

# THE SPHERE

Vol. 144, no. 1, published for the 173rd Mailing of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance by Don Markstein, 14836 N. 35th St., Phoenix, AZ 85032, (602) 788-5442 (voice, fax or data). Headlines: Stop. Body copy: Optima. May, 1993. Included with the one-sided flyers this time is a two-sided flyer. I can't justify it on the basis of saving paper, but I can't just pitch flyers listing me as Fan Guest of Honor and this is a good way to get rid of them. De-bulk!

## FUNNYBOOKS

With less than two dozen stories sold so far, I'm already a celebrity – at least to a couple of grade-school classes. As part of "Authors Week" I was invited by Karen's teacher to address her third-grade class on writing comics; and it went over so well, Rachel's fourth-grade teacher followed suit three weeks later.

To help enhance my Image as a Big-Time Funnybook Writer, John Clark, editor of Gladstone, supplied Disney comics for me to give the kids. I also dug up copies of *Comics Revue* #4, the first I edited, and ran out an actual script (a two-page Bucky Bug re-intro). I talked about the process of creating a comic story – pitching it as a one-paragraph springboard, getting a plot approved, building a script from the plot, then sending it to other specialists who pencil, ink, letter and color it.

In questions and answers, one kid said his favorite comic is *Calvin & Hobbes*, which gave me an opening to talk about the modular construction of Sunday strips (using *Steve Canyon* in *Comics Revue* to illustrate), and to praise Bill Watterson for his work in breaking free of such shackles and drawing his strip as *he* considers best.

I ended by reading an actual comic book to the kids, using an opaque projector so everyone could see the pictures. (One point I made is that the dividing line between comics and illustrated prose is where the pictures actually start carrying part of the story – so they *had* to be able to see the pictures if they were to follow it.) To Karen's class I read "The Second-Richest Duck", and to Rachel's I read "Back to the Klondike."

What fun! As long as they aren't afflicted with the sort of teachers who are prejudiced against comics, I can see myself doing this sort of thing over and over.

The comics writing continues to go slowly. I sent a series proposal to DC, whose submissions editor, Neal Pozner, used to be in CAPA-alpha with me. He turned down the proposal, but said he remembers me mainly as one of the guys (the others are Alan Hutchinson and Kim Weston) who turned him on to Carl Barks. And isn't that a great thing to be remembered for!

I'm working on a proposal for a superhero aimed at younger kids. This is sort of Distilled Essence of Superhero – just a big, strong guy who smiles a lot and likes to help people. I see it drawn in kind of a C.C. Beck style (you can see what I mean in the "Captain Tootsie" ad Alan reprinted last mailing). It started out as a new incarnation of Archie's "Steel Sterling" but I've decided if Archie doesn't buy it I'm going to change the name and shop it around because I think the world is ready for a backlash against the Grim'n'Gritty superheroes that have

held sway for so long. There are a couple of smaller publishers that might go for it.

Last time I talked with John Clark, I asked if there was anything besides Disney coming up that I might be able to get in on. Nothing he can talk about, he said, which I take as encouragement – it means there's stuff in the works, and if he can't tell me about it yet that's okay because it may mean work down the road. Meanwhile, I've got plots on his desk for Donald Duck, Li'l Bad Wolf and Eek the Cat (which is still not firmed up but is looking likely as a three-issue series). Also, I sent him fresh copies of all the Bucky Bug scripts I sold Disney – there's a good chance Gladstone will publish them. I won't get any more money for them, but it sure would be nice to see them in print at last.

And I've discovered an actual apa aimed at comic-book freelancers! I thought my days of joining apas were about ten years behind me, but I couldn't resist that one. I just sent off my intro zine.

## BEDTIME READING

*The Hound of the Baskervilles* went over great! It's been years, maybe decades since I read it, and I'd forgotten what a great mood setter Doyle was. We could more than just see the Devonshire Moor – we could *feel* it all around us. What a great book! I think I've created a couple of young Sherlock Holmes fans.

We followed that dark, moody stuff with a rip-roarin' western – a Simon&Kirby comic called *Boys' Ranch*. If you get *Comics Buyer's Guide* you might have seen a letter of mine about that book. It was a Harvey comic that lasted six issues in 1950-51, and the whole run was reprinted a couple of years ago in hardcover by Marvel. My letter concerned the fact that I'd ordered the book repeatedly but couldn't seem to squeeze it out of the distributors. The letter got action – nothing from Capital, where the original order had been placed, but I was deluged by phone calls from various Diamond locations. Within a week of the letter's publication, a copy was waiting for me at the store where I'd ordered it.

I bought it because I was committed to do so after all that, but by that time it was already redundant – a copy had appeared in my mailbox, with a return address that I've been asked not to reveal because the donor didn't want to spoil his employer's reputation as a heartless corporation. I haven't changed my opinion of his employer, I told him in my thank-you letter, but I never doubted good people worked there.

