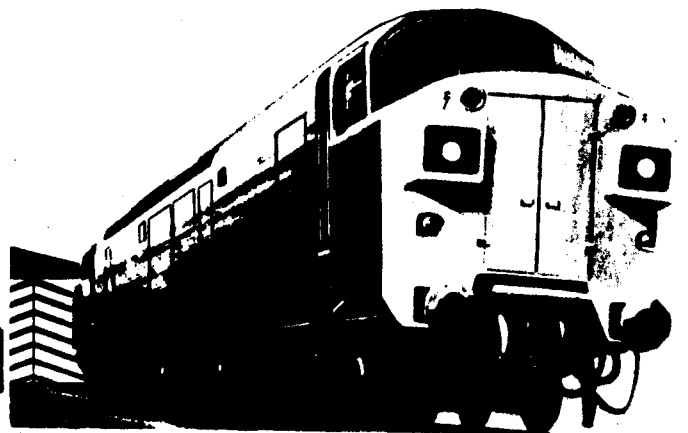
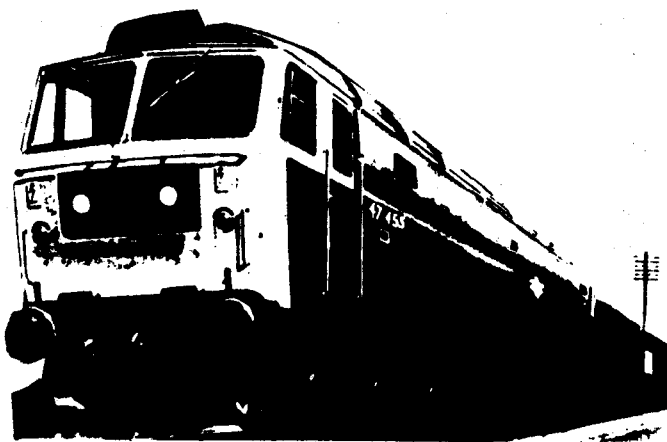


# WALLBANGER 6



# WALLBANGER 6

THE BRITISH RAIL SPECIAL

MAY 1982

(Yes, I know it was due in February, but since it's a British Rail special, I couldn't very well be on time, now could I.)

From: Eve Harvey, 43 Harrow Road, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 3QH  
Available for the usual, or 20p in stamps, to anyone who's foolish enough to want to read it.

<u>Contents</u>	<u>Page</u>
Unemployment Figures Plummet Eve Harvey	1
On the Beaten Track Chris Bailey	3
Living the Paranormal Life Allan Sutherland	7
On Heroes John Jarrold	9
Meanderings of a Sick Mind Eve Harvey	12
A Case of Conscience Steve Green	14
Letters United Artists	16

## INTERLUDES

The British Rail anecdotes come to you courtesy of Darroll Pardoe. The horoscopes I present to you in the hope they'll give you as much fun as they did me - try matching them up with people you know. Before you ask, NO I'm not telling which one applies to me. They come courtesy of a friend at work who gave me a birthday card containing them all. For the other snippets, I'd like to thank Brian Smith and Roy Macinski.

This issue is dedicated to Chris Bailey, whose article gave me the theme for the magazine this time (and I'm still waiting for the survey of BR toilets, Ian!). When I was producing Wallbanger 5, I had the feeling it was taking me over, and that sensation has persisted even more strongly with W6; like topsy it just grewed and grewed. Many thanks to all the contributors and apologies to Alan Ferguson - your article will be in next time, promise.

\*\*\*\*\*

## CANCER

June 21 - July 22

You are a very patient person. You can fall asleep waiting for things to happen. You have a keen memory and often recite boring, obscure things to your friends. Cancers are easily influenced and many have actually drowned when told to go jump in the lake.

## UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURES PLUMMET

Yes, if you hadn't already heard you must be deaf since we were shouting it so loudly from any convenient rooftop, JOHN HAS A JOB!!! After a mere 50 weeks' sojourn as a househusband, someone has been daft enough to take a risk on him. So, once again Wallbanger heralds dramatic changes in the Harvey household - good ones this time, though. Hopefully we've now passed the turning point and the world had better look out - no longer are we going to be 'the other people' that all disasters befall, you've got to find some other suckers.

You'll be pleased to know, however, that the Harvey Law, as expounded in Wallbanger 4 'It Never Rains.... But it Pours' is still as strong as ever; the shock to the world system would have been too great if everything went perfectly for us. When John was asked to resign from BOC, he not only lost his job but his company car as well. For several weeks we suffered the rigours of public transport but decided this was cutting into our drinking time far too much and so pooled our pennies to buy what is euphemistically termed a 'car'. Being somewhat penniless at this time, our purchase was a rather old, decrepid heap obviously pulled from retirement because it, like many pensioners today, couldn't survive on state benefits and decided to take a part-time job ferrying us around. It was quite sprightly for its age and managed to pull us, plus various guests and BSFA printing over to Reading every two months; it took us to several watering places at frequent intervals and, unfortunately, got me to the tube station during the rail strike. The last straw, however, was carrying five reasonably well-built people plus luggage down to Dover when it knew we were due to spend a couple of drunken days in sunny Boulogne-sur-Mer, but it was to be left in a multi-storey car park in Dover. It was well-mannered enough to get us there, but let its feelings be known in no uncertain terms by attempting to poison us on the way down. There was this little hole in the engine, you see, through which it took great pleasure in spraying oil onto the block. Now if you've any knowledge of these things, you'll know that the engine block gets rather warm, and when it gets hot oil burns with a delightful odour and thick blue smoke - so we had progressed from providing a smoke screen behind, to having one in the car as well. Opening the windows was our downfall since this succeeded in providing a slip-stream to draw the fumes up through the holes in the floor, but being ignorant we didn't realise this. Had we but known, keeping the windows shut would have kept the interior clear and merely increased the discomfort of any travellers foolish enough to stay behind us on the journey.

Enough is enough, however, and when the Viva became disconsolate enough to start breaking down at 3 a.m. it had to go. My persuasive powers were set at full blast, and dear Mr Barclay could do nothing less than lend me the money to buy a newer car and soon after we became the proud owners of a bright red Renault 16 which not only went without fumes, but had electric windows too! What fun. Ten days after taking delivery of our pride and joy, John was offered this job and, guess what, he got a company car as well. So now we are the proud owners of two cars, neither of which will fit in the garage with all the printing equipment. Still, who's complaining.

Another drawback to John finding gainfull (i.e. paid) employment is that he is rather busy. Since he was unable to meet my deadline for the last Wallbanger you can imagine my chances of getting him to write something for me now. But I'm determined to succeed, so watch this space.

\*\*\*\*\*

### PISCES

February 19 - March 20

You are a kind and gentle person. Your sensitive nature has given you the reputation of being a pansy and a creep. Your lack of ambition is directly related to your lack of talent. Pisces make good ushers.

Following Arnold Akien's article in Wallbanger 5, I have been more aware of the amazing powers held by some of my friends, two of whom exhibit their strange abilities in the following articles. Taking the second one first (I always did like to do things the difficult way), Allan Sutherland is obviously only too aware of his own power, but I'm not sure Chris Bailey is aware of the awesome power he possesses.

'On The Beaten Track' arrived unsolicited during December and you have him to thank (or blame) for the theme of this issue. I read his article and enjoyed it, but thought nothing more until January. Remember January? It was that white month when British Rail, being a considerate employer, decided it would be best to keep as many of their trains as possible in the sheds so that they wouldn't catch cold, and the drivers at home for the same reason. Aha, I thought, this is going to make Chris's article extremely relevant when it appears next month. But lo, the snows were closely followed by THE STRIKE. Those of you who are dependent on British Rail will have fond memories of the strike; the friendships struck up whilst pinned to the back wall of the guard's van with 50 other commuters, vainly hoping that this train will go, unlike the other 3 you've just been in (at this stage it didn't matter where it was going, so long as it moved). What fond memories I retain such as turning up at London Bridge on a day when the trains promised to run to find no details whatsoever on the indicator board; deciding to be clever and catch the tube to Morden only to have a 45 minute wait for the next one which was somewhat more than empty; arriving at Morden and ringing home to call up my friendly taxi service to find no answer because John had gone to the railway station to meet me; deciding to catch a bus to Sutton since that's only 2 miles from home but having a further 50 minute wait and finding on arrival at Sutton that John was still waiting at Carshalton Beeches station; staggering into the nearest pub to down as much alcohol as possible before phoning home again. On that occasion the 12-mile journey home only took 4½ hours so I shouldn't really complain. All commuters have horror stories of a similar and even worse nature.

To get back to Chris, the only thing that made the strike bearable was the thought of how topical Chris's article would now be. Then I stopped to think for a minute; could Chris have powers he knows little of? Could it be that, having written an article about British Rail stoppages his psionic powers were brought into play to make the whole thing up-to-date and relevant? Surely it couldn't be mere coincidence? I've no answer to the questions, but if he sends you a piece on houses falling down, plagues or atomic war, make sure your life insurance policies are fully paid up!

\*\*\*\*\*  
 The following is my horoscope as appeared in The Standard on Thursday, 1st April (i.e. just one week before Channelcon):

"Financial troubles are bound to loom this month...

For some time you have been trying to keep a business arrangement from floundering, but all your efforts and sacrifices seem to have gone unnoticed. Around April 9 you are likely to realise that a parting of the ways is the only solution....."

\*\*\*\*\*

GEMINI

May 21 - June 20

You are very exuberant and enjoy expressing yourself. Your friends think of you as a busy-body and a bore. You brag about your versatility but down deep you know you can do nothing well. Most Geminis are unemployed.

