ouija boards.

I've read *Gnosis*, you know, and found it a pretty literate and intelligent magazine. Not at all like the usual "love-starved Martians raped my wife muchly" trash you read in the tabloids. Thing is ... I love that love-starved Martians stuff. Just give me a stack of tales about naughty Bigfoots or the latest Elvis sightings, and I'm as happy as a snake.

Noon comes around, and by now I'm thoroughly stoked up on caffeine, sugar and fat. So I'm feeling ready to go out and take a more extensive tour of LV than the one the night before. I get myself a street map from the gift shop downstairs, throw a few things into my knapsack, and head on out the door.

But you, dear reader, are staying here in the hotel—the reason being that if I took the time and space to give you my observations of Las Vegas here and now, Robert wouldn't have room for the lettercol. So that will have to wait for another day.

Instead, let's jump ahead to Saturday evening.

I'm back in the Hospitality Room showing Mark Kernes some wonderfully tacky things I picked up at a place downtown. These include: a little rubber clown whose eyes pop out when you squeeze him, salt and pepper shakers shaped like male and female torsos, a pair of wind-up chattering teeth, and one of those life-size, inflatable plastic dolls.

"Bess and I will have a good time with this," I tell him (although I actually intend it for Bob, my pal in Ann Arbor, who has recently broken up with his girlfriend).

Just then, Ted and Frank enter the room.

"Howdy, gents," I say.

"You're ... garble," Ted replies.

My hearing's not so great, you know, so sometimes I don't get things. This generally isn't much of a problem, because the information content of most conversations is usually quite small. I can get by with "Uh huh" or "That's nice," and people don't know whether I'm listening to them or not.

So I just smile at Ted and say, "Uh huh" and "That's nice."

Frank, however, seems puzzled by my response.

"Didn't you hear Ted? You're GoH."

"Oh ... okay ... that's nice. What's that?"

"You're the Guest of Honor."

"Of what?"

"Corflu."

"Corflu? This Corflu?"

Frank nods.

Apparently, what had happened was this: while I had been out, there had been a sort of lottery to see who got to be GoH, and I lost.

"You have to write a speech," Frank says.

"What for?"

"You're GoH."

It turns out that a little known (to me) custom of Corflu is to lock the GoH away in his room on Saturday night, so he won't have any fun. I had thought that such barbarous practices had gone out with Claude Degler, but apparently not. So now I am stuck with this task of writing a speech (to be given during breakfast next morning). I'm not too crazy about this.

Frank senses my discomfort, so he takes me aside.

"It's no big deal," he says. "Just say anything you want. It doesn't have to be very long. And it doesn't even have to be a speech. It could be a skit, anything. Look at this ..." He produces an issue of *Spent Brass*. "John Bartelt did this thing with people dressed up as sub-atomic particles last year, and it was a big hit. It's all right in here. Read it. Maybe you'll get some ideas."

Frank places the mag in my hand.

"Now go," he says, pointing to the North.

I hesitate. But I can see there is no helping for it and, disconsolately, I shamble away.

I'm in my room, placing back and forth. On the nightstand next to the bed is a pad of hotel stationery, a pen, and *The Book of Mormon* — which doesn't have anything to do with this story. But I thought I'd mention it, because it struck me as different. You usually expect to find a Gideon Bible in your room instead.

I plop down on the bed and pick up the pad and pen. Long moments pass, but nothing comes out. Not

an unusual experience for me as a writer, but it's somewhat distressing. I was hoping I could get something, at least, before I went to sleep. Maybe I'll just go to sleep instead. Maybe something will come to me in the morning.

But sleep does not come. I go to the bathroom and pee.

On my way back to the bed, I pass by the window, so I draw back the curtain.

Directly below me, Fremont Street glitters away.

Glitters? Aha! That's it! I guess I'll go see the Muse.

I dress quickly and head out the door.

Glitter Gulch is much the same as I stumble through the darkness, searching for a propeller beanie. But she doesn't seem to be anywhere around.

A woman appears, but it's not Beatrice. This one is wearing black underwear and sports piercings in her nose and navel. She's wearing earrings shaped like little playing cards.

"Hi," she says. "Want a lap dance?"

"Uh, thanks, but no. Actually I was looking for someone, Beatrice. Do you know her?"

"Oh, sure. But she's not here anymore."

"She's not!" I reply – actually, I think I gasp it.

"Yeah, she said she wasn't needed here. So she went back to Kalamazoo."

Fuck!

"You want that dance now?" she asks.

"Are you a Muse?" I reply.

"No..." she says, "but I am the goddess of Blackjack."

"In that case, I think you want to talk to Arnie Katz," I reply.

It's Sunday morning now, and I'm still no further ahead. Besides that, I haven't had any sleep either. I have tried to force myself to write something, anything, but it's just gibberish. This stream-of-consciousness stuff might work for some people, but not for me. I guess I'm just going to have to wing it.

It's pretty close to time, so I'd better get ready.

It's a good thing I've got an early flight.

Breakfast is supposed to be happening in a big room located in that connector between the two Towers. But it appears that it's going to be a little late, because the hotel staff is taking longer than expected to set up. That's a reprieve as far as I'm concerned, but I sure could use some coffee. So I once again head up to the Hospitality Room, where I get myself a steaming cup of joe and ponder an apple danish nestled on a

paper plate in front of me.

Should I eat this? Might spoil my appetite. On the other hand, I could use the sugar buzz. Might even help with my creativity problem. I once had this math teacher who advised us to eat candy bars before taking our tests. He felt that sugar made you smarter.

A few people, who know that I have to give a talk, come by to give me some encouragement.

They say, "Relax, you'll be great."

But what I hear is, "You'd better be great, turkey."

Frantically, I start gnawing on the danish.

Over in a corner of the room, four people are sitting side by side on a couch, and my friend from yesterday's coffee line is stretched out across them, bouncing up and down.

She's saying, "Oh, I'm just a respectable married woman," or something like that.

This makes me smile, and I brush the crumbs off my mouth.

For some reason, this display cheers me up a little. I mean, look. These clowns goofing around over there are my audience. Fans, for crissake, not a doctoral committee or something like that. Give 'em a few cheap yuks, and they'll be as happy as clams.

This observation satisfies my forebrain, but my R-brain is still thrashing around like a lizard in a box.

I'm back downstairs now.

Breakfast still isn't ready, but folks are beginning to collect around the entrance anyway.

I spot Ted White in the crowd, so I go over to where he is.

"Well, Ted," I say, "I haven't said 'boo' to you all weekend."

"So say 'boo,'" he replies.

It's a fannish moment.

I like Ted but, you know, I have a little confession to make: I've always been a little bit afraid of him, as well. I guess that's because he always seems to be involved in some controversy or other, and you never know where lightning is going to strike. Actually, he's not nearly as abrasive in real life as he is in print.

Speaking of which.

It's kind of funny, but I don't know how many times I've read some Ted White rant and come away saying to myself, "What an asshole," only on reflection to find that I agreed with everything he said. I just wouldn't have put it so forcefully if it had been me writing. But I attribute this to my genteel midwestern upbringing, while Ted has lived all his life on the east coast.

Actually, I think Ted is a fannish treasure, and I say we should have him brass-plated, now!

Finally, breakfast is ready, and they let us into the room. Now I am next to the moment of truth. However, Joyce Katz has decided to allow me a few more minutes to stew while people get settled.

I find myself at a table along with Frank, Ted, Jay Kinney, Joyce and Arnie, and Lucy Huntzinger. Jay has decorated my badge (another Corflu GoH tradition) with a neat little cartoon, so I guess he must have forgiven me for that New Age crack.

Speaking of cartoons, I'm in a conversation with Lucy about Avram Davidson when Bill Rotsler appears and hands me a paper plate.

"This is for you," he says. And then he's gone just as quickly as he appeared.

This isn't just any ordinary paper plate, of course. It has a cartoon on it. A cartoon that Bill drew just for me!

You may not think this is such a big deal, because Bill draws zillions of these things and hands them out by the cartload. But this is my very first Rotsler, believe it or not, and I'm charmed out of my mind. (It may be of interest to mention here that Bill's doodle on the cover of *Pry* No. 5 was the inspiration for Beatrice.)

There are moments that have a special sweetness.

Say, for example, those moments before soldiers go into combat, or just before your Old Man's getting ready to beat you, or before you get up to make a fool of yourself. And those moments pass all too quickly.

At length, Joyce Katz got up and announced: "And now, the wit and wisdom of Gary Hubbard."

*God, I'm fucked now*, I say to myself.

I drag myself to the podium with a silent plea to the Muse to save me. But she's probably out on U.S. 80 and halfway to Nebraska by now. (Bitch!)

I briefly look at my notes as I take the podium, but they're still crap. So I try to use them as a prop.

"I made some notes," I announce, and wave them about. "But I'm not going to use them. I'm just going to wing it." And I toss them in the air.

It's a nice touch, if I must say so, but it's the last gesture of a dying man. From this point on, it's down-hill all the way ... fast. I try everything I can: irony, pathos. I even tell a dirty joke, but that doesn't really work for me, you know?

Dying takes forever, but finally my speech grinds to a halt and I stumble from the stage.

To my surprise, there is actually applause, and when I get back to our table Frank says to me, "Pretty good."

I don't believe him, but I give him a manly (but chaste) squeeze on the shoulder to show my appreciation.

As Lucy Huntzinger takes the stage to talk up Corflu Nashville, someone from the back of the room shouts out:

"Hey, can we have the quark dancers back next year?"

And I seem to hear the saint, wicked laughter of a spurned Muse.

— Gary Hubbard



# Woke Up One Mornin' on the Red Deer Trail



Despite growing up in a rural area, I never liked country and western songs, at least not the modern stuff. It was entirely too much the phony "yer cheatin' heart" type of stuff and did not match the reality of what I saw around me. The older folk songs, based on the actual experience of real cowboys (not Nashville fakers), were however more tolerable, such as "The Old Chisholm Trail." That song documents the genuine cattle drives of the old west of the United States (and Canadian) prairies, and can still be applied to modern cattle drives. So let me tell you a tale of my boyhood days in Red Deer, Alberta, Canada, and tie the anecdotes in with the song, verse by verse.

## *Come along boys, and I'll tell you a tale*

My father was a veterinarian specializing in farm animals. He kept a small herd of cattle on the side, comprising a couple hundred Charolais, Hereford and Charcross (a hybrid between the first two), plus a few miscellaneous animals from other breeds such as Simmental or Limousin. It was strictly a beef cattle operation because they were easier to look after, as opposed to feed lot or dairy cattle, which are labor-intensive operations. There was no way Dad could be milking cows and still keep up his practice. Although I suppose he derived some tax benefits from the operation, I suspect part of it was due to nostalgia for the south Saskatchewan farm he grew up on.

We didn't actually live on the farm, but rather on a bush-covered acreage a few kilometers away. The farm was only a quarter-section, too small to sustain the herd. (The Canadian prairies are surveyed into sections, a section being a mile on each side. A quarter-section was therefore a quarter-mile square of land.) Dad rented pasture in various places around Red Deer to which the cattle were taken.

## *All about my troubles on the Old Chisholm Trail*

At the beginning of a cattle drive, there was a lot of confusion and noise, milling around in circles, and uncertainty about which direction to go. And that was just the cowboys; the cattle were even worse. Planning a cattle drive is much like planning the D-Day Invasion, only with a smaller cast and no opposing fire. The cows were bad enough, but at least most of them had been driven before. Once we got going, they knew what to expect and would simmer down. The calves, however, had been born on the range in spring, had spent a peaceful summer in quiet pastures, and now found themselves being chased from pillar to post for no apparent reason.

## *Started up the trail October twenty third*

Spring was the busiest time of year for a farm animal specialist like Dad, with a constant flow of calving cases or milk fevers. Cattle were thus usually

moved by truck to summer pastures, a more convenient procedure but also expensive for the hire of the cattle-liners. We did most of our cattle drives in the autumn, bringing them in from the exhausted pasture and branding the calves that had been born out on the range.

#### *Driving the cattle of the 2 Bar herd*

Actually it was the CJS herd, but that doesn't scan in the song. My father's operation was officially called "CJS Charolais," and the brand was his initials, CJS. I had a brief spell of owning cattle, which ran with his herd. When I applied to the Ministry of Agriculture for the brand "DCS," my initials, it had already been taken, so I had to settle for "SPE." At that time I was a big fan of Isaac Asimov, and since he was writing about Greeks at the time I named my herd as "Speirs Psammites." The first cow I owned in my name was Miss Fishchar, purchased from Fisher Charolais of Rocky Mountain House, who were rather startled at the unusual herd name she was going to. If, even at this late date, there are ranchers in central Alberta who can quote Greek history while ignorant of everything else, I can take quiet pride (and Asimov, too, unknowingly) in having contributed to this.

