



HEY This isn't CHALLENGER; It's...

CRAZY

from the

HEAT



Issue #2
March, 2004

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Crazy from the Heat #2, March, 2004, is produced by the Trufan Ten, with considerable help from the semi-committed men and women of Las Vegrants.

Crazy from the Heat is published monthly, so far about once a year. Before you scoff, recall that *Wild Heirs* took a few issues to get going. That's what we tell ourselves and, you know, it helps.

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Alan White: 3, 8, 23, 25



Blowing Off Steam...

The Crazies Riot in the Nuthouse

Arnie Katz

Welcome to the sensational sixth issue of *Crazy from the Heat*.

Well, it would be the sixth — or maybe the 26th — issue if we hadn't set records for sloth while confirming Vegas Fandom's reputation for organizational ineptitude. (These are "personal best" type records; we know we don't have a chance to equal the standard set in these two areas in numerous corners of the science fiction universe.)

I've previously written about my proclivity for completely forgetting fanac when I'm not actively engaged in it. "It's like a bicycle," they say. "You just get right back on and ride."

In my case, it *is* like a bicycle.

I can't ride a bicycle.

And after a year or so away from publishing anything more substantial than a membership-saving FAPazine, I found that I couldn't Pub My Ish with the automatic, intuitive ease I felt during the periods when I did *Folly* and, later, co-edited *Wild Heirs* and (still later) *crifanac*. The processes that become second nature during times of

hyper-activity are *terra incognita* when I return after a bit of a rest.

I'm not the only one suffering from this malady, though. The passage of weeks and months made it all too obvious that most of The Council of Ten had accumulated at least as much rust. I'm here to do the mea culpa for a fanzine (*Crazy from the Heat #1*) that I expected to distribute on Labor Day and barely got out by Super Bowl Sunday, I won't reveal the lotus-eating and mind-numbing procrastination, evasion and rationalization that enabled us to blow our self-imposed deadline by five months.

Rest assured, I have the signed confessions and I'm expecting delivery of the exploding security manacles next week, so I can guarantee that this issue won't suffer similar delay. (If it does, you didn't read this paragraph. Forget.... Forget...)

Crazy from the Heat #1 truly served as a learning experience, because it gave us the chance to make just about every possible mistake. There's nothing like doing something the slow, stupid way to recall the memory of how to

do it right.

“That’s wonderful,” you are probably thinking. “They screwed things up so badly the first time that everything should be perfect from now on!”

Yes and no.

Things would, indeed, be perfect except that we don’t want to intimidate anyone with what we hope will be a fun-loving, friendly fanzine. Our current plan is that we will continue to make new and sometimes startling mistakes to enable the fanzine to retain *The Common Touch*.

Now that I think of it, why should I shoulder the entire burden of creative stupidity. No reason to do that when there is the bottomless reservoir of stupidity known as Fandom? You can help with suggestions for ways we can screw up in the future. Be patient; we’ll get around to your favorite flub before long, I am sure.

Another mistake was waiting for someone to start our group editorial. I’ve always been the bravest of this bunch when it comes to assaulting the empty page, so we probably could’ve saved a month or more if I’d shouldered the boilerplate burden and gone first.

And now, here I am. Who had “two issues” in the pool on when I would again assume the position of writing the archly phrased opening section?

One of the mysteries I inadvertently created last issue was lumping the diverse and dissolute band who produce *Crazy from the Heat* under the tedious and pseudo-formal name *The Council of Ten*. I used the name because there are 10 of us and I didn’t know what else to call us. We aren’t exactly Las Vegrants or Las Vegas Fandom, though those are reference point, and no alternative name has yet surfaced for the Southwestern Lobe of the Ted White Group Mind.

Let’s banish all lingering traces of mystery that surround *The Council of Ten* and investigate this fannish rogue’s gallery:

Arnie Katz – Las Vegrants’ chief instigator and co-host. A fan with looks and brains.

Joyce Katz – The looks and brains of the Katz family.

Ken Forman – Lord of the dance, king of the

procrastinators.

Aileen Forman – Rich in grace and wit, poor in hairstyle judgment.

Ben Wilson – Explorer of the poles, retired mountain biker, all-around terrific fan.

Cathi Wilson – Fabulous cook and, apparently, nurse

Ross Chamberlain – The nicest fan I’ve ever met, except for Shelby Vick

Alan White – A creative force and an amused (and amusing) observer of the fannish scene.

Tom Springer — Recently relocated to southern California and soon to return from parental leave.

That’s *The Council of Ten*. Like *Saturday Night Live*, though, we also have a wonderful group of contributors and supporters, including JoHn Hardin, Tammy Springer, Bill Kunkel, Derek Stazenski, Woody Bernardi and others who will make themselves apparent as they work up their courage.

Post-issue analysis judged the inaugural *Pillar of Fire Award* a qualified success. “Qualified” in that gratitude, shame or whatever did not induce honoree Richard Wayne Brown to fork over the *Five Grand* for his spot in fanhistory. In rich’s defense, it’s true I did say we were giving him this honor to atone for stealing the name “*Pillar of Fire*,” but some of us did nurse our little hopes.

And now it’s time, as it is and will be every issue, to unveil the *Pillar of Fire* recipient for this issue. To recap, the *Pillar of Fire* is our answer to the pay-for-honors *Pillar of the LASFS* award announced last summer. That’s the one where, for \$4,000 they write your name on a Pole. (For a hundred bucks, we’ll write your name on a bathroom wall at the Luxor...)

We’ve decided that we can be just as crass and commercial as the *LASFS*. (A big boast, I admit, but we are taking lessons.) The *Pillar of Fire Award*, which can be yours for a paltry \$5,000, entitles you to copious and repeated mentions in an entire issue of *Crazy from the Heat!* Hard to believe, yet so true.

This issue we again find ourselves without a paying customer. In the hopes that making an ex-

ample of one fan will entice others to pony up the dough in the future, it is with restrained pride and fiduciary misgivings that we announce the recipient of the Second Pillar of Fire Award — **Robert A. Lichtman**.

So be sure to look for mentions of **Robert Lichtman** throughout this issue. We've underlined them to make it even easier to spot.

Start saving your money now. Who knows, *you* could be the next fan to be seared by the immortal flame of the Pillar of Fire Award.

Ross Chamberlain

As one who, quite aside from years of developing skills as a procrastinator, has suffered from Internet depravi---uh, deprivation---for the last several months I can say with some authority that I recognize the conditions leading to postponement of effective communication with others in the community, fannish or otherwise. An early occurrence in this direction was when I dropped out of FAPA, despite blandishments from local fans (many named in the ten above) as well as **Robert Lichtman**, major operative of that organization, who expressed his concern at the time. I understand that this is a nice distinction (which is how I read Arnie's kind reference to me), but this has been just another step in my gradual withdrawal from the common weal, not to mention common wealth (since wealth and I have been less and less acquainted as well), however undeliberate the disconnection from the Net.

That particular slipping of the noose came about when an attempt to upgrade Windows 98 turned into a degrade of it. My better half, Joy-Lynd, had acquired a disc with a 2nd build of the operating system due to a recommendation from someone that it would improve its reliability, and indeed it apparently succeeded in doing so—for her. When I did the same, my cable connection to the Information Highway took the offramp. And several attempts to get it back on, with help from the folk at Cox and other knowledgeable computer folk, have failed, even after I reformatted my hard drive and re-loaded the original version of Win98... Joy-Lynd and our housemate Chris have never had this problem; they still happily connect. Only I am left to weep and wail and gnash my---no, sorry, that comes with the loss of

Paradise, and I have to acknowledge that the Internet and Paradise have not all that much in common.

There have been compensations. I got back to work on my Great American Knovel (50 years in the making!) there for a while, and have done some more art work and even plunged myself into the composition of some cheerful little musical works using the fine software program Melody Assistant. Nothing great, but reasonably satisfactory to my indiscriminating and eminently near-sighted soul and ears. I inflicted some of these on a recent gathering of the Vegrants, and they were very kind.

And so I move into the background even further than I normally do, slipping into the mists of time. But I shall pop up occasionally here and there. Beware!

Cathi Wilson

I think Arnie must have been thinking of some other fandom when he was insinuating that any fanzine out of Vegas has gotten out in any timely fashion. As I recall, even our attempt to do a monthly APA here never quite made its deadline. Procrastination seems to be the binding that ties we Las Vegrants together.

The Wilson household has been busy of late. The Michigan in-laws, Ben's father and his most recent wife, have been our houseguests for the last week. I could never understand how people are related to their relatives. You would think that since they are of direct blood relation, share a lot of mutual experiences and resided in the same home for a good number of years that they would be similar in thought and deed. This however is the exception instead of the rule. I am convinced that my sweet, wonderful, considerate husband was left at the doorstep of these silly, silly people.

My father-in-law is convinced that someday he will hit it big. There is some jackpot out there, with his name on it that will cure all his miseries. This is the reason he had to move from Las Vegas.

Wife number three (her fourth), seems very nice, but believes in her husband's pipe dream. She is also convinced that their luck will change and that they too will know how it feels to live on

easy street. They were broke by day two. Now I get to be a full-time hostess to two very bored people who must be inside during daylight hours because of the record breaking June heat. By the way, once the thermometer goes past 110 degrees, it's officially hell.

I'm still in the midst of hell week and my husband must desert me for business the last two days of his parent's vacation. I know I will survive this test of affection for my husband, but he owes me big.

Aileen Forman

What do you mean, "poor in hairstyle judgment"? I'll have you know I wash my hair regularly and see a hairstylist once a year whether I need to or not!

Okay, so I'll admit I'm not a slave to fashion. Actually, I'm not a slave to anything except maybe my job. I've always been the kind of person who throws herself into her work, generally with disastrous results. I've gotten ill more times than I can remember from overwork.

Right now I'm a small-town reporter. This is the first reporting job I've ever had, so I'm finding it hard not to get too deeply involved with the local politics, which are as goofy as I've ever heard of.

I recently got a change of assignment from covering Calimesa (a very small town on the other side of the county line from Yucaipa, where I live) to Yucaipa. This is a good thing. I've gotten about as sick of Calimesa's politicians as I can get without just throwing my hands up in the air and screaming.

One would think that a small town would be boring, but, surprisingly, it's not. In a town our size (45,000+ people) it's easy to see how the decisions of the city council can affect you personally. It's even more so for a city the size of Calimesa (7,100+

people).

Growth is a big issue here. You'd think someone had taken a person's own backyard the way they squawk about their neighbors selling their land to a developer. "But I don't want to have to look at houses! I want to look at the hill-sides like I've done since I moved here!" Yeesh.

On the other hand, we're only about 70 miles from Los Angeles, so growth will happen. You can't just build a wall around the city and say it's okay for us to move here but not you. Well, actually, I guess they could, but I'd like to see them try.

It's a pretty fun job, on the whole. I get to take pictures and interviews from stores with grand openings, cover big bake sales and school events, and write about everything from sewer systems to the Woman's Club.

The bad part is trying to get time off. Although they only pay me for 30 hours per week, my average work week is about 40-45 hours long. Still, it keeps me off the streets.

In other news, we're working on getting everything ready for Corflu. I can't wait to see my friends, like **Robert Lichtman** and Art Widner, Ian Sorenson and Andy Hooper.

I'm also looking forward to spending the whole weekend back in Vegas. I miss my friends there. We're in the process of trying to get everyone from Vegas to move down here.

We have Karl Kreder (a long time SNAFFU person) and his wife just down the street, now. Tom and Tammy Springer live only about 120 miles away, in Tehachapi, California. We're working on trying to convince Ben and Cathi

Wilson to move here as well as Arnie and Joyce Katz. Wish us luck. Who knows? In a few more years we may have Corflu Yucaipa!

Arnie Katz

And that's where the editorial languished for months. Rather than wait for inspiration to strike additional contributors, let's just draw a line, thank everyone for their effort and move along to some extremely timely and entertaining articles and such on the next 33 pages.





Death of Fandom

Cassandra Lives Again in Joyce Katz

I've been sent an apocalyptic vision; I assume it came from Ghu.

As I lay restless upon my bed, I fell into a shallow sleep. I seemed to be back in my old hometown, Poplar Bluff, Missouri, and as always when on that hallowed ground, I started to seek the city's most famous cuisine, the food-fit-for-gods, a sliced barbecue sandwich.

Readers may know Poplar Bluff as that most unlikely village of strange phenomenon. Tucked just left of the Bootheel of the Show-Me State, the small town nestles on the edge of the Mississippi flood plain at precisely the point where the Ozark Mountains begin to rise. In fact, it was the poplar-covered cliffs above the murky Black River that gave the town its name, when a couple of Native Americans paddled by in their canoe, noted the flamboyant spring blossoms crowning the hill above them, and said, "See, poplar bluff!" I cannot say precisely how and why this moniker caught on at the trading post where white men traded cooking pots for beaver, (as it is said they still do.) But it stuck, and when the lumbermen came along to shear the surrounding forest, they

hung on to the name, even though they trashed the trees.

The town was always a bit strange, nominally Southern in its style but dedicatedly Northern in its politics. While the flood-plain towns in the Bootheel clung to their cotton fields and Cruel Practices, Poplar Bluffians professed loyalty (sometimes) to the Union. Yet it was a very uncertain place, in terribly uncertain times. During the Great War Between The States, a packet boat sailed up the Mississippi, up the Arkansas, and then up the Black River, to fire two shells at the town's little Court House. Then it turned around and sailed back down the river to who-knows-where. It has never been determined which side fired on Poplar Bluff, although the two cannon balls still rest on their own history, in the basement of City Hall.

Mr. Lincoln once spoke of Poplar Bluff, calling it a den of murderers and horse thieves. Such is the proud history of the town.

After the Indians were removed, and after the Civil War, and after the lumbermen finished denuding the bluffs, the railroad men made a center

of what was left. Half way between Little Rock and St. Louis, a Round House serviced the bel-lowing steam engines and became the backbone of the town's economy. Traveling salesmen fol-lowed the tracks; it's said a route man would go a hundred miles out of his way to spend the night in Poplar Bluff (something about the beaver trade.) It also became a center for brewers and distillers. Because there were so many, Poplar Bluff next developed a thriving keg and barrel business. Perhaps this is what led to it also be-coming a regional medical center.

There were unde-niably some strange folk wandering around town by this time, per-haps lured by the com-merce, but maybe touched by the sun, and by the St. Elmo's Fire that seemed to hover most nights over the tracks in the swampy land south of town. Flying saucers were spotted regularly, from about 1948 on. One local citizen gained some degree of notoriety by going aboard, and then re-vealing what Space-men had told him: that the sky is a metal

bowl, and the sun glows because of the friction of sliding over it. In fact, the Spacemen also told him to shoot anyone who disagreed, so I accepted his message without argument.

Thus is set the stage for the Phenomenon that gives Poplar Bluff its fannish fame. This tiny, out of the way town has spawned more fans per ca-pita than any other place in the world. (Don't bother me for statistics; ladies don't talk in num-bers!) For no better reason than the climate, or perhaps something in the water, or due to some nefarious past infraction, Poplar Bluff birthed fandom's own Weird Cat, Claude Degler. Al-though he left the area while still a youth, he al-

ways spoke of going back to build an Ozark Love Camp in the surrounding hills.