# On The Beaten Track

Chris Bailey

"The train standing on Platform 12 will leave from Platform 12." Thus, mockingly, did Eve conclude the last Wallbanger with an announcement which she heard at London Bridge station. But, I thought, why scoff? Much useful information is secreted in that apparently fatuous statement. You have been told that a train is there, which is a start. You have been assured that it will leave, which is comforting - though note that any mention of a specific time is carefully avoided. And the train will leave from the platform which it is at! Now this isn't as daft as it seems, as any devotee of the 6.38 Crystal Palace train from Platform 7 will know. Regularly at 6.36, the expectant are notified that in fact it will leave from Platform 16; the ensuing scenes make Rorke's drift look like an egg-and-spoon race.

But why write about British Rail? Boring old Furious of Faversham getting it off his chest again? I don't think so. I once heard a Southern Region spokesman rather smugly observe that commuters have a love-hate relationship with their train services; this is quite true. We moan, but we're all addicts really. I couldn't live without my daily fix. Besides which, I claim to know more about the machinations (or, looking at that word again, lack of them) of British Rail than about most things.

Perhaps it is that my distant ancestors would have known the pulse and body of the soil, the eternal rhythm of the seasons; in place of that, I have only the announcements at London Bridge with which to measure out this beat. Winter is the season of ice-bound immobility, as if the whole system was devised before the advent of sub-zero temperatures. Spring is the season of industrial action, when the drivers realise that the winter fare increases aren't filtering their way. Summer is the season of staff shortages; the idle buggers have opted for a day in the deckchair in preference to ferrying me home. In autumn, the trains can't run because of squashed leaves on the line; an excuse of such lunatic plausibility that it inclines me to believe that Southern Region have got Bob Shaw on the payroll.

This yearly litany may be spiced by a peppering of other falsehoods, kept in reserve to cover unexpected emergencies such as sunshine in winter. One of my favourites is, "Cancelled due to vandalism at Tunbridge Wells". Vandalism at Tunbridge Wells! Is this what life in the West has come to? Penge Tunnel is another old standby. Consisting of half a mile of impenetrable blackness into which no unauthorised observer may pry, Penge Tunnel is perfect for the fabrication of off-the-cuff myths and we stand for hours at the station imagining plucky BR maintenance men, clad in armour of phosphorescent orange, grappling with cave-ins, flash-floods and troglodyte vandals. And only this week, I heard the ultimate in irrefutable logic - "The late arrival of the train at Platform 15 is due to the failure of your service".

My vast authority in these matters stems from a period I spent sharing a rented house with a train driver. I was his constant and willing pupil. The first thing he taught me was that every cog and wheel of Southern Region is exquisitely reliant upon the faultless functioning of all the others, and that a ticket-inspector's stubbing his toe at Brockley might cause chaos from Peckham to Portsmouth.

\*\*\*\*\*

VIRGO

August 23 - September 22

You are very methodical and like things in order. On the other hand, your personal appearance is usually a mess. You think of yourself as discriminating, while others think of you as cheap and selfish. You are amoral.

Once I learned this, I went to great lengths to ensure that he attended his daily employment; however, his one aim in life was to get through the week having sat in as few actually mobile trains as possible. One day I was shocked to discover him sunning himself in the garden when I knew that he should have been at Selhurst depot hours before.

"Tried to get home last night and the bleeders had cancelled the last bloody train," he said. "Took me two sodding hours to get back - too bleeding tired to go to work."

I remonstrated, I pleaded, I pointed out that at this very moment his colleagues were depending upon him to get them home and that this attitude, if repeated, could lead to the complete cessation of all activity on the railways. All to no avail.

For railwaymen are a breed apart. Their phlegmatism in times of adversity is legendary. I once sat opposite three of them in a train we had all waited forty minutes for. We made painful progress towards Victoria and finally halted within tantalising proximity of our destination - and waited. We shunted backwards towards Brixton for a while and then forwards again to our previous position, where we waited some more. One of the railwaymen eventually went to the window to cast a professional eye over the situation.

"We can't get in because there's a train on Platform 7 and we're meant to come in on Platform 7", he reported.

We hung on his next words as he rearranged himself comfortably in his seat.

"The reason there's a train on Platform 7", he continued, "is that I'm meant to be driving it". He sighed contentedly. "We could be here for weeks.

He wasn't exaggerating greatly.

Not that my live-in buddy hated the railways. He doted on them and big treat night in our harmonious household was when he got out his projector and subjected us to home movies of his ruling passion. We watched jerky sequences of shunting at Southampton and expresses whistling through Banbury (no mere child of Southern Region, he), all interspersed with a loving commentary on bogies and diesel generator units. He had all the gear. There was a super peaked cap, in which I used to secretly strut before the mirror. And the books! Endless volumes which detailed every yard of the track in South London; where the signals are, how fast you can go through New Beckenham, immense maps of the points at Clapham Junction. A splendid bible, called something like The Appendix To The Working Timetable, which is Not To Be Shown To Unauthorised Personnel, and you can see why, because it tells you things such as that if the heating fails then the guard is to bring passengers hot drinks at two-hourly intervals at no extra charge. And such was this man's corporate loyalty that I could storm in after a sweaty evening spent waiting at Cannon Street for a Hayes train and I could scream and rant and foam at the mouth and he would take it all meekly, even though he had spent the day innocently chuffing between Victoria and Gatwick. Such devotion! It was just that he didn't like actually doing anything.

He regarded his fare-paying passengers as an awkward inconvenience. I have to admit to sometimes sharing his view; there are just too many of us for the number of trains provided. You do not love your fellow-traveller when his head is wedged in your armpit and his umbrella has you skewered to the door. But I think that this is the place to dispel that popular notion that commuters never speak

to each other. If you catch what used to be the 18.02, was briefly the 18.04, and is now the 18.03 from London Bridge to Epsom Downs, you may be lucky enough to bag a seat next to Eve Harvey (though she tells me that she's changing to the 17.47 owing to the somewhat less fluid nature of its timetabling) and single-handedly she will prove that the art of conversation survives on Southern Region.

"Hullo. How's Focus coming on?"

"Bloody awful. How's Wallbanger?"

"Terrible."

I retire behind The Guardian. Eve snaps open her inevitable vast black Samsonite and out cascade dozens of duplicated magazines with titles like Salmonella 7 and Fruitbat 8. It's the quickest method I've seen of getting a compartment to yourself.

All public transport tends towards the greatest possible inefficiency at the greatest possible expense. If Bailey's Law holds true, then this is indeed the Age of the Train. No, I'm a great advocate of the railways really, especially when compared to the awful motor-car, though I won't subject you to the tedious arguments as BR have taken out a very expensive series of advertisements in the national press to do just that - money which, incidentally, would be better spent in preventing the contents of the Gentlemen's toilet at Sydenham station from flowing out over the platform, but we won't go into that.

What I really love, you see, is the contrast between the Saville-fronted image which they try to project and the glorious British actuality of it all. However, all honour to Southern Region. They've given up trying to pretend that the service is any good and instead have produced an intermittent series of leaflets which appeal to our common sense and which endeavour to explain why things are as they are. One of these told us all about the brake-blocks; these blocks apparently cost £5 each, there are sixty of them on a typical train, and they wear out very quickly if the train is made to stop gradually. This explanation now accounts for the daily horror of suddenly realising that the white blur you catch in the corner of your eye is in fact the signs of London Bridge station hurtling past. You brace yourself for a bloody disaster at the buffers when, with about a second to go, every single brake on the train is slammed on hard. At this point experienced travellers duck in order to protect themselves from the rain of Samsonites which are catapulted from the luggage racks; a split-second later comes the nastiest bit, when the front teeth of all the standing passengers meet those luggage racks with a sort of concerted crunching noise.

It is good to see that in the future British Rail intends to maintain these standards by means of introducing the Advanced Passenger Train which will achieve similar carnage and mayhem by the novel device of subjecting travellers to sudden and random 45-degree fluctuations from the horizontal. Another feature of the Advanced Passenger Train (one can't help feeling that they're courting disaster by calling it that) which has not yet been noised about much, is that the power unit for some reason cannot be placed directly behind the driver's cabin but has to sit in the middle of the train and such are the malignant radiations emitted by this power unit that passengers will not be allowed to walk through it. This means that each half-train must be provided with its own guard and buffet, at a time when BR are trying to cut down on excess manpower. I wonder which half they will put the toilet in?

And as for the distant future - well, the possibilities are endless...

"British Space regrets to announce that the 16.48 from Procyon will be running approximately 12 years late. This is due to cyborg shortages/vandalism in the Crab Nebula/squashed sort of green octopussy things on the launching ramp. We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause, and hope that your oxygen will last out...."

There now appears a short interlude to allow you time to go and make a cup of tea, or whatever else you used to do when the good old potter was doing his stuff (what, you can't remember that???)..

In December, my favourite columnist - Observer - in the Financial Times was interested in Germany for some reason, as you can see from the following two extracts, and France doesn't get away lightly either.

#### MARKING TIME

American Express cards may well say more about you than cash every can - but they seem to be having a few linguistic difficulties in East Germany, as my man in the shadow of the wall discovered when he tried to pay his bill with plastic money at East Berlin's Palast Hotel.

"I'm sorry sir, we can't take this" said the cashier, cheerfully oblivious to the publicity material on her desk proclaiming a warm welcome to American Express cardholders.

