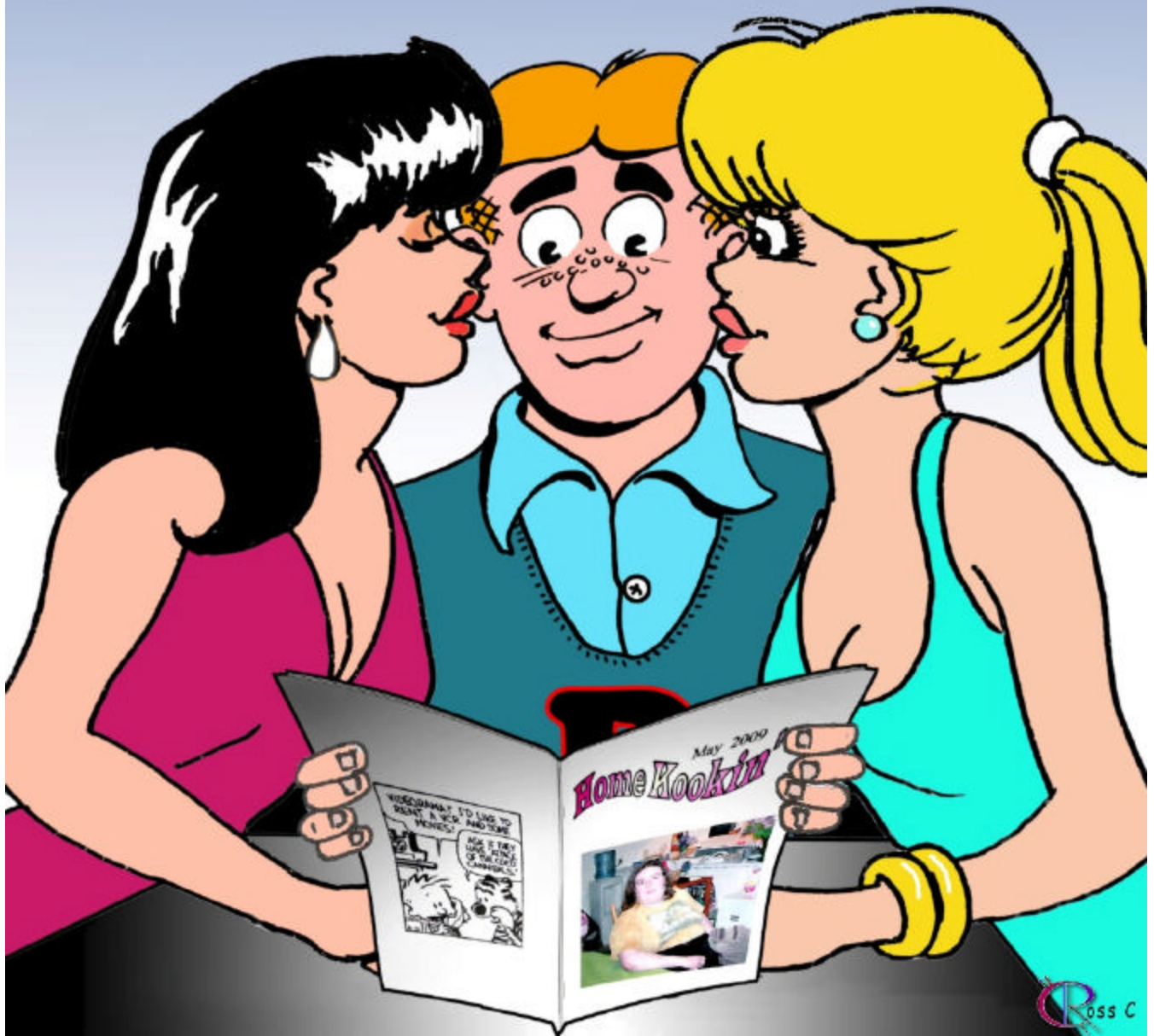


# Idle Minds

May 2009

Third Issue



# Middle MINDS Third Issue

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Our wayward band gets things going with a group editorial about love, sex and romance.

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## The Editorial Cabal

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Ross Chamberlain

Bill Mills

Roxanne Mills

John DeChancie

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*Idle Minds #3* is the combined effort of Las Vegrants, Las Vegas' informal, invitational Core Fandom Fanclub. This issue was mostly done at meetings at the Launch Pad (909 Eugene Cernan St., Las Vegas, NV 89145; Email: cross-fire4@cox.net).

Published: 5/31/09.

