



idea
NUMBER 12





TAFF-ON-A-STICK
1998 & 2000

Cover:
 Top: Eileen Lufkin, Laura Krentz, Maureen Kincaid Speller
 Left: Sue Mason, Patrick Nielsen Hayden, Lydia Nickerson
 Bottom Front: Roscoe Bendtsen, Beth Friedman, Rachel & Judy Rosenberg, Elise Matthesen;
 Standing: Eileen, DavE Romm, Maureen, Elizabeth Bendtsen, Felicia Herman

Top left: PNH, David Schroth, Lydy
 Right front: Roscoe, Back: Dean Gahlon, Elizabeth, Laura, Maureen, Beth, Joyce Scrivner, Eileen
 Center front: David Harsh, Laura, Doug Wickstrom, Beth, PNH; Back: Eileen, Karen Johnson, Mark Richards, David Dyer-Bennet, David S., Sue, Lydy, Dean
 Bottom left front: David S., Laurel Krahn, Sue, David H.; Standing: PNH, Mark, Lydy, Eileen, Laura, Dean, Doug
 Bottom right: Maureen, Michael Pins

IDEA 12

Interlino Express

I'm out of cigarettes, I'm out of whisky, and I'm out of beer. I might as well go change my shoes. **The hotel is not yet scheduled to become a parking ramp.**

PEZ is the first syllable of Zeppelin spelled backwards.

Wood lice have no tusks.

...and what soft Beast, its yellow fingers wide, slouches toward Easterland to '73...

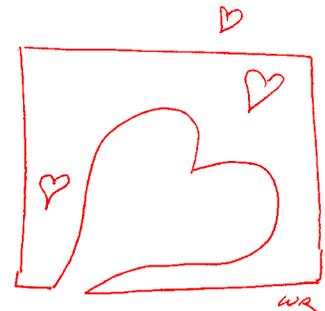
Sexual freedom through all-edible, certified organic edible underwear. Sorry, I've got to stay home and change quote marks. ...**once they found they were not to be robbed or starved they complained bitterly about the quality of the tea...** Of course. And on Sunday night, we garnished the punchbowl with plastic duckies.

Kale Liberation Front, Dave Langford, Teresa Nielsen Hayden, Patrick O'Brian, Mitch Pockrandt, Martin Schafer, Geri Sullivan, Jack Targonski, and Ben Yalow.

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Andrew Plotkin	Bacover
♦♦ Jae Leslie Adams, title artist	

Additional art credits:

Jae Leslie Adams: 1
 ATom: 6, 64 (originally in *Pulp*), 74 (originally in *Duplicating Without Tears*)
 Sue Mason: 14, 20
 William Rotsler: 1, 5, 7-9, 11-12, 17-18, 21, 48, 50, 54-57, 60-62, 66, 68-72, 75
 Davey Snyder: 29 (photographer)
 James White: 13 (photographer)



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Idea

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 Geri Sullivan, Editor

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Kidney-on-a-stick

It's a pickle. A deep-fried pickle. Maureen Kincaid Speller is chomping into it, right there on the cover of *Idea*. This is what you've waited three years for. This and more.

On the "more" front, I ought to be more precise: it's a deep-fried pickle *slice*. I have no idea what happens when you try to deep fry a whole pickle, but I expect that someone will be selling something of the sort at the Minnesota State Fair most any year now. It will come on a stick, of course. Most everything does.

"I always thought only the nerds in *movies* wore hats like that, but I suppose there had to be a reason they do...."—Maureen Kincaid Speller, 9/6/98

—"San Francisco was a little different; it had interesting architecture. Seattle wasn't much different than home. I was starting to think America wasn't all that alien after all. But the Food Building here at the Minnesota State Fair? *It's alien*. There's nothing like it in the UK. I can't imagine there ever would be."—Sue Mason, 8/23/00

TAFF-on-a-stick is just one (well, two) of the many notable fannish events that have occurred since the previous issue of *Idea*. Minneapolis fans have escorted the last two UK TAFF delegates to the Minnesota State Fair, and this year we had so much fun doing so that we turned around and took the fair with us to the Worldcon. Sue Mason, have you forgiven us yet? Or are you still quivering, seeking escape from the state fair mania that haunted your every move long after you left our fair state?

The fannish reaction to our Minneapolis in '73-on-a-stick party at Chicon 2000 suggests our state fair is pretty typical. For the larger variants of the genre, anyway. I quickly lost count of the people talking about how the party reminded them of everything they loved about *their* fairs, and how they now wanted to go back home and see the real thing again.

Madison fans immediately recognized the butter sculpting contest; their fair even does ours one better in that. Minnesotans only sculpt the dairy princess and her court. ("Princess Kay of the Milky Way." Yes, really.) A sole sculptor does all the work, sitting in a refrigerated, rotating display case in the dairy building every day of the fair, working away until all of the butter busts are complete down to the last swirl of the princess' hair. In Madison, if I remember the story correctly, the butter sculpting is open to contestants, and they carve whatever they like. That's how we did it at the Chicon party. By the end of the night, our "Food Building" table sported butter skylines of the city, a Godzilla butter dildo carved by Brad Foster, complete with pleasure ridges, and other oddities formed from the 20 quarter-pound sticks we started with. Karen Schafer carved three tiny butterheads, each one started from tiny cube. They were just ensmaller counterparts of those in Minnesota,



Available for the usual from:

Geri Sullivan
Toad Hall
3444 Blaisdell Ave. S.
Minneapolis MN
55408-4315 USA

612/825-3558
612/825-0136 (FAX)

Send email to: [Idea](mailto:idea@toad-hall.com)
<idea@toad-hall.com>

If I don't have your
signature on file and you're
locking by email, please
send a pocsarcd or TIFF.

Contributors:

Jae Leslie Adams, 621 Spruce Street, Madison WI 53715
The Beck, 3557 26th Ave. S., Minneapolis MN 55406
John M. Ford, P.O. Box 2424, Loop Station, Minneapolis MN 55402
Rob Hansen, 144 Plashet Grove, East Ham, London E6 1AB UNITED KINGDOM
Martin Hoare, 45 Tilehurst Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 7TT UNITED KINGDOM
Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5AU UNITED KINGDOM
Sue Mason, 3 York Street, Altrincham, Cheshire WA15 9QH UNITED KINGDOM
Elise Matthesen, 3641 Bloomington Ave. S., Minneapolis MN 55407
Ulrika O'Brien, 123 Melody Lane, Apt. C, Costa Mesa CA 94627
Andrew Plotkin, Red Hat, Inc., 2600 Meridian Parkway, Durham NC 27713
Jeff Schalles, 3444 Blaisdell Ave. S., Minneapolis MN 55408-4315
Craig Smith, 14155 91st Ct., Bothell WA 98011
Davey Snyder, 2 Newcastle Road, Brighton MA 02135
Jack Targonski, 4741 N. Malden, Chicago IL 60640
Glenn Tenhoff, 3033 Georgia Ave. S., St. Louis Park MN 55426

complete with hair swirls. We didn't have a refrigerated workroom, so Terry Garey used the fan she'd been given at the Nippon in '07 bid party to keep Karen and the butter from overheating. Monday night, Ctein carved a remarkably realistic, artistic dildo, complete with gentle curve and balls at its base. Looked like something you'd see at the Blowfish web site, or at Good Vibrations. By the end of the convention, I was punchy, but not so much so as to succumb to the obvious temptation. I appealed to Sue, who even had fresh lipstick on. I forget who grabbed their cameras, but I'm sure we'll see the evidence eventually. Especially if any of the photographers were from the *Plotka* cabal.

Five weeks before the Worldcon, I didn't even know if I was going to the convention, let alone hosting a party suite there for the duration. I'd just enjoyed two weeks in the Hawaiian islands, the first at this year's Westercon (Conolulu) and the second week on Maui and then the Big Island. Volcanoes. Wow. Must go back and take more pictures. Lava as sculpture. Pahoehoe—glistening and organic. Wow. Any one of several of my shots could be a future *Idea* cover, though I'd have to spring for high-gloss polyester film “paper” to get the right effect. Or start publishing a web zine; that would be the economical approach. But I've shown no signs of doing that yet and, given how long it takes me to do things I want to be doing right NOW, I don't expect to become a web publisher anytime soon.

Idea is moving into the future—or at least a more recent future past—in another respect starting with this issue. Three years ago, Ben Yalow stood in the Toad Hall Champion Mimeo Center and Frog Preserve, keeping me company and smoffing about Minicon while I printed the page after page of *Idea* 11 the day before the collation party at Not-A-ReinCONation. I'd already been cranking the mimeos for more than a week of my non-existent Copious Free Time, and had an all-nighter still ahead if the collators were to have anything to do the next day.

“If you had a Mr. Gestetner, you'd be done by now,” he said. “You would have been done days ago.” Mr. Gestetner is the name of NESFA's mimeo-in-a-box (also known as a copyprinter). There's a roll of stencil material and it uses ink rather than toner, but you'd never know that by looking at it. You'd think it was just another photocopier. Ben explained, at length and in that persistent, insistent way he has, that a Mr. Gestetner was the only sensible approach to printing *Idea*. It was fast, easy, *and* cheap, he promised. Not the usual reality that says, “pick any two.” But I'd just stocked up on tubes of ink for the Gestetners we already had in our basement, the old ones, and knew I wouldn't have the disposable income to invest in the newer technology any time soon. No matter how wonderful I knew it had proven to be at Intersection and other conventions. No, sir. Beside, I like cranking mimeos. Most of the time, anyway. When the equipment is working, and especially when Don Fitch is here to take care of the slip-sheeting.

Years passed. *Idea* didn't come out. Good intentions don't produce layouts, or crank mimeographs, and I was spending more time and energy than I anticipated working on Minicon. Quite a bit more time and energy. That's still...um...something of an understatement.

When a group of us committed to scaling the convention back before it ate us and the club alive, as we believed it was clearly in the process of doing, I enthusiastically signed on to help. Specifically, to run Publications. If Minicon was going to change, communications were going to be vital, and I thought I had the skills and sensibilities the pubs job would need. Then Stuff Happened and I spent most of two years doing other jobs for the convention, first as Minicon's facilitator, and then as its chair. Wow. That was intense. More Stuff Happened. Lots More Stuff. And we talked about it all. Endlessly, or so it seemed. Except when we didn't. Those times were hard, too.

The bottom line from my perspective—and this is me wearing my Geri Hat and only my Geri Hat—is a win. A qualified win, for sure; I could fill a fanzine talking about the things I wish had played out differently, that I wish I'd done differently, or that we'd done differently now that we have the benefit of at least some hindsight and outcomes to judge our efforts against. But it's still a win: Minicon is now a convention that I invite and urge neos to join. It's a convention that I *want* to run the consuite for, and I'm thrilled to be doing that this coming Easter weekend. Neither of those things was even conceivable, let alone true, five to ten years ago. I hope they remain true for many years to come, and I'll continue working to make that happen. See you there? I hope so! (And if you thought our Minneapolis in '73-on-a-stick party was over the top, just wait until you see or hear about Saturday night of Minicon 36! Drop me a note if you want to be added to the Minicon mailing list and we'll send you our progress report early next year and tell you about “when weirds collide.”)

Time and energy are still in short supply, of course. But if you're reading this fanzine in November or December, 2000, it means Ben was right about the efficiencies of the mimeo-in-a-box. Minn-stf bought a Ricoh copyprinter a little over a year ago to use for Minicon and other club publications. The club makes it available to members at a fraction of the cost of Kinko's, but still in a way that helps pay off the equipment cost quickly. If all goes according to plan, Jeff and I will use it to print all of the black ink on the interior pages of this issue of *Idea* between now and the collation party that's just ~~five~~ *four* two days away. Plus the enclosed TAFF and DUFF ballots. Heck, we probably won't even *start* printing until the turkey is in the oven on Thursday, though we'll likely recruit Denny Lien, Terry Garey, and Kay Drache as production assistants when they come over to celebrate Thanksgiving with us. If we manage to unearth the Toad Hall Champion Mimeo Center and Frog Preserve before Saturday, we'll print the spot color on the basement mimeographs. (Minn-stf didn't buy any of the pricy extra color drums for its still-unnamed copyprinter, and I still do like that hand crank.) If not, we'll do whatever it takes to have a fanzine to collate by Sunday afternoon. Or I'll be pulling this page to rewrite this editorial...

It wouldn't be *Idea* without some sort of time sink built into the process, of course, so I am maintaining the balance of crazed obsession in this world by printing a 2-sided color photo cover. If your copy is printed in black, you'll know that plan didn't work. Given that my desktop computer's internal hard drive failed yesterday, and that its replacement failed five hours later, I have my doubts. The only thing I'm sure of at this point is that I'm pubbing my ish. And I'm taking much delight in doing so, no matter how much trouble it is. Hmmm. That describes how so many things have gone with Minicon, too. It's not the *only* fannish way, but it does seem to be mine.

I take much delight in announcing one thing that I know isn't going as planned for this issue. The complete version of "American Guy" in the "Guy Fawkes Songbook" includes Mike Ford's glorious response to Neil and Mary Gaiman's challenge to set the words on the 1997 party invitation in verse. He'd done so previously, you see, but that year's invitation was factual and direct, nothing more. Until Mike turned his hand and mind to it, that is. "American Guy" has a verse of working directions to the party, closing with:

"The tower lights will be alive
You'll see the porch as you arrive
But do not park upon the drive
The night we light the fuse"

Mike was rewriting the directions at the beginning of the verse before its publication here in *Idea*. Then a kidney finally turned up, and, as it turns out, he's going to be in the hospital recovering from a successful transplant from now until collation day. Jeez, the lengths some contributors will go to escape a faned's deadline.

Little did Mike or I expect that I'd be standing outside his hospital room door fewer than 24 hours after he got out of surgery, laser proofs and laptop computer in hand, ready to keep working on my fanzine. But not on the rewrite: Mike, Elise Matthesen, and I each thought the best approach at this time was to simply drop the verse. I merely burred my giddiness over the operation's success from the comparatively germ-safe distance of the doorway, then made my way to the visitors' lounge. While Elise and Mike visited, I put in a bit of PROMote work before turning my attention back to writing this editorial, including the first draft of this very paragraph.

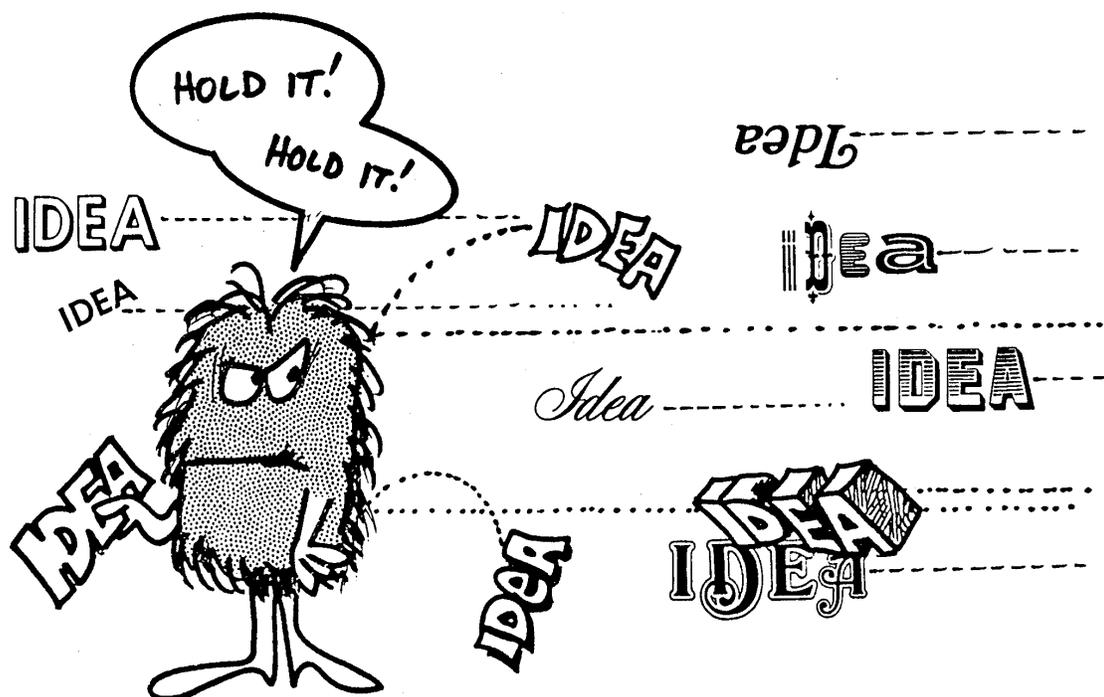
During the visit, Mike asked Elise to send email to a friend, so we found another, cell-safe lounge area (cell use is prohibited near the hospital's monitoring equipment), and she sent the message using her nifty Palm Pilot with its attached cell modem. On the way back from that errand, Elise introduced me to Minneapolis fan Simba Blood's parents, whom she'd met the day before. At the same time Mike had his transplant, Edina Police Officer Michael Blood had been in surgery after being shot in a bank robbery a few days earlier. Michael Blood is Simba's uncle. I hadn't made that connection while watching the news reports. Instead, I'd been focusing on his last name and the bright red blood on the snow that the footage showed. Simba's uncle has already needed to have lots of blood replaced and is likely to need more as they continue doing surgery on his injuries. (It's currently uncertain whether they will have to amputate part of a leg.) If you're a blood donor and haven't given in awhile, this would be a good time to do so. (If you're in the Twin Cities area, you can designate your donation as part of the support effort for Michael Blood. All types welcome.)

The great news *du jour* from Mike Ford was that the new kidney started working, and working well, at normal functioning levels. Elise and I walked over to the dialysis center and shared the good news with the staff there before heading home. Wow. This transplant stuff is amazingly cool when it works. I hope my organs and other body parts bring such joy into other lives when the time comes around.

While Mike set a new standard in good reasons for missing a deadline, *Idea*'s contributors go to deeply-appreciated lengths to meet one, too. Jeff spent weeks before the collation writing the eighth installment of "Adventures in the Wimpy Zone" between marathon scanning sessions, repeated computer troubleshooting, and other activities that kept me able to continue playing with the layout. We won't speak of Epson ink jet printers and what we think of the Macintosh version of their StylusRIP PostScript software beyond the fact that it all too often chooses to rotate QuarkXPress pages 90° counterclockwise without warning and that the team responsible for it ought to have to spend the rest of their lives re-installing the software for their customers. With priority of course given to those who have purchased multiple Epson printers and software RIPs and would like to be able to use more than one of them from a particular computer.

Other hero contributors include Elise Matthesen, who provided editorial assistance and served as an enthusiastic sounding board while dealing with other concerns of more immediate and long-term importance. And Ulrika O'Brien, who took a laptop with her to OryCon to put the finishing touches on "Adventures of an Unqualified TAffgirl." Jae Leslie Adams worked up until a few hours before her plane departed for the UK to finish all three of the last-minute headlines I sent her way. George Flynn proofed the text of the letter column between tight proofing deadlines for upcoming NESFA Press books, including the eagerly-awaited **From These Ashes**, the complete collection of Fredric Brown's short SF works that Ben Yalow is editing. (Brown's SF novels will be in a separate volume.)

What goes around comes around. I've been helping Ben with book layout and PageMaker challenges on the Brown book. Jeff and I have both been helping Laurie Edison with the intricacies of QuarkXPress and PostScript printer emulation as she and Debbie Notkin work on **Familiar Men**. There's always more to learn, and fun to be had while working together. Hmm, that's rather like Minicon, too, though sometimes that proves to be for bizarre values of fun. I give thanks to all who lent their hearts and helping hands to the last two Minicons, and also to all of the faneds who kept me on their mailing lists, and especially to the members of the Corflatch Corflu in Seattle who earlier this year named me the past president of fwa for 1999. (The fan writers of america never have a current president, just past presidents.) The continued stream of fanzines and the fwa recognition were unexpected, deeply appreciated honors. They came during the long period of time when I had no idea when I'd be able to publish again, or to say things I didn't yet have the words for. I only knew that I intended to write and publish, that I would when I could. That "could" finally came through the following words, which I found in a fanzine while looking for exhibit material to loan to Loscon for this year's Rostler Award winner, ATom. Thanks to them, you now have a new *Idea*.



In 1990, Chuch Harris wrote these few paragraphs for the Arthur Thomson memorial 'zine that Vinç Clarke published:

“Even now, weeks later, I find it very hard to write anything at all about Arfer. Words seem so trite and inadequate, and I don’t know just what the hell I can say to you about him. It still seems so private and intensely personal that it would be a betrayal to try and write about it just yet.



“But believe me, I have tried. I picked out the most memorable bits. The bit about Arf, sitting beneath my apple tree patiently waiting for an apple, ANY apple, to demonstrate the law of gravity. The double room at the Kettering con with the church bells thundering just over the road as he roughed out the ‘Church anybody?’ cartoon whilst we shared the last of the Alka Seltzer. Or...

“But, at best, these are only little flickery pictures of the mind—no more than one-dimensional snapshots. None of them illustrate the essential decency of the man, his generous spirit, the zest, the exuberance, the sheer joy that he found in fandom, and shared with the rest of us. I just don’t have the talent to transfer these things into words and sentences.”

Talent. Chuch Harris had a unique talent with words and sentences, as anyone who saved his letters can show you. But far greater was Chuch’s talent for weaving what was best about his friends into his own life, then sharing it with others. Essential decency, generous spirit, zest, exuberance, sheer joy. I met ATom only once, on an afternoon a few months before his death from emphysema and, yes, I saw all of those things still shining brightly in him. But I saw them magnified a hundredfold, a thousandfold, in Chuch. He was always passing it on, and passing it forward.

From our earliest days to the end of them, we learn how to live and to love from those around us. For a little over a decade, I had the profound honor of learning more about how to live, laugh, and love from Chuch and his immediate circle of friends, most especially Walt Willis, Vinç Clarke, and his favorite nemesis, James White. Then they were gone.

It’s been months going on years now. I hope to have the words and sentences someday. Until I do, Chuch’s words about his dear mate Arfer speak for me about all of them. As do my actions, I hope.

See you on the funway.

—Geri Sullivan

**When humid heat has swelled your feet
And sultry weather bodes,
Request from Geri a well-chilled Perrier
at WIDOWER’S HALL OF TOADS.**

—Dave Langford

We Jump Off the No-Time Express and Return to Brigadoon

by Jeff Schalles

A chance surprise may trigger unexpected slips through the universes. How would you know if it happened? So what's with Iowa, *anyway*?

I lived in the DC area in the late '70s. While hanging around there I worked some on the '83 Worldcon bid. At the very least I gave a few backrubs, that much I remember. By 1983 I was living in NYC. I drove my Chevelle—I think it was still white with red primer back then—down to the Constellation with Jeff Dunn and Susan Palermo and spent the weekend working for Avedon, running the mimeo room. Seems not so long ago, but it was, um, 17 years ago. And I'd already been in fandom for 15 years even then. Just timebinding a bit, sorry. So when Baltimore won again, throwing the Bucconeer in 1998, I decided I needed to get back to that neck of the woods. I don't go to a lot of Worldcons. For that matter, I don't leave Minnesota much. My universe here is pretty complete.

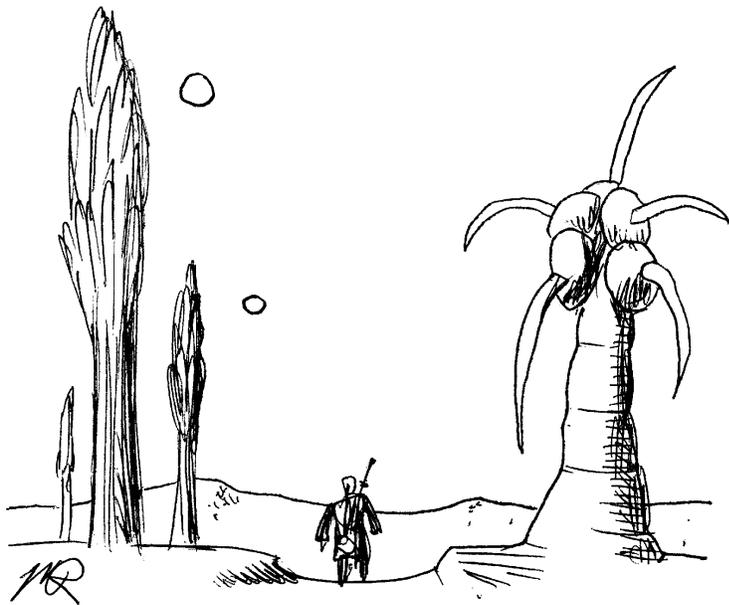
June and July were a bit edgy that year. In June Geri and I drove my '86 half-ton Chevy pickup to Michigan, and it overheated outside of Chicago. Our first Road Trip From Hell. The final night, in the Lannon Stone Motel in Janesville, Wisconsin, was the classic denouement. But this trip did give her dad and me a chance to do some Real Guy Type Stuff under my truck's hood. Dan liked my truck so much he offered to buy it when I was done with it. I dunno, that might be a while. I drove the Chevelle for 14 years, and it was already 12 years old when I got it. But, yes, we got back safe. Stressed but safe. I poured a big bottle of Stop Leak into the radiator and it ran pretty much fine through July and into August. I tried not to dwell too much on my plan to drive the truck to Baltimore. Maybe it had been just a *small* hole in the head gasket. But early in July I quit my prepress job of the last 3½ years—if I'd waited a few months longer I would have been laid-off and could have collected unemployment—but I wanted to beat the rush down at the union hall.* I quit a good-paying technical printing job — with my own office and a window overlooking downtown Minneapolis — and went back to full-time freelance layout and design while looking for a better-managed printing company to work for. Preferably another

Graphic Communications International shop.

It had been a 12-minute drive to work.

We live on the south side of Minneapolis, three blocks from the first interstate exit out of downtown, and the plant was a few blocks from the first exit on the north side. Between lies the Lowry Hill Tunnel. I began calling this stretch of I35W and I94 the No-Time Express. I entered an altered state, slipped through a wormhole, found myself on 7th Ave. N. The shortcut through the Holman Field/Sumner Housing projects occasionally got interesting. I kept one tape in the truck,

* *Worked, too. Now I've got the best job I've ever had, and I've made it to journeyman electronic stripper.*



played it 'til it bugged me, grabbed another one. Usually Black Sabbath, Megadeath, the Dictators, maybe the Scorpions. I really didn't want to go into that building. It was noisy and grimy and stunk of solvents. People yelled a lot and nothing much seemed to get done right until they finally handed me the job to fix. Probably by then a press was down.

That's annoying. Expensive. Typical, though. When desktop publishing came along, the proofreaders got fired first. The typesetters went next. Meanwhile, someone has to run out for pizza for the client doing the press check. I had plenty of my own work to do, preflighting work for 14 presses. I also re-worked old layouts, designed a few new pieces and did all the print production for a big direct mail client. Oh, and I fixed their bank form system. But, yes, I was responsible for millions of pieces of glossy 4-color junk mail selling cheesy software in the late-'90s. I'm sure you saw some of it. But this employer never displayed much in the way of learning behavior and one day they made the prepress departmental bully and saboteur my boss. It was like a bad war movie, but I didn't have to go out on that suicide patrol with the sadistic squad leader. I could just quit the next morning. I'm getting better at bailing sooner when I realize I'm working for the clueless.

That July I got the outside of Toad Hall's big midwestern porch and the whole south side scraped and painted. The carpentry part—which starts when you stick your putty knife into a window casing board and the blade comes out through the dining room wallpaper, just like on *This Old House*—slowed me down a bit. There was a big hail storm in the spring and I had to replace a few window panes, too. But we did manage to take the dog, Willow, camping. Took her to a lake, tried to convince her that swimming was fun. She didn't buy it. Sunday morning in a prairie clearing behind our tentsite I took a glowing radiant Kodachrome 25 slide of her that needs to be on a hunting dog calendar, or the cover of *Field & Stream*. One of her sisters, Kurlie Koate Kate, was on the intro page of the American Water Spaniel calendar last year.

I planned a solo two-week road trip: to Pittsburgh, to see my family, then to the Worldcon, afterwards up to Binghamton, New York, to see Joshua Ribakove, my old guitar player from the NYC days, back across Pennsylvania to Grove City to visit Bill Donnelly, an old English professor of mine, then home. I also arranged to pick up Linda Bushyager's old mimeo stuff after the Worldcon. That was the main reason for taking the truck.

What I was mostly looking forward to was the driving. I had a big box of tapes, cooler, boombox, lots of cameras and film, and my 16-inch steel doumbek. (That's a hand drum.) On the clipboard on the seat beside me as I waved good-bye to Geri and Willow and wheeled out of south Minneapolis was this scribbled itinerary:

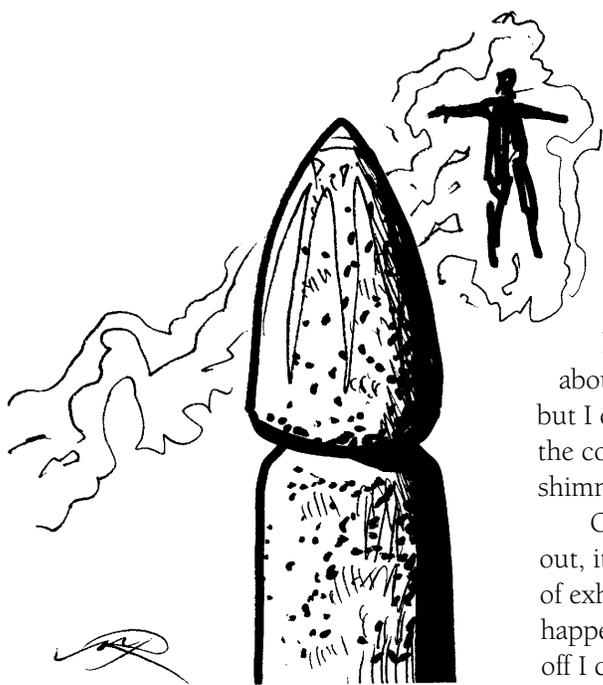
I35 – US20 - Waterloo – I380 - Iowa City – I80 - Quad Cities – I74 - Indianapolis – I70 –
PA50 - Coal Valley Road - Pleasant Hills.

I made it to about Latimer, Iowa. That's a bit north of Fort Dodge.

The temperature gauge sat rock steady on 160°F for three hours, I'd stopped glancing at it every 15 seconds, then up it went, straight into the red. When I slowed down to 50MPH it swung back out. A bit. In another mile a country exit came up and I eased up the ramp, pulling over on the gravel shoulder up at the stop sign. Corn everywhere. The roofs of a farm poked through some trees a good bit up the road to the right. It wasn't flat, but it wasn't exactly hilly either.

Easy, gentle rolling swells meandering off to the pinpoint-sharp horizon. To the east, nothing but corn. Oh, and it was kinda hot, about 102°F that August afternoon. The truck has no air conditioning, but I don't really mind heat like this. I drunk icy-cold spring water from the cooler and sat on the hood gazing out at the heat waves over the shimmering green landscape. Awesome. And yes, you can hear it grow.

On the Michigan trip we'd learned that the coolant wasn't leaking out, it was backing up into the overflow tank, expelled by a gas bubble of exhaust getting into the cooling system. It would run fine until that happened. I'd also learned that once I could safely get the radiator cap off I could unbolt the overflow jug and lift it until the antifreeze ran



back into the system. Drive gingerly another 200 miles. Repeat step one. Get home. But I couldn't take this for two weeks, and it probably would get a lot worse. I turned around. An hour before sunset, almost back to the Minnesota border, I was pulled off on the shoulder repeating step one when an Iowa State Trooper came up and asked if I needed a tow. I told him what I thought was wrong and said I thought I could get it back to the Twin Cities. He looked dubious and followed me to the border.

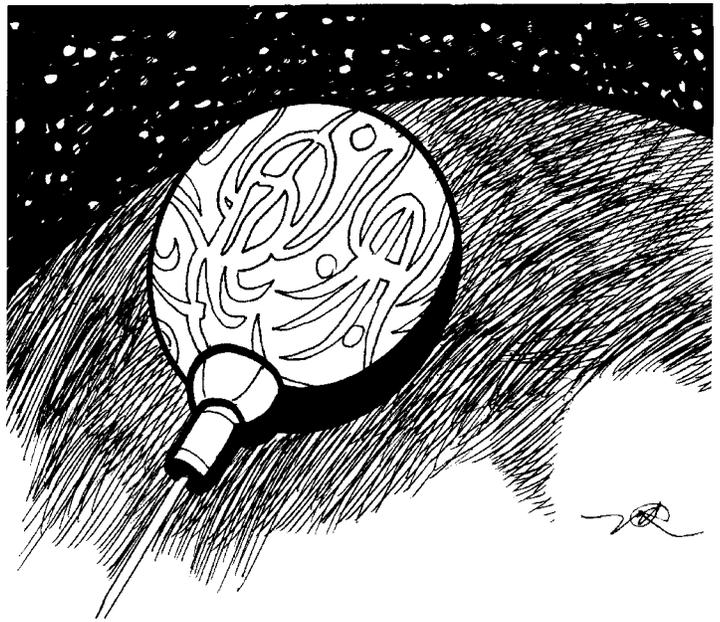
It didn't overheat again that night. It was cooling off, a storm front was moving in from the west. While eating at a restaurant in Albert Lea, just over the state line, I ran into a printing salesman I knew. I really didn't want to talk to him just then. I was busy hatching a plan: I'd get up early and rent a car and head right back out.

The tail-end of the Minicon progress report mailing party was going on as I came in the back door, so I had a good audience, a cold beer, and almost immediately my Worldcon odyssey turned into a thread on RASFF. The next morning I got a small car from Sears, smelling of tobacco smoke, but with air conditioning and a good stereo, and tried it again. I'd be spending a lot less on gas, but I wouldn't be able to fit in very much mimeo equipment.

Now I could concentrate entirely on the driving and the music. It was still early afternoon when I turned off I35 and onto US20. This isn't the shortest route east out of the Twin Cities. Going down through Wisconsin and around Chicago is at least 100 miles shorter. But I'd never seen much of Iowa, and I was intrigued by this stretch of 2-lane US highway that formed a hypotenuse with I380, slanting south and east before crossing I80. A chance to see something new. Even if it was...Iowa. Folks out here in the wimpy zone don't seem to think much of Iowa and I needed to know why. I'd saved the Greg Brown tape just for this moment. It had begun raining and he was just starting "If I Had Known," his Things May Never Be This Good Again song when I pulled into a convenience store called Pump 'n Go in a little town called Ackley for gas and coffee. Bought the Waterloo Sunday paper. Talked about the weather with the counter person. The doughnuts were really, really good. Why wouldn't anyone want to live *here*? This is *great*!

But I couldn't stay, couldn't go looking for old bridges to photograph, had to move on. It wasn't flat at all here. On I380 between Waterloo and Cedar Rapids, following the Cedar River, it became downright hilly. Hey, they got rivers and railroads and towns and dogs and people and all kinds of stuff. I even passed a small college or two. How marvelous! But by then I'd returned to the interstate system, was seeing the back yards of Iowa City, Davenport, Rock Island. Outside of Moline I found a Greek diner that belonged in Queens. That's where the owner had moved from, actually. I had a great dinner of hot roast turkey sandwich, mashed potatoes, gravy, string beans. It was the farmkid waitress's first night. She called me "hon" a lot but she didn't have much else of the diner act down. I tipped her big anyway.

I'd never seen this corner of Illinois, but it was dark out now, and raining. Hard. Around 10PM I got tired of this, checked into a cheap little motel east of Peoria, called Geri, slept like a rock. The next day was Monday. Everyone around me was going off to work...and I wasn't! I got to drive along through a beautiful summer day and look at stuff. I like driving around looking at stuff. On long trips out here on the northern plains I've taken to studying the electrical grid. Going up to Winnipeg I'd noticed how the big high-tension lines in North Dakota would follow the interstate at times, while smaller strings of poles, much shorter ones with lots of wires, followed the rail lines. Periodically a double line of high wooden poles would march in at an angle, maybe diverge into two new directions, march off again. And they all used different hardware to hang the wires from. Wow. Cool. So I'm driving across Illinois gazing at the landscape and thinking a bit about fannish history. Especially, the last time I saw Tucker.



Indiana was less interesting, and hot. I punched through Indianapolis at the noon rush hour and kept going. Nothing to see here, move along. Ohio comes next, and that's almost home to me. I'd been on I70 since Indianapolis and shot through Columbus just after rush hour. Heck, when I drove test cars for a tire company in Pennsylvania, I'd drive to the Columbus plant and back in one shift. It was dark when I came to the new Ohio River bridge at Wheeling. Used to be, you snaked down to the river and crossed on some old bridge in the center of town. Now there's a high sweeping modern one carrying I70 over a bypass to the south. My truck would not have liked climbing that long slope up from the river. Probably have to downshift and stay right, do 45MPH. Grit teeth. Wish for a V8 rather than the tired old Vortec 6.