#### *With a rope in my hand and a cow by the tail*

Cowboys learn a practical appreciation of Newtonian physics early on, especially the stuff about equal and opposite reactions and what inertia really means. This comes about from lassoing cattle. It actually wasn't done that often, as it is easier to chase an animal into a corral and thence to a squeeze chute. The problem is not so much lassoing the cow but rather what happens when you succeed.

Forget what you see at rodeos. It is all very well for a cowboy to come bursting out of the gates, run down a frightened animal, and hog-tie it. He stands up after, receives the audience's applause, and will not have to perform again for another hour. Doing it out on the ranch takes too long. Even supposing that a cowboy and his horse could take the impact of a yank on the cow every fifteen minutes, they would be there for days or weeks catching them one by one.

Cows generally have to be lassoed while on a horse or standing on the back of a pickup truck. This has to do with the fact that a man on foot would be yanked off his feet if he tried to stop a cow by roping her. There is one way to do this, which I preferred. Rope the cow but start running alongside her before the rope tightens. Chase her towards a fence, keeping plenty of slack on the rope. As you go by a fence post, quickly loop the rope around the post, and hang on. This will stop her short, assuming the post is in solid. Sometimes

the post was rotten at the base, so one would see a cowboy chasing after not only the cow but the fence.

My father didn't approve of lassoing and we seldom used it, normally only in an emergency. Lassoing is hard on the animals; the sudden yank does neither cow nor cowboy good. It was even worse for calves, who did not have the advantage of greater inertial mass.

#### *On a ten-dollar horse and a forty-dollar saddle*

Few farms keep horses anymore unless they breed them professionally, perform in rodeos (and thus deduct the expense), or have wives or daughters who ride for recreation. The pasture that a horse eats could support a cow and a calf, who would bring in a better return. It was always a joke around our area that you could tell the number of women on a farm by the number of horses. My brother and I never rode, and the hired hand did so only if he couldn't get his pickup truck into a place. For the cattle drives, we usually had the help of local farm girls who had horses. Neil and I walked along with the herd, and the pickup truck, loaded with feed grain, led the way with the hungry cattle trying to catch up to it. When we got home, the hired hand would leap out of his truck onto the back and frantically shovel off the grain before the herd mobbed him.

#### *Goddamn' tired of punchin' cattle*

It was a monotonous job driving cattle, but you couldn't daydream your way along. The main problem in driving cattle is to keep the herd moving. Cattle are intensely social animals, and no straggler would risk separation from the main herd. If, however, the herd stopped and began milling around, animals would break loose in clumps to form their own herds headed in different directions.

So we had to keep them moving. We drove the cattle along roadside ditches, with fences on one side, cowgirls on the road shoulder, my brother and me blocking off side roads, and pickups fore and aft. You had to stay close to the animals so they would veer away from you back into the main herd. Take your eyes off the herd for a few seconds to admire the scenery and, sure enough, some of the cattle would bolt down a side road.

#### *Clouds up above, looks like rain, left my coat in the wagon again*

The trouble in organizing a drive meant that it would go rain or shine, unless it was raining too heavily. When postponed due to rain, it was not because anyone worried about getting wet, but rather that the herd would destroy any turf it passed over and turn it into mud. If it began to rain after the drive was underway, nothing would stop the drive. It was easier to go on

than to turn the herd and start over another day. We had the additional hazard that my father might be called away on an urgent case, but I don't remember this happening.

*Began to storm and the rain to fall;  
we thought, by God, we'd lose them all*

We never had a stampede, not from lightning storms or any other cause. In fact, I've never even heard tell of a stampede, not even from oldtimers in our neighborhood who didn't let facts get in the way of a good story and who were secure in the knowledge that there was no one else still living who could call them a liar on something that happened fifty years ago. Charolais and Hereford are reasonably mild-mannered cattle. The big drives down in the States were often of Texas Longhorns, a notoriously skittish breed. We also drove only small herds of a few hundred cattle; it might have been different with thousands.

*We hit the river, we hit her on the fly*

Rivers were always a serious problem, but only once do I remember taking a route that required crossing a river, and we were lucky there because we could run the herd over a bridge. Rivers were trouble not only because they were a physical obstacle but because the cattle would automatically stop to drink. This bunched up the herd in a traffic jam as the followers plowed into the lead animals, pushed from behind by the rearguard. Naturally, those at back of the jam would try to go around the flanks, suddenly turning the herd from a long thin line moving forward into two separate lines moving sideways in opposite directions along the riverbank. The only thing worse than trying to reassemble a herd is trying to reassemble a herd while splashing around in the water. For this reason, the herd was always speeded up as it approached a river and chased across at full speed on the fly, so its momentum would carry it over without stopping.

*The mud and the dust and a case of pink eye*

Some hired hands still wore bandannas against the dust, but many preferred disposable paper dust masks. You could throw them away at the end of the drive and have one less item to launder. Autumn is the dry season in Alberta, but I don't remember much dust on our drives. This would be because we were driving the herd along grass-lined ditches, so there was little dust raised.

Baseball caps were the preferred headgear because they were free. Farm implement dealers gave them away by the thousands, so why pay money for a cowboy hat when you can get a cap for free. Sunglasses were always worn against the dust. If you didn't mind the

jokes, one might even wear goggles. But Red Deer is in the parkland belt of Alberta, and dust was generally not a problem.

*Bedded the cattle on the hills close by*

Well, we would have had it been an overnight drive, but we arrived home in time for lunch. The drive always started in early morning so if serious trouble developed we would have a long period of light. The only thing worse than trying to reassemble a herd while splashing around in the water is trying to reassemble a herd in the dark. That was one reason why I liked Charolais cattle; they are white or cream-colored and show up easily in the twilight.

But we got the cattle home in plenty of time. They were driven into a corral and left to settle down for a while. The calves would then be separated out, branded, and vaccinated. The entire herd would next be culled, shipping animals out to the packing plant and keeping the nucleus of next year's herd. They were kept on the farm over the winter and grain-fed until spring.

*And that was the last of the old 2 Bar*

My parents have since sold the acreage we lived on and moved into town. The town also moved into them. I made the mistake a few years ago of revisiting the acreage. I found it only by triangulating a few landmarks that still remained. The acreage had changed hands a few times before being "developed." The bush was logged over, the gently rolling hills were flattened, the old roads vanished completely underneath winding crescents and drives, and tract houses built. The farm is still going after a fashion, although my father is thinking of selling. The fields were mined as a sandpit.

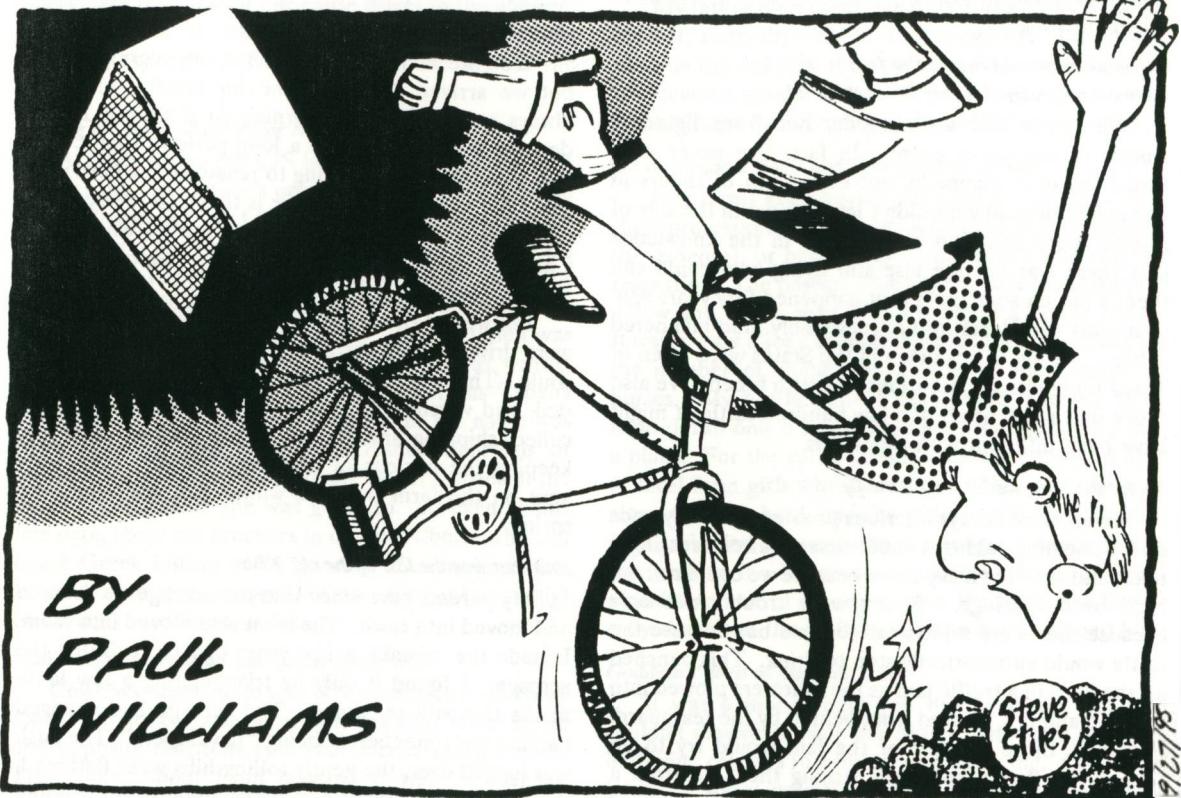
The farm was once quite a distance outside the City of Red Deer, but now is directly on the boundary line. I was talking to Dad not long ago and he figures it will end up as an industrial development. You can't farm on the edge of a city. Yahoos on motorcycles and snowmobiles charge around the fields; drunken teenagers have parties in the poplar bluffs. People in the tract houses let their dogs run loose and chase the cattle. Thomas Wolfe was right; you can't go home again.

— Dale Speirs

*Dedication*

*To the memory of Dr. Cecil James Speirs (1927-1996). You can take the boy out of the farm, but you can't take the farm out of the boy.*

# ASK ME ABOUT MY BRAIN INJURY



BY  
PAUL  
WILLIAMS

Let's see: one minute I was in Las Vegas, consuming mass quantities of shrimp with Dan Steffan and Andy Hooper's permission, and walking through the Valley of Fire with Moshe and Lise and Cindy, and then I was in a San Diego hospital bed with tubes going into my arm and nose — they tell me I ripped them out of my nose, but apparently I forgot to get Dan and Andy's permission first, so the authorities took this as a clear signal that they should increase the downer dosage. How to protect the patient from himself? Sedate the sucker. But how did this strange transition happen? I remember hearing first news of Kurt Cobain's death somewhere outside of Barstow heading towards Silvercon, a trauma forever associated in my (ahem) brain with fan-oriented car trips between San Diego and Vegas, but no, nothing quite so startling occurred on the road home from Corflu. What did happen? Uh, oh, memory gap. Well, I could do what I did during the month in hospital and the succeeding six weeks in rehab: ask Cindy.

-30-

I exaggerate. Actually I knew as soon as I was able to think in questions what had happened, because Cindy, bless her, was right there. "You sell off your bicycle on the Third Street hill and banged your head and broke your collarbone, and the paramedics took you to the hospital with a trauma center ..." (good paramedics — that was possibly a life-saving decision; a less-prepared facility was much closer) "... and then the surgeons looked at cat scans ..." (insert B. Kliban joke here) "... and first poked a hole in your skull to relieve the swelling pressure." That's not precisely what she said — my memory was *never* good enough for quoting verbatim — but anyway, the bottom line is that despite what one may have read in *Locus* (thanks to the much-appreciated good intentions of Nöel Sturgeon in the *Locus* letter column), I actually have not suffered memory loss. Could have, certainly. But this very morning I got a call and fax from *Q* in London asking me to contribute to their "eyewitness accounts of historic rock and roll events" series, 1,500 words on the

recording of "Give Peace a Chance." So it's a good thing for the pay-the-rent fund that the surgeon didn't manage to snip out my long-term memory (or the cells that index it, which sector of the hard drive was that?). Or my short-term mem either. I had fellow rehab attendees who were not so fortunate. They were instructed to carry around notebooks and write everything down constantly. Of course, the problem of Where did I leave my damn memory book? is just as persistent for brain injury victims as it is for the rest of y'all most of the time.

I did have some memory loss, but not I think due to the segment of my right temporal lobe the surgeon scooped out after the second cat scan (mercifully, neither Cindy nor anyone else told me about that till I was well into rehab). I lost the accident itself—and still have no recollection of it—a perfectly normal editing of trauma, probably a healthy reflex of the brain: ooh, let's not remember this one. The rest of what I not quite lost, but fuzzed over considerably, is easily attributable to all the drugs they were feeding me from the moment I hit the hospital till the day I finally got my discharge papers. "Agree to go to this daily rehab program and we'll let you go home." Oh goody.