It emerged that while the Palast is happy to accept American Express cards issued in Britain, the United States or indeed almost anywhere else, it does not welcome those issued in West Germany. Which was, unfortunately, the parentage of the card presented by my colleague - though American Express in London tells me that it knows nothing of this territorial discrimination.

Some gentle political pressure was tried: "I paid a bill in Moscow with this last year," said my man, "and if it is good enough for Mr Brezhnev, surely it is good enough for Mr Honecker?" Quite how diplomatic this approach was I can hardly say, but the hotel reception remained unmoved.

The only answer was to pay in cash - Deutschmarks. Which it does not take a financial wizard to deduce were also issued in West Germany. Nonetheless, cash would do nicely, Sir. Funny business, politics.

16/12/81

#### FOREIGN EXCHANGE

A colleague in West Germany reports a sour joke much enjoyed in the Bundesbank, which reflects that conservative institution's attitude towards the Socialist policies of neighbouring President Mitterrand:-

President Mitterrand had just taken deliver of a new and very powerful computer, programmed with political and financial data, for his private use.

What, he asked it first of all, would be the French inflation rate in five years' time? The computer buzzed and clicked, and after a few seconds came up with its answer: "Zero." Happy but puzzled, the President asked what the unemployment rate would be in five years' time. The computer thought once more, and replied: "Zero." Cheering as this was, Mitterrand began to fear that the machine might be defective. So he put a simpler third question. What would be the price of a baguette in five years' time? "One rouble, 80 kopeks," came the reply.

17/12/81

DAILY TELEGRAPH (Wednesday, April 28 1982)

"It's a crime for women to be ill in this country, and there should be a law against it," she said.



# *Living the Paranormal Life*

*Allan Sutherland*

I had a very extraordinary experience last week. I'd been planning to leave London for a few days and go to visit relations in Yorkshire. My suitcase was packed, my stomach was steeling itself against the forthcoming depredations of British Rail catering, as was my wallet, and I was halfway out of the door when, like the faithful old 'B' movie extra that it is, my phone rang. An urgent request from a friend: can I come round and see you now? Yes, I am desperate, must talk to someone who understands.

I abandoned my plans, put down the case, and left the train to go without me. And that's where the surprising bit comes in. That very train, which I came within a hairsbreadth of catching, got safely to its destination. It's true, I tell you! It wasn't derailed, didn't run into the back of a stationary goods train, no bridge collapsed under its weight. The train arrived safely in Sheffield without loss of life or even minor injury to any of its passengers or crew.

Stuff and nonsense! I hear you expostulating. Who does he think we are? We know what happens to trains which people change their minds about at the last moment. We've read about it dozens of times. And what about that man we met in the pub, the one who was going to go into London to go shopping, but didn't, and that very afternoon a bomb went off in Oxford Street and somebody was killed? You can't tell us he didn't have a narrow escape!

By this time you're probably thumping the table, and demanding what's got into the editor of a respectable publication like this, for her to be allowing such cranky nonsense, contravening all the laws of science and journalism, into her magazine. But just hold on a moment! Can you really be so sure? You do know what they say about truth being stranger than fiction, don't you? You do understand that, just because a particular event falls outside your experience, that doesn't mean it can't happen?

Well then, I tell you: against all expectations and contrary to all the probabilities, that train I missed got safely to its destination, thus depriving me of the chance to tell my friends and acquaintances about how near I came to being part of a massive railway disaster. All I came near to was getting to Sheffield on time, and I didn't even manage to do that.

It's difficult to believe, I know, but such coincidences, unlikely though they may seem - chances have been estimated at several million to one against - must happen sometimes. I was not oversurprised myself, I must admit, because the fates seem to have held a great deal in store for me in this respect. All my life I have been the victim of such preposterous and unheard-of happenings.

When I was a child, for example, my family moved house, from Newcastle-upon-Tyne to Sheffield. Shortly before we left, the family cat disappeared. We couldn't find her when it came time to leave, and had to leave her behind. You know the rest, of course - how the faithful creature set out, guided by its unerring animal instinct and trekked hundreds of miles to arrive, battered and travel-stained, at the back-door of our new house. Of course you do. Only - and you really won't believe this - it didn't turn out like that. The faithful creature set out all right. It trekked all of three doors up the road, and moved in with the neighbours. My parents had to drive two hundred miles each way to go and collect her.

(For anyone who's a believer in the influence of the environment, I should perhaps

point out that any animal living with my family was at a definite disadvantage as far as navigation was concerned; my dad got lost on the way back to Newcastle.)

Of course there will be those among you who scoff at such stories, claim them to be merely coincidence, or provide 'rational' explanations. But I'm hardened to such criticism. Of course one can find explanations for anything if one is determined to do so, or rely on the old standby of pointing out that the possible ways in which coincidences can occur are so many that it would be very extraordinary indeed if seemingly surprising coincidences did not happen to everybody from time to time. I'm used to having people try to mystify me with probability theory, talking about bridge hands where each player is dealt a complete suit and pointing out that such an event is no more improbable than any other random dealing out of the cards, the only difference being that that particular distribution is more noticeably different from any other. It takes a stern fixity of purpose to refuse to be convinced by such arguments, and to recognise their perpetrators for the doubting Thomases that they are, products of a materialistic age which turns its gaze away from the deeper and more profound secrets of the universe. But not for nothing do I share a publisher's list with that great seeker after Truth, Eric von Daniken.

But there are some experiences which even the most sceptical of individuals would have trouble explaining away as mere coincidence. Consider the following. Not long ago, I was sitting at home when suddenly, for no apparent reason, into my mind came flooding a memory of an old friend whom I had not seen for over ten years. It was quite clear to me that this was a message of some sort, a communication from I knew not where. At the time I had no idea what the significance of this might be. But only a week later, I was again sitting at home, at the very same time of day, when there was a knock at the front door. I went to answer it. What happened next is truly incredible. I opened the door and there, only a week after that sudden, vivid memory had come to me, stood a man from the Electricity Board, come to read my meter. I still don't know what's happened to my friend. Let the cynics try to explain that one away!

I could quote innumerable examples of such incidents that have happened to me personally. Like the time I saw a picture of Yuri Geller in the newspaper, and all my cutlery remained stubbornly inflexible for weeks afterwards. Or the time someone did a Tarot reading for me, and stated in incredibly precise detail things that nobody but myself could have known weren't true about me. It's easy to dismiss such things from outside, but when they've actually happened to you - and continue to go on happening - it's hard to deny that there's a deeper significance.

I know that I'm out of tune with the spirit of the times in asserting that such experiences are a real and important part of the world in which we live. There will be many who wish that I had not brought such matters to the attention of the public. Despite all the evidence I have just cited, many of you who read this will wish to deny the truth of what I am saying. To such people I say: cast off the shackles of conformist thinking! Open your eyes to what is there to be seen! You can find such experiences in your own life, if you only have the courage to look for them. All around you there is a world that is far more wonderful than that which you foolishly construct with your narrow-minded reactionary beliefs. Get out and find it!

\*\*\*\*\*

No matter how many others deride you, Allan, I wholeheartedly believe you. Unfortunately, now matter how hard I try, no similar incidents have ever occurred to me. Mundane and humdrum are the words to aptly describe my life. For instance, the other week I was sitting on a train (remember them?) reading a copy of Vector when the so-called fast train decided to stop at all stations. At one unscheduled halt, a young man entered and sat down next to me. Now, if this was Allan, not only would the train not have stopped at Brockley in the first place, but the

stranger would most probably have merely passed comment on the revolting yellow of the cover or, even more extraordinarily, taken no notice whatsoever. No such luck for me - I encountered the run-of-the-mill response, the stranger appeared to take an interest in what I was reading and after about 10 minutes asked if I knew anything about this new sf magazine that Dave Langford was connected with. There followed a discussion about Extro (the magazine in question) and I learnt that he was a fan who originally hailed from Manchester and who'd been active until the early 1970's, knowing many of the people still around today. For those of you who might know him, it was Peter Colley.

I wish I lived the exciting life of the unexpected like Allan!

But now we move onto the second 'uncommissioned' piece (well, when it arrives two years after the original request, it can hardly be called commissioned can it). I first met John several years ago now at a Greg Pickersgill party and I can safely say that he has a way with a whisky glass and with a 'bloody hell!' that would be difficult to surpass!

## *On Heroes*

*John Jarrold*

### 1

I suppose my first hero was George. George and I lived in the same block of flats in South London when I was five or six. He was about a year older than me, and we'd been mates for a year or so when he had some piddling problem, a broken leg I think it was. Anyway, he got to hospital and found that in the next bed was Johnny Leach. For those of you too young to remember, Johnny Leach was the world table tennis champion in the early fifties. Naturally enough they got to talking, and Leach promised George that if he worked really hard at getting back on his feet then he would coach him at table tennis on 'Seeing Sport', a programme Leach was doing for ITV. So the weeks went by, and eventually there he was, a boy who I knew well, on nationwide television. Well, wouldn't that have made him your hero?

A year later George moved away, but for that year he and I were inseparable, probably owing to my ideas of reflected glory. No, I lie, he was a good mate. I have a theory that one doesn't have heroes until a reasonable self-image is assimilated (Christ, doesn't that sound pseud) and mine came into being somewhere about the time I started school. At primary school your evenings were your own, and I filled mine with comics, TV and toy soldiers. All of which brings me on to my next lot of heroes.