But the town still hadn't finished producing phenomena; the next fan was Raymond "Duggie" Fisher. Then followed Max Keasler, and a half-dozen or so less well-known contemporaries of this 1950s fandom, and, eventually ...me! Much later, in the late 1960s, another fan publishing group rose and fell; I saw one of their zines. But apparently the strangeness bred itself out, be-cause they didn't survive to gain any more fame than their mention in this article.

But fan readers have a distorted view of the township. In fact, it is not the strange coincidence of fandom that is Poplar Bluff's best point. No, it is that divine food for the gods, sliced barbecue, which lures people back once they've tasted it.

It seems com-pletely natural to me, then, that Ghu would speak to me through Poplar Bluff's wonder-ful barbecue.

As I tossed on my bed, I dreamed I went to my favorite barbe-cue spot, Hayden's

Drive In. But the fine old establishment was filled with celebrating rednecks, drinking beer, waving their pistols in the air, listening to the twangs and twongs of some hateful country dirge, waiting for their sandwiches.

As I stepped to the counter to order, I saw a dreadful sight. A great Stormy Petrol was roast-ing in the fire, still alive, weeping in pain and distress. "Free that bird," I cried, "or kill it!" But the uncouth mob swarmed around me, pushed me away, craving their taste of the wounded bird's flesh, tearing at it while it still lived.

And in my dream, I went for my own gun, much like the well-meaning cowboys making the



Grand-But-Futile-Gesture in *The Wild Bunch*. I was determined I would either save the poor thing or end its misery, if it cost my life, as I thought it might.

The gift of apocalyptic vision isn't worth a lot unless you also get the gift of interpretation, and I somehow knew what that Stormy Petrol would say if it could speak. So now I'm telling you, as I'm sure the burning bird would wish me to do: Fanzine fandom is going to die, roasting in its own juices, giving up itself as meat for the uncaring.

Call me Cassandra. But remember, the girl was right.

There is, of course, plenty of evidence that my dream is wrong. There were a goodly number of fanzines printed in 2003, and this year has begun well, with a couple or three new zines in the mail every week. Our dear friend, **Robert Lichtman**, can tell you exactly how many, but he has not yet tracked the pending catastrophe.

In fact, the current generous outpouring of fanzines is a false harbinger of Spring. This is not the seasons' start, it is Autumn. What we're seeing is the beginning of the end. The high costs of publishing couple with the high costs of postage to make the hobby difficult. Add in the graying of fandom, which translates into the lower incomes of seniors, and it is quite prohibitive. Every week, someone announces they can't continue to absorb the costs. Most recently, no less a fanzine enthusiast than Bruce Gillespie has tallied the total and said "It's impossible."

But despair not yet: electronic fandom has risen, springing to the rescue of our dear hobby. Or so it would seem. We should all give praise to Bill Burns, for establishing the fannish newsstand, www.efanzines.com, where zines can flaunt their beauty and make themselves available to everyone who's interested. It is a wonderful concept, an excellent execution. Faneds complete their zines, then Bill Burns posts them to our own online site. A careful shepherd of fandom's future, Bill then sends notices to the online communities, so everyone knows each zine is available.

What could be simpler? The readers have several choices: they can browse the zine right there online, or they can save it to disk and read

it later at their leisure. Best of all, they can print their own perfect copy on their own computer's printer, either in full color or in black-and-white, and add the zine to their collection.

But it's not cutting it. Although that wonderful website fulfills its destiny most worthily, there is something missing, and it is killing us.

Recent list serv discussions revealed the pending disaster. After cautiously hemming and hawing, numerous faneds admitted that they receive little or no response from their electronic fanzines.

That's not even the worst of it. Several fanzine readers admitted that they never bother to download the zines, and are content to read them online.

Another cadre of confessors admitted they never (and apparently never will) print out any electronic zine to add to their collections, citing cost of doing so as the reason. This is particularly galling, when you realize that the recipients are Just Fine with the editor paying up to \$1000 to prepare and send out an edition, but not willing to bother to prepare one copy for themselves.

But that is not the killing blow. There have actually been admittances that some fans simply don't feel impelled to write a letter of comment on an electronic zine. Some of the same folk who used to feel more or less obliged to "pay back" the editor of a print zine with a letter, have no compunction at all about ignoring the electronic versions.

There's the rub, you see. Fans who leapt in joy to know they'd be able to pub their ish with no overhead costs, are now limping along sans egoboo of any kind.

People, this is completely unacceptable. It just can't continue, or we won't.

I've been talking about this problem with Lloyd Penney, a man who knows and understands fan publishers' need for response. He is also aware of the difficulty of getting recipients to Do The Right Thing. He made the point that, although it is expensive to print out every fanzine that gets posted to efanzines.com (because of the high cost of both paper and printer cartridges) there are other options.

Lloyd offers some practical nuts-and-bolts: "I download the ezine to my desktop, and open it.

Then, I change the size of the window until it takes up half of my monitor screen. I then open Word, and change the window until it fills the other half. I just go back and forth from window to window, easily reading and then making comments. The whole operation isn't difficult at all! When I'm finished, I save the document to my 2004 locdoc folder (I keep a file for each year's worth of locs), and then e-mail the document to the faned. The .pdf, or textfile, or Word doc, whatever, is then placed into a folder on my desktop labeled Zines To Print. Lately, I haven't been able to afford to print many zines, so I plan to take the contents of that file, eventually, and burn it onto a CD-R. Maybe I can print them later. If not, I have the zine on my monitor screen."

Lloyd is one of a handful of dedicated loc-writers who believe that fan editors deserve to receive response. But he understands why those letters don't always get written. "Ezines are simply on your screen, there if you want them, and they are easy to simply download, read and forget, much like an mp3 music file. It's become an electronic consumable, easily ignored and/or forgotten in the mass of the Web. I think our necessary move to the Net has greatly reduced the perceived value of a zine, and the impulse to respond has greatly diminished."

Yep. That's the problem. But what can be done about it?

Lloyd avowed: "Faneds and writers have to demand feedback." But he points out that, for him, writing letters is a way to participate in the fan community. "I can't afford to Pub My Ish the way I might have some time ago, but I can at least contribute through the locol. Being the journalism student I am, it's always great to see my byline there. That's my incentive, to get my writing published."

But how do we make other people do the same? As he pointed out, "Threatening to drop people from the mailing list is no incentive." True enough. When the fanzine is available to everyone to download, there's no way to stop them from getting it.

Lloyd suggests a more pro-active effort: "The faned has to come up with an incentive to get that feedback, and should offer a selection of ways to

get it...publish a photo, short profile of the Respondent of the Issue, etc. It is your fanzine, true, but if you want feedback, you may have to ask the readers what they want in exchange."

I don't completely agree with the idea of bribing letter writers to do their thing; they should want to do it for Pure Fannish Motive. They should want to take part in the fanzine community, without need for exhortations or rewards. The incentive should be the intelligent realization that fanzines cannot continue to exist without response from the readers.

Yeah. Right. We see how this is working.

Knowing this, perhaps we have to consciously decide, each and every one of us, to do what we know we must. We simply have to force ourselves to respond. Perhaps through our own efforts we can underscore the importance of letters.

And if that's not enough, then maybe we have to make use of Lloyd's good ideas. Although I'm sorry it's come to this, maybe we have to bite the bullet here; maybe we have no other choices except to find ways to reward the letter writers.

Toward this end, I agree with others who have asked for the reinstitution of the Faan Award for Best Letterhack at the next Corflu. Perhaps this will help provide an incentive to write more letters, to those who know they're unlikely to win any other awards. Certainly it seems appropriate to acknowledge the importance of the other significant participants in fanzine fandom: the readers.

Our kind of fandom can't continue without them. The recent discussions on line revealed that it's not just one or two fan editors that are feeling the chill, but most of them. The problem is crucial, and we haven't a lot of time left to solve it before fan editors start collapsing from disappointment.

Fanzines can't exist in a vacuum. And it's up to we who understand this fact to fill the void.

— Joyce Katz
March, 2004

Special Plug

Want more laughs like this? Check out Joyce's fanzine *Smokin' Rockets*.



The Return of the King

Comments on the Picture of the Year by rich brown

I suppose most everyone who intends to do so has already seen THE RETURN OF THE KING, the final segment of THE LORD OF THE RINGS. No one who has enjoyed the books can deny what a tremendous accomplishment these three films represent: What is probably the finest fantasy of the 20th (or most any other) century has been made into a marvelous, indeed breathtaking, movie which both honors and respects its origins. Quite aside from what it has done for the work itself, there is also what it has done for the genre of fantasy: It seems likely that it will win the "Best Picture" and "Best Director" Oscars at this year's Academy Awards ceremonies -- something which no fantasy film has ever managed to do.

I hope, therefore, that I can be forgiven for focusing on the negative. While I don't find any truly *major* fault with RotK, I'm afraid a series of things -- some little and some not-so-little -- bothered me just enough to make me feel disappointed with the finish. Indeed, if I hadn't heard so many times that all three movies were essentially filmed at one time, I'd be inclined to be-

lieve that director Peter Jackson just ran out of steam.

I don't think of myself as a Tolkien purist. Now, true, for those of you who don't already know it, back in the late '50s my best friend Paul Stanbery and I wrote in our fanzines and talked about our pipedream of making LotR into a nine-hour movie; a number of our fannish friends in the LArea joined us in imagining just who we would cast in which roles, given unlimited funds. And I admit I've probably read THE LORD OF THE RINGS all of some 20 times. But I never learned to speak either version of Elvish or to read and/or write in Tengwar. And though I have a copy, I've never read beyond a few pages of THE SILMARILLION.

Thus, despite a few minor misgivings (some of which were resolved by additions made in the extended versions), I felt overall that Jackson remained essentially true to Tolkien's vision in both THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING and THE TWO TOWERS.

Let's be specific here: Since I think the Tom Bombadil section slows the narrative flow of the

book, I didn't in the least mind it being eliminated when it was moved to the silver screen. I grant that, in the book, Bombadil saves the hobbits from wights on the Barrow Downs, which in itself isn't significant, but that's where they pick up some old swords made by the men of Westerenese, one of which (carried by Merry) has been forged with runes of bane for the Witch King of Angmar, who at this point in the story is the King of the Nazgul. But this didn't bother me enough to desire the tedium of Tom prancing around singing songs to his lovely Goldberry -- and, besides, I thought I spotted what could surely be a simple workaround. But I'll get to that a bit later.

I must admit that, before any of the movies were released, I was as concerned as any Tengwar-writing Elvish-speaker about the changes being planned to Arwen's character (which had been the subject of much back-and-forth debate on the official LotR site). The fear expressed was that the plan to make her more of an elvish warrior maiden to give her a more central part in the story might make her seem more like Xena than the Arwen whom Tolkien described. Ultimately, however, I felt Jackson made the right choices: I didn't mind her taking on Glorfindel's role in helping Frodo escape the Nine Riders in THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING but was gratified when Jackson reversed himself (even scrapping a couple of days of shooting) on having her show up with the elves at Helm's Deep in THE TWO TOWERS. (It was plain to me, however, that having the elves relieve the siege of Helm's Deep, which didn't happen in the book, probably meant the elves wouldn't show up to relieve the

siege of Gondor, which *did* happen in the book. But you can't have everything.) I also found myself agreeing with Jackson that use of material taken from the appendices about Aragorn and Arwen helped keep the romantic bond between them strong for the audience in THE TWO TOWERS. I felt even Tolkien would have approved of this underscoring.

There was, however, *one* fairly major change I couldn't force myself to approve prior to THE RETURN OF THE KING, and that was making Faramir more susceptible to the One Ring in THE TWO TOWERS. In the book, he's not into power for its own sake and hence isn't tempted, whereas Jackson chooses to depict him as only a little better than his brother. I do think I understand, well enough, Jackson's stated reasoning for making that change -- after all the time spent describing the insidious allure of the ring, it seemed counter-productive to have Faramir say he wouldn't pick it up if he saw it lying by the side of the road. But while I understand, I don't agree: I think Tolkien was saying (with both Faramir and Sam) that you don't have to be a wizard, an elf or a king to have the moral character necessary to resist evil. It was

the first time I felt that anything in the movie was a betrayal of Tolkien's vision, for all that I know it was not meant to be.

In fairness, for those who may have only seen the film on the big screen, I will point out that the extended version of THE TWO TOWERS has an additional scene that provides more motivation and thus makes it a *little* easier to accept the change made to Faramir's character. In that scene, Denethor gives Boromir all the credit for relieving a siege of Osgiliath while giving none whatsoever to Faramir for having withstood the siege against great odds. Boromir protests the unfairness of this, but their father doesn't listen.

