



idea

Number 11

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Geri Sullivan, Editor

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Ulrika O'Brien for TAF!

Of cars and stuff

There really was a Packard Hawk. It was 1958, the last year Packard cars were made, just four years after they'd merged with Studebaker. The Packard Hawk was released along with the fondly-remembered Studebaker models.

I mention this in anticipation that at least a few people who read "Ashes, Dust, 9 Electric Razors" later in this issue will be sure I got it wrong when I mention looking for a '58 Packard Hawk at an auto show. Jack Targonski and Bob Berlien insistently corrected the early drafts, crossing out "Packard" and writing in "Studebaker." They were certain my father was wrong, that he didn't correctly remember a car he once owned.

Car guys can be like that — and it turned out they were partially right. Daddy had mistakenly told me it was a '63. I think that was the year he got the car from his Uncle John; it certainly wasn't the year it was built. Packards weren't made after 1958, and that was the only year they made a Hawk.

I had a hoot of a time tracking down this information. First there were the conversations with Jack, Bob, and my dad. Jeff pulled out a couple of antique car books from his large, eclectic library. Then Bob and I each spent a sunny Saturday afternoon wielding the power of search engines on the World Wide Web as my father looked through old photo albums in Battle Creek. Daddy accused me of sending him on the chase not because I wanted the picture, but because Father's Day was coming up. He thought it was my way of tricking him into spending hours looking at page after page of pictures of his kids when we were small. It was a real trip down memory lane for him — one he hadn't taken in years.

That wasn't part of my plan, but I do consider it a worthwhile benefit of the search. He found a picture of the car — it even showed "Packard" name on the hood — and sent it my way. The added bonus prize was that it showed my dapper Uncle John looking just as I remembered him, motoring cap and all. He was a real car guy.

I'm not a real car guy, but I grew up with two of them. My memories of summer afternoons include greasy hands, leaning over an open hood, with the portable radio tuned to the Detroit Tigers baseball game. I didn't absorb many of the mechanical details or the sports statistics, but it was always fun. I helped by handing over tools, passing the shop rag, and holding the wrench just *there* as Daddy or my brother Barry tightened or loosened a bolt. Daddy was always happy to explain how it all went together, even if I didn't remember from one season to the next.

"I've got half the front-end parts in the basement," Daddy told me the same day he found the picture of the Packard. "I don't remember if they're for the left side or the right side; I'd have to look at them."

That's my dad. He hasn't had the car in most of 30 years, but he's still got parts for it in his basement. He's even got parts for cars he never owned. I plan to pick up a pair of Studebaker emblems, still new in their box, during my next visit. They belonged to Uncle John; perhaps he got them for his Studellac.



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Why does my dad still have this stuff? Why do I continue to accumulate little bits of it, bringing back more from every trip home? Toad Hall already overflows with stuff of every description, and it doesn't look like Jeff and I will be moving to larger quarters anytime soon. When we eventually do, we don't *have* to fill every nook and cranny, even if we are fans.

Having an astonishing amount of stuff is a fannish hallmark. Having it organized and accessible is not. Yet I continue to try, futile though the effort often seems.

I look at stuff in three ways — there's the treasure of stuff, the comfort of stuff, and the burden of stuff. I try to maximize the treasure and comfort while minimizing the burden.

It costs money to store stuff. While we've avoided the direct costs of storage lockers so far, if we had less stuff we wouldn't need a bigger place to store it all. Jeff wouldn't have *had* to build the tool shed. We wouldn't need all those bookcases and file cabinets; we wouldn't always need *more* of them.

But unorganized stuff is *all* burden to me. There might be some treasure buried within, but it's mostly an annoyance. It's boxes of unsorted fanzines that I have to move out of the way when looking for back issues of *Idea*. Those fanzines aren't doing me any good, while the fanzines organized in file drawers are a source of constant comfort and delight. Someone asks a question in a letter or on-line and I walk a few feet over to the file drawers. Presuming I can remember what editor I'm looking for, I can go straight to the desired file and have the information in a matter of moments. I've done this hundreds of times in the last few years; it continues to be immensely satisfying each and every time it works. And that's most of the time.

Early this year, I bought a few photo storage boxes. When I want to quickly find snapshots from Corflu, BritTrip3, Baggiecon, or even from just around home, I now can. No longer do I have to thumb through and open dozens of photo packets to find the images I'm looking for. That job is only partly done, though. There's still the box of old pictures, and the thousands of disorganized slides downstairs. I don't even have a plan for those. Every time I put together a slide show it takes hours or days longer than it needs to, simply because everything's jumbled. This is the burden of stuff.

In addition to getting better organized, I keep trying to weed out burdensome stuff. The occasional yard sale, charity donations, giving stuff away, or even sending it to the trash burner or recyclers all help. But my efforts are feeble in comparison to the rate at which we accumulate new stuff. So the house grows ever more crowded, and I keep looking for new places to squeeze in yet another bookcase.

I worry about ending up like my mother. She's got one full storage locker in Michigan and another here in Minnesota. She's living in a friend's rooming house; her small bedroom doesn't have space for even one percent of her belongings. There's really no sign that she'll ever be able to enjoy using her stuff again, yet she clings to the comfort of simply knowing she has it. It's all too easy for me to dismiss her stuff as burden, since Jeff and I are the ones who have ended up moving it when she's been hospitalized. We've seen the results of the direct mail slimeballs who prey on the vulnerable and elderly — all the boxes, bills, and offers from Lindwald Jewelers and their competitors. If my mother hadn't bought all that stuff in the few years she earned a good income, she wouldn't be in such a tenuous financial condition today. She may well have been able to buy that home she dreamed of. The money that now goes to storage fees could instead be paying her heating bill. Instead, there's a lovely Lenox china nativity set in that storage locker. She hopes one of her granddaughters will pass it on to her own children some day.

Stuff brings us comfort. Years ago I moved offices and, in an attempt to look more professional, I didn't unpack all my little notes, pictures, and other office kipple. I displayed one framed 5x7" photo and left it at that. Fifteen minutes later, my skin began to crawl. It was an anonymous environment — it wasn't mine and I couldn't work in it. Today, my attic office is filled with eye candy. Two frogs and a space alien sit on top of my monitor; a string of rocketship lights stretches across my wall planner and along the ceiling. There are pictures, posters, work samples, awards, rocks, and even a plastic wrapper from a brick of "Irish Cheddar, Aged." Don Fitch bought the cheese to serve in the L.A.con III fan lounge and James White autographed the wrapper during his Friday host shift. All this stuff is intermixed with the computer equipment, phone, answering machine, fax machine, rulers, X-acto knives, ink pens, and other tools I work with.

Other people's approach to stuff fascinates me, probably because I still struggle so much with my own. Years ago, Robert Lichtman described the kipple on his bedroom bookcase, telling me where he'd mounted a small photo I'd sent of Jeff and Willow in front of the compost bins Jeff had just built. When I saw it for myself when visiting during Corflu Wave, I took a picture so Jeff could see it, too. Other letters from Robert described his own efforts to organize his fanzines. He uses the same file drawer system I do, but he's further along in his efforts — I ran out of places to put more filing cabinets.

Most fans have more stuff than I do, though few have more eclectic stuff than Jeff. I adore his man-hole covers, cast iron cookware, tools, and wooden crates and benefit from these as much as the library of books I could spend a lifetime reading through. I like visiting fans, looking around their crowded rooms and learning more about them by seeing what they surround themselves with. That's also why I love helping people move. Helping somebody else move is ever so much better than moving myself. There's instant gratification with none of the responsibility for figuring out where it all goes in the new place.

The other part of the comfort of stuff is the way it binds us all together. There's the stuff Daddy's given me during trips to Battle Creek — the Candlewick dishes, Twinsy Toys, furniture, glass insulators, and other delights large and small. All of it leaves me feeling more connected to my past, to where I came from. And there are gifts from friends — some purchased new because they seemed just the thing, others passed along during their own attempts to lessen the burden of stuff in their lives. I got several such things this way last year, when Will Shetterly and Emma Bull moved to California. The metal sand pail Will played with as a child now holds supplies in my office. Emma's rock collection is on the front porch. And their red, insulated coffee server sits on top of our fridge, ready to be used at our next party here or at a convention. Did we need any of these items? Of course not. But I'm glad to have them for their whimsy, their functionality, or simply because they remind me of all the times I've helped Emma move. They somehow make her and Will seem less far away. How I smiled when I read Will's description of the sandpail in **Dogland**. His name is still painted in red enamel, just as the story so casually mentioned.

Even stuff I buy myself serves to bind — souvenirs from my post-Corflu day trip to Yosemite with Tom Becker, CDs I picked up at the Winnipeg Folk Festival, and the clothes purchased for last year's trip to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. There's the new camera that replaced gear that was stolen. And all those pictures taken along the way, pictures to be shared with friends and printed in the pages of fanzines.

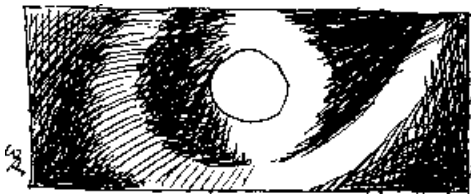
The hard part comes in knowing what's enough to remember by, and what's so much it becomes a burden. Some 15 years ago, Will suggested that everyone should get rid of half of everything they owned every five years. The thought horrified me, but I've never forgotten the idea and I've often wondered what it would be like to do it, even just once. Would I miss those posters rolled up in tubes? The unframed art in the cedar chest? The chest itself?

What would it be like to start all over, like so many people in the Red River Valley are now doing following this year's massive flood? And what difference would it make to have that forced on my by disaster — flood, fire, whatever — rather than by choice? Not that I seem likely to do it by choice. In 1974, all of my belongings fit in less space than the Christmas decorations now occupy. We loaded the 1968 Pontiac Le Mans and 1952 Higgins tent trailer and moved in one fell swoop. Twenty months later, the military paid to move 2,910 pounds of our belongings while our Chevy station wagon was solidly packed for a 2-month camping trip around the country. I haven't stopped accumulating stuff since. Jeff, who moved here eight years ago with a 24' truck piled high with his own stuff, is even more likely than I to tote things home from friends or garage sales. As I was writing the previous sentence, Ken Fletcher called to ask him for some moving help, and to offer him two of Giovanna Fregni's three Gestetners. They're probably left over from Lee Pelton's stuff.

That would bring the total number of mimeos in our basement to 12; we've already got nine Gestetners and my old Rex Rotary. But I broke the stripper on the best 360 just last week, and while we found a usable replacement on one of the parts machines, a few more mimeographs might be in order if we hope to ever use those 100 cases of paper...

So I continue to struggle with stuff, and I use my stuff to produce more stuff. Like this issue of *Idea*. I hope the stuff you find within these pages is the stuff of comfort or unexpected treasure, and that you won't think a letter of comment would be too much of a burden.

— Geri Sullivan



Adventures In The Wimpy Zone Part 7

LAKE HARRIET SATORI BY JEFF SCHALLES

*In books lies the soul of the whole Past Time; the articulate
audible voice of the Past, when the body and material
substance of it has altogether vanished like a dream.*

— Thomas Carlyle

Think Global, Act Loco

— Zippy The Pinhead

There was a bit in the Sunday paper today about the elf-house-in-the-tree-trunk over by Lake Harriet. I'd nearly forgotten, it was quite a few years ago now that the snug little iron-bound round wooden door appeared in the hollow at the base of the tree near the paths on the south side of the lake. The park department tried to remove the magical door one day, but the children wouldn't let them and finally even the maintenance crew sent to remove it balked. It wasn't built by the park department and didn't follow the codes and have the right permits for such things, you know. But elf doors by their very nature need to be done properly, with great cunning. No one seems to know who built it, but it's still there, and rumor has it if you write a question on a slip of paper and leave it inside the door, an answer will eventually appear.

The tail-end of a nice Sunday afternoon has always been my favorite time to go bicycling. Traffic is calm, the parks are nearly emptied out. Today the sky was magnificent, deep blue with fluffy white clouds, the wind, temperature, and humidity absolutely perfect, and I got my bike out of the shed and headed for the lake.

Once I've aimed myself at the lake, or the mountain or the prairie or the river, I can never quite remember what it is that I'm heading out for at the time, but later reflection indicates this to be my manner of linking backward to past lives, or, at the very least, to core memories from this life. Not everyone believes in past lives, but many will admit to a persistence of memory. When I was a kid in western Pennsylvania I would bike over to the Pleasant Hills Arboretum in the summer evenings and sit alone at the edge of the trees watching the shadows grow as the sun set. I wasn't exactly ashamed of this odd, solitary pursuit, but I didn't try to explain it to anyone in those days, or invite anyone along. Kept it a secret the way I tried to keep fandom a secret back then. "Nature Boy" was what Lou Stathis called me after we began trading fanzines and letters in the early '70s, but he knew what I was getting at. It's not like I invented this rural idiocy thing — practiced by the Lake Poets and many others before and after them — I've simply picked up the train of thought, as many do, and continued on with it, happy in my own particularly persistent way. Lou was very wise and very kind and I miss him a lot.

To calm oneself is to recharge a battery, and mine has been constantly and repeatedly drained in the last few years in the never ending battle with the insolent evil gamers forever plaguing our world. Even when living in the big city, even during the eight years I lived in New York, periodically I would go out to look for a place to recharge, often a different or a new place, but, once found, the same place, a worm-hole leading back to the mountains I've climbed, sunsets I've watched, to the beauty I've painstakingly stored away.

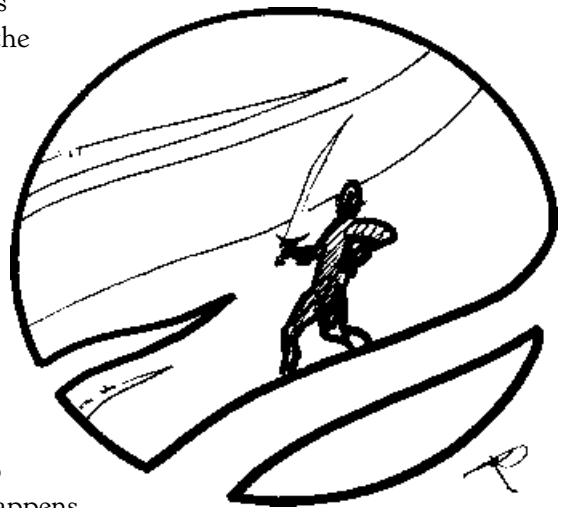
This most recent evening I spent a very long time just sitting on a wooden bench on a fishing pier jutting out onto the lake. To the left I could just see the rooftops of the Sunnyside neighborhood poking through the woods sloping up from the water, the white dome of the Lake Harriet Community Church gleaming high above in the sunset. That's where a noticeable beam of energy from another dimension has manifested itself, slanting down from the dome in the midst of the old sanctuary. The new age folks have been traveling from all over to marvel at this cosmic manifestation of power.

Straight across the lake sits the bandshell and various associated park buildings, old and new. In a clever, and, from a distance, not overly sappy execution, the overall design of the new buildings echoes the village of Native American tipis that stood on those flats when the Europeans first came to the Big Woods of Minnesota. As jets pass overhead and cars and bikes and rollerblades make their way around the lake out of site behind me, I can, for brief moments, see the lake as it was some 200 years ago. If I squint, or turn my head and let my peripheral vision do it's party trick, I can morph the pointed spires of the bandshell and concession stands into a Lakota village.

Around to the right the giant glass and metal downtown skyscrapers thrust themselves above the trees of the south Minneapolis urban canopy. Uffda, there's a lot of them towers these days. If you have never seen this city on the prairie, or vaguely remember it from old *National Geographics*, you should know that as we approach the Millennium, if there ever is to be an American Oz, it's here. The place is crawling with musicians and artists and writers and filmmakers and other edge travelers... and, get this, winter has been pushed back up here by nine days in the last ten years, and spring is coming nine days earlier. If it wasn't for the mosquitoes in the summer and the Jet-Stream driven Alberta Clippers in the winter (which unfortunately are intensifying in these days of worldwide weather flux) — and the crack gang violence all year round — this could be fun city. Especially once they build the subway.

The winter storm thing is just a bit weird, though, right out of Paul Bunyan where it got so cold all the cuss words (which is about all you have to say when it gets this cold) froze and fell to the ground till the spring thaw. We live in an old wooden house that was built on a drained lakebed and which has settled a bit towards the southwest corner in the last 90 years, so it's a bit twisted and out of plumb and few of the doors or storm windows fit quite right. There is a modern gas furnace in the basement and hot water radiators throughout the house. When it gets to 30 degrees Fahrenheit below zero outside and stays in that range for days on end, the furnace simply does not shut down. The burners, by design, roar steadily, night and day. It's like being in a car with the gas pedal to the floor, afraid if you let up you'll stall out. In other ways I find it like being deep down in a creaky old submarine, with deadly cold knife blades of icy air spurt-ing in at the weak spots like jets of pressurized sea water. You walk from room to room near the outside walls and feel cold winds. Ice forms on the walls. On the inside, I mean. Then of course there's the ice dams on the roof, but that's a different weather effect. It has to get warm enough to snow for that to happen, like above zero. In any case, what happens if Minnegasco drops the ball, cynically deferring maintenance or ignoring security weaknesses, like over at that enormous manifold field by Cedar Riverside where the old gasworks was and where all of the main lines still meet. What if something blows up in the middle of one of these really weird cold periods? What's their Plan B? (Might make a better movie than *Fargo* — something along the lines of *Volcano*... only a lot colder. Remember the Fritz Leiber story, "A Pail of Air"?)

The first time I contemplated that one, soon after moving up here, I thought of getting a wood stove for the living room. I've lived with wood stoves before. This house doesn't even have a fireplace. I suppose I could rig up a couple of electric heaters — those we got — but what happens if Northern States Power buys the farm too? Suppose the deregulationists' little darling, Enron, decides it can make more money selling its stolen power to southern California that week and can't cover the load in Minnesota when

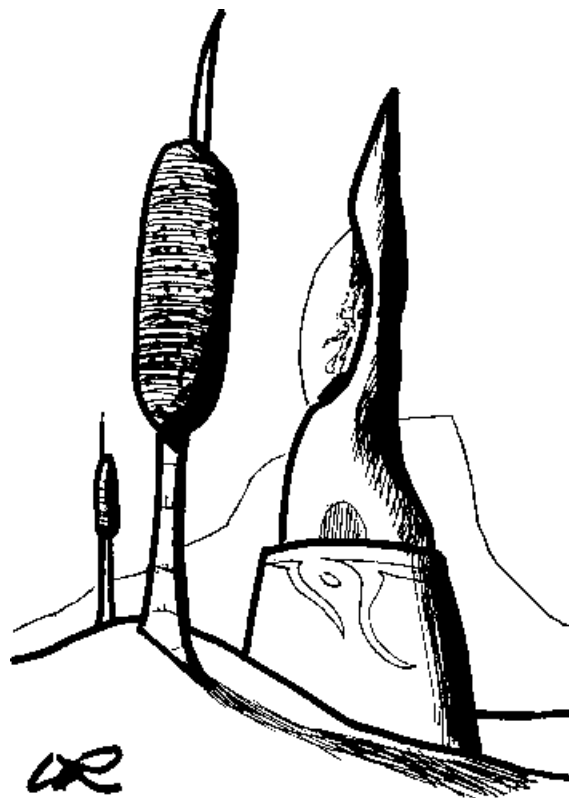


everyone plugs in their heaters at once? Am I the only person who believes these things could happen in this country? *Thpttt* — I doubt I have the imagination to come up with what could really happen.

The big difference regarding the ominous levels of apathy, greed, and ignorance in the world today from the way it was a hundred years ago is that now you can hurt a lot more people with your lack of comprehension of the social contract. Or your serious need for meds. Take nuclear power for instance — put a schmuck about to go postal in charge of a piece of that (which they've already done and will repeatedly do again) and there's eventually going to be one hell of a problem for...someone. Did you know that Union Carbide never cut the check for the damages it was assessed after killing off half the town of Bhopal in the late '70s? The Indian authorities have an outstanding arrest warrant for the now-retired chairman of the board from that time. India has an extradition treaty with us, even, but no justice is likely to be served. No Federal Marshals will ever escort him onto a plane bound for India. We're left to root for justice of the poetic kind.

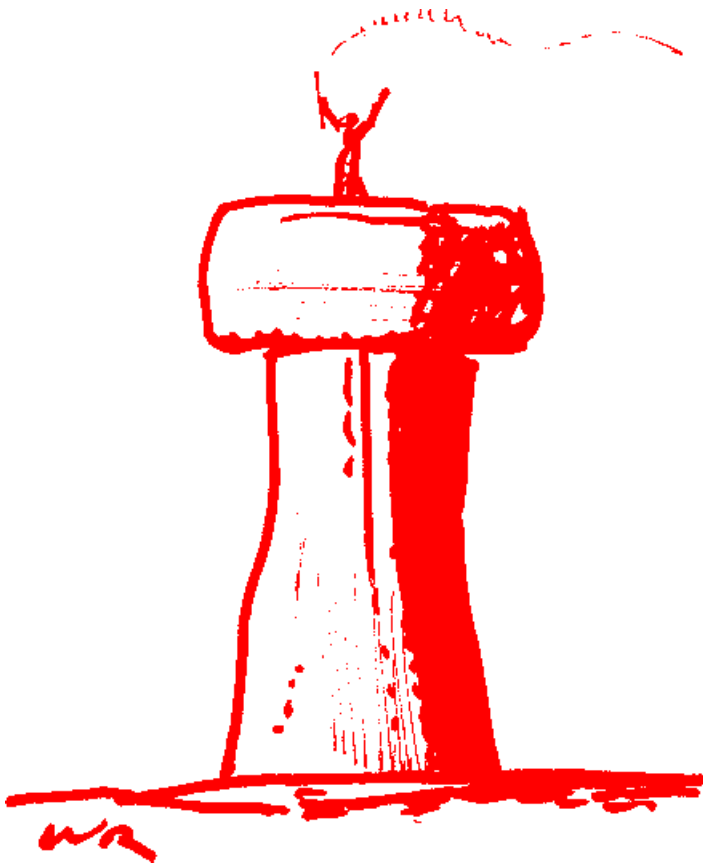
Anyway, Geri usually asks me if I might have anything good to report right about now, having listened enough to my Jewish-mother-to-the-whole-world routine (watch out for that cell-phone antenna, you'll poke your ear out!). which usually brings me back around to the subject of compost.

I like the fact that small organizations, like the Rodale Institute (of *Organic Gardening* magazine) run a demonstration farm in West Africa where they bus in groups of farmers and show them how to grow their traditional foods in organic intensive ways. As with the solar oven projects, one of the keys to success here is learning about the folks you are trying to help and working with them to see how to grow and cook their customary pre-Coca-Cola foods in locally sustainable ways, while still growing a cash crop. The third world is plagued by the foul lies of agribusiness, the mis-informed farmers are being tricked into buying fertilizers and pest control chemicals and treated hybrid seeds and they're hocking their children to buy this crap because they've been told that the highly advanced North Americans do it this way. Meanwhile, family farms — and larger ones, too — all over the US are falling prey to the evil cult of...organic farming. Finding it's a hot hot market and, gasp, telling each other about it, over the internet, even. How dare they...spread information. Like the tobacco companies, the agriopison megacorps must find new markets if they're going to generate enough cash flow to pay the liability suits down the road. And like the tobacco interests, their only effective defense is the suppression of information.



I was reading about a high school in Berkeley, California who turned the lot in front of the school into a garden, running it as a class, like wood shop or phys ed. They eat their own vegetables in the cafeteria — remember canned string beans and mystery meat? — and take the whole production very seriously. The project started in 1994 and is called the Edible Schoolyard. I think schools did stuff like this years ago, before people got separated from their food sources by the marketing weasels. The intent is to bring kids — and adults — back into direct contact with the production of their food.

I've been watching a youth gardening program developing in South Minneapolis for the past few summers. There's dozens of little gardens springing up on the ever-growing supply of vacant lots. (Houses are constantly being abandoned, trashed, burned down or torn down, and the lots tend to stay empty.) We may not be able to save all the kids, but we are saving a bunch. Head Start and WIC, were they fully funded (less than the cost of a B1 bomber) could save a lot more. The business weenies who make the food production decisions aren't the slightest bit interested in nutrition. They're interested in making money, period, and if it's cheaper to



buy a congressman than to grow decent food (and I guarantee it is) well then, that's the market for you. Whatever it takes. Business is business. Fraud is even better business. It's only a criminal act if we manage to jail you for it, otherwise it's just the sound of a tree limb falling on that deserted island.

Organically grown, unadulterated food, clean air and clean water are infinitely more effective, dollar for dollar, than any medical care imaginable. They belong in our Bill of Rights. Cheap eggs and meat aren't really cheap if they make you sick, and better food doesn't cost that much more. The cost to the world's social order from creating successive generations of ever-more genetically damaged humans will, if unchecked, eventually be fatal to us all, even to the ruling class. Their kids are getting weird cancers and turning into sociopathic monsters at ever-increasing rates just like everyone else's. Hijack the colonization starships!

European and Oriental investors are buying big time into solar panel producers, and this new wave of panels is hitting something like 27% efficiency. Remember the Heinlein story "Let There Be Light"? Harvesting the sun will soon look like the Oklahoma land rush and the fossil and nuclear interests are going to have to give up that part of their game. That's what all the fighting and foot dragging is about right now, a cynical delaying action so they can loot as much as they can. Down the road, the only thing keeping their stockholders in dividends will be sleazy government bureaucracies protecting artificially supported markets for unwanted agrochemicals and petty despots running clandestine nuclear weapons programs. Charming, eh?

Did you see the solar-electric shingled house on the cover of *Popular Science* a year and a half ago? Eventually they'll cost little more than regular shingles. They're made out of sand, damnit, and it doesn't have to be chemically pure anymore. Hello? Hello? — pay attention out there, the future has arrived, but it's a big secret. The reverse meter tie-in configuration was quietly legalized a few years ago by an act of Congress — a victory (after a little-publicized fight not unlike the one it took to give Tesla credit for radio) that the powers of darkness may someday find to be their undoing. This reversible meter concept allows you to sell power directly back into the local grid, and the tie-in gets cheaper all the time to install. That's why the power companies fought tooth and nail to keep their monopoly, claiming safety and code issues. But it's not just hippies goofing around any more, it's big time players and consumer electronics. The code and safety issues have been resolved by the engineers. Control circuits. Chips. Plug your exercycle into the wall and if you pedal hard enough you might make your electric meter run backwards! The people designing this stuff will be the next bunch of high-tech zillionaires.

Meanwhile, back at the lake, there's this perfect evening coming on and I need to get home for dinner. A few hundred yards beyond the fishing dock I find the elf house. I've never actually seen it before. There's a semi-circle of kids and a dog or two all lying on their tummies facing the door in the tree, hands propping up chins, looking about as happy as a goofy bunch like this can look. I pedal on thinking there's still a few romantic visionaries left to be born, and maybe hope for us yet.



Terry Fakes It

by Terry A. Garey



I once attended a panel on sex during which an earnest young woman declared that one should never fake orgasm. I felt that although she was right in general, she simply hadn't been through some of the experiences I had that I felt would be major exceptions to her rule. I certainly wouldn't wish those exceptions on her, however.

When Geri Sullivan asked me to host a slot in the Minneapolis in '73 party during the 1996 Minicon, I acquiesced. When being gently urged by Geri to come up with a theme for my two hours worth of party, I couldn't think of a thing and I said to list it as "Terry Fakes It," hoping I'd come up with something later. I felt a slight twinge of guilt but not much.

I kept trying to think of a theme and simply couldn't. Minicon came; Geri and Karen Johnson had done a superb job on the suite. It was a wonder haven of insanity and civilization. I now felt guiltier. My slot was for 4 to 6 PM on Sunday, when fans need something to get them through that Long Dark Teatime of the Soul* hour, but nothing that will cause them too much stimulation or need for thought. They aren't up to it.

Luckily, Sunday afternoon I chanced to have lunch with Erik and Paula Biever at the Hotel Sofitel and found myself ordering a dish that I wanted but could not pronounce. *Salade* I can manage but *Nicoise* always escapes me. Is it "nickoyce"? Nicoysee? Neeswahzh? Something else? No, don't tell me, it will do no good and will slip through my sieve-like brain to swim again upon the Sea of Confusion. Yes, upon. My Sea of Confusion is damned thick.

As a result, we gently mocked my inabilities with the Romance languages and then passed on to my dilemma with the Minneapolis in '73 suite and my commitment to Geri and her noble efforts.

I think it was Erik who casually mentioned the impromptu party he and I had shopped for on a Saturday evening at a WisCon many years ago.

The only place open on State Street that evening was a place called the Triangle Market. It was very small. With a certain amount of pushing the envelope, we came away with party supplies that sufficed and, dare we say it, even amused.

Then Paula began playing off the listings on the French menu and I knew I had it!

I would dash to a supermarket and buy many different kinds of fake food, like Not-Dogs, which are made of tofu, not meat, and Velveeta, a cheese-like product, and make hot dog fondue and call it something French. We could serve alcohol-free wine, and fake beer! It would be brilliant! It would be fun! It would be mildly educational! The possibilities were fantastic!

* Douglas Adams reference

Gallantly, Paula and Erik agreed to accompany me on this errand, offering their fertile brains and the loan of their car.

Off we went, to the nearest supermarket, up-scale Byerly's, a place of wonderment and weird food.

Alas, Byerly's was closed. So was the place down the street. We had forgotten that it was Easter Sunday and almost everything was closed. We couldn't even find a SuperAmerica. Darn that Easter Bunny!

I despaired. We drove around trying to find someplace open and finally Erik spotted a Walgreen's Drug Store with a tiny sign that said FOOD MART on the facade. I stared at it with dumb horror. Erik and Paula patiently convinced me that with three brains like ours, we could make it work.

We went in. We cruised a bit. It looked almost hopeless, but then a miracle occurred (probably a miracle called Desperation) and it began to happen. The staff must have thought we were mad.

We threw the most amazing things in the basket. The justifications, the polite philosophical discussions about the validity of fake food as an art form, were tremendous and I wish I could remember them more clearly. It took about 45 minutes and cost an amazing amount. My guilt load began to slip.

Elated, and hoping I had correctly remembered that there was a microwave in the suite, we arrived about 15 minutes before my stint.

There was no microwave. A stove, but no microwave. Ah well. I improvised in the tiny kitchen while Erik and Paul threw themselves into making labels and signs and dishing out our strange provisions.

Geri by this time seemed just a bit, ummm, stunned by the enormity of having run the Suite on very little sleep and the effects of various other circumstances beyond her control. She deserved better than what she was getting. We told her to sit down and relax, afraid to show her what we had brought.

Erik and Paula recruited my favorite reference librarian, Denny Lien, and the lovely, brainy, French-speaking Karen Schaffer. The four of them came up with the menu. Look Maman, no dictionary!

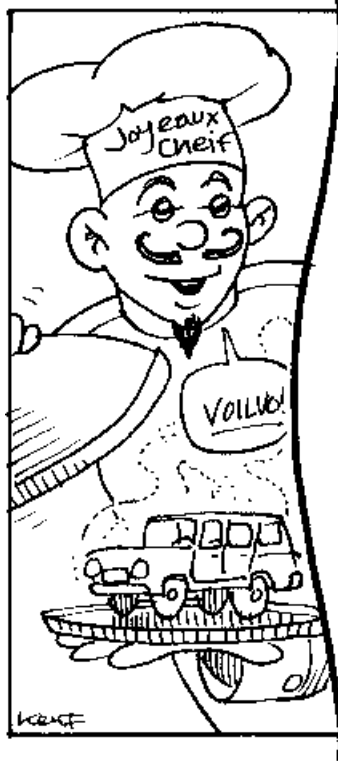
Here is the list of what we obtained at the Walgreen's Food Mart:

- Hostess SnoBalls (lavender, I swear)
- Planters Peanut Butter and Jelly something or others
- Vienna Sausages (made in USA)
- Walgreen's Antacids (a mere precaution)
- Walgreen's Circus Peanut candies (I had my doubts)
- Animal crackers
- Instant Breakfast
- Hot Tamale candies
- M&Ms (you have to have M&Ms)
- Liquid Nutritional Supplement (2 cans)
- Beans, peas, and corn seeds (decor)
- Velveeta Nacho Dip (I kid you not)
- Velveeta (obvious)
- Rice Cakes (I'm sorry, rice cakes are not food)
- Baked Bean candies
- Fritos (I forget the justification here)
- Chicken in a Biscuit crackers
- Kitchen magnets in the shape of cheese, I think
- This other weird cheese stuff
- Cheese puffs
- Toothpicks (for the fondue)
- Chewing gum, heavily flavoured with chemicals



In addition to this, someone (divinely inspired, I expect, and it might have been Don Fitch) had made Key lime cupcakes, bless them, as well as wild cherry. Artificially flavoured, of course. With matching icing.

Here is:



le Menu (haute cuzzine)

fondue de la pooch-vienna non-non
 petites cakes de le cup Key lime
 petites cakes de le cup cherie wilde
 faux peanute un
 faux peanut deux
 le hot tamale
 les M et les M
 salade de la futur avec maize et legumie
 le mouf de violet
 le faux fromage exquisite
 le fromage curlique
 les cakes plastiques du fromage blanc
 les cakes de la styrofoam
 biscuite de la zoologique
 poulet dans un biscuit
 le gum
 les tums generiques



It's up to you to translate. The posters were very impressive.

