

# WIDENING GYRE



NO. 2

# ◆ Widening Gyre #2 ◆

## THE DREADED TAFF STUFF by Ulrika O'Brien

Sometimes I can just feel my spirit pitch and yaw in the face of the blank page. Oh, god, I have to write something by way of introductory notes to the second issue. Somebody shoot me, now.

It wouldn't be so bad, I think, except that standing for TAFF leaves me feeling I should play the part of a performing seal. Be clever, be charming, be engaging, show a little leg, give the crowd a bit of fun, but don't, whatever you do, let on that you're doing any of it, even partly, in aid of the TAFF race. Faugh. I'm just not clever enough to be that Machiavel-  
lian.

So, yeah. Me. I'm standing for TAFF<sup>1</sup>. Look, don't give me that quizzical look, okay? It seemed like a good idea at the time. Back in early July when the notion took me, there were sweet FA in the way of declared candidates, and veteran TAFF watchers were muttering grimly about the state of the fund and last year's non-race (due to lack of time and enough candidates). In that brief era of doom and gloom it seemed to me, however foolishly, that I was a better candidate than none. If I decided to stand, we'd be halfway to a race, and that seemed like a worthwhile thing, even taking it as read that most any other candidate who elected to stand would wipe the floor with me. Since then, Victor Gonzalez, Vicki Rosenzweig, and Tom Sadler have kindly volunteered to do just that, but back then, who knew?

Several people have counseled me not to

apologize for my candidacy, and I'd like to oblige, and all, but I can't help it. I am haunted by the specter of all the Grand Old Fans who feel TAFF is an honor intended, in part, to reward fannish accomplishment, and who will grumble about my sheer cheek at imagining I have any. I don't, really. Certainly not enough to stand for TAFF on credentials. I decided to stand for TAFF to do my bit to keep the thread alive, do what I could to make sure there was a race, preferably a lively and fun one that increased fannish awareness of, and interest in, the fund. If that happens, then I'll feel satisfied with my part regardless of who actually wins the trip and all the work that goes with it. I've already had a lion's share of ego-boo just from the support of my nominators.

All of which sounds horribly noble, and self-sacrificing, and utterly unlike me. Don't imagine I wouldn't like to win. Of course I would. I mean, we're talking *Britain* right? "Manchester, England, England, across the Atlantic sea...." Land of Real Irony, Real Ale, and pub loo-dispensed condoms in bizarre flavors like curry and whisky. Free range Goons albums on the hoof. Marmite and Irn Bru and deep-fat-fried Mars bars in their native habitats. It would be a complete lark. I could actually just squeeze in Corflu UK at the beginning of my trip and Eastercon at the end, leaving nearly a month between to stir up trouble in London, Birmingham, Edinburgh, Croydon, Manchester and Leeds, Cambridge and Oxford and York, and anyplace else they'll have me. Just tolling off the litany of names rings with a sort of Britophile high magic. Never mind wild curiosity to meet Alun Harries, and Jilly Reed, and Dave Langford, and Pam Wells and Charlie Stross and Bernard Peek and John Dallman and D West and Greg Pickersgill and Fiona

<sup>1</sup> The Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund, charitable fund which sends a well-known fan from the UK or Europe to a major US convention, or a North American fan to a convention in the UK, in alternating years.

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### Art Credits

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*Some of y'all have been muttering that more of the zine should include more writings from me. On your heads be it, then. When all was said and done with the layout, I had a page left with nothing to fill it. It seemed easier to write some damn thing than doodle forth a baccover, and perhaps this scapple will show you all the error of your ways...*

## GETTING CENTERED

by Ulrika O'Brien

I walked out into the white glare of the noonday sun, squinting against the unaccustomed brightness reflected up from the concrete path, and bouncing back from the pale, hard surfaces that describe and enclose Social Ecology, University Extension, and the Graduate School of Management. I didn't think of sunglasses, then. I so seldom wear any. A hot, silky breeze stirred the fronds of the pepper trees, barely disturbing the scribbled clusters of red berries. Mad dog, me.

I rarely take a lunch hour. Nowhere in the Pereira-drafted wasteland of Modern architecture and same-same campus fast-food emporia does UCI offer much to tempt me away from the comparative coolth of my office and the unending drifts of paper to be shuffled. But on that Monday I was exorcising the demons of procrastination, and had to venture out. I hefted the red-white-and-black gym bag farther back across my shoulder, so it would ride in the small of my back.

Funny how the walls of routine grow up to hide the local miracles in your life. Daily business seldom sends me to the diametric opposite quadrant of campus, but this day I have a swimming test to pass, over at Crawford hall, in order to take sailing classes with the recreation program. Crossing the shimmering white plaza between the crumbling, rust-stained towers of Social Sciences, passing leggy palms and pollarded coral trees, I descend a path into the silent miracle of Aldrich Park.

Aldrich Park is the hole in the donut. It is the compositional white space in the drawing. It is the empty eye of the academic hurricane. The University of California's Irvine campus is built in the shape of a giant, elevated ring, with its buildings clustered by a hierarchy of academic discipline like beads on a bracelet. A ring road girds the campus, linking the buildings up on the ridge. If you travel only to related buildings, or otherwise stick to the great circle, you may never pass through the center of campus at all. Because in the middle is just the deeply sloping, green bowl of Aldrich Park, crossed by man-made paths that go nowhere

but back up out of the park. The campus was designed in the late Sixties, with a permeating awareness of the student unrest up at Berkeley, and across the country. UCI was meant to have no agora, no central plaza, no natural space suited to attracting large, and potentially unruly, congregations of students. And somehow, it does. Aldrich Park, a few minutes before noon on a summer Monday, is a miracle of quiet. It is absolutely deserted.

The impression of *perfect* silence is false. When I stop to attend to it, I can faintly hear the distant thwock-thwock-thwock of helicopter rotors from the Tustin Marine base, and closer to hand, the nearly subsonic thrum of the great generators and pumping machinery of Central Plant. But the grumble of automobile noise and the chatter of human creatures are cut off by the sides of the bowl, leaving only the faint stirrings of the wind, and occasional birdsong. It is almost like stepping out of the city entirely. Shadow and light wink across redwood benches where no one sits, a swallowtail flits above paths where no one walks. The sense of solitude is almost apocalyptic, yet calming.

Aldrich reminds me, a little, of why the refugees from snow rhapsodize Southern California. The park falls away from the ring above in slowly rolling, tree-studded grassy slopes. The sky is a closely fitting, seamless shield of blue made almost Wedgwood by the heat, but the wind when it comes is softened by the memory of the sea. The trees that tower and dream stand mute witness to the Mediterranean turn in the climate, a towering convocation of exotics. The lemon balm eucalyptus seem subtly erotic, their greenish-silver boles long and straight and so smooth they invite an exploring touch. The Canary Island pines are mysterious—dark and dry and aloof. The coral trees, the Hong Kong orchids, and the floss silk trees all bloom in improbable colors, and assume bizarre, alien shapes as if transplanted from offworld. In the slope below Career Services, a riotous tangle of bougainvillea in the trademark cornea-searing fuchsia vies for attention with a stand of hibiscus shrubs, blooming butter yellow with vivid red hearts.

I didn't expect a journey of discovery, just walking across campus. But I had forgotten how much of a Zen garden Aldrich is for me. Now I remember. A few steps through it, and the outside world is temporarily thrown off. When I need to put aside the office for the sake of a walking meditation, I can go back to the eye of the storm. Now I remember.



those who identify themselves as "fanzine fandom" are rather hung up about who is in their group. I should know, I'm one of them. To get on some people's mailing lists is a status symbol in itself, apart from being just a goal. But for what it's worth, what some of them mean by that "who the heck are you" attitude is really just "what zines of yours should I have seen?" Which is really rather complimentary, since they'd like to see more of your writing. On the other hand, some of them are probably just bastards. And, in fact, some of them are the same people complaining about "the greying of fanzine fandom" when they do precious little to welcome anybody new into their midst. Oh well.

But my favorite in your zine has to be "Cons for Frummies." This was just fascinating! I've heard it said that faith is best expressed in sincere intent, and I've never read anything that proved this better. Finding a way to both do the thing you want to do (go to cons) without having to compromise the tenets of your faith can obviously require both organization and ingenuity. I can only admire the author's unwillingness to just shrug her shoulders and pronounce the problem too hard to handle.

As you probably realize already, there are few fan-publishing mentors as good to have as Geri Sullivan. And as always it's a pleasure to read her writing.

*I can't say I'm exactly bothered by the phenomenon of fanzine fans being surprised to not know me, it's just a little odd. But I find that I do something somewhat similar – I'm ready to assume someone should be familiar to me and that I've just forgotten them because I have such a bad memory for names and faces. Maybe that's a component of some of the reactions.*

A. Vincent Clarke, 16 Wendover Way, Welling, Kent, DA16 2BN, United Kingdom, [vincentian@cix.compulink.co.uk](mailto:vincentian@cix.compulink.co.uk)  
I've been lurking around r.a.s.f.f. for a year or so, so know your [newsgroup] stuff, but am delighted to see a 'proper' fanzine from you.

"Fandom is a huge place," you say. It is indeed. We're a long way from the time when I could publish a Fan Directory naming every known fan in these islands, as I did once, and knew I was 90% correct. But putting aside some creeps and cretins, there's a hard core who will recognize and appreciate your efforts to gather in unknowing members of the family.

I kept on getting just a little knee jerk at the mention of 'ob'

in Charlie Stross's piece, because that used to be short for 'obligation' in fan slang (from the Eric Frank Russell story, 'And Then There Were None'), but it's a fine piece of sustained annoyance nonetheless. I wonder at his forbearance in not eviscerating the LoudAustralianStandUpComedian. Hope he feels better now.

'Cons for Frummies' was fascinating. I'd read with almost a feeling of disbelief [newsgroup posts] on this subject, and to see it in cold print is marvelous. A combination of a toothache when I was about 10 years old (when God wouldn't stop it hurting), and the almost simultaneous discovery and reading of H.G Wells at the same age, turned me off any religious feelings whatever. I'm willing to admit that I don't know how the Universe/Local Galaxy/Bill Gates were created, and there's an itch to find out. Well, the first one anyway. But to think that Someone who created billions of stars would be concerned at humans' use of electricity at a certain period each week – well, I have just a little difficulty. But I really admire Debra Fran Baker's actual writing and the clear reasons she gives for the customs. And, needless to say, if she wants to do things her way, why not?

You're a lucky lady to get the friendship of Geri Sullivan. Here in Britain she's taken some of us old-timers under her wing, and e-mails and letters go back and forth. What was the line somewhere about someone having a heart 'as big as all outdoors'? That's our Geri. To say that she's enthusiastic about fans and fandom would be a wild understatement. She writes pretty well also.

*WAHF: Maureen Kincaid Speller, Jerry Kaufman, Fritz Freiheit, Geri Sullivan, Daniel Taylor, Brin-Marie McLaughlin, Brad Foster, Dave Romm, Bridget Hardcastle, Ray Radlein, Gary Farber, Ann Green, Bjo Trimble, John Cochrane, Karen Schaeffer, Marcus Rowland, Alun Harries, Michael Feldhusen, D West, William Breiding, and Gary Mattingly. And maybe a few others I've forgotten or misplaced. Apologies are due to Ann Green whose letter would have been printed had it not been rendered vapor in the process of transferring my data files to a new home machine, and the backup copy I mailed myself at work proved unreadable. Sometimes I am cursed.*



enough of that going on to make it feel as though everyone knows everyone else. It's not true, of course: all I have to do to refute it is to compare the letter columns of, say, *Banana Wings* and *Trap Door*, both good fanzines that happen to be published thousands of miles from me, in opposite directions. That's the advantage and disadvantage of apas: an apa is more of a closed set: you know who you're talking to, and fewer random people wander in the door. Whereas one of the many ways fanzine mailing lists are built is that editors will look at the other zines we get, and pluck names and addresses from them: "this person looks interesting, I'll send her my zine." And it would be nice if all of us could afford to print and mail enough copies to have all the people who might be interested on our mailing lists. But even then, we wouldn't all be getting each other's fanzines: there's enough difference in interest out here that the only person who's likely to want all the fannish fanzines (meaning, as I'm using it here, those rooted in our community, rather than in rock and roll, politics, football, or wrestling) is a completist collector with a large house.

Charlie Stross's article is amusing, in a way that makes me wonder how I managed to get so lucky in my adventures on the British rail system: the trains not only got where they were going in good time, but the ticket agent at Euston looked at what I wanted to do and found the cheapest way to book my additional trip (I'd phoned internationally to reserve the London-Glasgow round trip, to be sure of having a ticket and a seat on a busy weekend, but figured I could get the ticket for the local train from Glasgow to Ardrossan Harbor for a pre-Worldcon side trip once I got to Glasgow, rather than run up the phone bill).

I knew a lot of what Debbie Baker is talking about, but a few oddities jump out at me. One is "the candles that I lit have long since burned out." I can't help wondering about the prudence of lighting candles and then wandering off, leaving them unsupervised. Yes, I know hotels have sprinklers and fire alarms, but does she want to go down in fannish legend for forcing evacuation of a con hotel? I assume there's a safe way to do this — leave them in a tiled area of the bathroom with the towels safely out of reach, perhaps — that she just didn't think to mention, because of course the Sabbath customs don't assume that you're going to light the candles and then leave.

Gerri's story about gifts is delightful, and very much her. The beauty of it is that Don found the right person to give those gifts to: I'm sure he has plenty of friends who would have said "thank you" and meant it, because they appreciated his thinking of them, and would have valued the gifts for what they meant to the giver, but wouldn't really have appreciated those old photos. I'm one of them: I just don't think in photographic terms as a rule (though those who saw me at the most recent Corflu might not believe that). And I love the idea of "good, fannish conversation, the kind you can never remember the next day, after the duck's sobered up." Often, I remember snippets, or who was there, and if I'm lucky I remember the emotional tone: what exactly Geri and I said to each other at the 7MPLS3 party this Wisconsin is less important than the good fellowship with which we said it, and the comforting hug she gave me when I needed it (though I do remember much of that conversation.)

*It's entirely my fault that there's no longer consideration of the precautions with Sabbath candles — one of the victims of my editorial fugues, I fear. All editors are bad.*

*BTW, Vicki wins the prize of the issue for coolest letter paper: silky, nubby stuff, with grass green silk threads in it. Gorgeous.*

Tracy Benton, 315 Island Dr. #4, Madison, WI 53705  
Thanks very much for the copy of *Widening Gyre* #1. All the articles are entertaining and very well written, despite the fact that I've never heard of you (sorry, couldn't resist). You haven't heard of me, either, I'm sure, although there is a distinct possibility we laid eyes on each other at Corflu Wave. But you obviously have a keen editorial eye to choose such good articles for this first issue.

I can relate to your lesson on writing being a public act, although my experience was not as traumatic as yours. Years and years ago I wrote a fantasy short story and submitted it to a contest. Only problem was, the contest was for the shortest of the short stories, so I had to cut my story mercilessly...far beyond what it could have sustained. I handed it in and heard no more about it, about what I expected. But I gave a copy to a guy I had dated once or twice, because he showed an interest. Then I got a call from a friend of his. Who thought I might like some advice on how to improve it. Ignoring my incoherent spluttering, he sent my story back with two pages of criticism on it. His credentials for offering this advice? Why, he'd had a little article published in a D&D magazine, which of course made him a "professional writer".

As far as anybody having "heard of you" goes, it's true that

*looking for different ways to make connections, to catch up a few of the people who are missed by other methods. Many roads, and all that. Indeed, I must say I bristle a bit at the implication that Usenet and electronic media are only one such road 'despite' themselves. My own experience suggests that Usenet, BBSes, and similar messaging systems can be a sovereign medium for meeting interesting people, once the cultural constraints on interactions are in place.*

Teddy Harvia, 701 Regency Dr., Hurst, TX 76054-2307  
Continuing one of your own themes, I've never heard of you before. But I do know some of the same fans you know, which is *close* enough.

