

TRAP DOOR



**Trap
Door**

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Twenty-six issues in twenty-six years—that's not too many, and they've been far apart in recent times. But it wasn't always that way. Long-time readers may recall several issues that were only six months apart back in the dim recesses of *Trap Door's* origins. That was pre-computer, too, with every page typed on Paul Williams's spiffy dual-pitch correcting Selectric, reduced in size on a high-class copier, and then laboriously pasted up along with the original artwork.

Paul's role in the founding of this fanzine goes much further, of course, than lending me his typewriter. It was he who financed my leaving The Farm commune in Tennessee in 1980 and gave me employment with his Ent-whistle Books. One day that fall, the first issue of Dan Steffan's and Ted White's *Pong* showed up in the mail. It was short, snappy, full of more familiar names



than I would have thought possible after my decade away from fandom, and virtually oozing comfortable good humor and fannishness.

This set me on a trajectory to return to active fandom, something that was probably inevitable—I always thought of my decade on The Farm as fafiation, not gafiation—and before long I was getting my own copies of *Pong*, writing letters of comment, and having an increasingly insistent urge to publish my own fanzine again. When it came time to come up with a title, it was Paul who suggested *Trap Door*—the title of a then-current album by T-Bone Burnett. Bingo!

A little back story: As early as 1963 Paul had been sending me his fanzine *Within* from far-oof exotic Belmont, Massachusetts, and we'd had extensive correspondence without ever meeting. We "knew" each other in that wonderful fan-

domly way. We met in person in 1968. That was the year Paul burned out on the tedious business aspects of the original *Crawdaddy!*, which in a little over two years had gone from a small newsletter mimeoed by Ted White to an elaborate offset magazine with a large circulation and many advertisers. He turned the editorial reins over to Chester Anderson, and moved to California. This was the beginning of a several-year Paul Williams chapter in my life, and it was a dilly. Through him I met: Robert Crumb, who was just about to break out from hawking *Zap Comix* from a baby stroller on Haight Street to the big time; Paul Kantner, and at least one other member of the Jefferson Airplane, when we visited their looming black mansion at 2400 Fulton; Jann Wenner, his feet importantly up on his desk when we dropped in at the *Rolling Stone* offices; Wavy Gravy, back then still just plain Hugh Romney, whose clown suit was still just a gleam in his eye; and, perhaps most memorably, Timothy Leary.

Most of the above were one-time impromptu meetings in which I was “the guy with Paul,” but with Leary there was a little more. Paul had known him for a while, and now we were visiting him and his wife Rosemary at their house high in the Berkeley hills. We were hardly ever alone with them, as they hosted an ever-shifting houseful of friends (and friends of friends, such as me). I found him much more congenial than I’d anticipated from his press, and Rosemary had an obvious grounding effect on his high-flying ebullience. When Leary decided to run for governor of California in 1969, his first campaign event was in San Luis Obispo. Paul and I gave him and Rosemary a ride to the airport and we went into the terminal to see them off. That was a good thing, because when he tried to buy tickets for the flight, his credit card was refused. I whipped out my own plastic and paid the fare. They thanked me profusely, and said they’d reimburse me next time we met.

That opportunity occurred some months later. We arranged to meet late one morning in front of City Lights Books. As Leary

handed over a handful of bills he giggled, “If anyone’s watching us, they probably think we’re doing a dope deal.” That was the last time I saw them, but just a couple months later Paul and the Learys were in Montreal for the first recording of John Lennon and Yoko Ono’s “Give Peace A Chance.” You can see Tim and Paul there, both in profile, in this photo:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jlbedin3.JPG>

Paul had rented a small compound on the outskirts of Mendocino consisting of three or four buildings on ten acres that he dubbed Caladan (remember your *Dune*?). He lived in one of them and soon attracted a circle of friends who lived in the others. But ever a restless soul, Paul traveled all over the country and beyond. Between 1968 and late 1970 he visited, more than once: New York, Los Angeles, San Luis Obispo, Miami, Montreal, Boston, Big Sur, Seattle, Arkansas and Vermont. During those years he came to San Francisco frequently, often crashing with me. On one visit he wrote ten pages of his diary/book *Time Between* using my typewriter. This was after he’d gone east in ‘69 to attend Woodstock—from which he’d returned with gleeful tales of mud and music—and before he burned out on Mendocino and disappeared into the soggy woods of British Columbia (as chronicled in another book, *Apple Bay*). By then I was living on The Farm and I didn’t see Paul again until 1978. He was now living in a tiny house in downtown Glen Ellen with his wife Sachiko and two small sons, running Entwhistle Books out of the garage. I was working for The Farm’s publishing company, and we talked shop extensively. The seed was planted during that visit that blossomed into my job with Paul two years later.

I sent out the first *Trap Door* to an unsuspecting fandom in October 1983. It contained the first installment of Paul’s column, “We Never Sleep,” which appeared faithfully in all but one of the first dozen issues, through the end of 1993. Paul ranged widely in his topics: book recommendations, what he was working on at the time, philosophical musings, fanzine reviews, where he’d

traveled, who he met. I particularly like this summary of his relationship with fandom: “Fandom is in some ways an uncomfortable place for me because I took what I loved in fandom and made it part of my professional life... Both *Crawdaddy!* and *The Philip K. Dick Society Newsletter* are, in different ways, little reinventions of fandom. Meanwhile, I never quite left the mother ship—the original model, SF fandom—altogether. Never quite retreated back to it, either...” *Trap Door* was the only fanzine for which he wrote.

In 1994 Paul moved to Southern California to live with Cindy Lee Berryhill and he didn’t contribute again until 1996, after his unfortunate bicycle accident the year before. It was a long article entitled “Ask Me About My Brain Injury.” For those of you who’ve never read it or would like to read it again without digging for your copy of *Trap Door* No. 16, it’s available at:

<http://efanzines.com/TrapDoor/PW-TD16.pdf>

This was the last article of Paul’s to appear in these pages. Other things consumed him: his need to earn a living; editing an ambitious series of all of the short fiction of Theodore Sturgeon; writing several more books; publishing a 28-issue run of a revived newsletter version of *Crawdaddy!*; and focusing on his family (in 2001 his son Alexander was born).

Sadly, the damage to Paul’s brain has led to the early, gradual onset of dementia (not Alzheimer’s, as has been reported in some places) and just this year he had to be moved to a nursing home. You can read more about it in Cindy Lee’s blog at:

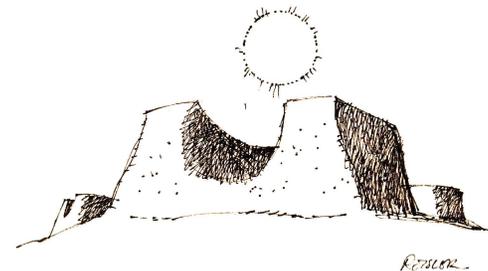
<http://cindyleeberryhill.blogspot.com/>

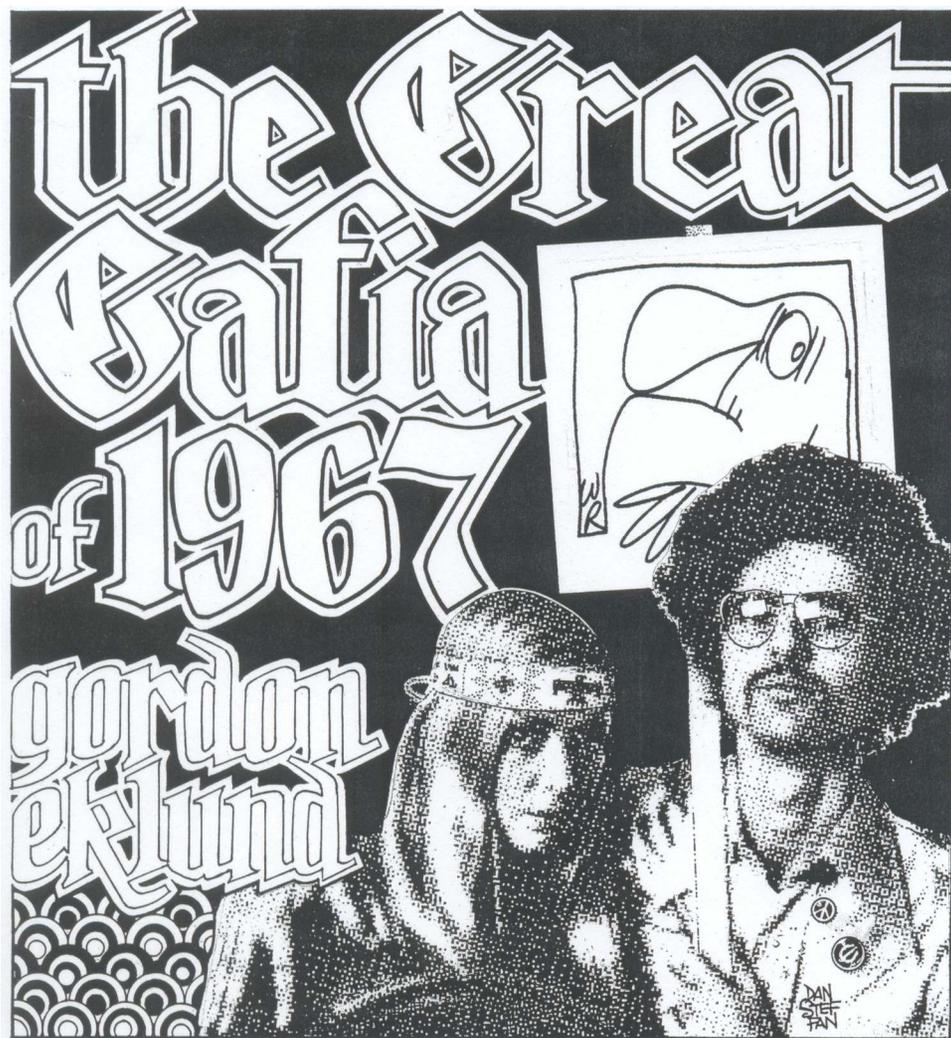
The additional expense, coupled with loss

of income, mobilized a large group of his friends and admirers to include a plea for donations on Paul’s Website. Details are at <http://paulwilliams.com/>, along with the extensive list of those who have helped out, including many science-fiction people.

Paul’s accomplishments are legendary. His 1975 *Rolling Stone* article on Philip K. Dick was, many think, responsible for bringing Phil’s work out of the SF ghetto and into the mainstream. Paul was rewarded in 1982 by being named Phil’s first literary executor. In that capacity he shepherded the publication of Phil’s mainstream novels and the five-volume collection of all of his short fiction. He also published thirty issues of the popular *Philip K. Dick Society Newsletter*. His writing on the music and career of Bob Dylan is voluminous; he is acclaimed a Dylan expert in that fandom. His focus on the music of Brian Wilson and the Beach Boys was perhaps instrumental in bringing them out of “surf music” semi-obscurity. From his early teens Paul was a fan of Theodore Sturgeon’s writing. He eventually met Sturgeon and they became friends. After Sturgeon’s death Paul was asked by his estate to edit a multi-volume set of his collected stories. Paul also wrote many general books of rock commentary and criticism, some “practical philosophy” books (most notably *Das Energi*, the most enduring of them), and a handful of “hippie memoirs and recollections.” I’ve read and enjoyed most of these works (and been involved first-hand in some), but none overwrote the special place I have in my heart for Paul as a long-time friend and fellow adventurer.

—Robert Lichtman





I have this from one with no right to tell it. But fans blab—always have, always will. Besides which, truth to tell, I knew most of it already. A lot of people do. You’d be shocked. If they don’t talk about it there’s good reason. They’re scared. And they ought to be. I’m scared, too. When certain powerful institutions catch wind of the full truth of what I’m about to reveal, one hell of a lot of heads will roll. Including the one belonging to the guy who blabbed it.

And me too. So why am I going ahead and writing this anyway? That’s for me to know, you to find out. Let’s call him J. Arthur Goodbody, Artie for short. And, no—surprise!—that’s not his real name, no more than the name at the top of this page is my real name either. That one is a real name—a few of you may find it remotely familiar—but not mine. I’m borrowing it for the duration. The real Gordon

Eklund owes me and says he’s willing to put his head on the line to help get the story out. He claims, as a veteran of a foreign war, the folks in power won’t dare touch him. I’m not so sure of that myself. I think he’s just angling for a way to get his name back before the public and help his flagging book sales. Gutsy or nutsy? You decide.

But I do want to make it clear as water on the brain that it’s not him who’s doing the talking here, who’s telling the tale. He’s the Beard.

The story isn’t about him anyway. (That one maybe later. Though don’t hold your breath.) This one’s about Goodbody, J. Arthur. Known to his friends at the time of which we speak, the fabulous fannish 1960s, as Artie.

J. Arthur Goodbody pubbed a fanzine called *Porcupine*.

Now the ears prick up. Now the chins sagely nod. *Why, you do know him, you think.* (Under another name that is.) You’ve seen that zine, read it, collected it, nominated it for the Hugo. For *Porcupine* in its day was a major fanzine, a significant contribution to the microcosm, even though its official circulation never topped 120. Willis was a columnist. Tucker also. Ted White reviewed mystery fiction. Terry Carr wrote about rock & roll. Greg and Jim Benford coauthored a massive opus on fannish drug use through the ages that had to be serialized over four issues and then a surprise fifth installment appeared when they chose to include a consciousness-wrenching, eyebrow-fluttering account of an alleged visit to the sacred Ecuadorian underground brothel in suburban Guayaquil where the mystical psychedelic potion Wapato (roughly translated *bad headache*) was dispensed in the form of soluble merkins. (In their description the co-authors spent the night downstairs singing along as the organ grinder played Vanilla Fudge tunes, though they seemed oddly cognizant of the intimate details of what went on upstairs.) Lenny Bailes wrote about his pending move to San Francisco. Arnie Katz had a piece in which absolutely nothing happened in over 10,000

words. There was a lengthy letter column loaded with BNFs and several slumming pros. Illos were by Rotsler, Bergeron, Stiles, and Nelson.

In addition, *Porcupine* was renowned for its ongoing series of photo-offset nude fannish centerfolds with the names of the femmes on display (always women in these pre-liberation times) left unidentified. Though guesses were encouraged. (Winners receiving free lifetime subs to the zine.)

Porcupine just missed placing on the final Hugo ballot for 1967. (Losing out to *ERBdom*, I think it was.)

Eleven impeccably mimeoed issues appeared between May 1966 and April 1967 with the giant anniversary “Summer of Love” annish announced for June 1967, which along with the regular contributors was heralded to include an exclusive excerpt from an anonymous BNF’s secret fannish memoir including his personal confession to a two-year federal prison sentence incurred for exchanging explicitly pornographic missives through the U.S. mails with a well known feminist science fiction authoress. (He supposedly led a failed prison break while incarcerated.)

All of which, by the way, was thoroughly a crock. There was no anonymous BNF, no lady SF authoress, no failed prison escape. It was all an intricate hoax promulgated by the editor. Goodbody was famously adept at the practice of deception.

For good reason. Artie Goodbody by profession was a secret agent. U.S. government style.

But didn’t he, um, live in San Francisco? say the ones with the straightest, least drug-addled memories of the day.

Well, in theory, yes, he did. And there indeed stood a three-story Victorian flat in the Upper Sunset district on Sixth Avenue between Irving and Judah where mail addressed to J. Arthur Goodbody was delivered. His name—his real one—was inscribed on a tag beside the doorbell. But if you ever pushed the bell—and, trust me, I have—no one would answer. Some of the

time somebody might be at home but it likely wouldn't have been anybody you knew. Or wanted to know. The flat on Sixth Avenue was a government-operated safe house. It was a refuge where secret agents came, rested, or hid out. It was all part of a certain ultra-confidential government agency, one so secret, in fact, that its very initials were classified Eyes Only.

Where Artie Goodbody actually "lived"—the domicile where he kept the tools needed to produce a leading fanzine—type-writer, mimeo, stencils, lettering guides, conflu—I never knew.

Though I do know where he worked.

Artie worked at "the Lab."

In Berkeley.

For officially speaking the Lab was part of the University of California, though located far back in the densest, heavily forested regions that bloomed among the rolling hills to the east of the campus core. It was here in an otherwise modest underground concrete bunker that much of the theoretical work on the proposed "cobalt" bomb had been carried out before John Kennedy ordered the project shut down when apprised of the fifty-fifty odds that any actual detonation of such a device would annihilate all life on Earth. (And some continue to wonder why many defense specialists never trusted Kennedy—afraid to take risks, they complained of him.)

But Artie had nothing to do with that part of the Lab's operations anyway. Bombs were another department. Artie was primarily a Psych Ops boy with a strong corollary leaning toward chemical weapons. (And a little biological stuff tossed in.)

Drug warfare, one might call it.

As early as 1954 he had played a key role in the team that conducted the initial experiments on LSD-25 as a potential weapon.

Then came early 1967 and Artie first heard about Spacewarp.

As the saying says, when it comes to the '60s you have to have been there to know what it was like—but if you were, then you can never remember it anyway.

J. Arthur Goodbody was there. Top secret hush-hush government agent or not, he was no different from the rest of us caught up in the swirling kaleidoscopic maelstrom of the Aquarian Age. In the beginning—say mid-'65—Artie smoked a little devil weed. Then, shortly thereafter, he smoked a hell of a lot more. He chewed Heavenly Blue morning glory seeds, ingested Mexican mushrooms, snorted Bolivian banana root. At the notorious by-invitation-only BatCaveCon in Pebble Beach in the spring of '66 Artie was the magic man passing out the pink pills at the late night room party where every femme fan present later turned out pregnant even though no one in attendance could remember taking off a stitch of clothing.

But it was that kind that kind of party, that kind of con, that kind of world, that kind of age.

And all before Spacewarp happened along.

The way it was told to me, Artie Goodbody was lounging behind his desk in the sixth bottom basement of the Lab late one afternoon pecking out surreptitious stencils for the next *Porcupine* lettercol when a chemist in a stained green smock burst in bearing a powdery cream-colored substance in a glass beaker tube. "I don't know what I've come up with," he declaimed, "but my number one experimental rat just vanished."

"Vanished?" Artie said, peering up from behind the old Underwood standard upon which he had been pecking. "What's that mean?"

"It means disappeared. Vanished. Dematerialized. Discorporated. Gone kaput. I fed him a light 25-microgram dose and twenty minutes later he went *poof*."

"Dead?" said Artie, with a narrow look.

"Oh, no. Just gone."

Artie followed the chemist in the stained green smock back to his work station and when they walked in the door there was the number one experimental rat back in his cage. He lay supine flat on his spine with all four paws sticking straight up in the air.

The rat looked dead, all right. Except for

one factor: his paws, the four of them, were kicking rhythmically—as if in time to silent music.

"He looks happy," the chemist observed of the supine rodent

"But he doesn't look vanished," said Artie.

"He must've come back."

"Give him another dose."

"What? How come?"

"Because," said Artie, with studied patience, "the critical determinate of the scientific method is experimental repetition. Give the mouse another dose and see if he vanishes again."

"He's a rat, not a mouse."

"And double the quantity."

The chemist prepared the syringe, injected the number one experimental rat with fifty micrograms of the cream-colored powdery substance mixed with clear tap water.

It took twenty minutes for the drug to kick in.

Then the rat vanished.

One hour later—the two men studied their watches—the rat came back. He lay supine flat on his spine in the bottom of his cage, all four paws rhythmically kicking as if to the beat of silent music.

"Look, he's smiling again," the chemist said, peering through the wires.

"Rats can't smile," said Artie. He peered closer. No, goddamn it, the damn rat was smiling, all right.

Ear to ear.

"I think he's stoned," Artie said. "By the way, what do you call it?"

"His name's Lester."

"Not the rat. The drug in the beaker. What's it called?"

The chemist rattled off a long complex chemical formula.

"Let's call it Spacewarp," said Artie, on impulse.

Naturally, as an actfan, J. Arthur Goodbody was aware of the science-fictional connotations of the term "Spacewarp" as they involved theoretical means of interstellar

travel. In addition he was familiar with *Spacewarp's* history as the title of a Fifth Fandom focal point genzine published by Art Rapp, who still used it for his SAPSzine. (Artie was on the waiting list.)

So call it a private joke.

The name caught on. Pretty soon everybody in the Lab was talking about "Spacewarp". It was thought to be a sure future war winner. Spray a weaponized batch on top of a some marauding Viet Cong and, *poof*, the yellow-skinned sons of bitches vanished.

The trouble was, nobody knew where they went or when or where or how they eventually came back.

Smiling from ear to ear.

Looking stoned.

The number one experimental rat wasn't talking either.

"We need a human volunteer," the officer in authority declaimed.

"One who can talk," added his chief factotum.

Mildew Frappe, the French-born thrice convicted slayer of his own entire family (and serial bigamist) agreed to give it a go. In return, Frappe's prison sentence was reduced from 599 to a relatively light nine years.

The chemist in the stained green smock injected Mildew Frappe with a five-hundred microgram Spacewarp dose—to compensate for the greater mass involved. Twenty minutes later, right on schedule, Mildew Frappe vanished.

What happened afterward is classified but I can tell you this much: it involved a significant loss of life.

Less than twenty-four hours after Mildew Frappe's vanishing, an order personally initialed by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara went out directing that all current stores and supplies of the chemical compound known as "Spacewarp" be gathered, collected, and immediately destroyed.

Copies of the chemical formula itself were to be burned.

So it was written, so it was done.

Except for one glass beaker's worth.

Weaponized. Which remained secreted in the bottom lower drawer of the desk of J. Arthur Goodbody.

It was at this juncture, apparently, that Artie began laying plans for his special “Summer of Love” anniversary issue of *Porcupine*.

He intended it to be (in his own words) “a fanzine like no other fanzine in the history of the medium.”

He planned for it to change the world.

It was a time of proselytism.

Everybody, it seemed, had their questions but almost as many, it further seemed, had their answers.

Want to know the meaning of life?

Try drugs. (Or chanting, prayer, radical politics, Tantric sex, royal jelly, military board games.)

Is there a God or isn't there?

There isn't—He died. (Alternately, there is but He's a She.) (And/or gay.)

Who won the World Series in 1904?

No one. The Giants refused to play.

Why are we in Vietnam?

Jeez, go figure.

Artie Goodbody had his questions too. Bushels of them. But he also had an answer. It lay secreted like a slumbering serpent in his bottom lower desk drawer.

Spacewarp.

On a warm Friday afternoon in late July J. Arthur Goodbody removed the secreted glass beaker from the desk drawer, stuffed it down the bulging front of his leopard skin undershorts, and carried it away to one of several secure locations he called “home.” (Not the one in San Francisco; that had been rented out as a rehearsal space to a well-known local acid rock band—agency budget cuts in the wake of the Mildew Frappe scandal.) There, in the security of the safe house he combined the contents of the beaker—mixing and stirring—with a separate compound.

A black, thick, oily greasy substance.

It was ink.

Mimeograph ink.

A combination which seemingly increased the potency of the original com-

pound to a level where it could now easily infect a person through the air itself.

That same night, laboring on without sleep, securely attired in asbestos suit and breathing apparatus, Artie ran off 120 copies of *Porcupine* #13, the special “Summer of Love” annish, on his Gestetner 360.

Which he then destroyed. Smashing it to micro-bits with a sledgehammer, bathing the fragmented remains in acid, igniting the residual chemical goo in a cataclysmic burst of flame and fire,.

He then sat down and addressed twenty 10x13 manila envelopes, into each of which he inserted one copy of *Porcupine* #13, the special “Summer of Love” annish.