You cross that little sliver of West Virginia pretty quick. I'd come back this way from many Midwestcons in the '70s. Pittsburgh isn't all that far from the state line. Pa. Rt. 51 might not be the most direct route up from I70 to the south hills, but I knew it a lot better than I did US 19, and I was getting too tired to risk getting lost in Mt. Lebanon or Bethel Park. The family were all over at my little brother's house and just starting desert when I got in. My older brother and his family, who live in Omaha, were there too. I got to be the comic relief. Uncle Jeff with a road buzz on.

On Tuesday I took the car to Sears to complain about the squealing noise coming from the rear axle. They swapped it for another car, one they wanted to send back to the midwest. A Chrysler New Yorker with Illinois plates. Big. Leather seats. Astounding sound system. No tobacco smoke. Did I say big? This was getting good. Meanwhile, on RASFF the excitement grew: I was on my third vehicle.

On Wednesday I drove to Baltimore. This I'd done a lot. PA Turnpike to Breezewood and down I70. The first time I did it I was hitchhiking to the 1971 Disclave. You take the I270 cutoff to get to DC. This time I stayed on I70 to the Baltimore beltway. Boy, has that city changed. The downtown used to be low-key, a bit shabby, lots of old brick buildings. A bit like Pittsburgh was. Not anymore. They're both nearly as bad as Manhattan. I was glad to finally park the big car in an underground lot, hoping it wouldn't get stolen, because I didn't intend to visit it again until the Worldcon was over. Wow. I'd made it. The Worldcon.

Like Brigadoon, the Worldcon rises out of the swirling mists of fandom. We are permitted to bask in the sunny glory of our little paraculture, romping at our annual reunion, epiphany and ebullience and enlightenment abounding, then we bid it farewell for another year. Along with a few braincells. I used to never want cons to end. That's changed too. After a couple of days I simply leave, walk away without looking back and return to my great work.

So I charged out of my hotel, the Omni, excited as all get out, and got to the Baltimore convention center only to find that they'd more than doubled it in size, and we were pushed off in one corner. Harrumph. In 1983 we had the whole dang thing. Got my badge, went looking for the fan lounge. Ha ha, anyone remember this one? The fan lounge on the edge of forever? Hey, we'll just put up a "fan lounge" sign here in the corridor. Say what? Time to pull the couches into a circle and make a stand? No, we grabbed everything we could carry off and moved the daytime lounge to the evening location in the Hilton. This wasn't so bad, actually; the hotel bar was a good hangout all weekend, the mezzanine fan lounge worked out very well. I got invited into the secret newszine offices in the basement. And my hotel was right next door.

For a couple hours I hung out in the bar with a lot of old friends, and then it was time for that Worldcon dinner thing. You know, 35 people following along behind Ted White? It used to only be 12 people. (The Group Mind coalesced among a mere 7 or 8 of us sleeping on Frank Lunney's floor in Toronto in 1973.) Ted and Lynda and I sat by the harbor and talked while we waited for a table in Paolo's. Mostly I wrote down names of albums as Ted dispensed great wisdom. Then the con began.

In 1970, after my first couple science fiction conventions, I wrote detailed hour-by-hour reports which never got done and never got published. Still have them, though. In the early eighties I reviewed a lot of east coast cons for Locus. It was fun at first, it all started because I offered Charlie some of my photos. But it became too much like work, I actually had to pay attention to the programming and guests of honor and stuff, and after a few years I lost the interest.

A lot of the old local crowd was involved in Bucconeer, but there was a lot of new talent too, The Pirates of Fenzance. I'd run into this one guy, Chase, a couple of years before, he and a pal did a road trip to the Winnipeg Worldcon and then showed up at our Fall relaxacon a week or two later. Chase, a skinny leather

biker dude, stayed up all night writing furiously at this beat up wooden army field desk he'd plunked down on a coffee table in the con suite. He was a Pirate of Fenzance. One of the scary ones.

Thursday, fannish fanzine fandom took over an outdoor corner table at the Wharf Rat, a bar across from the convention center. This became the fan lounge in the late afternoon and early evening for the rest of the con. The waiter hated us, yelled at us, threatened us, tried to get us to leave. Even throwing lots of money at him didn't seem to help. But the crab cakes were very good.

The enormously entertaining fannish parade was passing by on the sidewalk. Then NESFA staked a claim on the adjoining big table. I sat back and observed. It's what I do best. This was wonderful. There was a delightful half-hour before the Hugos where small groups of luminaries, like 4E, Connie Willis, Mike Resnick, repeatedly ducked in one door of the nearly empty bar next door and came out another carrying drinks before heading across the boulevard to the convention center. Reminded me of a Chinese fire-drill.

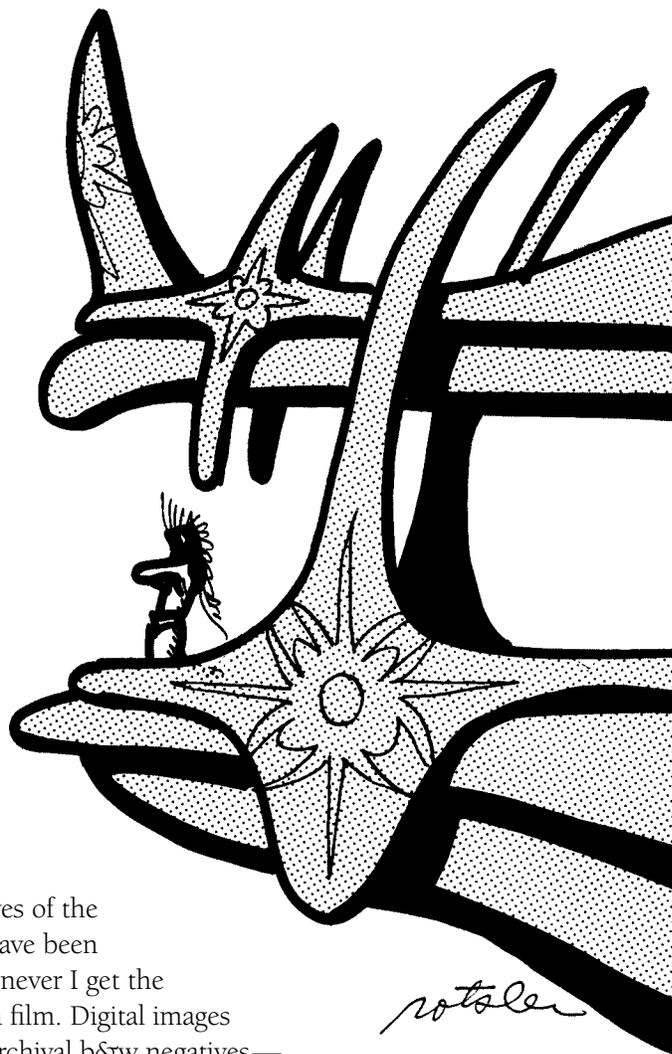
Friday and Saturday mornings I shot copy negatives of the photos brought in for the Fan History project. They have been scanning these photos for a number of years, but whenever I get the opportunity I like to actually shoot them on fine grain film. Digital images may not be readable someday (believe it or not) but archival b&w negatives— analog storage—may last a long time. And you can always scan them, at much higher resolution, later. I've had what I've shot so far scanned to Kodak Photo CD. Haven't had time to edit or retouch the images; hope to get to that this winter.

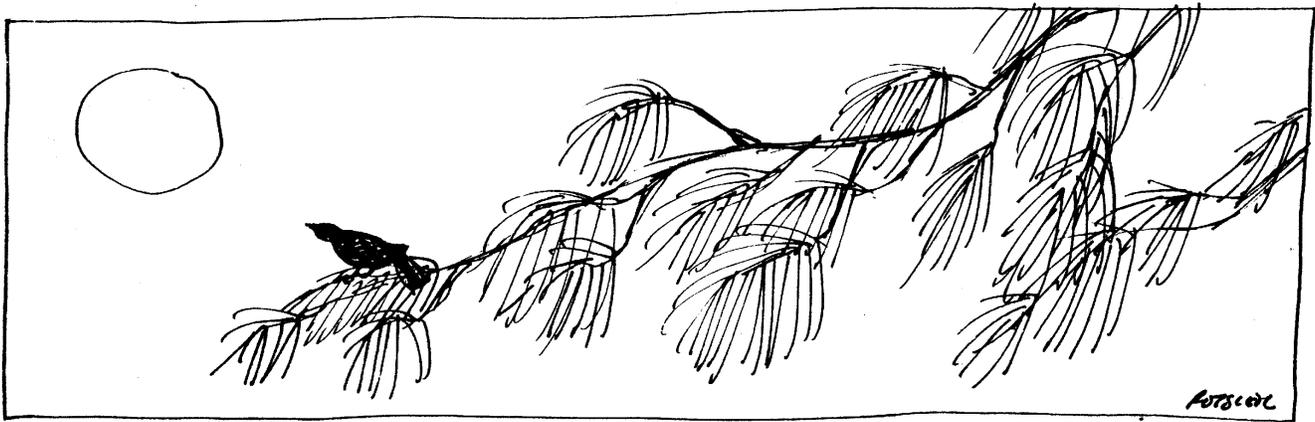
I took the envelopes of old prints up to a sunny balcony in the convention center, shot them with a macro lens and a polarizing filter. One of the things I've noticed over the years, working with fan photos from the '30s, '40s and '50s, is that a lot of fans carried cameras back then, most shot black & white (which doesn't fade like color emulsions do), and that many collections show different views of the same rooms and people. Plenty of work for photo researchers and graduate students some day. Hey, look, it's a young Steve Stiles!

The con began early, ended Sunday. Ron and Linda and I drove up to Philadelphia, I moved Linda's Gestetners down to the garage, loaded what I could into the Chrysler. Got the 366 duper and a lot of supplies into the trunk, put the model 455 electrostenciler on the back seat, had to leave the rest. There was this really cool steel desk with special slots and brackets for various Gestetner supplies and tools, Linda really wanted me to have it. If I'd had the truck, I would have taken it.

But the con was over. I just wanted to get home, and the road home lead north. In all my years of criss-crossing Pennsylvania, I'd never traveled the Northeast Turnpike Extension. Now I got to do that! Driving up to Binghamton, New York, threading my way through the heart of the eastern Appalachians. Allentown, the Blue Mountain tunnel, Wilkes-Barre. Then Scranton. I thought of it taking off, powered by spindizzies. It was rainy and late as I rolled off the interstate and into Binghamton. Josh would be up, he still rocks. Hey, his band opens for the Dictators!

He owns a little house in town. I slept on a sofa on the screened back porch, waking up to find that I was in the heart of the mountains. You could see them from the back steps. It was much the same as when I woke up in the Banff hostel campground in British Columbia, in 1974, after hitchhiking there in the dark from





Calgary late the night before. There's a feel of them lurking above in the dark. And the sounds of the winds. It's different in the mountains.

On Monday we drove up to a campsite Josh rents, went swimming in the campground lake. OK, here I am, the day after a Worldcon, floating on a raft on a nice clean mountain lake, with a good friend, looking up at the mountains, breathing fresh air. Cue Greg Brown again, please.

Tuesday was sunny; I retraced the Northeast Extension to I80 and headed west. Drive drive drive. I80 is another old home to me. The tire testing job had me driving out to State College and back, every night, for over a year. Got off at the Barkyville exit, stopped at the truck stop I had my first punch-clock job at, called and got better directions. I hadn't seen Bill Donnelly since the late '70s, when we'd gone camping in the Allegheny National Forest, but we've been in touch by email. He hadn't moved, but lately I keep getting lost in places I used to know. A professor pal of his was visiting that night too; he's been teaching in Japan. We'd met before. Plus there was a nice Chinese student couple that Bill had picked up at the Pittsburgh airport earlier that day. Before dinner, in the late afternoon sun, we all walked up the road to Kring's Pond. Fred Kring, who was Dean when I was a student at Grove City College, has died, but his wife, Hilda, was there, and she came out to chat as we swam. Two days in a row I get to go swimming in a nice pond! This is great! Of course, I'd swum in the Kring's old limestone quarry many times before. They used to let us have keg parties over on the opposite bank. Until a frat guy drowned out there one night. It's very deep. Dive down a few feet and it's very cold.

The Chinese couple needed to buy a car, so we all gave them our opinions about used cars, American and foreign. Then I popped the hood on the Chrysler. Us guys then spent a long time looking at the large, well-built power plant in there. Normal people don't drive cars like this. Meanwhile, I'd gotten a case of Iron City beer, in bottles. The evening was turning into a lot of fun.

Bill and his Jamaican wife, Dolly, made a big picnic dinner, salad and chicken and corn on the cob, we sat around and chatted. Another English professor came out from town, though she seemed to harbor a sour memory of me as being one of the bad boys on campus. Dolly told me the next morning (Bill left early to drive the Chinese students down to the University of Pittsburgh) that there hadn't been many like—us—my college gang of hippies and miscreants—on campus in 15 or 20 years. The college had gone full-force Christian, from being just sort of Presbyterian to Rockin For The Lord, and you were made very un-welcome if you didn't buy into it. Weeded us out good, they did. I think Bill retires this year or next. Maybe he'll come back to fandom—he used to be a fan.

I parked by the administration building and began walking up through campus. Hadn't changed much, pretty emotional to see it like this. Hey, we used to sit in a circle, play guitars, and...right over there in that quad! I hadn't been there on a warm sunny day since 1974. The campus security SWAT van quickly pulled up beside me. I thought of ignoring him from behind my sunglasses. When I went there the security van doubled as the food service van during the day. Now it was black and full of gear and the cop wanted to know *if he could help me*.

That was exceedingly annoying. But he recognized who my father is (a long-time alumni council member) and immediately got a lot friendlier. Downright talkative even. Hey, I just wanted to walk up behind Calderwood Hall and see if The Rock was still there. You know, the rock up by the water tower where we'd all gather about

11:00 AM for a morning, you know, break? While everyone else was in chapel? I didn't need to discuss any of this with him. I just wanted to look at...stuff. Leave me alone, my chest is bursting out my ribcage with emotion here. I'm not going to deflower a single one of your young girls or boys, honest. I'll even stay on the sidewalks. So I finished my campus walking tour. There's now a parking lot where The Rock had been. Then I drove the big Chrysler around town a bit, looking at various houses I'd partied at or lived in. Grove City is a charming little town, very Stepford-like. I pulled into the alley to the little house we'd rented senior year. Not much changed back there except that down the street a ways at another little wooden house the hundreds of small hand lettered wooden signs bearing biblical verses that used to be nailed to trees and fence posts and stakes in the ground and even the house itself, were gone. Rats. I'd never managed to get a photo of that house.

So what's this, Wednesday now? Can't I go home yet? No, I'd better go back down to Pittsburgh. I don't get back this way very often, and my folks are getting along in years. We just sat and talked. When the nephews and nieces are visiting, there's all this activity, all this Going To Museums and ballgames and swimming pools and stuff. I just want to sit and talk. I parked the New Yorker in the driveway next to my dad's Buick LeSabre. They were about the same size and color, and we both agreed that the body workmanship was far better on the Buick. Thursday, okay, great, finally, time to get back. Two more days of drive drive drive and the whole thing will be over. Please. Let. It. Be. Over.

The New Yorker was great for driving the big roads, the Pennsylvania Turnpike, Ohio Turnpike, Indiana Toll Road. This was truly great driving. I even finally found the Dolby switch on the massive sound system. Chicago. Beloit. Back in Janesville again, I find a much nicer motel room, call Geri. She squeals, "you're almost home!" because I am, it's an easy day's drive from here. I take my time the next day coming up through Wisconsin, stop at little towns, follow the old highways for a good long while, find some yard sales, buy an old light fixture for outside the front porch for a quarter. Bought some old wooden crates at another place. Picked up a dozen ears of fresh corn. This is fun, this is the way to do this. Driving through the Wisconsin countryside on a beautiful summer day in a honking big new American car. Too bad it wasn't a 2-door. Up the road, over the river, through St. Paul. And home again.



Adventures of an Unqualified TAFFGirl



A long time ago, Geri Sullivan asked me to write about the business of standing for TAFF. How did I get here, and why? Given what a universally popular choice that was, I thought I'd better marshal my excuses. Mistakes were made. Many share blame in the making of an unqualified TAFFGirl.

Personally, I blame the fan lounge.

Consider: a fan lounge is an amazing fannish technical achievement. A convention may be wheezing uphill to disaster, toppling under its own weight and falling about in angst and disarray, but with a fan lounge at the heart of it, you may still contrive to find your friends, foment good conversation, and settle in with a beer and a bagel schmear for a weekend-long coze, untroubled by the blast zone just beyond the threshold.

Westercon 50 was just that sort of disaster, lumbering toward Seattle to be stillborn. We could feel the centripetal forces tearing at it even before the convention was properly under way. Hal and I had arrived in Seattle late Thursday night so that, despite reprehensible rising habits and a local bus down from the U District, we were wandering around the Sheraton long before Registration opened on Friday. A thin smattering of fannish types haunted the lobbies, but no one we knew had shown up yet. While kicking our heels at the head of the escalators, we were hailed by a wiry person with a walkie-talkie. The art show needed set-up volunteers. Our sensitive fannish faces had given us away.

We took an elevator to the top-floor art show space. The long, angled sweep of windows gave a towering view of city and sound, soon to be occulted by art flats. The hotel's obligatory Chihuly shimmered modestly in its glass case. It wasn't immediately evident what help was needed. The scene before us was striking in its resemblance to those Disney nature films about Amazonian leaf-cutter ants.

by Ulrika O'Brien



Swarms of people in t-shirts struggled mightily with the strewn pieces of a giant's PVC Tinkertoy set. One swarm purposefully dragged thick lengths of white plastic pipe to the far end of the room, while another dragged them decisively back again. Clusters of very intent persons huddled about banging oblique-angled three-hole pipe joints onto the ends of pipes, and making jackstraw stacks of them. Another cluster of equally intent persons pried off some numerologically significant portion of those joints to replace them with acute-angled, four-hole joints, instead. Syncopated fits of reciprocal mallet swiping punctuated the ballet. If anyone was directing this tableau, it was by means so coy as to defy detection. I could not see whom to offer our help to.

After some observation, we decided the gist of the project involved following a Baroque hand-drafted schematic, possibly cribbed from an advanced organic chemistry text. We were given to understand that this astonishing design had been methodically worked out to provide the maximum possible art flat space in an overtly polyhedral room, while still accounting for traffic flow. This was a magnum opus of project planning. Mathematical elegance reified. With bolstered optimism, we took up pipe and joint, judiciously swiped a mallet and set to work whacking bits of PVC together.

Half an hour later the ambient burble of conversation took a decidedly mournful note. The fans clustering around the diagram and the open boxes of pipe joints began keening in consternation. We were, so it seemed, short-stocked of a crucial pipe joint. Short by dozens, perhaps hundreds, of pieces. No extra box could be found. None of the other pipe joints could be substituted for the critical missing ones. The schematic, the beautiful schematic, was useless. As drafted, it could not possibly be completed without those extra joints. At the moment, only perhaps a quarter of the planned frames were up and usable. Oh, woe. Oh, panic. As far as I could make out, no shakedown build of this heroic model of messenger RNA had ever been tried. Indeed, it seemed very much as if they had not even counted out the PVC bits to make sure they had enough of them. Certainly no one had bought spare parts or provided any sort of back-up plan. Mathematical elegance reified.

Around the time The Committee to Assemble an Art Show began talking of re-drafting the schematic on the fly, with less than an hour before opening, and then disassembling the whole thing and starting over, I had a Moment of Clarity. I grabbed Hal by the wrist and fled the scene. I have low tolerance for unwonted dumbness. And I'm opinionated. And power mad. Between the three, I was seething to render some choice remarks on the subject of their big penguins of project planning and foresight, then wrest control of the proceedings in the name of Isabella of Spain. But in a rational flash I realized that: (1) no set down, however apposite, would actually improve the immediate situation; (2) nothing I could think of *would* help the situation, short of *carte blanche* and a fast ride to the nearest suitable hardware supply, and these were unlikely to be provided to me, in the guise of j-random grubby volunteer; and (3) pissing off a bunch of strangers in the name of pointing out what a dumbass plan they had would really only be satisfying in the short term. Besides, my fourth main weapon is a fanatical devotion to indolence. We quietly stole down the elevators and made for the Public Market, leaving the Committee to its own petard. Call it cowardice if you like.

The rest of the Westercon showed much the same organizational acumen that powered the art show. The verticality of the Sheraton would only have been supportable for the couple of thousand fans normal to a Westercon if it were well supplied with lots of fast, working elevators. What it actually had was a very limited supply of slow, break-prone elevators. And no elevator monitors. This of course was only really crucial if you wanted to get to the top of the hotel. Where the art show and party floors were. Some of the crush might have been eased by free access to the escalators. The tables for registration were instead placed to just force the registration line to block the top of the escalators: you had to shove through it to get to the rest of the lobby when the line grew long. (The convention badges, when you finally got them, had big, splashy fantasy art on them, forcing the congoer's name into 8-point Peignot in the bottom corner. Luckily, this was never a problem because the single-attachment-point ribbon lanyard scheme meant that your name was inevitably flipped to face your chest anyway.) The hucksters were relegated to a room so much too small that you didn't so much browse the room as fling yourself into the streaming crush of humanity at one end, elbow-surf the circuit, and then get spat out again at the far end. (To be fair, it has to be said that whoever bribed the Fire Inspector knew his business.) The program committee knew just enough to get in trouble. They inveigled a number of keen speakers to come, only to then waste them utterly. In one particularly ill-fated panel, an acute attack of topic ennui forced Howard Waldrop to flee the dais before his liver leapt into his throat to mercy-throttle him. He did write a note of apology to the moderator before abruptly quitting the room. Call it cowardice if you like.

Westercon 50: on the whole, a ghastly farrago of unrelenting awfulness. But it had a fan lounge.

And the fan lounge had beer, good food, and big, stuffed leather chairs to sprawl in. There were fanzines to read. Andy Hooper regaled us with dramatic readings from his instant fannish classics. Vanguard came over and threw a party all over the suite. Art Aldridge provided balloon fights in the boardroom. There were tunes on the boom box: cool, ethnopunk and roots rock tunes and a lively conversation with Jerry Kaufman about our favorite weirdo music groups. The leather-clad babes of Seattle fanzine fandom lurked in every corner, and Aileen Forman sported a microscopic vinyl confection to killing advantage. Nigel Rowe lounged fetchingly in one corner and swapped fanzine theory with Hooper. Victor Gonzalez zipped about, all enthusiasm and energy and elbow-patched tweed.

Which was all fine and jolly, and we had a lovely time. But the problem, psychologically speaking, with so immediate a contrast between the miserably drab and lonely convention I'd otherwise have spent, and the convivial one I was actually spending, was that it left me feeling that giddy, reckless invulnerability peculiar to survivors of major disasters. I led a charmed life. I was inside the bubble, moving among the magic elite. I was, in short, deluded at the time, and cannot now be held accountable. The miracle of the fan lounge left me utterly vulnerable to cunning blandishments.

Which is why I blame the rhetorical powers of Andy Hooper.

Andy has a sorcerous knack for conjuring visions. He has this killer Summon Smoke-Filled Room spell; I infer it's contagious magic. In his presence you feel the airless, cloaking weight of fan matters solemn and portentous being mooted. Andy's own natural gravity and majesty give that air to everything he says. Beguiling Winsor McCay cloud cities erect themselves in the middle distance. Wafts of strange perfume scent the air. I can't claim I didn't inhale. The susceptible and the unwary will find themselves steamrollered. At the same time, Andy can weave a Towering Sense of Impending Doom. This turns out to be a parlor trick that he trots out for every North American TAFF race. But I didn't know Andy well then, and his arguments seemed cogent at the time. Indeed, they still seem so to me, though Andy may have abandoned many in the interim.

But in the fatal moment, I was only beginning to know Andy Hooper, and I was primed for belief in big things.

Picture me then, the hapless innocent, curled up in my safe bolthole. I'd managed to make myself mistress of a huge, cream-colored leather chair with a view of the door. Programming disasters were exploding all about, out there in the mainstream of the convention – perhaps most infamously the Lost Hour of Jack Cady—but in our quiet oxbow we had beer and tunes and the buzz of fannish colloquy. I was slowly infiltrating my own tapes into the boom box. Not a bad life. Andy Hooper sat by, holding forth in his bulletproof way while I skipped words edge-on at the monologue, trying to wedge one in. Call it quixotic if you like.

Andy was voicing his concerns about the TAFF race. Or rather, the lack of one. Cast your mind back to the time. It was 4th of July 1997, and not the happiest of times for the Fund. The previous North American race had stalled out for lack of a second candidate. A few months before, Martin Tudor made public the news of Abi Frost's embezzlement. That announcement sparked, in addition to predictable bitterness over the missing money and cries for Abi Frost's head, some unpleasantly divisive transatlantic snarling about whether American fans had any business being concerned at all in the state of funds held in the UK. Epithets hurled, fur bristled, conclusions jumped, and Gregory Pickersgill stopped talking to me about 30 seconds after I had any idea who he was. Chalk it up to my charming personality. After all that died down some, rumors started cropping up that Dan Steffan wasn't cashing the Save The Fund checks pouring in from around fandom. People grumbled that maybe the fund didn't really need their support after all. In all, the subject of TAFF was fraught. So now it was three weeks before the candidacy deadline, and no rumor of even one candidate had reached Andy's delicate, shell pink ears. You need a minimum of two to have a race. Andy worried aloud.

The gist of the worrying was that TAFF was in trouble. Staggering under the repeated blows, the fund really needed a turnaround—a good, positive, engaging TAFF race to attract people's attention and renew their interest in the game. TAFF needs vitality and visibility if it is to do its work at all. (We took it as read that the transatlantic exchange of fans is, on the whole, a good thing.) But the notion of assembling any TAFF race was troublesome. Races require candidates. Fandom, Andy felt, had reached a pass where the old model of a TAFF candidate was scarcely usable. If we take the old model as someone who has a stellar fan writing career already

behind him, popularity and renown through the breadth of fandom, is an established paragon of wit and a vetted genzine veteran, who nonetheless has never been oversees and couldn't manage such a feat on his own funds, but wants to, then viable TAFF candidates were thin on the ground. All the more so if you need a fan willing to put himself forward, and able to take the time to travel, and willing to be saddled with the satisfactory administration of the fund afterwards.

And you need at least two candidates to make a race. So perhaps the thing to do would be to re-think the model of a TAFF candidate. Maybe the strict adherence to fanzine credentials needed to be loosened. Maybe big credentials weren't even the right way to go. What if, for instance, TAFF were to send someone across the Atlantic who hadn't been over, and was closer to the beginning of a fannish career than the end of one? Someone for whom winning TAFF was a huge and singular honor? Someone who could be reasonably counted on to pay forward into fandom for years to come? If the idea of TAFF is to build friendships and connections among fans, then more mileage may be got from building them between younger fans who still look forward to most of their careers, and will not gafiate immediately upon getting home. TAFF has many reasons for being. Andy's idea was to focus on its power to build community, over its power to pay tribute to accomplishment.

This then would be TAFF without the qualifying pedigree. And if by chance some worthy drudge who could manage fund monies, creditably pass them on, and even build up TAFF's reputation and funds could be found and elected, so much the better for the current straits. It might, it had to be said, make for a less glamorous TAFF winner, but too many glamorous TAFF winners had been unequal to keeping the funds intact. TAFF has to survive and prosper to do any good at all.

Andy had a good deal more to say, much of it stirring and lofty. But out of the deluge, a couple of conceptual cockleburs caught in my socks. TAFF needed fans. In particular it needed service, dedication, and support. And you didn't have to be Walt Willis to do it. I am a sucker to well-framed appeals to civic duty. And I've spent my life not being Walt Willis. So the hook was set. I had a noble motive.

But I didn't immediately decide to stand for TAFF. It was a bit of a reach, after all. I hadn't previously spent much time picturing myself as a TAFF delegate. I had my whole self-image to revise. I needed a push.

On that score, I blame RASFF.

Pam Wells started it. The previous year, she'd brought up my name as a potential TAFF delegate in one of those rambling, mutating, pell-mell RASFF conversations. Since Pam's a former TAFF winner herself, and all-round famous faned, I gave some credence to the praise. Some other rasffen chimed in. Privately, I told Pam I thought it was way too soon for me to stand for TAFF then, and privately she agreed it probably was, but she meant to run another one-off fund again after the Farber fund, and thought I might be ripe for that. Or for TAFF some years down the line. Pretty heady flattery that was. Now, I had some notion that a proper TAFF candidate ought to be induced to stand only by general acclamation, rather by ego, and I hadn't noticed people popping out of cabinets to ask me to step in and save TAFF, but in Pam at least I had a known constituent. Somebody in England already thought it would be kinda cool to meet me, and the idea had not been met with jeers of public disapproval.

Westercon eventually collapsed to a halt, scattering fans and detritus as it fell. Hal and I moved our vacation base camp from the monastic hotel in the U District to the untrammled wilds of Redmond, where the in-home T1 lines abide. We spent our days pooching around Ravenna and Green Lake, and Pioneer Square, and I used my odd hours

**NO FANZINE IS
WORTH A HUMAN
LIFE.!**



**WELL,
EXCEPT
THIS
ONE
AND A
RUN OF
BOUND
HYPHENS**

writing plaintive e-mails and trying to figure out if I had any business standing for TAFF. I weighed Andy's criteria and looked for a fit. I had never been on a fannish visit to the UK. (Okay, technically I had set foot

in Heathrow and Gatwick while getting packed off to the maternal grandparents, in Sweden. I hoped this would not count.). At least somebody in the UK wanted to meet me. I could apply myself to being a worthy drudge if called on to do so. I certainly hoped I was on the upward arc of my fannish career. There was no question that winning TAFF would be far and away the single biggest deal in my fannish life to date. I didn't mind

the idea of standing for TAFF for the sake of the fund. I had been doing apazines for almost two decades, but the genzine fans assured me that this did not count as fanzine credentials or a fanwriting career. By the old model, I was largely unqualified to stand for TAFF. So I met most of Andy's hypothetical criteria pretty well. And I was certainly as qualified a candidate as anybody who was standing so far. If I stood, there was only one candidate to be drummed up to have a race. So maybe I could stand, if nobody thought it was too wildly stupid an idea.

I ripped off a quick e-mail to Patrick Nielsen Hayden, and then phoned Andy Hooper, wondering whether it was too cheeky of me to stand for TAFF. My thought was that both Andy and Patrick knew me a bit, had an established interest in TAFF, had thought a good deal about the fund, and neither one is coy with his opinions. If either one thought that my putting my name in the hat was a wildly stupid idea, I could count on him to say, "Gee, Ulrika, that's a wildly stupid idea," with the gentleness we know and love them for, and then I would just drop the whole crazed notion, and slink off to lick my wounds somewhere. I gritted my teeth and squeezed my eyes shut against the inevitable blow.

What actually happened was that Patrick replied that of course I should stand for TAFF. In fact he and Teresa would nominate me if I wanted. And then Andy said he'd nominate me if I decided to stand.

Ulrika. Feather. <Thud.>

Well. So okay. I picked up the scattered pieces of my jaw, and tried to guess where that put me. Mostly, in need of yet more help and reassurance. Never let it be said that I shirk in the business of low self-esteem. Or call it realism, if you like.

I had three nominators, but no idea how to become an official TAFF candidate. Nor how to run a campaign, if nominated. Was there ever so ample a dunce? I fired off fusillades of e-mails to friendly fannish elders from RASFF: Geri Sullivan, Gary Farber, Pam Wells, Bernard Peek, Rob Hansen and Avedon Carol, looking for support and advice. I went browsing Dave Langford's TAFF web site. I got some answers, and a bunch more questions. I found out that I needed five nominations, and must get them to the current administrators by the nomination deadline. But, how many nominations per side of the Atlantic? Did it matter which administrator? Who was the current administrator, anyway? I had to produce a platform of 100 words. Did it have to be exactly 100? Why wasn't Geri Sullivan answering her e-mail? I began to get a few replies. Pam Wells had promised her nomination to somebody else if only they would stand this year, so she wasn't at liberty. Bernie doesn't nominate in TAFF as a matter of policy, having recused himself for excessive smoffishness. Rob offered an enthusiastic nomination from himself and Avedon. Geri Sullivan was ominously silent. Still, no one had told me flat out that it was a wildly stupid idea for me to stand.



Our week in hot and sunny Seattle was winding to a close. We spent our last fannish evening at a dinner party with Andy Hooper and Carrie Root. Victor Gonzalez and Sheila Lightsey filled out the company. Carrie cooked us her justly famous New Mexico-style enchiladas. Normally I don't even like enchiladas, but Carrie's are swell. We talked and laughed, the smoke wafted in from the patio, and the heavy smuffing snuck by on little cat feet. Andy was trying to talk Victor into standing for TAFF. I admitted I was thinking of standing, too, to make a race. I thought it would be great if Victor would stand, since that way there would definitely be one. "C'mon, Victor," I said. "Stand for TAFF. If I can do it you certainly can. It'll be fun." With my mouth, I said that. Call it ironic, if you like, but only in hindsight, if you please.

Then back home to California, jiggedy jig. There I got back online and found, on closer reading, that I was wrong thinking I needed two North American nominators and three British ones. Actually, it's the other way around for an eastbound race. Lucky thing Pam and Bernie didn't both say, "yes," or I'd really be looking like a chump about now. And the Nielsen Haydens were counting themselves as one nomination, ditto Rob and Avedon. So I really still just had three nominations, and needed one more Brit, and one more American.

Then Andy fell through. Victor was definitely standing, now, and Andy had long ago promised a nomination to Victor whenever he would stand for TAFF. That put me down to two nominations, needing one more Brit, and two more Americans.

Fortunately, the ominous silence broke. Geri Sullivan was back from vacation, back online, and just tickled pink to nominate me for TAFF if I wanted. It wasn't that she had been trying to think of a polite way to tell me my standing was a scary bad thing that shouldn't be considered. Instead, she just needed some guidance about *how* to nominate me. No one had ever asked her to nominate them before. It is a lucky thing that several yards divide my computer from the nearest feather. The fall from my desk chair is an awkward one, and I might have done myself damage. I don't know if I was more boggled by the fact that no one had ever asked her before, or by the fact that *she* was asking *me* how the process went. Geri and I have been in fandom for about an equal number of years, but she's definitely been playing with the big kids a lot longer than I have. I just figured she knew everything. Luckily, I was just far enough ahead of her by then to know that Dan Steffan was the administrator, and that she needed to send him a letter of nomination.

For a while then, I could go forward buoyed by insufferable smugness alone. Geri has a special place in my heart as fannish all-mother and hospitality sprite, far more warmly accepting of my rough edges, sharp corners, and artless galumphing about than ever I deserve. She took so quick a shine to me when I broached the borders of RASFF that I imprinted on her like a baby bird. She's my net.mommy. That I should have been her very first TAFF nominee is beyond gratitude, so I opted for odious gloating, instead. Neener, neener, neener. All you past and future TAFF nominees, I dance the victorious Weasel War Dance tattoo on your heads. I was her first. Ha.

I also heard back from Gary Farber. Gary, too, was inexplicably happy to nominate me if I wanted him to, but he thought it might damage my chances if he did. He suggested I hold him in reserve and look for someone else. On the other hand, he had let it be known to Dave Langford that I was thinking of standing for TAFF and needed another European nomination. Langford told Gary that nobody had asked him for his nomination yet, and that he was willing to give it to the first even vaguely plausible crawler who did ask him. Dave. Langford. I am not an idiot. I can fake vague plausibility on a good day. I asked. Langford fell for it.

I had four nominations, two from each side. I still needed another North American. Yet even now, no one had pulled me up short for my hubris.

Then came a period of stumbling around not getting much accomplished. I fiddled with my candidate's statement, overtaxed anyone who would read it with endless small and fiddly redrafts, and sent off e-mails searching for a fifth nomination. I sent a query to Mike Glycer. Apparently it fell into a black hole, never to be seen again. I sent one to Bjo Trimble, with similar results. The finely stretched silence seemed like tacit condemnation. My statement was about five words too long and wouldn't pare shorter. I suck at waiting.