It was a hit. Everyone had a great time; there was laughter, there was giggling, there was food. Hot food, even.

There was great relief on my part, even without the antacids. I was guilt-free. "Terry Fakes It" would live in the infamy it deserved. Thank Ghu I have friends. Paula and Erik had saved my bacon bits, and Denny and Karen were brilliant translators. Great minds in great gutters. Fans can do anything if they put their minds to it.

And the food? Fans, it turns out, will not eat absolutely anything, but they'll eat almost anything. Not even the teen-aged boys would eat the horrid peanut butter and jelly peanut-shaped crackers. They did, however, gulp down the liquid nutritional supplement. (I think it was artificial strawberry flavour.)

Well, I was amazed. It even got Geri to smile. And that was swell.

Of course, you sorta had to have been there and been semi-comatose to have enjoyed the full effect. It helped to be American and aware of our lack of proficiency in languages. It also helped to be a bit hysterical and in a warm, comfortable hospitality suite.

In any case, Faking It has its moments and guilt has its uses.



*"When you've got a large homosexual wearing a prom dress,
 cowboy boots, and green and pink polka dot boxer shorts,
 something's going to happen."*

David Cummer
 3/8/97

Ever since I did it, I have been asked to tell the tale. I had never heard of him myself, before that fateful day in Athens, Greece. The sun shone down relentlessly, accusingly, in the cloudless too-blue sky. The heat was blistering. The ancient ruins whispered of millennia of war and strife and striving. Here then is my confession, for once and for all. I was there, that blazing, fateful September afternoon on the Acropolis, I was the one:

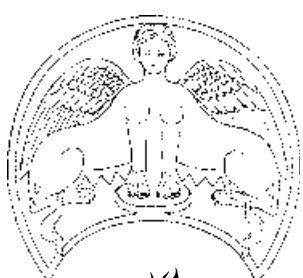
I YELLED AT YANNI

Background is everything. I wanted to do something really grand for my 40th birthday. I wanted to crush all those cute little comments: “Forty, Over the hill! It’s all downhill from here!” I wanted to challenge the inner voices that said, “Forty, Gee Whiz! I can’t be 40. Forty? Already? But I still haven’t become a famous writer, found a cure for sexism, cut a record, had any kids....” I wanted to stop the sinking feeling that said, “I guess maybe I won’t be doing all those things I thought I would just do ‘later’....” I had the earth-shaking — well, computer-table-trembling — realization that This was It — this was later. It was time to do something drastic, time for something I’d always saved for “when I grow up.” I wanted to be able to reach 60 and say, “You know, I think my life really got going in my forties.”

I’d never been to Europe. I decided I was going to Greece, to the temples of the ancient goddesses, to the cradle of Western civilization. I invited David, the apple of my eye, and off we went...all the way to O’Hare airport in Chicago, to wait for the next connection my bargain tickets had bought us. We were cheerful, we had a nice aerobic walk in the cool terminal with the neon art. A snack. A wait. Another wait. Hey, the tickets were cheap, what do you expect? No matter, before you could write a small novel we were off. Soaring in the great silver bird all the way to...Dulles airport, Washington, DC. We waited. And waited. They were really cheap tickets. And finally caught a red-eye flight (we had been at the airport in Mpls by 7 AM) to Rome. Rome, Italy. Or, really the inside of the airport in Rome, Italy where we...you guessed it...waited. At least we were waiting in another language.

But somehow we got on another plane and, predictably, flew, and at long last we landed in Athens, Greece. It was sometime in the late afternoon, the day after the morning we left home. We made our bleary-eyed, cranky way to Hotel Phaedra. Phaedra was chosen for my cat Phaedra (now deceased) and because it overlooked the Acropolis. Hotel Phaedra is in the Plaka, the oldest part of Athens, with tiny horse-and-carriage size streets and crumbly old buildings, anathema to the maniacal automobile drivers of modern Athens and the perfect preservation of nostalgia for tourists. After about 30-odd hours in transit

by Barb Jensen



and no sleep to speak of (for the last two nights really—do you pack ahead of time for trips? Or do you, like me, favor the adrenaline rush of wondering if you will crumble like a fistful of crushed crackers from stress and exhaustion before it is time to go?), we were a little worse for wear. For one thing — why hadn't we thought of this?— no one spoke our language. No matter, ever optimistic, through lots of mutual smiling I formed a kind of intuitive bond with the maid, who brought me more towels when I asked for soap.

We did good. We slept only the hour a friend had recommended (to get ourselves on a new schedule) and crawled around the cobblestone pedestrian streets of the Plaka, which was teeming with life and Europe and Saturday night. We ended up at a restaurant where you picked what you wanted by looking at raw food in the unrefrigerated case, trying to guess what things were, and pointing. Dogs and cats roamed freely in and out. We chatted for hours with a young couple from Scotland. She was doing her dissertation on the United States in Vietnam (small world), and he was turning us on to astonishing authors he had discovered: Hermann Hesse and Thomas Mann. You don't say, "Oh yeah! I read them when I was your age!" You just don't. It is one of the wisdoms that comes when you are turning 40. We had a lovely evening, chatting and petting cats.

Nonetheless, the next morning our willing spirits had some very exhausted flesh to contend with. Did that stop us? Not at all, when did sleep deprivation ever stop a fan? As someone said at Minicon one year (I believe it was me), at 6 AM on Sunday night, excuse me, Monday morning, "It's fun losing brain cells!" So we bought some cheese and Greek olives (what else?) and hiked up the road that led to the Acropolis, which did rather wave and undulate in the 80 or 90 degree heat, as viewed through our weary eyes which kept sending irritating messages to our brains: "Close me, close me now. That's enough sun, thanks. Okay, time for bed. Nighty night." We walked up the hill. It is a long hill. It is a small mountain. There's a lovely ancient amphitheater along the way, to do with Dionysis, I think, the god of wine and revelry (if only we'd had a little less of that the night before), where it is said the acoustics are astonishing. Do you sense a foreshadowing? Forget it, you probably just need some sleep.

We finally got to the top, not pleased to encounter Greeks guys hawking dusty plastic souvenirs at the entrance but, hey, at least they talked to us and knew how to say "Buy this! Authentic, best deal!" in English. We hung out with them long enough catch a few dust-filled breaths. We said our two Greek words, taught by my pal the maid the day before, and climbed, *another* rise to the steps that led to the Parthenon.

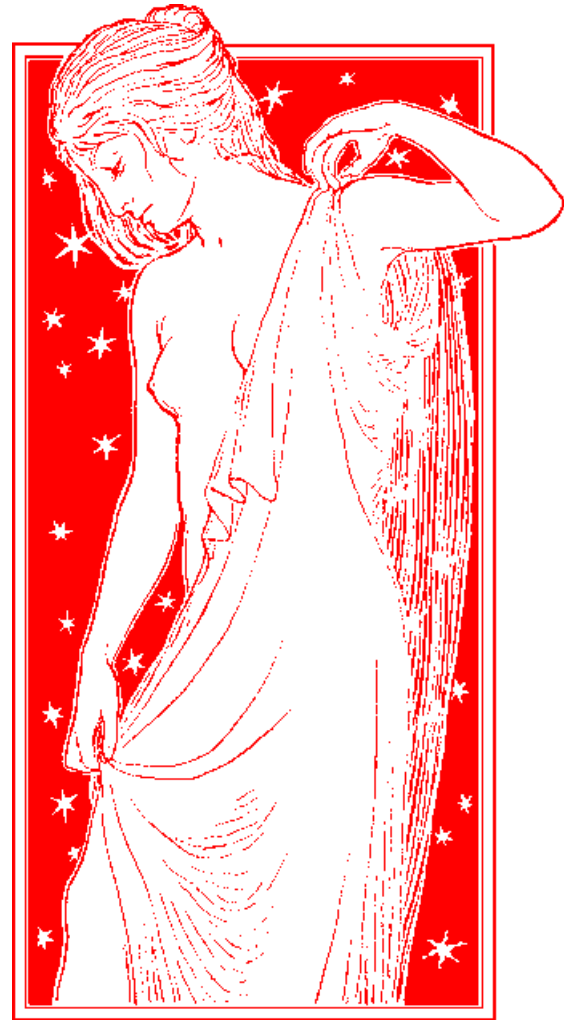
And here I must abandon the sarcastic tone of my narrative. I can hardly find words, let alone clever ones, to describe what it was like to stand before the Parthenon; to walk up to it, into it. I have seen pictures of it dozens of times; I could draw it without a photo — anybody could — it must be on the cover of every ancient history text ever published. But it was totally different to be there. The scale cannot be communicated through a photograph. David and I walked up like Babes in Toyland: we were awe-struck. We looked at each other and started to cry. We could feel it — the centuries of age, the wonder of engineering and construction that created it, the enormous columns and the wonder of stone goddesses and gods carved along the upper walls. And something else, too... a sense of reaching across millennia to join spirits with people who walked here once upon a time. People who knelt to Athena,

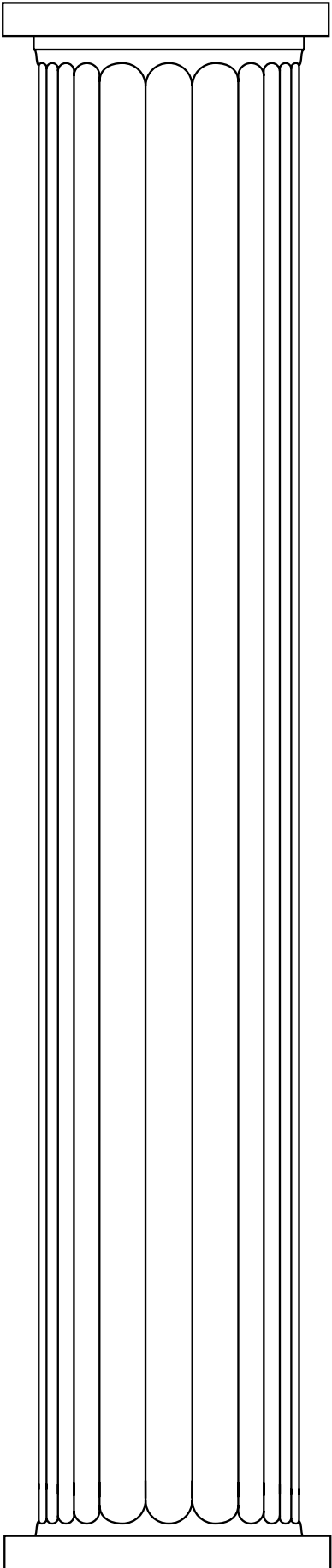
Goddess of Justice; who were a part of the civilization that invented courts of law, philosophy, astronomy, mathematics. Oh, I know, I know — it was built by slaves; the Greeks worshipped goddesses but the real women were not full citizens. I know that many earth-based peoples before the Greeks had their own ways of healing, were too fundamentally ethical — communal and connected — to need laws, and all the rest. I knew all this, and would have been embarrassed for my awe (I am such a willing critic of Western “civilization”) but I was struck. It was so big. So old. So magnificent. So Olympian. It was built to imitate the gods and goddesses after all. They succeeded. And I, a tiny, temporal smudge of tissue, crawling around in it like an ant, was amazed.

The afternoon was a weird mixture of awe-inspiring and obnoxious events. I tried hard to hold on to my initial sense of the Acropolis. But the other tourists didn’t seem to be getting the same cosmic flashes that David and I were. They were madly snapping Polaroids and Nikons, talking about distinctly un-awesome things: “Hey, Gloria, do you see a hot dog stand?” They were throwing their film boxes everywhere. People had come from around the globe — we could hear a dozen different languages at any one point; they were part of this great confluence in the seat of Western Civilization — so they could throw trash on it? Special enough to use up four rolls of film but not to put the film boxes in a trash can? I won’t pretend to understand tourism, or people for that matter, whatever language they litter in. So I went someplace peaceful, to recapture the spirit of the place, while David roamed around. I went to the museum where they keep all the real statues and wall carvings safe from the weather and tourists like us.

Now a bit of further background is needed here. Another death-defying thing I did in my 40th year was to marry David, the apple, etc. referred to above. At this point we had become engaged and I was trying hard to bend my mind around the concept of marriage. This is a bit of stretch for someone who has been a feminist all her adult life (which has been, as you can see, a long time now), and a lesbian feminist for a good twelve years of that. That’s another story. But part of this story is that one of the reasons I chose Greece was to connect with archetypal images of womanness, maybe in some weird way to get their blessing, for what was then a very strange new adventure — partnering with a man. The lesbian community that I had been closest to embraced the Greek Goddesses as icons of powerful women and as a way of invoking spiritual energy through female images. Artemis, the only one who never bedded with a male, and who was occasionally spied frolicking merrily in the woods with naked women, was a personal and community favorite. Finding myself frolicking merrily between the sheets with a male soulmate was not something easily integrated into my life or my psyche. By falling in love with David, I was no longer part of that lesbian community of women but, ironically, I could not imagine partnership with a man without a female-centered context.

And so it was that the trip to Europe designed to facilitate an optimistic passage into my middle years also became, in my mind, a way of maintaining, maybe recreating, a connection with woman-centered tradition. In goddess-worshipping, matrifocal cultures (ancient Greece was not matrifocal — women-centered — but it still maintained many of the goddesses it had appropriated from those cultures that were) there were male/female marriages but they were very different from the institution of patriarchal marriage, laden with the weight of property and state. There were celebrations of what the Greeks called *hieros gammos* — the sacred union between soul-mates. The wish to find a bit of this tradition was with me as I slid between irreverent tourists and over the litter of film boxes, into the Acropolis museum.

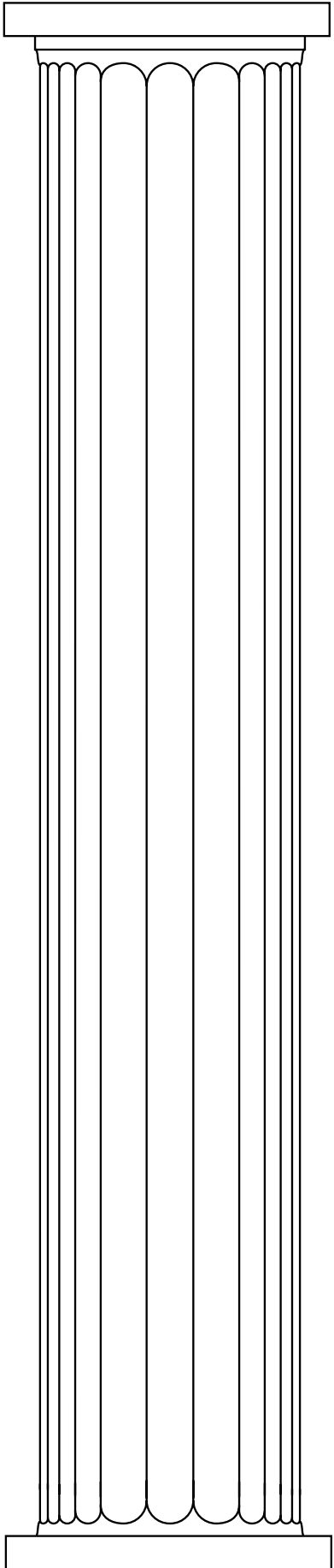


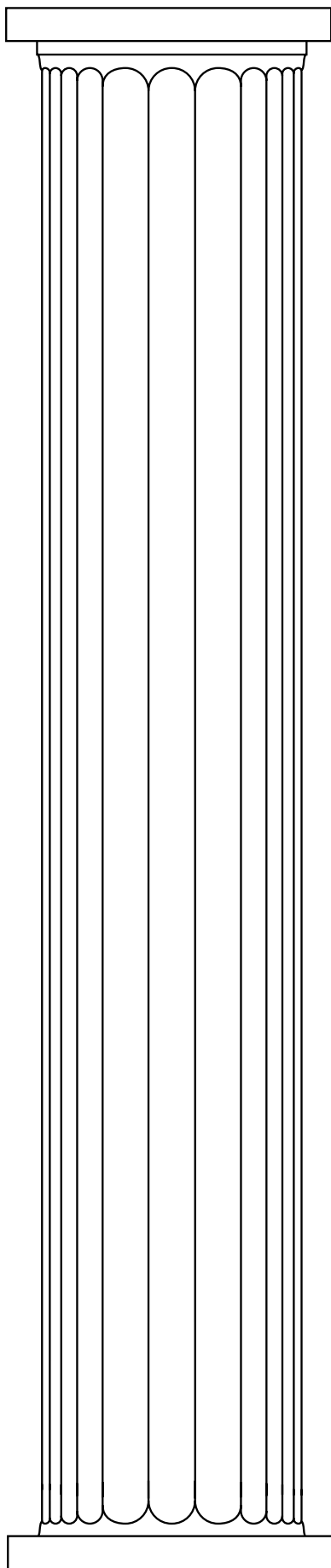


In the museum, I saw the goddesses conquered in a series of carved marble plates that depict the men in horse-drawn chariots spearing goddesses, the goddesses resisting, winning for a while, then finally crushed beneath the superior military technology of horses and swords. I was not encouraged. I stared at the white marble statues of the impenetrable Athena, her steely gaze challenging the boys to another game of sport that she would win. I prowled among the steroid-injected gods, ready to conquer some peaceful agrarian peoples, no doubt. No *hieros gammos* there.

Then I found her. Kore. The spring maiden. The pre-abduction Persephone, in all her goddess-strength beauty and all her spring-maidenly softness. There were at least a dozen of them. Ready for new life, ready for sweet love, ready for initiation into the secrets of romantic love. And among the many white marble praises to Her was the one for me. Her face held everything I needed to feel in my passage into partnership with David: delicacy and inexperience, freshness and vibrancy, wholly in-herself but ready to open, as spring itself does, to warmth and sweetness and blossoming. Not an easy task for someone turning 40. Not an easy task for someone with bad past experiences with men — and some women for that matter. It is difficult to say how complex and beautiful the face of that one particular statue of Kore was, how it managed to combined all these things with a gentle wisdom, or how it affected me. For the second time that day, tears spilled down my cheeks. Looking at her I could feel all that rising up in me. There was another woman alone in the museum and as I walked by her, hastily wiping up stray tears, I saw she was doing the same thing — we looked at each other and laughed, and both of our eyes filled up again. We grinned shyly and gratefully at each other.

Anyway, it was in this sweet state that I came face to face with my first Americans of the day. And just like Persephone in Greek myth, I was dragged somewhere I didn't want to go. In the entry (and exit) room of the museum a male voice boomed, "Lookit here! Here's yer naked women, Bob! Hey, Connie! How come you never dress like that! Heh-heh!" His laughter echoed through in the dark, hushed halls of white and gray marble. I hurried past them, into the blinding white heat, determined — once again — to hold on to my transcendent moment as long as I could.

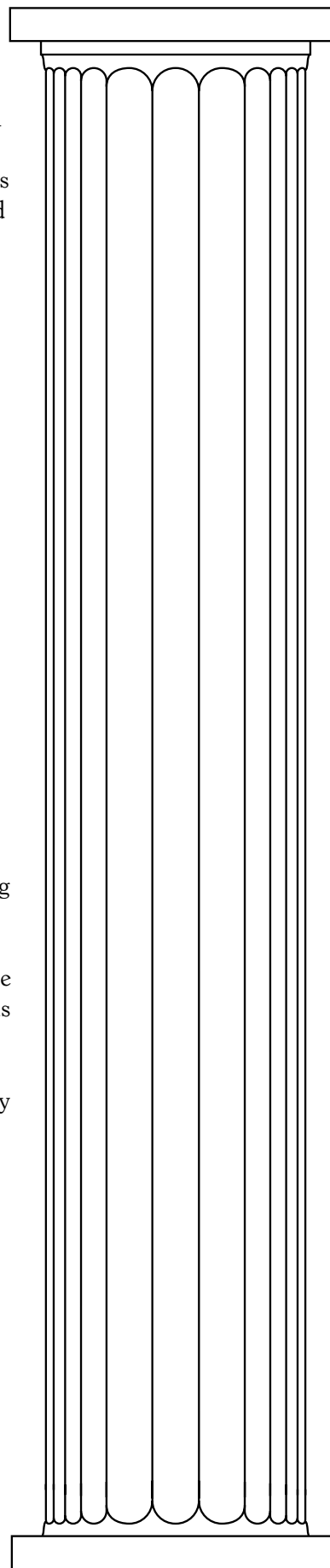




You're wondering, perhaps, what has happened to Yanni. I'm not sure, but, when we meet up with him Real Soon Now, the only thing that will be clear is that it is not what had been happening to me. I am outside the museum. It is very, very hot. And dry. And dusty. There are even more people now, swarms of people, all of them, it seems, chattering loudly and snapping pictures of each other. I can still feel the cool and quiet of the museum, still see the serene marble faces gazing across the millennia. I wander away from the people and the litter. I slip into the olive groves behind the massive complex of ruins that is the Acropolis. I walk on the dirt behind and beneath the stone and plaster. I am ready, like Kore, to feel the elements, to commune with nature. No film boxes, no tourists chattering in many languages. Just me and the olive trees and...oh no!...what's that smell? Urine! I look to the backside of the ruins — oh no! — dozens of spontaneous urinals have been hastily created. It reeks. The white wash walls are sprayed with yellow. This transcendent sight is accompanied with stray tissues and occasional piles of — well, you know. And then, as if to be sure I am thoroughly disillusioned, I spy a whole small empire of empty film boxes.

I am not amused. I head back into the fray of humanity, trying to appreciate the architecture and keep from scolding people as they throw their candy wrappers and film boxes onto the ground. I am trying not to have a bad day. I spy something promising. Past the Parthenon there is another old building where the pillars holding up the part of the ceiling are women, they balance the roof on their upraised hands (or was it their heads, ah, how memory fades at my age...). They are lovely. That's my spot, I know it. I wander that way and the crowd thins as I walk away from the hub. I imagine myself in the "women's building," as I am now thinking of it, sitting in the very center of it on the cool stone, stubbornly ignoring noisy tourists if need be. By the time I arrive I realize almost no one is here. A sign tells me this is the Erechtheion, a temple built primarily to Athena (the Parthenon building is to all the gods and goddesses). The stone women are holding up the ceiling of the "porch of the Krayatides." They are wonderful. No one is up in there. I am entranced, it is just the haven I have been looking for. I circle to find a place to climb up onto and into it.

At the entrance is a sign in several languages, all of them saying Keep Out. It explains that the





Erechtheion is crumbling from the traffic and asks us to please stay off to preserve it. Oh, hell! I have a powerful impulse to just climb up anyway, since no one is looking. Amazingly, I don't. Is this about turning 40? At this point I am still only 39 ^{352/365}. But I feel responsible. If I do it, so will anyone and it will be wrecked. I am entering the ranks of the middle-aged now; we run the world. Besides, having some official yell at me or evict me would certainly tip the emotional scales of a rather volatile day. I am not used to obeying orders. Or signs, for that matter. As a lesbian, there was no way to obey the rules and still live my life. As a hippie before that, breaking the rules seemed revolutionary. Before that I was a scrappy, tough working-class kid, breaking rules, and occasionally windows, just for the fun of it. Who am I to obey the rules? But I do. And with a middle-aged, world-weary sigh, I will my eyes away from the entrance, back up to the voluptuous female pillars, enjoy them at a distance and maturely circle around the lovely, crumbling building.



When I reach the front of the building, I see some people have indeed entered the way I chose not to and are creeping around inside. You can see them tiptoeing through the ruins because most of the walls are half rubble. I notice a small, dark man standing near the front. I've never seen him before, but I wonder if he is an Italian movie star. He looks like he is in a movie right now. I mean, you have to imagine how hot it was and how incredibly soggy everyone was on that small mountain, in the cloudless blue sky in the shimmering heat. The dust mixed with sweat and left everyone kind of grimy. But this guy looks like he is in an air-conditioned hotel room — scratch that — with his silk suit and his long, glossy, perfectly-coifed hair, he looks like he's in an air-conditioned ballroom, ready to dance with Cinderella. But before I can ponder this climateless, blow-dried phenomenon further, a woman in his group starts to walk into the inner sanctum, the one I ached to be in. She enters, then turns back to the others, "I don't know about this..." she says.

Before you can pee against an ancient ruin, I blurt out, "If everyone does what you're doing it will be ruined!" Apparently, developmentally speaking, what follows being a juvenile delinquent is being a cop. No one up there acknowledges me, nor do they make any sign of leaving the off-limits building. Somewhere in my hot, film-box and urine-infested brain, the fact of this man's movie starishness dimly connects to a sense that he might have some kind of special access to the building but this only makes me more irritated that I can't get in. I repeat myself, "IF EVERYONE DOES WHAT YOU'RE DOING, IT WILL BE RUINED!" The movie star guy turns toward me. He is about six feet above and he is gleaming, impossibly cool, sweatless and, I am now suspecting, not human.

He replies coolly, as only people in the movies and aliens can: "You obviously don't know who I am or what I'm doing."

There is a blond woman at his side. As she glances at me, I think, "God, she looks familiar." She, too, has not a drop of sweat showing, her careful hairdo has every curl and twist perfectly in place. A small crowd has gathered to watch my sweaty, snotty little David routine being squashed beneath the glance of this gleaming Goliath. I am looking at this woman, trying to remember where I saw her, when a Greek man rushes up to my side and shoves me, "Just Move Along!"

Having discharged me, the alien-movie-man pivots gracefully back to his group.

Sizzling, now fully regressed from officious little cop to spiteful juvenile delinquent, I spit back at the live-glossy-photo-in-his-silk-suit perched on the Erechtheion: "OH! You're SPECIAL!"

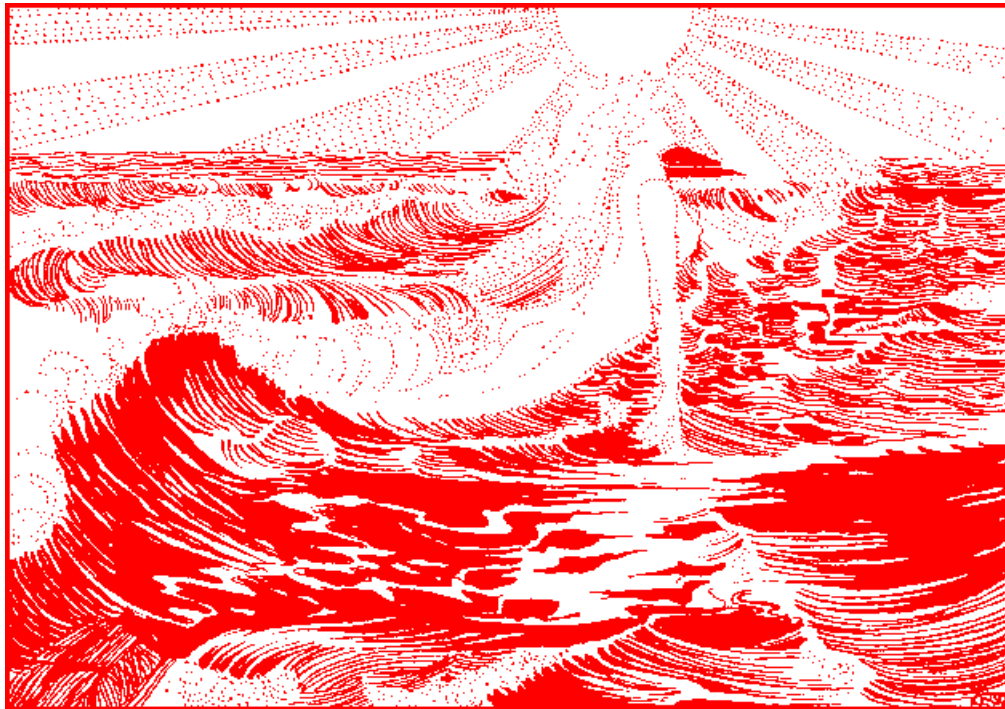
At which point the man who shoved me shoves me again, this time really hard, sending me on my way about four feet and bruising my shoulder. I stumble on, knowing that they had permission all along, knowing I kind of knew it all along, bumping into the tourist hordes, film boxes crunching beneath my feet and tears dripping rivulets of dust into my nostrils. It is unclear to me what I was fighting for or what I just lost.

I gave up on any more transcendence or illumination that afternoon. I settled myself onto a little platform outside the Parthenon, took out my sketch pad and started to draw the stunning view from on top of this small mountain. The rounded, whitewashed buildings topped the rolling hills covered with glossy green trees and blue-green, gnarly olive trees. Onion domes peaked out among the trees. David found me there and sat beside me, glad to get a load off himself. I just drew for about an hour, lost in the mindless communion of eye to hand motion, imagining the many textures into graphite....still trying not to have a bad day.

* * *

It was months later that I, firmly 40, was reading the Sunday paper and saw him. His dark hair was jauntily tossed back by a wind machine, his million dollar smile splashed across the front page of the variety section: "Yanni! Live at the Acropolis!" Hey! I said to David, That's the guy I yelled at! Remember that guy I told you I yelled at on the Acropolis that day? He is famous. His name is Yanni. Who's "Yanni"? I don't know, a musician, must be New Age with one name like that and his hairdo. We read the article and found out he was Greek, that he had lived in Saint Paul for a while. The recording and concert the article described had been at the Dionysian amphitheater we had passed on the way up, on the night we ate unknown substances and chatted with the Scots. I told a few people, both embarrassed by and a little proud of my rude little brush with the rich and famous. I was told the blonde was Linda Evans, a TV star from Dynasty and Yanni's partner of ten years. It was many months after that David's brother gave us three gifts for Christmas: a tape: "Yanni: Live at the Acropolis"; a T-shirt that said "I Yelled At YANNI" on the front and "Acropolis, September 24, 1993" on the back; and another T-shirt which said "My wife yelled at Yanni and all I got was this lousy t-shirt." (Yes, we had gotten married, with or without the help of the Greek goddesses, though we had requested the judge not use the word "wife.") I wanted the Yanni tape to be really insipid but it was actually pretty good, though I can't say I've spent much time listening to it.

Now I am just a scroungy normal person again, like I was all along. But I wear the T-shirt sometimes and it never ceases to draw comments. I did it. I was there. I opened my mouth and put my whole foot in it. And now here I am again, bragging about it for all the world to see. I was the one. I yelled at Yanni.



T W E N T Y
Y E A R S O F
UPROAR



B Y D A V E L A N G F O R D

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This closely resembles my GoH talk at Intervention, the 1997 UK Eastercon. There are differences, because (a) various last-minute scribbled changes vanished into the mists of history when — in keeping with the traditions of the venue (Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool) — my print-out was subsequently lost or stolen; (b) I've restored a few bits cut owing to worries about length and speakability; (c) a couple of egregious afterthoughts have crept in.... DRL

Hello.... There are a few things about this convention that make me feel old. This morning, for example, I discovered that with hideous cruelty my hotel bathroom has been fitted with a mirror. It wasn't a pretty sight. Even more soul-searing is the realization that Intervention marks the 21st anniversary of the Eastercon at which I handed out my first sf fanzine. You know how it is: you dabble for a little bit, thinking you can give it up any time you like, and then one Good Friday you wake up all grey-haired to find worried doctors telling you that your published fanzine count has reached the dangerous level of 285, which by an uncanny coincidence is the number of your remaining brain cells.

So I wanted to talk about the fanzines that made an impression on me back in the '70s and early '80s — a sort of **1066 and All That** history of the bits those 285 surviving brain cells can remember. After all, I doubt that even the great Harlan Ellison ever wrote a more memorable sentence than his famous fanzine example, which dispassionately sums up a 1953 fan feud:

The Mad Dogs have kneed us in the groin, they've rubbed dirt in our eyes and rabbit-punched their way to a first-round decision. (*Psychotic* 15, 1953)

You've probably guessed that I tend to forget all the historically important stuff in favour of what made me laugh... such as the writings of a now almost-forgotten fan whose name used to be a household word: Leroy Kettle.

One problem with fanzine humour is that it tends to be highly topical. For example, there was once a time when the British SF Association was in a state of collapse and failing to send out any mailings — [*speaks very rapidly:*] a situation that could not possibly happen under the present management — and Leroy Kettle's fanzine *True Rat* duly ran an ad for the BSFA, or Bromley Silent Farting Association. Motto: "Join now, and we promise you won't hear anything from us." *Nowadays*, of course, the service offered by the BSFA is not to be sniffed at. On a similar level of good taste were the little space-filler quotations Leroy used to put in, like the wistful line "where have all the bran-buds gone? (long time passing)."

