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Myth, superstition and folklore come in different shapes and sizes to fit the mind and the culture of a time and place; they form a substructure between the foundations of custom and law and the edifice of our daily lives. Sometimes they are confused with a similar infrastructure called religion, but while there is frequently some overlap they are not the same.

Superstition evolves from behavior based on erroneous explanations for things. It manages to root itself in unfulfilled needs. Myth is a logical but embellished strain of disseminated thought also based on mistaken notions about real events. It tends to include itself within folklore, though that I generally think of folklore as the cross-

pollination of information, frequently based on the resolution or remedies of a variety of shared problems and ills. If the myths in fact point to a demonstrable resolution that satisfies our sense of justice or even our craving for useful information, then they are perpetuated within folklore.

This even occurs if the myth only satisfies our sense of mischief, from which we, as adults, have been mostly weaned, in part by the development of empathy, but more by peer pressure. Some have been more weaned than others, to be true. After all, the myths of the mischief-maker hang on, ranging from Loki to Coyote to Til Eulenspiegel to Brer Rabbit to Dennis the Menace. And I think we may include the proponents and exponents of Rock 'n Roll, right? It is of course rampant among the creative community. One might

of course say that not all fun has to be mischievous, and that's true. But to make that the controlling point of view is so...so PC! It is, after all, what has happened to Halloween.

What happens to a culture's psyche when it converts all its ghosts to Caspars and its monsters to Herman Munsters? When vampires get cuddly and like to eat the peanut butter first? Sympathy for the devil...

Little enough of which actually leads me to the following cautionary (Or Maybe Not) reminiscence:

Dramatis Personal

by Ross Chamberlain

In Which the Classic Concept Is Demonstrated That, as Persons Advance in Age,
Recent Memories Fade While Distant Memories Are Recalled in Detail

Sure, I had a good time at SilverCon IV and if, between the fertilization of the Mardi Gras courtyard a day before that memorable longish weekend and Arnie & Joyce's subsequent similar refurbishment of their lawn, my nose has been so assaulted that it keeps telling me it's in some proximity to an outhouse, why then I just have to remind myself that I *laid* bathe that morning, and it's all in my head.

I'd actually prefer to select another cliché, but nothing occurs to me at the moment. Besides, there are those who suggest I'm full of it anyway, so why make an issue? Let's just say my ol' factory is working overtime.

Perhaps the best moments for me at this convention comprised the opportunity I had to make a ham of myself instead of the usual ass. (This probably works with the above paragraphs better for U.S. readers than for our British brethren, for reasons that have already been discussed sufficiently in earlier lettercols.)

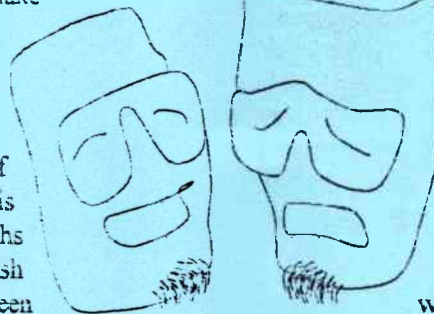
Andy Hooper invited me to participate in a reading of his inspired "radio" drama, *Ten Zines that Shook the World*.

I shared this honor with a dozen or more other fans, not all of whom, I'm embarrassed to say, could I recount when

I reached this point in my first draft. This was undoubtedly due to my active participation in some of the other

popular activities at the con and the consequent impairment of my little grey cells—not that I ever laid claim to Herculean powers of the mind. At any rate, Ken Forman, Nevenah Smith, Victor Gonzales, Ben Wilson, Peggy Kurilla, Richard Brandt, Tom Springer, BelleAugusta, Bill Kunkel, Pat O'Connor and John Hardin were in fact the players, with Andy himself providing the narration.

(I checked with Andy and added two or three names to the list before this saw print.) For the same reason, I cannot recount here chapter and verse of the events at the con that led up to the public performance. But perhaps I can give you a bit of the larger picture that made it special for me.