The phenobarb and dilantin were to help avoid the statistical possibility of a seizure (mess with the brain, and it twitches). Then there was haldol or something like that, and benadryl and others I can't remember (oops) to reduce the hospital patient's normal and possibly self-destructive feistiness (that will to fight back can also be what saves your life, but Medicine doesn't consider that when they try to drug it out of you). I particularly disliked the restraining straps that pinned me to my bed or locked me in my wheelchair (I freaked when I discovered my attendant didn't have a key), but I think it was mostly the drugs that still make me ask Cindy, "Who else visited me?" "Who is this person who just sent me this fax about gay rights? My nurse at the first hospital? No, I don't remember talking with him ...." It's all a cloud, those early days in and out of intensive care. Of course, there's this tremendous ambiguity regarding whether symptoms (fogginess, poor balance, irritability, confusion) were due to the brain injury or to the drugs they gave me, or a combination of both. Actually, my struggle after I left the hospital to get off the damn dilantin (anti-seizure prophylactic) is another story. Fortunately I broke out in a nasty rash, and that again was my ticket to freedom (the problem was not addiction but rather the implicit threat, especially for people around me, that if I didn't take my medicine like a good boy I just might have a horrible seizure—never did have one, thankfully). "Oh, you have The Rash? Okay, then we'll get you an

appointment with the neurologist." The neurologist, bless him, was thrilled at how I performed on their damn psychological tests (What day is it? What time is it? Name the last eight presidents of the U.S. Name as many foods as you can think of beginning with "f"), and then informed me that the neurology department of my HMO had recently conferred and studied the statistics and decided (unbeknownst to the doctor who was writing me prescriptions like sealed military orders) that prophylactic anti-seizure drugs were effective against "early" seizures, meaning the first two weeks after the brain injury, but useless and unnecessary for preventing later seizures, except that you have to be careful reducing your dosage because just stopping the drug may itself trigger a seizure. Anyway, I hated the dilantin, not just for the rash but because it made me feel so damned uncomfortable and foggy, like a caffeine addict desperately in need of his morning hit, or worse. So the neurologist took me off it without requiring another damn anti-seizure drug. It took a while to get the residue out of my system, but I'm happier now.

Back to the primary question of, what happened? In Encinitas, as in Glen Ellen, it has been my pleasure to ride my bicycle to the post office to pick up my mail. One way in which I have as an adult retained the personality of a fanzine-pubber is I'm forever eager to see what might be awaiting me in today's mail (money? egoboo? some bartered goody?). That eagerness has always helped push me through any mental resistance to the work of bicycling uphill, getting that aerobic exercise happening, so the bike ride to the post office has long been my most effective formula for getting the daily exercise us aging adults require. In Encinitas it was particularly pleasant until April 15th, 1995 (I'd been back from Corfu for less than a week), because the back street behind the downtown area leads conveniently from our apartment to the big P. O. over by Yogananda's retreat mansion ("Swami's," namesake of one of the most famous surfing sites in southern California), with not much traffic and plenty of opportunities to stop along the way and look out at today's waves, if you're so inclined. Just past the Moonlight Beach road, though, there's one horrendous slope that really gets the heart beating when you bicycle up. But April 15th, when I bicycled back, something happened — no car was involved, and although there's a witness we don't really know what it was that did it, a patch of gravel or untimely braking or .... Anyway I was apparently going a good speed down that steep hill, and flew forward still tangled with the bike, striking my collarbone and my head on the pavement. (No helmet — I'd often thought I should maybe wear my helmet, because so many cars at the bottom of the hill get

confused by the two-way stop, but I never did it. I know better now.) Someone saw, fortunately, and called the sheriff who called the paramedics. Also fortunately, a woman I didn't know, a frequent visitor to one of my neighbors, walked past and somehow recognized me on the ground and ran on to our building and told Cindy what she'd seen. That resulted in Cindy knowing, and even getting to ride with me in the ambulance. No, I don't remember a bit of this. I do have Cindy's accounts, and the written reports the various surgeons and doctors made to each other as my HMO transferred me from one hospital to another. My head had swelling, and that's dangerous for the brain, so after the first cat scan they cut a small hole in my left temple to let out some fluid. Then the second scan made them worry about my brain tissue itself, and they cut a bigger hole (still have it; that's another story) in my right temple, and did a "lobectomy," removing a little piece of my temporal lobe. Except for a touch of pneumonia at some point, my recovery went smoothly, though always necessarily they wondered if I was still all there. After the first two weeks I was moved to a rehab hospital, where at least I had a nice physical therapist who took me for walks. Wow, fresh air.

Probably the most important part of the story is the tremendous encouragement I got, in my healing process, from the love and support of my family and friends. (I also benefited from one outrageous piece of good luck – for the first time in my life I had signed up with an HMO, a good one, Kaiser, only a couple of days before the accident!) My 22-year-old son Kenta somehow got to my side from northern California that very first night, comforting me with his loving presence and helping Cindy with the scary decision-making. Local friends were also tremendously helpful, offering nearby places to stay for Cindy and the visitors, who soon included both of my ex-wives, my other son, Taiyo, age 20 ("Dad, what the fuck? Why weren't you wearing a helmet?" he wrote in the memorabilia journal Donna bought me), my father from Seattle, my mom from Boston. I even got flowers – from Lou's, the best record store in San Diego County – guess they appreciate a good customer – and from the *Reader*, the local weekly I'd only recently started writing for occasionally. And Cindy was there for me constantly, keeping contact with the rest of the world, holding back my Mom from being excessively solicitous, ordering the doctors and nurses not to give me so much damn haladol. Bless her. She was great. Still is. And Kenta and Taiyo's visits in particular made me feel so cared for, so motivated to find my way back to what used to pass for reality. Gosh, I even got written up in *Apparatchik*, and *Locus*, not to mention the Internet Dylan and PK Dick news-

groups. New friend (from Corflu) Nigel Rowe sent me Simon Ounsley's *Lagoon 6*, and I can tell you that a brain injury and a (broken) head full of downers does not make reading D. West an easier task. Actually I was having trouble making my eyes focus. But I was glad for the opportunity. Great communications from all over, even one from my Encinitas neighbor David Brin (who I hadn't yet met since I moved here). One *Crawdaddy!* subscriber in Japan read of my accident on an Internet posting and mailed me a CD of Beethoven string quartets, which he said had helped him through some difficult times. What a great gift. In some ways the whole damn injury was a great gift too, an opportunity to be reminded that someone cares and that we, or anyway I, ain't alone in this world. There was also a rehab nurse (at the hospital, not the subsequent day program), an outgoing black woman who loved telling stories and got me telling some back to her. She truly inspired me (she actually has won local awards for being such an outstanding caregiver), and if I'm a better storyteller now (or less self-conscious or uncertain about it) than I was before my brain injury, I'll always give Barbara Penn some credit for opening the door.

On the other hand, there was a "speech" therapist at the rehab hospital who tried to teach me not to talk on and on so much. Obviously, she wasn't successful. But before I cut myself off, I have to pick up a thread and explain that I was scheduled to have an operation July 5th to put plastic plates over the holes the surgeons had to make in my skull. (Sometimes they keep and later reattach the removed bone, the "skull flaps," but my new surgeon couldn't find anyone who knew where the flaps were now, if anywhere.) I met with my surgeon a few days before the operation, and he told me that my brain could be "adhesed" to my scalp where the scalp dips in in a startling dent on my right temple, and so when he cuts to make a place for the plate the brain would be cut a little too. He raised the possibility of a new chance of seizures. But that wasn't my main concern. I canceled the operation on the spot, on the theory that the brain had done such a great job of healing (everyone was telling me it was miraculous) and that I couldn't see the wisdom of messing with it again after it had healed so well. The surgeon was supportive – he again described the operation as essentially "cosmetic," saying that statistics don't show any greater incidence of reinjury in people who haven't had the plates inserted. And I said, if it's just a matter of how I look, forget it. I kinda like the "dented" look, and besides as my hospital buzz grows out my hair will cover it completely. (This has proved true, but if I ever do write a book about my brain injury experiences I'll have to have my right temple hair cut short to

present a more striking public and video image.) My main compensation for the holes in my head is I bought a surf helmet, which allows me to go in the ocean without having to be concerned about flying boogie boards or being dashed on the rocky shore. I could still have the plates put on—and hopefully the HMO would still pay for it—if I change my mind, but then again someone else said the Tibetans teach that a baby's patella gives it the benefit of being more open to and in touch with the crown chakra. (My head-holes covered with scalp are quite similar, and since the brain is surrounded by fluid the larger one kinda puffs up in the morning after I've been sleeping on my side.) I dunno, but my own spiritual inclinations do give me respect for the idea of carrying around a reminder of my vulnerability. And if it also makes it easier for me to pick up electrical messages from the Superconsciousness, that's good, 'cause I'm sure having trouble figuring out the Web-Browser software they gave me with my new computer, so anything that keeps me in touch—new computer, old but possibly slightly revised brain, that's the story of 1995 for me.

In conclusion, one thing about brain injury, apart from the fact that it automatically gives me entry into a new and exclusive microcosmic group (hi Calvin) I hadn't known existed, is that it's the sort of life-event that creates a sensation of having gone through a turning point: everything is open for reassessment, I

can change my nature, is such-and-such different now? Well, it might be. And I have the world's permission to reconsider my priorities and values. More important is the permission of my subconscious. I don't need to hold myself to old promises I made to myself. That's called starting over, I guess. On the other hand, the rehab people suggest that there could still be aftershocks from a brain injury any time in the first year and a half. I'm not expecting them, nor scared of them. It is odd how many brain injury symptoms, such as difficulty in "word-finding" (coming up with that particular word or name), are almost universal—doesn't matter if you're a genuine BI or not. On the advice of the rehab psychologist, I wore a bicycle helmet when Cindy and I went to the American Booksellers convention (thanks to Nigel and Karen's kind fannish hospitality)—because it was still early after my release from hospital and they worried about my balance and everything else, and actually it took a lot of persuading to get "permission" to go. I thought of stenciling onto my helmet, "Ask Me About My Brain Injury," but I didn't do it. Cindy correctly pointed out everyone would assume I was promoting a book.

Anyway, so this is what you get when you ask me. Another trap door. Watch yourself, they're everywhere. Sometimes when you least expect it . . .

— Paul Williams

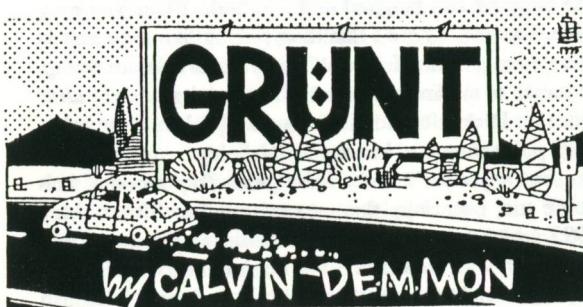
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scales, interestingly—they intersect at about that point! but you still have to go to work.

I also remember my winter in New York quite clearly. Not as cold as Edmonton, but windier, noisier, wetter, clammier. I remember the warmth and coziness of the Carrs' little apartment in Brooklyn, which for some reason had a floor that was slanted like the Mystery Spot in Santa Cruz. But the snow couldn't get in! And you had a TV! Once I ate a sandwich there. Then it was back on the subway to West 76th Street and Larry Ivie's Boarding House, which was also very cozy with its steam heat and banging radiators.

On the first snowfall that winter, I walked one block to Central Park and made a little snowman in an open field. I don't think I ever made a snowman in Edmonton, but I did slip on an icy patch one day while walking downtown with the managing editor, and I flailed about wildly and knocked his glasses right off his face, breaking them. He was courteously irritated.

Last Sunday, I got a call from him for the first time since we both left Edmonton. He'd found my number in a CD-ROM phone book. Now he's an Episcopal priest. And I'm still flailing about wildly. —CD



As a native of California, but one who has lived in other places long enough to have experienced Real Weather, I've found that talk about far-away snowstorms here is about as common as talk about Bosnia. Hardly anyone ever talks about it, but once in a while you run into an actual Bosnian and have a very interesting conversation.

I don't think there's anyone in my office now who knows snow and blizzards the way I do—five winters in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, where the temperature reaches 40 below (on both the Celsius and Fahrenheit



## GORDON EKLUND

I guess I'm that rare kind of fool with a grin on his face and a doughnut through his nose who sleeps with an umbrella for a blanket because I took you absolutely seriously about the "thinner, more frequent" *Trap Doors* and have been haunting my mailbox like a hog with a banana the past several months, eagerly anticipating the incipient arrival of the first of these and wondering if since it was so goddamn thin and goddamn frequent that I was maybe missing something here.