He then waited for morning to dawn, tentatively removed the asbestos suit and breathing apparatus, drove to the nearest post office, and mailed seven of the envelopes. Then he drove to the next nearest post office and mailed seven more.

At a third post office he deposited the remaining six.

Then he drove back home to the safe house, changed into one of several pairs of silken pajamas he kept there, and toddled off to bed.

He slept the dreamless sleep of the innocent child.

Twenty copies of *Porcupine* #13 deposited in the United States mails, July 1967.

So who got them?

Well, me for one. (More on which later) But also—and it's not that hard—I'll try guessing:

Burton T. Arbogast for another. The old school Southern California fan, whose letter of comment in the June 1926 *Amazing Stories* is commonly regarded as the first known instance of genuine fan activity.

His brother Milton, also an occasional fan, then serving out the last of six consecutive prison sentences on charges of committing crimes against nature involving beasts of the field and forest.

Leslie Drummond, the seventeen-year-old New York City femme fan and one-time

child model who was said to have teased the pulsating appendages of a good ninety percent of east coast male fandom. (In Leslie's case, by the way, a contributor's copy. Yes, the notorious centerfold.)

Quailmeyer Briggs, erstwhile president and last remaining member of the Interstellar Science Phantasy Correspondent and Pharmacological Society, long rumored to be a renegade Rosicrucianist front.

The psychotic science fiction writer Hapgood Snails, kept in solitary confinement at Napa State Hospital, Napa County, California, following his public breakdown at the last Hugo awards banquet when his story “Revenge of the Space Poop” failed to win in the controversial not-quite-a-novella-but-not-really-a-novelette category.

South Africa's self-proclaimed number one fan, the white supremacist fanatic Phineas Windpipe.

The Negro jazz accordionist and sword-and-sorcery author Sherman Buttermilk whose story “The Gay Barbarian” had edged out Hapgood Snails's in the Hugo balloting. (Think racial and political balance here.)

Flippo J. Dancer, the Seattle actifan and number one finisher in the unpublished 1964 *Fanac* Poll for Worst Fan of All Time.

That's eight. (A ninth was apparently Steve Stiles, his copy refused entry by the military authorities in Vietnam as being “incompatible with military discipline.” My guess: that centerfold again.)

As for the remaining ten (deducting for my copy, don't forget), do your own research. Leaf through the fanzines, apa rosters, and convention booklets of the day. Find a name that seems to be everywhere and then, all at once, isn't anywhere at all.

Take your guess. That could be one.

The Great Gafia of 1967.

It was noted at the time.

Here I quote from a private letter from a prominent New York City publishing fan dated October 13, 1967:

Things sure have been damnably quiet in fandom lately. It may be nothing more than the usual post-Worldcon malaise but I'm

starting to wonder. More and more people are not being heard from at all. What about Artie Goodbody for instance? The latest Porcupine—the promised hippie dippie annish—is way overdue. And Leslie Drummond—bless her sweet fannish tush—was supposed to join me at Fillmore East last night to hear the Velvet Underground. She never showed. (The bitch.)

And so on.

But it was nothing new. Fans come, fans go. Who was it who said the average lifespan of an active fan is three years? And this was especially true during the late '60s when diversions ran particularly rife.

How can you keep 'em down in the mimeo room, cranking that handle, when there's sex, dope, and rock 'n' roll bubbling for free in the streets beyond?

And me? That copy of *Porcupine* #13.

The one allegedly mailed me. What happened with that?

I didn't vanish. I'm here. I've been here all the time.

And it was delivered. It was received.

But I'd just fallen in love for the first time in my life and amid the romantic—and carnal—delights of the moment I'm afraid that like every other fanzine and apa mailing that slid through the mail slot in that halcyon period it got tossed on the pile and the pile soon got shuffled and *Porcupine* #13 ended up on the bottom and then dumped into an apple crate, one of several that followed me around for years and then decades from home to home, city to town, till finally coming to rest...here.

I hold it in my hands now. The sealed, unopened manila envelope. Ten by thirteen. Addressed and postmarked.

I have no intention of opening it.

In time I may burn it.

Hey, you better believe.

And the rest. The other hundred copies Artie ran off?

There I've got to admit I don't know. Nobody does—not for certain. Maybe Artie still has them. Maybe he doesn't. Maybe the government got them. Maybe it didn't.

I'll tell you my theory though.

Artie was no dumb bell. More crucially, as a government secret agent, he was cautious to a fault. Those first twenty copies I think he mailed out as an experiment. To see what would happen. And when it worked—when the recipients vanished—then Artie did too.

Not a Spacewarp vanishing though. The other, old-fashioned traditional kind. He skipped town. A new city, a new identify, a new life, perhaps even a new face also. (Artie had his connections in the criminal underground, I imagine.)

As a secret agent Artie would know how and where it could be done.

Whatever, after mailing out those first twenty copies of the *Porcupine* annish, nobody heard from Artie Goodbody again.

Hell, he could be living right next door to you—or me for that matter. And we'd never know it.

And there the story rested. Until last week. When Something Happened. Something both expected and unexpected.

And it's why I've broken silence here.

I admit it: I'm worried. No, hell, more than worried.

I'm scared.

They're coming back.

I saw her last week. In the corner neighborhood Starbucks down the block where I commonly sip my afternoon decaffeinated beverage while imbibing a chapter or two from whatever novel—usually something from classical American or English literature—lately it's been Dreiser—I happen to be reading at the time.

She was sitting two tables away. With a tiny white porcelain cup of straight espresso in front of her. A pretty girl. Young. Far too young for me, though I couldn't help looking. She was dressed like one of the hippie girls I remembered from four decades back: bell bottom jeans, peasant blouse and no bra, fringed boots, spangled headband.

She was smiling from ear to ear.

Then something in me clicked. A Bat-CaveCon photo I'd seen on the internet.

"Leslie," I heard myself saying. "You're Leslie Drummond."

She looked up at me, still smiling. But blankly now.

"You're Leslie Drummond, the science fiction fan," I said, rising to my feet.

There was something else too. Something I only just then noticed. On the table in front of her lay—yes—a fanzine. I instantly recognized the familiar green-tinted, quarto-sized paper.

I crossed to the table and pointed accusingly. "That's *Hyphen*, isn't it?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," she said coolly. She pressed the fanzine, the *Hyphen*, tight against her chest. "And if you don't stop annoying me I'm going to call a cop."

She sprang to her feet.

"But, Leslie, wait—" I reached out to catch hold of her and as I did she spun around, took a frantic step, ran straight into me, bounced back, and then raced out the front door.

By the time I could react further she was off down the street.

Ignoring the curious—and occasionally outraged—looks of my fellow patrons I hurried on out, looked desperately around, saw nothing.

She was gone already.

Vanished.

I got into my car and drove home.

When I got there an e-mail was waiting in my computer in-basket. From Robert Lichtman wanting to know if I was willing to again serve as teller in the upcoming FAPA election. At the bottom of the note he added:

"And guess who the hell I ran into in Moe's Bookstore in Berkeley yesterday? Of all people? Sherman Buttermilk. The fan and writer. Tall black guy with a patchy beard. Left fandom in the late sixties, I believe. Anyway he didn't look one day older than when he was hanging around LASFS and playing a hot jazz accordion in the clubs around Venice Beach. The odd part, when I went up and tried to say hello, he got a panicked look on his face and damn near ran over me trying to get away. Maybe

he's wanted by the law or something but it sure seems as if his gafia isn't apt to end soon. I'm positive it was him, though."

Hell, Robert, I'm positive too..

Let me tell you about the issue of *Hyphen* Leslie Drummond was reading that day in the corner Starbucks and after that I'll fill you in on a few of the high points of my pet theory.

Its masthead I noticed when she first pressed it against her chest. I didn't see a date but I did spot an issue number.

It was *Hyphen #149*.

Now hold on, you say. As every fan knows Willis folded *Hyphen* after the thirty-sixth issue in February 1965. He brought it back in 1987, publishing #37 to mark the fortieth anniversary of Irish fandom. And Shelby Vick did a oneshot he called *Hyphen #38* in 1999 for the Corflu he hosted that year, with reprints from old issues. No more after that.

I'd seen it wrong. A trick of the light. It was *Hyphen #19* or *Hyphen #14*. Something like that.

There's only one flaw in that analysis.

I have part of the page.

When Leslie and I collided as she struggled desperately to get away and as I reached out to grab hold of her I ended up grabbing instead and tearing away a part of the front page of the *Hyphen* she was holding.

The part that contained the issue number. (#149 oh yes indeed.)

Also the first paragraph of the editorial. By Walt Willis.

And the date.

July 2007.

Now I know that's going to excite a bunch of people. If that's a joke, it's not a very funny one, they'll say. Willis is dead, has been for some years now, and we all mourn his passing.

As I'm sure we do. I do. Walt Willis is dead, all right.

In this universe he is.

But what about another universe? A parallel universe separate and distinct from this, one in which *Hyphen* continues to be published to this day with Walt Willis—an

aged Willis to be sure—still turning the mimeo crank.

A world in which fandom not only perseveres but one in which it thrives.

Let me give you a clue—the title of the Willis editorial, a snippet of which hold in my hands as I write. The editorial is entitled: "The World President Speaks."

It's written in the first person.

What follows is sheer speculation.

Given an infinite number of possible alternate universes, then not only does anything become possible, then everything is possible.

Including a world—a universe—in which fandom rules.

I can't draw you a complete picture. I can only continue to speculate. A world war. Maybe several world wars. A devastated and ruined planet. Only one stable institution somehow survives. The paper network established and firmly built among the fellow fans of science fiction. Maybe the only ones who saw it all coming. Who saw and prepared for the consequences.

Out of the rubble and ruin of a devastated planet springs forth...*fanzines!*

Something like that anyway.

And, yes, it's silly. Ridiculous. Absurd as frog's heads in a soup. But...possible.

And with Spacewarp—the drug that makes people vanish—yes, but to where?—a means of going there.

To that other fannish universe.

Leslie Drummond went.

Sherman Buttermilk went.

And so did the other recipients of *Porcupine #13*, the special Summer of Love annish.

They all went.

And now, clearly, they're coming back.

Which is why I'm scared.

Now there may be no reason for being afraid. They took their damnable dope—unknowingly perhaps—and now it's wearing off and they're coming down, coming back, so it's all over

Except if so, then why are they still smiling from ear to ear? (And why have they

seemingly not aged a day after a forty-year absence?)

Like that number one experimental rat back in the beginning. Recently returned—I'll bet you—from an alternate universe in which lab rats rule.

And Artie? J. Arthur Goodbody? He's still out there—I'm absolutely convinced. Out there and fully prepared—at long last—for his next move. Does he still possess a store of the original Spacewarp? Does he—and I find this the more likely alternative—happen to have a copy of the chemical formula?

I can again only speculate. But the Artie I knew was not one to deprive himself of any available option.

And by now he must know as well as I do that they're all coming back.

And that's what scares me.

So there you have it. That's my story. It's not the full story of course—since there's no end yet and only time will truly tell. I

don't expect, personally, to be around to see it. Once this sees the light of day somebody out there—maybe Artie, maybe somebody still working for the same secret government agency—is going to realize it's not just another idiotic piece of dumb faaan fiction, that it's real, even if the names have been switched around here and there.

And they're going to be coming for me.

They'll find me. I suppose I could run. But I know I can't hide. So I'm not even going to try to run. I'm an old fan and tired. I wouldn't know where to go if I did run. So I'll wait it out right here in front of my computer keyboard where I feel most comfortable and see what develops.

Other than that, I can only say wait. And fasten your seat belts. The ride's about to get very bumpy out.

I'd tell you to keep watching the sky. But that line's already been used.

—Gordon Eklund

About Gout

When in France here's what to do:

Pronounce it 'goo'

When in England you must shout

'Bloody Hell, I've got the gout!'

In France of course I should haste

To mention the word means taste

In England there are rumours

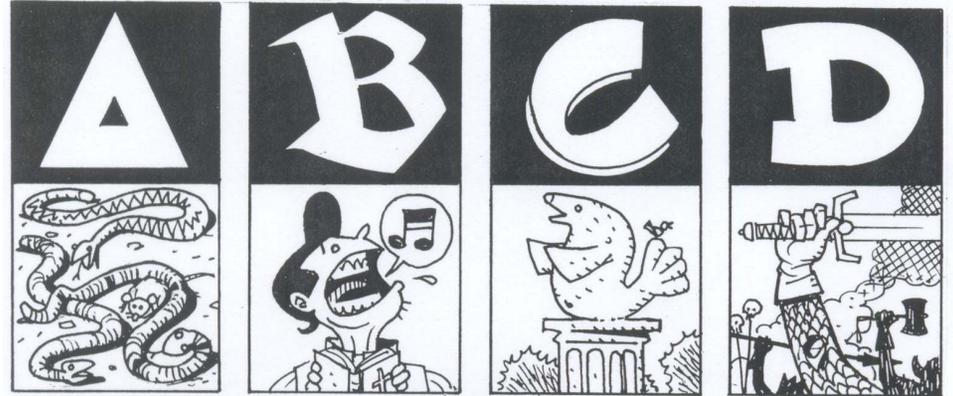
it means 'a flowing down of humours'

But how to pronounce that particular sound

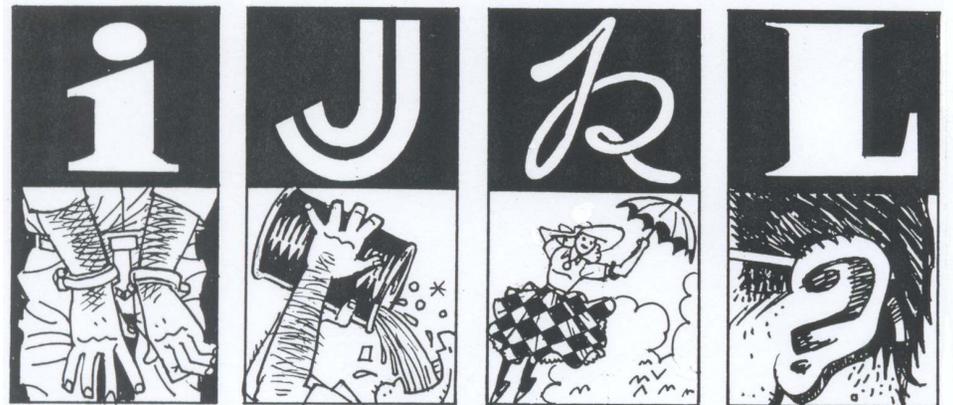
Remains a painful choice, all round.

—Graham Charnock

SOUTH WALES ALPHABET



By Dave Langford



Er, it's like this. Brother Jon the rock star and artist, who lives in Chicago these days, is planning an illustrated "book, CD, catalog thingy about S. Wales... theme of the book is all very tangential stuff about growing up in Anglo-Wales, seaport town—blah blah Arthur Machen, Dylan Thomas, rain, chartists, Uncle Bob's pigeons, pubs, Aberfan etc. Industry, booze, nostalgia, sheep, disasters. Dad's slides will be a major part..." For my contribution, to be scattered through the book as text sidebars, I tried to scrape up some mostly 1950s/1960s memories of Newport (Gwent, though in my infant days it was Monmouthshire). Do not expect coherence. Or accuracy.

* *A for Adders*

One of the Langford traditions was to drive for miles and miles in order to walk up Rudry Mountain in Glamorgan, although Rudry Modest Hill or Rudry Quite Large Tump would be more accurate names. There were adders there, actually allowed to roam the wild without even a BBC film crew to record every wiggle and hiss.

My confrontation with a Rudry adder is a cherished family legend, many times retold at the watering-holes where aunts gather. At the time, I was young enough to be in the habit of carrying a large plastic sword and scabbard wherever I went. It was a sunny day, and they found me carefully keeping the coiled snake in my shadow because (according to hazy memories of something I'd read in the Children's Encyclopedia) this was supposed to stop it getting overexcited. My plan was to lure this reptile into the scabbard—which was just about the right size—and carry it triumphantly to Cardiff Zoo. Instead it slid off into the bracken.

Unlike a lot of our family legends, this is entirely true. But I never quite believed the uncle or cousin who knew for a fact that we'd all been in deadly danger, because (voice drops to low, blood-curdling tones) a friend of a friend had seen just such an adder uncoil like a spring and *leap thirty feet* to fix itsfangs in a victim.

Though I never managed to import adders into the household, we did once find a slow-worm at the far end of Burnfort Road from our old pebbledashed house there. "It's not a snake," I learnedly explained, "it's a legless lizard." We then discovered how to tell the sex of a slow-worm: if it promptly gives birth to a litter of jelly beans, it's a she. The jelly beans twitched feebly. Dad performed Caesarian operations with a razor blade, releasing tiny silver snakelets with black stripes down their backs. They were almost unnervingly cute.

We kept the family in an old fish tank and fed them gourmet slugs, maybe the wrong kind of slugs since the mother quietly died in there. The surviving little ones staged a mass escape while being exercised on the back lawn, and vanished into the rockery. For all I know, whoever now lives in the Burnfort Road house is still wondering what idiot established a breeding colony of snakes in the garden. Don't worry! They're only legless lizards.

* *B for Bettws*

It is not true that my experiments with home-made explosives left Newport High School as an insurance write-off that wasn't worth repairing. Not long after I left, though, the school moved from its St. Custard's redbrick building near the railway station to a dull new home in Bettws, well outside town on the Cwmbran road. I was moved to commit blatant plagiarism of John Betjeman:

*The High School's transplantation
In nineteen seventy-two
Has left for contemplation
A rather dismal view.
On masonry and woodwork,
The concrete dust collects:
Sing praises to the good work
Of female architects.*

Our old headmaster D. Parry Michael followed his school to Bettws, and I went to see him there on some now forgotten errand. He kept me waiting in his outer office while he and other visitors—including that female architect—sang the whole hymn for my

benefit. Of course I deafly couldn't hear a word through the closed door, but it gave me a warm glow when DPM told me afterwards.

*Within that grey emporium,
Who knows what madness lurks?
How like a crematorium,
How like a sausage-works!
How high the phallic tower
Thrusts upward through the air,
To symbolize the power
Of teachers everywhere!*

A touch of poetic licence there, since the "tower" was merely a tall narrow chimney. The word before that tended to get mumbled when sung on official headmasterly occasions, like one of the bits of the National Anthem that no one quite remembers.

*O concrete grey and dismal:
Behold the wondrous sight!
O corridors abysmal,
O gay fluorescent light!
Sing on, with hymns uproarious—
From rain and storm aloof—
Look up! and oh how glorious,
It's leaking through the roof....*

Jon's secondary school career happened at Bettws. He reported bitterly that the older staff from Newport High had somehow acquired a deep suspicion of pupils called Langford and tended to blame them for just about any unsolved crime. I couldn't possibly comment.

* *C for Cardiff*

The capital city, twelve miles away to the west, full of sin and spectacle and evocative district names like Splott! Our mother's greatest dread about her boys was centered on Cardiff. She lay awake at nights worrying that one or other of us would be contaminated by sordid big-city influence and (shudder, shudder) *pick up a Cardiff accent*.

Victoria Park in Canton, Cardiff used to have a tiny zoo that was famous for Billy the Seal. Billy had been accidentally caught in the net of a fishing-boat, somewhere off the Irish coast in 1912. He wallowed happily in the zoo for many years, with one brief outing when Canton flooded in 1927 and Billy went exploring: he was found trying to board a

tram in Cowbridge Road. When Billy died in 1939 it turned out that there had been a basic error and that he was, in fact, a she. The zoo is long closed but there's still a statue in the park of its star attraction Billy the Seal—which shows how rare exciting events used to be in Cardiff.

Sadly, the dates are all wrong for my pet theory that Billy helped inspire Arthur Machen's 1895 horror story "The Novel of the Black Seal".

* *D for Denis*

Our father's name—as we've spent all too many years explainin—is spelt Denis, not Dennis. By an uncanny coincidence this is also Jon's middle name. Likewise, Dad's brother was Geoffrey and there was an Uncle Claude in the family. My wife spotted the trend when she added all these alien forenames to her family tree. "Your father's lot aren't Welsh at all!" she hissed. "You're all Normans!"

In the long run, everyone really comes from somewhere else.

* *E for Experiments*

At secondary school I was vaguely aiming for a career in science (which eventually turned out to be a five-year stint at the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment). A budding scientist must carry out world-shaking experiments, and—often in collaboration with my schoolmate Chris Faulkner, who was less responsible than me—I did my best to push back the frontiers of knowledge. Gobbling up vast quantities of detective novels and science fiction was also helpful. Some discoveries:

* The formula for traditional black gunpowder given in H. Beam Piper's alternate-history SF novel *Gunpowder God* isn't so successful when you substitute sodium-nitrate fertilizer for saltpetre. The result is too damp (can you say hygroscopic?). Nice fireworks, no bang.

* In those days it was still possible to buy tall yellow tins of calcium carbide at the Newport branch of Halford's. This was meant for old-fashioned acetylene bicycle

lamps. Drop a lump into water and acetylene gas comes bubbling out, along with smelly impurities. A carefully planned experiment determined beyond reasonable doubt that if a scientific investigator drops carbide into all the inkwells and fills his classroom with a terrible stench, he gets cand.

* John Dickson Carr's locked-room mystery *The Hollow Man* mentions the ingredients of the "Krupp preparation"—that is, thermit—but experimental science was unable to buy them in Newport, not even at the largest Boots the Chemist. (That Carr novel was pressed on me by my favorite aunt, Louise, who also introduced me to *The Day of the Triffids*, *Catch-22* and mulligatawny soup. Alas, she died far too young.)

* The recipe for nitrogen tri-iodide (NI₃) in *Farnham's Freehold* by Robert A. Heinlein can be improved upon by using solid iodine crystals from the Newport High School labs. This was a traditional discovery made by most chemistry classes even without Heinlein's help. The resulting contact explosive is liable to detonate without any assistance whatever, but if you keep it wet enough it can first be smeared on floors, blackboards, desks and anywhere else you fancy. When victims touch or step on it, there are exciting mini-explosions and puffs of purple smoke. Roars of laughter! Breaks the ice at parties! A definite triumph for Science.

* It was not possible to confirm the spectacular pyrotechnics produced by dropping large lumps of sodium into water (as described many years later in Gene Wolfe's *The Book of the New Sun*) because the authorities kept the school supply too well locked up. And the potassium as well. We all agreed this was shockingly distrustful.

* *F for Fizz-Buzz*

All too much of my maths homework at Newport High School consisted of playing drinking games in a smoky pub. The beer was some foul carbonated slop of the late sixties (Courage Worst? Double Diamond?), costing one shilling and fourpence a pint, and the game of Fizz-Buzz was a reliable way to choke it down.

If you are very lucky, you won't have met it. We mathematical scholars would sit round a table in the Amputee's Arms, counting in turn, clockwise round the ring. *One. Two. Three.* At five, and every multiple of five, you don't say the number but shout *Fizz!* At seven and its multiples the word is *Buzz!*—and the order of play reverses direction. Anyone making a mistake must take a huge swig from his beer (amateur rules), drain the glass and buy another (tournament rules), or knock back any drinks in front of him and buy a round (insane idiot rules).

Unfortunately we got too good at it. Even the double thrill of *Fizz Buzz!* at multiples of 35 began to lose its edge. So I and my mate Dai Price started attaching electrodes to the traditional rules. One early experiment, which even the slow-witted could handle, was to add *Oink!* as the (ahem) buzzword for multiples of three. Daio developed a particularly obscene *Oink!* whose mere sound came under the heading of gamesmanship. The corpse of the rotten game began to twitch slightly.