There was a time, dear friends, when I Aspired to the Stage.

In part this was the usual case of claiming, on having seen performers who made it look easy, "Hey, I could do that!" But there was a little more to it.

To put it semi-succinctly, I was a shy and troubled kid who, by my mid-teens, was so buried in a shell that therapy was advised. Because I seemed to like to draw and write, Dr. Spencer, the psychiatrist, recommended I go to Buxton School, a small private co-ed preparatory school in Williamstown, Mass.—about 50 miles from where I was living at the time—that emphasized creativity. My folks were not well off, but after an interview with Mrs. Sangster, the headmistress, I did get a scholarship to go there. Mrs. S. was a remarkable woman, and sometime I'll have to write more about her.

Illustrative of that shell I spoke of, I remember an evening shortly after arriving at the school, still very much withdrawn into myself, sitting in the main house's living room by myself. One of the students, Terry Smith, came in and asked if there was anything wrong. I said "No, I'm okay." I was grateful for the attention, but he of course took it as "Leave me alone," and went away annoyed, clearly feeling that his offer of help had been rebuffed.

Among the creative endeavors promoted by the school was (you guessed it) drama. There were only about 20 or 30 students all together, over the four grades, freshman to senior. Each year the entire student body would prepare and present a play. They not only put it on in the school's own theatre, rebuilt from an old corn crib structure, and sometimes in churches or auditoriums in one or two neighboring towns, but they would also take it on the road for a couple of performances in some distant but interesting place. I came to Buxton as a senior, but, on the recommendations of the therapist, stayed for a post-grad year. So I was in two such productions, one of which was a home-grown musical based on the story of Rip Van Winkle, and the other was Thornton Wilder's *The Skin of Our Teeth*. In addition, there was usually a second production put on by a smaller group of interested students.

The first effort I was involved in was *Rip*.

The late actor John Cazale (1935-1978), who played Fredo Corlone in *The Godfather*, Sal in *Dog Day Afternoon*, and guys named Stan in both *The Conversation* and *The Deer Hunter*, graduated from Buxton the year before I arrived, I think. Johnny (yeah, we called him that) was brought in to play Rip because he had a strong tenor singing voice. Because I sang bass, or at least could hit some low notes, I was selected to play St. Nicholas, who was a pivotal character in this version of the story (Washington Irving might have shaken his head dolefully at some of the embellishments). Johnny and I got to put on long white

beards. I had mine for my two appearances on stage; he, of course, only had to wear his in the second act. They also encouraged him to let his hair grow long for the part... Bear in mind that this was in 1956, well before the Beatles revolution. Everybody thought he looked a little strange!

I also had to wear padding (I was a skinny kid, then; today the suit would fit without the pillow). The costume I wore was not the classic Santa Claus suit; rather it was an outfit that reflected the period, all in fall colors—browns and oranges and greys—and including a tall hat, a long-stemmed pipe and leggings that were improvised out of dyed long johns...

I was initially cautiously interested in the project but didn't know about this idea of getting up in front of people and making a jerk out of myself. Mrs. S., who had written the book and lyrics herself (Jerry Bidlack, our musical director, wrote the music), called me into her office to offer me the St. Nicholas part. I didn't know what it would entail, and she explained some of it. There were a couple of songs, or maybe one long one and a reprise, and I'd basically be providing the motivation for Rip to go into the mountains—something about seeking a golden ball to help his daughter get married, or something like that. I was demurring about all this, or trying to in the face of Mrs. S.'s enthusiasm, and she was getting me to read some of the lines of the script, I think. I did some little silly business with one of the lines, and her eyes lightened. "Yes! That's good!" she encouraged even as I blushed at my temerity. And thus she began to chip away at that shell...