We're continuing with Tarzan, but interest is flagging. The later books just aren't up to the first few. I may skip the next few and go directly to *Tarzan at the Earth's Core*



when that one comes up in the Pellucidar series. I hate to read them out of order, but other than discovering Pal-ul-Don and taking up with the Golden Lion, I don't think anything significant happens in them.

We're also enjoying Piers Anthony's Xanth series. I'll probably do the second one soon as we finish *Tarzan the Untamed*. I'm not much of a Piers Anthony fan, and would probably never have read Xanth on my own.

Another one we all enjoyed was *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* – our second R.L. Stevenson.

Just had another good idea – *Flowers for Algernon*. Think they'll go for that one?

## THE CULT

Nah, I'm not talking about the old apa-like organization of that name. *The cult*, the one they're carrying on about whenever you hear that word in the news these days. I know everybody will be talking about it this time, and I just wouldn't be fulfilling your expectations if I didn't say a couple of iconoclastic things about it.

First off, just what *is* a cult? From all I see, the difference between a cult and a religion is a lot like the difference between terrorism and military action – if it jibes, even roughly, with your belief system, it's military action or religion; if not it's terrorism or a cult. I happened to see an item in the paper the other day by a local cult-monger or religious leader, take your pick, which vehemently denounced an earlier article warning people against cults. It's not, the guy piously stated, that people shouldn't be wary of cults – it's just that he objects to his noble and good faith having been cited as one.

Excuse me, but wasn't Christianity pretty cult-like back in its early days? Aren't a lot of Christian sects pretty cult-like even now? Doesn't the Mormon faith fit most of the descriptions of cults we hear in the news? Exactly what quality of Islam distinguishes it from a cult?

Verb conjugation: "I adhere faithfully to my traditional creed. You cling stubbornly to outmoded dogma. He, she or it is a slave to ancient superstitions."

This cults-are-evil business has gotten so bad, GiGi objected to a line in my initial zine for that comic creators' apa where I referred to Bucky Bug's "cult" following.

As I see it, either we have freedom of religion or we don't. If we do, any goofball thing anybody wants to believe is okay. If not, let's stamp the hell out of Christianity, which has sponsored more bloodshed than David Koresh, Jim Jones and Lenin put together.

But setting aside the question of whether Koresh's claim to divinity seems more or less absurd to a non-believer than that of Jesus, exactly what was his crime?

Yeah, I know, there were children in the compound. They responded negatively to being surrounded by law-enforcement officers. They had guns.

But I have children in my house, too. I wouldn't care much for being surrounded hostile people. And if I were to keep a gun or two for the protection of my home, I'm

afraid you'd have a hard time convincing me I was doing wrong. Furthermore, I hold non-standard beliefs. If the government decided to wipe me out, they could make me look just like a miniature David Koresh.

The stand-off is said to have started when the religious persons shot at law enforcers serving search warrants. As I understand it, the warrants were served not by hand, but by foot, the feet being thrust through upper-story windows at 4 a.m. I dunno, guys, I always thought it was okay to shoot at people kicking in your bedroom windows in the middle of the night.

Then there's the Surprise Ending. Being Cultists, they were of course expected to commit suicide in a big way – we had that hammered into our heads over and over in the news. So we were well prepared when they shot themselves, *then* set fire to the place – all except the law-enforcement people, who were taken *completely* by surprise! And always, the children, *the children* form the mantra of those trying to justify the carnage.

If all this happened because the Branch Davidians kept illegal guns, then I intend to cite those children as victims of gun-control laws next time the subject comes up.

David Kraft happened to watch *Nightline* that night. He says there was a public opinion poll – did people believe they burned their own place down, or did they believe the fire was accidentally started by the FBI? Now, is that a biased way of asking, or what? I have to say, I don't believe either. I'm not convinced they burned their own place down – not if, as appears to be the case, they mostly (including Koresh himself) died by gunshot – *and* I don't believe the FBI *accidentally* started the fire.

All of this makes one wonder, what did they *really* do to bring such wrath down on themselves? While it was going on, I thought it was just a macho trip – the FBI acted like a jerk, then demonized them because it couldn't back off gracefully. But since then, I've heard a rumor – just a rumor, like the one about Bush waiting until election eve to spring the renunciation of citizenship Clinton apparently didn't actually make – that Koresh was writing a book drawing parallels between the One World Conspiracy, the Bilderbergers, Trilateralists, New World Order, whatever you call it – anyway, a parallel between current trends toward worldwide consolidation of power, and Biblical prophecies of Armageddon. While this doesn't affect any of *my* opinions, I can see where the U.S. government might be peeved.

