ELLISON, GLICKSOHN, HALDEMAN, OFFUTT

all pro issue

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XENIUM 2-4-7

is published by Mike Glicksohn from 141 High Park Avenue, Toronto Ontario M6P 2S3. An issue of XENIUM appears whenever I have both the material and the energy to put one out and is cobbled together from hundreds of little pieces of paper kept in an old shoebox. It is produced entirely for my own amusement and pleasure, but is also sent out to family, FAPA and friends in the hope that it might amuse, entertain or even instruct. It cannot be obtained for "the usual" except by way of contribution of acceptable written or drawn material for which I faunch just like any other faned. Letters of comment, although they may not be published, will be greatly appreciated since they help prove that the universe does not fade away to a gray, featureless void at the end of the block.

SSScotch Press # 43

December 1974

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Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shined.
---John Milton

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Issues of XENIUM really do materialize from the contents of an old shoebox. It's an ancient Hush Puppies container I keep in the bedroom and into which I toss anything I think might someday be useful for this fanzine. The rare contribution from an outsider, once accepted, goes in there. Clippings, cartoons, comic strips or news items that appeal to me for one reason or another get stored there. Whenever I read a short quotation that I find particularly amusing, poignant or insightful, I take a xerox and toss it in or type it on a scrap of paper and add it or, if it's in a fanzine, drop the entire issue into the box. Even that rarest of objects, a loc on the previous issue, is added to the pot.

Eventually, the forces of creativity and egoboo overcome the dread powers of inertia and entropy and I drag out the box, sift through the contents, liberally surround the whole process with good scotch, and, ultimately, a fanzine appears.

Sometimes, as must happen, that fanzine will contain something a little more important than usual. I think it has happened with this issue. I was strongly affected by Andy Offutt's speech at the 1973 Pghlange, and I'm extremely pleased to be able to publish it here. I think it's a vital message to fandom. Andy repeated this speech at Discon, at the request of that committee, but I wasn't there, so I don't know how it was received. I do know, however, that at Pghlange, the intensity and warmth of the reaction reduced the usually super-cool Andy Offutt to tears. I'd like to think that anyone on the XENIUM mailing list already knows the truth of the things Andy says: but read his speech carefully nonetheless. At times it is good to be reminded of things we ought to know.

Something else that is good to remember is that for every hurtful or thoughtless act we may have encountered from fellow fans, there's been a generous and considerate action to balance it out. There are fans such as Andy describes, who strike out blindly for reasons known only to themselves, but there are also kind and gentle people in fandom, who give of themselves with no thought of reward, but simply because they are good people. It is these people who make fandom a good place to be in.

In keeping with a tradition I've not yet had a chance to establish, I'd like to devote all egoboo for this issue to just such a person.

I expect that if a poll were conducted among fans for the most generous, thoughtful and selfless fan, Harry Warner, with his decades of devotion to fans and fandom, would win. And deservedly so. To endure the perversities of fandom for as long as Harry has requires an exceptional human being. And yet, listen to Harry Warner: "She is as selfless a person as I've ever encountered, in or out of fandom, and her constant doing of good deeds for others is particularly outstanding in fandom where so many others are self-centered people out only for personal ego."

To which I can only nod my head in complete agreement. It's been my privilege to meet many fine people in fandom (along with a generous portion of fuggheads) but I doubt that I've ever met a more generous, giving, or truly beautiful human being, in the true sense of the word, than Sheryl Birkhead, to whom I extend whatever egoboo might arise from this issue with affection, admiration and more than a touch of awe. And an apology for the embarrassment this will cause her.

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At times Malzberg produces really vivid effects. But he also is capable of mangled images like one description of a corpse as "falling in upon itself like a smashed balloon". Writing like this makes me wonder: If Barry Malzberg and J.J.Pierce really are two separate and distinct people, why have they never been photographed together? ---Joe Sanders, STARLING 29

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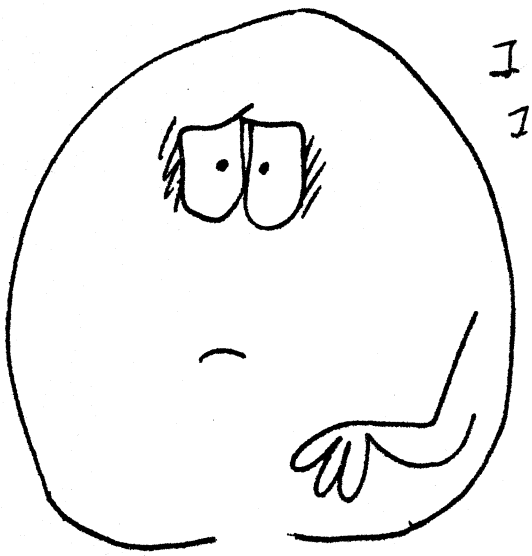

THE WORLD BOOK OF GUINNESS RECORDS

or

THE SUMMER OF 74

When last I wrote for XENIUM, I was shortly to embark on a summer vacation to England, a rediscovery of the land of my birth. In the six months that have elapsed since then, much has happened. I have spent my summer in England, and as well I've prepared for, survived and recovered from yet another Worldcon: such are the advantages of having a summer for a holiday. Since I've egotistically put my name on the cover of this issue, I'd better spend a little time describing these events. I'll try not to write a long boring travelogue, however. (It isn't the material that inhibits me. I can write a long, boring article about anything at all. But at $9.00 a thousand for paper, it's no longer economically viable to be a writer instead of an editor. Inflation has brought some benefits to fandom, after all.)

To put it mildly, 1974 was a fantastic summer. There's a magical quality about England in general and London in particular that I'm completely incapable of capturing on paper. Part of it is in the people, part in the sense of history that pervades

every street and every building, part in the familiar-yet-different culture. And yet there is an undercurrent of economic, racial and cultural unease that makes me realize I was viewing things through the rose-coloured glasses of a tourist. London is a magnificent city to visit, but I'm not at all sure I'd like to work there.

In fact, I'm not at all sure I'd like to live there. My father runs a co-op in one of London's less desireable areas. He has three locks on the front door, and still the house has been burgled. Outside a local (notorious) dance hall, I came across a man who'd been beaten to a bloody mess by three hoodlums while crowds of passers-by hurried along on their own affairs. (I saw the three fleeing from two blocks away and watched the man stagger to a nearby police station as I approached: don't ask me what I'd have done had I been there when it started.) Overall there seemed to be a noticeable lessening in what I remember of the sense of pride that once existed in being British and in doing a job well. The former, perhaps, is both understandable and even a good thing in an age where internationalism seems to be the most reasonable philosophy. But clearly Britain is suffering from the latter. It shows in the cities and in the streets and in the markets and in the life of the people. In London, you'd better get home by midnight or be able to afford a taxi, because the underground closes by then from lack of personnel. And even then you're likely to find the last train cancelled without warning because there's no-one there to run it. Despite the relatively good employment opportunities offered by London Transport, no-one wants the jobs. The quality of British life has suffered noticeably from this "I'm alright Jack" attitude that seemingly pervades large segments of the working population.

But I <u>still</u> had a fantastic summer!

Getting there may not have been half the fun, but it was certainly enjoyable. After I straightened out the arrangements, that is. I'd booked, paid for and been receipted for a six week charter through a teachers' organization. But the plane being used apparently carried two groups, those going for six weeks and those travelling for just a month. By an error in the travel agency handling the arrangements, I'd been assigned a four week seat. My track record as far as flying was concerned was being maintained with a vengeance.

When the travel agency discovered the error, they told the teachers' organization, then both of them sat back and hoped I'd die before the departure date. After three weeks, when it appeared my health was holding up, they got around to letting me in on the mix-up, some two weeks before I was due to leave. It was the travel agency owner who called, and he apologized profusely, admitting several times that it was his error, explaining the almost insurmountable difficulties involved in juggling seats on charter flights and politely requesting that I cut short my planned vacation by two weeks to help him out. My reply was not exactly polite! (It did make me wonder, though, how often this sort of thing happened and how many little old ladies would sigh and give in to the situation.)