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Arnie Katz

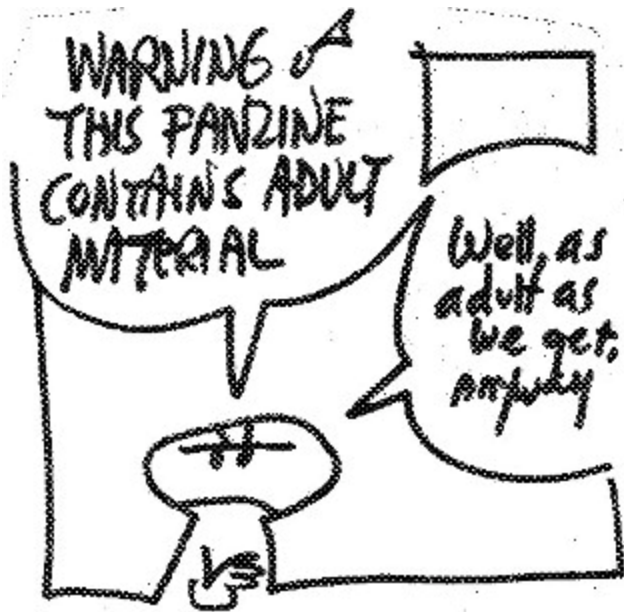
Welcome to *Idle Minds #3*, the latest edition of the Veggrants' current group fanzine. I guess it proves that Joyce had a good idea and that we can, frivolous fans though we be, publish more than two issues of something.

It's rather scary to report that the editors have already picked the theme for the next issue with an eye to distribution in late April or early May. That sure sounds like *Idle Minds* is assuming somewhere between a bimonthly and quarterly schedule, which would be pretty good going for this stage of our current group.

Someone, I think it was Guy Lillian, described me as the "man who loves Fandom." I can't say that's wrong. I appreciate Fandom more after having gafiated and returned, because the difference it makes in my life is much more obvious to me than when I was active 1963-1976. I returned to Fandom, because I came to realize that I was missing something in my life that Fandom could provide.

My success as a writer and editor painted me into a corner in some ways. I tried not to cultivate close friend in business, because I didn't want it to sway critical judgment or journalistic integrity. I had a lot of acquaintances and well-wishers, but very few true friends of the type I'd known in Fandom.

# HOBO QUIRE EDITORIAL



I wanted a peer group of people who were artistic, colorful and weird. I wanted to “be myself” rather than feeling like I was “on stage” every time I got into a public situation. The more I thought about it, the more I realized that I knew where I could find such a collection of glorious misfits – Fandom.

Fandom delivered. I’ve now been active for 19 years since my return and have written and published more, by a wide margin, than I did the first time through. Las Vegas can be a tough town in which to find friends, but Fandom has blessed me abundantly with friends, from the “golden age” Vegrants of the early and mid 1990’s to today’s “new generation” version of the club.

So, yeah, I love Fandom.

### Jolie LaChance

You’ll see my full-length article, which will probably seem kind of gloomy, later in this issue. I have to share this about Sweethearts. The little candy hearts with the motos on them have moved with the times. Along with “be mine,” “kiss me,” etc., there is now “email me.”

Who would have thought it?

### Arnie Katz

Those chalky little hearts that Jolie mentioned, aren’t the only confections with sweet sayings on them. M&M’s are now

available with inscriptions, too. In fact, you can go to the company’s website and order *customized* messages.

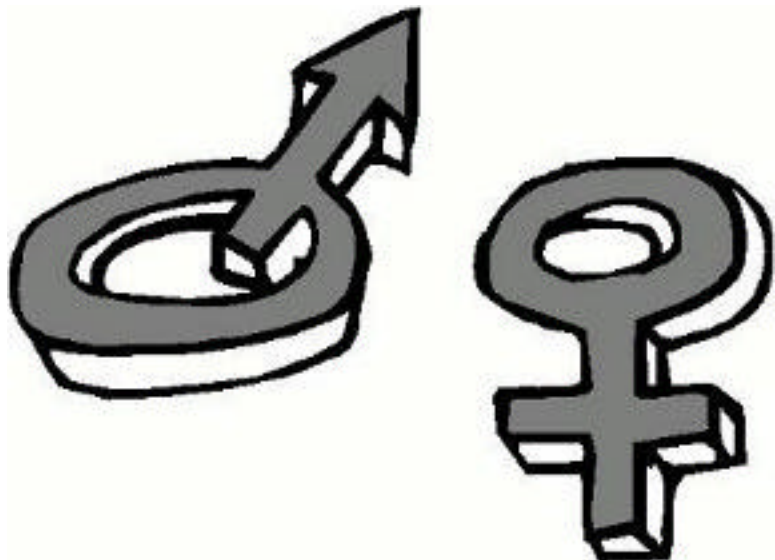
Until cooler heads, and the state of the Corflu Silver treasury splashed cold water on the idea, we considered ordering some with fannishly appropriate sentiments to put in consuite candy dishes.