In your art, I can easily see a dark side to you. Andy Hooper thinks all cartoonists are evil inside; we just hide it better. He's irked because he laughs despite himself at cartoons in which he's the target.

I illustrate all *my* pet peeves.

*Teddy wins the prize for most stickers on a single pocsarc'd received this ish.*

George Flynn, PO Box 1069, Kendall Sq. Stn., Cambridge, MA 02142

Thanks for *Widening Gyre #1*. Quite a nice zine (and not at all a rough beast).

Let's see, I've known who you are for about a year, since I started noticing your posts on Smofs. (I stay away from r.a.s.f.f.: life is too short...) And I did see you at Corflu, though I don't recall that we ever spoke. But yeah, in fandom there are many mansions, and nobody can keep up with all of them.

I hadn't heard that British Rail had changed its name, presumably to something abbreviated "GNER." I'm afraid to ask.... An awesome account, though.

Michael Weholt is sick (in the complimentary sense, of course.)

Geri is always great, and should write more. And Don Fitch is one of the nicest people I know. I've had some scares myself when lugging baggage, but my cardiologist assures me that the problem is my musculoskeletal system (in other words, arthritis of the shoulder, I think), not my heart. This is reassuring, but it still hurts.

Vicki Rosenzweig, 33 Indian Road, 6-R, New York, NY 10034

We seem to have very different approaches to fan publishing: I do it because it seems the easiest way to get my writing out in front of people. Thus, I resisted even so much as a letter column, and it's been years since I published anything else by other people in my fanzine. I don't think perzines are "better" than genzines; I just lack the desire to publish a zine that isn't primarily my own writing. But I do write for other people's zines, because that's another way to get my writing out there.

Writing is generally a public act. Many people can be trusted to honor an explicit request for confidentiality, but far too few can be trusted to use their own judgment on the matter. Some of that is that we really do have different ideas of what's private, and some of it is that people just don't think, or are more interested in the moment of attention from spreading gossip than in the effect this may have on the people they're gossiping about.

It is amusing that one person should be surprised that he'd never heard of you, and another angry that you'd never heard of him. Granted, fandom is a larger place than is often convenient to think of — I read a theory recently, that most humans are capable of really knowing about 300 people, and beyond that there are casual acquaintances, friends of friends, faces you'd recognize, people you chat with, but can't really keep track of all of them. And fanzine fans do tend to pass each other along, so to speak: we share mailing lists, we've been known to put notes in print saying "This person is cool, send him fanzines," and there's



ULRIKA DISCOVERS THE DARK SIDE OF ART

*ing to just talk about myself in the first place. I think I dread being a bore. I will try to inject a little more of myself as we go, but I fear it will be mostly an organic process of revelation through dialog and discussion. But yes, to answer the immediate question, I was indeed born in Sweden, in a small town called Karlskoga. The town is known chiefly as the home of Bofors AB, which built the Bofors gun, an artillery piece much prized by the British in WW II. I don't think I have a relative back home who hasn't worked in munitions production in some way. It was also in Karlskoga that Alfred Nobel's will was adjudicated, and the decision handed down that established the Nobel prize. Basically, it's all about things that go 'boom'. Those tempted to speculate on the influence of this fact on my character are politely and respectfully requested to sod off.*

*It is a shame about the decline of train travel and trains in much of the US. I discovered that American train travel can be quite wonderful when Hal and I took the Amtrak Coast Starlight run from LA to Seattle. It's so much more civilized to travel by train than plane. You meet people, have real conversations, get a sense of the country you're travelling through. But it's no use at all if you're pressed for time, a state which seems almost pandemic to modern Americans.*

Robert Lichtman, PO Box 30, Glen Ellen, CA 95442  
I apologize for not having heard of you before Corflu. That you've been around fandom for seventeen years is awesome. However, since as you say fandom is very large, it's really not so surprising. Actually, your invisibility in "mainstream" fandom because your print fanac has been in apas ties in with something I've been pushing off and on in *Trap Door* since 1990: that the people who hang out in apas ought to make their own apa" by picking a mailing list of the people in all their apas they really want to be reaching, as opposed to the entirety of the apas' membership, plus the people in fanzine fandom (outside of the apas) of whom they have knowledge, and publish something in a more public way. To my delight, a lot of people have done just that, of which you're the latest.

My favorite part of this issue was your own introductory piece. I think you're entirely right that it's improbable that "everyone in fandom who might be interested in, or of interest to, fanzine fandom, has been properly introduced." I agree it *ought* to happen, but working out the mechanics of it has always been elu-

sive. I think that, despite itself, the on-line world has been an impetus furthering this goal.

I enjoyed your lines, "Scary as it is, writing is still a basic, if not the basic, tool of fannish friendship," and "The bigness of the world and of fandom should be defeated by the power of the written word." Lovely.

Of your shortlist, I've heard of Rick Albertson, Elaine Normandy and Vanessa Schnatmeier, and even met the latter two.

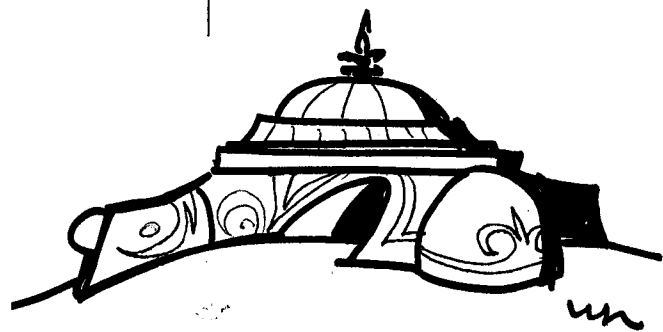
Charlie Stross' Britrail horror story reminded me of my own experiences on that transportation system when I was TAFF delegate back in 1989. I'd purchased a 15-day unlimited use Britrail Pass for getting around, and right from the outset I rode in the first class cars. The first occasion was when I was heading out from London to Bristol to meet with Christina Lake, Peter Fred Thompson, and the rest of the Bristol fans. I'd promised to call Christina from the station before leaving, but had been delayed in getting there and had to literally run for the train before it pulled out. I learned that there were phones on the train, and they were in the first class cars. So I went to use one and, when I was done, I found those cars so much more comfortable than the "cattle" units that I stayed. No one bothered me about it on this particular run, and later when various conductors would question my presence I would play dumb and wave my Britrail pass vaguely in front of them. None of them ever asked me to leave.

Debra Fran Baker's tale of Being Orthodox at conventions reminded of my long-ago friendship with the late Avram Davidson during his Orthodox period in the early '60s. He was as hard to accommodate in social settings as I must have been, later on in the decade, when I became a vegetarian. That was also the period when I briefly owned a VW Beetle, and Avram would never accept a ride with me in my "Nazimobile."

*The idea of 'making your own apa' has its charms, but of course pushing the idea solely in Trap Door limits your ability to address the disconnection as it now stands—only people who are already on your mailing list (and presumably somewhat plugged into "mainstream" fanzine fandom already) will see it, and only people who are in apas with people motivated by that idea will benefit from it. I've been doing apas for coming on seventeen years now, and was neither mentored in, or inspired by, the few genzines and perzines I received over that span of years. I know talented fan writers whose only 'fannish' outlet is a single apa, or Usenet. So I'm*

suggestion by personal experience. But from what I've heard from others in fandom and from things I've seen in mundane publications, I would recommend that you make one change in this issue if you decide to make it available via computer. Abridge the bottom of the first page of type by removing your full name and address. Very little danger results from publishing such things in paper fanzines but it can be dangerous if it's done on the internet for material that is frank and revealing about the writer. I've never gotten into real difficulties as a result of anything I wrote for fanzines, except on one memorable occasion when an American soldier stationed in Germany thought "fanac" meant copulation and decided to beat me up for what he thought was a snide reference to a visit he'd made to a whorehouse on Christmas Day in that nation. I finally convinced him of the facts about fannish slang and he calmed down enough to ask me to reveal fandom for the conspiracy it is to the CIA. (I also survived forty years of newspaper work in Hagerstown with my telephone number and full name in the phone directory with nothing worse than a few cussings out.) But there are some psychopaths in control of computers that could make things very rough for the unwary person on the net who gives full identification.

I can understand how irritated Charlie Stross was at that series of delays before he succeeded in getting from Edinburgh to London. But even when things go wrong like that, I must



consider public transportation just a little short of perfect in Scotland and England, when I compare it to what has happened in Hagerstown. I worked for a railroad briefly in youth, and at that time four major railroads served Hagerstown with freight and passenger service. There are still a few freight trains daily but the last passenger service, a sightseeing train that ran once a year, has just been discontinued. Inter-city bus service no longer comes into Hagerstown itself, and

offers only a few buses daily on the interstates that stop out in the boondocks. There are about 30 taxis, 22 of which were found to suffer from mechanical defects on a recent inspection, to serve a population of around 50,000 in the city and suburbs. Intra-city bus service exists if you look closely but is offered only at two-hour or three-hour intervals on some runs, almost all service ends at 6:00 p.m., the buses don't run on Sundays or holidays, and it's necessary to walk eight or ten blocks to the nearest bus stop from some residences.

The problems that Orthodox Jews have on the Sabbath when attending conventions were somewhat known to me already, because several members of SFPA have written on the topic repeatedly. I wonder if some small con or other couldn't decide to be different and offer a con that would remove the problem, by scheduling it on perhaps Monday and Tuesday, or Tuesday and Wednesday.

I have full agreement with Geri Sullivan about the generosity and kindness of fans. Just last week, it was demonstrated to me again when a fan visitor gave me an important and expensive small-press book without warning. I always feel tempted at times like this to give in return some rarity from my accumulation of old fanzines or hard-to-find books. And I feel bad when I don't because of the fact that my collection is destined for preservation at a university library and I feel that my stuff no longer exactly belongs to me to give away, in a sense.

I hope you'll continue to publish regularly on paper, since I won't see it if your future issues consist of electrons dashing around unpredictably amid printed circuits and such neighborhoods.

*I am charmed if horrified to find that several people expressed much your sentiment that they'd like to see more of, about, or by me in the zine. One of the things that seems to be true of me is that I have a sort of low grade horror for writing about myself. Certainly there are lots of charming personal essayists who focus largely or entirely on themselves and theirs, and I don't mean to denigrate that. Me, though, I'm most comfortable talking about my ideas, theories, and strong beliefs, even about my emotions and reactions, than I am talking about the unadorned me. I'm best off sneaking up on myself, revealing myself in discourse and in the course of telling stories than in try-*



Janice Gelb, 562 Kendall Ave., #18, Palo Alto, CA 94306; janiceg@marvin.Eng.Sun.COM

I was right in my estimate that Debra would do a better and more thorough job in explaining the issues of trying to observe the Jewish Sabbath and kosher laws at conventions than I would have.

Her article was slightly biased toward convention experiences where many of the attendees are Jewish -- not so prevalent here on the West Coast as on the East Coast. I would venture to guess that at most West Coast cons, I'm the only practicing observant Jewish person there, and even just moderately identifying Jews are not in great supply. It was a really interesting article, and there are a few arrangements in there that I wouldn't have thought of!

There were also a few tricky things that have more than one side to them, such as the definition of a public space. Also, I am willing to use a microphone for Shabbat panels because I believe the main melacha involved is turning it on (which is usually done by the odds-are-good-that-they're-not-Jewish hotel staff), and that the circuit changes that may arise from actually using it are minuscule at best.

Kathy Routliffe, 4856 N. Oakley, Chicago, IL 60625-1952; [kathbob@flash.net](mailto:kathbob@flash.net)

I was surprised and flattered when I found a copy of *Widening Gyre* in my mailbox; having lurked in Raseff for just over a year now, (even accessed your home page to see what you looked like), I was very aware of you, but I had no idea you might be aware of me.

Then I remembered you knew Geri Sullivan -- *there* was our point of congruence!

Long, long ago, when dinosaurs walked the earth and I was a tad younger and less discerning in taste, I put out my very own first zine. It, however, was a crudzine of the very finest water. Because I produced it with youngsters even less aware of good taste and standards than was I, and because I didn't think to send it to anyone beyond our tiny group, my future reputation didn't suffer. At least not from that.

Gee. You did a lot better.

The Charlie Stross piece "We're Getting There" put me in mind of various air and rail trips I made in my youth; I think the most unexpected delay was when I traveled

from Edmonton, Alberta, all the way to Halifax, Nova Scotia, by air, only to have to turn back -- stymied by fog and inclement weather - as we hovered over Halifax. I think we went all the way back to Montreal, re-fueled, and headed east to Moncton, where we deplaned and took a five-hour bus trip to Halifax.

The essay by Debra Fran Baker on observant Jewish practices at a con was enlightening. Religious beliefs and practices have always drawn my attention, although I have not always understood them. God could well be there, but my acknowledgements of him/her/it/them will probably always be somewhat less than ceremonial, even though ceremonial thinking is a large part of my makeup. God and I seem destined to deal with each other sans phrasebook.

The apex, however, of *Widening Gyre* for me was <snigger> Michael Weholt's piece <chuckle>.

"The Colonial Powers shuffle toward the Exits of History leaving behind their Empty Popcorn Containers of Counter-revolutionary Thought" indeed...

<giggle>

<guffaw>

<chortle>

<snort>

<snrrt>

<pauses to wipe eyes>

Excuse me. I'm much better now.

Do have him write for you again, if you can so persuade him.

Harry Warner Jr., 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, MD 21740

Thanks much for the fanzine and the surprise. The latter is the result of the former, because in these decomposing times, it's very seldom I receive a first issue of a fanzine from someone who hasn't previously been publishing genzines. Maybe the doomsayers about the aging of fanzine fandom aren't completely right, after all.

I enjoyed this issue very much, although I would have liked to see in it more details about your life, which I hope hasn't been a so-called one. The mysterious reference to a move to Stockholm, for instance, makes me wonder where you came from to get there and how long you were there and whether you came from there direct to California.

This house is a computer-free zone, so I can't justify one

As I'm not a denizen of alt.peeves (I'm afraid that is most likely a little too rough for me), I was glad to have this "Ob" business explained. I've seen that a few places and wasn't quite sure what it was. Now, if only someone will explain what "IME" is, I can die happy. (I was in LASFAPA for years before I got someone to explain what "ICQ" was.)

The article that most interested me was Debra Fran Baker's, for I've always been curious exactly what observant Jews have to do in order to attend cons. I was not aware that she was Orthodox; having the article from her perspective is most likely the most complete word on such matters. As we're friends with Janice Gelb, I was aware of some of this, but not all (and Janice is Conservative, not orthodox, but she is just as observant).

I had heard about a little bit of what Geri discussed in her article, but I was unaware that Don was having health problems at Minicon. (Not that I was there, mind you.) Don is truly a treasure, and I fear we're going to lose him some time in the not too distant future. (I say this mostly because he always looks so frail. Who knows, though -- he could outlive us all.) I got a kick out of her story about being able to name the people in the photos, and I really liked hearing about the rubber ducky in the beer. Quack!

*Alt. peeves can be a pretty prickly place. Not for the faint of heart, to be sure, though you don't actually have to post to the group to read it, if that helps any.... I think ICQ may be idiolectical to LASFAPA. I don't remember if using NCOTZB-HYNA instead of RAEBNC was LASFAPA or Myriad. IME is the acronym for "In My Experience." HTH.*

Murray Moore, 377 Manly St., Midland, Ontario L4R 3E2, CANADA; [murray.moore@encode.com](mailto:murray.moore@encode.com)

I support your intention, as I understand it, to enlarge the fannish family by introducing to each other people who don't know the other exists. Of your contributors, for example, Geri Sullivan is the only writer known to me as a die-hard fanzine fan.