It was *True Rat* that inspired the news-mangling techniques that were later brought to a new low in my own newsletter *Ansible*. Here's the report of an aspiring young novelist's first triumph:

At last, yes, finally, Rob Holdstock has had an offer for his novel **So Many Readers It's Falling To Bits**. Robert Hale and Rob's agents Tenper, Cent and Moore, have agreed on a sum of £100. Rob is still struggling to find the money. (*True Rat* 5, 1975)

True Rat's finest hour involved the only definition of sf I've ever been able to remember, supposedly written by Peter Nicholls — the Australian sf pundit whose awesome intellect was overshadowed only by the vastness of his ego, his beard, and his beer-gut. The piece began, "You'll never appreciate Sci Fi until you read this unbelievable critic," and then launched into the solidly academic definition:

Sci-fi can be succinctly defined as speculation, whether based on established scientific facts or on logical pseudo-facts consistent with the framework of the fiction in question, involving smelly green pimply aliens furiously raping or eating, or both, beautiful naked bare-breasted chicks, covering them in slime, red, oozing, living slime, dribbling from every horrific orifice, squeezing out between bulbous pulpy lips onto the sensuous velvety skin of the writhing sweating slave-girls, their bodies cut and bruised by knotted whips brandished by giant blond vast-biceped androids called Simon, and written in the Gothic mode. (*True Rat* 7, 1976)

But Peter Nicholls didn't usually write quite like that. I admired the way the irritating sod could be funny even when writing solid criticism for the SF Foundation's heavyweight **Foundation**, which back in 1972 was a lot more like a fanzine than it is now. Here's Peter reviewing Larry Niven's **Ringworld** with his famous smartarse mode engaged:

Some of you may not be familiar with that famous work entitled **A Reference Book of Planetary and Galactic Civilizations for the Use of Science Fiction Writers**. It was a compendium John W. Campbell Jr worked up from Spengler, Toynbee, and **The Child's Wonder Book of World History**. Campbell had the only copy, and he used to lend it to his writers. Asimov and Heinlein used to swap it backwards and forwards all the time; Alfred Bester could only get hold of it twice. There's a nasty story that A.E. van Vogt had it xeroxed, but his secretary made a mistake and xeroxed a Superman comic in place of Chapter 6. Anyway it came out all right, because he never noticed. Poor old Jim Blish couldn't get hold of it when he needed it, so he had to read Spengler in the original, to the ultimate confusion of the fans.

The rumour is that Fred Pohl has the book now, but he is more cautious about who he lends it to. But he liked Larry Niven and lent it to him, and Larry took the Ringworld civilizations from the chapter called "The Decline of Technocracy into Superstitious Tribalism." He made a few mistakes, but Fritz Leiber and Walter Miller had scrawled so many annotations all over the margins and between the lines that he can hardly be blamed. (*Foundation 2*, 1972)

When I first read this in 1972, I was not as sensible as I am now, and fervently wished that I could get a look at John W. Campbell's legendary guidebook. But after a while, something dawned on me.... What was annoying about Nicholls was that he not only wrote witty litcrit stuff — well, that was his job — but he also trespassed on the territory that *I* fancied, by doing fanzine convention reports. The bastard.

The time was 1975, the Easter convention was Seacon (which was supposed to be in Brighton but had moved to that well-known seaside resort Coventry), and I was still cowering on the sidelines of the action... afraid of being destroyed by a single crushing look from famous people like James Blish, John Brunner, Harry Harrison, or Leroy Kettle. This event took place in the poshest and most freshly decorated hotel any British con had known — at least until 1987 in Brighton, where they helpfully did the redecoration while the Worldcon was actually happening.... Meanwhile, the Seacon '75 hotel renovations had Peter Nicholls cringing from all human contact, just like me, but for a different reason:

What must have looked like the standard fannish paranoia, most familiar of all sf syndromes, was rooted in the knowledge that I had a static charge of half a million volts inside me. So did everyone else. It was the nylon carpets and air conditioning. My first contact with an attractive woman at the con had resulted in a crackling blue spark when our hands touched. "Cor, I'm all right here," I thought, having read about that first electric contact many times in my favourite Woman's Magazine. I wasn't disenchanted until the same thing happened when I shook hands with Bob Shaw. ("The Great Seacon Freak-Out," *Wrinkled Shrew 4*, 1975)

The main thing I learned from Peter was that when you're stealing other people's stuff — just as I'm doing today — you might as well steal the best. His summary of the Seacon '75 convention experience illustrated this by swiping bits from that classic of early fanwriting, **The Divine Comedy**:

I began to walk spiralling down the stairs. With every successive landing it was like entering a yet more inward circle of Dante's Hell. The circle of the drunkards was followed by a circle of limbo, where aimless neofans trudged in passive circles, seeking a way out to the great unreachable room party in the sky, which no-one could locate. The next circle was the circle of the sleepers. Picking my way through them, I spiralled down through the circle of the failed gamblers, commiserating with one another about the difficulty of filling inside straights. Further down was the circle of the lost. They sat, unreachable in their desolation,

crooning to themselves, "I need a woman." [...] I feared to descend to the lowest of all the circles, half-expecting to meet the horned one himself, haunches sunk in ice, endlessly chewing on the body of some long-damned fan, perhaps George Hay. (*Ibid*)

Newcomers to the accursed circles of British sf politics may need to be told that George Hay more or less created the Science Fiction Foundation — although he was very quickly dethroned by a palace coup involving someone called Nicholls. George saw the Foundation as a group of slan-like sf intellectuals which, when the aliens finally descend to make contact with Earthly civilization, would provide them with like-minded people to chat to. Meanwhile, he also hoped to finance the Foundation's growth to world domination by taking out lucrative patents on the bright ideas developed by sf writers who were too unworldly to exploit them commercially — ideas like time machines, antigravity and faster-than-light travel. Sceptical fans may mock, but the word is that George used Isaac Asimov's psychohistory to predict that one day his Foundation would be taken over by academics who would fill its magazine with essays called "Some Lesser Known Aspects of Eighteenth-Century Utopian Fabulation in Albania." And so George set up a Second Foundation at the other end of fandom, which will one day reveal itself and astonish us all.

But I was talking about fanzines. Some people tend to denounce them as impenetrably esoteric and in-groupish, unless they're entirely full of sf reviews and amateur fiction. Myself, I was fascinated by the chatter about sf people — which didn't seem any more irrelevant than the gossip columns in newspapers or *Private Eye*, and were often a lot funnier.

Who, I asked myself, was this obscure librarian Malcolm Edwards who was described as having a baby-faced and owlsh appearance that concealed ruthless, empire-building ambition? As the saying goes, all knowledge is in fanzines: Malcolm is now running HarperCollins UK with a rod of iron, while I still can't remember whether it was Kettle or John Brosnan who christened him "Le Petit Mal." Speaking of Brosnan, you had to know that he once had a Morbid Growth on his nose to understand why *his* scurrilous fanzine was called *Big Scab*, or indeed why Malcolm suggested he should cut his nose off and enter the convention masquerade as Michael Moorcock's *A Cure for Cancer*. Again, was it true what the fanzines claimed about Rob Holdstock's immense sexual prowess? He will hit me if I say another word, or even mention that in one convention's "Fannish Fortunes" poll the top scorers as "Tallest Fan" included: "Rob Holdstock lying down." Meanwhile, who was this mysterious power behind the scenes, known to fallible humanity only as "Greg Pickersgill"? Friends rushed to advise me, for the sake of my health, not to ask.

Indeed, there are people who actively didn't want to know about fandom. There was a magical moment at the 1979 Worldcon in Brighton, when that man Nicholls tried to lure famous critic John Clute into having desperate fun at a room party somewhere upstairs:

Clute bridled, but followed, only to jib completely at mounting the stairs. I grabbed his arm, but he backed away, his face a mask of panic. "What's wrong, John?" "I don't *want* to be a fan," he wailed, in absolutely stricken tones. God knows what dreadful initiation rites he was envisaging. ("The Regency Buck Stops Here," *Drilkjis* 5, 1980)

But I myself fancied joining the club, and so I produced a first solo fanzine which was pretty terrible. Part of the problem was the title, carefully chosen to be impossible to pronounce: *Twll-Ddu*, which is very bad Welsh and — to the disappointment of friends who'd been hoping for some hideous obscenity — merely means Black Hole. By the time of the second issue, I'd lived through the appalling 1976 Eastercon and begun to dabble with the dangerous technique of sarcasm:

I found the convention in Manchester very interesting but a little surprising. There were many interesting Science-Fiction events such as the BSFA Annual General Meeting, but few of the attendees seemed to take them seriously. In fact some people seemed to spend all their time in the bar, and I think it would be a good idea if this were closed during programme items at future conventions. To continue my complaints, the Guest of Honour [Robert Silverberg] did not speak about Science Fiction as I expected, but instead read some odd experimental literature [called *Dying Inside*] which was very disappointing. And Mr Robert Shaw's scientific talk was completely spoilt by antisocial people who laughed at his proposals. (*Twll-Ddu* 2, 1976)

Ever since then, in hundreds of fanzine pieces, I've been continuing to struggle for cheap laughs. It's particularly satisfying when you can sneak a serious point past people's guard by, er, lubricating it with humour, so it goes deeper and sticks in the hapless reader's mind — like Randall Jarrell making a permanent point about critics by blandly defining the novel as: "A prose work of some length that has something wrong with it."

Speaking of critics, when I very nervously started typing my first fanzine I was lucky enough not to have read one piece of criticism that might have scared me off altogether. This was Greg Pickersgill's notorious (only I didn't know that) and much-quoted (but I didn't know that either) 1970 review of the one and only issue of *Viridiana*, a less than perfect fanzine by the now blessedly forgotten Dave Womack. The review ended:

Jesus Christ I'm reading this bloody thing now and I can't believe it. It's worthless. It gets Brit fandom a bad name it hardly deserves, bad as it is. Every copy ought to be sought out and burned, with Womack securely roped down in the middle. My fury knows no bounds.
(*Fouler 3*, 1970)

Eventually, of course, I did collect some reviews, not every one of them flattering. On the whole the critics agreed that up to about issue number 8, my magnum opus *Twill-Ddu* was in need of improvement. Thereafter until the 20th and last issue, the general consensus seemed to be that it was past its best. Somewhere in between there must have been a peak moment, but I blinked and missed it. My favourite review was a mild denunciation by Don West, which condemned me and various others as belonging to an unspeakably sinister movement which he had detected and identified as... Middle Class Fandom. This concept quickly led to Chris Priest's inspirational *Middle Class Fandom Liberation Front* flyer, with its splendid rallying-cry:

Now is the time to sit down with a nice cup of tea and be counted. (*MCFLF*, 1980)

Of course one can understand why Don West should be hard on the smug middle-class bastard fans who could afford their own duplicators to produce fanzines, when *he* was reduced to building his own just like Robinson Crusoe. Here's the West recipe.

A rotary duplicator, mind you. Not any of your cheap flatbed shit. All you need is a one-gallon paint tin, four furniture springs, a mangle roller, two wardrobe fittings for hanging clothes rails on, a couple of plates for joining bunk-beds together, a mincing machine handle, some felt, a rubber bath mat, half a clothes horse (for the wood), various screws, nails, nuts and bolts, some sellotape, two pushchair wheels, a pram axle, some draught excluder, and half a baked bean tin. The design is original. [...]

You people who go out and buy these readymade duplicators make me sick. No enterprise. No initiative. You should be ashamed of yourselves, the lot of you.

I am going to show you how it really should be done. (*Stop Breaking Down 2*, 1976)

This reminds me that my own duplicator broke down in 1979 and was fixed with the aid of an unusual spare part. I'd been organizing the Hugo trophies for that year's Worldcon in Brighton, and for years afterwards my fanzines came churning out of this great clanking machine that incorporated a piece of a Hugo. If you believe in sympathetic magic, it might explain a lot about my later career.

One useful bit of critical advice for would-be funny fanwriters came from Bob Shaw, who advised that you should set down in merciless detail the most horrible and demoralizing thing that had recently happened to you. The callous readers, he promised, would then collapse to the floor in tears of helpless laughter. I remember Bob demonstrating this technique in a convention bar, by reducing his listeners to jelly with a graphically agonizing anecdote of how, before his guest of honour speech at Tynescon in 1974, the committee had treated him to a delicious meal involving real game birds that had been shot with a real shotgun. Of course Bob broke a tooth on one of the pieces of real lead shot, and had to recite his funny talk through a haze of pain and anaesthetic whisky, with what felt like tactical nuclear exchanges going on at

the back of his jaw. Having given his blow-by-blow account of this horror, Bob looked sadly at the listening fans who were falling around in hysterics, and added: "You see what I mean? It *isn't* funny." But it was the way that he told them.

A favourite horror story for us would-be sf writers is Rob Holdstock's fanzine description of what it's like to produce 180 pages of hack novelization of a lousy Peter Cushing movie called *The Satanists*, in just eight days, with only the dirty bits to cheer him up. Here he is, shattered but near the end:

TUESDAY: Two days left and sixty pages to go. I read from the script; Felicity is dressed in a simple white shift and kneeling in some sort of trance; the Duchess sensuously strokes the girl's creamy white neck....

I perk up immediately. Strong possibilities here. Ditch the shift: stark naked, full breasts, rounded buttocks, a hungry look in her eyes like she wants head or something equally repulsive. The Duchess dressed like a belly-dancer. Touch of lesbianism. Rubbing magic oils into their bodies. By mid-morning my hands are shaking. Phone Pickersgill, who is into this sort of thing, and read him several steamy scenes. The heavy breathing from his end is taken as approval and I carry on. By midday I reach a crisis. Can't decide whether to have her raped or not. Decide not to. Story flags a bit as Black Mass proceeds, so flip to priest slumped in a corner and have Satanist come over and kick him a few times. "Vomit rose to his lips as the foot thudded into his groin, then smashed into his mouth." This sounds familiar so I check back and find I've used exactly the same expression twice in the same chapter. How many times can one be kicked in the mouth and lose the same teeth? I am reminded [...] that last year in three consecutive sf stories I wrote "The screams of the time travellers were terrible to behold." Just for the hell of it I write "Simon's screams were terrible to behold." [...]

By five o'clock I've finished page 142 with lots of mistakes as energy and interest wanes, but I'm now close enough to finishing to remove the terror from the situation. With Wednesday's output I'll be up to page 172, and that means just eight pages early Thursday morning to round off the book before delivery at noon. Is this what they call obtuseness? ("Eight Days a Week," *Stop Breaking Down* 4, 1977.)

Thank you, Rob Holdstock. One side-effect of hacking this stuff out at high speed is that you give minor characters the first name that comes to mind. My own universe-busting sf novel **The Space Eater** contains, for no apparent reason, a brutish Sergeant Pickersgill. Rob's **Legend of the Werewolf** novelization features this indescribably filthy French sewerman who spends his days fishing cigarette-ends out from between the floating lumps of sewage, and drying them for later use. His name is Michel Rohan. Michael Scott Rohan, who is half French, was not amused.

Getting back to fanzines, I should also mention the Chris Priest principle, which is that not everything that happens to an sf fan is worth writing about. This emerges with hideous clarity in convention reports, which are one of the great classic forms of fanwriting. In Shakespearean times everyone was sooner or later expected to bash out a sonnet or a blank verse drama, and the fanzine equivalent is the con report. I forget how many I've read that tell you in great and circumstantial detail how the writer travelled to the con hotel, often — a cunning narrative surprise — using some form of transport. Further astonishing developments include eating unlikely meals, drinking, overspending in the dealers' room, drinking too much, having remarkable and unique bowel movements, drinking far too much, staying up far too late, and being taken completely aback by a colossal hangover next morning. It's a real challenge to write a con report that avoids all of this — or even any of it.

One of my own efforts began by dressing the thing up as a TV documentary probing the state of science fiction...

ANNOUNCER: Viewers are warned that the following programme contains a certain amount of content, and also some dialogue, which may be offensive to some. Better to switch off quickly and read a good book —



But already we are into the standard sf opening montage. An Apollo rocket boosts into the night... King Kong wobbles threateningly at it from the top of the Devil's Tower... a radiant Erich von Däniken slowly rises above Stonehenge... old *Astounding* covers show tentacular aliens ravishing Dave Kyle... the Phantom of the Opera hums a few bars from *Also Sprach The BBC Radiophonic Workshop*... Patrick Moore's eyebrows signal across interstellar space and Darth Vader eats the USS *Enterprise* in a telephone box. (*Twll-Ddu* 14, 1978)

I was able to date this particular article by its mention of a recently published book, with Joseph Nicholas saying, "Ah, you've got **Lord Foul's Bane**," and the reply being (of course), "No, just a hang-over." Another Langford convention essay pretended to be the report of an alien survey which decided this planet was unfit for colonization owing to its drunken natives' habit of laughing heartily at charade games in which people mimed titles like D.G. Compton's sf epic **Hot Wireless Sets, Aspirin Tablets, The Sandpaper Sides Of Used Matchboxes, And Something That Might Have Been Castor Oil**. In yet another convention piece I saved myself a lot of work by presenting it as a jigsaw puzzle which you had to assemble from a lot of apparently unrelated, out-of-order fragments... which in fact *were* unrelated.

One fragment was about the panel called "Science Fiction's Stupid Ideas." I had no ideas, not even stupid ones. William Gibson was sitting next to me and had even fewer ideas, since he was busy gazing at the coruscating lights of infinity after borrowing an interesting cigarette from famous US editor Ted White, containing some exotic substance; possibly menthol. I tried to be controversial by complaining about Bill's descriptions of mind-destroying computer programs in **Count Zero**: if it takes a whole sixteen seconds for the dread "black ice" to "eat into your nervous system" and stop your heart, a simple dead-man switch on the computer should give plenty of protection. The master of cyberpunk controversially lashed back by saying: "Uh... I never thought of that... don't know how I'd get round that...." And then he sank into tortured silence for the panel's remaining forty minutes. Afterwards, I made a mental note that I wasn't really very good at panels, while Bill headed rapidly in the direction of Ted White's interesting cigarettes.

Of course, converting earth-shattering convention incidents and passionate thoughts about sf into decent fanzine writing is hard work. I've already quoted cosmic advice from Bob Shaw and Chris Priest: here is the Word of Malcolm Edwards.

I'm opposed to the view that it's okay to print any old rubbish because, what the hell, it's just a fanzine. On the contrary, I think that fanwriting is one of the very few forms of writing which are pointless unless you are doing your very best. (*Tappen 1*, 1981)

Me, I tend to scream aloud when I open a new fanzine and read a tough, hard-hitting editorial that begins roughly like this:

Well, folks, live long and prosper, and I suppose it's about time I produced another issue of *Boredom Express*. Sorry this is so late. I really don't know how I'm going to fill up the rest of this page....

I don't have a formula for success in fanzines. At the moment my own approach is to produce an extremely thin sf newsletter, so that sheer lack of space forces me to edit out all the boring bits. As the great Walt Willis once said: if the letters that people send for publication in your fanzine aren't any good, you should rewrite them until they are. Not everyone is lucky enough to get letters like the one which Hazel and I have been happily quoting to each other for twenty years. This was sent by Ursula Le Guin to the British fanzine *Maya* in response to some comments attributed to one-time fan Henry P. Pijohn:

I wish people who say things like "When I read a science fiction book I don't want to be educated and go to sleep. I want to enjoy myself and read a story," were all named Henry P. Pijohn so that you could recognize them the instant they were introduced, and get away before they started quacking. People with watertight compartments in their heads are very boring. It never occurs to them that one can read a story, be educated, enjoy oneself, and *then* go to sleep, all at once except for the going to sleep part. Education of course is the trick word. Education is dull. Education is for like eggheads y'know man. Y'know like reading and writing and thinking and looking at pictures and driving so you don't kill all the pedestrians and making edible dinners and all kinds of like stupid intellectual stuff like that. I don't wanna be like educated man I wanna live in a cave and eat bats. And tell myself real good stories about the last bat I ate. Yeah. (*Maya 11*, 1976)

So, in a purely educational way, I'll finish with a few last extracts which have somehow stuck in that tiny crevice known as my mind. Our first selection answers the complaint that fanzines don't contain enough about science fiction. This bit from Chris Priest's legendary fanzine *Deadloss* tells you more about what it's like behind the sf scenes than at least three writers would wish you to know. The setting is the 1976 Eastercon...

Hearing familiar voices coming from the next bar, I went in and discovered BRIAN ALDISS, HARRY HARRISON and ROBERT SILVERBERG joking around. In the midst of it all, one of them made a passing, scathing reference to HEINLEIN's **Stranger in a Strange Land**. I said: "You know, I've never actually *read* **Stranger in a Strange Land**. Is it really no good?" One by one, the other three solemnly admitted that they too had never actually sat down and read it all the way through. "What about FRANK HERBERT's **Dune**?" HARRY HARRISON said. "I've never read that lousy thing either." The rest of us confessed the same. "What about **Lord of the Rings**?" I said. Same result. We all agreed they were lousy books, but none of us had read them. Other titles were suggested, most of them "classics" of science fiction...with a very few exceptions, none of us had read them. At the end, HARRY said: "Listen you sods, don't let the fans know! We're supposed to be experts!" (*Deadloss 1*, 1978...wherein filthy pros were distinguished by capitals, and Chris Priest the fan poked fun at the dignity of CHRISTOPHER PRIEST.)

Only in fanzines do you learn such secrets. Another which I cherish is the confession by *Interzone*'s film critic Nick Lowe that he once had a toilet decorated with *Star Wars* wallpaper, and found it difficult to complete his bodily functions because Princess Leia looked so disapproving.

Next: one of my favourite ways of wrapping up criticism is a gentle sugar-coating of parody. Before I quote from Kevin Smith's piece "How to Write like Joseph Nicholas"...two disclaimers. First, you *don't* need to know Joseph Nicholas's writing. Second, Joseph himself protests that he no longer writes like this at all. Here we go:

The starting point in writing like Joseph Nicholas is a simple statement, e.g. —

"The cat sat on the mat."

Add adjectives and adverbs:

"The large cat sat crookedly on the coconut mat."

More adjectives, more adverbs:

"The large ginger cat sat crookedly, preening itself, on the hairy, coconut mat."

It may help if an adverb is somewhat unapt. Then insert similes:

"The large ginger cat sat as crookedly as a corkscrew, preeningly itself, on a coconut mat with more hair than Greg Pickersgill."

Get abusive and exaggerate:

"The fucking immense ginger cat sprawled as crookedly as a bloody corkscrew on a coconut mat with more hair than Greg Pickersgill, preening itself like a ponced up version of David Wingrove in footer shorts."

The next two steps described by Kevin are "Force in the current hobby horse" and "Conjure up random value judgements," which bring us to the following uncanny echo of Joseph's haunting prose:

"The fucking immense, randy ginger tom cat (which would probably win a Hugo if it got published in *Analog* — and such a thing would not surprise me in the least) sprawled as crookedly as a bloody corkscrew on a coconut mat with more brains than Spider Robinson and more hair than Greg Pickersgill, preening itself like a ponced up version of David Wingrove (who wouldn't recognize good sf if it bit him in the leg) in footer shorts that would look better on Legs & Co.: not to mention the fact that Poul Anderson should have quit while he was ahead, in 1965."

This is nearly the full version *[says Kevin]*, but it is still first draft. The genuine Joseph Nicholas would ordinarily produce only a first draft. However, the unpractised student cannot leave it at that. It still lacks that certain ambience that marks the true work of Joseph Nicholas. A rewrite is required... (*Dot 9*, 1980)

But I'll spare you the rewrite since I think you get the idea, especially those of you who started screaming for mercy at about the second line.

[For the record, Kevin's final refinement of josephoid perfection went as follows:

"The Hugos are now so devalued that a randy ginger tom cat would probably win one if it were to be published in *Analog* (and such a thing would not surprise me in the least, so fucking immensely awful has it become — Christ! even Spider Robinson, who has less brain than a coconut mat and is bent as a corkscrew to boot, does all right out of it); and Poul Anderson, who should have quit while he was ahead in 1965, still wins the things these days, which only goes to prove that the credulous fan-in-the-worldcon wouldn't recognize good sf if it bit him in the leg." (*Ibid*)

Good parodies give you this ghastly vision of what the original must be like, even if you've never read the original. In one fanzine piece, I tried to sum up the subtle prose essence of a certain fantasy bestseller in just half a page, like this:

"Hellfire!" erupted Thomas Covenant, his raw, self-inflicted nostrils clenching in white-hot, stoical anguish while his gaunt, compulsory visage knotted with fey misery. His lungs were clogged with ruin. A hot, gelid, gagging, fulvous tide of self-accusation dinned in his ears: *leper bestseller outcast unclean*.... To release the analystic refulgence, the wild magic of the white gold ring he wore, could conceivably shatter the Arch of Time, utterly destroy the Land, and put a premature, preterite end to the plot!

Yet what other way was there? The argute notion pierced his mind like a jerid. Only thus could the unambergrised malison of Lord Foul be aneled. Only thus. He clenched his clenching. Hellfire and damnation!

At that point he winced at a swift, sapid lucubration.

But I'd better cut this short before it runs into a second trilogy, and put an end to your suspense by telling you straight away that the butler did it. I'm sorry, I'll read that again. The hierodule did it — with the aegis — in the lucubrium.

Finally, I'd like to quote that great rarity, a piece of fanzine verse that I've found genuinely unforgettable. Stop sneaking for the exits, back there: this is by the great David Masson, author of that spiffy (and criminally out-of-print) sf collection *The Caltraps of Time*. It's called "The Eve of St Affidavit."

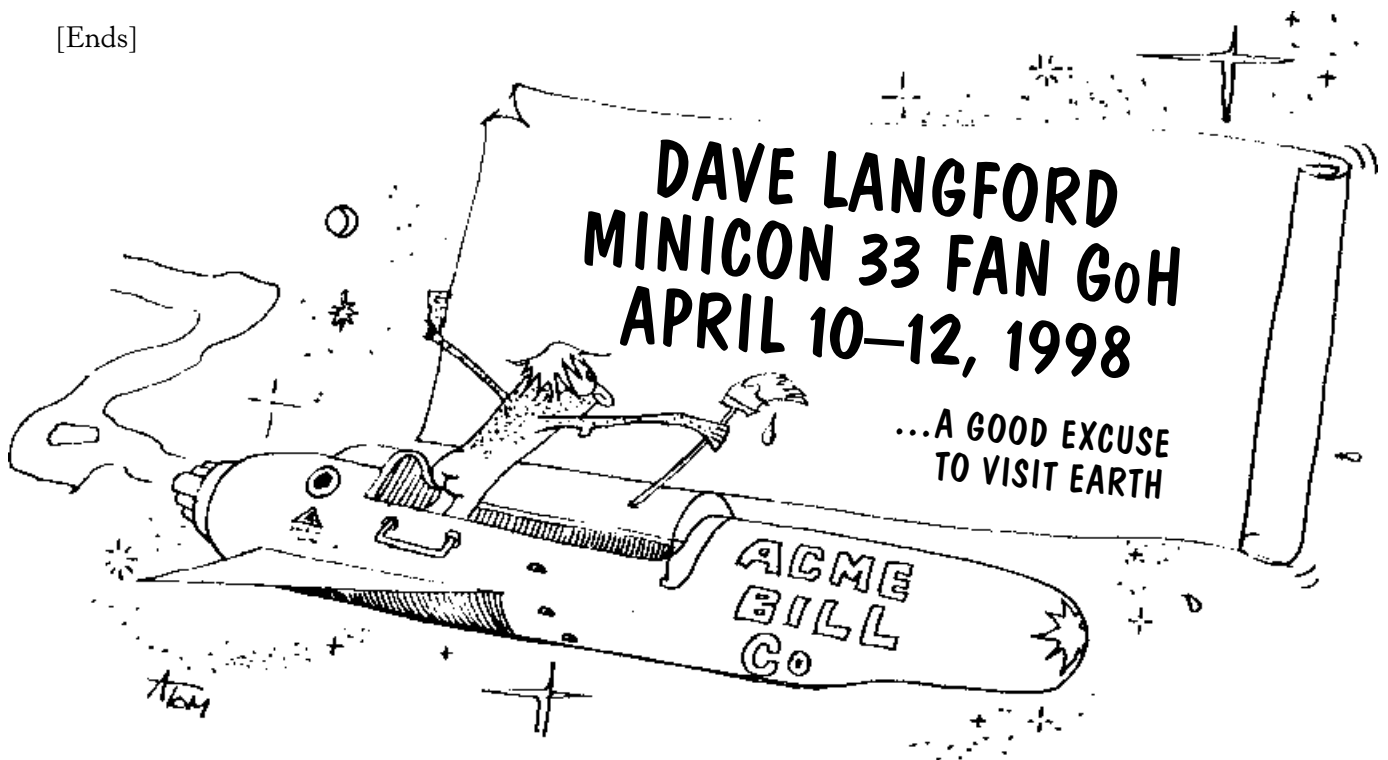
As I sip the bland cedilla
By my aspic-shaded villa,
Where the salmonella ripens in the sun,
Through the rennet-peopled pines
Wind the simnel-chanting lines
Of the banisters whose longitude is done;
Clad in pelmet, syncope, albumen and lathe, they move as one;
For tonight is Calibration,
Time of terror and elation,
When the calipers commute and our Parenthesis is won.

(Bar Trek 3, 1977)

Time to finish. I'm grateful not to have suffered the fate of a certain 1972 Eastercon guest who shall be nameless — oh all right, it was Larry Niven — whose abstruse lecture on physics threw the audience into a helpless stupor, until the Great Inspiration of Brian Aldiss. This consisted of pressing a handkerchief to his nose and sprinting for the doorway, tactfully screaming "The blood! the blood!" I wouldn't dream of suggesting that you all keep this in mind when Brian gives *his* GoH performance tomorrow.

Thank you all, very much.

[Ends]



☐ Ashes

☐ Dust

☐ 9 Electric Razors

by Geri Sullivan

“Let me know if there’s anything I can do from here,” I told him. “And if you want me to come to Pennsylvania, I can do that.”

“Oh, no. That’s not necessary,” Jack quickly replied. “I’ve got friends there...Barry’s there, and Greg will help. I’ll be okay. Thanks for the offer; it means a lot. And it *would* be nice to have you there.” Jack paused. “It would be *really* nice....”

We were on the phone, long-distance. Jack Targonski had started our conversation by saying, “Well, I’m really glad you met my father last November — because he died today.” It was completely unexpected: heart failure in the back yard while Duke Targonski was trying to restart a balky lawn mower on a hot, muggy evening. As an only child, Jack had known he’d face his father’s death someday. But until the phone call came from the emergency room physician, “someday” had remained comfortably distant — something he’d start worrying about in another six years, when his father turned 80. It was so sudden. He wasn’t prepared.

Our conversation jumped between what had happened, what needed to be done, and what lay ahead. Jack was in shock. I listened.

He interrupted himself in the middle of telling me about his last conversation with Duke the previous Sunday — Father’s Day — to ask, “Do you *really* want to come to Pennsylvania?”

“Yes.”

Pennsylvania? I wanted to get in my car and drive to Jack’s home in Chicago that very night. I’d been through the deaths of two family members and knew what hell it could be. I didn’t want Jack going through that particular hell alone. We agreed that I wouldn’t drive to Chicago — that we’d touch base the next day after Jack talked with the funeral home and made some arrangements.

Thus it was I spent ten days and several lifetimes in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, last June.

Getting ready...getting nervous

Jack flew to Pennsylvania on Friday, about 12 hours after we’d first talked. We’d spoken again as he was leaving for the airport. He outlined the funeral arrangements — a meeting at the funeral home Saturday morning, visitation Monday night, and the funeral Tuesday morning. “They’re already doing three funerals Monday and couldn’t schedule a fourth. They’re full up,” he explained. Jack paused for a moment, then said, “You’ve had some time to think about it, and maybe you’ve changed your mind, but if you still want to come to Pennsylvania, I’d love to have you there. I’ll pay for your ticket.”

“I haven’t changed my mind,” I assured him. “I want to come. Jeff and I talked about it last night when he got home from work. He thinks I should be there, too.” Jack and I agreed I’d fly to Allentown on Saturday. He wanted time to check out the situation before I got there — he didn’t know whether he’d be able to handle staying at his father’s house, or if we’d stay with friends instead.

I was distracted all day; my mind was already 1,100 miles east and thinking of funerals past. I went through the motions — reserving tickets, calling clients, and figuring out what to pack. Packing, the thing

that mattered least, took the most effort. Jeans and T-shirts to wear around the house were no problem, but my wardrobe came up woefully short for a funeral. The only option was a business suit. The cut was okay, but the suit was green. Solid green. Bright green. I was overly conscious of Jack's own obsession with clothes, with the importance of appearance. I wondered how many people would be there. Jack had no other immediate family members — his mother had died 27 years earlier, and both of Jack's parents were also only children. But there'd be friends. And the priest. I was going to be the stranger in the mix; I didn't want to offend or look horribly out of place.

Rationalizations, no doubt. I was worried about how things would go. Shopping for suitable clothing gave me something to focus on, something I could magically fix. Unlike those things I couldn't fix — Jack's loss, his grief. I could only hope that by going, by being there, I might lend a helping hand, some moral support. Nothing was going to make this fun, but perhaps I could make it more bearable. I feared making it worse. Mostly, I just wanted the hours until my flight to pass. I just wanted to be there.

Shopping reminded me that I am not by nature a solemn person. Fuchsias, purples, and other bright summer colors kept attracting my eye. One dusty beige outfit caught my attention, and I took it into a dressing room. "How are you doing, dear?" the attendant asked through the door. I came out and showed her. What looked solemn and demure on the hanger screamed, "Cleavage! Cleavage! Cleavage!" on my body.

"It's nice," I said, then pointed to the deep plunge. "But this is clearly Not Appropriate for a Catholic funeral."

"Oh, the priest might get a rush out of it," she replied, chuckling. A moment later, she paled, fully registering what I'd said. A funeral. Someone had died. I assured her that laughter was welcome. And I found a flowered skirt and top that, while not exactly solemn, would serve well enough for the Monday night visitation, and two possible outfits for the funeral itself. One of them came with a vivid pink over-jacket, which would be fine for work but didn't accompany me to Bethlehem.