## BARBARA ADAMS:

The fact that you can say all Tim had to do to answer the phone was stop typing shows you to be amazingly unaware of what he was doing. No, I shouldn't say "amazingly" because I've run across such lack of understanding over and over. People just can't get it through their heads that someone who is writing is *doing something*. Staring at a blank screen is work, even if you can't look inside and watch the little neurons firing. Writing is

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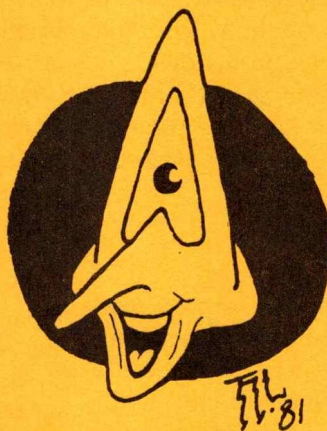
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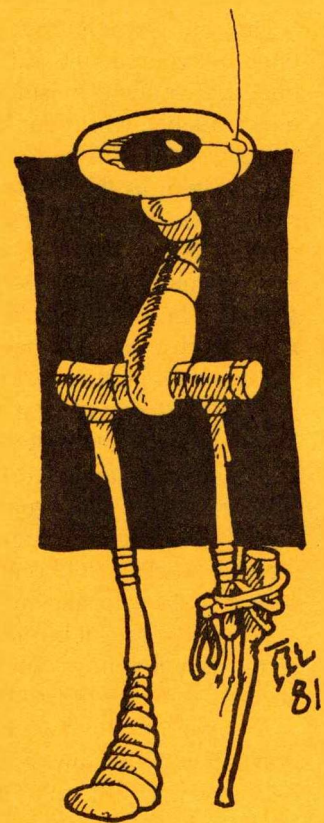
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not typing. To answer a phone while writing is not just to stop typing. It is to break a train of thought. It is to interrupt a smooth flow of creativity. It is to lose, perhaps forever, a turn of phrase on the verge of birth. What goes in its place may be better, may be worse, will probably be about as good, but it will never be, *can* never be, what it would have been without the interruption. And always, *always*, to get back to where the writer was before the interruption takes time and effort. A two-minute phone call can set a writing project back half an hour. "And all HE had to do was STOP TYPING," you say, without a hint of irony – expecting, no doubt, sympathy from this association of writers! I'm certainly glad *my* wife understands the creative process better than you do. I don't say you were necessarily in a better position to answer the phone in that particular case, but you'll never reach a mutually-acceptable agreement in this or any related area until you come to a better understanding of what he's doing when he uses the word processor.

("You do go on," GiGi said when she read this. Well, excuse me, but you're taking the heat for every jerk that ever interrupted me when I "wasn't doing anything", and was unable to *fathom* why I was bothered by it.)

The first time I shared an apa membership with a woman, I did my zines on pink paper and she did hers on blue. I'm not saying that made us any less the slaves of convention, but at least it was a change of pace.

## LON ATKINS:

I haven't followed your exact criteria for the current Box Scores closely enough to know whether seven pages is correct for my listing. JoAnn was correct in listing #142 as 14 pages, because that's how many sides of a piece of paper had printing on them, but your criteria may be different. If it helps any, copies were identical in that the same flyer (or whatever) appeared in a given position in all copies (a standard I'll adhere to as long as I'm doing SFPAzines on the backs of flyers, probably the next couple years). Also, five of the seven flyers represented my own work, even tho this wasn't their first distribution. Seven pages is correct for how much writing I had in the mailing (I mentioned increased density only to lay the ground for sparser zines when I'm pressed for time and have to go back to the old density) but should the rest be counted? What do the precedents say?

I agree, of course, that changing the criteria for counting pages after all these years would be ridiculous. There's always been some dichotomy, if only between pica and elite type. For apa requirements, which matter more than Box Scores, the OE might consider mandating maximum type size and margins for minac; and beyond minac the OE doesn't have to worry about "credit".

If you can write an average of 750 words a day, that's great! That comes to three decent-size novels a year.

You mentioned an attempt to write one of those "creative scripts that are exactly like the latest box office

smash", and how your story turned into something else. You were right to pursue that. Hack writing isn't dishonorable work, but it *is* work. It's a job, one that, like most, has to be learned. If you're writing to satisfy creative urges and not because you need a job, don't bother learning it – instead, learn how to express what *you* want to express the best possible way. If it sells, great; if not, that's okay too as long as you're pleased with what you're doing. Another thing – as long as you're doing what satisfies you, your satisfaction will show in your work and the work itself will be better for it.

I don't want to state unequivocally that "media" can't take a singular verb, because after all, "data" has made the transition from Latin plural of "datum", meaning "fact", to English collective singular, meaning "information". But it'll take another generation of misuse before "media" stops being the Latin plural of "medium". (Or are you thinking of it as a back-formation from "mediocre"?)

