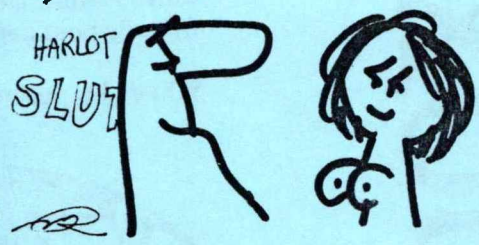


ISSUE 5 AUG. 97

X TREMIE

easy
SLUT
SLUT
BOOBS
HARLOT
SLUT

I've heard so much about you.



THANKS WITH HIS C
junk
SEXIST
PIG

I've heard about you.



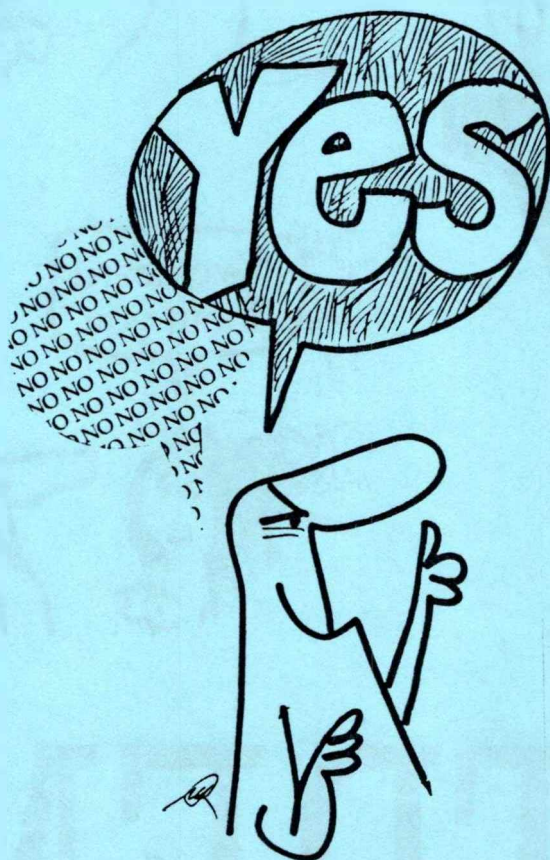
chatterboxing

What kind of fan reads *Xtreme*?

That's hard to say. A series of logistical mishaps forced a second run after I satisfied FAPA's requirement, so I haven't seen much response yet. I hitchhiked *X4* onto Joyce's *Quant Suff* in the hopes that some of that zine's lustre rubs off on this one.

Right now, a lettercol is a hope more than a certainty. I want a column that crackles with wit and pulses with life. I'll settle for a friendly post card.

What's he pulling here, anyway?



PUTTING UP A BRAVE FRONT

Xtreme #5 comes from Arnie Katz (330 S. Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107; Email Address: Crossfire@aol.com). It's published for the August, 1997 FAPA mailing and a few good friends. Member fwa. Lukewarm support, afal.

Xtreme is about my interests, quirks, hobby horses, crotchets and observations. *Wild Helrs*, *Sidebar* and similar titles soak up my allusive anecdotes, fanhistorical speculation and faan fiction.

X mostly prints the Other Stuff.

Will *Xtreme* stay this way? I can't honestly say. *Xtreme* reflects my current needs. If I didn't have *Wild Helrs* and/or *Sidebar* as outlets for fannish stuff, more would end up here.

I'm not compartmentalizing my fanac. I'm the same guy who co-edits *WH*, so some overlap is unavoidable. Yet some of my writing seems out of place there. Maybe it's out of place *anywhere*. The responsibility for that verdict lies elsewhere.

I explained my "less is more" kick last time, so I won't recapitulate. This tight self-editing makes it tough to pile up FAPA page credits, but it keeps the page-count low. If I control my runaway mouth, Joyce will let *Xtreme* continue to ride with *Quant Suff*. In future days, when learned fans extol its excellence in awed tones, I can say that even though I didn't appear in *Quant Suff*, I was right nearby.

Xtreme's format doesn't look much like *Wild Helrs*. That's a conscious decision. It's the *Pert* shampoo of fanzine layout, quick and easy. but I hope it's a refreshing change. At worst, it's a reason to print some Rotsler illustrations that weren't Just Right for my other fanzines.

Xtreme is set in the deeply symbolic 10/12 *Cosmos Medium* for the reading comfort of its select patrons. I normally wouldn't mention such details, but a paranormal flash reveals that someone out there wants to know.

What fandom means to me (some aspects)

Saturday, July 26th was the 71st, and last, monthly *Social*.

Joyce and I began this series of open fan parties shortly after we met then-isolated Las Vegas fandom.

We decided to snap the string for several reasons. Joyce's puny health is a prime factor. So is Las Vegrants' urge to meet more often. The lower key Vegrants sessions are less strain on Joyce, and the group's new biweekly schedule should take up any social slack.

The final Social had a hearteningly cyclical quality. Robin Langdon, a character in my *Willis Plays Vegas*, returned to the Social after several years of globetrotting for his job. He's been gone so long that stalwarts like Tom Springer and Ross Chamberlain had never met him!

In an unexpected reprise of an incident at the very first Social, NonCon I, Lori Forbes fell into the jacuzzi. Unlike Ray Waldie, who tried to walk on water in 1991, Lori banged up her knee and seemed dazed by the experience. I wouldn't an accident on anyone, especially such a pleasant person as she, but Lori's stumble *did* provide closure.

I'm not a Drinking Man...

I distrust conspiracy theories as much as the orthodoxies they reinterpret. Mark Lane may, or may not, have had good intentions with his *Rush to Judgement* theory about the John Kennedy assassination, but his ideas don't ring truer than the Warren Commission report.

The 50th anniversary of the Roswell, NM, incident has sparked a rush of media attention. The documentaries and articles have again induced me to think about this ambiguous and confusing case.

Most UFO stories are easily dis-

missed. I've heard and read them since I was a child, and none has convinced me. It takes willful gullibility to swallow a patent piece of nonsense like *The Interrupted*



Journey/Incident at Exeter, and the less said about Shaver or Streiber the better.

It's my curse to be a perpetual skeptic in an increasingly gullible world. Conspiracy theories and "hidden truth" suppositions have replaced religion as a belief system for many, and I never quarrel with someone's beliefs as long as they don't try to enforce them on me. If you want to believe that John Dillinger killed JFK with Bruno Hauptmann as back-up, that's fine with me. Thank goodness we have the right to pick our own mythology.

I accept the likelihood of intelligent life elsewhere in the cosmos, but I'm skeptical about alleged reports of alien contact. The trendiness of the accounts, both the descriptions of the aliens and their alleged activities, would give any rational person cause to doubt.