Burp! for multiples of 11 was the next logical addition. By now we were sweating, concentrating intently, and falling over much sooner than usual (see above, Tournament Rules). Next: *Clang!* whenever the count reached a prime number. It was around this stage that I stopped remembering trivia like closing times or how I'd got home afterwards. The final blows to sanity were *Pow!* for perfect squares and *Zap!* for powers of two.

By now, you see, there were no bloody landmarks. Pale, strained faces ringed the table, soddenly trying to follow a count which instead of *One Two Three Four* began *Clang Pow!* ... *Clang Zap!* ... *Oink Clang!* ... *Pow Zap!* The supreme moment of triumph came when, or if, we galloped into the straight with *Oink Buzz!* ... *Burp!* ... *Clang!* ... *Oink!* ... *Fizz Pow!* ... and then at last the first number that came through in clear: *Twenty-six!*

I'm not sure what the other pub regulars thought of us, but they used to look worried.

* *G for Gaer*

The Gaer, also known to locals as the Gollars, was the perfect place for kids to muck around, stalk each other through ancient, bracken-infested earthworks, and (if you tried really hard) get lost. It's actually an Iron Age hill fort on the west side of Newport, overlooking Tredegar Park and the Ebbw River. In our day it also overlooked a golf course, now vanished under horrid new housing developments. A 2006 BBC report insisted on calling it the Tredegar Hillfort, but Newportonians will have no truck with this blatant revisionism. It's the Gaer.

We grew up on the edge of the then-quite-new Gaer Estate, a sprawl of modern houses, flats and prefabs next to the Gaer itself. The Gaer School loomed large in our lives, and Jon's was the first christening held at the new church St. Martin in the Gaer. Afterwards, it had to be consecrated again.

The Gaer Estate was a kind of literary time capsule, with all its roads named for writers. Street names were handed out in strict order of the planners' idea of their importance, working down from the very long Shakespeare Crescent through Dickens Drive, Ben Jonson Way, Masefield Vale (John Masefield was Poet Laureate at the time), Ruskin Rise and Kipling Hill. I always hoped that Morton Way was a nod to the humorist J.B. "Beachcomber" Morton, but probably they meant the travel writer. Hacks with lower ratings got Groves—Brontë, Pepys, Shaw—or Gardens, like Barrie, Macaulay and Marlowe. Right at the bottom of the pecking order were the small fry who were fobbed off with mere Closes, from Jane Austen to H.G. Wells. Rather daringly, one Close was named for the notoriously filthy James Joyce.

Drinkwater Close always seemed to be an odd one out, but at secondary school one of the English teachers explained all by making us read a particularly gloomy poem by the now-forgotten John Drinkwater. ("Long time in some forgotten churchyard earth of Warwickshire / My fathers in their generations..." had, to cut a long story short, snuffed it.) What pull did *he* have with the

Gaer planners?

Naturally the tiniest and most insignificant of all the Closes—as far as I can make out on the map—was allotted to a literary critic: Hazlitt. This was inspirational. I went on to become an insignificant book reviewer, though of science fiction rather than drama.

Shakespeare? Oh yes, he wrote some plays, but if you grew up in the Gaer he was mainly celebrated as a Crescent.

* *H for Head Teachers*

Mrs. Saunders was my first: she ran a tiny dame-school in the back sitting room of her house in Melfort Road, where I first grappled with sentences like "Dan is a man" and "The fat nag ran to the gap." Lessons were punctuated by disaster clean-up operations when this narrative excitement became too much for infant bladders. Mrs. Saunders regularly threatened chair-wetters with a dose from her feared red bottle of "Wakey-Uppy Medicine," understood to be an experience too awful to contemplate. It was in her classes that I first met my buddy Martin Hoare, who went on to be a year ahead of me at the Gaer School, at Newport High, and at Brasenose in Oxford—and for blackmail purposes remembers all about the Saunders Academy, curse him. When I traveled to Minneapolis to be a guest of honor at the local science fiction convention, my hostess Geri Sullivan had been briefed by Martin to place a terrifying bottle labelled "Wakey-Uppy Medicine" at my bedside. It turned out to be sherry.

Our own Aunt Ol (technically Great-Aunt Olive) was the reigning headmistress of Gaer Junior School in those days, but retired before I got there, and spent the following decades ruling the family rather than the school with her famous rod of iron. Almost all I remember about her Gaer replacement Mr. Griffiths was that he kept a special library of treasured books for advanced readers, including most of Hugh Lofting's *Doctor Dolittle* saga. I caught the fantasy habit young.

The other thing about Mr. Griffiths that sticks in my mind was our father's explana-

tion of the important difference between him and D. Parry Michael of Newport High School, where I was about to start. “For four years you’ve had a headmaster whose head looks as though it’s been squashed *this way*.” Dad’s hands moved together, miming side-to-side pressure. “Your new one’s head looks as though it’s been squashed *that way*.” Same business, but top to bottom. In this way I was prepared for various canings by D. Parry Michael, though not for the fan letter he sent about one of my books in the mid-1980s.

DPM had brought a touch of public-school tradition to Newport High by dividing us up into houses named for the rivers of Monmouthshire: Monnow, Severn, Usk and Wye. No one was allowed to be in Gryffindor. There wasn’t much deadly rivalry, although in addition to sports (rugby, rugby, rugby, swimming and rugby) the houses were pitted against each other in an annual Eisteddfod where earnest girls invariably recited Dylan Thomas’s “And Death Shall Have No Dominion”. Attendance was compulsory, and would-be poets gave up their ambitions on the spot.

School classes had arbitrary letters to avoid any trace of elitism—N, H, S and M for Newport High School, Mon— but secretly N and H were the fast stream with the other two reserved for clods. In my fourth year (4N, he mentioned smugly), an English teacher blew the gaff. Some duplicated sets of test papers were so badly fixed together, with a stapler on the “pin” setting, that they disintegrated while being handed out. “Well,” said our mentor in tones of utmost contempt, “these seem to have been stapled by”

Incidentally, most of the Newport High masters and mistresses still wore black academic gowns, just as in *Stalky & Co.* or Billy Bunter. Tell that to today’s youngsters and they won’t believe you.

* *I for Industry*

For several years, among the Croesyceiliog family and friends especially, there was a fashion for surreal ornamental globes

that stood in empty fireplaces or were proudly displayed on window-sill. They came in various shapes and sizes but all had a runny, molten-plastic look, as though Salvador Dali had been preparing a huge soft watch but forgot to turn off the oven until far too late. In fact these artforms were solidified lumps of nylon slag left over from the mysterious industrial processes at British Nylon Spinners, where our Uncle Bryn worked. Great-Uncle Bryn really: his wife Auntie Rosie was one of the three weird sisters Hilda, Lenta and Rosie, of whom Lenta was our mother’s mother and also our Grandmother Len. Bryn was also a useful source for family knitters: all the children were parcelled up in scratchy but indestructible nylon sweaters. Indestructible, that is, until they met their first burning cigarette-end.

Len’s husband Arthur worked at the Avondale Tinplate Works (so indeed did Len herself) and brought home odd little machined bearings and cams, not big enough to stand impressively on the mantelpiece. When I took a vacation job at the Gwent Alcan works in 1974, I wondered whether I’d be continuing the family tradition by coming home with pockets full of small aluminium trinkets. In the event my services were in demand because the factory shop gave workers huge discounts on cooking foil.

I was stacking aluminium sheets at Alcan when the Thames Valley Police tracked me down and appeared on the shop floor to nick me for setting off loud bangs in Oxford that summer. The foreman was disgusted that one of his least promising young workers had found this paltry excuse to down tools early. “You skiving sod,” he said as the constabulary led me away.

* *J for Jon*

A brother of mine, almost exactly four and a half years younger. See practically any page of this book. The age gap between me and my “tiny little deformed brother” (a phrase whose origin is lost in the mists of alcohol) kept us well apart at school. One later anecdote, just one: during my final year

at Oxford, Jon came to a party at the sordid college lodgings in New Inn Hall Street. There was much homemade beer, I remember, from extensive brewing operations in a disused cellar kept nicely warm by the central-heating boiler. There were rust-spotted Watneys Party Seven tins that never got opened but went the rounds of student parties as revered cargo-cult goods. There was a sinister punch concocted from fortified fruit wines and other sticky ingredients, in a plastic dustbin from the home-brew operation...

The last of these was Jon’s downfall. As the party wound down and the punch sank to low tide, he hefted the bin with both hands to take a mighty swig. Some passing physicist—not me, I promise—helpfully raised the far end a few inches. Jon vanished in a wave of murky fluid and fruit bits. The grisly aftermath came in the small hours, as a limbless monstrosity inched and humped its way about the building like some protoplasmic horror from the works of Arthur Machen. When eventually I mustered the courage to turn on a light, the crawling abomination proved to be Jon—still sticky all over and unable to get loose from the sleeping bag. Perhaps, if we hadn’t ripped him free of his cocoon, he would have metamorphosed into a lovely butterfly.

The moral, probably, is “don’t drink from dustbins.”

* *K for Kingsway Centre*

They didn’t call them shopping malls then, but the Kingsway Centre was Newport’s first manifestation of the wave of extraordinarily bad town planning that swept over South Wales in the 1960s. The chief architectural merit of the Centre is that it gives me something to put against K in this alphabet. The Kingsway Centre has no other architectural merits.

Newport’s main consolation was that the Centre wasn’t quite as dire as the pedestrian shopping area in Cwmbran New Town, whose designers had got the plans mixed up with blueprints for a wind tunnel. Hellish gales blew down the long bare arcades,

spawning whirlwinds and dust devils. Until the council added a complex system of baffles and spoilers, little old ladies who dared to put up an umbrella in Cwmbran were regularly recovered by mountain rescue teams from the higher slopes of Twmbarlwm.

* *L for Langford*

There’s nothing very exciting about the family name. It’s irremediably English, a “locational surname” for people who happened to live in one of the places called Langford or Longford in Bedfordshire, Devonshire, Essex, Norfolk, Nottinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Somerset and Wiltshire (most of them recorded in Domesday Book). Not many Welsh counties in that lot. And it doesn’t mean anything more thrilling than “the long shallow river crossing”, the long or lang (Old English *langa*) ford.

We are probably not connected to the first recorded specimen, Osm’ de Langeford, who was listed in the Pipe Rolls for Wiltshire in 1130. By an uncanny coincidence, though, the first computer on which I did serious programming was an IBM 1130!

At school, until a teacher’s curse fell on me (see Woodwork), they tended to say Lanky Langford because I was tall and thin. I’m still reasonably tall despite natural shrinkage, but for some reason that nickname never occurs to anybody nowadays. Happily, the universal tendency to misspell Langford as Longford has faded since the once notorious Lord Longford took himself away to investigate that great porn-shop in the sky. But people still try to cheer us up by sending photos of the village sign at Hanging Langford (Salisbury, Wilts). Wishful thinking, no doubt.

Notable anagrams are a greasy-spoon Chinese restaurant called Fong Lard, plus that dread villain of many a fantasy trilogy, the Fanglord. My publications list includes a booklet titled *Wrath of the Fanglord*, which may have been a bad idea.

Mum’s side of the family provides all the Welshness, including a seething mass of Evanses who tended to marry other Evanses

in hope of making life as difficult as possible for amateur genealogists. You should hear the grumbles from my wife Hazel, who is an amateur genealogist.

* M for Arthur Machen



This supernatural fiction author was born and raised in Caerleon, just up the road from Newport, and in 2007 they unveiled a sculpture there to mark the sixtieth anniversary of his death. It was also the eightieth anniversary of H.P. Lovecraft's essay "Supernatural Horror in Literature" (1927), which gave our local boy an enthusiastic plug: "Of living creators of cosmic fear raised to its most artistic pitch, few if any can hope to equal the versatile Arthur Machen, author of some dozen tales long and short, in which the elements of hidden horror and brooding fright attain an almost incomparable substance and realistic acuteness." This was Lovecraft's way of saying, "I'm planning to pinch Machen's best effects."

What we need now is the Arthur Machen Experience as a Caerleon tourist magnet. Careful research should reveal the exact chair in the King's Arms or Ship Inn where, after a few too many beers, the author dissolved into "a dark and putrid mass, seething with corruption and hideous rottenness, neither liquid nor solid"—and thus got the inspiration for his gruesome tale "The Novel of the White Powder". (Please note that the dread White Powder is taken dissolved in water, and not snorted.) Perhaps one of the Roman antiquities in Caerleon museum inspired the golden treasure brought from under the mountain in Machen's story "The Red Hand"—an ornament so revoltingly obscene that people cry out, "Put it away, man; hide it, for Heaven's sake, hide it!" (It is known as the Pain of the Goat. Suitable reconstructions should sell like hot cakes in the souvenir shop.) There would be excursions to Wentwood to view ill-omened glades exactly like the one where the

hellspawned little girl of *The Great God Pan* was seen playing on the grass with a "strange naked man" whom the observer was "unable to describe more fully." See also the entries for Cardiff and Sheep.

Langford links: Our Newport High School headmaster D. Parry Michael wrote a learned monograph about Arthur Machen. Croesyceilog, where Grandmother Len and her close family lived, features in AM's nasty story of abduction and sacrifice by the Little People, "The Shining Pyramid". One of the family treasures is a letter handwritten by Machen to a Mr. Snelling (apparently a pal of Grandfather "Pop" Langford's) in 1937.

* N for Noxious



Well, "Newport" would have been a bit too obvious, wouldn't it?

For this episode, I think *The Observer's Book of Common Fungi* must bear full responsibility. There never seemed to be any common fungi in our garden, but once upon a time on a visit to what

I believe was the Forest of Dean, I was fascinated to find some slightly uncommon ones. They had such an unusual shape that I could actually recognize them from the picture in the book. As a rule identification was far from easy, with instructions like: "Apply a dilute solution of Culpepper's Alkali to the gills. If the resulting coloration is lemon-yellow, the fungus is Common Blewit, delicious when fried in lard. If canary-yellow, it is the lethally poisonous False Newtbane..."

The unusual shape of my specimen fungi was very rude indeed. They were exceedingly male. They were in fact the Dog Stinkhorn, and I gathered some to take home and gloat over. Perhaps I could persuade the spores to grow in our garden! With a slight sigh of resignation, Dad stowed them in the boot of the car and off we drove. But not very far.

You would not believe what an astonishing stench a few Dog Stinkhorns can generate inside a closed car in just a few minutes. We pulled up hastily. The priceless botanical specimens were chucked into a ditch. Mum waved her perfume-bottle around with wild abandon. It helped, but to this day she insists that she's been unable to wear Chanel No. 5 because of the terrible memory. Even a tiny whiff still conjures up that very rude smell. I blame *The Observer's Book of Common Fungi*.

* O for Orange



Poets have struggled for centuries to find a rhyme for orange, and according to popular wisdom there just isn't one. One of my favorite dead American authors, James Branch Cabell, wrote a story called "The Rhyme for Porringer"; much later, the living SF author Michael Swanwick took his cue from Cabell and came up with the back-formation "porringe".

As any South Walian knows, the true rhyme is The Blorenge—a hill just south of Abergavenny.

* P for Punch



Punch, our first dog, was always tactfully referred to as a black Labrador. Other breeds had gone into the mix, though: he wasn't broad or tall enough to manage a truly convincing Labrador impersonation. Punch furiously defended the garden of our Burnfort Road house against

the forces of evil, which for some reason took the form of little old ladies. Men with black masks, striped vests and large bags labelled SWAG could come and go as they liked, in danger only of being joyfully licked to death, but the little old ladies who menaced the Langford household tended to get bitten. Mum had a special Christmas list of victims who needed to be sent apologetic

cards and choccies each year.

This was all uncannily similar to the situation in James Thurber's "The Dog That Bit People" (in *A Second Century of Humor* illustrated by Fougasse, one of the books I remember being already on the Langford shelves when I first learned to read). Unlike Thurber's fearsome hound, Punch never bit the family... well, except just once. He followed me to the Gaer Junior School one day and got into a fight with another dog in the playground. Showing my immense native power of stupidity, I tried to separate them. Shortly afterwards came the exciting new experience of getting my hand stitched up in the Royal Gwent, followed by my first tetanus injection. Another rite of passage for the Hero With A Thousand Embarrassments.

Jon adds an episode which has utterly vanished from my own memory: "the time we took Punch down to the post office on Bassaleg Road and he bit some grumpy old vicar and you (with great presence of mind) did not hesitate to lie to him (A VICAR!) about both our identities and address.... I have always admired you for that one act sir—though the horror of the vicar rolling up his trouser leg to show the grizzly blue black bloody bruise on his translucent white shin flesh still haunts my midnite slumbers!"

When Punch and Burnfort Road were long gone, we had Bella the pedigree basset hound—Jon's dog really—and sort of accidentally acquired Heidi the mostly-Jack-Russell. Bella was the brains of this outfit, a Napoleon of food crime. Kitchen surfaces that neither of them could reach alone were conquered by, according to the best guesses of forensic science, Heidi standing on Bella's back for a desperate leap. Either that or Mum's special party dish of sausage meat in pastry, something like a gigantic sausage roll, was abducted by Alien Grays.



* Q for Queen's Hill

Lots of Newport memories are clustered round Queen's Hill, which used to

be a backwater tucked away behind the station (it's more of a through road now) but contained the main entrance to the old High School. One of the duties of school prefects was to patrol this escape route in pairs during mid-morning break and stop evil-doers slipping off to the pub. I realized I wasn't cut out to be a prefect when I and a much smaller colleague (Deaf Guy and Midget—They Fight Crime!) found several hairy thugs waiting at the gate to meet our first truant, and narrowly escaped a beating-up. After that it seemed wiser to stay in the Prefects' Room like everyone else, reading *Private Eye* and planning our underground school magazine *Vole*, whose jokes were all uncannily reminiscent of the *Eye* and Monty Python. That led to a lot of trouble, too; our first issue triggered three outraged meetings of the school staff. Later it occurred to me that we'd invented the fanzine, years before discovering SF fandom.

On an educational tour of the print works of our local paper the *South Wales Argus*, I cunningly asked a Linotype operator to run off a *Vole: The Underground Magazine* masthead as a demo piece. I still have that slab of metal type, which reads: "VOLIE: The Underground". This tells you all you need to know about the *South Wales Argus*.

Queen's Hill was also famous in our family for Peter Price's garage (By Appointment to the Langfords). It took Jon's musical expertise to reveal that Joe Strummer from the Clash had lived over the newsagent's on the corner. Joe Who from the What?

* R for Rationing



We were too little to notice the way wartime rationing continued long after World War II was over, but it still cast a shadow in the early 1960s. I remember school dinners—actually lunches—at the Gaer School, and the morning ritual of calling the dinner roster. This made it very clear to the whole class which kids were paying a shilling or so and which

charity cases were getting fed for free. One day when I'd somehow lost my dinner money, or maybe spent it on a comic, I learned the hard way that switching to the free list was not an option. God, the embarrassment.

The Gaer canteen food was pretty awful, but we choked it down, even the watery white slime that pretended to be custard. One dark day, though, the sausages were too much. Tough, greasy, horrible: and after a specially slow and reluctant meal, one was found abandoned on the floor.

This gave our headmaster a Crazy Kat moment: "I sense the feel of evil. Every nerve of me vibrates to the symphony of sin. Somewhere, at this moment, crime holds revel." Outraged, he focused his little grey cells and gathered the suspects in the library. That is, he reconstructed the crime with the same hapless pupils sat around the same canteen table for interrogation. I forget now whether there was a chalked outline of a sausage on the floor.

The questioning was brutal but no one confessed. The mystery remains unsolved to this day. I was glad to have put several feet of alibi between myself and that awful tube of gristle, but wished I'd managed to lob it further and land it under a different table.

* S for Sheep



"He's that most dangerous of creatures, a clever sheep." This famous line from the first-ever episode of *Monty Python's Flying Circus* was clearly inspired by the satanic cunning of South Walian ovines. The sheep is not a creature of the air, but to some baffled investigators it seemed they must be able to levitate. Merthyr Tydfil, you see, was defended in depth by cattle-grids which no hoofed animal could possibly negotiate... yet somehow the local sheep made their way into the town centre. Were heavily disguised ewes hitching lifts from unwary motorists? Was it significant that certain planes are called

ramjets? Someone call the *Fortean Times*!

Eventually this conundrum was explained by film footage of Merthyr sheep lying down and deftly rolling sideways over the grids. After which they'd rowdily upset dustbins, slash cinema seats and bully old age pensioners until driven off by fierce cries of "Mint sauce! Mint sauce!" Never underestimate *dafad*, the clever Welsh sheep.

Arthur Machen imagined sheep as one of the animals that murderously rise up against humanity in *The Terror* (1917). After all, "what would happen to you if a hundred sheep ran after you instead of running from you? There would be no help for it; they would have you down and beat you to death or stifle you." But Alfred Hitchcock decided to film a much later author's nightmare of animal revolt, which is why we got *The Birds* rather than *The Sheep*.

* T for Transporter Bridge



One of the mysteries of South Wales is why Newport isn't a World Heritage site with tourists flocking in tens of thousands to see and ride on the amazing Transporter Bridge across the Usk. Its trademark towers—like giant electricity pylons—and the long high span between them are the first clear sign of Newport you see from the train. Welcome home.

When we were innocent tots with no access to Google, we had no idea that this was such a rare and special kind of bridge. All the same, it was a thrill to be carried very slowly over the river's filthy grey water and mud on a moving platform ("gondola" is the technical term) controlled from a small pointy-roofed house in one corner. With a maximum of six cars and a hundred and something pedestrians in each load, it definitely wasn't built for the age of the M4.

Nothing special seems to have happened on the Transporter Bridge centenary in 2006, though it was all lit up with fireworks for the eve of the millennium. The most exciting

moment came when it was hijacked during the 1984-1985 miners' strike. "Transport this bridge to Cuba, or Margaret Thatcher gets it!" Well, not quite: mining pickets occupied the control house on 30 August 1984 and halted the gondola in midstream—right over the Usk's deep-water channel, so as to block shipping. Letting ships through is, of course, the reason for having such a peculiar bridge design in the first place.

Although the militant miners had stocked up for a two-week siege, the police defeated them that same night by use of satanic cunning. After waiting for most of the shore pickets to get bored and go home, Chief Superintendent Fred Wyer had his men storm the engine room under the bridge's east tower. A few quiet arrests later, they overrode the platform control-house and brought the gondola home again like a dog on a long lead. Less spectacular than having the SAS abseil from the top span with a shower of stun grenades, but probably easier on everybody's nerves.

* U for Urban Legends



There is an irrational belief among visitors to Wales that laver bread is a food. It is, in fact, seaweed. Researchers have come to suspect that offering this dank green substance as gourmet nosh is a practical joke played by the Welsh on unsuspecting tourists. A bit like the famous Arab prank of pretending that the tastiest part of a sheep is the eyeball. ("He believed it, Abdul! He believed it!")

It is widely believed in Chicago that the national dish of South Wales is macaroni cheese, baked in the oven with bacon and sausages. Our Mum loves to make it (very good, too) and Jon's children Jimmy and Tommy expect it as part of traditional Welsh cuisine whenever they're in Newport.

It is not so widely believed that our Grandmother Len was a barmaid at the Up-

per Cock pub in Croesyceiliog during the Chartist Riots. But give Jon a bit longer to spread this story and it may yet get into the history books.

The many legends and fables about Welshmen, sheep and wellies will not be discussed in this scholarly text for fear that our mother may read it. The Welsh were being linked with certain activities as long ago as the sixteenth century, as shown by a notorious piece of English legislation: “An Acte for the contynuyng of the Statutes for Beggars and Vacabundes; and ayenst conveyance of Horses and Mares out of this realme; ayenst Wellshemen making affraies in the Countyes of Hereford Gloucestre and Salop; and ayenst the vice of Buggery.” (18 Hen. 8, c. 6, 1536.) Luckily for all concerned this was repealed in 1863.