I called my lawyer and then called the travel agent back and it was agreed that he would try to get the seat switched and if he couldn't, he'd send me over on regular flights for the agreed-on period at his own expense. He actually seemed to believe that if he explained how many hundred dollars it would cost him, I'd relent and take the shorter trip. Such is the business mind, I guess.

The changing of the charter ticket had to be presented to and approved by a committee of the Department of Transport of the Canadian Legislature. For a week and a half I went to the travel agent and he called Ottawa and I went home assured things would be arranged the next day. And finally, the day before the flight departed, the Government of Canada said it would be okay for me to take my full six weeks. Ain't democracy a wonderful thing? (I'm already booked on another charter with the same group and agency: I shudder to think what they'll try on me this time!)

The flight itself, however, helped make up for the pre-takeoff screwups. My seat companions were delightful and there was an unlimited free bar, plus quite adequate food. I had to explain to the stewardess how to mix martinis, but once she caught on to the proportions, she made them in six ounce glasses, and the flight passed most enjoyably as I read and crossworded my way across the Big Pond. (How people can sleep at eleven o'clock at night when they're about to embark on a summer in England I'll never know, but, as usual, my reading light ended up as the only bright oasis in an otherwise darkened plane. I like to think I was helping the stewardess feel useful.)

Heathrow Airport at six in the morning was child's play to anyone who has battled his way through O'Hare or JFK. Despite bomb scares and tight security a week or two before, the formalities were almost non-existent (travelling on a British passport probably helped) and it was no time at all before I had greeted my father and been wisked away to the London Underground and my new home.

In many ways, that first day was the entire summer in miniature, capturing most of the things that made it such a memorable time. The nervous excitement that always accompanies a trip for me kept the dreaded jet-lag at bay and I enjoyed good conversation, met wonderful new people, roamed with delightful aimlessness through the magical streets of London, and rediscovered that most marvellous and delightful of British institutions, the pub.

My father knows me well, so he took me for lunch to a four hundred year old pub on the banks of the Thames, where I was reintroduced to one of the great delights of Western civilization: draft Guinness. There is no finer libation, no more magnificent an accompaniment for good fellowship or good food, than this titan among brews. Those who know it will nod their heads in sage agreement; those who don't will have to wait for Britain in 79 to experience the ultimate in beer-drinking pleasure.

And, hedonist that I am, I discovered another of the traditional British delights that enriched the summer (and my waistline) so much: the Ploughman's Lunch. Fifty cents worth of French bread, pickles and sharp cheddar cheese in a bewildering variety of guises that made the best available lunch and the perfect foil for a pint or two of smooth, black, velvety Guinness. In fact, were it not the barbarous opening hours, I could easily imagine a summer spent in England entirely in pubs!

Anyone who has ever been in England knows that there is no comparison whatsoever between an English pub and a North American beer hall. Apart from the physical differences (pubs are among the most beautiful old buildings in England) there is a complete difference in attitude. English pubs are social centers, places where friends get together to enjoy conversation, darts, bar billiards and good food, all to the accompaniment of good, cheap beer. But there's no pressure to drink, drink, drink the way there is in beerhalls here. The customer has to go to the bar for a drink and if he chooses not to, he can sit all night with a single half pint of beer and a good

book. The pubs were one of the most enjoyable of the typically English ways of life I encountered, and while in London I experienced two or three new ones each day.

But I wouldn't want to give the impression that London is only worth visiting for its pubs. I am aware, although I've always found it hard to actually believe, that there are people who don't enjoy drinking beer. For them there is the London of the museums, theatres and shops. And the London people, of course.

London's National Gallery has a better collection of Rembrandt than the Louvre, for example, and there are enough museums and galleries to occupy the art-minded tourist for at least a summer. The parks and zoos of London are among the best in the world and I recommend a Monday at the London Zoo to anyone. (Monday is the cheapest day, by 20 pence.) High Park, Kew Gardens, Zion Park, Kensington Gardens (where Peter Pan holds court) and a dozen other beautiful parks are all worth a day's visit. And the theatres! In less than a week I saw Robert Morley in a bedroom farce, Michael Crawford in the brilliant musical adaptation of Billy Liar, Diana Rigg in "Pygmalion" and Agatha Christie's "The ~~Tourist~~ Mouse Trap". All with the best seats in the house for between five and six dollars. If there's a better city for a tourist to visit, I cannot imagine where it is.

But I wasn't just a tourist this summer. I was a returning expatriot and also a fan. And those aspects enriched the summer also.

I visited with relatives, and spent time in the places I grew up in, remembering many happy moments from my childhood as I did so. I even went back to the school I attended between the ages of five and eleven, and was amazed to find it exactly as I remembered it, only about a third as big. I passed by the house I lived in for eleven years, and talked to a neighbour who remembered me as a child and seemed to consider my return the highlight of the week. I met people I'd known as a child, and re-remembered things I'd completely forgotten. It was good.

And, eventually, I contacted English fans. I've been a part of English fanzine fandom for some time, and I was looking forward to putting faces to some of the names I'd become familiar with. So it was only fitting that the first two fans I spent time with in England were Jonh Ingham, a California fan artist, and Larry Nichols, a Wisconsin ski bum.

Eventually, though, after I'd spent a wonderful week in Paris with French sf fan Patrice Duvic and his wife and mother, I contacted Peter Roberts, who took a day off work at the British Museum to show me a little of <u>his</u> London. And the following week I fulfilled a long-standing fannish dream by attending a London sf meeting. The Globe, sight of London sf gatherings for more than twenty years, had just been abandonned (although Peter and I went there for a pint or two of Guinness amidst the hallowed surroundings) so I met a few English fannish legends at The One Tun, just around the corner.

A couple of old friends were there, in the persons of John Brunner and Bob Shaw, and I was finally able to flesh out my mental images of such notorious London fans as

Greg Pickersgill, John Brosnan, and Dave Rowe; the heart of the group known as Ratfandom and a lot of other epithets not suitable to mixed company.

I enjoyed them all immensely.

So much so that the next night I spent the evening in the Ratfans' "local", drinking Guinness and beating them all at pool, including such Rats as the Charnocks and the legendary Charles Platt. These are talented, amusing, intelligent and enjoyable fans: despite their reputation with the other English fan groups. My last night in England was spent in their company, drinking bottled Guinness until we ran out, at which time we ran out to another local pub for a few drafts before Time. I'm looking forward to additional contacts with Ratfandom and with the Rats who weren't in London when I was there. Shitty poolplayers they may be, but they're my kind of people.

On the return flight to Canada, I was shown the advantages of Christian charity. I was asked by the stewardess to abandon my seat so that a mother and child might take it and the vacant seat next to it. I didn't really want to move, but neither did I have a valid reason not to. So somewhat resignedly I agreed to the switch. My old seat had been in the second last row in the plane, opposite the washroom door. So it goes. But my new seat was in the first class section, which gave me 50% more room and simultaneously placed me a mere three feet from the bar! The trip home was a decidedly enjoyable one.

Not so, though, the arrival in Toronto. I returned to find the city paralysed by a transit strike and was forced to take a seven dollar taxi ride from the airport to my flat at a time when I had about two dollars in my pocket. Luckily I had a supply of US dollars tucked away, and the cabbie was willing to accept them at par.

So the start and the finish of my summer were not all that I might have wanted of them, but I cannot fault the trip itself. I could write for page after page about the wonderful six weeks I spent in England, but I just want to give an overview in this piece. As far as I'm concerned, Britain is fine in 79...or any other time!

And, there'll <u>always</u> be an England!

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Greg Pickersgill is an arch-example of the ratfan paranoiac. Believing ninety percent of fandom to be mainly cretinous he is morbidly afraid of being counted among them. ---Graham Charnock THE WRINKLED SHREW #1

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The thirst to know and understand,
A large and liberal DISCONtent;
- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
--Sir William Watson

Although it hasn't yet been nearly a year since the 1974 Worldcon, I think I'll make a few comments about DISCON and my reaction to it. Not on the lines of last issues mammoth TORCON report, but a few remarks about DISCON in particular and Worldcons in general.