In addition to my new wardrobe, I packed two pewter totems. The first was a mule. I'd originally given it to my sister-in-law, Louise Sullivan. It represented her stubbornness, and I'd held it in my hand during her funeral in 1981, after her third suicide attempt succeeded. (She was as stubborn about killing herself as she was about everything else.) The second totem, a frog, was larger, heavier. It represented Toad Hall and all the good things in the life I'd built since Louise's death. I'd carried both the frog and the mule in my pockets after my brother's death (another suicide) in 1989. These were my previous experiences with "big" deaths and enormous grief. The totems helped remind me that tough times can be endured — that the future holds joys yet to be discovered.

Not that I expected the Bethlehem trip to be all that tough. I'd met Duke only once, when our visits to Chicago overlapped. Personal grief wasn't an issue or concern. My role was simple — to be there, to help. But death has a way of reminding a person of other deaths, and I knew I'd be remembering other funerals I'd attended. Sorting through Duke's things would remind me of doing the same for Louise. So I carried a bit of comfort along, trying to prepare.

I also tossed in pens, markers, Post-it™ notes, several large envelopes, and a couple of shiny red folders. Susan Levy Haskell had pointed out there would probably be papers to organize. She was right about this and about many other things regarding the trip.

Bruce Schneier and Karen Cooper were having a party that Friday. I stopped in after picking up airplane tickets. Dean Gahlon was there and he gave me invaluable information. He and his wife, Laura, have had both of their only surviving parents die in the last few years. "You're staying a few days after the funeral, right?" Dean asked. "Good — a day or two after the funerals was when it really hit us, when we got overwhelmed by everything that had happened and everything that needed to be done. Until that point, you're going through the motions...there's a structure with the funeral and all."

I knew about going through the motions and about dealing with an estate. What I failed to consider was the difference between a small apartment's worth of belongings accumulated by a young woman just a year out of college and the items, dreams, and memories that fill a home that's been in a family for over 60 years.

Being there

Jack met me at the Allentown airport early Saturday evening. His voice was softer than usual. He looked haggard, but composed. Pretty much what I'd expected. When I saw the size of his father's Cadillac, I was grateful he was in shape to drive. I wouldn't have wanted to maneuver that boat on unfamiliar roads.

While the possibility that Jack might not be in shape to drive had crossed my mind, it was more a sign of my own uncertainty about what I was getting into than an actual concern. Jack is the most unflappable person I know; he's always in control of himself and his actions. His approach to almost any situation is to identify the next step needed, confident he'll then be able to "take it from there." After hearing him use this coping and planning mechanism for years, I adopted it myself. It's the perfect, reassuring answer to almost any big task: "Let's get to point X, and we'll take it from there."

Besides, driving is just something Jack does. He's one of those people who belong behind the wheel of a car.

As he drove into Bethlehem, pointing out a few sights (including the restaurant Frank Lunney and Catherine Jackson once owned), Jack told me about going to the house the day before. It was a disaster area, he said. He'd been furious with his father when he first saw the clutter and dirt. Duke had always had advance notice and time to clean when Jack came for summer vacations and Christmas holidays, but not this time. He was used to living alone. While he was still active and in reasonably good health, he'd slowed down. Perhaps he felt like my dad, who at age 73 says, "I look around and see there's lots that needs to be done. But I enjoy sitting back in my chair and reading the newspaper. So I do."

One of Jack's friends, Greg, had spent the day making the house more habitable. "Greg's part Tim Allen and part Felix Unger," Jack explained. "He just kept vacuuming, washing the kitchen floor, doing stuff. I couldn't get him to sit down. I couldn't get him to stop and talk."

Greg also mowed the rest of the lawn, finishing the job Duke had started two days earlier. This alone endeared him to me sight unseen.

713 & 715 East Fifth Street

The property Jack inherited consisted of a duplex and an enormous garage off the alley in back. Bethlehem alleys are unlike any other I've seen — one side of the alley leads to garages, just like in Minneapolis. But the other side of the alley is fronted with rowhouses rather than garages for the houses beyond. There's a narrow sidewalk, but the front door of each rowhouse basically opens directly onto the alley, which has its own street name. Jack's paternal grandfather bought the duplex in the 1930s, deeding half of it over to Jack's parents when they married in the 1940s.

The Bethlehem Steel plant was just five blocks away, downhill. Jack's father, Duke, and Duke's father, John, both worked there until their retirement. Beth Steel once employed 35,000 workers; there are now 3,500. The once-prosperous working class neighborhood is the scene of frequent shootings. South Bethlehem is markedly different from, and all too like, South Minneapolis.

Jack had told me about his dad's garage, and had even once shown me some pictures. But the reality of the 40x40-foot cavern — where you can park five full-sized cars without having to move any of the others to get in and out — with its 16-foot ceiling left me gaping. My father would adore having such a garage, as would Jeff and I. It smelled old, and the enormous wooden stepladder propped against the wall was straight out of my childhood fantasies. It had been a ladder for climbing to the sky. But it was broken — the support legs long gone. The once-glorious stepladder needed something to lean against in its old age. Sad as I was that it was broken, I also smiled to see it could still be used as a regular straight ladder.

The house had more of that old feeling. Inlaid stars in the corners of the kitchen linoleum delighted me, though I was also uncomfortable entering Duke's space without his invitation.

A hospital bed in the living room startled and angered me. It cast a pall of illness over the home, but he hadn't been sick. The bed, and the collection of prescription bottles on the coffee table, spoke of old age and decline. Despite the bed and pills, Duke *was* healthy. Is this what healthy looks like at age 74? He was



taking medication for an irregular heartbeat, which had been diagnosed 11 or more years before. But that was all — he didn't have high blood pressure, or any of the diseases that have become so commonplace that we think little of them unless we have them ourselves. Was this what the future looks like? Was this the reality of aging?

The bed was left over from his grandfather's old age, Jack explained. Duke had often fallen asleep in front of the TV at night, and after the wear started showing on the sofa, he moved the bed in from next door to simplify things. Hey, it was his house. Why was I so judgmental about where he'd chosen to sleep?

I think it was because Duke's death had seemed so quick and easy. I thought he'd escaped the decline my mother is going through, the decline I fear. And he had, mostly. But the hospital bed and pill bottles told a darker story than the reality of the situation and I responded strongly to the symbolism of their presence.

We carried my bags upstairs. The hall was cluttered with toiletries, spackle, and paint. Duke had been working on the bathroom. He'd finished painting the woodwork, but he hadn't gotten to the walls.

Duke had befriended an alley cat a few years earlier. He fed the tomcat on a daily basis, first on the back porch and later in the kitchen. The cat had been used to wandering around the house until it was time to continue his daily rounds through the neighborhood. He'd been in the house on Thursday when the paramedics shut and locked the back door. He bolted out — angry and frightened — the instant Jack opened the door on Friday. Upstairs, the pungent aroma of cat piss still filled the large front bedroom: a fresh stain marked the mattress. There were signs it wasn't the first time that mattress had served as a litterbox. Perhaps it could be salvaged, but no one was going to sleep on it anytime soon. "I was going to put you in here, but we'll have to stay in Helen's room," Jack said. "It will be a tight fit."

Helen is Jack's cousin through his father's side. She and her family live in Poland, but she's made several extended visits to the States over the years, working for six months each time, earning money to improve life back home. In fact, Helen had tickets to fly in for another working visit the week after Duke died. Jack said she was going to try to move her flight up a few days in order to get to the funeral.

Her bedroom was filled with furniture and some of her belongings left for future visits — cosmetics, hair rollers, and oddities like rolls of Polish toilet paper, which had no center core and looked to be anything but Charmin-soft. The dresser drawers were stuffed full with extra towels and linens. The closet was also overflowing, as was the extra clothes rack hanging over its door. Jack left his suitcases in Duke's bedroom. I emptied a couple of drawers and the top of the dresser, making room for my belongings and getting my first taste of the job ahead — how much stuff there was to sort and how many decisions needed to be made.

The room *was* small, but I was glad we'd be sleeping together. We'd done so often enough in the past, both as lovers and as friends who found comfort in sharing a bed. I wondered where we'd put Helen if she showed up, but Jack never heard back from her.

We walked downtown for dinner at the Bridgeworks that night. The special was soft-shelled crab on linguini noodles. I soon discovered I didn't like soft-shelled crab. I pushed bits of pasty yellow slime and shell around my dish, talking quietly and listening to Jack. Godfrey Daniels, a folk-music club, was across the street and we wondered who would be playing there while we were in town. Jack checked the schedule. Bill Morrissey, who we'd both like to have seen, had been there the night before. Just our luck.

The oddness that accompanies death was thick in the air. There's something wrong about talking about folk music concerts and sightseeing in the same breath as funeral arrangements and the need to find a good lawyer. But there's something right about it, too. We were there; we were alive. Even at its darkest moments, there's more to life than burying loved ones.

Envelopes. What was it about envelopes?

I started in on the papers Saturday night. By Sunday afternoon, I'd sorted through all the papers in the desk and was starting on those in the buffet. Duke was not particularly well organized, but he was meticulous. As far as we could tell, the man never threw away an envelope. Each bill was carefully tucked back into the envelope it came in. If Duke paid the bill in person, the payment envelope was tucked inside, too. This left us quite confused about which bills had been paid and which were coming due.

Most of the sorting took place at the kitchen table. I'd bring a handful of envelopes in from the dining room and sort them as Jack and I talked. Eventually he'd announce he was going to have "just one more cigarette" and then we'd go on to do whatever we decided was next. By the time I left ten days later

I'd sorted through every envelope in Duke's house, and several stacks from Jack's grandfather's house, too. Most of the papers went in the trash. The rest went into the envelopes I'd brought, each one marked with what was inside. 1996 receipts. Old property tax statements. Income taxes. Birth certificates. Death certificates.

The death certificates got to me. I'd naively thought we were dealing with just one death: Duke's. Instead, I found myself sorting through the death of a family. Jack's grandfather, John, died in 1985. Duke had talked about selling the duplex ever since, of moving away from the south side of Bethlehem. But he'd never been serious enough about it to hire a real estate agent, or to even put a phone number on the "For Sale" sign he propped in the front window. He'd told Jack, "If somebody wants to see the place, they can come and knock on my door. If I'm not here, they can leave a note, or come back later."

The amazing thing is that people did. There had even been a few offers made over the years, but nothing that ever resulted in a sale. Jack doubted that his father ever really wanted to sell any of the property.



Duke lived away from the duplex for about five years in the late '70s and early '80s, when he married his second wife, Ann. Apart from three years in the Navy during World War II, it was the only time he lived away from the south side since immigrating to America in 1932, when he was 10 years old. He moved back home after Ann's death in 1983.

Jack's mother, Angie Targonski, died in 1969. He had tickets to Woodstock, but went to her funeral instead. A month later, Jack's grandmother Stella collapsed and died in the back yard, just a few feet from where Duke fell 27 years later. "That's one family tradition I'm going to break," Jack announced.

Duke saved death certificates, funeral home invoices, prayer cards, and Guiding Light memorials from each of those earlier losses. I kept stumbling across them, one sharp reminder at a time, piecing together the family history as I went, feeling more and more surrounded by death. The only missing death certificates were for Angie's parents. Her father died when she was 12; her mother, Bertha Pulcher, continued to live in their house on Laufer Street, just a few blocks away from the duplex, until her death in 1965. I eventually packed Bertha's Guiding Light — an illuminated print of the Infant Jesus of Prague — for shipment back to Toad Hall.

Then there was the fact that this was all taking place in Pennsylvania. There's something about Pennsylvania. Something about the way the law works, the way government works, that defies common sense or understanding. I stumbled across this over and over while sorting papers.

When John died, Duke inherited his father's property. But the deed was changed to Sigmund (Duke's legal name) and Mary Angela (Angie's), even though Angie had died 16 years earlier. Even though Duke had remarried and lost a second wife in the meantime. I *didn't* get it. Angie's name was *still* on each of the properties, and so on the semi-annual tax statements as well.

Thanks to the state, the garage was a problem, too. It was purchased 20 years after the duplex and even had its own street address, but it could no longer be sold as a separate property. This left the duplexes that much harder to sell to unrelated people, who might hesitate over buying half of a big, open garage. Dividing it into two separate garages — the recommended solution — would be an expensive tragedy.

Old checkbooks and bank statements presented another puzzle. Banks had changed names, merged, or simply closed. Which accounts were active? Where was the safe deposit box? Jack knew of one life insurance policy. I found paperwork for another small one — \$1,000 — along with the certificate showing it had been fully paid decades earlier. But who had ever heard of the insurance company? Were they still in business?

So I sorted and puzzled, trying to make sense of things, identifying what was important for legal reasons, what held sentimental or curiosity value, and what was simply trash. Noticing the different ways Duke's name had been spelled — the Polish "Zygmundt," changing to "Sigmond" or "Sigmund" in English. Finding his birth certificate, in Polish, and John's, too. Beautiful, irreplaceable, hand-written documents. How many such documents were destroyed during World War II? There were the family's immigration papers from 1932. I tried to imagine being 10 years old and moving to America.

A few Beth Steel paystubs from the late 1940s held special interest, with their 59¢ Social Security tax on \$60 wages. Each piece of paper told its own story, accompanied by the depressing feeling that all these stories were ending, that the time for dreams and promises had passed, and that the only outcome was in an envelope of similar documents, or as fill for another garbage bag.



“How am I going to repay you for everything you’re doing?” Jack asked. “If you weren’t here, I wouldn’t be getting anything done.” He noticed how each of his friends seemed to focus on some one *thing* — Barry was full of advice on business matters, Greg had his obsession with cleaning and fixing, and I went for the papers. I suspect it’s the natural outcome of wanting to help in times of stress. It’s hard to know what to do, so we each grab onto something, anything, and give it our full attention. It’s harder for the people deep in grief, since it’s the grief itself that absorbs them. Thoughts fragment and jump off in unexpected directions; it’s hard, if not impossible, to focus on any one thing for more than a few minutes.

As we sat and talked and sorted, Jack kept mentioning things we needed to do, running through the details. I got in the habit of jotting them down on one of the Minneapolis in ’73 notepads Jeff had printed at work. I’d wondered about bringing that particular pad along, worried it might be too frivolous and frequent a reminder of life and happy times outside Bethlehem. Then Jack showed me the Minneapolis in ’73 pad he’d brought; he was glad I’d done the same. We cleared and cleaned the kitchen table, but Duke’s clutter was soon replaced with ours: To Do lists, reminders, and odd envelopes we hadn’t puzzled out yet.

During one quiet moment Jack asked, “Who’s going to do this for me?”

“Your friends,” I shot back. “So make a will!”

Getting out of town, getting on with things

Sunday afternoon we reclaimed the living room, moving the bed into the dining room and throwing the prescription bottles away. The room was cluttered, but, like the rest of the house, not particularly dirty. Curtains were clean, crisp. Anyone clearing out Toad Hall would find a lot more dirt in places rarely touched. Having the living room picked up gave us a place to stretch out, even watch a little TV.

We took a break and went for a drive around Bethlehem. Jack showed me the sites of the Musikfest stages, Lehigh University, and Beth Steel; he pointed out where friends had lived and the woods where they’d played. We stopped at a large shopping center to pick up garbage bags, enzyme odor remover for the smelly mattress, and other supplies.

That night we went to see two of Jack’s friends in Danielsville, about 35 minutes away from the south side of Bethlehem. Barry and Kathy’s driveway wound through a small woods: instant country, instant escape. The property included a stream, and a manmade pond with cattails and frogs. Lots of frogs. Loud frogs. Being there brought a deep sense of relief and relaxation. I hadn’t realized I’d need such an escape after just 24 hours in Bethlehem. We soon learned to build some sort of break like this into each day.

Monday morning Jack was up early, hoping the cat would come around and that he might lure it into the kitchen for breakfast. He also needed to talk with the trash hauler. He didn’t know their name, or whom to call, but a neighbor told him of the Monday morning pick-up time.

We had breakfast at Dempsey’s, which had been one of Duke’s regular hangouts. Jack didn’t introduce himself to any of the staff, so it was like breakfast at any diner for me. Jack no doubt had memories of past breakfasts with his dad, and the oddness of knowing there wouldn’t be any more. Afterwards we went looking for empty boxes at the beer distributor, where I also hoped to pick up some Iron City for Jeff. They were out of boxes, but we found a sampler case of Yuengling’s that included their thoroughly drinkable black & tan, plus a case of Fort Pitt so I could take a few cans of the cheap Pittsburgh brew home to Jeff. They had to order the Iron City. We didn’t need three cases of beer, but we were up against Pennsylvania law again: bars can sell 6-packs, but not distributors.

Jack also checked the recent lottery numbers. Duke bought tickets daily, and we’d found several with recent dates. Wouldn’t it be a bittersweet hoot if Duke’s lottery numbers came up even as his own did? None were winners, but it was an entertaining fantasy while it lasted.

As we started to drive away, one of the owner’s sons saw the car and waved Jack down. “Are you a relative of Duke’s?” He spoke about what a shock it had been... how Duke came in every day for his lottery tickets... how good he’d been looking — the simple expressions of sympathy, loss, and understanding. It’s the stuff communities are made of.

There was a second lottery question that haunted us. Duke had hit the three number lottery for \$7 on Easter Sunday. In Pennsylvania, they pay 500 to 1. You simply pick up the cash from the ticket seller. No records, no taxes. It's a state-run game modeled after the numbers racket that once flourished in steel towns and working class neighborhoods. A winning number was what enabled John to buy that big garage in the mid-'50s.

Jack knew Duke had won, but we couldn't find the money. It didn't show up in his bank statements and Jack was sure Duke hadn't spent it all. The knowledge added a sense of adventure as we went through the house. Jack checked above the dropped ceiling in the kitchen, where years before his mother's engagement ring had been hidden. He found a few empty plastic bags, originally put there to catch drips from an old leak Duke had fixed years before. We looked in drawers, on the bottom sides of drawers, in the medicine cabinet, and through coat pockets. Nothing.

Family history goaded us. Years before, when John was going into the hospital for surgery, he called Duke over to his place and handed him an envelope from the china cabinet. There'd been \$14,000 inside. We didn't think Duke kept that kind of money around the house, but we rather expected to find *some*.

While it's fun to imagine opening an envelope and finding a wad of money, it's frustrating to keep looking and looking and finding nothing other than old water bills, Medicare statements, or perhaps more empty envelopes.

Our Monday errands included a stop at the main office of the funeral home across town, where we dropped off the clothes Jack had selected from his father's closet. A black sports jacket. Burgundy striped shirt with a white contrasting collar — one of Duke's hallmarks. Grey pants. Jack wondered, "Do they bury people in shoes?" I didn't know, but we took some along. I figured if he was going to be in a suit, he ought to have shoes. If Jack had gone for the Hawaiian shirt he'd been considering, I would have argued for bare feet or sandals.

Steve, the representative at the funeral home, was both professional and helpful. He summarized the arrangements for that evening's visitation and the funeral the next morning, then went through the papers and asked if Jack had a copy of Duke's military discharge. "That's a DD-214, right?" I asked, remembering the magic form number from my previous life as a Marine wife. Yep, that's what we needed to get the small burial payment from the V.A. and a dozen free copies of the death certificate that wouldn't arrive until months after they were needed. The V.A. would also pay for a granite plaque and concrete flag stand to be installed at the gravesite and local veterans would place a little flag in the stand on appropriate holidays.

I'd been through a lot of papers by this point; the DD-214 hadn't turned up yet, but we promised to keep looking.

A staff member came up to us in the parking lot. He'd also grown up on the south side, and he'd be our driver the next day. He and Jack reminisced about the neighborhood while I wondered what it was like providing funeral services to families you knew.

Shortly after we got back to Duke's place (Jack's place, how bizarre...), there was a knock at the back door. It was Carl, the next door neighbor who'd seen Duke collapse and had called the paramedics. He handed us a large pot of beef stew and a molasses cake, fresh from the oven. It smelled heavenly and solved the problem of what to eat before going over to the visitation. Jack didn't think he'd feel like eating afterwards, but we hadn't looked closely enough at the refrigerator to know what it might contain beyond hot dogs. I think the 14 bottles of salad dressing on top of the fridge scared us off.

Like most people who lived through the Great Depression, Duke believed in stocking up — sometimes to the point of absurdity. Take coffee, for example. Duke didn't drink coffee at home very often. He kept coffee for Jack, who visited twice a year. So why were there 12 small cans of coffee in the kitchen cupboards? Because every time he'd see one on sale for 99¢, he'd pick it up. My dad's the same way.

Showtime (Part 1)

The visitation was only a block and a half away, at the same small neighborhood funeral chapel that had provided services for the rest of the family in years past. It was scheduled for 7–9 PM, but Jack wanted to be there early. He hadn't seen his father's body yet and didn't know what his reaction would be. He only knew he wanted to allow time to regain his composure if needed. It was raining lightly as we walked down the alley, quietly, with apprehension and the ever-present sense of, "Ok, this is what's next. We'll get through this, then we'll take it from there."

Two staff members greeted us as we entered the small building. There was a vestibule, and then the main room with the casket. I was startled at how everything was "right there" — you walked in the door, up a few stairs, forward a few feet, and there was the body. At the last visitation I'd gone to, for Thomas Juntunen's father the previous winter, I'd never even seen the casket in the viewing room. (It was a good 50 feet away from the lobby where I stood with Thomas and his friends.)

"Does he look all right?" the funeral staff asked. "Would you like us to change anything?" Jack muttered a bit later that they hadn't done a very good job with the tie, reaching down to adjust it himself.

I wondered if they'd put the shoes on. But mostly I thought about how small bodies in caskets look. I kept thinking I saw Duke breathing, that his chest was rising; I think it was the motion of my own breathing in contrast to his stillness that caused the illusion. Jittery, uncomfortable, I wandered around the small funeral home. I picked up a book on the history of the south side and skimmed its pages. Here were more stories like the ones I'd been reconstructing with Duke's paperwork. *Déjà vu*. I was holding a written history of a place I first saw two days before while at the same time I'd already been flooded by one family's first-hand experience of the events printed in its pages.

People started arriving; Jack went into host mode. Lots of Duke's friends from the neighborhood, including many Jack didn't know. There were some of the people Duke walked with each day at the mall after breakfast, including Marie, a woman he'd been seeing on and off since the mid-'80s. I finally met Greg, then the Chladney family and the Godlewskis. Ed and Betty Chladney, and their five grown children, were cousins through Jack's mother's parents, while the Godlewskis were cousins on his father's side. The cousins are the only remaining family in the States beside Jack. I hit it off immediately with Michelle Chladney; it was probably her offer of packing boxes that did the trick. Barry was there, and, to our surprise, Kathy was with him. She'd been due to fly overseas, but that day's flight had been cancelled.

The funeral home itself was non-smoking, and it was raining outside. At one point, Kathy decided Jack needed a smoke, and a group of us made a quick getaway for the back porch. The vestibule and main parlor were crowded right then. Our departure resembled the conga line of the Ted White Group Mind going off for a smoke at a convention and I felt both naughty and embarrassed when that image flashed into my mind as we fled the somber setting.

It was good to get away for a few minutes, but Jack was uncomfortable ducking out of his hosting duty and was soon back inside. It may well be the only time in his life he'd passed up the opportunity to say, "I'll have just one more cigarette...."

Near the end of the visitation a deacon came and performed a small service, which brought a welcome focus to the event for me. After everyone else left, the Chladneys gathered round. It felt like family. It was.

During the walk home, Jack suggested we should have packed up all those bottles of salad dressing and other food at the house. He could have handed them out to everyone saying, "Thanks for coming, now do you want a bottle of Thousand Island or French? Here, take another can of tuna, and a package of hot dogs. Pleease." A moment later, anguish returned: "Everybody keeps telling me how lucky he was to go so fast. But he went so damn fast he didn't give me any chance to say goodbye."

That night I ironed clothes for the next day; the funeral started at 9 AM, and we'd been told to be at the funeral home well before then. Not that early mornings were presenting their usual problems for me. I usually sleep until noon, but I was up early almost every day in Bethlehem, and the morning of the funeral was the earliest. When I couldn't fall back asleep after waking at 4:30 AM, I turned to **The Shifting Realities of Philip K. Dick**, a collection of essays that had successfully distracted and cheered me the

night before. I reread the end of his introduction to *The Golden Man*, where Phil asked and answered a timely question:

Push philosophy and theology to their ultimate (and Buddhist idealism probably is the ultimate of both) and what do you wind up with? Nothing. Nothing exists (they also proved that the self doesn't exist, either). As I said earlier, there is only one way out: seeing it all as ultimately funny. Kabir, whom I quoted, saw dancing and joy and love as ways out, too; and he wrote about the sound of 'the anklets on the feet of an insect as it walks.' I would like to hear that sound; perhaps if I could my anger and fear, and my high blood pressure, would go away.

Humor. Dancing and joy and love. What I hold most dear and important, there on the printed page to see me through dark, lonely moments. Finding that passage late Monday night, just a few hours before Duke's funeral, reaffirmed my own sense of being even as I continued to get more wrapped up in the stories and history of the family and place around me, and more taken by a sense of loss and futility.

Goodbye, Duke...

It was my first Catholic funeral, and I'd been inside a Catholic church only once in the last 20 years. That might have been once more than Jack. I wondered aloud whether a hat was called for, while he tried to sort out what he would do when the priest served communion, whether he'd take it or not. I was worried about communion, too. I mean, I knew the Church has closed communion, so as a non-Catholic, I wouldn't walk up and take it, but what if the priest offered the Host to us, the "family" in the front pew? I'd seen it done at other funerals.

The formalities would start with a service at the funeral home, followed by mass at Saints Cyril and Methodius, the church Jack had grown up in, where he and Greg had been altar boys. Then we'd go to the cemetery for a brief graveside service. The whole thing would be over by noon and the rest of the day hung open. The house wasn't in any shape to have people come back there, and we weren't up to hosting such an event. "Maybe we'll invite a few people over to the Tally-Ho for lunch, and sit around all afternoon drinking beer," Jack suggested. That sounded good to me.

We walked to the funeral home, where we were briefed again on the arrangements for the morning. Greg was one of the pallbearers, as was Bill Macario, an old friend of Duke's, and Mark Chladney, Duke's godson. Bill helped Jack recruit the other pallbearers.

Greg's mother complimented my hat, which soothed my unease over being the only woman wearing one. We chatted quietly about how the Church rules and customs had changed.

The service was brief, and, at the end of it, everyone passed by the open casket, reaching out to touch Duke's corpse. I hadn't seen this done before, but it struck me as a good thing. It's a small, formal acknowledgment of death, of seeing, knowing, and accepting that the person whose funeral you were at was indeed no longer alive or of this world.

The pallbearers loaded the casket into the hearse, and a sedan took us the few blocks to the church. Jack and I waited in the car until the whole procession arrived. People parked and got out of their cars, then waited as the pallbearers gathered, unloaded the casket and carried it up the front steps. They then



stood at the entrance as Jack and I followed the casket in, and the rest of the mourners followed us. “Let’s grab Greg,” Jack urged, “and have him sit with us. He’ll show us when to kneel and everything.” Good idea.

I spent the service next to Jack, deeply aware of how alone we really are at such times. I was the respectful observer, the steadfast friend; he was burying his father, whose flag-draped casket stood an arm’s length away. Jack seemed to be holding up okay, but was in his own world.

I kept watching the altar boys, imagining Jack and Greg standing there years earlier, wondering what they’d been thinking as they went through the rituals. And I looked around the sanctuary. The lighting on the crucifix turned Jesus’ shadow into a realistic rendering of the Incredible Hulk. I wondered if the Marvel comic artist grew up Catholic.

Greg showed us when to kneel, sit, stand, and pray. Communion was served at the altar; he was the only one of the three of us who went up for it. Jack later wondered how much he’d horrified the congregation by going without the Sacrament.

The Mass ended and we made our way to the cemetery. It was a bright summer morning. The drive brought back memories of funeral processions past. There was the ever-present out-of-place feeling — all around you are cars and people going about their daily routine while you’re doing anything but. I reached out for Jack’s hand, and he held mine firmly for the rest of the trip.

As we pulled into the cemetery, I looked across the open land at the brilliant blue sky scattered with cotton clouds and saw what a beautiful day it truly was. A day for picnics and kite-flying. I told Jack about blowing giant bubbles while people gathered for my brother Barry’s graveside service. His widow, Leslie, had provided the bubble kit. Jack and I imagined bubbles floating over the rows of tombstones we were passing. “That’d be nice. We should have done that,” Jack said.

Huh? Just when I think I really know Jack, he surprises me by agreeing with my playful suggestions or by making some of his own. “Hey, it’s raining,” he’d said at the Fourth Street Fantasy Convention, during the dry spell back in 1988. “Let’s go for a walk!” We did, and I’d soaked in the joy of the unexpected as well as the welcome moisture falling from the sky.

Of all the things I love about friends and those I call family, their ongoing ability to surprise and delight is perhaps the one I hold most dear. It yanks my sense of wonder in all the right ways, reminding me that no matter how well I think I know someone, there’s always more to learn.

The graveside service was short. The pallbearers finished their job; the priest offered a prayer. People from the funeral home folded the flag and presented it to Jack. We each placed a red rose on the casket. The roses came from the spray of flowers Jack ordered, which the funeral home had brought along to the cemetery. A dead plant sitting by the family marker annoyed me with its very presence. It spoke of care and attention while it also screamed neglect — Duke had probably put it there, most likely for Memorial Day, but now it was just withered and dried, beyond any hope or possibility of life. There were no trash containers in sight. After the service, I told Michelle Chladney how much the plant bothered me. It bugged her, too, so I asked her to take care of it. She ended up leaving it by the roadside — at least it was away from the fresh gravesite.

Jack talked a bit with Bill and Liz Macario before leaving the cemetery. Bill promised to come by the next day with more boxes and to take clothes to a charity shop.

As the sedan driver took us back to the duplex, he and Jack talked about the former location of a favorite corner store, and other childhood memories. I was relieved — we’d made it through the formalities and the afternoon promised a break before we had to again face dealing with the house and estate.

We met Greg at the Tally-Ho, but we stayed only long enough for a burger and beer rather than spending the afternoon. Greg had taken the whole day off work and was anxious to pitch in at the house. Jack salvaged a small break, telling Greg we were stopping at a comics shop on the way home. “Give us some time before you head over.” The comics shop was one of Jack’s regular stops during trips to Bethlehem. He browsed the bins for new releases while I debated which of the Pez dispensers to buy. I didn’t have a Charlie Brown with his tongue sticking out. It seemed like a good time for a treat and Charlie’s expression fit my mood.

That afternoon I got to see Greg in action. The Tim Allen/Felix Unger clone showed up with a leaf blower, patching concrete, and several buckets. He went hunting for garden hoses to tackle the front porch siding. Years of dirt had accumulated there, turning the white siding grey with filth. Greg's work improved the curb appeal of the property a hundredfold or more.

Jack got Greg set up, but I didn't keep track of what else he was doing. I gathered the photographs scattered throughout the house and looked through them as I boxed them up. There were snapshots of proud, young parents, holding the infant Jack in the back yard... professional photos from glamorous New Year's Eve outings at dance clubs... Duke in the Navy with his buddy, Billy Harrison.

We'd run across several of Billy's Christmas cards during previous sorting sessions. He wrote chatty comments each year, always urging Duke to remarry and to stop by if he ever visited Tennessee. I found myself wanting to write to Billy — his faithful words and annual expressions of his friendship touched me even before I found the previous year's card that afternoon. Billy wrote, "There's always more to do than time to do it in, but we'll have plenty of time in heaven after death." Was he part fortune-teller, or just a simple man with steadfast faith?

There were school pictures of Jack, some recognizable, most of them not. Every once in a while, I would seek him out and ask about a particular shot, but mostly I just got them ready to go to Chicago where he could go through them when he was ready. I also set out the mass cards and other expressions of sympathy people had sent. Putting more things out on end tables I'd just cleared seemed counter-productive, but the cards also showed that Jack wasn't going through this ordeal alone, that other people grieved, that they cared.

Greg came in from the front porch and quietly asked me to go to a hardware store for some Brasso. He wanted to clean the pitted brass doorknob, and Jack's search through the kitchen supplies hadn't turned up any polish. Jack told him to let it go, but that wasn't in Greg's nature. He wanted Brasso and he wanted it now.

As soon he'd asked the favor, Greg remembered, "Oh, that's right. You don't have a car."

"Is there a hardware store within walking distance?"

He directed me to one four blocks away. I took off without saying goodbye to Jack; this was Greg's and my secret. The store turned out to be across the street from the *Sing Out!* offices where Frank Lunney worked. He was just finishing his day, so I invited him back to the house. I was still trying to rescue whatever fragments of an afternoon off that might be found. There was also the thought kicking around the back of my head that Frank, who had lost his partner Catherine a few years earlier, might have something to say about grief that Jack could relate to. Mostly though, they're a couple of really neat guys; I wanted them to meet each other.

I also wanted to hang out with Frank myself. I was feeling the stress of being out of my own environment and away from most of my usual support systems. Frank didn't know me well, but at least he didn't have to think to remember my name.

Frank drove me back to the duplex. He had a few stops to make on the way, so it was some time before we pulled up in front. Greg had just finished washing the siding. "Hey, Greg, I got a car," I called from the passenger's window. The bewilderment on his face was gratifying.