It is easy for me to dismiss most ufo incidents as mis-perception or fraud. People who want to believe may unconsciously warp their perceptions to coincide with their preconceptions. I think the type of person who might've seen an Angel in in the Middle Ages now meets ET, Faced with something not immediately explainable, their minds warp reality into images they find understandable.

UFO scams fascinate me, too. I've heard some great spritzes of bullshit, but the spiels of Otis T Carr, Howard Adamski and the rest but authentic evidence remains elusive.

Could Roswell be an exception? I honestly don't know. Though many facts are debatable, Roswell disturbs me.

I'd like to believe the Air Force that it was a weather balloon, radar target and crash test dummies, but I can't. Too many people have to be lying and too many acknowledged actions seem strange, if that explanation is true.

Let's say that a weather balloon with a radar reflector and a payload of test dummies crashed on that New Mexico farm. If its importance justified an Air Force clamp-down, why didn't the Air Force search for it before the "flying disk" story? What is it about this weather balloon that could explain a half-century of deliberate government lies and evasions? Surely any secret project could be disclosed after a half-century.

The evidence for a flying saucer is intriguing, but unconvincing, to me. Most testimony is second-hand, and I distrust evidence that is somehow not available for examination.

"Secret aircraft" is the answer to more than one ufo mystery, but I get the feeling it won't wash here. Both the flying disk and balloon factions have spent as much energy disproving the "secret aircraft" option as validating their own positions.

So I've got this nagging question: What is the Horrible Truth that the government has tried so hard to squash for the last 50 years?

My So-Called Brilliant Career

Inside Games (www.insidegames.com) is finally, finally fully operational. It's a commercial site for intelligent electronic game enthusiasts. It's backed by InterWorld, and I'm the editor.

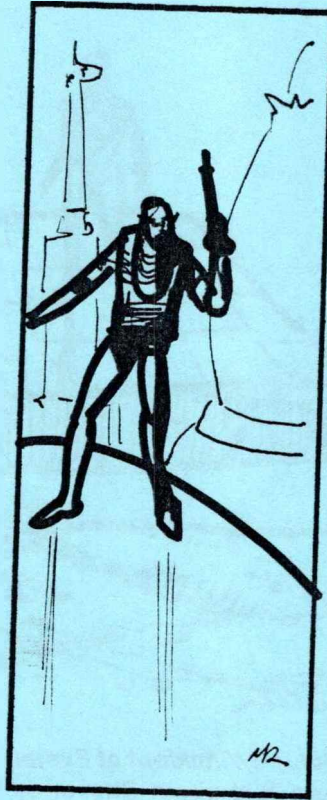
It was a rocky road, made more frustrating by the need to work through technological intermediaries. I shape and edit the whole package, but I can't touch the site directly.

One problem after another shook the site, capped by a blown server computer. The machine took issue with off-the-shelf software, a program to implement an archive search routine, and went catatonic. That disaster barred new posts for over two weeks in late June and early July.

Now that IG is functioning well, the company wants a second publication. **Game Trend** will highlight what's new and innovative in electronic gaming, with more pictures

than words. The articles will be briefer and more simply written, with much more pictorial material.

This is the second or third con-



cept Interworld has embraced for that second mag. My boss Rich Heimlich and I have successfully talked them out of a couple of false starts.

Game Trend could be a mistake, too. The new site targets people who are gamers but not word-or-

ented. How much such people want a magazine of any kind is what we'll learn when we put up a limited test version. If you're not getting enough of my IG column Monday, Wednesday and Friday, there'll be even more when GT is fully live.

Bill Kunkel and I are poised to make our debut as professional fiction writers. Some work we did on a new electronic game, **Postal**, has turned into a deal to write a novella based on that material. Several studios are supposedly interested in turning this Great Literature into a movie when we finally write it. Whether they'll retain this enthusiasm when Kunkel and Katz bust their fiction cherry is another, separate question.

Return to Southfork

One of my TV addictions is the king of the 1980s night-time dramas, *Dallas*. Not only did Joyce and I faithfully watch the original telecasts, but we've taped over 200 rerun episodes.

Accumulating our *Dallas* collection hasn't been as straight forward as you'd think. The first two rerun cycles, on TNT, stopped several seasons short of the end. Now TNN (The Nashville Network) is in the midst of the first complete re-airing, and we've taking advantage of it to complete our collection. Naturally we watch each newly taped episode as soon as possible.

It's easy to dismiss *Dallas* as a soap opera. The show has the continuity and human interaction of the daytime dramas, but it has more substantial plotlines, polished acting and a faster-paced narrative. Conditioned by innumerable science fiction series, Joyce and I are unable to shake our interest in the fortunes of the Ewing clan.

We often debate the motivations and justifications of these fictional folks. This is not a completely



THERE ARE ONLY SO MANY SYMBOLS LEFT

healthy activity, but I guess it's better than directing the same scrutiny toward our friends and relations.

As those who know her undoubtedly anticipate, Joyce has some rather unique perspectives on the show. She'll argue for hours that JR Ewing is not evil, only misunderstood. It requires considerable ingenuity to twist things around to make JR the good guy, but Joyce's twisted mind is more than equal to the task.

In our defense, many of these discussions end with "because the writers wanted it that way." Joyce hardly ever writes to Miss Ellie any more.

We've watched our *Dallas* collection a couple of times, semi-marathon style. Fast-forwarding through commercials, credits and previews cuts running time to 40 minutes per episode. A *Dallas* weekend can race through a season or two of the show, while leaving plenty of time for carousing, chores and fanac.

Viewing sprees like that sensitize us to minor aspects of the show that pass unnoticed when seeing them one per week. It throws plot and character changes into bolder relief, and the heavy foreshadowing of major events builds dramatic tension.

Dallas has one gigantic swerve, though, the dream year. A combination of off-screen contract shuffling and on-screen mistakes led the show to retroactively declare a whole season took place only in the dreaming mind of Pamela Ewing. She wakes up in the first episode of the following season and Bobby Ewing, killed the previous year, steps out of the shower.

Isn't that convenient?

Aren't there a few years you'd like to declare imaginary? I'm not sure I'd scrap the whole year, but there were definitely aspects of 1996 that made it a candidate for a

"dream year" for me. Meanwhile, Joyce wakes every morning with the unflagging hope that Patrick Duffy will step out of our shower instead of me.

Nashville Katz

The daily taping ritual has increased my awareness of The Nashville Network. That's not necessarily a good thing. Apart from *Dallas*, there's nothing on TNN I wouldn't go out of my way to miss.

Not that this window on redneck culture lacks a perverse appeal. TNN lards its broadcast day with generous portions of C&W videos and country's answer to *MTV Grind*. (TNN fill most of the remaining time with redneck sports, hagiographies of country hit-makers and *Dukes of Hazzard* reruns.)