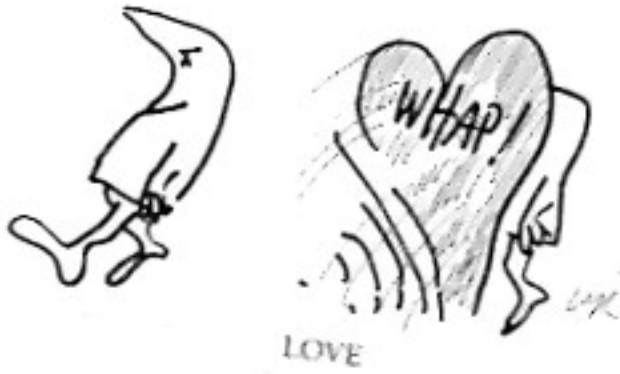
We never got beyond the stage of Four-Dimensional Mental Crifanac, so we didn’t actually invent any messages, but the prospects are intriguing. Grants, the bite-size candy is too small for something like, “Everything two fans do together is fanac,” but we could’ve used “FIAWOL!” “FIJAGH!” and “Pub Your Ish!”

### Joyce Katz

Well, gloom is at least half of the composition of love. Gloom is around every corner, whether it’s merely sorrow from separation from your desire, or the horrors of unrequited emotions, or the misery of regret (or dread) of the end. I guess there must be gloom in order to really understand love.

I’ve recently started noticing how cheap the word love has become. My carry-out girl at the grocery today told me that she loved the rain; the sales person at the shoe store told me she loved my socks. I say I love all my friends; we all love our families; and we all love our pets. Love is apparently lying around all over the place, ready to be picked up or put down at whim.





### **Jolie LaChance**

But what is love? There was a fellow who worked one building over from my shop in Office Machine Repair (yes CCSD Maintenance is that specialized, I do radios, overhead projectors and other miscellany). Anyway this guy was just your basic 'hi, how's it going' coworker type. We would end up at the same freeway exit leaving work and wave on our motorcycles. He went south on Mountain Vista and I continued east on Tropicana. His wife served him with divorce papers so he went to where she was staying (with her dad), shot her, shot her dad, shot himself. She's in critical condition and might survive.

I would have bet money that such a nice mild guy would have been the last in the world to do this. Is it love that is so powerful? He was obviously in too much pain to live. But why the rest? Enough pain can make you crazy I guess. I'm glad he didn't cut loose at work and I'm feeling guilty for feeling glad. I read a quote from C S Lewis (in a Sharyn McCrumb mystery), "grief is selfish". Grief is also stupid and short sighted. But what is this love that can turn to hate this way?

### **Ross Chamberlain**

It's hard to remember how deeply emotional we sometimes can be in various stages of involvement with someone. Love can be so bloody inclusive of various degrees of infatuation, lust, possessiveness, fear, and probably a bunch of other less desirable attributes, as well as moments of quiet harmony and contentment. One of those is that unheeding focus on the object of our devotion that leads to aberrations like stalking

and jealousy. But then, there's also the tennis score....

### **Teresa Cochran**

Ah, love. It's very complicated, yet it can be spontaneous and innocent. It can be filled with new discoveries and nice surprises. Fandom brought me my current husband, after all.

I do have a love of knowledge, as is the case for a lot of fans. I went on one of my curious quests the other day after listening to some old-timey Appalachian music. I know intellectually that many old-timey songs came from England, Scotland, and Ireland. I heard a song about the cuckoo:

O, the cuckoo, she's a pretty bird.  
She sings as she flies.

Something was niggling at the back of my brain. Hmmm, there are no cuckoos in those Smoky Mountains. I went to my good friend Google, and there I found the cuckoo's range: England and the British Isles in spring; Africa during the winter. Very interesting. Guess where that song comes from?

I've been wondering what a cuckoo sounds like in spring. I went to Scotland in the middle of winter, so I didn't get to hear one. Maybe I will visit during the spring someday, perhaps for Corflu!

### **Joyce Katz**

Ah, Spring! In the springtime, every fan's mind turns to Corflu.

### **Arnie Katz**

It's sort of remarkable that, in an issue themed "Love, Sex and Romance," that no one has mentioned the Elephant in the Room. And by



“elephant in the room,” I do not mean the little stuffed elephant I bought for Joyce as a Valentine’s Day present. (Come to think of it, that elephant also fulfills the theme, since I gave it to my loved one on Valentine’s Day in the hope of even more enthusiastic sex.)

No, the Elephant in the Room to which I refer is that we currently have two courting couples in the Vegnants. I won’t embarrass them by mentioning their names – I’ll leave that pleasure for someone else – but it is certainly a reminder of what a mating ground Fandom is. Several couples in the group, most recently James Taylor and Tee Cochran, met and married in Fandom.