Jack, Frank, and I sat in the kitchen, drinking a few beers and chatting. It seemed to be going okay, but conversation was laden with the awkwardness of meeting someone in trying times. Frank was preparing for the deposition he was giving in a few days as part of his lawsuit against the hospital that had mismanaged Catherine's care and sent her home to die. It's a horrific story, and the reminders of deaths both present and past weren't doing Frank or Jack any good. After Frank left, I learned I'd stumbled in an unknown way as well. Jack had never been comfortable inviting friends back to his father's place. He wouldn't have chosen to be a host in his father's home anytime, especially not that afternoon. He didn't particularly feel like meeting anyone new, either.

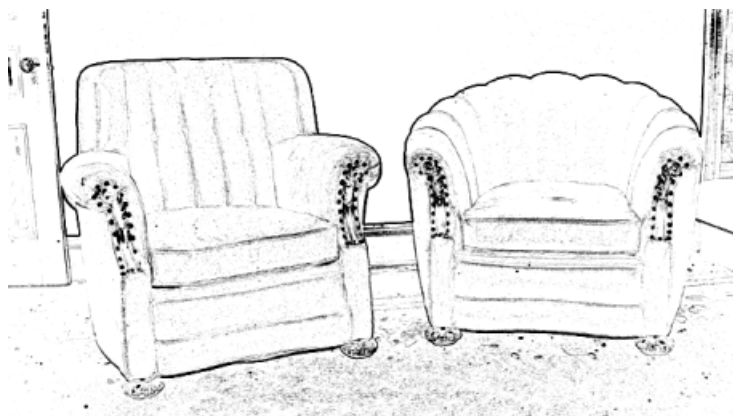
On Marlo Thomas' album, "Free to be you and me" there's a song about helping. The chorus is: "Some kind of help's the kind of help that helping's all about, and some kind of help's the kind of help we all can do without." I was batting zero. The Brasso didn't even clean the doorknob.

"Goddammit, Duke! Why'd you leave me with this?" — Jack

After Frank and Greg were both gone, Jack walked me through his grandfather's side of the duplex. He'd avoided it before then — he expected to find a disaster zone and knew he wasn't ready for another problem.

The kitchen *was* a wreck. It had become Duke's de facto workshop, with drop cloths and partially-closed 5-gallon pails of gooeey paint. Tools were stacked on the stove, but mostly it was chaos. The rest of John's side was in much better shape, though Duke hadn't gotten around to hanging a dining room light after taking the art deco chandelier down and shipping it to Jack to use in his new home in Chicago. The replacement fixture was there on the floor — one more job for Jack to finish.

We removed protective sheets to uncover John and Stella's living room furniture. There was a 1940s burgundy mohair sofa and matching chair, and a second chair in blue. Gorgeous pieces, in lovely condition. And comfortable, too, once you got past the unfamiliar stiffness of sitting down on genuine spring cushions. I would have shipped the sofa and chairs west in an instant, but Jack took his time, thought through the advantages and disadvantages of the set, and eventually decided to move it to Chicago.



Mark and Michelle Chladney came over Tuesday evening, bringing a pile of empty boxes and walking through the house to select furniture. I was delighted when Michelle fell in love with the 3-way mirror and dressing table in the corner of Helen's bedroom. It had been Jack's mother's, and I'd been urging him to take it. Lovely as it was, Jack insisted it simply didn't suit his needs. "Oh, good!" I said, slapping a Post-it note with their name on the mirror. "Now I'll stop bugging Jack to ship it to Chicago." None of this was my stuff, but I cared about some of it and was delighted to see it staying in the family, going to the couple I liked so much.

As the night cooled, I turned my attention to the attic. Jack had told me several times over it was a hopeless cause — to just leave it — but I was intrigued. Most of the papers were sorted, Jack needed to make the decisions about Duke's clothes, but here was the great unknown. The attic held the promise of adventure and instant gratification. It also held Jack's toys.

A few childhood toys were already in a box bound for Chicago. Jack had found several cap guns and holsters he wanted to keep. As for the rest, "I relived my childhood years ago when I hauled this stuff out for Peter to play with; I don't need to do it again." Peter, Helen's son and Jack's Polish cousin, was now a grown-up, too.

Jack told me about the toys I'd find in the attic: Fort Apache, the different generations of plastic cowboys and Indians, and the amazing mold detail on some of the earlier pieces. "But what am I going to do with them?" he asked. I suggested he ship them back to Chicago and set up one of his spare rooms, the one that already held his comic books, as a toy room. Jack liked the idea, but said there wasn't space for all those toys, or even for all of Fort Apache.

"Ship it to Toad Hall," I said. "Jeff will love it, and so will I." I'd mentioned the set in one of my many calls home, and Jeff thought it might be the same one he'd loved as a child. "If you ever decide you want it back, just let us know."

Jack turned me loose, saying he'd take a final look through stuff before shipping, but that Jeff and I were welcome to any of the toys he didn't want.

So I started in the back room of the attic, where the toys were. I wiped off the dusty boxes containing Fort Apache, Fort Comanche, Valley Forge, and Fort Pitt. There was Castle Fort, with metal walls,

crenelated towers, knights, and horses. Two of those horses could be wound up, aimed at each other, and released for an authentic jousting experience. There was an ancient tube of wooden Pixie pick-up sticks, the cardboard tube with the metal cap I remembered from my childhood. A Cootie game, with every body, head, leg, eyeball, antenna, and proboscis still in the box. I hadn't known Cooties came from Minneapolis. Would the W.H. Schaper Mfg. Co. still sell legs for 15¢ per set of six if I used the original parts order form?

These were clearly the toys of an only child.

You could tell which ones he'd played with most. Melt marks on the deck of the Jolly Roger pirate ship spoke of firecrackers and other explosions. The Playskool knock-out bench had its share of hammer hits, while the extra box of colored pegs looked brand new. The Steve Scott Space Scout crayon and stencil kit was more or less intact, though it also included a partially-eaten, sticky, caramel candy young Jack carefully set in the box while punching out the stencilled Saturn and Steve Scott's "Orders from Strato-Port." But only a few of the Hopalong Cassidy crayons remained, and only part of one of the stencils from that kit. He may have grown up to be a science-fiction fan, but cowboys were this kid's passion.

One box horrified and fascinated me. Bomb-A-Ship contained a battleship, a B-29 bomber (with "special all metal bomb release"), and bombs — "atom" bombs. "Hit the target and battleship explodes harmlessly into eight parts," the box promised. I never did find the bomber, and some of the exploding pieces were forever lost, but a couple of the atom bombs showed up in the belly of another ship. They were made of lead. Ah, yes, the perfect toy. Jack's toys were designed and built at the beginning of the baby boom, in a world that had just emerged from war, a war supposedly won thanks to the atom bomb. Bomb-A-Ship let every little boy win the war, just like Daddy.

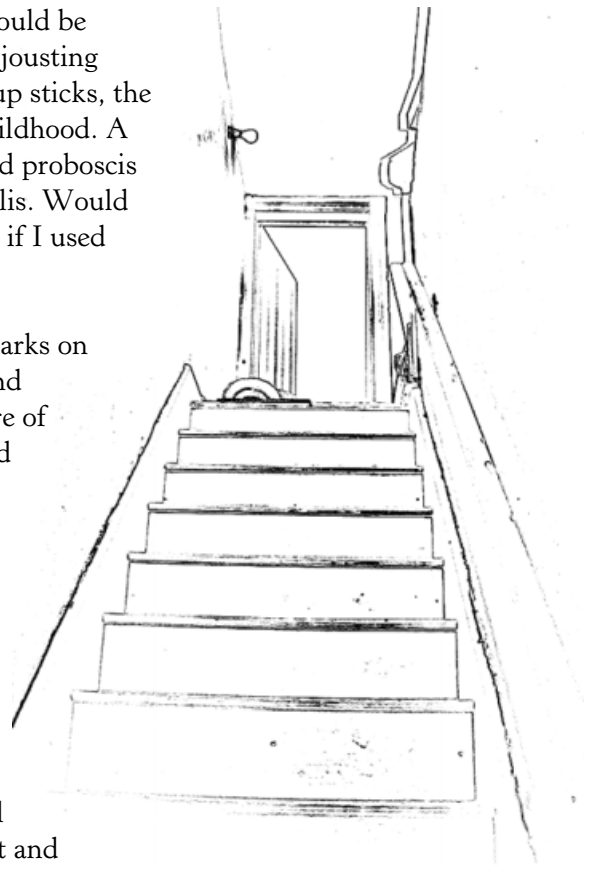
The war toys had been through a lot. Plastic tanks were in pieces, jeeps had lost their wheels. Actually, everything with wheels had clearly spent a lot of time in the hands of a child at play — the stagecoaches and race cars as well as the jeeps and tanks.

Wednesday morning I came across an older toy, a set of wooden alphabet blocks with illustrated nursery rhymes stamped into the sides. The first block I pulled out held a rhyme I'd never heard:

Curly locks! Curly locks!
Wilt thou be mine?
Thou shalt not wash dishes,
Nor yet feed the swine.
But sit on a cushion
And sew a fine seam,
And feed upon strawberries,
Sugar and cream.

It's curious. I wouldn't want such a relationship, one where someone told me what I could and couldn't do. I wouldn't tolerate my partner doing the hard work while I sat comfortably with a task "suitable" for ladies, luxurious strawberries and cream always at hand. But I was (and still am) completely enchanted by the romance of this rhyme.

The alphabet block spoke to me of promises and dreams. And I fell for it — hard — much as I knew better. I wanted the burden of reality to go away. I was seeing all too clearly how John and Duke Targonski spent their lives laboring in the rolling mills and machine shops. Jack's future was the family's



promise and dream: he'd be the one to rise out of the mill, to an easy job in the front office. Well, Jack succeeded; he escaped the mill, the machine shop. Then he'd gone beyond the family dream, leaving the steel plant and Bethlehem, too. He had a well-established office career, serving as an administrator for the Department of Children and Family Services in Cook County, Illinois. But easy jobs are an illusion. They can't be found in offices any more than on the production floor, especially in offices devoted to child protection. Grown-up reality holds too much grimness when it leaves you disposing of your father's things, remembering all the promises made in childhood and comparing them to your real life as an adult.

As in so many families, it was that transition from being a child to an adult that drove Jack and his father apart. "I had an idyllic childhood," Jack told me. "But then I turned nine and it was like I suddenly couldn't do anything right. I turned into one of those traumatic Little League cases. The pressure to excel and the constant criticism finally got to me. It went on through high school and college. I couldn't wait to cut the strings."

Angie kept the peace between father and son as best she could until cancer took its toll, and her life. When Jack's grandmother died without warning a month later, Jack was a recent college graduate, working in the steel mill, suddenly living with two grieving widowers. This was not the future of his dreams. The town was too small to hold both his and his father's anger, and in its own way, Angie's death gave him the freedom to leave. Jack joined VISTA and headed for Oklahoma. A year later he moved to Chicago. He hadn't seriously considered moving back to Bethlehem since then.

He returned home for visits, eventually reaching a certain peace with his father. But there were always ghosts from the troubled times past — little things like running out of gas while driving his dad's car left him feeling like a teenager all over again.

Jack's stories of his rocky relationship with Duke reminded me of my own ambivalence toward my mother. And the similarities between Duke's age, health, and lifestyle and my father's left me seeing everything happening in Bethlehem as an intense dress rehearsal for what I'll go through in Battle Creek someday. As much as I've listened to my dad talk about his friends, I'd recognize few of them at a funeral. While my dad throws away envelopes, he's much more of a packrat than Duke ever was. Jack had to figure out what to do with the religious statuary in the house; we'll have to decide who gets the pulpit that stands in Dad's dining room.

I called Daddy a couple times from Bethlehem, wanting to hear his voice, to have his support, to tell him what we were going through. I said I wouldn't ask him to start sorting and getting rid of things, but that I intended to go home and take a hard look at my own mountains of stuff. "If Jeff and I died in a car wreck, our friends would hate us for the hundred cases of paper in the basement, let alone everything else."

"Whoever goes through this house is going to have one hell of a lot of work," Daddy replied. I don't know what prompted him to mention it just then, but he reminded me that he had the shotgun my brother used to commit suicide stored in his bedroom closet. "Thanks, Dad, that's *just* what we'll want to find after you've died."

Jack had been wondering how he could possibly repay me for all my help. After finishing that call to my dad, I turned to Jack and told him he could drive over to Battle Creek when it becomes necessary and deal with that damn gun in the closet.

Our conversations just got bleaker and bleaker. Jack and I were making progress, but the lists of things to do didn't seem to be getting any shorter. We continued trying to take things one at a time, to get to a certain, identifiable point, and take it from there.

I grabbed onto the joy of finding the alphabet blocks, of the simple wonder of the set, especially the Curly Locks rhyme. I took the blocks downstairs to show Jack. "I know you said you don't want any more of the toys, but — as much as it pains me to say it, as much as I'd like them myself — these need to go back with *you*, to Chicago."

Jack took one look and said, "You won't get much argument from me on this one. I remember these; they were my mother's, probably from the '20s. I played with them when I was a child." I showed him the Curly Locks block, and we read other rhymes as well.

For all my talk of the promises of childhood, some of those rhymes were gruesome:

There was a man in our town,
And he was wondrous wise;
He jumped into a bramble bush
And scratched out both his eyes.

Tell tale, tit,
Your tongue shall be slit,
And all the dogs in the town
Shall have a little bit.

There was a little man
And he had a little gun
And his bullets were made of lead-lead-lead.
He went to the brook,
And saw a little duck
And he shot it through the head-head-head.



Reading these left me grateful my fingers were drawn first to Curly Locks, to her fine seams, strawberries, and cream!

Bill Macario came over Wednesday noon, bringing us several empty boxes. We didn't have clothes ready for the charity shop, but he helped Jack haul an antique icebox from John's basement. Still excited over the alphabet blocks, I mentioned sorting the toys and showed the blocks to Bill. "I told Jack I couldn't make any claim to these, that he needs to take them back to Chicago."

"You don't have a claim to anything here," Bill sternly responded.

He was right, of course. He didn't know about Jack's and my conversations regarding the toys. He was protecting his friend's belongings, and his friend's son, from this stranger from Minneapolis. I admired him for that, and liked knowing where I stood with him, even as his comment stung.

"Your level of organization is starting to scare me" — Jack

Jack tackled estate business Wednesday afternoon, setting up appointments with a lawyer and a real estate agent. I pulled out the first of the glossy folders I'd brought and used it for yet another stack of paperwork that was different from the stuff filed away in manila envelopes. Now that we had boxes, we started filling them — some would be shipped to Chicago or Minneapolis while others were for charity or for items set aside for specific people. Every time we cleared off a surface, we found something else to set on it. The dining room we'd spent so much time cleaning and clearing was more of a wreck than ever. I was due to fly out on Saturday, Jack on Sunday. We both talked about rescheduling those flights. There was so much left to do.

We started in on the front bedroom. Jack sorted the hanging clothes while I dug through drawers. The lottery money still eluded us and there was that DD-214 to find. One drawer yielded a scrapbook from the war years, and several military documents. It looked like payday for the discharge papers, but I came up empty-handed. Jack thought he'd seen the missing papers in one of the dressing table drawers the day he arrived. We'd each looked through it since. Nothing. We continued working on the room, making slow progress. Every item picked up required a decision. Sometimes we just wandered aimlessly until setting it down somewhere else, then tried again with another item. If we did the same thing with the next two items, it was time for a break, or to start working on something completely different. Jack was burdened with most of the decisions — I could always opt to "ask Jack," "set it aside for Jack," or "organize it for Jack to look at later."

I began to see the advantage of being a sole survivor. While the number of decisions needed was immense, at least Jack didn't have to discuss each one with other inheritors. He didn't need anyone's agreement, and there weren't emotional arguments over who would get the china.

Wednesday night we met Greg and his wife, Georgia for dinner. Greg had arranged for a table overlooking the river. It was like being in another world. Peaceful. Relaxing. Sociable. Georgia and I got downright tipsy. At the house it was all too easy to lose sight of how valuable and necessary such breaks were.

Dean Gahlon was right

Thursday we hit the wall.

The day started gently enough. Jack had coaxed the cat indoors a day or two earlier, and now it even allowed Jack to scratch it behind the ears. Jack knew he couldn't take the cat back to Chicago — it was an alley cat, accustomed to its daily routine, and wouldn't tolerate such a change. But we chatted about it over coffee.

We had a number of errands to run that morning and Jack had an appointment with the lawyer that afternoon. I asked if I could sit in. I had a pretty good understanding of the papers and thought I might be helpful. That was fine with Jack.

I talked to Jeff, then rescheduled my flight home for Monday afternoon. Jack thought he'd leave Tuesday. I found the DD-214 in the back of a dresser drawer just as we were leaving for the funeral home. Yes! We dropped it off, picked up several copies of the death certificate, ran other errands, and drove up to Allentown for the lawyer's appointment. Finding a lawyer had been difficult — almost everyone Jack asked knew of one or two, but could only recommend against them. Are good lawyers really that rare around Philadelphia?

Luckily, Greg told us about "Lawyer Bob," who'd once done good work for Georgia. Bob was great. Jack gave him Duke's will, which dated from the time when Jack was a minor and Angie was still alive. It named another lawyer, and a bank as executor. Near the beginning of the meeting, I summarized something Bob said, and asked a question about it. He turned to Jack and said, "I see why you brought her along."

Bob reviewed the will, puzzled out the tricky points, and put his assistant to work tracking down information. He outlined Pennsylvania estate law for us and recommended the most cost-effective way to proceed. The lawyer named in the will had retired the previous year, so Jack was off that hook. The bank, long since merged with another, would have to renounce their role before Jack could serve as executor, but Bob thought they would. I handed over various papers and documents as they were needed; the manila-envelope filing system actually worked!

As we walked out of Bob's office, Jack thanked me for carrying the meeting. I thought Bob did the carrying, but welcomed the praise. Jack and I have hosted parties together for years, but we'd never done anything like *that* before.

Having things go so well was a rush, but the meeting left me drained. Late nights, early mornings, constant decisions, and the overall intensity of the week were taking their toll. I was becoming more aware of how hard it all was — not just on Jack, but on me. All the deaths, and all the new people to keep track of — the Chladneys, Bill and Liz, four different men named Ed, Jack's friends, Duke's friends and neighbors, and all the names from all the stories. Everything was overshadowed by an ongoing feeling of rehearsing for when I'd go through this with my own father, while constantly remembering that this was no rehearsal for Jack.

I was on the edge of tears the rest of the afternoon. At one point, I picked up the Yellow Pages and scanned the listings of antiques dealers. I wanted to know the value of the mohair furniture, but each call left me more frustrated. I was tired of talking to people I didn't know, and who didn't know me.

So I called a friend in Minneapolis who collects antiques, and whose husband used to run an antiques business. Peggy Jo would know the ballpark value, and I'd know we were talking the same language.

It was lovely to hear her voice. Her estimate on the furniture was somewhat lower than I'd been expecting, but significantly higher than the amounts local dealers had mentioned. But then she went on to say how strange it was I'd called that particular day. Our mutual friend, Sally Oswald, had been diagnosed with liver cancer the day before. Her condition was terminal.

As soon as I hung up, I told Jack I was going upstairs.

"What's up?"

I blubbered the news about Sally and climbed the stairs, tears streaming down my cheeks. As if we weren't surrounded by enough death already, here was more heading my way. I'd just redone Sally's business cards, dropping the artwork off at the printer's on my way out of town. Would she live long enough to use them?

Jack gave me some space, or maybe, like me, he just needed some of his own. I eventually showered and went back downstairs somewhat more composed. Jack told me about wishing I hadn't made that particular phone call, that he'd been thinking: "Why'd she have to call Peggy Jo *today*? Why'd she have to find this out *now*?"

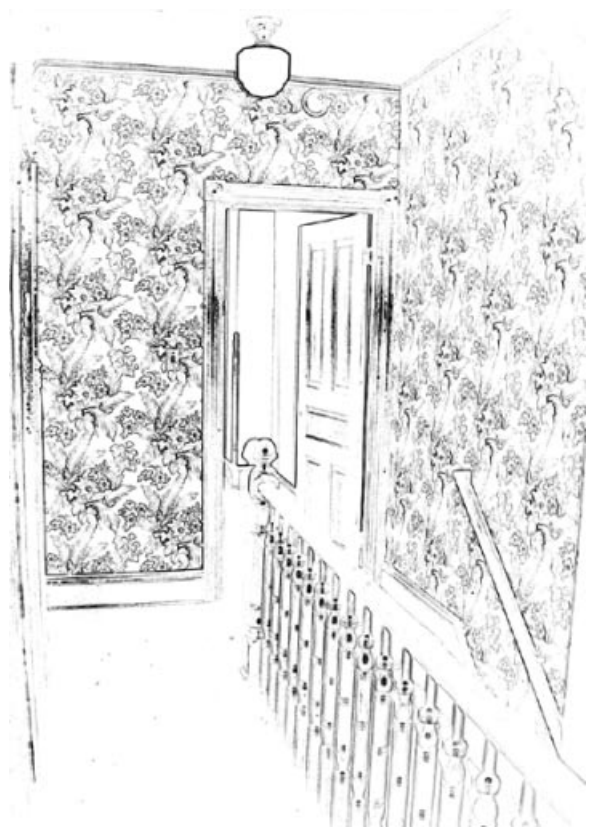
We headed out to Barry's that night. When we got there, I went straight outside, leaving Jack to explain the traumas of the day. I walked by the stream at the edge of the woods and alongside the pond with its cattails. I kicked at a rubber ball, missing entirely the first time I tried. Then a series of short little taps, followed by firm, mad kicks. I didn't go inside until the urges to kick, hit, and scream were supplanted by an illusion of control. Watching fireflies as night fell helped, as did the croaking of nearby bullfrogs.

Barry and I talked computers and typography — we're in similar lines of business. He showed me his computer, and I asked him about getting on-line. I longed to see familiar names on the rec.arts.sf.fandom newsgroup, but Barry turned the computer off instead. Jack was in the other room; it wasn't the time to immerse myself in cyberspace.

**"Don't be surprised if I stay up all night working;
I do that sometimes." — Geri**

The real estate agent was due Friday morning. Restless from the events of the day, and wanting some instant gratification, I said goodnight to Jack shortly after we returned from Barry's and went next door to tackle John's kitchen. Two hours later, the mere sight of it no longer led one to recoil in horror. I added five more bags to the trash pile, and found yet another pile of papers to sort. By this time, Duke's organization (or lack thereof) was familiar, as were his sensibilities.

There was one casualty in the late-night swath of order I cut through John's place. I found a small metal music box in the dining room. It had a tinny buzz, but a music box is a music box. I set it on a flat surface; it tilted sideways, one of its legs bent out of shape. I tried to straighten the leg; it snapped off. I threw the whole thing away in frustration: it looked bad, sounded worse, and I'd only managed to break it. When we were taking the trash bags to the curb a few days later, the box played a few notes, and Jack asked about the noise. I dismissed the box as junk and confessed that I'd broken its leg. The music box had been his mother's; he'd planned to keep it. Oops. Regret. Jack decided to leave it in the trash, saying, "I'm already taking back way too much."



“What the fuck is THAT?” — Jack

Not everything held sentimental value for Jack. A few items were so ludicrous we couldn't help but laugh. There was a garish, red, beaded basket Jack was ready to throw in the trash until he looked at it closely. The entire thing was handmade of beads and safety pins. Hundreds and hundreds of safety pins. How many hours had someone labored over the pathetic thing? We rinsed the dust off and left it to dry in the sun. Jack carried it back to Chicago where he gave it to our friends Bob Berlien and Kathy Routliffe, telling them he wanted them to have one of his family heirlooms before handing it over. Kathy read his expression well: “Oh, look — safety pins.”

And then there was the Little Drummer Boy.

“Oh my god,” Jack said one afternoon. “That's what Bill was talking about!”

He was pointing at a large ceramic *objet d'art*. It was the Little Drummer Boy, standing about 18" tall and equally wide, with pleading eyes right out of a Precious Moments catalog.

“Good lord, that's hideous. Can I take it out on the back sidewalk and smash it?” I asked.

“No. No. That's mine. That's part of my inheritance.”

Jack had been talking with Bill Macario at the visitation. Bill was warning him to sort through things carefully, to check pockets for cash. Yes, there was a lot of stuff Jack wouldn't want, but there were some treasures, too. Treasures like the Little Drummer Boy that his wife, Liz, made in ceramics class. “The Little Drummer Boy is for you, Jack.”

Jack envisioned some little piece, a 3- or 4-inch statuette, not this huge...*thing*. “It's like a bad Hummel on steroids,” he observed.

“Surely you can give it back to Bill and Liz, telling them you just don't decorate for Christmas, or something. They'll never come to Chicago. Or tell them you know how special it is, that you want them to have it back.” Jack knew such approaches would never work.

“No, I'm stuck with it.”

I understood exactly what he meant after I talked with Bill on Wednesday. Generous, good hearted, hard working, with a crystal clear picture of the world and what was important. The Little Drummer Boy was important. Now it was Jack's.

While there was only one Little Drummer Boy (thank goodness), everything else seemed to come in case lots. Jack found five TVs at Duke's — two consoles and three tabletop models — and another at his grandfather's. One of the TVs picked up the full range of channels. Most of the others stopped at channel 13. Neighbors in the apartment building on Duke's side of the duplex saw Jack putting TVs out on the back porch and wanted them for video games. “You're welcome to them,” Jack said. “There's only one condition. Once you take 'em, they're yours. I don't want 'em back.”

There were three electric razors in the bathroom. I found two more on a shelf in the front bedroom. By the time we'd gone through all the drawers, the collection had grown to nine.

I could see how it happened. Razors are like toasters and coffee-makers — they get replaced by newer, more advanced models, often as a gift. Even if one breaks, it still seems valuable; perhaps all it needs is a simple repair. If Duke had stored his extra electric razors in one place, he probably wouldn't have kept them all. But I was crogged: what could anyone do with *nine* electric razors? I thought on the matter for several days without coming up with a single idea. Eventually, I just stacked them neatly on a shelf and left them for Jack to deal with.

We filled a box with religious statuary, the Virgin Mary rising graciously above the shorter saints. “Maybe Greg can take these back to Saint Cyril's,” Jack said. But when he called, the church didn't want them either. Bill eventually found another Catholic parish that would take them.

Some items were simply trash, others were ready to be respectfully discarded. Jack strove to find a way for things to be of further use; if not to him, then to someone. He encouraged all the Chladney kids to stop by; most of them were in the early years of setting up their own households. They might need and appreciate something of their Uncle Duke's.

I saved the envelopes from Poland to give to Garth Danielson, who's gone from editing *Rune* to stamp collecting. Jack said to throw away the letters inside. “There's no one to ask about this stuff anymore,” he

said plaintively, “I don’t read Polish, and don’t know anyone who does. I have no idea who’s in some of the pictures we’ve found. There’s nobody left.”

We talked about his being the end of the family line, and about the odd sense of freedom it brought, along with the sheer aloneness of it all. Ten years of hanging out together had provided us with a strong bond that was seeing us through the tough times, making it easy ... well, no, *possible*, to talk about whatever came to mind.

Fred Levy Haskell once suggested a possible explanation for Jack’s and my closeness. “It’s as if there’s an alternate timeline, not too far from this one, where you and Jack are married and living happily-ever-after with each other.” Jack and I both rather like this theory even as we pursue other relationships and lifestyles that suit us better here and now. Jack quoted Fred’s theory the day before my arrival in Bethlehem to answer Barry’s questions, “Who’s Geri? She’s someone you used to date, but she’s living with someone else now, isn’t she?”

Jack is incredibly important to me. I think of him as a member of my self-chosen family, but one who eludes any specific title or label. The first few years after Jeff moved to Minneapolis, I struggled to identify what I wanted from Jack. In the end, it came down to intimacy. Intimacy in whatever forms we all found comfortable. Sitting at a kitchen table with Jack, talking for hours, drinking just one more cup of coffee, him smoking just one more cigarette, had long been a cornerstone of our relationship. That particular intimacy served us well in Bethlehem, giving us a familiar, time-tested structure of communication and interaction in the awkward, unfamiliar situation.

While those ten days were the most prolonged intimate event we’d yet shared, loneliness hung heavily in the air. Jack was in grief; I wasn’t — at least not the immense, overwhelming grief that follows the death of a loved one. I was there because I didn’t want him going through it alone, but, at the heart of it, grief is a lonely process. It overwhelms and isolates. There’s so much going on inside your heart and head that other people seem distant and everyday life seems disconnected, fragmented. A loved one’s death brings loneliness no matter how big or small the family, no matter how many friends and loved ones are standing by.

As Jack struggled to regain control of his emotions, I was slowly, steadily succumbing to mine. I thought my prior experience with grief and with Louise’s estate left me well-prepared to deal with anything I’d face in Bethlehem. But as each day passed, the task and the emotions it evoked grew ever larger, mocking my self-confidence. And this wasn’t even my father’s death.

If life goes as expected, every one of us buries our parents before we ourselves die. How do people *do* this? How do they process it all? The big questions loomed as we continued taking things one moment at a time, getting to point X, and taking it from there.

TGIF? Yeah, sure, whatever

Friday’s schedule included an 11 AM visit from the real estate agent, and Jack’s 1:30 PM appointment with Lawyer Bob at the courthouse in Easton. Scotty, the youngest Chladney, was supposed to stop by, too. We hoped he’d want a lot of the remaining stuff.

Scotty was late, and picky. He wanted to look at everything. He asked questions and sounded interested, but, no, he didn’t really need end tables or lamps. He wandered from room to room admiring things Jack planned to take to Chicago, or that others had already claimed, asking for those even after we’d said no. He wanted a full sales pitch for anything he *might* take. We wanted him to pay attention to what we were saying, decide what he wanted, and get out of our way before the agent showed up. With every question, we each came closer and closer to strangling him.



John, the agent, was late, too. There wasn't much time before Jack needed to leave for Easton. We went through the property quickly. John knew about older construction and the neighborhood, but he didn't impress me like Lawyer Bob had the day before.

While Jack was in Easton, I returned to the attic. It was hot and dusty, but offered the promise of more adventure and discovery. Now that the toys were out of the back room, I turned to the stacks of boxes in main room. Christmas decorations were stored along with old college textbooks and Jack's baby stroller. I found crafts projects he'd made in the Boys' Club, including a hand-painted plaster rendition of The Last Supper. There were more dishes, storm windows, and chamber pots. I found a pole light Jack had painted black, striped with day-glo tape, loaded with UV and colored lightbulbs, and used in his bedroom to illuminate blacklight posters during the rebellious years. I took it down to his old bedroom on the second floor.

Angie never wanted for a hat and probably never threw one away. There were several boxes full, a reminder of the time Catholic women kept their heads covered. Angie's head had been smaller than mine, but I tried many on and selected a handful to ship back to Minnesota. The rest I set aside for Greg's mother. Progress on the attic continued in these small ways — each decision brought a sense of accomplishment, a sense of something *done*.

Jeff had called earlier in the day. One of my clients wanted me to call about a complex new project. She and I brainstormed ways to approach the work, then I called my other clients with work in progress and let them know I'd be back in the office on Tuesday. It was good to reconnect with the world outside Bethlehem, outside 713 and 715 East Fifth Street.

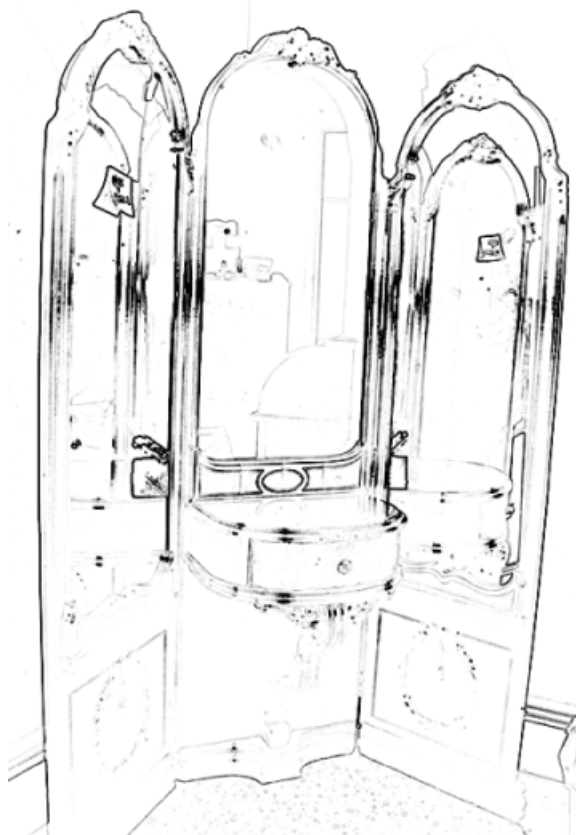
Jack and I continued running up the long-distance bill that evening, touching base with Bob and Kathy in Chicago, Fred and Susan in Minneapolis, then Dave Clement and Ruth Anderson in Winnipeg. I called my dad for our regular Friday night conversation. I told him about the toys in the attic, the progress we'd made, the overwhelming amount of stuff still to be done, and how hard it all was. "You're getting an education, aren't you?" Indeed I was.

Mystery solved?

Mark and Michelle were picking up furniture on Saturday, so Friday night I emptied the student-sized rolltop desk they planned to take. Jack continued working in the front and middle bedrooms. He'd inherited his father's love of clothes early in life; now he had his wardrobe to sort through. Many of the clothes were close enough in size to be worth considering taking home, though that would mean having to make more space in his own already-full drawers and closets. "I never wanted to walk in my father's shoes," he said, while going through the collection.