The end-of-summer fannish season began early for me this year. After only a day and a half in Toronto (just long enough to count in dismay the sixty eight fanzines that had accumu-

lated in the six weeks I'd been away) I hitchhiked down to the railway station (remember the transit strike?) and Amtraked down to Tarrytown, New York to spend a day or two enjoying the generous hospitality of Jack and Lorena Haldeman, parents of my good friends Jay and Joe. Joe and Gay had just returned from a summer in Spain, Morocco and France so we had many stories to swap as we all got fleeced by a sweet-smiling, gray-haired lady with an endless supply of aces and kings.

As both Joe and Gay were key members of the DISCON committee, their presence was required in the Washington area, so I travelled down with them and spent close to a week and a half visiting friends in the DC area and occasionally helping out with the manual labour that goes into the preparation of any convention. The DISCON committee expected a huge crowd, and were busily preparing registration packages for them all; in addition, of course, they were making the last minute arrangements for the con that only concommittee members ever know are left so late. Considering the enormous size of the convention, I think they did a pretty good job.

The complaints about the DISCON that have been aired have been valid ones. The masquerade was poorly run, and so was the banquet; but it's also true that these were difficulties arising from the sheer size of the event, and they caught the committee unawares despite their pre-con preparation. Future committees are going to have to find solutions for these problem areas, and a lot of thought has been going into the matters. People are discussing the various alternatives, and giving serious consideration to some fairly dramatic alterations in the basic format of the Worldcon. A good thing, too, because DISCON proved that something has got to be changed.

Despite the problems caused by the appearance of forty four hundred people, however, DISCON was a good convention. In fact, no matter what pressures have existed for me in the past, I've never been at a convention I didn't basically enjoy. I think the DISCON committee deserves a round of thanks for providing as well as they did under very trying circumstances.

I'm more and more discovering, though, that I don't function at my best when exposed to large crowds. I'm not a public speaker, and yet I'm at a point in my fannish career when I'm being called upon to be on panels or to give speeches. I find that this worries me, even though it ought not to. The responsibility of chairing a panel at DISCON weighed on me quite heavily, and is the only thing I can think of to account for some unexpected nervousness experienced at the con. Happily the panel was moderately successful (in an almost empty hall) which might make it easier for me to handle the next time.

Undoubtedly my preference for smaller, quieter groups explains why the two or three days before the official opening of the convention were among the most enjoyable for me. As fans from around the country started to assemble at the hotel, there was the chance to renew old friendships and initiate new ones in a more relaxed atmosphere; while all the time helping pay off a few old debts by assisting the committee with some of the set up and organization. It was a particular pleasure to meet and have a good chance to talk with Peter Weston, TAFF winner and Britfan Extraordinaire who charmed the socks off most people who met him. Figuratively, of course.

Once the convention began in ernest, though, there was a strong tendency to stick with a small group of old friends, simply because of the problems in finding other people. I suspect DISCON became even more a series of non-overlapping private con-

ventions than has been true in recent years. The hotel is certainly not designed to facilitate centralization of a convention.

And yet, amidst all the completely frantic activity of the largest Worldcon of all time, there were quiet beautiful moments. A few minutes in a deserted N3F room for a talk with Sheryl Birkhead, before we were joined for an equally delightful exchange with Don Thompson. And a relaxing cup of coffee late one night with Sheryl and Harry Warner, while the convention pursued its manic path outside the coffee shop doors. These are the moments that make a con unique in one's memory.

There were other moments, of course. Parties, panels, speeches, brief glimpses between elevator doors, hurried exchanges in crowded lobbies, promises to sit down and talk that somehow never get kept, moments when you need a reassuring word, and other times when you can give that reassurance to someone who needs it. Of such things are all conventions made: they're the reasons some of us keep coming back.

As Worldcons go, DISCON was unusual for me. I went into the huckster room just three or four times, and didn't buy a thing. I attended quite a bit of the program, but not the really big drawing cards. I didn't go to a single art auction, nor did I spend very much time in the art show. There just wasn't time to be everywhere at once and do all the things one might have wanted to do. One could fill every waking moment with frenetic convention activity and still miss out on two thirds of what was happening. Worldcons are like that nowadays.

Then there were the Hugos. One really can't comment on a Worldcon without mentioning the Hugos, even though I was only interested in three of them this year. The Hugo banquet being an unappealing prospect (and secure in the knowledge that the con chairman had promised us reserved seats for the awards' ceremony), Sheryl Birkhead, Gay Haldeman, Connie and Roice Faddis and I went to a nearby Indian restaurant for a meal half as expensive and three times as enjoyable as the banquet, returning in time for the presentation of the rocketships. I was delighted Susan won, disappointed that OUTWORLDS didn't and a bit dismayed that Tim won once again. But it <u>was</u> nice to actually see a real Hugo!

Once the Hugos have been given out, there isn't much left of the convention. But this year I still had a panel to appear on while I was busy packing and saying goodbye to my friends. For some strange reason, the panel was filmed and later appeared on television both in New York and in Toronto, so that I was greeted upon my return to my mundane existence as a teacher by several enthusiastic students who'd seen me the night before on television. Sometimes it's difficult to keep a low profile.

So another Worldcon passed into memory, and into the pages of fanzine where it will be praised, condemned and reported on for some time to come. And the good things and the bad things that were done will be talked about, and may even influence what happens to future North American world conventions. Meanwhile, in the midst of all the thousands of words that will come out of DISCON, there's a happy group of DC area fans enjoying local regionals and occasionally thinking, "Thank god <u>that's</u> over!"

There were forty four hundred conventions in the Watergate City; this may have been one of them.

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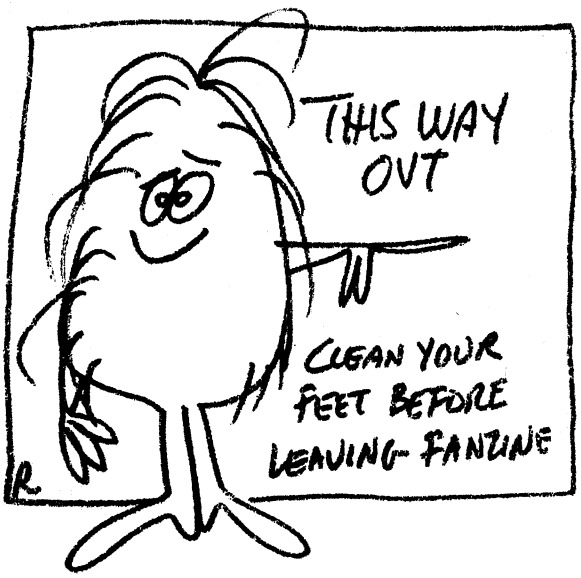
Yes, dear reader, I am by profession quite out of my mind. And I recommend it heartily to anyone who has courage, genuine integrity, an appetite for evening walks in the country, a tolerance of variety in one's fellow humans, a capacity to entertain leisure at infinite length. And I dare tell you this because I know your passion for dull blinding labour and hollow success will keep you from crowding me out of my sinecure. ---Robert Kroetsch THE STUDHORSE MAN



THINGS TO COME

In this issue, that is. Next issue is still many hundreds of pieces of paper and many thousands of hours away.

I've already mentioned the Andy Offutt speech that follows immediately after this page: it's important, and I think you'll both enjoy it and benefit from it.

The Harlan Ellison contribution might ring a bell with those of you who've been around since the demise of ENERGUMEN. When I folded that fanzine, I ended its run with a pair of special issues. #14 was a tribute to Bob Silverberg, and was planned around a major article by Bob's closest friend, Harlan. Unfortunately, that article was never completed, and the issue appeared without it.

Some time later, Harlan sent me a copy of the first page of what he'd planned on doing, complete with coffee stain, and I decided that even that much was worth showing here. I believe it marks Harlan's first non-loc appearance in a fanzine in at least three years, but more than that, it's a fascinating glimpse of a timeline that just didn't work out. So it goes.