As I've pointed out before, the guilt or innocence of Clarence Thomas of any particular accusation was not the issue – the issue was whether or not it was desirable that he sit on the Supreme Court. In a criminal trial, he's entitled to the benefit of any reasonable doubt; but when it comes to handing out immense political power a reasonable doubt of desirability is cause for denial. In both cases, the "reasonable doubt" standard ensures that errors will be on the side of caution.

I guess "use it or lose it" is a fairly plausible way of justifying the notion that graphic user interfaces cause brain atrophy, but to me it sounds suspiciously similar to 1950s anti-comic-book rantings. While those pronouncements were supported by loads of "objective" scientific evidence, I don't personally know anybody who became stupid because he read comics, and I know a *lot* of comic readers. I still haven't laid hands on the literature Celko cites, so I can't judge for myself. But I suspect it contains hidden biases. (Even if it doesn't, I'm confident I can get my mental exercise recreationally – I see no need to go out of my way to make my work harder.)

## NED BROOKS:

Yes, Ned, I voted for Nixon in 1968. I revealed this dark secret from my past to illustrate the futility of voting. You may recall that the Democrat opposing Nixon in that election was Hubert Humphrey, a pustulent little twerp who – among his *many* faults – was part of the administration that had brought the Vietnam War to its then-unsurpassed height (we had no idea then what Nixon would do with it). Of course, there was a third-party candidate – George Wallace. So. Who did *you* vote for in '68? Is it any wonder I swore off voting?

Most of the Helvetica clones I see these days are pretty awful looking, but the true Helvetica, as it originally came from the Mergenthaler Foundry in 1955, is a classic of simple elegance. There's a good reason it became the world's most popular typeface.

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That must be a fairly old *Weekly World News* with the vampire story. They reported years ago that vampires had been brought to the verge of extinction by AIDS.

I wrote a few verses of "The Green Hills of Earth" in the late '60s. Have to dig them up for you sometime. (I do remember one: "We pray for one last stanza to 'The Cool, Green Hills of Earth. All the rhymes, we fin', were used by Heinlein . . . so we have no final verth.")

## GARY BROWN:

I have an idea for a re-designed word-processing work station. The right- and left-hand keys are on separate keyboards, which are placed 3-4 feet apart. The body is horizontal between them, and the screen faces downward from the ceiling. Think there's a market for it?

I can not *believe* what I'm reading in your zine! You're talking about setting the body copy in your paper in larger type?! What happened to the desperate need for space you cite whenever you shrink the comics?

## RUSTY BURKE:

I've always kind of liked "Okie from Muskogee". When I first heard it I thought it was a parody, but when I realized it wasn't I came around to a kind of respect for it. I mean, what does the song say? The man is what he is and he's proud of it. It's not what I am, or would ever want to be, but how can I argue with self-pride?

I also like "Don't Worry, Be Happy." Yeah, all you say is true – wealth was flowing at an awesome rate from people like you and me to the money-mongering hogs clinging to Reagan's coat-tails; impending economic collapse was obvious to everybody but Republicans; and this guy was telling us don't worry, be happy. Sure, and one of the big hits of the 1930s, when the country was struggling to climb back from an earlier period of Gilded-Age revival, was "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?" The message is, *don't let things you can't control bring you down!* Maybe it helps and maybe it doesn't, but how can you blame a guy for telling you to try to feel better?

Feh! And I promised myself I wouldn't comment on any of these "Worst Songs" lists.

## MEADE FRIERSON:

The best OCR software still runs on only one system: the human brain. If you really want old typeset material converted to machine-readable form, I'll do it for \$1.25 a kilobyte, guaranteed 100% accurate.

I crogged at your suggestion that we who smoke pot should "get the damn laws changed". Are you confusing democracy with freedom or something? Perhaps you're under the impression that the law reflects the will of the people? Especially amusing was your addendum that we should "pay taxes on it instead of profiting the Mafia and other scrofulous thugs." Meade, Meade, Meade . . . One

does not pay taxes instead of profiting scrofulous thugs. One pays taxes *thus* profiting scrofulous thugs.

If dangerous drugs are to be made illegal, why is it you can still buy tobacco openly? Talk about dangerous drugs! Besides reducing hypocrisy in the legal code (a vain quest indeed!), making tobacco against the law would give the nicotine addicts a taste of what we have to go through just to score a teeny weeny joint. It would correctly brand Jesse Helms a drug pusher. *And* it would encourage disrespect for the law. There is no end to the salutary effects of legislating against tobacco. Why it hasn't been done yet is simply beyond me.

Of course, you are aware that your type size is ecologically indefensible.

## TIM GATEWOOD:

I don't know what to think about this controversy over the Georgia state flag. It's understandable that some people are upset at what the Confederate battle flag has come to symbolize, but dammit, that's not what it *really* symbolizes! I guess mostly, I resent the fact that racists have hijacked my country's flag. Talk about desecration!