Later, while Jack dozed off in front of the Food Channel, I turned my attention to the cedar chest Mark and Michelle had chosen. It wouldn't open and I wondered if I'd finally found the hiding place of the lottery winnings.

I checked the dresser drawers for keys; none fit. I got the big ring of keys from the kitchen and tried each one, my excitement and apprehension growing with every new attempt. Was there money inside? Or something else, something private? Did I really *want* to get into this chest?



Two small keys had been filed off or worn down to narrow points. Neither fit the lock, but they were useful as picks. I poked and prodded, and the button latch suddenly pushed in. It hadn't been locked at all; I simply hadn't known how the latch worked. Chuckling with relief and embarrassment, I opened the chest and saw it was filled with baby clothes and linens. I went downstairs and told Jack of my mini-adventure.

Saturday morning we emptied the chest, admiring crocheted tablecloths, stacks of doilies, and heavy satin pillowcases. Jack repeated his familiar plea, "What am I going to do with all this stuff?" Where was the balance between what was enough to remember his family by and what was so much it became a burden? In particular, Jack had no interest in the exquisitely-embroidered baby clothes that had been carefully packed away. We shipped them to Toad Hall and put the linens aside for Jack to take to Chicago.

He was so uninterested in the baby clothes, I was surprised a few days later when he picked out a set of frosted bottles labeled for a baby's layette table. I'd respectfully consigned it to the trash since one or two of the pieces were broken, leaving the set noticeably incomplete. The remaining pieces include bottles for "cotton," "boric," and "nipples." "I rather like the idea of having a bottle for nipples at my place," Jack confessed with a cheeky grin.

As I was going through the built-in wall closet in Duke's bedroom on Saturday afternoon, I reached blindly along a high shelf and felt something there. Standing on a footstool for a better look, I screeched. It was an antique doll... in pieces. Head, torso, arms, legs, even knee joints and feet — she was all there. Another smaller doll lay nearby. She was still in one piece, though her arms and legs hung lankly from her body for the want of new strings.

I was almost done with the closet when I heard Mark and Michelle arrive to pick up their furniture. Knowing they'd be upstairs soon, I kept working. The bottom drawer under the leftmost closet door held still more papers. Bills from Ann's chemotherapy — more death. Where were the happy memories? Someone sorting through Toad Hall would find convention name badges and other symbols of joyous times; among the papers would be hundreds of letters, party invitations, and drafts of fanzine articles. Not chemo bills, funeral home invoices, and prayer cards.

Underneath the bills, I found envelopes with 1980 and 1981 tax returns, and another labeled "1979 state taxes." But it wasn't thick with full-page tax forms like the other two — only the bottom third of the envelope bulged. Sales tax receipts, I thought. Duke religiously tracked and claimed sales taxes paid on his state tax returns, as allowed by law.

I looked inside and saw a big wad of money instead. Jackpot!

I took the envelope downstairs and handed it to Jack. Whoowhee! There were twenties and fifties and a whole bunch of those new hundred dollar bills with Ben Franklin's great big face on the front. That night we were having dinner with the Macarios; Jack figured he'd break the news to Bill by picking up the tab.

Bill and Liz took us to their favorite Italian restaurant. Squid, tasty wine, and good conversation, including Bill's discreet yet fascinating stories of being a numbers runner decades ago. It was another welcome break. When the check came, Jack spoke up, "Let me get this, Bill." Oh, no. Bill wouldn't think of it. Jack showed Bill one of the hundreds in his wallet and mentioned we'd found Ben and 28 of his cousins earlier that day. Bill was thrilled with the news, but still wouldn't let Jack get the check. Somehow I wasn't surprised.



God bless Auntie Bun!

I returned to the attic late Saturday evening. It was beginning to look like I might finish the job. I found more baby and toddler clothes and a stunning pair of purple suede high heels that were at least two sizes too small for my feet. I set them aside, thinking they might fit Susan or some other friend who appreciated such style.

I took a closer look at the 1914 Singer treadle sewing machine I'd uncovered. Going downstairs for a fresh beer, I passed Jack and accusingly said, "It's a damned good thing your family line ends with you! That sewing machine has its owner's manual in one drawer, and a *complete* set of attachments. In another drawer, there's the owner's manual for the *attachments!*" Such meticulous care is admirable up to a point; after that, it's just spooky. With that sewing machine, the Targonskis had crossed the line one time too many.

I was almost finished around 3 AM when I tried to stuff another bit of trash into an overflowing box of garbage. "Waaaa," cried something in the box. What was *that*? I pushed again on a flattened piece of cardboard. "Whaa... ahh... ahhhhh." I started digging through the box.

I'd found it in the main room a few days earlier and had rummaged through the debris to make sure it was just garbage. I'd reached deeply but didn't empty it, thinking I knew enough about Duke's habits to know he wouldn't pile garbage on top of anything he wanted to save. The box continued making noise as I removed more trash. Near the bottom, I found a large wad of vinyl. It was red and green with bits of yellow, all of it covered with what looked like plaster dust. It was a child's wading pool. The yellow bits were horses' heads — they were the source of the noise. Two built-in vinyl straws could be used to inflate it but there weren't any valve covers or closures. I turned back to the big box, wondering what else might be lurking inside. This was Targonski trash, so I wasn't too surprised to find the cardboard box the vinyl pool originally came in. It was a "musical carousel" wading pool, and instructions on the box showed how to roll and tuck the straws into a flap in the vinyl after inflation. I wiped the white powder off the straws and started puffing. Moments later, the pool was inflated. A light squeeze to a horse's head brought a plaintive, squeaky "waaa." Longer squeezes, "waa... ahh... ahhh... ahhhhhhh."

I tidied up the few remaining boxes and left the wading pool set up in the middle of the attic. It showed no signs of losing air. This was one job I was glad Duke hadn't finished: he'd consigned the pool to the trash, but left the box in the attic. Pleased to have finished off my work there and delighted to have found unexpected treasure beneath the piles of dust, I went downstairs for a bubble bath and crawled quietly into bed as dawn approached.

Jack found the wading pool before I woke up Sunday morning — he remembered playing in it as a child. The white powder was talc sprinkled on to preserve the vinyl. How very like the Targonskis! It was raining lightly, so I put the pool out in the backyard to rinse off the talc, giving the horsies a friendly squeeze for good measure.



My mood was peaceful, yet melancholic. I kept thinking about the toys I'd found in the attic, and the other reminders of a Jack I'd never known. We talked about grief. I told Jack, "I think I'm mourning someone who doesn't exist. I'm mourning the little boy who lost his parents, except that little boy grew up a long time ago."

We talked about godparents. When I was a child, my parents told me if anything happened to them — if they died or couldn't take care of me — that my godmother, Auntie Bun, would. I've since heard that godparents are usually responsible for the spiritual upbringing of their godchildren. I don't know if Auntie Bun ever went to church — my memories of her center around the piano in her dining room. She would play as the entire family gathered around, singing song after song. Auntie Bun had clearly finished her job, I realized, even though she died before I hit puberty. In addition to helping to spark my love of music, she founded and ran a successful toy factory with her twin sister. Decades later, I still believe in toys.

Fantasy, reality

Jack saw the purple suede heels on the pile of stuff I was shipping home. "Do they fit?"

"No, and they're probably too small for Susan, too. But they're so great, I thought I'd take them and find someone they do fit."

"When you find her, let me know."

Later that Sunday, I put the shoes back in the attic. I'd had quite enough of Jack's romantic dreams. If he wanted a woman who could fulfill them, he'd have to find her himself.

Mostly, I wished I *were* that woman. On this timeline. I was going through hell with him, and longed for the rewards. It was easy to imagine living a whole other life, one where I was part of the Targonski family history. I didn't want that history to end. I wanted to help keep the story alive rather than packing it away in a box and sealing it shut.

On one level, Jack's and my daily interaction was far more intimate than it had ever been, in ways it had never been before. The casual domestic intimacy of hanging wet laundry out on the clothes-line together. Our intermixed T-shirts, underwear, bras, socks. Aged one-piece clothespins, laundry warmed and dried by the sun. Washing dishes every day, not just once as a polite thing a guest might do when visiting. Being in Bethlehem, hearing Jack's stories. The intimacy of death.

But there was also devastating loneliness. Jack, who's always been reserved and slow to touch, drew into himself even more as he struggled with the reality of his situation. I couldn't tell if my casual shoulder rubs and other light touches were welcome or an intrusion. Days after the funeral, he told Bill and Liz how the Mass had been much harder than he'd thought it would be. "I would have had an easier time if I'd chosen a different Catholic church. There were so many memories associated with Saint Cyril's." I'd known the whole morning was hard on him, but hadn't noticed that the service was any worse than the rest of the ordeal.

With every day that passed, Jack's casual comments about his interest in other women became more annoying. As a woman, I was feeling rejected and — even worse — not noticed. His interest in others when he had none in me stung.

On a deeper level, the possibility that Jack might someday find a woman to settle down with neither bothered nor concerned me. I know Jack; I know his steadfastness. We will remain friends for life — of that I am certain. If and when he does get seriously involved with someone, I expect I'll be happy for them, wishing them much joy in each other. The transition may be rocky as our patterns of communication and interaction change, but we'll work it out. We'll get to point X, and we'll take it from there.

But all the time I sorted this through, trying to figure out my emotions and reactions to his offhand comments and emotional distance, I kept having nightmarish fantasies of Jack using the Curly Locks alphabet block when proposing to someone else. That I could not stand. He could give her his mother's engagement ring, as he's always planned. But not her alphabet blocks.

It all comes down to fantasy and reality. And romantic sensibilities.



Gloomy Sunday

The hilltops were fogged in, but Jack had picked up tickets to a one-day, outdoor auto show up the hill at Lehigh University. We were too worn out to get much done around the house, and while we weren't much in the mood for going out, we figured the cars would be worth the effort. Greg and Georgia were going, too, and Jack expected to run into them there.

The car show was good, but also subdued, the dense fog adding an otherworldliness to the whole affair. Jack and I went through the motions. I knew little about the cars themselves, admiring their designs rather than having anything intelligent to say about any specific model. I kept looking for cars out of my own childhood: a '38 Chevy, '56 Buick Special, or '58 Packard Hawk. But this show was highbrow with sleek Mercedes, an exotic Tatra, and the like. I took pictures, focusing not on entire vehicles, but instead on the swooping curve of a fender, the repeating circles of a spare tire, headlight, and side view mirror.

We found Greg and Georgia about halfway through the show. Near the end, Jack and Greg reluctantly posed for a picture. I tried to get them to pick a car they liked to stand next to, but neither seemed inclined. I finally caught them at a red sports car that seemed Jack's style. It was a 1967 Bizzarini P538 Sports Racer, one of the five such cars made.

As Georgia and I walked across the damp grass near a row of cars, she turned to me and asked, "How long have you known Jack? Do you think it's getting serious?"

I stumbled over my reply. I wanted to look her straight in the eye and say, "I don't think it gets much more serious than *this*. Do you?" But her innocent question didn't deserve such bluntness. "Oh, no," I said, telling her of my love for Jeff, how we'd already lived together for seven years and expected to stay together. I also tried to get across the depth of my feelings for Jack, but felt clumsy about everything I said that afternoon. Exhaustion, loneliness, hurt, and the haunting futility of life itself — they were all taking their toll.

During the gloomy drive back down the mountain, Jack talked about how oppressive the fog was, and how odd it was to go to the car show without his father. It was exactly the sort of thing they would have enjoyed seeing together.

Back at Duke's, I repacked the toys into a sturdy U-Haul box. Jack picked out a few to keep himself, including his Prince Valiant sword and shield. I filled a second box with hats, baby clothes, the antique dolls, two glass refrigerator bottles, and other items. Jack loaned me the alphabet blocks so I could type all the rhymes into my computer. The blocks were going in my carry-on luggage; I wasn't letting anything happen to them! The wading pool was carry-on, too. I looked forward to the expression on Gavi Levy Haskell's face when she saw it and squeezed the horsies.

We hauled 35 bags of trash and several old carpets to the front of the house for the garbage haulers to take the next day. Jack had warned them the previous Monday when he'd put out the first seven bags we'd filled.

Putting the trash at the curb brought its own small sense of closure. There wasn't much left that I could help with. As we walked back into the house, Jack looked at me and said, "You know, I think it's time for you to go. I've loved having you here, but it's time for you to leave."

He was right, and I found his announcement cheering. I was leaving the next day, so the timing was right. Three days earlier, I'd asked if he needed some time to himself, away from me. "God, no," he'd said then. "The last thing I want is to be by myself. I dread the thought of your leaving."

In those three days, we'd gone from "I dread the thought of your leaving" to "it's time for you to go." Jack was ready to make the rest of the decisions on his own, and I was ready to go home, hold onto Jeff, and recover from the ordeal.

I called the Levy Haskells and talked with Fred. "I'm coming in tomorrow evening; could you or Susan possibly pick me up at the airport?"

Fred started, "Let me think of how this might work... Susan might have dinner plans...." I made a small "uh" sound and Fred stopped short. "Oh, that's right, you're coming back from being at Jack's dad's. We'll figure it out. One of us will be at the gate."

"Thanks," I said, with utter relief. "May I talk with Gavi?" I told her about the wading pool and how I was bringing it to Minneapolis for her to play in. That sounded good to her. She asked if she could invite her neighbor friend over, too. We talked about how much fun we'd have. Then, "Umm... Aunt Geri... can I ask you a question?"

"Of course you can, Gavi. What's your question?"

"Ummmm," then silence. The three-and-a-half-year-old sounded worried.

"What do you want to know?" I asked gently.

"What's a wading pool?"

Sunday night we headed back to Barry's house. On the way, Jack tuned in a radio station doing a '60s countdown of some sort. Perfect. We'd been without music for most of a week now, unheard of in either of our lives outside Bethlehem. "Along comes Mary" wailed The Association, and I sang along, remembering junior high school days when Mary was my name. Jim Horton and Steve Lewis used to tease me by singing that song whenever I walked by. I had a crush on Jim, a blond cutie who played the guitar, so I secretly welcomed the attention. I never dated Jim, and am no longer Mary, but I still get a kick out of the song. Music endures.

At Barry's, we all vegged out in front of the TV. I dozed on one of the sofas; it was another evening of escape.

Finishing what's been started

The real estate agent came back Monday with market information and a suggested sales approach. I had a hard time following him and my questions only confused things more. The picture John painted was grim: values were depressed all over town. But he spoke reassuringly of sales prospects and how he planned to market the property.

After John left, Jack and I walked through both houses. Jack had decided to stay on for the rest of the week rather than leaving the next day. I debriefed him as needed, pointing what was done, where I'd left things, and how the paperwork was filed. Jack looked around the cleared-out attic. "This is spectacular." Yeah. It looked great, and I'd had fun doing it. He noticed the purple shoes sitting next to a few of Angie's evening gowns. "You're not taking them?" he asked quizzically.

"No."

Over on John's side, there was one cluttered bedroom we'd never gotten to. It was a microcosm of everything I'd been working on: papers, pictures, mementos, kipple, and trash. I was glad to be leaving that manageable chunk of chaos for Jack. It was his inheritance; he deserved some of the adventure and discovery.

I left the kitchen table littered with "To Do" lists based on things Jack hoped to accomplish. We talked about how he probably wouldn't get to everything on the lists, and how he'd no doubt be adding to them. The overall job was still enormous. We'd just given it a good start.



We hugged tightly at the airport. Our standard goodbye, “It’s been fun,” just didn’t apply. “It’s been awful,” he said, truthfully. “It’s been really awful. It’s been good, too. And we got a lot done. I don’t know what I would have done without you. But mostly, it’s been awful.”

“Yeah,” I answered, tears in my eyes. There really wasn’t anything more to say. Then I got on the plane and headed home. I spent the flights taking the notes that enabled me to write this story seven months

after Duke’s death. On the last page I jotted the quote of my father saying, “You’re getting an education.”

So what did I learn? From previous experience, I already knew that everyone deals with death and grief differently, that there’s no one “right” or “best” way. That knowledge held true. I was reminded to live with joy, to take it as it comes. I learned the importance of leaving things “in order,” which means keeping things that way since we usually don’t have control over just when it is we leave. My will was up-to-date, but I’d never written that list of gifts that would be of such help when it came to disposal of my personal effects. It had been a long time since I’d told anyone my funeral desires. (*Cremate me. Rent the largest, loudest, best sound system you can get your hands on and set it up outdoors if you can. Hold a memorial service. Say whatever you want. Don’t worry what anyone will think; just make sure it’s true. Then play Elton John’s “Funeral for a Friend” with the volume cranked. Feel the music pour through your body. After that, play whatever music you want, recorded or live. Play it loud. There’s no rush, but eventually scatter my ashes at the base of a newly-planted tree or over a garden. Remember that I loved you and that I hope the remainder of your life brings you joy.*)

I learned that burying a loved one and settling their estate is hard. It’s harder than you think, harder than you remember if you’ve been through it before. The experience is so intense and the grief so overwhelming that time blocks most of the specific memories. They come back in unexpected, poignant little flashes. It’s important to deal with the grief as it strikes, but to also remember there’s more — much more — to life.

Friends can help — with food, referrals, cleaning, and sorting; by providing escape plans; and by just being there. Share stories. *Listen*. Be prepared for loneliness, no matter how big or small the family, no matter how much you share or what your role is.

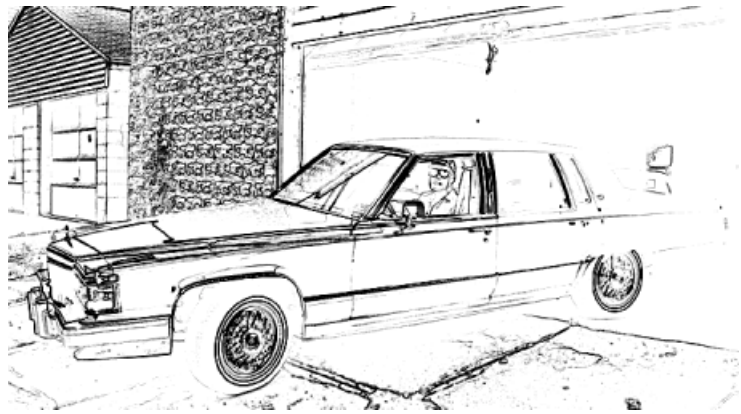
I learned that I wasn’t as strong as I thought. I hated becoming more fragile — feeling more and more needy — with every day that passed and I threw myself into additional projects such as the attic and John’s kitchen as if accomplishing more would prove the value of my presence. As though there was anyone I needed to prove it to. Even as I lost my perspective and sought escape from the grim reality of those ten days in Bethlehem, Jack helped anchor me with our familiar patterns. Moment by moment, day by day, we got to point X, then we took it from there. That strategy served us well. We even found things to laugh about along the way.

As I was finishing my notes, I remembered the first time I’d talked to my father after that Thursday night phone call from Jack. “Duke died just the way you want to, Daddy. He was out mowing the lawn and just keeled over. He never knew what hit him.”

Daddy’s reply surprised me: “That’s no good. Duke didn’t finish the job, did he? He should have finished what he started.”

If only that were possible....

Jack found several of Duke’s jobs awaiting completion in Bethlehem. Duke didn’t expect to die right then any more than his son expected to lose him. Now those jobs are Jack’s to finish. But Jack’s got friends, and some of us are handy when it comes to mowing the lawn. The rest of us have other things to give.



Park Loc it

Mike Glicksohn

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CANADA

You couldn't have made a better choice than Steve Stiles as illustrator of this issue. I'd guess that Steve is the longest-serving regularly-contributing fanartist never to have won a Hugo but it's rare to see the words "Hugo" and "justice" in the same sentence, eh? Steve's artwork is always fabulous, always perfect for the material he illustrates, and he happens to be a hell of a fine writer and an extremely decent person as well. And, you know, it's never too late for a long-overdue Hugo....

Try not to burn yourself out on Minicons and the next few Worldcons. I was serious about your considering working with the Torcon III committee when we win the 2003 bid.

It was nice of Steve, in his "Dogpatch" piece, to prove my previous observations to be so accurate. The factual material about the comic strip was all new to me and fascinating. (To my relatively-untutored eye Steve did a pretty good job of capturing Capp's style. Too bad he never had a chance to do the script as well since the ideas behind these panels were pretty jejune.) Add in the personal revelation about Steve's relationship with his father and you've got a damned powerful piece of excellent fanwriting.

Interesting and very well written piece by Sean Alan Wallace although I'm not sure how a building can stretch for more than a city block: if there's a street in there somewhere, surely we're dealing with two buildings? It's always reassuring to discover the similarities as well as the difference between fans in extremely different parts of the world. Had it been me at that party I couldn't have held *any* length of conversation on Ukrainian/Russian fiction but I sure as hell would have helped them finish the wine.

Mike Scott's article about scouring the British motorways for PEZ sets would have made enjoyable reading even if I didn't happen to have a PEZ dispenser from Bruce Schneier and Karen Cooper's wedding sitting on the desk next to where I'm typing. Of course, my dispenser is a simple red plastic one with a heart-shaped top with a notation of the occasion attached to it so it in no way prepared me for the problems faced by

the fully-addicted PEZ collector. In fact, despite me having been at Karen's wedding, I had no idea there *were* such things as PEZ dispenser addicts until I read Mike's fine article.

And now I've just finished the article by Kathy Routliffe. What to say? *Is* there such a person? I don't know. If there is, this is one of the most powerful pieces of personal journalism I've ever read. Also one of the best written. If there is no such person, this is one of the best pieces of fictional recreation ever to appear in a fanzine. Why don't I know? Because in the past I've taken at face value extremely moving pieces of apparent autobiography only to be told later that I was actually reading faan fiction. If I'd published such a piece myself, I'd have authenticated it in my editorial. The fact that you didn't, Geri, adds to the possibility that this is just a magnificent piece of fan writing. Either way, it's far and away the most powerful and impressive piece in the issue.

It's so good, I'm going to get Susan to read it, although she rarely ever reads anything in a fanzine. But she's followed a little along the path that "Kathy" may have trod. Susan was lucky. She found a therapist who was disinclined to rely on drugs, and eventually she found me. At her worst, though, she was never close to being where "Kathy" ended up. For which I will be forever grateful. My best friend and I were able to bring Susan back from where she was orbiting. Had she been on Jupiter, though, I'm not sure we would have been able to rescue her.

As for me, I'll never be as complex or introspective an individual as "Kathy." I've made my peace with the world and with myself, accepted my limitations, made the best of what I can give the world and receive from it. Consequently, I've never faced the tribulations that my wife and "Kathy" have had to battle against. Am I superficial? Perhaps. Probably. Sometimes I regret that but I don't think there was ever much I could do about it. Most of the time I accept it and am grateful for it. Can I understand what people who suffer from depression go through? Not at all. Am I deeply moved by what I completely fail to understand? Of course I am. Is this one of the best fanzine pieces I've read in years, real or otherwise? Damn right it is.

Jesus. The lettercolumn has a *L*O*T* to live up to.

Evidently, if I'd actually gotten around to reading the copy of *Idea* #9 you so kindly sent me, I'd have recognized the Routliffe name. Still doesn't prove anything either way.

Oh oh. Yet more evidence of the reality of Ms. Routliffe. Perhaps my recent gafiation is causing me to make an absolute fool of myself? Wouldn't be the first time. Probably not the lat time. And she's Canadian? Gives good loc, I'll grant that. Lots of references to Things Fannish that make me wonder why I've never encountered the name before. Still could be a straw man or a Will Straw man. None of my previous comments is changed. And a large part of my doubt is due to having accepted at face value a piece by someone I already

knew to be a fan. Reality doesn't necessarily equate to verisimilitude.

In keeping with my generally suspicious nature concerning the people/revenants who seem to appear in your pages, I'd probably wax eloquent as to the authenticity of anything purporting to be from the British Peter Roberts. (There *are* others, you know.) But as it happens, Susan and I *met* the resurrected Mr. R. in London last summer so I know that he really does exist. Again. Besides, few fans could ever have duplicated that distinctive and elusive Robertian charm as a letterhack. And Langford is far too busy right now.

Sad to see some last words from Ethel Lindsay. Good to see some last words from Ethel Lindsay. So it goes in fanzine fandom.

One of the fans I regret I've never met is Robert Lichtman. One of the fans whose letters I've enjoyed a lot, both pre- and post-gafiation, is Robert Lichtman. I sincerely hope he contributes to the fanzine dedicated to Harry Warner, Jr. I suspect Robert and I would have some similar things to say about what Harry has accomplished.

Many thanks,



Your invitation may have just been for me to consider working on Torcon III, but I've already taken that idea and run with it. It's premature, and therefore no doubt annoying as all get-out, but Jeff and I are looking forward to running the fan lounge for your Worldcon. It will have been long enough since Los Angeles, and there's something extraordinarily silly (and appealing) about bringing the Minneapolis in '73 spirit back to Toronto 30 years after the original post-supporting Minneapolis in '73 party was held there. It's intimidating to think of following Susan Wood's All Our Yesterdays room, but we rather like the idea of creating something that will have fandom talking for another 30 years. Fan history, hospitality, and a double measure of silliness. All the fun of MagiCon and L.A.con III combined, and then some. Not to mention Canadian beer and the glories of Toronto. How could we resist?

The Hennepin County Medical Center spans two city blocks; the road passes through the building. And in cities where the blocks have a specified length, you can easily have a park or building spanning several of those blocks without roads running through. Surely this is not such a difficult concept?

I usually avoid talking about the contents of any given issue in my editorial, but even if I did, I doubt it would have occurred to me to validate the existence or reality of Kathy Routliffe and the experiences she wrote about. Your questions point out one of the problems with an infrequent publication schedule (and your Scotch and martini consumption between issues): memory weakens and fails. If Kathy was a hoax, just *who* might the actual

author be? Will Straw is talented, but not *that* talented. Look back to *Idea* #2; Kathy's name appears above yours in the table of contents, with her article on the 1988 American and Canadian elections. She's mentioned in Jack Targonski's article, "The Little Music Party That Smoked," in #3. That's her sitting on the floor wearing the fishnet stockings in Reed Waller's illustration of that same article. She's back again in Jack's "Slugs 'N Fungus" in #6, and Reed chose once more to draw her. (He jumps at any opportunity to put her cleavage into print.). Kathy shows up in the photo section and letter column of #7, where she deified Jack with the simple lack of a comma, which in turn prompted Tom Grewe's illustration of Christ Targonski. Then there's her well-received articles in both #9 and #10, plus casual mention of visiting in my editorial and the usual letter of comment.

Fandom's had its expert hoaxers over the years, but I haven't the talent or motivation to play that game myself. So I'm choosing to take your questions as yet another indication of the power of Kathy's latest piece. It overpowers previous memories and leaves such a mark it's easier to think of Kathy as someone brand new to the fanzine scene, or think her a hoax, rather than to integrate "My Trip to Jupiter" with the recurring, common examples of her existence.

Yes, Kathy is Canadian. She's the kind of woman who inspires music, as can be seen in the lyrics of this song, written by her husband, Bob Berlien, a few months after they met, and recorded by Dandelion Wine on "Cheap Hooch":

Canadian Lady

*Canadian lady, she sure treats me nice
When I need some lovin' I need not ask twice
If she were a painting I would pay any price
Just to see her, just to see her*

Chorus:

*Daughter of a rock bound coast, sister of the wave
When she's standing here beside me it's easy to be brave
When I come home bruised and battered
She's the sustenance I crave
I find peace with her, I find peace with her*

*That Nova Scotia climate grows them strong,
grows them smart*

*It puts steel in their bodies, it puts heat in their hearts
And if I were to lose her I would tear this world apart
Just to find her, just to find her*

(Chorus)

Canadian lady

*There is beauty in this world there is truth there is light
There's the sun in the morning, there's stars at night
And I've got them all, they're all locked up tight
In my Canadian lady*

(Chorus)

*I find peace with her, I find release with her
Canadian lady*

Jim Young

Embassy Lagos
Department of State
Washington DC 20521-8300

I really liked Steve Stiles' Abneresque adventure. I have a strange compressed memory of John Campbell, Joe Pine (the broadcaster who seemed to have been the basis for Spinrad's "Bug Jack Barron"), and Al Capp all acting like sick, old gadflies who made things worse by just opening their mouths. Over the last couple of years here in London I've seen a number of films about the late Sixties and early Seventies ("Isle of Wight" concert, the Beatles retrospective series and a number of documentaries on TV), including the bizarre and decidedly humorless meeting between John Lennon and Capp in the hotel room in Montreal. Seeing that footage again made me think of Capp as more than just a grumpy old man disgusted with young people because of their age and hair length, but as someone who was trying to contain a really destructive impulse inside himself. But then I can recall seeing him on talk shows back then and thinking that he was only funny in print, not in person. (Hey, in fandom we know all about typewriter personalities, right?) Undoubtedly that made his role as social critic more difficult; in the States you generally have to be funny in person to gain real public accolades.

One of the reasons I really liked Al Capp as a little kid was that he had a certain science-fictional approach to life. Remember the Shmoo? The little critter that wanted to be eaten? I loved that. In its own way, it almost seemed Minneapolisian, right up there with the dogs in "City." I guess that's why I also felt saddened to hear Capp ranting away there at the end of his life, along with John Campbell publishing an editorial supporting Governor Wallace in the 1968 presidential election and Joe Pine castigating anybody who called into his show. In some way I can't exactly put my finger on, it seems like that whole attitude helped to demean public life in the U.S. Not that the counterculture or the rapidly ideological baby boomers had such great answers either.

Apropos of the whole period of the late '60s and early '70s, I recommend Ian MacDonald's **Revolution in the Head: The Beatles' Records and the Sixties**. It begins with a brilliant essay by MacDonald and then goes into a close exposition of text of the Beatles' lyrics, putting them in historical context. In its own way, the book is something of an encyclopedia of what was going on culturally and politically from 1960 to 1970.

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Ulrika O'Brien

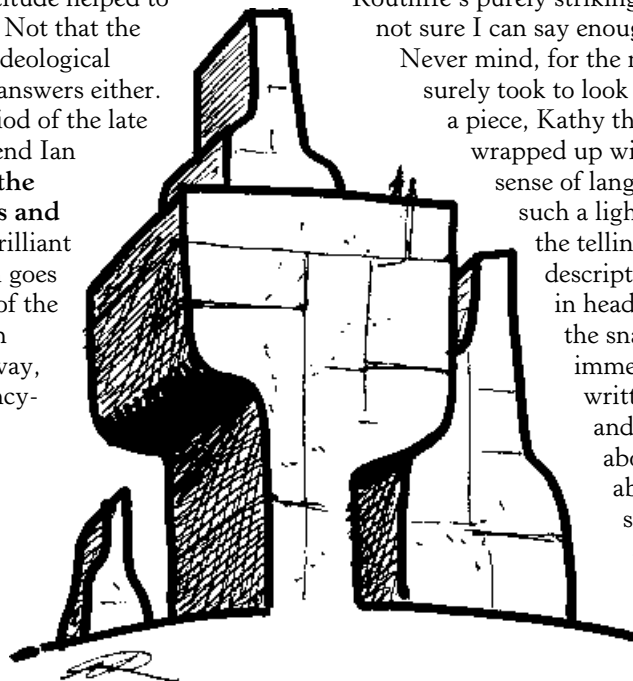
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Back at LAcon III, I, too, was among the anonymous gnomes who got roped into helping Teresa whip up bizarre conjunctions of edibles for the James White party. I did my yeoman's best to keep up, but I have to confess I was left dusty, awestruck, and quite humbled in the wake a TNH cyclone of cheery creative fervor. Nobody makes alien larvae out of Twinkies like Teresa, I'm telling you.

I had a couple of pauses reading Jeff's piece on the ways in which drumming has woven through the fabric of his life. I wouldn't say it was disconnected, exactly, so much as the connections and transitions kept coming at, for me, unexpected points in the narrative, somehow. A bit like new lovers trying to find each other's rhythms, I kept being thrown a little off my pace. That aside, though, it was a real prize for giving me a glimpse of life experiences of a sort that I have no parallels for. For all my lifelong love of music, I've never learned to make any, not really. (I took guitar lessons at the local city college for a while, but dropped the thread of it before getting the confidence and rewarding fluency that will carry you on with a new skill. Now this Christmas my brother finally gave me the beautiful Takamine 6-string of his that I lusted for at the time, and it sits waiting for me to find my tuning fork and my chord books and make myself worthy of the gift.) And of all musicians, drummers are the most like aliens to me. (Maybe that's why I can't quite fall in synch with the piece, now that I think of it....) I have no discernible native sense of rhythm at all; time signature is always the hardest part of music for me to "get," so the drummer's eye view of life is most tantalizingly like a visit to spice perfumed foreign soil.

The reason I had to LoC you, though, was Kathy Routliffe's purely striking "My Trip to Jupiter." I'm not sure I can say enough good things about it.

Never mind, for the moment, the brute courage it surely took to look closely enough to write such a piece, Kathy then delivers her introspection wrapped up with this lyric, almost poetical sense of language and timing. She's got such a light, utterly deft, touch with the telling detail, the idiosyncratic description, that she sucks the reader in head first and gives the writing the snap and crunch of personal immediacy. If someone had written a very damn long, smart and sassy rock and roll song about her experience, it probably would have had about the same feel to it. I'll be proud and very, very surprised, the day I can deal with my own family ghosts of mental



illness half so well. Right now bluntness and hostility are about the best I can manage.