Joe Haldeman is one of my oldest and dearest friends in fandom. When we first met, Joe was a bare-faced and crew-cutted fan and Vietnam was a word you sometimes read in the newspapers. We killed a few sixpacks for breakfast together, and I taught him how to shoot pool. Coff, coff. Now he's a veteran, and a fast-rising star in the world of science fiction and groupies beat a path to his door encumbered with cases of jello powder. And we're still friends, and we still occasionally share a few beers for breakfast, although nowadays he usually beats me on the pool table. It's one of the nicer things that have happened to me.

Of the two short pieces presented here, one was submitted by a writer to an editor and one was sent from one friend to another. I thought them both worth printing, so here they are for your amusement. As always, the titles should be blamed entirely on me.

Next issue? Well, I shall forego all these professional writers (although I'll be back myself) and dip once more into the world of fandom. John Alderson will be here, and Richard Labonte. Hopefully Susan will reappear. And if you out there don't submit something, then I'll have to write the rest of the issue myself...

You have been warned.

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That decision caused all hell to break loose in the roundabout apathetic hamfisted way that even the most cataclysmic things happen in fandom.

---Greg Pickersgill RITBLAT/GRIM NEWS #1

A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS

andrew j offutt

Hey yall.
As some of you may have noticed, I am NOT Joanna Russ.
She is thinner, has darker eyes, and wears her hair shorter.

I am here courtesy your friendly neighbourhood con committee. The committee felt that there was far too much serious business at these affairs, too much formal talk, and not enough fun. Too many sercon panels and long introductions, usually followed by one more reminder that most writers are shy, totally self-oriented, and bloody dull speakers!

This year the PgHLANGE committee decided not to have a GoH speaker. They asked me to come instead.

I've never thought much of committees. I'm an independant loner SoB. A committee is a group of people (who? that?) talk and talk and talk and finally decide to do what no-one wants to do, so they can still be friends at the next meeting.

A committee is like violence: a very uneconomical means of reaching an end result.
Look at this year's situation! Joanna Russ was asked to be GoH here, and

This is the text of andrew j offutt's talk to/at PgHLANGE, 9/29/73. Everything here offutt did say; some things he did say may not be here, as no recording was made. The speech was repeated, with changes, at DISCON II, Saturday 8/31/74.

This was offutt's first serious GoH speech, though he'd made seven others at the time. He was also aware that Joanna Russ was to have been PgHLANGE GoH; hence the opening.

later so was Sprague de Camp.
Dumb ... dumb.
Hell, chairpersons Topher and Rachel could have put me in charge of arranging this con, and we'd have saved a lot of time and trouble. I'd have asked me in the first place.

As far as I'm concerned, an OCTOPUS is a CATFISH designed by a committee. And a RHINOCEROS is a BATTLESHIP designed by a committee.
Ever see a duck-billed platypus? /Offuttnote: this is WPSFA's totem crittur./ Before a committee got hold of it, it was a Scotch Terrier.

Oh, I mentioned Rachel and Topher a few minutes ago. He is Topher Cooper, and she's Rachel Maines. They're married. I mentioned to Rachel that fact, and she said she'd noticed that. She also said that she and Topher had discussed it, but that he absolutely refused to change his name!

I would have asked god about it, but she doesn't speak to me.
Since she found out I'm not Joanna Russ.

I am a writer of, as you know, lots of things, including science fiction. I don't write many short stories, because I am basically a novelist, and the current project isn't even sf; I just finished #2 in a new series called THE CRUSADER that I'm doing for Grove Press. Anyhow, I am a writer, not a science fiction writer or any other kind, but a writer, with a period after it.
And more importantly, I'm a people.
I am also a fan, and that started first. As a fan of sf and of cons, I go to six or seven cons a year. Sometimes I'm up front like this, and sometimes I'm back there with yall, being .... entertained.

And sometimes at cons I get hurt, because people seem to like to hurt people. And especially, it appears, writers.

Why?

Well, I can give you some thoughts.
/Offuttnote: at this point there was a great deal of rowdiness at one table, for the second time. offutt stood very still and quiet for about 3 minutes, considered walking out and joining better company like the shoe salesmen convention, remembered his responsibility and the subject matter of the talk, and finally said something to this effect: "OK yall, how about cutting that out so we big kids can do our thing, now?" There were nine people at that table. offutt later received 7 apologies./

As I think I was probably saying, I can give you some thoughts. Maybe they'll help you at cons. I have very little hard science background, but I've been a heavyweight student of people for years. I read lots of history and social anthropology, and, above all, psychology.
So howabout if we skip the usual sf topic and talk about inner space, OK?

One mind-opening book by a shrink I've read in the past year is THE NATURAL MIND, by Andrew Weil. The chapters on stoned thinking and straight thinking are alone worth the price of that book, seriously. I realize that's an unconscionably overworked cliche, but again-- seriously. I'm sure it's out in paperback now. I do recommend it. You might try to get some slow learners like department heads and parents to read it, too.

Another book that hit me hard was by Fritz Perls. Dr Frederick Perls was the father of Gestalt Therapy, and the book I read was called GESTALT THERAPY VERBATIM.

FAS-cinating.

Fritz taught me about some of the nasty people I've met at cons, such as Fred in Cincinnati a few years ago, when I was less experienced and vulnerable; he hurt me badly, and helped put these calluses on my psyche. Or the person of the female persuasion I met at Toronto.

Sorry; she is not a woman yet, and I try not to say "girl" anymore.

One of my editors in New York, about 32, loves being called a girl. Another would give me a kneelift in the crotch if she heard me use the word about anyone over 12 or 14. I have to take a cribsheet up there with me! Being kneelifted in the crotch is no fun, and I am not interested in singing soprano.
I have another editor in New York who likes being called a girl too, but we won't discuss his problems.

As I was saying: Toronto, a few weeks ago.
One yenta there flung that overused and usually mispronounced piece of jingoistic jargon "male chauvinist pig" at me because Dell recently brought out an offutt novel that's a sort of E.R.B. pastiche and satire. No use trying to explain to her that the status of woman in a barbarian society is not the Arthurian one Burroughs showed, but actually is lower than a snake's rectum. No use trying to explain that if I was dishonest in that book it was in making the woman WILLful, the kind who talk up. My kind.

I don't mean attack on sight, or be superdefensive, as too many are these days. I mean talk up, like people, not like girls or chattel. But there was no use trying to explain or discuss it with this bigot; her mouth was made up.

She had memorized an incredibly ugly, insulting phrase (that she mispronounced). I could have told her she'd dig my book about Eve Smith, a wholly female and unconditionally independent and extraordinarily competent secret agent-- but I doubt it. She'd find something to bitch about, because she is dead set on the sterile course of being not a feminist or a person, but a female chauvinist sow.

You people who are serious about where you're coming from-- and where you're going-- should go around garroting people like that.

In Toronto I was standing out on the convention-floor floor, outside, rapping with Lester del Rey and sort of holding up one of the pillars there. And suddenly this young person said, while we were talking, "Wah-- I thought all people from Ken-tuckee just stayed down there whippin their women and keepin 'em barefoot and pregnant." I was shocked, and looked, and didn't know this interrupter. But-- as many of you know, I have a great memory for names, and a good one for faces-- but I have a lot of trouble putting them together! So I broke off talking with Lester and looked over and said "Do I know you?"
The cool reply was "No." "Then why," I asked, and I was genuinely incredulous, "my god, why would you come on like that to a stranger?"

It took a few more exchanges until I got the answer; this person was from the North, and had been down South this summer, and had been dumped on by some Southren males, and lord knows there are some bad ones. (I hasten to point out that Kentucky is not a southern state-- although it is not a Yankee state either, yall.)

So-- defensively, the person in question jumped me without specific cause. "This way I find out real fast who are the nice people and who are the bad ones." "Gee," I said, "no you won't... how many basically nice ones do you think you drive off by attacking 'em this way?" Well, that was pretty much it, a hem-haw sort of thing, and the accoster wandered off, into the huckster room I think, and Lester and I resumed our conversation. About 15 minutes later I noticed the same person sort of standing around, shifting a bit, darting me looks, and he finally came up-- and apologized!