I consulted with my various nominators and supporters, and despite myself sank ever deeper into the Kremlinology of spin. Gary held firmly that getting the right ticket of nominations was vitally important to the success of a TAFF campaign. I should be very careful whom I asked. He proved so right in Langford, I couldn't say much against it. I mooted nominators and Gary discarded them. In a parallel conversation, Pam Wells felt that consuming four people to get two nominations would look greedy and I should pare off some, but Patrick had been pretty firm that he and Teresa always counted as one entity in TAFF matters, and Rob and Avedon

seemed much of the same mind, and there I sat, not knowing what was the done thing, but pretty sure that I didn't want to cry off from anybody who had already been generous enough to agree to nominate me. Pam proved right when word came back that Vicki Rosenzweig had decided to stand and was a bit put out that I had already sucked up all the good nominations. That nonplussed me, in turn, just because I hadn't realized that was what I was doing. Score another one for Ulrika O'Brien, girl Kremlinologist. And I still didn't want to insult anybody by saying, "Oh, hey, remember how I said I was really honored you were willing to nominate me? Ho, ho, ho. Uh. Just kidding." Anything I could do was wrong. And I still needed a fifth nomination. I had Gary in reserve, but if he had been right about the plus points of Langford's nomination, he might even be right about the minus points of his own. I waited. Badly.

Finally Andy Hooper decided to take pity on me, by hunting up a "better" nominator for Victor to replace himself with, so that I could have Andy as my fifth. Andy set about wooing Arnie Katz to the role. After a seemingly-length courtship, Arnie relented, and Victor got Arnie and I got Andy. All hands change, the shade of Shakespeare smiled down on us, the wedding bells tolled and we all lived happily ever after. I sent off my bond and my statement—still about four words too long—to Dan Steffan just in time for the deadline, and with the speed of overnight success we had ourselves a TAFF candidacy. Gee, that wasn't hard.

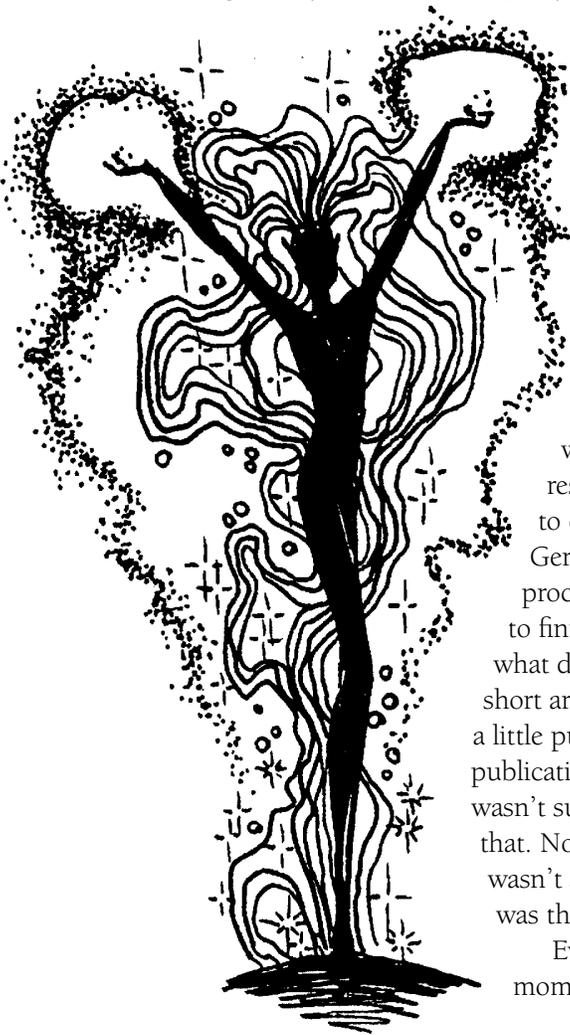
Except I still had a TAFF race to run. I needed strategy. I needed direction. I needed a big ol' clue with training wheels on it.

For that, like so many before me, I blame Gary Farber.

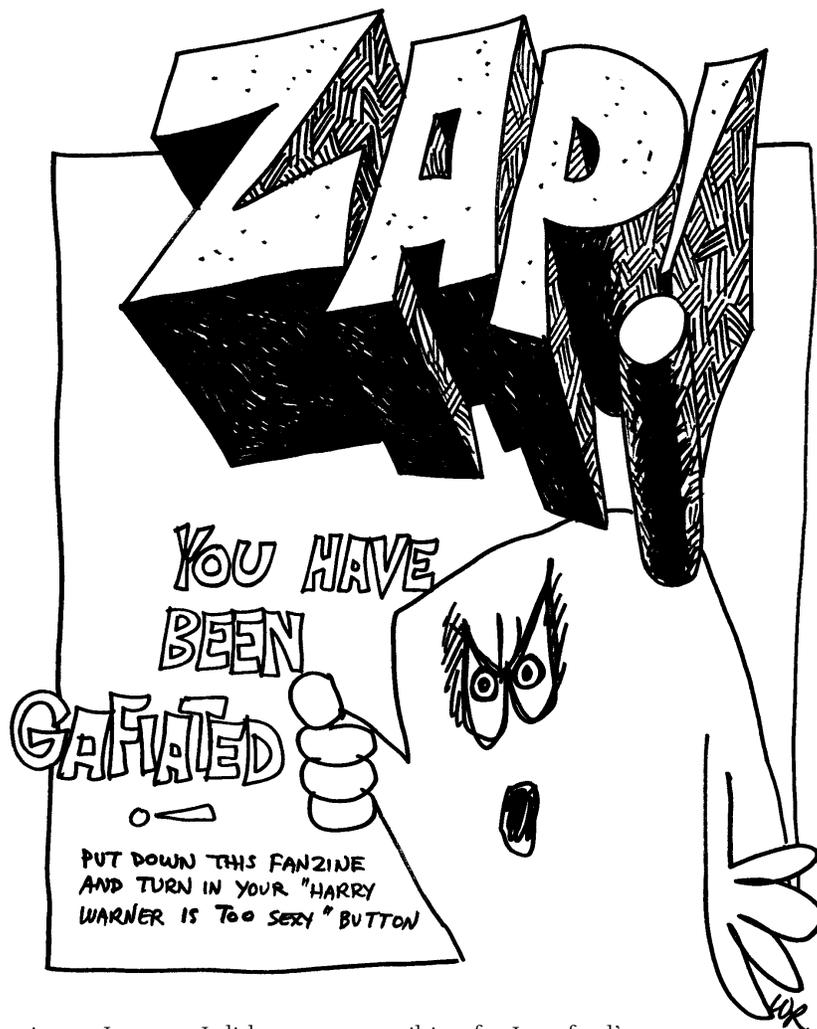
Gary kindly took it upon himself to instruct me in the business of standing for TAFF. This is exactly the sort of job Gary was born for. He's a positive wealth of ideas and suggestions and established fannish wisdom. Gary taught me everything I know about what is and isn't "done" in TAFF. Some of it isn't very intuitive. For instance, it generally doesn't do to openly and flagrantly campaign for yourself. And yet a lively and active

race is prized. To my naïve sensibilities, the two seem a little contradictory. The trick, apparently, is that your supporters are supposed to campaign for you. Handy if your supporters are the ones who have cudged your shy, self-effacing ass into standing. If not, then not. What a candidate can do instead of explicitly soliciting votes is work on being fannishly visible. Publish fanzines. Get articles in other people's fanzines. Write interesting and clever locs to everyone who pubs an ish. Get fan artists to do campaign art. Dave Langford, bless his energetic heart, immediately found ways to drop my name in every issue of *Ansible*. He also offered to run anything from me that fit the *Ansible* format. I turned out to be just as rotten at coming up with little squibs of fannish interest during a TAFF race as I am the rest of the time, but it was a nice idea. Teddy Harvia kindly agreed to draw campaign cartoons for me—hand colored in crayon, no less. Geri Sullivan suggested I write her an article for *Idea* about the whole process of deciding to stand for TAFF. (Yes, it did take me three years to finish the article. I admit its usefulness as a campaign tool is somewhat diminished with the passage of time.) Andy Hooper offered to run short articles by all four candidates to provide a forum for everyone to get a little publicity. Gary suggested I put *Widening Gyre* on a more frequent publication schedule to show myself off more. I pointed out that *Gyre* wasn't supposed to be a campaign zine, and I didn't really want to change that. No, no. If I wanted to win, I needed to be visible. Okay, but winning wasn't supposed to be the point. Having a race and getting a good winner was the point.

Even so, winning would be kind of nice, I admitted in wistful moments. Corflu would be in the UK in '98, and since I had just



discovered how much I like Corflus, I didn't want to miss the next one. And I really did want a chance to meet all those fine British fans in person. And it really was the optimum year for me to go. Only trouble was, I couldn't possibly win. Hadn't Pam Wells said it was too soon for me? Wasn't everyone in the race more published than me? Hal was sure I would win anyway, but he's married to me so he's supposed to think stuff like that. Andy was equally sure I would, except for when he was convinced that Tom Sadler or Vicki or Victor would. He had a different theory for why each was equally certain. Most everybody else seemed to show reserved optimism. Which I interpreted as trying to be nice to soften the blow. Rich brown was darkly certain I would win because all the evil online fans would overwhelm the right-thinking fanzine fans with their thousands, if not millions, of votes. I had by then some experience of rich's predictive powers, and took it as a sure sign that I would lose. Most of the race I spent in a suspended state of dread, trying to find other things to think about. I ran a TAFF auction at Loscon. I did some transcribing for Langford's various electronic transfer projects. I produced a couple of issues of *Widening Gyre*, and sent out TAFF ballots to every fanned I could think of. I even brought ballots to LASFS. I raced around like a kid on Christmas Eve, trying to make up for a the previous year of bad behavior.



Apparently, the attempts to distract myself worked. One Sunday morning in December the phone rang, just as Hal and I were about to go out for Dim Sum. Hal answered. He handed the phone to me. "For you. It sounds like a sales call."

"Hello?" I used the cool, businesslike tone I reserve for telephone solicitors and undergraduates.

"Is this Ulrika?" He stressed the first syllable. Made the 'i' short. Had never heard my name pronounced correctly, in other words. A stranger. I steeled myself to break into the pitch, and cut the call short.

"Yes."

"Hello. This is Dan Steffan. I wanted to congratulate you for winning TAFF."

"What?"

"You won TAFF. Congratulations."

"I what?"

About then Hal figured out what the call really was. He started laughing and shouting and leaping about the room. I think I he hugged me right off the ground, but I can't be too sure. I was feeling shocky and surreal just then, and the various fragments of reality were not fitting together at the edges.

"I won?"

"Yes? Didn't you expect to?" Dan sounded genuinely surprised in his turn. Perhaps he'd been talking to rich brown.

"No."

"Well, you did."

"Oh."

Dan stayed on the phone long enough to give me the vote totals. A very small voice at the back of my brain said something wasn't quite right, but I nodded uselessly and I jotted down the numbers on a card, then hung up. I read the totals off to Hal, and then we went to eat Dim Sum.

I was completely dazed. A familiar giddiness was slowly washing over me, working its way up from my toes. We had a nice little brunch in Santa Ana. The small voice in the back of my brain was getting louder, but not loud enough, yet. Finally, toward the end of the meal, Hal said, "But I thought a TAFF ballot had to be counted by Australian rules until someone has a clear majority."

"It does."

"Let me look at the numbers again."

I pulled the creased card out of my pocket and handed it over.

"Yeah. These figures only go out to the first round of counting. You only have the largest plurality. Nobody has a majority."

I didn't realize that I had floated up to such a height until I fell down from it.

"Shit. I'll have to call Dan Steffan."

We drove home in a more subdued mood. I got on the phone to Dan immediately.

"Dan? It looks like there may be a problem. The vote isn't really finished yet. You guys need to do the eliminations until somebody has a clear majority."

Dan sounded harried and cross. "I know, I know! We're working on it!"

I apologized and hung up. What I didn't know then was that while we had been out eating brunch, TAFF-watching fandom had turned into a boiling anthill of activity. Vicki Rosenzweig, being far quicker witted than I, had noticed the problem immediately. She'd told Dan, and then gotten on ElderMoo and talked it out with a bunch of the fans who frequented it, which got Pam Wells and the Nielsen Haydens and maybe Dave Langford in on it in a matter of moments. Somebody called Martin Tudor to tell him they needed to finish counting. Someone got hold of Andy Hooper who immediately got on the horn to Dan to take advantage of their years of friendship to ream him a new one. By the time I called him, half of fandom had been flamenco dancing on Dan Steffan's head for the better part of two hours, trying to make sure that he and Martin would finish the count and vet the legal results. No wonder he sounded so grouchy.

The next few hours were the worst of the entire TAFF race. I couldn't stop thinking how awful it would be to have finally let myself get giddy with hope and expectation about winning, only to have it turn out that somebody else had won after all. Before, I had been steeled to lose. I had actually managed to forget about being antsy. Now I was a raw nerve. Losing now would be crushing. I got online to distract myself. There, it turned out that Victor had already posted news and his congratulations for my "win" to RASFF and several online lists. With my sandpapered nerves focused on the central goal of doing what was best for TAFF, I could only picture the worst: how bad would it look if announced election results had to be retracted because of an incomplete count. That would be the perfect cap to the disappointment of being dropped from a great height. I just about hit the roof. No doubt I was stretched too tightly by that point. But this was in those far flung days before bolixed presidential elections. We couldn't even blame Florida.

After the long hours of waiting, I finally got a second call from Dan, confirming my win. By then I think I was too tired to even be happy about it. Call it emotional exhaustion if you like.

I'm not sure what lessons to draw. "All's well that end's well" seems a little trite. "Even pessimism is no defense against the cunning perversity of fate," might be more like it. But I did get my TAFF trip after all, so maybe not. Perhaps the right observation is that Hooper's new model of a modern TAFF delegate must have something right about it, since it worked. You can step into the fray as an unqualified TAFFgirl and actually win the brass ring. And egocentric bias and all, I think maybe that's a good thing. If all else fails, blame Canada.

For information about the current TAFF race, see the enclosed ballot.

**For more information about TAFF, and to read trip reports on-line ,
visit <http://www.dcs.gla.ac.uk/SF-Archives/Taff/>**

Minicon Diary

by Dave Langford

So there I was booked to be Fan Guest of Honour at Minicon 33 in Minneapolis over Easter weekend, 1998. The trouble is that despite the pose of spurious cool, I'm not exactly a seasoned international traveller. Previous US trips (Noreascon II, Boston, 1980; Orycon 11, Portland, 1989; Boskone 29, Springfield MA, 1992) have failed to leave me sufficiently blasé. At the slightest contact with trouble, the veil of unconvincing suavity is ripped away to reveal the all too convincing gibbering wreck beneath....

Monday 6 April

Phase one seemed straightforward. Catch train from Reading station, disembogue at Gatwick, check in with plenty of time to spare for TWA Flight 721 flying to St Louis at 11:55. (St Louis? Mine not to reason why. The connection was apparently cheaper that way.) As it turned out, Dorking Deepdene station will be infesting my nightmares for years to come—since just beyond, with three stations still to go, the mighty Thames Trains express stopped and made vigorous idling noises, continuing in this exciting course of inaction for the next forty minutes.

Then it reversed into Dorking again, while the conductor fended off lynch mobs with the practised diplomatic claim that he knew nothing about anything and neither did anyone else. Subjective aeons passed. We draw a veil over the eventual resumption of movement at 11:30, nicely calculated to raise my hopes...the very, very slow subsequent progress, as though the batteries had run down and this train could no longer do hills...Langfordian efforts to preserve tranquil calm through an unscheduled bloody halt at bloody Betchworth, may plagues of locusts and boils afflict the bloody awful place...and of our eventual stately progression into Gatwick, merry as a funeral bell and ten minutes after flight time.

TWA were quite nice and invited me to try again on Tuesday, when there were no free seats on Flight 721 but someone or other was rather more than likely to cancel. So it came about, boys and girls, that six hours after leaving Reading I was home again.

Tuesday 7 April

Not being one to keep my woes to myself, I had duly whinged at full throttle in the general direction of Minicon liaison Geri Sullivan and travel agent Rick Foss. Various strings attached to TWA had been pulled, with what effect no one was sure. Tuesday's train—an earlier one, just in case—went smoothly; my suitcase was sucked into the Gatwick system with huge luminous STANDBY labels all over it; and the real suspense began in the boarding lounge as what seemed like several dozen similarly placed passengers all got the nod before me. One gloated at the top of his voice about being allotted a cancelled first-class seat. I started feeling very lonely in the almost empty lounge—but, not to prolong the suspense, a boarding pass was thrust into my profusely sweating hands some seconds before take-off.

There isn't much that's new to say about transatlantic flights. Notable differences from past experience:

- (a) My choice of Very Fat Book this time was **The Count of Monte Cristo**...which may have something to do with years of hearing about its influence on Alfred Bester's **The Stars My Destination / Tiger! Tiger!**, and even shiftily mentioning the fact myself in print, without ever having read the book—the Dumas, I mean; I forget how many times I've reread the Bester. The approved John Clute phrase is 'use of secondary sources,' meaning 'Of course I haven't *read* the bloody thing.' Anyway, **Monte Cristo** is now recommended as a rattling good yarn. It even has a scientificational bit: thanks to long training in the utter darkness of the Chateau d'If, the Count (just like Gully Foyle after his rewiring) can see in the dark.

- (b) This was the first time I'd carried along a midget word processor, in the form of a Psion Series 5—whose bijou keyboardette would probably be a disaster for a ten-fingered touch typist but works fine for me. It also offers opportunities for exciting international diplomacy when the all too detachable pointing-pen thingy falls out and vanishes under the large lady wedged in the seat next to you.... ('Excuse me, Ma'am, may I feel under your bottom?')
- (c) It is, I assure you, a novel experience to fly in company with thirty or maybe forty members of the Selby Rugby Union club's goodwill mission to St Louis — all boasting this fact in proud t-shirt slogans and demonstrating the traditional rugboid qualities of loudly consuming more than fannish amounts of beer, laughing or applauding loudly and derisively at the in-flight movie, singing loud rugby songs, and being loudly impervious to plaintive TWA suggestions about sitting down, fastening seat belts, etc. Old Langford's Travelling Tips: wear a hearing aid, and turn it off.

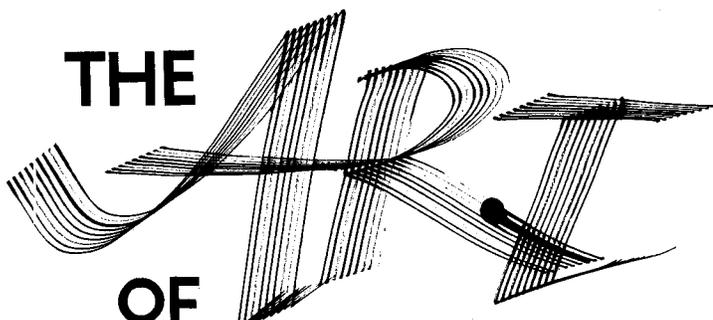
Touchdown. Good things about St Louis airport included getting this far and managing to find a pint of reasonable beer first try—Samuel Adams, chosen for the name's beery resonances (Samuel Smith and Adnams are words of power in Britain), costing bloody hell \$5.05, and later identified to me as 'America's best-known overrated beer.' Not-so-good things: a Gulp moment when the woman in the Immigration booth cancelled my US visa on the ground that its 'Indefinite' status had somehow expired since 1980 (but she let me in anyway); the realization that all Minicon's string-pulling and karmic boosts had been directed at TWA Gatwick, leaving me with the last-ditch stratagem of clinging to the TWA St Louis desk and looking deadly pathetic until they found me a seat; and inability to find, anywhere in this vast modern airport, a telephone that would accept a credit card or the puny amount of loose change to hand.

But wait. As I collapsed gratefully into the last seat on TWA 124 (St Louis to Minneapolis), I noticed a handset right in front of me. Seconds later this had sucked money from my Visa card and connected me to legendary Toad Hall—and so I was met by Fabulous Geri Sullivan and the Amazing Nielsen Haydens, all waving early copies of Minicon's Langfordzine *Wrath of the Fanglord*. We collected my suitcase, whose little wheels had gone all peculiar in transit and emitted persistent squeaky noises; when Geri and Teresa complained that it was

alive, I painted a touching word-picture of small furry animals inside that were expiring in their final agonies after being jumped upon by burly TWA baggage handlers, and—with a certain quiet majesty—Teresa fell over. Yes, I was definitely in the Fannish States of America again.

Wednesday 8 April

Come, Muse, let's sing of toads...but actually Toad Hall, the ultra-fannish abode of Geri, Jeff Schalles, a thousand toads and ten thousand PEZ dispensers, does rather outstrip the feeble descriptive power of mere words. Every surface is littered with enough toys and silliness to keep the most jaded fan (me) happy for hours. Living-room highlights visible from where I most often sat slumped included much antique wooden furniture (most spectacularly, an ancient music-box that plays 18" perforated metal discs, the one in situ being the 1898 *Der Hugenotten*, which I painstakingly translated as *The Huge Otter*), stained-glass windows, a realistic wall-hung punk unicorn head



THE OF ROUNDSMANSHIP

Dave – here are your beer vouchers for the convention.

*As you know, the committee is trying to reduce the costs of running the convention. On advice from the UK we have commissioned **Martin Hoare** to write this guide on the age old art of **Roundsmanship**.*

conceived by Terry Garey and arted by Giovanna Fregni, sundry arcane optical devices, a monstrous deep-sea fish model suspended from the ceiling, a Fabergé-style egg containing a china frog reading *The Wall Street Journal*, a USS *Enterprise* telephone, a chair that delivers alarmingly intimate electrical massage, racks on racks of PEZ memorabilia, and innumerable further frogs, toads, books, knick-knacks and playthings.

But, contrary to popular report and the insidious distortions of urban myth, I can reveal that there are only ten mimeographs in the Toad Hall basement. The other two are out in the garage.

Info-dump digression for those rare fans as ignorant about PEZ as I was: the things are unremarkable little lozenge-shaped sweets, generally citrus- or peppermint-flavoured, whose makers have cunningly injected interest into the packaging by (a) the concept of spring-loaded PEZ dispensers which spit the things into waiting hands; (b) adding droll plastic heads to these dispensers, so that your PEZ is now realistically regurgitated into the world by Mickey Mouse, Batman, a variety of Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, etc—Toad Hall’s favourite is of course Kermit the Frog; (c) introducing variants and rarities into the mix—‘This Wonder Woman has the *raised star* on her forehead,’ said Geri breathlessly, ‘and is worth *ten or fifteen dollars!*’; (d) adding the further joy of PEZ Body Parts, whereby your Darth Vader-headed dispenser can be realistically sheathed in the awesome garb of Miss Piggy; (e) making some specialist varieties available only overseas—Geri was gloating unrestrainedly over a set of imported Asterix dispensers bought for her by Karen Cooper at the recent PEZcon, and I narrowly avoided too intimate an acquaintance with her copies of the all-important handbooks **Collecting PEZ**, **PEZ Collectibles** and **More PEZ for Collectors**. Then there was the electric revolving PEZ-o-Matic, the high-velocity PEZ pistol, the home-made Minneapolis in ’73 zeppelin-headed dispensers, the even more fannish set of PEZ cartoons by Bill Rotsler...and I have barely scratched the surface.

Me: ‘Gosh, what a collection. The work of a lifetime.’ Geri: ‘No, I’ve only been collecting them two years. Well, *maybe* three.’

Upstairs, with characteristic attention to detail, Toad Hall’s spare room offered a jolt from my childhood with a bottle of ‘Wakey Uppy Medicine’ (‘To be administered to Minicon 33 Fan GoH Dave Langford as his behaviour warrants’). This supposedly foul and paralysing potion had been the ultimate deterrent for naughty children at Mrs Saunders’s day school in old South Wales where Martin Hoare and I had first learnt to read in the 1950s. Minicon is not afraid to confront guests with the horrors of their past, aided by bean-spillers like Martin—or like Chris Priest, who revealed a few Langford embarrassments from the ’70s in his programme book piece. You can flee as far as Minneapolis, but there is no escape. As they said to Attila the fortieth time he fell off his horse, ‘You can Hun but you can’t ride.’

Onward.

After an intense business lunch with Patrick and Teresa (‘Are you still thinking of writing a book for Tor some day?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘Good. this is now an official Tor lunch.’), it was time for total immersion in US culture at the Mall of America, allegedly the world’s second-largest shopping mall. Teresa helpfully footnoted its vastness with a commentary on mall design psychology and its aim of achieving a light trance state in which shoppers become decoupled from the outside world and the realities of money. Meanwhile, a built-in amusement park decouples the kids from their stomachs: one ride, perhaps based on garbled memories of ‘The Pit and the Pendulum,’ used a massive simulated axe-blade as counterweight to a midget auditorium crammed with unfortunates being swung upside-down into the air and put through a whole aviatational lexicon of pitch, roll, yaw and puke.

The scale of the place emerged not so much through immense set-pieces—‘Golf Mountain,’ far from inducing vertigo at the awesome north face of the sixth hole, proved to be a rather small and ordinary miniature golf course—as in relentless specialization. The shop devoted entirely to chili, for example,

Roundsmanship - An introduction

Roundsmanship is a practice that dates back to antiquity. Archimedes ran naked shouting ‘Eureka’ to avoid his round. Vercingetorix built his famous Gallic defences to avoid buying Julius Caesar a drink. Caesar, another master Roundsmanship, made some excuse about conquering Britain.

Much has been written about the subject. Baden-Powell’s famous work: *Roundsmanship for Boys* is essential reading.

The party adjourned to an Uptown restaurant whose cuisine was subtly adumbrated by the name 'It's Greek To Me.' Here I learned that when they bring the flaming cheese to the table, it is of the essence that everyone should shout 'Opa!', meaning 'The Cheese Is On Fire!' Must submit this important phrase to Hazel's Language Lessons....

Thursday 9 April

It was The Day...we were off to Minicon itself at last, but by roundabout routes owing to Geri's schedule of last-minute errands (delivering work; depositing Willow the famous linoleum-eating dog at a boarding kennel for the weekend) and tourist excitements. The latter began with a visit to the utterly historic eatery Mickey's Dining Car, est. 1939, open 24 hours daily, and offering a wondrous pre-war ambience of grease, uncompromisingly fast food—you get 30 minutes to gobble it before they tow your car away—olde-worlde mechanical jukebox selectors at every table, and more grease. With appropriate reverence I consumed their topically named 'Mickey's Sputnik' burger with a side order of hash browns whose fragrance of purest grease lingered with me almost as long as a tattoo.

Subsequent excitements included the Geri Tour of superior properties in the posh areas up at the top of St Paul—with pauses to covet all those with wrap-around porches—and the awed discovery that a 'Cretin-Vandalia' sign did indeed refer to Cretin Avenue, location of Cretin High school. To laugh at this nomenclature would be a very Offensive British Cretin thing to do. I laughed inordinately. Next, a glimpse of the Mississippi, and of Minnehaha Falls Park with its no doubt historically authentic statue of local hero Hiawatha and his consort. Geri related the colourful legend, probably set to verse by Longfellow, of how the falls run dry in hot weather but were nevertheless reactivated by the hydrant-opening skills of the entire local fire department to provide a brave spectacle when President Johnson visited at the wrong time of year.

And so to Minicon, pausing only to pick up expensive chocolate truffles (Geri's Pavlovian reward to the con's executive committee) and lesser goods suitable for microwaving: Peeps and Ivory soap. Peeps proved to be horrid little marshmallow chicks in a variety of toxic-seeming colours, the bright blue ones being especially alarming. I don't know exactly what Peeps do when microwaved, but Ivory bars apparently grow legs and expand like some spectacularly gruesome special effect from *Alien*, conquering the world in Lovecraftian shoggoth form and at last leaving your microwave smelling indelibly of soap. Let me admit right here that anyone who did in fact bring a microwave oven to Minicon successfully concealed it from Geri for the duration. Curiosity still has me by the short and curlies....

And then it was Minicon and I don't remember any more, except for a moment during dinner when Patrick Nielsen Hayden advanced on our restaurant table to administer committee egoboo: 'Geri, I just want you to know this is THE WORST POCKET PROGRAMME I HAVE EVER SEEN!'

Friday 10 April

I try to be quick at getting the hang of hotel geography. Here was Minicon 33 in its then traditional venue the Radisson South, hotel of two towers: the huge great South Tower with 20-odd floors, and the modest North or Plaza Tower whose top (8th) floor housed such fannish oddments as Geri, Martin Hoare, the Minneapolis in '73 suite, and me. Far below, the ground floor offered vital spots like the breakfast and lunch room ('Kaffe Stuga'), the coffee and sandwich bar ('Plaza Java') and—eerily empty by British standards—the real bar or 'Captain's Quarters.' The second floor contained the main function rooms. What was notably missing from the programme-book

Lesson 1 - 'Hello'

Joe Phan is standing at the bar. He has just ordered his second pint and is about to pay when he hears 'Hello, I didn't expect to see you here.'

'Er...Um would you like a drink?'

'Thanks...I'll have a pint.'

'What a coincidence,' Joe Phan is thinking.

Little does he know that Roundsman had spotted Joe Phan half an hour ago. Patiently observing the pint go down, he swooped with perfect timing. Just as Joe had the money in his hand for his second pint it was time for 'Hello.'

maps was the Fontainebleu Room where I happened to be giving my first talk. Closer investigation disclosed that this was in the Sofitel, an overflow hotel not thought worth mapping, whose position relative to the Radisson remained shrouded in mystery.

It seemed a good time to ignore this problem and send some traditional postcards to England (one—‘Wish you were here’—carefully addressed to Martin Hoare). A gentle reminder of the scale of Minicon came when I asked about the nearest mailbox and was directed to the con’s official US Post Office substation next to the mighty registration desk complex, which not only accepted my humble cards but franked them with a special Minicon 33 postmark.

Joyce Scrivner, a familiar face since the 1979 Brighton worldcon, decided to take me to lunch and present me with a bottle of single-malt whisky since she knew my dark secret: today was my birthday. With an air of cunning I suggested we eat in the Sofitel, and thus learned how to get there and to puzzle over the authenticity of the restaurant’s doggedly French ambience. If their wall sign ATTENTION—CHIEN BIZARRE wasn’t a warning against surrealist poodles, could it be the speciality of the house? We searched the menu in vain.

After lunch it took only about a quarter of an hour to penetrate the arcana of Sofitel geography—the key insight being that the YOU ARE HERE on the lobby’s helpful function room map refers to a position one floor below HERE. Downstairs, one merely had to wander to the far end of an unsigned corridor to find the Fontainebleu Room labelled as such on its door, in letters almost an inch high. There was not, as rumour later had it, a notice reading BEWARE OF THE LEOPARD. How many fans would solve this spatial *koan* in time for my scheduled speech at 4 PM? Disturbingly, according to the Pocket Programme which showed seven panels conflicting with my little spot, mine was the only item in the Sofitel all day and the only one scheduled for the Fontainebleu through the whole of Minicon. (Actually, several late-breaking readings were subsequently put there.)

Meanwhile, further exploration of the Radisson revealed that the heart of Minicon wasn’t the bar (as it would be at a low British event) but the bottom two levels of the big South Tower, with many ‘cabana’ suites—including the con suite itself—surrounding the hotel pool and its adjacent floorspace. I inferred that ‘cabana’ is an ancient Spanish term, probably first coined in *Don Quixote*, meaning ‘room with balcony/porch fronting on hotel pool area.’ The cabanas held a wide variety of bizarre and variously private parties. The con suite was strong on food—early one morning there I had my first close encounter with a blueberry bagel—and also provided free utility beer. Here the cultural gap between Minnesota and British fandoms could be measured with some precision, as the time difference between 10:30 AM, when Britfans first clamour for alcohol at the hotel bar, and Minicon’s perception of an appropriate time to unseal the beer keg, at 7 PM.

Tiptoeing back to the distant Fontainebleu Room a few minutes before H-Hour, I found that my audience consisted wholly of Bruce Pelz, strategically placed in the back row for easy escape. After whimpering and hiding in the toilet for a bit, I returned to find a throng numbered in the high single figures, and was encouraged to begin the rerun of my 1997 UK Eastercon talk (‘Twenty Years of Uproar,’ as reprinted in *Idea* and *Matrix*), about fond memories of fanzines in the good old days of my own early career. More people arrived at intervals, muttering dark things about signage. Hardly anyone walked out again. Several laughed at my carefully hoarded joke. Bruce Pelz permitted himself a thin smile. Relief, success, joy, and Anchor Steam Beer in the Sofitel bar

afterwards with Martin Hoare, Dave Clark and Doug Wickstrom...I felt I had negotiated the First Hoop and was now a potential Minicon survivor.

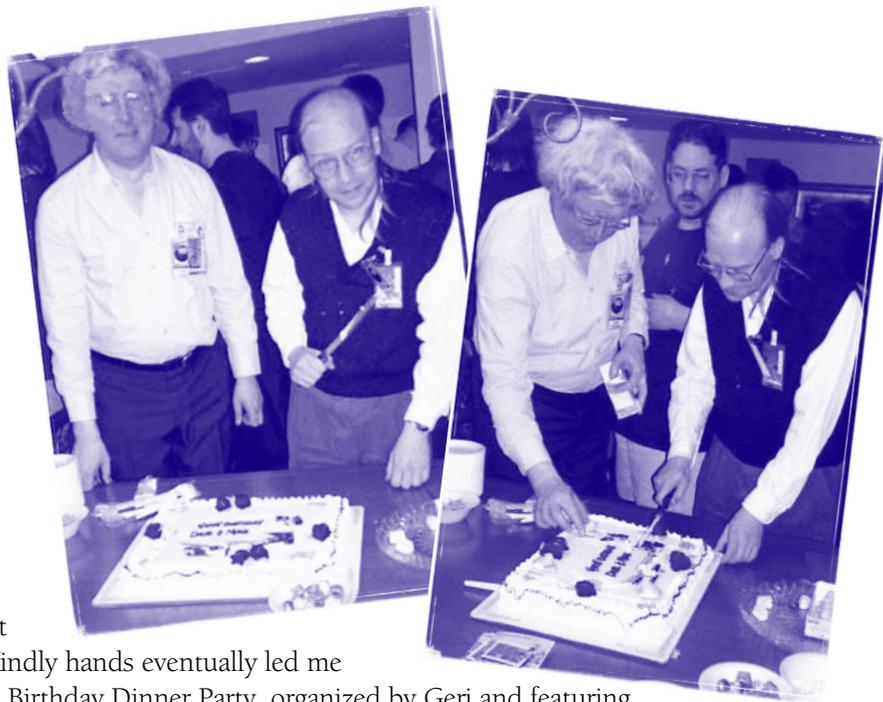
Next came the opening ceremony, at which Toastmaster John M. Ford successfully concealed the fact that (as he later confessed) the hot lights made it impossible to see his audience. At his command though invisibly to him, GoH Gardner Dozois and Fan GoH Langford stood up to be admired, after which I was ordered on-stage to announce a few highlights from the just-released Hugo nominations. ‘Keep it

Lesson 2 - Expanding the round - General Principles

Roundsman now has a dilemma: if he stays drinking solely with Joe he will have to buy the next round.

One solution is to expand the round. With each new member buying the next round, Roundsman can continue to drink for free. It is important to make round expansion seem like a coincidence.

short,' Geri advised, leading to a précis of the fan categories as 'Modesty forbids,' of Professional Editor as 'Gardner something and a few other chaps,' etc. I managed not to swoon at the absence of *Babylon 5* episodes under Dramatic Presentation, and very nearly controlled my puking at the presence of *Starship Troopers*. The Hugos were overshadowed by the following set-piece item, in which Phil Proctor and David Ossman of Firesign Theatre fame announced the Mark Time award for audio drama and had clearly been told to confine themselves to a tight time-slot lasting approximately forever. Kindly hands eventually led me



away for drinks and the Official Langford Birthday Dinner Party, organized by Geri and featuring an appropriate selection of evil cronies whose names I will not drag through the mire here.

10 April was also our toastmaster's birthday, a fact later acknowledged in the con suite when Mike and I were required to cut an enormous sticky cake while Steve Brust—now armed for battle or for poker in his extraordinary leather hat—led the masses in appropriate song. 'Happy Birth-day—UGH! / Happy Birth-day—UGH! / Doom, destruction and despair, / People dying everywhere, / but Happy Birth-day—UGH!' Minneapolis, the home of fannish music.... (Later, with the remark 'Aren't you glad we didn't sing it all?,' Geri sent the entire text of 'The Barbarian Birthday Dirge' which has enough dubious references to sheep to make a Welsh fan feel slightly uncomfortable. But there is sound advice in the couplet 'This one thing you must learn: / First you pillage, then you burn...')

I blame the beer for the impulse that caused me to adorn that cake with a fearfully symmetric pattern of electric-blue Peeps. Unfortunately, photographs were taken.