I introduced myself to Rip on stage with the following chorus and verse:

*Oh, I am St. Nicholas, jolly and fat,
With my long, long pipe and my high, high hat!
With my long, long pipe and my high, high hat,
I am St. Nicholas, jolly and fat!*

I wait all the year 'til the snow piles up high
And then with my reindeer and sleigh off I fly
Through clouds and through moonlight, avoiding each star
To the houses of children in lands near and far.
Where my well-laden belly I tighten and shrink
As I lower myself through the chimney's square brink.*
And fill all the stockings that patiently hang
While the children are waiting to see what I brang... **

*Oh, I am St. Nicholas, jolly and fat,
With my long, long pipe and my high, high hat!
With my long, long pipe and my high, high hat,
I am St. Nicholas, jolly and fat!*

* This sank to a very low note, here, which I didn't always succeed in hitting squarely.

** You cringe, I cringe, the audience cringes. I tried to add a sense of "elbow-in-ribs, wink-wink, it's all in fun here, folks" to this, but it probably just made it sound like a sour note in addition to the barbaric grammar.

later and became good friends after that. But I missed laughing with Sidsel.

The next year, we took *The Skin of Our Teeth* to Nantucket, this time traveling by bus. Borgny Hammer, Peter's kid sister, one of two who played Sabrina in alternate performances, distinguished herself by climbing up into the overhead luggage racks. One of the guys, Bill Mackay, was the first person I knew to wear a Mohawk haircut. We changed for a ferry at Woods Hole, Mass., on the southern shore of Cape Cod, and soon enough we were out of sight of the mainland... another first in my life. And the last, to date.

I played a news reporter who introduces the show. There are supposed to be movie clips to accompany the reporter's spiel, but we were on too tight a budget to get those from the company that handles those things. On our first performance, back at Buxton, the one for parents and some locals, we had a miscue—I was sitting in the front row, wearing the new trenchcoat I'd gotten for the part. My folks were in the audience. Someone was supposed to flash a spotlight that was set up above and in front of the curtain, for my cue. It was on, but I kept waiting for it to flash, and it never happened. Finally the curtain opened, and they started the play without my intro. (Sabrina, the maid, duster in hand: "Oh, oh, oh! Six o'clock and the master's not home yet!"—or something like that.) They had been waiting for me while I'd been waiting for them. Bother!

There were no miscues in Nantucket. Our performances were well received, there—indeed, we got rave reviews in the local paper, comparing us favorably with a Broadway production. All of us felt pretty good about that, to be sure!

Our other production for the year was *The Swan*, by Ferenc Molnar. Later that year (1956) the movie with Grace Kelly as Princess Alexandra, Louis Jourdan as the Tutor who falls in love with her, and Alec Guinness as Prince Albert (not, incidentally, *the* Prince Albert—nor, for that matter, the other one, of tobacco can incarceration fame) was released, and most of us went to see it. I played the Prince. One of our faculty had a tuxedo that he let me wear for the part. He was a tall man; we had to roll up the trouser cuffs for me. And we found a broad crimson ribbon and some gold trinket to look like an emblem, for me to wear across my chest over the standard white shirt (if Mr. Sears had a dicky for the tuxedo, he didn't let on). For the life of me I can't remember what I wore at the neck of the shirt.

It was at one of the performances of *The Swan* that we experienced *The Click*; the only time on stage I've ever had that good fortune. Our soccer team got it once in one game. It's one of those extended mutual satoris where everything Works. On the stage that evening, suddenly, we forgot the fourth wall; we were all in character, the interaction flowing quite as I'm sure the author would have had it given his druthers.

I've actually seen it happen on television, a couple or three times; once on the Dave King summer replacement show for the Kraft Theatre, when a new young singer called Shanie Wallace came out for a solo spot, and blew the audience away. As far as I know she was never again able to capture that excitement. Another time was on the Dinah Shore show in a duet with some other singer you wouldn't normally expect to blend so well with her; and a third time it was Jane Olivor in a guest spot on some variety show in the mid 70's or early 80s. She did a fantastical cover of *Over the Rainbow*. When I finally got one of her albums with the song on it it wasn't the same—nevertheless I was rather a fan of hers for a while.