Well, that was twice I'd been shocked, but I am the way I am, and my arms automatically shot out and hugged and I kissed this unusual person on the forehead, and I suppose that was that.

I hasten to point out that you can come on saying something nice to begin with and probably get the same treatment.

But .. why do people do that?
Because they're bitter? Because they really dig being snots, hurting others? I don't think so.
Intrinsic damn meanness?
I think not, surely.
I think shyness, and fear of being hurt. So they're defensive. And they've heard that the best defense is an offense. So they come on being...offensive.
Damned offensive.

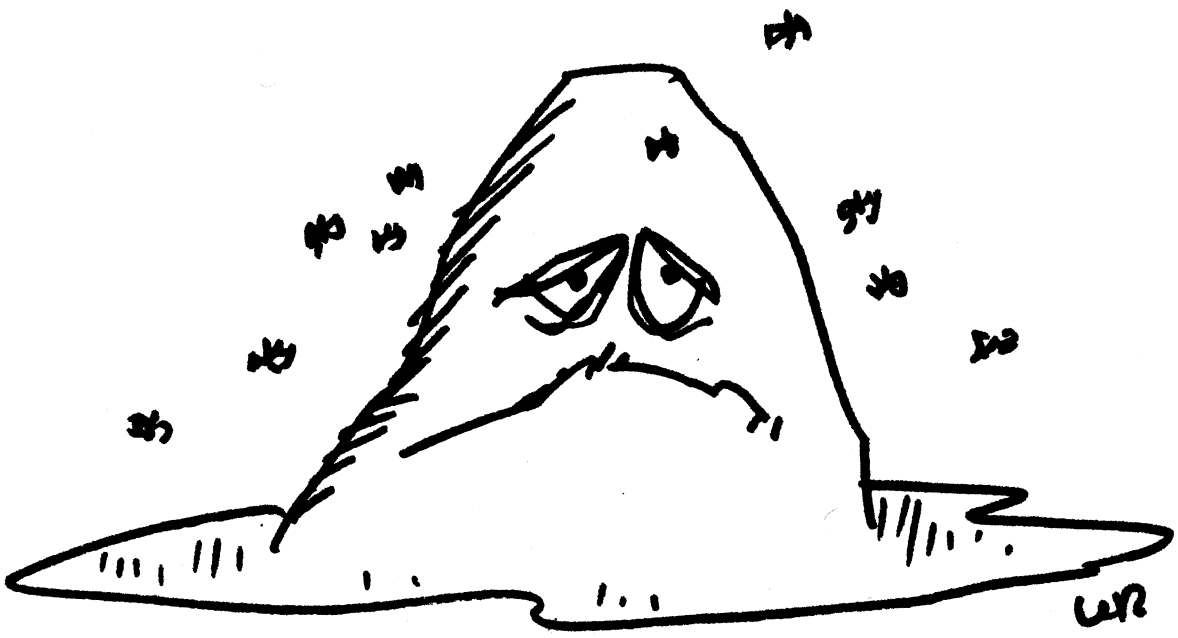
Now look, I'm letting yall in on a big secret.
Back to Fritz Perls. A lot of you have probably heard or read the Gestalt Therapy Prayer.

/Offuttnote: the six lines of the credo were read with slow force-- and the second line was repeated, militantly./

I do my thing, and you do your thing.
I am not in this world to live up to your expectations
And you are not in this world to live up to mine.
And you are you and I am I.
And if by chance we find each other, it's beautiful.
If not, it can't be helped.

Maybe I'd sort of like to add one line to that. It would be this:
AND GODDAMN YOUR EYES, STOP TRYING TO FORCE ME TO DO YOUR THING, AND CALLING ME NAMES IF I DON'T FEEL LIKE IT THIS MINUTE OR THIS SEMESTER OR THIS LIFE!

I'd like to have talked with Fritz about that. I believe and totally agree with everything but the last line.
It C A N be helped. Too many people don't try. Or they come on being defensive/offensive, with a wall out there, and the drawbridge up and the portcullis down. And sword and fangs bared.
I'm willing to try it peacefully.
So howcum I keep getting attacked and see others getting attacked?



I was once attacked on sight by a con-person, and I worked a little to find out why. I finally got to it; because he'd once approached another talky young writer and he's one of the defensive ones, one of the many who have a hard time being real; one of those who is On, all the time.
Look, I'm on now, but I'll be glad to get off later-- if you'll let me.

OK, so I told this person essentially that, and that I could be trusted, and I think maybe we're friends. And maybe he learned something-- I did. Either that or I've got another groupie; I prefer believing the former. Being treated as an object is sort of fun, but it can get tiresome.
(Never thought I'd have so much in common with Gloria Steinem!)

Here's what Fritz Perls said, and it's affected my head, and therefore my life, and therefore my writing:
"...we seldom look for a common denominator, what we have in common, but we look for where we are different, so that we can hate and kill each other."

Oh boy.
Yeahhh, mannnn.
Ask my Jodie about that. She came up with what I think is all of it in a phrase, and a well-turned phrase at that.
She says people should build bridges instead of walls.

Or ... tear down the walls and build bridges with the same materials.
It's not easy.
Takes effort.
My GOD-- it's worth it!

Listen to Fritz Perls: "My formulation is that maturing is the transcendence from environmental support to self-support."

Now this makes us all less than mature, right? Because we all go around looking for support from our environment, meaning each other.
Look at me, right now! Playing writer!

Thanks for your ... support. Maybe I can help you ... too.

So I've been trying to move past the shields, the fences, the walls, the verbal barriers or attacks. To try to see what's behind. Maybe there's a people in there. (And-- maybe not!) But it's worth the try-- unless someone hits me hard enough, cuts me deeply enough, to hurt.

Fritz Perls put it this way: "A good therapist doesn't listen to the content of the bullshit a patient produces, but to the sound, to the music, to the hesitation. Verbal communication is usually a lie. The real communication is beyond words."

Beyond ... those standard ... upfront ... words.
The word "PERSON": per sona. Per:through. sona:sound. Through sound! Oh wow. Maybe it's not such a great word at that, huh?

But written communication isn't to be taken that seriously, either. Lots of people write really mean letters, or superlatively witty letters. And you

meet them, and they're very shy people. Totally incapable of talking as they write. The mean ones may be pretty decent people. And you do know there's a brain in there. Where it's at with me, then, is I've learned to try and see underneath, inside, and to try to get together with that person. Therefore I am happier, and a lot harder to hurt these days. I think that's the reason; I hope it isn't all calluses and scar-tissue that turns the stabs and blows.

I got attacked a lot in fanzines, no matter what I wrote.
People asked me to write about writing, personal inside stuff, and I did, and I was attacked for egotripping.
People asked me to write about the issues of the day, and I did, and I was verbally gangbanged on the grounds that I was pontificating.
People asked me just to have fun as I do when I'm talking-- and in a lot of my fiction-- and I did, and I was jumped for perpetrating trivia when I obviously had a brain and things to say.

So, with a few exceptions, I have essentially stopped writing for fanzines, although I remain a sucker for them.
Just as some writers who've had enough of being jumped on and insulted and treated too bloody intimately by strangers seeking to show off for others and hearing just plain stupid stuff, don't hang around much anymore. You know, you see them at cons, you know they're there, but they sort of vanish most of the time.
They get called arrogant and standoffish and some say they have god-complexes. I think not.
I think they just get bloody well tired of suffering the slings and arrows of outrageous fans.

And people ask me if I pay much attention to, or get hurt by, or what did I think of the latest quotes review unquotes from such as Robert-- wait, wait, that's Richard-- E. Geis and Richard Delap. Sure. I get hurt when a gnat steps on my booted toe, too.