FEAR

First and last, I see a lot of country videos and dance party segments. Cutting-edge video technology has given me the dubious benefit of this opportunity.

Since my stunning defeat by a

VCR manual in 1981, I've depended on manual recording starts. Hey, at least I can set the damn digital clock. It never blinks "12:00" at our house.

I can even make the picture-in-picture work if that ever becomes absolutely necessary. Since I've only got one working eye, though, two simultaneous video images is ocular overkill.

Anyway, despite my awesome technical proficiency, I have never trusted VCR timers or my ability to properly program them. So I leave the TV on when I begin my workday in my office, just through the French doors. I stroll back through those French doors at a few minutes to 8 every morning and hit the record button. The machine automatically rewinds when it reaches the end of the tape, so I don't have to think about that. Each evening, I reset the cassette to the start of the newly taped episode so we can watch it.

The videos haven't endeared contemporary country to me. A lot of it is weak-kneed, basic pop rock with a Southern drawl. The biggest distinction between primitive rock and this stuff is the unbelievable banality of the lyrics. It seems like half the songs set some overworked cliché to music, while the rest wallow in the hokiest form of sentimentality.

A Good Ole Country Song

The old-time music revival continues here at Toner Hall. I lean heavily on current alternative rock when there's a houseful of company, but Joyce and I veer to older music most of the time when we're alone.

Every time I accumulate a little dough, we swoop down on WOW, a superstore with a Tower Records music department, and carry off five or six CDs. The collection has grown so rapidly this year that it has claimed the 200-unit spinner

that previously held CD-ROMs. Now it has folk, blues and old-timey country.

What we do like? Muddy Waters is still my favorite bluesman, and Chicago artists (Howling Wolf, Walter Horton, Willie Dixon and both Sonny Boy Williamson) are well-represented. We've also been buying some Leroy Carr, Memphis Minnie and Furry Lewis.

Picked up an usual CD recently, *Gene Autry, Bluesman*. It's a collection of country and country blues the singing cowboy recorded under two pseudonyms in the early 1930s.

The disc has over two-dozen tunes, about half actually written by Autry. Most of the rest are good covers of Jimmy Rodgers songs. Gene isn't quite as strong on the vocals as Rodgers, but Joyce insists that he is the sweeter yodeler.

I discovered something interesting while squinting through the liner notes. This album was compiled, as were another 20 or so "roots of blues" titles by my long-lost cousin Larry Cohn. His mom and mom had some sort of insane family argument, which effectively cut one branch of the family off from the other, but he and I never had any part in that.

I'm thinking about calling him, now that Joyce has unearthed his phone number through some Internet research.

A Selfish Love

Old habits die hard. I was a Randist for about three months during my freshman year at college. I recovered from Objectivism without any lingering ill effects, I think, but I still recognize Enlightened self-Interest as a human motivation. (It isn't as ubiquitous as Apparent Self-Interest,

but it generally lasts longer.)

There are many reasons to love fandom, at least as many as there are good friends, fine acquaintances and stalwart party fodder. Another motive, reeking of Enlightened Self-Interest, cropped up in a conversation at the final Social.

A bunch of us were sitting in what is normally Marcy Waldie's office. Tom Springer, Bill Kunkel and I were talking about a range of topics with two of the newest Vegrants, Derek and Alison Stazenski.

For now-obscure reasons, I made a passing reference to Bob Tucker as "the Will Rogers of Fandom." When our adorable new couple laughed out loud, it forced me to examine its validity. When I took stock after the Stazenskis' implied challenge, I discovered no reason to retract the statement.



I said as much to Derek and Alison, and I think I made a pretty good case for not only Tucker, but quite a few other leading fanwriters. The gist of my argument follows:

Popularity and ability are separate yardsticks. Erma Bombeck and Dave Barry are not the greatest

humorists in the history of the English language, though they're probably the most widely read ones. There are period during which the finest writers, such as Addison & Steele and Jonathan Swift, who wrote for tiny audiences. These three eventually won their deserved popularity, but there are others as talented who have remained obscure.

Fandom, for a myriad of reasons, has captured the attention of some marvelous writers who lacked the ambition or opportunity to become full-time professional essayists, columnists and humorists.

The quality of fandom's top writers may be an illusion, but I don't think so. So many fans have done well in the professional ranks, including Bloch, Tucker, Hoffman, Kennedy, BoSh and Warner, that the existence of writing talent seems irrefutable.

How skillful are the top fanwriters? My perception, backed by a moldy BA in English Lit and nearly three decades as a professional editor, is that the best is very, very good. Tucker, Burbee and Willis, to name three, don't have to take a back seat to anyone.

I haven't read a more facile manipulator of the English language than Walt Willis. A Willis article has sensational puns and word-play, perhaps the most sophisticated of any writer in this century. Then he throws in situational

humor, funny dialogue and amusing observations. And while he's juggling all these elements, WAW manages to convey a fairly complex message or theme.

He does all these things in a highly polished style. His sentence structure and word choice are very good. As someone who has both

copy edited professionally and had the privilege of publishing Willis, I found far, far fewer revision points in his work than in any professional work I've edited.

Walt Willis, for his own reasons, chose fanzine fandom as his audience. Much of his best work transcend cultural differences, but the fullest appreciation of his work requires considerable knowledge of fandom. This is not so different than saying that the fullest appreciation of TS Eliot's work requires a considerable knowledge of poetry. The difference is that knowledge of poetry is readily available, while understanding of fandom is a much more obscure field.

What this means, to me, is that fandom has a body of literary hidden gems which we lucky few are in a unique position to relish.

After I finish this issue, I think I'll re-read *The Harp Stateside* and revel in its esoteric pleasures. It's Ghodd to be a Fanzine Fan.

Nothing can save Flash Gordon now!

When I ripped through the wrapping paper and saw the boxed set of *Flash Gordon* cassettes, it stirred a lifetime of science fictional memories. I've always loved the make-do grandeur of the Buster Crabb serials, and a collection of the feature movie versions struck me as a wonderful thing to own.

I had the first inkling that this wasn't my heart's desire when I counted four cassettes. Since there are only three series, and thus three movies, something wasn't quite right.

Then I noticed that the titles didn't tally with my admittedly hazy recollection. I recalled that at least one should have "Space Soldiers" in the name, and I was pretty sure another was supposed to be "Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe."

The enigma resolved itself when Joyce and I actually watched the



four tapes. Yes, there were four, each claiming to be a Flash Gordon adventure starring Larry "Buster" Crabb,

This quartet of quasi-coherent cassettes was definitely *not* the "Special Director's Cut," though I imagine Ford Beebe can feel the pain of even in his grave. (If you are still alive, Mr. Beebe, I salute you and pray daily for your continued good health.)

