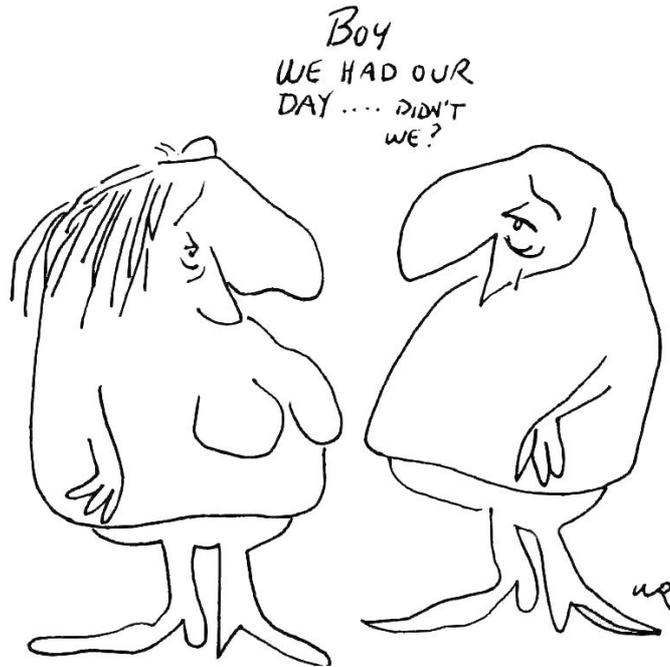


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E-mail address: catchpenny@mw.net

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Artwork

Cover: William Rotsler

Kyle Hinton: 2, 7, 13

William Rotsler: 4, 12, 16, 30

David Burton: 27

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ROCKET SURGERY

COLUMN BY DAVID BURTON

Rumspringa in LA

My “guilty pleasure” this summer was watching *AMISH IN THE CITY* on television. Normally you couldn't get me to watch any of the multitude of reality shows if you waved a signed blank check in my face, but since I have Amish in my genealogical woodpile and I've been interested in them for years anyway, I thought it would be interesting to check this nine week series out.

For those who didn't see it, the show paired a group of Amish kids (late teens-early 20s) with a group of kids from Los Angeles, all living in one

large house. The Amish are Anabaptist Christians, which means they believe in adult baptism and church membership. They have a tradition called *rumspringa* (which translates loosely as “running around”) for kids in their late teens. Before they're baptized and become members of the church, these kids have a year or so where they're freed from the strictures of the Amish life. They're allowed (if not completely encouraged) to experience life in “the world” as fully as they want; at the end of their *rumspringa* they decide whether or not they want to remain Amish.

It was interesting to watch the interaction between the Amish and the Los Angelenos. The Amish kids definitely came across as more grounded, moral, and having more plain common-sense. My favorite characters to “hate” on the show were two of the kids from LA. Reese, a “club promoter,” said in his initial interview that he didn't understand why people couldn't get along and that he “gave everyone a



chance” and turned out to be the most bigoted, back-stabbing person in the cast. Ariel, a young woman tailor-made for every piece of New Age clap-trap that comes down the pike, was a strident (and abrasive) Vegan. Which works out well since she seems to have the intelligence of your average turnip. She also believes cows come from space... One of the quips I read about the show was that they must have interviewed all the Amish girls in bikinis, since they tend to wear relatively little else on the show..

The Amish kids experienced a lot of things that they never thought they would (most kids on *rum-springa* don't venture far from their home communities), and were much more adventuresome than their city counterparts. It was particularly amusing to see the city kids when the whole cast went to “Amish country” in Ohio for a couple of days. None of them were much into hard work, and the “smells” in particular seemed to give them a lot of problems. They were, however, impressed by the peace and quiet and the slower pace of life.

At the end, of course, all the past disagreements and bad blood were forgiven and forgotten and ev-

eryone kissed and made up. It was surprising to me that none of the Amish kids decided that they would definitely go back to the Amish immediately. Surprising because the Amish have one of the highest “retention rates” of any Christian denomination – somewhere between 90-95% of Amish kids remain Amish. Probably the unusual lure of a really big city had something to do with it.

On The Road Again

Finally, after a little over three years, I'm once again employed full-time.

For most of that time I've been working part-time (40 hours every other week) as a delivery driver for a large dental lab. It certainly isn't rocket science or brain surgery (or even rocket surgery!) but I enjoy it. I'm not tied down to a desk, it's relatively hassle free, and I'm more or less my own boss once I leave the lab in the morning. I'm just enough of a gear-head to enjoy driving 1000+ miles a week, especially when I'm getting paid to do it. Plus it gave me time to do some freelance tech writing, although I've done none in 2004, and at

this point don't plan on doing any more in the foreseeable future.

I've been looking for full-time work for some time; sending out resumes, going on interviews when I was lucky enough to snag one, and overall bidding my time. I'd had two interviews with another dental lab doing the same thing (an out of town outfit that was coming into the Indianapolis market), and was

pretty confident about getting the job. The same week I was expecting to be offered the new job, my current employer asked if I wanted to take over my current route full-time, as my counterpart had unexpectedly quit. Which was extremely fortunate since the other company *didn't* end

up hiring me.

Of course, driving so much I get the “pleasure” of observing some really horrendous driving by an assortment of people, many who seem to think they're playing some sort of video game rather than



rocketing down the road at 80 mph in a 4,000 pound lethal weapon.

I don't necessarily hold myself up as a paragon of safe driving, although given some of the knuckle-headed things I see on a daily basis, maybe I should. At least I *know* when I've done something wrong. In 35 years I've been involved in *one* accident, when an unlicensed, uninsured kid ignored a stop sign and T-boned my car. I had my share of moving violations when I was younger, but have a spotless record for the last 16 years.

Given the amount of time I spend on the road, I've had plenty of time to compile a list of driver-types that seem to make the most egregious errors and put the rest of us at risk.