But it wasn't the addition of this scene that ultimately let me shrug this off: Call me mean-spirited, if you like, but I found it fittingly ironic that the most glaring error made in all three films was a direct result of this



change. Faramir takes Frodo, Sam and Smeagol/Gollum prisoner, intending to bring them before his father -- along with the prize of the One Ring. Their route takes them first to Osgiliath, which happens to be under attack; it is there that Frodo, in a daze, tries to show the One Ring to a hovering Nazgul. Sam tackles him and pulls him out of sight before the Nazgul sees -- at which point Frodo draws Sting and very nearly stabs Sam before he recovers from his momentary madness. When Faramir, understanding a bit more about the nature of the ring, ultimately decides to let them go, it is remarked that his life might be forfeit for doing so and I found myself wondering what punishment might be dished out to a Captain of Gondor who has neglected, over a two-day period, to disarm his prisoners: He not only didn't take Sting from Frodo, he let him keep the One Ring on a chain around his neck. Granted, Faramir had no real idea what the ring could do -- the only thing he knew about it was that was *the most devastating weapon in all of Middle Earth*. Naturally, he'd let his prisoner, Frodo, continue to wear it around his neck, and as long as he was doing that, he might just as well be allowed to keep his flashy elven sword as well. **sigh**

Well, let me say again: I'm not a purist. This one false step was disappointing but it did not, could not, in and of itself, ruin the movie for me. I persisted in my high hopes for all three films -- hopes that I'd had since the beginning, largely because I'd heard both Ian McCallum (Gandalf) and Elijah Wood (Frodo) say, in separate interviews, that whenever *anyone* in the cast had a question about whether they were doing the Right Thing, they consulted the book (not the treatment, not

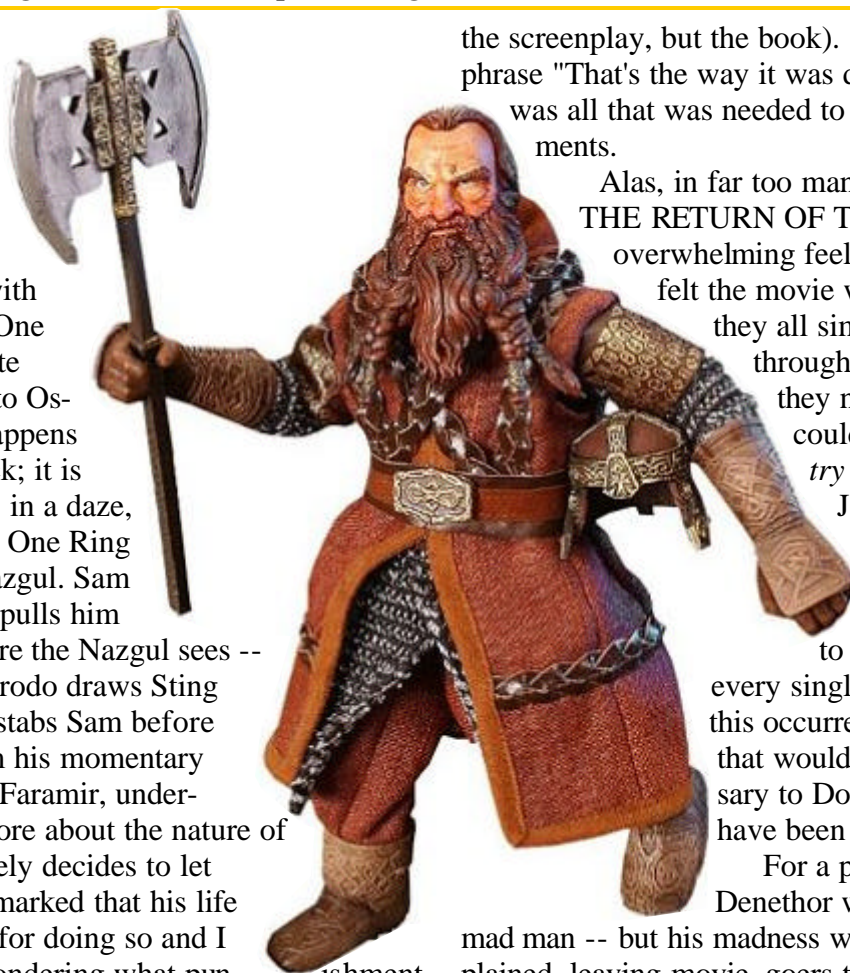
the screenplay, but the book). And that the phrase "That's the way it was done in the books" was all that was needed to win most arguments.

Alas, in far too many instances in *THE RETURN OF THE KING*, my overwhelming feeling was that they felt the movie was ending and they all simply walked through it plonkingly, like they no longer cared and couldn't be bothered to *try* to stay on course.

Jackson's direction, for once, lacked direction. And, most discouraging to consider: In almost every single instance where this occurred, the extra effort that would have been necessary to Do It Right would have been minimal.

For a prime example, Denethor was shown to be a mad man -- but his madness was never fully explained, leaving movie-goers to assume it was perhaps all the result of his grief over Boromir's death. Denethor's madness, of course, is almost entirely due to his misuse of the seeing stones; for years, at this point, he's been deceived, allowed to believe that he's been able to wrestle use of the I Palantir from the Dark Lord to see his plans. This could have easily been conveyed in a few lines of dialog: Denethor would have clasped the I Palantir to himself after lighting the funeral pyre (as he did in the book), and Gandalf could have said something like, "Now I understand what you meant when you said you've seen a great deal more than I gave you credit for -- but you're a fool if you think you've seen anything other than what the Dark Lord wanted you to see! Only the king has the right and the strength of will necessary to wrest an I Palantir away from him." A bit later, he could have remarked to Pippin that the Dark Lord had shown Denethor only enough to overset his reason.

While I'm on this, the I Palantir is used in another way in the books that they don't bother with



in the movie. In THE RETURN OF THE KING, after years of reluctance and doubt, Aragorn is coming into his own, finally stepping up to become the leader needed in these dark times by the world of men. One of the ways he does so is by wresting the I Palintir from the



Dark Lord just prior to the "diversion" they all undertake in the hopes of helping Frodo complete his mission. Aragorn reveals himself to the Dark Lord in taking over the stone and shows him the sword reforged, to add verisimilitude to the ploy.

In the book it is Gandalf who points out that the one thing they have going for them is the fact that the Dark Lord could never conceive that they might try to destroy the ring, since it is not anything he would ever consider doing in their place. So Gandalf urges Aragorn to take back the use of the I Palintir, to reveal himself. This is, essentially, what makes the diversion work -- it convinces the Dark Lord to commit all his forces to crush what he believes to be the upstart and seemingly over-confident heir of Isildur and whoever (if not Aragorn himself) may be trying to wield the ring in his behalf.

We don't get any of this in the movie. Not even a hint, really.

Another way in which Aragorn demonstrates his growing leadership abilities in the book is when he leads Legolas, Gimli and the rest of the Dunedain -- all of them riding forward in terror but forcing themselves to follow on the strength of Aragorn's will -- through the Paths of the Dead. They don't call them the Paths of the Dead in the movie, the rest of the Dunedain are nowhere to be seen and Legolas doesn't tell Gimli (as he does in the book) that while elves are not normally affected by fear of the dead, he for once feels actual terror and dread for those whom

Aragorn commands (thus giving us some idea of how frightful the whole thing is supposed to be). Without that the whole scene, which is absolutely riveting in the book, has all the impact of a blow to the head with a wet paper towel. Again, this was apparently deemed not worth the effort to stay with the spirit of the books.

I suppose the reason Jackson has Frodo send Sam away while they're part way up the stairs to Shelob's lair is to have Sam out of the way when Frodo is attacked by Shelob. Since this is for no good reason, I found myself fuming when it happened. It also doesn't make any sense for Sam to get all the way down to where the lambs had been dropped by Gollum before deciding to turn back: Sam was in no doubt of his own innocence and he doesn't pick up the wrapping he found to show to Frodo to prove it, so what's the point (other than doing something the auteur thinks needs to be done)?

It also seemed to me -- and I realize this might be wholly subjective -- that the pacing of this segment of the movie sucked. It stands out because otherwise, throughout the film, Jackson has directed with such a sure hand. The whole scene from where Frodo enters the cave until he's eventually attacked by Shelob goes on too long; as soon as Frodo starts getting tangled up in webbing, *everyone* must surely realize that Shelob is a spider -- yet Frodo lumbers on longer than our interest can be maintained in what's going to happen next (particularly as the movie itself, with battle scene after battle scene, has been going on for so long at this point anyway). After Shelob attacks and rolls Frodo up in a lot of webbing, Sam shows up and then everything happens *too fast*. Sam is apparently just trying to get some of the webbing off Frodo's face when a couple of Orcs show up and Sam has to scuttle away to hide. It's not until the Orcs reveal that Frodo is not really dead that we find that Sam has not only taken Sting but the One Ring as well. He doesn't agonize with himself, in the belief that Frodo is dead, over whether he should take Frodo's things and attempt to finish the job himself. Then too, in the book, Sam *uses* the One Ring when he charges and kills those Orcs -- thus appearing to them as a fearsome creature, perhaps even an Elf Lord. The movie doesn't bother.

But a caveat here: Perhaps the extended version will do better by this extremely muddy set of scenes and at least a few of the things I'm complaining about will be resolved. Let's hope.

Jackson's at least consistent in where he plainly disagrees with Tolkien, since when Frodo wants the One Ring returned, Sam has a difficult time giving it back. Sam's sole reason for being on this quest is his love for his friend Frodo; Sam's a gardener and power -- not even the power of the One Ring itself -- has no ability to attract him. As only the book cares to make evident.

Most of these complaints of mine are minor, I'm sure, to people who've never read or don't care that much about the books, but there is also, to my mind, one failing in the final installment of the film that seems to me to be fairly large and unforgivable.

To my mind, there are two scenes THE LORD OF THE RINGS that, for sheer dramatic impact, stand head and shoulders above all others.

The first is Gandalf's stand, in THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING, against the Balrog in the mines of Moria. I don't think the staunchest Tolkien purist could deny that the movie realizes this scene to near perfection, both in its depiction of the Balrog and the use of Tolkien's actual written words in what Gandalf says: "You cannot pass. I am a servant of the Secret Fire, wielder of the flame of Anor. You cannot pass. The dark fire will not avail you, flame of Udun. Go back to the Shadow! You cannot pass." Not to mention: "Fly, you fools!" As readers, and viewers, we are stunned by this overwhelming loss for the fellowship.

The second is Eowyn and Merry's confrontation with the head Nazgul, the Witch King of Angmar in THE RETURN OF THE KING. The movie fails miserably to convey *any* of the underlying drama of this scene. It's utterly flat. For a number of reasons, some of which matter more than others.

In the book, we don't know that Eowyn has

disguised herself as Dernhelm, a Rohirrim fighter who has pledged not to remove "his" armor until after the coming battle, so it's a surprise when the Witch King quotes prophecy which says he will not die at the hand of any man and she takes off her helm to reveal that she's a woman. I think this could have been done in the movie if Merry had simply been pointed toward Dernhelm as someone light enough to let Merry ride along with him; it wouldn't have been necessary for Dernhelm to speak and in armor Eowyn could have passed for a man on camera.

But this is not the only thing that robs the scene of its effectiveness. In the book, the Nazgul, by their mere presence, all *broadcast* an aura of fear. Men who are brave enough to fight a Troll barehanded find themselves frozen in terror when a Nazgul passes over. All this would have taken, the only thing that would have been required to make this understood to the moviegoers, would have been for someone to merely *remark* upon this effect. No one does. The Nazgul fly over and do frightful things, but there's nothing to show that Eowyn is demonstrating greater courage than most men are capable of by merely standing up to face one -- which



she's able to do by virtue of the great love she feels for her uncle, the fallen king.

The blow that kills the Nazgul is actually struck by Merry, of course. He doesn't know it, but he's carrying a sword that was forged for that



specific purpose. And there's great effect to be felt in the fact that he doesn't demonstrate Eowyn's level of courage; overcome by the terror projected by the Nazgul King and in tears, condemning himself for his cowardice in not being able to strike a blow for the king whom he also loved, Merry crawls around on hands and knees and manages to get behind the Witch King and, with great effort, to stand and stab him in the back. Now, as I've already mentioned, Merry didn't pick up that special sword on the Barrow Downs in the first film as he did in the book -- but up to the point of seeing the third movie I had hopes that they could work around that. Aragorn provided swords to the hobbits while they were all on Weathertop without saying where they came from. It didn't need to be explained at that point -- there was a perfect place in RotK where this could have been set up so that it later could have been seen for what it was by Gandalf (as in the book): Merry, trying out the sword that was

given to him in Rohan, remarks on it not being very sharp. He could easily have said, "Well, I'll just use this one that Aragorn got for me back on Weathertop." And whoever he said it to could have remarked on the runes on that sword: "I can't tell you what they say, but I recognize they are runes of the Westernese." Gandalf would have been able to read them when Merry was discovered on the field of battle after dispatching the Nazgul. But, no, a few lines of dialog are too much effort and Merry's just told to sharpen his rather blunt sword.

In both the book and movie, Eowyn's arm is broken by the Nazgul King's huge mace. But in the book, while she and Merry ultimately succeed in dispatching him, they both succumb to the effects of the black breath and the dark magic surrounding his very existence -- both are left unconscious, seemingly dead. When Eomer comes on the scene, he believes both the king *and* Eowyn to be dead (he doesn't see Merry) -- and

his despair sends him into so ferocious a berserker rage that he and the riders of Rohan begin to turn the tide of battle.

None of this happens in the movie. We're not in the least surprised when Eowyn unmasks herself to the Nazgul king. They exchange blows -- his mace breaks her shield arm while she chops off the head of his mount -- and Merry matter-of-factly and with little effort stabs him from behind. They kill him by force of arms alone, with passing but not-much-worth-remarking bravery, and they are left apparently only moderately wounded. Eomer doesn't even come by. One of the most stunning and overwhelming scenes of the book is thus ensmallled, made into an encounter with only marginal impact ("Golly, the Nazgul was killed by a girl!") that gets swallowed up in what becomes, through lack of contrast, the larger battle. I mean, ho-hum.

This may seem irrelevant, but it's not: I'm an Agnostic. I used to be an Atheist, but I came to feel that the existence of a God, any God, is a matter of opinion -- and opinions don't matter diddly-squat when it comes to what is real. As witness the one-time belief that the world was flat. It didn't make the world flat, and although it's true that it had the *effect* of making many sailors treat the world as if it really *were* flat, I also hold that that's a whole separate argument and not one I want to get into in this digression.

Now, Occam's Razor comes down on the side of the Atheists, so I don't "believe" that God exists -- I'm just willing to postulate the *possibility* because my belief (however backed up) is just my opinion, and you can see my opinion of opinions in general by reading what I have to say about them above.

I bring this up only to explain that, when I was diagnosed with cancer last July, I *didn't* find my beliefs about the existence or non-existence of God undergoing any change; I remained firmly wishy-washy about the whole notion. But, given my childhood desire to make a movie of THE LORD OF THE RINGS that remained faithful to the book, I *did* find myself thinking that, if God had me shuffle off this mortal coil

before I had a chance to see THE RETURN OF THE KING, then he/she/it and I were going to go a few rounds if/when we ever came face to face.

Fortunately, I didn't have to make good on that; I not only survived the initial surgery and chemo/radiation treatment for the cancer but a subsequent operation to relieve an obstructed bowel at the end of December. I was too sick to go see the movie when it opened, or attend with my ex-wife and friends at Christmas (as I had the two earlier films), but eventually I saw it, as I think I've demonstrated by what I've had to say about it here.

Quite aside from being quite pleased that I'm not dead yet, now that I've seen the film I have to say that I'm *really* glad I didn't have that little contretemps with God. I mean, I realized I'm known for my love of a good argument, but I just *hate* getting into the kind of dust-ups that I lose almost wholly because I've entered into them due to a misunderstanding through not having had all the facts. (We won't, in this particular essay, go into just how many times I've done that.)

What I mean is this: If I *had* died and remonstrated with God for serving me such a back-handed turn, I can't help but feel that, following my angry outburst, God might have turned out to be a reasonable creature who would have simply shown me the film at that point. Which means I would have wound up afterwards, chagrined and replying, like Emily Latelia, "Oh. Well. Never mind."

--rich brown
March, 2004





Muy Caliente

Column by Aileen Forman

The Iowa saga

or *Why I Hate the Midwest*

I went back to Iowa June 26th to attend my nephew's wedding. I was 16 when Chuck was born and babysat him almost every day of the first two years of his life. He's one of my favorite people and I didn't want to miss his big day, but I also couldn't miss too much work or spend a lot of money on the trip, so I flew out from the Ontario (California, not Canada) airport to Kansas City instead of flying directly into Des Moines, where my folks live.

I had arranged for a rental car at Payless Car Rental – or, as I prefer now to call it, Painful Car Rental. I got to Kansas City about 1:30 in the afternoon. I actually received the car at 4 p.m. The good news is that it was a car several steps up from the class I paid for. The bad news is that I just don't care. I am not a car person. Unlike Ken, I don't get all excited about driving a convertible or a luxury car. So I *really* didn't care about getting a Ford Taurus instead of a Ford Escort.