* V for Vesta



Exotic cuisine was in short supply in 1960s Newport. I remember a lone Indian restaurant somewhere beyond the shady end of Commercial Street, but it was regarded with a certain superstitious dread. The tandoori oven hadn't been invented (all right, imported) and Newportonians didn't even know what chicken tikka masala was.

But in our cosmopolitan way we regularly dined on Vesta Beef Curry, a sort of dark brown sludge reconstituted from a rattly packet of dried lumps. The measured portion of very white, fibre-free rice came from another packet. Just Add Water! For family consumption, Dad would pep up this grim ready-meal with fancy side dishes of chopped onion (yum), banana (yum) and tomato (ugh, but that's just me). A nibble of raw onion still conjures up the whole scene, though not at the excruciating length achieved by Proust's magic biscuit. It all feels part of such a remote past that I was stunned to find that Vesta Beef Curry is still on sale. Perhaps they've changed the formula. I do hope so.

* W for Woodwork



I've got an O-level in woodwork, I'll have you know, although I was and am terrible at actually making things. Grown men have wept at the sight of a Langford mortice and tenon joint. Here the rectangular tongue of wood is supposed to fit so snugly into the matching slot that you hardly need glue. In my rough hands, the result was always a obscene wooden lump that wobbled around in a kind of splintery crater. Much furtive packing with cardboard was needed, and sometimes help from forbidden nails or screws.

I must have got through the O-level exam by remembering the theory. Smell-free sycamore is the wood for kitchen use. Lignum vitae is ever so dense, while balsa wood isn't. Elm is what you use for coffins: impossible to forget because there was a lad called Elms in our class and Mr. Golledge the woodwork master never mentioned his name without growling, “Elms... coffin wood.” Perhaps Elms hated this as much as I hated the way Golledge insisted on calling me Sammy. He'd been taught maths by Dad's father, Arthur Langford, whose pupils in the 1950s called him after the well-known black boxer Sammy Langford. Thanks to the humorous Mr. Golledge, I was lumbered with the same nickname for the rest of my Newport High School days. No, I'm still not in a forgiving mood.

When high crimes were committed in the workshop—things like bodging a loose mortice-and-tenon with cardboard, or defiantly not answering to “Sammy”—the Golledge Kangaroo Court would administer terrifying justice. He'd select a sheet of wood from the offcuts box and slowly, menacingly, use the electric bandsaw to cut out a shape like a double-width cricket bat. The accused had to bend over and take a mighty thwack on the buttocks from this terror weapon. If it broke, the ordeal by woodwork was over. If not, it proved you were a witch and deserved another whack.

Probably there's a law against that kind of thing now.

* X for Bidden



Because there is no X in the Welsh alphabet, our bilingual signs carefully explain for the benefit of Welsh monoglots that *Taxis* are in fact *Tacsis* and—far up in the frozen north—*Wrexham* is *Wrecsam*. Otherwise everyone would be terribly confused. Keep an eye out in the supermarket for the famous South Walian triple-CS brandy.

Other difficult Welsh words include the double-decker *bws*, the seaside *promenad*, the eighteen-hole *cwrs golff*, and (for indoor games) the *clwb snŵcer*. If tourists want to go native and take a leak, they should use the *toiledau*—being careful not to confuse this amenity with the *teledu* or television. No one is quite sure why, when a word for TV had to be added to the Welsh language, they chose one whose English dictionary definition is “the stinking badger of Java”.

* Y for Yat



One, or maybe more than one, of our long-ago family outings was to Symonds Yat in Herefordshire, which is essentially a large lump of rock covered in trees and standing next to the River Wye. The guidebooks credit it with great natural beauty (as distinct from the Cwmbran valley's trademark hill Twm-barlwm, which is more famous for great natural deformity: it shows on the skyline with a large off-centre pimple near the top).

There was something disappointing about this Yat expedition. Perhaps we picked a day when the touristy bits were closed: at least, I can't remember a single detail of the famous hand-powered rope ferry or the famous maze. The real problem may have been that I was young enough to expect great

things, and thought Symonds Yat would be an exotic animal named for its inventor, like Thompson's Gazelle or Bosman's Potto. It would be something partway between yeti and yak, and would live at the heart of the maze. But I never got to see it.

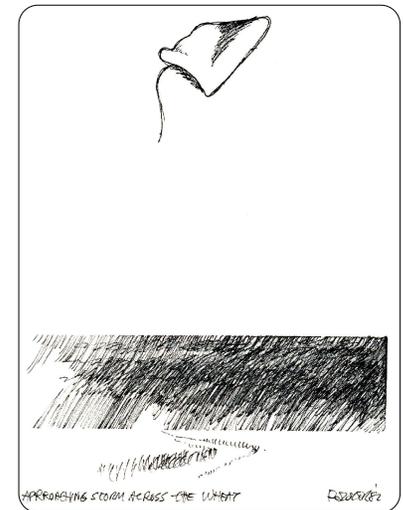
* Z for Zampogna



The zampogna, as we all know, is the Italian bagpipe. This is relevant to any South Walian reminiscences because, in the first place, the region has a largish Italian community which I've disgracefully failed to mention. They live principally on zabaglione, ziti, zucchini and Heinz Tomato Zuppe. In the second place, the zampogna is one of the few instruments which brother Jon has never played with his famous *zoppo* (Italian for syncopation). Our family is deeply thankful for this.*

[[FOOTNOTE: * Please note the enormous restraint with which I avoided dragging in the *zufolo*, “a small flute or flageolet used for training singing birds.” We trained our budgie Joey on cuttlefish, but he never developed any talent or tentacles (see Arthur Machen).]]

—Dave Langford





THANKSGIVING IS THE CRUELEST MONTH



Carol Carr

Life is funny, isn't it. There's hardly a cliché that isn't born jam-packed with wisdom, only to be drained dry by misuse and overuse. Poor things have to be discovered again and again. But don't worry. It's not important. As long as you have your health.

It was a cool, sunny day and we were about to have Thanksgiving dinner at Robert's sons' mother's spacious rented-for-the-occasion house in Sebastopol, about fifty miles from where we live. I was still thanking whatever gods may be for Obama's win, and, more sarcastically in this case, thanking a different set of gods for giving me one of those birthdays that ends with a hideous zero.

Anyway:

There I was, blithely coming out of the bathroom on my way to where the food was, when I forgot to remember the step down into

somebody howling like a big dying animal, and, as the expression goes, that somebody was me. Faces above me, Robert's ashen, the cousin with a medical background checking me out, asking questions, telling me, alas, what I already knew. Plans were being made in hushed, concerned tones. With my very reluctant permission, Robert's youngest son Gabe and another relative carried me to a chair (was everybody screaming or just me?) and then out the door to our car, where I was inserted head first into the back seat. I used my arms and shoulders to scooch all the way to the back. Scooching will turn out to loom large in this legend.

Cut to the nearest hospital, about twenty miles away, where I said yes they could ruin my slacks, and yes they could shoot me up with Demerol . . . *please*. And it worked. "Yay Obama" I think I was ranting. "It's my birthday month. Happy Thanksgiving."

When I got back from the x-ray I don't remember, the leg was encased in a blue poly-something splint and put back in the car. I suppose with the rest of me.

My diagnostic printout said "tibial plateau fracture."

"Have yourself some surgery within a week," they told me, "and, by the way, even if you luck into a great surgeon and it's done perfectly, you'll still get arthritis because of

the damage to the cartilage. Maybe we should talk about the nerve damage later, when you're feeling up to it. You are *so* fucked." Ok, maybe not the exact words.

Ben and Monica (Robert's eldest son and girlfriend) followed us home and Ben carried me, from behind, down our eighteen steps – his labored breathing mixed with my whimpers and gasps – into the house and onto the bed. I stayed there, trying to reduce the swelling enough for surgery, for the next eleven days. (Our insurance company, by the way, refused to authorize an ambulance to the hospital. I'd gotten home without one, you see.)

Yes, eleven days in bed, The Leg (as I fondly call it) strapped 24/7 in the splint, with me flat on my back, nurtured by TV, books, magazines, phone calls, email, ice packs and bedpans. My lifeline (Robert, as I fondly call him) took care of me and kept the whole lifeboat afloat. Words cannot express. My gratitude for his sleep-deprived, unwavering, uncomplaining devotion woulda brought me to my knee, if I coulda.

December 8

I don't know if you saw Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*. Well, let me tell you. After many abortive build-ups to the climactic Happening, the music reaches peak volume and an angel crashes ear-shatteringly through the skylight and intones: "Greetings, Prophet! The great work begins!" Tony Kushner was not thinking of me at the time, but when I get the phone call that my surgery is finally scheduled, I'm thinking of him.

So, on the great day, pre-op pronounces me fit enough for an eight-inch incision, a shovel full of synthetic bone, 28 staples, 18 screws and a steel plate. I don't remember closing my eyes and I don't remember opening them. I feel fine afterwards, if more than a bit slowed down and dry in the mouth. Robert is right there and brings me water. His life: same-old, same-old, at home or abroad. I've been given a nerve block, with a side of Percocet, and I have no pain. At the tail end of my new blue wrap-around splint I see that my foot is so swollen it must belong to a giant infant.

December 10

Where's a good *esprit d'escalier* when you need one? This morning the anesthesiologist comes by to remove the nerve block. He says, in all mock seriousness: "How are you feeling?" I say ok, then point to my inflated balloon of a foot. "It's very swollen," I murmur redundantly. His reply comes with a soupçon of intimacy, as if he were selecting me, out of the entire ward, to be his confidante: "I can't *tell* you how many swollen feet I've seen this morning."

December 11

So tired of bedpans. I try to get to the commode just inches from my bed but when I stand up my blood pressure falls to 80/43 and a nurse makes me retreat. A day or so later, when I start using the walker to bumble my way down the halls, the therapist follows me with a wheelchair, just in case.

I notice today while the incision is being rebandaged, that the pre-cut lengths of surgical tape are exactly the length of the scar. I marvel at how efficient that is, how managed care has managed to coordinate the surgery with its aftermath so that there's no waste.

December 12

Driving again! I'm given my own wheelchair and go nutso through the halls, dizzy with freedom and heady with starvation (did I tell you about the food?). In no time at all I narrowly miss four nurses, two game wardens, and a physical therapist who refuses to stay close to the wall.

December 13

I'm moved to rehab (just another hospital really) across town and I'm moved to tears at the feel of sun on my face in the few seconds between hospital doors and ambulance doors. But that's the end of the fun part. Before I can say "Watch the foot! Be careful of that fat foot!" I'm dumped onto a mattress filled with fresh rocks and given some forms to fill out. On my right, behind a partially open curtain, is my very elderly roommate who speaks only Korean but who, it turns out, snores in many tongues. Not the kind of snores you can, with

Definition: "A tibial plateau fracture occurs at the top of the shin bone, and involves the cartilage surface of the knee joint. If there is a large fragment which is forced out of line with the rest of the joint, the surgeon may opt to elevate this fragment and secure it to the main body of the tibial plateau with screws."

the sunken living room. Just a tiny lapse of memory. What I do remember, all too clearly, is an almost horizontal flight and, just before I landed, trying to protect my head from bashing into the side of a coffee table. Then, as I tried to move my leg, there was

great effort, get used to, but the kind that start out deceptively soft, like the first movement of a symphony, then suddenly accelerate in intensity (think Stravinsky, Shostakovich): deep breath – short snort, in, then out, groan, whimper . . . louder: pant! pant! pant!. A creepy ten-second silence, and then, from the deep recesses of her being, this poster child for apnea lets out a room-shattering, guttural roar that starts in the throat, comes out her nose, and slams against my brain. Silence, again, a very long one this time. The staff outside my room are celebrating New Year's Eve early, a 'hootin' an' a'hollerin', hearing nothing but their own revels. Should I call 911 myself? Oh, it's ok – she's still alive – that was a short sharp fart. Followed by an oxygen-seeking missile of a whole other kind of snore from a previously dead planet. I'll never sleep here, ever. I want her dead.

December 14

In the morning the head nurse passes my open door where I'm still flat on my back on the bed of rocks. I whimper her inside, and she actually sits down as I explain how the combination of mattress and unearthly snoring is a significant hindrance to my healing. (I can talk like that when I want to.) I beg her for a private room. Robert has been out there, prowling; he knows they exist. I raise my head imploringly, trying to look like a baby seal. She nods some variant of understanding.

Yes! Around noon she comes back: "We have a room for you." "Bless you," I exhale, and then, totally insane with relief, I add, to my almost immediate chagrin, "Long life." She's Asian. That's the name of a Chinese restaurant we like. Now I'm not only an old-lady killer, I'm a racist.

December 15

The sun is streaming into the blessed quiet of my private room. Robert's chair has some space in front for his legs. There's a big

tree outside and my bed is halfway up its trunk so to speak. I'm feeling reborn what with the light, the spaciousness, the peace. Of course, that night I still find that sleeping, even in relative silence (as long as there's a nurse's station there will always be a New Year's Eve party), is not easy. Because of the splint on my leg I can't turn on my side. Because of the nerve damage to my foot, it's propped straight up against four carefully placed pillows. I sort of fall asleep when the partying simmers down a bit around one a.m., but have to wake up a couple of hours later for the clothespin on the finger, the upper-arm blood pressure vise, the glass lollipop stick in the mouth. Around five, the new day's clankings and carryings-on open my eyes. Most of you know the drill. But this was my first, and you always remember your first.

Apparently life as we know it does go on without us. Robert reports that our car was broken into this morning. They took my bathrobe – the fleecy twin of the one we got for Calvin when he was in remission for a couple of days. And my new nightgown, a gift from Patricia, and a flashlight, a box of Tic-Tacs, and a half-filled notebook. Otherwise the car is intact. "Some criminals!" my grandmother would say. But with nice minty breath.

Sweet offerings: *One of the nurses who came in to do inexplicable things to the IV in the middle of the night must have seen I was partly uncovered and tucked me in. Another nurse gave me a foot massage at the end of her shift. Robert, rubbing my good leg: "I'm giving you phantom pain relief."*

December 16

I just hate those feel-good pieces titled "The Sky Is Bluer and the Birds Are Singier and All My Petty Thoughts and Trivial Pursuits Have Miraculously Flown the Coop Now That I'm Facing Real Shit." But you do get greedy for a laugh. Today everybody's talking about the Iraqi reporter who threw his shoes at George Bush. Best line: "This is why they can't be trusted with nice things." Next

best: "And in what culture *wouldn't* it be an insult?"

Another first for me: To get back into bed after a romp in the wheelchair, I pull my own leg up by the splint-strap. R & I masticate this triumph for hours. But wait! There's more! Sometime in the night I use the reacher-stick-thingy to pick up a pillow that fell on the floor, and then use it in the morning to pull my pants on. I pat myself on the back. Ouch!

December 18

Shoes become so important when your foot's only half functional and twice its normal size. Robert scours my closet for possibilities until we find the pair that works best. And today I walk 75 (!) feet down the hall, blood pressure holding steady. When I get back to my room, several denizens of the ward and a few of the staff are lurking at my door with puzzled expressions and forced smiles. One of them is looking back at the hallway, so I get to see what the fuss is about. A trail of dark brown crumbly bits of some unknown material had followed my path for all those proud 75 feet. Have I fallen into an "I Love Lucy" sketch? "It's my shoe," I explain, trying not to laugh. Stony faces. I should have hired a warm-up act for this audience. "The shoe is very old and the rubber sole must have gotten dry and started flaking off." Plonk. Skeptical looks all around. "No, really," I say. "Really really." Too late, I think, much too late. Even after I pry the shoe off my foot and display its elderly pathetic bottom, the crowd remains unconvinced as they mumble off with the help of their various accessories. Even if they do believe me, I will have forever be-smirched 75 feet of their hall with my shoe doo-doo.

December 19

Able to move from bed to walker to bath-

room to walker to wheelchair to bed to walker. Yes!

Mary, my favorite physical therapist and I have another long walk in the hall (new shoes, no trail today). She tells me that her mother died recently and she's starting to regret having her cremated, because maybe she really wanted to be in the cemetery with the rest of her family. We wonder if anything can be done at this point. "Do you think they'd charge me less for burying ashes?" she says. This is why she's my favorite.

December 23

I'm going home tomorrow! Staples out today, and the final x-rays. I'm ecstatic. I'm terrified. Home is where my heart is, but home is an obstacle course studded with land mines and no registered nurses. What if I trip over something and nobody's there to hear me except Robert and he trips over me? And then there's an earthquake? And how will they get me down the steps? Will the walker fit in the bathroom? Will they let me take home those pink socks with the bumps on the bottom? And on, and on.

Words I Learned During my Hospital Vacation: *flexion, extension, orthostatic hypotension.*

December 24

The trip home is scarier than the surgery, and this time I'm conscious. It's misting rain in the hills. The driver doesn't know the road and has to do a U-turn, and I'm of course backwards, eyes riveted on the vehicle tailgating us. Backing into the carport (beep-beep-beep-etc.) takes forever, but finally I'm out of the ambulance, off the stretcher and into a wheelchair, and I take a minute to look around. Oh God – that smell of damp trees and grass, the beautiful gray sky, my little house. It's decided it would be safe to get me downstairs in the wheelchair, the EMT in back, bumping me down step by step, and the driver alert at my side. Gentle bumps, mostly, but I'm holding my breath and clutching the arms of the chair. Robert's waiting at the





door, ready to guide the caravan inside. I'm just fine as we roll down the hall but the second we're over the doorstep to the bedroom the dam

breaks and I start sobbing. I mean, like, uncontrollably, the entire sixteen-day coping machine finally in meltdown. As soon as I can I squeeze the EMT's arm and thank him. He hands me the feedback card I filled out in the ambulance but wouldn't sign until I was back down in one piece. I sign it now, my eyes still wet and blurry, somewhere in the vicinity of the X.

An hour later a friend calls from the road to tell me how pissed off she is to be caught in a traffic jam. And with the first flush of the toilet, it starts leaking around the edges. I lie on the bed, a damp sack of potatoes, while Robert calls the plumber.

Christmas

The wheelchair fits under my office desk. I love you, computer mine! I pay a bill. I'm even more delighted when I find I can push the walker up against the bathroom sink and do things like wash, comb hair, even put on some makeup. Bits and pieces of normal life float back into my . . . well . . . heart. Full-blown joy. It comes in many shapes and sizes as I hop with my walker from room to room.

December 26

First visiting nurse visit. She approves of my vital sounds and asks (hold on to whatever's handy, ye who know me) if I'd ever been an athlete. I say, well, I smoked over two packs a day for about 35 years – does that count? She looks at me with some wonder. "You know, most people with that history,

you can hear the damage clearly." I say, "There's still time." Most people, I've noticed, don't like that kind of attitude, but she smiles politely.

December 29

First visiting physical therapist visit. He "evaluates" me. He says my "foot drop" (definition: "a deficit in turning the ankle and toes upward, known as 'dorsiflexion'") might not get better. My foot doesn't fully contact the ground now. I am not pleased to hear it might never. He leaves me with enough anxiety, depression, and exercises to overflow my days.

January 4

Still can't sleep what with the hip, back, leg, ankle, foot all speaking ache or pain in different dialects – but I've rediscovered the deck and I'm out there every day, starting with the pale noon sun to get some D and a nature infusion. Cold but wonderful. I don't think the sun recognizes me yet. I'll work on it.

"After tibial plateau surgery, 44% experience pain and breakdown and need knee replacement in seven years. Percent is higher in the elderly."

January 8

Best news. The physical therapist goes ape when he sees how my foot is wiggling. He shows me how it's connecting to a muscle up the leg I didn't even know existed much less that it connects to something. Seems I went from not even a trace on a measurement scale I don't understand to a mighty five, and in only a week. This does away with the permanent foot-drop theory and my depression in one swell foop. I call Robert in to take a bow, because this is obviously the result of that fine foot therapy he's been giving me three times a day. Physical therapist says he can't wait to call visiting nurse to tell her the news. My support people, how they swaddle me in good stuff.

January 22

I can touch the middle of the sole of that foot. Don't know if it's due to better flex, or better reach, or becoming craftier at how I skew the leg. Does it matter? Well, sort of.

January 27

Appointment with the surgeon today. I scooch up the steps. (Remember Tod Browning's "Freaks?" Maybe I can audition for the remake). At the top, the physical therapist positions himself in back of me, grabs me by my eight-foot-long kiddie belt, and airlifts me to my feet. I try not to look down. Leaving the house will be like this until I can fully weight-bear. But a good thing follows. After walking to the car, we push the front seat back as far as it goes, and I manage to get the leg right in there. Whoah! Gun that engine and let's see the world. For the first time in two months I get to see it straight on, not from a prone position in an ambulance with every vehicle in back of us reminding me of the monster truck in "Duel."

Everything's good, the surgeon says. All the hardware's in place, and I can – thank you, Lord – throw away that blue prison of a splint. Two weeks of twenty pounds of weight-bearing, two more weeks of forty pounds, then another appointment. How do you calibrate that kind of weight? You put the bad foot on a bathroom scale and press down until the dial stops at your chosen number. You repeat the process until you think you have a good idea of what it feels like and then you transfer that feeling to the ground. By the way, it doesn't work. But I learn to have a little more respect for the word "approximation."

February 13

Thunderclap, followed instantly by "Why didn't I think of this before?":

To get upstairs to the car, once I'm at the top why don't I just scooch horizontally until I'm at that level place with the gravel and then lift myself up to a stool and from the stool to the wheelchair and from the wheelchair to the

walker? This will eliminate the terror of being airlifted at the top. It's a life-changer of an Aha! Now, just with a bit of herculean effort, I can go anywhere, do anything!

A Story

In the beginning I'd watch Robert just blithely get up and take himself to the bathroom whenever he wanted to and I'd think how lucky he was. Whereas I had to (yes) scooch down to the edge of the bed, strap on the splint (no mean feat), reach for the walker, pull it towards me without scraping the adjacent chest of drawers, stand up slowly, and be very very careful not to let the leg bear any weight while I executed some fancy footwork to get into position in the narrow confines of that room. One day, a few months later, I see him come into the bedroom and I'm suddenly feeling a cold wash of fear. He's walking across the room without holding on to anything! "Be careful!" I want to warn him.

*Carol: "Did you hear that? My knee just popped."
Robert: "The bad one?"
Carol: "Yes."
Robert: "You finally broke it in."*

It didn't take much time to figure out that I was becoming identified with my limitations. I was "normalizing" the shrinking abilities of my own body and perceiving it as scarily abnormal to see someone (especially someone I loved and depended on) walk on his own, with no mechanical assistance. It was a horrifying thought, but like a lot of horrifying thoughts, eventually forgotten.

Until in early April, standing on two feet without the walker for the first time, a cane at my side waiting for me to do my stuff and walk, I find myself unable to take a step. I will my foot to move but my will power is powered by a dead battery. Standing there, frozen in place, I think of all my other fears, some of them well documented in that wonderful pop-up book of phobias that Karen (who knows me well) gave me for my

birthday. I try again, and again I'm faced with paralysis. The floor is covered with Gorilla Glue. It's then I remember that strange time when I was frightened for Robert because he was walking all on his own, and I realize now so clearly how I was projecting my own fears onto him, how that moment was the bud and this is the evil flower.