Spring is coming – and Love and Fanac are in the air!

### **David M Gordon**

Sex, love, AND romance? Sheesh, I know nothing about any of those topics. All my attempts throughout my life to romance someone, anyone, went for naught. Do you know how humbling it is when you try to be romantic and the woman laughs at you for your clumsiness? And sex? I still am a virgin, and likely will die a virgin. But I hear talk that sex can be a lot of fun. I hope someone more knowledgeable, more... experienced, will chime in on the topic. Which leaves love – a topic that confuses poets and philosophers.

Yep, you guessed correctly; I fumble my way through life. But that’s not such a bad thing—not when you see me drive. But that’s a whole different story!

### **John DeChancie**

Love sucks. Romance bites it. Sex? Fairly soon you will be able to get it cheaper from Amazon.com. And delivered right to your door. MasterCard, Visa, and Discover cards are honored. This offer is void in states where voids are not enough. Actions count. And I’m taking action. I’m swearing off sex for the rest of my life. So, apparently, have all the women I know. Before our divorce, my ex wife reduced our conjugal joy down to twice a month. I was lucky. Two other guys she cut off altogether. She had a wild streak in her, though. She liked to go out in the car and make love in the back seat. She wanted



me to drive. But I am well rid of sex. What has it ever done for me? From it, I contracted herpes. I guess you could say I'm an incurable romantic.

### **James Taylor**

I must be doing something wrong--I'm not confused or bitter. Of course I did wait until I was fully grown to get married. Having achieved enlightenment and given up the notion that love would ever happen to me, it of course immediately appeared, tazered me and slapped the manacles on, and that was that. Resistance was indeed futile.

### **Don Miller**

Love, schmu...I'm a confirmed bachelor who just hit the half century mark.

I can tell you about a sci-fi convention I attended, accompanied by six females and myself, all in one hotel room. It was 1976, I was 18, had just graduated from high school and joined a local Vegas sci-fi club almost entirely made up of young females. Seven of us drove down to San Diego and spent 3 days and 2 nights there. At the convention I became closely acquainted with my future girl friend, a hot registered nurse 26 years of age at the time. No kids, I can't make this stuff up, it was the best time of my life.

On another topic, it recently occurred to me that I've reached a milestone of sorts. Way back in 1979 I was working as a disk jockey at a local radio station here in Vegas and on a few occasions, sent greetings to extra-terrestrials. I said something like, "Since FM radio escapes the earth's atmosphere and keep going at the speed of light indefinitely...I'd like to send a big hello out there to those who might be listening".

I haven't thought about that in years, but it recently occurred to me, that this year marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that muse. I looked it up out of curiosity, and found that there are over 250 stars within a radius of 30 light years from earth. I played it off as a joke at the time but it's cool knowing there's an increasing potential for it to be heard with the passage of time.

On one last topic, Comet Lulin that will



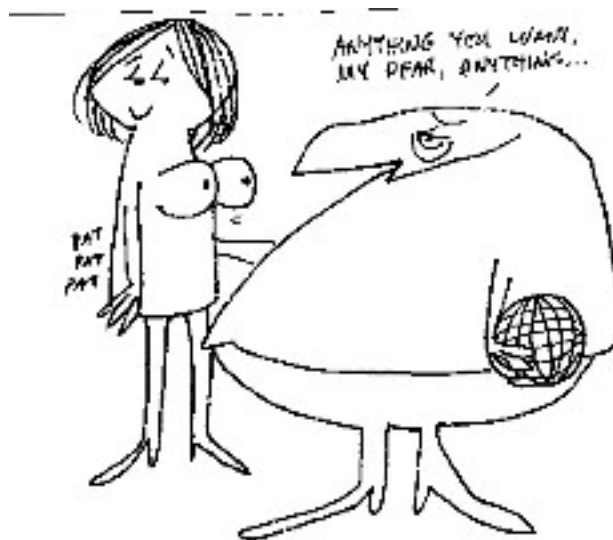
reach it's closest approach to the Earth, this Monday night 2/23/09 and Tuesday morning 2/24/09. It should be visible to the naked eye and easy to find. Look to the Southwest and you'll see the planet Saturn, a bright yellowish star. Just below Saturn will be a greenish fuzzy star. Observation indicates that the tail will be visible with binoculars or a small telescope. The comet is passing the Earth on it's way back into deep space. They say it's a rare comet that has never felt the heat of the sun and still has the frozen gasses that formed in the primordial solar system. Its green color comes from cyanogen that is sublimating from frozen gasses. Hopefully the weather will cooperate; we may not have clear skies but try and take a look.

**Jacqueline Monahan**

I suppose that stars and comets have their place in an issue about Love, Sex and Romance. It must be the celestial proximity to Heaven, that fleeting refuge for lovers and other dangers; ex-fiancés and cuckolded husbands (pendejos, en espanol) combine with true believers and ballad singers to search for promises in the dark.