### 2

Luckily, one of my cousins has worked for W H Smiths for many years and because of the discounts he got I was allowed to have seven comics weekly: Eagle, River, Wizard, Victor, Hotspur, Lion and Tiger. I never went for Beano or Dandy; they didn't have enough war stories or thrilling adventures. So I read Dan Dare, Alf Tupper - The Tough of the Track, The Wolf of Kabul, Wilson... the list is endless.

\*\*\*\*\*

#### AQUARIUS

January 20 - February 18

You are an amiable person who likes to be popular. You need to be around others because you cannot stand yourself. When alone, you do weird things to your body. Sex change operations are common among Aquarians.

However, I suppose my favourite at that time was Matt Braddock, VC. Braddock was a wartime bomber pilot, a sergeant, and I avidly lapped up his adventures (told by his navigator, George Bourne). I was bought an Airfix kit of the Lancaster, Braddock's favourite aircraft, and when it was made I'd spend hours sitting with it in my bedroom, imagining myself on raids over Germany, helping Matt (he was Matt to me, of course) to win another bar for his VC. In fact, a lot of my time between the ages of five and fifteen was spent imagining. Being an only child, I was left to my own devices a fair bit, and a vivid imagination was very useful. I incorporated my heroes into my own life wherever they worked, and thus on Sports Day I would be Alf Tupper or Wilson, yes, Wilson who lived on the Yorkshire moors and ran in a black, woollen leotard. He broke the four minute mile about forty years ago, and won the sprint, high-jump and long-jump on the same day. Me, I couldn't even win the sack race.

Thinking about it, I am amazed that I had faith in these heroes for so long; Tupper and Wilson failed me in athletics; my football idol, Wee Bandie, left me as useful as Jimmy Greaves with one leg; and when I pretended to be the Wolf of Kabul during fights, the big kids still beat me up. Still, at seven I suppose you tend to be trusting.

On TV by this time we had Broderick Crawford in Highway Patrol - "This is Captain Dan Matthews saying Ten-Four until next week"; Have Gun, Will Travel, with Richard Boone; and The Grey Ghost. The Ghost was a Confederate officer in the American Civil War who did terribly brave and noble things every week and I loved him. Well, who knows about the Bill of Rights at seven?

Also around 1959 or 1960 I discovered The Famous Five. Now today, Julian, Dick, Anne, George and Timmy the dog may seem class-ridden, old-hat and anything else you care to say, but twenty-odd years ago they were high in my pantheon when I wanted the company of other children. It got to the point where I imagined that they were in my room at night, and I would talk to them before I went to sleep. My parents got quite worried. But it passed, it passed.

## 3

My early teenage heroes appeared after a change of scene. We moved back to West Wickham, where I'd been born.

I toyed with Superman and Batman for a while, but by the mid-sixties I had come down firmly in favour of Marvel comics. Well, they had Thor, and I was always a sucker for Norse Gods. My dad had a small masonry hammer which I struck repeatedly against the ground, but I never turned into the Thunder God. Maybe I just didn't believe enough. Also from the House of Marvel came Iron Man, Captain America and Giant Man, oh, and a jolly green giant called the Incredible something-or-other.

The Avengers was on TV, and I bought myself a John Steed walking stick which fired small corks or water. This was not popular with my older relations, and ended up being left on top of a wardrobe at a holiday hotel. I really missed that cane. Until I got the air pistol, anyway. The Saint was on TV as well. I had started reading Leslie Charteris's books in about 1963, the same year that the TV series began, and even at ten I could tell that Roger Moore was nobody's idea of Simon Templar. As the sixties progressed I continued reading Saint books and, of course, wrote pastiches whenever a suitable title turned up in English essays at school. Somewhere around 1968 I decided that girls were all right after all, and I modelled my teenage act on the Saint, who was still my main man. I started smoking, and smiling quizzical smiles, all of which got me very little action. There are those who will tell you that my act has changed very little over the years, but I think I carry it off better now than I did at fifteen. Somehow I was always disappointed

that I never met a beautiful girl being threatened by a master criminal, and I think that resulted in a certain lack of sincerity.

4

Since leaving school, heroes seem to have been few and far between. Whether this is the result of an onset of cynicism I don't know. I think I'm the same stupid romantic I always was.

Anyway, the astronauts hold a high place in my esteem probably those of Apollo 13 coming at the apex, but then how do you bring something so unattainable into your own life, especially after sixteen, by which time a certain naivety has made its exit? I played around with the spies of Le Carre and Len Deighton, but they seemed to become more cool and inhuman with each passing book. So, having no modern hero to turn to, I went backwards. Back to Humphrey Bogart, Robert Mitchum and their like. In their days there was still a shop-soiled sense of honour operating, which appeals greatly to me. Leave me with a pack of cigarettes, a bottle of Scotch and video-tapes of Casablanca, The Maltese Falcon and Farewell My Lovely and I'll be as happy as a sandboy. These days my fantasies consist largely of running a nightclub in North Africa or being a private-eye walking the mean streets in search of a scared lady who maybe needs a little loving. The quizzical smile has become more world-weary, but it still has a cigarette in one corner and a glass of whisky approaching fast. I suppose that I ought to face reality head on, but having lived largely through a dream for some years this don't seem like a good time to give up. Excuse me.

"Of all the gin joints in all....."

\*\*\*\*\*

A few days after I had typed this article, John (not this one, the one I'm married to), bought a copy of The Island of Doctor Death etc, and I had intended to read it so that I could follow the article with some linking comment on the book. As usual, the best laid plans etc, and of course I haven't read the relevant stories so cannot insert here the science fiction orientated piece I had intended to balance the general articles.

John's article made me feel very sad, in a peculiar way, because I never had heroes in my youth. It seems strange now, but I honestly didn't and I feel I've missed something by that omission. Some of the fault was my parents', since girls were not supposed to be interested in the type of comics John talks about, and I wasn't interested in reading about girls and their ponies, or boarding-school antics etc. What is even more galling, is the fact that when my mother knew she was pregnant, my father was so sure I was going to be a boy, he started regularly buying comics for me (and I believe they were Eagle). Admittendly it was a stupid thing to do; who ever heard of a two-day old baby reading Dan Dare!, but if you knew my father (even before his accident and subsequent brain damage) you'd understand. The upsetting thing is that when I was born, obviously a girl, he threw them all away! Not only did I miss Dan Dare, but can you imagine what a complete collection of Eagles from about September 1950 to March 1951 would be worth now? It wasn't until I became old enough to read books without pictures, and gained some independence in my reading matter, that I was free to indulge my love of things science-fictional, but by then I was too old to start reading comics again. Hopefully, the growing recognition of the conditioning effects of society on the minds of young children will help the present generation, but I'm not too sure because, unfortunately, the most ardent women's libbers are hardly those who 'settle down to have a family', but these are the very people who are most aware of the situation! So where do we go from here?

# *Meanderings of a Sick*

## *Mind*

*Eve Harvey*

I hate being ill - I'm a terrible patient at the best of times, but even more so with flu; not only do I feel like death, but when I go to bed to get away from it all, my mind won't switch off and I lie there mulling things over for hours. That's what happened the other night. Following long discussions over the phone on points of principle in connection with Channelcon, feeling shattered at trying to be the diplomat when all I wanted was to be allowed to curl up and die, I staggered to bed for some well-earned rest and what happened? I lay there for two hours with my mind turning over and over. What was I thinking about? No, not Channelcon, but women's lib, would you believe!

Women's lib is a topic I tend to avoid discussing, like politics, because it elicits such strong emotions that it's very difficult to actually have a discussion, at best you have a group of people where everyone is attempting to convince the others that their ideas are right (there's something of the missionary in all of us), at worst you get out-and-out war. I suppose many people would label me wishy-washy, but that couldn't be further from the truth; the views I hold I hold very strongly, it's just that I hate extremes, since it is at the extreme that reason tends to get lost. Still, this is rambling - to revert to my sick-bed machinations. I found myself mulling over the whole field of women's lib and my attitudes to it, which automatically led me to ponder my present situation as breadwinner in our family. (Notice how that word, one of the most male-orientated concepts, is in fact neuter in the sense that it doesn't contain 'man' or 'woman', whereas others that can be either, such as chairman, are distinctly masculine? I'd never really noticed it before - same applies to nurse I suppose, since Florence Nightingale that occupation has always been feminine, but the word itself is, in fact, neuter.)

Some people have implied that I'm upholding women's lib principles by being the breadwinner, and expect it to make me more militant. It has, in fact, had almost the reverse effect if anything, and made me appreciate some of the drawbacks of being male, especially if you're a real MCP. This is because of the almost overpowering feeling of responsibility that rests on my shoulders now - the dependency of both John and my father. I am the sole breadwinner; when I changed jobs I was petrified in case I didn't succeed during my probation. What if I didn't have a job in 6 months' time? How would we live? I had to succeed. I had to do as well as possible because my eventual salary depended on it and thus our lifestyle. OK, we would have managed, just as we do now on merely one salary (something I never thought possible when we were both working) and if I lost my job John would have gone out roadsweeping, but that wasn't the point - it was bad enough one of us feeling impelled to do something, both of us under pressure would have been more than twice as bad. Luckily I'm ambitious and wanted to do well, but what about men who aren't ambitious, however, and whose wives either do not want, or cannot work? They must suffer this feeling constantly. I think the major shock was that for the first time in my life I was not a free agent - I could not decide to, say, give up work to study for the PhD I've always hankered after. Not that I ever would, but when the choice is taken out of your hands these things take on more importance than they otherwise would. In similar fashion, I don't want children, but won't have myself sterilised because not being able to is a different matter to deciding not to. Anyway, if this is what men have to go through, I feel for them, especially if they're not as lucky as I am in finding a job they really enjoy doing.