At one point in the last act of *The Swan*, at the confrontation of the Prince and the Tutor, the Prince is supposed to approach the Tutor and kiss him on the cheek, sort of *à la* the medal-awarding kiss of the French army (tch! Those French!). This was definitely an awkward element for me, even though there was in fact no kiss *per se*. Whenever I get one of those rare moments of self-doubt about my sexual identity, I look back on those occasions as an early reassurance of heterosexuality. (I've had better and more convincing, since, by the way.) I trust the stiffness with which I approached Larry (I can't think of his last name) at that point was properly perceived as the essence of noblesse oblige in the character I played.

On the other hand, the young man who played Father Hyacinth (Brian Aherne in the movie) would have had no such problem. While I never saw any hint of it during our school days, during which I guess he was as much a friend of mine as anyone—and I had pretty well broken out of my shell by that time—the first time I saw him, in Boston, a year later, he had somehow acquired all the mannerisms of a flaming fag. Disconcerting, to say the least.

This was still the '50s, and, truly, I was still naive to many of the ways of the world. And still rather prejudiced and ignorant about some things (the same, perhaps).

Besides our standard schooling at Buxton there were other creatively oriented classes. I had an art class, of course, but our teacher was so occupied in his own endeavors that he did little in the way of actual teaching. They did provide materials, so I pretty much went my own way with that. Mrs. S. taught a creative writing class, where, again, it was mostly a matter of writing what one wished and reading it aloud in class. Perhaps the chief impetus to improved writing there was competition, though I believe at the time I thought of it more as seeking Mrs. Sangster's approval. I had only one or two real competitors, at least in my mind, and one of these, it later proved, was inclined to crib stuff from books. She *read* it well...

One of the occupations of the last year at Buxton was, of course, the selection of colleges to apply to. I remember

This was followed by another verse which provided expository information for the plot. I had trouble remembering that verse even then (I blanked part of it out during our last performance), and it promptly disappeared forever after the final curtain calls.

We took this play to Quebec City, commandeering a passenger car on a train to Montreal, while the props and materials were driven north in the school's old truck. The car was divided between girls and boys overnight, but at least a couple of couples succeeded in crossing the line—and got in trouble for it. Disciplinary trouble, I hasten to add.

This was my first time out of the U.S. We stayed at a small hotel in the old town, L'Hotel du Jardin des Gouverneurs, a block or two behind Le Chateau Frontenac (my memory of these names may be faulty after all these years), the great building, now a hotel, that dominates the skyline over the city. It was winter, and we had just missed being in town for some winter games—there were wooden frameworks for some sort of skiing or skating or sledding contests that had been held in the courtyards surrounding the Chateau. I took many pictures around the city, old and new town, the Citadel and the Plains of Abraham, but I was still a self-styled loner and failed to get any snapshots with my fellow students in them—I regret this yet today. Most of the pictures might as well have been black-and-white postcards, though many were from odd angles that probably most real postcard photographers would not have taken.

Our first performance was at the French school, Université Laval. It went well—I remembered all my lines, as did we all, I think. Some of us, not I, had memorized French lyrics to some key songs, and that was well taken by the audience. Afterwards we were treated to an evening at a night club. Each Buxton student was hosted by a student from the school. I now only remember that I enjoyed talking with the lovely girl who was my hostess but she could not draw me out to the dance floor, and eventually she disappeared. Before that, there was a comedian who elicited much laughter but, since his act was entirely in French, I and most of my fellow troupers missed most of it. My hostess did try to explain one observation that got a good laugh: something about how all their U.S. guests who did speak French spoke it with a Parisian accent. I guess you hadda be there. And speak French.

Jerry Bidlack, our musical director, who had written the music for *Rip* and played piano accompaniment to our performance, made one big mistake. At the end of the evening, someone decided we should sing our national anthems. The Canadians stood up and sang theirs, verse after

verse, strongly and proudly and with gusto. We didn't do too badly with ours—until, after we were proudly done with "...and the home...of the...brave!" Jerry started to play for the *second* verse! Do you know the second verse? Neither did we...