Saturday 11 April

Saturday was my day of heavy programme commitments, beginning with a 9AM 'Meet the Guests' breakfast party at which Gardner Dozois's role was to scintillate and set the table in a roar, mine was to look at least vaguely awake and sentient, and liaison person Geri ('I don't do mornings.') accepted the burden of staying in bed. Luckily Gardner really is hideously entertaining even at 9AM. By introducing stomach-heaving subjects like children's revolting rhymes and scatological alternative versions of songs and hymns, he not only boosted the circulation between breakfast table and toilets but prodded me into remembering things about Raymond Briggs's joyously filthy **Fungus the Bogeyman**, W.H. Auden's favourite rude variants of carols ('While shepherds watched their flocks by night, / All shitting on the ground, / An angel of the Lord came down / And handed paper round') and much other odd stuff I'd forgotten I knew. Clever sods, these *Asimov's* editors.

Lesson 3 - Expanding the round

Constantly observant, Roundsman will watch for acquaintances. If any is foolish enough to come within earshot the distinctive 'Hello' will ring out. Without accurate timing, this approach may not achieve good results. It is essential to have between one and two inches or beer in your glass.

More than two inches and you might not get a drink.

Less than one inch and people might expect you buy a round.—Disaster

Roundsman often recognise each other by spotting the glass with one and a half inches of beer which sits waiting for the next round to appear.

It was a busy day for Gardner too, since his ‘GoH Interview’ followed at 11AM and was interestingly complicated by the fact that no interviewer turned up. GD, resignedly: ‘So, Mr Dozois, where do you get your crazy ideas?’ By the time I’d screwed my courage to the sticking-place for the Live Thog’s Masterclass in the same room at noon—a presentation based on truly terrible lines from published sf—Gardner had been reduced to reading great wads of stuff from his emergency packet of truly terrible lines from the *Asimov’s* slushpile. This was a frightening act to follow, but I survived the Thog event somehow, and this time caused Bruce Pelz to giggle out loud. For the record, I think the session’s biggest double-take and laugh was provoked by the Linguistics Special from Fred and Geoffrey Hoyle’s **The Incandescent Ones**...

“Hello, stranger on the road,” a voice said in a language not known to me, Turkish presumably.’

After Thog and a hasty beer of recovery, 2PM was already looming, the time of my—and Gardner’s—scheduled autograph session. I carefully researched this in the Minicon Pocket Guide, first failing to find it anywhere in the quick-reference grid, then locating Autographings a little after Science & Technology in the alphabetical subject list (the book had been creatively collated) and Dave Langford in between Dave Bogen and Dave Romm in the alphabetical list of participants...indexed by first name because, to translate the euphemism actually employed, ‘our database is crap.’ (Just to make it more fun, the miscollation caused this list to begin quite plausibly with Eleanor Arnason; forenames in A to D were transposed to a later page.) After long struggle with the maps, I put the question to a committee person: ‘Is it in fact possible to deduce the location of the autographing area from information in this guide?’ The frank answer was ‘No.’ For the guidance of future generations, what you do is walk hopefully around the second floor until you spot the prominent landmark of Gardner Dozois, who has been guided by better-informed hands to the tables which are so conspicuously not signed ‘Autographing Area.’

A digression. Yes, it seemed a bit odd that such a highly organized-seeming convention, of such size and established tradition, should schedule the two main GoH slots for successive hours in the same room, with no one to introduce us; and likewise should provide no directions to mysterious places like the Fontainebleu Room (eventually fingered in the nifty con newsletter, *The Bozo Bus Tribune*, on Saturday afternoon) and autograph zone. But all this, I came to realize, lay at the edge of the Great Minicon Controversy—wherein the convention was seen to have become too vast a party, in which both sf and fandom were swallowed up in dense heaving

Lesson 4 - Expanding the round - part 2

There is always a danger that acquaintances will not pass closely enough.

When this happens a bolder approach is required. This is when Roundsman makes a journey to the toilet. On the way back he approaches an old friend. ‘Hello, I didn’t see you sitting here. We’re over there.’

This never happens until the poor victim has less than an inch of beer in his glass. As he wanders over there is the well rehearsed expectant look of ‘It’s your round.’

Victim may think that this is a coincidence. It is not. Roundsman has been closely observing Victim since the start of his pint. Victim’s drinking rate has been calculated. Roundsman swoops with impeccable timing.

masses of undifferentiated fun while organizers became too over-extended to cope with all the details and suffered regular burn-out from confronting the intractable immensity of it all. Minicons are bigger (3,350 at Minicon 33) than any but the most recent British Worldcons, between which British fandom gets about a decade of recovery time as opposed to Minneapolis’s single year. Hence the hotly debated ‘High Resolution’ scheme for a smaller, tighter-focused Minicon 34 in 1999...

I worriedly began to toy with a vision of brainstorming at some policy meeting: ‘Hey, I know how to make the fans stay away in droves. There’s this guy we could ask as guest, called Langford...’

Meanwhile, M33’s variegated generosity to this particular crabby guest also deserves to be recorded. An emergency bottle of wine in my room; an enormous stash of bottled beer and a refrigerator to keep it in; a special amplifier fitted to the room phone so the deaf twit GoH could call Hazel in England at Minicon’s

expense; wads of bills as ‘walking around money’ for beer and meals, several times replenished by Geri on the basis that ‘even if you haven’t spent it all, you *should have* by now...’ As a bonus treat, Martin Hoare—that man again—had been commissioned to write down his long-researched thoughts on Roundsmanship, the art of not buying drinks when it’s your turn, and Geri had printed this up on dollar-sized cards in an exquisite limited edition of three copies for the author, the publisher, and me. Martin lives in vain hope that each of the two British fans whose habits are most closely described in this opuscle will recognize only the other.

I blame the hotel for the room’s presentation bundle of ‘Minnesota Birch Logs,’ straight pretzels complete with salt-grains but noxiously coated with white chocolate except for a bit at one end. Cally Soukup insisted that these things were nice, so I was able to cover myself with glory by donating them to the Green Room during her shift there.

We now return you to the scheduled autograph session, which I estimate was not visited by 3,340 fans. I sat between Gardner and the very nice Lois McMaster Bujold, the latter still boggling at her discovery that the Mobile Robotics / Machine Perception Lab had named an experimental robot after her. Shameful egoboo came from the fact that as I’m rarely at US cons to sign books and there was a heap of my stuff on sale just round the corner, I did slightly more business than Lois. Since her autograph is conscientiously large and legible, it was my duty to pass on the wisdom of Greg Bear, who during a signing at Orycon 11 had stood critically behind me for a while and then confided: ‘I’ve been timing your signature, young Langford, and it takes you five whole seconds to autograph a book. This shows that you have clearly *never had a bestseller...*’ Here, perhaps, is the secret of ever-popular Tanith Lee’s autograph, which over the years has contracted to a single inscrutable pothook from some lost shorthand alphabet.

After an hour and a half the signing was brought to a close by the traditional Dozois cry of, ‘That’s enough *humiliation* for one day!’

Meanwhile in the main hall, the Minicon 34 committee were lined up on-stage in a long dogged row, fielding questions about their shrinkage plans which—considering the ease with which ‘tightening up Minicon’ can be interpreted as ‘elitistly picking on special interest groups X, Y and Z’—were incredibly polite by British standards. A haze of Minnesota Nice filled the air. Whenever confronted with anything unanswerable, ringmaster Teresa Nielsen Hayden would break open and read a Chinese fortune cookie, with eerily appropriate results.

One useful rendezvous spot for pros and others was Minicon’s Green Room, boasting endless supplies of coffee and cake plus its very own copy of **Flight** by Vanna Bonta, from which various people—many of them Mike Ford—would give random readings almost as impressive as (if less cogent than) Teresa’s fortunes.

‘He was having a grand time behind Section A controls of Z Zone when, without warning, his face turned umbrageous and he barked, “But there is no chance of error!” [...] A laugh heaved forward from Juristac’s massive body and broke up the catarrh deposits in his throat. “But of course!” Juristac intermixed in his laugh-cough.”

Never sit in the front row when this guy is speaking. But a sudden chill settled on the Green Room when the whisper went around that fellow-guest Phil Proctor was a bosom friend of Ms Bonta’s, with a dangerous fondness for defending her work against all comers. We found ourselves—to quote the great book—emitting frequent dispersals of fear.

And so it went. Vignette from the lavish Tor party: Gardner D. was holding court amid a circle of lesbian and feminist writers. During a brief silence, one Dozois remark rang unforgettably out: ‘When you’ve had a fat old man, you won’t wanna go back!’

Lesson 5 - Round Rot

Eventually it will be spotted that Roundsman has failed to buy his round. This is when Round Rot is important. By keeping the structure of the round dynamic, no one will spot that Roundsman hasn’t bought a drink.

This is far too important to be left to chance. Roundsman has carefully studied the convention programme. It is no coincidence that just as Joe Phan was expecting a drink from Roundsman, he is reminded that he is on a programme item starting in two minutes.

Sunday 12 April

Breakfast routine was disrupted when, owing to some strange pagan festival revolving around ice sculptures of rabbits (known in the trade as ‘graven images’), the breakfast room opened very late and then refused to serve mere breakfast. Over sandwiches elsewhere with Dermot, he told me how he’d wandered into a hall full of Wiccans or something, all conducting arcane rituals with crystals, and I reminisced about the dealers’ room visit in which I’d just bought a souvenir for Hazel, an octahedral chunk of fluorite in her favourite blue. Being under the impression that that this was a lump of mineral, I was overwhelmed by gush from the lady behind the sales table, who congratulated me on my fine choice of healing stone and gave a short lecture on how to charge it with orgone energy, align it with leys and very probably wield it to conjure Easter Bunnies from the vasty deep. I thought it wise to make my escape before she sold me a set of occult instruction and maintenance manuals.

It is well known that I don’t do music, but I was seduced by glowing newsletter reports of Friday’s performance of the practically legendary 1977 fannish musical *Midwestside Story*—based of course on *West Side Story*, which in turn was based a little bit on *Romeo and Juliet*, so I felt I was in with a chance of understanding the repeat performance on Sunday. Instead of Montagues and Capulets or rival street gangs, *Midwestside Story* has fanzine and conrunning fans who meet at the Worldcon (Bozocon, Minneapolis in ’73), and, from forth the fatal loins of these two foes / A pair of star-cross’d lovers take their life....

Even I must have been bitten by the Spirit of Minnesota Nice, since the energy and enthusiasm of the players made the whole thing seem pretty damn wonderful even to a tone-deaf twit. Picky exception noted: there was a

Lesson 6 - Expanding the round - part 3

There may not always be enough people in the bar to keep the round expanding. Roundsman will have already assessed this before coming to the bar.

A quick excursion into the rest of the hotel is necessary.

‘Hello, I’m going to the bar soon. Do you want to join me at 3PM?’

Now we see a perfect example of timing in Roundsmanship. It is approaching 3PM. Everybody else has bought a round. Roundsman’s glass is running lower than the others. The round is looking at Roundsman expectantly. With impeccable timing he raises his glass for the last drop... ‘Hello’ says new Victim. ‘Like a drink?’

You must always pick a punctual victim when using this ploy. Only another Grand Master would notice the careful position adopted by Roundsman. While everybody else marvels at the coincidence, we know that Roundsman picked his bar stool so that he could see the corridor in the bar mirror. He had been carefully observing the progress of Victim before raising his glass for the grand gesture.

framing device consisting of long, long, taped voice-overs—to me, incomprehensible—which ‘explained’ all this weird fannish stuff, as though slanlike sf readers were incapable of picking it up from context or from the glosses in the programme book. But after much on-stage silliness, including the distribution of Tony (Romeo) the Confan’s first awful fanzine *Idea* to the front rows, the charge of enthusiasm built and built until the entire audience was on its feet clapping and demanding impossible numbers of curtain calls. Me included. This is uncharacteristic. There must be something in the air.

CLOSING CEREMONY SPEECH WHICH IN THE HEAT OF THE MOMENT GOT TRUNCATED TO ABOUT THE FIRST SENTENCE: ‘Thanks very much, everyone. The best part of Minicon 33 hospitality was the trusting way that they stored the Minneapolis in ’73 beer in my room, and encouraged me to sample it freely. I’ve been asked to announce that Minneapolis in ’73 apologizes profusely for the shortage of beer at tonight’s party....’

Normal reactions to music had returned by the small hours, when I found myself cringing from the filk circle in the Minneapolis in ’73 suite (my musical spy Krissy Benders assured me that people who knew about tunes and keys were quite often cringing too), a circle which had arranged itself with insidious cruelty to block the way to the bathtub of beer. In the next room, various fans were disporting

themselves in a jacuzzi but failing to be the centre of interest, this spot being reserved for the spectacular electrical storm that raged over Minnesota and lit up the whole sky in jagged mile-wide lightning bursts. Watching this from a hot tub full of naked fans would doubtless have added to the experience, but, being Britishly uptight, I kept a cautious distance from the party suite's tub of simmering flesh... Was this decadence as she is practised in Minnesota? Martin Hoare sneered at my naivete. *He'd* been exploring the bondage party. Eventually the pyrotechnics blew away, and I went to bed by moonlight.

Monday 13 April

While Minicon workers took the convention down, it was soothing to sprawl for hours in the bar, all programme responsibilities over. Dermot gloated over his portable technology: a pocket computer which played snazzy video clips of recent explosions he'd been implicated in, and a super camera that not only held 90 minutes of digital video or 10,000 stills but also zoomed in to read the small print on bottles behind the bar 40 feet away. All this was eclipsed when a fan came in waving a brochure from DiaboliCo, who make giant Tesla-coil installations that generate 18-foot lightning bolts, and other fun things which I nervously sensed were being added to Dermot's Xmas list.

Meanwhile, Joyce Scrivner fretted in the bar for approximately eight hours because Martin Hoare—about to become her house guest—was supposed to be meeting her there but, it turned out, had been lured off for a little 12-pint session in a city pub called Sherlock's Home. Various fans, on his return: 'But isn't the food there *awful*?' Martin: 'Oh, do they do food?'

Minnesota Niceness came into perspective here and at the con suite's final 'Dead Donut Party.' That great Minicon shrinkage debate had raged very mildly all weekend, with hotheads fomenting reasonableness in all directions. The most visible evidence of strife had been a feebly satirical poster suggesting that costume fans were being picked on and 'excluded.' (Actually the whole masquerade event was being transferred bodily to a new convention, or possibly two new conventions.) M34's savage riposte was a pre-prepared rubber stamp for annotating subversive notices by adding, in red: '...is not a sufficiently healing message.' One earnest fan explained at length how she had helped preserve Niceness by dissuading someone from printing up his dreadfully over-hurtful and divisive t-shirt slogan: *Oh my God, they've excluded Kenny!* The M34 controversy reached its peak of violence when a tired and over-emotional con worker was moved to (if you have tears to shed, prepare to shed them now) scrape the frosting off a cake bearing the inflammatory message that Minicon was hosted by Minn-Stf, the Minneapolis SF Society. 'They're not hosting it, they're trying to destroy it!' etc. Effusive apologies followed.

Had I been abducted to some paradise planet where 3,350-person cons can happen without serious incident? In a guilty way it was almost a relief to hear that one excitable congoer had unfunnily threatened people with a real sword and been marched off by the police.

Tuesday to Friday: Toad Hall

Tuesday morning, and Minicon really was all over. The next convention was steadily moving in—something to do with the oil business, bringing people in suits, significantly posher vehicles in the hotel car park and a vast model of a gasoline pump in the once fannish Plaza Tower. Would it be wise to move among these newcomers asking, 'Say, are you with the global warming convention?' Sitting at a handy table in the deserted bar, I tried to update my Psion notes and found myself falling prey to the **Tristram Shandy** syndrome. Life moves faster

Lesson 7 - The Grand Gesture

It is important that the generosity of a true Roundsman is never questioned. An occasional Grand Gesture is necessary.

Roundsman, seeing a large group—all of whom have recently bought him a drink—strides confidently to the bar.

'Who wants a drink then?' He had already observed that most of the glasses were empty and this would be a large round.

The last glass arrives. Roundsman takes a large gulp. The barman looks expectantly.

'Oh Shit! I've forgotten my wallet. Can you buy this one Joe Phan? I'll see you later.'

than writing; Tristram Shandy, having taken several books of his 'autobiography' just to get himself born, despaired of ever recording his adulthood; likewise, my Tuesday-morning trip notes were still stuck in the remote epoch of last Wednesday. It was time for decisive action. I ordered a Bloody Mary. Another item crossed off the roster of great US con experiences that I'd planned to relive.

Some Minicon jigsaw fragments still remain, since with famous Langford efficiency I don't quite remember where they fit. Fabulous fan artist Ken Fletcher giving me a copy of his *Spontoon* cartoon scenario for islands, seaplanes and funny animals, looking to my untutored eye exactly like every other funny animal fanzine...much silly and inconsequential party chatter with Ann Layman Chancellor, not knowing that she had only three months to live... DavE Romm presenting me with a fridge magnet labelled MINNESOTA DAVE as compensation for missing Minicon's 'Legion of Super-Davids' photo call for a group picture of everyone called Dave or David ('It won't matter if you're a minute late,' Geri had mispredicted, 'and I need a beer first.')...and many kindly fans like Jeanne Mealy and John Stanley cheering me up by permitting me to autograph Langfordiana at unexpected moments. Allowing for the strong likelihood of my being slightly off-sober at 'my' party, Jeanne took the precaution of sending photographic evidence of the act.

The next few days involved a rigorous regime of slumping at Toad Hall, interrupted by occasional hideous screams as Geri struggled with a belated tax return. I improved my cultural self-esteem by reading neglected classics like **Bunnacula** and Dr Seuss (now it can be told: for shameful decades I had cravenly worn the mask and *pretended* to know what oobleck was). My bemused examination of a Zippy the Pinhead cartoon on the mighty fridge caused Jeff to vanish with a knowing smile and return with several no doubt priceless Zippy comics for Langfordian perusal. Coo er gosh, as we sophisticates say.

There was a soothing dinner outing to Denny Lien's and Terry Garey's, involving super Chinese nosh, lots of red wine, and a lengthy tour of innumerable rooms—from extensive cellars to vertiginous attic—mostly crammed with enough books to boggle me. Denny flatteringly asked that I sign a copy of *Wrath of the Fanglord* ... for Mog Decarnin, not for him, because 'librarians don't let people write things in books...'

I came away laden with pots of Terry's home-made preserves—one of which was to prove life-saving in the Great Chicago Breakfast Dearth a few days thence—and, from Denny, a copy of **Thirteen Poems** by 'Grace Lord Stoke' (ed. J.C. Rez, Bootless Publications, 1998). This strange chapbook's introduction explained almost convincingly that Stoke was an obscure poet of the Lovecraft era, whose masterwork **The Saga of Red Ethel the Unruly** had been praised by HPL himself as depicting...

'a viraginous maiden, whose every inch of integument is bedizened with variegated cicatrizations bearing the form of Gorgons and gryphons, and whose Cyclopean thews betoken a strength matched only by the profusion of her ichorous expectorations.'

At some stage Geri took me downtown to marvel at Minneapolis buildings more than three storeys high, futuristically linked by glass-walled 'skyways' that let you wander through office buildings and above traffic-laden streets, until—this being the realistic and not the Frank R. Paul future—the skyway mysteriously lapses into a snarl of convoluted dead ends about a block short of where you wanted to go. Somewhere beyond the reach of skyways, unattainable like a mirage, was the attraction which for reasons best known to herself Geri

kept dangling temptingly before me, the place with the naked dancing girls. I settled for a glug of beer at the onomatopoeically named Gluek's, a bar whose back-room decor is resplendent with moose and water-buffalo. As Geri pointed out, there was something strange and un-British about the sausages served at this place. They seemed to be made entirely of meat.

That night saw a reception at Dreamhaven bookshop in honour of the Minnesota Book Awards' fantasy and sf nominees. These included Peg Kerr, Mike Ford—who later

Lesson 8 - Late arrival

The late arrival technique is useful when Roundsman only wants two or three drinks.

Using the 'Hello' technique in Lesson 1, Roundsman arrives shortly before closing time. The initial rapid drinking rate slows to a crawl as closing time approaches and everybody else has bought a round. It is essential that Roundsman still has beer left to avoid buying the last round.

won, for his NESFA Press book—and the normally ubiquitous Steve Brust, who for once didn't show up. The audience consisted almost entirely of a party passing through on the way to a drinks outing: Neil Gaiman, Neil's assistant Lorraine Garland (still being taunted for the double booking that kept Neil from Minicon: 'So what are you trying to tell me? That Easter MOVES?'), Geri and myself. We gathered up Mike Ford and fled in search of beer and snacks at the famously overpriced William's Pub nearby. All the ensuing small talk was terrifyingly high-level and off the record, which sounds more interesting than an admission that it was just enjoyably desultory pub chatter. You had to be there.

Further milestones in life... Emma Bull's **War for the Oaks** (of which I bought my very own copy at Dreamhaven) mentions Byerly's as 'the most lavish supermarket in Minneapolis,' a memory which gained the ring of authenticity when Geri took me there and I boggled at exhibits like the big tanks of trout and lobsters, all clearly trying to look ever so small in the hope that passing customers would pick a different one. The attached off-licence—no, Langford, the attached liquor store—supplied a strange and wondrous cranberry-flavoured cider which for a time seemed just the thing to live on for the rest of one's life.

In fact, re-reading Emma's novel on the homeward flight produced a curious effect of double vision. The actuality of Minnehaha Falls, and my failure to find strange glittery remnants from the old glassworks there (Teresa Nielsen Hayden found several; all that falling over puts her closer to the ground) was sort of overlaid by the pitched battle between elven cohorts of the Seelie and Unseelie Courts that takes place there in the book—which had also taught me to recognize Lake Calhoun at the heart of Minneapolis, and the city's strange air-inflated sports dome that glows like a vast phosphorescent mushroom. And Blaisdell Avenue, home of Geri and Jeff, was an oft-used thoroughfare in that very narrative; nearby was fabled Hennepin Avenue, more recently immortalized in Peter Gelman's **Flying Saucers over Hennepin**... Sense of wonder!

Not mentioned in **War for the Oaks** was the 'Ax-Man' surplus shop, full of imaginatively labelled electro-mechanical junk. 'How can you possibly live without a dozen of these obsolete bakelite grommet swivels?' Alas, I couldn't see a way to smuggle a medium-sized missile casing ('Ideal lawn ornament') in the hand baggage, while Geri's solvency was saved in the nick of time when a lifesize Robbie the Robot candyfloss machine proved to be not for sale. As a tasteful souvenir for Hazel, I laid out several cents on a large plastic INFECTIOUS WASTE sack covered with biohazard symbols, and dutifully put all my used socks in it.

A final personal triumph was that I finally managed to open a US bank account to handle those royalty cheques, or checks, for sums like \$3.84 that aren't worth converting to sterling. This nearly foundered on bureaucratic insistence that everyone must have a US social security number, British NI numbers being deemed not good enough...but under relentless pressure from Geri, her bank came up with a special-case checking account for smelly foreigners like me. Then, serendipity: thanks to a new-customer offer which she spotted and invoked, Geri was rewarded with \$10 in her account for introducing me, and I with \$10 in mine for being introduced. Until further notice, Norwest Banks are declared to be utterly splendid.

All too soon it was airport time again. Looks as though I'll have to come back to Minneapolis...

Friday to Monday: Chicago

Things to remember about short hops on cheapo Vanguard flights: you're charged extra if you ask for a decent drink (\$3 for a gin and tonic wasn't so bad, but it took forever to arrive), the window of opportunity for visiting the toilet is nonexistent since the aisle is choked with stewardesses taking drinks orders in the fleeting period of unfastened seatbelts, and Vanguard do not so much touch down as plummet the last fifty feet to the runway, impacting Chicago with a satisfying bang.

The contrast with the tranquil niceness of Minneapolis was fairly boggling. Brother Jon picked me up at Midway airport with nine-

Lesson 9 - Escape

It is essential to have at least one escape plan to avoid buying a round.

Common techniques include having imminent programme items, dinner engagements or committee meetings.

More advanced techniques involve being paged for telephone calls (this must be arranged with the hotel beforehand) and extreme constipation.

month-old Jimmy in tow, and we inched our way to the Langford apartment through dense clots of rush-hour traffic while being offered unparalleled views of Chicago's grottiest neighbourhoods. 'Mayor Daley had this freeway built to cut off the poor districts from the rich white ones,' Jon explained. I'd already worried a bit about the presence of that sinister name on the Midway welcome sign, but it was merely the more infamous Daley's son. Being stuck with the Royal Family and the dwindling remnants of our ghastly peers, we Brits know about hereditary rule but hadn't realized it survived in America.

After greeting my ever so attractive sister-in-law Helen (architect and breadwinner), inspecting their swish top-floor apartment, and consuming a huge slab of barbecued salmon which shamed the expensive little pink tissue-samples in supermarkets back home, it seemed a good time to try an evening out on the town.

Chicago was all neon, glitz, bustle, innumerable signs in Spanish. Jon knowingly led me to a Mexican restaurant where they didn't mind us spurning food in favour of sitting and drinking authentically sour margaritas from goblets bigger than goldfish bowls. This gave way to a succession of low bars where the celebrated artist and Mekon tended not only to be recognized by bar staff but given drinks on the house (and likewise his brother). Special bonus points in this area to the Silver Cloud Bar & Grill, an airy place with the stamped tin ceiling which I'd often read about as indicating some kind of US bar authenticity, either of atmosphere or of sleaze. Also of note: The Boulevard Café quite near Jon's place, whose barman proved to be a drunken ex-Mekons drummer who started but did not finish a number of interesting sentences (Jon: 'This is the bar of the short attention span.') and who seemed seriously determined to bolt the doors and keep us swilling freebies all night.

Yes, Chicago was the city where I renewed my acquaintance with an old friend who had deserted me all through the pristine joys of Minneapolis: the hangover.

Another landmark pointed out by Jon demonstrated yet again the ability of rock stars to live on the cheap. For obscure reasons of goodwill he gets free studio space on the upper floor of 'Shirts Our Business,' a t-shirt sweatshop whose workers—all Mexican women—come to the upstairs lunchroom at noon and are moved to give handfuls of food to this obviously starving artist. The words 'Jammy sod!' rose unbidden to my lips.

Besides the music, Jon is selling lots of artwork and has just branched out into small tombstones. It gives him that authentic Damien Hirst glow of thinking up concepts and letting humble artisans do the actual work, as his sketches of doom-laden subjects like the Death of Country Music are drilled into polished granite slabs by other hands. When informed that these priceless artforms weigh 135 pounds apiece, I decided not to take one home for Hazel.

Other joys of multi-ethnic Chicago included a Patel Brothers grocery exactly like countless small Asian shops back home, except that the Reading variety doesn't offer Gandhi Salsa. After one quiet Indian-restaurant lunch with Helen and small Jimmy, Jon and I furtively agreed that our dissolute reputations would suffer if it became known that we had just disported ourselves in a alcohol-free vegetarian eatery that encourages small children....

As Voltaire quipped after reading a certain TAFF report, the secret of being a bore is to tell everything. Let's leave some aspects of this trip shrouded in tantalizing mystery: specifically, the merry Family Visit to Greek-American in-laws, of which I merely record that we survived.



Further Reading

The real fun begins when two or more Roundsmen gather together. Using this guide you must try to observe them and learn more Grand Master secrets. This may require you buying them a drink. It is essential to do this while there are only two in the round.

Good Luck and Good Drinking.

Monday, Tuesday: Chicago–St Louis–Gatwick–Reading

- By this period, the Langford notes are getting wavery and sparse. Following detailed consumer testing of Vanguard and TWA domestic flights, I can now report that TWA charge \$4 for a much mingier G&T than Vanguard's \$3 offering, but are able to touch down without simulating a dinosaur-killer meteor impact. You win some, you lose some.
- At St Louis, everything worked—apart from a slight misunderstanding when I ordered a

margarita and was served with two, the simplest solution being to display proper British sang-froid and drink them both. Could it possibly last, this uncanny experience of being in the hands of an air transport system that was working correctly again? Of course not: instead of a 6:50PM takeoff for Gatwick, I sat in the plane being treated to interminable and incomprehensible cockpit messages from someone who was very, very bad at improvising soothing remarks and appeared to be saying 'Uh...' a great deal as he failed to explain that the plane was being reloaded with all-important...fuel? gin? wings? small lemon-scented tissues? It remains a garbled mystery. Two hours after takeoff time, when the inordinate number of babies in seats close to mine had more or less cried themselves out, we took off.

After a free G&T which the no doubt guilt-ridden stewardess spontaneously decided should be a double with an extra cup of ice, I forgave TWA everything and settled back to my recently acquired Daniel Pinkwater omnibus. Easy, that's me.

And so home, where Hazel and a longish period of post-travel convalescence were waiting. Thanks again to everyone. Thank you for having me.

Please join us for...



April 13-15, 2001

Hilton Minneapolis & Towers Minneapolis, Minnesota

Writer Guest of Honour

Ken MacLeod

**Award-winning Scottish author of
The Stone Canal and *The Cassini Division***

Ken MacLeod burst into view in the mid-1990s with *The Star Fraction*, *The Stone Canal*, and *The Cassini Division*, three mindboggling novels of humanity and posthumanity in the centuries just ahead. High-tech, political, contentious, and very funny, the first two novels both won the "Prometheus" award for libertarian SF, surely the first time that award has gone to a left-wing Scot. MacLeod's SF is in the best tradition of John W. Campbell, always "asking the next question" and sparing no sacred cows, even his own. He is one of the most exciting and discussed writers of the decade. His latest novel is *The Sky Road*, published in Britain in 1999 and forthcoming in America in August 2000; at this year's Eastercon, it won the British Science Fiction Association Award for best novel of the year.

Fan Guest of Honour

Jo Walton

Outstanding online fanwriter and essayist

Welsh fan Jo Walton is perhaps the first truly great fanwriter of the new online fandom. Usenet and Fidonet and the bulletin boards have featured fine work for over two decades. But just as it took some time for the fandom of mimeographed fanzines to produce Walt Willis and Lee Hoffman, it's only now that we find in Jo Walton that warm, strong, brilliant writerly voice that makes us say, yes, this is what online fanwriting could be, this is what this stuff is for. The Usenet newsgroups *rec.arts.sf.fandom*, *rec.arts.sf.composition*, and *rec.arts.sf.written* are hard to imagine without her. Her first novel, *The King's Peace*, will appear in the US this fall — but her fanwriting continues, and continues to strengthen us thereby.

Musician Guest of Honor

Leslie Fish

**Singer/songwriter, anarchist, writer of "Hope Eyrie,"
and multiple Pegasus award winner**

Leslie Fish is a name that's practically synonymous with SF-related music, whether you call it folk or filk. She's written over a hundred songs on subjects ranging from the space program ("Hope Eyrie," "Step by Step") to *Star Trek* ("Banned from Argo," the most notorious *Star Trek* song extant) to politics ("No High Ground," "Jefferson and Liberty") to rampant silliness ("I Believe the Cats Are Taking Over") to just about any subject you can name. She's written many melodies for others' lyrics, including three tapes' worth of Rudyard Kipling's poetry. One of her songs, "Carmen Miranda's Ghost," inspired a short-story anthology. She has a powerful singing voice and is a skilled finger-picker on her 12-string guitar named Monster. She's a great storyteller, too.

Attending memberships are \$30 through December 15, 2000 (probably through the end of the year; see our web page), then \$40 until March 15, 2001, and \$70 at-the-door. **Child** (age 12 & under) and **Supporting memberships** are \$15. Minicon 36 room rate: \$76+tax.

For more information:

<http://www.mnstf.org/minicon/>
Email: <request@minicon.mnstf.org>

P.O. Box 8297
Minneapolis, MN 55408-0297

The Guy Fawkes Songbook

by John M. Ford
& Elise Matthesen

American Guy

John M. Ford

(C'mon. You know the tune, whether or not you remember all the words.)

A long, long time ago
But it should be remembered
How it fell out on November five
Some nobles and a guy named Guy
Thought they'd make their oppressors fly
And there'd be revolution, by and by...
The commissary must have shivered
When all those herrings were delivered
Barrels in the basement
For Parliament's effacement
It was a bold, quixotic dream
(Though some say Salisbury's scheme)
Explosive treason was the theme
The day the fuse went out

They started singing:

*Remember, remember,
the fifth of November
It was a night full of gunpowder,
treason and plot
I see no reason
Why a gunpowder treason
Ever, ever should be forgot
Ever, ever should be forgot*

One day with Lord Monteaule's bacon
A note says, bangers have been laid on
Take a powder, signed, A Friend
The sort of hint that starts you thinking
With leaks like this, we'll soon be sinking
Knot the rope that marks the end
They thought rebellion had a chance
But no one got up for the dance
Guy bent but didn't break
Until Salisbury's stake
The bottom line could not be plainer
A round of trials and attainder
Divide by four with no remainder
The day the fuse went out
They started singing...

I met a girl who fiddled fine
And she handed me some sparkling wine
(Outside, the champagne's always chilled)
Upon the kindling, Guy stands straight
As annually he meets his fate
The host ignites the fire, we watch it build
And in the yard we take our stations
Awaiting the illuminations
Foggy conversations
Then colored conflagrations
And the words we most admire to say
Light Blue Touchpaper, Get Away
They'll get a workout on the day
The night we light the fuse...
And we'll be singing...

The Operetta...

Elise Matthesen

The operetta was thought lost, but unfortunately, fragments of it have recently come to light...

When Guy Was Just A Little Lad

MAID When Guy was just a little lad
He proved so bold and daring
He pilfered toys from other boys
And filled them up with herring
I was alas his nursery maid
Guy's father had ambitions
And so he bade me teach the boy
The secrets of magicians!
Some nice fat doves, some new white gloves
And various rare editions
Of old grimoires, a robe with stars:
Of such are made magicians

The pole star of his father's wish
Was ever my compass-bearing,
But a trifling mishap with some fish
Had left me hard of herring
Mistaking thus his father's thought —
Oh, tragic transpositions! —
I arranged to have the little guy taught
The myst'ries of munitions!
For bomb or fuse, Guy had no use —
He's rather be out fishin'!

I soon found out, beyond all doubt,
The scope of these disasters
Not only dad was hopping mad
But so were Guy's schoolmasters!
In Chemistry, Guy earned a 'D' —
They feared his flubs would bury 'em
He blew up three of the faculty
And the brand new school aquarium.
So when some dad says "School my lad!
Put a little magical gloss on,"
Consider: What, for one man's meet,
Is another fellow's poisson.

Oh, Better Far to Live and Die

GUY: Oh, better far to live and die
A careless conspiratorial Guy,
And camouflage my dearest wish
As a bouncing barrel of salty fish
Than bear with a government of ghouls
And a Parliament of prating fools.
While I'm not one to incite dissent,
I think I'll blow up Parliament!

Yes, I'll blow up Parliament!
Oh it is, it is my fond intent
To blow up Parliament!
Yes, I'll blow up Parliament!

CONSPIRATORS: Me too! I've never liked Parliament!

GUY: Oh it is, it is my fond intent
To blow up Parliament!

CONSPIRATORS: Woo-hoo! We're blowing up Parliament!

GUY & CNSPRS: We're blowing up Parliament!

GUY: When I sally forth to do the deed
Some trusty henchmen are what I'll need
All stout of heart, in fighting trim
And a little tiny trifle dim
For many a man of experience
Would think my plan devoid of sense
So bring me dolts of dubious bent
To help me blow up Parliament!

Yes, I'll blow up Parliament!
Oh it is, it is my fond intent
To blow up Parliament!
Yes, I'll blow up Parliament!

CONSPIRATORS: Me too! I've never liked Parliament!

(continued)

Excerpts from a work in progress...

GUY: Oh it is, it is my fond intent
To blow up Parliament!

CONSPIRATORS: Woo-hoo! We're blowing up Parliament!

GUY & CNSPRS: We're blowing up Parliament!

ALL: (cheers!)

DELIVERYPERN: All right, who ordered the anchovy pizza?

The Guy Fawkes Songbook

We're Called Evil Traitors

CONSPIRATORS: We're called evil traitors; We shan't be debaters With nobles we hate, or Suspect of the worst	(pianissimo) And after the fallout Our joy will be all-out The people will call out At what we have wrought
We want no petitions, Protesting conditions We'll just use munitions On Jimmy the First!	They'll cheer when they see us Sing Ave Marias They'll all want to be us —unless we get caught.
We're weary of speeches These lords are such leeches. A boot to their breeches!... For they can go hang.	They'll all want to be us— unless we get caught.
When once they assemble, No more we'll dissemble, Our barrels will tremble, and then they'll go bang!	They'll all want to be us— unless we get caught.
Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha etc.	We're called malefactors (We're really just actors!)
Our barrels will tremble And then they'll go bang!	Malefactors (Only actors)
	Evil traitors (Merely waiters)
	Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha... Bang. (Gotcha!)