## JANICE GELB:

I *thought* I was only kidding about Batman hiding from his publisher (as lucrative as killing Superman turned out to be), but now I hear a rumor they're going to cripple him. I guess he didn't hide deep enough.

## ARTHUR FLAVATY:

You've cited this "pictorially challenged" condition you claim to suffer from before, in a no-doubt generously-motivated attempt to place blame for your lack of interest in comics on yourself rather than on the medium. I'm reminded of my response when the icon-based traffic signs came in. I was working for the local paper at the time, and it fell to my lot to interview the traffic engineer about it. He told me studies had shown the new signs were universally recognized more easily and at greater distance. As a word-oriented kind of guy, I scoffed. *Universally?* He pointed out that *letters are pictures*. To read, you must first recognize each individual letter in a word, and *then* convert it into language. So I'm wondering, Arthur, if you have this trouble interpreting pictures, how is it you're able to read at all?

Personally, I think it's psychosomatic; and as evidence I offer the fact that you enjoyed *Watchmen* – a relatively complex work, with pictures considerably harder to interpret at a glance than, say, those of Carl Barks or Walt Kelly. I think you could learn to appreciate comics if you just let yourself be exposed to a lot of good ones.

I realize typeface names are often changed to avoid infringing on property rights, but sometimes it just doesn't make sense. Garamond, for example, has been the name of a typeface for 350 years; and while ITC offers a

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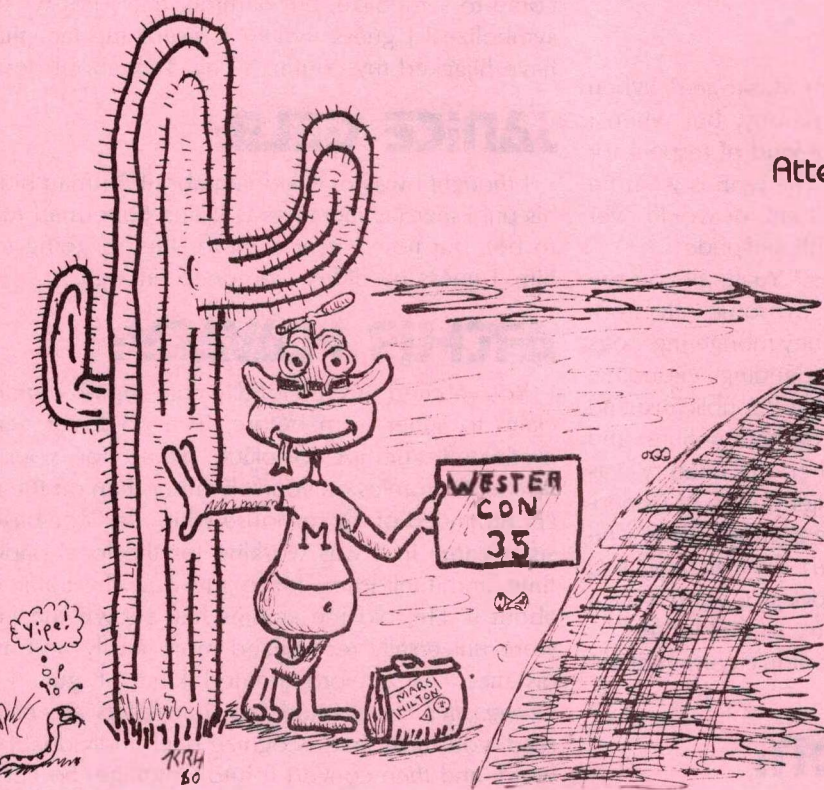
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Feb. 1, 1982



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# NUTRIA CON

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The con of the Nutrias. Nutria Con is being brought to you by the Rodential Co. For only \$6.50 you can get a piece of the rat and be a member in this great SF<sup>2</sup> convention. We are, however, expecting a bad nutria crop this year, so delay past April 20th and your piece will cost you \$8, (also \$8 at the door.)

We have a fairly large huckster room and hope for a good turnout. To encourage huckstering we have kept table prices to the minimum. Also, any huckster who has both a table and a room in the hotel will receive a free membership. Tables are \$10 each.

Gathering together some of the finest names in SF, we have worked and slaved to assemble a ~~party~~ *party* large enough to hold all the ~~ideas~~ *ideas* that they are going to consume con program to make the weeds on your head stand up. Rdleeeee lamas lamas!! Our guests include:

- GUEST OF HONOR.....GEORGE ALEC EFFINGER
- FAN GUEST OF HONOR.....DON MARKSTEIN
- TOASTMASTER.....HANK STINE

We also hope to have in attendance Gil Gaier from Torrance, Ca. Gil is being brought to NOLA for Nutria Con by the SF<sup>2</sup>G<sup>2</sup>TF (Southern Fried Fandom Gil Gaier Transport Fund.) Contribute in the con suite.