The second performance was at an English school and it was a disaster. I regret to say that I've now forgotten specifically what it was that turned them cold, but it had to do with a radio interview the night before, with one of our faculty members, who inadvertently said something out of line. I think it addressed the excellent welcome we had received from our French hosts, but in such a way as to slap our English hosts in their collective face. Mrs. Sangster's autobiography, which I got a copy of many years later, explained it, but that explanation has faded from me and the book is inaccessible.

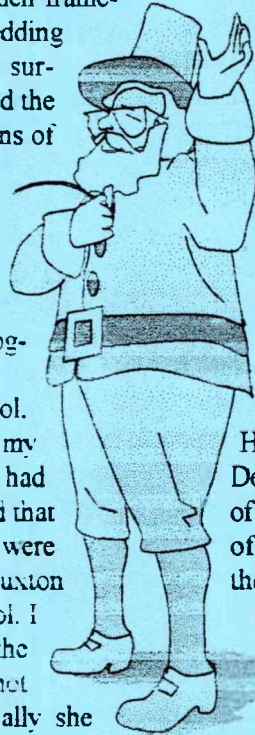
It was a pure example of how a performance can be affected by its audience. We did miserably on the stage; as I mentioned before, I blew some of my lines, and I think I wasn't the only one. We crawled off the stage by the end—I think we had just the one mandatory curtain call—and, quite frankly, I have no recollection at all of the trip back to Buxton.

One of our group did, I know, speak French, and it probably was Parisian; Sidsel Abbott was the daughter of a diplomat. In the second half of our school year, a smaller group of us interested in acting (I'd more or less been hooked) put on a production of *The Night of January 16th*, a play by Ayn Rand that consists basically of a sensational murder trial. I played the Prosecutor; Peter Hammer, whose voice hadn't changed yet, was the Defense Lawyer. In the several performances we did of this play, both in Buxton's theatre and in a couple of churches in nearby towns, the Jury (chosen from the audience) always decided in favor of the defendant... I guess I wasn't cut out for the law. (But churches tend to make excellent courtroom sets.)

Sidsel was my assistant D.A., and in the course of rehearsals, as well as several shared classes, we got to finding each other's company very easy to take. Laughing together a lot. One of those things. It wasn't really anything more than a good friendship developing, but her boyfriend took a dark view of it. This was Terry Smith, the fellow who'd thought I'd rejected his offer of friendship when I first arrived, and who had been pretty much cool toward me subsequently. He stopped me between classes or something one day and issued an ultimatum. Stay away from Sid. That's it.

Sigh

Actually we got things straightened out a month or so



"Wow!" came the voice of the class director.

Okay, I'd learned to project back at Buxton. I was accepted. And then they learned, as rehearsals went on, that I had trouble learning my part...

I was trying to learn it by rote. I had never really learned a better way to do it, but the method really wasn't flexible enough for me to stay with the character if I, or anyone else, fluffed a line. Ad lib? Me? Forget it! I blow it in normal conversation if I try to talk off the cuff without some mental rehearsal! (This is the *real* reason I'm so quiet most of the time!)

They tried me out with a little improvisational bit, where the actor who played the male half of the couple and I were supposed to have a confrontation in my office. Details have escaped me, but after a moment of setup in which I managed to maintain my (Mr. Edwards') haughty demeanor, it went something like this:

"Tell you what," he said. "Let's have drink on it."

I drew myself up "Certainly not!" I replied.

"Aw, come on," he winked. "I've seen that bottle you thought you'd kept secret in your drawer!"

I cracked up—and out of character. It was no good. But it was too late to find someone else, so I remained, and played the three or four public performances, all of which were at the Reisinger Auditorium at Sara Lawrence. Several fans came to one of them at my request, though whether any of these are among the readers of this opus, I'm not sure. I think I played the part okay without any serious screwups. But Marian did not seek my help with any further productions, though I did come to visit her as she got into another play—*The Killing of Sister George*.