This train of thought led onto the whole topic of equality - it has to be two-way but so often ardent women's libbers don't seem to be able to see both sides. Admittedly there is a battle, just get me talking about the prejudices in the British banking system and it'll make your toes curl, but unfortunately the harder the battle, the more blinkered people's views tend to get. We must look at our own attitudes as well, and be honest rather than idealistic about it. Two examples: firstly nurses. What would women feel about all male nurses on women's wards. When I'm truly honest with myself I have to admit I'd feel happier with female nurses, especially when in a few weeks I have to have a small gynaecological operation, but what about men? Male nurses tend to be largely assigned to specialist wards; who gives any thought to the sensibilities of male patients? I would much rather be given a bed-bath by a female nurse but has anybody even considered what the men might think? Male nannies fall into the same category - what would be the opinion of the general public, other nannies or employers to a man who applied for a live-in children's nanny's job? I know what I would like to think, but I'm sure I would fall short of my ideals if I was a mother interviewing prospective candidates.

Secondly there's secretarial work; I'm sure my idealism would have flown out of the window if I failed to get a secretarial post in preference to a man, but I don't expect them to get upset if I'm angling for a management position. What would be the reaction in a typing pool to a male typist? I've witnessed the reaction to a male telex operator and it just bordered on toleration and only then because he'd learnt his skill in the forces and was used mainly to do late-night shift work because the girls complained about the difficulty in getting home! What would their reaction have been if he was a young man who, like the girls, had attended secretarial college, and made as much noise about late shifts (men get mugged too, you know) or complained that his wife was annoyed at his late working?

I'm not passing judgment as to right or wrong, just pointing out that perhaps we ought to look as much to the prejudices in ourselves as be constantly on the lookout for that in others. In addition, shouldn't the axiom of innocent until proven guilty be applied to everyday life as well as in the courts? One thing that has really got under my skin during the organisation of Channelcon, both from inside the committee and from outsiders, is the willingness to read prejudice into things when they may not necessarily be there - I've had it from men who think that because we are mainly a female committee we must be constantly making a point about women's lib, and I've experienced it from women who cannot understand why I steadfastly refuse to be called either Chairperson or Chairwoman. It seems incomprehensible to some that I consider I'm making a much stronger case for equality by not making an issue of my femininity by insisting on a change in the job-title. Similarly I abhor being referred to as Ms and refused to keep my maiden name when I married. Both these latter decisions were made because I feel I am liberated and don't consider I have to make an issue of it. I am liberated enough to admit in this way that Mrs Eve Harvey is a completely different, and in my view better, animal than Miss Evelyn Simmons ever was, and this metamorphosis ought to be marked. But there again, it could merely be that I'm exceptionally lucky in John. After all, he did offer to change his name to Simmons when we married; I wonder how many other husbands would have done that. So perhaps I am being too hard on those women who do have a fight on their hands, I just wish they would stop trying to impose their views on me. I am as liberated in my social life as I want to be; as for business, that's another matter, but I'm working on it.

\*\*\*\*\*

#### ARIES

March 21 - April 19

You have great energy and are always enthusiastic. Your vivaciousness is nauseating to others. You concentrate on future success to avoid confronting your past and present failures. You have strong relationships with people much younger than yourself.

# A Case of Conscience

Steve Green

It's not often I find myself reading one of Harry Andruschak's diatribes and nodding affirmation; indeed, it's rare that I can summon the stamina to plough through anything longer than a change-of-address notice from him without collapsing into an instant coma...

For once, however, we discover ourselves on the same side of the debating hall. And the subject? The lunatic, destructive fringe now emerging in science fiction fandom.

No, I'm not referring to the inspired insanity of the Astral League or Greg Pickersgill's murderous antics in the British Bulldog arena. Despite the potential for self-induced injury of the former and the certain carnage of the latter, both harm only those foolhardy enough to join in. But in recent years a new element has emerged, a cancer inside sf fandom that already threatens the day-to-day existence of our American counterpart and even now prepares to take up a similar position this side of the Big Pond: violence.

All of us are guilty of the occasional destructive whim at conventions, but there is a difference between the mischievous juvenility of, say, rearranging hotel furniture and the mindless vandalism of the idiots who disabled one of the Royal Angus lifts at Novacon 11 this autumn. A bloody big difference. And if any of you out there can't grasp it, you're as guilty as the morons responsible.

We depend on the goodwill of hotel managements; even in the present economic climate they do not depend on sf fandom. Finding one like the Royal Angus (now well-versed in the social absurdities of the UK's second-largest annual sf event) or the Brighton Metropole (which, as I'm sure Eve can footnote, appears genuinely eager to see us again, no doubt still reeling from the Seacon '79 bar returns) is bloody difficult; trying to find others if the scenes of wanton stupidity now fast becoming commonplace at US cons (assaults on staff, "Logan's Runs" and the like - all described in grotesque detail by Andruschak in Supernova 3) take root in Britain will be nigh on impossible once word gets round. Thankfully, they haven't - yet. But the Novacon 11 incidents (other mechanical victims included the hotel shoe polishers) bode ill for the future; since the first worldcon a half-century ago, America has taken the lead in fannish endeavours - it would be a sad day indeed for British fandom if we chose to ignore the warnings and follow them on this occasion.

No-one's saying that we need to act like bloody killjoys and turn cons into three-day insomnia cures - many of us only attend them for the party spirit anyway - but every freedom comes complete with a built-in responsibility. Hold room parties, by all means; just call a halt when the guests start kicking the shit out of the furniture and breaking the windows. Sleep a couple of friends in your room if you want; just stop short of extremes like camping ten fellow Americans on your carpet and then demanding extra towels for the illegal guests (as occurred in at least one room at Seacon; in case anyone's forgotten, every hotel has strict fire regulations). The list is endless - the patience of most managers is not.

Rules can always be bent, flaunted even, but no-one likes having their noses rubbed in it. And whilst I wouldn't (yet) go along with Rochelle Dorey's suggestion at a recent FiS session that we hire professional security men to warn off



the brainless wonders before they do any real damage, there's absolutely no reason why the persistently moronic shouldn't be thrown out of condom. For good, if necessary.

It's not as if the problem stems from anything more than a pathetic minority (mostly recent entrants into fandom, I suspect; our own fault for placing so much emphasis on the more unprogrammable events in conreps, perhaps), yet the same's true of football supporters, and we all know what a wonderfully moderate image they now have.

But this is more than a question of responsibility, or even social stigma. If hotels start cancelling cons this side of the Atlantic, it'll become one of survival. American fandom has chickened out of facing the marching morons head on; I trust we've got the guts to avoid making the same mistake.

\*\*\*\*\*

I quite agree with Steve here, having suffered some of the headaches connected with con-attendees' stupidity during the run-up to Channelcon. We suffered from the disadvantage of being the second sf convention hosted by the Metropole and thus they knew exactly what sf fans can get up to. They didn't mind most of our activities, but were understandably upset at cellotape being used to stick posters to painted walls etc. OK, we said, Seacon was an unusual event with so many people there we couldn't control their actions, but an Eastercon is different since most attendees have more intelligence. Still we decided to warn people about the areas the hotel were likely to be vigilant over: posters and people sleeping on the floor. You can imagine my feelings, therefore, when I'm accosted at the One Tun for "coming on strong" on these matters in PR4, and getting the reaction "Well, I've paid for the room and I don't see what it has to do with the hotel how many people I put in there", or "damage is what hotels get insurance cover for". This is not the sort of intelligent understanding I expected to come from British fans and didn't even bother to go into details such as "no, the room rate is per person" or, "no, we're responsible for any damage the hotel decides is more than 'fair wear and tear' and we can't get insurance cover for that". Since we went into the convention just breaking even, I had quite a few sleepless nights worrying about bills for damages etc. Organising a convention is not fun, it's hard work and tends to fall to a small group of people who feel the responsibility to put back into conventions what they take out (so to speak). What we don't need is for selfish people to make the job even harder by adding to our problems. If only everyone could take turns in being on a convention committee I think it would open their eyes and those that do put themselves out to enhance others' enjoyment would have a much smoother road. End of lecture.

\*\*\*\*\*

\* I was once travelling by train in France, and had an hour to wait for a \*  
 \* connection at some remote junction. The platform was bleak, just a \*  
 \* couple of name-boards and a mysterious trapdoor set in the ground. I \*  
 \* wondered what it was, especially as the rest of the waiting passengers \*  
 \* seemed to be clustering around it. In a couple of minutes all was \*  
 \* revealed: an old lady came along, heaved the double doors open and dis- \*  
 \* appeared down the steps revealed underneath. She soon returned with a \*  
 \* collapsible table which she set up and stocked with bottles and glasses. \*  
 \* It was a wine cellar! She was only selling the local ordinaire but it \*  
 \* was passable enough and cheap so we all spent a happy half-hour. Ten \*  
 \* minutes before the connecting train was due in she put everything back \*  
 \* in her cellar, padlocked the trapdoors and disappeared over the tracks \*  
 \* into the station. I've never seen the like on British Rail. \*

\*\*\*\*\*

# Letters

\*\*\*\*\* Even though I knew it, the letterbag on Wallbanger 5 proved conclusively that drink is a vital constituent of fandom. As Jeremy Crampton said in his letter to me, if we're not drinking, we are planning to drink, or discussing the after-effects. Unfortunately very few people took up my plea for more interesting snippets about the derivation of pub or drink names, but Brian Smith's article did attract a fair amount of comment. The first comment I, in my lowly position in the scheme of things, would not dare edit and so reproduced here in its entirety is a comment from John Brunner....