Now this may not be what you expected to hear, or what you want to hear, but I think it needs to be said. If a bunch of you would rather hear crazy stories about publishers and wild tales about other writers and wild tails, and my 3:30 AM call from Harlan and how I just got nearly three thousand dollars for a book the publisher is not going to publish, ever, and is returning to me, and so on --all those groovy Inside stories I love to do-- then take a vote or something and hang around another hour or two and we'll do that.

But right now ... can I go a step further? I really think I can be of a little help, both to fans and to those who make fandom possible. The creators. This business of approaching the creators of our favorite reading matter is pretty bloody hard. I know; it is for me!

Some writers come on pretty caustic,

or worse: God, if you say something to Asimov you might get kissed, fa petesake, because he's got this Thing about not putting sex in his books and he has to do something!
Or Harry Harrison may overwhelm you with that Jack E. Leonard routine-- that I love.
Or lord all Friday, Jerry Pournelle can blow your eardrums with that V O I C E of his.
Or you may think that Larry Niven or Roger Zelazny is an arrogant stand-aloof, as I did. They're not. They are both most intense, highly intelligent, and ... shy! Honest.
I guess some people get put off by Sprague de Camp or maybe A.E. Van Vogt because they are very straight and look so erect and unapproachable. Not so. Both are approachable; hell, they're both friendly!
Try not treating them as objects.

I've seen people take out a copy of one or three of my books and just sit or stand there, silent and overlookable in a crowd of two, while I'm talking with someone or someones else. Sometimes I just take those books away from 'em and sign 'em. I guess that could be terrible, but hell, I know what my books look like.

They all have covers that have nothing to do with the story, and blurbs that don't have much to do with anything and are written by special education dropouts, right?

Anyhow, there've been times when I've been talking and others have come up and we talked too, and I either forgot or overlooked that sweet someone with my book or he's gone away.
And I feel bad --no,no, not badly, as those dummies say on tv.
So far, I can think of few situations in which I'm not delighted to be interrupted by someone feeding my shaky ego. And I think most writers are the same.

Just be wary that they may want to get back into the conversation they were into when you came up with a book to be signed; lord all Friday, the 1973 laborday weekend was the first time I'd seen Lester and Sprague and Joe Green and Poul for over a year, and the first time I'd seen a lot of others for two years, or more.
And we do have things to talk with each other about. On the other hand ... Christ, the writer you're so diffident about approaching may be desperately in need of rescue from the bloody bore who's got him pinned to the wall, man!

Just do be careful if he's head-to-head with a representative of the opposite but not opposing sex, right? Go do your own bird-doggin!

Now here I am tonight, ole seldom-serious offutt, coming on like a shrink or a mobile advice column. Well, I've been wanting to say some of these things for a long time, several years. I think there can be a lot more communication, and friendly communication, too, at cons. And a lot less of people going about hurting each other, out of lonliness and shyness that makes them defensive and then offensive, right?

Why the hell shouldn't we, of all people, understand and be kind to each other? We sf people were the oddball kids, the shy lonely ones the others made fun of because we read a lot and read weird stuff, remember?
Surely we can take shelter with each other?

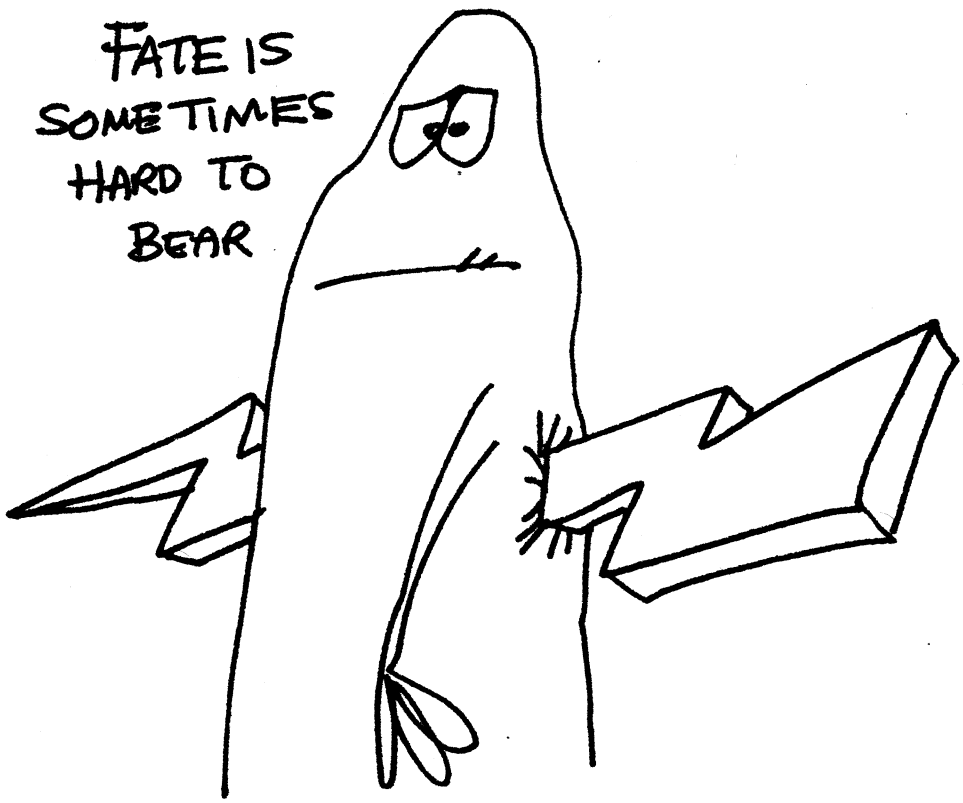
Now let's do get this straight. I've always thought that "turn the other cheek" stuff was elephantshit, which is like horseshit that comes in bigger piles. But ... if someone does verbally slap you, it's astonishing and very gratifying, what you can bring about by saying "Gee, why'd you want to do that?" or "Did you really want to hurt me or has it been a bad day?"

And ... remember this.

If he, she, or it starts drawing back for a second shot at you, then go to the Harlan Ellison technique, which is to go after a stinging mosquito not with a fly swatter but with an elephant gun.

/Huge explosive shooting sound into microphone; broad gesture/

Now let's call it quits --there are several women here I want to treat as objects...



But, fuckit anyway. Whoever they are, they're the best people, whether they recognize themselves or not. They're the ones who find many fans silly people, with trivial senses of humour, lacking in anything approaching genuine friendship as opposed to jolly cameraderie, overconcerned with the more irrelevant aspects of everything. The ones who see most fans as prudish, flauntingly inadequate and overconcerned to be good fellows. The ones who see most fans as too much the same despite their superficial and deliberate attempts to set themselves apart from the 'mundanes'. Ratfans are the best ones, more or less, even though they're a bunch of no-good irresponsible, uncooperative, neurotic, selfish, ignorant, uncommunicative, alienated, estranged and useless bunch of bastards. Great people.

---Greg Pickersgill RITBLAT/GRIM NEWS 1

The trufan writes letters of comment to nearly every fanzine he or she receives, although he trades fanzines with the other editor. The trufan can be found eating a cold can of beans in the middle of winter to pay for postage stamps from an organization he constantly criticizes. He is the person who makes a mimeo from a broken typewriter roller, an old oil drum, half his son's mechano set; and then turns out a fanzine that looks like it was done on an offset press - he also manages to misspell his own name four times on the front cover. The trufan is a fanatic; a mystic without a belief. He produces his fanzine or runs a convention in defiance of alleged economic good sense, gives it away to people who ask him for it - and then they send him a letter saying it was no good!

---Eric Lindsay GEGENSCHEIN 16

THE MOST UNFORGETTABLE SILVERBERG I EVER MET

by harlan ellison

If one ever took stock of the most frequently recurring memories one's mind chews and rechews, I suspect they'd total less than two hundred; that would include life-experiences ranging from bitter disappointments and vivid sexual episodes to moments of honor and glory and incidents wherein enormous emotional or physical pain was inflicted...encounters with Great Persons...instants of self-discovery in which one found out one had been cheated or maligned or praised or that everything one had done before that moment was adolescent...the mid-life crisis in which one realizes death cannot be avoided, the recognition of one's mortality...all the unforgettable memories...and that includes literary experiences that touch one so deeply the rememberer cannot pass a cemetery without conjuring up images of Tom and Huck crouching with a dead cat while Injun Joe slaughters his prey or Pip encounters Magwitch.