Fanzine fans are known to discuss the greying of fandom, and to wonder from where will the ranks of fandom be replenished. I decided to get myself inserted back into the web of fanzine fandom in the early 1990s. I thought I had done so after a few years, seemingly having found my way, from review column to review column, from hints and references, to the mailing lists of most of the generally available, non-clubzine and non-special interest mediazine, fanzines.

And fanzine fandom turned out to be not large at all, as I defined it, with a lot of overlap between titles and attitudes. And here's *Widening Gyre #1*, fine folk talking about interesting subjects, and my perception of the fannish universe happily must expand.

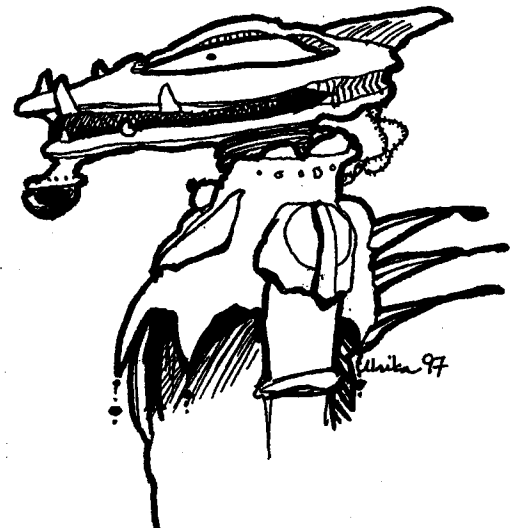
Debra Fran Baker did not answer for me why Jews, Orthodox and otherwise, seem to be such a significant percentage of SF prodrom and fandom, past and present; out of proportion to the representation of Jews in the U.S. population.

Hmm. A 24 page first issue, 200 copies. Potential easy for 10 pages of locs. Quarterly publication stated. The contribs will start to trickle in. Put me down in the pool guessing for a 44 page second issue.

*Well, thanks for the vote of confidence. I'm actually hoping not to go quite that big, if only out of concern for mailing costs and keeping to a length appropriate to the material, though you're quite right that it could easily have been over ten pages in letters alone, if I'd printed everything, even at the judiciously reduced 11 point type.*

Michael R Weholt, 311 E. 14th St., #4B, New York, NY 10003-4220, [mrw@panix.com](mailto:mrw@panix.com)  
WG arrived today...and I read it all the way through. Very nice. I liked your article especially. Oddly enough, the one I liked best after that was Debra's. Though she never said a word about *whyshe* (in my terms) would go to all the trouble, after reading her article, I \*did\* understand why ... somehow.

Oh, and I noticed, remarked upon and loved the quotation marks you used around my name. Yes, that's right.



an entirely local-based fannish career. The result was good for neither the LASFS nor the rest of fandom. Local BNFs grew up in complete isolation, and to fanzine fandom Los Angeles was a blank spot, known to be highly populated but with only half a dozen names known outside it: in the early 80s, Mike Glycer, Marty Cantor, and Harry Andruschak among the relatively younger fans, plus older names like Forry Ackerman, Bill Rotsler, and Bruce Pelz. It was as a Northern Californian fan who realized that I knew almost nobody in LA that I made a deliberate effort to get to meet LASFS members of the time, primarily by joining LASFAPA, then at its most active. Though I don't think you and I were ever members at the same time, your name definitely crossed my scanners as other people mentioned it, so I'm quite sure I knew who you were.

What can we do to keep the writing center together? Before the Internet grew and took over everything, I would gamely try to advertise clubs and fanzines at con panels as "something fannish to do in between conventions". Now there are whole new fandoms, of media or filking or gaming, whose young greybeards are very put out to discover that there are other fannish traditions that predate them. They are insulted to discover that nobody's heard of them there, and that they can't transfer their fame and seniority intact into fanzine fandom. Consequently they put it out that fanzine fandom is elitist and unwelcoming. Elitist, yes, but not at all unwelcoming. Even a fugghead can be a fanzine fan in good standing, and quite a few are, as long as he's aware that a fanzine fan is what he is trying to be. And that means being a baby pigeon for a while, learning which way is up, and acquiring a few fanzines and writing for them.

I enjoyed all your articles, but the most intriguing was Debra Fran Baker's. Reading it, I feel a bit like you learning fannish lore from Geri Sullivan, because I was raised Jewish, but in a Reform tradition that did not keep any of the Sabbath rules, nor do I keep them to this day. Yet the article made me feel a little uncomfortable too. For though we did not keep the rules nor learn many of their specifics, we were taught about the meaning of the Jewish traditions. One of the things we learned was that the function of the Sabbath prohibitions was to serve as a framework to form a mental space in which the Sabbath could be kept separate and holy. You don't use electricity to keep you away from the temptation of doing the sort of "work" activities associated with that. Yet with her attention fo-

cused on how to attend a convention without pushing elevator buttons, opening electric doors, or using credit cards, Debra seems to be treating the malachot more as an obstacle course to navigate through, so that she may fully attend the convention while legally keeping the Sabbath: having her cake and eating it too. Working on a convention may definitely be a mitzvah, but it's also work. I've seen this emphasis on the letter over the spirit of the law elsewhere in traditional Judaism, and I think concern over that is part of what led to the creation of liberal Judaism. Debra is welcome to do whatever she wants to, but that's what it looks like from here.

Yet I was also very pleased to read of how Debra makes time for traditional Sabbath prayers and meals at conventions, straightforwardly and not as an obstacle to overcome. Incorporating religious observance into one's life, whether as a Jew finding a minyan or as a Muslim praying towards Mecca, joyously and without resentment, is the best testimony an observant person can make for the value of a religion. That's the spirit, and probably the best mitzvah she could perform.

*The tendency to expect fame elsewhere to buy special status in a new environment is just endemic, I think. For instance sometimes you'll see someone who's a BNF in fanzines get online and behave as if he needn't trouble himself to learn the local Usenet manners and mores, and look a bit foolish and rude as a result. Not to say that every fanzine BNF or even most of them fall prey to that pitfall, but just to suggest they are not immune to foible. I think it's a function of coming to believe your own press releases. We all do that, every now and then.*

Berni Phillips, 1161 Huntingdon Dr., San Jose, CA 95129; [bernip@ix.netcom.com](mailto:bernip@ix.netcom.com)

Very interesting editorial. We certainly can't accuse you of holding back on us. I had never considered that "hardassness is just the flip side of falling a lot." I tend to hold back, and I don't fall in love much. If I didn't have my husband, I would surely be alone, for I can't imagine being comfortable with anyone else. Part of this is also due, I'm sure, to growing up fat and always being told that no one could love me because of the way I look. When you internalize that message at such a young age, it can never truly be eradicated. (It's like what the nuns used to tell us about sin: it made a black mark on your soul, and if you confessed it to the priest, the mark would be erased, but you could still always see where it had been.) This sort of thing sets up a somewhat different barricade in the heart.

## Lox &amp; Morlocs

*I think everyone goes a little maniacal when first they hear the siren snicker-snee of the vorpal blue pencil as it sings along, leaving whole paragraphs fallen in its editorial swath. I did, anyhow. All editors are bad. If you simply cannot bear to have your letters edited, please don't send the poor darlings to me; I just don't know when the madness will next take me. Not to say I'm not flattered as bugger-all by the stream of letters and cards and trade fanzines that followed tight on the heels of Widening Gyre #1, because I am, but the pockets for infinite postage are not so deep as once they were. Letters will be edited.*

Christine Bzdawka, 909 Walnut St., Verona, WI 53593;  
[Bzdchris@aol.com](mailto:Bzdchris@aol.com)

I already knew you were cool because your first LOC in *APAK* was just great. Very funny, smart, conversational. Then I got *Widening Gyre*, out of the blue, on a very bad, stressful, tiring day after working until 2:30 a.m. and then getting up at 7:00 a.m. to get to the next job, so I got a beer and a butt and sat on the porch and read it. Your essay on Pubbing Your Ish was very good - in fact, I had been contemplating the possibility of maybe, perhaps, doing a very short, concise, non-committal zine myself, but after reading WG I decided you had pretty much covered my territory so why bother? (This is a joke, although that doesn't mean mine will get done any faster). I liked the Orthodox Jewish Fan article - how strange, all the requirements and the getting around them - and the article about Fandom by oh, gee, I wish I had the copy right here in front of me, and Geri Sullivan's about Don Fitch and jewelry - you really struck it rich when you found an ally in Ms. Sullivan. But I have to tell you, even after repeated readings, I love the peeve story by the other guy oh, how I wish I had my copy RIGHT NOW. I could just feel the frustration, the bile rising, the stuffy train car, the screaming kids jumping on the seat, the sullen cab ride, the sinking into the B&B bed, even the fury rising again as he wrote it. I laughed out loud so many times - definitely a great article, although I fear this person may have more anger in him than I care to experience on a personal basis. The way he seamlessly worked in the "abandon all hope" announcements of the conductors, the death stares, the striking buffet workers—excellent!

*Hey, if you're thinking about it, go for it! Pub your ish. It's not half bad, once you get over the sticker shock on the postage. C'mon in, the water's fine. A couple of folks said that Gyre put them in mind of getting out their own fanzine, and even if it's a "Well, Hell, if she can do it, anyone can," response, it would please me no end to see more people*

*finding new ways to experience fandom because of this project.*

David Bratman, 1161 Huntingdon Dr., San Jose, CA 95129; [d.bratman@genie.com](mailto:d.bratman@genie.com)

It does indeed sometimes seem that fanzine fans are already all known to each other, which raises the question of where new ones come from, but like baby pigeons they do exist. Originally fandom was exclusively a writing-based community. One joined by writing letters of comment to the prozines, or by writing away for fanzines reviewed there and then writing letters of comment on that. Either way, one's name and address appeared in print, and one got more fanzines, and everybody in fandom who read those prozines or fanzines found out who you were. Only later might you discover that there were other fans in your town, and you might even take the radical step of going to meet them. Conventions were once-a-year events that only the fortunate could attend. Later on, new fanzine fans were recruited by their fannish friends. That's how I got involved, 20-odd years ago: I stumbled upon my local club, and people pressed fanzines into my hands and told me what to do with them. Thus my name started to get out into the written universe before it was known to more than a handful of people who'd met me in person. It's certainly been common for fans to go through a neohood where they're active and known locally before they begin to appear on the wider stage. If they're lucky enough to have encountered a club full of fanzine fans, they can get their training there. The first time I received a fanzine from Andy Hooper, many a year ago, I had never heard of him. Yes, this happens! From my perspective, he was just a clubfan from Madison, Wisconsin, but he so obviously had been well trained in the fanzine ethos, and wrote so well, that he was worth remembering.

I might say much the same for you, save that I have heard of you and we've even met. (And I know half the people on your "Have you heard of ...?" list, too.) But this is the result of a deliberate effort on my part. As clubs and cons have grown, it's more and more possible to spend an entire fannish career there without being brought into written fandom. Berni attended conventions for years without realizing there was any more to fandom than that, until I met her and introduced her to some of it.

Because of its sheer size and level of local activity, the LASFS was one of the first places a fan could pursue

hill. We were in the Circus five minutes later.

Our home away from home is the *Basement Flat, The Circus, Bennett Street*, one of the myriad of homes on the Circus, a Georgian confection built between 1754 and 1769 by John Wood(s) Sr. & Jr., the architects of the reborn Georgian Bath. The Circus is a trisected circle of row houses cast about a central green, and is on a hill overlooking the old part of the City, and just a stone's throw away from the Royal Crescent, another Wood marvel of Georgian neoclassical style.

Our basement flat was inhabited by our landlord, the redoubtable Mr. Chris Jump, who was doing battle with our hot water heater, and swearing at the loss of his holiday time with his family. Some hours of banging later, he had restored the unit to at least partial health, and we had gone off in search of provender for our larder, along with the rest of metro Bath, scouring the local supermarket before it closed for the Easter holidays.

Up the hill the laden beasts of burden labored, arriving just as Margaret had finished the first movement of the parking minuet, the biggest headache of our living arrangements here in Aquae Sulis.

March 30, 1997 (Easter Sunday): It's good to wake up in the same place, knowing I'll do so again tomorrow. Actually, it's even better to not have to wake up at an unnatural hour to do anything. The day began brilliant and cool (or so I'm told; I was sleeping in....), and the others decided that Easter was properly celebrated with a church service; to wit, a Baptist service. This they did, and then came home for a time for lunch, followed by a desire to mosey downtown. Me, I needed to stay at home and try and restore order to chaos, totally repacking everything, and trying to prepare a box or two for eventual shipment home.

March 31, 1997 (Monday): What can this weather omen be? Three days of brilliant sunshine, and Bath positively glows. We're right around the corner from the Bath Museum of Costume and the Museum of Asian Art,

and the Antique district is right down an alley.

Late morning found us strolling down towards town, stopping first at the Museum of Postal History, and then making our way to the Roman Baths. The bath complex was rescued from ruin in the 1870s-1890s, and the last century has seen a fair amount of recovery work of the old Roman precincts, but what it really underscores is how much remains which is undiscovered and unrecovered from the era of Roman occupation. The museum would have been splendid without the crush of an Easter Monday crowd; we may return when the crowds have thinned. Still,

it was an impressive complex, and only a balky tape in the video recorder dampened my enthusiasm. Well, that, and the scary guys juggling fire in jock straps, with sparklers lodged in their bums.....

The buskers were generally excellent, and in good form, with some richly colored 'living statues' filling niches outside the baths, an accomplished Irish fiddler and his begging dog, a juggler with batons working outside the West Front of Bath Abbey, a flute player in the TIC courtyard,

and an exceptional group of Peruvians, *Apu*, playing in the street west of the baths.

Tonight, a fine Spanish rice dinner, and a few map updates for Dad, followed by the beautiful but dangerous totaling of the to-date Master Card charges for the trip. The news was bad, but not deadly; we will not have to live in a box the last week we're here. France, however, remains something of a question mark.



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another lunch en auto. A few miles beyond, we found a side road marked Tywyn, and took it, to find ourselves face to face with a narrow bridge marked 'toll'. This was the one-lane toll bridge of Llyn Penmaen, a bit of local craft designed to shave 2 miles off of the trip to Tywyn, and extract 25p from those choosing to cross (an easier choice to make than backing up all the way to the main road). The bridge bed was about 8 feet wide, a ribbed corduroy wooden affair with a central spine which was rendered doable by the fact that it was only about 75 feet across.

And so down to Tywyn, place of pottery, home of the Halo Confectionery Company. Much taking of pictures and video ensued, with a bit of hiking about and a pleasant chat with a local bookstore owner, who had enjoyed a brief career as a footballer.