**John Brunner** The Square House, Palmer St., South Petherton,  
Som. TA13 5DB South Petherton 40766

Please tell Brian Smith that the conner's breeches had to come away from the stool <sup>Date as postmark</sup> (not stick!) Sticking indicated that not all the sugar had been turned to alcohol!  
Thank you for your ~~letter/postcard/circular~~ dated \_\_\_\_\_ 19\_\_\_\_

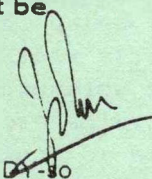
under reference harvey-type wallbanger Oct 81

**It was:**

- \*\* (a) Most interesting and welcome.
- (b) A load of codswallop.
- (c) Junk mail fit only for recycling.
- (d) Incomprehensible and probably meant for someone else.

**Further communications on the subject must be addressed to:**

- (a) My literary agents.
- (b) My accountants.
- (c) My lawyers.
- (d) Anybody-but ANYBODY-so long as it isn't me.



\*\*\*\*\* Coming like a missive from the gods, I felt this required an immediate response, and so here's Brian Smith...

John Brunner: A Reply

I would like to say how deeply humble it makes me feel that a writer of Mr Brunner's stature has taken the time and trouble to even read my lowly little article. And even though I would never dare to presume that my knowledge of the history of leatherwear is in any way comparable to that of my worthy and erudite critic, I would like to marshal a few arguments in my defence.

Firstly, there is the question of sources. As neither Mr Brunner nor myself have first-hand knowledge of this period, I think it is fair to assume that we both read it somewhere. In which case, I do not see why either of our sources should be more or less intrinsically plausible than the other.

Secondly; as I pointed out, the conners' method varied over the years, so possibly both Mr Brunner's method and my own were in use at different times. Indeed, they may even have been contemporaneous. I personally find no difficulty in believing that, for example, my method could have been prevalent in the higher centres of Elizabethan culture, and Mr Brunner's method practiced elsewhere - amongst the degenerate pre-Roman pagan tribes of the South Petherton area, say.

Ultimately, though, I must take refuge behind Dirac's Proof by Aesthetics, namely, "This result is too beautiful to be false". It is surely apparent to all that Mr Brunner's view of history is a deeply revolting one. It was perverted thinking of this kind that set mankind on the slippery road which led to American beer, and eventually to the nauseating, almost tautological concept of alcohol-free lager. I rest my case there, and would like to say that I harbour no ill-will or resentment whatever towards Mr Brunner, as he was of course perfectly entitled to cavil at my facts if he believed me to be in error.

This refutation supports

Rockall for Eurocon '84.

\*\*\*\*\* Let me first say, that I take no responsibility for the views expressed by my contributors! No offence meant, John, and hopefully no offence taken.

Now, to show just how open-minded I am, a letter from someone who not only is a train

\*\*\*\*\*

LEO July 23 - August 22

You are a very proud and trusting person. Others are constantly taking advantage of you. You do not realize what is happening to you because basically you are very stupid. You are the laughing stock of any group.

driver, but also has the audacity to brag at the speed with which he was able to respond to Wallbanger 5 due to the strike! If you lived in Carshalton and worked in the City, you'd know better than to even mention your occupation Alan....

ALAN MORRIS, 58 Westfield Road, Bletchley, Milton Keynes

The tendency, nowadays, when building a new pub is to give it a bright, zippy name like "The Eager Poet" (as seen in Milton Keynes). Other unusual names I have seen are "The Artichoke", "The Spanish Patriot" and "The Porter and Sorter" (this latter near Croydon Station); but as to their origins, I can only guess. Apparently a lot of common names for pubs come from heraldry such as The White Hart (Richard I), The Red Lion (John of Gaunt). As to The Crooked Billet, I can only guess that it is something to do with the billeting of soldiers that was foisted upon householders during the middle ages.

\*\*\*\*\* Yes Alan, I realised it might have something to do with billeting, but if so, why 'Crooked'? Won't somebody help me?

Now for some illuminating information on drink from the other side of the Atlantic (I didn't realise they knew about such things).

HARRY ANDRUSCHAK, PO Box 606, La Canada-Flintridge, California 91011, USA

A sidelight on Brian Smith's comment on US Whiskey. The name depends on the grains used in the mash that is distilled. If 51% or more is corn, it becomes Bourbon. With 100% corn, it becomes Straight Bourbon. Similar proportions of rye give you Rye and Straight Rye.

As a sidenote, the popularity of Bourbon is a 20th century happening... it was Rye Whiskey that helped to build this country, conquered the west, and put hair on chests regardless of sex. Its strong flavour explains why Bourbon grew so popular with the wishy-washy 20th century citizens.

As for the origins of the names of cocktails, most are apocryphal and I wouldn't trust them. Too often I think they are made up just to have a good story; to show you how easy it is....

#### THE ORIGIN OF THE SCREWBALL COCKTAIL

by Dr. Shack the Quack

It actually goes back to the 1930's. Robert Goddard was working on the development of liquid propellant rockets, and one of his assistants had a fondness for alcohol. This was helped by the fact that Goddard had gallons of the stuff to use as fuel. To get the strength down to drinkable proportions, he cut it with Orange Juice which also helped cover up the smell of the alcohol. But when he got into town after a few quick ones, everybody recognized him. Goddard was sneered at as "The Moon Man", but his assistant became "The Screball". This name was later transferred from the assistant to the drink that made him so.

\*\*\*\*\* And now, for the last word on the topic of drink, we have the one person who can close a discussion on any topic whatsoever...

DAVE LANGFORD, 22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berks

I was going to toss in something pretty profound as a comment on Wallbanger, but not a lot seems to be happening in the Langford apology of a brain today. Though Brian's bit did set me thinking about Our Kevin's pathetic attempts to induce others to play his drinking game 'Jacks' - while exhibiting strong unwillingness to play it himself. It sounds simple enough, certainly. A small number of players sit around the table and a well-shuffled pack of cards is dealt round, face up. When the first jack comes up, there is a pause and the person who got it must Name A Drink. The unwritten rules demand that this be fairly repulsive. 'Guinness and Pernod', Kev kept chanting by way of example. The deal continues until the appearance of the second jack, whose recipient must rush to the bar and buy the already chosen drink. When ready, this concoction may be admired ('Mark how the purple bubbles froth upon/The evil surface of its nether slime!' - Max Beerbohm, 'Savonarola Brown'); eventually the deal continues, and the duty of the third jack's owner is to taste the appalling drink. Finally... yes, you guessed it. He or she who gets the final jack must Drink The Drink. After an understandable pause, the cards are reshuffled and the game resumes. Me, I'd rather like to see this played... by somebody else. The Channelcon committee at Easter, for example.

\*\*\*\*\* Quite agree Dave, I'd like to see it played too - by somebody else. What are the poor Americans going to do if Our Kev gets sent over there with TAFF? H-bombs are useless against an evil like him.

\*\*\*\*\*  
CAPRICORN December 22 - January 19

You are an upholder of tradition and authority. This is because you lack imagination and creativity. You cannot take honest criticism. Not even from your mother. Most prison warders are Capricorns.

The other major topic of discussion in the letters I received were about the apparent revival in the fanzine world. I think as much as been said and written about this topic now as can be, all we can do now is wait and see what happens, only time will tell. So here are the last comments on the subject.

MIKE GLICKSOHN, 137 High Park Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M6P 2S3, Canada

With the evidence of hindsight, your editorial is amusing. The recent health of the English fanzine scene undercuts some of your fears and proves some of your hopes to be valid. It seems that every second day I get another British zine and most of them are good reading indeed. In fact, several prominent North American fans are recently on record as predicting that the new "golden age" of fannish fanzines is currently being born in Britain. Better get on the bandwagon and reap the egoboo while you can!

\*\*\*\*\* Sure is nice to know that Britain can lead someone, somewhere - other than down the drain that is! Not to sound too jingoistic, though, Britain does seem to have led the way in things fannish. It is interesting, however, that Mike mentions the coming golden age of fannish fanzines; I'm not sure if the emphasis was intentional, but it links with some worries that Jeff Suter expressed...

JEFF SUTER, 18 Norton Close, Southwick, Fareham, Hants

Most fanzines doing the rounds are gen or personalzines. Whatever happened to the sercon fanzine? The last I remember seeing was Sirius which came from the Limpwrist stable as I recall. Doesn't anyone out there like SCIENCE FICTION enough to write about it? Some people will start shouting Vector or Arena but I would not consider those 'fanzines' in this context (which is not a comment on those publications). Perhaps it is that those publications drain all available talent, but I think not. Could it be that there is no demand for this kind of fanzine; again I think this is not the reason. So come on lads and lasses, have a go.

Rob Hansen's Starfan brings to mind another pet subject of mine, in relation to fanzines - artwork! I would like to see more artwork in fanzines. Pete Lyon, Rob Hansen and Jim Barker are not the only artists in fandom (D West in Matrix for example) but it is their work one sees more of than most. Surely there must be other talented artists in fandom, these lads cannot supply all fanzines indefinitely. Why not launch a search for artistic talent? We need more fan artists and more art in fanzines.