1. Women driving an SUV and talking on a cell phone. (*Sorry, ladies, but you win top spot. Apparently driving an SUV imparts some sense of invincibility, and yakking on a cell phone only exacerbates the problem.*)
2. Anyone talking on a cell phone. (*Even if you're using a "hands free" setup, your concentration is on the call, not your driving.*)
3. Women driving an SUV. (*See #1.*)

4. Anyone driving an SUV. (*See #1.*)
5. Anyone over 70, particularly female victims of osteoporosis who need to sit on two or more phone books just to see over the steering wheel. (*I wish I had a dollar for every car I was behind and thought was a runaway because there didn't seem to be a driver...*)
6. People driving too slow. (*You cause the people trying to get around you to have accidents.*)
7. People driving too fast. (*You cause the people you're trying to get around to have accidents.*)
8. Teenage drivers with more than two passengers. (*If you want to get out of your teenage years, quit acting like a car is a mobile party.*)
9. Anyone who thinks backing up on an Interstate after missing an exit is a Good Idea. (*Self-explanatory. Go to the next exit and turn around, chucklehead.*)
10. School Bus drivers. (*Apparently, driving a big yellow Blue Bird makes you immune to any sort of traffic citation – when's the last time you saw a school bus pulled over for a violation? They drive too fast, particularly in school zones.*)

One of the other things that I notice as I'm driving along is that kids just don't seem to walk to school anymore, at least not in Indianapolis. And it seems that school buses stop *every other block* to pick up or drop off kids – God forbid they should actually have to walk a little ways. A number of times I've also seen a bus pick up a student from their home *literally* across the street from the school. And everyone's amazed that our youngsters are obese! Let 'em walk a little. With the exception of one brief stint for about 3 months, I walked to school right through my senior year in high school. Three miles, morning and afternoon, rain, shine or snow. And uphill both ways, of course. ☒



From the **All the Airtime I Can Get** Dept.
Heard on an NPR weather report during hurricane Ivan:
“It's a big storm for its size.”

CHEESE SANDWICH

By

CALVIN DENNISON

ABSURDITY (Part 1)

This morning I was lecturing my freshman English class about the Absurd Novel. The Absurd Novel, I explained, is not necessarily a statement about Bad or Good. *Catch-22* is just Absurd. Wars are Absurd. School is, genuinely, Absurd. We keep thinking that Absurdity is something to be avoided, but it is inevitable.

I had to dismiss the class. Out in the hall, marching up and down, were a couple of hundred students, shouting "Strike Now! Shut it Down! Strike Now! Shut it Down!" in absurd protest to the absurd war in Vietnam (and Cambodia) and the absurd deaths of four students at Kent State in Ohio. In *Ohio*. What could be more absurd?

MORE TERMINAL ANNEX

STORIES (returning by request)

The Terminal Annex Post Office in

Los Angeles is old – kitty corner from Olvera just a little bit down from Felipe's Famous French Dip Sandwiches. It is old, and it is big, with high ceilings and WPA murals, and you can mail a letter there anytime during the day or night to get the postmark you need. In the daytime, there is a cigar stand inside the post office, run by a blind man who knows the location of everything he sells without looking. He *can't* look. At night, the Terminal Annex Post Office is a warm place to go if you are old and you haven't got any other place to go. If you haven't any food, and you can't get fifty cents from somebody for a room, or 75¢ for the all-night movies, then you can hang around the Terminal Annex for a while, anyway, addressing letters that you cannot afford to send, inspecting the stamp machines, trying

to find somebody who will give you fifty or seventy-five cents without screaming, if you bring the subject up right.

I had to go to the Terminal Annex Post Office in the night a few weeks ago for some reason I cannot remember. Something needed a postmark, right then, before midnight. Inside, a man who needed a shave and had some teeth missing and had his cuffs rolled up was sitting under one of the tables that you use for addressing letters. He spotted me, and I spotted him. I didn't have any money on me, and I felt a little guilty about that, but I didn't look away. I walked past him to the mail slot, then turned and came back towards him, towards the door. We were still looking at each other. I'm a soft touch. He was going to ask me for fifty cents, and he wasn't going to believe that I didn't have it. I did not look away. I was next to him, on my way to the door, and I said "Hi," and he spoke.

"Boy," he said, "I wish I had your energy."

FRONTIER MOUSE

Over at the Longhorn Cafe the mice were stirring things up. There was always that kind of trouble on

payday. Paula had her hands full, and Fred knew that there'd be hell to pay that night. The last time the mice got paid, about two or three weeks ago, they broke the mirror behind the bar and pulled down the chandelier that Fred had shipped in on a stage from Kansas City. But the mice were good customers and Fred didn't mind. And Paula really loved the mice and was glad to see them have a good time. By eleven o'clock the place was really jumping. You could hear the nickelodeon playing clear down by



the church, and you could hear the mice singing and shouting and occasionally firing off a round or two into the ceiling, although Fred tried to make sure that everybody checked their guns at the door. But the mice were irrepressible. The Sheriff stayed in town just in case there was any trouble, and he was sitting down the street in his office playing solitaire and drinking whiskey from a bottle. There wasn't anybody in jail yet but he thought the place would probably be full up come morning. At the hotel the guests had boarded the place up tight in case things got rough. All the lights and the noise coming from the Longhorn Cafe kept people awake, though, and the mice had left their horses tied up out in front and the horses were nervous too, stamping and blowing. It had just started to look like everything was going to go along without any incidents when Frontier Mouse rode up. He had been gone for a long time, under mysterious circumstances, and Paula really missed him. But Paula wasn't expecting him, and she was dancing with another mouse. Frontier Mouse saw all of this from the outside. He drew his guns. He kicked his way in through the swinging doors, guns blazing. Many mice fell,

wounded, none seriously. Everybody else ducked behind the bar and under tables. Nobody was left standing but Frontier Mouse and Paula and the mouse she was dancing with. Even though the music stopped he was still dancing. Paula was trying to warn him, but he paid her no attention. Frontier Mouse motioned Paula out of the way. She broke out of the mouse's embrace and backed away. That fool mouse was still dancing away. Frontier Mouse shot him at close range for fooling around with his girl. Somebody called Doc, but when Doc got there it was too late. There wasn't much else that happened that night. Frontier Mouse said he was glad to be back, and ordered drinks all around. Fred was glad nobody had shot up his mirror. The Sheriff heard some mice pounding on his door, saying that Frontier Mouse had killed a mouse down at the Longhorn Cafe, but the Sheriff pretended he didn't hear. Frontier Mouse had quite a reputation, and he didn't come to town very often. The Sheriff decided Frontier Mouse could take care of himself. Besides, everybody knew that Paula was his girl. The next day there was quite an uproar about the incident, but by that time Frontier Mouse had rode off again,

on another mission. As the sun rose, Paula missed him.

You live with euphemisms long enough. you get used to them. sweetie.

WARREN BRICK told me a strange story the other day. He had to go to San Francisco to make some arrangements about a job – he and Emily were planning to move north next year. At the last moment, though Warren's 1957 Buick gave up the ghost, and, after fussing around with garages and mechanics, Warren was forced to grab a taxi and head for the Airport. He bought a ticket and called Emily to tell her of his change in plans.

She gasped. “Oh, Warren,” she sobbed. “I didn't tell you, but I dreamed last night that you took a plane to San Francisco and it crashed and you got **killed**. Please don't fly!”