Literary memories are the **very best, really.** Because the ones that stick with are the ones that touch, in some unfathomable way, deep secrets the soul identifies as important ones, the solitary core secrets. If one knew which literary memories a man or woman most treasured, I think it might be possible to understand the target-person wholly.

I won't tell you all of mine: that would be giving it away too easily, selling myself too cheaply, going even more naked than is my habit. But a few, perhaps.

I remember the Red Death stalking through that party bringing its victims to ultimate terror; I remember the dirndl-skirted lovely lady with the picnic basket filled with raw and bloody meat, throwing her snacks to the wretches in their cages in Mirbeau's TORTURE GARDEN; I remember Toby Tyler's sorrow at the death of his pet monkey; I remember Ahab lashed by his own sick revenge to the plunging shape of Moby-Dick; I remember Kafka's country doctor and the Statue of Liberty with sword held high.

End ms.

For all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these: 'It might have been!'

mdg

HOW TO WRITE SCIENCE FICTION FOR A LIVING AND MAKE LOTS OF BREAD

joe haldeman

2 cups warm water
1 packet dry yeast (¼ oz)
1 tbsp. dark molasses
1 cup rye flour
2 tsp. salt
3 cups unbleached flour

Combine the yeast and water (warm potato water is best) and let the yeast dissolve. You can help it along a bit. Add the molasses, salt and rye flour; along with a spoonful of caraway seeds if you like them. Mix the whole thing up until it's pretty smooth. DON'T USE AN ELECTRIC MIXER! Add ½ cup of the unbleached flour and mix that in, then let sit for 20 minutes, rising, in the warmest part of the kitchen.

Then mix in the remaining 2½ cups of unbleached flour and turn it out on a well-floured board (or table or floor or even large dog, if it has a flattish back) and knead, adding more flour if needed (no low puns here).

You knead the dough by pushing it out with your hands until it resembles an inch-thick pancake, then folding it over back on itself twice so it looks like a folded-over pancake. Repeat, adding flour if it doesn't look right. It will soon develop a will of its own -- put some muscle into it! It will "look right" when it looks the way dough looked when your mother made bread, or the way it looks when a baker makes bread: smooth, satiny, resilient.

Put the dough in a greased bowl (prepared beforehand), cover the bowl with a cloth and leave it in that warm place until it's doubled in size (45-60 minutes). Then knead it vigorously (which will make it shrink) and let it rise again until double in size.

Divide into equal portions, shape into loaves and put into two well-buttered loaf pans. Let rise one last time. Then pop into a /preheated/ 375° oven and let bake for about fifty minutes. The bread is done when it makes a hollow sound when you tap it on top.

When it's done, you're supposed to put it on a rack and let it cool for about fif-

teen minutes before eating. I can never wait this long.

(You can give it a crunchy crust by brushing the top with egg white, just before baking. I think you can give it a soft crust by brushing with milk, but I've never tried it.)

(Potato water, you may have deduced, is the water left over after you boil potatoes. Peeled potatoes. The water left over after you boil unpeeled potatoes is called "mud".)

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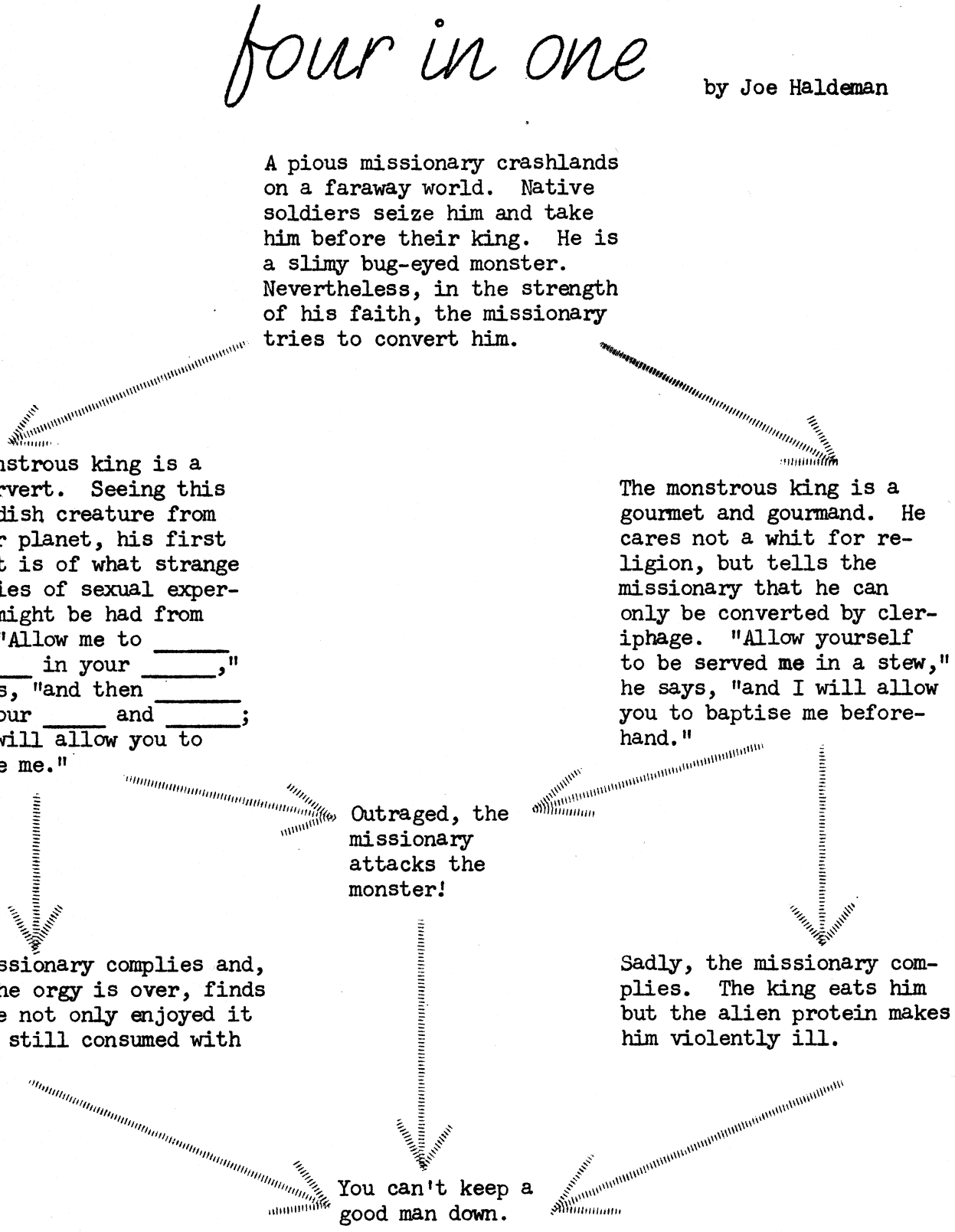
four in one

by Joe Haldeman



THE FANNISH INQUISITION

Locs on XENIUM haven't exactly been plentiful; the drawback of not having a letter column, I suppose. There've been about a dozen all told on the first four issues. Here are some comments on the last issue's TORCON commentary.

JOHN ALDERSON -- I particularly enjoyed reading the Canadian side of Torcon. I feel amazed that Susan hugged Bruce Gillespie, must surely have been the first time anyone hugged Bruce since he was three years old.

DON D'AMMASSA -- I noticed with interest in the latest XENIUM your remark: "I never did make it to the Apa45 party..." Well. Under the circumstances, I feel I should warn you that there is someone doing a very good imitation. As I recall, you (or your doppelganger) walked in about 9:00 with Susan, stumbled over Bruce Gillespie, and sat on the bed talking to - I believe - David Stever. You left about fifteen minutes later.