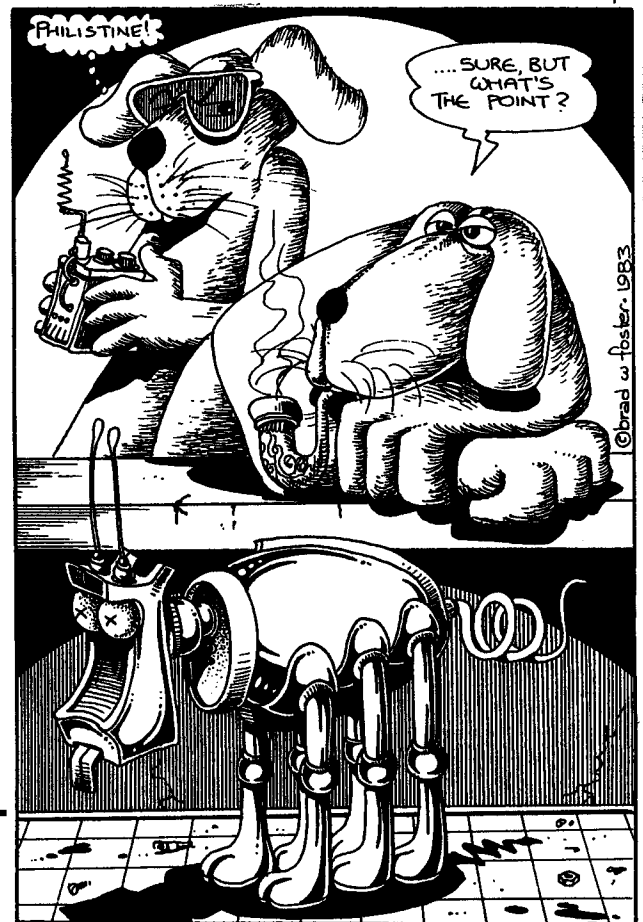
We headed down along the Atlantic Coast Highway, where the view got harsher with the descent of the sun, though as we rolled into Cardigan, we were spared by a well-placed cloudbank. We arrived in Cardigan at 5:30, just as the Good Friday sidewalks were rolling up for the night. Even a quick stop at the usually reliable Tesco's proved less than productive, as they were closing at 6:00 for the holidays. We thus elected to roll on into Llangoedmor, the tiny village where our B & B, *Llan Mair* awaited.

Our hostess, Mrs. Williams, in a heavily inflected almost English, managed to communicate that an evening meal might be secured in Lechryd, at The Carpenter's Arms, a local pub. With trepidation for Margaret's sensitivity to smoke, we hied ourselves there. In a corner near an openable window, we were able to secure nourishing fare, and I was able to provide entertainment for some locals willing to teach a Yank a thing or two about the local variant of 8-ball. I was also regaled by a couple of local elbow-benders, one of whom had been to Los Angeles and the American southwest, and the other who accosted me as we were leaving, a local lad named Derrick, or maybe Hank, who wanted to know where I was from, then professing surprise that shit was stacked that high in Georgia. He seemed somewhat abashed when he discovered my parents were also in attendance; I got the distinct impression that the Guinness was doing the talking, and we beat a polite retreat.

Back at *Llan Mair*, we were treated to a clear night sky and the gorgeous presence of the Comet Hale-Bopp, a short swath across the northwest sky. Even Mrs. Williams had a look through the field glasses. It's hard to believe that this is the first comet I've ever truly seen, and sad to think that this celestial visitor precipitated the mass suicide of 29 in San Diego, a Rael-like group slipping their earthly shells. And so the Millenium approaches.

March 29, 1997 (Saturday): We are eager to reach the afternoon's destination, Bath, where we will begin our "vacation from our vacation", a respite from our gypsy ways of the last three weeks. As I write, we are rolling east along the M4, with Swansea in our wake, and Bristol in our future. Tonight's entry will likely be truncated, filled mostly with a description of the flat, and of how good it is to be headquartered for a couple of weeks. Our journey to divided carriageway this morning was uneventful, but filled with rolling hills, mixed hardwood and evergreen forests, and the small, twisty roads along the way to Carmarthen which Margaret has become the driving master of these last three weeks. She has made the trip possible, and I will be a long time in repaying her willingness to chauffeur and schlep the rest of us hither and yon.

Getting into town wasn't easy once Bath was in sight...the A46/A4 was clogged with half of southern England, who decided that Saturday midday was the perfect time to consider a visit to Bath. We made our uncertain way to a central parking arena/hunting zone, and I made my way to a phone booth to cry out to Ms. Dagger (our housekeeper) for succor. As luck would have it, there was a florin left behind in the booth, and I found Margaret Dagger at home. When she figured out where we were, she figured the line of least resistance would be for she and her husband to come in their dirty white Peugeot and fetch us to our 2-week manse on the



March 26, 1997 (Wednesday): We sit in the Stena loading area waiting for the ferry to Holyhead, which is running a bit late. We're going to try and make today a lighter walking day, though Beaumaris is set for this afternoon if possible. We have money to change and other stuff to do at Holyhead, and will hopefully spend the evening in Caernarvon; from there, on to Northern Wales before a swing towards Cardigan and, eventually, Bath. One possible note of concern; this morning at 6:30 AM, the IRA detonated two bombs in the eastern part of Cheshire. We will be following this story with keen interest as it develops. More later from Cymru...

When it came, the crossing was pretty much flawless, crossing in moderate seas, but going downwind to the chop in the largest fast-sail ferry in the world made all the difference; amidships, the motion was scarcely noticeable, to the point where we were all able to patronize the shipboard McDonald's, though we wished we'd chosen seats away from *Tom and Jerry's Clown Pit from Hell...*

Our attempt to connect up with bank and grocery in Holyhead was an exercise in frustration, and we turned our collective attention towards getting across Anglesey, a task frustrated by our first serious traffic obstruction, a lorry-car accident that re-routed us through Llangefni. We lost an hour and found ourselves on the doorstep of Beaumaris twenty minutes too late to get into the castle. We took some exterior shots, visited the Museum of Childhood Memories, and bought mom another sweater before hieing ourselves to the Bangor Travelodge via Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysiliogogoch (or, if you prefer the English translation, *'Mary's church by the white hazel pool, near the fierce whirlpool, with the church of Tysilio near the white cave'*).

We had a sterling dining experience at Dad's new favorite eatery, the Little Chef, and retired to our rooms, where I was so tired that I became profoundly unconscious at about 7:30. At about ten past ten, I was awakened by the dulcet, seductive tones of the fire alarm klaxon, 300 screaming decibels of neuron-splitting energy that went on seemingly forever before our hosts came through and reassured us that it was only a false alarm. This led to several sleepless hours before the sleep elf mugged me and delivered me to Thursday.

March 28, 1997 (Good Friday): We had an exceptional run down through Snowdonia National Park, a ride favored by U-shaped glacial valleys giving way to the uplands, as the mixed forests yielded to the slopes scraped clean of trees, leading eventually to the harshly

sculpted lunar scapes of the slate mining district at Blaenau Ffestiniog, a blasted heath marked by the scree of several hundred years' slate removal. Characterized by slate caverns and cog railways, this is, oddly enough, tourist territory too, as the domestic holiday goers take a keen interest in the industry that so shaped their lives.

The road dropped quickly from the slate cwm down into another region of u-shaped pastoral valleys, this time on the seaward side, and marked by a much quicker descent to the sea. Before we knew it, we were on a winding side road, up a hillside and around the bend, to be confronted with the astounding instant presence of Harlech Castle, set hard upon a rocky promontory overlooking the sea.

What to say about Harlech? The castle is entered from the landward side, across a ditch that marks the only remotely accessible point into the fortification. The gatehouse and barbican complex is as strongly engineered as any we've seen, and this is my favorite castle we visited; it is the only one thus far in which one can completely circumnavigate the curtain wall, although the gatehouse has fallen into decay. Like Conwy, the stonemasonry seems to grow from the rock itself, and the pinnacle on which it is built commands the whole of the narrow valley to the sea beyond. It is easy to see why this castle was crucial in the Welsh adventures of the English kings from Edward I to Henry V (who had to reduce the castle when still Prince of Wales in 1406 in his response to the claims of Owen Glendowr; trebuchet stones and stone cannon balls in the basin of the gatehouse are mute testimony to the encounter). The castle was also a pivot point in the War of the Roses.

Though bright and clear, the weather was blustery, and Margaret and I spent a bit more time clambering about than Mom and Dad, who chose to clamber about in sheltered local shops instead. Still, we joined back up, inflicted damage on strawberries, commented on the Leaping Sheep of Harlech and the Harlech chapter of the Psycho Golfers of Lahinch, and bent our course southward, towards the Atlantic Coast Highway.

The coast drive was nothing short of magnificent, with stretches of rocky beach and estuaries giving way to uplands sea cliffs where the mountains ran down to the sea. We were skirting the southern edges of Snowdonia, one of the largest national parks in Britain. The one spot of contention along the way was Barmouth, poorly designed for holiday car travelers bent for a coastal retreat at any cost, and the one place where we felt the full effect of being on a red road rather than a green one.

Out of Barmouth, near Bontddu, we found a tiny pullout along the estuary of the River Dee, and there had

side of the road, usually accompanied by piles of collected materials, typically metal, glass, and in one memorable instance, batteries. These are the Wanderers, or Travelers, a group similar to the gypsies who travel from place to place, and make what living they can by recycling what they find, or by manufacturing or repairing useful everyday items like pots and pans.

Sunday, March 23, 1997 (Palm Sunday): While the rest are at Mass in Ardfinnan, I am using the opportunity to recharge the laptop batteries and do a little extra commentary in the interim.

Joe and Lynda were a true delight; she formerly with Pan Am in Florida, and he, a retired elementary school teacher from Miami. They bought *Lady's Abbeys* some three or four years ago, and own the 12-acre spread where they run their B & B, and keep 6 horses as well. Their house looks out upon the River Suir, rich with trout and further south, salmon, and to the south, in the near distance, spread the Knochmealdown Mountains. On a trip filled with lovely places we have stayed, this is, for me at least, the loveliest.

From Ardfinnan, we head north to Cahir to visit Cahir Castle, an edifice begun in the 12th Century by the Norman Butler family. Cahir is the most complete castle of its era in Ireland, and one we have seen in the movies. It is used in the movie *Barry Lyndon*, and is the castle of Guinevere's father in *Excalibur*. The principal features were a central keep, an inner, middle, and outer ward, and the only still-functional portcullis left in Ireland. The roof reconstructions date from the 1840s, but are faithful to the original forms, including the use of the cruck roof in the banquet hall. Outside the castle, a busking fiddler earned a hard day's wage fiddling in the wind.

March 24, 1997 (Monday): We next stake out our specific quarry in Waterford, the Waterford Crystal Factory. Marking time until the tour, we munch lunch en auto next to a 6-door Mercedes limo, and kill time not spending money in the showroom, where I don't have the 12,000 pounds for a crystal mailbox. The tour is a fascinating look at all of the work that goes into that expensive glassware. People come to the company right from high school, and undergo a stan-

dard 5-year apprenticeship, after which glassblowing mastery can take an additional 3-5 years; cutting mastery an additional 5, and engraving mastery a few additional years besides. The work in the blowing and marking/cutting rooms was exceptional, but the work of the 16 engravers (out of a total staff of 1,600) was artistry of the highest caliber. We also saw the Harrod's Fountain, a piece 6 feet tall, 8 feet wide, and 110,000 pounds delivered. Four have been delivered to date.

March 25, 1997 (Tuesday): In Dublin we were off to Trinity College, site of the Book of Kells, the Book of Durrow, and the Cathach of St. Columba, extraordinary texts of the Celtic Christian calligraphers' and illuminators' arts. We were not alone in visiting the Old Library, though; the President of Poland chose the same time to visit the Library, and his entourage of security and followers filled the three limos pulled up to the security entrance of the building, and were working their way through the gift shop as we making ready to enter the exhibition, a handsomely mounted affair put together by our friends at Waterford Crystal. The exhibit itself was a masterful blend of manuscripts, artifacts, and explanatory text detailing the business of the dark ages scriptorium, from the preparation of the vellum surface and the grinding of the elements for the pigments through to the finished documents.

Kells and Durrow were smaller than I thought they would be, and it was almost quaint the way the volumes had been rebound in the mid-1950s. Each of the leaves has been separated from the signature, placed on a binder of linen, and the linen sewn into signatures. Kells was opened to Matthew's rendition of the Sermon on the Mount (the ornamentation included mice with the Host and one beast chasing another), and Durrow was opened to the beginning of Matthew, where the lineage of Jesus is delineated in enlarged script. Upstairs in the Long Room was the bulk of the rare book library, some 250,000 volumes arranged in double aisles with stacks some 25 feet high. There are alcoves with reading desks between, and the central corridor is given over to the display of some of the Shakespeare treasures, including fine copies of both the First and Second Folios. Best of all the "Brian Boru" Clairsach is on display, a fine harp of medieval provenance, which is the oldest harp in Ireland, and still playable, with 29 strings.

We then went to the front gate of the College to meet with Mom and Dad; together we waited there for Siobhan Keane, the niece of mom and Dad's friend Bill. Siobhan took us on a truncated tour of the campus, showing us the quad where the race against the clock was run in *Chariots of Fire*, and many of the campus scenes in *Educating Rita* were shot. Most of the campus is given over to student residences and examination halls, and the older part campus is given over to the Arts, while the new part is where the sciences and athletics are located, a somewhat familiar arrangement.



Portrush, and we hit a local music emporium and grocery before turning north along the Antrim Coast Road. The drive up to Cushendall was extraordinary, replete with rocky headlands, limestone cliffs, rocky beaches, auks, razorbills and puffins, and stands of kelp, punctuated by the occasional trawler working in the heavy seas.

In Cushendall we took many pictures, and found that the area was loaded with McAlisters, including the owners of a local hardware store and sweet shop. It made a pleasant place to stop for lunch en auto before heading inland into a more pastoral upland, where sheep shared the road, and the expanses of forest were maintained by the national forest service. The blight seems to have touched these evergreens as well, though not as extensively as in Scotland.

Gradually we rejoined the coast, and found ourselves winding down towards the Giant's Causeway National Heritage Site. This is an excellent expanse of columnar basaltic extrusion, formed under conditions similar to those that created Devil's Tower in Wyoming. Here, however, the columnar pentagons and hexagons average a foot or so across, about one fourth to one fifth the size of the columns there. The whole formation is exposed to the sea, and this section of the coast was perfect as we arrived, with the late afternoon sun bathing all in a golden light. Margaret communed, Mom and Dad walked hand in hand on the

beach, tiny as it was, and it was a great walk along the rocky surf for us all.

March 22, 1997 (Saturday): We headed off down through the Burren towards Lisdoonvarna and the Cliffs of Moher, which lay just beyond along the coast. We arrived to find the cliffs largely bereft of humans, proba-

bly because of the fine mist of rain and sleet which was given extra impetus by the 40-50 mile an hour wind, sufficient to drive Mom and Dad and Margaret back to the car after a brief sojourn at the edge for a peek. I, however, was not to be deterred, and began the brief and stinging hike up the hill to O'Brien's Tower, atop the highest of the cliffs, some 680 feet above the ocean's roar. It was difficult to stand against the wind, and as one might expect, it and the sleet ensured that the only other people up at the Tower (other than a cold, shivering clerk losing a lung in the tower's forlorn and nearly open to the elements gift shop) were also Americans. Here also was the man with the incredible pipe-smoking dog, an entrepreneur who was charging 50p for a pose with the wonderdog.

On the run down from the Burren, we encountered the Mad Golfers of Lahinch, a foolhardy band of duffers who were playing on a lumpy course sandwiched between the sea and an estuary. The weather was stormy, with a good 30-40 mph wind shredding the flags at all of the holes, but there were dozens determined not to lose their golfing Saturday.

We eventually found ourselves at the Craggaunowen Project, a living history project devoted to exploring the lives and artifacts of the earliest Irish, dating well back to the Iron Age. There was a tower house castle on site, replete with an explanation of Imbolc and the Ipona/Brigid connection. There were also a reproduced crannog, Iron Age hill fort, old cord road, dolmen, menhir, and the actual vessel *Brendan* used by Tim Severin to cross the Atlantic in the 1970s. There were also enclosures given to the maintenance and nurture of "old native species" important to the early Irish, from the hardy brown Soay sheep, and wild boars, to the jet-black Kerry Cattle. As the weather had turned somewhat sunny and almost mild, this was the best time of the day.....