Warren argued, but he was tired anyway, so he yielded. He would return home and wait for the car to be repaired. He called his contact in San Francisco and made arrangements for a later meeting, then he sold his ticket back to the airline, making an elderly gentleman waiting on “stand-by” very happy. And he returned home safely.

The next day on the front page of the L.A. *Times* he saw a terrifying photo story. The plane he had decided not to take, because of Emily's “silly” dream, was Western Airlines millionth flight to San Francisco, everybody on the plane had his money refunded, and an old man, whose picture Warren of course recognized, had the lucky ticket number and won a free trip to Europe and Asia, two cars and a movie contract.

Do I annoy you with my posturings and intonations? Be thankful I don't kill you.

FROM A LETTER TO ALLAN POGRUND:

A small side trip about our TV. It melted one night when we were watching it in bed and pulled the covers up around our necks and accidentally covered up the vents in the back of our TV. A puddle of melted wax under the TV, and Broderick Crawford dwindling to a dot and vanishing just as he was about to make his last stand against the cops up in the hills. So a couple of weeks ago I took it to a TV repair shop for an estimate, anticipating my paycheck. Call back in two days, they said; I called back and they were *very apologetic*. “We

were robbed last night. I'm sorry, but your TV was *stolen*. They even took the 25¢ items. We were insured, and we'll get you a *brand new* TV." So Wilma and I believe in God and go to Vespers every week, even though we often fall asleep and fall off the pews and that's very hard on Wilma because she's pregnant, you know.

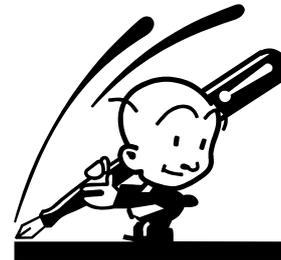
About 50% of our mail says, "I could write like you only better if I had the time." The other 50% never gets here.

ABSURDITY (Part 2)

Wilma and Peter and I were driving home from my mother's house in Inglewood last Sunday morning, at a little bit past midnight, in the black 1964 Morgan Coupe that I have had for nearly 5 years. We stopped at a red light, and Peter dropped his bottle on the floor. Wilma reached down to pick it up, adjusting Peter in her lap. A white 1969 Thunderbird rammed into the back of the Morgan, went up and over, ripping the convertible top off, pushing the topbars down, tearing the windshield off, crashing down on the hood in front, and stopped about a

hundred feet ahead. We were drenched with gasoline. I got out, pulled the top off of Wilma's head, and helped her out with Peter. We are alive. The car was destroyed. Had Peter not dropped his bottle, he and Wilma might be dead. ☒

CHEESE SANDWICH originally appeared in MICROCOSM #14 in September 1970.



From the **Signs At The Side Of The Road** Dept.

"Church Bizarre This Saturday"

analemma

It was long ago, back in April of 1961 before dirt was invented, that I decided to be a fan. I'd already been around fans and fanzines for a few years, though early-on there was no personal contact because I lived in Indian Lake, New York which might not have been discovered at the time. But we had a post office, and that was good enough. So, after four or five years of correspondence and getting some zines, I decided that was sufficient courtship and I should Get Involved. The main lure was to publish fanzines, which I immediately started doing.

Forty-three years later, in April of 2004, I was still at it when I published the first issue of *Archaism*. Actually, I've almost always been publishing a fanzine, but this time the lure was back. I'd lost much of it along the hard trail, but there was still

list and publishing and mailing, then it was publishing and mailing which fell to the wayside first. It was my least favorite part of the process. That was easy to get around. Coediting fanzines did it, with fans such as David Hulan and Ed Cagle and Joni Stopa.

It also helped with the cost, but that wasn't a big factor back then. It had become one by 1986, which was the year I folded my genzine *Time and Again*. I'd trimmed the factor of cost by using midnight requisition to xerox the final issue, which meant I was back to the publishing and mailing

enough to keep me rolling in some apas.

If a zine can be structurally divided into the writing, and the design, and the mechanics of maintaining a mailing

BY
DAVE
LOCKE

again, but postage was still a bear. Some days you get the bear.

Now it's a different ballgame in a lot of different areas. On one of the positive sides most of my old fan friends are into the apas and so that's where I am, too, and the fanzine and membership costs are relatively small and there's minimal publishing. But most of my old friends, aside from those in apas, are long out of the genzine and perszine stage where the cost in time and money still reside.

Now there's no need to use paper, of course, which theoretically could make a general circulation fanzine primarily a matter of time and distribution. We can consider that most of the costs of being online were to be online, and therefore a digital fanzine can ride along at no cost. Even putting a price on web storage space is likely unnecessary, because without the great service of Bill Burns and eFanzines as a distribution point many of us have webspace with our ISP membership or can obtain free webspace via the Web. And no offline production issues are involved.

The problematic factors are now different. We're at an inbetween time in our ability to use the

Net effectively. There are too many fans clinging to the old model that a zine isn't a zine unless it's on paper, and far too many fans with the dunderheaded idea that if a zine is free they shouldn't have to come up with *The Usual* in order to read it. So if a general distribution fanzine is on paper, it will get some feedback, but if it's not it will get none or little.

While it's always been true that many fanzines have been done for the satisfaction of the creator, it's equally true that feedback is a factor. If the feedback isn't there for a digital fanzine, the experience of keeping it going is handicapped.

And then along came e-APA, the all digital apa. The lure was strong for me, but it has a small base of interest and a resultantly small cast of characters.

I know the paper apas are fading, but it's all old technology, and a given group of the old fans like the old technology. I think



THE RETORT

the problem with a digital apa, for some, is that like a general distribution fanzine it doesn't have the instant gratification of newsgroups and mailing lists. It's kind of inbetween what was and what's possible. Although I like it, I think the concept of an apa isn't something most fans hold dear anymore.

I'm hoping more fans will take an interest in e-APA. Maybe, with marketing to make them think more about the concept, they will. As Dave noted when I was discussing this with him: "... you're spot on with the "inbetween" description. I know that what I was aiming for was something more immediate than the trad quarterly apa (the main reason I thought monthly distributions would be good) and the newsgroups/lists/etc. I do think there's something to be said for a more formal format than the lists provide -- more time to consider your comments, particularly".

I'm also hoping a model for a digital general distribution fanzine will come along which gets around the circulation and feedback problems. Several models have been tried, and several are still out there being tried, but we haven't had the right chemistry happen yet.

But, at the moment, more of the lure is back for producing a fanzine. The cost is gone, the meat-space mechanics are gone, and I get to work with more creativity than fan paper publishing normally allows. That's appealing, and this being an apa gets around the feedback problems that online zines have been struggling with. Of course, who knows what tomorrow will bring... ☒

This article first appeared in Dave's e-APA zine, ARCHAISM. There are currently memberships open in e-APA. If you're interested in joining, you can download the 6th distribution at efanzines.com.