Both Sheila and I were very impressed with Toronto. I don't know if I ever mentioned that there was a TV special on Toronto last year which said that Toronto was probably the only "civilized" city in North America. The thing that impressed me most was that every time we stopped to look at a particularly striking building, people passing on the street would stop and tell us all about it. I don't think I've ever seen such pride in a city displayed by its residents.

BOB TUCKER -- I thoroughly enjoyed TORCON! Every hour of it, every inch of it. Quite honestly, it was the best worldcon I have attended, and I've been going to them since 1940. Until now, until Toronto, the Cinvention in 1949 had been my happiest, my best, but the events of Torcon firmly place it in top position. You wouldn't believe some of the events and I don't intend to tell you. You're too young, innocent, and fannish.

ERIC LINDSAY -- I will really have to find out from you what brands of beer and scotch to stock up with for when you come to Australia. Not that I'm a drinking man myself - I drink to feel sophisticated - trouble is, then I can't pronounce it. Actually I have a health problem, a finicky stomach - I can't eat an olive unless it's been sterilized in gin. Actually I'm surprised at all the Torcon reports that did come out; with all the parties that always had rum for one more, I thought the writers would suffer from bottle fatigue. Bob Tucker corrupted me, and I lost all my respect for older fans. He had no respect for age unless it was bottled. But fans did more than drink; they discussed music - I always thought Beethoven's Fifth was a bottle. Despite this I'm not sot in my ways, I suppose I can always beer up under misfortune, and write something good for you. I was going to make this a drinking song, but I never got past the first two bars.

And I Also Heard From: Asenath Hammond, Bob Bloch, Mike Gorra and Phil Payne.

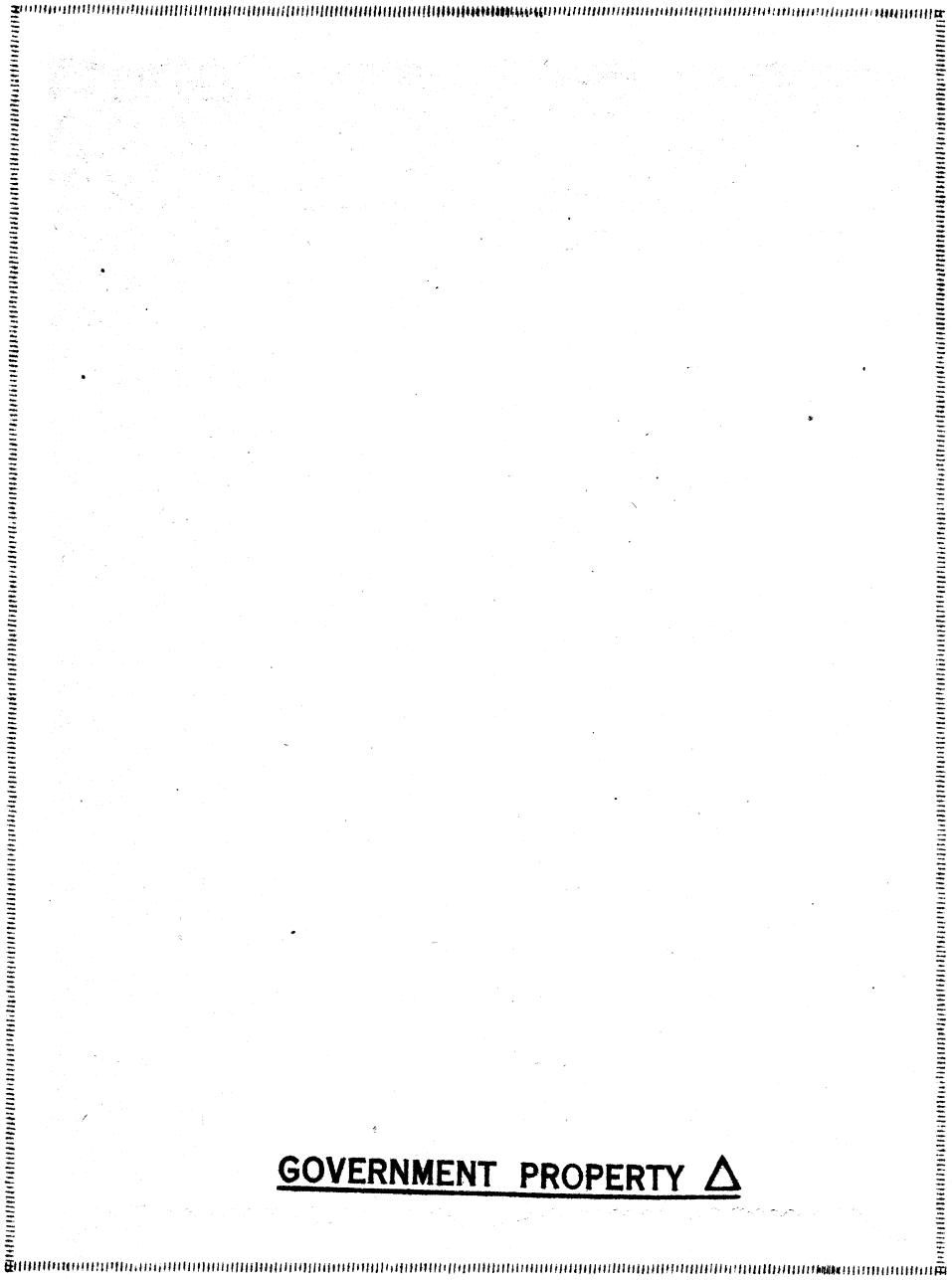
- -

It is a strange thing to discover and to believe that you are loved, when you know that there is nothing in you for anybody but a parent or a God to love.

---Graham Greene THE END OF THE AFFAIR

Friendship is the comfort, the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person, having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words, but pouring all right out just as they are, chaff and grain together, certain that a faithful friendly hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping and with a breath of comfort, blow the rest away.

A LITTLE SOMETHING FOR THE END?



In light of andy's talk on not being shitty to people, this issue's Something Extra seems particularly appropriate. And exercising unusual restraint I'll refrain from any more of the more obvious remarks that come to mind.

Just as Post Office stories are the trademark of every practicing fan, so complaints about the toilet paper are the hallmark of the international traveller. As evidence of my recent voyage, I offer the accompanying sample of Official London Public Toilet Toilet Paper. In quality and texture, it is not an especially rare or valuable specimen, but I was struck by the typically British touch of printing messages on each sheet. Unfortunately, I couldn't locate a full supply of the sheets that politely but firmly request "Now wash your hands please" but the commercial possibilities hinted at by this breakthrough must be obvious to you all. At last a chance to get those damn cigarette ads out of our paperbacks and into a more appropriate location! If any of you seize this opportunity and cash in on this potential advertising bonanza, remember, you saw it first in XENIUM, The Fanzine That Gives You Something Extra. It certainly is a wonderful thing...

COVERS for this issue are by Terry Austin while the interior artwork, in order of appearance (as if you couldn't tell) has been by Bill Rotsler, Jack Gaughan, Jack Gaughan, Jack Gaughan, Bill Rotsler, Bill Rotsler, Connie Faddis, Bill Rotsler, Jim McLeod, Dan Steffan, Bill Rotsler, Bill Rotsler and Jonh Ingham

"Toilet paper is getting hard to find in London, supposedly because of the three-day week. Toilet paper has become the entire symbol of hardship for Britain now that there is enough petrol to go around. Housewives are buying it up while storekeepers keep it in the back of the store, out of view."

Blank Page

XENIUM?
YES, I WAS A CHARTER MEMBER OF THAT CLUB. WE MET EVERY APRIL 12 IN ATLANTIC CITY FOR ONE HOUR AND DID DINOSAUR BONE IMPERSONATIONS. MMMMMM... WONDER WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO MORTON FEZBELZ? HE DID THE BEST LEFT REAR STEGASAURUS FEMER I EVER SAW....
AW, THE OLD GANG, WE REALLY SHOULD--
YES, YES ....MMM.
TAR

Xenium 7 (2.4) Original Colour Covers

Xenium 7 (2.4) Orginal Colour Paper

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