No way! I'm awake half the night, unable to toss and turn but very able to stew, mull, and worry. By seven that morning, something has shifted. I get dressed fast as I can, grab the cane, and instinctively – or maybe channeling one of my physical therapists – I find myself watching exactly how my good leg works when I'm walking, and mimicking it with the bad one. And then I do it again. I walk a few more steps and then more than a few. Then I call out to Robert so urgently that I scare him. He runs in ("Slow down!"), and after I explain the breakthrough, he places himself across the room, stretches out both arms, and like Frankenstein's monster on its first outing, I walk into them.

About an hour later, leaning the cane against the bedroom dresser, I dust all around the TV. God, it's good to live to dust again!

March 31

It feels like spring, and I missed winter.

April 15

Still not allowed to use the cane except in the house. Still scooching after all these years, I get myself up those steps in a light rain, and I'm off to see the surgeon. I really like these appointments, because I know I'm doing ok. He sees me coming down the hall towards him with the walker but walking without a limp, showing off by pushing it with one finger, and he says, "Wow! That's 90% of the exam right there!" He's beaming. I beam back. Our beams collide and make a smiley face. But once seated we get down to the reason for that leg pain when I'm doing weight-bearing exercises. He looks grave and says it's possible I have a stress fracture of

the tibia. Oy. Heart plummets to shoes. If so, I would have to stop bearing weight again, and for at least six more weeks. He gives me a referral for a bone scan. I clomp sadly out of the office. No more smiley faces today.

Cane talk: Right leg up, cane and left leg up. Cane and left leg down, right leg down. Repeat.

April 28

In the hospital lobby with Robert, waiting to be called for the bone scan. Still in a surly, blahed-out, dull-minded state of worry about what it might turn up when I feel a jolt of electricity hit my eyes and go straight to the shopping center of my brain. The gift shop! It's several feet away but it wakes me up. It's how that vanilla ice cream tasted after my tonsillectomy at age five. I point at it to Robert. "Take me!" It's a tiny place and I'm surrounded by stuff I can touch with my own hands. Robert discovers that there's no aisle too narrow for the wheelchair. He practically does a wheelie to get me to every shelf that sparkles at me. I fondle a pair of soft socks and put them in my lap. I add a strappy little purse I can sling over my neck and still have an arm free for the cane. I chat with the clerk at the register. Life. I know how to meditate with my eyes wide open, just staring at a spot of dirt on a wall for two minutes and coming out a calmer, better person. But there's a time and a place for everything.

And now it's time for the bone scan. I'm in such afterglow from the gift shop that when I see some attendants pushing a little cart outside the elevator, I blurt out to the full audience: "Oh, for a second I thought it was dim sum."

The scan shows no hot spots. If there *had* been a stress fracture, it was probably healed as soon as I saw that little purse. I am fracture-free. I have no idea what's causing the pain – that diagnosis will come later – but for the moment, there's nothing I want more than to build up the leg with as many of those painful stomping exercises as I can tolerate.

May 4

Surgeon confirms there's no stress fracture and the bones have completely healed. What I've got, it seems, is CRPS (definition – get this: "chronic regional pain syndrome"). Simply – oversimply – put, a lot of important stuff was severed during the surgery and didn't come back together correctly. The result is swelling, discoloration, pain, and the feeling that the leg is wrapped in forty pairs of socks. Meanwhile, yes, I am allowed to go right ahead and walk with the pain, exercise with the pain, make omelets, not to mention lemonade, with the pain, etc., because the pain loves to be active. No one has ever received a shitty diagnosis with such pleasure. We drive home. But before starting the big scooch down, I stop cold in the carport and find myself staring at the staircase with a kind of hunger and excitement. "Maybe," I say to my cane – "maybe just one or two steps, and then we'll see." I start down. "Or three. Or four." With Robert watching me like a mommy-hawk, I slowly and carefully make my way down to the front door.



By the end of the week I've said good riddance to the scooch and farewell to the walker.

The Present

It's almost a year now. I walk pretty limp-lessly at home and use a cane only when outdoors – for stairs, for balance, and to keep the jostlers at bay. Our town is loaded with people

tuned to the disabled and I'm treated just swell. Well, except for the anonymous sadist who left a banana peel in our handicapped parking space.

I can cook again, walk a slow mile, clean the house, pick something up from the floor, shop, see Tony Kushner's new play, have lunch and dinner with friends.

I'm so grateful to my doctor, who got me

Bittersweet offerings: The alacrity with which my surgeon agreed to give me a permanent handicapped parking permit gave me more mixed emotions than I usually like to deal with.

back my leg, and the physical therapists who taught me how to maintain it, and the University of California, which (so far, but trouble's brewing) lets its retirees keep their health insurance. And to my close friends and family who were so thoughtful with their precious time and brilliant gifts, and most of all to Robert, who kept me and our life alive with such love and energy and competence.

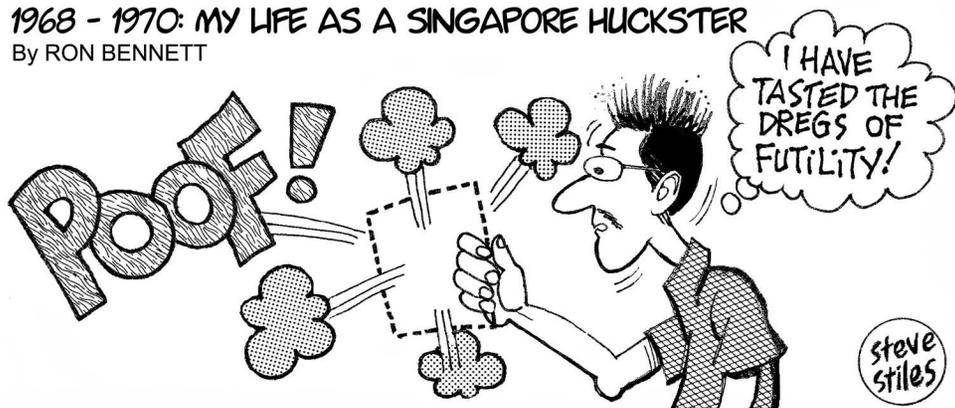
With very little cartilage left, my knee hurts with more or less intensity depending on nothing I can figure out. And the leg pain varies a whole lot too. My doctor offered me Lyrica for that. It comes with many pages of side effects. The one that most impressed me was "seizures." I thanked him and then enacted the human equivalent of what your basic cat does when you give her a pill and she holds it in her mouth until you're out of sight and then you hear that unmistakable sound of her spitting it across the room. The leg doesn't hurt *that* much.

I'm promised arthritis in the future but as somebody once said, what am I to the future or the future to me. Or whatever.

—Carol Carr

1968 - 1970: MY LIFE AS A SINGAPORE HUCKSTER

By RON BENNETT



(These sketches of the book-dealing life in Singapore are extracted from Ron's correspondence to serve as a continuation of his letter in Trap Door No. 24. By kind permission of Ron's son, Andrew Bennett. Note: the U.K. prices quoted are all pre-decimal and pre-inflation.)

27 Feb 1968: 91 Namly Avenue, Singapore 10. (On why a little simple book-dealing isn't as easy as it looks:) ...Buying at 75¢ and selling at 5/6—and paying postage both in and out—doesn't really break my overdraft, and may well be the reason for it. One of the vagaries of buying a collection sight unseen, via a dealer with whom one has done so little dealing previously, at so much per item. I could tell you of one magazine for which I paid 7/- about a year ago, which actually *did* disintegrate at the touch. Never seen anything like it. Looked like it had been left in an oven for a week, without any of the scorch marks. Come to think of it, wonder what the radioactivity level of the thing was.

One latest listing all enveloped and ready to post—when I get around to going down to the postbox. Sounds ridiculous but I don't pass one on the way to work and seem to be working all sorts of weird hours and...oh, well, that's my worry... (Not to mention the customer difficulties:)

23 May 68: If the cash isn't sent off in the first flush of enthusiasm when one has received the list, it's rarely sent at all. And the odd postage rates definitely influence this. This trait has always been shown, incidentally, by the way the orders come in. On the first possible post—after the list has gone

out—there are one or two customers, people who have just managed to catch the post by sheer good fortune. The following two days are absolute madness with letters piling up, magazines and books strewn around all over the place, and with me trying to get as much as possible cleared up and out of the way as quickly as possible, sometimes staying up until all sorts of stupid hours. Then things tend to fall off. After a week or ten days there is nothing, but nothing—then about a fortnight later I *may* get a couple of late orders. Fascinating business altogether.

...I've just listed a hard to get comic at 12/- (ridiculously high price). So one customer writes in and says "12/-? Phew, I enclose 15/- for it!" It's amazing—I keep thinking I've heard everything—like the customer who has me searching the world and advertising for a really rare magazine, buys it and then decides to sell it back to me (complete with the rest of the worthless set), or the customer who wants me to advertise his magazines for sale, send him the orders (and my customers' addresses) and take 10%, or the customer who asks whether I've had many replies to an advert in *Exchange & Mart* so that he can advertise *for magazines I'm already selling*. But it seems that I'm just an innocent abroad. Especially when I get

customers who do this sort of thing: 1. Buy 10/- worth of mags. 2. Order 10/- mags and say—"sorry, money follows." 3. Pay the owing 10/- and order 15/- worth mags. 4. Pay the 15/- and order £3-£4 worth mags next week. You can trust me—you know I've always paid before." And then, yes you can see what's coming—I never hear from him again!

Sometime I must tell you of the customer who intends leaving me, in his will, his really fantastic collection of thousands of hard-to-get pb's. Says he'll try to last out until we get home to U.K...!

23 Jul 68: Having been playing solo from eight last evening to three this morning with a drunken Lancastrian and two very drunken Welshmen... and having lost a great amount of money to them...two dollars.... Well, what does one do? I spend over £50 in stock, of which I have to sell just over two-thirds in order to recover my outlay, and I sell under one-third. Having given the game a whirl for a year out here, during which time I've attempted to (a) keep clear of the normal run of British magazines and pb's. Reason is that I doubt whether anyone will buy these from me from this distance when every U.K. dealer carries them. Also profit on these runs about 6d per. b) buy harder to get U.S. items, taking advantage of the US\$ situation out here. Free market. ...I'm now in a position where I'm running at a loss and all my possible profits are tied up in my stock. Sad. Sit down and cry. Thank goodness for the American comic market, which is subsidising the sf trade! Would you like a 1950 *Superman*? Only 17/6.

(Which segued into a discussion of business expenses and the ethics thereof:)

...I feel that to submit a claim for 43 bus fares and actually to travel by car is perfectly justified. If you're allowed the bus fare that's one thing; how you travel is something else. You can walk and save the cash, cycle and save the cash, travel by car and save a proportion...or you can even hire a Rolls complete with driver. It's entirely up to you. I'm certain that if one did hire such a Rolls and

submitted those expenses, one would be told that the expenses allowed only for bus fare and that's all one would get. So...the argument *must* work the other way round. And, as my own similar expense-claiming days are only four years behind, I know full well how one needs the difference between the allowed and the used. I used to walk round the corner one stop to save 1d on a journey on the Liverpool buses. Four journeys a day. 1/8 a week saved. An extra packet of cigarettes. Nowadays, I'm in a situation where all the expenses I need for life in S'pore (including an average number of letters to U.K. per year—ridiculous number in my position of course!—and the extra postage on Xmas cards) are taken into account and totaled up. They are then divided by twelve and I get this amount monthly on top of my pay. Tax-free, too. An excellent system....

Thanks again for the order...some easy, readable stuff therein. From the writer's view some very interesting lessons in writing to sell by the then Silverberg-Garrett combine. I take it that you know their writing method? ...I'm sending the following magazines (e.g. *Madge*). Haven't done so yet as I've been waiting for a supply of envelopes to come in at the local stationers, the island's only stockist. The hard word has come. No more likely this year. So, the old brown paper and string game. Will get 'em all off to you within the next couple of weeks. ... Which means that I now owe you 6/-. I'll have to do so—owe it, I mean—too, for I'm out of both postal orders and stamps to include amongst the mags. Do you mind waiting?...

18 Sept 68: 45 Namly Garden, Shamrock Park, Singapore 10. ...Ohmighod, you wrote months ago asking me to send you the four stamps...completely slipped my mind. Out here people tend to suffer from what is termed "Singapore memory" (great fun when widespread as you can imagine), and I sometimes think I had a head start on others when we came out. No trouble at all to pick up the stamps—I'm in the post office at least once a week (for Toto—a national numbers sweep—tickets). Anyway, let's trust that

now we've come back from a week's holiday up in Penang, that now we've met new colleagues off the plane and helped run them all over the island, that now we're back at work, that now we've moved house, that now I've actually got around to producing a new list, and that now I've finally found your letter and reread it—well, let's hope that now I can finally cough up with those stamps.

We moved on Sunday. Into a brand new house (from one a year old!) into which most of the furniture has not yet been moved by the rental company. My study is littered with piles of papers, fanzines and the like, though at least I've managed to house my books, magazines and comics.

Heavens, don't talk to me about income tax—or did I tell you before? Before we let 52 Fairways Drive, in order to meet certain specifications laid down by the U.S. Army, to whom we've let the place (egad!) we had to lay down extra paths, build a garage, put in gas fires and fitted carpets (no, *not* in the garage). Which ran me into a £300-plus overdraft (which I'm still paying off). So okay, I thought, I'll be able to claim on income tax. I was wrong. Also, whilst I thought that I'd be taxed on the balance of the gross rent minus the expenses (mortgage, insurance, etc), I was wrong on this count too. I'm taxed on the gross, period. Result is that this year I've made on the letting...count it...eleven shillings! (2008 U.S.A. equivalent: one dollar.)

Yes, Silverberg and Garrett. They rented an office in New York, put in desks and a bank of typewriters and set to work churning out stories. Real hack-stuff. Little, if any, planning...just "get on with putting something on paper" technique. If one got stuck on a story he'd merely leave it in the typewriter and go on to the next machine. Eventually one or other of them might continue the story and perhaps even end it. They didn't know themselves eventually just which of them had written what. Then they started farming the stories out. Most went in bulk-sale deals to *Imagination* and *Imaginative Tales*. The stories appeared under either of their names, so that in fact a story

taken as being by Garrett might have been written entirely or in the main part by Silverberg and vice versa. Also of course they used pen names extensively so that issues of *Madge* ran several stories of theirs in any one issue (Ivar Jorgenson), Garrett, Silverberg, Calvin Knox (almost entirely Silverberg, I think), Robert Randall, etc.). At least they had a terrific apprenticeship, I suppose. Silverberg once said something on the lines of "When I was a boy I used to admire the stories of Ivar Jorgenson. Little did I think that I'd grow up to be him." So much for house names.

Personally, this is the sort of story I really go for. Like the old one of Vince Clarke telling, "Ken Bulmer and I decided one evening to work out the perfect opening lines to a science fiction novel, including in it as many standard situations as possible. We liked it so much that we added another 45,000 words and sold it." Just like that!

...TV out here seems to be improving no end, with some fairly new U.S. programmes, like *Judd* and *Mannix* slotting in nicely with about half a dozen westerns (*Cimarron*, *The High Chapparral*, etc.) TV Malaysia has just started running *The Prisoner*, which TV Singapura ran through around Easter. Highlight of my week seems to be *At Last the 1948 Show* (by Monty Python crew), though a couple of these have been terrible.

Hey ho, Yorkshire won the County championship... again... And Leeds United are up there in their usual second place, with the Fairs Cup in the bag. Very nice, even if we are eight and a half thousand miles away. Still, *2001* opened here this week and all being well we'll have seen it by the time this reaches you...

(To sum up 1968: still much to enjoy about life, although the huckstering never did get easier. See this preamble from *Catalogue Vol IV No 3, June 1969*...)

Dear Friend: Here is my first catalogue in some six months. I'm afraid that several factors have combined so that my service has become so irregular. I had hoped, on first arriving in Singapore two years ago, that I would be able to take advantage of the free

currency market to scour the American field and obtain items which are rarely offered in the U.K. This I have managed to do to a small degree but during that past year to eighteen months prices in the U.S.A. have risen to the point where I'm forced to bow out of the race. In Singapore itself sf is at a premium. There is an abundance of British material, the cheapest of which sells on the second hand market at 50 cents (1/4½d for Badger Books) and obviously, with such a source, I cannot hope to compete against British dealers... And of course it is appreciated that in the U.K. the cost of living has risen by a ridiculous degree within the past eighteen months; money is "tighter" all round and there are people who prefer to spend their hard earned money on luxuries like groceries instead of the necessities of life like sf! Accordingly this will be my last catalogue for some little time to come... Have fun hunting here and many thanks for your highly appreciated support in the past. Sincerely – Ron Bennett.

(But of course the dealing did carry on, a happy time in retrospect, with even a few breaks for holidays including this flying (literally) trip to England:)

8 Aug 69... Chandos Terrace, Lidgett Lane, Leeds... I'm having a great time, thanks, mainly because of having some decent weather to wander about in. Have to look up millions of relatives, friends, neighbours in Harrogate, etc., etc. You know how easy it is to hurt people's feelings if you leave them out for any reason, even lack of time. I've also managed to sneak in the Leeds United v. Manchester City Charity Cup game (I got home an hour before it started, this after having been offloaded from my Comet in Bahrain) and the Yorkshire v. Notts fiasco (from our standpoint) at Bradford yesterday. I'm also due to see a rugby match tonight (Terry Price is playing) and Leeds United v. Spurs tomorrow. Then I can be whipped back at any time. I rolled into Brize Norton at 3a.m. Saturday...the RAF gives one the sort of notice which allows one to throw everything in a suitcase and drive back to the airbase like mad.

21 Mar 70: 45 Namly Garden, Shamrock Park, 5½ ms Bukit Timah, Singapore 10. Plan to try to get up to Hong Kong during this next fortnight on a book-hunt. Away about a week, then it's back to work and twice-a-week soccer down here until sometime later in the year when we make tracks for other foreign climes...

16 Feb 72: British School, SHAPE, BFPO 26. (After the move, an article in *Soldier magazine* about changes at Singapore stirred reminiscences:) I hadn't known about the disappearance of FARELF, but I'm not surprised. I've heard that the GHQ golf course, previously beautifully kept, is now overgrown with ulu (jungle) and attendant weeds. Perhaps its name of Tanglin is appropriate after all.... Had noted (from the article) the Jungle Warfare school in Johore which we used to pass on our way to Jason Bay or Kota Tinggi and the Paasir (beach) Panjan (long) playing fields (on which I've played both soccer and cricket), Gillman Barracks where we used to go to the swimming pool, Slim Barracks next to our school (at which I've also played soccer), Brigadier O'Flaherty, whose daughter I used to run home from time to time, etc., etc. (I used to run my lists off at 3 B.O.D.)...hey ho, hey ho....

(It's nice to know that despite those early problems the memories of S'pore remained fond. Much later Ron happily returned to the island via imagination in his light thriller *Singapore Swing* featuring less-than-competent Singapore sleuth Alan Chance—a *Cosmos* book in 2003. *Cosmos* accepted five further Alan Chance novels, but these have yet to appear...)

—Ron Bennett

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Waiting for the Sermon

My sixty-year old neighbor Larry rang my doorbell on Father's Day. He was dressed in his Sunday best. We had met once in passing in the apartment complex laundry-room. When I opened the door he smiled broadly and asked if I was interested in hiking. I allowed that I was and he invited me to go to Mt. Lemmon, which we did, the following morning. I had been homesick for cool forests. Tucson was experiencing extreme drought conditions due to La Nina. I was already tired of the 100+ degree temperatures and it was only June. High atop Mt. Lemmon (9,000+ feet) a refreshing breeze sighed through the tall ponderosa pines. Below them, rich green grass lined the earth like a small piece of heaven. Wood birds sang their liquid song. The air was fragrant.

Larry, it turned out, is a Mormon. On the drive up the mountain he looked over at me significantly and said, "I'm a match maker, you know." Larry's second wife is a tall pampered-looking pleasingly plump Latina with orange hair. She walks with a languid sensuality. Larry is a short, skinny German guy with slicked back gray hair and a slightly tight body language. On Sundays his wife wears a calf length fur coat to church. When Larry made his confession I immediately saw myself at a Latter Day Saints church social surrounded by dressed up middle-aged women in fur stoles looking hungrily about for husbands who follow "the rules". I some-

how found this perversely exciting.

Along our trail to the Mt. Lemmon lookout, a yellow bird with black wings and an orange head (western tanager) landed in a tree. At our feet were small purple flowers. We stopped to rest. A guy came walking up the trail with a large backpack and a walking stick. The hiker stopped and declared, "I'm homeless and jobless and I've been camped out on the side of the mountain since Friday." He was a little jittery but entirely pleasant. Moving on, he bid us have a good day. Larry said, "God must be with him." On the way back down the mountain I became nostalgic—not for any place, but for a state of mind, a state of being. At our apartment building Larry gave me his card. Aside from his name and phone number it read, "LDS Friend." (LDS=Latter Day Saints) We made tentative arrangements for another hike. In my stuffy apartment the cool mountain air was still breezing through my head. I wondered what I would do when Larry started a sermon on Mt. Lemmon.

Focusing

I next saw Larry was on a Saturday in July, soon after a day when we had gotten seven inches of rain in four hours, which had collapsed some spots on the mountain road up to Summer Haven. Mt. Lemmon was gloriously green. The Sunday before Larry had rang my doorbell, inviting me to church. When I declined I figured that could very

well be the end of that, but it wasn't. We climbed into the splendid cool of 9,000 feet and parked in the shade of a Douglas fir. Larry wanted to show me Heidi Meadow, a small patch of grass running vertically along the mountain, surrounded by old growth pines and young quaking aspens.

In the middle of the emerald knee high grass Larry lay down, his limbs sprawled, watching the clouds as they moved swiftly towards a monsoon rain. I'd only met this man a few weeks before and here I was lying next to him in an isolated meadow with a curious intimacy running silently between us. The thought passed through my mind how easy it would be to fall in love with a man like that. After awhile Larry pointed out how the lower, faster moving clouds were pink and the upper clouds were gray and white. Eventually we rose and walked much of the parameter of Heidi Meadow. At one point we scared a fawn, probably just a few days old, and it bounded off through the high grass into the pine forest. We thought it odd that there was no sign of the doe. Back at the road we walked for another hour or so. Larry spoke freely of god, of being blessed, and his love of nature, his true home. We stood and looked at a small stand of aspen quaking in the wind, listening to the rustle. Larry asked me to focus on the clouds beyond the trees and allow my eyes to pick up everything they could in my peripheral vision. Absorb everything possible, visually, aurally, sensually.

On the way back down the mountain, we stopped at the viewpoint for Seven Cataracts. While leaning over the low rock partition, I spotted a magnificent yellow butterfly—the lower quarter of its lobed wings a deep velvet black. It fluttered delicately by us. In the background the seven falls were a white blur in the brown and red rock. Larry followed the butterfly's flight path down the canyon until it was too small to discern. He then mechanically swivelled his head about to look at the rushing water, following it down the canyon towards the Tucson Basin. He looked at me after finishing this arc and smiled. "I'm taking photographs in my head, memorizing this moment." He paused. "God

has blessed us." He skipped a beat, staring at me, then said, "Shall we return to the heat?"

I was grateful that Larry felt at ease enough to speak of God but did not feel the necessity to engage me directly in a discussion. Grateful too, because my neighbor was a good, observant walking partner.

Walking the Monsoon

In early August Larry came knocking at my door at about 3:30 on a Saturday afternoon. I was sprawled out crosswise on my bed reading a Travis McGee novel, with the big fan blowing, in nothing but blue jean cutoffs. I answered the door in my nearly naked state. Larry eyed me through the screen door and said, "Are you available?" I grinned but didn't answer him. He continued, "If we leave right now we can make it up to Sabino Canyon in time for the last tram. We can hike back out. Want to go for a swim?" I rushed to the back room and pulled down my cutoffs, replacing them with swim trunks. On top of that went jeans, tee shirt, and cowboy boots, and I was ready to go. I met Larry at his failing Maxima and we putt-putted out to the Sabino Canyon parking lot. Larry showed me a cool and very unconventional route through the city streets that landed us a half block from the park entrance.