Springsteen declared Love, "an angel disguised as Lust," but I think he got it backward. Lust covers up its g-string with a silk robe and seductively impersonates Love in a brazen charade.

And we buy it, along with flowers and condoms and declarations of forever, although our



own built-in expiration dates doom that premise. Makes one appreciate Don's thirty-year greeting, still hurtling madly into deep space, desperate for ears.

The extra-terrestrials haven't even responded yet, but somewhere, someone or something is waiting for the phone (or similar instrument converting voice/sound signals into a form that can be transmitted to remote locations) to ring. Seems long courtships are making a comeback, just not in this galaxy.

**Arnie Katz**

Hey, what are you, Jacq, one of those Scientific Fiction Fans with their minds in the stars (and their butts in the back rows of some anonymous convention hall)? I like my Lust earthbound, preferably within easy reach.

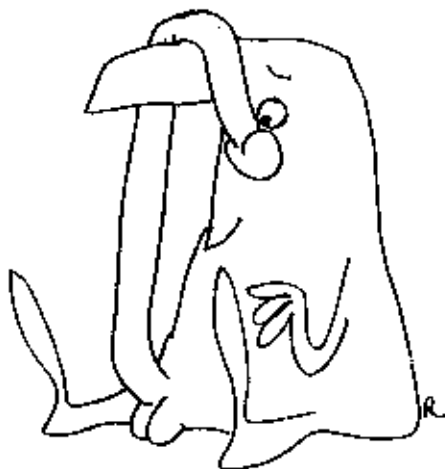
Of course, I am a survivor of the Brooklyn Insurgents, a group that rallied around the slogan, "Hedonistic to the Hilt!" Our apartment was the Hedonistic to the Hilton.

**Derek Stazenski**

OK, I will try to give a few thoughts on love, romance and sex. Let's take these one at a time. First off love: This one is easy. Love is the most wonderful thing in the entire world. Until it isn't!!! Take that how you will. But that is what I believe.

Romance...hmm. Well, I am always saying that I am a romantic so this should be easy. Yet I find it difficult to put into words just what a ro-

A BOY AND HIS PAL





mantic is. Is it being a sucker for a good love story, which I am? Don't tell anyone, please! Is it giving flowers or pulling the chair out for her at dinner? Maybe it is being patient and not forcing anything. I am not sure, but I believe that all of these things and more come into play. If you're a romantic.

Last, but certainly not least, sex. I think this is the most complicated of the three. Not always – sometimes it is simple. Wham bam thank you, ma'am or sir. Both parties go their separate ways and everyone is happy. Most of the time, however, it doesn't work that way. For many of us, like me, it always seems to be that things don't seem to work out. Maybe I'm a weird guy, but a mental connection has always been much more important than a physical one. Besides, when you grow up not being very attractive to the opposite sex, you learn to look for the mental connection. And you also learn infinite patience. But, I will say that when mental and physical come together it is glorious.

### **Jolie LaChance**

It's amazing how many of us think that we are unattractive, especially since most of us has or have been attractive to someone else at some point. Furthermore this is probably a universal statement, "he/she thinks I look great!" with a grin to go with the exclamation point. So that's the trick to looking attractive; stand in front of someone who loves you.

### **Rick King**

A great point, Jolie. In fact, from a different perspective, I have often been of the mindset the world is full of people "looking" for love. If they only stopped and turned around they would probably find someone standing right there already in love with them. It's just that everyone in so many ways is too busy "chasing" or "looking". Kind of like "the grass is greener" concept. I suppose as well some might say that applies to sex as well. As for romance, I'm not really sure if that would be the case or not.

### **Arnie Katz**

And having reached this point, let's leave the editorial and advance to the rest of the zine!



# ROSS Chamberlain



And They  
Called It/  
PUPPY  
LOVE

I was under 12 when the Burchard family moved next door to our house on Montclair Ave., near the area then (possibly still) called South Gate in College Station, Texas. This was in the post war building boom; and I watched their house being built. I say next door, but it was on the far corner of an acre block; I'm not sure there were any other houses on my block yet, maybe a couple further up from them along that next street.

Google Earth doesn't much reflect what I remember about that part of town. It's grown tremendously over these intervening 60 years. Now, a couple of blocks away in a couple of directions, there's a couple of big multilane highways. One is called George Bush Drive, which naturally didn't exist in my time, though it largely parallels a street that was a main drag in my time. The other, Wellborn Road, was also a fairly main drag then but still just a two-lane road...

There are street views; the house I lived in is now painted grey (it was white) and is surrounded by full-grown trees—all grassy lawn in my day.

And it looks a lot smaller than I recall.