Which should have prepared me for navigating hell. Suffice it to say this, I have left nothing undone in Limerick which will ever draw me back there again, and I think that Margaret feels much the same. An hour wasted there put us into Cahir as night was falling, and the last few winding miles into Ardfinnan were made in darkness, though the impeccable directions brought us right to the threshold of *Lady's Abbey*, the magnificent country home of Joe and Lynda Buckley. Titch and Erin the mismatched terriers, and Joe and Lynda made us feel quite at home, with warm conversations and warm fire drawn up in the parlor downstairs.

These past few days I've noticed, first on the drive south towards Donegal, and several times since, areas along the roadside in which collections of caravans are drawn up together and the people in them are living at the



focus along the mustering point for the Scottish forces. The highlight of the grounds is an equestrian bronze of Robert, dedicated in 1964. From the site, one can look away to the north towards Stirling and view the ramparts of Stirling Castle, atop a volcanic plug.

That was our next destination, as we tried without success to unravel the mysteries of the Stirling town centre; by luck and Margaret's persistence, however, we found ourselves in front of the Smith Gallery and Art Museum, a delightful spot at the base of the Castle Hill where we enjoyed a sumptuous repast of pizza, chicken and rice, and manicotti. It was our best dining buy to date, served by cheerful ladies who told us that we were just missing the opening of a major exhibit dedicated to William Wallace on the 700th anniversary of the Battle of Stirling Bridge; there was much talk about Mel Gibson, and the daughter serving us had gotten to shake his hand during filming of *Braveheart*. This meal fortified us up the rather steep back way to Stirling Castle hill, where we were able to use our British Heritage passes to good effect, and toured the Castle, which is built on older foundations, but shows a primarily Stuart outer face. There is much restoration going on in the inner wards, most notably in the great feast hall, the largest medieval hall in Scotland.

Next was a brief expedition to the local "everything store", Tesco's, where we laid in a supply of road snacks and lunches for along the way, including fruits, cheeses, and baked goods, both of the sweetbread and regular wheaten varieties. In the evening, I demonstrated to Mom how one dines on a flaky pastry without making too much of a mess.

March 16, 1997 (Sunday): Our morning roll north brought us to Blair Atholl, home of Blair Castle, and a bit further on, to Bruar, home of the Clan Donnachaidh Museum, of a fine mill store where Mom was finally able to find the cashmere she was looking for. Also in Bruar we discovered a site where the Red Deer of Scotland were wintering, and most spectacularly, the Falls of Bruar, an impressive series of substantial falls and cataracts which pour down like silver from the Highlands. Further on, as we threaded our way between the Grampians and the Cairngorms, our first snow lay on the hills above us, and weather continued to tantalize, with the sun putting in very brief appearances in a sea of mostly lowering clouds.

A quick dash to Culloden Field after settling in at the Inverness Centre Travel Inn. We had an hour to spend on the dying ground of Bonnie Prince Charlie's dreams of a restored Scottish throne. I was impressed chiefly by the 18th century croft house which both survived the battle and the intervening years of modernity in the area. Com-

manding a view of the Firth of Moray, this windswept plain saw the death of Scottish independence, and the last battle fought on British soil, all in the year 1746.

March 18, 1997 (Tuesday): Morning is spent arranging lodging in what turns out to be Ballantrae (we're headed deep into Robbie Burns country), a brief stop at Tesco's, and eastward along the A85, sighting Kilchurn Castle at a loch head. Then it's down along the northern and western shores of Loch Lomond, flirting with brief bouts of sun amidst the showers. This last look at the Highlands showed us more of the same we'd seen right along; largely barren mountainsides, with rivulets and cascades carrying the water unimpeded down into the lochs, and here and there, plots of evergreens planted carefully, and threaded through with some sort of blight. Every now and again, small patches of old growth forest would appear, moss and lichen encrusted places of secret and magic.

Below and around Glasgow my navigational aids failed me completely, as what was meant to ease Margaret across the Erskine Toll Bridge in towards a series of M roads pushed us instead eastward, back towards Edinburgh. Meandering south of Glasgow for an hour, we finally got on track in Strathaven, and pointed west towards Kilmarnock.

After a brief traffic snarl at Girvan, we found ourselves afoot in a windy and bitterly cold Pictish town. The rest sought food and shelter, while I scampered about in search of pictures and memories, gathering water along the way. My supper of pizza and chips was less than I might have hoped for; note for next time: try the haggis.

March 19, 1997 (Wednesday): Dawned cool, breezy, and relatively clear in Ballantrae. We had a delicious breakfast courtesy of Mrs. Sloan, took a few pictures, and struck down the 10 miles to Cairnryan, where the P & O Ferries ran the jet shuttle to Larne, Ireland. We were able to book passage on the liner *Nassau*, and 107 pounds sterling later the car was parked and we were ensconced in the passenger lounge. The trip began well, but as we rounded the head of Stranraer promontory the seas kicked up, and with them, our collective stomachs. Margaret fared poorest of us all, though she was not alone as young and old all about returned their rented breakfasts into the handy collection devices thoughtfully provided. I made landfall at Larne rubberlegged, but otherwise intact.

A stop in Larne yielded a booking in

Bath, which took us to the Post Office. All those done, we had but to settle the bill at Rudderhans and pray that my directions to the M25 were good ones. Thankfully, they were, and Margaret was relatively happy to make her way halfway around the London Orbital to the A21, where we headed south towards the coast.

In the little town of Battle, we stopped for a delightful lunch at the Meeting Place, followed by an abbreviated tour of the Hastings Battle site and Battle Abbey, which is today a modern private school. It was amazing to stand along the way where the Saxons held the hill and look down on the rolling lowlands that fed the Norman advances. An incredible place...

Thence down the road to Hastings and the coast, an approach which we felt ahead of time, heralded by fog, which set in in earnest as we moved up the coast road towards Dover. Above Folkstone, we decided to seek shelter, and found ourselves at a Travel Inn, across from a hillside full of delightfully vocal sheep.

March 11, 1997 (Tuesday): Canterbury, where the weather was mild and the crowds tolerable. A quick sit-down lunch at the cathedral close gate was followed by a brief tour of the Cathedral in which my folks were able to visit the martyrdom site, the tomb of the Black Prince, and hear a stirring series of comments from an old guide who had some rather pointed views on the subject of the role of the military in churches throughout the land. Out of the cathedral, we had a brief bagpipe serenade at the southern City Gate before our departure.

We made our way to Leeds Castle, where we took the late afternoon sun to stroll through the Duckery and the gardens and grounds leading to the castle proper, site of a 13th century fortified mill, the gatehouse with the Museum of the History of the Dog Collar, and the tour itself, which featured Yorkist partisans, dour custodians, a sweet lass in the chapel, French Kate's bathtub, and a doorman grateful for a break in the winter weather.

A perfect day was not to have a perfect end, however; the Travel Inn in Maidstone was full up. Something it had in common with everything else in Maidstone. Something it had in common with every other Travel Inn south of York. We know. Over the course of two hours, I called them all, frustrating myself even as I enriched British Telecom. Finally, the manager of our Travel Inn phone took pity, and a phone call later we were headed 25 miles back down the road towards Dover, to a Holiday Inn in Ashford

where they generously hosted us at the Travel Inn rate.

March 12, 1997 (Wednesday): We started the day with our first visit to a Safeway grocery, land of Eccles Cakes, juice concentrates, and other tasty pastry treats like hot cross buns, followed by our first visit to a British Tourist Information (BTI) to book a B & B. The lady at Ashford BTI was fiercely helpful, and we were treated to a tour of the St. Mary the Virgin Church adjacent. Within half an hour, we had lodging booked in Selby for that evening; all that remained was to drive up. So we did, through legend and the midland of England in weather that was mostly seasonal, with a stop along the way for lunch at Burger King at a Granada service plaza along the M1.

March 13, 1997 (Thursday): Selby BTI for the next booking. While we waited for news, a tour of Selby Abbey was in order. This Norman, Decorated, Perpendicular church is noted for its Washington window, which holds the old Washington coat of arms with stars and stripes, which George probably borrowed when heraldry for the U.S. was under consideration.

March 14, 1997 (Friday): Wild, windy weather met us by several turns along Hadrian's Wall. We stop at the Roman Army Museum, at the Northumbria National Park station at Twice Brewed, and at Vindolanda, a Roman fort outpost, site of a fine privately run museum, ongoing massive archaeological undertakings, and exceptional displays of local rural life over the last 2,000 years. At Steel Rigg, the overlook on Hadrian's wall at perhaps the most scenic part of the escarpment, we trooped down for pictures, and to sully our shoes with sheep offerings, which were then smelly the rest of the day.

The weather, barely holding during our outing, turned raw and wet as we rolled up the M6 towards Scotland, Abingdon, the Travelodge, and our stop for the night. Modest M service plaza bill-of-fare was plenty that night, and saw us to early chambers, thence to catch up on mail unsent, and chronicles unrecorded.

March 15, 1997 (Saturday): Vile and Scottish dawned the day, windy and misty, and neither fit outside for man nor beastie. The temperature was in the low 40s or upper 30s, with a steady wind and swirling rain and mist. Up towards Stirling, the weather broke into a fit of sun right at noon, and we stopped at the Bannockburn Heritage Center, site of the Bruce's triumph over Edward II in 1315. The battlefield itself has been mostly subsumed by subsequent construction out along the carse and the track of the Bannock Burn. The fifty-eight acres of the Heritage Center

the wall are striking, but alien; the ability to make real art is unintelligible to me. I know that if I try to make something real, I'll end up gluing together pine cones and painting little faces on rocks. I can see myself dwindling off doing "boxes," snipped concretions of primitive meaning assembled from the detritus of my life, pictures, badges, ticket stubs and canceled stamps. I sink despairingly into an extended reverie of cigar boxes and precision cut glass fronts, and you have to

glue them on very carefully to keep from smearing the glass and looking just idiotic, not primitive.

Waah, I'm crap; or at the least, very tired. Back to the top of the hill and into my own driveway, my own parking lot, my own patio garden, my own computer and this stream of consciousness piece, every word of which is true, is now complete.



*I have to figure that Gil Head was a neutron star in another existence. Or he will become one. He can pack a dozen funny, interesting, scholarly, and quirky remarks in the time it takes me to pull my thoughts together to say something. His Myriad zines spark more comment from two or four pages than I could usually stoke up in twenty. His and Margaret's house has such an unimaginable density of books, music, weird cool art objects, and cats per square inch that you feel certain it must be larger on the inside than the outside by some weird twist of n-dimensional geometry. Information density as a way of life. The piece that follows started out as forty-three pages of stream of consciousness diary from a trip to Great Britain that Gil gave to his wife and parents as a gift of family time. I have the journal pared down to about eighteen pages, so I'm running it in two parts....*

## JOURNAL OF THE SCEPT'RED ISLE TOUR - PART I by Gilbert Head

March 7 & 8, 1997 (Friday and Saturday) The flight out was exceptional, with a beautiful view of the countryside from Atlanta all the way up past Long Island, where we began to bear away from land. The night flight was smooth; the stars impossibly close. I was unable to sleep and saw the sun rise as we crossed Ireland near Waterford, and descended to cool and overcast at Gatwick, which was as small as I remembered, but much grimmer. After a wait for the last of our bags (mine, of course), we went on to Avis for the 1997 Toyota Carina EST wagon, a silver beauty with exactly 6 miles on the odometer, whom we dubbed Matilda.

Margaret, my wife, was our driver by default, as she was the only one of us to have driven in England before. And drive she did; she took us all the way to our hotel via surface roads in London. For this alone she deserves some sort of medal, as I was a basket case as navigator. With a little help from a gentleman in High Street and the assistance of our hotel clerk at Rudderhams Hotel in Sussex Garden, we were able to settle in, and Margaret was able to dash off to her textiles conference where she would hobnob with Janet Arnold.

March 9, 1997 (Sunday): Morning brought a vast English breakfast, and the means to walk it off through the morning

mists of Hyde Park, which was largely ours, with the pigeons. On the east side of the park, Margaret saw the Queen's Horse Guards riding down towards Buckingham, so we followed after through Green Park, arriving in time to see the regular changing of the guard at Buckingham, a ceremony of precision but relatively less pageantry as we were there on the wrong day. From there down through St. James Park, home to myriad waterfowl including humongous pelicans. We arrived of a sudden at Westminster, just in time to go in for the 11:15 worship service.

Eventually made our way to Covent Garden, where a street festival was in full swing. My favorites were the "living statues", the Chinese trio w/ pipa and hammer dulcimer, the juggling crowd workers, and the Punch and Judy puppet show. I was struck by the London buskers, mostly in the tube stations, from the quaint (the usual Dylan/Who/Beatles warblers) to the scary and bizarre ("Killing Me Softly With His Song" on an accordion, and a heartfelt rendition of "Mercedes Benz" by a less than skilled practitioner....).

March 10, 1997 (Monday): Our last day in London. We've heard from Celia Hutton for our place in Bath, and we have to find a way to get her the money to hold our place. This Byzantine struggle had us going to Lloyd's to change travelers' checks for pounds, to the Midland Bank for the bank draft to send off to

far less distinctly, as through a lens or valve.

The TV in his tottering clogs clacks closer. I am seized with an unreasoning fear. Silly, unutterably so. Yet, I hitch up my belt and stride south purposefully, past the CT cafe, the Cobalt Healing Arts Center with the blue crystal in the twisted black iron arch and its tiny hand-spaded pond in the front yard spackled with exotic red-green scum, and Adams TV Repair (how timely) with photocopied political cartoons filling the windows. Then I'm doubling around the block to search for the water course again. Under the dark wings of Chestnut trees, I find myself thinking of spiders again, Ungoliant the Great, bigger than the Tacoma Dome. With a little shudder I climb the bowed back of 45th street again, tracing the silent tunnels under thick rust-colored covers, and there's not a drop to be heard. A car sits ticking over at the curb in front of an apartment building near the corner of 45th and Evanston. A desperate-looking bald man is at the top of the front steps, and raps nervously on something metal while he begs of a voice on the other end of an intercom, "Please, ask Mary to come down, it's her Uncle Ricky." A woman sits in the passenger seat of the car, looking uncomfortable. I feel that I have wandered into a Raymond Carver story.

As long as I am patrolling the whole neighborhood, I decide I might as well take a look at locations that have been the source of suspicious water in the past. I walk by the front lawn of the Sunset Arms apartments, where a mysterious main break once wept unrepaired for 18 months, but it's now gone dry. Only a half-block away is what I've come to think of as Palmetto House, for the incongruous trees that line the top of the stone bank beside it. Beside the palmettos, lush lilac bushes and tall Russian olive decorate the lawn. As I investigate, a slab of cracked sidewalk glinks audibly under my feet. Most of the year, water seeps out from under these cracks, dribbling into the boulevard and draining into the street. Is this because the owner irrigates his upper yard religiously, keeping those palmettos and lilacs happy? That's not necessarily the answer — we do, as you might have heard, get a great deal of rain

in Seattle, and in the natural order of things, a big hill like this would drain down through a thousand seeps and tiny streams. In most of the neighborhood, the high banks of the gardens and yards are an artificial gesture to keep the houses from sliding into the canal, but in a few, they are a vestige of the original contours of the hill. Along such a

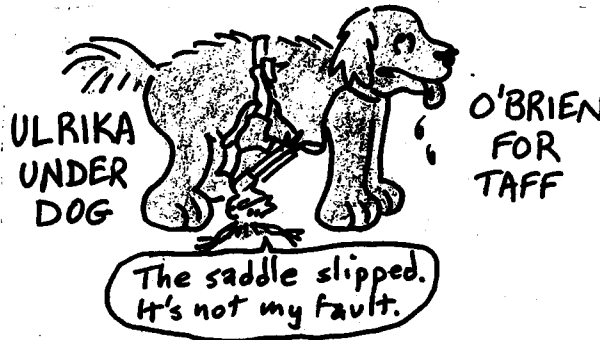
slope run the ghostly veins of the old watershed, diving under the turf in one place to pop back up and crack concrete in another.