Sabino Canyon is, to many people, locals and visitors alike, the crown jewel of the many spectacular mountains and canyons that surround the Tucson Basin. From the parking lot you walk (or take the tram, or bike, in the early morns and late eves) about a half-mile up a gentle, almost unnoticeable slope and then descend into the canyon which has been formed by a nearly permanent creek. The canyon walls rise as high as five hundred feet, but the canyon bottom is wide, and rarely shaded, leaving room for cottonwoods, a series of pools, (some formed in sand with beaches, others formed in rocky crevasses), and enough room to build a road. The road follows the winding creek in a moderate climb ending where the creek canyon narrows on the journey to its source high in the Santa Catalina Mountains.

The incredible monsoon storm that had

dumped seven inches of rain on the Catalinas in four hours in July had taken its toll on the canyon. There were areas where the road had been washed out, massive debris everywhere, huge rocks, uprooted trees, cactus, and of course, human generated trash. You could see the flood line as high as eight feet on the trees. No one had died when that wall of water came plummeting down from the mountains, but several people had been stranded and transported by helicopter to safer ground. Volunteer work had cleaned up the majority of the mess, but as much as a year later you would still be able to see the effects of the flood.

I don't know how to swim. When Larry and I reached the pool I confessed, and he was kind and concerned. We stripped to our swimsuits and waded into the pool. He scoped the depth of the lower end, which was only at neck height. (I stand at about 5'7", and Larry is slightly shorter than that.) When I was comfortably ensconced, Larry swam off to the deep end. He had chosen a pool where an extended family of young Latinos were diving and jumping. He swam right over and joined them. They didn't seem to think this was at all unusual, though they weren't overly friendly. I played alone down at my end. There is a certain kind of relaxed feeling that comes to me when I'm in warm water for any length of time in an outdoor setting. My mind and body park for a spell. These are rare times that I cherish. I hovered in the warm summer water looking up at the canyon walls, feeling utterly at peace.

Larry meanwhile had ingratiated himself to the Latino family and had been jumping around and splashing with them. Eventually he returned to me. There was a pool further upstream that he wanted to show me. Would I mind a short hike? I hadn't thought to bring a towel, and so just used my tee shirt to dry my feet and slipped into my cowboy boots. I looked down at myself, grinning. My white legs covered in thick dark hair, now wet and plastered down to my flesh, looked absolutely absurd where they rose out of my high-heeled, needle-nosed cowboy boots. To top it off, I was wearing a pair of electric blue

swimming trunks. I looked over at Larry, who eyed me up and down. "I've seen sillier things," he said, pausing a beat. "But not many." He grinned widely arching one eyebrow, and then proceeded to get fully dressed, making me feel even sillier. I giggled intermittently to myself as we hiked upstream.

We climbed past several small plunges. The creek bed narrowed and became rocky. Finally, around a small bend, there was a long, narrow slip rock crevasse. "This is my favorite spot." Larry stripped again and I pulled off my boots and socks. We walked along the shallow creek bed to the entrance of the slip rock pool. Larry stood for long moments, staring. "I don't think there's anything more beautiful," he murmured, and then fell forward into the water, swimming towards the far end. He came up gasping and said, "William! Come in! Put your head in the water and keep your eyes open! There are fish in here!" Indeed there were. I didn't have to stick my head under the water to see them. Through the clear creek water I could see small slender fish scurry as I glided into the pool.

We played for a considerable time. The deep end was shallow enough that I could safely jump in from the rocks above; we ran around like mad men jumping in and splashing each other like kids. And then before either of us could notice, a monsoon was starting to brew up at the top of the canyon. We leisurely dried and dressed ourselves as the stormheads brooded, and began our several mile hike back to the car. About a mile along the canyon Larry asked if I had ever eaten prickly pear cactus fruit. I hadn't, so he stopped, produced a pocketknife and proceeded to prepare several of the fruit for us to eat. Meanwhile I looked nervously back at the storm behind us. It was already raining in the mountains and you could hear the vague rumble of thunder. I can't say I know how to describe the taste of prickly pear cactus fruit, but it was quite good. As we stood eating them, a few drops of rain scattered over us. We both looked back at the mountains and could see that we were going

to be drenched in a matter of moments. "Maybe we should run for it," Larry commented. "What do you think?"

"We could," I said. Larry nodded, ate the rest of his cactus fruit, and began sprinting down the road as the scattered drops became a constant light downfall. Larry picked up the pace, but it was already too late. We were in an extreme downpour. After an all out gallop for a few moments, we stopped and both started laughing and gasping for breath. Realizing the uselessness of the situation, after sitting under a tree for a few moments we settled down to a normal hiking walk. While we were sitting a man and two children walked by briskly. As they passed by the man volunteered, "Sitting under a tree is no good—they attract lightning!" Like we didn't know that, for crying out loud. But since the tree wasn't affording much protection from the rain we started off again. There was a huge crack of thunder that nearly made me jump out of my boots. An incredible bolt of lightning, just ahead of us, followed this. Immediately there was another loud thunder crack. The rain felt like pebbles. I put my trunks protectively over my bald spot. There was a quick series of lightning and thunder. Then the rain gentled just slightly, enough to relax me. Somehow I wasn't frightened, as most seem to be, of our glorious monsoon storms. The rain was warm. The lightning was beautiful. The thunder awesome. We *oohed* and *ahhed* all the way to the mouth of the canyon like the couple of boys-at-heart we were. Here the storm flew ahead of us and we were left in a pocket of warm, humid air, just at dusk, with a storm raging behind us in the mountains, and out ahead of us in the desert: Tucson was getting drenched. But where we were standing there was dark blue sky. We hovered for long moments pointing out beautiful sights to one another. Finally we descended out into the basin as a coyote skulked into the shimmering landscape.

We drove back into the storm, and back to our apartments. Larry invited me over for a bowl of chili, which I accepted. He was disappointed when I declined a game of Mono-

poly. But I was tired and just wanted to fall back on to my bed and watch the storm ride out.

Bear Wallow

Later that autumn Larry called. It was near the end of October and he was bemoaning the fact that he hadn't made it up to the mountains to see the fall color. We made a date for the following Saturday. "Bring a coat," Larry said. "It may be eighty degrees down here, but up there it will be *chilly*." By this time Larry was no longer my neighbor. Early one morning, just at first light, I had heard shouting in the courtyard that separates his building from mine. I couldn't hear what was being said but I recognized Larry's voice. After that I didn't see nor hear from Larry for a couple of months. Eventually he called. "You probably noticed I moved," he said. "I had it with that woman." As it turned out Larry was an abused husband. He said his wife, Martha, was hot-tempered, often irrational, and it didn't take much for her to start hitting him. Larry didn't hit back. The saddest comment Martha had made was how Larry must not love her since she couldn't get him to hit her. Unfortunately, because of Larry's religion and personal morals, he has to marry to have sex. He and Martha had known each other for three months before they were married. When she moved into his one-bedroom apartment it was likely certain disaster. Six months later Larry was gone and filing for divorce.

When we met at the Taco Bell parking lot Larry was taciturn and not in the best of spirits. We took my 1968 Dodge Dart up the mountain. Larry's Maxima was in such bad shape he was afraid it would fail to make the 6,000 feet up to our trailhead. He ate *chilupas* while I drove. The conversation was desultory as we headed out of the city, into the desert, and then up the lower portions of Mt. Lemmon. Once we hit the pines and sycamores Larry started to perk up, pointing out good hiking trails and great spots to picnic. He guided me down a dirt road a few miles where we pulled off and parked. There were two young women sitting around a

campfire half way up a grassy hill under autumn trees. They made quite a picture. Larry looked at them longingly as we strolled by and waved. He noticed I had caught his hungry glance. "I'm sorry," he said. "I'm just built that way. I've always been like that. I can't help it. Forgive me." It saddened me to think how tortured Larry must have been through his sixty years with a strong sex drive that could only be assuaged through marriage. And yet he was now divorced twice. I wondered, in the long run, which was the greater sin for him.

Bear Wallow is a long, narrow, tree-dotted meadow between mountain slopes. A small spring-fed creek meanders through it, ending at Rose Lake thousands of feet below. For perhaps a half-mile the road borders this section of Bear Wallow. The other side is a steep, uninterrupted wooded incline. Initially you pass through a piney park and then it opens out to tall, marshy grass. In chilly late October there was but a trickle of water in the creek and Larry walked out into the waist high yellowed grass, holding out his arms, letting the grass run over his hands. He stopped to sniff a particularly verdant bunch and then fell backwards and lay down. I stood there amused and beguiled. When he stood again, his entire back end was damp but he seemed not to care a whit.

Further down, the creek passes under the road in a spacious, metal lined underpass that is oddly aesthetically pleasing. I have tried to photograph this underpass on a number of occasions and have never been able to convey its effect on film. On the far side of this opening are great ponderosa pines, oaks, maples, a few aspens, and an ancient apple tree, probably the remnant of an old farmstead. The tree was bearing heavily that fall and we spent considerable time munching apples and exploring for tell-tale signs of habitation.

Down the trail in cool pine shadows, someone had started a maple leaf pile. Larry was delighted and suggested we finishing collecting leaves and then jump in them. One of my fondest boyhood memories was raking leaves in the fall with my brothers and my

mother and jumping into them. After ten minutes we had a huge leaf pile gathered. I extended my arm with open hand towards the leaves, offering Larry the first jump. His eyes twinkled mischievously. He skipped towards the pile and threw himself down among them. He rolled back and forth, laughing, throwing the leaves up into the air. Then he lay absolutely still, staring up into the blue sky through the pines, with his arms stretched out, as if he were on the cross. I stood there looking at him. I had nothing to say—and it was okay—so I sat down on the trail, lost in my own thoughts. I started to get chilly after awhile and stood up. Larry had covered himself in the leaves and all I could see were his eyes and nose as he stared up at the deep blue sky. He didn't notice my restlessness or pretended not to, so I struck off up the hillside to explore. When I returned he was sitting up in the leaf pile looking around, as if he had just woken up to find himself there instead of in his bed. He heard me coming down the hillside and stood up. "William," he said. "It's your turn! The leaves are so warm, you could fall asleep!"

Some of the magic that Larry apparently feels on our hikes engulfed me. As I lay there in the leaves I felt a sad nostalgia. Not for my childhood, but for the time when I was as open as Larry still seemed to be. Over the years I had become jaded and closed off. I had known from our very first hike that this was my attraction to Larry.

Unlike myself, Larry didn't hang around at all when I lay in the leaves. He immediately struck off into the woods, leaving me to the rarified spaces that he just been occupying. Long before he returned from the woods, I had stood again and left the leaf pile. When he returned he walked directly up to me and said, "Thank you, William. There aren't very many men I could go jump in the leaves with. It's a gift." I smiled. "No," I said, "thank *you*. This is so wonderful." And I thought, *Larry, it's you who are the gift.*

We spent maybe two hours meandering along the creek, exploring, taking side trips, lingering at beautiful spots, occasionally exchanging thoughts. Then we were among

a group of rustic cabins. The wallow opened out to a pleasant, open pine forest. Larry said, "Ah! Almost there now." Apparently we had a destination that I knew nothing about. The cabins were empty, this being late October, and these being summer get-away-from-the-heat vacation cabins, and we spent considerable time being naughty, peering into people's vacation homes and speculating about their personalities. Finally we hit the creek again and Larry said "It's just ahead of us now."

We followed the trail a few more minutes. The creek turned into a green, stagnant pool. The far end of the pool turned into a marsh with cattails. I could see nothing beyond that but trees. Larry said, "Stop a minute. Can you hear it?" We stopped and I listened. I heard a bird singing far away, and then another nearer. "You mean the birds?" I asked. He shook his head. "Can't you hear the creek tinkling?" I listened again, but I couldn't hear anything. He past me on the trail and walked on. I stood there listening, but couldn't hear any movement of water. When I caught up I was about to say something when I looked out ahead of him and saw a magnificent drop in the land. "My God!" I murmured, "That is beautiful." He continued forward and then took a short offshoot from the trail. We stood on a precipice looking over at an amazing stone wall over which the water trickled. The wall was covered with bright orange algae and glittered wetly, even where the water wasn't running. It dropped probably fifty feet. At the bottom there was an area that formed a pool, which was now mostly empty, exhibiting jagged rocks and dead tree branches. "Larry. Wow. This is incredible. It has to be manmade." It was a little hard to tell, it was so overgrown with algae. "It is, yes, from a long time ago," he said.

I looked away from the wall and followed the rugged sweep of the landscape. There were towering pines and huge boulders in the lower lay of the land. The forest here was too thick to get a view of anything beyond, but this piece of land was quite enough to look at, bequeathing a sense of great vastness, like something out of Middle Earth.

At my insistence we backtracked to the top of the manmade falls and catwalked across it to the other side. Larry followed me with apparent reluctance. I found myself in the curious position of having to reassure him that it was safe. When we sat secure and cross-legged on the other side I confided to Larry that I had a fear of heights, too, but for some reason crossing that falls hadn't bothered me. I told him about the time I took a night hike with my friend Gene to the edge of a reef in Capital Reef National Park and how I'd experienced such strong vertigo that I had been forced to lie face down on the rock until it passed. Even standing ten feet from the edge I still experienced vertigo and had to lie down again. Finally, with eyes closed, I sat up. From that sitting position I opened my eyes and had been able to enjoy the night with Gene. But when we left I had to scoot farther back before I felt safe to stand.

Larry made no comment at all about this, but instead pointed to a lichen-covered tree and said, "I want to visit with that tree." The tree was a glorious thing, tall, shapely, and entirely covered with blue-green lichen. Larry stood looking up at it at great length. He sauntered over to the tree and pressed both of his hands against the lichen. "That is amazing," he nearly whispered. Then he pressed his whole body against the tree and hugged it. He looked over his shoulder at me, grinning, and said, "I *love* this tree!" I laughed right out. "You tree hugger you!" I said. "That's right!" Larry quipped, "I'm a hardcore tree hugger. And proud of it." He continued hugging the tree for long seconds, looking up its length. Finally he let go and we traversed the opposite side of the marshy pond, and returned to the trail. The hike back was uneventful. It was now late afternoon. I was getting chilled through my light denim jacket. Larry, in only his windbreaker, said he was quite warm. When we returned to the leaf pile Larry said, "Hey, I know! Let's build it up really big for the next guy!" And so we did. When we finished Larry eyed our handiwork and nodded. "I know they'll like that."

On the drive back into town Larry

explained at length what had happened between he and Martha, and about an extraordinary, romantic night he had recently experienced. Apparently both of Larry's ex-wives think he has a sleeping disorder. He said he was inclined to believe them, for when he awoke he often felt more exhausted than when he went to sleep. His wives said that he thrashed violently most of the night on most nights and moaned. Yet Larry claimed that he remembered nothing. I think he was probably lying. He decided that he would go to the sleep disorder clinic at the University of Arizona and be monitored for a night. When he checked in he was the only person there and the attendant was a young woman. She and Larry hit off, were very simpatico, and they ended up staying up late into the night sharing stories about their lives. Finally the attendant told him he really was there to be *sleeping* and that she should leave him alone so that he could be monitored. She attached the wires and they reluctantly parted. He did sleep. And she watched him as he slept. The next morning she said nothing to him about his sleeping, instead made an appointment for him to talk to a doctor later in the week. She also gave him her phone number and asked him to call. Larry sadly told me how much he liked her and how much he wanted to call her, but that he couldn't. First, she was much too young, and second, he couldn't just *do it* like that, if I knew what he meant. I knew what he meant, but I couldn't agree with him. I didn't think he wanted to be talked out of his beliefs so I simply listened, nodded, and grunted sympathetically. He never returned for his results at the sleep clinic, for fear of seeing this young woman again. At the end of the story Larry looked over at me and said, "A guy like me—I can't stay single for very long. I need a woman in my life."

I dropped Larry off at the Taco Bell parking lot. I watched as he drove off. Then went in and bought a couple of *chalupas* myself.

A Purpose Well Served

Larry and I played phone tag for most of

that winter. It was frustrating because winter is the best time to go hiking in the desert. We spoke a few times but were never able to find an afternoon we both had free. Larry, you see, was working two jobs putting both his son and daughter through college. He mentioned he'd met a woman and was dating. During yet another call the next two Saturdays were out. He had a date with his new girlfriend and the following he would be moving again. Sundays were out of the question because he went to church and then spent the rest of the day socializing. He said he would call after he moved. He never did.

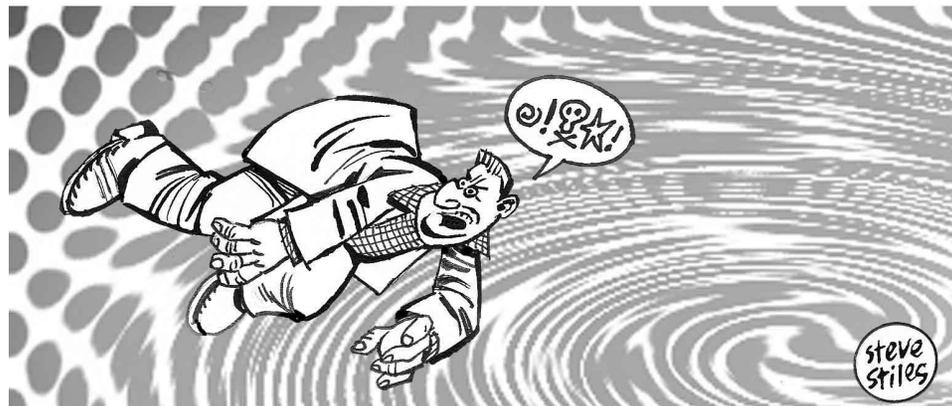
By this time spring had rolled around. Larry still hadn't called so I called him. I got the phone machine and left a message. I would be in San Francisco for the first two weeks of March. Maybe we could get together when I returned? I fully expected a message from him when I got back, but there wasn't one. When he moved he hadn't given me his new address or phone number; I got his number from information. It had been so long since he'd called and when there wasn't a message waiting the meaning seemed pretty clear.

I knew it wasn't anything personal. Between the two jobs and the new girlfriend he had very little time. I could only hope that the girlfriend liked to hike, because his previous wives had not. I was sad about it for a while, because I really liked Larry. I realized that our relationship had served a purpose for both of us in the time that it lasted. He had been in desperate need of male companionship, and someone who liked to hike. He'd needed a diversion from a bad marriage. I in turn had needed him just as much. After being a hermit for nearly three years I had been ready for a pal.

I will always remember Larry fondly. We had a deep soul bond that wasn't dictated by language. And, as Larry might say, I wish him Godspeed.

—William Breiding

THE ETHER STILL VIBRATES



CHRIS NELSON

Thanks for *Trap Door 25*. I don't think I've seen the name Harry Bell before. His cover looks vaguely Spanish but manages to remind me of *Howl's Moving Castle* at the same time. A formidable looking cannon under the trap door, suitably symbolic of another strong issue.

It's getting hard to avoid obituaries in zines, what with timebinding and genuine interest in fandom's earlier leading lights when they fade away. I had certainly heard the name Calvin Demmon before and greatly appreciated the chance to learn more about his life and read some examples of his writings (dare I say "wordbites"?), from *The Flying Frog* and *Hot Shit*. Two great names for fanzines, those. I don't think I would ever have the gumption to call a zine *Hot Shit* myself, but it's definitely an attention-getter.

Isn't it curious how so many relatively short-lived fanzines can be remembered so fondly so many years later? Most of don't have posterity in mind when we churn out an issue, but it is clear from the reminiscences of Calvin and his zines that they were a significant part of his early life and those of others involved. For people who never knew Calvin, like myself, there is interest in the brief anecdotes involving fans and pros he knew, such as Elmer Perdue or Phil Dick, but my greatest enjoyment came from seeing how Calvin was able to use his creativity to deal with the mundane aspects of life we all have to deal with. His skit about flunking out of

college and the paragraph John quotes about how he has had to adjust to riding buses every day, yelling at the kids, etc., were examples that struck a chord with me. (I failed Physics and Mathematics in my second year at university and, when invited by the Dean to "please explain" I pointed out that nobody in either faculty had provided me with any advice on my lack of progress throughout the year. He was unmoved. I could have used Calvin's sense of humor at the time.)

The funniest of Calvin's writings, though, I found to be his accounts of how he was able to discern and feed his boss's crude sense of humor—the "pile driver" anecdotes. Again, it was his ability to use humor to relieve his frustration with his boss that is notable. We can applaud, too, his stand against his boss' bigotry. I like to think that every small stand taken by people like Calvin has contributed to the changing of attitudes in the States to an extent which has seen a black American elected to the White House.

Dick Lupoff's piece on the marathon effort to get his Lovecraft work published the way he wanted it published was enlightening. Particularly in the way that reputable publishing houses operate, or not, as the case may be. I've never been much of a Lovecraft fan, but I can appreciate the amount of research that must have been involved, before he even started writing. It was amazing how stoically he accepted the various publishers' decisions on his work. I don't think I'd have the patience to

rewrite or walk away from anything I'd spent so much time on.

Another obituary! Although your note made it clear that Benford's article on Sid Coleman wasn't intended that way, it read like one, albeit rather brief and fragmentary in comparison to the Demmon material. I couldn't see the humor in the German shepherd anecdote, but Sid's alternate Pioneer 10 plaque more than made up for this—and overall it was good to learn more about a fannish figure I hadn't known much about.

John Hall's travel tale brought back some memories for me, at least in Episode 1, since Megan and I ventured into the Karakoram, too, when we lived in Pakistan—just a few years after the events he describes. I particularly remember the odd feeling he mentions of flying through the high mountain valleys and being dwarfed by higher peaks on either side. (The Pakistani national airline, PIA—affectionately dubbed “Prayer in the Air”—loses aircraft on the northern routes on a semi-regular basis, mostly when they encounter sudden changes in the weather.) We never made it much further, though, so I found the rest of John's account quite engrossing.

A little sorry to hear you've decided to discontinue the fanzine tally; it had always drawn my attention. I can see the dilemma you ace, but thought perhaps a breakdown by format was all that was needed to maintain the tabulation's usefulness.

MILT STEVENS

The Harry Bell cover on *Trap Door* #25 is interesting. I'm not quite sure what it is, but it is interesting. It seems to be a blockhouse built on a chimney with a canon and harpoons. There also is a medieval looking fellow who is probably looking for trouble. The banner has a symbol which might be either a Byzantine double eagle or a cabbage. In our world, warriors just didn't use cabbages as insignia. Which must mean this is an alternate world. That probably explains it.

I've never encountered the term “obitzine” before. (Neither has my spell checker.) It seems like a good neologism as neologisms go. Years ago, there was seldom any need for obitzines, but times have changed. I've joked that I check my pulse before reading the

obituaries in *Locus*. If I don't find a pulse, I don't continue reading.

I never met Calvin Demmon. At times, he seemed like a fictional character who remained eternally offstage. Was he part of some joke of which I was unaware? *{Yes, he was a pseudonym of Warren Brick.}*

I never exactly met Sid Coleman, although I did see him once. It was at a LASFS meeting in 1960. He was reviewing an Olympia Press porn novel. At the beginning of the novel, an ancient Egyptian prince is musing philosophically as he listened to the sound of a virgin being raped by the temple baboons. He mentioned the novel became quite dirty after that.