What I remember of the Burchards was Mr. & Mrs., older (teens) son, and younger daughter, whose name I only learned later. If I thought anything about them at the time it was that there might be potential playmate or pest in the girl. It was too soon in my life consider any other possibilities.

Pest, it turned out. Betsy, as I learned soon enough, was my age, though because I'd skipped my first grade, she was in the grade below me. She was a bit chunky, and—I won't say belligerent, but combative. She'd grown up with an older brother, and had learned oppressive techniques that I, while fairly strong, never learned to counter.

She'd come over to my yard, act friendly initially, and then I'd find myself on my back, with Betsy grinding my elbows into the ground with her knees. This was unpleasant and unfightable.

Do I remember what led up to the frays? Not really, but it seems like there must have been some challenge. Sort of an equivalent to the "come on" gesture (hands extended, palms up, fingers beckoning) that seems to be popular these days.

I dunno. Whatever, the results were conducive to

frustration, irritation, and a preference to staying away from that girl whenever possible. I may even have gone inside to hide when I saw her looking like she might be heading my way.

Yeah, yeah, you can see it coming, can't you? Storybook situation.

The first inkling of incipient trouble was one day when, for some reason that was incomprehensible to me at the time, Betsy came over to our house for my mother to cut or wash her hair. I dunno. Maybe it had something to do with Mom's church work, or, because we were not really financially all that strong and they paid her to do it because the person who regularly did it was out of town.

Or my mother, who was that kind of person, simply volunteered.

I was pre-teen or barely teen, self-absorbed, largely ignorant of the real life around me where it didn't directly impact my own routine. Being asked to mow the lawn, for example, was an intrusion. Being signed up for Vacation Bible School—in summertime!—was trauma.

In other words, my attitude toward life hasn't much changed over the last 60 years. Oh, I suppose I may have gained some maturity beyond the physical aging. You know, that emotional and social stuff. Probably mostly in the 25 years since Joy-Lynd and I were married, but you might get a raised eyebrow from her about that...

Meanwhile, I was shaken by the presence of my *bête noire* in my house. Puzzled when she spoke to me nicely in my brief glance in to the kitchen, where she was sitting draped in towels, my mother fussing with her dark hair (which I remember as generally shortish, with bangs, but somehow my memory supplies longer hair for that particular occasion; and probably I'm right on both counts, there being a few years involved).

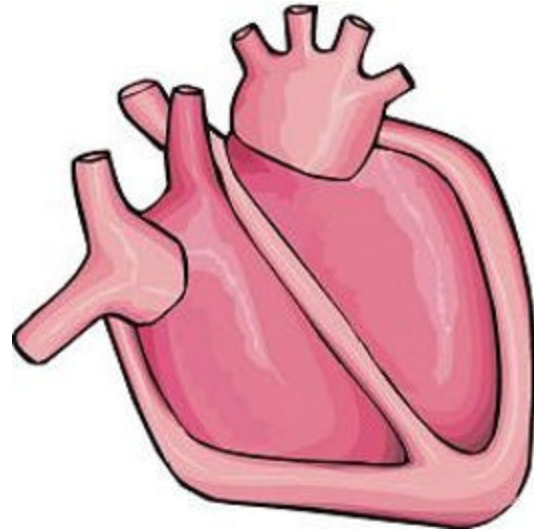
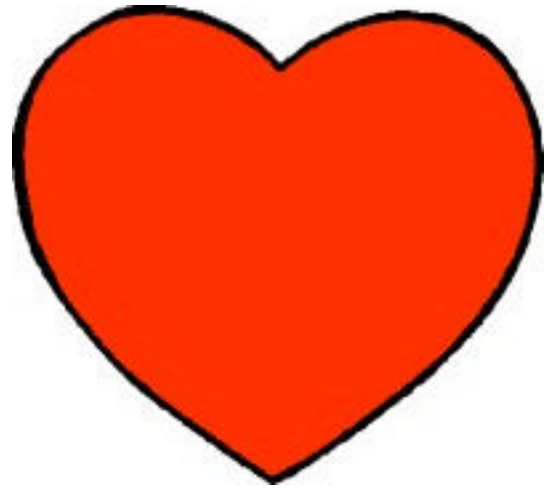
It's likely Mom didn't have time to shoo me away; I'd have retreated to sanctuary elsewhere immediately. Certainly it wasn't an occasion for me to stick around for light conversation.

But a remark I overheard Mother make afterward in conversation with someone else triggered the beginning of an attitude adjustment: "She's going to be a heart-breaker."

I wasn't sure I understood the remark, exactly, but I was naive, not dumb, and I was a little afraid that I *did* catch its drift.

Betsy? Chunky little tomboy Betsy? No, not that bratty girl who could wrassle me to the ground and make me say "uncle."