I know you've already had to endure a flurry of praise over your coup in publishing Kathy, but I'm afraid I'll have to chime in with the deluge. My hat's off to the both of you.

Looking forward to what the mailman brings,

Ulrika@aol.com

Steve Green

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UNITED KINGDOM

I'd read Andy Hooper's review in *APAK*, and it certainly whetted my appetite; I'm really pleased to say I wasn't disappointed.

Mike Scott's "PEZQuest" struck a chord. I used to collect the damned things back in the late 1960s or thereabouts, when PEZ were issuing a variety of horror-oriented "heads" (I vaguely recall a Frankenstein's Monster in the Jack Pierce make-up, a creature with a squid-like skull, and maybe a werewolf; heck, it was a rather long time ago.) Since I now live in the same house I did then, and since most of my childhood acquisitions lie upstairs in the attic, it's possible I may still have them, just as I amazed my friend Ray Holloway the other evening by unearthing a virtually intact Zero-X (the massive spacecraft from the 1966 movie *Thunderbirds are Go!*). I must go on my own PEZQuest.

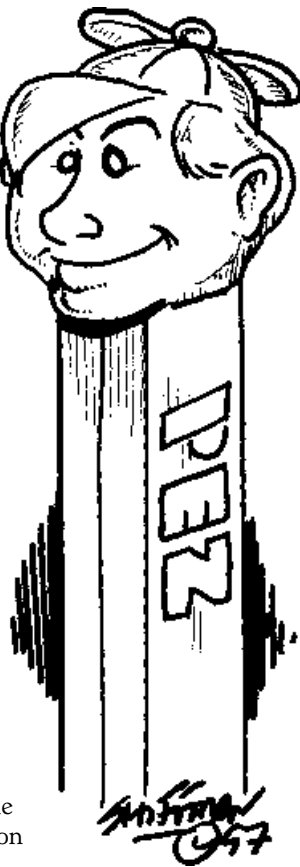
I was listening to Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds' *Murder Ballads* as I read Kathy Routliffe's "My Trip to Jupiter," not a course I would recommend to others if they wish to retain their emotional balance. Much as I appreciated Kathy's honesty (though it would have been interesting to counterpoint her account with her partner Bob's viewpoint, closing the circle as it were), the volume of metaphor and repetition did occasionally get in the way of the message. Still, full marks to her for tackling such a difficult period in her life and producing what is in the main an extremely illuminating memoir.

Sympathy also to Steve Stiles after the events he chronicles in "Passing Through Dogpatch." All that work, only for some cretin to pull the plug. "These things happen in freelancing," he observes: too true, they do. As well I know by bitter experience, but I also know it's a lot more painful when the project is one you actually care about.

There's a copy of my fanzine *Railings* en route. Unfortunately, the huge increases in British postal rates (trebling the cost of reduced rate airmail) have forced me to send the non-UK copies out by surface mail, but

at least you'll have something to light the 4th July bonfires with.

All best regards,



Yes, you should go on your own PEZQuest: the dispensers you describe now sell for \$200-250 each! Let us know what you find. (Make that \$300-350 each; I picked up the new price guide at the October PEZcon!)

I relayed your comment to Bob and Kathy. Bob succinctly summed up his viewpoint at the time: "Umm, Kathy, are you all right?"

Having project schedules and projects themselves yanked around is perhaps the most difficult challenge I've faced in eight years of free-lancing. It's hard to build and maintain enthusiasm, or to turn it on and off and back on again at the flick of a phone call.

All but a handful of overseas copies of *Idea* go by surface mail, for #10 the cost was \$3 each airmail and \$1.63 surface. You got better mail delivery than I did, though. *Idea* took about seven weeks to cross the ocean, while *Railings* showed up the same day as your Aerogramme. How did you get such ordinary-looking paper to withstand the heat of your words?

I'm one of those vehement American supporters of a Brit Corflu. I've been surprised by the political machinations surrounding it, given that I'd had casual, comfortable talks with a wide variety of British fans about the subject going back to 1989. Some of the resistance seems to be to any Corflu in Britain, while other pockets focus on one run by Ian and Lilian. At this point, the latter is what we've got and my plan is to enjoy what can be enjoyed and learn from it all. Mostly, I'm looking forward to hanging out with British and American fanzine fans much as I did at Precursor and Intersection, and much as I do at most every Corflu. (At least there won't be a Worldcon complicating things.) — gfs

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It sure was a Steve Stiles issue, wasn't it? When I first opened the pages, they fell open at the *Li'l Abner* section, and my first reaction was "how can you print all this stuff stright off and not be done for breaching

copyright?" And then it became clear as I read that this was all the work of our own Steve after all. Now I'm not much of a *Li'l Abner* follower; in fact I know virtually nothing about it except to recognise it when I see it. But from what little I do know, Stiles did a creditable effort to reproduce the feel of the style of the strip, and as a credit to him that's exactly the task set for the professional cartoonist in a contract like this. Again, as a non-follower of the original strip, I'll have to take his word that the script he was given to work with was in no way as funny as Capp's originals. I'll certainly agree that these ones weren't really all that funny.

My favourite piece of artwork was "Hellcon: The Art Show." Somehow it had that inspired sense of the loony and bizarre that hit the right nerve in my funny bone. It's also a nice touch that you've printed the fanzine in two colours. That extra effort gives it an ambience of style.

On the other hand, your obsession with PEZ body parts is shameful. If Mike Scott's account is accurate, you sound like the type of person who could keep trying to complete the set even if the company decided to create several thousand. Geri, *you can't win*. They can make 'em faster than you can acquire 'em. And pardon my bluntness, but what do you with them once you've got them? Set up miniature armies for your burial chamber? I noted your comment about the higher prices for the differently packaged non-US dispensers. Are you suggesting that you — or other people maybe — buy them and then keep them in their packages? Is this the height of silliness or what?



But then, compulsive collecting was never meant to be a rational sport. And I must confess to having had the bug at times in my life. As a child, our family took great seriousness in collecting the whole sets of plastic cereal toys, and to try and remember exactly why, it seems it was simply because the whole set was there to be had. I was one of four brothers. The youngest, Trevor, was the one who ended up being the most avid hoarder, the consummate completist. For my part, I was the meticulous one, after quality not quantity. I spent years with the little pots of Humbrol paint, decorating them in the smallest detail. There were soldiers of different parts of history (with cardboard cutout backgrounds), costumes of all nations, and the more humorous ones — "Pirates, Privateers, Cutthroats and Blackguards" (get two cereal packets and you could build a treasure island, which we went further and divided up into a grid to create our own board game), "Nep-Tune and his Switched-On Seaweeds," "Crater Critters" and many more.

The Seaweeds were of particular interest, because whereas every Kellogg's series had had a complement of eight (some especially significant number, I suppose) listed down the edge of the packet, this was the first one to have fifteen. A blockbuster. It even took two packets to list the *dramatis personae* (given that King Nep-Tune appeared twice, with a list of seven other supporting members). Now, when I first perused the list, I thought the very coolest character was Saxy Salmon, a sleek, smooth fish who perched delicately on the tips of his triangular tail while making music out of a saxophone. The worst was Bubbles Blowfish, an ugly brute of a figure, with a bulbous head, fat lips and some misshapen sort of sea shell used as a poorly-defined wind instrument. Or perhaps Slugsy Base, who was like this only a shade more hideous, the type of cereal toy you use to frighten the children. But Saxy — I coveted him, and lusted over the vision of what he'd look like, all painted silver and gleaming.

So there we went with the first packet, and what did we get? Bubbles Blowfish. Next packet? Bubbles Blowfish again. Our next several tries netted other creatures, and we slowly began to build up an orchestra, but still without that oh-so-cool salmon.

Geri, at least with your PEZ habit (sorry, collecting), you can buy as many as you feel you can afford when you have the chance, but remember that for four anxious boys they had to consume an entire packet of cereal before they could try again for the next shot. That's (I think) about one a week, and these offers only last a limited time. And with a 15-item series, and building them up at random, you can see how as the months went by the prospect of not managing to complete the set became excruciatingly real to us. So we ate, and we ate, and as time was just about to run out we had amassed every single member of the band except Saxy Bloody

Salmon. Slugsy Base we had about five, and probably ten Bubbles Blowfish, as well as the full inventory in triplicate of Tom-Tom Turtle And Tiny Tim Turtle, Cool Connie Coral, Octopussy Hep Cat *et.al.*, but for that one maddeningly elusive fish.

We were then driven to desperate measures. We wrote to Kellogg's, in a letter of the most abject pleading, to tell them how much of their breakfast cereal we had bought and eaten in the drive collect the whole set, and how much we had tried (Ghod knows how we had *Tried*) to net that last member, and on our knees if necessary could they *please* just give us Saxy Salmon. Just give him to us. Just like that. A couple of weeks later a parcel arrived in the mail. We opened it. It contained a plastic bag stuffed full of cereal toys, and as we ripped it open and spilled the multi-coloured contents onto the table and scrabbled them around we found a rich assortment of Bubbles Blowfishes, Slugsy Bases and — at the bottom of the pile — ONE SAXY SALMON.

Trouble was, he was small and rather disappointing, and if you'll pardon the pun, the novelty soon wore off.

Collecting cereal toys was never quite the same after that. I seem to remember collecting later series, but it was never to be with that same hunter's zeal. I would paint them and cherish them, but the completion of the set was a desire, no longer an obsession. Trevor took that over, and gradually became the *de facto* custodian of the hoard. (Later progressed to GI Joe models and their fleets of military hardware, which was one of the reasons he moved out to a house of his own.)

Cereal toys progressed over the years to the more and more lightweight, until they were finally replaced by cards depicting sports stars, or even worse nothing but actual cereal in the box and cheap-out "attractions" on the back of the box like contests for holidays you would never win, stupid brain-teasers you could do in thirty seconds and — the final insult — nutritional information telling you how good the stuff you were in the process of eating was for you.

The most bizarre fact of all this is that with all the resources Kellogg's poured into these nationwide sales campaigns for cereal packet novelties, including saturation TV coverage, they seem never to have kept a record of them for historical purposes. Ian Gunn and Karen Pender-Gunn told me this, great collectors that they are. Kellogg's cereal toys were part of the ingrained popular culture of my whole generation — "Collect the whole set!" they were told — and yet there is nowhere in any official archive one single cereal packet to show the names of at least some of "The Fringies," "The Tooolybirds" or "Nep-Tune and his Switched-On Seaweeders." It would have cost them the salary of one lowly-paid clerk for a day, plus the price of a scrapbook and a pot of glue. Incredible how ephemeral some things are.

Incidentally, the plastic toys were exactly the same in Britain but for some reason had completely different names.

A few years ago I was over in Melbourne at Ian and Karen's, and the pride of place in the middle of their collectible-ridden house was a glass cabinet within which, arranged neatly in rows, were the ragged survivors of these once-proud assortments. My friends beamed with that special feeling of shared knowledge when I went up and reeled off most of them by name, but I believe I'm no different from any Australian child of the late sixties/early seventies, who could easily have done the same. True, I wasn't infallible, but my gaps can be filled in by the next person, and to give them their dues, the Gunn-Pender-Gunns knew most of them. But no-one seems to know them *all*, least of all the company that peddled them. We're not talking nineteenth century typewritten parts here, but mass merchandising that was forced down the throats of a nation of average, TV-watching kids a few decades ago. Apparently Kellogg's would wash its hands of the series once they had served their purpose.

So there you have it — a lost generation of popular culture. Priceless memories of childhood, but none on paper. Kellogg's was not helpful. Ian and Karen had written to the company, asking for an inventory from the archives to catalogue their collection. No joy.

They should have just asked for Saxy Salmon.

Yours,

Craig Hilton <archon@ois.com.au>

With PEZ, there's the trick of actually finding dispensers in stock. The new Star Wars were out for over three months before showing up any Minneapolis area stores. I don't go for the army approach, though I do have a the eight Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles in Body Parts and they look pretty forboding. PEZheads tend to use a "Mormon Tabernacle Choir" display set-up, which makes for an awesome (or frightening) sight. Jeff made me a custom PEZboard to hang the unopened packages. But as extreme as I sound, I'm really just a dilettante among collectors. I don't spend my weekends scouring garage sales and flea markets, I have yet to part with more than \$20 for a single dispenser, and I usually limit my purchases to currents at regular retail prices. I don't even have a database of my collection. I am rather hoping selling it off will finance a trip to the UK or Australia in my retirement years. Or course, if I had the luck Steve Green hinted at, the sale of just three dispensers would finance my trip to next year's Corflu. You can bet I'd sell at least two such dispensers in a snap. Collecting is all very fine, but it doesn't compare to fanac. — gfs



Terry Jeeves

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UNITED KINGDOM

Steve's artwork is indubitably the best part of the issue — but his article on drawing Li'l Abner and company came a close second. He really captured the character. Along with Pogo, the Dogpatchers are my favourites. Can't you twist Steve's pen to give you MORE? I drew a cartoon strip for a local newspaper for several months so I know the work involved.

The PEZ Body Parts hunt was both interesting *and* baffling as I have no idea what they are. How about a Stiles' illo to show us? The girl in the Routliffe piece looked a lot like Little Orphan Annie, another comic character, but I'm afraid baring one's soul in writing is not my idea of high excitement.

I'm pleased to say my broken ankle is fully healed, but two weeks after giving up crutches, I collapsed in agony with a slipped disc, which put me in bed for four weeks and which is still tender and won't allow me to bend.

All the best,



If you know what's involved with drawing, why do you suggest I twist Steve's arm (or pen, or anything)? Much better, I would think, to follow the advice Fred Levy Haskell gave me back when Glenn Tenhoff drew the cover, developed the logos, *and* illustrated an article for *Idea* #1: "Chain him to your coffee table. Don't let him get away. Feed him well and keep him drawing." — gfs

Kate Yule

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Many, many thanks to Kathy Routliffe for her tale of her "trip to Jupiter." At times it read like poetry, in the sense that though it sounded nice I didn't know what she was on about. Much of it, however, was oh so very familiar. I have been dealing with "better living through brain chemistry" myself this past year. Low-grade depression, a familiar companion for many years, suddenly invited a whole raft of friends in to party: bitchiness, tears, intense lethargy (is that an oxymoron?), obsessive internal dialogues, inability to finish sentences or parse what other people were saying.... Words and communication matter very much to me. When it seems as if either I or those around me must be speaking Urdu, it is extremely upsetting! At one point, when we were trying different meds—I was on some-



thing worse than useless—a friend's ex was hit by (AIDS-related) brain lesions. I understood what was going on with him much better than I really wanted to. At least for me I could hope it was reversible.

I'm glad for Kathy's article because I think we, in general, need more realization that mental illness is not something that just happens to "those crazy people, over there." It may be what's wrong with Uncle Ed; it may be what's wrong with one's self. If we can't frame that thought—"something's the matter here; maybe it's treatable"—we don't seek help. I'm also glad when someone comes along who can explain to people that we're not just taking Prozac because the Scotch bottle ran low, or we stubbed our little toe or something.

Steve Stiles' style varies enough that I wouldn't have dreamed it was a one-artist issue if you hadn't said so. Especially like

the dog/cat dichotomy on p. 45.

See you in San Antonio if nothing else.

kyule@agora.rdrop.com

Sorry, but I wasn't be in San Antonio for the Worldcon. It was time to stay home and (hopefully) keep my clients happy. It was good seeing you and other fans at Corflu, Minicon, and WisCon earlier this year, and I hope to see many of these friends again at Loscon over Thanksgiving weekend. Both Jeff and I will be there, doing our best by the committee and mostly having a grand time. — gfs

Mae Strelkov

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Jujuy
ARGENTINA

Steve Stiles' DOGPATCH is great. What remarkable talent he has. And how poignant, his doing such an exact imitation of *Li'l Abner* by invitation, and his father's not there to enjoy it. Well, you never know — in what the Latins call the *Mas Allá* important news may get circulation and this would be important to Steve's dad.

I postponed writing to you because of Kathy Routliffe's "trip to Jupiter." I thought of so much to say and couldn't find words to tell it. I do know that the *Mas Allá* is a terrible place to meddle with if you're still "in the Flesh." It pulls back the ones "on the other side" ... I think Steve illustrates that unconsciously. (Or purposefully?)

There's this girl with only one eye "seeing." She's in her car listening to the dead one's haunting music and wishing to evoke him back into our mortal "reality." Pulling him back — not letting him progress

to the next state of our eternal journeys beyond time (where lessons are learned there as well as here, each changeover). So the ghostly figure holds up the biggest "ball-on-a-chain" you could ever imagine — moon-sized. And between the girl and the specter the music plays on, from the car down "the Valley of Death." Here, she has a fine child and he represents life and the future, also a most loving, understanding husband; but the chain forged by the music and the longing to reject our mortal state that cuts us off from those "beyond," grows more and more binding. It's like loving a ghost, a specter, a real skeleton actually.

I've lost two sons, grown-ups they were, but I sent them on in my thoughts with loving prayers and wishes for their Karmatic progress in learning. They both burned themselves out devouring every minute of existence to the fullest — an urge I have, too, save I use it in writing, studying, and making friends with those who care for the topics I do. (Through both letters and meeting face-to-face.) So I keep plodding, enjoying fandom tremendously through the years, being terribly amused by our daily happenings, but ghosts I'd not encourage one tick. I'd say (did something spooky intrude), "Hurry back safely, and I'll be praying for you to get on with your future. Reborn maybe, hopefully."

With love, as ever,

Uae

Aileen Forman

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Las Vegas NV 89119

Vegas hospitality isn't caused so much by intent as by my own grand ideas that get spoken out loud. We just get carried away.

Loved Steve's Dogpatch story and comics. Too bad he's not going to be paid tons of money, but I certainly enjoyed it. Enjoyed Mike Scott's PEZquest article, too. I found myself examining PEZ displays here in Vegas and realized that you have yet another addicted lackey looking for a fix for you!

The article that hit closest to home was Kathy's. With growing alarm I realized that her early symptoms sounded a lot like my own thought processes. Something for me to consider.

Love,

Aileen

The line between mental health and mental illness is either heavily smudged or ever so light and flexible. I remember comparing myself with my sister-in-law, Louise, after her second suicide attempt. What was different about her, or about the other mental patients locked onto the 7th floor at St. Mary's hospital? (The same hospital as in Barry Longyear's **Saint Mary's Blues**.) What still surprises me about Kathy's tale is that she was diagnosed with a "mild, potentially debilitating psychosis." If that's mild, what must a full-blown psychotic's life be like? — gfs

Greg Benford

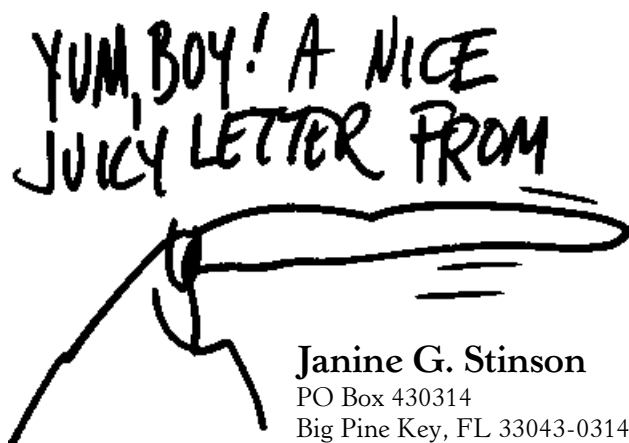
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While Routliffe moves in gray terrain, a truly accomplished piece, my heart swelled at Steve Stiles' tale. He did a fine strip. I ran into the same problems, tho not fatally to the project, writing a novel set in the Asimovian Foundation.

Relatives have a capricious hold on an author's legacy, alas. A minor sf writer of several decades back had one good solid story, and Terry Carr tried to anthologize it. Came back a reply from his daughter, angrily rejecting the \$100 or so offered for reprint. She said that he was always unrecognized, a great writer, blah blah, and his work would go for a thousand minimum. Sad; the author's sole chance at being remembered, squashed by the upshot of what was undoubtedly his own view, sour gripes over dinner for an impressionable daughter.

More, please.

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Janine G. Stinson

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Being new to fandom (beginning with my membership in N3F in June of 1996), and having read but a minimum amount on its history (the main single source being **All Our Yesterdays**), I've been hunting around online for information and leads to other sources on fandom and fanhistory, as well as fanzines. I found *Idea* on a fanzine list written by Dick Lynch, which was located at the same URL where the online version of *Mimosa* can be found.

I've been reading SF for over 25 years. My introduction to the field was provided by Andre Norton's **Moon of Three Rings** and Alfred Bester's **The Stars My Destination**, which I found in my junior high school's library. I was incredibly lucky to attend public school in an area where nearly every school I attended had been built within five years of the time I first went to school in them. I had some excellent teachers and will always be grateful for the opportunities I was offered for learning in new ways.

All this is provided as a prologue to the following: please have mercy on this neofan for any *faux pas* she

may commit in print here. I will try my best, but I'm not perfect.

One of the first things I did after joining N3F (even before getting into a round robin—imagine that!) was volunteer to take over as editor of the letterzine *Tightbeam*. I've survived the first year in that position, and have settled in quite comfortably with it. Having trained in journalism in high school and college, as well as working on a few newspapers in editorial positions, editing TB is probably easier for me than for someone who's never worked in that field. I'm still learning, though, most recently from this ish of *Idea*.

Steve Stiles' "Passing Through Dogpatch" was very funny and quite illuminating. I used to know a guy who drew cartoons and was interested in trying to get one of his strips bought by a syndicate, so some of Steve's trials and tribulations had a familiar ring. He's also one heck of a fine artist. I thoroughly enjoyed the "other" art of his in the rest of the ish.

I had some fond memories return to me while reading "It It's Too Loud, You're Too Old!" I did a short stint as a lead singer for a cover band in my early college years, and while it wasn't exactly the fulfillment of my long-cherished dream, it was a great experience. Jeff's so very right when he says, "Music is a way of life." Once bitten, never the same.

"My Trip to Jupiter" also carried a haunting familiarity, though I haven't experienced Kathy Routliffe's degree of separation, so to speak. My mother's side of the family has a history of manic depression (aka bipolar disorder). I seem to have escaped with only a brush against it, but it was still scary. Kathy's description of her family, her adolescence, her early loves...so many things were familiar to me. Thanks, Kathy, for having the strength to share something so intimate. I send my sincere wish for you never to take that trip again, as it seems there are many who want you to stick around. The poem was a gem.

Having read the "Floundering Fathers" panel transcription (from a 1977 Minneapolis con, I cannot remember which one) at the (I think it was) *Mimosa* Web page, I was very happy to finally "get" the "park and lock it!" chant. Or am I still in the dark? If there is such a thing as a con virgin, then I'm eligible, having never been to one. Not that I don't *want* to go to a con, I just can't seem to plan far enough ahead to *get* to one! I will keep trying. I *have* read many con reports, mostly in *Locus*, so I'm not completely ignorant of the major events of a con. Unless, of course, all those writers lied incessantly.

By the way, I liked the paper.
So neo I squeak,
Tropicsf@aol.com

Welcome to fandom, Janine; you're catching on fast. Don't believe everything you read in fanzines, even semi-pro 'zines like *Locus*. Get up to Tropicon if you can; it's as near your neck of the woods as any convention is likely to get. Then again, planes fly between

Minneapolis and the Florida Keys. I know, 'cause I gave my partner Jeff a surprise trip to Key West too many winters back. There's a great big bunch of fandom to discover, and I'm happy to introduce you to small pieces of it through the pages of *Idea*. — gfs

David Singer

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I have to believe that it's less than coincidence when two of the very few fannish items I receive here in the Glades of Gafia arrive on the same day, and from the same city. And so, how could I not LoC *Idea* #10?

(Though I must confess that I didn't find it necessary to LoC the Minicon 32 progress report.) Besides, your generosity in keeping me on the mailing list can't last forever without some small reciprocation, and I would miss *Idea*.

I have still not gotten over the wonder of receiving e-stencilled typeset mimeography on twilltone; I still remember my first experience in using pseudo-typesetting at work to pub an ish of an apazine, and then having to explain that I was just, um, "testing" the system. Ah, those were heady 240-pel days! Now, of course, I dash off quick letters (non-fannish) on a quiet little 1200-pel printer at home — there's hardly any sneaking around necessary any more. And thus do our lives become ever more mundane.

It's been a long time since Diane and I went to a con — since the Minneapolis Corflu, which was just about 9 months before Jeffrey was born, in fact; I did go to a couple of days of Minicon 28, since I had to be in Minneapolis the following week and I was able to save the company a lot of money by flying out early and spending Saturday night at the con. It was fun...but I didn't find it as compelling as I used to find cons, and haven't felt any strong desire to go to a con since. What little desire I have for cons seems to be satisfied, and then some, by work-related conferences. I'm even on the concom of a couple of them at IBM (well, we don't actually call it the concom, but the shoe fits) — the SMOFing skills I've acquired by osmosis have proven to be valuable.

I enjoyed Steve's article (and all of his art); I wish that the revival of *Li'l Abner* had happened — it was one of my favorite strips when I was growing up (though I didn't truly appreciate everything that was in the strip, any more than I really caught onto Pogo or Bullwinkle). I wonder if today's kids will have the same nostalgia for *Doonesbury* or even *Calvin and Hobbes*.

PEZQuest rang some serious bells with me; I, thank God, am not a collector, but Jeffrey is. He loves



Batman and Star Wars toys, and so I find myself going in search of whatever he “needs” when I take out-of-town trips. Last year, he had collected all but one of the MicroMachines Transforming Action Sets — so I found myself driving all over area code 914 in search of the C-3PO/Cantina set, which was nowhere to be found locally. Or in New York. Or in nearby Connecticut, for that matter. A friend eventually found it via the Internet and gave it to Jeffrey for his birthday; he was duly impressed, and makes a point of having me put it out of reach when other kids come over. It has been worse, though — a couple of years ago, we were in search of a particular Riddler action figure, and I found myself asking a friend’s wife to please check Toys-R-Us while he and I were at a meeting. We were all in Southampton, England, and I guess she might have found more enjoyable things to do than cruise toy stores, but she found the toy in question, and that’s what counts!

Kathy Routliffe’s piece was very disturbing and powerful. I pray that I never am able to comment more cogently.

In the loccol, Vicki Rosenzweig makes a very good point about disposal costs not being factored into the true price of anything; the rising tide of spam on the Internet is probably the most extreme case of this, since all of the costs are borne by the recipients and the carriers, with the senders paying virtually zero. The cost of Real World junk mail isn’t quite as lopsidedly apportioned — the sender does have to buy the paper and postage — and so there isn’t quite as much of it for entirely worthless products — but if the sender had to pay for the trash bill at the other end, I’d have a lot more room left in my recycling bin.

I have to apologize for the quality of my signature (not to mention sending a .BMP when you asked for a .TIF), but I can’t write as fluidly or as sloppily with a mouse as I can with a pen. My real signature is entirely illegible; this electronic model, which is only a crude approximation, has some letterforms visible. I’ll try to do better next time.

Cheers!



It’s good to hear from you, David, and you’re right about needing to respond to stay on my mailing list. I’ve hit the point where every new name I add means dropping someone else, and I’ve already been through the list a couple times removing all the “easy” names such as local friends who never responded and aren’t active in fanzine fandom. If money (and time and reality) were no object, I’d gladly expand beyond the 230 people I currently mail to, but for now, responding is a good idea for those who want to receive future issues of *Idea*. (Those who don’t really care are also encouraged to let me know, so I can drop them and add others who have expressed interest.) — gfs

Tom Perry

sigh...

In Robert Heinlein’s interview in the mid-eighties with Peter Heck, he said that you had to multiply the seventy dollars he got for his first story times 20 to understand what that first check for fiction meant to him at the time. Laney’s lino (“...a giveaway [fanzine] ... can quickly eat up six or eight dollars.”) does sound funny nowadays, but if you substitute \$120 to \$160, it gives a more accurate picture. You could buy two large candy bars of good chocolate for a dime in those days, and magazines we now pay \$3 to \$6 for now went then for 15 to 25 cents.

I suspect you are well aware of this, and published the Laney quotation to make precisely that point, but I worry about fanhistorical anecdotes losing their meaning — or even inverting it — if this isn’t explained for younger readers. I believe in Fred Pohl’s memoirs he mentions a pro author donating ten dollars to the expenses of a fan party in the forties; that probably sounds pretty trivial now, and before long will probably sound downright cheap, while at the time it was quite a generous gift. Same goes for the hundred dollars that Heinlein sent (along with a hundred story ideas) to a writing-blocked Theodore Sturgeon. That C-note sounds like a lot less now than it meant then, and in twenty years, it could well be seen as a contemptuous gesture. In the interests of timebinding, I seriously think that all mention of such financial transactions should be annotated with some reasonably accurate estimate of what the amounts involved would be worth in current currency.

Back in the midseventies, I was passing along memories of a fifties fan named Peter Vorzimer to a young correspondent who had run across some of his fanzines. I mentioned his burst of activity and subsequent disappearance from fandom, and concluded by saying that Terry Carr had probably been right when he had speculated that whatever Vorzimer turned his hand to, he was probably making ten thousand dollars a year. This was a cliché in the fifties for a young person who achieved early financial success. My correspondent wrote back in some indignation, saying he was sure that someone of Vorzimer’s demonstrated talent and energy certainly earned more than ten grand. He had thought that Carr was sneering that Vorz was living well below what had subsequently become the poverty level.

The funniest lino of the lot was the final one: “What if the hokey pokey really is what it’s all about?” — and I wrote that before noticing that you are apparently the author of it. As someone who’s just gone through some life-altering changes and had occasion to give our purpose here a lot of thought, I have to say I think your lino is very insightful. In a larger sense, I think the hokey pokey may *be* what it’s all about — taking it as a trope for the enjoyment of life and sharing happiness with others. Beside that, material or professional success and solitary studies of arcane

subjects pale. They have their own value and satisfactions, to be sure, but if you can't put your left foot in and shake it all about, you may have failed at something very important.

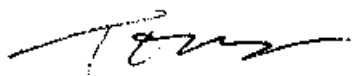
Steve Stiles did a great job capturing Al Capp's style for his *Li'l Abner* strips, though I have to agree with him that the scripts he got to work with were weak. His renditions of Abner, Daisy Mae and the Yokum parents are excellent. (And the self-portrait on page 3 is delicious!) I'm not sure though that I regret — except for Steve, who deserved success for all that work — that the revival of the strip didn't come about. (Doesn't it seem strange, though, that the fellow who convinced Capp's widow to allow its resuscitation didn't get her signature on a binding contract before proceeding? The ways of the business world often astonish me.) Tell the truth, I didn't like the strip that much when it was coming out — and I mean even before Capp turned his rudder sharply starboard. I read it faithfully enough, and it was certainly better than most of the crap on the funny pages of the time, but it always seemed overblown and repetitious, milking its gags over and over and duplicating its daily continuity beyond all reason. Weak though Hochberg's story may be, I suspect Capp would have taken two or three times the space to tell it, repeating at least one gag each day from the previous day's strip.

Steve's telling of the story is great, of course, and I'm delighted he got that generous kill fee. When he comes to the part about subcontracting all the work to Dan Steffan, I can't help wondering if he's subtly alluding to the rumors that Capp had assistants do almost all the drawing. I'd be curious to know it that was true. Milton Caniff commented in one of the "Steve Canyon" reprint volumes by Kitchen Sink that Capp couldn't draw all that well and spent a lot of time erasing when he was doing "Colonel Gilfeather" (a "Major Hoople" knockoff) for the Associated Press, before Caniff took it over; and the Kitchen Press reprints of "Abner" certainly show a distinct change in style after the first couple of years of the strip.

Of course, maybe Capp just developed his talent and style during that time.

Using *Idea* #10 as an all-Stiles showcase of art was a brilliant stroke, and it was a delight to encounter so many old friends in the letter column. The color registry on the cover — all those dots within the feather — was excellent. You've certainly proved the contention you made to me a couple of years ago that mimeography can produce beautiful fanzines; I hope you'll keep on proving it.

best wishes,



"All those dots within the feather?" I'm delighted people continue to have such high regard for my mimeo skills, but it's sometimes misplaced. I'm not above cheating to get the effect I want. The feathers are hand-colored,

usually by whoever's grown tired of collating. A hundred or more copies had individualized rainbow feathers on #10 thanks to the fine eye and tireless hand of Laura Krentz, who kept coloring long after we'd stapled the last issue. And whenever you see a page with enormous chunks of solid black in the artwork, take a second look at the type before marvelling at what our mimeographs can do. If the copy is suspiciously darker and more uniform compared to the printing in the rest of the issue, Garth Danielson probably photocopied the page onto Fibertone for me. I used this trick as needed in *Idea* #8 and *SBFY* #10.

The hokey pokey quote was the anonymous signature file; the credits for the interlino column are not in the same order as the quotes. Remember *Hyphen* and it will all make sense. As for giving modern day financial equivalents, well, thanks, but I'd rather not. Especially when quoting out of context.