The complete explanation of how a young Jewish boy like Dick Lupoff had to attend services at a Baptist Church must be one of those stories the world is not ready for. It might be titled “In the Pews of Putridity.” I can imagine it as both a novel and a movie. There might be possibilities for a songbook too. Personally, churches have always made me nervous. My visits to churches have been limited to weddings and funerals, and I'm probably being entirely unreasonable. It's just that some part of my mind suspects churchgoers have a need to persecute someone, and I probably fit the profile for someone they would love to persecute. It makes me nervous when they look at me and smile.

GARY MATTINGLY

First, very nice Harry Bell cover and artwork throughout. Your layout and printing is always very nice.

I was sorry to read about the death of your friend, Calvin Demmon. Although I am familiar with his name, I never knew him. I do not really have contact with any of my friends from high school. I do have contact with a number of people I met in fandom while I was in college, but I have either never or very rarely actually visited in person with any of them. I'm sure that type of a relationship must be very enjoyable and losing such a longtime friend is probably very painful.

The article about *The Flying Frog* and Calvin Demmon by Andrew Main was very entertaining and reminded me of the time I was in college and published fanzines on a more regular basis. I never published a weekly fan-

zine, though—never had the fortitude for it.

Calvin Demmon's article from *The Flying Frog* was most entertaining. Sounds like some people were having a good time in Berkeley.

With respect to “North Beach Nights,” I thought it was interesting that John D. Berry liked going back to the college campus. I never had that desire. I never felt the urge to hang out with students. Even while in college, except for class and studying for class I usually felt no particular urge to hang out with students. Of course, I usually felt no particular urge to hang out with anyone. With respect to cockroaches, I lived in an apartment on Hayes Street and could have easily mailed out more cockroaches from San Francisco from that apartment if anyone really wanted them. This was an old building so they probably had a long Hayes Valley lineage, if that was something in which one was interested. Sutton Breiding lived in the same building and had lived there before I moved in, so he probably knew them better than I did. However, I did buy a number of house geckos, which I released in to the apartment and its walls, and they apparently found the cockroaches most appetizing.

And another entertaining Calvin Demmon article, this time from *Hot Shit*. I never had his problem with respect to not being as funny in person as I was in print. I never was that funny and entertaining in print and am equally not funny and entertaining in person. I'm not too sure that that is very beneficial. So far I have not come up with a good way to talk to any of my bosses, but at least I am consistent in that I have seldom found a good way to talk to people in general. Again, consistency is my byword. Actually I have been more able to talk to people who have been diagnosed as having psychiatric problems. While working for Social Security, I frequently found myself talking to those who other representatives found difficult. I liked to listen to their stories and was honestly interested in the other universes that they inhabited. Unfortunately, it can be very depressing talking to them about the universe in which they were forced to live all the time.

Dick Lupoff's article on writing the Lovecraft novel was very interesting—both with respect to the preparation and writing of the novel and the editing and permutations the novel went through over time. I know that I

would certainly be interested in reading both *Marblehead* and *Lovecraft's Book* and looking at the similarities and dissimilarities between the two.

“Remembering Sid” by Greg Benford was also quite enjoyable and interesting. I must admit a certain gap in my knowledge of physicists in fandom, other than John Bartelt. Oops, I take it back, there was also John Moffitt at Texas A&M, who I met through the Cepheid Variables. Now my mind is probably going to wander around for several days in an attempt to remember any other fans who were physicists with whom I am or was acquainted.

Lenny Bailes' Calvin Demmon Memory was also enjoyable. Calvin Demmon certainly seems to have been a nice fellow. Too bad I never knew him.

“Episodes from a Journey,” by John Nielsen Hall, was most entertaining and convinced me quite thoroughly to not make a similar trip—not that I had been thinking of it but now certainly will not. If I had convinced Patty to go on such a trip—well, best not to think of the consequences of that. The hotel with the sand, the lack of working bathrooms, and the marvelous food admittedly will be hard to miss, but I will make that sacrifice. I was wondering if there was some of the journey that was enjoyable.

I note the comment about stairs and feel quite miserable in being able to only report one or two steps in a straight line from house level to ground. Now I have lived in several places in San Francisco which had more steps, but have no recollection whatsoever as to the exact count, number of turns or precise angles involved. I doubt that I knew when I lived in these various and sundry residences, so it is futile to even attempt to search my memory.

Hm, my fanzines and postcards are not filed in any appreciable order and are for the most part in boxes. I do remember becoming involved in fandom at the age of seventeen, which is just shy of forty years ago. I rarely if ever print out copies of online fanzines and then only when I know I will have some time on a plane (no, I don't have a laptop computer) and my trips on planes are very rare these days.

Relative to workplace adventures, I rarely if ever get very involved with anyone at work. There may be two or three people I talk with on rare occasions, but certainly never ping pong or

ances of any kind. From the almost ten years that I worked at Social Security, I have contact with only one person and that is primarily just Christmas card communiques. I send jokes in e-mails to some of the people I've worked with since becoming an electrical engineer but again am only in contact on a more regular basis with one person who has retired back to the midwest. That is more due to similar tastes in music and stereos and an interest in trains and political leanings, nothing at all to do with EE.

Interesting note by Pamela Boal about becoming intoxicated while driving behind a truck full of grape skins. This thought had never crossed my mind. Admittedly I have never driven behind a truck full of grape skins, but will certainly attempt to remember this should such a situation arise.

Relative to Taral Wayne's missive, I did not go and see *Dukes of Hazzard* and actually haven't watched it on TV either. Now admittedly I have watched various and sundry television shows that are almost as bad, one assumes. However, what I most enjoyed was his mention of driving to conventions. I remember while living in the midwest the many trips far and wide—even one to Discon II, I think it was, from Kansas City—in my van with a number of KC fans, all going to promote the MidAmerican bid. We even brought Coors, which many liked although I will always wonder why. I would also love to take long scenic car trips off the Interstate. However, that can get a tad boring in Kansas. I mentioned that because I have done that many times to visit relatives, most of whom don't live near any Interstate. Kansas is not the most exciting place to drive on a two-lane highway. Now I'd love to drive through parts of the south. Southeastern Missouri particularly comes to mind because of a number of towns which have died with the demise of a number of railroads through that area, plus a lot of marshes and such. Sounds most interesting and probably a bit unpleasant. Admittedly gas prices aren't exactly helpful when one desires such long car trips. Yes, winning a lottery of 3 to 4 million would be most helpful. I did recently purchase a book, the name escapes me at the moment, of someone documenting a similar travel through small towns and back roads. I may have to settle for vicariously traveling through such interesting places.

And I thought I should add that I do not agree with Fred Smith that the state of popular music has “declined steadily over the last fifty-odd years.” There is still a lot of marvelous music out there, a lot of new and different stuff and also a lot of new stuff that sounds a lot like music that has been around for ages. You just have to look for it, listen for it, be available for its presence. I'm most entertained (or not as the case may actually be) by people who used to go to punk clubs and now complain about the loudness and raucousness of some of the current music. I did not grow up to be my father nor to listen to the same complaints he made.

Relative to Jessica Salmonson's note on things propped over a computer, I have noted that a number of people do that, have things attached to it, stuck to it or near it but that is something I've never done. It makes me think of people naming their cars, another thing I've never done. Admittedly I have a number of calendars with pictures near my workstation at work but I consider those more office decorations than anything else. Of course, I do have a number of Simpson characters (thirteen, plus two from Spongebob Squarepants) I purchased from Burger King (thank goodness they have a veggie burger even if it isn't that great) on a book cabinet near my desk at work. And I do have the Wallace and Gromit clock (interesting that I can find that by googling “dog and man british cartoon cheese,” since my memory stopped working there for a second), the poster of the Hieronymous Bosch triptych of *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, and two large posters of hot peppers. Add to that when asked what I wanted my workstation named (they need that for the network, don't you know) I said bettyspage (actually it should have been Bettie but...). Still nothing attached to the computer itself or the two screens. I wonder if people think I'm odd here. *{I still have an old-style non-tower CPU with my much newer flat-screen monitor on top. From left to right, there's a 2x3-inch framed photo of a two-headed Zuni fetish corn maiden, a small colorful box containing a baby Slinky, a group of mounted small polished stones with pasted-on eyes, a plastic cardholder with two psychedelic square badges with replicas of '60s blotter acid and a tiny statuette of a map in cap and gown holding a diploma, and behind all that a tiny black*

Duracell flashlight which takes one AA battery. Has everyone fallen asleep yet?}

LEIGH EDMONDS

It's got to the stage where I no longer even feel a twinge of guilt if I don't respond to a fanzine that arrives in the letter box. I must be that far gone into fafia, although earlier today I sent off memberships for Valma and me to a convention that's happening in Canberra in a couple of months—so we haven't fully fallen from the fannish world.

I didn't realize how much I'd stopped reading for pleasure these past few years. But now that I have my new eye and my new glasses reading is no longer the chore it once was, I enjoyed finally picking up *Trap Door* 25 and reading bits of it.

It was nice to see your lead-off LoC from Mike Glicksohn. Here he's at retirement age and I reckon I'm only about halfway through my new career writing history. I recently wrote a history of one of Melbourne's leading public schools (read private school here if you like) and one of the things that struck me was that almost none of the teachers had much to say about the process of teaching, even though they'd done it for decades. There were plenty of memories about many of the things that revolved around the school and a lot about the politics of the school, but almost nothing about the process that the school existed to do. Odd, I thought, but apparently not uncommon.

If there is a theme to this issue it seems to be “memories” or something like that. The memorable Calvin Demmon, Dick Lupoff starting in 1946 (too early for me), Greg Benford remembering Sid Coleman and John D. Berry starting off in 1971. It reminds me of a couple of little history seminars I went to in Perth (Western Australia) back in June. One was about media history and the second day's event was about internet history (as though the internet is old enough to have a history). I had a good time on the first day because I was among old friends and we chatted amicably about the subject; there was lots of comradeship and co-operation. Half the people there are now Professors, Emeritus Professors and Heads of Department and they had all achieved and created good careers for themselves. One of the things that they wondered was where all the young historians were.

The next day all the youngsters were out and on display, most of them still in the process of building reputations through the mental gymnastics of creating or extending theory into new areas of research. It was interesting to watch their energetic displays of not exactly competition but certainly testing themselves against each other. *Trap Door* reminds me of the first day. Here we all are, having mostly established reputations of one kind of another and comfortable with who we are and what we do. We are here to enjoy each other's company safe in the knowledge that we are all more or less equals. I wonder how it is in internet fandom? Not that I'm likely to find out.

I see that one of the workshops on offer at the Canberra convention is about blogging. I can't work up any enthusiasm for it. From what people who want to convert me say about it, blogging is just like a form of fanac except that you don't have to mimeo your thoughts and post them off, and the feedback takes much longer to arrive. These days I don't need the frantic pace of that sort of thing, but get me to a convention with a glass of bourbon and I can chatter for a long time about nothing in particular.

I must also comment on John Nielsen Hall's article in three parts. Very enjoyable. Maybe I'm not very adventurous, but I've no great desire to see the world in the way he has. Flying to conventions in far off places and staying up most of the night talking to people is enough excitement for me.

GARY HUBBARD

I never met Calvin Demmon, although I may have corresponded with him once (or maybe that was Carl Denham, I dunno), but I enjoyed reading the selections from *Hot Shit*—in particular, Calvin's comments on Raymond Chandler. A few months previously to the arrival of *Trap Door*, I had found a paperback copy of *The Big Sleep* in the Goodwill store. The Bogart movie that was made from this book is one of the Wife's favorites (she really responds to that Bogart/Bacall chemistry), so I pretty much knew the story already; but what I didn't expect was what a really good story it is. I was captivated right from the first paragraph and read it straight through, even though I knew how it was going to end. In fact, the movie was kind of a disappointment the next time I saw it.

I never met Sid Coleman, either, but that's not surprising since I'm such a marginal fan. However, I really enjoyed Greg's tribute to him. There is this one thing here that Greg says about Sid: "He was far more subtle and powerful in his mathematics than I." Must be nice. My math has always been so dismal, that I have an exaggerated admiration for people who know how to do math. In fact, when I was 24 I decided that I needed to do something about that, so I started on a program to improve my math skills. I started with some remaindered grade school textbooks that I found at K-Mart, moved on to those Made Simple books, and took some night courses. Every night after work and all day on Saturday I did math; on Sundays I read Jack Vance novels. I did that for four years and worked myself up to a little light calculus, then hit the wall. On my 28th birthday, I decided I'd had enough with math and that I probably should think about getting laid. In retrospect, I should have stayed with math, because those four years were one of the happiest periods of my life. But it's all behind me now. I never have been able to get back into it, and I've been corrupted by calculators and Excel, just like everyone else, thus forgotten most all the math I tried so hard to learn.

MIKE DECKINGER

I was sorry to hear of the deaths of Calvin Demmon and Sidney Coleman, and even sorrier that I had no personal anecdotes I could relate. I find it sobering that my contemporaries are passing. It's wrenching enough when someone you know of dies; even worse when you have more than a passing acquaintance with the deceased.

I enjoyed all the tales and reminiscences about Demmon and Coleman. Their own writings are just extra froth to the rich background of material that exists. Calvin's writing is so easygoing and confident that it's a shame there isn't more of it. Elsewhere there was talk of the "humor" contained within his prose. I don't believe there was any deliberate or conscious intent to inject humorous content; more likely he was offering an expression of his normal outlook.

John Neilsen Hall's travelogue was a rigorous read, and after a while I began to experience the same plodding struggle that he did. Even in

my most masochistic moments, I don't think I'd be inclined to undertake a comparable journey.

I think we all have a form of selective memory retention. Mike Glicksohn remarks that he has slim memory of his 35 years of teaching. I can recall, vividly, interchanges I've had with relatives and co-workers dating back forty or more years. I can also recall emotions and attitudes, if not precise words. I'm quite confident I'm conjuring accurate images of what was said, what was done, and how I felt. What I do have difficulty recalling is what I did the past week or two, precisely whom I spoke with, where I went. I have a memory outline of what transpired, but I can't recollect any of it with the exactitude of those periods stretching deep into the past.

Paint-By-Numbers is making a comeback at some outlets. I've seen a multitude of kits at both Target and Costco, promoted as a new experience, instead of an opportunity to relive some of the favorite recreational moments shared by boomers at a young age. Hula hoops are appearing in music videos and sold as weight reduction devices, only now they are embedded with music and strobes.

Sam Moskowitz saw his immense collection as an investment and an annuity for the benefit of his survivor. He frequently said that when he's gone, he expected his wife to sell it for the best price she could get. I find it entirely appropriate to dispose of one's stock in this manner. Sam poured a lot of time, money and effort into amassing his collection. As the centerpiece to a museum or library collection, it would receive an occasional perusal by the interested or the curious, but would hardly satisfy expenses Chris Moskowitz would accrue in her later years.

I am fond of flying, but I rarely do it. I'm not fond of the numerous necessary inconveniences I face when checking in. Once I'm in a seat, with headphones attached, screening out my surroundings, I'm quite content. But getting to the halcyon sanctuary means maneuvering endless lines and probing, then finally discovering I have a youngster developing his motor skills behind me, and an overstuffed porker in the seat beside me, who needs both his space and my space to accommodate his girth. And I haven't even mentioned the guy in front who inclines his seat into my lap during the entire flight.

I've read that this is the only country that scales airline competition to cost. If you can save \$50.00 on a carrier, traveling the same route, you'll select the cheapest fare. Other countries set up competitive standards relating to comfort, or meal service. Here, the dollar and the dollar alone rules decision-making.

How about settling airline fares based on weight? The heavier you are the more you pay. It seems only fair, since bulkier people exhaust more fuel. What better incentive to diet? The only downside to this scenario is that children would cost less, so there would be more of them per flight. And the only thing worse than an ill-behaving adult is a child on a rampage.

I've never been to White Castle and I'm reluctant to sample the frozen variety, offered at an exorbitant price in the supermarket. On the west coast we have our own version of a cult hamburger: In and Out. (So named because the objective is to immediately fill your order within a bare minimum of waiting time. And they do adhere to this). The serving area resembles your typical frenzied carhop, but the burgers are tastier than most other outlets.

Four decades ago, a friend on the east coast developed an interest in L. Ron Hubbard. This was when Hubbard was living aboard his yacht in international waters, trying to stay one nautical mile ahead of the authorities. He desperately wanted to publish something by Hubbard but had no way to reach him. My friend Joel was a pulp collector, had most of Hubbard's early pulp appearances, and was thoroughly fascinated by them.

So Joel delivered a polite letter addressed to Hubbard, to the New York Scientology headquarters. They in turn were cordial, promising to dispatch it to Hubbard, and by the way perhaps you'd like to learn more about Scientology and take a test to discover your full potential? No!!!!

Several months later Joel received a 7- or 8-page letter from Hubbard, thanking him for his interest, discussing his early pulp career ("Unknown folded because I stopped writing for them"), and expressing his optimism that the first man to walk on the moon would be a Scientologist. Joel published this in full in a small fanzine distributed to even a smaller readership. I can't guess what it would be worth today. {Unless it was in an issue I don't have,

you must be referring to Hubbard's letter in Joel's Deeper Than You Think #3, published in 1969. But it's a one-page letter there without the above line or any reference to who would be the first man to walk on the moon. Perhaps you saw the original letter, or maybe this is another case of that "selective memory retention" you mention above.}

RICHARD DENGROVE

As a young man, the late Calvin Demmon proved himself witty, able to report fantasies as he saw them, and able to unearth obscure truths. While I didn't see much reporting of the news, Calvin still deserved a Nobel prize—for being an irrepressible human personality. Unfortunately, they aren't giving any prizes for it.

I loved it especially when he said that Andy Main, for his Swedish typewriter, should have a nose full of Grave Accents and molten Æ's in his eyes. Also, I loved the meeting with the dean of his college where he somehow weaves horror movies, love and college grades into a hilarious whole. Andy Main suggests their efforts might have been sophomoric. No, Calvin's is too outrageous, too creative and too actually witty for that. Sophomoric is lame humor; this flew.

Calvin, in particular, deserved a prize for unearthing obscure truths. For instance, in another article he had a hilarious bit about his boss that showed prejudice is more subtle than the politically correct would have us believe. As Calvin observed about his boss, people can be "prejudiced" because it's naughty. By their sheer fanaticism and intolerance, the prigs have been encouraging such a backlash. While many "prejudiced" people really do hate other races, ethnic groups, sexes, etc., some just resent being bludgeoned.

I want to tell Dick Lupoff that *Marblehead: A Novel of H.P. Lovecraft* would never make it today as the blockbuster much beloved by big publishers. Since *Marblehead* was rejected in the '70s, things have gotten worse. Blockbusters used to have a tightly written plot. Now they no longer have any plot: it's all special effects. It's beginning to look like you can really be proud of being published by a small press.

Michael Dobson thinks that airport security covers Homeland Security's rear before Congress. Covers?! These people expect a medal

for saving the Republic!. On the other hand, what they are really striving for is not security but public relations. They realize these bone-headed measures do nothing for actual security. What Homeland Security should expect then is the Oscar. Of course, what they should get are rotten tomatoes—and the hook.

I agree that, while Dan Steffan is not interested in the esthetics of libraries, he still loves libraries. I bet he is a lover of books: what I regard as an essence of a library. Of course, these days, libraries have changed: he could be there for the databases, too. They are another essence of a library. In fact, they are basically the only services my library has provided for many years now.

CASSON DEMMON

Thanks so much for sending me the February copy of *Trap Door*. I love it. Every time I pick it up I smile, get sad, and feel like writing to thank you. Thanks for all of your love and support. You've been there for my dad longer than I've been alive and I am grateful to have gotten to know you both.

RAY NELSON

The February *Trap Door*! What a stroll down Memory Lane! A tear trickled down my cheek to leave one more stain on the Keen Red Floor which, strange to say, still exists while everything else in our world has changed beyond recognition.

RANDY BYERS

There's a fair amount of discussion of e-fanzines in this issue. You asked your readers about their printing habits with PDF zines. About the only time I print them is if I've contributed an article and want to create a file copy. Otherwise I don't see much point. I mean, the whole idea is to avoid the expense of printing, right? We'll see if this changes now that I have a duplex printer that makes the process easier, but I've had it for at least half a year now with no changes in my printing habits so far. {"*To avoid the expense of printing*"? *Yes, for the publisher—and the expense of mailing, too. But a really good fanzine is best read, in my opinion, in hard copy, and electronic publishing passes on that decision to individual readers. Additionally, this saves trees*

and the fossil fuel and chemicals needed to turn them into paper, so one could say that electronic fanzines are helping save the planet.}

On the other hand, that's a very good observation Joseph Major makes about how e-fanzines.com has brought a number of old time fanzine fans back into the fold. It's a useful point of reentry for people who have drifted away and are looking for signs of the old crowd, and that aspect of it hadn't even occurred to me.

I was fascinated by all the material by and about Calvin Demmon. It seems he was one, like so many, who drifted away from fandom once he started raising a family. Do you think he would ever have pubbed his ish again if he'd lived longer? On another front, I was startled to see your apparent threat to kill Redd Boggs back in the day. What the hell was that about? {*Calvin was always putting funny words in my mouth.*}

I hear rumors that Dan Steffan is getting lots of praise for his artwork in this issue, as well he should. The Lovcraftian illos are truly outstanding, and as Carl pointed out they are quite different in style from Dan's other recent work—particularly the sky in the graveyard piece, which looks like the work Harry Bell did for the last *Science-Fiction Five-Yearly*. Speaking of whom, that's a wonderfully silly cover by Harry, like something out of a French cartoon.

I also loved Dan's caricature of Sid Coleman for Greg Benford's "Remembering Sid." Greg's warm remembrance of Sid may be my favorite piece of writing in the issue. It certainly contains my favorite line: "Small animals are eating my penis." Wish I'd seen the look on the French doctor's face when he heard that!

RICHARD BRANDT

Why is it lately that, every time I finally bestir myself to write a loc to a fanzine I have neglected for far too long, I find that Mr. Glicksohn has preceded me?

One of the joys of my fannish life is that many of the legendary figures who had come and gone before my entry into active fandom came around again to let me take another swing at them. But I have to admit I never made the acquaintance of Calvin Demmon (nor, it should almost go without saying, Sid Coleman). Still, I imagine I shall henceforth frequently be heard appropriating his description of his boss's

politics ("he's somewhat to the right of the decimal place").

Calvin's earlier writings, on the other hand, remind me how happier all of us would be if we had forsorn publishing any of our writings until we were in college. At the very least. {*As you would suspect, I don't agree.*}

Lupoff says that at age eleven he "didn't know anything about the practices of the publishing world." Evidently in the intervening years he hasn't learned much more, but more to the point, neither, seemingly, has anybody else! A fascinating journey of a manuscript through an industry that makes legislation look positively scrumptious.

Greg Benford manages not only to convey simultaneously Sid's coolness and his impressive place in physics, but to make the physics itself seem almost comprehensible.

Often, travel writing infuses me with the desire to retrace the steps of the author to some farflung exotic locale. John Nielsen Hall quickly disabuses me of this notion. Quite evocative, though, particularly the tentacles of sand spreading themselves under the door. (I have my own horror stories, too. I won a trip to St. John to watch a *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue photo shoot, and let me tell you: the humidity was *terrible*.)

Most surprising revelation from the letter column: that it is Hope Leibowitz's great ambition in life to sit on eggs.