(Note: for smaller productions, the song "Three Little NPCs" may be substituted.)

*Fortunately, the rest of the manuscript was too tattered to read.
Unfortunately, there is always next year....*

"Saintly behavior. Inspired lunacy. There's a difference?"

—Geri Sullivan

ONCE INA LIFETIME...

On Wednesday 11th August 1999, at around 11.15am, a total solar eclipse swept over Devon and Cornwall on its way across Europe and down into Asia. It was the first Britain had seen since 1927, and the last we will see until 2090.

I had decided some time ago that I was going to travel down to the south-west to experience the totality—this was, after all, the final total eclipse of the millenium and the only one in the UK during my lifetime. However, when I enquired about rail prices I was horrified by the mark-up the rail company was making on standard fares for the day and walked away from the ticket office intending to give it a miss. But then I suddenly realized why I had to do it regardless, so I turned on my heel and bought the ticket. That was about five weeks previous and, early on the morning of 11th August, I set out for London's Paddington rail station and the train to Torquay, the only sizeable town within the totality I had a realistic chance of getting to before the big event, I'd decided after much poring over railway timetables. It was a glorious day when we pulled out of London, but the further south and west we got the more overcast the skies became. This was not good.

As we plunged ever deeper into Devon, we got to see into many back gardens and it looked like the whole of the county were out in their gardens, eyes turned to the cloud-covered sky. It's been a long time since I last travelled to Devon and I'd forgotten just how beautiful it is, particularly from Dawlish on, the train seeming almost to ride on the water as it skirts Teignmouth bay, only a small wall hard up against the tracks keeping us and the water apart. It was on this stretch of track that I got my first glimpse of the eclipse as the clouds momentarily parted—a full third of the Sun's disc had already been swallowed.

I had to switch trains at Newton Abbot and in the twenty minutes or so I waited for my connection I got a few more glimpses of the eclipse, ever more of the Sun having been eaten with each new sighting. (I also got to see a large billboard advertising 'Blackthorn's Cider—official sponsors of the 11th August 1999 eclipse.' Heh.) Having checked the timetables carefully I figured that as long as the train was on time it would get me into Torquay about two minutes before totality. This was cutting it extremely fine but it was, and it did.

One thing about the eclipse that really surprised me was just how much of the Sun had to disappear before conditions changed from looking merely overcast into something that was clearly twilight, though with an oddly metallic tinge. This it did as the train pulled into Torquay station and I and my fellow passengers dashed for the exit. The station was maybe a hundred yards from the seafront and we could see crowds of people over there, but with only seconds to go there was no time to join them.

**BY
ROB HANSEN**

Thanks to our understanding of celestial mechanics we've known precisely where and when this eclipse was going to

occur for decades, but the chaotic motion of clouds is far less predictable than the clockwork of the heavens. Were we going to see anything or were the clouds going to deprive us of a sight not to be seen again on this island for almost another century? It was all down to random chance and, for the most crucial two minutes of the day, random chance went our way. The clouds thinned and we saw the final sliver of the Sun shrink down to nothing and vanish as all went dark. A great cheer went up from the thousands lining the seafront along the great arc of Torbay accompanied by the flashing of hundreds of cameras. I took the opportunity to trot on down to the seafront and was there, among the multitude, as the Sun reappeared, a single dot of light that quickly grew into a thin arc as the darkness went away and daylight returned to the accompaniment of the whup whup of an ITN news helicopter as it swept over the bay. Almost immediately the clouds closed in again and, apart from one or two very short glimpses over the next hour, that was the last we saw of the eclipse, not that most people seemed interested now that the main event was over. But that was OK. When it mattered the most the clouds had parted to let us see something quite spectacular and strangely moving. The event itself, and sharing it with all those thousands of people, is something I shall never forget. It may be the closest this non-believer will ever get to having a religious experience.

My father died a little over three years ago. As a family, we've never had much money and, anyway, my mother is still living in the house they shared so I had no expectation of inheritance. He did, however, request that token sums go to me and my two siblings and that we should spend these on something to remember him by. I'd never been able to think of anything suitable enough until that morning outside the ticket office five weeks ago when I suddenly remembered his request. In 1969, I stayed up until the early hours of the morning with him and my brother to watch Neal Armstrong step out onto the surface of the moon. Dad always had a fascination with such things and, had he been able, I'm sure he would have been there with me in Torquay, watching as the Sun went away and day briefly became night. I think he would have approved how I chose to remember him.



Well, it's more like 29 months, but who's counting? I'm not sure when the Sunday evening impulse to pick up the phone and call Duke finally subsided. As time passes, we manage to distance ourselves from the most traumatic events. They never go away, just seem farther to reach.

I should apologize for the length of time it has taken me to complete this letter. The truth is that as thrilled as I am to have your chronicle of those ten days in Pennsylvania, I had to force myself to go back and read it again. It's wonderful to have the day by day account. My memory would have been much spottier without it. Still, it is difficult to go back and relive the events.

There were two subsequent trips to Penna. to deal with the estate. One at the end of summer in 1996 and again in April of 1997 when the house finally sold. I shipped a couple of boxes to Chicago after the funeral. The August trip was to select useful items and mementos.

Yes, my Grandfather's couch and chairs are now in my living room where I think they fit nicely with the overall feel of a building that dates back to 1915. I stayed on 5th Street during that trip. Had to lower my expectations for pizza delivered to the house, having been spoiled by Chicago's. My friends helped with diversions, a cookout at Greg's, dinner and peace and quiet at Barry's a couple of times. The frogs had quieted down, having produced their season's worth of tadpoles, I suppose.

There were haulers, electricians, movers, the Realtor, the lawyer, the bank, the credit union. The basement and garage were cleaned. The 713 side of the duplex was cleaned badly by hired help. I spent a month there in those eight days, sorting, packing and sorting and packing. In addition to the living room furniture, I shipped four smaller pieces and four large boxes via the moving company.

Then there was the Cadillac....

I considered keeping it. It was a year newer and had lower mileage than my '89 SHO. If it had had the fuel injected 5.8 liter V8 instead of the relatively anemic 5.0 liter carbureted version, the decision would have been harder. Two and a half tons of Fleetwood Brougham, measuring 18' 5" is just not my style.

There were no offers to take it off my hands in Penna. So I set off in my newly acquired Colossus of Roads for Chicago, about 750 miles distant. It was the Sunday before Labor Day. My luggage was consigned to the front seat and foot well. The back seat and cavernous trunk swallowed 15 boxes of stuff ranging from 78 rpm records to kitchenware to antique curtains and tablecloths. A normal car would have looked loaded down. The Caddie's self leveling suspension made it ride and look as though it were empty.

I made arrangements to visit friends in Detroit, about 80–90 miles off my route. I had done this drive before and it's quite a haul. The 'anemic' 5.0 liter managed to propel me fast enough to get busted for speeding in Ohio. Holiday weekend—I should have been more wary.

Upon arriving in Chicago, I discovered that the Caddie could be stored in my garage, however, I needed to pull straight in, nudge the front bumper against the back wall and scoot out the passenger side. If I closed the garage door behind me, it cleared the rear bumper by a scant eight inches.

Selling the behemoth proved to be trickier than I anticipated. I expected to have it for about six weeks. It turned out to be six months. There was a certain pleasure involved in being a two car family of one. I finally found a young man with a 35–40 mile one-way commute to work, who was looking for a large comfortable car.

two years after

*[An update and introduction to the letter column from **Jack Targonski**]*

A deal was struck and he seemed very happy. My emotions were mixed. It had to go of course, but one more piece of my father was gone. There had always been some immense Cadillac/Buick/Chrysler/Pontiac luxocruiser in Penna. for me to ride in or drive. I learned to respect them despite their excesses. I knew I had lost something as I watched the Cadillac leave.

When I left Penna. on each of the first two trips, I could look over my shoulder and think, 'I'll be back.' When I finally received and accepted an offer on the property, the last trip was the most difficult to make. I did need to finish cleanup and packing.

I suppose I could have stayed at home, but it would have been close to camping. Most of the furniture including the TV was gone. The gas was shut off. Sleeping on a couch and using a toaster oven was not a pleasant prospect. It made more sense to stay at Barry and Kathy's.

It was a strange contradiction to be awakened by a half dozen Canada geese honking their way to a landing for an idyllic day on the pond outside my window. After which, I drove my rented car home to deal with dust and refuse. I cleaned. The heating company came to clean the burners. Greg and I cleared attics and basements. A hired hauler took a truckload away. I visited the lawyer to sign forms so that the sale could be completed in my absence.

While the hauler took scrap lumber from the basement at 715, I realized that the sandbox also had to go. Fashioned of rough lumber and painted deep green, it was about two and a half by four feet and probably 18 inches deep. It had come to rest under the basement stairs as a catch all well over forty years ago. The hauler said, "I don't think I can get it up the stairs, so I'll just break it up here." At the first sound of cracking wood, I fled the room to be alone. I realized that another artifact of my childhood was being destroyed, this one hand-built by my Father and Grandfather. Memories of miniature Desert Storms enacted by four-inch tall lead soldiers flashed in my mind's eye. It was the low point of the week.

There were some compensations. Barry pointed me to a comic book auction at the Klecknersville Fire House. It was part of an estate sale, I suppose. After watching the few magazines that I was really interested in go to serious collectors or dealers for multi-hundred dollar bids, I managed to procure a 1949 *Superman* for what seemed a reasonable price. On Saturday, Greg drove me to Easton, about 10 miles from Bethlehem. We had lunch at a brew pub and did some shopping. In addition to purchasing a favorite cologne that is next to impossible to find in Chicago, I selected a pewter flask made in Sheffield. It seemed an appropriate souvenir. Now I can toast Fifth Street whenever I carry it.

The last boxes were packed. The new owners assured me that the furniture I needed to leave behind would be put to good use by their church group. For the first time in 60 years there would be no Targonskis associated with East Fifth Street in Bethlehem. Selling the property was, of course, saddening. Paying taxes, water and sewage charges, insurance, heating (expensive even with minimal thermostat settings) and other incidentals made the sale a relief.

So, late on the afternoon of April 27th, I turned in the rental car. I took my place in line at the airport amid drivers, mechanics, TV crews, models and other associated racing folks who were leaving the area after a big-time Indy race at the Nazareth Speedway. I haven't been back since then, although I do mean to visit. Worldcon will be only 50 miles away in Philadelphia in 2001....

Again I need to thank you for the article and more for your inestimable help during the funeral trip. It's a debt I will never be able to repay. If the time comes and you really do need someone to haul that shotgun out of the closet, I'm only a few hours from Battle Creek.

Love,



P.S. Amid the stuff that I sent/brought back from Penna. was Duke's latest electric razor. Heck, I bought that one for him for Christmas a few years ago and it has a better beard trimmer than mine. So, my collection has quite a way to go, but now I have two!

PARK & LOCIT

Wed, 06 Jan 1999

Mike Scott

2 Craithie Road
Chester CH3 5JL
UNITED KINGDOM

My father died early on Monday morning (not unexpectedly—he was 88), and after spending a couple of days going through his papers and stuff with my mother I reread “Ashes, Dust, 9 Electric Razors” from *Idea* #11 last night and found it strangely comforting, probably because it made the point that this sort of thing happens to other people too, although of course I knew that intellectually.

I just thought I'd email you to say thanks, really.

Mike Scott <mike@moose.demon.co.uk>

You're welcome, of course. My lasting thanks to you and to the other *Idea* readers dealing with grief who let me know the article brought them comfort or was otherwise helpful.

Most of the following letters were written nearly three years ago, shortly after #11 came out. I've updated addresses where I know of changes, which may contribute to a bit of time travel whiplash when comparing an address to the letter's contents. For example, John D. Berry still lived in Seattle when he wrote the following LoC, and then lived in NYC before moving to San Francisco earlier this year.—gfs

John D. Berry

232 Winfield Street
San Francisco CA 94110

Nothing intelligent here, since we've been out drinking too much and having fun with Ole Kvern and Bruce Frasser at the PageMaker Summit party tonight (thanks to Ole's invitation), but I did want to say that *Idea* struck a chord or two, and provided me with a very good way to avoid the drudgery I ought to be dealing with and instead step back and think a bit about what I want to be doing. A very useful function...besides being fun to read.

John D. Berry <typographer@earthlink.net>

Randy Byers

1013 N 36th Street
Seattle WA 98103

Enjoyed Jeff's ranting (and then read an interesting bit about the changes that organic farming is going through, in *Z* magazine) and was utterly delighted by “I Yelled at Yanni.” Wow! That was some great writing—funny and poignant (the little meditation on marriage and the Kores) and full of dusty details that brought back ancient memories of my own visit (with my brother, in 1980) to the Acropolis. Terry's piece is nicely fannish, though I was really, really hoping, as I read the first couple of lines, that she was going to talk about faking orgasms.

Oh, right, and Langford's piece was a fun bit of historical education. Got me thinking a little about fannish mythology. Are the Great Days (and Zines) of the Past a product of memory or of the excitement of the time? Will *Apparatchik* and *Idea* be remembered as hot zines twenty years from now? Will you or Andy be writing GOH speeches in which you cull tidbits from your favorite zines of the '80s and '90s? Or were the '70s truly a more remarkable



time in the history of fanzines? (The names Langford drops ring with time-tested importance. Why?) It also reminded me (again) of why I feel like a fringe fan: I haven't read any of the zines he refers to. (Just as I haven't read the *Izzard* you mentioned on the phone. I even looked through my small collection of zines to make sure I didn't receive it back in the day—a time when I was a little more interested and thus receiving more zines.)

Hm. Lots of little thoughts bubbling about fanzines and my take (or lack of one) on them. F'r'instance, the feel of the paper you use, and the look of mimeo vs. photocopy—leading to the fact that I've never been that interested in the details of repro and don't know that much about it. (Why do some fans get into this stuff, while others don't? One thing I keep circling back to is that when I got into fandom, I really was more interested in SF writing than fannish writing. But then there are a lot of fans who got far deeper into the history of the production of SF than I did, too.)

Well, shoot, I'm probably blowing my loc wad here, and I haven't even reread "Ashes/Dust" yet. I'm gonna.

Randy Byers <rbyers@u.washington.edu>

Given that fans in the '70s, '80s, and even '90s cite the 1950s and '60s as the more remarkable times, I think it's likely that at least some of us will always be inclined to look back in fond memory of whatever the present and future bring us. Just as some of us will be certain it will never be that good again. From my perspective, fans continue to do enough incredible, new things to feed the fannish legend mill and sense of wonder for another few generations, at least. And I expect it will continue on pretty much the way it has for the past 60+ years: in ways that are sometimes unrecognizably alien, yet all the more hauntingly fannish for that.

As you say, some fans are into details of repro, others are not. Most of us have several to many things we're interested in, often to if not past the point of obsession. The common trait I see is interest itself, and the endless (and wonderful) conversations that arise when our interests intersect (and sometimes collide) with each other.—gfs

Karen Johnson

1682 Rose Hill Circle
Lauderdale MN 55108

You've changed A,D,9 a tad, especially the ending, right? And you left in several things you mentioned the various editors debated. Very good, although I'm a little too close to events right now to read it thoroughly. Barb Emerson's "I Yelled at Yanni" was a total hoot! (for several reasons, although I loved hers best). Great imagery for me because I've been to the Acropolis and the Erechtheion and the museum, and it's like she said, yeah. Although I envy her being able to go into the Parthenon; it was closed to even standing on an outer step when I was there in 1973. Lots of obnoxious guards. But then, Greece was under martial law at the time.

It's a magical place, but you do have to constantly resist the intrusion of current time/people/rude behavior. It helped that I was there in January, which scared off many people with the cold weather, although there were still plenty of Japanese tour groups. My clearest chill of excitement was when the class had gathered for a short time to listen to our philosophy professor talk a little about stuff, and I realized that this sort of philosophical interchange had probably taken place on this very spot many times over hundreds of years. Instant connection to the ancient past!

TTFN,

Karen

Kathy Routliffe

6615 North Talman
Chicago IL 60645

[Two locs, edited as one]

Got *Idea* last night at the surprise party we held for Jack at his place. (The look on his face when his upstairs neighbor knocked on the door, he opened it, and we all trooped in, singing "Happy Birthday," was priceless.)

It looks great.

First thing: Thanks for your kind acknowledgments re "Ashes, Dust..." As many of us writers do, you took everyone's suggestions, considered them, and made the decisions that were best for you. I may not agree with all the decisions you made, as you no doubt could imagine, but, upon reading the piece again in its finished form, perhaps I can see the route you wanted to take more clearly than I did when I read it in draft form.

My writing/editing sensibilities will always come from south of fandom; yours, however, are sitting there next to its hearthfires. (The simile is awkward, but I haven't had my second cup of coffee yet.) Once I can wrap my mind around that, and can enter the paradigm instead of fighting it, my response to "Ashes, Dust" changes.

It read very well within the pages of *Idea*. Very well, indeed. You have your own voice, soft and insinuating, all businesslike and matter of fact on the surface and nothing of the sort underneath.

Your philosophy of fan writing and mine may not always coincide, but in this case, I might have been wrong. And being a very stubborn woman, it is hard for me to admit that. Keep writing, and do it as you feel fit. If any of my suggestions come in helpful, I'll be pleased; it's a pleasure to be involved, however peripherally, in the creative process of a gifted writer.

The rest of *Idea*?

I smiled at Terry Garey's piece (and the feast sounds ever so much better than spam chunks with cherries). I hope you continue to get pieces from her, because she is very, very high quality stuff.

Jeff is, as always, unique and somewhat fearsome. Don't tell him I've become an RC Cola fan.

Mr. Langford is someone I look forward to meeting at Minicon. I'll keep my mouth shut and let him do the

talking...if he's half as intelligently witty in person as he is in print, I'll be amply rewarded.

I hope Barb Jensen continues to write things like "I Yelled at Yanni." It introduced her to me in a way I had not expected, and it was a pleasant introduction. And I'll never look at the PBS Yanni special the same way again. The thought did occur to me, as I read about the urine-stained backside of Greek history, that the ancient Greeks probably did the very same thing after offering up praise to Pallas Athene.

Good writers, good art, good stuff. Good job, my dear.

Love you,



P.S. Tell you what. Tell Mike Glicksohn the truth—I'm a vaporous phantasm out of your deepest, most absinthe-sodden midnights. (Oh. No one knew about your wormwood addiction? Sorry. Never mind.)

Luke McGuff

4121 Interlake Avenue North
Seattle WA 98103

OryCon had a panel in the fanzine lounge about "e-zines" which was dominated by a bloat-headed punter. He was pretty definite in his opinions, also pretty sure they were objective and absolute.

Anyway, *Idea 11* (and the colored feather) was held up as an example of a level of craft and personal intervention not possible on the web. Well, he had an answer to that: break the page up into three frames, have ten feather .gifs and a javascript that would load each randomly. He proudly pointed out that that would mean it was different each time, which the mere 8½ x 11 fanzine wouldn't be.

I was silent when he said this, because his obtuseness completely missed the point of handwork in a fanzine, and the texture that handwork adds. It's not that my copy of *Idea* is "different" than Jerry and Suzle's. Mostly, they're the same. Same paper, same ink, same collation party. It's not the difference that's the addition, but the texture. And the texture comes from somebody taking a little time at the collation party to color in a few feathers (or maybe a lot of feathers).

And that attention to texture is apparent through the entire fanzine. I particularly like the way that you combine "old" and "new" technologies so seamlessly—like the photoillustrations for "Ashes, Dust, 9 Electric Razors."

And the attention to production is borne out in the quality of the writing. I think *Idea 11* is easily the best fanzine I've read this year (not to imply that I'm a great student of the genre or anything). And my favorite piece, of course, being your tale of helping Jack Targonski pack up his father's house.

It's a kind of writing I really like: honest, direct, dealing with substantial emotions without whining or prevaricating. You set out what happened without flinch-

ABSINTHE MAKES
THE HEART GROW
FONDER...



ing or apologizing. I found it gripping, staying up late reading it and finishing it first thing the next morning.

My second favorite piece was Barb Jensen's "I Yelled at Yawni." A while back, local comedy show "Almost Live" did a spoof commercial for "Appearing Live! Yawni!" featuring lots of people yawning and dozing, even Yawni himself. Part of the joke was the Yawni person was the host of the show, who's closer to Picard than Pickersgill on the hirsute spectrum. I quickly recheck the last paragraph to find that Barb actually liked the tape she got, and must admit that I've never heard any of Yawni's music that I know about. So I could be pleasantly surprised. Oh well.

Mind you, I enjoyed the entire issue, your editorial about the burden of stuff, Jeff's adventures in the wimpy zone, Terry faking it, and Dave Langford's uproar. What a great Guest of Honour he'll be for Minicon!

I also enjoyed the letters column. When I read locs on a fanzine I read but didn't loc myself, I often wonder if we read the same issue. However, this time most of the locs reminded me of how much fun I'd had reading *Idea 10*, and I will second most everybody's opinion.

Luke McGuff <luko@oo.net>

You were right, of course; Langford was a wonderful Minicon GoH, as you could no doubt tell from reading "Minicon Diary."—gfs

Jerry Kaufman

3522 NE 123rd Street
Seattle WA 98125

First thing: I'm envious of your skill in coaxing such good results from your mimeo, your artists, your writers and yourself. Especially the mimeo, at the moment. We've gotten such poor results from our mimeo (I've recently run samples for the next Mainstream) that I've decided to give up on mimeo altogether. There will be, someday (maybe soon), one last large Mainstream in photocopy. The rest will be, not silence, but a smaller, quieter voice on the order of my perzine from two years ago, Monkey Mind.

I was one of a handful of fans witnessing a discussion at OryCon on the subject of e-zines. The official participants were Loren MacGregor and a proish type from Colorado, JC Hendee. There was some cross-purpose discussion of e-zines and websites, since Loren and the rest of us were under the impression we were going to talk about e-zines done by fans and meant as extensions or substitutes for fanzines, while Hendee had something else on his mind.

He couldn't understand what I was talking about when I asked Loren if he wrote stuff for the Internet differently than he did his paper fanzines, and was momentarily baffled when I flourished someone's early copy of *Idea* and pointed out the hand-coloring as something not to be duplicated by a website. "Handcrafted," I chortled. To his credit, Hendee recovered and explained how one could include color touches that would look different to ten different people randomly.

I understand how "Travels with the Wild Child" would be an inspiration to you in tackling such a difficult and thorny subject as death and its effect on the surviving family, especially when your relationship with Jack is itself a bit thorny. For those of us who have very strong emotional ties to people other than our spouse or life partner, a lot of issues arise to complicate the support we give them or get from them. In your case, explaining to Jack's friends or family why you were there, why Jack felt you had a "claim" on toys, was a complication in life and an important issue to explore in your article.

The rest of the issue doesn't pale by comparison; the material is the necessary counterbalance to a very weighty piece of writing. I particularly liked Barb Jensen's piece on meeting antiquity in propinquity to celebrity. And I loved the Greek artwork. Where did it all come from?

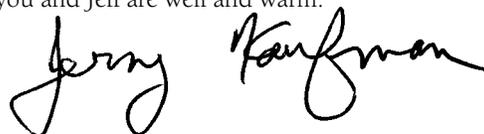
Speaking of art, I'm bobbing back to your piece again: all photos? Did you trace them? They all look handcut and shaded with shading plates. Or did you somehow e-stencil them, like maybe photocopy them first, then scan the photocopies? The detail is amazing.

(And Ken Fletcher for Terry's article and Dan Steffan for Dave Langford's speech are really honestly and truly good too.) (As are Jeff, Terry, Dave.)

Have I mentioned how good this issue is?

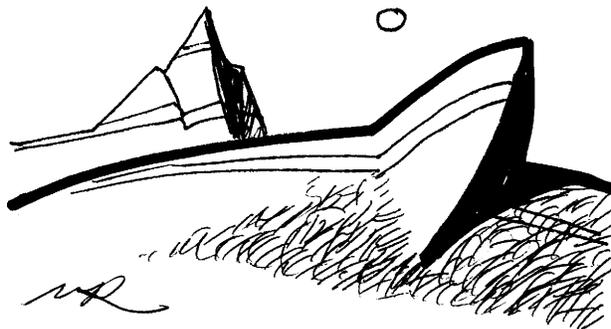
But it's time to stop and send this, along with a few other email messages. I'll have to pull a postcard out and send it along, so you'll have a reasonable facsimile of my

signature, and I'll go stick my hands in front of the space heater—our furnace decided to break down last night. I hope you and Jeff are well and warm.



I wish I'd been at that OryCon, though you and Luke might have been surprised to hear me agreeing with JC Handee. On some things, at least. I see a lot of handcrafting in web pages, a lot of texture. One of the many reasons I've been slow to embrace web design is because I'd want to immediately bring the same level of craft to a webzine as I do to *Idea*, though the zine itself would be very different indeed. Animated KenFletch cartoons. Color photos. The perfect touch with links, both within the zine and to the rest of the web. It's a different medium and I want to be an expert from the start, much as I know how unrealistic and defeating that is.

Jeff scanned the "Ashes/Dust" photos and I played around in Photoshop, adjusting levels and running the "find edges" filter to get the illustration effect and mood I was looking for. It worked better with some shots than others, but I was pleased with the overall results. I love using computer technology to get at least some of the features of classic mimeography.—gfs



Robert Lichtman

PO Box 30
Glen Ellen CA 95442

What a gorgeous gatefold cover Glenn Tenhoff provided for *Idea* No. 11! I love the restraint you (or your coloring staff) exercised on adding little touches of hue to the front half of the cover. The tiger's eyes, the woman's armband and scant brown highlights in her hair, the green foliage just left of the logo, and the blue feather. Only the latter looks slightly out of sync; one doesn't often encounter a blue feather of that intensity in nature. But that's a quibble; the cover was truly delicious.

For a 76-page fanzine, this issue is awfully floppy when you pick it up. I wonder if Twiltone has become more gormless over the years. I went into my files and pulled out a few vintage fanzines printed on Twiltone: Gregg Calkins' *Opsla* No. 25 and a few issues of the Coulsons' *Yandro*. They were all thinner than this issue of *Idea*, but they seemed stiffer. I also checked out Terry

Carr's *Innuendo* No. 7, which was comparable in page count, and it was also more stiff; but then I realized it was printed on Fibretint, a West Coast variant of Twiltone that I used myself on some early apazines. (You can tell Fibretint and its cousin Fibertone from Twiltone because the former have lots of visible fiber strands embedded in the paper.) Could the Twiltone have hardened up over the years in those older fanzines, or am I remembering its qualities wrong from back when they were new?

The blue ink was less effective (and noticeable) on the light colored Twiltone than it would have been on white bond, which is what Dean Grennell used to use on *Grue*—perhaps the best of the blue fanzines. It looks like you had some consistency problems running off the issue. Some pages are underinked while others got lots. Overall, though, it's a beautiful fanzine.

I fully resonated with your writing, regarding the portion of your fanzine collection that's in file cabinets, "I can go straight to the desired file and have the information in a matter of moments." This is an experience we've been sharing for over a year now, it being the summer of '96 that I got my collection into the 19 drawers it now inhabits. Besides my fanzines, my books are now well-organized; they're the next thing I intend to catalogue. Like you, I experience a never-ending battle against clutter and I'm not sure if I'm winning or not. I have too many boxes of miscellaneous paper—everything from newspaper clippings to whole papers, from odd issues of various magazines to concert programs, from old fannish correspondence to print-outs of e-mail. And more. Every now and then I'm able to tackle some of this and get it together—last month I had an enjoyable half-hour at my shredder as I weeded out a tall pile of what might be called "personal papers" (accumulated mail from my health plan, my retirement program, etc.)—but sometimes I get the impression it's getting ahead of me!

[2000 addendum: Now have 29 drawers of fanzines but still haven't catalogued my books or won the war of the paper clutter.]

Further on, you mention Will Shetterly's notion that everyone should get rid of half of what they own every five years. I've never intentionally pruned my belongings that drastically, but divested myself of stuff from time to time when I was younger. The most radical reduction of material plane I ever underwent was only partly intentional. When I was getting ready to "join up with the Caravan" (as we called it in those days, the bus community not having landed at the time), which ultimately resulted in my living in Tennessee, I sold off most of my books and records in a variety of ways, and passed along my fanzine collection (which was highly winnowed and selective along lines you can imagine). But when we embarked on our cross-country journey to join up with the Caravan, we thought we'd be coming back to San Francisco afterwards to gather up our stuff. Accordingly, I paid six months' rent on a garage not far from where I was living and put lots of stuff in storage. Didn't ever get back—once *The Farm* began we were caught up in the action, and besides my wife was nearly eight months pregnant with our first son. Ended up arranging with close friends (we'd let them have

our house when we moved) to go through the garage and send us everything we put on a list we'd brainstormed. This required us to have to try remembering what we owned while being 2,000 miles from it. (We did pretty good, only forgetting a few things we recollected in subsequent years.) After that, we told them, keep some favorite things you like for yourselves, have a big garage sale with the rest, and send us the proceeds. Eventually a nice-sized money order came in the mail.

Jeff's column this time jumps all over the place, and everywhere he lands I find myself nodding my head in agreement. I've never been in 30 below but I remember ice forming on walls inside houses on *The Farm* when the temperature got below zero, which it did at least a few times every winter. We had wood heat then, and it was hard-pressed to keep things warm when the temperature dipped *that* low. The cold inside winds (not a typo: inside) definitely didn't help. Houses on *The Farm* were undoubtedly as a group significantly less weather-tight than a typical Minnesota house, so everything was exacerbated.

He's absolutely right about how many more people can be hurt by "lack of comprehension of the social contract," but I don't think there's any more "apathy, greed, and ignorance" now than back then, except numerically of course. The more I read in history, the more it's clear that these qualities have always been with us.

Okay, Geri, I'll talk about good stuff. I also read the article about the Berkeley high school growing veggies in their front yard, and even drove by to take a peek—looked good. Like Jeff, I hope "there's still a few romantic visionaries left to be born," and pray they'll be able to be heard above the cacophony of commerce.

Terry Garey's food lists made amusing reading, but I don't think there was anything on them as outrageous as the clear soda pop with colored globs in it at *Toner* last year.

Barb Jensen yelled at Yanni because her whole life led her to that moment. What else could a lesbian/hippie/scrappy-tough-working-class-kid do when faced with the particular injustice of the Privileged getting to traipse where she couldn't? I know just how she felt. On the other hand, maybe she should have sued him for the rough treatment she received at the hands of his guard. (Can you imagine subpoenaing Linda Evans as a witness?) I'd never heard of Barb Jensen (or her name hadn't stuck in my mind) previously and here she was in your fanzine, relating stuff about her life and the various changes she went through upon turning forty. It was awesome reading about her and David approaching the actual Parthenon. I say "actual" because I first saw the American Parthenon in 1971 (the year before I turned forty). You will have seen it if you ever saw the movie *Nashville*, in which it plays a prominent role. It's in Centennial Park near Vanderbilt. (Maybe you saw it during *Corflu*? It was around a mile from the hotel.) Although I was struck by the sheer size and audacity of it, it wasn't surrounded by other similar structures like the actual one—and of course lacked actual antiquity. Anyway, good article; I hope you get her to write again for you sometime.

Dave Langford's update of his GoH speech at Intervention made for good reading and a lot of laughs, but only one marginal notation to the effect that I agree with Chris Priest when he says that not everything that happens to an SF fan is worth writing about.

Um, er, your article. It got a lot tighter than when I saw it last, and I appreciated that and liked the final form of it. Let me see if I can remember the substance of the various checkmarks throughout from this second reading. Well, for starters I can definitely relate to your dad when he says he enjoys kicking back instead of constantly doing things that need to be done around the house.

Since I just rent, there's a whole level of maintenance that's lifted from my shoulders, so in order to have something to avoid I treat general housekeeping as an intrusion instead. Sometimes only the likelihood of house guests will stir me into action.

Some of the things you encountered going through Duke's papers reminded me of what I ran across doing the same thing with my parents' 57 years of living together. My mother's birth certificate, in Hungarian, with a 1-forint tax stamp affixed. Immigration papers and citizenship papers for various long-dead relations. Photographs in sepia of people none of whose identity I have the slightest idea (or maybe just one). Books and letters in Hungarian. Several small life insurance policies, including one on me for \$1,000 taken out in 1943. Several years of my mother's pay stubs from the mid to late '30s. Sound familiar? I will add that it's even more engrossing when it's your actual relatives who are documented in these ancient papers. In the family photo albums, there are shots of me as a toddler being held by various deceased relatives. I look happy, and so do they.

Much further in the essay: embarrassed to admit that I, too, have a deceased electric razor around the house. It's been living in a drawer in the desk by my front door. The one before it went to No. 2 son Arthur who, being into electronics, fixed it and may still have it. He's currently traveling around the world, in Nepal at this writing. I guess I envision passing it on to him when he returns. Except I'd had it around for over a year before he left—in a drawer, out of sight and mind.

You don't quite think, when you're growing up and you experience your parents burying your grandparents, that this has anything to do with that, that this might be something you'll have a turn at someday. Thoughts like that never went through my mind when my grandparents passed away in the late '60s. Maybe it was my relative youth—being only in my mid-20s—that caused me not to make the connection, but I don't think so. "How do people do this? How do they process it all?" By the seat of one's pants, it appears. My experience so far.

I paused for quite a while over your sentence early in the "Fantasy, Reality" section that read, "Mostly, I wished I were that woman." Despite your final paragraph in that section—"It all comes down to fantasy and reality. And romantic sensibilities"—there's something a little, well, surreal and revealing about this section of your narrative. We all have moments when we think of what might have been. Certainly, for most of us in this extended family, the nexus point is "What if I never discovered fandom?" But there are others: What if my relationship with Person A hadn't ended at the time it did? I would never have met

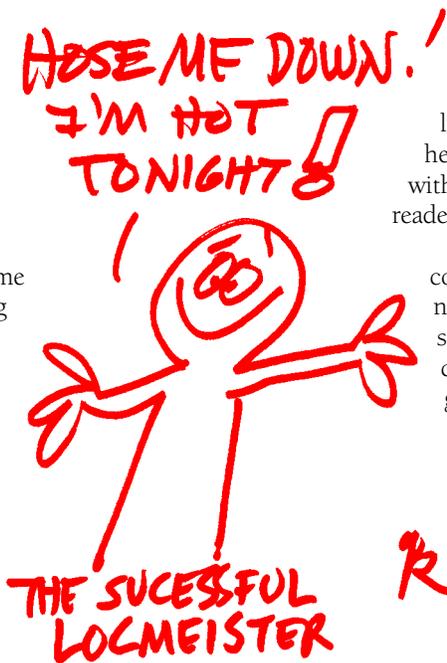
Person B with whom I'm now so much happier. If I hadn't been at this job/party/convention, I would never have met Person C. And so on. It feels like you worked things out for yourself here—and thanks for sharing the process with us—but there's a little piece of this reader's mind that still wonders.

I looked back at the letter I wrote you commenting on the draft version and notice I've missed one thing in this second reading. That letter was, of course, largely preoccupied with your grammar, construction and spelling, and intentionally so. Near its end I wrote, "Now, to go further than that on the specifics of the article at this point would be to veer into a pre-letter of comment. (And there *will* be a letter of comment. I can imagine a whole section on stocking up, just for starters—my parents' and my own.)" What I was responding to

was where you wrote, "Like most people who lived through the Great Depression, Duke believed in stocking up—sometimes to the point of absurdity."

Yes, a whole generation did that. My parents lived through that period, too, and were certainly advocates of stocking up, particularly when things came on sale. I remember one of the last visits to my parents' house in Los Angeles. My father opened a storage cabinet door in the garage and it was solid, ceiling to floor, stacked with toilet paper and paper towels. In another area, box after box of laundry detergent. Inside, in a hall closet, neat piles of packages of toothpaste, bar soap, Kleenex and Depends. I'm not immune to this either, having lived in my own private version of the Depression—my near-decade on The Farm, where scarcity was a way of life. I like to think my own stockpiling tendencies are mitigated only by the size of my living space (small) but you never know.

I was much honored by Mike Glicksohn's kind words about my letters, by which I assume he means the letters of comment I write to fanzines since he and I have never been correspondents beyond a few exchanges. I like yours, too, Mike, and wish you were still writing them more than your present pace. I wish you were doing that more than being involved in a Toronto worldcon bid, though it's an enjoyable bid so far in its various print manifestations. My

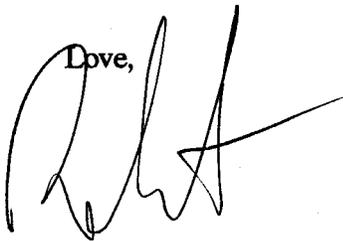


contribution to Murray Moore's fanzine dedicated to Harry Warner Jr. is certainly more succinct than Mike's (his three pages to my two short paragraphs) but Mike is right: we did have similar things to say about Harry.