\*\*\*\*\* Couldn't agree with you more, Jeff - just look at the plethora of artwork in Wallbanger. One of the main problems I find is that, whilst doing Matrix, we had plenty of artwork sent in which, to be perfectly honest was atrocious. When trying out new people it is very hard to commission something, and then return it because it's no good, so you tend to concentrate on those people who've shown their ability already. The trouble is then you're in a chicken-and-egg situation; how can new artists prove their ability if no-one is willing to take a chance on them because they haven't already shown what they can do? Still, things might well solve themselves as more and more people become active in fandom. The more newcomers there are, the greater the pool of talent available and the wider the selection of styles etc both in artwork and fanzines themselves. Now onto the whole topic of the resurgence of activity in fanzines, and newcomers' attitudes to their predecessors.

JOHN D OWEN, 4 Highfield Close, Newport Pagnell, Bucks

I must admit that I, like Mike Ashley, rather interpreted many of the recent remarks in Wallbanger, Epsilon, Stop Breaking Down, etc, to mean that the Old Guard were trying to re-impose their 'standards' onto fandom again. Your own editorial, as well as Malcolm Edward's in Tappen, puts that to rights a little, in pushing the 'leading by example' route rather than the one which I was certainly subjected to by the likes of Joe Nicholas etc, which was a 'follow our rules or we'll say even nastier things about you next time' attitude, which I was disgusted to encounter, and which I am still wary of in the re-emerging core of fandom. I'm aware now that the younger acolytes of Rat-fandom were simply misusing the basic tenets of that particular section of fandom, either in clumsy emulation of the real thing (Pickersgill, Kettle, etc) or out of plain stupidity. That assuages my own feelings of animosity towards the Old Guard somewhat, though it's a slow process. In a way it has helped, in that I'm more inclined to follow my own path, and my own judgement, rather than be swayed into doing things in a particular way. I hope that the result is that my zine is different from the normal run-of-the-mill fanzine - whether you like it or not is another matter entirely! Nowadays I'm always ready to admit that I'm not going to please everybody, so I may as well just do the best I can and try to satisfy my own instincts first, and then see who squeaks about it one way or the other afterwards.

\*\*\*\*\* The trouble is, John, it's very difficult to find the happy medium between constructive

\*\*\*\*\*

TAURUS

April 20 - May 20

You are steadfast, even stubborn, in your ways. People who know you well describe you as a pighead. You enjoy music but the only thing you can play is a radio. You are a communist.

and destructive criticism. The very act of sending a fanzine out unsolicited is in effect a request for comment, but not all of us are born diplomats, unfortunately, and it is very difficult to avoid offending the sensibilities of newcomers who, like all of us, are proud of their 'little baby'. If we're too conscious of this, however, we'll end up with everyone being incredibly 'sweet' to everyone else in print - which is worse than useless. As to Joseph and Alan, I think their main problem was that they attempted to emulate a style when the circumstances had changed. Early Rat-fandom was attempting to change what they saw, rightly or wrongly, as hidebound, outmoded, attitudes of established fanzine editors, people with enough experience in fandom to be able to accept criticism but who, in Ratfans eyes, were so blinkered that nothing short of an atom-bomb up the pre-verbal orifice, would make any impact. Thus their style was right for the circumstances; Alan and Joseph were emulating what had been a successful style, without realising that its success was dependent on the time. As John Maynard Keynes said when asked by a reporter for his feelings now that his Economic Monetary Theories had been accepted with great enthusiasm and heralded as THE GREAT PANACEA for Britain's ills in the 1930's, "The times demanded a drastic change in attitudes and these policies will succeed, but when times once again change, I will change the policies to match" (or words to that effect!). Unfortunately he died before Britain began suffering economic conditions that Keynes's theories did not cover (for those of you who don't know, his Monetary Policies were based on conditions of mass unemployment and deflation - they specifically excluded mass unemployment and inflation). Now look at the mess we're in after years of applying policies to conditions they were never aimed at alleviating. A straight analogy can be made with the Dorey 'kick-em-in-the-balls' style of criticism, but hopefully not with the same drastic results. Anyway, to continue with John...

The fact that your own fanzine carried two very good newcomers to the scene in the respective shapes of Roy Macinski and Martyn Taylor, would seem to indicate that things are still stirring out there in mundane-land, and that new fans with ideas are still being found. Macinski's piece is really quite moving (breaks off to wipe away a quick tear) and shows that whatever else fandom is, it's not a bad place to be if you're trying to find yourself - it may not work for everyone, but Roy's experience must be echoed by a lot of current fans, especially in today's increasingly isolating world.

\*\*\*\*\* One reason I thoroughly enjoy meeting new fans is that they are only too eager to relate the tale of their entry into fandom and, as you must have gathered from the whole tone of Wallbanger, I find anecdotes fascinating, so here is yet another description of how someone found out about our little 'sub-culture'.

TERRY HILL, 41 Western Road, Maidstone, Kent

My first contact with fandom was SEACON, and I came in by the back door, literally, helping out one of the hucksters. I was totally overwhelmed and spent a large part of the time in the book room, but still managed to fall over one famous author and insult another. Not bad for a neo! Having caught Bob Shaw's speech, I was hooked and in 1980 attended ALBACON. I still spent a lot of time in the book room, but also saw a lot of the films; fell over no famous authors, nor insulted any and almost started to socialize... with a trekkie... but thought better of it. I also caught Bob Shaw's speech - I was definitely going to Leeds next Easter. In the intervening period I met Mike Ashley (the real one) and he fired my interest in things bibliographical and sercon and resulted in the commencement of a project to index Tales of Wonder, which developed into indexing all of Wally Gillings' mags and from there into accumulating material for a tribute to him. So, by the time Easter came around, my bent was definitely sercon and not fannish. So how, I hear you ask, did I come to be interested in the fannish side of things? Well, in the course of research on Wally Gillings, I tracked down many people, one of them being a former B.N.F. in what was known, I believe, as 6th fandom. Yes, that person was Vinç Clarke, and I am responsible for rekindling his interest in fandom. Since then we have become good friends and he has loaned me many old fanzines; Scientifiction, New Futurian, Fantasy Review, Nirvana and Hyphen. It was Hyphen particularly that swayed me to things fannish.

\*\*\*\*\* I find it interesting that someone whose entry into fandom is on the sercon side, could succeed in rekindling the enthusiasm of someone who, from what I've been told, was definitely a fannish fan from a long time back. And speak of the devil....

A VINCENT CLARKE, 16 Wendover Way, Welling, Kent

As a newcomer to 1980's fandom I'm still building up a picture of the past couple of decades in this sub-world and I've yet to see much of the fanning of the early-to-mid 1970's which is said to have been so marvellous, but if Mood 70 is anything to go by I would say the reports of its health were greatly exaggerated. I'm not surprised that subsequently the number of new zines went down for a time, if some of the criticisms of new zines I've seen were taken to heart. As I've said, I've insufficient knowledge of recent fandom to pass any reasoned judgement, but in the fandom to which I still mentally belong - the fifties - I think we ordered things better. You put out what you could as best as you could - my first duplicator was a flatbed, and it was a rare fan indeed who had access to an electric duper or photo-copier even at the end of the decade - and if you suffered from the million sins of a beginner you would be told in a private letter, with helpful hints if possible. You didn't get BNFs getting the cheap laugh and inflating their own egos by holding the neofan up to ridicule.

I suppose times change, and I don't want to go around like the Ghos of Fandom Past perpetually moaning - a sort of gripes of wraith - and there do seem to be some fans around who'd slot very easily into the live-and-let-live '50's scene. Others would stick out like a sore thumb... at least, I think that's the right part of the anatomy....

It was amusing, in a sad way, to read Chuck Connor, where he says "... but all the material is from 1978/79, so nothing will be relateable to the newer fans." What on earth was the fan writing of those years like? I've fanzines from 1938/9 which are perfectly good reading; Wallbanger itself has a timeless quality which will make large parts of it interesting to the fans of 2001. I'm starting my diggings into recent fan history with some trepidation.

\*\*\*\*\* You have my admiration for being willing to take up the threads of fannish life after such a long time. Christ, you were already in fandom when I couldn't even read the word! If I'm classed by some as 'Old Guard' because I was active before Seacon, what will they make of you! The difficulties you will face at Channelcon are, in my view, worse than a neo's, because you will at worst have preconceived ideas which are bound to be proved wrong, or at best memories - and we humans are notorious at remembering only the good times. At least if you are a complete neo, you have an open mind since the whole thing is completely new, as Jeremy Crampton explains.

JEREMY CRAMPTON, 15 Pelham Grove, Lark Lane, Liverpool

I must say that I was interested in the little piece by Roy Macinski on entering fandom. I know people have said that this is very boring but as a 'neo' this read was a big first. He was bloody lucky I'd say! Still, there is something to be said for the theory that if you're interested you'd be bound to get into fandom. I used to take this argument with a pinch of salt when it applied to other things, but my own initiation was due to the purchase of P Nicholl's Encyclopedia wherein I saw all about Foundation. I won't bore you with the details but through them the promised delights of the BSFA were revealed and due to their fanzine section....

So here I am waiting for Channelcon. What'll it be like? The thing I'm looking forward to especially is meeting someone interested in sf. I mean seeing them breathing there in front of you - it's all right for you with everybody nearby, but up here it's a damn sight harder. Nobody, not one person do I know who is interested in science fiction. So Channelcon will be a bloody good experience for at least one person there. So thanks for that piece, it was very interesting. Not sure how this sentence passed the censor though "perhaps the most vivid impression is how remarkably friendly and affable fannish people are", makes the word 'fanfued' somewhat obsolete doesn't it!