Or else it could have been mail theft, which seems to be the petty crime of the '90s as dwarf juggling was for the '80s. As a sometimes postal service delivery manager with an associate degree in septic engineering, I can testify that we (the USPS) are finding in Seattle, WA 98103 (where, I believe, at least several of *Trap Door*'s regular readers reside) as many as a half dozen counterfeit postal keys illicitly lodged like the severed phalli of statutory rapists in various mail boxes every month. And that's just the ones that break off. I am reminded of this movie I once upon a time saw half of but nobody else seems to have seen any of, except maybe Carol Carr who I keep forgetting to write and ask and my letter would probably get swiped anyway. (Or she wouldn't answer, same thing.) It (the movie I saw half of) was called "Union City" and the only person I remember in it was Deborah Harry, who previously sang with the new wave band Blondie. Anyway, in this movie this guy—Harry's husband or boyfriend—is having his milk bottles ripped off his porch every early morning right after the milkman comes and he never can catch the guy. So he sets up this elaborate trap by tying some fishing line from the milk bottle to his big toe and then the thief comes and he wakes up and he takes his gun and he shoots and kills the

guy. And the movie proceeds somewhat anticlimactically from there. I am also reminded of the incident in 1970 when I was living on Dwight Way in Berkeley and a thief popped the padlock of the storage locker I kept in the basement parking lot of my building, except that the only thing I stored in there was my old FAPA mailings in their original envelopes, which the thief proceeded to methodically rifle and strew everywhere. The next day I took Dick Lupoff, who was a long way from his penthouse days by then, down to show him the scene of the crime. He laughed and laughed and laughed. "Can you imagine," sez he, "here's this thug risking like ten years in the slammer...and for what? A bunch of mimeoed crap. A bunch of mailing comments." I think it was right after this that Dick left fandom for good. But I think he had a sage point to make that day in Berkeley.

But anyway. The fat infrequent *Trap Door* is welcome too, especially this current number fifteen, May 1995, which has a zooming spaceship on the cover and somebody with snakes in his or her hair and a squiggle in the lower right which is probably some sort of fannish gang graffiti that I fail to recognize.

You know the one. "Dan Stef-fan," it says.

Good to see from your chart fanzine fandom undergoing an apparent upswing in activity, though whether this equates to a renaissance or golden age I'll leave up to those who get more fanzines than me to determine. But I do like fanzines. I like their permanence, their weight, their good solid honest mass. I guess I'm just not an electronic media kind of goosball—like the camel with the windmill on his back—and the farthest I tend to diverge from old-fashioned literacy is in seeing a lot of movies. And with that you need to start with a camera and a reel of film. Somebody recently marveled how it's possible

nowadays to run into really bright people in their 20s and early 30s who don't read at all. I don't think that was likely even twenty years ago. And impossible thirty or forty. I sometimes like to pretend to myself that this whole thing is a fad that will pass like a ripple through a bottle of wine. But more than likely not. But it's not mandatory either.

Manifestations of electronic literacy like the Internet leave me cold, too. It strikes me as being sort of like fandom but without the virtues. To be honest, there aren't a whole lot of people around I'm all that interested in having long conversations with. And most of them—like most people—can talk better than they can write. So who needs a computer to sit around all night squawking to other people with other computers. I'd rather read a book, or take a walk through the park, or have dinner with a friend. (And there's always sex, which may have predated not only computers but fandom itself.)

I liked Foyster's teenage piece pretty good. It seemed to start out as an adolescent version of Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain* and then blurred into fan speak. But that was okay. I know this isn't original with me, but I bet a survey would reveal that a lot of fans suffered from childhood diseases of some sort or other. I never had anything as heavy-duty as polio but missed big chunks of the school year in the first, second and third grades due to severe strep throat. I think it may have been during those long lonely weeks at home when I first started to read all the time. What else was there to do? I couldn't go outside and daytime TV in those years—the early '50s — was abominable beyond belief. Not even any ball games on the radio. (I lived in a minor league city and the minor leagues already played exclusively at night.) I didn't start reading science fiction that early but the die was certainly cast. I do remember borrowing the Dick and Jane books from school ahead of schedule because I wanted to see how the whole thing turned out. Dick and Jane always reminded me of the Bobbsey Twins but without the explicit sex.

Speaking of which, it's a bit disturbing to discover through the letter column at this late date that it was not Conklin's *A Treasury of Science Fiction* in its truncated Berkley Books edition that was my First Science Fiction Book Ever but rather his other anthology, *The Big Book of SF*, likewise abridged. Sort of like finding out at age 50 that the first girl you had congress with wasn't really Betty O'Bunnion but her twin sister Veronica instead. Interesting to know—though it won't change anybody's life much. I remember I later found and read the complete *Best of Science Fiction* in the local library where it was one of maybe a half-dozen s-f books on their shelves. (All the others seemed to be written by Asimov.) It was then that I first read Heinlein's "Universe." Which remains my

favorite s-f story of all time. Unless it's Burroughs' "Junkie on Mars." Or Burbee's "Big Name Fan." But, hey, think of where we'd all be today if we'd never changed to become regular readers of s-f. In my case, I figure for sure I would either be selling mosquito net door-to-door out of the trunk of a 1957 Ford Fairlane or else modeling railroad ties while otherwise nude. Greg Benford would be an astronaut, Bill Rotsler a TV host, Ted White a hipster comedian. Other possibilities abound.

Elsewhere in the ish, Boggs is brilliant, Strecker illuminating (and maybe frightening—what if I'd grown up to become the granddad in those advertising pictures, the one who gets to hold the happy smiling baby in his beefy comforting arms) and Katz amusing and tough to read when you haven't had your breakfast yet.

Calvin Demmon's "Grunt" seems strung together out of letters but I guess that's okay. {From e-mails, actually.} He's always been funnier in print than in person. (Just kidding.) Funny too that I just finished an article in FAPA in which I describe him as being long gone from the portals of fandom and here he shows immediately up with a column in a Hugo-nominated zine. It only gone to show. I've been stuck so much in the '60s lately that his brief allusion to a 1968 peace demonstration in Los Angeles causes me to want to inquire instantly if it was the one at the big hotel downtown where LBJ spoke and the cops went wild and banged everybody over the head with their nightsticks. No, I wasn't there but people I later knew were. And I heard stories. I never met either Paul Krassner nor Phil Ochs though I did see the latter play and sing a time or two. Krassner's still around someplace in skin magazines {and has been putting out a revived newsletter version of *The Realist* for many years now}, Ochs hanged himself in his sister's bathroom in the '70s, and Calvin W. "Biff" Demmon drives a Volvo. I mean, who would have guessed? (Or wanted to.) {But it's a 33-year-old Volvo!} The real future can sometimes arrive as unexpectedly as any parallel universe.

The place where I grew up, about three miles from here, there was a huge thick wet mossy woods extending clear to Puget Sound starting at the end of the street I lived on. Happily, it's since become a state park so most of it's still there intact, though a few parts were chiseled away over the years by developers. When I first moved here I wandered around on the beach till I found the terminus of the old trail through which we kids used to walk down to the Sound. I started up it in the other direction but didn't get far. It was steep and there were many fallen tree branches and the wet was like being in a bathtub of mud upside down. If you know the feeling. But it was still there. And I found that comforting. (15815-40th Place So. #103, Seattle, WA 98188)

## GERI SULLIVAN

I love what Dan Steffan did with the type on his "Doorway" heading. Very classy and creative; it beats most if not all of the 2,000+ typefaces in my collection, which just goes to show there's always room for more art in type.

Your editorial was even more enjoyable than usual. Maybe it was because I related so closely to your explanation of what happened to your best laid plans for more frequent publication. Also, how could I be anything but cheered by the Golden Age documented in your carefully kept statistics and editorial commentary? Your comments on the cyclical nature of fandom reminded me of how familiar many parts of my recently-gifted-by-David-Cummer copy of *Fancy II* struck me. Ah, concerns back in 1959 about the increasing size of Worldcons!

I'm of the opinion that there will always be a place for myth-making and fabulous fannish characters within fandom, and that fanzines—in one form or another—will continue to play an important role in spreading those mythologies and promulgating the values they represent. I don't expect "us" to emerge from the enclave and take over fandom, nor do I expect "us" to disappear, even long after the first-hand witnesses have passed on to the Enchanted Convention where the parties (and the sidebars) never end.

Your comments about the effect taking notes has on your convention experience also struck a familiar chord. Recording the experience—either with words or pictures—takes me away from conventions, too. That's why I only bring my camera out at certain times, like I did Friday evening of Corflu Vegas and for the banquet. I can enjoy taking pictures for brief periods, when it can become just something I'm doing at that moment. And I certainly enjoy the results, as do others when I get around to sending them pictures. But when I have a camera in my hand, I'm "Geri Sullivan: Photographer" rather than "Geri Sullivan: Fan." It's work, and it gets in the way of play.

As he no doubt expected to, John Foyster grabbed me with the lead of his article, "I was fourteen years old when I first saw someone die." While I never spent time on a polio ward, his descriptions were both familiar and fascinating. His relative mobility served him well; Sister Kenny gained international fame and acclaim with her radical polio therapies practiced here in Minneapolis, therapies that called for vigorous exercise and muscle manipulation. My attention wandered over the details of John's obsession with the sf magazines of the day; it's an obsession I've never had, and I've read several similar descriptions, story by story, issue by issue, written by other fans. But his description of the obsession ending needed every bit of his build-up, and it was perfect! "But then it all fell apart. The July 1957 *Astounding*, it seemed

to me, just was not up to scratch. Oh, there was fine stuff in it, but I did not feel a pressing need to read every word, and I didn't. Thus the rot set in...."

Calvin Demmon has the right idea about fandom in cyberspace, but sorely misjudges things when he says we could keep entire fanzine collections on two or three floppy disks. Even the new 100 megabyte floppies would no doubt soon be filled. {Yes, when one considers that one would want to create files that would produce the exact image of each fanzine page, the resulting files would take a lot of those 100 meg floppies. I guess you could save a lot of disk space just converting the text, but the art and layout are important parts of many fanzines, and leaving them out would lack zip.}

When Gavi Levy Haskell was just a few months old, Fred took her to a baby casting call for a diaper ad. She wasn't selected, but that small adventure made reading Candi's experience as a baby-model's mommy all the more interesting. Her views ("rationalizations") so closely match mine that the whole article went down like yummy strained fruit. My own experience with child models is limited, but I was horrified by the little I saw a few years back: six-year-old girls and boys dressed to perfection, worried about their looks, their hair, whether they would be perfect enough to get the assignment. Blech!

Len Moffatt's poem brings delightful if unlikely images to mind: cadres of drunken fan wandering the halls of a convention hotel, taking swings and punches at all—fan, hotel staff or mundanes—who look at them sideways.

I always enjoy Carol's column, but her rebuttal of Ted White's perceptions and interpretations of "a Milford Mafia composed of knee-jerk liberals" was exquisite, demonstrating how it did the all-so-common propensity of fans (or people) to lash out against things they are (or feel) excluded from, and how different the experience is from the inside. Ted himself has been on both sides of this one, being as he is at the center of the "Ted White Group Mind." But it's hard to see things from both, or all, sides—especially at the same time, especially when you are personally involved.

I presume Carol sent Rotsler the pome while he was still recovering. {Yes.} I hope that it didn't hurt when he laughed. I laughed till it hurt.

I know so little of Laney that Cora's reminiscences from "That Little Machine Shop" are a treasure, sparkling as they do with wit and detail. "Oh fuck it" indeed. Encore! Encore!

If I remember correctly, Don Fitch told me the first of the Gung Ho zen koans (the one about carrying the beautiful young girl across the stream) while we were mimeographing *Idea No. 8* in the Toad Hall Champion Mimeo Center and Frog Preserve. Reading the rest of

Ray Nelson's "Child's Garden of Zen" built on that happy memory. Light. Amusing. With easily swallowed kernels of truth.

Ah, yes, the ether still vibrates. Don Fitch may have a point about the lack of family-strength Obligation in fandom, but your letter column reads like a small reunion of a family whose members are especially good at expressing themselves. As for the heady elixir of his closing paragraphs, I can only say, "Oh, that Don Fitch. First he stays at Toad Hall a couple weeks after Minicon, weeding the largest flower bed, preparing the soil for spring planting, and helping Jeff install a fence to keep the pup from eating the day lilies and other flowers again this year. Then he sends a full load of compost my way via the pages of *Trap Door*. What a fine gardener he is. What a fine friend." (3444 Blaisdell Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55408-4315)

### RICHARD NEWSOME

I haven't been back in fandom long enough to notice the dearth of promising young newcomers everyone is complaining about. All the people that started pubbing their ish in the early 1980s seem like new faces to me. I think the real problem with the present moribundness of fandom—and this is nowhere more noticeable than in the elegiac tone taken by most of the articles in *Trap Door*, *Mimosa* and *Habakkuk*—is that the science fiction field is in the doldrums, with the prozines dying off and the absence of anything really exciting happening. What the science fiction field needs is for some brilliant new writer to emerge and excite SF readers the way Lovecraft, Burroughs, Heinlein and Tolkien did generations of readers past—excite them to the point of wanting to make contact and share their excitement with other fans.