This is the Greedy Idiot's Cut. Besides chopping the first and third serials into episodic mush, despite the existence of perfectly good feature-length versions, the publisher divided the serial series into two movies!

Before admiration for the publisher's editing skill overwhelms you, I hasten to add that it is a graceless, ham-handed job. They split the second serial by putting all scenes about the bombardment of Earth with flaming shell in one movie and the purple death dust in the other.

This makes for some strange continuity. For example, the treacherous handmaiden is virtually invisible in the flaming shells picture, but she's in almost every scene in

the other. Similarly, Flash had two Arborean helpers, but this reworking assigns each sidekick to a different film.

The attempt to cover this butchery with voice-over narrative is, literally, laughable. The flaming shell movie ends shortly after Flash and friends achieve a minor victory with a stunning narrative that assures viewers that they have triumphed, gone back to Earth and reaped the acclaim of heroes.

Not that the Great Divide is the set's only sin. The scene-by-scene editing is whimsical at best. The action leaps over key scenes like OJ leapfrogging chairs in an Avis commercial (or leapfrogging justice in real life). All of a sudden, everyone is somewhere else, perhaps with additional people on hand, and there's no indicate how the plot jumped ahead so quickly.

The four tapes are less moves that anthologies of partial scenes and resonant images. They are a pleasantly nostalgic memory jogger those who remember how it's all supposed to go, but those who don't have those fond memories would have to wonder how anyone could watch these disjointed science fiction adventures.

The Best Man

Robert Lichtman called to ask if I intended to run for FAPA President again.

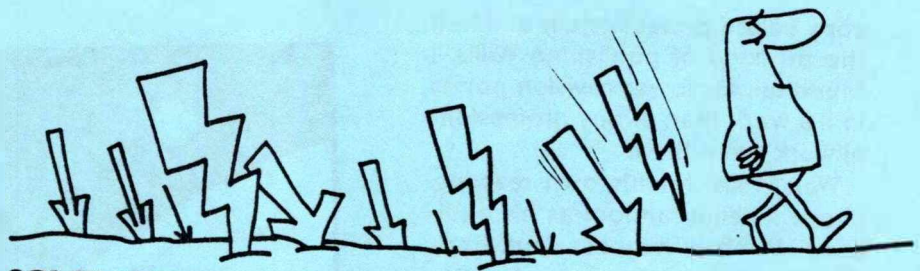
"Run again?" I asked my fanpolitical mentor. "Wasn't I just elected?"

From what he said, a whole year had slipped past. My entire term had come and gone.

"Sure, sign me up!" I said. I'd run on a "do nothing" platform, and the record shows I've lived up to this promise a lot better than most politicians.

Joyce claims I did something during the year, but if so, I don't remember. All I can do is swear to do even less if re-elected.

common knowledge



SOME ARE OBLIVIOUS

ROBERT

Writers depend on common knowledge. It's a crutch. Common Knowledge is the basis for the communications shortcuts that make possible reasonably stylish, and sufficiently brief, journalistic prose.

Without common knowledge, every article would bog down under the weight of necessary explanations. A newspaper doesn't offer a short course in civics every time it mentions pending legislation. The writer, and the newspaper, assume most readers know how a bill becomes a law.

And what would us (allegedly) humorous essayists do without common knowledge? "All the world's an allusion," Lenny Bailes once said to me. I'm a less allusive humorist than Dennis Miller, but my work makes many pop cultural references. My articles would balloon to book length if I explicated every statement based on a fact "everybody knows. The resonant images derived from Common Knowledge lead to more concise writing.

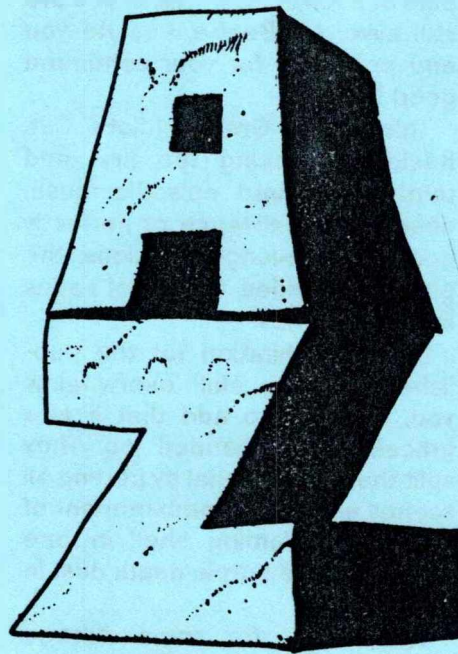
Imagine telling a joke that begins, "There's this rabbi and a priest..." if you had to explain Judaism and Christianity and the sociological connotations of their respective clerics. By the time you explain the Crusades, pogroms and the holocaust, the punchline won't get many laughs.

So I've got a big stake in the existence of common knowledge. I'm wordy enough without encumbering my writing with explanatory digressions.

Just the other day, Joyce frightened me by passing along the results of a survey of Las Vegas high school students. According to the research, a sizable minority of students think Joan of Arc was Noah's wife.

It could've been worse. They might've answered that she was the star of "Knots Landing."

Knowing high schoolers, I've dismissed such horror stories as teenage humor. Yet the mounting evidence gnaws at my belief. I want so much for there to be lots and



EVERYTHING

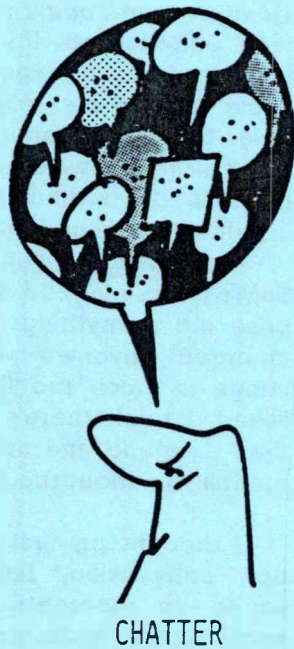
lots of Common Knowledge that y
perverse mind ferets out every
instance in which it proves unreli-
able. All that sustains me now is
the slim hope that a goofy answer
to a survey is an eternal teenage
prank.

Perhaps youthful rebellion
explains surveys that disclose e-
ncyclopedic ignorance among high
school and college students. Yet it
would be easier to accept this as
juvenile aberration if adults didn't
provide so many additional
instances of lack of common
knowledge.

A particularly painful instance
came to light on the morning
newscast the day after the made-
for-TV version of "The Odyssey."

The anchorwoman said, "The
world of the 'Odyssey' isn't the
same as it was in Homers day." She
paused, looked into the camera
with great sincerity and added,
"Homer was the author of the
'Odyssey!'" She said it with sur-
prise and vehemence, as if to say,
"Here's a fact you've never heard
before!"