Delmonte has agreed to come down from Red Stick, La. to put together our art show. Ken Smith of PHANTASMAGORIA fame will be present with an array of his fine oils and prints. Other artists there will be, Delmonte of course, NOLA's own Dany Frolich, P. Lyle Craig, David Rhett, and others.

HOTEL INFO: The Grand Hotel is where the con will be. Their address is 1500 Canal Street, New Orleans, La. 70140. The phone number over there is (504) 523-4471. The hotel is just outside the French Quarter



(for those who can grok a "good time"), so it's only a short walk to its enjoyments.

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Night of the Living Dead

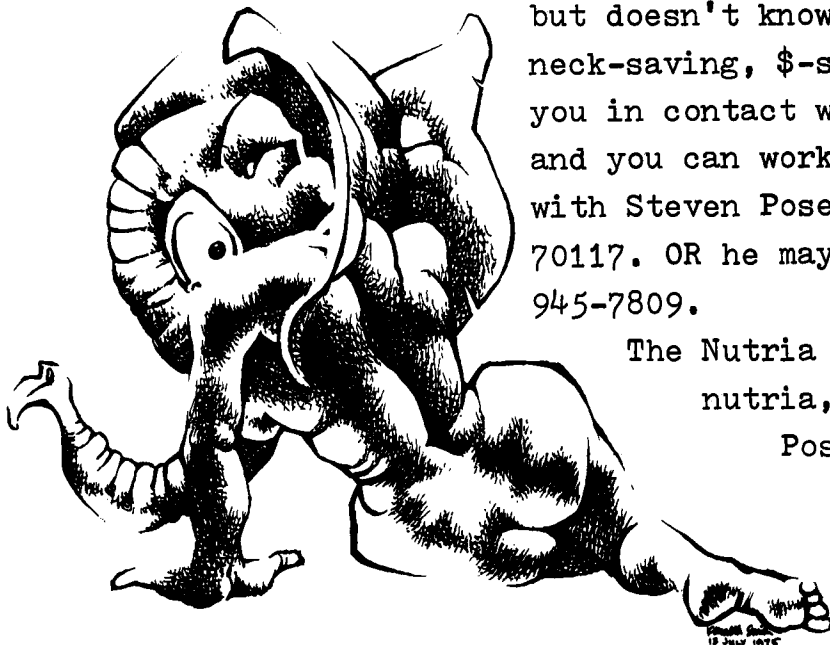
and more. We should have a Lost in Space, Star Trek maybe, and a bunch of Betty Boop cartoons by Max Fleischer, all courtesy of The Book End. There will probably be additions to this list between now and the con.

Being a truly Fried con, we will feature a fanzine room, a Bheer-filled bathtub in the con suite, an art panel, sf and f trivia quizzes, lots of D and D (Dungeons and Dragons), costuming (all SCA members are invited), filksinging, and a Rocky Horror Picture Show presentation and panel.

For anyone who wants or needs a room-mate, but doesn't know who to get, we have devised a neck-saving, \$-saving system. The con com will put you in contact with others in your same predicament, and you can work something out. Just get in touch with Steven Posey, 1128 Pauline, New Orleans, La., 70117. OR he may be reached telephonically at (504) 945-7809.

The Nutria Con Committee is Tom Longo, head nutria, Burt Cary, Dana Adams and Steve Posey.

Please send all questions or memberships to: NUTRIA CON, 6221 Wadsworth, New Orleans, La., 70122 OR call Tom at (504) 283-4833.



version of it, they don't own the name. Same with Caslon, Bodoni, Century, and a whole lot of others. The name "Times Roman", for example, isn't owned by anyone. Why should anyone change it?

## ALAN HUTCHINSON:

I like your idea for counting SFFA activity according to the size of characters, but there are still inequities to work out. For example, should serifs count toward minac? Also, many typefaces have both thick and thin strokes. How should they be counted? Should script typefaces count as artwork, with minac counted in inches of linework? What about black areas? Halftones? A sound idea, Alan, but not fully thought out.

That bit about LSD wrapped in "Simpsons" stickers – close, but no cigar. There is still no authentic case of LSD distributed in such a way that children might lick it without intending to get high, tho scare stories of such incidents still make the PTA rounds. The only authoritative source I've seen is a book on urban folklore.

There *is* a case of a writer getting \$35,000 a word. I forget the guy's name, but it seems in 1954 he copyrighted the phrase "Warning: The Surgeon General has determined that cigarette smoking is hazardous to your health." He gets a half-cent in royalties on every pack sold in America. I heard this from a friend of a friend.