You have a point, though. I trace many of my ongoing financial difficulties to the fact that I imprinted on what things cost in my youth and still think of \$100 or \$1,000 as a significant sum. You mean 3-dip ice cream cones don't cost 18¢ and new cars aren't \$2,000 for a cheap model up to \$6,000 for most anything other than a Cadillac or Mercades? It's no wonder I'm broke. — gfs

Steve Stiles responds: "Capp, like many cartoonist, had assistants. His long-time regulars were Andy Amato, who did the bulk of the drawing; Walter Johnson, who drew cars, mechanical objects, and backgrounds; and Harvey Curtis, who handled the lettering, filled in the blacks, and inked the panel borders. They also had some input in plot and gag jams. Later on, sometime in the midfifties, Frank Frazetta took on the bulk of the drawing chores, but since I don't (yet!) have those Abner volumes, I don't know the extent of his contributions. Sometime in the early sixties Frazetta left the strip in time to catch the Burroughs revival, going on to become a famous cover artist."

Lloyd Penney

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Etobicoke, ON M9C 2B2

CANADA

Ah allus lahk *Li'l Abner*, so Ah jes adored the wuhk o' thet Stiles boah — seeing the strip concerned Messy Smelms and Uba Duba, a few evil Canajans violatin' the Smelms-Hurtin' Bill would have been great in the background. A little topicality ain't hurt no one. Believe me, Jesse Helms is a comic figure up here, too.

I know exactly what it meant when folks like George Flynn and Jeff say they take pride in seeing something they worked on in print. At one point, I was one of six senior editors of the Sears Catalogue in Canada. Later on, I had plenty of copyediting work and articles in a short-lived Toronto magazine. Now, the changes are good that if you pick up an American Express application form in the US, it was produced in Canada and edited by me.

Your comment to James White made me think of a little mischief Jeff could do ... he can make plenty of little silver dollar pancakes, put them in small plastic envelopes and include them with each copy of the next *Idea*. Now there's A Little Something Extra Glicksohn never thought of....

Kathy Routliffe is correct about hiss-and-spit. Too many of us are catty little frogs in a myriad of tiny ponds. If it were possible to find the fannish ego dial and turn it down several notches, ahh, what fandom could do.

Yours,

Lloyd Benney

**NO NO,
NOT
THAT!**



If I were to pick up on Mike's Something Extra game, I'd be far more inclined to enclose Zip-Locked packets of Jeff's Best Ever Pancake Mix and let the readers make up their own batch (add blueberries as desired). It's easier on Jeff, not toxic to the fanzine if the plastic bag accidentally opens, and it invites the kind of participation I'm looking for. I don't know what the Customs Agents would think, though. — gfs

F.M. Busby

2852 14th Ave. W.
Seattle WA 98119

Congratulations on your All-Stiles-Artwork issue. The *Li'l Abner* strips are drawn superbly. Too bad

Steve was stuck with Hochberg as writer; I hate it when the message is laid on so heavily you can barely taste the humor. One of these days, given any justice at all, Steve's going to hit it big.

Lots of good stuff in these pages, but Richard Brandt's dachshund story rings the bell. (Well, so did the line, in Richard Condon's *Manchurian Candidate*, "Raymond, you always were as stubborn as a dachshund.") From 1955 to '68, our own Nobby and Lisa racked up their share of stories. Case in point: I'd be at the typer; Nobby would come invite me to play, so we'd do that. But he wasn't ready to quit when I was; he'd come back, cavorting in invitation until he saw it was futile and gave up.

One day he moved instead to the front door, body-signaling "I need to go out." Okay; I rose to comply — but here he came, tail a-wag and *bounce-bounce-bounce*. Who could resist? He got played with, and the gimmick became a habit.

Eventually he tried it once too soon again and I sat pat. He began to turn away, but moments later he was back to the door and making retching noises: "I'm gonna barf!" In a hurry I got up and headed that way. *Bounce-a-bounce-a-bounce*. "Let's play!" The little guy could not only lie; he could improve on his story.

On the other hand, Elinor considers these maneuvers as being not so much lies as practical jokes. She could be right; he always accompanied the bounce and tailwag with a big doggie grin.

All best,

Buz

(coops!) F.M. Busby

In my limited experience, dogs and preschoolers are all too aware of humor's ability to deflect well-deserved discipline. "I'll do something I know is naughty, but if I can get the grown-ups to laugh, I'll probably get away with it." Of course, one of the reasons for having a dog is to get dragged away from the keyboard from time to time, and to be kept away from it long enough for the break to do some good. — gfs

Linda Bushyager

24 Leopard Rd.
Paoli, PA 19301

Loved the mimeo work (and color illos too — wow!). Nice to feel the fibertone between my fingers ... the smell of the mimeo ink ... the roar of the fans.

Steve Stiles' article was fascinating. Those sample panels were great. Steve — you've really captured the Al Capp style, yet somehow I can still see Stiles there too. I think you were wrong about the Hochberg jokes not being funny — maybe they didn't strike you, but I thought a lot was funny, and true to what I remember of the Capp style (though it has been years of course since I was a devoted reader).

Jeff and Sean Alan Wallace's articles were quite interesting, but the one that really grabbed me was the PEZquest. I have no idea why, since I don't collect PEZ, and try not to collect things. But I think I, like most people, have felt that collecting bug hit, or that obsession thing where we keep looking and looking for something, so it struck a definite nerve. Maybe that is why I try not to collect things — I don't want to become an addict.

Kathy Routliffe's saga was truly scary and sad. The fact that she can write about it shows how much better she is, which is great.

Linda@netaxs.com

P.S. I'm still waiting for someone to come over and take away several Gestetners, mimeo cabinet, ink, stencils, electronic stencil maker, boxes of paper. As I've said, the first person to get here takes it. I just hope someone does before Ron and I move and I have to think about depositing nonworking mimeos on the street! Don't know when that might be — Ron's job situation is still somewhat shaky. With luck it will be in 3–4 years, but possibility still exists for layoff in 1998 or thereafter.

Well, Jeff bought the truck last year, which was the first step in getting your equipment from Pennsylvania to Minnesota. And he had the new engine put in it, and we took our first road trip with it when we went to the Winnipeg Folk Festival/Baggiecon 10 in mid-July. I hope we're the first to get there, but included your postscript anyway. It seemed the fannish thing to do. Those are the mimeographs that once belonged to the Republican National Party, right? — gfs



David L. Russell

196 Russell St.
Dennington, Victoria
AUSTRALIA 3280

Dear PEZ addict,

After reading of all the difficulties and milage travelled by Mike Scott it was somewhat of an anti-climax for me to get the "hot" stencils in the refill packs at the first two places I tried — the local Target store and Safeway Supermarket. The sixth stencil previously only spotted in Switzerland can apparently now also be found here in Australia. Which one was it?

I did notice that the newer refill packs have stickers instead of stencils in them. It's probably cheaper for the PEZ company to make the stickers.

They have two series: Star Wars and the more recent Hanna Barbera cartoon characters. Do please let me know if these are difficult for you or Karen Cooper to get in the United States.

I wasn't sure whether it would be okay to remove the stencils from the plastic/cardboard covering. I've attended a few convention panels on collecting stuff and it was always stressed that the item was worth more if it was left in its original packaging. Have I don the right thing or should I remove any future stickers/stencils from their packaging and send them sans candy?

I don't know about you, but I think the name Body Parts is a bit gruesome. It sounds like something Hannibal Lector would collect.

So Jeff's a drummer? Start learning sign language now so you'll still be able to communicate with him when the Vitamin C Jeff takes for his eardrums no longer works.

In your reply to Sandra Bond's letter you mention other publishing options for *Idea*. In case you were thinking of making the focus more Hollywood than fannish, I've sent some issues of an Australian Magazine, *New Idea*. Don't send your fanzine down this path, please. Better big and infrequent than on-line.

Reading further I heave a sigh of relief. A hundred cases of Twiltone means we computer Luddites can look forward to a few more decades of Geri and Jeff's "construction paper" (™ Sean Wallace) fanzines.

Hope you like the T-shirts. I couldn't find any "Suck the Duck" ones so "Duck off" it is. I hope at least one fits you.

Warmest regards,

David L. Russell

"Warmest regards," indeed! As your letter indicates, it arrived with the most amazing bunch of stuff. The padded envelope had a rocky flight to America. Something about the 17 packs of PEZ refills, magazines, T-shirts, Chupa Chups, trading cards, picture postcards and Australian stamps, and Australia's idea of candy must have weighted it down beyond the capacity of that heavily decorated and stamped envelope.

You win the prize for "most over the top LoC contents." The inflatable stegosaurus Pat Virzi sent years ago is still near to my heart, but you managed to croggle my senses. Chocolate-coated pop rocks? *Musk* Life Savers? (The vote it 3 to 1: "urinal cakes." Not that any of the votes admits to ever having tasted a urinal cake.) I'm saving the rest of the Life Savers for the bemusement of fans at Loscon. I'm counting on them to draw attention away from the weirdness of the champagne Fizzies.

Musk Life Savers? Does anybody ever buy a second pack? Well, other than to ship to unsuspecting fans in other countries?

The Dark Pink Alligator was the late arrival on Australian shores. It's also the one pack that appears to have disappeared from your astonishing care package. PEZ thieves? Probably not, else they'd have snatched the whole thing. I suspect it slipped through a hole that developed in the flap.

As you noted, there are several different sets of stickers — there are eight different stickers in each of the

following series: Star Wars, Flintstones, Looney Tunes, Tom & Jerry, and six in the Muppets series. Also note that the Tom & Jerry come in two versions, one with the jagged white border, the other with a straight black border. Will collectors stop at nothing?

I guess not, because there are also tattoos. None of these can surely match the Bullwinkle and Mr. Ugly tats PEZhead pals Mary Thronson and Brian Gochal have on their calves, but PEZ has released a Monkey, Snake, Bulldog, Vulture, Alligator, and Hippo.

You Did Right to keep the stencils on the cards, even though it increased postage fees by several thousand percent. When it comes to actual dispensers, it's usually safe to send one or two off the card, since Karen Cooper and I use them for display. But all others should be carded. Watch for over-cartooned Garfields in costumes (not Body Parts), and the new Pink Panther series! The bottom line on all this stuff is that we can buy *none* of what is stocked at your Target store in our Target store. International packaging is different, and often the characters are, too.

I gave Karen a full set of the stencil packs, and sent the T-shirts on to Bob Berlien. It seemed only fair to spread your generosity far and wide. Now, what back issues of *Idea* are you lacking? And what weird American stuff do you crave?

As far as my future publishing plans, we came all too close to having those 100 cases of Fibertone end up sogged this summer. Fred and Susan Levy Haskell's basement flooded to 40" in the July 1st thunderstorms. And it hasn't stopped raining since. The paper is up on pallets, but that only covers the first inch or two. Unlike several other Minneapolis fans, the water in our basement hasn't passed the quarter-inch mark. Yet.— gfs

Walter Willis

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Donaghadee, N. Ireland BT21 0QD
UNITED KINGDOM

The piece that impressed me most was Kathy's. It struck me as not only well written but saying things well worth saying about mental illness. I still have some way to go along that same way, but I feel a remote sort of fellow feeling for some of her experiences. I have developed, for example, a habit of developing duties for myself arising from early morning thoughts that seem to me quite sensible when I first waken. They usually take the form of places I have to attend, and my giving up on driving has been a help in convincing me that I don't really have to go anywhere. They are quite convincing while they last though.

Steve's "Passing Through Dogpatch" was a fabulous piece. The actual strips show exactly what he means, and that the fault doesn't lie with Steve's drawings, which are to my mind identical with the originals. I specially admired his Daisy Mae.

Jeff's piece was a revelation. I had no idea of the richness of his cultural background. I was particularly

taken by his description of the technical terms used in drumming. It makes me almost wish I was writing novels so I could incorporate this piece of esoteric expertise.

Sean Alan Wallace's account of his visit to Ukrainian fandom was brilliant, so well written one really feels what it must have been like. I can't help thinking how Graeme Cameron feels about learning how a copy of his *Space Cadet Gazette* figured in this cultural interchange.

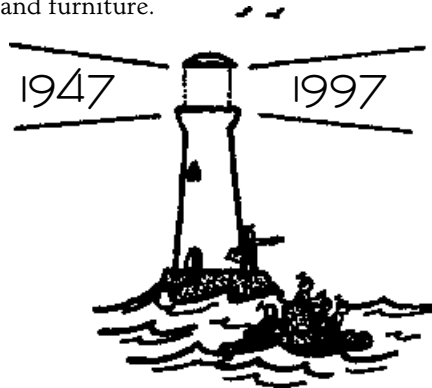
"PEZQuest" was another fine example of editorial ability. How did you come to realise that this pointless quest would be so interesting to the average fan? We must all be instinctive completists.

I thought James White's letter was the best.

Love,

Walt

P.S. You were asking about our new home. It's only about 100 yards from 32 Warren Road, along the back lane. It's practically right on the golf course. (We found a bucket of balls collected by the previous owner. He took them with him.) It's a timber framed house, about 20 years old, and in good shape except that the wall-paper is coming off. At the moment it's far too full of books and furniture.



Let's continue with the recent activities of Irish Fandom. On 12May (well, that was recent when I typed this), James White splurged on a door-to-door taxi to visit Walter and Madeleine in their new bungalow. They'd invited him some time back, but walking in the cold is bothersome and the amount of walking involved in going by train and bus has become more difficult for James. Hence, the taxi. James stayed overnight, heading home after lunch Tuesday.

Walter and James did me the honor of writing a joint letter on Walter's computer. Here are some excerpts for your enjoyment:

"It's Monday afternoon now and James has arrived. His first impression of the bungalow is that it's bigger than he expected.

"(James) It's still Monday and I'm still here and wrestling with a non Apple type computer with a mind of its own. I arrived at eleven thirty rather than noon because, during the whole journey down — some 80-plus miles — we only hit one red light. The taxi driver said that he had never had such a run of green lights in

all his years at the wheel, but I told him that Ghod moves in mysterious ways where fans visiting Oblique House Mark III are concerned.

"I hate to be giving people orders on someone else's computer but, re your letter of 30 April, you are not to do that 20,000-word article in big print for me. If I don't read it to completion myself, Peggy will help me out, so just save your paper and postage. I'm glad that you are already working on Idea 11 (where are the italics on this thing, Walter? Control 'i'. Got it — *Idea 11. Is there any chance of you going from irregular to frequent?* Walter, now how do I stop writing italics? Control 'N'. Got it. My learning curve is flattening out, a little. But my brain works. Back to Walter.

"James has settled in nicely, computer and all. It's just like it used to be at Oblique House Marks 1 and 2 {James: But correcting the typos is a lot easier} except that he remembers to speak clearly and slowly to me so that I understand him easily. We've put him up in one of our three spare bedrooms, having already rejected one of them because the bed sagged too much, {James: But *all* beds sag too much, I'm *heavy*.} and found that the bookcase covered the mains outlet for the electric blanket and shaver. {James: There goes my chance to grow a fast beard.} The result was I was still putting books back at 11.30 when James arrived. I should explain that there are bookcases in every room of this house, plus three in the garage. {James: If I don't behave myself this evening, or if I take too much red heart medicine, at least there will be plenty to read.}

"Walt here again. It's really nice to have James here again. I hadn't realised what was missing from the new house."

And so they kept me up-to-date throughout the visit, filling three and a half pages and closing just before James took his taxi home. Walter mentioned that he's given up the idea of producing a 50th anniversary issue of *Hyphen*, and followed through by disposing of his electric duplicator during the move. He doesn't sound in the least bit upset with this. One of his reasons was that he was dissatisfied with the reproduction he got on *Hyphen* 37 compared to other stencil-duplicated fanzines like *Attitude*. "It has admittedly more recently occurred to me that the inadequacies in *Hyphen*'s reproduction were more likely due to the inadequacies of the Amstrad's dot matrix printer. But it's too late now for second thoughts. Heigh ho."

I was pleased to hear more about Walter and Madeleine's new home, especially the bookcases. When I visited in 1995, Walter had filled the shelves in Carol's room with books they were parting with. He told me to help myself, so I tucked a few into my bags, including 3 or 4 volumes of "The Thinking Man's Library." I didn't bring any of the books in foreign languages, but there were several to choose from. I'm so glad to hear they're still surrounded by books. And why did it surprise me to learn their "bungalow" is a 4-bedroom model? Given the scale of both Oblique House and Strathclyde, how could it have been anything else?

Happy 50th Anniversary, Irish Fandom! — gfs

Robert Lichtman

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Glen Ellen, CA 95442

What a great idea to have an all-Stiles art issue! With so many spots to fill, Steve did his best to provide a wide range of his work. I was particularly pleased to see some of his "abstract" art included, but in a strange and yet entirely appropriate way the best single piece in the entire issue is the heading he did for his own article. Besides being yet another variant on the ongoing series of Steve Stiles self-portraits, it conveys the pure joy Steve felt at the possibility of doing *Li'l Abner*. As it happens, I was a long-time reader of the strip, beginning when I learned how to read (and it was read to me before that) and continuing non-stop either until Capp stopped doing it or I moved to Tennessee and didn't see newspapers for years — whichever came first. It was part of the American experience in those days. Later, I would get put off when the strip would turn into "bad Capp" but never enough to quit. So when I first heard from Steve that he had this chance to draw a revived *Li'l Abner*, I was really jazzed. And was also disappointed when he told me the deal fell through. He's right that the scripting of these revival strips is lame, but his drawing was good — good to the point where I can honestly say that if I didn't know this was Steve's work, I'd think it was Capp's.

Great title for the latest installment of Jeff's ongoing article, and as usual an enjoyable read. "Ted White took me over to Rupert Murdoch's house. Ted played sax, Rupert keyboards..." Rupert Murdoch!? As for the ending, "None of this, not even fandom, is just a ... 'hobby'": amen to that!

Sean Alan Wallace's and Mike Scott's articles were interesting to read as Tales of Other Fandoms, but other than noting this similarity I've no particular comment. Well, other than that I *did* enjoy Karen Cooper's interjection at the very end of Mike's piece — but I wonder if I would've thought much of it if you hadn't more fully conveyed your own PEZ addiction to me?

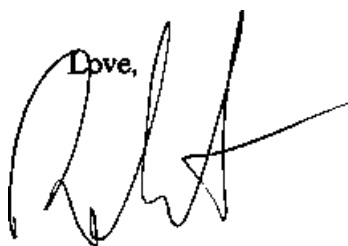
Kathy Routliffe's article certainly describes familiar territory, and it was courageous of her to share this chapter of her life with us, but reading it again tonight for this LoC I still find that something in the style of it precludes my complete enjoyment and comprehension — though less this time than on first reading. If I had to quantify this, I'd say that it's the sort of writing that in part lends itself more to fantasy trilogies than to the serious subjects Kathy touches upon. There's something too florid about it, in places. All that aside, though, it's a gripping read — and the looming and forboding that Steve's heading evokes work well with the text. A truly but delightfully weird illo.

In Irwin Hirsh's letter, he says "that visiting one's old stomping grounds would be a strong motivation to be thinking about a reunion." Well, not in my case and probably a lot of others. The town where I went to high

school is now in the part of Greater Los Angeles referred to as South Central, and the class reunions are held off in white bread territory — usually coastal Orange County. For the first 25 years or so after leaving high school, I wanted nothing more to do with it and all the people associated with it, except for some who'd become faans under my influence. After that I went through a period where I kind of wondered about it but didn't do anything about that. The Calvin Demmon "turned me in," providing my current address to the alumni association prior to the 30th (I think) reunion. I had a brief correspondence with a woman who was kind enough to send me a good photocopy of the senior class pictures section of the yearbook — which I'd tossed long ago. I went so far as to compose a little blurb about myself for publication in the "memory book" that was being published for the reunion. But never in all of these phases did I come close to wanting to go to one, even if it was held in the old "multi-purpose" room.

Regarding your comment about my referring to annual garden preparation as "a breeze" — you said, "It's descriptions like yours that make me understand why people think gardening is Too Much Work" — there are a couple of things to mention. First, I neglected to say that for the past 3 – 4 years one or another of my strapping sons has volunteered to do the initial breaking of the soil. Gabe has performed this service the last two years, even though he has to come up from Santa Cruz to do it. (But then I made him a great dinner.) Also, weeding is something I do only in preparation for the garden, and, after it's in the ground, until the plants are tall enough that the weeds aren't competing for sunlight. Weeds is, of course, a misnomer, because the alternate ground cover in the garden area is always the same: vetch, wild oats, dandelions, and crabgrass. And recurrent brambly things in certain corners. Overall, the labor is more than worth it for the months of delicious vine-ripened tomatoes and all those hot peppers. Yes, and the cucumbers while they last, but they're always first to go. The physical labor ain't half bad for me, either.

And that seems to be it, except that I see halfway down the WAHF the source for me information on Steve Sneyd's *Star-Spangled Shadows*, a copy of which I sent away for and received, and have found quite interesting. There was a NSFA catalog with it, and I ended up ordering a couple of items from it: *The Fantastic Muse* by Arthur C. Clarke and *Flights from the Iron Moon* by Sneyd. So thanks for turning me on to this.

Love,


We knew naming the wrong Rupert wouldn't get by everybody, but we should have *known* it wouldn't slide by you! Ted White confirms it was Rupert Chappell(e):

"Rupert was once a member of the Maryland Medieval Militia, and was/is a Yippie, who appeared (usually in his trademark chain mail) regularly at the Yippie-sponsored Smoke Ins, until relatively recently he was busted at one (for possession) and jailed."

"I met Rupert through WGTB FM, the radio station where I deejayed. Rupert came in and did live, on-air concerts."

"He was known as 'a local synthesizer wizard,' who played a variety of keyboards like a one-man Tangerine Dream, and who introduced to me the musical value of those cheap little Casio keyboards. My first performance (on sax) before a paying audience (at the Key Theatre in Georgetown, on a New Year's Eve) was in tandem with Rupert."

"I liked him a lot — as a friend and as a musician — and I'm sorry we drifted out of contact in the late '80s."

"(Thinking about it, I'm pretty sure it's 'Chappelle.')"

— Ted

Part of breezy gardening is first bearing and raising several strapping sons? I stand by my original point. But you're absolutely right about the physical labor; gardening is among the best exercises as it works most every muscle group. Jeff's done wonders for the Toad Hall gardens and I continue having fun with the "Darwinian gardening" approach to the whole thing. I plant whatever strikes my fancy and after that it's survival of the fittest. We've got Lily of the valley battling it out with creeping Charlie (which we call creeping Margaret in the memory of the woman who introduced it to our neighborhood). Jack in the pulpit once looked on in disapproval, but he fell by the wayside when the neighbor's garage that shaded him was demolished along with the rest of the house. A thriving stand of big bluestem prairie grass now fills Jack's spot.

The Ferns and two species of Ivy have joined in the fray, and Daisy fleabane is sprouting up throughout the battlefield. Oh, yes, and the raspberries — how could I have forgotten the raspberries? I transplanted a few canes from my dad's garden in Battle Creek about five years back. We've finally hit the point where we have more berries than we eat, so our neighbors pick some and give us jam. We've got raspberries coming up in the miniature Rose bed, circling the edges of the chaos I described above, and shading George, the concrete frog. So far, we've managed to kill off just one small portion of the canes, first by planting them in a bad spot and then by not watering them after they were moved.

Dame's rockets are in bloom right now, so there are fluffs of purple scattered from the back door to the back fence. I do lend a helping hand for special occasions. Yellow Violets invaded the front yard, and I transplanted several of them to the base of *The Sun, the Moon, and the Stars* in the back garden in the hopes they'll thrive there, too. Violets in the more usual shade of purple and

white are doing well in the rest of the backyard, but haven't invaded the sculpture garden yet, so I think the yellows have a fighting chance. Next to come: purple and white speckled ones from Susan. Violet has a friend in our yard. But we also cater to renegade Hollyhocks and marvel at the lushness of the greenery on the purple coneflowers.

We don't just have pretty things to look at. Jeff and I go for the sweet peppers rather than the hot ones. The broccoli plants are doing well; fresh, steamed broccoli in heavenly. The beans are doing well, except for the hill Willow ate. We've got dozens more vegetables and flowers growing madly, but you get the idea. Looking around the yard is always a source of wonderment and surprise. Where *did* that cultivated spiderwort come from? Neither of us remembers putting it in, but the perennial is now some three feet wide and expanding its turf every year. Which are the prairie grasses we want to encourage and which are the everyday variety; which is welcome only in the lawn itself, where we wish it was able to conquer the dandelions, and not in the daylilies?

So that's *my* kind of gardening. It's a breeze, and it doesn't even require decades of childrearing first! — gfs

Dave Langford

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UNITED KINGDOM

Oh wow, I have received *Idea* — I have seen the future and it works! It looks and feels splendid as ever. "Dear Ms Sullivan: Our lawyers have been instructed in respect of the fact that your product simulates the look and feel of our established software Splendid As Ever® ..."

I was chuffed by the trouble you took to lay out and credit even the humble little interlino which I passed on; modestly smug at being able to identify "The Yellow Wallpaper" as the famous story of madness by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935)*; and rather touched by the thought that my strayed copy of the Scottish Convention *Idea* might have gone to cheer Ethel Lindsay.

ansible@cix.co.uk (Dave Langford)

* Information surely already communicated to you by a million others including George Flynn and Fred Lerner — the latter turned up at a BSFA meeting in London last week.

James White

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Co. Londonderry BT55 7ND
Northern Ireland
UNITED KINGDOM

Your time-traveling editorial, including the crafty continuations between the letters of comment, was a nice balance of fun and feeling. You were a bit pushy, for a Minneapolis nice person, where Steve Stiles was concerned. He well deserves to have an issue's artwork entirely to himself, but do you deserve him?

It was two years ago that our Peter died so we know exactly how you were feeling while helping Jack Targonski settle his late father's estate. The grief doesn't go away, and even though nice things happen that overlay it for a time, it surfaces again suddenly at the oddest times, and it is awful. But your extra measure of sunshine and joy was provided by the trip to see us in Portstewart — I thought you had *two* Irish Sunrises, but I won't tell anybody — that was sandwiched between the UK cons and visits and the US events. I remember how well you partied at Intersection and all I can say, without risking legal proceedings, is that you are one of those strange, mad, long-running people who can stay up longer than me. One of the nicest things I remember about the L.A.con III fan lounge book launch party was how you went suddenly into maternal mode, declaimed in stentorian tones that I was diabetic and needed to eat and proceeded to refuel me on lasagne, salad, and milk while the waiting queue of book signees laughed and say down on the floor and corridor outside and talked about rain on Venus or something until I'd finished.

"Passing Through Dogpatch" just illustrates the fact that *Idea* 10's Artist Guest of Honour writes as he draws, like very well. I really felt for the hassle he had.

Jeff's further adventures in the Wimpy Zone I liked very much, and don't know why because I have absolutely no interest in rock or whatever bands, but he made it interesting anyway. And the title, "If It's Too Loud, You're Too Old" isn't quite true. If you're too old you hear it better when it's too loud. Is there anything he isn't good at? "Party On, Dudes!" was such a sudden switch of subject and place that I ought to have heard my mental gears clashing, but Sean Allan Wallace did a nice piece that made me and, I'm sure, a whole lot of other people realise that fandom flourishes even in a place that not too long ago housed the major threat to world peace and civilisation as we know it.



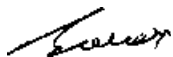
"I don't know what a kangaroo tastes like, but I'm willing to try the condom."

David Cummer
3/8/97

Mike Scott's "PEZquest" was completely incredible but great fun. What is it with Karen and you that you can send otherwise sane young fans scouring the motorways of Britain for things I've never heard of until now? You know, you may have seriously damaged his fine mind. Are your fine minds seriously damaged already?

Speaking of fine minds, Kathy Routliffe has a particularly sensitive and entirely honest one that went out of true and was lost for a long time until, fortunately, it found its way home again. If her writing style and language hadn't been so clear and simple and direct, if it had used more psychological polysyllables, "My Trip to Jupiter" could have been published as a detailed and scholarly case history in one of the professional journals of psychiatry. A piece like this doesn't belong in a fanzine, it's far too good. I don't know what else to say about it except that I think it's the best thing in the issue.

All the Best,



As you will have read in this issue, my experience with Jack in Bethlehem didn't entail direct grief on my part, but it was nonetheless overwhelmingly intense. You're absolutely right about grief resurfacing at unexpected times, though. Back in 1989 at the Minneapolis Corflu, a chance comment from Teresa Nielsen Hayden triggered a fresh wave of grief over my brother's death. As Elise Matthesen observed at the time, "the trouble with grief is that when it knocks, you're always home."

Two Irish Sunrises? James, that's simply the story you so convincingly told the dietician you met at the German convention when she was shocked by the picture of you carrying two of the ice cream monstrosities! I have the purple frou-frous from the one I ate *and the one you ate* decorating the brim of my Tilley hat; I don't remember Walter's concoction having a similar souvenir.

Much as I wanted Kathy's article for *Idea*, thrilled as I am to have published it, I did encourage her to consider submitting it professionally after first reading the manuscript. It deserves a wider audience. But I don't think *anything* can be written that's "far too good" to be published in a fanzine. — gfs

We Also Heard From...

Sean Wallace, who was the first to point out that "The Yellow Wallpaper" was by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "as noted in THE EVOLVING CANON (Contemporary Literature textbook) and she died around the early 1930s (of suicide I believe)." ♦ Mike Scott ♦ William Breiding ♦ Tom Becker: "I got *Idea* 10 last night and stayed up late reading the whole thing. Fabulously stunning. It's wonderful, in the sense of wonder sense. I always thought in SF literature provided the sense of wonder and fandom the community. Maybe I had it the wrong way around."

♦ William Breiding ♦ Neil Rest ♦ Lindsay Crawford ♦ Gary Farber ♦ Avedon Carol ♦ Arthur Hlavaty ♦ Bruce Pelz ♦ Kate Schaefer: "Idea! I must love this zine named Idea! But I don't remember anything else about how the song goes. Come hear Uncle John's Band..." ♦ Terry Garey ♦ Karen Schaffer ♦ Berni Phillips ♦ Joe Siclari ♦ Murray Moore and Dale Speirs (Canadian PEZ trades for back issues).

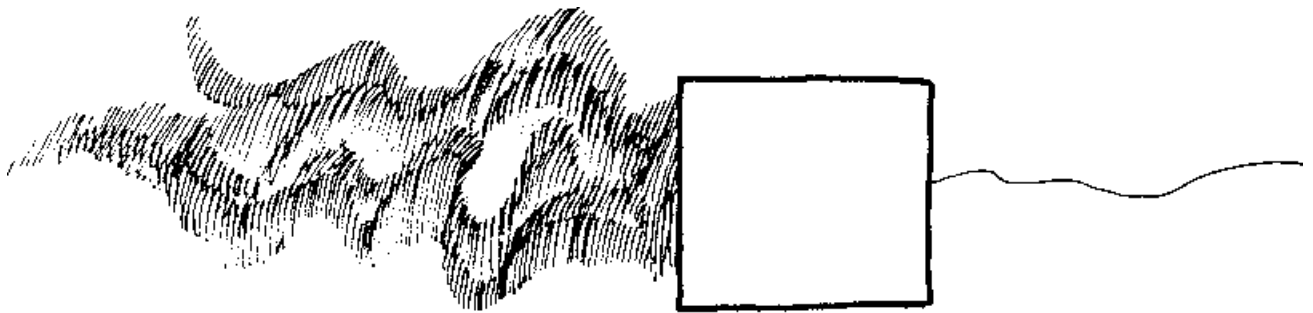
Jerry Kaufman: "...full of wonderful Stiles art (like the header for Kathy Routliffe's memoir, and the cartoon that VERY CLEARLY shows the difference between dogs and cats). Kathy's piece was the prize of the issue (hope you don't mind if I remember Chris Atkinson's 'Life Among the Loonies' at this point). I also found Steve's piece about L'il Abner and Jeff on his band experiences enjoyable and even valuable pieces.

"(I was amused to find the FTL quote about the cost of fanzine pubbing in the front of the issue, because I'd only finished reading 'Syllabus for a Fanzine' an hour or two prior to reading *Idea*. I still haven't read all the zines that arrived just before Corflu, much less the ones I picked up there.)"

Sandra Bond ♦ Felix Strates ♦ Tommy Ferguson ♦ Martha Beck ♦ Steve Sneyd: "Stunning Kathy Routliffe article outnumbers all rest of content moodwise — still feel cold, tho is a hot day — essence of getting sucked into a Dickian worldview where everything that isn't a cardboard false front is out to get you. Impudent to comment on, except as indicated to note the horribly, compulsively, catching effect it has, tribute to the power of the writing." ♦ Steve Stiles ♦ Teddy Harvia ♦ Brad Foster: "*Idea* 10 was wonderful, though it could have used a bit more work from Steve Stiles. Keep an eye on that kid, he shows promise!" ♦ and Guy Lillian III: "My admiration for Kathy Routliffe's first-person account of mental illness, 'My Trip to Jupiter,' is limitless. This woman is a compelling and brave writer. I note from your lettercol that she's written for you before. I hope she does so again. And in case there is any doubt in her mind that she is not alone, I'd just mention that I type this letter with fingers calloused and deformed by decades of nervous, angry gnawing."

*Meritorious Fan Awards to Dave Rike, Erik Biever, and Linda Bushyager
for rescuing the print run when those last six tubes that I thought were filled with
Gestetner Congressional Blue ink turned out instead to be brown and red!*

In Memory of William Rotsler



CHANGE

Rotsler's

The End