NEW ZINES FOR OLD

a letterhack's perspective

by
rich brown

Hardly anyone engages in fourth dimensional mental crifanac these days – perhaps because no fannish lexicon I'm aware of lists the phrase and most fans have forgotten what it means, if they ever knew. Coined by Terry Carr, I think, I instantly knew what it meant the first time I saw it in print: Fourth dimensional mental crifanac is where we, with our encyclopedic knowledge of fandom's past, observe and take into consideration every conceivable aspect of fandom's present to use our fine, high-type minds to extrapolate the course of fandom's future. Both Arnie Katz and I, albeit not recently, have dubbed it The Sport of BNFs. And when two or more fen engage in the sport simultaneously, whether or not in actual competition, it becomes fourth dimensional verbal crifanac – that goes without saying (although I've just gone and said it anyway, haven't I?).

At any rate, I feel like a game. But before I get started, as a kind of "warm up" exercise, I want to dispense with the obvious about the past and the present so that we – like good little science fiction fans – can move on to the future.

The past: General fanzine fandom has undergone tremendous changes over the past 35+ years. These major differences are less about internal and/or organic growth (as they were in the 35+ years before that) and more about adapting to shifting external circumstances. Most of you already know what's happened and pretty much why, and that the major factors involved have been massive increases in postage costs, the resulting move to (and increase in the number of) apas and the advent of the Internet. I daresay most of you've already engaged in your own games of fourth dimensional mental and/or verbal crifanac about this, in one venue or another, so detailing the whys and wherefores here would add nothing to your understanding and only increase your boredom. So let's not.

The present: General circulation snail-mailed fanzines continue to shrink in number, size and frequency. Not that they don't exist, but this is no longer a hobby that a high school kid with a paper route or part-time job at MacDonald's can afford. Apas continue for those who still enjoy the craft, taking advantage of postal economies of scale. An increasing number of paper fanzines combine a small postal circulation with an Internet presence. There are also quite a few fanzines available exclusively on the Internet, some in down-

loadable formats that can be printed. And quite possibly because downloading these fanzines is an expense now borne by the readers, the response those fanzines receive is considerably less than the fan editors who publish paper fanzines are used to receiving. (Bet most of you knew this already, too.)

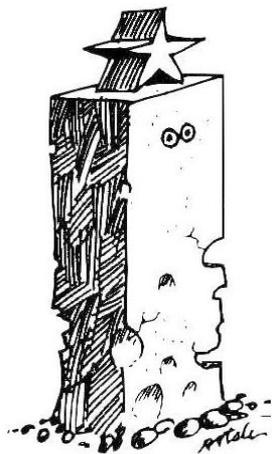
Are we ready for the future now? Well, there's one thing about it that's as obvious as any of the above: Fanzines are going to go through even more changes. But we can expand on that.

Dave Burton has suggested that, sooner or later, fans being the creative and inventive creatures they are, on-line fanzines are going to start taking advantage of more of the whistles and bells made available by the medium. Videos. Music. Sound effects. Photos. Links. Stuff like that. There are both positive and negative things to be said about these things, individually and/or collectively, but as fascinating as such a discussion might be, I'm going to leave it to someone else to do so and instead focus on another seemingly relatively minor suggestion I've seen in various places. And that's one which would let the readers post their letters of comment directly to the zine, without editorial intervention, and perhaps even allow others to post comments to those comments.

I'm against it. I could put my opinion forward as a fan editor who's enjoyed editing the letter columns in my own fanzines. I could also point out that there are other venues – on-line discussion groups and apas, e.g. – where every single word written by those who elect to contribute will appear totally unedited by outside sources.

But I'd prefer to come at it from the vantage point of a letterhack. I'm not going to totally ignore my experience as a fan editor, just saying that's not where my objection is coming from. I've published fanzines I'm

inordinately proud of and – being an admitted egoist – likewise have written articles and columns over which I could easily pat myself on the back in celebration of their excellence. However, if I'm known for anything at all in fandom, it's as a letterhack. Although I can no longer recall just which egoboo poll it was (which means, I guess, I really don't pay much attention to them), I had the distinction of once tying with Harry Warner Jr.



as best letterhack of the year. The swelling of my head, frankly, never went back to its normal size again, but none of my fanzines or articles or columns have ever been recognized in such an astounding way in any poll that I can remember, so perhaps that helps to sober me up a bit. Not complaining, just observing. Providing context to say this:

Speaking as a letterhack, I don't think what works quite well for on-line groups and apas would work for LoCs. Not that either is inherently a bad form of fanac. BUT.

Why do people want to publish fanzines? Not that it applies to everyone, but a good number of the fans who've been in it for a while will tell you they pretty much do their fan publishing (of whatever variety) for their own enjoyment, while hoping that others may enjoy (and might even respond to) it as well.

This is the pure, unrefined gratification of the creative act for its own sake – and I don't find it in the least difficult to empathize with the sentiment. Completely. I mean, to step back a bit, I've written some skiffy that I'm fairly certain will probably never be seen by more than a small handful of people (if that many); I won't intentionally inflict in on anyone out of the blue, or by publishing it in a fanzine, or by putting

it on line. There's a slight chance – in some cases, very slight – that I may whip it into shape and sell it, which upon publication will change the dynamic just enough to invite others to judge its merits. Short of that, I might show it to a writer's group for the purpose of getting criticism or to a collaborator. Whether or not any of it ever gets wider distribution, I will derive considerable enjoyment and satisfaction from the acts of creation that went into writing it. Wouldn't bother to do it if I didn't.

Yet I don't create anything – fanzines, articles, pro or faan fiction, letters of comment, mailing comments for apas or postings to on-line discussion groups – with the idea that it is solely for my own enjoyment. Partly, yes, or (once again) I most likely wouldn't bother. I suspect I'm not alone in this. But it seems axiomatic to me that anyone who puts anything out there where others can read it is doing so at least partly in the hopes that others will read it. Nothing else makes sense. All it does make is pretentious twaddle. ("I am an Artist – I do it for solely the sake of Art Itself.") At the same time -- and I've been through this frequently enough that I'm positive – my nose isn't going to get bent out of place if someone, or a whole group of someones, dislikes or disagrees with whatever I've cre-

ated and says so. Which means I can't very well claim I'm creating solely for the enjoyment of my prospective audience, either. Like it or lump it, folks; I'd rather you liked it, but I can take my lumps if you can't or don't or won't.