Anyway, I finally got to my folks' house at about 8 p.m. This did not make me happy, since it meant that instead of leaving for my flight back home at around 6 a.m. on Sunday, I would have to leave at close to 4 a.m. I was really not looking forward to that and, not for the first time, questioned my own sanity for flying into K.C.

My parents live on an acreage on the outskirts of Des Moines – a place my brother and I not-so-fondly called Dogpatch when we were growing up. Although I knew intellectually that my folks were getting more and more mired in the hillbilly lifestyle as they grew older, I was not prepared for the sight of at least 11 dead and rusting cars and trucks sitting in the driveway, in the yard, in the garden, and along the street.

Every time I go back, I get slapped in the face with reality. I come from a redneck family. At least they don't have hound dogs sleeping on the porch – just two yappy lapdogs.

The folks seemed in good spirits, despite Dad's diabetes and the complications related to it, such as hot, tingly feet and leg cramps. Both

Mom and Dad eat only fatty foods and get exercise only when forced. Still, they are adults and (mostly) in sound mind, so I'm always at a loss as to how to get them to behave differently.

Mom and Dad both needed haircuts rather desperately, so we trudged out to the old broken picnic table in the yard and turned on the porch light. I grabbed the scissors and the clippers. Whatever small skill I have in hairstyling was greatly diminished by the necessity of slapping mosquitoes every ten seconds.

I buzzed Dad's hair to a length of about ¼ inch and gave Mom a hairstyle that resembled the ones they give to women inmates. The sad part is how much better they looked afterwards. They were both thrilled – mostly because I don't require payment.

Everyone was looking forward to Chuck and Shalome's wedding on Saturday. I was happy not to have to be a passenger while my father or mother (or, god forbid, my brother) drove. Neither Mom nor Dad can see very well, particularly at night. My brother is simply a terrible driver and has been all his life.

The following day, after visiting my 94-year-old grandmother (who still drives better than any of the aforementioned family members), we packed up the car and I started out of the driveway.

"Where's the map, Dad?" I asked. He responded by opening his car door. I stopped and he went inside. Five minutes passed and he finally came out – without a map.

I fished the little map out of my purse that Chuck had included with the wedding invitation, put the car in reverse again, wound my way through the rusting heaps of steel and plastic that acted like an obstacle course, ... and then it all started.

"Let me drive," my brother Matt demanded. "No," I responded flatly. "You're not on the rental agreement."

"I won't wreck anything.

I'm a good driver." "Yeah, you and Rainman," I said sarcastically, which flew right over his head. He continued to ask to drive for the entirety of my visit in an attempt to drive me crazy enough to let him take the wheel of a \$30,000 vehicle that I was financially responsible for.

Next, from the back seat I heard my Mom say, "Teedee, let me see the map." For reasons never fully explained, my Mom calls my Dad "Teedee." His name is actually Donald.

"No, Rosa!" Dad calls Mom "Rosa." Her name is actually Rose Erin.

"Pleeeeeeese? I'll give it right back," Mom wheedled.

"Oh, for ..." Mumbles came from the left side of the back seat, thankfully too low to carry to the front. "Here!"

A long pause. Then Mom – "Can I borrow your glasses?"

"Woman!" This came in a threatening tone of voice. "No!"

"Pleeeeeeese? I'll give them right back."

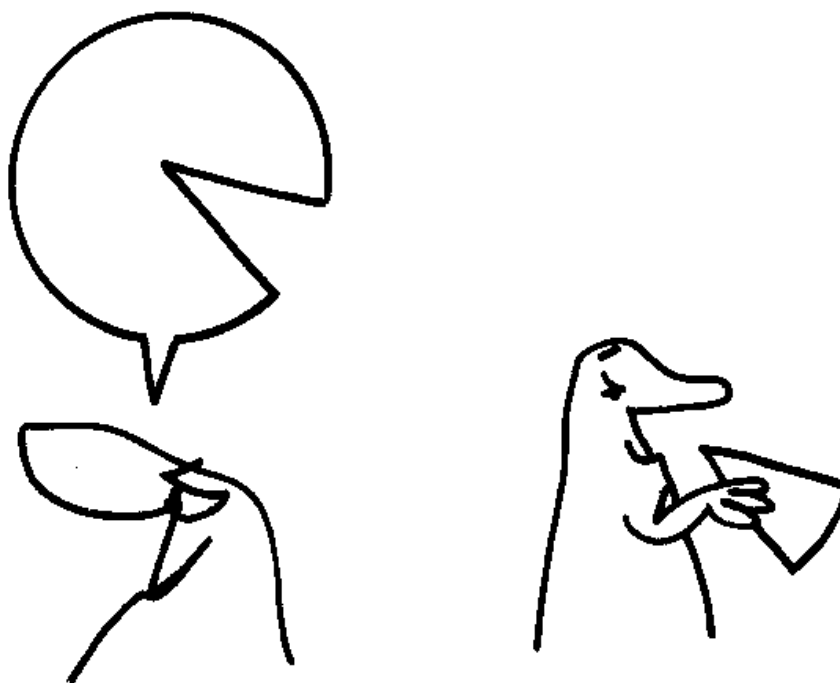
"No! You can't read maps right anyway."

"Dad!" I said. "Just give her the glasses for godssake!"

"Oh, for ... Here!"

Long pause. Then Mom said, "Aren't we heading in the wrong direction? Osceola is the other way."

"For heaven's sake, Rosa, we're going to



Osage!” My dad exclaimed.

“Oh.” Another long pause. Then, “But Oskaloosa is off of I-80, isn’t it?”

“Oh, for ... Osage! Osage! We’re going to Osage!” My dad exploded. “Give me that damn map!”

“No!”

It was then that I heard myself say, “Guys, if you don’t stop that, I’m going to stop this car and go home!”

It had finally happened. I’d become my parents. To make things worse, my mother said, with no irony in her voice whatsoever, “Well, he started it!”

After a while, Mom passed the map and glasses to Dad, who started to tell me about a shortcut he knew that could cut ten miles off the trip, but I’ve been on enough road-hunting trips with him and couldn’t be suckered into it.

Road hunting, by the way, is when you get in the car with a gun and a retriever (me, when I was a kid) and drive down country roads until you see a pheasant, rabbit or squirrel. You then stop the car and shoot it. Not very sporting, but then we were not hunting for the fun but for the food.

Still, Dad would always claim to know where we were – until he got to a road sign, when he’d make this tell-tale “Oh!” and turn around. He’d then promptly get lost again.

As we exited Interstate 35, we passed through the interestingly named towns of Manly and Cumming. I wasted a few moments thinking about the circumstances in which these towns could have been named. Finding this to be an unfruitful topic of conversation with my mother and father in the car, I remained mute and drove on.

We got to Osage and I found the Super 8 Motel, where I’d made reservations for a party of three. It turned out that my brother’s last minute decision to stay with us would cost an additional \$20, which I would have paid except that Matt dragged me out of the lobby and insisted on finding another hotel, citing the lack of a pool and claiming that the lobby clerk had been rude.

The only other motel in town was the Staff Motel and it looked just like the name – if the name was spelled “staph” and had “infection” after it. It resembled all the motels we’d stayed at when I was a kid. On summer vacations, we always ended up in a room that cost less than \$20, had cold and cold running water, two towels, and

vibrating beds. Dad would make us sneak in so he wouldn’t have to pay another \$2. And, of course, he wouldn’t give us a quarter to make the beds vibrate either.

Anyway, this motel was just as seedy looking. In fact, I couldn’t find the lobby. We headed for the bar that formed the center of two wings of one-story rooms. It turned out that you could either order a beer or a room from the bartender. We got the room for four of us for the same cost as a room for three at the Super 8, so Dad and Matt were happy. Dad even bought a lottery ticket in triumph.



Mom bought a beer, Matt said pool tables were almost as good as a pool and I thumped my head against the wall – stopping quickly when I took a good look at the wall.

The phone in the room didn't work and neither did my cell phone (was there no cellular tower in Iowa?!) but the TV had cable, so Dad was happy. He promptly turned on the Weather Channel (I don't know why he loves it so, but I guess if you live in Iowa, you'd better keep an eye on the weather). At this point, I might have welcomed a vibrating bed, but that apparently wasn't an option either.

I stepped into the bathroom. After killing the inevitable bug, I tried to shut the door. Arnold Schwarzenegger with a can of WD40 couldn't have closed that door. Warning my family members of my intention to take a shower, they all agreed to knock before entering. I turned on the shower. After about a minute or two, the trickle of water started to get warm. Figuring that was the best it would ever get, I stepped in.

The water immediately turned burning hot. Yelping, I swiped at the faucet. It turned freezing cold. I turned the showerhead to the wall and experimented until I thought I could get away with bathing without suffering frostbite or second degree burns.

Nope. It alternated between hot and cold in relentless waves until I finally rinsed off and got out. Naturally, there were only two towels. Resigned, I took one, which I think may have started life as a washcloth until it shrank. It was akin to being dried by a cow's tongue. Or a cat's.

We headed off to the rehearsal, held in the tiny town of St. Ansgar. It was a lovely little burg, built back when the nearby railroad line was a big seller for settlers. It's still the same size, sporting a population of about 400.

The rehearsal went off well but I had my age slapped in my face as I watched the bridesmaids and groomsmen. They looked like children playing at being grownups – all except for my nephew and his bride-to-be Shalome. In their eyes I saw true maturity – a calm and sure expression borne only by those who know their next step is the right one. Frankly, I'm certain I didn't have that look when I married Ken. I was so pleased for them.

The rehearsal dinner was held at the house of Shalome's father, Steve. He set up a spread in his garage, with chips, veggies and the makings for Maid-Rite sandwiches. Maid-Rite is a chain of restaurants in Iowa that serve a loose-beef burger. Think of a Sloppy Joe without the sloppy. They resemble hamburgers made without forming a patty. It's an Iowa thing. Outsiders will never understand the appeal.

Only one problem – it was Friday. My folks are insanely devout Catholics and wouldn't eat meat on Friday if they were starving, which, in fact, they were. Giving Steve a glare, they filled their plates with veggies and chips. Hiding farther back in the crowd, I made a sandwich and hid behind Chuck to eat it. If my folks saw me, they'd never forgive me, even though I've told them several times that I'm no longer a Catholic. They just say I'll find my way back soon. Urgh!

As I finished, Matt came slinking up with two sandwiches on his plate. I silently slid out of my chair and he slid in, careful to hide his plate from our folks. This is not the first time we've had to cover for each other and we're well practiced at it.

I took time to get Chuck and Shalome alone and give them some marital advice. "If you have kids," I told her, "don't forget you still need to play with Chuck. Take time alone just to have fun." She nodded solemnly. "And Chuck, here's advice from my favorite science fiction author." He listened carefully. "Rub her feet." He too nodded and promised to do so as often as possible.

Heading back to Osage, clouds gathered ominously and for once I was looking forward to watching the Weather Channel. By the time we got to the motel, it was sheeting rain. Naturally, the Weather Channel was dedicating its coverage to a hurricane in the Caribbean. On another channel, a little string of text at the bottom read, "Tornados sighted in Winnebago County ... Worth County ... Hancock County."

After a little pause, I asked my father what county we were in. Iowa has far more than its fair share of counties, by the way. He said he wasn't sure but we might be in Winnebago County. Sighing, I got up, went out in the pouring rain, and moved my car out from under the trees.

Coming back in, dripping wet, I read the next little string of text. "Hail spotted in Winnebago County and Mitchell County."

Torn between my desire to shelter the car under trees in case of hail and my desire not to see the rental car fly away like the Wicked Witch of the West, I shrugged my shoulders and went with my brother to the bar for a beer. On our way there, Matt said, "It's raining too hard to have a tornado hit." By the time the words were out of his mouth, the rain died down. As we entered the bar, it stopped. Luckily, neither tornados nor hail hit Osage in the night.

The next day we had breakfast at Hardees – a fast-food joint frequented for the most part by farmers. Mud was thick on the floor, but none of the perpetrators looked in the least bit guilty about it. In fact, not even the staff seemed to notice anything amiss about having to wade through an inch of mud in a restaurant. The conversations around us seemed to be primarily concerned with what last night's rain would do to the crops. I felt incredibly out of place.

The wedding wasn't until 5 p.m. Not sure what to do with ourselves, we went to Steve's house again. The members of the wedding party were doing what all wedding parties do – act like they're not panicking. The girls were in the kitchen applying makeup and working on elaborate hairstyles. The men were trying to figure out where they'd put their socks and discovering they'd left their tuxedos in the hotel room.

Mom and Dad sat out in the garage and chatted with Steve, careful not to bring up the subject of his recent divorce from Shalome's mother. By the way, when I'd asked Shalome if she happened to be Jewish, she just looked puzzled and asked me why everyone asked her that. I looked at her closely to see if she was kidding and then said I had no idea and dropped the subject.

The members of the wedding party finally got themselves ready and headed off to the church for pictures. My folks weren't due there for another three hours, so we continued to hang out in Steve's garage – until my mother saw his nudie calendar. We decided for my mother's sake to hang out in the local bar instead.

I risked my health and ordered a sandwich with mayonnaise. Looking at the less than pris-

tine appearance of the kitchen, I shrugged mentally and grabbed the cribbage board and well-worn cards sitting on the table next to us. We all played cribbage until the time came to head off for the church ourselves.

The ceremony was interesting only because of the various reactions I saw around me. My parents were horrified that Chuck and Shalome were getting married in a Methodist church, not the Catholic church and therefore made little noises of disapproval, which I tried to view as white noise. Matt wouldn't sit next to his ex, so I sat between them, feeling like a referee in a boxing match.

The hymns were particularly incomprehensible, making reference to butterflies and crossing rivers, opening hearts and taking refuge in other people's hands. One line struck me as particularly funny and I couldn't stop shaking with laughter, which I tried to disguise as crying. Matt sat there in his black rented tuxedo with dark wraparound sunglasses on his face. He looked like a Mafia character waiting to take out the groom following the ceremony. Mom tried to get him to take them off, but he ignored her. Actually, he's pretty good at ignoring almost everyone, particularly me, such as when I told him to stop mocking the hymns.

After the wedding, we headed off for the reception. Being Iowans, they served pork sandwiches, pork and beans, and macaroni salad – with pork. No, just kidding about that last. Anyway, my whole job in this event was to play hostess and release tables one by one to go to the buffet. I found myself stymied by the crowd. They didn't bother sitting down, they just entered the building, lined up for food, grabbed a drink and then found a table. Life's short, I guess, and you better not chance being last at the chow.

Still, Shalome and her mother had done a terrific job of decorating the place and everyone had fun. The only weird thing was the décor chosen by Shalome – black, white and gray. It seemed a little monochromatic, but I guess it would look great in the photos, assuming people used black and white film.