In the 1950s and '60s, Charlton did special printings of many of its comics with shoe-store ads instead of the regular covers. They're listed in Overstreet under the title *Blue Bird Comics*. Is that what you have?

If anybody in SFFA knows exactly when the *Prince Valiant* story took place, it's me. Definitely 5th century C.E. – tho Foster was deliberately vague on exact years, Val met too many prominent historical figures of that period, including St. Patrick and Emperor Valentinian III, for any other period to make sense. The dating used in *A Prince Valiant Companion* is anchored on the sack of Rome by the Vandals, which took place in 455 C.E., and which Val witnessed. Other dates are determined by counting holidays and season-turnings backward and forward from then. We have him born in 433 and Foster retiring when Val was about 40. So yes, his story took place over a thousand years before Columbus. And let me add that I'm shocked, *shocked* that you don't read Val. As a writer/artist of quality comics, I consider Foster part of the vanishingly small Top Echelon, right up with Barks, Eisner and Kurtzman, and above Kelly.

By the way, yes, I was thinking of "Manduck Gestures Hypnotically" when I abbreviated "Val pursues relentlessly as "V.P.R." Another guy who catches me when I do little things like that is John Clark at Gladstone Comics.

Speaking of whom, did you do as I suggested to your answering machine and call him about drawing Duck stories? With Rosa and Van Horn selling their work in Europe, he really needs somebody who can do Disney Ducks well, and you fit that description. I've suggested

you to him, so I'm telling you, Alan, if you just dial that number I gave you, he'll be glad to take your call.

So I'm not the only person in SFFA who has his ear. But since you ask, yes, I *have* suggested other properties Gladstone might consider licensing. Not the ones you ask about, tho – I'd mostly like to see them deal with MGM. How does *The Carl Barks Library of Barney Bear and Bennie Burro* sound to you? There's a huge body of Barks' work that's never been satisfactorily reprinted, and is virtually unknown today. He says that's a possibility someday, but it's not currently on the horizon; and anyway, he's not directly involved in licensing. If you want to suggest other things, call him yourself.

You don't have to pay cigarette tax if you don't smoke, and you don't have to pay income tax if you have no income. The fact that you don't have to buy a lottery ticket doesn't mean it's not a tax on stupidity.

## JOANN MONTEALBANO:

Yes, there's PageMaker for the IBM; what's more, I hear it's file-compatible with Mac – that is, once you've got a PageMaker file onto a disk formatted that goofy way only Apples can read, you can deal with it just as if it were done on a Mac in the first place. But I've got PageMaker, and I'm not impressed. There's good stuff I can do with it, but I'd trade it for CorelDraw any day. (Unfortunately, they don't take trade-ins on software.)

Don't feel bad – the middle of the second term is about when OE Burnout usually sets in. Stick it out a few more mailings, then you can retire and be an Elder Statesmen. (Or States-something-or-other, anyway.)

Yes, according to long-standing practice 14 pages is how my zine should have been listed in the Contents, because that conveys enough information so everybody can make sure they have a complete copy. As for my personal credit, just put it down as "not less than minac".

## NORM METCALF:

I thought we'd been through this "inconsistency" of Burroughs in having his Martians use swords rather than their high-tech weapons. Are our military people "inconsistent" because they don't issue nukes to ground troops? Unless you can come up with evidence that they had weapons other than swords that are *useful in one-on-one combat*, I see no inconsistency.

I guess you could say it was shameful that the Allies ignored the German concentration camps during World War II, but you've got to remember – the U.S. was running concentration camps of its own for Americans of Japanese descent. People seem to have forgotten that in the early days of that war, it wasn't at all certain whether or not the U.S. would come in, and if it did, which side it would take. Ideologically, I think it would have been more comfortable with Germany – but Roosevelt needed a war, and it proved relatively easy to maneuver Japan into making an "unprovoked" attack.

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When returning this form, please use the space below for your comments on *Comics Revue* or comic strips in general.

## HARRY WARNER JR.:

You say (I wish it were possible to respond without quoting almost in full) "I doubt that it will be that easy for family tree builders of the future to find out much about the average person today. What about the millions of people who drop out of school, never join a church, have an unlisted telephone, give the census taker a phony name, live with a succession of persons they aren't married to, move about from time to time and die in a city whose newspaper publishes obits only for persons whose families pay?"

First off, you're *hardly* describing the average person. The average person appears on the census under his own name, for starters; also, the average person is officially married, and his phone is listed. For those not listed, a moderately skilled hacker can get his number and address easily enough. In addition, your "average person" would have to avoid credit cards, not get a driver's license, never buy a house or a car – or, indeed, sign a lease for same. He couldn't have insurance, utilities, a job, or even a library card. It takes *concerted effort* to keep your movements out of our increasingly-interconnected computer network; and even concerted effort seldom works long except for those well skilled in avoiding detection. I stand by my statement that genealogy in the future will be child's play, but I'll go so far as to offer an amendment: It will be child's play for those not descended from uncaught hardened criminals.