Bob Berlien's song lyrics inspired by Kathy Routliffe are really nice.

Your description of the package David Russell sent you reminds me that last week I got one of my own. Under the guise of ordering a couple copies of *Fanthology '92*, he added on his note: "I recall reading that you like dark chocolate so I thought I'd surprise your taste buds with an unexpected treat." And indeed he did: several large dark chocolate bars, a bunch of Australian postcards, a Sydney bookmark, and four (count em—four!) packages of Musk Life Savers! I took one pack to share with Carol; we had exactly one apiece. I didn't remember your "urinal cakes" comparison—they reminded me of Fan Tan Gum, one of the chews of my childhood. Fan Tan tasted like cheap perfume smelled. To the best of my knowledge it was only available in Southern California, and I don't recall it still being around in the '60s.

Your garden sounds great—I hope to get to see it sometime. I still remember with great affection Ted White's taking me around *his* garden and plantings in Virginia when I stayed at his place during the Corflu Nova.

Love,


Thanks for your great letter, Robert! Our Twiltone variant is Hennepin Paper Company's Fibertone and, yes, it's flimsier than some of the Twiltone fanzines in my files. Aging seems to be turning some of it to lint (we're ready to dump our supply of Rose), but given that most of our supply was made in the same era those other fanzines were published, I don't think age is affecting the paper's weight on those colors that aren't turning to lint.

I wonder about the relationship between the hoarding of the Depression Generation and the current popularity of childhood memorabilia. Our parents surrounded themselves with staples to see them through times of want. Baby boomers and those following are stocking up on emotion-laden items rather than practical ones. Lunchboxes, games, and Barbie dolls. PEZ dispensers. Childhood toys that our parents gave or threw away. The collector/accumulator mentalities have always been present in the human race, but the obsession appears to be at all-time heights, throughout American society at least. We can save anything and everything, and all too many of us do.

You saw Ted's yard in Spring; I envy you that. I saw it at the beginning of December, 1998, on my way back from Vince Clarke's funeral. It was a thing of beauty and delight even at that time of year. In bloom, it must really be glorious. All those rhododendrons, and so much more.—gfs

Joseph Nicholas

15 Jansons Road
South Tottenham
London N15 4JU
UNITED KINGDOM

As I read your editorial, and came across your lines about accumulated stuff being a fannish hallmark and most fans having more stuff than you, I realised that I can't really be a fan after all. Not merely because (by the sound of it) I have less stuff than you, but because I don't accumulate stuff in the first place. I shun and despise clutter, and get rid of it whenever I can. *If in doubt, throw it out.*

This, along with my drive for tidiness and order, is doubtless something I've inherited from the rest of my family—my parents weren't hoarders, and I don't think my siblings are, either. (Judith, by contrast, is a bit of a hoarder—but because I'm in charge of tidying up, I'm in a position to ensure that her stuff stays more or less under control and in its place.) But perhaps this makes us unique, because by comparison with what one can see of others, others seem to have great trouble controlling the clutter that seeps into their lives. Indeed, one of my colleagues at work says that he's never thrown anything away—which left me wondering whether his house still had any space for him to move around. And when one considers the generally smaller size of British houses compared to those in the USA...

Perhaps this is one reason why Americans are reputed to be such hoarders. And they usually have basements, which we don't. And in addition to this they rent storage lockers in which to squirrel away yet more of their accumulated junk. But why? What can they (you) possibly *do* with any of it? Broken duplicators, parts of cars that are no longer made, worn-out old toys, clothes that no longer fit, multiple sets of china that are never used, and paper-paper-paper everybloodywhere. Never mind, in your case, rolled posters and unframed pictures that you must know you are never likely to display. And plastic PEZ dispensers (whatever a PEZ might be—I've never seen one), gathering dust in every corner and on every window sill. Crowded? It sounds as though you barely have any space left to move around yourself!

(There's an apocryphal story* of Australian fan Kevin Dillon, who was so addicted to collecting paper that his house became so full of it that it was declared a fire hazard by the local council. Several deadlines for him to resolve the situation were missed, since every time he set about clearing the stacks he'd discover a piece of paper from which he couldn't bear to be parted. Other fans eventually came in and threw everything away for him—presumably allowing him to start collecting all over again.)

If in doubt, throw it out. Once upon a time I had a large paperback SF collection; but it struck me that it was pointless to hang on to books by authors I didn't like simply for the sake of keeping up the numbers, and for three or four years in the early '80s GUFF was funded by

* Proofreader's note: "Not 'apocryphal.' July of 1981, and I was there — Denny Lien

convention auctions of my throw-outs: Heinlein, Niven, Clarke, Poul Anderson, Asimov, Herbert, van Vogt, and other tediously dreadful hacks who couldn't type their way out of a wet paper bag. The saving on space was immense—as was the saving when we later passed on our entire fanzine collection to Vince Clarke for his Fanzine Heritage Library. We weren't going to re-read them, they were getting in the way—so why bloody keep them? *Out, out, out.* Out went, in 1990, the library of press cuttings I'd accumulated during my years of anti-nuclear activism, when it was necessary to have the facts at one's fingertips: I wasn't active any more, most of the cuttings were out of date anyway, so it was the recycler for them. For similar reasons, this weekend I purged my environmental cuttings file of out-of-date, superseded, irrelevant, and inactive material. More space on the shelves!

You ought to do the same, you know. And I'll bet you'll find, once you do, that the horror you say you feel at the thought of throwing things away will simply evaporate. Once you've broken through the mental barrier, you'll be able to do it again and again. Reduce the clutter. Get some space back into your life. (And leave less for others to have to sort out when you finally cash in your chips.) Why do you need five or six duplicators anyway? (Never mind the manhole covers—*manhole covers*?!) And when you've cleared the space, another benefit will open up: you'll be able to get it properly organised. And accessible.

I dare you to start now. Go out on the front porch and kick the rock collection away into the undergrowth. You'll never find them again, but so what? After all, they're just rocks!

Yours for tidiness everywhere,



Minneapolis fan Sharon Kahn, whose clutter level is similar to the one in the public areas of Toad Hall, recently confessed to having a small rush of envy when she sees news reports of people whose homes have burned to the ground, just before seeing the tragedy of it all. Yes, it would be a tragedy. But it would also be a chance to start again, with a clear slate, and at least something of an insurance settlement as a starter fund. All this stuff really is just stuff, much as it provides the key words of our memories and lives. The people, and our actions, memories, and stories are the important parts. And the love we share, of course.

Still, we each have our own ranges of comfort, and mine seems to be firmly anchored in the "cluttered yet organized" quadrant. One time I moved into a new cubicle at work and decided to go with a professional, corporate look when I unpacked the boxes from the other building. After about 15 minutes, my skin began to tingle uncomfortably. It was an alien environment, and sterile at that. The feeling didn't go away; it got worse. I couldn't work in that; there was no me there. Out came the cartoon clippings, notes, favorite quotes, and additional photos. Making it my space brought comfort and an immediate return to productivity.

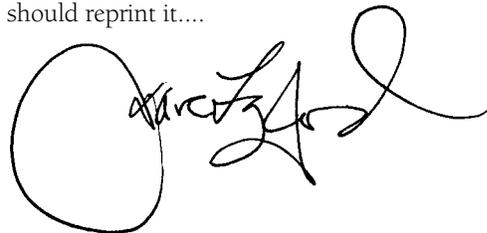
We've clearly got different comfort zones regarding clutter and tidiness, but we have similar approaches for getting rid of stuff: have it go to a good cause or further use where possible, otherwise toss it. (Recycling where possible, right?) The amount of recycling we generate every two weeks demonstrates that we're not afraid of throwing paper away. Jeff's a great saver of magazines, though. One of my deals with him when I signed up for free subscriptions using some airline miles that would have gone wasted otherwise was that I didn't have to save the magazines, that they could go into the recycling bin after I'd read them. Worn-out old toys can bring amazing sums on eBay, as can PEZ dispensers. But as long as having them around brings me more comfort than burden, I'll likely keep them. Beside, dares don't work with me.—gfs

Dave Langford

94 London Road
Reading Berkshire RG1 5AU
UNITED KINGDOM

A peep into the letter column reminds me that I didn't comment on Steve Stiles' Capp re-creation last issue—partly because it's a very long time since I've seen the originals. It must have been back in the '60s that some US friend of my parents sent a great wad of newspaper cartoon pages, fascinating and frustrating since the Abner continuity broke off somewhere in the middle of a fantasy storyline about Evil-Eye Fleagle, master of the Triple Whammy.

But Steve did just impress the hell out of me by casually sending one of his old TAFF promotional sheets, TEFF Tearaw Tales Number "Three," a line-perfect and word-perfect sequence of false Krazy Kat strips in which, building on Herriman's metafictional games with the cartoon frame (characters stepping out of the panel, hiding below the "horizon" line, etc), Ignatz slowly realizes the "Phil K. Dick situation" of his now being drawn by someone called Steve Stiles. Wonderful stuff. Someone should reprint it....



Ailsa Ek

290 Quarry Street
Quincy, MA 02169

I've read both #10 and #11, and with #10, I fell in love with twiltone. It feels so nice on the hands, the whole time I was reading, I was stroking the issue with my fingertips. It's like getting fanzines printed on stuffed animals. (How many Beanie Babies died to make this fanzine?)

I'm very glad you bought a lot of it at once, so you can keep using it for years to come. I had neither seen nor heard of it before. Actually, Gary and I ascertained after

NO...NO! I SAID
I PUBBED MY ISH!



some confusion about smudgy purple grammar school tests that my teachers referred to as mimeographed, but actually weren't, that I've never even seen a mimeograph machine. (And I want to be a fanzine fan?)

#10 was wonderful. I've seen some of Steve Stiles' work in other fanzines and liked it, so seeing an entire issue dedicated to it was quite nice. The *pièce de résistance*, though, was Kathy Routliffe's "My Trip to Jupiter." It was very difficult to read, and the artwork set it off very well. Some things one reads, one remembers a while, and then forgets within a week or two. Some things, once you've read them, are there for life. Kathy's piece definitely tends towards the latter.

On to issue 11:

I've always wanted to be a car guy. I dated one in high school, and got to stand by him and hand him things while he worked on his close-to-junk station wagon. I adore cars from the 40s through early 60s, but I have yet to even learn to drive, let alone start pricing the Studebaker of my dreams. But I always stop to look when they go by, and I go to car shows when I hear of them and can get to them.

And it's lovely to hear that other people are inveterate packrats. I'm not sure whether the fact that I don't own a house yet is a good thing or a bad thing. Your description of your office sounds much like the way I keep mine, though. It's good to be surrounded by familiar things.

Jeff makes Minneapolis sound lovely. I grew up in Maine; tales of cold and deep snow don't scare me, they attract me.)

Yay, woodstoves! Yay, compost! Yay, gardening!

I stopped reading *Popular Science* and *Harrowsmith* a decade ago, and his article reminds me that I must start again. I just took a trip up to Maine, spent a week, looked at my sister's garden, my mom's garden, my mom's friend's garden, a local public garden that was private when I was a child, and did some rambling around the fields as well. Reminded me that I'm still a dirt-under-the-nails rural kid at heart, and I really miss gardening. Pity there's no affordable way around here to have a subway station, and shops in walking distance, and a good sized yard. Jeff's piece made me homesick all over again.

Terry's fake food party sounded like a riot, but even on a fast day, which today is, that menu doesn't make me hungry. Well, OK, maybe a little for the lavender snowballs....

And that's where I set the notepad down, and then the back issues you sent me came, and then I thought I ought to LoC all of them at once, and the results are as you see.

So now I'm at least sending this. It's not the greatest LoC I've ever read, and it's only the second one I've ever written, but it's sort of done, anyway. Sorry for taking so long and being so slapdash about it.

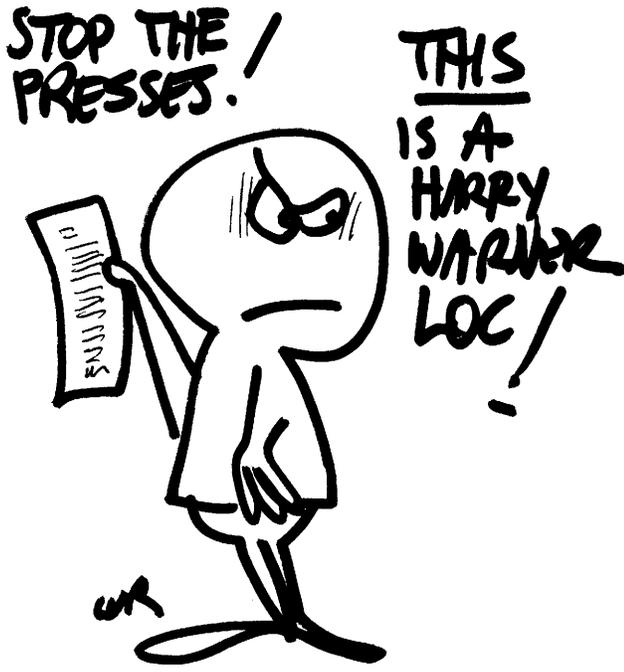
You're doing fine, Ailsa. You've no doubt written more LoCs since sending this one, and you pubbed your ish last year, too. (Please, please let it have been last year and not two years ago. Time, umm....)—gfs

Harry Warner, Jr.

423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown MD 21740

I'm pretty sure I owe you locs on at least two other fanzines that arrived months ago. But the new issue of *Idea* is so fine and comment-prone that I'm going to attend to that one tonight, with a promise of digging out the older issues later.

You create a lot of envy in your description of how you're sorting out and arranging and discarding things. This has been a problem with me for most of my life. I've learned for instance from a few unhappy episodes that I invariably regret throwing anything away other than tin cans and daily newspapers and a few other items. Possessions that no longer interested me in 1940 are now objects of great, sad, wistful emotions because they're beyond all hope of retrieval. Sometimes monetary considerations enter: for instance, one of the first things I bought after I got my first steady job was an electric refrigerator to replace the old ice box the Warner family had used so many years. Just yesterday I saw a classified advertisement offering an ice box for sale for \$750, and I know some models bring higher prices in antique shops. I could use a thousand bucks that the discarded ice box would bring if we'd stuck



it in the cellar. Or there were several hundred issues of *Radio Guide* in the attic when my father and I moved from Bryan Place to Summit Avenue after my mother's death in 1957. He was doing most of the work involved in preparing for the move and I told him not to save those old magazines. While they sell today for three bucks or so apiece, they would be more precious to me because of the nostalgia I now feel for the golden age of radio. *Radio Guide* was a more literate, less hectic publication than *TV Guide*, but both had the same basic combination of schedules and feature articles. The best way I can dramatize my lack of organization for my collections is the fact that I've been hunting for several years my sets of the novels of Bulwer-Lytton and the complete works of Kipling. It's easy to misplace a book if you're the average unorganized person but the disappearance of those bulky multi-volume sets is limited to the severe cases like mine.

"I Yelled at Gianni" caused me more laughter and drove my worries a greater distance than anything else in this issue. I suppose I shouldn't have snickered and chortled so much because her article does treat of many serious and nasty things like litterbugging proclivities of Americans at home and away and the failure of most people to react seriously enough to the treasures of civilization. I kept thinking, however, about how Gianni's annoyance at his brief encounter with Barb Jensen would have shrunk into insignificance if had known the enormity of her much greater misconduct: not knowing who he was. Nothing that can happen to any celebrity can cause as much depression and concern as the thought that maybe he is losing his grip on the public and will finish much lower in the next poll to determine name recognition of big shots among little shots.

Fortunately, when I die, nobody will have emotional qualms over what I leave behind because I no longer have any surviving and mentally capable relatives or close friends to be saddled with the estate closing job. My

executors will presumably try to find buyers for the books and records as a bulk because it would take three months or so to sell them individually at public auction. My will takes care of the fanzine collection. I hope whoever does the work for pay will take the trouble to ask knowing people about the value of old stuff packaged in boxes that mostly have gone unopened for four decades.

The letter column provokes some comments on comments. I might point out to whoever complained about the slow-moving nature of Al Capp's *Li'l Abner* that this was often encountered in mid-century and earlier. *Lum and Abner*, one of my favorite radio programs, moved ahead with incredible deliberation. Often an adventure would stretch over three months of five-nights-weekly episodes. Radio soap operas had plot twists maybe twice a month, with all the other broadcasts consisting of characters talking about the situation and what had happened and what might happen while nothing was occurring. There was a weekly periodical aimed at farm families that had been running a serial story for more than 20 years when I lost track of it, with nothing in particular ever happening.

Tom Perry was so right about the difficulty of adjusting to changing costs. But I'm so old that I suffer from dollar awe. When I was a boy, a dollar was a landmark: anything that cost less was affordable from time to time, anything more than a dollar in cost was inaccessible unless it was absolutely necessary. I still feel a moment of panic from time to time when I patronize a cheap restaurant and hand over four or five dollar bills to pay for a meal. I remember the way I won a \$3 meal ticket on a pinball machine when I was about 10 and my parents and I enjoyed three meals before it was all used up.

[And more from Harry...]

As advertised, I have finally dredged up the tenth issue of *Idea*. It is holding up well despite its considerable age and I want to indicate my appreciation for it with some comments, long-delayed though they may be and handicapped by an effort to avoid duplicating things people said in the 11th issue's letter section. Obviously, I can't say anything about the Steve Stiles art spectacular without duplicating all the compliments already paid him in print, so I'll spare you that sort of repetition.

But I can report that *Li'l Abner* was a favorite comic strip when I was a boy and it was in its golden age. I know it deteriorated in later years, but has any daily comic strip ever avoided that fate? The local junior college continued to hold Sadie Hawkins Day festivities for years after the strip had vanished from newspapers, but I think the event has finally vanished from the academic calendar at that institution.

I thought Steve's art on the pages he drew for the revival was a very credible pastiche of Al Capp's original strips. Somehow, I thought the hero looked a trifle older, but maybe that's my imagination or Steve's intention. I didn't care too much for the script with which he was forced to work: too polemic and bitter in comparison with the comic strip during the years I enjoyed it most.

It's also difficult to comment on Kathy Routliffe's "My Trip to Jupiter" without echoing the reactions that are

already in print. But I don't believe anyone mentioned one aspect that impressed me as important: the fact that Kathy was lucky to have that fixation on a deceased musician rather than a live one. If it had been the other way around, she might have gotten herself into the same deep trouble as some other troubled individuals who get arrested for stalking big name musicians or even shooting them. Of course, it's possible that Kathy's problem was of such a nature that she was forced to become obsessed with an unobtainable individual.

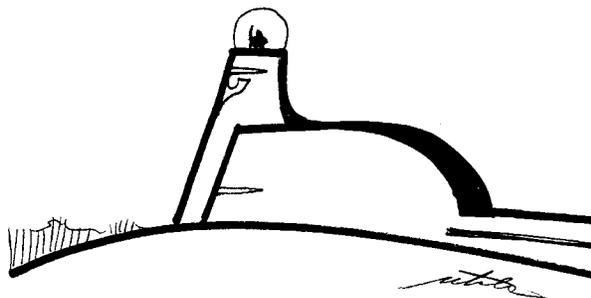
I'm very glad that she licked the trouble and has today the courage to write about it for public consumption. Incidentally, I suffered all sorts of worries earlier in life about the danger I might lose my mental health, because so many of my cousins had instability in the upper story ranging from a condition serious enough to require institutional care for a while to weird notions that didn't affect their conduct sufficiently for most people to notice. (One of them was normal in most respects but she was certain that Milton J. Cross, the Metropolitan Opera radio commentator for several decades, was wildly in love with her and was sending her secret messages during his between-act chatter on the Saturday afternoon broadcasts. She had met him during a visit with her husband to New York City, he had apparently been gallant in her presence, and that was the extent of their contact, but she never got over it.) By now, I suppose, I'm safe from the danger of having people say what a shame it is that I went mad, because if the generation curse should strike everyone would assume it was a quite normal, expectable case of Alzheimer's.

I feel a little better now about my neglect of *Idea*. Soon, I hope to make a direct frontal attack on my failure to respond to *Science Fiction Five Yearly*.

Yrs., &c.,

Harry Warner, Jr.

It's never too late to send a letter of comment, and I can hardly complain about readers neglecting *Idea* when I've done so myself for so long. Still, it feels wonderful to be working on an issue again at last, and *SFFY* looms ever closer on the horizon, too. Terry Hughes, *SFFY*'s first guest editor back in 1976, is joining Jeff and me as guest editor/publishers of *SFFY* #11, due out in November, 2001. Jeff and I are even hoping to get down to Port Charlotte, Florida, for an editorial conference with Lee Hoffman early in the coming year. (Hmm, if only we could stretch that conference to cover all of Minnesota's winter months instead of just a January weekend.)—gfs



Jim Trash (J.P. Mowatt)

16 Harlington Court
Morley, Leeds LS27 0RT
United Kingdom

PEZ STUFF

Jim was indeed pleased to receive the *Idea* 11 and found much to delight in and appreciate within its pages but little did he realise there was a vicious trap awaiting him in the letters pages. PEZ, PEZ, PEZ it went. Here a PEZ, there a PEZ, everywhere a PEZ PEZ. What can this be he cried. I know naught of this. Days passed, breaths were taken, socks were washed but the PEZ problem could not be shoved from his mind. Not to be denied it itched, rattled around and irritated like sand in one's underwear. Eventually he could stand it no longer and strode down the road to meet his good friend Holmes at 221b Baker Street.

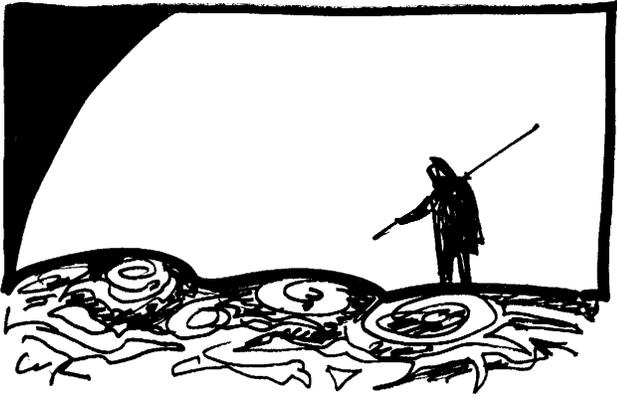
"Ah, greetings Trash" boomed out Watson merrily as he pumped my arm up and down in the doorway. "I do hope you have a case for us. Poor Holmes is quite despairing of the criminal element these days. They seem to have no imagination." I assured him that I had a mystery that should provide some stimulation and was ushered inside.

Holmes acknowledged my presence with a raised eyebrow as I entered the room. He sat back in his chair. He drew on his pipe. He drew on the window, the walls, the floor. Seemingly there was no end to this man's talents. "So, Trash, what have you for me today?" he asked.

Swiftly I produced an *Idea* from my trousers and brandished it before him. "I received recently a most singular publication which mystery the like of which I have ne'er previously encountered. Within these pages, I am convinced, are dark doings which I cannot fathom. I was hoping that you may bend your great mind to the unravelling of the mystery."

Holmes looked interested. He leant forward with a glitter in his eye. I picked it out with my trusty penknife and told him of the PEZ phenomena. Bleeding only a little he rapidly absorbed the flow of information and decided upon a course of action. Donning hat and coat he crossed the room to his personal library. Shedding hat and coat he began to peruse the contents of his bookshelves. "Somewhere within these many words we will uncover the key to this mystery. The mystery is a word and therefore the answer to it will also be a word. But where to start?" He tapped his finger upon the spine of a large and unwieldy dictionary. "I suspect," he said after considerable pause, "that we may have here a mis-spelling or an abbreviation of a much longer word. Immediate possibilities that spring to mind are such as the word peasant, which could and probably would be shortened to PEZ in certain circles. These could actually be miniature peasants to be dispensed when needed so they could spring upon the field, scythe in hand and tame those wild and wayward natural grasses which cause so many problems for the struggling small-holder."

At this point Jim suddenly remembered a previous appointment and began to edge toward the door. Watson was there waiting though with his own particular slant to add



to the investigation. “Oh I don’t know Holmes.” Watson shook his head worriedly. “It sounds like something much more fearful and dangerous to me. I worry that we may need to take precautions against this possible menace.”

“Like wearing condoms you mean?” snapped back Holmes.

“Well, I... er...”

“I would hope you always wear your condom anyway Watson. One cannot be too careful nowadays.”

“Oh absolutely Holmes. Every morning I pull on my pants, socks and condom as a first priority.”

My curiosity got the better of me at this point and I had to ask what he did when he wished to urinate.

“Oh no problem there old man. I’ve cut a hole in the end to facilitate my urinary functions.”

“Oh” says I, somewhat dazed. “That’s all right then.”

Holmes was still considering the PEZ problem. “I wonder if it could be a spelling mistake. Perhaps they meant to speak of a Fez, which is, of course, a kind of hat worn by foreigners in warm climates. This broadens out the mystery if so as there may be a Middle Eastern connection. From there it would be just a short step to possible oil money involvement, political intrigue, fuel shortages, global warfare and the end of the world as we know it. Her majesty’s government must be informed.”

“Un, perhaps I’d better go,” says I. “I’ve just remembered my auntie’s ill. The dog’s been sick. Cambodia’s been invaded and they’ve requested that I personally rush them some lemon-soaked paper napkins urgently. Or something.”

Holmes looked suspicious. “Could this be connected with the great PEZ conspiracy?”

“Um,” I responded not sure what to say for the best.

“But wait,” Holmes raised a pointy finger skyward.

“I seem to remember your saying this word began with a capital letter and therefore perhaps it is a place name. Maybe we should search for cities of that name. How big is this woman’s garage? Could it house a number of cities waiting to be dispensed upon a newly developing civilisation? Perhaps when the Middle Eastern plan is realised and the world lies in ruins this Geri Sullivan will be waiting to dispense fully formed cities from her dispenser in the garage.”

Eventually I made my escape and thumbed the pages of *Idea* 11 once more. I accumulated a little more data

from the letter written by David L Russell. It seems that these PEZ things are probably sweets that come with stencils and stickers out of a long tube. Hmmm...

Or is that just what THEY would want us to think...

Hiya Geri,

Good to see you at Corflu. Shame we didn’t really get a chance to chat. Many thanks for *Idea*. It was delightful.

Jim Trash <jim@scream.demon.co.uk>

Jim, thank you for a welcome change of pace for the lettercol!—gfs

A.Vincent Clarke

The Enchanted Convention...

The blue ink is marvellously good-looking and legible, although judging from my own experience with Aporrheta in the late ’50s, and looking at the pre-war *Novae Terrae*, this colour ink has peculiarly osmotic properties. At least, the British Gestetner blue has. Have a look at *Idea* in another 50 years and see if you can read each page from both sides.

I was awe-stricken to read the editorial on the accumulation of Stuff. I might have been reading my own innermost thoughts and feelings. The only thing that stops me from going to boot fairs (the rough equivalent of your garage sales) every weekend is that the house space is limited and some saving speck of sanity in me refuses to build a garage for the Stuff. The attic floor creaks a bit, tho.

I realise that I’ll never have time to re-read a tenth of the books, magazines, fanzines, clippings, etc. here, unless someone comes up with an immortality serum smartish. On my left as I write this is a large and rugged Victorian bookcase, which tends to attract the hefty books—5 Orwells in one volume, 5 Chandlers ditto, complete Lewis Carroll, Jane Austen, Bernard Shaw, Oscar Wilde, etc. etc., and when I note that this bit of furniture holds about 10% of the books in this one room only—I shudder.

Mind you, I must confess I shudder even more when I see a TV reporter walk into some celebrity’s house, look at a single bookcase on the wall and comment on how well read the owner evidently is.

Jeff rambles very pleasingly indeed. I’m a bit surprised that Solar Power hasn’t taken off more in the States, which as we Brits know has blazing sunshine eleven months of the year. There was even a piece on our pop TV science programme, ‘Tomorrow’s World,’ last week, which said that solar panels were the coming thing. They were saying this twenty years ago, so they must be coming soon.

Terry Garey’s piece is neat and funny. In furrin ignorance I wonder what “Instant Breakfast” is.

“I Yelled at Yanni” fails to impress as a title, ’cos I’ve never heard of him, but the sentiments expressed are almost all good. Don’t know quite why Barb was so overwhelmed by the scale of the Parthenon, tho. Given enough time even quite ordinary people can build the Pyramids, the Great Wall of China, the Taj Mahal. Good writing, nonetheless.

When I read a new article by Dave Langford my mind immediately enters a Time Warp where I fancy I've read three-quarters of it in various manifestations in the past. This is possibly because his writing is so good it impresses the ambient ether along the Time Line both in the past, the present and the future, possibly because I've read and re-read everything he's written so many times. Our second greatest fan writer.

"Ashes, Dust, 9 Electric Razors" was one of the most extraordinary pieces I've ever read, in or out of a fanzine. The details, the intimacy, the expressions of your own thoughts, are awe-inspiring. I suppose that 27 pages devoted to clearing up after a death might be a shade obsessive, but it was fascinating. I gained a little comfort, as a 75-year-old living alone, at the words of your father: "I look around and see that there's lots to be done. But I enjoy sitting back in my chair and reading the newspaper. So I do."

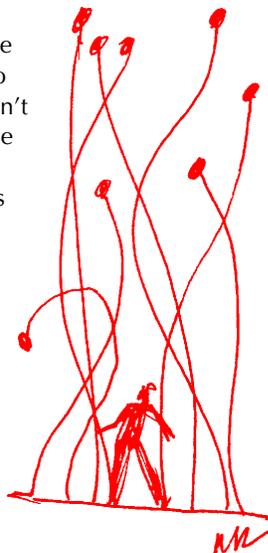
Yes, that's growing old, at least in the context of living alone. Someday you'll do this—someday you'll do that—no one around to nag you or shame you into using your small store of energy to Do Something Now. It'll wait until tomorrow—next week—next time I feel like it. Here, things like broken radios abound—some day I'll get around to repairing 'em. I wonder if all those nine electric razors were in proper working order? And in my case, at least, there's a permanent feeling of slight guilt.

The Letters. Ah, the old and well-known Family. Nice to know *Idea* is so appreciated. And very nice to see you answering so many LoCs in full. Communication is all. The front cover is beautifully done, tho' possibly suited more to **Burroughs' Jungle Girl** than a proper fanzine. (I have a copy of **Jungle Girl** in the room and the dust-jacket is definitely inferior.)

Best,

Vind

I must not be old yet, though I'm definitely middle-aged in outlook if not always in thought and action. The last few years have left me feeling the urgency to Do Something **Now**. I'm all too aware that I no longer have an entire lifetime ahead in which to get around to doing things, or even half of one. If I don't do things *now*, it's only going to become more likely that they'll *never* happen, never get done. One of the silver linings of having taken so long to publish this issue of *Idea* is that working on it reminded me of all the things I've done in the past three years, helping me see that my life is far from stagnant, much as it may feel otherwise down in the trenches of daily living. My cup is indeed full, and it's up to me to keep refilling it with a brew worth drinking, worth sharing with loved ones, and with friends.—gfs



Cy Chauvin

14248 Wilfred
Detroit MI 48213

Your story about helping Jack Targonski make arrangements after his father's death and then clear out the family home was very touching. It's something I want to put out of my mind, when I think of my own family. With my grandparents, things happened rather gradually. My grandfather became sort of mentally disoriented, started going places and getting "lost," really just running away from home, was put into a nursing home, and died. They had moved to a small bungalow from the family home that their parents had built, and my grandmother subsequently moved to an apartment where she lived for over a decade, then went to live with my uncle in Denver. Clearing the furniture from her apartment was sort of like a death, perhaps, a little death, but she was excited (and worried) to be moving. I'm glad to have these stone bookends, and a small table I helped her pick out at a store when I was a boy. But a whole house—to have your whole childhood and everything else rain down upon you all at once? That would be too much. Even if it wasn't very happy. It can't be too good an idea to look back too much.

Joyce Scrivner came to visit over the summer, with a similar idea to your essay, to help Howard DeVore find some of the more important things in his garage and make sure that something happened with them. I guess I tend to take Howard for granted, living in the same city, and seeing him at the local conventions and Midwestcon. I've always enjoyed the stories he tells, mostly of the crazy bargain basement type book deals he's made over the years, or the weird things George Young ('40s-'50s era Detroit fan) has done lately.

Anyway, I did get to help look for stuff in the garages, and did we make some fabulous finds, especially in Candice's garage:

- (1) Original manuscript of Philip K. Dick's first novel, **The Solar Lottery**. Howard said it was left over from Detention, the Detroit Worldcon held in 1959. Donald Wollheim gave it to him for the auction, but it never got auctioned, apparently because they were waiting for an okay from Dick. The novel was published in 1954, and so Dick was just an up and coming writer, they probably had more important stuff for their auction anyway.
- (2) Dozens of beautiful photos from old-time Worldcons and Midwestcons from Ben Jason, so clear and artful that I felt I was "there" in the 1950s! They were like movie stills. And it's weird to say, but in most everyone seemed so '50s fashionable that it seemed like a pose...except for maybe Ted White, there were a couple photos of him with wire-rims, T-shirt, and goatee that made him seem sort of current (he looked maybe 19 in the photo). I hope you get a chance to see these!
- (3) A beautiful mint copy of Gernsback's *Science and Invention* magazine from 1929, with a glowing cover. I never wanted to own a "pulp" but I wanted this magazine....

- (4) An issue of *Slant*, the Willis letterpress fanzine, and a letterpress note saying that the next issue of the magazine would be delayed due to press failure!
- (5) Lisa Tuttle's first fanzine, *Mathom!* I used to write to her in high school, which is how I recognized it.

I can't think of anything else in particular; we sorted through reams of fanzines, apas, offprints of covers from *F&SF*, old paperbacks, etc. Candice's garage, by the way, is behind a house she no longer lives in; it's empty, with weeds and wildflowers growing long, and I don't know why she keeps it. We spent an enjoyable afternoon sifting through it and eating coney-dogs.

Then there was Howard's own garage and house.... Steve Cook (local fan) and I took turns going up into the garage's loft in a futile quest for some art prints that had been stored up there. We had to clear away boxes of old envelopes, paper, odd plumbing parts, paint cans, old mimeographs, and (of course) tons of old paperbacks and magazines just to be able to crawl around up there. The day was a relatively mild one but we began sweating almost instantly once we got up there—I pity poor Joe Siclari who had been looking in the garage the previous week when the weather was constantly in the 90s or high 80s. Some neat things there, too, I guess, my favorite being a very small mimeo that I could hold in one arm. I felt sorry for all the neglected digest magazines in the attic; would anyone ever want them? What will Howard do with them? I just feel it is a crime to destroy books, and digest magazines are so close to being books that it seems like the same thing.

Best,



Vijay Bowen

P.O. Box 155
Village Station
New York NY 10014-0156

I really liked the concept of “the treasure of stuff, the comfort of stuff, and the burden of stuff.” I'm trying to learn how to reduce the burden, but it's not easy. Particularly paper stuff—getting rid of any piece of paper with writing on it still feels like a wrench. And I agree with you wholeheartedly about the way that stuff binds us together. I've clothing and books from friends that I cherish, because they are constant reminders of the relationships between us, and the shared history (shared through both experience and the telling of tales between us).

I'll write later about my responses to your piece on helping Jack...it's been about fourteen months since my father died, and I'm still working my way through my feelings. It was pretty much as I expected, and nothing at all as I'd expected. It's great that you could be there for Jack....

All best —

Vijay <VJBowen@aol.com>



Gary Deindorfer

Trent Center West
465 Greenwood Ave., #1104
Trenton NJ 08609-2131

(7-16-98)

I have been remiss. Permit me to explain: some years ago, I mentioned to old friends Steve Stiles and Robert Lichtman that I wondered why you didn't see fit to place me on the mailing list of *Idea*. About three years ago, I received a nice letter from you, explaining that this omission had been an oversight on your part, plus two back issues. I was duly astounded by the quality of this fanzine, but didn't reply to you, didn't loc you, because about this time I was entering a relatively complete gafia. You kept kindly sending *Idea*, and got only a dreaded silence on my part. At times I toyed with writing you a loc that would cover all the issues I'd received so far, but put it off—still mostly, or at least 90% gafia, you see. But now I am rousing myself out of my self-imposed exile from the Tribe and feel it is high time I locced you, after your being so nice as to keep sending *Idea* for nothing in return. I have abandoned the old idea of loccing all of the issues I have received so far, but here is a letter on *Idea* #11, and my apologies for taking so long write.