We couldn't stay long, since I had to get up the next morning at 4 a.m. – a fact that never left my mind for long. We drove through intermittent

rain back to Des Moines. In the lulls, fireflies took the opportunity to try to share the highway with us. Did you know that if you hit a firefly when it's "on" you get a glow-in-the-dark streak on your windshield?

We hadn't gone ten miles before I heard my mother ask my father to see the map. Dear god, not the map fiasco again! But yes! It was almost identical to the conversation I'd heard on the way up to Osage. I caught myself before I started pounding my head on the steering wheel, not wanting to die in Iowa and never getting to see California again.

I slept a total of about three hours before it was time to rush back to Kansas City for my flight. Remembering how inept the rental company was earlier, I decided to drive even faster. Naturally, the rain came back, making me arrive at the airport with only 30 minutes before the plane took off.

After standing for ten minutes in the security line, I was told brusquely that I had to have my boarding pass before they'd let me into the area. I rushed back to the ticket counter, stood for another ten minutes there, got my boarding pass, ran back to the security line, stood for another five minutes there and finally got onboard the plane. As we took off, I felt an overwhelming sense of relief for having gotten out of the Midwest successfully.

Now I had to make a decision. Ken's brother in Phoenix had been working on Ken's truck for a couple of months and it was finally ready to come home. If I felt up to it, I was planning on driving it back to Yucaipa, instead of changing planes and flying back to Ontario. I did a mental checklist, pronounced myself still sound of mind and body and not overly tired, so I got off the plane and met up with my brother-in-law Jim.

Jim and his wife Alette had to show me their home, introduce me to the dogs, etc. so by the time I left, it was 3 p.m. I stopped at a gas station to fill up and promptly locked my keys in the truck.

Now, you might be thinking that this would have been a good clue that I was in no way capable of driving home. Still, in that same weird way drunks have of convincing themselves that they're okay to drive, I found myself determined

to prove I was okay. It took me two hours to break into the truck, but I did it. My cell phone had run out of juice, so I called my folks collect from a nearby pay phone and asked them to call Ken and tell him I was on my way. After making several wrong turns, I finally ended up on Interstate 10, heading home.

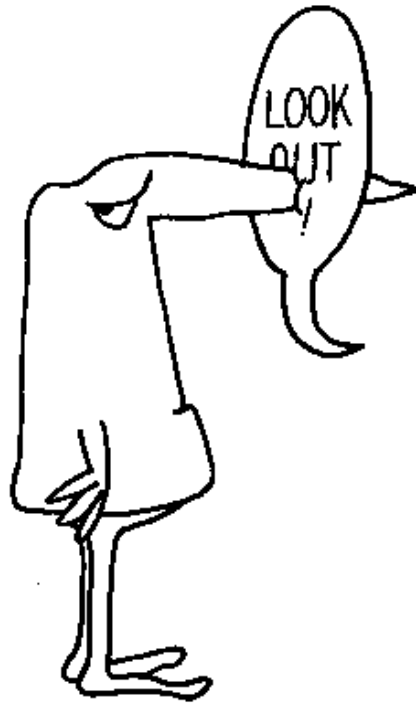
Well, that drive was longer than I anticipated too. I ended up taking what I thought was a 20 minute nap in the parking lot of a McDonalds. I scared myself when I woke up and saw the time, but convinced myself that I hadn't been sleeping more than two hours but that I simply had forgotten to change my watch back from Central Time. Starting the truck, I took off again.

I finally arrived home at what I thought was ten o'clock. Ken was frantically worried and very angry. "Do you realize it's midnight?" he asked. Looking at the clock, I realized that I must have changed my watch without realizing, really *had* slept two hours and never called Ken to let him know what had happened. Apologizing profusely, I staggered to bed.

The moral of this story is: Don't go to Iowa. Ever.

—Aileen Forman
January, . 2004





The “Now he tells me” bit.

Sunstroke

Column by Cathi Wilson

When I married my husband, Ben, I do recall agreeing to love him through sickness and in health. But I didn't know that he would steadfastly test that promise. I should have known before the marriage, but I refused to see the signs.

We were living together just three months when the first incident happened. He was riding his motorcycle. He hit some gravel, overcompensated, hit a curb, and ended up with a broken arm and lots of road rash. I thought it was just a freak accident. I dutifully nursed my man back to health and thought nothing more of it. Little did I know what I would be in for.

A year later we were married. In the first year after our nuptials Ben had developed extremely painful kidney stones and had to have them removed. If you have never had this procedure, let me inform you it's not a pleasant one. They have to go up the urethra (thankfully under anesthesia)

to get to the stones and then they leave about a thirty-six inch tube up there for a couple of weeks. It is removed in the doctor's office sans drugs. You can't do anything but feel sorry for the guy the whole time this is happening.

There were a couple of years there that Ben gave me some reprieve from my nursing duties. Then one day, he was cleaning out our apartment storage unit and threw out his back. My husband, many years earlier, had suffered from a ruptured disk. This resulted in surgery on his lower lumbar. We have discovered since that he needs to be very careful when doing any physical work.

About a year of seemingly good health followed. Ben and I had gotten into a very heated and emotional discussion. He decided to get into a one-punch brawl with a metal floor lamp. I can't say that either one of them won since both of them ended up broken. The lamp sheared in

half and my husband re-broke his right arm.

The year following we got some happy news. I was pregnant with our now wonderful three-year-old girl, Megan. During the seventh month of my pregnancy Ben's back went south, so to speak, again. He was over at the Katz's lifting a lawn mower out of his truck when he re-injured his disk. I got a phone call from Arnie informing me that my husband was yet again broken. He had to crawl out to the bed of the truck so that I could take him to the emergency room. They gave him some drugs to ease his pain and sent us home telling Ben to see his own physician for further treatment.

He new he would have to probably have another surgery but refused to go until after the birth of our daughter. He was in so much pain that he couldn't even stand straight. The doctor later told me, that he didn't understand how Ben was able to walk.

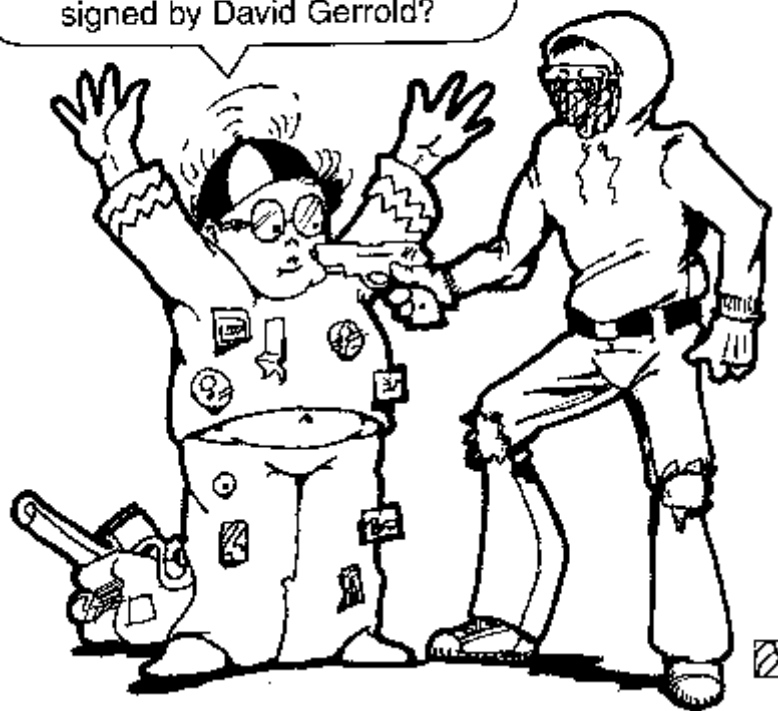
Our offspring came into the world in November and, after another emergency room and a few doctors' office visits, Ben was scheduled for surgery in December. Now I would be nursing my baby and my husband.

After the recuperation from his latest visit from under the knife, Ben felt like a new man. He also has become quite wary (comparatively) about his back. There was good health in the Wilson household for about two years. I became complacent and thought that our luck had changed. But alas, this too would pass.

Then came the fateful camping trip in Utah. He went out mountain biking with Derick Stazenski and came back with a sprained ankle and broken foot. I should have known that it wouldn't last.

The most recent injury has been a black eye. He was strolling down the street. Minding his

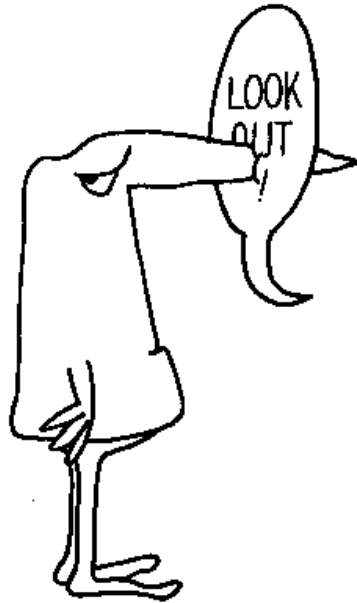
My money or my life? Uh, how about an Elvira poster, three Hershey bars, a can of Diet Coke, a copy of "The Enchanted Duplicator" and a styrofoam cup signed by David Gerrold?



own business, when he was startled by an inconsiderate driver. He turned to look at the car and then turned right into a large metal light post. By the look of his eye he got quite a bell ringing. Unlike the other light that he had a tangle with I believe there was a clear winner in this confrontation.

I have two trains of thought on my husband's slow self-mutilation. The first is that I am destined to love a man that needs my attention so badly that he must cause himself bodily harm to get it. Second, since most of the accidents have happened out of my sight and range of influence, my husband is so married that he can't even walk down the street without me. Whatever the reason, I have resigned myself to knowing that every so often I am to nurse my husband back from whatever illness and/or malady that might befall him, in sickness or in health.

—Cathi Wilson
Summer, 2004



The “Now he tells me” bit.

The Toasted Bagel

Column by Arnie Katz

The Parts Unknown Fan Fund Need You!

I used to care about fan funds, back when they sent BNFs like Ron Ellik and Robert Lichtman to the UK or brought fans like Atom to the US. I confess that I haven’t given them much attention in recent years. The latest TAFF election, apparently a contest among several very nice people with only rudimentary fan credentials, hardly caused a ripple at Toner Hall. Nothing against those who ran, but I just didn’t feel motivated to subsidize their European vacation.

The DUFF race did, admittedly, impinge on my consciousness.. The relatively high expense of going to Australia somewhat justifies the effort and I like both of the nominees (though I’m less sure about this “running as a couple” thing when the other partner isn’t very active.) Guy Lillian publishes one of today’s most popular

North American fanzines – well enough known to inspire this issue’s parody cover -- and Mike McInerney is a fine fan whose self-effacing ways have won him far less fannish praise than he deserves. One of the first fans I met in person, Mike’s many kindnesses to me back in our New York days won’t soon be forgotten.

More than that, Mike and I are... uh...co-editor-in-laws. He co-edited *Focal Point*’s first run with rich brown and I filled the same post in the fanzine’s second run as a newszine. (I ran it solo, with plenty of help from Joyce and the support of the Brooklyn Insurgents, before I turned it into a monthly genzine.)

In fact, their race put me in such a benign mood that I actually coughed up the voting fee. I voted for McInerney in the knowledge that either candidate would represent US fandom very well.

I've gone into such detail because I feel the need to explain this lapse in my indifference to fan funds before I thunder ahead with my bold new fan fund plan.

If you are surprised that a fan fund is my latest brainstorm, just imagine how shocked I am about it. I certainly didn't set out to enrich fandom with yet another travel charity.

No, indeed. I had a far loftier goal. In keeping with my recent attempts to adapt to the current fandom, I sought a way to self-aggrandize myself with the least possible effort.

Unfortunately, it's not always easy to change, to embrace new ways. Try as I might, I kept coming up with ideas that required work, even creativity. "That is not the modern fannish way," I scolded myself.

Meanwhile, I was still thinking...

"I can run for TAFF!" I said. "Or DUFF or CUFF or something like that." Then I recalled the example of my great and good friend Robert Lichtman. He'd enjoyed the trip, but not the two years of hell as the TAFF administrator. The strain of dealing with all the fannish bureaucrats and buttinskis had etched care lines on his sensitive fannish face and disrupted *Trap Door's* hectic annual schedule.

That ruled out running for a fan fund trip. Then it hit me: running for a fan fund doesn't confer nearly as much egoboo as starting one. Look at Don Ford. He was a nice man, a good club and convention fan and all, but how many fans outside the Midwest would know his name today if he hadn't helped to found TAFF?

Let me tell you about the greatest new Fan Fund since Minneapolis Fandom started giving out free condoms at conventions. It's called PUFF, the Parts Unknown Fan Fund.

It fills a real need in our hobby. This is exactly the kind of empty-headed, pointless activity that can keep fandom's paper tigers and paper shufflers happily wrangling and posturing for years. It'll be a fine excuse for secret listservs, marathon auctions and over-the-top electioneering. Plus it'll look plenty swell on those fan resumes. Affiliation with PUFF may be worth a walkie-talkie or even prime-time duty in the

SFWA suite bathroom at the next convention.

Who actual stands for PUFF is secondary to the opportunities for amateur file clerking and fan politics it offers. Fandom has grown tremendously in these years of the Internet, yet there are, if anything, fewer such positions available now than in the 1980s.

Even though this is solely my idea, I am not blind to its brilliance. PUFF suffers from none of the problems that beset fan funds today.

Let me explain the factors that give PUFF an advantage over all other fan funds

1. One problem with, say, TAFF is that just about every fan worth sending has already made the trip one or seventeen times. That won't happen with the Parts Unknown Fan Fund. *No one* – at least no one you know – has been to Parts Unknown so you can pack away that perpetual calendar. There's absolutely no chance that a PUFF candidates will have been there at any time, let alone recently..

2. Many older fans find the self-serving campaigning for fan funds distasteful. They long nostalgically for the days when fans "stood" for TAFF. Given the nature of Parts Unknown (*see sidebar*), and the fact that we only guarantee a one-way passage is designed to blunt the enthusiasm of any potential volunteer, even ones who blunt their judgment with blunts.

PUFF is the first fan fund to move beyond the tackiness of forcing the candidates to sully themselves by any show of interest. PUFF drafts its nominees without any taint of acquiescence on their part. The PUFF winner can venture into Parts Unknown secure in the knowledge that the consensus of fandom is solely responsible for propelling them toward whatever fate awaits them in Parts Unknown.

3. Andy Hooper recently wrote an article about the Gonad Factor in recent fan fund races. Even though it didn't appear in *Crazy from the Heat*, it was a mighty fine article, full of polysyllabic profundity. Ted White also wrote about the Gonad Factor I believe, though I don't recollect if he called it that.

Even Walt Willis, who so often tactfully held his tongue, didn't scruple about referring to American male fans as sex-crazed. He said so as far back as the 1950s and it scarcely seems less

true today. Today's hound dogs should lift their hats (or legs) to salute the would be Casanova's of that bygone era who managed such sustained lewdness despite such a meager selection of targets.