You're behind the times, Harry. People no longer run book reviews to fill space. They change the type size.

## TONI WEISKOPF:

After the 12-year greedfest we're hopefully leaving behind with the start of an administration which, for all its faults, at least isn't militantly devoted to the enrichment of the wealthy at the expense of the rest of us, it brought a smile to my lips to see *anyone else* called "self-indulgent". And after the unprecedented expansion of bureaucratic regulation under a succession of geriatric Republicans (despite highly-publicized rollbacks of isolated bodies of regulation), the thought of *my* generation being blamed for the "obscene growth of government intrusion into our everyday lives" very nearly made me chuckle. I wish I could manage a belly laugh, but as you know, my sense of humor has been dormant a dozen or so years now. Thank you so much for your efforts to revive it. As, in the wake of Reaganomics, I spoon out oatmeal for my children's dinner, the memory of your merry witticisms will help me to recapture lost feelings.

By the way, one of the things my generation was criticized for by our elders was a lack of historical perspective. And now ... now, I'm becoming my father. It was *Franklin Roosevelt* whose social experiments gave people the idea that the solution to society's ills lay in government regulation. (Of course, it's merely a coincidence that

Roosevelt was elected in reaction to a period of engorgement of the rich and impoverishment of everybody else, followed by economic collapse.) Since Roosevelt's time, every generation has had a hand in government expansion – including and most particularly yours, young lady – right now, I hear no voice crying louder for federal intervention to relieve their growing desperation than that of those too young to realize the source of that desperation. I can't wait until Katie's contemporaries start carrying on about how their parents' generation fucked the world up, and beg the government to fix it – that is, if there's any free expression left after you guys have been around awhile (I *do* see a tendency for young people today to be less tolerant of dissent than we were in the '60s).

In fairness, I think this is a good place to commend the Republicans for their heroic efforts to preserve the one thing I really liked about the Bush administration – Gridlock. Tying the federal government up in knots, the tighter the better, can only work to our advantage. Also, I join you in condemning the excesses-to-come under Clinton. Where you've gone wrong is in ignoring the excesses-that-were under Reagan and Bush. Politicians propose different uses for big government according to whether they call themselves liberal or conservative, but the one thing they all agree on, no matter what they give lip service to, is they all like big, big government.

And how nice of *you*, in fairness, to praise Hillary Clinton – emphasizing that her influence in her husband's administration is aboveboard and well-defined, as opposed to the back-corridor skulking of Nancy Reagan. As you so *correctly* state, there is a *great* difference.

## POETRY CORNER

I said in my comment to Ned that I'd written a few verses to "The Green Hills of Earth" in the late 1960s, and that I'd have to look them up for him. Well, they turned up very easily, as it happens.

Written earlier, but first published in *The Sphere*, vol. 9 no. 1, SFPA Mailing 38, November, 1970:

*We freeze in the Martian desert;  
We choke on her rusted sands.  
The hope of a jaded dreamer –  
To return from these fabled lands.*

*May a bright, fresh day soon find me  
Resting weightless in my berth  
On a ship that sails 'twixt comets' tails  
To the cool, green hills of Earth.*

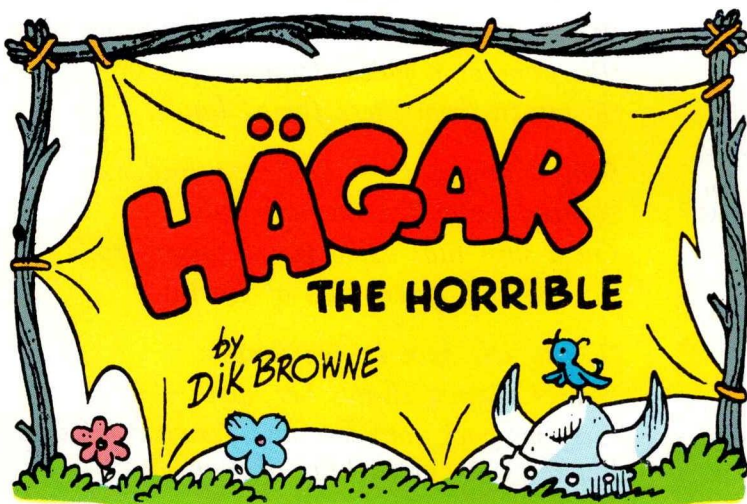
*To the sole spot in the System  
Where Nature shows her mirth –  
Take me back someday, and I swear I'll stay  
By the cool, green hills of Earth.*

# COMICS

*review*



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Secret Agent X-9  
Steve Canyon  
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Bloom County  
and more!!!