This issue is no slacker in quality compared to the previous issues I have seen. It is a wonder how you manage to put out such a superb fanzine, issue after issue. Graphically, the integration of text, illos, and headings is currently

equalled only by those of *Mimosa*. But the text—ah, that's where you shine. One fascinating article after another, followed by one of the most absorbing letter columns around today.

As for that paper, that twiltone, it is so timebindingly faanish. That of course has been said before about twiltone by so many people. Thought I'd add my two cents to the general litany.

The cover is very nice, subtle use of line and contrast between black and white. Love that tiger! But then I have always admired tigers. Magnificent animals indeed. The bacover is pleasant with the phallic spaceship standing unmolested in the open space, dramatically offset by the rocks and foliage in the foreground.

Fans are traditionally packrats, I suppose. I'm not. I don't like to be burdened down by a lot of possessions and don't have room for them, anyway. Periodically I weed out old recordings, books, fanzines, clothes, etc. I guess this makes me fannishly atypical. Your editorial gets this issue off to a rousing good start, anyway.

I have been reading Jeff's writing for years now. In the fanzine he used to send me, which I must shamefacedly admit I never responded to, perhaps one of my earlier bouts of gafia or semigafia; in *Trap Door*, and now in *Idea*, as well as other places I have forgotten, perhaps. I have always admired his ability to write vividly and subtly about the natural world, a talent I have never had. I am not as attentive to nature as he is; but then, I get the impression that few people are. I was also impressed and fascinated by his tales of his musician days in a prior issue, since I am a musician myself—alto sax, recorders, and a little keyboard.

I am intrigued by the elf door in the tree. Perhaps it is not a prank. Maybe it is a real elf door, a portal to the wondrous land of faerie. Do you think you could investigate that door in the tree again? You might gain entry into a Neverneverland of Middle Earth where you could have grand and glorious adventures. Then you could write about them in the next issue of *Idea*. For the occasion, you could retitle your column, "Adventures in the Narnian Zone."

Just a thought. I have a thought on occasion.

Good to see something from Terry A. Garey. I have fond memories of her deft contributions to that much missed zine *Mainstream*. She is clever, wry, witty, often downright slap yer thighs funny. This is an original idea—a menu comprised completely of nonfood. The nutritional value of that French dinner must be absolutely nil. By all means, feature more Garey in future issues. She is always a delight.

Barb Jensen is a new name to me. It is interesting to read the writing of someone you've never read before. Each of us is a unique personality, and reading Barb opens me up to a mind I'd previously had no acquaintance with, replete with all its own special quirks and turnings. This is beautifully atmospheric writing. By the way, I watched about ten minutes of a Gianni concert on public TV a few months ago. I didn't like his music at all, but then I hardly ever take to New Age music.

Dave Langford is devilishly funny and clever. This is one of the best articles by him I have read. It has so many serpentine twists and turnings in it, so many witty

surprises, that I am forced to conclude that Dave has a subtle mind, something I had long suspected.

The highpoint of the article for me is the accretive construction of a "typical" Joseph Nicholas sentence. Of course it is a gross exaggeration, but, withal, one based on a kernel of truth.

The Dan Steffan illos for the Langford article are almost the highpoint of the issue, the highpoint being your photographic realism illos of your long piece. If Dave's article/speech is a *tour de farce*, your piece is a veritable *tour de force*, and then some. This is atmospheric, heartfelt writing. At times it is emotionally very intense. It wore me out emotionally to read it, but it was well worth it. I felt from reading this piece that I'd almost gotten to know Jack, and I liked him. Cigarettes and all.

My own memory of Bethlehem is riding up there at Christmas time with my parents to see the huge lit up Nativity star on the mountain overlooking Bethlehem. (I grew up in the nearby town of Pottstown, Pa.)

Nice to see Mike Glicksohn leading off the letter-column. He is one of the all-time great locwriters, along with Harry Warner, Jr., rich brown, and Ted White. And others who for the moment elude what is left of my mind.

Since I am not on the Net, Ulrika O'Brien's writing is a nearly complete unknown factor to me, so it was nice to make her acquaintance in this letter of hers in your pages, though since I have read an article by her on Swedish fandom in *The Reluctant Famulus*.

The page "In Memory of William Rotsler" is my absolutely first knowledge of his passing. I miss him. He was a Great Fannish Character.



I didn't mean to respond to your apology with the longest delay between issues ever, honest I didn't, Gary. *Idea* has long been gifted with outstanding fanwriters old and new, and I hope future issues continue in that direction. As for the absorbancy of the lettercol, I hope your comment holds true for this issue. "Park & LoC It" is certainly absorbing a lot of pages, and I still ended up WAHFing more letters than I would have liked. I'm a feedback junkie, and love reading and sharing reactions, facts, and stories that bubble up in response to the 'zine.

Twiltone is a love it or hate it product. Few are indifferent to its look and feel.

Jeff hasn't had any unexplained long absences, but his title this time around refers to Brigadoon. Do you think...? I've seen the elf door, though only under the cloak of darkness. Who knows where might you go if you opened it at dawn?

Asking Jack to read an early draft of "Ashes/Dust" was most likely the biggest thing I've ever asked of him. Well, asking him to read and respond to it, too. Emotionally wearing, yes, indeed. I'd called him with some questions

while writing it, so he knew it was coming, something of the level of detail I was getting into, and that I hoped to publish it. Given the subject matter, that was his decision, and it couldn't have been an easy one to make. When I'd asked how many TV sets there had been, so as to get the count right, his first response was, "I'm not sure I want people to know how many old TVs Duke had." Yet there I was, asking him for so much more than that.

Near the beginning of the cover letter, I wrote, "If you never want another person to read it, tell me. Tell me now, while only you and Jeff have seen it. (I don't think this will be your reaction, but if it is, it will be a valid one.)"

Reading it that first time wasn't easy, and the conversations and work he put into it between then and its publication couldn't have been a welcome exercise, either. I doubt it will ever be an easy piece for Jack to read, much as I believe he shares my pride in its publication and the reader response to it.

I closed that cover letter to Jack by saying, "Thank you for letting me come to Bethlehem. It wasn't easy, it wasn't fun. Yet it had its moments, and every bit of it was good for my soul. Part of me wants to apologize for getting as wrapped up in it as I did, for getting so emotional about it all. I hadn't expected that. I thought I was going to help you through agonizing times, not that I'd wind up needing help and support myself. But I'm not going to apologize. I was completely Geri through the entire ordeal. You were completely Jack. I'm immensely proud of us for that."

I'm equally grateful to *Idea's* readers for the warmth, interest, and understanding the article evoked. It was courageous of all of you to come along on that particular journey, and your presence and support continues to bring a unique comfort to the experience.—gfs



William Breiding

150 Grattan Street #4
San Francisco CA 94117

I've been trying to figure out why it was I was having this block about reading incoming fanzines. I think it had to do with a sense of "faithfulness." This may sound weird, but I think Bowers would understand it, and maybe you, too. I couldn't read *Idea* until I had locced *Outworlds*. I couldn't read the other zines until I'd locced *Idea*. I knew this issue of *Idea* was particularly close to your heart. I had this nagging feeling that I had shortchanged Bill in my letter—and so much of my relationship with Bill is through letters, indeed, our friendship is founded on it—and I could not go on to you until I had reconciled this feeling of not having given enough to Bill in some way. Well, Bill remedied this situation by publishing OW29.5, a letter column from the '70s, and I had great fun reading and loccing the thing. Only in a Bowers world would these problems be answered in this way.

Stuff. I suffer only mildly from this disease called Stuff. I had nothing, really, until about 1983. I was moving so much until then I couldn't afford to, and as noted in Bowers' zine, lost two very valuable libraries (both personally and monetarily) because they were pitched by the people who were storing them. By 1983 I had my own place and was in a serious long-term relationship and it didn't look like I was going anywhere. So I started Accumulating. For me this meant mostly books and records. Even still, it's not that much. Compared to you, I mean. But I paid for it when I moved to Iowa, like a thousand bucks. And now that I'm in Tucson, it all sits in Iowa in a storage unit in subzero weather until I figure out how to get it out here—Jeff, what happens to vinyl after it has been frozen?

Speaking of Jeff, he was on a rant this issue; I thought for sure I was seeing an "it's time to move to somewhere warmer" notion formulating—but it was not to be so. I agree with Jeff in every way, but dammit, I still like my hot dogs! His writing, as usual, was superb in tone.

Barb Jensen—what a thoroughly amusing and delightful read! I wish that I could have put such a funny (yet serious) spin on my travels in Europe—but then I'm not a very funny guy (As Joe Wesson once pointed out, "William, let's face it, you're just not a humorous guy!") And I loved learning about Barb's life, the transitions she sees as her life: working class juvenile delinquent, hippie, lesbian feminist—to what? A middle aged married woman? I don't think so! Thanks Barb, and more, please.

There is not much to say about Dave Langford's piece—except that I laughed all the way through it. I imagined myself hearing it as a speech and laughed even harder. Bravo. (Leroy Kettle! That guy **was** funny!)

The letter column, itself, is a world. Briefly: Mike Glicksohn's letter was very funny and one of the best from him in a long time. I would be very much interested in knowing whose "autobiographical" writing it was that held the power to make him feel betrayed when he found out it was fiction. And I wonder, too, if it was necessary for

him to feel such, as there is a great need for “fictional memoirs”; they almost never lie, and when they do it is so they may better tell the “truth,” rather than the facts. I would say you gave enough evidence, including a love song, that Mike ought to be fairly satisfied with Kathy’s reality! If not, I’ll vouch for her, even though I’ve never met her. Ulrika reminded me of the time back in the ’80s when a bunch of Bay Area fans, including myself on rhythm guitar, got together to form a psychobilly band called the Coyotes. The joke in the band was that I couldn’t count past four, because I didn’t have the natural rhythm in me to feel where the chord changes were. Once I learned the song, I was hell on wheels, though! I didn’t think that I would find much to ever chuckle about in Kathy’s trip to Jupiter but the interchange you created between Bob and Steve Green, both as individual comments, and as editorial hijinx, was funny. I guess that’s how we get through this mess of a life, huh? Craig Hilton was masterful and nostalgic. Terry Jeeves was his usual cranky self. Mae’s take on Kathy piece—mind expanding (but then when **isn’t** she?). I just read Harry Warner, Jr.’s two volumes of fan history in the last two months and Tom Perry’s tone was so in line with Harry that I had to do a double take to see who was writing. So tell me about Tom Perry—sorry, we’re all neos on this bus. And speaking of the illustrious Mr. Warner, Jr., just where the heck is he? The update on Irish Fandom was magical and time binding, not to mention well written and funny. Your garden exchange with Robert was exquisite. I must come to Toad Hall one day. I was a fool—but I couldn’t help it at the time—not to have visited you and Jeff when I was in Iowa.

Gerri—I’m sorry to have to be the one to tell you, but Terry Jeeves just isn’t going to like your essay. No sci-fi in it. You bared your soul—not his idea of high excitement. I, on the other hand, loved it. It was a smooth and seamlessly crafted piece. You pulled everything together marvelously.

I’ve been spending days on end trying to figure out how to respond to your piece. Of course we have all been touched by death, but the major issues for me were all the other things that came up for you while you were “being there” for Jack. I had recently rewritten a piece I wrote in December of 1994—the piece I was thinking about sending you when I was in Iowa. When I was done revising it I decided not to send it to you because it was still entirely too hysterical in tone. (Plus I wasn’t sure if it was very well written/organized.) But I’ve decided to send it to you because in many ways it is a direct rebuttal to certain aspects of your essay: home and parents, which in effect, I really felt like I had neither, though in the material world I had both. This piece will much more elaborately answer your essay. Look for it under separate cover. If you feel that you want to publish it, consider it a submission.



The other aspect has to do with love and your relationship with Jack. In many ways I, too, fall where you do with Jack with some women in my life; with the closeness and intimacy and love and friendship. And it’s pretty much destroyed me. I’ve been unable to fully integrate these relationships with everything else in my life. I have recently

come to realize that there has been a dangerous openness to these relationships that causes confusion. I envy just how clear you’ve been able to be with yourself (and Jeff and Jack) about where you stand, yet still be able to express the misgivings and hurt that you do—and even the jealousy that transpired because of Jack’s comment about the purple high heels. I think you’ve done a much better job than I in loving and accepting the situation as stands. That takes a lot of brutal honesty, and the will to continue, beyond the pain and personal neurosis that so often I can’t get beyond. Your piece helped me realize that there are some doors that need to be shut and to accept that shutting. If those boundaries mean a distancing (which I would prefer it not) then so be it, but there has to be a clear line of healthy integration with the whole of my life, much like you have done with Jack, or it will just continue further destruction to my psyche—and my already many times shattered heart.

In many ways I have been lucky where death is concerned. I was badly brutalized at 19 when my stepdad died of lung cancer, but since then have only been lightly touched, even though two people close to me, an Apa-50 member and a former lover, have died of AIDS: by the times these deaths happened time and distance had muffled its effect. I was shaken and held by grief, yes, but not torn down. I don’t know whether to be thankful for this or not. My Dad is a healthy 80, my Mom, a healthy 76, but even in that their deaths will be different for me than perhaps you or Jack. Which, again, might be better explained by the essay mentioned above.

I thank you for writing and sharing this piece. In many ways it seems as though you are educating your little corner of fandom, about what it means to human, what it means to be alive, and what it means to love. Every issue seems to have one important mind altering piece, and of course it is because of you and your will to live and to love.

Stay warm.

William

I was glad to see your essay in *Outworlds* and am looking forward to seeing the reader response to it. There’s an entire, giant, fannish conversation about home life and childhood that continues to weave its way through our conversations, fanzines, and online communications. I particularly like it when the discussion flows freely between fanzines and other fannish venues, binding us ever closer while also including other, different voices in the discussion.— gfs

Terry Jeeves

56 Red Scar Drive
Scarborough YO12 5RQ
UNITED KINGDOM

Many thanks for such a nice, hefty zine with a striking cover. I thought the tiger superb, but the 'Tarzana' woman not of the same standard. Nevertheless, a striking piece of work. Both front and back covers had excellent foliage work, but the rocket on the back weakened the illo. Other interior artwork was simply GREAT.

Why does your dad collect auto junk? I might well ask why do I regularly buy electronic components when I only make something about once every three years. Why does my loft contain a huge fire hazard in the form of umpteen pulp SF mags from the thirties? It's the squirrel's collecting mania for which there is no known cure.

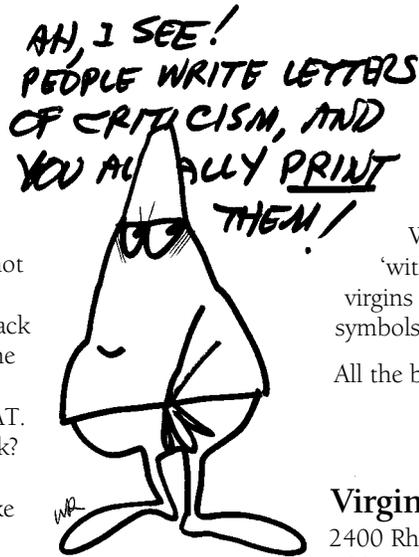
I liked Jeff Schalles' idea of feeding power back down the power line by hooking up one's exercise cycle and pedalling like mad. The possibilities are endless. Plug in one's electric toothbrush and scrub away like mad to cut down your power bill or put a hand crank on your shaver and re-feed down the line. Egad, we could all become millionaires.

Dave Langford was also excellent—which is just normal for him of course. I don't think he could write (or deliver) a dull speech. Pity we share the same affliction, one ear deafness. On the rare times we meet and converse, we circle like pre-fight boxers as we each try to bring our good ear into the right position.

Greece—I thought those supporting columns in the shape of women were 'Caryatids,' not 'Krayatides.' A quick dekho into the dictionary confirms the former. Maybe that's an anglicised version of the Greek spelling? As for 40 being 'over the hill,' that puts me way out of sight on the other side as I was 75 last October. Tempus continues to fugit like crazy. The older I get, the quicker the years flash by.

Your article and trip comments (lovely illos) reminded me of the times Val and I visited America (1980 and 1982). There's nobody as generous, friendly, and welcoming as an American fan, but travellers are not always ready for such warm welcomes. I recall when Val and I toured the West Coast of the States, after a long, long drive (with faulty air conditioning) via Death Valley to Prescott in Arizona. We arrived at the hotel dying for a shower followed by sleep. Instead, Joan and Jane Raymer were waiting to take us out for a run, which they did and finally dropped us at a Western tourist town for an evening of noshing and entertainment. By the time we got that shower and sleep, we were BUSHED.

Excellent LoCs, and even better illos. I was going to slip in a few fillos, but not against competition like that offered by your artists. Reading the letters and seeing what people read, watch, collect and are interested in makes me wonder what fandom will be like in another decade. The



SF field is now so vast that few of us have overlapping tastes and interests. I shudder in W.H. Smith's when I see 'Science Fiction and Fantasy'—since the SF content is minimal and gore and horror seem to hog the Fantasy shelves.

Who reads the endless sword, sorcery and 'witch/spell queen' sagas of magic wielding virgins foiling evil Dark Lords as they seek lost symbols of power?

All the best,

Terry

Virginia Wickstrom

2400 Rhode Island Ave N. Apt 507
Golden Valley MN 55427

[written to her son, Doug, who loaned her his copy of the 'zine; this time she gets her own]

Of Cars & Stuff—Memories of a '49 Packard on our honeymoon. Never will forget the time I went with your dad to deliver a newer model to a customer. On the way home he told me "That car will never fit in their garage." The newer ones were bigger, of course. Then there was the stack of hubcaps in our garage. I can really relate to "stuff" since I've had to get rid of a lot of it in recent years. Boxes of fabric, bags of yarn, books that just became too cumbersome to pack up and lug one more time—to say nothing of diminished storage space. It's really hard to admit that I would never have used it all even if I had room to store it.

Lake Harriet Satori—Starts out great; good last paragraph. Could do without the "what ifs" and sordidness of life in today's and/or future world. There's enough of that in the newspapers, on the net, and among dissidents. I don't consider it part of *spiritual* enlightenment. Other than that, I liked it.

Terry Fakes It—Enjoyable. I loved the French menus.

I Yelled at Yanni—Not sure what the theme is really supposed to be here. A 40th birthday passage? A travelogue on Greece? The revelation that the writer discovered heterosexual love does not add to this story and could better be told in "another story." If the incident with Yanni is the main point here, it is my opinion that a lot of the background is superfluous.

Twenty Years of Uproar—This is funny. I liked it a lot.

Ashes, Dust, 9 Electric Razors—A very sensitive narrative. I never really understood my mother's pain at losing her best friend until I lost my best friend. It was easy to identify with this and I'm not ashamed to say I shed a few tears in remembrance of the losses and the vulnerability these losses leave.

Virginia Wickstrom

Virginia also read David Langford's **The Leaky Establishment**: "I loved the book! I think it would make a good movie." *[Proofreader's comment: "Have you heard that it's being reprinted?" — George Flynn]*

David Charles Cummer

Somewhere in Linden Hills, right?

I have to admit I was a little concerned when you told me that there was something in particular that you wanted me to read in *Idea* #11, but was relieved when I found out that it only concerned death and its aftermath.

I enjoyed Barb Jensen's article, "I Yelled at Yanni," and spent the following couple of weeks wandering around the house singing—badly, of course—the title to the tune of "I Shot the Sheriff." (I'm still working on the rest of the parody, but it's damned hard to find anything that rhymes with "Linda Evans"...))

What I got out of "Ashes, Dust, 9 Electric Razors" was a sense of familiarity. Memories of the aftermath of my father's death at age 49 came back, particularly the picking up of the pieces afterward. (For example, Dad didn't have a will and I can recall sitting in an attorney's office as my mother and Uncle Jimmy—a lawyer—probated the non-existent will (or whatever would be the correct legal term).)

But more than that this article made me think of my involvement with the NAMES Project. Although not the same as what you and Jack experienced getting his father's worldly goods pulled together, it had the same feel of...having been close to where death has been, having to deal with the survivors, or occasionally being one of the survivors.

However, what came through strongest to me was the feeling that I knew how writing this piece must have felt. When I wrote *Now I Understand*, I had to go back into my memories of the Quilt display in Washington, D.C. in October of '89. It's one thing to live through such times, but another to willingly go through them again some time later, and then get people to feel what you felt. As I read your article I could see you in your office, remembering, feeling, groping for words, and finding them.

DAVID CHARLES CUMMER

P.S. Loved the cover. It took me back to the day when my first copy of *Rune* arrived (after attending Minicon 10). That issue's cover featured a naked lady squatting on a large mushroom. (I didn't catch the phallic symbolism until a couple of years afterwards. Sometimes I'm sooooo slow....)

Now I Understand was the reason I wanted you to read "Ashes, Dust." You'd shared a moving piece of personal writing with me; I hoped to return the favor. As for the writing process, when the words finally came, it was simply a matter of riding a tidal wave of obsession. For most of a week, I slept only a few hours at a time, always waking up with more words and sentences clamoring to be written. The article was much longer than I planned for it to be, and the hardest work came in, yes, the remembering, but mostly the editing. Thank Ghu I had lots of help on that.—gfs

Chuch Harris

"Harris Hovel"

The Enchanted Convention...

Gosh Mom! This is the best *Idea* I've seen yet—even better than the Special Collector's Issue with the yellow feather instead of an ordinary, run of the mill red one. I'd be surprised if Lichtman hasn't already copied Langford's "Twenty Years of Uproar" and filed it away in his '97 Fanthology box. Dave makes it all seem so effortless, a light conversation piece all sketched out with no trouble at all. It flows along so easily you can hardly credit that he even bothered to write it down in the first place let alone rewrite and tighten it up like he MUST have done. Joe Neo might think you just push a pint in his hand and then sit back and enjoy the torrent of fun and frivolity as it tumbles out, but those of us who actually try to—well, "write funny"—know that it ain't so. It's bloody hard work. Any damn fool can write a readable con report—and most of us have done so, too—but original wit and true humour are the rarest talents of all.

In the last 60 years we've found only five consistent giants out of the hundreds and hundreds of fanzine writers: Bloch, Burbee, Willis, Shaw, and Langford. There are dozens and dozens of worthy runners up—Hoffman, Tucker, Kettle, for a start—but only the Famous Five really stand out. Bloch, Burbee, and Shaw are dead; Walter has retired from serious fanac and only Dave remains to work the magic.

And "work the magic" is not just my opinion. He has a whole sideboard full of Hugos...a fannish endorsement I'd give my right bollock for. He differs from my other nominations. He's a sharp observer with a rat trap mind and over the years he has built up a marvellous repertoire of stories, and is much loved for the meticulous way he acknowledges his sources. It's a bit like the "-" bacover quotes...there was a sort of cachet in getting your name printed as a contributor...as a Wit or even as a fuggheaded moron held up to ridicule (altho nobody was named individually and the audience could never be sure which category you belonged to).

Now, this seems to have become a sort of paean to Langford but what I set out to do was to make a few observations about fannish humour, with a few hints on how you, too, could win a Hugo.

First, you need a sounding board, somebody you can bounce the witty bits off and gauge the reaction, count the boffolas. Bloch, like Dave and BoSh sometimes used a convention audience. Walt, who HATED public speaking, used the Oblique Angles. Other people—say, John Berry and me—used Atom, or Walter Himself; Vincent used Ken Bulmer, everybody has somebody to sit in judgement.

Next, unless you are really, really good, forget about those acknowledgements. Plagiarise is NOT a dirty word. The source you steal from had a lot of antecedents stretching all the way back to King James and his version. (All the best jokes come from the Bible altho I never did find where EFR's Willie Pugmire got his necklace of human foreskins.) Alan Coren—who is the only real pro

living off his wit nowadays—is a good source. But please don't use "HM the Q" or "the queendom" or people will tend to confuse you with me.

You could even try verse if you have a real talent for it. Vincent, before he sold his talent for a mess of pottage and an April '43 ASF, was the absolute master of this:

"Midst the chattering and the clattering of the
London Circle nattering,
Came an alcoholic anthem loud and clear
And as silence overtook 'em,
They heard words that really shook 'em,
Blasphemy that blasted every blasé ear...."

It must be 40 years since he wrote that but I can still quote the next four verses as well as almost every other verse he wrote. For me, they'd be worth a left bollock and I'd put up with the high squeaky voice. If there were a poetry Hugo, Vincent would need a sideboard as big as Langford's.

All that seemed to be in danger of turning into An Article or, worse still a pre-eulogy for Dave. How can I, Past Master of the International Union of Fully Certified Sex Fiends, natter away about Fandom Whither when somehow National Sex Week has crept past unnoticed in Daventry? I haven't heard of a single orgy in the whole town. There wasn't even a ritual defloration at the Salvation Army concert in the Precinct this year when, by all accounts ecclesiastical activities have been extraordinarily popular elsewhere. You saw the report of the German Couple Doing It during a guided tour of the Sistine Chapel? (No, seriously—I never joke about important things like this.) It was, according to *The Times* no more than a sort of knee trembler whilst officials and flunkeys rushed about shouting "Defense de bonk," "Unhand the wench," "Ooooooh stoppit Sigmund" and suchlike whilst that vast frightening Michelangelo vision of God in Cinemascope on the ceiling glowered down and even the cherubim and seraphim averted their eyes.

(Naturally, out of respect for the place, for the attending clergy, and for a group of nuns on their way home from Lourdes, contraceptives were not used or available. There are no vending machines in the Vatican, of course. As far as I know.)

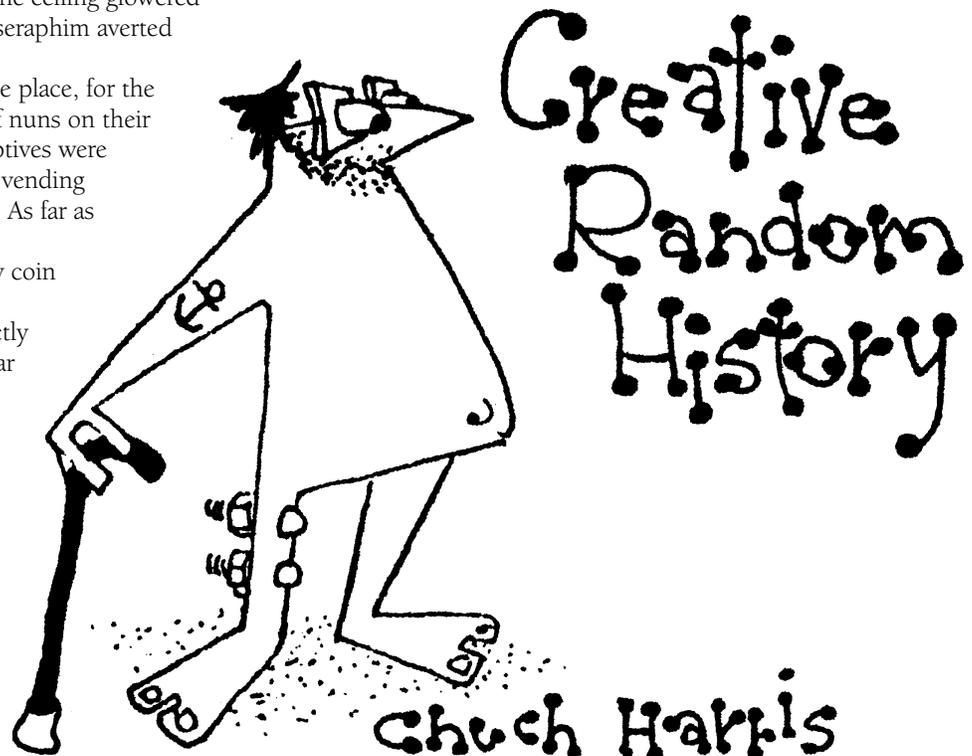
And—still gospel truth if I may coin a phrase—only this week a pair of publicity-seeking copycats did exactly the same thing behind the high altar in St Paul's Cathedral in London. This was truly outrageous and sacrilegious. Admiral Lord Nelson (who is one of my heroes), is entombed here in a huge funerary marble monument by the left aisle. (They brought him home from Trafalgar in a rum barrel and, to help me, the crew spliced the mainbrace with what remained in the barrel once they got him out and into a proper coffin at

Greenwich.) His one remaining eye would have been out on a stalk if he could have seen everything that was Going On full ahead of him, and even though it was pretty basic and no more than simple coitus interruptus. (Vergers, deacons, and beadles rushed to the scene, threw out the offending couple, and mopped up the desecration.) But you have to admit it wasn't the sort of thing you'd expect in a well run church—even a Protestant one—especially when you have to pay a pound to get in.

(For admission to the Church I mean.)

(If there is a service going on and you look suitably pious you can get in for nothing but you have to sing and have a pray and must not wander around.)

I'm sorry this has become a sort of serial letter, but the flow was rudely interrupted because Uncle Bill fell over in the nursing home whilst putting his trousers on (or maybe taking them off), and broke his femur. They took him off to Northampton General and since then we've had time for nothing except visits and consultations, etc. Just to complicate things, that was the day there was a fairly big multiple accident on the motorway with casualties taken to the hospital for trauma surgery. As Bill was fairly comfortable they put him on the back burner and delayed his theatre visit for a couple of days until they had cleared the backlog. They did the operation last night and have put a sort of sleeve over the broken bone so that he can use the leg a bit whilst it heals up. As he will get nursing care at the home I expect he will be discharged from the hospital in just a couple of days time. At the moment he seems happy enough; he likes to watch the traffic in and out of the ward and all the nurses are friendly and helpful. He can't do much for himself and last night I noticed the happy smile on his face when the pretty young nurse fitted



his dearest possession into the urine bottle. (This, believe me, never happened when I was a patient. All I got was a catheter.)

All this though is just a digression. What I want to comment on is A, D, & 9ER. This was quite the best thing I've seen from you yet. It held the interest right the way through... partly because it's not a subject that is usually written about and partly because of the similarities and contrasts with the British Way of Death. Millions of little bits floating around in my mind... in Catholic Churches (well, in England), you have to be in a "state of grace" before you can receive the Host... i.e., you should have been to confession, obtained Absolution and be free from sin. I rather doubt if even in America—my favorite pagan country—the priest would come along the front row of the stalls and offer it to, of all things, sundry Protestants let alone atheists, Hindus, or Holy Rollers.

And, whilst we are about it, I'm happy you are going to be cremated. I think I read that about 70% of Brit funerals are now cremations (we have a lot less space than you do). In all my time I have ever been to just one earth burial... my lovely Grandmother... and it was horrible... the yellow, greasy London clay, the wet dingy ill kept cemetery, the sensed urgency of the parson and the funeral staff to get everything over so they could get out of the rain, and the general "don't care" attitude. I much prefer the cremation service... and the coffins are generally cheaper, too!

And—it just occurred to me—on my new driving licence (you have to renew the licence when you are 70) you have to state what you want to do with your body if you die. I specified they can re-use anything they want, corneas, liver, heart, anything at all and take bits away for medical students to practise on. With luck there may not be anything at all to burn, which will not only avoid pointless wreaths, atmospheric pollution by holy smoke, but, even more important, save the vast amount of money that the undertaking industry always manages to hive off.

Undertakers and lawyers are my betes noir at the moment. I am still furious at the amount the lawyer charges to settle Belle's estate and will make damn sure that future wills will be settled on a do-it-ourselves basis. God only knows it's simple enough when you dig behind the gobbledygook and get the right forms to fill in.

I'm sorry; my fingers are faster than my brain today and I'm trying to comment on *Idea* although you would never believe it.

Could the nursery rhymes be a British import? Both of the examples you mention are known to every Brit baby... or were until TV jingles took over as the new nursery rhymes, e.g., "Lotsa fish and lotsa meat / The food that all cats love to eat / Oh! Isn't it a pity that / All kittens don't get KIT E KAT."

I used to think that nursery rhymes were universal—well, to the English speaking nations—but "Row, row, row your boat, Gently down the stream, Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, Life is but a dream" is little known here and is probably of US origin (and could well encapsulate a universal truth in its last line). And so is "Itsy bitsy spider went up the water spout..."

I was surprised to find that your Dad is only three years older than me, but ours is a weird, convoluted family.

After reading this I begin to wonder who is going to clear out my stuff. All the legal work is in order and I've shifted the house and all the assets into Sue's name—it seemed sensible because she is ten years younger than me and Brit inheritance tax is a bit tricky and liable to change—but there is one hell of a lot of paper and stuff and old toys and furniture up in the two lofts that I can't even climb up anymore. I suppose I should hire a garbage skip and get the kids to hoist it all out and throw it away... but it's wet and miserable and I can't even force myself to go out and rake leaves, so I suppose it will all finish up as one of those must do/someday jobs.

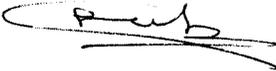
I've got rather a lot of those.

Interval. Down the road to inspect neighbour's new baby. Very wizened. She had one last year and called it Dakota (after an aeroplane rather than North or South and another instance of the creeping Americanisation of Britain). This is another girl and will be called Brönte. If I could only remember what they call those two dots that go over the "o" (as in Noël, too), I'd buy some as a christening present.

Talked to George-next-door who—AT LAST!—is cutting down the giant willow tree in his front garden. This is taller than the house and only five yards from my front window. Willow roots are notorious for cracking walls in their search for moisture, and I've had nightmare over the damn tree for years. I even thought of creeping out one night and banging some copper nails into the trunk to poison the damn thing, but Sue said I'd wake the whole street up with my hammering and wouldn't even think about the idea. I was so pleased with the glad tidings that I even offered to help with the sawing, but he has already arranged with the neighbour on the other side who, understandably, was just as eager to help as I was.

And on that happy note I think I'll pack up and get this in the mail.

Much love,

Your Big Kid


I expect Catholic churches in America have a similar approach to communion at funerals; the funerals where I'd seen the family served directly were Protestant services. If I'd thought of the relationship between confession and communion at the time, I would have had one less thing to worry about. Or, more likely, I would have thought of something else to focus my worries on.

Uncle Bill stories—I miss 'em. My favorite was the time he pulled the fire alarm on the locked ward, thus releasing all the doors and freeing himself to go walkabout in the process.

Toad Hall's willow tree fell over during high winds a few years ago. It landed gently on the neighbor's lawn

and sidewalk, doing no damage in the process. Looking at the split trunk, we learned why; the interior of the tree had quite thoroughly rotted. No signs of any copper nails. Jeff wished it had fallen on our porch roof, since that needs replacing, and then insurance would have paid at least something toward the tree's removal, too. Instead, we cut it up, bundled up the branches for city removal, and are storing the bigger pieces of the trunk in the back garden until we come up with something to do with them. In the meantime, a large willow shrub has grown up from the base of the rotted trunk. Must do something about that one of these years....—gfs



Richard E. Geis

PO Box 11408
Portland OR 97211

Hey, Idea 11 is an incredible trigger for me, sending me (via Dave Langford's "Twenty Years of Uproar") back...back...*thump* to the early 1950s and my Psychotic days.

I'm astonished at your mimeo work and the sheer audacity of publishing a 76-page mimeozine in this day and age. I love the uniquely soft feel of the paper...the sight of blue Gestetner ink...art by Atom...Rotsler...Steffan...Letters from Glicksohn, Willis, Jeeves, Mae Strelkov!

I'm quivering. I may have an orgasm! And at my age...

Thanks again,

Dale Speirs

Box 6830
Calgary, Alberta T2P 2E7
CANADA

The article on the cleanup after the death of Duke Targonski was almost too much for me to finish, it reciting events so similar to what happened to me after my father died suddenly in March 1996. Like Duke, he went suddenly, falling dead to the ground as he walked out to his car. At the funeral and wake, people kept telling me it was better that he went suddenly. I wasn't happy to keep hearing that at the time, but a few months later began to agree. I've seen too many people suffer a slow death from cancer. The impact of death doesn't hit until the funeral or after. We were too busy arranging the details, looking after the livestock, and cleaning up the evidence of a life now gone. It wasn't until the congregation started singing the first hymn at the funeral that my mother began crying. My brother and I spent three days sorting through old papers and burning them in a firepit on the farm. The result of that is that I have since been simplifying my own life, clearing out 29 boxes of books I didn't really need and being certain that my own will and final instructions were up to date. As fandom ages, we can expect to see more articles on the subject.

One must also make a point to follow the Johnsonian advice to constantly renew friendships and collect young friends as well as those of the same generation. (I suspect this is why he tolerated the young Scot named Boswell.) I've been thinking on this as I contemplate the BOFs of fanzine fandom whining about how things aren't the way they used to be. I've done my share of Trekkie-bashing, and while I still don't intend to buy a television set, I will try to trade with more Trekzines, even if I can't understand a word of them. Neo-Luddite ranting against the Internet aside, I suspect the day will come within the decade when *Opuntia* moves to a listserv (not Web page) and I finally concede defeat and get online. One can only preach to a dwindling congregation for so long before searching out fresh pastures.