I have no such illusions about the endlessly drooling artificial watering system in front of a house a block further east. This was once another Gluer site, where the concrete base of a sundial was stuck through with flashy rocks and colored

glass, and strange faces leered out from the rather ill-tended leaves. The new owners now take bushels of vegetables, tomatoes, eggplant, peppers, even corn, from beds at the very edge of the sidewalk. I think they benefit from the efforts of the former residents, who made their effigies and offerings in supplication to archetypal forces that keep dogs and raccoons and small boys with sticks away from gardens.

I'm almost back to Fremont avenue now, walking past black cherry trees and a freshly-painted house with fine shake siding and a Chevy Bel-Air parked in the driveway, next to a Honda with a license-plate liner that reads "I'd Rather be Smashing Imperialism." Self-satisfaction throbs from within the house, like a gut distended from eating far too much cotton candy. I stop and pick my way carefully for a moment, to the potential path of my cross-dressing nemesis, trying to follow the sewer line down the hill...but no water. I can hear nothing. I am not, alas, dowse-capable.

Time to head on to home now. I stop and look in the window of a new gallery that has opened at the base of 43rd street. Inside is a tasteful tableau of handmade African drums and paintings and Persian rugs. Something about this makes me remember that the great Sufi musician Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan died today. He was on the way to the U.S. for a kidney transplant, but died in transit. I stare in the window at the drums, imagining the popping bass beat of Khan classics like "Mustt Mustt." Why have I discovered so many things only in their last days? The paintings on



neck was some sort of glittering necklace, above the swooping bodice of a flowing white dress. The impression of otherworldly serenity was somewhat punctuated by the paper bag she had clutched in her left hand. Perhaps she'd run out to the 50th Street Minimart for some fresh Belladonna. "Hi," she said.

I pressed back into the stones as unthreateningly as I could and croaked, "Hee." Just then a man walked past the doorway with a backpack, another slid by on a bicycle and a whole convertible full of guys rolled up, and started talking at the stoplight just outside the maw of the snake. Then the car backed up behind the crosswalk, as if they didn't want the snake to look at them. When I turned back after this long second, the girl in white was gone. I did not follow her, even though the impulse trod heavily on my sense of adventure. Inwardly something shouted at me to at least stand and look where she went, while the person who was actually on the scene took a last pull on his chocolate shake and stepped into the street to find a rubbish bin. My mind was already at work creating a better explanation of what was back there in the darkness than reality was ever likely to provide.

Up and down the street, no bin. Bus stops and all, where such are often located. Walking down the street and thinking of garbage caused two more empty cups and a crushed aluminum can to find their way into my hands. I wanted to hold out for a proper public can, but block after block of recycling bins left out on front boulevards took their toll on me, and I finally pitched it all into an empty box meant for glass and cans. And got away Scot free.

From the foot of the Meridian play fields, 50th street runs down a long, impressive valley, down to Stone Way, and then up to the top of Fremont Ave. The grade isn't too difficult either way, making 50th a great way to climb up the back end of Phinney Ridge. Blocks flew by as I angled downhill, then slowed to a crawl as I started back up again. Dark woods lay heavy on the right side of the road, and I clung to the half-shadows, picking through the roots that suggested an old forest out of a fantasy novel. Halfway up the hill two young men pitched a racket ball to one another in the middle of the street at half past midnight, while a dozen tennis courts sat empty in nearby Woodland Park. A suggestion of headlights came from within the park. At the enormously broad avenue named for the park, I stopped for a moment and admired the view of downtown Seattle, miles away. The towers, lined with tiny lights and the reflections of traffic below, looked like a matte painting from a Ridley Scott film.

Continuing in a cinematic mood, I perspired my way up the long, Leni Riefenstahl-like pan of the 50th street viaduct. I picked up the pace; there was nothing good to see, and the air seemed to be made of equal parts auto exhaust and the drifting odor of the dung yards at the nearby zoo. Once at the top of the hill, I felt like I had reached the cooling portion of the walk, a shallow descent into the blocks of upper Fremont, along the avenue of the same name.

Down the hill, past the house with huge Bering Sea trawl floats in the front yard, the condos with the little court filled with well-polished Jaguars and Bentleys, yet another Texaco station and the huge transvestite in the blonde wig and awful green dress, yes, here he is now! His appearance in this hellish mixture of moonlight and reflected gas station sign is so arresting that I actually suffered a pre-traumatic stress response to it nearly an hour before. He licks his lips as I draw level with him at the edge of 46th street. Even in this odd light, I fancy that I can count the individual hairs in his day-long growth of beard. I'm not a homophobe, and I'm seldom shocked by mere drag displays, but something about this guy flat spooks me. Although the Don't Walk sign is already puffing orange at me, I pick up stride and dash across the road.

Down by the neon-softened railings and windows of Video Isle, our neighborhood rental shop, I'm tempted to stop and do push-ups against the iron copings, as I've done many times before, when I see him following me. He takes a thousand tiny steps in his heels, across the suddenly busy 46th street, where four different people in a different convertible hoot insultingly at him as they pass. That's when I heard the sound of water flowing nearby.

46th is the same arterial road I started out on at 45th; it jogs hard to the right at the bottom of this ridge-line, a sudden, artificial curve to keep demons out of Fremont. But the path that veers at the base of the hill doesn't disappear completely; at 45th and Fremont avenue, it has become water and rushes down from the crest of the ridge, the line the energy of the hill speaks through. Water here, but from where? Does the sanitary sewer rise up here and rush through an open gate, calling to my ear? For no one can resist investigating the course that water takes. From another nearby manhole marked "SSS" (Seattle Storm Sewer?), the sound of the flow comes

ing in to buy a poetry collection as if it were a pair of shoes: I'd like something in a nice Gary Snyder please.

I steam up to the top of the hill, and turn right at the Taco Time franchise, a green mirror box with pink gleamings within. At last I've turned off the main drag, and onto a dark residential street, Corliss avenue. The chocolate shake sweats in my hand.

Corliss comes to an abrupt end after two blocks, at the driveway of the Seattle Tilth Association, a cooperative of community gardeners. The group has made the gardens on the grounds of the former Good Shepherd convent their showplace, and devoted as much effort to the stonework and demonstration compost system as they have to the plants themselves. Nearby, the huge brown brick mass of the former convent separates one neighborhood from another; streets come to halt in the approach to the grounds, and people in cars have to detour a good four or five blocks to get directly from one side to the other. The building has been occupied by various small businesses and community groups for many years, but it was only last week that the last sisters resident on the site announced that they would be leaving at the end of the year. Considering this, looking up at the moonlight fracturing on the aging glass of the second-story windows, I have the strong feeling that the middle ages have just now come to an end.

Seattle is studded with community gardens called P-patches, and this one is an almost idealized expression of what such plots can be. The rambling garden is bordered with odd junk metal sculptures, and the uneven path is paved with odd round stones, with little found objects, keys, beads, marbles, fragments of porcelain and ceramic, pressed into the mortar between them. They make me think of "Glueers," artist/mystics immortalized in James Blaylock's novel *The Paper Grail*. It's very quiet in the garden, but somewhere a sprinkler is hissing, and I can hear individual drops of water landing on broad leaves. Nodding banks of flowers surround me. Apples grow like gate handles on trees pruned to describe a fence. All the beetle houses, little piles of rocks, are empty now, as those sleek black limousines search the alleys of Bugtown, picking up vagrant wood lice and juvenile crickets and tearing their heads off.

The leaves and fronds and petals and pods nod lightly in the breath-like breeze, the full moon casting all in high gray relief. Somewhere in the gazebo to the north something shifts and coughs. In response, I walk to the old straight track through the park, thinking of how this place is closed from 10 pm to 6 am. Best to go quickly though and not draw official attention. Plus I'm hungry, and point of coming here was to find a place to eat this burger.

The old orchard that stood west of the convent has been thinned out, forming a wide lawn for Frisbee and volleyball. A paved basketball court is seldom empty in daylight hours. The road, which continues from Sunnyside avenue to the south, ends in a circle. The sodium lights along the bathroom doors are burned out or stolen, so the central grounds are very dark.

Making for the exit at the northwest end of the park, I see some lights down in the damp hollows beneath the trees near the chain-link fence. They look like candles, or possibly even torches. There are four of them, apparently arranged in a square. Between them is the gauzy suggestion of a tent shaped like a geodesic dome. Or perhaps it's a great woven silk fumulus, with something spider-like, or perhaps even more primitive like a horseshoe crab, gamboling about its base in the suggestion of light. Perhaps a flash of something white as on a wing-tip feather...fey and complicated and indistinct, I struggled to make it out, and craned my neck uncomfortably over my shoulder as I walked by. I'd forgotten all about the picnic tables now, and want nothing so much as to get back into the bluish-yellow glare of the streetlights at the edge of the park.

Then I'm into the scaly, serpentine embrace of the path out, studded with yet more weird and dissatisfied stonework, curving this way and that to keep demons out of the park. The path doubles back on itself twice, surrounded by exotic masonry, and seems quite literally to be built in the form of a snake. At the very end is a gray slab of a bench, looking out into the intersection of Meridian and 50th. I sat down there and ate my Dick's deluxe, and sucked up my chocolate shake. What had I seen back there in the darkness? The lights were like wards, the place in the center suggesting something out of faerie come into this incongruously pastoral place for the duration of the gravid moon overhead...this and other indulgent thoughts pattered through my brain, until I felt quite foolish. Until the girl in white came through the stone archway before me.

She had long, brownish-blond hair, and she was wearing heavy makeup . . . how else were lashes so kohl-dark, her lips so full and red? Around her

*When you've been multiply nominated for Hugos and dragged home a raft of FAAn awards, as Andy has, I rather wonder how much introduction you need from me. I can't actually recall what first brought Andy to my attention. It was some post of his on rec.arts.sf.fandom, I remember that, and I remember it was something that irked me, but the specifics are lost to fallible memory. I guess I irk easily — a great many people seem to first cross over my event horizon that way — and so the most striking thing to me about getting a better sense of Andy Hooper has been realizing what an uncommonly gentle guy he is. Maybe it's another sign of barricades, though I don't know if they're his or mine.*

## TO FREMONT BY MOONLIGHT by Andy Hooper

I leave Victor's apartment at about midnight, feeling slightly weird, expecting something I couldn't quite identify. He lives right on 45th street now, at the edge of the University district, a place with so much traffic and varied commerce that he says it puts him in mind of his years living in Manhattan. As I walk out of the alley behind his building, reggae music surges toward me from the ersatz Irish pub across the street, and the odor of fresh beer is almost enough to make me cross the road. But it's hard to do that just off the Interstate Five overpass, so I stay on my side of the street. I pass a bus stop and nod shortly at the two people sitting there; the Chinese man remains unmoving, while the blonde girl next to him seems slightly put out with me, her eyes brown and unnaturally huge.

It's slightly dangerous to walk the 45th street gauntlet, hungry as I am; there are plenty of temptations in my path. First is Pizza Eleni, a new delivery service with a neon sign so large it can probably be seen from orbit. As I passed, three guys sit inside looking glum, an older man, probably the cook and owner, and two younger drivers. The initial wave of popularity attendant on a new restaurant may have passed; I know I'm not buying this week. The three appear to have nothing to do. Not so next door at the tattoo parlor, where a long-haired guy stands rubbing the part of his arm just around his new illustration, and three girls cluster around him admiring his arm. A bored looking woman in latex gloves with a big fat stud through her lower lip tosses some blood-stained gauze into a trash can.



But the promise of Greek pizza does not slow me down, nor the Winchell's Donuts or the bagel place. I pass another pizza joint, this one proclaiming itself "The Home of the Monster." A bad fluorescent light buzzes above the front window, matched in tone by a squadron of large black flies pounding mindlessly at the glass. It's much more tempting to peek in the window of Petosa Accordions, a Seattle tradition since 1922. Steel fittings and mother of pearl buttons glitter in the neon light from the tanning salon next door. And beyond it the brand new Blues Barber Shop, where a golden Stratocaster, plugged into a Fender Champ amplifier, lies on the faux leopard couch in the front window. After that another tavern, blue letters glowing "East Street," people chattering, yellow beer in clear glasses. Games boop and beep. I pick up my pace, past the Q Lube. The big terra cotta pottery store. The closed mini-market. The Texaco station. Golden Oldies records. The huge transvestite in the blonde wig and the hideous green dress. Wait, that was later -- but no matter. Nothing slows me down until I reach my immediate goal, Dick's drive-in hamburgers.

Dick's is a throwback, in both menu and appearance. Big glass windows reveal a half-acre of chromed fixtures. A portrait of a huge Hereford dominates the back wall. Dick's offers hamburgers, shakes, fries, sodas and ice cream cones -- and that's all. Ketchup is extra. I've been imagining I could smell the hamburgers since the bottom of the hill, and now I'm glad I held out, even after I saw the heavy pie, served by the slice, spinning under the heat lamps at Pizza Eleni. That would have been fine, but this is finer. I order a deluxe burger and a chocolate shake, and the counter kid returns with my order in about twelve seconds.

The only drawback to Dick's is that there's no place to sit; most people just eat in their cars. I form a mental image of the nearest picnic tables and angle farther up the hill in that direction. I pass by a curious little shop, named "Open Books: A Poetry Emporium." Somehow the juxtaposition of the word poetry and emporium amuses me, and I imagine myself go-



man high on my Top Thousand list of folks to chat with socially on my own time. He was waiting for his wife to come fetch him. And I suspected he was about to trying to do that "leader" thing officers are trained to do. Bond with the troops.

As I fought with my gear, which was looking more and more like an OD Green octopus, he began to make small talk. Chummy stuff.

"Hey, Sergeant Green. I remember you said you've got some college behind you." He pointed at a sticker I had on the rear window of my car. "Is that the university you went to?"

I followed his finger with my eyes and saw he was pointing at the Miskatonic University Alumni sticker, a promotional item for an RPG, years ago. Unlike some of those gags, this one was well done. The graphic design looked much like any collegiate alumni sticker, there was even a Latin motto. If I remember it right, it translated to "From darkness, light". Nice frosting on the gag. But he was asking in all seriousness, the wide-eyed innocent.

Maybe I should have just told him it was a joke, and continued packing. But it had been a long weekend.

"Why, yes sir." I smiled and stopped loading. He tried to pronounce the name. I corrected him.

"I've never heard of the place."

"Oh, I can understand that, sir. It's a very small school."

"That's interesting. It's not local, is it?"

"No, Major. It's back East, the New England area."

"Ah. Good school?"

"I thought so."

He frowned slightly. "Maybe I have heard of it. It really seems like I should know the name. Is it known for any special area of study?"

In any military operation, there's a point that you cross, which commits you to the operation. Once past it, there is no going back. This was that point.

"Why yes, it is. Theology, actually."

The Major's eyes widened in surprise. He warmed perceptibly. We had a common bond.

"Why, Sergeant, I would have never suspected you would be interested in that kind of study."

"Well, it sort of called to me, sir. I sometimes feel I had no control over that choice."

"It can be a tough calling."

"Oh, yessir! All those late hours, researching in the library. A lot of night work. Sometimes, I studied so much that I dreamed about it. Vivid dreams. Nightmares sometimes."

"Yes, finals can be tough. And you never finished? Why not?"