The last couple of times this happened was with *Star Trek* and *Star Wars*, with the result that media fandom was born. Not really our sort of fans, with the exception of a few like Linda Bushyager who drifted across the bar and found their true home in fanzine fandom.

Cyberpunk, like the New Wave thing in the '60s, failed to really catch fire and live up to its hype. Cyberpunk probably had ten times more influence on computer hacker fandom than it did on ours. The kids who had their minds blown by Vernor Vinge's "True Names"—and I'm sure there were hundreds—aren't in fandom pubbing their ish, because they're out there in the computer lab really doing it, exploring cyberspace.

Not far ahead, brilliant young fellows no one has ever heard of are going to emerge from their college classrooms and create the pioneering classics of virtual reality. And a whole new fandom will spring up around what they are doing.

At one point in my life I read a science fiction book

or magazine almost every day. For about seven years. After a while the kick is gone, but you're still hunting for it.

It seems to me that the problem with the science fiction community is this: at one time, if you were a fan, you were pretty bright. And if you met somebody else who was a science fiction enthusiast, they were probably pretty bright, too.

Today, there seems to be an awful lot of normal people in fandom.

Candi Strecker's piece was amusing and reminded me of a woman I knew who had a talented child she was forever dragging around to auditions and agents. The kid truly did have some sort of natural magnetism. Stage presence. She sent out a vibe that drew your attention to her. Most of us, I suspect, are hurting inside a lot of the time and are hiding it behind a lot of barriers that say "stay back!" and "don't look at me." The people who most naturally draw other people's attention are those who are the most relaxed and happy. Except that's a bullshit theory, of course. What about Marilyn Monroe, who was absolutely miserable and couldn't turn off the magnetism that made people want to look at her? (And she was simply not all that gorgeous. Look at a picture of her closely sometime: her facial features were not perfect, even after the nose job; her hair was frizzy; and plenty of girls have better bodies. What was it that made her so impossible not to look at?) (281 Flatbush Ave. #1-B, Brooklyn, NY 11217)

### VICKI ROSENZWEIG

I think part of the concern over the graying of fandom is because fandom, like "modern science fiction," is a relatively new thing. Those who appreciate poetry have grown up knowing that many of the writers they most admired died before they were born. Even relatively young science fiction fans, while there was a large body of work already out there, spent our early years as SF readers awaiting the new Heinlein or wondering whether the latest Asimov novel was worth buying in hardcover. It's not that there isn't a lot of good stuff being published—I'd stack Pat Cadigan's fiction up against Asimov's any time, for example—it's that we're still losing people we think of as being in the first generation of professional science fiction writers, people like Bloch and Leiber. Oddly, I feel something similar about Zelazny; while Harlan Ellison presented him as a fairly new voice in the 1960s, he was writing before I started reading. It also occurs to me that this may connect to the whole American ethos, or myth, of the frontier: fans, especially those who advocate space colonization, are likely to see themselves as pioneers, and may expect a next generation to be following them. But it seems to be in the nature of

such things that the people who move to the already developed no-longer-frontier don't have the same attitudes as those who developed it in the first place. The idea that it is "a proud and lonely thing to be a fan" reminds me (squinting only a little) of the narratives of the early white settlers in places like Montana, in contact with "civilization" only by mail and the occasional package sent by Sears Roebuck. At least we didn't have to kick out any aboriginal people to make room for the pulps. *{Yes, but we took away their trees.}*

I'm glad you're going to be staying here in the paper universe, as I am. Electronic mail is a useful supplement to paper mail; when it works at all, it works a lot faster than the post office even tries to nowadays. Some of the things I put in my personalzine have previously gone out to some people by e-mail. But I'm another of those who prefers to know who she's sending her fanzine to, and to hold other people's zines in my hand, rather than have them land on a computer screen. There's something satisfying in the physicality of a fanzine in the mailbox, or in handing it to a friend to read. *(Like you, some of the writing in my apazines, and even occasionally in these pages, has its origins in letters to friends, and often has been copied (and modified) several times before it hits more public print. As someone who used a manual typewriter for decades, I value the capability of easily moving/replicating text more than the ability to send messages fast.)*

John Foyster's description of what it was like being a teenager with polio is fascinating and well-written. One difference between polio then and AIDS now is that there doesn't seem to be much first-hand material on what it was like to have polio, perhaps because there wasn't the same sense of polio happening to a specific group of people, with the need to let the rest of the world know what's happening. I like Foyster's distinction between being devoted to science fiction as a body of written work and being a fan in the sense of participating in a community, attending conventions, and publishing fanzines.

I like Carol Carr's revenge fantasy of getting the doctors to make house calls and then making them wait around as they make us wait. And while I wasn't there and have no first-hand knowledge of any of what went on at the Milsord conferences, it seems entirely reasonable to me that someone would value a writer more for quality than quantity. The danger, perhaps, is in combining personal criteria—who you'd be comfortable having in your home, who you like talking to over a meal—with professional ones. Carol's exemplar of integrating assertiveness, common politeness, and the ability to cry is excellent, and the topic reminds me of a one-liner I saw recently. "At 16, we [women] realize that men are only interested in one thing. At 30, we realize that the one

thing is football." I realize this is unfair to some men—for some of them, like some women, the one thing is books—but I found it amusing nonetheless. I should also note that I enjoyed her poem on making God laugh: the universe does seem to be set up that way sometimes.

I don't think we'll have the virtual old age homes Jim Caughran predicts, if only because someone would steal the VR equipment from anyone feeble who was sleeping outside; but yes, the difference would matter: you can fool the eyes, but the body will know whether it's fed, whether it's warm enough, whether it's getting necessary medication. And that, I think, is why VR is more hype than promise. The people promoting it seem to think we only have about 2.2 senses: sight, hearing and a very limited tactile sense (one that, for example, reaches out to pick up an object, but doesn't notice whether we're sweating).

Pascal Thomas is right that, while various cuisines are blending together in the restaurants of Western Civilization, they are not the same thing. An aspect he omits is that a Vietnamese emigre cooking for Americans is likely to produce dishes that are closer to the Chinese food we're used to than the same woman will when cooking for herself and her family. I'm not worried about authenticity, as a rule; I'm just glad that so many people in this city are willing to cook tasty food at prices I can afford. But I am most intrigued by his inclusion of eggs as a commonplace ingredient on a pizza; I've not only never had egg on a pizza, I've never eaten anywhere that offered it.

I like Walt Willis' anecdote about the effects of prayer, but I do wonder what percentage of prayers for royalty are somewhere between "May God bless and keep the Tsar—far away from us" and "May God strike him down dead!"? (33 Indian Rd. 6-R, New York, NY 10034)

## BO STENFORS

It's interesting to learn that the number of fanzines you've received increased from 115 in 1990 to 199 in 1994. Here in Sweden the showing up of fanzines is reversed. From 1990 I have a stack of Swedish fanzines (they're in my cellar so I can't count them, but at least fifty) but in 1995 I've received only three issues of *Spektra*, the membership fanzine from Skandinavisk Forening for Science Fiction, or SFSF (the Scandinavian Society for Science Fiction). I have written articles in two of these issues about the beginning of Swedish fandom and the founding of SFSF (I was one of the founders).

Well, an SF fan should hope for the future! But the reason for the dropping of fanzines in number is, I think among other things, the rapid rise in prices here in Sweden for everything. For example, the post office has found that the business companies are using faxes to send

messages these days, not letters, and so they of course increased the postal rates immensely to get in the money anyway. Furthermore, I used to cheaply print my fanzines *Candy Venus* and *Sexy Fantasi* at a little firm, where I could supply the paper myself, but this is no longer possible. So I have had to take out my old mimeo stencil duplicator to print my FAPAZine.

I knew John Foyster in the old days and translated something he wrote about the Australian scene which was published in the SFSF's memberzine, but I never knew much about his personal life, such as that he had got poliomyelitis. I read his article with the greatest interest.

Ray Nelson is also one of them I knew way back. I put a lot of his funny drawings on stencil for the Swedish zine *Cactus* at the end of the '50s. He seems not to have lost his flare!

I must also say I enjoyed the illustrations very much—very fine art, all through the zine! (*Gudmundvagen 5 B., S-182 61 Djursholm, Sweden*)

#### A. VINQ CLARKE

Are we in a fanzine Golden Age? Quite possibly—difficult to remember a time when there were so many fanzines hitting 16WWW. Drives me to distraction. But as to diminishing of effort as old-timers drop from the tree, I'm optimistic that new buds will turn up, even in strange contexts. I've recently had some correspondence with an American enthusiast of E. C. (Ted) Tubb's stuff—he wanted information about Ted's fannish activities, which was difficult. Also, he said he's intending to put out a fanzine, and I'm not sure if I should welcome this or not. In the '50s there was quite a debate on this—shouldn't prospective faneds do some writing of their own in other people's zines first? {*Must've been before my time—what was the consensus, if any? It seems to me an impossible rule in a functioning anarchy such as fandom.*}

More worrying is the accepted wisdom that once us old-timers have gone to the great Duplicating Room in Hell, there'll be an end to myth-making, the old Fannish Fanzine Fandom for Fun. I feel this very keenly, as being not only a minor part of it in the past but so thoroughly enjoying it, there's a sense of loss. And yet—is this inevitable? I'm not sure that way back we were limited to a "relatively small enclave," but even if we were, we did create. Why isn't it possible for twenty or thirty or more fans even in these days to reconstruct and play in that marvelous playground of myth? All enthusiasms have an inner core of devotees.

John Foyster's article was fine—here's another one who felt that SF in the mid-'50s wasn't worth bothering about—and Katz was funny, even though I have no idea of what pastrami tastes like. {*Would one of our New York readers please Fedex Vinq a pastrami on rye?*}

Nice to read Demmon again, and I never thought I'd find an article about baby-modeling interesting, but Candi Strecker's writing was good enough to make it well worth reading. You're lucky to get it instead of some women's magazine.

Redd Boggs' column was an object lesson in how to take a series of reasonably trivial subjects and make them interesting. And so smoothly done. Yes, that's ATom showing his genius, a few lines suddenly revealing so much. Carol's and Socorro's contributions OK, and Ray Nelson's Zen stuff clever and pertinent. Wonder if it'll start a fashion? (*16 Wendover Way, Welling, Kent DA16 2BN, U.K.*)

#### LEIGH EDMONDS

Did D. West actually write "The State of the Art" in 1977? That would make it 18 years old. Are the years whipping by that fast or have you got the date wrong? {*Yes, and no.*} In any event, I found your musings on the passage of time, the life and death of fanzine fandom and so on, intriguing. I guess I share with you the feeling that there is something about fanzine fandom that needs to be preserved, or at least needs to be preserved from our perspective. The interesting thing about your comment on the loss of the old traditions and also the ideas of setting up a SFFFHFM is that they are not about preserving fandom for the future (which is happening through libraries) but because it is about preserving what we want for the future, sort of shaping the ideas that pass on into the future so that they conform to what we want people to think rather than allowing people to think about us what they will. I've recently been thinking about the difference between cultural heritage and history, and this is precisely the difference. History is what people write about the past and it is their view of it, while cultural heritage is what we want to convey to the future. {*Actually, I think we want to convey both, but to my mind cultural heritage is more important, for the very reason you state in the next paragraph.*}

It strikes me that what most fanzine fans want to convey to the future is not the actual material itself but the intangible meaning that goes with the material. By this I guess I mean that *Trap Door* is just a few pages of printing stapled together, while in the hands of a trufan it becomes a "fanzine." It suddenly occurs to me that this little insight gives a post-modern interpretation to Willis and Shaw's "The Enchanted Duplicator." For a fanzine to be a "real fanzine," it needs not only a trufan at the handle of the enchanted duplicator but also a trufan who reads it. If anyone else were to read the product of the enchanted duplicator it would not make much sense to them. All we need now is a gifted faan-writer to turn this little observation into a literary expression. We know how Jophan got to use the enchanted

duplicator, but how did he get the enchanted spectacles which told him how to read fanzines properly? Perhaps somebody has already written it but I haven't read it. (Elvira St., Palmyra, WA 6157, Australia)

### SID BIRCHBY

Thank you indeed for *Trap Door* No. 15, another thoughtful issue full of goodies. May I put a word in for the immaculate format? As they say, you could almost eat your dinner off it.

Your remark in the editorial — "More than ever, fandom seems like an oasis of relative calm amidst the other turmoils of life" — shows a certain amount of caution, like a politician's promise? What exactly is this oasis of calm, relative or not? It seems to me that the life of the average committed fan, either editor or letter-writer, is little better than life on a chain gang. Once you're hooked up, you are jerked along by the impetus of your fellow-sufferers.