Should anyone wonder about it, I didn't meet Joy-Lynd until a year or so after Marion broke it off with me. It was a little while before she got around to asking me to take down Marion's picture from my wall...

She was just known as Joy, then—Joy Sennet. She added the Lynd, herself, several years later when she got fed up with all the jokes on her name ("Joy to the World" got kind of old)—and of having no middle name. She was quite adamant about people using both names; the hyphen came a little while later when it became clear that people weren't going to use both names without it.

It took *me* a while to get used to it, I can tell you!

The closest I ever got to any kind of acting again was at a playwright's workshop in the Village six or seven years ago. A friend at work, Alison Graves, was involved with it, and asked me if I'd like to come read one part in a play she'd been working on. I did, but the circle of readers I joined were mostly semi-pros, and I fear my amateur status was obvious. My part was that of a Midwestern farmer (Alison hailed from Wisconsin, I think), who was bewildered by and hated to see his wife turning independent. I couldn't get the accent—it came out pretty Southern, basically. It was a serious drama about personal relationships. I liked it a lot, and I hope she actually succeeds with it one day.

So, anyway, the chance to ham it up as a character named Samstinov ("artist and Red Guard block captain... A visionary who paints cigar-shaped lights hanging over haystacks and suspects Reed [a time-traveling fan] of being an alien.") in Andy Hooper's strange, Firesign Theatre-like comedic melodrama of an alternate-universe, protofannish revolutionary Russia, was welcome!

Yes, even when our first rehearsal was held in the Mardi-Gras Gazebo, situated in the very heart of dung country! Especially memorable on that occasion was Jack Speer's enthusiastic rendition of Lenin, which made V.I. Ulianov sound more like Huey Long. He was standing in for the otherwise occupied Bill Kunkel, who did well enough in the final, public reading.

Pat O'Connor played one Capt. Athelstine Jinnantonix (an inspired surname), whom Andy described initially as having a regrettably Belgian accent, but the stage direction when he is introduced is, "His accent defies description." Pat succeeded astonishingly well with this.

The subsequent spot rehearsal and the final reading on Sunday afternoon went well, though Andy noted afterward that I'd swallowed a key phrase. Next time—?

It's been rare for me to share in a project that pretty much everyone involved not only found fun to do but was enthusiastic about. That's what drew me to dabble with drama over the years—It's a great shell-breaker, as Mrs. Sangster and Dr. Spencer knew forty years ago.

Come to think of it, maybe that's what drew me to fandom...?

Perhaps. But, enhh—maybe I'm still waiting for the Click.

Mailing Comments

PowWow #24 - Joyce

But Joyce, everyone knows that fanzine fandom is but the local chapter of the Illuminati, plotting Nameless Horrors for those benighted souls who still have the temerity to read and, worse, discuss science fiction. We—I mean,

They—are anti everything that SNAFFU stands for, and a few other things as well, and besides we—dammit, *they*—ruin the socail tone of the neighborhood and lower real estate values wherever they—yes—settle. Haven't you noticed?

that Oberlin, in Ohio, was a popular candidate, and my folks and I did look into it. The financial aspects were certainly a consideration, far more than it was for many of my fellow students at Buxton. We finally settled, however, on a two-year school in Boston called the Leland Powers School of Radio, Television and Theater. The "Television" part had been relatively recently added; I know the school had been around a while. I believe my late grandfather, himself a performer in the 20s and 30s (Charles Ross Taggart, the Old Country Fiddler, as he was called on his Victrola records, or, on the Redpath Circuit, The Man From Vermont), had either known or at least been acquainted with Leland Powers. Not that this gave us any in at the school!

I've told some of this part of the story in one fanzine or another from time to time. I did not do well at Leland Powers, not from any lack of ability, but definitely from lack of self discipline. There were weekly parties to go to—the kinds of parties where one stood jam-packed in the middle of an overcrowded apartment, juggling a drink and shouting to be heard; the kinds of parties that would and were occasionally be closed down by police for being too noisy.