As an example of what I'm leading up to here, let's consider one of those works of skiffy I mentioned above, which might be submitted to a writer's group for criticism. Often I get so close to what I write that I literally can't see the forest for the trees – someone else, looking at it from the outside, will see and point it out instantly. That's what I want from them; I don't see criticism of my creative work as a criticism of my personal worth and so, without feeling any pain, I can take it and use it if I agree with it.

But I don't automatically agree with all the criticism I might get. I admit it's entirely subjective, but at times my stories receive unjustified criticism – to my mind, the people offering it simply missed the point. While in some cases I may be a fault for this (and if I see it that way, I try to make some adjustments to make my point clearer), in other cases I just believe that the critic, like any human bean, can at times be short sighted. I'm neither offended nor upset by this; I'd rather have honest (if arguably misguided) criticism

than insincere praise. For anything I do, not just fiction. What I consider valid criticism, I try to use to improve what I've created. Insincere praise and invalid criticism I let drop by the wayside, like water off a duck's back. Or at least I try.

But even in the worst-case scenario, response is response. A few fans I know insist they publish for what I've often described as the coin of the realm of fandom – egoboo. It's the paradigm provided us in the parable that is *THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR*. But while it's a fine ideal, the truth is that fandom – with its acerbic personalities and often ktf reviews – really isn't a mutual back-patting society. It's been ages since I've had any personal involvement with them, but that was one of the primary differences I saw between mundane a-jay and our microcosm: They are (or at least were) a true mutual back-patting society, where it's considered "impolite" to offer even the mildest form of criticism. That's a good part of why I prefer fandom.

I don't doubt that total negativity, long-term unremitting negoboo, can be discouraging enough to drive some people right out of the microcosm, but at the same time I think what really matters is what the recipient chooses to do with and about the criticisms they receive.

I got a lot of strong negoboo for my early badly reproduced, largely first-draft and barely thought-out crudzines. (I'm probably being much too charitable in my depiction of them here.) But I never considered it a matter of "acceptance" – and since I could be every bit as paranoid as the next fan, I suppose this was largely because I'd already had quite a few letters and articles and individual pieces of fanfiction published in other people's fanzines before I pubbed my first ish. Fans, even some moderately well-know fans, were willing to accept me – they just weren't, as a rule, willing to accept shoddy work or abide fools gladly, into which categories I fell more often than (in retrospect) I would have liked.

I could have put the back of my wrist to my forehead and trudged off, stage left, a sad, solemn figure of High Tragedy – the victim of all the slings and arrows of outrageous misfortune, surely (as any reasonable sympathetic person, observing my exit, must know instinctively in their heart of hearts) cast in my direction by self-aggrandizing snobs who simply refused to ac-



knowledge (since it would jeopardize their elite position in the fannish hierarchy) my generous attempts to instruct an unkind and unworthy microcosm regarding a few Truly Innovative and Original Ways of Doing Things. Or I could put in a little more effort by trying to do better.

We don't create solely for the sake of egoboo; we do it in large part for the response, which includes negoboo as well as egoboo. We probably wouldn't continue if, over the long haul, the negoboo consistently overshadowed the egoboo; I'm not saying otherwise. It's just that it's the full range of response we're really looking for. A little bit of each goes a long way and each tastes a bit better if taken with a grain of salt, but although they denote positive and negative feedback, in a weird way negoboo is also a form of egoboo: If someone spends two pages telling me why they don't like my fanzine, they've at least implicitly told me that they think my fanzine is worth taking the time to write two pages saying why think it's a pile of crapola. And that ain't nothing – that's something.

The thing is, though – getting back to what I said I was going to be my focus ("At long last!" I can almost hear you all saying) – this egoboo/negoboo/response thing is not a one-way street. When I LoC a fanzine,

electronic or paper – whether via email or snail mail – I know I'm serving a, well, Higher Purpose. I'm providing the fan editor with something s/he pubbed that ish at least partly (and probably largely) in the hopes of receiving in return: Not necessarily egoboo, not necessarily negoboo, but response. As thoughtful and insightful and interesting as I can make it. Like those vaudeville comedians of old, fan editors may know their audience is "out there" because they can hear them breathing – but having been one myself (a fan editor, I mean, not a vaudevillian), I know they'd much rather hear both the laughter and the jeers to let them know their audience is at least nominally paying attention.

One of the things I think distinguishes a fanzine from a prozine is the desire on the part of fan editors – well, excepting Cheryl Morgan – to involve their readership by encouraging them to take an active part other than just as passive consumers. What involves me, and where I get the kind of response that prompts me to write a letter of comment in the first place, is where at least some part of my LoC gets published in the following issue. It's a bit more intense, I grant, where paper fanzines and snail mail LoCs are concerned, because in that scenario the editor has to retype what

s/he wishes to print, as well as mail me a copy of the resulting fanzine; the effort and expense speak for themselves. But it's still gratifying, even if an editor of an electronic fanzine gets to cut & paste what I wrote to insert it in their zine, because either way there's some editorial effort involved in choosing what to use and what to discard.

I'm not saying I've always approved the editing decisions made by fan editors regarding LoCs I've written them. I don't particularly enjoy being WAHFD – who does? But I can understand it happening; I may have picked a topic or topics the editor in question is tired of discussing. Can't really get miffed at that. I do get upset if I'm rewritten (rather than edited) or badly edited (e.g., the editor prints everything but the punchline to a joke I made). But I've also been somewhat embarrassed by LoCs published completely intact that I think could have been better edited – where, for example, someone else has already pretty much said what I say, only better, earlier in the letter column. It's a mixed bag, really.

But the editor's decision to publish at least some part of my letter is, on its face, egoboosting – even if

it's only to disagree with what I've said. By publishing all or any part of it, the editor is at least implicitly stating that s/he thinks that part of what I've written is, well, Worthy. It's at least worthwhile enough to pass on to the other readers of the zine.

I get new information, egoboosting information, when I read a LoC of mine in the lettercolumn of such a fanzine. Since I wrote it originally, I know that probably sounds a bit odd, but what I mean is that I discover what, in all I wrote, impressed and intrigued the editors enough to make them decide to give me a little space to make my points in what is, after all, their creative effort. I can read it over, several times, and get a new endorphin rush (rather like, as someone once pointed out, sitting on a whoopie cushion) each time I do. That rush makes me feel included, it boosts my ego and it's likely to keep me coming back for more. (Egoboo abstracted like this does have its addicting qualities, even though it's not on any official government list.) I've been "paid" in the coin of the realm by the publication of my LoC, with a strong possibility that if others comment on it subsequently there will be more egoboo coming for me in future issues, which also tends to inspire me to continue my involvement with the fanzine.