Before I could absorb this reve-



lation, the weather man provided
even more evidence that common
knowledge isn't all that common.
When not reporting sunshine and
low humidity, meteorologist John
Fredericks presides over the daily
trivia question His question was:
"What state is at the geographic
center of the United States?"

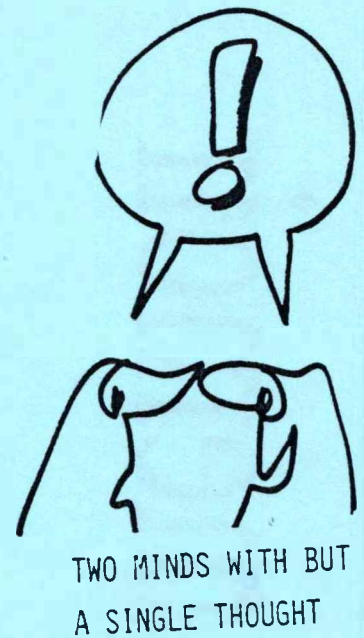
If you share my suspicious
nature, you caught the dim out-
lines of a bar bet. With almost inde-
cent haste, so anxious was he to
parade his knowledge, Fredericks
quickly announced that the answer
is... Kansas.

That's a real good answer – for
1955. In 1996, we must consider
Hawaii and Alaska. Those states fix
the spot considerable North and
West of Kansas.

TV offered another instance of
the rarity of common wisdom dur-
ing coverage of a Kiss comeback
concert. They gave people waiting
on line a chance to win a contest
by answering two questions. One
test question involved completing
a lyric line from a Kiss song. The
other was: "What is the Gettysburg
Address?" Everyone got the first
question right, but few of the many
contestants nailed the second.

Of course, this was a biased sam-
ple. It would be unfair to stigmatize
our entire society when there are
serious questions about the intelli-
gence of people waiting on line for
a Kiss comeback concert.

Evidence like that keeps piling
up. Now I'm afraid to assume any-
thing. I'm afraid I'll sound like a
professor acquaintance of mine
who buttresses his points with ref-
erences to people, places and
events outside the knowledge of
anyone who can't match his PhD in
history. During a typical, bullshit
conversation, he'll squash his
opposition with a trenchant, "The
Flennerman Incident during the
Hopwhistle dynasty proves this
conclusively!" We're all too
ashamed of our relative ignorance



to call his bluff. For all I know, he
makes up these citations as he
goes.

There's actually a series of
paperback books which teach how
to bluff through any subject from
baseball to computers by memo-
rizing a few bits of common knowl-
edge calculated to convince the
even-more ignorant that you know
what you're saying.

The series struck me as very sen-
sible, though I'm surprised none of
my friends had codified its pre-
cepts before this. So many live by
those tenets. Certainly, several are
acutely aware of this strategy. Now
I wonder if the whole idea is work-
able. If people no longer possess a
goodly store of common knowl-
edge, these bluffer's gambits
might be perceived as gibberish.

And what of Dennis Miller – and
me? It may become harder to
make a reference that everyone
understands than it was for
Manginhorst to trample the mighty
Gnorfmen at the Battle of
Phlotsambourgh.

SaM and me: a memoir

Sam Moskowitz's death hit hard. It roused memories of a man who changed my life for the better. I don't know where I'd be as a professional writer/editor without his tutelage and support, but I know where I've gotten with them.

It's a big debt. I'm glad I acknowledged it to him, both in person and in writing, while he was alive. Now he's dead, and I'm battling my usual reserve to share those thoughts with you.

Most fans harbor cast-iron images of Sam Moskowitz. His joke at the NyCon 3 banquet – "Don't step in the Oompah!" – probably sums up their opinion.

My feelings don't depend on convincing anyone who feels that way that they are wrong. Everyone has flaws, and my feeling don't depend on proving that SaM was the exception to that rule.

He could be loud, coarse, self-involved and inappropriate. If

those were his flaws, and they were, they don't negate his incalculable contribution to fandom, his many estimable qualities as a human being and his positive effect on my life. We're all diminished by our Imperfections; some have great positives against which to balance them.

As often happens, more people think they know all about SaM than really do. Especially in fandom and science fiction, everyone has heard of him.

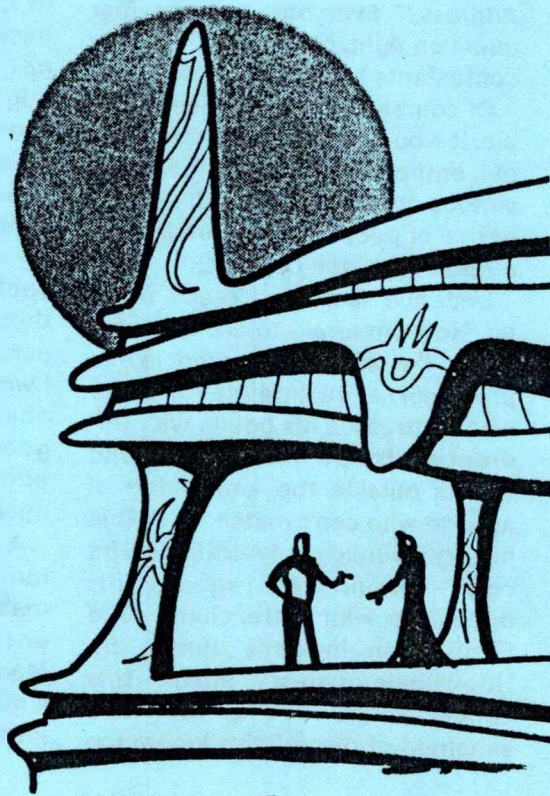
I knew him that way. By the time I entered fandom in 1963, SaM had become the lightning rod for sercon fandom, much like Ted White is for my favorite backwater eddy. My feelings about Sam the Symbol back then were pretty much what you'd expect from a semi-hippie faaanish fanzine fan.

If things had stayed that way, I'd have no reason to write this. If SaM and I had stayed in our separate social sets, our slight contact would've produced no particular effect in me.

Things *didn't* stay that way. He hired me as editorial assistant for *Quick Frozen Foods*, my first full-time editorial job. I worked with him for about four years, saw him every day and had many opportunities to just sit around and talk. I won't claim that we became bosom buddies, but I think I got some insights into his personality.

One article won't re-write SaM's fannish legend. It would surprise me if anything I write here changed anyone's view; SaM's image is much too firmly established. I think there's more here than a legend and an image. Let me tell you about the guy I knew.

I thought my first science fiction convention, Lunacon '63, would be momentous. I never imagined that a chance encounter would change my life. I didn't expect to meet someone who'd





W. T. S.

play such a pivotal role in my life. More accurately, I never expected SaM to be that person.