I was assigned a room with a roommate. His name was Russell Parly, but he was generally known as Ross... Since most of the time when anyone called "Ross" it was he that was wanted, I fairly quickly returned to my self-effacing ways. He was classically handsome in a Julian Glover sort of way, though thinner. We got along pretty well, studying the International Phonetic Alphabet and practicing lines and things like that.

[By the way, Seattle fen, do me a favor and look in your telephone directories to see if there is a hairdressing firm or chain there called Ross of London. The London referred to is London, New Hampshire, where my former roommate hailed from. It seems, he, too, discovered homophilia after school (I could be wrong, but I inferred as much from a couple of things he said in the last letter I had from him, written from Seattle). My, my. If nothing has happened to him, things being what they are, and the business was a success (hence still around), I think I'd be interested in saying hello, sometime, for old times sake.]

I did okay at Leland Powers for a while. But it wasn't too long before I began to get behind in my studies.

Then, in a particularly susceptible mood, as I was realizing I was screwing up and unable to tell myself how to fix it, I saw the film *Lust for Life*, with Kirk Douglas as Vincent Van Gogh, and it was so powerful that, much to the consternation of my folks, I quit the school. I'd decided I was going to be an Artist, you see.

Damn fool kid..

This story being about my brushes with the theatre, I'll pass quickly over the next few years—my first "real" job, a summer with my married brother in North Carolina (where

hevas involved with a summer theatre), New York City and my second job, business school (*f u en rd ths...* yeah, a Speedwriting class), and then after a while back to New York and a job with a book wholesaler, Bookazine, where Mike McInerney and rich brown worked. Hence and thence, fandom...

One day in '65 or '66, some interesting girls (we didn't know from women's lib yet) visited a FISTFA gathering. They were slumming in the Village from Sara Lawrence, a College for Young Ladies in Bronxville, which is a few miles north of the city (and several miles beyond the Bronx). I got the word from Mike or rich that at least a couple of them were interested in hearing more from some of us guys and one had left her name and number (well, that of her dorm phone at SL), which he passed on to me.

I've often wondered what might have happened had I called that number—

"But," says someone who knew me at the time, "you did, didn't you? Isn't that how you met Marian?"

Yes, it was, in fact. But that was a couple of weeks later. Some of the girls (gimme a break; they weren't in their 20s yet) came back to the next FISTFA. I remember noticing one, whose short skirt rode up very interestingly as she sat on a window ledge on the far side of the room. She was plump, redheaded (almost auburn) with long hair parted in the middle in the style of the times (well, one of the styles), a snubnose and an easy laugh. I wasn't introduced at the time, but I was told she'd noticed me and I had a new number to call...

Marion Edmonds was a drama major at Sara Lawrence. She also represented at least a couple of interesting firsts for me—not my first love, no, no, but the first one to ever stay the night... Ah. Reverie!...

Okay, that's enough. Back to the story.

It seems that her drama class was working on a trio of one-act Noel Coward plays from the *Tonight at Eight o'Clock* suite. I don't remember the individual titles, now, but one—the one I remember best—involved two bickering actors, a husband and wife team, whose performances suffer from their jealousies, and like that. The set is in their dressing room, and the scene breaks take place while the two are on stage.

They (Marion's class and director) were looking for someone, a male, to play a blustering theatre manager, one Mr. Edwards.

I went to read for the part. The director (I regret to say I've long forgotten his name) wasn't too sanguine about me and my bushy beard and soft voice, but waved me on. I got to my first cue and knocked on the scaffolding of a backstage flat in lieu of the dressing room door.

"Who is it?" calls one of the actors.

"Mr. Edwards!" I called out in my best stentorian voice.

Implosion #24 - Arnie

If in-jokes drive some of Wild Heirs' readers to distraction, and you run this story of the "New GDA" there (as I expect you plan to do), then they'll be tearing their own wild hairs (full cycle?) out by the handful. I trust the WH version will have been tightened up a bit as well—there are definitely times when both writer and reader wandered off the trail a while...