I'm a little hazy about the exact meaning of the Gender Factor. I think the general idea is that American male fans, having unsuccessfully hit on every female fan in the country, always vote to import a woman under the impression that standards for guys are lower there so the women when they arrive in the US on their fund trip.

The obvious corollary is that US female fans will vote to send any male hound to the UK in hopes that some desperate lady Brit will take a shine to him and save the women back home from further attentions. Unfortunately, British *male* fans vote for US *female* fans, presumably in hopes that women from such an allegedly sin-drenched country will prove more susceptible to their gruff charm.

Ah, but let's not wallow in the meaningless complexities of TAFF. I want to wallow in the meaningless simplicities of PUFF.

My point is that the Gonad Factor, whatever you think about it, won't be a factor in PUFF. Since fandom has not yet detected any fans in Parts Unknown, PUFF makes no provision for reciprocal trips from Parts Unknown to the US Worldcon (or WrestleMania). That cuts out half the election problems right there!

PUFF even undercuts the Gonad Factor in the elections it *does* plan to hold. When a female US fan is nominated for a trip to Parts Unknown, there's no host country population to vote for her with their, ahem, genitalia – and male US fans will think twice before they dispatch a woman on a trip that could easily prove to be one way.

4. So many people spend so much time fundraising and administering fan funds. As a one-way trip, PUFF only needs to raise half as much. That ends the fear, so rampant with the other, lesser fan funds, that the winner will be trapped in a nightmare of amateur office work for two years or so.

Admittedly, that last reason isn't as

compelling as it was back when fan fund trips saluted outstanding achievement. In those days, administering TAFF could sideline a fan who might otherwise have produced a steady flow of wonderful, entertaining fanac. Two years of TAFF Administration cost us all the issues of *Trap Door* Robert Lichtman might have produced during that timespan. (It might've been as many as two.)

As you can see, there are lot of reasons for the Parts Unknown Fan Fund. Since that is the case, we are going to proceed with the first election to send an unsuspecting fan to Parts Unknown. The nominees' platforms are in a sidebar to this column.

—Arnie Katz
Las Vegas, NV



The Parts Unknown Fan Fund

The 2004 Raffle

What is PUFF: Founded by fans with too little to do and too much time to think, the Parts Unknown Fan Fund rewards hypothetical excellent in fandom with an equally hypothetical all-expenses paid trip to Parts Unknown.

Rules: Voting for PUFF is open to all fans, everywhere. It doesn't matter if you are known to the PUFF Potentate (Arnie Katz has kindly volunteered to accept the egoboo and squander the money on personal luxuries) or, indeed, to anyone outside your immediate family. If you have a buck or can counterfeit a reasonable facsimile, that's good enough for PUFF.

Just send your votes to: Arnie Katz at Crossfire4@cox.net . He'll get the dollar from you when he sees you.

The 2004 PUFF Candidates

About the Candidates: All candidates are unwilling draftees. They know nothing of the Parts Unknown Fan Fund or their candidacy in it, so there's no use asking them about it.

Ken Forman

His sunny outlook on life is ideal for someone who may have to bear many hardships in the Unknown Land. No matter what indignities are visited upon the Mainstring, he is sure to keep smiling – the ideal Ambassador of Good Will (and he dresses the part).

Ben Wilson

Ben has had enough accidents in the last year or two, only some of which he has recounted in *Crazy from the Heat*, that he'll hardly notice whatever calamities befall him in Parts Unknown. In addition, his abilities as an IT professional raise the possibility that he will be able to establish two-way communication via computer to pierce the cloud of mystery that hangs heavy over the host country.

Ross Chamberlain

Today's well-mannered and well-adjusted fandom provides few opportunity for Ross to display his famous even-temper, reasonable attitude and commitment to fannish pacificism. We don't know what the PUFF winner will find in Terra Incognito, but from the number of professional wrestlers this strange land exports, his mild-manner diplomacy will find its ultimate test if fandom elects him for this honor.

Arnie Katz

The Kingfish can only get more annoying as he continues to pine for the alleged purity of fandom, the days of his youth. Put this bastard out of his misery and dispatch him to Parts Unknown where he can live out his days watching masked wrestlers.



Line of Fire

Column by Joyce Katz

Pigs Don't Even Like Pearls

Way down in Missouri, where I heard my lullabies, the weekends were broken by Sunday morning trips to church. For the first few years of my life, this meant the rural one-room Twin Springs Baptist Church, just a half-mile down the dirt road from the 40 acres-with-a-mule where my family lived. Brother Gene Sells was an enthusiastic leader, determined to keep his flock safe from all the demons. I still remember his exhortations that I shouldn't grow up to be "a cigarette-sucking daughter of Satan, wearing red patent leather shoes, walking the road to Hell."

The family moved to town when I was six, and took up membership in the First Baptist Church of Poplar Bluff Missouri, ably pastured by Brother Chester B. Pillow, a man who physically resembled the handsome **Robert Lichtman**. Chester was the exact opposite of the charismatic Sells, and he conducted a dignified and

somber gathering. He held his flock on the narrow path to salvation by dint of well-reasoned argument and logical, if unexciting, promises of temporal blessings that would surely arrive in exchange for a good life.

This intellectual approach to religion pleased his parishioners, but he recognized that it might not provide the needed impetus to bring in new believers. Hence, once a year the church invited a special speaker, an evangelistic preacher, to hold Revival, much as a club might invite in the esteemed **Robert Lichtman** to build excitement for fandom. A Revival is about the most exciting time that any church goes through; it shakes up the congregation, and provides a full week of nightly meetings filled with bombastic and inspiring sermons from a fiery speaker. The church is usually decorated with fresh flowers each day of this effort; the choir is toned to perform its most dramatic hymns, and the church deacons

are all aglow with welcoming smiles. It's a holiday of holiness, a celebration of salvation, a joyous occasion for the congregation members to revel in their worthiness while praying for the unwashed-in-the-blood.

I myself, hormones stirred by the powerful imprint of a famous orator, chose to receive church membership and baptism during a Revival. It was during a phenomenal week of inspired guidance by an exceptionally talented evangelist who made me see that the walk down the church aisle to shake his hand was the first step toward righteousness throughout eternity. Many converts were added to the church rolls during that week of flamboyant Christian outpouring, and not just the eleven and twelve year olds in my group. The church gained many adults, indeed whole families came together to repent and receive Christ's blessing in front of the speaker's pulpit.

A couple of years later, the church decided to invite him back again for yet another Revival. But this time it wasn't so grand; nightly he preached about God's love and invited the Lost to be Found. But there were no takers; the congregation sat motionless during his call. He couldn't even get a Rededication or a Pledge of Sobriety out of the membership of the Already-Saved, much less a genuine convert's promise to give up sin.

By Sunday morning, after a week of hand wringing, soul-racking enticements, he made his last try. He raved about the Love of God, and he ranted about the Final Days before Jesus' return. He described the pleasures of heaven, and explained the pains of perdition, as impassioned as Robert Lichtman inviting fans to join FAPA.

When his sermon ended, he pleaded and exhorted for the sinners to come forward. The congregation softly sang, "Jesus is calling" for at least a hundred and thirty seven choruses; Chester Pillow even wiped a tear from his dry eyes to support the emotional invitation to salvation. But no one Stood Up for Jesus, and no one knelt by the pulpit to pray, and no one denied Satan his due.

When the evangelist gave up at last, after what seemed like hours of the Invitational, he stepped to the pulpit again, and shouted into the

microphone, "Then, God Damn You, You Can Just Go To Hell!!!"

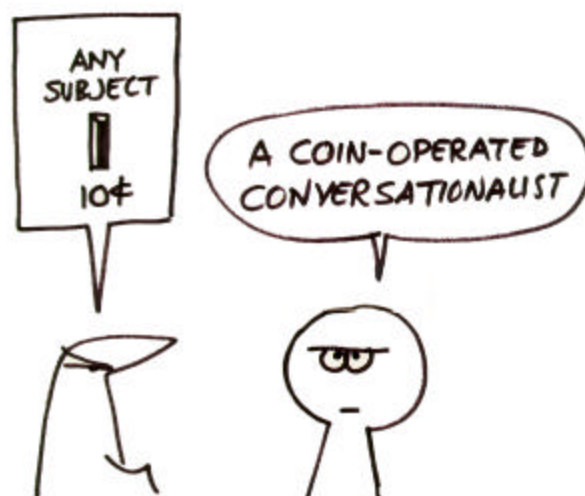
Even good things are sometimes hard to give away.

Arnie and Bill Kunkel were talking the other day about the misfortune that came to some rock bands when opening for a star group. Bill mentioned a concert in Queens, where the audience booed and yelled, "Get off the stage" at a little known band that was opening for Simon & Garfunkel. The Doors were finally pushed off, even while performing "Light My Fire". The Queens kids wanted to hear their hometown heroes, and simply didn't realize what they were missing.

Arnie told of a similar occasion in Manhattan, when the crowd at the Fillmore East wanted to hear Savoy Brown, and drove Buddy Miles off the stage.

I was reminded of these rejected offerings a week or so back (well, last Spring) when Greg Pickersgill announced to the online list-servs that he was trying to give away some fanzines but was finding few takers. It seems that, except for the dozen or so hardcore fannish fans who Robert Lichtman could easily name from memory, the Brit science fiction fans can't be talked into collecting old zines even if they get them for free. It was obvious from Greg's tone that he was disappointed, even angry that so few of his countrymen knew a good thing, or at least were not interested in this particular good thing of ours.

We talk a lot, we who appreciate old fanzines, about what we'll do with our collections when we move on. Many try to arrange a home for their prizes in some university or library; oth-



ers hope to sell them for great profit. All of us have always assumed Someone would want our treasures, that there would be outstretched hands to grasp anything we offered to the newer and younger fans we'd nurture.

But maybe it isn't so. The Eaton Collection of fanzines, in Riverside University, California, is the repository of many fanzines, including (I believe I've got this right) the Peltz collection, zines from Carr's collection, items from Burbee, and items from Rotsler. I believe Robert Lichtman helped set up the Trust. Harry Warner also indicated, at one time, that his fanzines should go there. But, once these mighty collections are assimilated into Riverside's library, just how many more will they agree to house?

Right now, fanzine fans enthusiastically receive any offers to sell, and especially an offer to sell cheap. Usually. But the number of new collectors doesn't seem to be increasing as rapidly as our numbers are reducing. It is easy to see that someday we may fill up their filing cabinets and storage closets, just as we've filled our own. Even an avid collector like **Robert Lichtman** doesn't have room for every zine ever published. And then where will we send our collections?

We may become like my evangelist, describing the joys of fanzine fandom, begging them to escape the clutches of media fandom, or costume fandom, or even on-line list-serv fandom, while entreating new fans to revel in old zines. Will we, the proud and the few, sing a hundred and thirty-seven choruses of "Fandom is calling you, tenderly calling you, fanzine fandom is calling you home"?

I think this is likely. I think ultimately our pearls will fall to the slime.

Fanzine fandom seems in a boom right now, with new print zines arriving every week, and new electronic zines posted on line almost daily. Robert Lichtman's annual chart of new fanzine arrivals seems to show this. But it's a here-and-now kind of fandom, with not much more than a tip of the hat to the past. Worse, there's a tendency to regard the old days' outputs as nothing more than historical curiosities, to be catalogued, then wrapped in tissue and carefully filed away, or put into frames and hung on the wall as trophies. The information inside old zines is no

longer seen as vital or even alive.

When I (and I'd warrant you, too) first read *Quandry* way back in the 1950s, it was obvious I was looking in on real dramas, observing real exchanges and becoming in small vicarious ways a part of Sixth Fandom. Even though the years passed, those dramas are still real to me and, I believe, still real to **Robert Lichtman** as well. I still get the sense of being right there with Hoffman, Tucker, Bloch, Willis, Shaw and Keasler.

The difference, I suppose, is less in the stories I'm reading than in my desire to participate in that world. When I read Burbee, I slip into LASFS, and I stand with Laney and Burb as they tweak the noses of California fandom. When I read Willis, I get to eat Madeline's molasses cookies and hurl shuttlecocks toward the Monroe calendar on the wall.

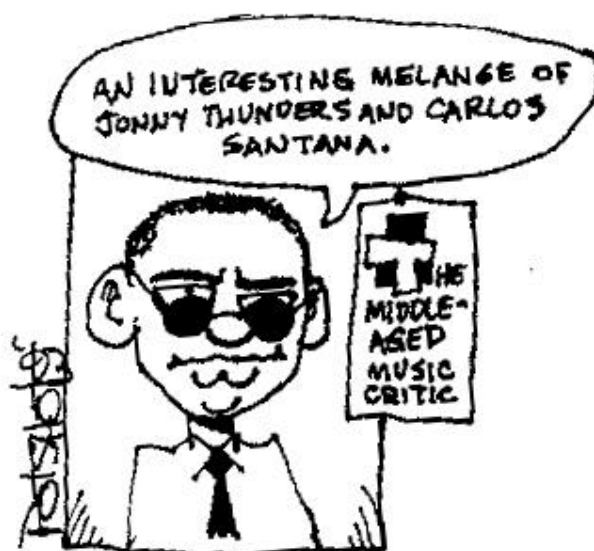
But it's probably more because I want to do a time shuffle, than any other reason. And if the newer generation of fans don't wish to do the same, they are unlikely to ever develop the appetite for dusty old twill tone that you and I and Robert Lichtman feel.

So, what's to be done about it? Well, nothing I suppose. Greg was unable to make British fandom want the fanzines he has cared for all these years. The Doors couldn't make Simon & Garfunkel's fans listen to "Come on, Baby, light my fire." Buddy Miles and his Band couldn't get Savoy Brown's fans to sit down and hear them. Robert Lichtman's recommendations can't fill the FAPA rosters.

Like the old evangelist, I've come to the conclusion that, well then, They Can Just Go To Hell. If they don't want the pearls, the beads can fall on the ground. If no one wants what we've got to offer, we can drink it to the last drop, until fandom is only an empty cup with nothing left in it.

Me, I'll still be in the attic (and probably so will Lichtman), or the garage, or the den, reading *Quandry*, joking with Bloch and Tucker and Hoffman, playing Ghoddminton with Willis and The Crew.

—Joyce Katz
March, 2004



Obsession & the Whisper of Peace

Article by Ross Chamberlain

The mind, like the sea, plays little tricks on us from time to time. Sometimes they become obsessions.

The sea? Okay, it's pretty damned early in an essay for a digression, but I'll explain that. Half a century or so ago, Stan Freberg had some hit singles, a radio show and did some albums of skits and pieces that satirized the popular culture of the time. A couple of the most famous (or at least favorites of mine) were singles—remember singles?—one of them a takeoff on the TV police show *Dragnet* called "St. George and the Dragonet," another the holiday favorite "Green Christmas." A couple more were devastating swipes at "The Yellow Rose of Texas" and "Shboom."