When I do my own apazines or post a comment to



a fannish news group, I know – barring unforeseen technical difficulties – that it's going to appear exactly the way I wrote it. No human intervention or editorial judgment will be involved in that process. Until/unless it receives some comment, I'll remain the only person who's even attempted (and that from my own personal biased point of view) to assess the merits of its content. I already know what I think about it – so there's no new information and no egoboo for me in that, just as there would be none in having a LoC I'd written automatically inserted into any given electronic fanzine.

The fan editor of such a zine has not put any personal effort into crafting a lettercolumn with the aid of what s/he finds worthy in my LoCs – it's just been dumped in there willy-nilly, without regard to whether the editor in question feels it's interesting or entertaining or worthwhile. In fact, we haven't interacted with each other at all in such a process. My sense of involvement doesn't begin with the publication of my LoC; it's not egoboosting just to have it there. I won't be paid for my effort, if at all, until the following issue, with the kind of egoboo that would have been more like an "interest" payment (pun intended) under the other dynamic.

As I said early on, this idea is no more an inherent-

ly bad form of fanaticism than is participation in an apa or a news group. But we already have that. But neither would it be anything new. And, really, would it be an "improvement" to rob fanzines of the very aspect which makes them, if not unique, at least stand out in sharp contrast and distinction to an apa or participation in a news group? I really don't think so.

Your Mileage May Vary. ☒

This article first appeared, in a somewhat different form, as a message on the FMZFEN mailing list.



From the **FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH** Dept.

February 1865 is the only month in recorded history not to have a full moon.

The average person's left hand does 56% of the typing.

There are 293 ways to make change for a dollar.

And so it came to pass that a fan who vowed to never again write a fanzine review column followed in the footsteps of his mentor, who had also vowed not to review fanzines, and agreed to review fanzines.

The reviewer's lot is often a thankless one. On one hand there are the indifferent and distrustful reads, instinctively doubting every opinion as they blithely miss half the nuances. On the other crouch the shamed and insulted fanzine editors ready to spring for the jugular. That would make thing just about impossible for the poor critic, even if all those people weren't standing on his hands. (I guess I'll have to use my sizable nose to peck this out on my computer.)

Over the years, I've observed that writing

THE FANZINE PARADE

Reviews of Print and Digital Fan
Publications - and a Little More.

by

ARNIE KATZ

fanzine reviews is tantamount to declaring open season on the author. It's an expressway to unpopularity. And though some may argue that I don't have much of that to lose, I had rather counted on holding onto what approval rating I had.

And yet, here is the first in what is anticipated to be a long series of columns in which I review fanzines. This is weird and paradoxical, even for fanzine fandom.

So, why should I surrender my admittedly longshot chance for fannish sainthood to write this? Because I think fanzine readers, both current and potential, will benefit. The growth of the fanzine field and its spread to the digital realm makes it

hard for even an active fanzine fandom to stay aware of all the zines. I hope this column will bring many titles to the attention of those who may've overlooked them.

Helpful as this may be to knowledgeable fans, who will also derive deep pleasure from nitpicking everything I write, it is the new reader who has inspired me to risk the wrath of outraged editors. Beginnings are never easy, but today's fanzine scene can be pretty confusing to any newcomer. It's hard to know which title to check out first. Fanzine content is so wide-ranging, it is possible that an embryonic fanzine fan will, by sheer bad luck, pick three or four fanzines that don't hit the mark. Instead of becoming more active and eventually writing a laudatory letter of comment about me, they take up self-tattooing or amateur gymnastics.

Another problem has risen from the weeds. Dave told me I could have 1,200 words for the column and I have already burned through one-third of my allotment. Perhaps he was only kidding. Surely he can't expect someone who has published more than 1,000 print and digital fanzines to shoehorn his Broad Mental Horizons into a mere

hundred dozen words. My wife Joyce, also a prolific fanzine writer and editor, and I can barely say "hello" to each other each morning in 1,200 words.

So, I figure I might as well ignore Dave's word limit, especially since I have come to the portion of this introductory column in which I finally get around to introducing myself. This will give you some information to put my comments in context and give me a chance to bray about myself like the subject of Francis Towner Laney's memorable assault on self-aggrandizement, "I Am a Great Big Man."

I entered fandom in 1963 when Lenny Bailes and I publishing *Cursed* #1. We survived this inept start to co-edit *Quip*, a well-regarded fanzine of the late 1960s. I become rich brown's co-editor on the fan newszine *Focal Point* and co-chaired the Fund that brought Bob Shaw to the Worldcon in 1971. I continued *FP* as a monthly fanzine for a while until I got together with Joyce (formerly Fisher) and shortly afterward began a collaborative effort called *Swoon*. We did quite a number of fanzines together until about 1976, when I gafiated (quit) to concentrate on my developing career as a writer

and editor.

I came back, dragging Joyce with me, in 1990 with *Folly*, credited by some with revitalizing fanzine fandom after a half-decade catastrophic fan war. We had left Brooklyn for Las Vegas by then and, with a wonderful new club called Las Vegrants partying at our home, Toner Hall, we loosed about 20 issues of *Wild Heirs* on a stunned fandom.

Since then, most of my fanzines have had electronic as well as print editions. Currently, I produce *Flicker* and lead a band of 10 fans who periodically commit *Crazy from the Heat*.

I've chaired conventions, attended (and founded) clubs and at least tried my hand at most other facets of fandom. But to be honest, I love fanzines.

One more thing I want to cover before plunge into the first set of fanzine reviews. Generally speaking, a reviewer is assumed to be objective, uninvolved and aloof from the material. To claim that in fanzine fandom would be a farce - and an insult to your intelligence. It's rare for two fanzine fans of any longevity *not* to share a history. Even in this small group of fanzine reviews, among the

fanzines I'll be taking about is one from my former roommate. Hard to speak about objectivity with a straight face. I'll try to indicate my biases as they come into play.

**Bento #16/David Levine & Kate Yule
1905 SE 43rd Ave, Portland, OR 97315
Irregular, 38 pages, pocketsize
Available for letter comment; send a request for
a sample.**

One of the glories of fanzine fandom is that every publication offers something unique and special. *Bento* lives up to that ideal by being as different from most established fanzines as its minuscule page-size differs from the 8-1/2x11 standard.

Savvy fanzine editors and writers learn to maximize their strengths. David and Kate have mastered that lesson so thoroughly they could teach it at the college level. This extraordinarily appealing couple creates a fanzine that reads like a wonderfully detailed personal letter from the most charming twosome you've ever met. If *Trap Door* is

a reunion party at a fannish convention, then *Bento* is a sunny afternoon in the living room of your gracious hosts, Dave and Kate.

What in other hands might resemble one of those annual family letters that some folks stick into the Christmas card envelope becomes a mellow and pleasant visit. The topics range from David's observations on the movement to permit same-sex marriages in Oregon and Kate's chronicle remodeling her kitchen, but it's the spirit that is important. I hardly know this couple, but their down to earth friendliness makes you feel like you're a friend.