GEORGE LOCKE

I was particularly interested in Dick Lupoff's account of the trials and tribulations regarding *Marblehead*. I can well imagine the excitement caused by the surfacing of a typescript of the original. Being one of the few collectors and dealers interest in old manuscripts and typescripts, I can feel full empathy. People in publishing seem to have so little respect for the material which passes through their hands, whether it be manuscripts or artwork. And if something doesn't get published, all too often it is lost for ever. The SF world is full of such woeful stories. But just occasionally, something nice happens. Years ago, I learned that E. V. Odle, who wrote a minor classic of SF in the 1920s called *the Clockwork Man*, had written another, unpublished SF novel. That manuscript, entitled *Juggernaut*, surfaced a few

years ago, and I was able to buy it, albeit very expensively. But my daydream is to stumble across the original for David Lindsay's *a Voyage to Arcturus*—which I gather was very much longer than the published version.

DICK LUPOFF

The new issue of *Trap Door* arrived today and—your protestations to the contrary notwithstanding—I cannot bring myself to call it a fanzine. It might fall into the old category of "little magazines," or maybe just, "a magazine." But it's more than fanzine.

Many wonderful and familiar names on the contents page and in the letter column, although of course there is a definite melancholy air to this issue, in view of the deaths of Calvin Demmon and Sid Coleman. A good memorial to them both.

I am delighted with the presentation of my piece on *Marblehead*, and especially with Dan Steffan's glorious (albeit gloomy) ("gloriously gloomy"?) graphics.

BRUCE TOWNLEY

Wanted to say that I really enjoyed Dan's illustrations for Dick Lupoff's "There's a Long, Long Trail A-Winding." Particularly the one on page 16, which captures for me the unsettling, otherworldly effect that HPL was after in his own stories, when he was firing on all eight cylinders. Great stuff, Dan! Also enjoyed that nice Mr. Bell's handsome cover drawing quite a bit too. I think he has a bright and promising future ahead of him in scientific fandom. My best wishes to this gifted youngster.

BRAD FOSTER

{*Writing about the aftermath of reorganizing his library.*}

One of the books I pulled to read was "The Incredible Umbrella" by Marvin Kaye from back in '79. Fun stories, but what really was a nice surprise was to find it had been illustrated by Dan Steffan. And, while they were nice enough pieces, they didn't really "grab" me and I couldn't figure why until this new *Trap Door* arrived. Dan's new stuff is so sharp, dense, angular and stylized. So very individual and recognizably-his-work. The early stuff, like many of us, is good work, but has yet to break into his strongest most personal approach. The pieces of his to illustrate the

Lupoff article (itself a great read, by the way) are just amazing. Each new piece I see from Dan just makes me want to work harder on improving my own doodles. I hope you can keep him contributing to *Trap Door* for many issues to come! (*P. O. Box 165246, Irving, TX 75016*)

FRED SMITH

The memoirs about Calvin Demmon and Sid Coleman were very touching. Interesting to read that Andrew Main produced *The Flying Frog* on a Facit typer since I spent five years selling Facit calculators (imported from Sweden) and coincidental that another Andrew Main happened to be the husband of a girl singer who worked with my trio in a lounge bar for several years. The excerpts from Calvin's own writings in the *Frog* are fascinating in that it's one zine I never came across.

The article by Dick Lupoff mentions "The Dunwich Horror," which I always thought was one of the best things Lovecraft wrote. Marvelous article and those illos by Dan Steffan are something else. John Nielsen Hall's "Episodes From a Journey" great stuff too. In fact there's nothing I found dull in this *Trap Door* and that goes for all your letter writers too. Keep up the good work.

GRAHAM CHARNOCK

Read the article on Sid Coleman, and found it very interesting and obviously affectionate. Didn't realize Greg Benford had such good credentials as a scientist either. Did come away, however, with the impression that Sid was second fiddle to Weinburg. I love reading about these insider academic scuffles, even though I don't know shit all about the science involved. One reason why I liked that Russell Crowe film, "A Beautiful Mind," which Pat still can't bear to watch because she thinks it's about me.

JOHN PURCELL

Your tribute issue to Calvin Demmon was extremely effective, more so because of the samples of Calvin's writings from his *Flying Frog* and *Hot Shit* days. I never knew him in person, but had read some of his zines when I first wandered the halls of fandom back in the '70s and '80s. Judging from what people have written about the fellow, Calvin certainly sounded like a wonderful person. Yeah, I sure

wish I had met him.

Same thing for Sidney Coleman. Greg Benford's remembrance was a delight to read. Geez, just reading these reminiscences by their colleagues and friends makes me miss both Calvin and Sidney. Sure wish I had had the chance to meet them, too. Both sound like they were quite the characters. Thankfully many people were blessed by their presence, which is a plus because now we get these delightful tribute articles. Thank you, Robert, for pubbing them.

Onward to some happier topics in your latest issue. Dick Lupoff's article almost makes me want to stop working on my novel. Almost. I have the prologue done and most of the first chapter, too—bits and pieces of other chapters, too, if you can believe that—but a lot of research and outlining is left to do. It will take me a while to complete this novel since I teach full-time, but maybe during summer break I can get a bunch more written. If anything, Dick has provided a cautionary tale of what a budding writer might face someday. I guess I can thank him and you for the warning. Moral of this story: get a damn good agent! That, and keep copies of everything, and don't throw anything away! Document, document, document!

As for John Nielsen Hall's trip report, remind me never to go to on such a jaunt. If he ever invites me to join him on a trip somewhere, I will probably decline. Although it would be neat to travel to Lands Unseen Before, there is enough of the wanderlust in me to want to do some serious traveling before my time on this rock runs out. But remote areas of China are pretty much out of the question. More power to John and his traveling companions for making that trek. He certainly came out of it with a crackerjack tale to tell.

Your response to Joseph Major about how the "ease of on-line communication compared to paper mail" resurrected the fannish careers of Eric Mayer and me definitely rings true. If it wasn't for the ease of pubbing on-line, I seriously doubt if I would have resumed zine pubbing with such zest. The costs of producing a zine otherwise would be prohibitive nowadays. And you know something? I am glad I'm back. This is fun, Meyer.

CHRIS GARCIA

That's a gorgeous Harry Bell cover. And

inside, once again Dan Steffan does magic. His art does justice to Dick Lupoff's fine words. I've always been a fan of Dan's versatility and his ability to make the art fit the words without feeling like it was shoehorning either. The Pickman's Model image is superb, just absolutely beyond all awesome thoughts on that one. I have to say that it fits tone and mood and the rest of the material for the zine. There's an amazing amount happening with that one image and I'm not sure I know how to express it all. Dan's #1 in my eyes.

Good to see Ross Chamberlain with some new art out. I haven't seen his name nearly enough this last year or so. John Nielsen Hall's article is a good one. There have been a lot of pieces in zines lately about trips to China, which probably has something to do with the fact that China is drawing more and more people from around the world.

I really enjoyed reading Greg Benford's look at Sid Coleman. I enjoyed Earl Kemp's issue of *eI* dedicated to the man, too. I never met him, but am very familiar with his writing, especially from *F&SF*.

I have take up a point with Joe Major in the lettercol. He says that it's all the same names in the lettercols for those of us on eFanzines.com. I'm not at all arguing that fact—you'll still find Lloyd Penney, Eric Mayer and John Purcell in most of the eZines—and I'm certainly around a lot of them too. But there are a lot of new faces who write in once in a while (like Leigh Ann Hildebrand, John Coxon, John Thiel, Espana Sheriff, Kristine Kopnisky, and Andy Trembley) who usually get overlooked, often because they seem to write to zines that a lot of folks just skip over. I certainly know that my zines are far more read than they are commented on by my readers, which is fine with me. The average eZine over its lifetime is probably more widely read than a similar printzine simply because of its lifespan. I track the progress of some issues of *The Drink Tank* on Scribd and the older issues average about a hit a week while new issues average about five hits a week for the first couple of months. Some issues get large numbers of views, somewhere around 2,500 for the Vonnegut issue, and 500+ for another five or six older issues, and I could never reach that many with a printzine. Still, I only average three responses to any given issue, which is fine with

me. *{That's not too many, Meyer, but given the wide subject matter variations from issue to issue and the pace at which you publish it's not too surprising.}*

JACK CALVERT

It was all good, from the Harry Bell drawing on the cover down to the WAHFs and the very last fanzines received table. Those earnest little guys scanning the horizon in defense of their whimsically constructed fort might be a metaphor for certain parts of fandom. Or not—I'm probably reading too much into it, but there does seem to be a story in that drawing, trying to get out.

Thanks for printing the Calvin Demmon remembrances and the excerpts from *Flying Frog* and *Hot Shit*. He must have been a joy to know. Likewise Sydney Coleman. Both bright lights and sad to lose.

I started reading HPL's stories at about the same age as Richard Lupoff, and I still remember the impression that *At the Mountains of Madness* left on my eleven-year old mind—it was one of two stories that produced an almost physical sense of scariness. (The other was completely different: Bernard Wolfe's novel *Limbo*.) And I've been reading Lovecraft's fiction, and also letters and essays, ever since. So I found the story of *Marblehead* and its long journey to publication quite fascinating, and was moved to go get myself a copy. Also found it enjoyable—a nice reconstruction of HPL's time, and true to his character, as far as I could tell, as a non-expert follower of his career. I should also mention that I thought that Dan Steffan's drawings for the Lovecraft article were great, especially the one with the old gent and the tentacled monster. Quintessential Lovecraft, that.

John Nielsen Hall's story of his travels in central Asia reminds me of all the good reasons to stay home and read about other people's adventures. I don't think I realized just how *bad* sandstorms are until I read John's account of hiding from one in a hotel bathroom. I remember as a kid seeing maps (probably printed in the 1930s) that actually did have white spaces in that part of the world. These were brought home by my first Uncle Johnny, a seafaring man.

And once again the letter column was out-

standing. I particularly liked Michael Dobson's incisive comments on TSA and FEMA. And I see that I'm not the only person in the world who has fond memories of old-fashioned (that is, pre-CAD) drafting techniques. I got to use what must have been about the last mechanical drafting machine up at LBL, and I loved it. It was smooth, precise, and repeatable. CAD seemed quirky and annoying in comparison. Finally, I should add that those folks who praised Carol's column and that nice Mr. Kinney's rant in the previous issue were absolutely right.

TRACY BENTON

The Calvin Demmon excerpts are so dry and funny that the loss to fandom is made quite clear.

As a Lovecraft-universe fan I was *glued* to Dick Lupoff's story of *Marblehead*—and Dan Steffan's illos! Viva la creepy.

SUE JONES

I really enjoyed the travel article from John Nielsen Hall. Very vivid and engaging piece: I wanted it to be longer, although I think John, Julia and their companions had earned a break by the end of it. This sort of armchair traveling is rather more to my taste than clambering across slipping land myself or enduring sandstorms inside half-built hotels in the far reaches of China.

JOSEPH NICHOLAS

Very (very!) belated thanks for *Trap Door* 25, which must have arrived here some months ago and now looks a little the worse for wear, having been carried around in my bag (and taken out of it every evening) with the intention that I would look at it real soon now, or if not now then at least tomorrow, or the weekend, or.... Not out of indifference to the fanzine itself, I stress; just that I have lots of other reading as well, and it has to take its place in the queue.

Which is one reason why—to follow up your comment to Tommy Ferguson—I drop in on efanzines.com very rarely, and almost never print anything out from there: with a giant overhang of stuff to get through, there is zero temptation to add to it. On the occasions when the rule is breached and something is printed out, it's only ever something substantial like *Steam Engine Time*, the articles in which are the

sorts of things which one has to sit down to read away from the computer screen. If there's anything else there that I look at—Chris Garcia seems to publish on an almost daily basis, and I look at his stuff from time to time simply out of admiration at his energy—it stays on-screen: ephemera to be flicked through and forgotten. (The paper would only be recycled anyway.)

Another reason for not visiting efanzines.com very often is that we only had broadband installed in February, the chief driver for which was Judith's need for it when she's working from home. Neither of us are the kind of people who spend the evenings watching YouTube or downloading music or even just googling to see what's out there; we turn on the router, we turn on our computers, we do whatever it is we intend to, we switch everything off again. This is a habit formed through years of internet access only by dial-up, where large downloads had to be avoided because of the time they would take and the consequent inflation of the telephone bill (in the UK, all calls are charged by the minute; there is no "local" tariff under which one pays a flat fee for access to the network), and I daresay that it's possible this may change with time; but habits are hard to break, and the lure of a book or other publication beats chat rooms and internet shopping every time. (Not that we do any internet shopping in any case, or indeed trust any transaction to the internet; one might just as well hand one's cheque book and cheque guarantee card to a random stranger for all the alleged security on offer.) *{I've been shopping on-line for years and have never had a problem. I restrict my credit card exposure to just one, and wherever possible I use Paypal as a way to avoid spreading that one card's number among numerous small merchants who want the credit history of your life for a single purchase.}*

Beyond that, however, I can't think of much to say in response to this issue—large chunks of it concern people who are no longer with us, and on that basis alone there's little more one can do than nod regretfully with the sympathies expressed. Although I did enjoy John Nielsen Hall's travelogue, and am even slightly envious at him for having penetrated the Taklamakan Desert—the Silk Road (so-called—there were actually lots of different routes from Asia to the west, some of them by sea) is something of an

interest of ours, and indeed the year after his visit to China Judith and I were in what was then Soviet Central Asia, visiting some of their Silk Road cities (Samarkand and Bukhara). I have no idea whether tourism to that region is still possible—Uzbekistan in particular is an unpleasant dictatorship, so one probably wouldn't want to visit it on principle (because one's money would simply be helping prop it up).

JOHN NIELSEN HALL

Thank you for a brilliant issue. I never knew Calvin Demmon or Sidney Coleman, but the writings on Calvin pictured an early fannish existence well familiar to just about any other fan, and this was an appreciation of the guy and his fanac that made an absorbing read. Greg Benford's "Remembering Sid" is a very fine article and apprises me of things I never knew—namely that a prominent physicist was a fan, and that Greg himself has a background in physics! Call me ignorant; many do.

Dan's art is just so fab, and I'm only sorry that *Trap Door* is so small, because I would love to see his illustration for "The Tomb" at A4 size, or even bigger. Dick Lupoff's article was stimulating enough to make consider reading Lovecraft again—I haven't tried him since my teenage years.

In the lettercol, Milt Stevens gives sage advice about how to be less grumpy in our old age, to wit: avoid the news as much as possible. Great idea, but have you tried it in this day and age of rolling twenty four hour news channels, global TV and the internet? If you get in the car, and you put the radio on, sooner or later there's going to be a news bulletin. You sit at your computer to do some work, and one of your many buddies sends an e-mail—"Did you see this?"—with a link to a story on a news site, be it a newspaper or the BBC. Admittedly, I don't really try to get away from it. I eat my breakfast while the BBC's pappy breakfast news program passes before my eyes, usually with lots of stuff on health, crime and domestic politics to raise my blood pressure a notch or so. And, heaven forgive me, I tend to end the day with a slab of News 24, as well. Why do I do it? I'm frightened of missing something, I guess. And my willpower has turned to jelly, and I'm basically paralyzed.

TIM MARION

Thanks for *Trap Door* 25. I turned to the letters section first, since that's my favorite section of most fanzines. Lots of letters from unfamiliar names, but I don't know if that's because they're new fans or just old veterans from before my time. Knowing *Trap Door*, I suspect the latter. *{You would be right—not a single new fan in the lot.}* They all seem to understand what you're trying to do with a hard copy fanzine, too.

It was a delight to read of Michael Dobson's meeting with Stan Lee. I always had the impression Stan was a really nice guy, just judging from the two times he wrote me many years ago (once at the age of 10 he wished me happy birthday and sent me a no-prize!, and again when I was 35 and I was working in barter advertising and I wrote him about business). He was kind and gracious both times.

You mention, in your reply to A. Langley Searles, about a small collection of Bloch postcards you have, and idly speculate that you may have to sell them in your dotage. I too wonder about such things—like, would it be ethical to sell post cards and letters written to me by L. Sprague de Camp and E. Hoffmann Price? Somehow, I almost feel not (despite the fact that Price actually had published one of the letters he wrote me). *{Once you reach your dotage you may reconsider, all depending on how desperate are your circumstances.}*

I celebrate with you that you initiated such a successful fan into fandom as Calvin Demmon. I wish I had achieved that kind of success. I did grow up with a "media friend" whom I tried to convert into fandom, but he looked down his nose at fanzines, despite his frequently stated wish to be a horror writer. As a result of my fanac, I developed a much greater facility for writing than he ever did. (He's someone who would probably drool over your Robert Bloch postcards, whom he said was his favorite writer.)

I remember, and celebrate, Calvin for not giving me any bullshit. In a fandom where I was trying desperately to get locs on my FAPazine, I would ask dozens of people, "If I send you my fanzine, will you please write me a loc?" And every single one of them responded with, "Why, of course!" But don't you know I would never get a letter from such people, despite their

promise? I wrote Calvin Demmon and wrote him the same thing. From him, I got a refreshing answer, “It sounds like a good idea, but I’m afraid it would fall down in practicality. I already have too many things here that I’ve been meaning to read and get to. As a matter of fact, sometimes I find myself wishing for one of those hurricanes like I hear you guys have on the East Coast, to come and just sweep it all away. Instead, all we get are earthquakes that shake everything around a bit and then I still have the same stuff, only I have to go to the trouble of reorganizing it all again.”

In your first reply to Mark Plummer, regarding retirement, you say, “When the entire day... can be categorized as ‘free time,’ the need to focus and prioritize becomes more of an imperative than pre-retirement.” I guess I’ll have to take your word for it. I know in my case, if I didn’t have a deadline of when to get to work, I would probably laze around for much of the day and waste it. By contrast, when I’m working I try frantically to get all my personal stuff done when I come home.

Dan Steffan’s art on Dick Lupoff’s “There’s A Long, Long Trail A-Windin’” makes me think he’s a great, undiscovered HPL artist!

JAY KINNEY

This looks like an excellent issue, full of writing either about or by those slightly older fans whom I tend to think of as the Elder Gods. Spa fon! But, as is my wont, the only way I can keep my momentum and actually write an LoC is to do it before I get bogged down in reading the zine at hand.

Thus, let me concentrate on matters such as your remarkable page numbering system. This concern was triggered by my thumbing through the issue and spying the caricature of someone at the top of the “North Beach Nights” piece by John D. Berry. Hmmm, I said to myself, who is this supposed to be? Surely not John D. Berry? I’ve never seen him in a tie in my life—and believe me, I’ve seen plenty of Mr. Berry, though usually in the tavern at the corner. And that doesn’t quite seem like his beard. So, can it be Calvin Demmon? I’m handicapped here by last having seen Mr. Demmon back in, oh, 1972 or thereabouts.

So, then I thought, maybe I can triangulate on this identity riddle by figuring out who drew

it. As an artist, I have the super power of mentally reverse-engineering other artist’s styles, often enabling me to deduce just who a caricature is supposed to be, when the art itself provides no clue.

So, through my keen powers of observation, I immediately trimmed the possible artists down to two: Dan Steffan or Grant Canfield. But which? This is where colophon artist credits come in handy and, if one wants to be old fashioned, page numbers.

So, merrily I skipped to the contents page—the day’s marching being done with—and saw: aha! “North Beach Nights” is on page 11. Of course, I couldn’t actually tell that by looking on page 11, because the first actual page number on an actual page turned out to be page 24. Whoa! WTF! Aha, there’s another of those rascals on page 30, then a nice long gap before another one on page 40, and that was the last of that. Three pages numbers in a 60-page fanzine, *that’s not too many*!!

But back to the artist mystery. If “North Beach Nights” is indeed on page 11 as the contents says, then I merely need to look at the artist credits to ascertain who the culprit was. Hmmm. Well, Grant ostensibly has one on page 14 and Dan’s illos only start on page 16, or so these pesky credits say. Well, did anyone have art on page 11? No, sir!

Well, shoot. Perhaps we can figure this out another way. Let’s see, the Rotsler *Hot Shit* illo is on page 13, according to the credits. And the “North Beach Nights” piece starts two pages before that—so, voila! we are back on page 11, which is a cul-de-sac.

So, I’m forced to abandon my left brain and go all right brain on you. I intuit that this is art by Dan (cf. the parallel lines and beady eyes) and it is supposed to be of Calvin, because it really doesn’t look like Johnny D. to me. Apologies to Master Steffan, if I’ve guessed wrong and it actually is John. *{Your deduction is correct—it’s Calvin drawn by Dan, and snipped from Dan’s centerfold heading for Calvin’s article in Trap Door No. 21. And you do make a compelling case for page numbers—or at least more of them—but this is my affectation and I’m sticking with it. Other than “problems” such as this, how hard can it be to find something in a mere sixty pages!? On the other hand, my bad for not properly crediting Dan.}*

Such is how we amuse ourselves around here on a grey afternoon in February. My horoscope today said I shouldn’t drink caffiene, but I had a latte anyway, this LoC being the ill-fated love child of my ignoring the stars.

On other matters, excellent letter col, with the biggest blast of egoboo I’ve received in years, for which I thank one and all—with the exception of Mike Glicksohn, who seems to managed a detailed LoC commenting on every single thing in the issue except my rant. Bah. He must still be miffed at my mocking *Energumen* 33 years ago with that “Uh oh, itchy scalp!” cover for *Syndrome*. It’s water under the bridge, I say, and I forgive you.

There’s also the little matter of Dale Speirs’ LoC taking issue with my annoyance at the P.O.’s package weight rules. I bow to his superior expertise on the history of mail balms (note to editor: word alteration to avoid NSA dragnet) and I am sure he is right that Kaczynski’s 18-year campaign had something to do with those “idiotic security precautions.” And perhaps up in Canada the postal authorities had this weight limit and counter drop-off rule decades ago. But all I know is that here in overcast San Francisco they didn’t start up with this rule before a mere few years ago, and that was after the anthrax letter scare and after 9/11. The ultimate irony of all this, I think, is that the post office is busily making postage stamps obsolete or at least insecure. Tut tut.

WE ALSO HEARD FROM:

JOHN D. BERRY (“I think it’s one of your best issues. And not just because it’s got a piece of mine in it.”), **PAMELA BOAL** (“I never met or corresponded with Calvin Demmon and it is obvious from this issue of *Trap Door* that it was my loss. One thing always makes me sad about obituaries—why don’t we tell people how much we appreciate them while they are alive?”), **RICH COAD** (“I wanted to be sure to compliment Dan Steffan on those superb illustrations for Dick Lupoff’s article. ‘The Tomb’ especially struck me as among the finest Steffan work I’ve seen. It’s very evocative; with the gnarled oak in the background I am reminded a bit of Santa Rosa’s Rural Cemetery. If I ever see a horse and cart there when taking Bertie for a walk you can bet I will flee in gibbering terror now.”), **GRANIA DAVIS**, **MOG DECARNIN**

(The Sid Coleman memories were fascinating. ‘Stupidity leads to adventure.’ Hmm! Maybe that’s why we’re *here*.), **KEN FAIG** (“I found Calvin’s account of his visit to Philip K. Dick interesting. It’s sad that such a talented man (Dick) was so troubled. I recently wrote Dick up for *The Fossil*, since he was a juvenile publisher.”), **JOYCE KATZ**, **HOPE LEIBOWITZ**, **LLOYD PENNEY** (space being short here, please see <http://lloydpenney.livejournal.com/2008/04/16/> for Lloyd’s LoC), **YVONNE ROUSSEAU** (“The most recent *Trap Doors* seem the ideal of what a fanzine should be. Not only is the reading matter full of fascination; not only does the lay-out make one purr; but as Terry Jeeves commented, the size is perfect and the hard copy makes it much easier to read and reread than an electronic fanzine.”), **TARAL WAYNE** and **HENRY WELCH**.