Another that was collected in an album that I believe was called *A Child's Garden of Freberg* — I can't put my finger on it just now (he says, after spending half an hour flipping off—uh, *through*—his only recently unearthed collection of LPs and finding other long-missed albums including other Freberg titles, most of the Fire-sign Theatre and related albums, and a surprising number of versions each of *The Rite of Spring*,

Daphnis & Chloe, the *Saint-Saens Organ Symphony* and *Beethoven's 9th*) was a zinger on bandleader—I'll think of his name any minute now—the German-accented chap whose aggressively cheerful show washed American TV viewers' minds squeaky clean for decades and introduced such rictus-smiling acts as the Lennon (or was that Lemmon) Sisters to the world—um, yes, you know who I mean um... —ah! It finally came to me, Lawrence Welk!

Well, anyway (or anyways, if you're from Canada or the upper midwest), in this bit, titled "Wun'erful Wun'erful," after an introduction as "Live from the Aragon Ballroom" he introduces some brief (one or two bars at most) selections from various singers and the orchestra ("Larry Looper" manages to get out one solitary bass note, as I recall). Each is introduced by bubbling noises (remember the original show was called something like the Champagne music of Lawrence Welk, and it seems like there were bubbles rising on the title screen). At one point, however, the bubbling sound continues, getting louder. The host, with increasing deadpan concern, repeats

the phrase “Turn off um the bubble machine...” At last the bubbles take over amid sounds of creaking and breaking wood, fading into a moment of silence...radio-style scene change. Then one hears a slight wind and a foghorn, a buoy bell, and a character-actor old sea-dog voice says, “Fix satey” (that’s how I remember it, never did figure out what the words were supposed to be, though it seems like it should be something “matey”), “sometimes the sea plays tricks on yeh,” and goes on to describe what looks like the Aragon Ballroom floating off to sea in the moonlight. In the distance is heard, “Turn off—the bubble —machine...”

End of digression

But the kind of mind tricks and obsessions I’m talking about are the kind that seem to develop in times of stress or illness. I guess we’ve all had, especially in childhood, the kind of fever dream in which one idea, often a completely nonsensical one, just keeps rolling over and over in our minds, getting nowhere. It’s a bit like the catchy jingle or pop tune that won’t go away—Alfred Bester did a thing on that in *The Demolished Man*, used to prevent telepaths from tuning in on one’s thoughts. In the milieu of the story a lower case generic term had developed for the concept, like pepsi, as I recall, after the Pepsi Cola jingle of the 40s (& I guess 50s). It’s a while since I’ve read it.

There was also a short story I can’t track down where a rhythmic sequence (my sketchy memory has it begin with a splash of paint, illustrated in the story) takes the world by storm, obsessing everyone, until another one resolves it and suddenly, universally, it has no more effect.

Then there’s the anxiety dream, usually

related to an event or situation, frequently school or job-related. Not always. Years ago, when I moved from the lower east side in Manhattan to Brooklyn (to a fannish apartment formerly occupied by Ted White and after him Steve Stiles), I rented a truck and drove back and forth between the two locations to load and unload my fan-nishly overample quantities of stuff, and it pretty much took all night. I hadn’t driven a vehicle of that size before; the truck did not have an automatic transmission and required double-clutching—I guess; at least I know I ground a lot of gears that night. I’m not sure I ever got to the point of being comfortable with it. Anyway, next morning, when as much of the job as I could handle without sleep was done, after leaving the truck at the rental place I rode home on the subway, filthy (and self conscious about it) and exhausted, and collapsed on my bed. You know how it is when you’re over tired? I’d finally drift off into slumber only to startle awake, foot reaching for the brake, trying to stop the truck before I hit someone or ran a light or whatever... Over and over again. Not one of my favorite nights to remember, some ways...

I still get dreams about not having homework done for school (frequently it’s part of the dream that I’m still going to a school I went to decades ago and it’s not clear just why I’ve never finished the course of study), or I’m not ready to go on stage for a play, or sometimes I’m trying to take



book orders for the book wholesaler I worked at back in the 60s. These are classic types of anxiety dreams, but they often get mixed in with my current (stressful) job situation as well. I'm currently in customer service for ADT Security, and must deal with a variety of customer problems. In the dreams I'll be talking to someone and the voice fades away or becomes intermittent or for some reason they just stop talking to me. Meanwhile my pen won't write and I can't remember just what the problem was that they're calling about...

Ahh, those are good dreams to wake up from!

Sometimes, though, the stress is unrelated directly to the content. I've been having problems with the job for months now, and back at home a couple of months ago I lost my connection to the Internet and still haven't been able to recover it. These ongoing conditions provide a general background for stress. But as I write, I'm fighting off the dregs of a cold that developed a couple of weeks ago, so quite aside from age and prostate-related reasons for waking occasionally through the night, I now have added accumulations of—well, you don't need gruesome details, let's just say that hacking and coughing were added to the mix. So for a while I was getting maybe one or two hours' sleep between waking moments. This really makes those twilight zone moments fit the name.

In my leisure time, meanwhile (another brief digression, which will be shown to be pertinent, if not downright impertinent), I recently decided to take advantage of having at last unpacked my book collection, which had moldered (sometimes all too literally) in storage for a decade and a half, and decided to re-read some favorites of the past. Over the last few years I've heard disparate disparaging remarks about E.E. "Doc" Smith's stuff from various sources. Recalling that I'd loved them when Pyramid brought most of them out in paperback back in the early 60s, I started reading through my set, beginning with the Lensman series (I took it chronologically by content, starting with *Triplanetary* and ending with his *Masters of the Vortex*, which, though separate, takes place in the same universe), and then continuing with his (earlier written) *Skylark* series.

They're different from what I remember. I do enjoy his writing. He tells a story well and actively. But the years in between have done something to my perception of his writing. Of course there is much that is a tad laughable from the perspective of the 21st century, especially when it comes to viewing from a time in which computing is a common element of everyday life. When he refers to a computer, he's referring to a person who calculates things, using logarithmic tables and slide rules and even sometimes using a calculating machine. Not infrequently—especially in the Lensmen books—card catalogs are part of the process. Machines intended to do major work are huge things with scads of levers and switches and dials that it takes entities of great intellectual and physical prowess to master. Toward the end of *Skylark of Valeron*, David Seaton builds a giant mechanical brain requiring a small planetoid-size ship to house it.

The blurbs in those books note that he did some reworking to update a lot of them, but that would have still been well before the computer age as we know it.

But we have other perspectives from which to see his work as well, and one of them is the sly infiltration of political correctness into our paradigm in the years since he wrote. One has to keep consciously allowing him slack for his attitude about women, for instance. Oh, he has strong enough women characters, but all, seemingly without exception, are primarily concerned about their looks and how they dress and how well they cook, etc. He emphasizes over and over the "fundamental differences" in the sexes, which include attitudes about fighting and authority. In the Lensman series, the Arisians, the super-mentalities of the "Civilized" worlds—the White Hats—initially do not give women lenses; they don't "need" them. Only Clarissa Kinneson *nee* MacDougall (the "Red Lensman"), as the penultimate human female of an Arisian genetic project, eventually gets one and she usually hides it... Finally, in *Children of the Lens*, her daughters sort of create their own. With their brother, who provides a coordinating element, they become a mental superbeing to overcome the Ed-dorians, the last, highest echelon of evil. But even those sisters, when not in the actual process

of using their mighty powers, seem Stepford Wives at heart.

Another aspect to his approach to all his stories, one which also catches a bit at the PC point of view—though in the current political climate, as exemplified by our current administration, perhaps, unfortunately, less so—is his tendency to generalize by racial or national characteristics, and a hard-nosed it’s-them-or-us viewpoint on warfare. It’s realistic in terms of actual warfare, I suppose, but in terms of pure adventure-story reading I’d forgotten this—is it fair to say Heinlein-esque? They were of course writing contemporarily—aspect of his books. I suppose the destruction of worlds requires that point of view; you just can’t commiserate over the good folk who die with the bad, and in the grand view have to view whole populations as intrinsically expendable for the good of “Civilization.” In the World War II years the U.S. necessarily had to have this attitude to maintain the war effort; only afterwards, with some exceptions, did we learn about German and Japanese people who did not share their countries’ intentions toward domination of the rest of the world. Ditto for the Russians/Soviets, later on, as the cold war drew to an end

But apart from that, the primary characteristic of “Doc” Smith’s books is the ever-escalating one-upsmanship carried on by their protagonists and villains. Always Kimball Kinneson or David Seaton are contending with their evil counterparts—various Boskonians on the one hand or Marc DuQuesne on the other—to create bigger and better weapons and defenses and power systems for their bigger and better space ships, using hugely involved sequences of scientific and pseudo-scientific theories to develop them. That’s what I loved—and still love—about these books; and I admit that many of those concepts underlie my own attempts to write my GAK (or GASFK—Great American Science-Fantasy Knovel), which is still an intermittent WIP under the uninspired title *Angel Without Wings*.

But, at least in the Lensman series, Smith arrived at a final solution that involved whipping out the biggest gun and wiping out the Black Hats lock, stock and barrel, once and for all. I don’t like the sound of the phrase “final solution”

in that context, folks. Maybe it’s just me. [The Skylark set ended strangely, after a similar solution to the evil BEM race, with Marc “Blackie” DeQuesne ending up chasing off to a distant segment of the universe to set up his own despotic empire, complete with devoted girl at his side. Dunno how I feel about that either.]

I haven’t figured out how to finish my story yet, and maybe it’s because I don’t want to look in the direction of wiping out the enemy and salting the earth where they lived. Seems like there’s gotta be a better way.

End of 2nd digression.

When my cold started its nasty work on my night life, so to speak, it was the escalation aspect of Smith’s books that invaded my dreams. I didn’t have my book in mind; I was in one of “Doc” Smith’s universes. I sort of found myself experiencing, both as observer and participant, an environment in which I shared with a protagonist—more Kinneson than Seaton—efforts to develop more powerful ways of doing whatever amorphous goal it was, always indistinct but somehow necessary to achieve, and frustrating to wake from as they somehow had still to be done...

These agenda would progress through the night from a more abstract sense of urgency and frustration to harder-edged, more detailed specifics, as though actual events were occurring toward morning, though never resolving into anything that really made sense to recall, much less recount, in the light of day. Recollecting it is a little like trying to focus in on an image in a telescope or pair of binoculars only to have everything completely different as (awakening) one takes one’s eyes from the eyepieces and looks around at reality.

Another analogy, perhaps a closer one, is that it’s reminiscent of refocusing on the world as one draws one’s eyes from the content of a book, or when “The End” and credits appear on the screen at the end of a movie—only in this case, book and movie were somehow obscure and already partially forgotten at that point in time.

Still closer analogy? Rather than book or movie, think video game... a not completely understood one. I’ve had experience with some like that.

As my cold and sniffles have worn on, hap-

pily, that aspect has diminished, and while the multipurposed trips to the bathroom continue at a lesser frequency, the character of what I remember of the interims is at once less obsessive and occasionally clearer.

Last night one came up like that. There was some sort of a game show question that I retained out of an otherwise obscure context: “Biblically, who killed Huispé?”

At the time, in the dream, I remember either stating or thinking, “Wasn’t it Esther’s King? I can’t think of his name.”

When I got up I checked my Bible and the king was Ahasuerus. But there is no reference to anyone named Huispé in either the Old or New Testaments, according to the Proper Names index—nor anything really resembling it.

A little later, after going back to sleep for a while, I read through the book of Esther, and found that while Ahasuerus decreed death for many, including Haman, he is not written to have actually performed the deed at any point. In the index to my *Encyclopedia Americana* there’s a Chinese emperor and a play by Sartre that approach the spelling of Huispé, but they don’t really come that close, and there’s certainly nothing biblical...

I musta made it up. That happens now and then.

But, perhaps obsessively, I kept thinking about it. Huispé. The name San Luis Obispo, as in the story about the bridge, crossed my mind. Neither the story nor the derivation of the name (is it perhaps Spanish for bishop? Religious, if not biblical) show up in my encyclopedia.

I’d long ago have Googled it if I were on line.

So I started playing with the name Huispé. It was familiar to me in the dream—sufficiently so to know how to spell it—but less so by far when awake, as frequently happens with some of the most familiar words if one messes with them too much. (Try it with “onion” some time. I actually forgot briefly how to spell that word once when my mind latched onto “union” and wouldn’t let go. “you-nyun”-“un-yun”? Yeah, well...)

But “Huispé”? I pronounced it “*hwis-peh*,” or “*huwees-pay*”—one could even re-write it “*whispy*” (not “*wispy*”—I’m fussy about the differentiation between the sound of *w* and that of

wh). I kinda liked “whisper” if one allows for a silent *r* there, a British or east-coast pronunciation. And then I thought that if you twist it around a bit, or just put it in the old dyslexicon and shake it a very little, and you could get “peace.” I know, the *wh* is gone. Sosumi.

“Whisper of Peace”? That’s euphonious. Evocative.

Everyone’s been killing the whisper of peace a lot, and have been since biblical times.

From no specifics to too many? Yeah, really.

But I’m looking at the news and at our semi-elected President’s pronouncements—which don’t appear from this angle to have anything of any wider focus than a public pissing contest behind them—through the fog of my own less than global problems, and I realize I haven’t been this scared about the immediate future maybe since Kennedy was in office.

So I allowed this rather convoluted “explanation” or “derivation” of my made-up word to linger, if not actually take up residence. Obsessions are not always logically arrived at.

Obsessions develop under stressful situations, but most of mine are at least inner directed, where I focus on making sense of nonsense words and old fiction, and where I find myself still blanking on creating a satisfactory solution for my characters’ problems in a fantasy novel.

But that’s just mine. In this climate of repression and recession in the Real World, I fear where our nation’s obsessions are turning.

Mommy, I want to go home.

Hm? And where’s that, dear?

—Ross Chamberlain
March, 2003

P.S. Weeks later, I found that Stan Freberg album, *Stan Freberg with the Original Cast*—the cover has him in a leg cast—and includes “Banana Boat Song,” “The Quest for Bridey Murphy” and another *Dragnet* take-off called “Little Blue Riding Hood,” among others. My recollection of “Wun’erful Wun’erful” were slightly inaccurate; the bubbles kept interrupting the selections, “Welk” also had trouble playing his accordion and the scene aboard the passing ship was a two-character dialogue introduced by a brief hornpipe of the Popeye persuasion. No biggie. I’m glad I found it, though; it was even funnier to listen to again than I’d remembered.



Backdraft

The Hotheads Have Their Sat

rich brown

WARHOON 28.

I suppose, to explain that beginning, I should start by admitting that it's been so long since I've written a letter of comment on a fanzine that I was crafting this one on CRAZY FROM THE HEAT #1 in my head even as I was using my computer to download and print out a back-to-back copy. I decided early on, you see, to start my LoC as I have here.

It needs a bit more explaining, I know. Both Arnie and Joyce Katz informed me via the internet that there was a heap of egoboo for me in the issue. So I was (for the first time since I bought my printer) actually printing off a copy of the zine, rather than just reading it on screen. Because I printed the odd-numbered pages first, then flipped it to print the even-numbered pages, I read it in an understandably haphazard fashion, i.e., just getting the gist but very pleased with what I got of it, thinking I understood the motivation for all those lovely mentions of my name, and in accordance with my limited understanding I thought I'd start my LoC with a paragraph that

would say, simply, "WARHOON 28."