Of course some fans, or impartial observers, would roundly declare that there is nothing to compare with the tolerant bonhomie existing between members of the fannish ingroup and that, when it comes to a crisis on a personal level—say a bereavement or a serious illness—then the collective entity known as fandom knows how to take care of its own.

In a sense, the same may be said of any group of fans—motorcycle fans, Elvis Presley fans, football fans. Once I saw a football fanzine on sale at Manchester's Maine Road, and it was quite undistinguishable from one of "ours."

We are all setting up our ideal fantasy world and acting out our loyalties in good faith. Somehow (we say) it is going to all come true, despite this brutal world, so we must keep calm and carry on whistling in the dark. On the whole, one has to endorse your metaphoric oasis. (40 Parrs Wood Ave., Didsbury, Manchester M20 5ND, U.K.)

### MICHAEL WAITE

I had to check the title of John Foyster's article several times while I was reading it, to be sure the article was about science fiction and not about John's early medical history, but then . . . John's article tied everything together and it was pure ambrosia to the end. John's excitement over reading the January 1955 issue of *Galaxy* was similar to my excitement on reading the first issue of *Galaxy* (October 1950), when I was thirteen. I used to have a complete run of *Galaxy* through September 1956 (when I enlisted in the USAF).

I sold my pulp collection off in the early '60s. I was also an *Astounding* fan at that time. My interest in science fiction dates back to the pulps of the late '40s. I

used to stop at the local drug store, on my way home from church, and thumb through all the latest issues (western, mystery, romance, science fiction). Of course, at that time I was more interested in checking out the scantily clad nymphs than I was in reading the stories. My meager allowance seldom permitted such literary purchases.

On several occasions, I skipped church and spent the money my mother gave to me for the church offering, on pulps (not always SF). I usually got caught. Much to my mother's displeasure, my Sunday dress suit was often covered with paper trimmings when I returned home from church (due to the cheap paper used in the manufacture of pulp magazines). I don't believe my mother knew what the white specks were. Perhaps she thought I had a bad case of dandruff. But then again, mothers have a way of knowing things. The only reprimand I ever received for skipping church was being told, "Jesus is keeping a record." That wasn't much of a threat to a precocious nine-year-old. Mother had to put up with a lot of shenanigans when it came to my reading habits.

I always took a flashlight to bed with me, so I could read under the covers. I thought my mother was psychic because she caught me several times. I finally figured out that she could see the glow of the flashlight when she walked into my dark bedroom. The most memorable undercover book I read was Clarke's *Childhood's End*, but it took Heinlein's *Starman Jones* to make me an avid reader of science fiction.

Re: *The Ether Still Vibrates*. The articles are the most outstanding feature of *Trap Door* but it also has one of the most exceptional letter columns in fandom. I find myself wanting to comment on each and every letter. (105 W. Ainsworth, Ypsilanti, MI 48197-5336)

### DEREK PICKLES

John Foyster's recollections of the isolation hospital he was in remind me of when my sister was about five or six and contracted diphtheria. Mavis was taken to the Bradford Fever Hospital where visitors were not allowed inside the buildings but stood on wooden-stepped platforms outside speaking to the patients through slightly-open very high transom windows.

My wife, Marjorie, also spent some time in the same hospital about forty years ago when she was isolated with suspected polio. I (but no one else, certainly not the children) was allowed into the building but only as far as the isolation room doorway. Fortunately she didn't have polio but a girl she worked with contracted it and died within a few days.

When I began teaching, I taught ten-year-olds. I was asked if I would do some overtime teaching of a boy who should have been in the class but who had polio. He was

back at home and needed home tuition. I agreed, to find out that the boy was recovering some use of his legs but that his mother had caught it while nursing him and she was confined to a wheelchair. Several years later I saw him out riding a bicycle while his mother was still in the wheelchair.

Liked Carol Carr's poem, and how is she able to describe my hospital experiences so accurately? I have had quite a few visits. I've had doctors queueing up to peer through a 'scope in my bowel, a doctor who insisted it was my right leg that was to be operated on when I was adamant that, as I was the one in pain, it was my *left* leg in need of treatment. I had a hell of a job persuading him to draw his felt-pen arrows in the right place. I've also been asked if I was an alcoholic. I drink hardly at all, never at home and only an odd beer with a meal out, and I don't like wine. It turned out that I had acquired something from one of the numerous blood transfusions I have had. (In passing, a woman here is suing a hospital for performing an operation on her teeth when she had gone in for one on her knee.)

On a personal note, I appreciate how you feel and what you have gone and are going through with your parents having to enter nursing homes. Marjorie's mother went from looking after herself in her own home to having to go into a nursing home in a period of about three months. She began to fall, once in front of a lit gas fire, once onto a portable electric fire, and numerous other falls. She came to stay with us and we found that she was getting up in the middle of the night and trying to go downstairs. She thought that because she was awake and the clock said two o'clock it must have stopped.

We could not cope, as we both have our own health problems, and after a few weeks we found a retirement home. Fortunately she liked the large, sunny room, which looked out over the large garden with goldfish pond and nice flowers. She did go to the hospital for exhaustive tests at the conclusion of which the consultant told her and Marjorie and her sister that there was nothing he could do, it was just old age, she was ninety. She was in the home for about six months when she had a heart attack and died a few hours later in hospital.

We had done all we could but she was looked after twenty-four hours a day. We are convinced that she lived longer than she would have in her terrace house with its steep stairs and cellars which she insisted on going up and down. (44 Rooley Lane, Bankfoot, Bradford, W. Yorks. BDS 8LX, U.K.)

### MILT STEVENS

Until reading *Trap Door* No. 15, I hadn't known John Foyster had gone off the deep end on SF the same year I had. In my case, there was no traumatic event associ-

ated with it. I suspect it was just a few additional synapses frying. With all the sunshine in Southern California, synapse frying seems more common here than most places. I had been acquiring SF quietly for several years. By 1954, I had 76 SF magazines that fit neatly on a shelf over my head. (I know there were 76 because I counted and made a list. I later realized that counting and making lists are bad signs.) It was in November 1955 that the metamorphosis occurred, and I became a Teenage Completist. The condition lasted for two years until lust eventually overcame bibliomania. By the end of 1957, I wanted to spend money on girls rather than buying every piece of SF in the world. I've only had a few relapses since then. (Well, relatively few.) Of course if I were to win the Lotto, no telling what might happen.

After reading Candi Strecker's article, I found myself hoping baby models are fed better than regular models. I recall reading about a recent incident where a super model slugged someone and explained she was irritable because she hadn't eaten all year. No telling what sort of ravenous beasts starved baby models might grow up to be. (CaA-6235 Keystone Street, Simi Valley, CA 93063)

### WILLIAM DANNER

I particularly enjoyed John Foyster's article. One paragraph about small commercial libraries recalled to me something from my youth that I hadn't thought about for many years. In the '20s and '30s, and perhaps later, Pittsburgh and, I'm sure, many other cities, had chains of small commercial libraries in neighborhood stores. The store owners provided space and did the accounting, and a distributor (I think it was the Pittsburgh News Co.) provided shelf units and books to fill them. The sizes of those libraries varied from a hundred or so to a thousand or more, and they were mostly current novels and probably some of the more popular non-fiction. For three cents a day one could take out a book for any length of time.

The one I knew best was a very small one about three blocks from Dad's house in the east end of Pittsburgh. It was a tiny concrete-block place on the corner of Fifth and Penn Avenues, and had been built for and was furnished free of rent to a former brakeman for the Pennsylvania R.R. who had been injured on the job. J. F. Dornan was his name, but everyone called him Jeff. He had a large and impressive wife who, so rumor had it, made a good living from writing salacious novels under a pen name, and they lived in an apartment about half a block from Dad's house. I frequently stopped there for a nickel candy bar (some of which were as heavy as four ounces) or an ice cream cone, or to pick up a copy of *Astounding* from the rack adjoining the bookshelf. I rented quite a few books there but remember no titles. I don't know

how true the rumor about Mrs. Dornan may have been, but J. F. walked with a pronounced limp and after he died the little store was demolished. That corner of the large Pennsy East Liberty freight yard never looked the same after that. (R.D. I, Kennerdell, PA 16374)

## WALT WILLIS

John Foyster's mention of *Nebula* 13 inspired me to look up my copy of it to find out what was in my fan column for that issue that was apparently so unsuccessful in awakening John's interest in fandom. But I was unable to find my copy of *Nebula* 13, so this remains one of fandom's weird unsolved mysteries, like Who Sawed Courtney's Boat? I am pretty sure there was one of my fan columns in that issue because there was one of them in *Nebula* 15, which is the first one I can find, and it was called "Fanorama," whereas I remember that the earlier columns were titled "The Electric Fan," over my madly struggling body. The search for *Nebula* 13 originated in the survey of my collection prior to disposing of it to Tommy Ferguson. Apart from this, John's well-written article was fascinating.

"A Touch of Celebrity" is Arnie Katz at his best: amusing, full of interest and brilliantly written. And much the same applies to Calvin Demmon's "Grunt," which is the latest demonstration of fandom's debt to modern medical science, without which neither Calvin nor myself would still be alive.

Candi Strecker's piece was unusual and quite brilliant. Redd Boggs was unusual, too, for a different reason. Some of it, notably the item about the scissors, reads like a clever parody of Redd.

Carol's contribution was varied but uniformly brilliant. I loved her quote about the lava.

I hadn't realized that Socorro's acquaintance with Burbee went back so far. This piece gives one a thrill rather like finding a real example of time travel.

Ray Nelson's "Garden of Zen" made much more sense that such things usually do.

In answer to your query in Ethel Lindsay's letter, my recollection about the embarrassment at Esther Davis's dinner party is that it arose from our being installed in two special chairs, like thrones. It wasn't important, though; we appreciated the intention behind it. (32 Warren Road, Donaghadee, N. Ireland BT21 0PD)

## JEANNE MEALY

Neat article by John Foyster about encountering science fiction while in the hospital for polio when he was fifteen. I also appreciated the insights he had about mortality and goals. Yes, serious illness is one of the most riveting reality checks around. I am relieved he recovered so quickly and is still around to share these

memories with us. In just a few lines he reminded me of many used book shops I've poked around in, enjoying the hunt and the atmosphere as much as the potential for finding something I wanted. Then there was the thought of what he would have missed if he'd continued to just read SF instead of finding out more about fanzines, fans, etc. Reading this article was like watching someone throw out a fishing net, tossing it farther out each time to gather more tidbits.

Jeeze, Len Moffatt's "We Are Science-Fiction Fans" makes us sound closer to All-Star Wrestling brutes rather than the wonderfully mature intellectuals we really are. On the other hand, he accurately depicted the passion behind our personal choices (I'm a Trekker, *not* a Trekkie, thank you!).

I could nearly see the "family heirlooms" Redd Boggs wrote about that are or were part of his life: the old, blackened scissors, the wooden ruler, the desk his father built, etc. I'm sure he thinks of his family members nearly every time he uses them. I have a few things like that. The most amusing is the desk that used to be blond, part of a '50s set, I believe. It's now dark brown. Its drawers contain stationery supplies and letters I've received recently. At least one or two boxes of fanzines are sheltered where my legs would go if I sat there, though it's unlikely I'd do that because the TV, a pen and pencil holder, and a tall stack tray holding fanzines and magazines sit on top of the desk. The amusing part of this is how clearly I recall punching my initials and the year into the top of their desk with a pen. I think I was supposed to be studying and got bored. The really clear memory is of my mom's reaction to seeing what I'd done. She was not pleased. Every time I see that line of numbers and letters, I'm transported back to 1968. (I have many other, more pleasant memories of my mother, of course.)

Do you ever wonder which of your actions, thoughts or writing are remembered for years by others? I "hear" people's voices saying things relative to the current situation. I think of former teachers (and my mom) when I smell the perfume they wore. I remember my mother's parents' house when I hear a screen door spring stretch as the door is opened. We had a long drive and it was a wonderful relief to escape from the car to grandparently love and hospitality. (766 Laurel Ave., St. Paul, MN 55104)

## JEAN YOUNG

Regarding John Foyster's article, it was interesting to find someone coming to SF through illness. (Some, of course, would say it is an illness in itself.) I was interested in his "cross-cultural note" about being able to buy books from libraries. I remember rental libraries from

my childhood. My mother occasionally rented a much-desired hardcover mystery that wasn't in the public library and hadn't yet come into paperback - this in the early to mid 1940s. The rental library was located in a drug store much the way video rentals are in drug stores, convenience stores, grocery stores, etc., today.

I thoroughly enjoyed Calvin Demmon's "Grunt" column. I'm with him on the subject of being a homeowner. Especially the ants and the skunk. I also have around armies of mice; I trapped about sixty last fall and early winter in my kitchen.

Interesting piece by Candi Strecker on being parent to a baby model - a fascinating inside view. Yes, it seems strange - but why not? Any way to make some money for the kid's education.