[Hey, I was the one who did that to *other* kids... Uh, oh... But no, I didn't have that insight until much



later. Can't picture me as a bully? That little bit of maturity, at least, I did absorb eventually. Perhaps another story for another time—or perhaps not; I don't think there's anything I can make into an anecdote about it. Okay, confession time's over. Nothing to see here. Move right along, please...]

Heartbreaker? Betsy?  
Nawww...

I didn't see a lot of her over the next few months, and any "whole new light" I might have seen her in from around that time waned. Pretty much.

I did notice she lost a lot of that chunky look. A lot of the girls around my age, and hers, were...well, yes, developing is the word.

One Mexican girl I remember as almost spectacularly so. She had changed over that summer from dark, plump, monobrowed and plain to dusky, curvy, plucked and pretty. I recall a first aid class in the gymnasium—these were rare, maybe once a year, actually—when we were practicing CPR techniques (I don't think we had learned that term, yet, but essentially the chest compression process: "In goes the good air, out goes the bad air."). This Mexican girl was wearing a classic peasant blouse, and as she leaned forward straddling and pressing on the chest of the student underneath her, I got an eyeful of cleavage that might well have jump started my puberty right then and there.

But I digress.

One day, as I was walking home from school, I met Betsy and a couple of other schoolmates with whom I was not well acquainted, and didn't particularly care to be. She had not yet really slimmed down that much, but her casual sweater bulged somewhat in appropriate places, indicating that her transition was under way.

Her attitude hadn't changed much, however; still more challenging than belligerent. I'm hazy about how the encounter proceeded, but somehow her friends were aware that I'd had problems with her, and they offered to let me punch her. No retaliation.

Huh? Yeah, I know. It didn't even make a lot of



sense at the time, but quite aside from not trusting the "no retaliation" part, I realized I had no desire to hit her for any reason. My eyes kept returning to her chest. I couldn't really explain to them that that was the reason—I'm not sure, myself, that I really thought there was more to it than that. They pursued the question—"You're sure?" And I was adamant. "No."

Y'unnerstan, she was standing with them. Making no objections. Going along with the gag. If that's what it was.

All the obvious responses like "I can't hit a *girl!*" were somehow the wrong thing to say. Yet I think that's what I may have finally fallen back on. Nothing happened; I went my own way, they theirs.

In any case, while I still didn't really understand how I felt about her, it had definitely changed.

Then, some time later yet, there was to be a dance. A costume ball at the school. I don't think it was Halloween-related, though I suppose it could have been. I can't remember now if there had been dancing classes before that, or to what extent I had participated. If I had, it must have been required; no way would I have readily volunteered. But I must have, otherwise the very thought of inviting Betsy would never have been entertained. Yet, I did.

The process of inviting her was in itself more or



less in the same category as traumatic. Certainly I vacillated over it for a long time. I don't remember anyone pushing me to do it, though I had family encouragement. I suppose there must also have been that element of peer pressure that is such a part of what schools are all about. (Even if you're a geek. In my day, as far as I know that specific term still only meant the guys who bit off chicken heads; it was yet to become commonly applied to those of us on the periphery of the popular set. Nerd was still further in the future.)

Eventually, whatever the nudging process, I managed to walk over to the Burchards' house, and, heart in throat, butterflies aflutter, all that stuff, knocked on the door, and braved asking the undoubtedly amused parent who answered if I could speak to Betsy. I have no real recollection of details. It does seem like when I asked she was not reluctant, but rather pleased. All I know is, she accepted my invitation.

My first date, and hers, too. We were 13.

My family was one that gathered in the living room of an evening, possibly listening to music (radio or 78 records) from the big console, or just conversing or even reading. When I came home, I plopped in a chair and pretended to read a magazine, holding it upside down on purpose, waiting for comment. It wasn't long coming; they knew what I'd gone out for. Congratulations were forthcoming.

My grandfather and grandmother lived with us, and my brother Hale and sister Elinor were staying with us then. Elinor came up with the idea of my going as Raggedy Andy; an idea that did not strike me as lame (can you imagine it today?). I had blue pants and a tartan shirt. My grandfather, an entertainer in the 1920s and '30s (more recent than then to now), contributed a wig that would stand in for Raggedy Andy's yarn hair,

Elinor sewed together a round sailor's cap, and Hale may have helped me make a mask from posterboard. He said that it was obvious that Betsy and I were a foreordained couple—just look at our names! I'm not sure if I had suspenders; I could well have owned a pair in those days.

When I picked up Betsy at her house, I had to do the classical bit with waiting in their living with the parents, and possibly even her big brother, while she finished getting ready. She went as a newspaper—she had a skirt (probably Rayon; something silky) designed with newspaper print, and a blouse that had a Sunday color funnies design, and she had a paper hat made from actual newspaper.