If you'd asked before Lenny Bailes and I hopped the bus and subway to Manhattan, I'd have guessed that my most significant Lunacon fan would be Judi Sephton, my first fan contact. I'd noted her cute photo in her zine, *Free Radical*. What teenage boy *isn't* interested in nubile college girls?

Of course, there was already one person of considerable importance to me at Lunacon. Lenny Bailes was, literally, with me every step of the way as we climbed the endless staircase to the top floor of New York's Adelphi Hall. We'd hunted back-date science fiction magazines together, co-edited our first fanzine and were venturing into face-to-face fandom shoulder to shoulder.

It didn't take long to spot Sam Moskowitz after we huffed and puffed into the meeting room. We got there minutes before the scheduled start. By a fan tradition we didn't yet know, we were a half-hour early. Young fans scurried to complete preparations. Several men in suits stood aside from the bustle, chatting in a tight circle.

Not that their conversation was private. How could it be when one guy had a voice that shook the walls? I don't recall the subject,

except that it was some obscure science fiction historical point of no interest to me. I did notice, however, that the orator digressed from his monologue to solve one con crisis after another.

When someone called him "Sam," Bailes and I guessed his identity. Even two

kids on the hobby's outer edge had heard of Sam Moskowitz. We knew of SaM primarily as a science fiction anthologist and historian, but I quickly saw that he was a power at this Lunacon.

Lenny and I observed more than talked, except to each other. I eventually worked up courage to exchange "hello"s with SaM after the panels and speeches. I didn't attempt a real conversation, mostly due to shyness. SaM's gruff manner and stentorian voice gave any stranger reason to hesitate. At that time and place, it didn't take much to make me hesitate.

Our fannish paths seldom crossed in the ensuing years. I saw him at the Eastern Science Fiction Association monthly meetings in Newark NJ. First Fandomites ruled the little world which existed in the antiseptic conference room at the Newark, NJ, YMCA. Its conservative, bookish members cared passionately about Hans Stefan Santesson.

Our ESFA contact scarcely enlarged on our Lunacon meeting. He was in charge, and I was part of the audience. The club's rigid structure, which emphasized guest speakers, didn't allow

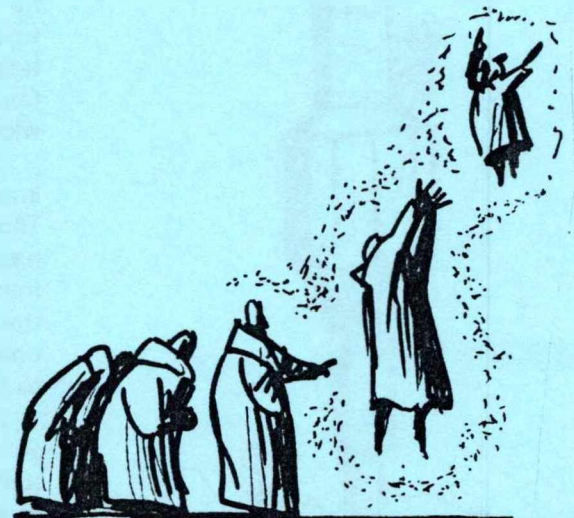
socializing until fans went to an after-meeting restaurant.

Naturally, people sat with their friends. SaM, Chris and their crowd had its table, and ragtag young New York fandom had ours. After one fall 1963 ESFA meeting, Sam read the Pacificon II committee's attack on Walter Breen to his group, and through the miracle of his resonant voice, to the entire restaurant.

Occasional side comments communicated Sam's viewpoint. *The world science fiction convention committee said it, so it must be true.*

The document never got a more stirring reading than Sam gave it that day. His own penchant for mock-heroic prose meshed with the material. I'm sure he convinced many eavesdroppers, including some fans, that the Pacificon had dealt with a menace in a mature, just and competent way.

I sat there, stunned. I didn't know much about fandom, and SaM's rendition was luridly persuasive. Yet it rubbed me the wrong way. Amid ringing declarations of moral certitude and fannish indig-



W. T. S.

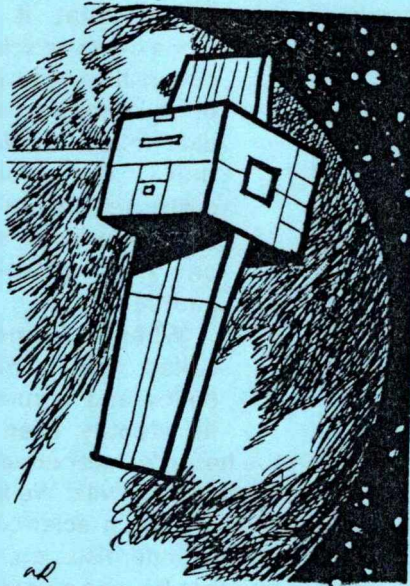
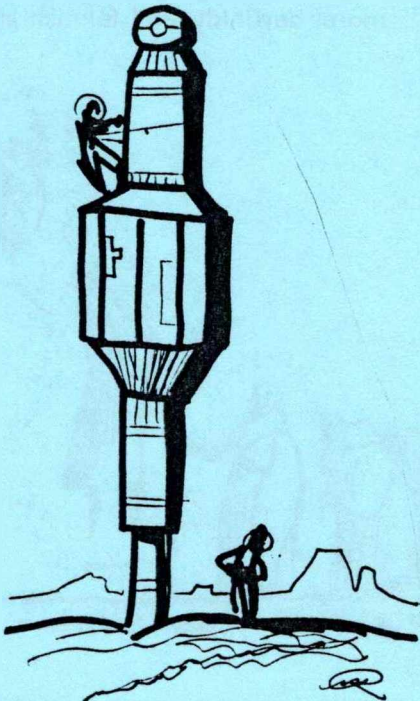
NOON MIRACLE

nation, I couldn't bring myself to hop on the bandwagon.

In that moment of hesitation, SaM and my fannish paths diverged. I stopped going to ESFA after a couple more Sunday afternoons. I joined the Fanoclasts, went to an out-of-town college and earned a small reputation as a fannish fan as co-editor of *Qulp* and then *Focal Point*.

We inhabited different circles, had no friends in common. SaM became that strange dude who'd perpetrated the Exclusion Act, sued Ted White, fought with fans who criticized the rigor of his research and supported the campaign against Breen.

Things changed when I began looking for my first job after college. My then-roomie Andy Porter suggested I try EW William's Publishing Company, which already employed him in its production department. A staff editor had gone on a bender and gotten fired. When the editorial assistant moved up to fill the vacancy, it left the bottom rung invitingly vacant.