Good to read Redd's "Pensero" - I especially liked "A Book From the Library," the scissors reminiscences, and Adlesburg.

I always like Carol's column, and particular enjoyed her different view of the "Milford Mafia," Judy Merril and Delany. Also liked "What Women Do Want" (yeah, right on!) and the wonderful quote "from somewhere on the Net" about carrying lava down the mountainside bucket by bucket.

Interesting to read about the machine shop where Burbee and Laney worked. I didn't even know. (Sometimes it's nice to know that there *were* things Before My Time.)

I loved Ray Nelson's "A Child's Garden of Zen" - so funny and so exactly Zen! I was particularly taken with the last story, about "teaching all those subjects." My philosophy of teaching is exactly that. Of course, it doesn't cut any ice at all with places like Luther College, which still will not hire me to teach. (Rt. 4, Box 47, Decorah, IA 52101)

## CHUCH HARRIS

Calvin Demmon wonders, "Is there any kind of fandom going on in cyberspace?" Yes, come and join us, and bring your tambourine. It's time-consuming, fascinating and completely addictive. It may never replace fanaticism as we know it, but it's the finest supplement you ever did see. The concept itself is completely addictive and, as Dave Langford sez in the 20-page primer he wrote to guide my faltering feet onto the Information Superhighway, the actual mechanics "will give you hours of exciting frustration and bafflement...."

Arf, in just four pages of doodles, once again shows his genius - and Redd only needs three pages to do exactly the same. But when you think about it, all the contributions are of such a consistently high standard that it's unfair to try to rate them. Socorro who, as far as I know, hasn't written for any fanzine previously, was

astonishingly good - and so was Craig Smith's nicely pointed heading for the piece.

Carol Carr is one of the first people I always turn to (after checking the letter column to see if I made it), but when she hits me with a stealable quote like "When I die I want to go peacefully and serenely like my grandfather - not kicking and screaming like the passengers in his car," you get so infuriated because everyone else in your world also reads *Trap Door* and you don't have a hope in hell of passing it off as original. It seems such a shame to just throw it away over the golf club bar and get an ephemeral laugh instead of slipping it into an article and winning immortality. It got a pretty good laugh, though, and Peter, the Men's Captain, bought me a beer and asked if he could use it in his Captain's Day speech next Saturday. "Certainly," I said. "I'm all in favor of recycling." And I hope Carol is, too.

I agree with Mike Glicksohn that Alzheimer's is the most potent reason of all for legalizing euthanasia. I've told you about Sue's Aunt Belle and Uncle Bill in their retirement home. We drive down to visit every six weeks or so and even on short intervals like this you can see the inexorable march of the disease. Belle, who used to be so "with it" and sharp and sassy, no longer recognizes anybody, not even her husband sitting next to her. She has to be hand-fed. She has no control over her bladder or her bowels. Her fingernails have to be cut to the quick because she will handle her excrement if she gets a chance and the staff doesn't have time for a twice daily manicure. She has cataracts - we got them cut but she still doesn't see properly - her hearing aid is useless, and she can't even walk without a supporting arm around her.

Her life is one long nothing. She is a burden to us and her family (four sisters but they never visit now because it is so painful for them), a burden to Bill who, although he used to be a right old bugger to her, still feels responsible and guilty as if it were all his fault. She is a burden to the caring staff, and a profit to the home's owners who charge £2,000 a month to care for them both. I sold their house and the money is gradually being eaten up by the home's charges - and what happens when it's all gone?

Truly I cannot see how anyone could look at a person like Belle and feel that it would be a sin to help them on their way out of their misery. To give them peace with a loaded chocolate, or a small prick in the arm, or even a plastic bag over the head and a hand to hold for the final thirty seconds... and I suspect the home feels exactly the same way. Two years ago I unwisely made remarks to this effect. Since then Belle is brought down to the day room to see us and I am never left alone with her!

Would I? No, I wouldn't, definitely not. I'm not brave enough. I'm too frightened. I can push all this out

of my mind except for three hours every six weeks when, full of pity in purgatory, I sit there opposite and from time to time I hold her hand. (32 Lake Crescent, Daven-  
try, Northants NN11 5EB, U.K.)

### RICHARD BRANDT

Calvin wondered if there was any kind of fandom in cyberspace. Indeed there is, as I'm sure you and he have been inundated with reminders by now. *Leave aside all the fans who have ensconced themselves cozily in the forums, topic areas and chat rooms (respectively) of the commercial on-line services (Compuserve, GEnie, America On-Line),* the real hardy fannish pioneers are blazing trails on the electronic frontier, plastering Usenet with their postings to newsgroups like *rec.arts.sf.fandom*. The World Wide Web, with its hypertext hot-links and capability to display sophisticated graphics, has offered a venue for the graphically-oriented fan who in previous years might have produced an elegant fancy twiltone or offset fanzine, but who now tinkers with laying out a Web page.

The fannish sensibility is also evident in full force on Internet newsgroups like *alt.folklore.urban*, where folks have evidently established the same kind of camaraderie over the 'net as fans used to through the mails. (You also have a high percentage of wasted bandwidth, in the way of pointless blathering and general fuggheadedness, that I suppose is the electronic equivalent of by-rote clubzines and crudzines in general. I'm not sure fanzine fandom has ever had the equivalent of virtual "spam"—dubious commercial solicitations e-mailed en masse to millions of homes simultaneously via multiple Usenet newsgroups—although I suppose bulk-mailing fliers for the likes of SF Expo, or *Locus*, might count.)

Did Ronald Reagan read SF? You betcha. *USA Weekend* interviewed several prominent Americans about their childhood reading, and Ronnie confessed his favorite author as a lad was Edgar Rice Burroughs: "Tarzan, of course, but especially his science fiction — John Carter on Mars and all that." (4740 N. Mesa #111, El Paso, TX 79912)

### HARRY WARNER JR.

"Grunt" was intensely interesting. I was particularly impressed by the fact that so many Steinbeck-associated things still survive in Salinas. Years ago, I met a person in this category. She was the daughter of the operator of the camp where the Okies finally found a welcome in California in *The Grapes of Wrath*, an institution Steinbeck borrowed from real life. I suppose she's dead now, although she was living only about fifteen miles from Hagerstown and I don't recall having seen her obituary since.

Like many other fans, Calvin should splurge on an

Auto Club membership. The more expensive of the two types of membership can be a godsend in an episode like the complete breakdown of his Volvo far from home, because it provides free towing for a considerable distance if the owner prefers to have his favorite garage back home do repairs. (*The Auto Club here in California just began offering this option last year, and I immediately switched over to it. Except for the occasional long-distance trip, the generous towing allowance would get my car to my favorite garage from anywhere I customarily travel.*)

The letter section seems to be dropping broad hints that Pennsylvania as a spawning ground for fans has been underestimated up to now. Maybe the theoretical progenitor of all fans lived there at one time. Despite my reputation as a Marylander, I was born in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. This may give me the distinction of being the only person in fanzine fandom whose home town was burned to the ground by the Confederate army. Since then, apparently all Pennsylvanians who didn't find work with Fred Waring eventually became fans.

If Henry Kissinger got in trouble for failing to open some copies of the *New York Times*, I hate to think of what will happen to my reputation in fandom when I'm gone and someone discovers that certain fanzines in my collection are still in sealed envelopes or still stapled shut. No, I'll never tell which ones are destined to reveal me as a fakesfan. (*Harry, I think you should make an agreement with the library getting your collection to unstaple/unseal all unopened fanzines before making the collection available to researchers and nosy fans, and not to keep a record. Some things deserve lasting anonymity.*)

For the past month or so, I've been having a new dream experience. In the past I usually slept soundly for hours with no awareness of any dreams I might be having, then as dawn approached I would sometimes wake and remember parts of something I'd just dreamed. But recently, I've had nights when I fall asleep and waken abruptly only ten or fifteen minutes later with every details of a dream or nightmare perfectly established in my memory. An older tradition in my dreaming experience is the fact that sometimes I go to bed and the moment I'm stretched out in it and the light is out, I can remember something about a dream from the previous night which hadn't reached my awareness during the day.

I'm on your side when it comes to fanzine margins. Both from the standpoint of expenses and from the ecological standpoint, I think margins in fanzines should be quite slender except of course on the side of the page adjoining the staples. Wide margins seem to be a useless convention in today's circumstances. I suspect the tradition started centuries ago when it was customary for both handwritten manuscripts and printed books to put glosses in small type in the margins that summarized the adjoining

ing material or referred to related publications. Most copying firms these days can produce complete pages on which the typing goes very close to the margins and it's wasteful not to use this method of saving paper.

Not many people can remember events that happened three decades ago, a matter Richard Newsome speculates about in the letter section. I'm reading an excellent double biography by Gene Lee, *Inventing Champagne*, about the team of Lerner and Loewe. Many pages of this book are concerned with the difficulty of determining what really happened when two or three persons who were involved in events wrote about them in later years in contradictory manner. "Newspapers and magazines make mistakes, though for the most part journalists are conscientious and disinterested, and so their reports are often more reliable than the recollections of participants in events. Any researcher becomes aware that personal testimony is not necessarily dependable.... The longer the time since an event, the greater the chance that its witnesses will be mistaken about it." I hope future fan historians will keep this in mind. {I can certainly vouch for this phenomenon myself, having been corrected from my sometimes inaccurate memories of fannish events of the early '60s.}

The ATom illustrations provoked only sadness in me because of the fates of the artist and the writer whose words they were intended to accompany.

I can't wait to see the statistics on your fanzine arrivals for 1995. Between Arnie Katz and Andrew Hooper, the figures should behave like the recent Dow Jones industrial average. (423 Summit Ave., Hagerstown, MD 21740)

## ANDY SAWYER

Thanks for *Trap Door*, which hit the button with Len Moffatt's poem beginning, "We are science fiction fans / We never say sci-fi." On one of the several Net mailing lists I belong to, this distinction was played out ad nauseam, with someone suggesting that he, as a writer, felt offended by people saying "sci-fi," many people saying that "sci-fi" was generally used by people who either knew very little about the field or thought that *Star Trek* was the be-all and end-all of it, and one particular person saying that if he called it "sci-fi" that was it and never mind confusion in the mind of the enemy. As with all these things, some reasonable points were made but the discussion dragged on far beyond its useful lifetime until someone made the sly comment that if we were all agreed that the proper term was "SF," then should it be written that way or as lower-case "sf"? At which point, even the most serious Net-nerds realized they were being set up. {In my mind, Forrest J Ackerman - who invented the term "sci-fi" - has a lot of answer for.} (1 The Flax-

yard, Woodfall Lane, Little Neston, South Wirral L64 4BT, U.K.)

## BOYD RAEBURN

"Terry Carr's TAFF Report by Arthur Thomson" was very good. I liked his "British toilet paper" with spikes sticking out of it. One time when Bob and Barbara Silverberg were staying at the Dorchester Hotel (a Fancy Expensive Hotel) in London, Bob related that in the bathroom there were two types of toilet paper. For the effete Americans, the usual soft fluffy roll. For the hardy British, the box of single sheets of brown paper, glazed on one side. "They must be constructed differently from us," Bob speculated.

"Charles Platt type." Some time around the convention, Charles Platt invited Terry and Carol and me to an evening at his flat. "Beware," said Arthur (or words to that effect - after all this time the dimly remembered quotes are approximations). "He's just trying to gain your confidence before stabbing you in the back." "Well, we're only going to be here a short time, so there is no chance of that taking place. He seems a nice guy, and it may be an enjoyable evening," we said more or less. Also visiting Charles that night were two young fans, one of whom was named Chris Priest, later to become a well-known SF writer. Charles was utterly charming, his two friends were also good company, and we had a great evening. Arthur picked us up. "How was it?" "Great," we said. "Charles was utterly charming." "Hmph," said Arthur, "he was just softening you up." I don't know what the division was between Platt and some other members of British fandom at the time, but I remember Charles Platt as a very gracious and entertaining host. (189 Maxome Ave., Willowdale, Ont. M2M 3L1, Canada)

## BRIDGET HARDCASTLE

Regarding Terry Carr's TAFF report, I would like to put to rest the minds of anyone planning on visiting the U.K. British toilet paper has come a long way since, um, whenever it was Terry came over. The latest technological breakthroughs include a "thinner middle" so more thick sheets can be fitted onto a roll (though I don't know if this contravenes the industrial standards for outer and inner girth of toilet roll introduced to ensure compatibility of bathroom fittings) and thicker, quilted sheets ("He didn't have sheets, he had a quilt - in the bathroom!" as they say in the ads). The spiked version you now have to shop for in specialist stores.

Don Fitch's letter about fandom as family struck a chord with me. Lately I've been a fair bit housebound with back trouble and it has been fans who have been there, visited me, and helped get me to places. They didn't have to, but they did. (13 Lindfield Gardens, Hampstead, London NW3 6PX, U.K.)