Sercon-navigation #14 - Tom

Hm, I was just leaving as the remarks that sparked your recounted conflict were made, so missed the gunplay (Zap-play? Plonker-play? Nah; they don't have the same fire...) (Duck!). You do have a gift—or perhaps I should say, penchant—for battle narrative, but one does begin to wonder, after having several such tales by now, if there is something in your presence that reduces everyone in your vicinity to physical contention.

John.Re - John

Every time I re-type the name of your zinc, I'm reminded of my good friend who lived across the street from me in College Station, Texas, when I was but a tad. His name was Jon Ray Perryman; he was in the grade below me and, in retrospect, I think I was a bit of a bully to him—fortunately not often nor as a habit. His father took us golfing and camping from time to time, which may have had something to do with my cooling my mean streak with him. (Ross with a mean streak? someone asks. As frequently happens, especially in those tender years. I tended to do as I was done to...) I think he went on to become a teacher in some other Texas town.

Many years later, in New York, as I was being intro-

duced to my second job, as a stock clerk at a wholesale jeweler, we were told. "God helps those who help themselves, but at Capri Jewelers, God help those who help themselves." Their stock line for us stock clerks. Capri provided materials for junk jewelry—lots of colored glass and faux pearls (extremely) and the like, and in fact, after I'd been there a few months (as long as the job lasted), I did end up with a few of those things. So I guess God did help me, because nobody ever hassled me about them at all. But it was a drudge place to work and the half-hour lunch hours were a total drag in midtown Manhattan, where hotdogs at standup lunch counter were the best one could do.

Revel-ation - Marcy

Just reading this one made me tired. Gosh! I admire you, as I've admired Arnie & Joyce in a gape-mouthed and beaded-brow sort of way for years, for your industry. My periods of industry are few and relatively brief, though often intense at the time. Well, intense for me. Ordinary, I suppose, for you guys. So, okay, you look up "Phlegmatic" in your illustrated dictionary and there I am...

Tequila?

Lost Trails v. 1, i. 3 - BelleAugusta

I've never succeeded well with schedules for work. Oh, well, employment schedules are another thing (and needless to say I have my troubles with them as well), but never in home-life circumstances for longer than a week or so. There are too many exceptions to every planned event. Must-type exceptions and should-type exceptions and, my favorite, well-okay-this-time exceptions...

Well, I just have to accept it modestly. My life is... exceptional.

Notes from my Notebook

I recently began to reread for the first time in many years Edmond Hamilton's *The Star Kings*, in the 1950 Signet edition mysteriously retitled *Beyond the Moon*. For those who haven't glanced at this title lately, it begins with our 20th Century hero, John Gordon, changing minds with Prince Zarth Arn of the Mid-Galactic Empire. He is nearly kidnapped by the forces of Shorr Kan, leader of the League of Dark Worlds, and in the process the kindly old scientist Vel Quen, his only means of returning to his own mind and time, is killed. Zarth Arn's father, Arn Abbas, the Emperor, orders him away from that old planet Earth, to Throon, the planet and city that is the capital of the Empire, where he is soon to be married to the beautiful Princess Lianna, ruler of the Fomalhaut star-kingdom... Glass mountains surround the city of Throon, and dawn brings a crystalline song...

Wow! No wonder I remembered this novel as *the Space Opera*! This is where the clichés *come* from, man! Well, okay, not really—Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers predated this 1949 novel—but it defines the genre for me.

Is it me, or is there suddenly a lot of prime time devoted to matters military? *Jag, Space: Above and Beyond*, and the new *SeaQuest 2024*—perhaps there are others I'm not aware of. Major Dad has been around since, oh, roughly the time of the Gulf War, if I mistake me not. Coincidence? And now President Clinton appears to be reflecting public opinion in urging U.S. peacekeeping troops into Bosnia. Where are we heading?