So I went to be interviewed by the Assistant Publisher and Editor of *Quick Frozen Foods* magazine, Sam Martin. (He used "Martin" in this aspect of his career, due to an early brush with anti-semitism.)

Fandom was a potential barrier between me and my prospective boss. I didn't think he'd hire me if he knew much about my fanac. I wasn't exactly the sci-fi scholar of his dreams.

It turned out that SaM knew no specifics of my fan career, but he knew I published fanzines. It was the best of all possible situations; I got full credit for being a fan and no demerits for my wicked wicked ways.

A history of fan publishing impressed him more than my BA. Though I believe he had at least a hazy idea that my fanzine wasn't must reading for him, SaM liked the potential of anyone who had enough interest in literary pursuits to publish prolifically.

So he hired me. Over the next several years, SaM taught me the rudiments, and subtleties, of the writing and editing profession. He pushed me hard, but his patience and understanding helped me over

the inevitable rough spots and setbacks.

I had worked for only three months as Editorial Assistant when the guy who'd moved up to Assistant Editor quit in a tizzy inflated self-importance. He thought he should be running the company. Those in a position to make that adjustment thought he wasn't doing his current job very well. That's probably why he seemed vaguely surprised when no one tried to talk him out of quitting when he threw a mid-office tantrum.

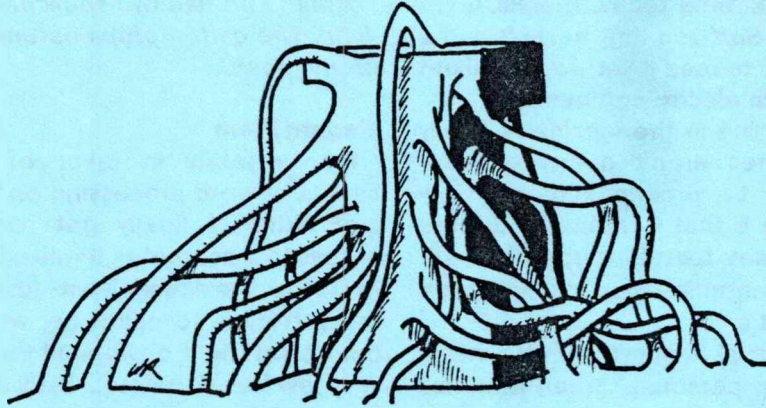
As Editorial Assistant, I'd learned to answer the phone, sort the mail, file the picture and — incredibly! — proofread *Quick Frozen Foods*. My writing and editing consisted of writing and assembling the page of promotions and hirings,

When the old Assistant Editor walked out, my co-workers told me not to dream of a promotion. Editorial Assistants generally stayed a year in that role. The only exception in memory was the ill-starred fellow who'd just quit.

Nonetheless, I went into SaM's office and asked for the job. His immediate response was negative, and for exactly the reasons the staff had predicted.

The tide turned when I invoked fandom. His great affection for the hobby of his youth overcame his reluctance to promote another eager upstart. Though I tiptoed past a few potentially embarrassing particulars, I described my





WE ALL HAVE DEMANDS UPON US

fanac. He was surprisingly sympathetic, especially when he realized I co-edited a biweekly newszine.

In the end, he gave me the shot. "OK, Amle," he said. "You've got to come up with two features, one about frozen baked goods and the other about frozen fish, for the next issue."

I'll never forget taking my first feature into his corner office. I knew its scintillating quality would astound him. Probably earn me an on-the-spot promotion, I figured.

I sat there, eyes wide, as his pencil demolished my clumsy attempt and erected a cohesive, polished article in its place.

His professionalism impressed me as much as his speed and sureness. He could have gloated over my numerous neophyte mistakes or taken credit for the article, but he did neither. SaM dismissed his overhaul as ordinary editing. "Everybody gets edited," he told me.

He instilled a "try anything" attitude that has stayed with me. Time after time, SaM threw me into uncharted waters. It made for some anxious days, but it also accelerated the learning process and propelled me forward in my

career at a speed I might never have achieved.

I'd see him batting out feature articles faster than I could've hunt-and-pecked "Quick brown fox." His ability to structure articles and generate meaningful content set a standard to which I still aspire. He was like a one-man editorial department.

Over the years, warily, we began to talk about fandom. SaM constantly surprised me with his broadminded attitude toward my zines. I'm sure he'd rather have seen me tread in the footsteps of A. Langley Searles, but he respected my right to go my own way.

In more recent years he often wrote enthusiastic letters to *Folly* and *Wild Helms*. He enjoyed the fannish spirit, and why not? After all, SaM did his part to create our microcosm. He invented faan fiction, launched cons and clubs and wrote innumerable fannish articles back before World War II, when it was all getting started.

Changes in fandom, many of which he abetted, made him an anachronism. Bullying and doctrinaire Marxism aside, Wolheim's social conscience and non-stefnal interests are more in tune with

today's fanzine fandom than SaM's earnest devotion to imaginative literature.

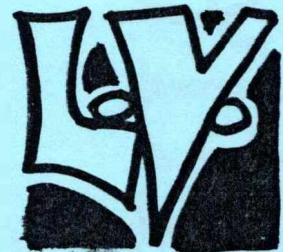
Yet SaM wasn't a total Neanderthal. While working late one night, he confided that he thought the Exclusion Act was stupid, and that he had known it even at the time. According to him, SaM arrived at NyCon to find that his co-chairmen had thrown out Wolheim and the rest. He couldn't see how to reverse it, and he felt he owed Taurasi and Sykora loyalty, but he sincerely regretted it.

One thing we shared was an interest in the history of science fiction fandom. One of my dearest possessions is a copy of the 1970s reprint of *The Immortal Storm*.

I've read *The Immortal Storm* several times since Tucker sold me a copy (since passed along to Art Widner) in the mid-'60s. SaM's mock-heroic prose makes it a compelling memoir of fandom's early days. SaM's accounts of the roots of fandom are informative, but *The Immortal Storm's* most absorbing sections derive from his intense personal involvement.

SaM died of complications following a massive heart attack in late April. I will forever be grateful for what he taught me, and I fancy my success made him a little proud, too. He even came to enjoy my fannish fanzines, though they hardly exemplify his own unwavering commitment to science fiction.

The *Immortal Storm* swirls forever.



xtreme response

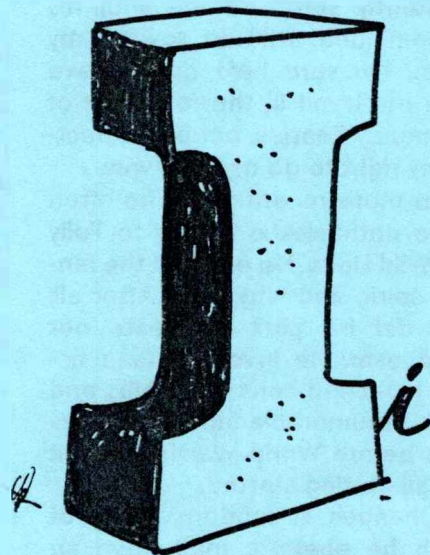
John D. Berry

Got **Xtreme** today. Thanks. (I got **Quant Suff**, too, but haven't had a chance to read it yet; Joyce will get her own electro-comment.)