Just looking at the back cover of *Idea* #11 and realized that the rocket ship has an erection. (Take a look between its legs.)

On that rather undignified note, I conclude with regards,

An erection? In *Idea*? Surely better on the cover here, where ideas of all sorts are entertained, than on the cover of your 'zine. Opuntias and other cacti are usually erect, but I don't want to think about a one with an erection. Not my kink. *Definitely* not my kink.

As for stuff, I threw away a lot of old receipts and credit statements when I came back from Bethlehem. Now it's four years later, and I need to do it again.—gfs

The Beck

3557 26th Ave. S.
Minneapolis MN 55406

Dear Geri and all the toreadors in the *Idea* bullpen,

YANNI? Don't get me started on fucking YANNI! Balloonknot of Christ! Have I tuned into "MOIST SUCKING CHEST WOUNDS OF THE RICH (not the Rick) AND FAMOUS" without flipping on the TV?! Is this the lost script for the celebrity edition pilot of "WHO WANTS TO CUISINART A MILLIONAIRE"? Anyone who thinks this talentless hack has anything going for him is channeling LIBERACE playing the GRANDPA JONES GREATEST HITS songbook!

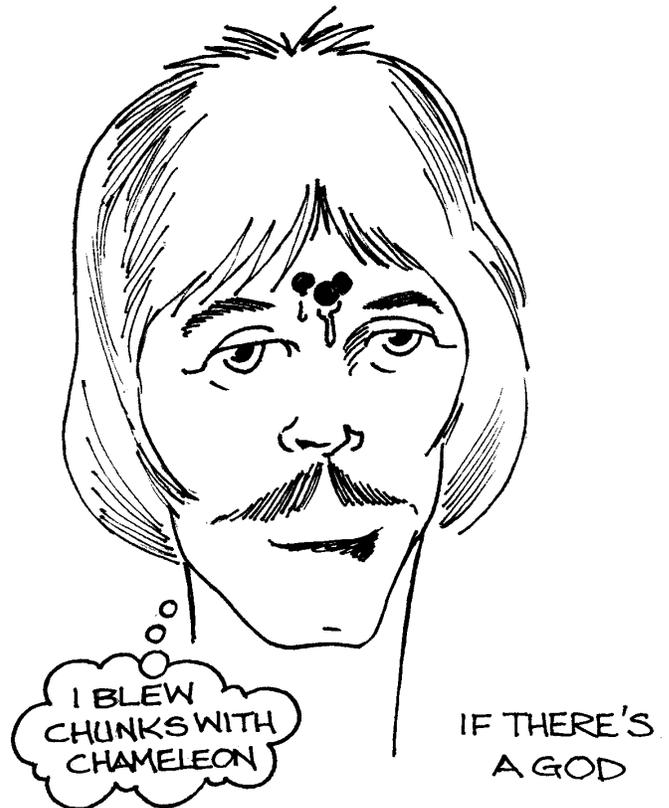
Okay...I'm calm...I'm calm, really...it's obvious that anyone who reads *Idea* needs a little historical background on this pus-sucking Nazi hosebag called YANNI.

First of all, for the past twenty-odd years, Minneapolis has had a club music scene that I will put up against any American city as being one of the most active and vital. On any night of the week, one can find over a dozen venues that offer music of one sort or another. As a rocker, I've seen many great bands and players come and go over the years, most of them propelled by great songs and great musicianship.

CHAMELEON was not one of those bands. They were a bighair holdover from the '70s that played covers and originals that sounded like covers. They started off as a four-piece: guitar, bass, drums, and keyboards. The only thing I can remember about the bass player is that he wore scarves tied around his knees. This was to protect them from his bass because his strap was so long that it banged against them. He had to stoop over to reach the strings. He and the guitar player used Schecter guitars, usually in matching glossy white. Schecter guitars are *kit* guitars, boys and girls, made of individual interchangeable parts like LEGOS. I won't comment on such an instrument's musicality, but with CHAMELEON it was obvious that this was second after *looking good*.

CHAMELEON had another memorable gimmick that had everything to do with showmanship. At some point during the evening it was time for the dreaded obligatory drum solo. The drummer had a lot of drums, and bless 'im, it looked like he managed to hit all of them, repeatedly, but that's not all. To keep the crowd from heading to the cans en masse for a quick toot'n'piss, he would go over to his *second* smaller set and *strap himself in*. He had to strap in because this was the *motorized, rotating head-over-heels* drum set! By this time, the few times I saw them, I was having a small stroke from laughing too hard.

How does YANNI fit into this? Why, he became their *fifth* member and *second* keyboardist! These rich (rotating, custom-made drum sets are *not* cheap) but taste-challenged bighairs must have owed him something for *producing* (!) their album because they let him join the band. The first keyboardist was also the singer, so maybe he couldn't sing and hold down the keys to make amelodic, synthesized washes of fuzztone at the same time.



CHAMELEON eventually faded away. YANNI made the transition from barband bighair to "NEW AGE" lobotomist having the paucity of talent with which he was born and an epiphany in self-marketing expertise. Isn't that the crucial difference between success and failure in the current music industry? Being able to sound good is not as important as the ability to sell well. People will *buy anything* if it's marketed well. Did CHAMELEON really suck, bite, chew, and swallow rubber donkey lungs, despite my opinion of them, or did they fail to find a market in which they could be a profit center?

ARMAGEDDON OUTAHERE,

The
BECK

Thus proving once again that it's never too late to send a letter of comment. This one arrived Tuesday, November 21, 2000, though I must say thanks for the call the night before with the heads-up and word count so I could leave room for it in the layout. Fun read!—gfs

Mike Glicksohn

508 Windermere
Toronto Ontario M6S 3L6
CANADA

Great cover, based, I assume, on one of my favorite tales. (In this case, as in most actually, I'd pick the tiger over the lady.) And I still love the little touches of colour you add to the copies of your fanzine!

I liked the way you segued from car guys into the relevance of "stuff" in our lives. I'm not a car guy. Never have been, never will be. I occasionally drive a car and will undoubtedly do so again but until I married Susan (at age 47) I'd never owned a car. But I have **lots** of stuff, have always had lots of stuff and will undoubtedly die owning lots of stuff despite my good intentions of getting rid of a lot of my stuff before I shuffle off this mortal coil.

I've never heard of Yanni and I don't recall knowing Barb Jensen but I thoroughly enjoyed her evocative article and I strongly suspect that were we all to meet I'd like her more than I'd like him.

The Deaf Man is always entertaining and this speech was no exception. Not as many outright yuks as usual but fun to read nonetheless.

Heart of the issue, of course, was your massive article, which is so very much more than a description of helping someone with a funeral. It was especially poignant for me as my uncle died two weeks ago and I experienced a few (a very few) of the things you write about.

I suppose I ought to say right away that I think funerals are a crock. Both of my parents were cremated without funerals and when I go whatever parts are left over once the medical school has finished with my cadaver (I like to believe they'll call in people from all over the world just to see my liver) will be cremated without ceremony.

On the other hand, celebrating the life of a deceased friend is something I heartily approve of, which is why I appreciated the chance to share in wakes for Bob Shaw and Joni Stopa recently and why I'm earmarking some cash from my estate for at least one halacious wake when I go.

Your descriptions of having to go through all of Duke's lifetime accumulation of kipple struck home deeply. Until recently, I had no personal experience with this. My mother died when I was 22 and my father took care of her things, all of which were hundreds of miles away from where I was living. When my father died some six years ago, my step-mother stored all his stuff several thousand miles away. So I'd never been confronted with what it's like to try and sort out an estate.

But my uncle was put in a palliative care hospital three months before he died and Susan and I were asked to help clean up the one bedroom apartment he'd lived in for the past twenty odd years. And that was an eye-opener.

Nobody had been to his place in about ten years. He always said it was too messy for him to have visitors. We couldn't believe what we found. The place was filthy. I mean dirtier than I could ever describe or anyone could ever believe. Dust and dirt over an inch thick and not just underneath or behind things but out in the open. Every surface was a foot or two high in papers and various "stuff." Boxes and bags and loose piles of things filled every corner right up to the ceiling. The toilet had obviously been broken for ages and there was fecal matter all around the room. The kitchen counters and sinks were covered with rust and spilled food and various molds and fungi. It was almost impossible to imagine a human being living in such conditions.

And yet my uncle was a **clean** person when he came to visit us. His clothes were clean, his person was clean, he didn't smell, he was always neat and tidy. Yet he'd completely abandoned trying to keep the place where he lived in anything like a decent state. This double life came as a complete and painful shock to his three kids and to Susan and me and we were numb the whole time we were gathering up hundreds of bags of trash and hauling them to the dumpsters. (That was just the first, and only, day Susan and I were there. We started back to work the next

day and a couple of his kids and some of their friends took out three times as much rubbish over the next few days.)

Envelopes? Yeah, he had envelopes, many of them with bills he'd paid ten years ago in them. He had piles of discount coupons for stores that went out of business years ago. Hundreds and hundreds of losing lottery tickets dating back to the '80s. Bags and bags full of empty bags and empty (non-refundable) bottles, boxes full of dead batteries or paperclips or flashlight bulbs (who had the time to see if any of them still worked?) and on and on and on.

Huge tottering piles of stuff that to any normal eyes was merely garbage. But he kept it all. And we threw 95% of it into the trash after the most cursory of glances. (I'm sure we tossed out at least a couple of things that might have been worth saving but the sheer astonishing **volume** of it all was totally intimidating.)

It was a new and startling experience for me (and for all of us). It made me realize how little we sometimes know about those we think we are close to. Over the last five years, my uncle was here at least once a month and



because he acted normal and seemed normal we accepted that things **were** normal when all the time he was desperately in need of serious help and we never knew it. But hell, his own kids and his long-time female companion never knew it and they all saw him **every day**. It shook us all deeply then and it still croggles my mind and probably always will.

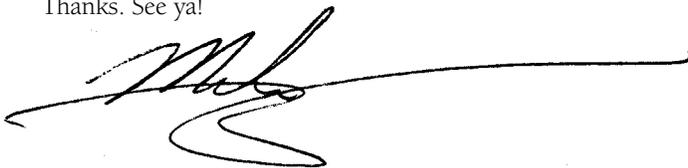
It also made me think about my “stuff.” And about what it would be like for Susan to have to go through it and try and decide what to do with it all. The great majority of my stuff consists of books and fanzines. Take that out of the equation and you’ve taken care of at least three quarters of it. (So if my plan to become the Rusty Hevelin of my generation and dispose of all of my books and all of my fanzines in the years between when I retire and when I die comes to fruition it will massively reduce the work my executor has to do! No premature bids, if you please.) But what about the other stuff, the personal stuff? Who on earth would want my grade school report cards? Nobody. Throw ‘em out! What about these plastic World Wrestling Federation figures with built-in rubber stamps? Priceless examples of twentieth century American popular culture and worth a fortune in the right market! That ugly blob of wax with the funny Australian hat and the stitches? Have you never seen a Spayed Gerbil candle before? The Museum of Science Fiction and Fandom will want that. And so on, and so on, and so on.

So I guess the **new** plan (predicated on not getting hit by lightning or a bus or being shot for yet again drawing successfully to an inside straight) is to make sure that **I’m** the one who goes through all this stuff and sets down what’s worth keeping and what is just useless sentimental junk. And then sell off all the things that might be worth something but would be hard for anyone else to unload. Sounds like a plan. And I’ll never have to worry about having nothing to do when I retire!

It was flattering to see my response to issue #10 leading off the lettercol... at least until you pointed out that I was merely a deadbeat drunk who couldn’t remember what fanzines he’d read. Of course, you’re entirely correct. (I am rightfully chastised and apologize to Ms. Routliffe for having erased her from my memory banks.)

Your tribute to Bill Rotsler was simple. Also perfect. Just like Bill’s artwork. And half like Bill. (He was far from simple.)

Thanks. See ya!



When I was FanGoH at Loscon, Margii Ellers gave me an acrylic ray gun from the Weapons Shop of Isher. That was a couple of years before her death, but after a bout of cancer. As she explained it, she decided to have the joy of giving treasures away while she was alive rather than letting the job become a burden inflicted on someone else.

I’ve taken to spreading sentimental stuff around fandom, especially in the form of toads and frogs. Mary Kay Kare successfully bid on a genuine Toad Hall frog or toad at a Potlatch auction a few years back and, after ascertaining her preferences, I shipped two crystal specimens her way. David Russell has inflicted much delightful kipple on me over the last several years, so I returned the favor by sending Toadems of my keen regard with Aussiecon-bound fans. I don’t know how many of them eventually made it into his hands, but the entertainment value made the effort worthwhile even if it did just prompt him to send another box of Australian goodies to Toad Hall.

The net result is that stuff continues to accumulate here at Toad Hall faster than I am giving it away. But I’ve managed to carve out a couple corners of organization here and there, and I continue to fantasize about a major clearing of the decks.

Thanks for sharing the distressing story about your uncle. As I was typing it, which went more slowly than my initial reading, I kept hoping that you discovered you were somehow in the wrong apartment, even though I knew that hadn’t been the case.—gfs

Rick Foss

809 11th Street
Manhattan Beach CA 90266

Your own article about helping your friend through the process of cleaning out his grandfather’s house was splendid. It reminded me how personal and intelligent fanzines can be, what raw emotions we are willing to share with others who we trust will understand. I think that fans of a certain generation, the ones who loved SF before it was cool to do so, seem to be able to write with no internal censor—they aren’t embarrassed to reveal things most people keep private. I think it’s partly that they trust that the audience they reach is sympathetic and empathetic, beyond the level that a mainstream author can trust that assumption. Or beyond the level their publishers think they can trust; publishers seem to trust their readership less than writers. In my experience.

(Three phone calls interrupt me, and I am forced to notice my surroundings; I am at work but thinking about the risks inherent in honest communication, and other fandom-related topics.)

Rick Foss <laderatvl@earthlink.net>



Janine Stinson

P.O. Box 430314
Big Pine Key FL 33043-0314

Loved the covers (front & back) by Glenn Tenhoff, and bless you from the bottom of my neofannish heart for plunking that Pinocchio-nosed Rotsler just above my first-published LOC to a fanzine! I was glad to see several Rotslers in this ish, but saddened to think that I won't be seeing many more of them. I look forward to reading remembrances of him in a future ish of *Idea*, and regret that I never had the chance to meet him.

Jeff Schalles' seventh installment was enchanting. Has he ever left a message at the elf door?

Barb Jensen's piece was very funny and very touching, in all the right places. I think I would have yelled at Yanni, too, just on principle. And she's right, it's hard to actually hate his music, but I don't think I could stand a steady diet of it.

Your piece on Jack Targonski and helping him through his father's death was moving and exhausting. I had no idea how difficult such an experience could be from a friend's perspective, much less the person who actually lost a loved one. I came close, though; my father suffered a mild heart attack last December, but has been recovering well from it. My parents will be visiting here this month for Turkey Day (that other word is just too long to type!), and I'm a little nervous about seeing him. One wants to remember those one loves in certain ways, and not to have that image overtaken by reality. He probably won't look much different, but I'm trying to prepare myself for alternate possibilities.

Terry Garey should win a medal for her fake food improvisation. I wish my mind were as nimble as hers! And Dave Langford's "Twenty Years of Uproar" made me laugh several times; I can't imagine what it was like to hear that speech in person!

Regards,

Janine Stinson <tropicsf@aol.com>

Isn't it neat when life hands you good things you couldn't previously have imagined? Even though I couldn't make it to Tropicon, I was delighted on your behalf when Dave told me he'd used "Twenty Years of Uproar" as a replacement item for the panel he and Ulrika O'Brien were scheduled to do when other commitments kept her from Fort Lauderdale, too. Langford is a master of the genre, and I hope to have many more opportunities to publish his speeches (and other works) in the future.

Ditto my above comment in regard to your sadness thinking you won't see many more Rotslers drawings. The ones in this issue are but a very small fraction of the Toad Hall collection and, last I knew, Bill Warren still had envelopes full that he planned to send to interested faneds. Good excuse to pub your ish, eh? But I know what you meant; I still find it heartbreaking to realize that there will be no more new Rotslers. The loss of that line, drawn by that hand to such delight, feels like a crime against humanity.—gfs

Arthur Hlavaty

206 Valentine Street
Yonkers NY 10704

Mimeography makes me think of the definition of golf as "an effort to put a small white ball into a slightly larger cup by means of implements singularly unsuited to the task." I'm glad someone is maintaining this fannish tradition, but I'm even gladder it isn't me. More relevant to me is that once again the zine is delightful to read, even though Death is a major theme.

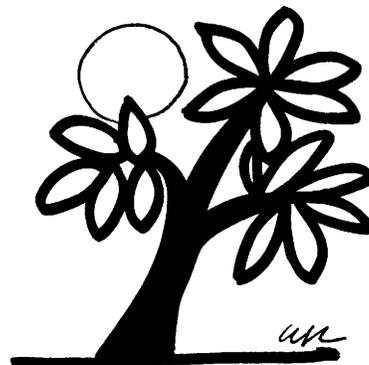
The Langford piece is excellent; he has found quotes that match his own wit. I too had remembered the Le Guin quote for twenty years—wonderful stuff. Poor Henry P. Pijohn, doomed to the same sort of literary limbo as all those 18th-century poetasters and politicians who would have been decently forgotten, except that Alexander Pope passed verbiage upon them.

I definitely agree with Chris Priest that not everything that happens to a fan is worth writing about, and with Dave that con reports offer copious evidence of this. This reaches its epitome in those reports where the writer offers so much not-worth-writing-about data on the travel to the con that we never get there. On the other hand, I do not recall much reportage about remarkable and unique bowel movements. I don't know whether this means that I've repressed it or it's a British thing I don't get to read much of.

I haven't been able to find the quote, but I always thought it was Delmore Schwartz, rather than Randall Jarrell, who defined "novel" as "a prose work of some length that has something wrong with it." An understandable confusion: all those neurotic, self-destructive mainstream writers look alike.

Interesting about those Major Pros who hadn't read Tolkien, **Stranger in a Strange Land**, or **Dune**. I've read all three and even enjoyed the first two. (I read **Dune** over a weekend when it first came out in paperback and I have somehow managed to completely repress it. Even the movie didn't bring any of it back. I sometimes fear that in the dank recesses of the unconscious where one is supposed to have Oedipal longings and same-sex lusts and such, I have **Dune**.) Maybe it's a generational thing; the writers I'm ashamed of not having read are Gene Wolfe, David Brin, and Lois McMaster Bujold.

Arthur D. Hlavaty <hlavaty@panix.com>



GERI
SULLIVAN
IS NICE

SHE EDITS
SWEET



F.M. Busby

2852 14th Avenue West
Seattle WA 98119

I think the last true Packards appeared in 1953 (all same like the 1954 Hudsons being merely Nashes with Hudson insignia). Starting in '53 Studebaker put all sorts of engines into their Hawk chassis, all the way from the Champion's light six to (eventually) that huge Packard V8. Which made for an exceedingly front-heavy vehicle and no doubt inspired the custom-made Studillac hybrids. Put two anvils in the turtleback and maybe you could dig out with traction.

Clutter. The problem is that Stuff accumulates according to the laws of compound interest. The more you have, the more you get and the faster it comes in.

The Pickersgill review blast reminds me of a zine from one Richard Koogle of Texas. Noting that the perpetrator could neither type, spell, nor form two complete sentences in a row, I concluded, truthfully, "Hell, he can't even staple." In comment on deMille's "Ten Commandments," Koogle did provide one unforgettable evaluation. "The actors were too fantisted by the scoop and power of the message to get any dept in it."

D. West's homebuilt duplicator is in the hallowed tradition of the Martin Alger \$3.75 Mimeograph (early 1950s). Alger, though, gave complete instructions and drawings.

There's no one best way to cope with grief and loss. Circumstances can differ too much. From sudden blow to long-expected finale, a tragic end to bright prospects or relief from futile pain. The only constant is, it's never easy. Jack's a lucky guy to have a friend like you (and others you cite).

On reunions, Robert Lichtman strikes a chord. For years I avoided them; then I got talked into one and learned a new thing. It doesn't matter whether or not you were buddies Way Back Then; if you've lasted this long, you are now. Well, mostly. But from my high school class to E Company 161st Inf to the old postwar *Kappa Sig* gang to the Alaska Communication System, we go to these things and are genuinely glad to see each other again. Time, in sufficient quantity, can have some strange and wonderful effects.

All best,

Buz

Steve Deger

5109 Ewing Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55410

I just saw an old Robert Devney review of your *Idea* fanzine on the Web that said:

"...starting with the dead-ringer 1950s-comic-book-style Dan Steffan cover, which recalls the time that Editor Geri Sullivan's then-new American Water Spaniel, Willow, ate the kitchen floor."

Boy does that sound familiar.

Do you happen to have an old copy of this issue lying around? I'd buy it from you.

Steve Degler <steved@scisoc.org>

Steve's email was a small world phenomenon. Yes, he lives in Minneapolis, but I've only met him electronically. Not through fandom—through the Browndogs mailing list. He found out about *Idea* when doing an American Water Spaniel web search. And I just so happened to already have a snailmail address for him from having sent him a check for the 1999 AWS calendar he published just a month earlier.—gfs

SKEL

25 Bowland Close
Offerton, Stockport
Cheshire SK2 5NW
ENGLAND

(29 December 1997)

I should have been at work today but Cas is crook. Has been for about a week. Some sort of flu thing, only when you figure it's time for things to start improving they just keep on getting progressively worse. She wouldn't let me take her to the doctors' surgery but finally broke down and rang in for a prescription for some antibiotics (which is how we've referred to them ever since Archie Mercer spotted that precise typo of Brian Robinson's in a zine Brian and I were co-editing in the early '70s.) Odd to think that in another week Brian will have been dead a year. His passing meant that I read your fine piece in *Idea* 11 and found special resonances. I won't go into details here as I wrote a piece for Tom Sadler's *The Reluctant Famulus* (published in issue 50) that has all the pieces and that I trust you've seen, so referring to them again here would be redundant. We had to go through his stuff. Not that we'd any special "right" to anything, but unlike Duke, Brian's place was in a terrible state and his closest friend said that once the landlord saw it the entire contents would go straight into landfill. Cas and I had (as it transpired) less than three days to salvage what we could for fannish and non-fannish causes before this actuality.

Brian's SF collection wasn't much on quality (though of course there were some valuable items) but it was big on quantity. We cleaned it up and passed it onto TAFF who because of its volume sold it on to a dealer for £1,000, thus at a stroke putting said organisation well on the road to recovery after its recent problems with

maladministration. "I trust Brian's name will be mentioned in despatches," I said to Martin when he came up to collect the stuff, and received his assurance that this would indeed be the case. This remains a major disappointment. I didn't expect headlines in newszines screaming 'Brian Robinson Saves TAFF!' or 'Fan Dies So That TAFF Might Live!,' but all I've seen was a passing mention of his name in a letter Martin wrote to *Apparatchik*, and I would have thought that his posthumous contribution would have led to his name being mentioned a bit more widely with the result that more fans would be reminded of him and his non-posthumous contributions to UK fandom (which like most of us were simply 'being there' and being a part of it, individual memories of personal interactions—we can't all be the movers and shakers who Dave Langford remembers so well in his '20 Years of Uproar').

Just glancing through *Idea 11*, I am reminded just how much both Rotsler and Atom practically defined the visual aspect of 'Fanzine Fandom' for generations of fanzine fans. We'd all write our LoCs, and almost invariably spend almost all of our effort responding to the fanzine's written content... but it seems to me that of all the fans we've lost 'recently,' these two will be the most irreplaceable.

On the dog front, I trust you will never make the mistake we did and anthropomorphise. Cas reckoned that Smattie needed a 'friend' to play with. We thought of a bitch but people said that a bitch will always put a dog in its place, and this didn't seem fair to Smattie. Also, as a bitch and a dog means zillions of puppies, and as Cas would never be able to part with a single one, we realised that this was not an option we could run with. So we got another male Yorkshire Terrier puppy to be a companion to Smattie. Hah! Dogs do not do 'companion.' Dogs do not do 'playmate.' This puppy, you could hold it in the palm of your hand. If you set it down it would move unsteadily to its feet, swaying from side to side...and attack Smattie like its life depended upon it! It would keep this up until Smattie got pissed off and snarled and snapped back, at which point it would roll over and be submissive. So Smattie would stop being pissed off, and the puppy would attack him again. The puppy would keep this up effectively forever. At one point we were thinking of naming him 'Duracell.'

The problem was that Smattie had been an 'only child.' He'd imprinted on us. We were his 'parents' and therefore he was a de facto human being. Smattie is not a 'dog.' Fergie however is very much a 'dog' with a dog's need to be the 'alpha male.' Unfortunately for Smattie, Fergie is also bigger and stronger. Life is seldom fair.

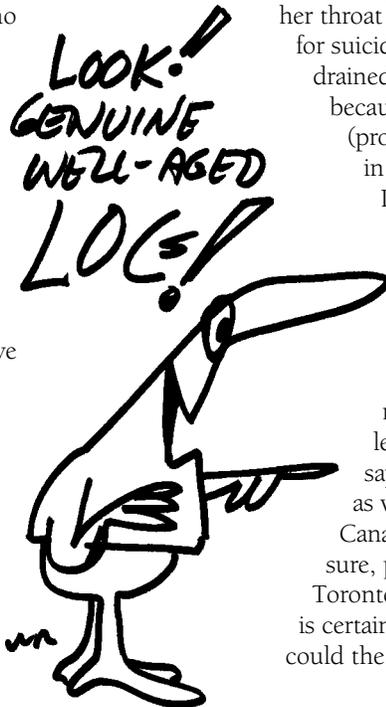
If Smattie gets one of his toys, Fergie takes it off him. Being a realist, Smattie then goes and gets another toy... but they don't play with each other. The both want to play

only with me. Unfortunately they don't even play the same fucking game, making it almost impossible for me to play with them together. Fergie wants me to grasp his toy and try and wrestle it from him. Smattie on the other hand wants me to chase him in a forlorn attempt to get within a mile of his toy.

What I'm saying here is that if one of you ever says, 'I know...let's get another dog!,' the other one of you should beat them to a bloody pulp with whatever comes to hand! Preferably the first dog!

I appreciate that this has been a piss-poor response to a fine fanzine, but I've been awake all night waiting for Cas to start snoring again (this is like waiting for the other shoe to drop), which she doesn't normally do unless her throat is so inflamed and swollen that she'd opt for suicide over breathing...and I am absolutely drained. Tonight she's going to sleep in her den, because I absolutely have to be at work tomorrow (providing she says the antibiotics have kicked in and she's feeling a little better...otherwise I guess work could slide one more day).

Anyway, in one sense it's been a very shitty Christmas. On the other hand though I read and enjoyed *Idea 11* and Richard Stark's 'Comeback,' and tucked away in the freezer almost ten kilos of delicious unburnt turkey stew. This is a lot more stew than last year, and significantly less burnt. As a turkey-stewophile I can safely say that 1998 is looking better than 1997. And as we're also going to get to visit the US and Canada next year (Midwestcon in Cincinnati for sure, plus Hagerstown, Washington, Baltimore, Toronto...and whilst Indiana may not want me it is certainly going to get me, at least for a while) how could the omens be other than spiffy?



Are we on an exchange program? 1998 was the last year I visited the UK; much to my surprise, I ended up doing so twice.

I hoped to have this issue of *Idea* out in 1998, aiming for OryCon 20, for Dave Langford was one of their returning guests. Didn't happen, and shortly after that November weekend, the year of grief started. I'm still reeling from that, though clearly now doing so from the road of recovery. Losing four loved ones in such a short period left me wondering how people deal with accidents and other tragedies where families or communities are hit with several (or dozens or hundreds) of people die all at the same time.

That's really neat about Brian Robinson's SF collection helping so much to put TAFF back in the solvency column. I remember hearing about it, probably in *Apparatchik*, and there may have been more public mention after you wrote your LoC. But it's worth remembering, and so we shall.—gfs

Andrew Plotkin

Red Hat, Inc.
2600 Meridian Parkway
Durham NC 27713

I'm impressed.

Er, I think that's it. No, wait. I am also left with a not very logical, but distinct, impression that I'm too young to enter fandom. This at 29.

Andrew Plotkin <erkyrath@eblong.com>

Oh, dear. That's hardly the impression I would hope to make.

I never felt too young to enter fandom, though it took me until my 30s to do so. My not very logical, but distinct (and equally incorrect) impression was that fandom wasn't a place for me because I shaved my legs and armpits, and was not at all certain I'd want to go skinny-dipping at conventions. Hard to imagine either of those as barriers these days, especially the latter. Much as I find them relatively harmless compared to a barrier of age.—gfs

James White

The Enchanted Convention...

[Excerpts from a 5-page letter/LoC, copied to Walter, as usual, and also to Chuch]

Your big, hairy, depraved son (hi, Chuchie!) wrote saying how well he was doing and, among other interesting news mentioned the fact that his two glasses of red wine a day was doing wonders for his aorta. *Two* glasses! My dietician allowed me only *one*. Being a pure-minded fan at the time, as well as being old and tired, I hadn't realised that the quantity of red heart medicine prescribed was directly dependent on the volume of male blandishments heaped on the dietician by the patient. Naturally Harris has me outclassed in this area. Life isn't fair.

I did another very stupid thing, this time while playing the X-Wing CD. General progress had been slow but encouraging up to a couple of months ago—I passed all eight training levels on the four starfighter types, performed successfully in about a dozen historic battle simulations and was awarded battle patches for them and even made it through the for-real first seven tour of duty missions with promotions from cadet to flight officer to *Lieutenant*, no less. I was beginning to feel self-assured, devil-may-care and quietly proud that the denizens of the free galaxy could sleep easily in their beds (or whatever) while I was out there guarding the space lanes. Then I went and stupidly clicked on a wrong options box and deleted myself! All of Pilot James' training points, battle patches, Tour One combat ribbons and promotions were gone, irretrievably wiped out. I could have spat, and I did direct one or two four-letter words at myself. With a nerd like me loose among the stars, I thought, the citizens of the galaxy would be better advised to sleep with one eye open.

Anyway, I rejoined, this time as Pilot Jim instead of James, and slowly went through the training, battle

simulations and first seven tour of duty missions and made it to lieutenant again, which is where I am now. But Tour One, Op 8 looks impossible. In there are about 12-14 enemy transports hurrying for the shelter of two enemy capital ships. I'm supposed to identify and disable the two transports containing prisoners and protect them, and the two friendly transports that turn up to rescue the prisoners, from TIE fighters trying to destroy them, and then I'm supposed to destroy all the other transports before they can reach shelter—all within 18 minutes! So far I've been able to disable and cover the rescue of one prisoner transport before running out of time, which constitutes a mission failure. Maybe the old reflexes are no longer fast enough. Does anybody out there know how this mission can be completed? At least with Ghodminton I could always cheat. This bloody game is forcing me back to work on the [Sector General] story.

I've had *Idea* for more than a week now but have put off reading it because you had already mentioned the article you had intended doing for it and, well, you will understand that we're still a bit sensitive on that particular subject. But such moral cowardice ill behooves a brave starfighter pilot, so here goes.

First off, the musical lyric on the envelope was a nice, original touch—do many readers LoC your envelopes?—and the front and back cover art were beautifully executed, and the general layout, illustration and production were the same old thing, like excellent.

Your editorial about cars and stuff, mostly your problems with your comfortable, treasured and burdensome stuff, I liked very much. I like having comforting, treasured and memory-filled stuff around me, but an additional problem is that I like to work tidy and some stuff just has to be thrown away much as I hate doing it. I loved the crafty way you tied the whole theme of the editorial into a request for LoCs, a burden that nobody could refuse.

"Lake Harriet Satori," Jeff's latest adventure in the Wimpy Zone, was a great trip. It is always a pleasure, although at times a bit disquieting, to follow his mental and metaphorical footsteps even when he happens to be riding a bike. From the elf's-house-in-a-treetrunk through the almost tactile past and present scenery of Minneapolis, including the winter life-support systems needed to survive there, and the criminal assault some of us are making on our beautiful world, and back to the elf-house again. Seeing things through his eyes is the next best thing to being there and using one's own. I know I met him—and shamelessly OD-ed on his wheatgerm-laced blueberry flapjacks during our Toad Hall visit—but he knows so much and has such an easy way of imparting the knowledge that I sometimes wonder if there is only one person in there.

Terry Garey should never feel guilty about faking it when she can make the fakes look and, with a couple of nauseating exceptions she listed, taste better than the real thing. I can't read French, either, but that menu, and indeed her whole article, was a hoot. I wish I'd been there.

"I Yelled at Yanni" was a wonderful piece of travel

WE ALSO HEARD FROM



Ruth Anderson (“The article on your ten days helping Jack through the aftermath of his father’s death sure triggered a lot of memories for me of my own father’s death—which was not a bad thing. Of other articles I particularly enjoyed Barb’s.”), **Judy Bemis**, **Woody Bernardi**, **Bill Bowers**, **David Bratman**, **Nate Bucklin**, **Emma Bull**, **Mog Decarnin**, **David Emerson**, **Doug Faunt**, **Tommy Ferguson** (“Your article was especially moving as my father is currently in ill health and not likely to live past Christmas.”), **Dan Fitzgerald**, **Terry A. Garey**, **Janice Gelb**, **Steve Green**, **Rob Hansen**, **Bridget Bradshaw** (nee Hardcastle), **Teddy Harvia**, **Craig Hilton**, **Kim Huett**, **Barb Jensen**, **Rodney Leighton** (asking to be put on the *Idea* mailing list in the oddest, self-denigrating yet also insulting way after reading several issues that Steve George passed on to him), **Loren MacGregor**, **Mike McInerney**, **J.R. Madden**, **Elise Matthesen**, **Murray Moore**, **Jerry Olsen**, **Bruce Pelz**, **Lloyd Penney** (“Welcome to Janine Stinson; there’s few people who find fandom first through fanzines these days” and much more; thanks, Lloyd), **Andrew Porter**, **Ruth Sachter**, **Tom Sadler**, **Steve Sneyd**, **Davey Snyder**, **South Florida Science Fiction Society**, **Felix Strates** (with a letter, a magnet, a postcard, and blimp history), **Shelby Vick**, **Sean Wallace**, **Paul Williams** (“...my appreciation also to those mentioned in your Special Thanks sidebar. ‘Ashes, Dust’ immediately vaults into the rank of my favorite pieces read in a fanzine this decade, alongside Kathy Routliffe’s “My Trip to Jupiter,” and Grant Canfield’s memoir of life with and without Catherine...”), **Ben Yalow**, **Kate Yule**, and **Frank Zrilich**.

Dan Goodman <dsgood@visi.com> sent the second stanza of one of the nursery rhymes quoted in *Idea* #11. It’s still gruesome, but has a happier ending than the single stanza on the wooden alphabet block:

There was a man in our town,	When he saw what he had done,
And he was wondrous wise.	With all his might and main
He jumped into a bramble bush	He jumped into another bush
And scratched out both his eyes.	And scratched them in again.

I end in the memory of the Oblique Angles, with the third and last paragraph of the postscript on Chuch Harris’ LoC:

Without venetian blinds it would be curtains for all of us... the poor sod doesn’t even have a portcullis to his name... 14% of Americans say they have seen UFO’s and most of them are fully paid-up members of the N3F... He is a definite nutter; every time I look at him I can hear the shower music from *Psycho*... the labiodental fricative or F-word... the love that cannot speak its name because its mouth is full... I no longer have as much swash in my buckle as these fannish upstarts... don’t be afraid to put your girl friend’s garter belt on now and again... bored flaccid rather than stiff... it’s not over till the fat lady sings and at present she’s nowhere near the piano... there will be no further chapters of the Just Sue Stories... in Whitechapel, where I was born, the difference between a buffalo and a bison is that you can’t wash your hands in a buffalo... if I lay my face down on the table with a banana up my arse he’d still ask me where I’d put the fruit bowl... somewhere very warm and intimate like the Golders Green Crematorium... the narrow line between ecstasy and sin... we have poor damned moulting Pepe with us again for yet another cockatiel party... so pure, refined, and wary of sin that she eats bananas sideways.

(Evolution on the claim that red is, in fact, a form of yellow)

But yellow is a form of white. Yellow's the very white.

White's a form of pale, and pale's a form of light. Light is a form of morning-dawn, and dawn is one end of night.

A morning-star is a form of song, and song is a form of carry-along. And carry-me-long is a color of sky, the shade it gets between chilly and dawn.

Chill and storm are trouble in form, and worry's a form a sight. But storms that blow are far-up snow, and snow's a form of white. Dawn is a form of go-forth-rightly — that's a form of right; I don't know my way from right to left, but someday maybe I might.

By
ANDREW
PLOTKIN