Bento will never be ranked among the great fanzines, but it is definitely an ornament to the field. It's highly accessible even



to the newest fans, though it doesn't dwell overly on science fiction and fantasy.

Degler! #2/Andy Porter
55 Pineapple St., Apt 3J, Brooklyn, NY 11201
Irregular, 4 pages, 8-1/2x11
Availability uncertain - write to him

Andy Porter and I shared apartment 3J for the two years before Joyce and I got together in 1970. This is the second time around for *Degler!*, a weekly personalize that had already transmuted into a weekly pro-oriented newszine called *SF Weekly* by the time Andy and I signed the lease for the place at 55 Pineapple.

The change to *SF Weekly* presaged an even more devotedly commercial effort called *SF Chronicle*. What appeared to be a friendly buy-out of *SFC* ended with Andy expelled from his own paper home. The revived *Degler!* Is clearly an attempt by Andy to return to his fannish roots and recapture the simple joy of fanning, long buried under the drive to produce a viable professional publication. It'll probably be *SF Weekly* again down the road, but

meanwhile, it's nice to see Andy putting a bit more of himself out there for us.

Andy moves from subject to subject with practiced ease. He leads with a comparison of his attitude toward his first Boston Worldcon to the way he approached the most recent one this year. Other sections detail his blossoming interest in cultural events, his feeling about the *Lord of the Rings* movies and even a section of pro and fan birthdays.

It wouldn't be an Andy Porter fanzine, though, without at least one head-scratcher. In this case, it's a brief reminiscence of George Nims Raybin, a controversial lawyer who helped file a lawsuit about a purely fan matter in the 1950s.

Andy reprised a conversation

in which, while they ogled a pre-teen girl, George righteously lectured Andy about the legal prohibitions. Andy went to some pains to cite sources for those who want details on Raybin's WSFS, Inc., escapades, but he didn't mention George's well-known keen interest in underage boys. Andy's tone is very favorable, so I have to wonder why he would resurrect that particular conversation with its unwholesome associations.

Despite this fleeting odd note, *Degler!* Shows that Andy Porter still knows how to put out an entertaining fanzine. Let's hope he continues this new run of his old title.



The Incomplete Bruce Gillespie
edited by Irwin Hirsh
**Order from Bill Wright: Unit 4, 1 Park St.,
St. Kilda West, VIC 3182, Australia.**
**Anthology, 40 saddle-stapled, 8-1/2x11 pages,
\$10 (US or Australian)**

This beautiful publication was produced in conjunction with the Bring Bruce Bayside Fund, of which I am the co-chairman). The impeccable

section of articles shows those unfamiliar with BRG why we're so eager to have him come to Corflu and Potlatch in early 2005 - and why it was so easy for us to raise the money.

Irwin Hirsh did a commendable job of selecting articles that demonstrate the breadth of Bruce's interests. You'll find everything from serious science fiction criticism to fannish and personal pieces. All are very well done.

The anthology is profusely decorated with Bruce's fan photos. Since many of the selections didn't have especially memorable original artwork, the photographs were a welcome bonus. The layout and reproduction are absolutely impeccable, one of the year's most attractive hard copy fanzines.

That's enough for a first column. Next time, I promise less introducing and more reviewing. See you next issue. ☒

If you have a fanzine you'd like reviewed, send it to me at 330 S. Decatur Blvd., PMB 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107. Electronic fanzines can be sent to me at: crossfire4@cox.net.



epistles

Black words by you blue words by me

FRANK WU I was particularly touched by the discussion about the problem of pain, and surprised to see it in a zine. I'm a Christian, but sometimes it's a little awkward talking about Christianity in the context of fandom - I once mentioned that I was a Christian while giving a slide show at a con and immediately half a dozen people stood up and walked out. So it was really fun for me to see theology in a fanzine. I think, despite my slide show experience, that most fans are pretty open-minded. They won't agree about anything, whether the subject be science or gender issues or politics or religion

or Buffy. But part of the fun is tossing around ideas, even if we disagree. I think that's part of the richness of fandom - I'd love to see more discussions about Hinduism and Judaism and Buddhism and any other religion, not just Christianity, in fandom. On a related note, I think that it's stupid to argue about whether or not manger scenes can be put up in public places. What I'd love to see is public squares filled with Stars of David and Oms and pictures of Ganesh and Crescents with Stars.

My experience with most fans and religion is that they're either apathetic or antithetical to it. Which is fine - everyone has to make up their own mind. Since coming back, I haven't been reticent about my faith, but then I don't "trumpet" it either. If people want to discuss it, I'm not shy about doing so, but it isn't a topic I'm likely to bring up. I haven't had any negative experiences with my faith in fandom. ☒

JANINE STINSON

Genealogy has long been a favorite hobby of mine, but you wouldn't know it from the amount of time I've spent on it lately. One of my father's cousins has traced his family line back to an "admitted Freeman" from England who settled in Ipswich, Mass. in 1641. That ancestor's descendants moved the family from Massachusetts to New York to Chicago to Michigan, where my father and his sisters were born and raised, and where my dad met my mom, whose mother came to the U.S. from Lodz, Poland with her family in the early 20th century. My mom's mom married a man of French-Canadian ancestry whose family had settled in northwestern Michigan. Of note in my father's genealogy is an ancestor who fought for the Rebels in the Revolutionary War, so I actually qualify for membership in the Daughters of the American Revolution. How-

ever, the only use I ever had for the DAR was to use Constitution Hall in D.C. To attend a Frank Zappa concert. Now there's ironic for you. The genealogical Web info you provided is welcome, and I'll mark it down for later use.

I note your interest in Little Feat and King Crimson, two of my favorite bands from high school. Sometimes I wonder what Lowell George would be doing now. KC, on the other hand, has followed Robert Fripp off into some strange realms. I'm an early-KC fan, and as a result only have a few recordings from that period, notably *In the Court of the Crimson King*. Not sure if I have any Little Feat recordings, but I can sing a chorus or two: "If you'll be my Dixie Chicken, I'll be your Tennessee Lamb, and we can walk together down in Dixie Land..." I still love that rolling-gait rhythm they so often used in their songs. Great dance music.