Best line in the fanzine is, "Daily deadlines aren't nearly as conducive to procrastination." Only trouble is that it threatens to pass the Laney test (Is it good enough for an interlineation? If not, then make it a fan article) — apart from the news on your personal career, it makes the whole section redundant.

I was going to say, "Amie! Use the spell-checker! Use the spell-checker!" which might have caught things like "word -of- mouth" and "official premiere," but it would never have caught the best inadvertent line in the issue: "I've spent my whole caress writing and editing monthly magazines."

You know, don't you, that if you wrote *The Red Wine, Chocolate, and More Sex Diet*, you could probably sell it big-time? Unless someone's



THE ME
FOR PUBLIC CONSUMPTION

beat you to it.

Amie: I do use the spellchecker, John. The carton props up one leg of my desk.

George Flynn

I'm certainly in favor of the impact of word processing on writing." When I finally got regular access to a computer, it galvanized my fanac. Previously, it was just too much trouble to polish my writing before setting it down, and I wrote very few locs. But now... (I still don't Web-surf, though, so I don't expect to be looking at your site.)

Amie: The incredible ease of desk top publishing was partly responsible for my fanzine spree when I first returned to activity in 1990. I got into the process so much that I could hardly wait to start tinkering on the next issue as soon as I finished the previous one. Much as I'd like everyone to take a glance at my daily column (among other things), I don't take your web-surfing comment too personally, George. Those who are interested might try www.insidegames.com.

Buck Coulson

Yes, it depends on the person how much rewriting helps. Some writers have admitted that they are hooked on revisions to the point of not getting the article/whatever finished. I never liked rewrites.

Fan stuff was mostly composed on stencil, and if I was doing it today, I'd probably send things out without ever re-reading them. The pro work did require rewrites, but then I considered it more important than fanzine writing. When you grow up poor, making money is always important.

The collaborations with Gene DeWeese never saw a rewrite if they went to a fanzine, and the professional ones didn't get much, though there were usually two drafts. (Sometimes we could blame

the editor on the pro stuff; "Man from Uncle #12" pb had a one-month deadline from the time we were informed it was ours until the final mss. had to be in the editor's office, and there were no computers then; We mailed chapter drafts back and forth. And it wasn't as good as #11 by a long shot. Forget improvements; get it done.)

Yeah, I'm a chocolate fan, though as a diabetic my intake is restricted. I don't much like the pie or the ice cream, but the rest is fine. I now and then buy a package of semi-sweet baking chocolate and eat it, though. I've never quite adjusted to the unsweetened. I can't have all I want, so I don't bother with milk chocolate; it's sort of a panty-waist version anyway. The darker the better. Chocolate cherries are fine as long as they're made with dark chocolate.

Not with you on baseball. Well, I was a Chicago Cubs fan as a child; that sort of thing is discouraging.

Amie: When Bill Kunkel and I collaborate, we generally each write a draft. Either I blaze the trail and he tidies up, or he writes the basic version and then I embellish and expand where necessary. We've written so many articles and columns together over the last 20 years that it takes very little discussion.

I'm not sure your childhood experience as a Cubs rooter applies to baseball as it exists outside Wrigley Field. Believe it or not, there are franchises which actually try to develop or acquire a group of players capable of winning consistently. Strange... but true!

Dean Grennell

Regarding *Xtreme*, Amie, you made my day by mentioning *Grue* on page 2. It's depressing to hear the post awful still tries to rule with a heavy hand. A great many years ago, *Esquire* got in deep Dutch with the p.o. over a joke they'd

printed. It ran:

Girl: Would you like to see where I was operated on for appendicitis?

Boy: No, I hate hospitals.

I'm surprised (X, p4) to encounter a reference to The Bull of the Woods. I think that originally appeared in a single-frame cartoon called "Out Our Way" which skipped about blithely between characters, sometimes planting an episode in a machine shop in which the BotW was a foreman.

I have some software called *Hoyle* for this machine which can set you up in several different card games, including Hearts. That was long the blood-game of San Gabriel Valley fandom when we used to live in Glendora, prior to 1972. I've played a few games of Hearts on the computer, but feel I really do better when playing with real people.

A propos nothing you published, but one of my pet peeves of the moment is the robot telephone system in which you're supposed to press some number to make something happen. At age 73, I still enjoy 20/20 vision, but my ears are something else, having been exposed to loud noises occupationally for well upward of a half-century. I usually use a phone that has the number buttons in the center handpiece and have to take it away from my ear to find and press the stupid button, by which time the operator — usually a mush-mouth female speaking at a rate conservatively estimated at 987 words per minute — has uttered 17 more paragraphs with no slightest clue as to what they may have been saying.

Amie: Have I ever mentioned that I have an almost complete run of Grue? I still enjoy rereading it from time to time, since its literacy and wit haven't faded nearly as much as the blue printing over the

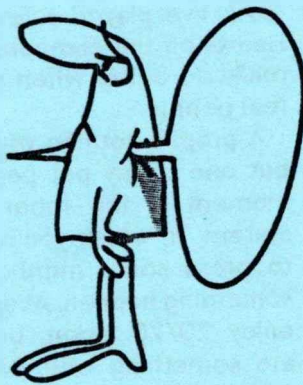
years. It's one of my very favorite fanzines, and I'm prepared to say that in each and every issue of Xtreme if that will encourage such excellent letters of comment.

My problem with automated phone systems is opposite to yours. Despite nights spent too close to large speakers blasting rock, my hearing is fairly good. Though cataract surgery improved my overall vision,, it virtually destroyed my ability to see things right under my nose. I do fine on the phone until it asks me to read off a customer service number or the like. Even with reading glasses in place, I still need to hold the paper in one hand, the phone in the other and my magnifying glass in the other..

This is no easy feat. I usually end up laboriously preparing for such phone calls by writing the needed string of numbers in type so large that even I don't need additional magnification to see it.

And that's the letters received on *Xtreme* #4. Thanks to all the writers — and to those who read but didn't find an appropriate comment hook. See you in three months. — Amie

Great thanks to
Bill Rotsler
for all the illos.
and thanks also
to the
letter writers
Everything else,
including the typos,
is the
editor's responsibility



STUNG BY THE CRITICISM
OF FRIENDS