Now, I admit one does not usually begin commenting on a fanzine by tossing out the name of another, unrelated fanzine -- unless, possibly, to say how much better the fanzine one is commenting on is than that other fanzine. I'm not *quite* going to do that. Just something similar. You see -- to explain a little further -- I had it in mind to start my missive by pointing out that Jophan's quest in THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR, the thing he frequently said he most wanted to do, was to reach the Tower of Trufandom and secure the magic mimeograph so he could *publish the Perfect Fanzine*. And the thing of it is, you see, I think you could probably get a fairly strong consensus among people who have a good grounding in fanzines that the closest anyone has ever come to doing that is WARHOON 28. Hard bound, over six hundred 8-1/2 x 11" pages, most of them *by* Walt Willis, the rest brilliant material *about* Walt Willis, the finest writer the microcosm has ever seen, beautifully illustrated, virtually typo-free -- what, really, could offer it any competition?

I was prepared to answer that question with profound ease: CRAZY FROM THE HEAT #1. Taking advantage of the modern color printer -- and who doesn't have a color printer, these days? -- ensured that the production values would be every bit as fine. Well, pretty close, anyway; at the top of the second page, where CRAZY FROM THE HEAT #1 January 2003 appeared in large letters on the computer-screen version, it came out CRAZY FR M

TH Issue #1 January 2003 when I printed it out. But I'm willing to posit that this was due to some downloading error on my part (I did try running it off three separate times, but it always came out the same). No big deal, really.

Now, I don't want to stand accused of over praising you folks -- my motives would be questioned, I'm sure -- but the thing of it is, while I grant that probably none of us will ever write to the consistent quality of Walt Willis, nonetheless there are several individual pieces in the issue which I think are worthy of WAW himself.

Still, though: Do the math. WARHOON 28: Over 600 pp, most of them by Walt, including but not limited to the finest trip/convention report the microcosm has ever seen and THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR itself. CRAZY FROM THE HEAT: 36 pp of brilliant material, including some nice convention reporting, but only some of which is up to the Willis level of quality. Right? So how, you may well ask, can I say with a straight face that the latter offers competition to the former?

It's as simple as a bridge. Really. But before I can go further, I need to point out something else. Something that, in your collective modesty, you may not realize (or if you do realize, then something your modesty would probably forbid you from saying about yourselves) regarding your place in the microcosmos of fannish fanzine fandom: The Vegrants, as a group, provided us a breath of fresh air back when you first burst on the fannish scene -- and you continue to bring new insight and good humor to the microcosm as a whole with every move you make. In our anarchistic meritocracy in which no one really Runs Things, you nonetheless frequently take the lead, and you consistently hold the moral high ground.

I honestly cannot think of another currently

active fan group that has so consistently made its way into new territory. Sometimes you're so far ahead of the rest of us that we have to climb up on a stepladder and use binoculars just to keep you in sight. Without exception, every individual member of Vegas fandom is noted for his or her keen and/or high-type mind.

Knowing this, I had an epiphany as I ran off those pages and read the bits and pieces with all that personal egoboo: I was certain that I knew what it all meant, what it signified.

It involved a matter of fourth dimensional mental crifanac which I, as a longtime practitioner of the Sport of BNFs, had realized long before but had never shared with my fellow fen. Namely: Las Vegas fandom had collectively made an intellectual quantum leap that buggered (or is it "beggared"?) the imagination. You had figured out the True Meaning of Jophan's quest.

I was confident that every one of you had realized in your heart of hearts, even as I did long ago, that the perfect fanzine which was mentioned as Jophan's heart's desire was not the largest, prettiest, highest quality, best-written fanzine, but rather the fanzine *which contained numerous mentions of my name!* It was so clear to me that copious applications of Windex could not have made it any more transparent.

Nor was I quickly (or easily) disabused. For reasons I've DNQ/DNP'd Arnie and Joyce about, I was unable to sit down and start reading CRAZY FROM THE HEAT immediately after running it off, so when Arnie again asked me on the internet if I'd read it, I remained clueless enough to joke about how I was so appreciative regarding what had been done that I was willing to overlook the fact that there were actually a few pages which had no mention of my name at all.

Arnie allowed as how I'd always been gracious.

But I figured, as soon as I did finish reading it, I'd expound on that in my LoC, too -- actually *commend* you all for permitting that flaw, and thus allowing other fans to have a goal worth striving for, while at the same time making up for the egoboo gap on other pages where I was mentioned several times. I also planned to point out what I thought was an overlooked coincidence -- that I'd published a fanzine titled PILLAR OF

FIRE -- and suggest, for that reason, that the award should actually be something stronger and/or somewhat different. I intended to suggest Pillar of Overwhelming Obliterating Fire so that I could then receive the first POOF Award.

Eventually, however, my error became clear to me. I managed to sit down and, between episodes of "Buffy The Vampire Slayer," read the entire issue cover to cover. I now understand not only that you already realized I'd published a couple of issues of PILLAR OF FIRE but that you actually had a crass commercial motivation I did not suspect for providing me with all that egoboo (however well deserved it was), and hence that collectively you have not quite reached the level of true enlightenment I suspected you all had.

Though you might reasonably suppose or suspect otherwise, I have to report that I'm not really disappointed.

Oh, I admit it's a pity, really, since I'm sure it could well have been one of those things -- like Laney and Burbee realizing that fandom didn't have to be Serious and Constructive, or the Wheels of IF deciding to show by example how fandom could be a heck of a lot of fun -- that would have elevated the microcosm to ever higher levels of delight and accomplishment, not to mention one that would have provide me with copious quantities of egoboo and Windex for years to come. And, also true, had things turned out to've been as I suspected, fandom as we know it could even now be on the cusp of entering a new Golden Age.

But what of that?

I'm sure no one -- myself least of all -- will hold any of you accountable for the naked greed and avarice that prevented you from realizing any of these inherent possibilities. "Greed and avarice were the stock in trade of mundane Las Vegas," future generations will no doubt say, "so we really can't blame them [the Vegrants] for eventually falling victim to it themselves." Even though it may be freely acknowledged that this effectively stymied a much-needed boost, indeed even if a direct correlation should be shown between this blunder and the fact that fandom as we knew it no longer had the strength to stagger on when it so easily could have been reinvigorated

with new life and purpose for very little effort (as you've adequately demonstrated in CRAZY FROM THE #1 how easy it is to provide me with egoboo without actually mentioning me all that often as a person). I'm fairly certain (and genuinely hopeful) that you will all come off relatively unscathed by any future fanhistorians who may determine that this failure on your part ultimately caused all the mimeos to stop turning and thereby hastened what was already the twilight of our kind to become the midnight of our collective souls.

Besides, I prefer to look on the bright side and console myself with the immortal words of Ambrose J. Weems -- not his oft-quoted remarks in the pages of the late Bill Danner's STEFAN-TASY ("You can fool some of the people some of the time, and you can fool some of the people some of the time, but you can't fool some of the people some of the time.") but, rather, his less well know, "Egoboo is egoboo, even if you have to pay for it."

Or was that Seth Johnson?

Well, anyway, my check is enclosed. Or it will be, that is, with the snail mail version of this letter. And while I realize I was offered a \$1,000 discount, I happen at the moment to be in a position where I can afford the paltry (but full) \$5,000 charge. I hope you don't mind, but even if you folks have absolutely no regard how others may think of you, I *do* care, very much, what fan-nish posterity says of me, and I don't want anyone (even it it's some future fans I couldn't possibly know) looking down their noses and saying, "Oh, well, as for rich brown's POOF Award, it was a knockoff, you know." So, please, deduct the full POOF Award fee.

Yes, I did say "deduct." For the benefit of those of you who may be reading the advance "email" copy of this missive, I should explain that I'm short on checks but I offered Arnie and Joyce a bit in the way of remuneration to ensure that they keep my DNQ/DNP, so they check I've enclosed covers the combined amount. I trust this will be acceptable to all involved. Simply apply to Arnie and Joyce after my check has been deposited.

Even though I'm not known to be a sweetness & light kind of person, nor even the kind of guy

who keeps his feelings to himself out of supposed "tact" or "politeness," I've tried my best to keep this letter pleasant. But before I could sign off on it, it occurred to me that I would be betraying all my values if I did not communicate to you the *one thing* in all of this which has made me resentful. I can face all the possible adverse effects on the microcosm I've outlined with equanimity because, frankly, I believe the universe itself is probably mortal, so what can you do? And besides, to quote a cliché, there's no point in crying over spilled milk. But I feel I have to tell you that the fact that you folks completely Missed The Boat (to put it tactfully and politely) means that now I can't, as I carefully planned out in my head, start my letter with "WARHOON 28" -- and that really ticks me off.

Arnie: What a wonderful letter — and what a compelling examples of Applied Egoboo. Does it come in jugs? We here in Vegas like Big Jugs.

Earl Kemp

Thanks for letting me know about your new zine from Vegas. As a neighbor within easy reach of casinodom, I know just what all of you mean about being crazy from the heat. Then, here at least, there are the crazy from the cold times as well.

Anyway, it was a real pleasure to see all you finally get off your collective asses long enough to do something fannish like this. It seems like I've been waiting years almost.

Very nice job from top to bottom. I liked all of the artwork (Hello, Alan, Bill) and the way it was used on the pages.

Arnie: It seems we *really* kept you waiting this time, what with the year-long gap in our monthly publication schedule.

Ulrika Obrien

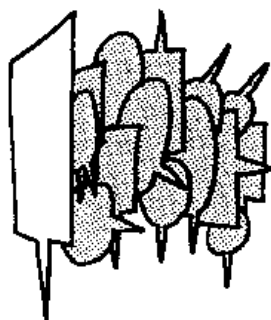
Funnily enough, I had been reading it on efanazines even before this notice got to me.

And so, a few comments:

Spiffy cover. Boffo fun.

Ken writes: "Living on the edge of nowhere I have the pleasure of experiencing fandom from the perspective of the lonely fan. I suppose I

could go to LASFS meetings, but 70 miles each way tends to diminish my enthusiasm for the club."



RESEARCH

bunch the LASFSians are: "...these people think pun fines are the peak of wit!"

"Andy," I explained, "it's not that interesting any more." I was quite pleased to put Hooper at a total loss for words. LASFS was mother to my fandom, but the days when club meetings were something to look forward to are long gone.

On the other hand, with respect to Arnie's shock over the nasty, money-grubbiness implied by holding an auction after to make Bruce the first Pillar of LASFS: I think he may have missed the fact that the idea of charging a great deal of money for the honor was Bruce's idea.

Back in the days when LASFS met peripatetically in various cafeterias and rented facilities around Los Angeles, it was Paul Turner who conceived of putting together a fund to buy the club a clubhouse, but it was Bruce Pelz who shepherded that idea into reality. He did it by dint of a great deal of hard work and persistence, by latching onto every conceivable means to turn a buck, and by inventing quite a few, besides. And so the fund grew, and eventually LASFS bought its clubhouse. But the need for money has only begun, once you buy a building.

It costs a great bloody wad of ongoing money to keep up with property taxes, insurance, utility bills, roof repairs, carpet cleaning, HVAC maintenance, periodic repainting, and all the predictable fixed costs, never mind the unexpected,

I can't much recommend the perspective of the lonely fan, other than as a spur to participate in print and online fanac, but if it's only the mileage that diminishes your enthusiasm for LASFS, then you haven't been to the LASFS lately.

At my first Vanguard upon moving to Seattle, Andy Hooper tried to razz me about what a droning, tedious

like legally required Americans With Disabilities Act code compliance orders, or little niceties like keeping the place in toilet paper, hand soap, dish detergent, and instant coffee. A club house is a money pit, and necessitates the club have a substantial steady income to support it.

As a result, LASFS is stuck doing a great many things that aren't strictly faanish, like running its annual convention with an eye to net-profit rather than net-zero-sum balance sheets, inventing honors to encourage donations, and holding regular auctions in support of the club.

Constant shilling for money is an absolute necessity, and Bruce Pelz was our biggest shill precisely because he loved that club, and its clubhouse. Keeping them safe was his dream for the 22 years I knew him, and long before that.

LASFS already had a "Saint of the LASFS" honor available for a lower net donation, as a means for the club to recognize and encourage people who gave money, auctionable goods, and other donations over time. That's not so different from the various schemes that your local NPR radio station, or local zoo, or local opera house, would use to recognize and thank its major donors. So there isn't anything really novel about the new Pillar honor except the price, and the fact that it has a physical manifestation in a plaque, instead of just getting you three cheers on your Saint's day.

Now, you can claim with some justice that no clubhouse is worth what getting and keeping it does to your trufannishness. I could easily make that argument myself. Maybe asking Bruce's mourners to cough up big bucks to honor him seems crass. But it was Bruce's idea, conceived to preserve the club he loved. It was Bruce's dream, not mine or yours, that was being kept alive. In that respect, it was a fitting honor. I bet somewhere Bruce is grinning his wolf-grin and toting up the take. Among so many other things, he always was a FIJASOI fan. He surely was the fan you knew, but also several you didn't. He was large; he contained multitudes.

That's my piece for this time. Hope to see more issues forth coming. Keep up the good work and all.

Arnie: Death does not confer infallibility. Bruce

wasn't right about everything when he was alive and his death certainly hasn't changed that.

You can't judge the fitness of an action or policy based on whether or not Bruce Pelz would've liked it. That is only slightly less far-fetched than scheduling child molestation night, because EE Evans would've loved it.

You provide an excellent explanation of LASFS' road to its present preoccupation with finance. Yet an explanation is not a justification. A lot of clubs, faced with the same decisions, might've chosen fanac over fundraising.

A clubhouse has many advantages, indeed. Yet if it leads a club into obsessive concern with money and virtually eliminates it as a creative force in fandom, that could be too steep a price.

LASFS has the right to do whatever works for them. And I have the right to laugh my ass off at the money madness.

Jason Burnett

I had stopped work for lunch (a pastrami sandwich and a rich brown chocolate bar) and decided to entertain myself while I ate by firing up the progressive metal station at iceberg.com and finding something to read at eFanzines.com. Spotting a familiar name (Katz) I decided to read *Crazy from the Heat*.

BIG MISTAKE! I couldn't bring myself to close the window, just sat there entranced as I read the entire issue, waiting to see what your crew of crazies would bring out next. The zine had everything: Hallucination-induced drugs, fannish dreamtime, weddings, funerals, strippers, broken bones, real estate, mountain biking, and anything else one could possibly want in a zine.

Consequently, I am now 45 minutes getting late getting back to work, but I have gotten right with Roscoe, and so I don't care. I know I'm not going to get rich at this job, and I'm not a brown noser.

Besides, I work from home, so the boss won't know I spent my time doing more important things than work.

Arnie: Welcome to the tribe, Jason! I don't think we'll have to wait long for *Crazy from the Heat* #3.