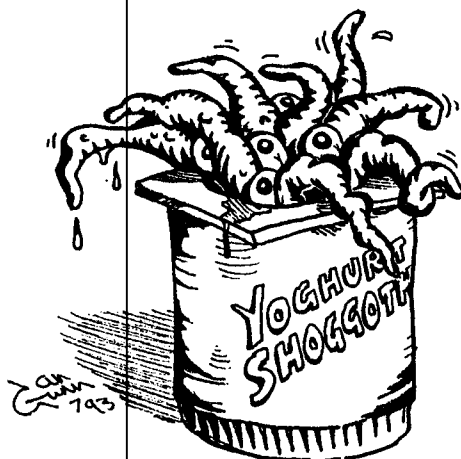
I prayed silently. *"Dear gods, whoever you are, please give me the strength in my hour of need. One smile and I lose it all."*

"The curriculum was driving me crazy sir."

He nodded sagely, understanding. A car pulled into the lot. The driver honked the horn and Major Thomas looked up. It was his wife, and he needed to go. He patted me on the shoulder and told me to get back to school. The Army needs soldiers like me with a lot of education. In a moment he was gone.

I watched them drive down the road and out of sight. Yes, the Army does need soldiers with an education.

03



but this one he hangs on to. He knows it was given to him by "Aunt Wilma," and one day, I'm sure, he will ask more about her.

And we will tell him Wilma's Koan.

From *The Marshall Independent*, Thursday, April 1, 1993:

**WILMA CLAUDIA ERWIN**

*Wilma Claudia Erwin, 50, of Rt. 3, Marshall, died at 3:10 p.m., Friday, March 26 at Carle Hospital in Urbana. Mrs. Erwin was born Sept. 3, 1942, in Paris, to William and LaDonna Griffith McConchie. She married Bruce Erwin, Sept. 15, 1962, in Blandford, Ind. He survives.*

*Also surviving are her mother of Marshall; two daughters, Dianna Hale and Denita Lankster, both of Paris; and two grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her father, an infant [son] and one grandson.*

*She was employed by the Secretary of State of Illinois, and was a 1960 graduate of Paris High School. She was a member of the State Line Christian Church and the Paris Eastern Star.*

*Funeral services were held March 31 at the Sutton and Son Funeral Home of Paris with Pastor Ansil Harpold officiating. Burial was in the Forsythe Cemetery north of Marshall.*



*Here's a switch. I met Ed Green in the flesh long before I ever saw him write. Probably the first thing I noticed about him is that, among all the self-appointed wits assaying humor from the peanut gallery at LASFS, Ed was one of the few who was actually reliably funny. When I first met him six years ago he was just launching himself into the arc of SMOFdom that would get him up to his bald spot in LASFS club and convention-running politics, but Ed's working on his second LASFS career. In the first he was a bright-eyed young neofan and apahack under the wing of the Moffats. Weird ol' World.*

## STICKER SHOCK by Ed Green

My uniform was covered with dust, grime and large white circles of dried sweat. It had been a long, hot, rotten weekend with the California National Guard at Fort Irwin. No one got hurt, and no major property damage occurred, but it was still an ugly drill. The tactical command post I was attached to never fell into a smooth work rhythm all weekend long. People yelled at each other, orders were misunderstood, plans were changed by people who shouldn't make changes. I saw at least one canteen flung in anger and there was always some troop getting chewed out by someone higher up the food chain. The technical military term for such an operation is "dicked up".

On top of all that, it was August. In the summer in the California desert, the only thing rarer than a cold can of Coke is

a patch of shade. Someone spilled my last Coke mid-afternoon on Saturday, and the diamond back rattlesnakes had staked out Yuccas that might have given us shade.

By the time it was over Sunday evening, all I wanted was to toss my 90 pounds of military gear in my trunk, drive home to a shower, and fall into bed.

I was struggling with my web gear (the tangle of nylon belts and harness we use to carry ammo, canteens, first aid kits and the rest), which was refusing to lie flat in the trunk, when I heard a someone hail me from behind.

Major Thomas is large and imposing. He's a civil engineer on the civilian side, and looks the part. He's also a Born Again Christian, and a righteous pain in my ass. I'd had to listen to him chew me out three times over the weekend. The first was deserved, but numbers two and three were just trickle-down effect, after he got chewed on by the battalion commander. Not a

Lin and I had flown along the edge of a storm front all the way from Atlanta to Indianapolis, and drove through rain going west to Terre Haute. By the time the procession was ready, the front had arrived and it was raining too hard to see more than a hundred yards.

The procession wound out of Sutton and Son for a half-mile or so, with a police car in the lead and another at the rear, and two more blocking intersections where we had to make turns. (Before her illness, Wilma had worked for the state of Illinois, and seemed to have a lot of friends on the Paris police force.)

Lin had at first expected Wilma would be buried in the cemetery at Paris, but the actual spot is in a little country cemetery a couple of miles from her home. (The site, incidentally, of a particularly rough practical joke my wife played on some kids one Halloween night many years back.) I found it a good place—a stand of hardwoods on a rise in the middle of the table-flat and tree-sparse Illinois farmland all around.

The rain eased a bit for the graveside service. The preacher spoke for another few minutes; at one point, I looked up at the drumming canopy of the mortuary tent, wondering if this couldn't have waited another half-hour. The preacher opined that this was Wilma's last "Gotcha!" in a lifelong line of practical jokes. For once, I liked his outlook better'n mine.

After the interment, the ladies of Wilma's church threw a supper for the family and others. That was a little outside my experience; the Alabama kamikazes I descend from tend to walk carefully around each other at funerals. Emotions run high at times like that and people are likely to take offense at any little thing. "...what he said at Cousin Raymond's funeral!" has been at the root of many a family feud.

I think I like the Illinois way better. Wilma had been respectfully laid to rest, the pain of the last three years was over. The pain of the coming days and nights could be put aside for a little while. There is a relief in simply getting something like this over and done with. And if Bruce and his daughters and his mother-in-law could smile and eat a bit, how could I not? Who could not congratulate Dianna and Shawn about Tony? (Yes, it's "Tony".)

Our traveling arrangements demanded we leave by

4:30—which we overstayed by twenty minutes or so. Through Terre Haute. Back to Indianapolis. A roaring ride in the aft cabin of an MD-88, tucked between the engines. It's hard to talk back there, but a good place to think.

It was good to go home.

It's four and almost-a-half years later now. I wished at the time that my sons had had more of a chance to get to know Wilma, to carry memories of her. All I can give them are words, spoken or written down, descriptions of a brave and enduring lady.

I wish I had better words.

What Wilma left behind herself was—a puzzle? An example, a parable, maybe a koan. Whatever I call it, it's something my younger son Colin will have occasion to turn over in his mind in years to come—and must work out on his own.

Colin has cystic fibrosis. For those of you who are unfamiliar with CF (O lucky men and women!) here's the short-short-short course: It's a genetic disorder that cripples the digestion and ruins the lungs. When it was first characterized in the 1940's, it killed its victims by age two. When Frank deFord wrote in 1980 about his daughter in *Alex: The Life of a Child*, CFers might live into their teens. The average age at death this year is a tad over thirty. There has been great progress and we are optimistic—with the sort of guarded but determined optimism that helps you go on from day to day to day.

However long a path Colin runs, it will be a hard one. Lin and I have seen CFers in their late teens or early twenties suddenly abandon their medicines and treatments, as if they found the effort and pain of continuing to live too much to bear. As if the possibilities left to them in life were not enough to overcome the burden of living day-to-day.

The lesson I take from the last year or so of Wilma's life is that the careful calculations of whether it is better to fight or peacefully lie down can be turned upside-down by a sentence—but the margin of days and breaths, once given away, can never be called back.

The end of Colin's bed—the little bed he's rapidly outgrowing—is crowded with stuffed animals. One has been there a long time. It is a print rabbit, a Beatrix Potter-style mama bunny—and a gift from Wilma, one of the last sewing projects she ever finished. Other stuffed animals come and go,

Lin and I found seats in the back of Delta's 9:34 flight to Indianapolis on the last day of March, rented a Camry at the airport, and drove over to Paris, Illinois, picking up Lin's mom on the way.

We had worried we'd get held up somewhere along this complicated path and be late for Wilma's services, but in fact we were nearly the first to arrive. It gave us a chance to view Wilma's body almost privately, and I think the aloneness helped Lin deal with the occasion a bit better.

The only other "viewing" I've had to deal with was my father's and I can't say it left me with any particular impression. I could never get past the familiar overall pattern of my father's face enough to tell you any details—the color of his eyes or whether his nose had that kink at the bridge that my brother's does. In death, all I can recall was that his chin seemed to be pushed uncomfortably far down on his chest and that the half-smile the mortician had arranged for him seemed—well, lifeless. So much of my father's smile, I realized after he was dead, was in his eyes.

It may be that Lin had as much trouble assessing Wilma's face as I had with Dad's, but to me she looked more like Wilma as I remember her from the night before Lin and I wed. Her color was ruddy again (if only by the grace of makeup), the pain-etched lines of the last three years had relaxed out, and the faint, wry smile looked in character for her.

I signed the visitors' book for us, but it was Lin who noted that the book was nearly full. The funeral director said the viewing the night before had been so crowded that people at the end of the line had given up and gone home, to come back Wednesday. Wilma—like my father—had more people concerned for her and involved in her life than I had ever dreamed.

After a few minutes, the rest of the family arrived—mother Ladonna, widower Bruce, daughters Denita and Dianna, their husbands. Dianna was getting around surprisingly well for a woman four days past a caesarian, but then I would imagine she has no small portion of her mother's grit in her character.

I think Bruce was glad—if bemused—to see us there. Lin asked him how he was doing; he started to say something along the lines of "Fine!", then stopped himself and whispered "Not so good." (I'd rather hear that answer than one full of bravado.) The immediate family occupied the front row of seats; I noticed that—from thirty-one years of

habit—Bruce had saved a seat by his own.

There was a service, conducted by an old preacher-friend of the family and of Wilma's; I won't go into it, save to say that it reminded me of why I don't care much for preaching in general or preaching at funerals in particular. The things this man found most admirable and deserving of praise about Claudia Wilma Erwin are not the things I appreciated most in her. Let's just put it down to a difference in perspective and let it go at that...

After the sermon, a line filed by the casket for one last look. Lin began to cry again as we came by; Dianna had laid a photo of the newborn Tony under Wilma's hand. It caught me in the chest; Lin had put a photo of Neil in my father's hand

From things the preacher had said, Wilma had known in her last hours that Dianna was also in a hospital, delivering her grandchild. I will never know if that was bitter or sweet to her.

"Come away," I said to Lin and we did.



your parent or your child with worries they can do nothing to help.)

We all turned in or departed around midnight, hugging all around as hard as circumstances seemed to permit. We had to rise around 6:00 and leave by 8:30 to make an 11:00 plane from Indianapolis. I had expected Ladonna to be up and bustling, and had hoped that Wilma would rise in time to say goodbye to us. But they were both still sleeping when we turned the rentacar south for I-70, and we hadn't the heart to wake them.

Funny, I guess I still expected to see Wilma one more time.

In late March, we got the news that Wilma was in a hospital in Champaign with a fungal infection in her lungs. It apparently lodged there after her chemotherapy weakened her immune system; her doctors fought it using antibiotics and oxygen, but with only limited success. She ran a constant fever, held down by a network of tubes under/ around her through which cooling water flowed. (It's a spin-off from the similar longjohns astronauts wear under their pressure suits.) If she could keep her temperature down on her own for a couple days straight, her doctors would let her go home.

Daughter Dianna's pregnancy continued on track, with a due date around April twelfth.

Lin phoned Champaign on one of the "good days" and chatted with Wilma about half an hour. She promised photos and video of our boys playing in the Great Georgia Blizzard. Wilma said Dianna was huge, and they did not expect her to hold on to the baby to term. She looked for an early advent.

I traced curves in my mind, kept my peace—and hoped.

The Friday following, Lin got a call from Ladonna. Wilma had died about 3:30 that afternoon, peacefully, with her husband Bruce and daughter Denita present.

And Dianna's baby had been delivered by c-section

about 8:00 that evening. At a doctor's visit, her blood pressure had been elevated; they were unable to get it down and concluded she was developing toxemia, as her sister Denita had done. The baby was not in distress—yet—but they decided to go ahead with a caesarian. Another factor was the baby's size—9 lb., 12 oz. Contrary to everyone's expectations (based on a fourth-month sonogram), it was a he: Logan Tony Erwin Hale. "Logan" is from a grandfather, the same man honored by our son Neil's middle name. "Erwin" is Dianna's maiden name.

Lin and I sat up quite a while Friday night. A later call from Ladonna let us know that the funeral would be on Wednesday. We decided to let Cristy—the boys' well-trusted and well-loved sitter—keep Neil and Colin while we took a one-day trip up for the funeral. Lin would have liked to take the boys—children at a funeral give a sense of family and continuity, she believes—but it would have been hard on them, and reduced our travelling flexibility, something we needed for an unplanned trip like this. I offered to stay while Lin went up herself, but she said she wanted me along.



Lin said that, after talking to her last week, she didn't really think Wilma would be going home, that she just sounded bad. That's not the impression I got at the time when she got off the phone and told me about the conversation, but I guess Lin didn't want to dwell on her impressions. It was nothing definite after all, and speaking something out loud seems to make it so much more real and undeniable.

It's not as if Wilma just missed seeing Tony; Dianna wouldn't have gotten out of the hospital for another three or four days after a c-section. But another week would have done it. Lin kept saying how unfair it all seemed. The word that came to my mind was "cruel".

It struck Lin that Tony's birthday will also forever be for Dianna the day her mother died. I understand connections like that; I can't see St. Patrick's day on my calendar without thinking of my father, dead three months after the birth of his first grandson. Whether they forever cause you pain, I expect, depends on how much "fairness" you expect from life. There are a lot of things in life I think are unfair—and life, so far, shows no sign of respecting my opinion worth a damn.

The news had come south to Georgia some three years before that Wilma had been diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. We worried, but we also hoped. A lot of people beat lymphatic cancers nowadays, between surgery and chemotherapy. So we "kept in touch", called, talked when we didn't miss connections because of the press of life. And we hoped, because—after all—a lot of people get over this.

But not Wilma. The chemotherapy didn't do as much as her doctors had hoped for, and it made her deathly ill, so she quit it—gave up, in effect. "It isn't worth it," she told Lin over the phone, "trying to live like this."

"Worth it," though, can change in the time it takes for a sentence to be spoken. A few months later Dianna, Wilma's older daughter, came up pregnant—finally.

It wasn't just that Wilma wanted to see a grandchild, or even that particular grandchild. Wilma's other daughter, Denita—who fixed and primed Lin's hair at her wedding—conceived twins about the time our Neil was coming along. But Denita is a small woman and carrying twins was more than she could handle; at eight months into the pregnancy, she went into toxemia and the twin boys had to be c-sectioned out. One brother died in a neo-nate intensive care unit, aged six weeks. Wilma brought him back in her arms from Indianapolis to Illinois to be buried. The living child they named Aaron.

Wilma wanted very, very badly to see another grandchild, maybe a granddaughter. As much or more, she wanted to be a help for her daughter if needed—and to hold her if things went very, very wrong.

Wilma was having a "good day" when we got to Ladonna's Friday afternoon. A "good day" means she was not in obvious pain, moved around pretty well, and felt like conversing. Saturday (when she got an infusion of platelets to fight the cancer) was not as good a day—her speech rambled and her breath was ragged. Moving was an obvious effort.

The lines in her face had deepened more than they should have, her hair had been reduced to a thin,

gray-streaked and close-fitting cap. Her eyes were squintier and the smile had grown very wry—but it was still Wilma.