## ETHEL LINDSAY

{Unfortunately, Ethel's final LoC to me: }

How nice to see Trap Door again. I was highly amused by Bill Kunkel's back cover. It is rather hard for me to picture you as a father of four sons, but then you have to picture me as now 75. {That will be difficult, since my mental picture of you dates from our times together in 1962—and now you're gone I'll stick with that.}

Redd writes of staples which reminded me of ATom. At one time Arthur was working in a factory which manufactured staples. Nearly every time we met, he handed me another one—all sizes. I have them yet. I wonder how many other fans are still using what Arthur considered a job perk?

I had my first "laugh out loud" this issue over Carol Carr's question about Judith Merril. Last time I saw Judith she was being carried into the con hall on a sedan, waving languidly to the fans. All in good fun but goodness knows at which con this happened. A second "laugh out loud" was also by Carol: the last line of her pome.

## CATHERINE MINTZ

Curiously enough, given the general theme of fandom and science fiction in *Trap Door* No. 15, the article that captured my attention was "My Baby, the Supermodel" by Candi Strecker. I have long been amazed by how willing people are to believe that what they see in advertisements, particularly those on television, is real. One PhD of my acquaintance comments of an insurance ad that, "They must have gotten there fast to catch the water still dripping" off a burnt set of toys. The idea that the display had been set up and then deliberately torched was completely foreign to his thinking. The average TV commercial costs hundreds of thousands of dollars, is entirely staged under the most controllable conditions the agency can devise, and is, in short, a complete fantasy. Like dripping water, babies add a touch of naturalism. Candi's article was a fascinating glimpse from the inside. (1810 S. Rittenhouse Sq. 1708, Philadelphia, PA 19103-5837)

## CANDI STRECKER

I enjoyed *Trap Door* No. 15. "My Baby, the Supermodel" looked great in your pages, and Jay Kinney's illustration was quite nifty. And I've had lots of positive remarks about the piece from various *Trap Door* readers, of whom there are many in my circle.

And Nicola is now an ex-baby model. I retired her in June, shortly before we left for a month in the midwest. Having stated my intention in print to take her out of the business at age two, it seemed pretty reasonable to follow through with that decision. Also, she hadn't been getting much work; there are lots of jobs for 12-to-18 month olds,

but not many calls for two-year-olds. So even before I called the agency to tell them we were quitting, it seemed as if we had already quit months before. Sure is great not to have to wear the damned beeper! (590 Lisbon, San Francisco, CA 94112)

## WILLIAM ROTSLER

Gee, that's the very first poem ever written to/for me. Thank you, Carol. You know you are one of my favorite people in the entire world and one of the five or six people I care what they think of me. How could I not like the poem? You used my line about Frankenstein's D-minus homework.

It was good to read something by Calvin Demmon again, instead of third-hand mention about him. I always liked him—even though I hardly knew him personally. Fandom was poorer for all the years he wasn't in it.

Sure, why not have a Hall of Fame for SF? Hell, I'm the first porno critic entered in the XRCO (X-Rated Critics Organization) Hall of Fame. (Hell, you take your Halls of Fame where you can get them.) I do suppose people know that for twenty-plus years I've been a film and video critic (in the sex film, then the porno field). They deliver boxes of them free, and when I'm in the mood I sack out on the couch and push the remote. It pays (or almost pays) my rent! (17909 Lull St., Reseda, CA 91335)

## SOCORRO FRANCO-BURBEE

I was so impressed with the illo by Craig Smith that he did for my article. It bears an uncanny resemblance to Laney. Even Charlie said, "My god, it really looks like Laney." Please be sure to give Smith our compliments and comments. {In a later letter, Cora adds that although they have no photos of Laney anymore, Craig's illo matches perfectly her and Charlie's mental images of Laney.} (46749 Pala Rd., Temecula, CA 92592)

## PAMELA BOAL

Thank you for *Trap Door* No. 15, as ever much appreciated. I can empathize with the demands on your head space. Derek and I have passed through that phase. Derek's mother (who was the only one of our parents to live into her mid-eighties) died a few years back now and while of course we were sad, death is an inevitable outcome of life and must be accepted. Then we realized that even our youngest had been living an independent adult life for sixteen years. The time had come when we could put ourselves first.

I particularly enjoyed "A Child's Garden of Zen." That sense of fun is what attracted me to fandom. Being of somewhat mature years when I discovered fandom, I had already found intellectual homes (could that view of

fandom be a mite pretentious?) elsewhere but they lacked that sense of fun that was so much part of fandom twenty-five or so years back. In other groups I felt that people took themselves more seriously than the cause or topic which brought them together. Yes, that exaggerated sense of self-importance does creep into fandom and fannish exchanges, but on the whole there is enough humor around to keep me faithful. (*4 Westfield Way, Charlton Heights, Wantage, Oxon OX12 7EW, U.K.*)

### SHELBY VICK

Jim Caughran, and dreams. I'm weird; I'm not in most of my dreams. Nor, for that matter, is anyone I know. My dreams are usually something I'm viewing, like a movie or TV show. I've written several stories inspired by my dreams (none of which I've yet submitted) and I'm currently rewriting a book that came from a dream, and rich brown and I are getting ready to submit another book that was inspired by a dream.

When I say "inspired by a dream," it isn't in the usual sense. Instead, I'll dream a very detailed scene—clearly delineated characters, conflict, emotional involvement—that stays with me when I wake, plus some residue from the scene giving a little background as to what the suspense was about. Awakening, I'll lie there and mull the dream over. Sometimes, after doing that, I'll go back to sleep and pick the dream up again.

Oh, yes, and I often control my dreams. Something will be going on and I'll say to myself, "That isn't right; it should go more like . . ." and the dream will change.

I dream in color, too.

But! I will also have dreams that, upon arising, I'll decide were really great, and I had to remember . . . and later they slip away, no matter how hard I try to bring them back.

I am sometimes in my dreams. The one I remember best was not in color. I was in an open field full of broomsage across the bay from Lynn Haven. I was trying to escape from a dangerous man and got shot in the chest. I felt the impact of the bullet, felt the blood rushing out, felt the ground slap my back as I fell—and woke up, sweating.

Even though it was still dark outside, I didn't go back to sleep.

Ray Nelson—how in the world have I missed Gung Ho and his Zen philosophy?! I'm certain there must have been much before "A Child's Garden of Zen"; there has to have been more, and I missed it. "Delightful" and "witty" are just too tame to properly report my enjoyment. {Interesting that you felt there must have been more published before. Ray sent me that article originally about five years ago, and it seemed familiar to me, too. I put it aside intending to write him and ask, and it got lost in the

shuffle. Rediscovering it last year, I wrote to Ray and finally posed the question. "No" was his response.)

Calvin Demmon and his "Grunt" initiates several responses. For one, his survival just proves that fans are Superior People—well, at least Special People (as well as emphasizing the power of prayer). Whatever the cause of his recovery, we should all be grateful; Calvin would be missed.

Home ownership? I've been through two and decided—after selling our last one (way in debt because of repair bills) we decided renting was better. Let the landlord worry about the upkeep! Our rent has been raised several times since we moved in, but it's still less than our mortgage and second mortgage on the last house.

Skunk? Sometime you should ask Suzanne about the skunk that lived in the farmhouse when she was a kid. It managed to find its way into one of the kitchen drawers; it would wiggle up and down and vibrate the drawer open, expecting to be stroked. {Okay, Suzanne, I'm asking—please write it up and send it in for a future issue. Besides this natural faneditorly response, this brief tale reminds me of the early days of The Farm—the alternative community I lived at in Tennessee during the '70s—when we were still living in a school bus converted into a camper. One day we opened up a kitchen drawer—and out crept a five-foot long black snake (non-poisonous but impressive) that had been coiled up inside, asleep. We ran and opened the back door of the bus and used a broom to guide it along when it wanted to crawl back under the furniture.} (627 Barton Ave., Panama City, FL 32404)

### JOHN BAXTER

{Responding to a note I put in his copy:} Thanks for Trap Door. Yes, of course I remember you from the sixties. It's the sixties I don't remember. I tend to date everything from when I moved to London in 1969 and put aside fannish things for a career as a working writer. Since then, I've lived in Dublin, Roanoke, Va., Los Angeles, and now Paris for the last five years, with a brief and, on the whole, regretted return to Australia in the early eighties to partake of the boom in film and TV production fanned by reckless government underwriting. If one needed an object lesson in the fact that money can't buy happiness, that was it.

The ATOM cartoon of British toilet paper, complete with spikes, struck a chord. Years ago, I took an American friend out to Kew Gardens. She went to the loo, and stormed out a few minutes later waving a piece of toilet tissue in my face. It had the slick finish of polystyrene and the surface texture of a kitchen scourer. If you held it up to the light, you could clearly see the watermarked brand name: Bronco. The Marquis de Sade is alive and

well in the sanitation department of the British Civil Service.

Repolitical scandals, writing biography convinces you that everyone has things to hide. I'm frankly astonished that anybody survives the gauntlet of the American selection process for cabinet posts. It can't be because they have unblemished pasts; nobody has. Clearly some horse-trading takes place behind the scenes, which is just as well, otherwise robots would be running things. Which brings to mind the president's line in Gore Vida's *The Best Man* about "not caring if the candidate has sexual congress with a McCormick reaper providing he delivers the votes."

France is untypical in that the press is forbidden by law to reveal embarrassing facts about public figures. There is no "public interest" defence, no "right to know." The politicians simply closed ranks and pushed through laws that ensured they would never be revealed with their pants down. Ironically, this only applies to French nationals, so the press is filled with paparazzi pix of Prince Charles nude, Princess Fergie sucking the toe of her lover, etc., almost none of which are seen in the U.K.

Scandal flourishes in France, of course, and is widely publicized, mostly by word of mouth. The best story I've heard recently concerns the mayor of a large town who had a regular Tuesday afternoon assignation with his girlfriend, whom he would pick up from her office after lunch. One day, he forgot something at home and needed to drop by and pick it up. He told the mistress to pop into the trunk while he went into the house. However, his wife, seeing the car in the drive, took it to do some shopping. An hour later, in the town square, with hundreds of people about, she opens the trunk.... But

he's still mayor, and the story, though common knowledge, never appeared in any paper.

Thanks for *Trap Door*. Keep 'em coming. {Welcome back; I hope to hear from you again.} (18 rue de l'Odeon, 75006 Paris, France)

## WE ALSO HEARD FROM

SHERYL BIRKHEAD, WILLIAM BREIDING, BRIAN EARL BROWN, NED BROOKS, rICH bROWN, GREGG CALKINS, STEVE DES JARDINS, JANICE EISEN, GEORGE FLYNN ("Candi Strecker's piece demonstrates once again how many activities there are in the world that one had never imagined the existence of. Fascinating."), BRAD FOSTER, DAVID HAUGH, IRWIN HIRSH, MURRAY MOORE, LLOYD PENNEY ("Fanzines on disk sounds good in theory when it comes to not fading, but masters would have to be kept on a hard drive somewhere, or else a magnetic source could decide for you whether or not to toss your collection. Give me paper, still."), SARAH PRINCE, DAVID REDD, JESSICA AMANDA SALMONSON (with a fine letter I might use next issue—oh, curse the inelasticity of ancient non-scalable fonts!—and some fine mail art from her mail art alter-ego, Pag-hat the Rat-girl), PAUL SKELTON, CRAIG SMITH, DALE SPEIRS, TARAL WAYNE, DAVID THAYER, SUE THOMASON ("Thank you for *Trap Door* No. 15 and a series of glimpses into lives other than mine. Very other. Interestingly other. What really fascinates me are the commonplaces of life, barely remarked on, that are totally alien to other lives. We humans are one weird bunch of people."), BRUCE TOWNLEY and HENRY WELCH. Thanks for all your response—fanzines thrive on attention—keep it coming!

## That Green Sequined Tie

My memories of Elmer Perdue always seem to involve that incredible bright green sequined tie. You saw it first, then Elmer, who was almost always sitting like a sack of crushed pineapple. I always felt a bit sorry for him. I knew him slightly for decades and there was no point at which I would have been surprised if someone said he had died the night before.

I don't think I heard Elmer say more than one or two memorable things. These were almost all passed through Burbee.

Elmer had a number of odd habits. He had a "hobby" of using paper matches, each book in a different way: one used only, one row, one bent, etc. Apparently the number of permutations was very high.

by William Rotsler

He worked for the city as a traffic engineer and once, as a birthday present to Bjo, had a bus line rerouted to put a bus stop a block from her house.

In the early 1950s they were feverishly building freeways and Elmer, who had been memorizing streets (yes, you read that right) started memorizing the streets that would soon be obliterated. I tested him on streets I knew and if he had "committed them" he did know. "South side, blue house, white shutters, picket fence with busted gate. Next to it a tan house, brown trim, Spanish tile, loud dog." And so on.

To me, that's the weirdest "hobby" I know.

—William Rotsler