I often wonder what Lowell George would be up to, myself. It's hard to believe he's been gone for 25 years. Little Feat never achieved the success it should have; I suppose due to their combining so many different types of music (rock, soul, R&B, blues) into something

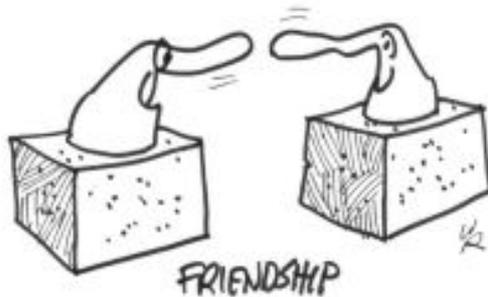


Lowell George

uniquely Little Feat. Listening to their live recordings (all top-notch) makes me sorry I never got to see them in concert when Lowell was still alive. He sure could make the slide guitar sing.

Interesting (and short) conrep, and also funny for the mythical police escort. Brother Jerome's article on God's will and free will was also interesting, and I read the whole thing. I think I understand it, but I may read it again just to be sure.

Dave Locke's "Pain Story" was, well, painful. But funny. And that last photo, on the back page -- got a good laugh out of that. For which, much thanks. ☒



Hey, I like the look of *Catchpenny!* I wrote a bit for Trufen.net about formatting for online reading; it's good to see that someone is doing it. Had I been more aware, I would have cited CPG as a good example. And I appreciate the care you took balancing columns and so forth. The details may not be explicitly noticed, but they make the whole look very good.

I can't claim to have seen every digital zine out there, but now that John Foyster's gone, I may be the only fanned producing a PDF zine designed **solely** for on-screen viewing. Most other PDF zines are still following the "paper paradigm" of an 8½ x 11 page size. Most, to my eyes, seem to be

JIM CAUGHRAN

conversions of the WP files created for zines that are also available in a print version, and/or designed to be eventually printed out by the reader.

Hmm -- 34 years absence from Midwestcons. I was gafia early 70s to early 90s, which must have included the time when you were active.

I was active from 1969 to 1971, when I graduated high school and went off to college.

When Locke scheduled the appointment with an unknown doctor, I envisioned him seeing a female doctor for the boil on his scrotum. That happened to me once when I had a rash on my penis, many years ago, in a university clinic. I wasn't sure how to handle it, but finally decided that a doctor is a person of science, an uninvolved healer, and I confessed to my malady. The doctor turned bright red and referred me to a male doctor.

While I have great admiration for the *Rule of St. Benedict*, I can't anthropomorphize god in the way Brother Jerome does. My god is very abstract.

If we traced all our relationships, we *all* have to be cousins. There weren't enough people to make up independent family trees for more than a few generations, if there are twice as many in each past generation. ☒

Midwestcon can be an enjoyable convention, and Yvonne and I attended MWCs 48 and 50, but there was still the feeling of standing on the outside looking in. Driving from Toronto to Cincinnati was a daunting task for Yvonne (she's the only driver), but taking two days to do it helps. And, we certainly find out just how big Ohio is then you have to take I-71 from Cincinnati, through Columbus and up to Cleveland on the way home. At least we made the attempt to be a part of things. Mike Glicksohn does get down there on a regular basis; my memory is short, but I think we took Mike to one MWC and back.

LLOYD PENNEY

I felt a bit of the “outsider” at Midwestcon myself, but that was probably my own doing – everyone was certainly very friendly to me. I had hoped to reconnect with someone I might actually have *known* from the Old Days (either in person or through correspondence) but that didn't happen.

Dave Locke's story of a boil in an Extremely Unfortunate Place might wind up in the Too Much Information file, but it holds an extremely important message ... don't read those old magazines in the waiting room! It's dangerous! I must admit, though, that I have had zits in similar places, including the side of my nose. If I'd wanted to dress up as a witch, I wouldn't have had to use any makeup.

I will hazard a guess and say that I've never seen an article in a fanzine like Brother Hughes' article, but I will take a stab at it. Usually, God's will is done. Whether God's will is best is a subjective feeling, and best left for religious scholars. Accepting the death of a loved one is so difficult, but I feel that simply accepting it as God's will and saying that His will is best is being too passive. Grief and anger are natural reactions to death, and I think we have to accept our human natures, and go through those reactions. We are too inquisitive creatures to simply say it was God's will; we

want to know why these things happen. Once there is some knowledge, we are more comfortable in that meager knowledge instead of the mystery of God's will. (Unfortunately, not only do many people want to know what happened, they want to know who was to blame, and even if it was accidental, that want that person to pay. We are far too litigious, and we are far too bloodthirsty for revenge. But, that's another article.)

Yes, Br. Jerome's article *was* unusual for a fanzine (and I'll leave it up to him to reply to the comments about it here in the letter column). I'm interested in having articles about a broad range of topics in the zine. In fact, outside my own pieces, not much in the zine has had anything to do with fandom... Ideally what I'd like to do is publish one humorous and one serious piece per issue.

CB radio? We dabbled, but before getting into fandom, I was a shortwave DXer. I still have all my QSL cards and letters. For my birthday, and as a direct result of the near-continent-wide blackout that had its first anniversary marked just yesterday, Yvonne got



Br. Jerome and chickens

me one of those crank-powered radios with a built-in flashlight. This may never happen again, but if it does, we're at least semi-prepared. That radio has two shortwave bands on it, and I've had a good long listen to the shortwave bands, something I haven't done in a some time. Not much left on it ... I heard a lot of Spanish, and Chinese, too. Any English I heard was usually a religious broadcaster. I belonged for a couple of years to the ODXA, the Ontario DX Association, and I remember that they were friendly to a new member's money, but not all that friendly to the new member himself. The people in charge were the rich kids with the big expensive Hallicrafters SW sets, and my little Sony SW radio was openly laughed at. Perhaps being subject to this group prepared me for my entry into fandom...

In the early 90s I got interested in shortwave DXng myself, and eventually acquired three radios, none as grandiose as a Hallicrafter though. It is, in a way, an odd little hobby, since it's more of a "spectator sport," although there is a sort of thrill to actually pulling in a signal from some exotic location. I spent more time listening to hams (both voice and code) than I did the (then) seemingly endless commercial and religious stations available across the spectrum (generally unintelli-

gible to me since I speak only English), and ran across several groups that reminded me of my old friends from the CB days. Shortwave was, in the pre-Web days, a pretty good source for news you couldn't get easily here in the US, or news that was reported without an American bias. I still have the radios and occasionally fire them up and scan the dial, but these days they're more apt to be tuned to a local FM station than one from South America or Europe. ☒



Although I've been listing the publication schedule for CPG as "irregular," issues have been coming out every other month. I'll be taking a break and skipping the December issue, and the next CPG will be out in January. LoCs and other contributions are still needed!

This issue was produced using OpenOffice for text and layout, Microsoft Word for some letterforms, and Photofiltre and Irfanview for graphics. Background music this time around was by Jimi Hendrix, Little Feat, Kasey Chambers, Jerry Riopelle, and Nils Lofgren.