Ladonna's house is like a lot in Illinois—designed to keep out winter at the edge of the Great Plains, with small windows and small rooms. We spent, I think, most of Friday and Saturday in Ladonna's kitchen, talking. Not about anything in particular, just talking. Colin and Neil and Aaron, singly or chasing one another, would come in every so often, stay awhile, then dash back out to the living room. Daughter Denita was there most of the time; Dianna—a McDonald's manager—was up at "Hamburger U". We didn't get to see her at all.

We stayed up late both nights we were there. I was tired, but neither Lin nor I wanted to quit while Wilma was willing to go on talking—and she (she said) slept little these nights. Nobody said but everyone knew that this would likely be our last chance to feel Wilma's presence. We stayed up so late Friday that it turned into Saturday, and Wilma's husband Bruce came in from work. After being unemployed for a year or better, he was back running numerical control mills and lathes at a local bearing manufacturer, on the second shift. They were any husband and wife, saying little of obvious consequence, and left together.

I got up later that night to get some water and—standing at the kitchen window—spied their footprints in the moonlight and blank snow, going from Ladonna's kitchen to their home. The smaller prints, Wilma's, had swung wide around the corner of the house, but fell back in with Bruce's larger, more direct track before reaching the line of bushes between Ladonna's house and their trailer.

Saturday, Ladonna cooked a turkey and all the family—including the absent Dianna's husband, Denita and her husband, Lin's sister Kathy and her new husband Terry—came together.

After dinner, Wilma tugged Lin aside for a short, private conversation. We had been expecting Wilma to hang on through another six weeks until the birth of Dianna's child fairly easily, but at the doctor's that day she had gotten the news ("There's good news, and bad news," she said, "and then there's news you just wish you hadn't heard.") that the pneumonia in one of her lungs is not pneumonia. So it's day to day. Bruce knows. Lin knows. Neither her mother nor her daughters know. (Lin wondered, later, aloud at that, but it seems clear to me: her husband has a right to know, and Lin she trusts. But you do not burden

*Ron Butler I first met in the pages of Myriad, and he was long a fixture there. He's on my list of unwitting mentors, because he's the devil himself to argue with if you don't have your facts razor-pleat straight and documented to the eye teeth. I once surprised him by remembering that he'd given up airplane modeling when he discovered that the color of the hinomarus on model Zeros was an issue that could get him agitated. I remembered because he tells the tales of his life so that I feel I've lived them, too. I wish to hell he and Lin and the boys weren't a continent away, but Ron has let me feel a lot closer than the actual mileage.*

## WILMA'S KOAN by Ron Butler

My wife Lin's family tree is—complicated. Lin's mom, Mary McCombs, married a Navy man named "Nault," and bore him two daughters—Lin and her crazy sister Sherry. They divorced when Lin was sixteen months old; Lin has no memory of him. He remarried twice, leaving behind a platoon of half-brothers and half-sisters for Lin.

Her mother also remarried—an old high school friend named Frank Griffith. Though Frank was supposedly unable to father children, Mary gave birth to another daughter—Lin's sister Kathy, a redhead with an Apache brave's nose, as bright and sweet-tempered as Sherry was not, and ten years Lin's junior. Then Frank broke his back on a construction site and later developed emphysema. As his health deteriorated, more and more of the responsibility of running the household shifted onto Lin's shoulders—and settled squarely there when he died. She had just turned eighteen.

That's the basic split you need to remember: McCombs vs. Griffiths.

The McCombs remind me of the old saying about the Roman Claudians: their tree bore only the sweetest apples—or the sourest. The last coupla generations, the sour apples have been outrunning the sweet hands down. The good folks—like Lin's mother and her sister, Aunt Olive—are fine people, but even they seem to have a morbid cast. Maybe it comes from having to deal with their own relatives. Warmth and family feeling don't figure much in Lin's memories of her mother's family.

The Griffiths were altogether kinder to Frank's children than their mother's relatives were—and drew no distinction toward the two sisters they had no blood in common with. Frank had a sister named Ladonna, who had a daughter, Wilma. I'd put Wilma's age at about ten years older than Lin. Maybe it was because she saw how Lin looked after Kathy. Or maybe it was because Wilma was herself adopted—and so, no "blood" relation to her own family. Whatever the reason, Wilma and Lin became closer

than is common with cousins, maybe even a bit like older and younger sisters. The bond stayed when Lin went off to college, then to Danville, and eventually to San Francisco.

When Lin finally married, Wilma threw herself (and her daughters, Dianna and Denita) into arrangements for the affair, and the reception afterwards, in the little Methodist church that sits directly across the Illinois state highway from the mobile home where she and her husband Bruce lived. (It's about a hundred feet from her mother Ladonna's kitchen door.) Lin and I could not have been married in such style as we were without Wilma's outpouring of time and effort—and of love, I guess I've hemmed-and-hawed enough around saying.

Lin talked a lot about her cousin, but I believe the night of our wedding rehearsal supper was the first time I met Wilma in person. I recall sitting in the bar of the Holiday Inn in Terre Haute—Lin and me, my father and his then-wife Barbara, Wilma and Bruce—drinking Long Island teas, hoping the rehearsal dinner would soak up the alcohol, staying up much too late and not really caring. We were all having far too good a time. I can still see Wilma: an apple-shaped woman with short dark hair, her chin resting in one hand and a cigarette dangling in the other. We drunkenly half-planned for Wilma and Bruce to visit us in Atlanta, riding south on Bruce's big damn Harley.

That never happened.

Six years went by. Lin and I went through a career change, a move, a house, a death, two births and one chronic illness. A significant portion of a life. At the end of the February before our sixth anniversary, Lin and I packed the boys on a Delta 737 for Indianapolis and then on to Terre Haute. It wasn't the best of weather—a storm had dumped upwards of seven inches of snow across the middle of the continent the night before—but we really couldn't wait for spring. We were going North for—to be cold about it—last visits and viewings. Of our sons by certain of their relatives, of the relatives by Neil and Colin.

## TAFF Stuff (continued)

Anderson and Sue Mason and Michael Abbott and all the other people who are now feeling miffed because I didn't mention them by name. Hell, yes, I'd like to go.

And just in case Hell freezes over, I have a few thoughts on how I would administer the fund. I can't imagine going it alone. Just putting together a candidacy has been an education in the history and business of TAFF, made possible by the aid and advice of a bunch of good people, including Dave Langford, Gary Farber, Pam Wells, Andy Hooper, my other wonderful if deluded nominators, and a cast of thousands. If selected, I fully expect to be running to all of them for advice, suggestions, personal experience, and moral support. Moreover, I am rotten with accounts. I've gone literally years without balancing my checkbook. (Might as well tell you now, just in case you were thinking of ticking my checkbox on the TAFF ballot.) So I've asked my dear long-suffering Hal to (who is alarmingly good with accounts) to handle the treasury of the Fund for me, should it come to that pass.

I think I can probably handle writing a trip report by myself, but I really do like this cooperative aspect of fandom (less charitably called letting other folks do your work for you), and the idea of pulling in people who have been peripheral, as well as the ideal of showcasing other people's talents, which started me down this fan pubbing path in the first place. To that end, I think I would also borrow a page from Greg Pickersgill, and incorporate written reports of my trip from other people (if I can find anyone who really wants to whitewash that particular fence) into the trip report I write.

But all of this is blue sky stuff until we see how the dice fall in December. I'm enclosing a TAFF ballot with the zine. Please consider voting for someone, and supporting the fund. If TAFF is something new or only vaguely familiar to you, you'll find some basic background information on the ballot. If you're curious to find out more, you can point your web browser to The UK Science Fiction Fandom Archive site at <http://www.dcs.gla.ac.uk/SF-Archives/Taff/>.

The site has all sorts of stuff on TAFF, including current TAFF bulletins, some sample past ballots, a history of TAFF races and their winners, a sampler of extracts from unpublished past trip reports, and the text of sev-

eral published past reports, some complete and some partial.

If you like what you see and would like to contribute, Dave Langford is organizing the typing of electronic versions of other published and unpublished trip reports to add to the page, and also to get some of the unpublished reports published at last. Dave is perennially looking for volunteer typists to speed things along, and you can contact him at [ansible@cix.co.uk](mailto:ansible@cix.co.uk). Getting unpublished reports published is particularly important because the Southern California Institute for Fan Interests (SCIFI) has a standing pledge to donate \$500 to the fund for every published report. So helping to get those reports finished and pubbed can be an easy way to really help out the financial health of the fund.

If you'd like to find out more about the other candidates, all of them are cool and talented people and do publish fanzines, available for the usual. Write to them and check out their work:

Victor Gonzalez, *Squib*  
905 NE 45th #106  
Seattle, WA 98105

Vicki Rosenzweig, *Quipu*  
33 Indian Road, 6-R  
New York, NY 10034

Tom Sadler, *The Reluctant Famulus*  
422 W. Maple Avenue  
Adrian, MI 49221-1627

The TAFF voting deadline is December 13, 1997. If I'm very ambitious I'll have the next issue of Gyre out around then but no fear, this will be the last you'll hear of me nattering on about it. We now return you to our regularly scheduled genzine.





# WELCOME TO THE 1998 TAFF RACE!

**What is TAFF?** The Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund was created in 1953 for the purpose of providing funds to bring well-known and popular fans familiar to those on both sides of the ocean across the Atlantic. Since that time TAFF has regularly brought North American fans to European conventions and European fans to North American conventions. TAFF exists solely through the support of fandom. The candidates are voted on by interested fans all over the world, and each vote is accompanied by a donation of not less than \$2 or £1. These votes, and the continued generosity of fandom, are what make TAFF possible.

**Who may vote?** Voting in the 1998 race is open to anyone who was active in fandom prior to September 1996, and who contributes at least \$2 or £1 to the Fund. Larger contributions will be gratefully accepted. Voting is by secret ballot: only one vote per person, and you must sign your ballot. You may change your vote any time prior to the deadline.

**THE DEADLINE:** Votes in this race must reach the administrators by Midnight *December 13th, 1997*.

**Voting details:** TAFF uses a preferential ballot system which guarantees automatic runoffs until a majority is obtained. You rank the candidates in the exact order of your preference for them. If the leading first-place candidate does not get a majority, the first-place votes for the lowest-ranking candidate are dropped, and the second-place votes on those ballots are counted as first-place votes. This process repeats itself until one candidate has a majority. Your votes for second and third place are important, but you may give your candidate only one ranking on your ballot. In order to win, a candidate must receive at least 20% of the first-place votes on both sides of the Atlantic, separately. Any candidate failing to receive this minimum percentage on either side will be dropped, and the second-place votes on their ballots counted as first-place votes in the next ballot count. Thus candidates and their supporters will need to canvas fans on both sides of the pond. You may send your ballot to either administrator, but it will be tabulated with the other votes from the side of the Atlantic on which you reside. Votes from fans not resident in *either* Europe or North American will not count towards either 20% minimum, but are important to the outcome of the race.

**Hold Over Funds:** This choice, like 'No Award' in Hugo balloting, gives you the chance to vote for no TAFF trip this year, if the candidates do not appeal. Hold Over Funds may be voted for in any position, and is exempt from the 20% requirement; thus, if it receives a majority of the votes on the final ballot, no TAFF trip will be held this year regardless of how many votes Hold Over Funds received on the first ballot.

**No Preference:** For voters who prefer not to choose between candidates, but don't want the trip held over.

**Donations:** TAFF gratefully accepts your freely-given money and material for auction; such generosity has sustained the Fund for over 40 years. TAFF is fandom's oldest travel fund, and one of its worthiest causes -- give early and often! Please contact your nearest administrator for details.

**Candidates:** Each candidate has posted a bond, promising -- barring Acts of God -- to travel to *Intuition*, a British convention to be held in Manchester, England on April 10 thru 13, 1998, if elected; and has provided signed nominations and a platform (overleaf).

*Please read both sides of this ballot before voting. Send entire sheet as your vote.*

**NAME &  
ADDRESS:**

**PHONE:**

**Signature & Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is \_\_\_\_\_ as a contribution to TAFF. Please make all checks payable to Martin Tudor (UK) or Dan Steffan (US), *not* to TAFF, and in the currency of the administrator's country.

If you think your name may not be known to the administrators, then in order to qualify your vote please give, in the space below, the name and address of an active fan (not a fan group, a candidate or their nominator) to whom you are known:

# 1998 TRANS-ATLANTIC FAN FUND BALLOT

## The Candidates:

### VICTOR GONZALEZ

Highly placed secret masters declined to confirm that, if elected, first-time pond-hopper Victor Gonzalez would soak in the cold bathrooms, greasy curries and dangerous old women of the United Kingdom, bask in the deliciously Seattle-like weather, and grovel at the feet of D. West. After 44 issues of *Apparatchik* and hundreds of newspaper stories about chipper/shredder mishaps, Victor longs to see the land of Peter Sutcliffe, Stuart Sutcliffe and Greg Pickersgill, and promises to write a trip report in the form of a muck-raking investigative story.

(Nominators: Arnie Katz, Steve Green, Ted White, Christina Lake, Robert Lichtman.)

### ULRIKA O'BRIEN

Everywhere I've gone in fandom, people drew me there. Each time, I relearnt that when print friends meet, friendship deepens and we give each other better charity of understanding when we meet again in print. In my oddball walkabout of print and online fandom I've met a host of folks, challenging and intriguing, hailing from the UK and Europe. I'd like to meet them, the better to be friends. I'd like to swap scurrilous yarns over a pint, find out about this "real ale" business, prove I don't bite, test my invulnerability to the opacity of British dialects. Oh, and write a scandalous trip report.

(Nominators: Patrick & Teresa Nielsen Hayden, Dave Langford, Geri Sullivan, Avedon Carol & Rob Hansen, Andy Hooper.)

### VICKI ROSENZWEIG

Tea, cider, and lots of good conversation. What's the catch? Right -- well, I think I'd be a good TAFF administrator. I've been OE of A Women's APA for several years, and when I took my dream vacation to Hong Kong, I published a trip report within three months. I've been sending my zine, *Quipu*, all over the world, and British fans have sent me lots of great letters and zines in return. Now it's time to visit, attend a British convention (Intersection doesn't quite count), and have the sort of conversation that only happens at two in the morning.

(Nominators: Lucy Huntzinger, John Dallman, Luke McGuff, Alison Scott, Vijay Bowen.)

### TOM SADLER

Most people wouldn't suspect it to look at me, but I am a devout fanzine fan who believes fanzines are the true core of Fandom. I even publish my own fanzine, *The Reluctant Famulus*, which some people seem to like. I have never been outside the United States before (Unless a brief trip into Canada counts.), so I figure it's time I broadened my horizons. Additionally, I have made the acquaintance of several British fen who I'd really like to meet in person. If I win the TAFF voting, I promise I won't embarrass either country too much.

(Nominators: Buck Coulson, Terry Jeeves, George Laskowski, Derek Pickles, Mike Glicksohn.)

PLEASE READ AND FILL OUT BOTH SIDES OF THIS SHEET! Send in the entire sheet as your vote. Do not detach this portion of the ballot.

I vote for: (rank 1, 2, 3, etc.):

_____ VICTOR GONZALEZ	_____ ULRIKA O'BRIEN	_____ VICKI ROSENZWEIG
_____ TOM SADLER	_____ HOLD OVER FUNDS	_____ NO PREFERENCE

Send ballot & donation to:

Dan Steffan  
3804 South 9th Street  
Arlington, Virginia 22204  
U.S.A.

Martin Tudor  
24 Ravensbourne Grove (off Charles Lane)  
Willenhall WV13 1HX  
England

Reproduction of this form is encouraged. It is the official voting vehicle and must be reproduced verbatim. Anyone doing so should substitute their name here:

~~DAN STEFFAN, TAFFboy~~  
Ulrika O'Brien