But enough of the chit-chat let's move onto what I thought of your fanzine. An interesting contrast was provided by W5 coming at the same time as Vampire Frogs from Chuck Connor. Comparing yours and his shows that you tend to concentrate on light entertainment (as if you didn't already know) with several pieces by various people and the inevitable section on drink. It was indeed quite funny, i.e. I'm not saying it didn't work, I laughed until I stopped etc, and in the right places I hope. Chuck Connors showed a much more different style, what with VF being based on horror and a decent amount of fiction. It's nice to see such a wide range - makes life all the more interesting!

\*\*\*\*\* The comparison between W5 and VC is interesting as it highlights one of the exciting points of a 'revival', the fact that it's not just the quantity, nor even the quality, but the sheer variety that is present when there are a lot of people producing fanzines and circulating them. The circulation, however, is the vital part. Chatting to Cyril Simsa at the last One Tun, he pointed out that in fact there is no 'revival' at present, because there was never a dearth. It's just that following the Dorey/Nicholas era, many editors with novel ideas were simply not willing to send their zines to the 'Old Guard' since they didn't believe they would receive a fair reading due to their very individuality. If this is true, then it is very sad because fanzine fandom will suffer the usual results of incestuous relationships, weakness of all the good points (originality being the most important) and strengthening of all the bad characteristics (elitism and narrow-mindedness).

Bernard Earp reinforces this feeling of isolation - there is a whole world of fanzine publishing out there that I never even knew existed, let alone had the chance to find out if I liked any of it!

BERNARD M EARP, 21 Moorfield Grove, Tonge Moor, Bolton

I'd like to put one point of view of the fanzine scene.... The Bolton or BaD one. At present we have about five fanzines produced by members of the group, making us one of the most active small groups around, but whose heard of us?

The answer is simply that they aren't all SF, nor are they anything like the quality of Tappen, Wallbanger or even Crazy Eddie. What is there...

Illumination - three issues, three editors; contents the Tarot, vegetarianism and the pros and cons of sado-masochism and the largest collection of pen names I've ever seen.

The Visionary Sword - A Public School group 'zine.

Trends - just what the editors of this zine are is open to doubt, Punks, New Romantics or just plain weird; contents, the local music scene.

Molly Turbine - a personalzine from a 13 year old schoolboy and, of course, Crazy Eddie.

So what morale can one draw from the BaD experience? Simply that having something to emulate or surpass will spur on the 'average' fan, but whether or not the result is readable is open to doubt. I can't imagine some of our editors wanting to trade or even contact fanzine fandom outside Bolton but that doesn't mean that they don't have their audiences for they do, but they aren't even interested in the old fannish values because to them those things aren't valuable. Perhaps the writing is rawer but the story of one group's struggle to buy instruments while on the dole (Trends) or even sexual politics (Illumination) have power because of the force of the writers' beliefs in what they want.

\*\*\*\*\* Now let's finish on a lighthearted note - as Jeremy Crampton implied, one of the basic building blocks of Wallbanger - with Jon Wallace, except that after you've laughed at the humour of the situation, like Martyn Taylor's experience in W5, you shiver when you actually think about the implications.

JON WALLACE, 21 Charleston Street, Dundee, Scotland

The worst thing about collecting lost property from the police must be that almost tangible feeling that they're just waiting for you to leave so that they can have a good laugh at the stupid pratt who left his umbrella/wallet/briefcase on the bus/pub counter/roadside. On the other hand, Dr Green, my consultant, thinks that our Scottish police are wonderful. When he went to collect some stolen bottles of wine that they'd recovered, he discovered that they'd gone to the trouble of storing them properly until he could get down to collect them.

My own small encounter with the police, however, shows a more sinister side. I was walking home one night, and I'd just reached the top of a dark, lonely footpath which leads down the hill to where I live. From the top, I could see a sinister mound, man-sized, brightly lit by four spotlights. In the background were two large vans, and there were figures scurrying about all over the place. Being naturally curious, I thought I'd have a wander down to see what was going on. I was about half-way down when a large, blue-clad figure appeared, silhouetted against the lights.

"You'd be better detouring round this area (pause) sir."

"Why, what is it," I replied flippantly, "something nasty?"

My fertile imagination had supplied me with all sorts of visions of what the mound was on the way down. The policeman seemed to expand slowly until he reached his full height, 6'6" it looked like, and with suspicion dripping from every word, he replied,

"Something nasty, what do you mean something nasty?" The 'sir' had disappeared.

I took a deep breath to steady my nerves and explained that I'd seen the lights from the top of the hill etc. He explained, 'sir'-ing me again, that it was just a gas leak with an outside chance of blowing up. I detoured. He returned to his post with an air of dejection. I was almost sorry that I hadn't been the Charleston Ripper or whatever, but not quite.

\*\*\*\*\* Returning to Terry Hill's letter... for something completely different...

TERRY HILL

Your piece on Ultravox clearly indicated your dilemma. Many of the recent bands with heavy bias on electronics seem to have the same problem; the performance has to be tight to tie in with the non-live material. I understand that Soft Cell, also heavy on 'tronics, had fans asking for refunds because so little was truly "live". The last live concert that billed anything remotely similar that I attended was a local college dance several years ago. Hawkwind were the band. To give you an idea of how long ago this was, they were third on the bill. There were only two other acts - Pink Fairies topped it, I think. I hadn't heard Hawkwind on record so I couldn't compare, but I do remember thinking WOWWWW, a reaction their records have never since provoked.

\*\*\*\*\* Many thanks to the following for their letters on both Wallbanger 4 and 5  
Andy Hobbs, Alan Morris (W4), Joyce Scrivener,

I'd like to finish this Wallbanger with a letter which personifies the basic ideology behind Wallbanger 6; it is not only anecdotal, written by someone not often seen in fanzines, someone who is new to fandom but, in addition, is about BRITISH RAIL...

PAM WELLS, 24A Beech Road, Bowes Park, London N11

So it's not a rumour. There are trains on Sundays! Thanks to (a) ASLEF (b) BR (c) ACAS and (d) Who Cares? British Rail are providing 'normal' services again. (Loud fanfare; pigs seen flying in formation across the Solent, etc.) It is now possible to go away for the weekend and return home on a Sunday night, rather than straight to work bleary-eyed and senseless on a Monday morning. As I write this I am sitting comfortably, facing in a northerly direction, on the 19:30 Portsmouth to Waterloo train. But, horror of horrors, I am wide awake! This long-forgotten state on a homeward journey has presented me with a dilemma. What can I do for the next 1½ hours? I look around the carriage - to my left, a young woman is reading something looking suspiciously like a fanzine. So, an idea is born. Why not write that promised LoC to Eve for Wallbanger? Now, instead of being eminently sensible and thinking of 1001 reasons why not, I start writing....

.... Anyway, back to why I'm on this bloody train in the first place. I belong to the South Hants Science Fiction Group (yes, I know I live in London, but there was this pressgang..) I try to get to as many meetings as possible, and as there was both a Friday and Saturday session this week, I just had to be there. Friday's event contained a thinly-veiled 'keep Pam quiet' device, cunningly disguised as an SF film quiz. Saturday was an aural evening where we listened to records and taps of SF authors reading their own work. I won the raffle - a signed copy of 'Planet of the Damned'. I am assured that it's a truly awful book, but I intend to read it nonetheless.

I enjoy SHSFG - as the only female on the books I can be 'one of the lads'. Who says women aren't logical?

\*\*\*\*\* And this is how yet another poor sucker is dragged into the sf version of The Moonies. Take head Pam, if you're not careful you'll be so busy enjoying yourself you won't even notice that insidious bug "fanac" making itself comfortable inside you!

WAHF

Many thanks to the following for their letters: Ashley Watkins, Andy Sawyer, Martin Tudor, Steve Ince, Joy Hibbert, Joyce Scrivner, Andy Hobbs, Mickey Poland, Pete Lyon, Mike Hamilton and Peter Wareham, to whom I give the honour of the last word: "Brian Smith (who is to tact and delicacy what Brian Burgess is to Cordon Bleu cookery)...."

Some people have wondered how John and I have managed to maintain our social life at a reasonable level with only one salary comin in over the past year. Now, however, the truth has appeared in the press for all to see, but to protect the innocent I'll refrain from naming the publication.

"Eve has just installed a blue and white neon sign in the hope of adding a bit of passing trade to her faithful local clientele. Eve is usually busy at lunchtime, but surprisingly quite in the evenings. She will, however, hot it up on request."

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*  
\* Talking of British Rail, the Ghost Buffet at Stourbridge Junction was \*  
\* once a well-known local joke. The buffet there was closed down in \*  
\* about 1955, but for a long time afterwards it stayed in being behind \*  
\* locked doors. You could peer inside and see everything exactly as it \*  
\* was the day they shut it up for the last time - not only the counters, \*  
\* tables and the tea urn, but biscuits and pies as well. They all sat \*  
\* behind their glass display case for at least a couple of years; first \*  
\* going mouldy, and then shrinking down into little desiccated black \*  
\* piles. Eventually the station staff cleaned it all out and I can't say \*  
\* I envied them the job. I think the trouble was that it had been run \*  
\* privately on a concession basis and there was some dispute over the \*  
\* ownership of the left-over stock. \*  
\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*  
LIBRA

September 23 - October 22

You are very affectionate and sympathetic towards others. You enjoy sobbing. You talk a great deal about justice, but no one trusts you. Most Libras are alcoholics and dope fiends. People look at you with pity.

\*\*\*\*\*  
SCORPIO

October 23 - November 21

You are a very domineering and opinionated person. You do not care who you step on to get to the top. You laught during funerals. Most Scorpios are shot in the back.