Mom drove us to the dance in my grandfather's Model A. I consider that kinda cool now, but I recall feeling a bit embarrassed about it then.

The dance was not held in the gymnasium, per all the classic scenarios, but in one of the classroom buildings, decorated and cheery looking.

I brought her in, and soon pretty much lost her in the crowd. She was definitely "in" and I was "out." At least that's how I felt. I danced once with her, and may have tried another with one of my classmates—Marilyn Floek, a pretty blonde that I felt more comfortable with than most of the other girls. But if I had had dance lessons, they hadn't taken very well. I saw Betsy occasionally, seemingly having the time of her life.

I'm unclear about the balance of that evening, but if I remember right, Betsy was driven home by someone else, and when my mother picked me up at whatever predetermined time, it was just to take me back.

There were no more dates with Betsy. As time went by she toned up, became one of the most attractive girls in school. I'd see her walking up Montclair, tanned and pretty, sometimes with a tennis racket or other sports outfit. I'd watch out the back window to see her. I got the old, inarticulate puppy love thing rather bad. My mother's prediction was pretty much on the mark, at least where I was concerned.

We left Texas in 1953, and I fell in love with another girl up in the Massachusetts Berkshires a couple of years later. This time it was pretty much reciprocated. But that's another story, also for another time.

A decade later yet, Jack Smith, my best buddy from the College Station days came from military service to New York to go to Columbia, and we shared an apartment for a while. He had a picture of Betsy, one of those school portrait shots, and he let me have it. I kept it in my wallet; which was later stolen. So all I have now are those fairly fuzzy memories.

And Betsy Ross is just the flag lady. Doggone.

— Ross Chamberlain

# Jacqueline Monahan



# VOLE Is a Many- SPLENDORED THING

The male prairie vole is a mouse-like mammal that mates for life, resolutely sticking by the female to whom he lost his virginity. He'll even attack other flirtatious, would-be home wreckers; a hormone in his brain triggers a fierce, lasting bond formation with his mate.

By contrast, the human male will usually encourage or actually solicit a vast array of stray females into his realm. His lost virginity is simply the starting gunshot for a lifelong race, fueled by "vulvaline" (my word). Hormones in his brain trigger cravings for porn images and Judd Apatow films.

Swans are monogamous for the most part, although those that do cheat go to great lengths to conceal it. "No baby, that wasn't me gliding in tandem on the far side of the pond. That was Kurt. Besides, we all look alike!"

Men engaged in unfaithful field trips will pretty much emulate such covert behavior, being tripped up only by their ability to accessorize. It's easy to tell most male Homo sapiens apart. Beer preference alone will separate the "tastes greats" from the "less fillings." Electronics and automotives will take care of the rest.

Bald Eagles remain faithful to a single mate until death, scientifically confirmed by DNA taken from feather samples. It helps that they go through an entire lifespan with a face frozen in a disapproving glare. "Ernest, you're not thinking of straying, are you?" "Why, no, dear, I'm not one of those sleazy swans! That was Kurt."

Wolves are capable of monogamy, but the alphas among them generally tend to stray, which is what may have contributed to the notion of the wolf whistle. "Look, Virginia, I'm the leader of the pack. I do what I want... wait a minute... who's that? Hey, baby, you from around here? (howls in two distinct notes) Nice set of forepaws!"

Human alphas also possess this sense of entitlement; rock stars, sports heroes and politicians, regardless of marital status or committed relationship, flit from conquest to conquest like hummingbirds along a honeysuckle vine. **Please note: clever use of "hum" and "suck" in the previous line.**

Gibbons (small, acrobatic primates known as

“lesser apes”) are characterized by maintaining lifelong pair bonds. Monogamous by obligation, primarily because of an unusually prolonged period of offspring dependence, males routinely initiate “conciliatory-appeasement gestures” toward aggressive females. “Aw honey, don’t be mad. I let the kids stay up – it’s not a school night. We’ll clean up the forest tomorrow. Promise!”

In the human world, this kind of behavior keeps florists, jewelers and confectioners thriving. At least something gets stimulated, even if it’s only the economy.

Males from certain arachnid species die during or after intercourse, the females devouring them as a kind of post-coital snack. *Argiope aurantia* spiders willingly sacrifice themselves while mating, but exact a diabolical revenge. During sex, a male will leave its reproductive appendage inside the female’s body, to act as a kind of organic chastity belt, preventing her from mating with other males. “Eat ME, will you? You’re totally screwed now, baby! And for the last time, you... aaaaaahhhhhh!”

A male *Argiope aurantia* has something in common with his human counterpart in that he cannot turn down a chance to be eaten, even under penalty of death.

For black vultures, enforcing monogamy is a family affair. If caught copulating with a bird other than its partner, the culprit gets harassed not only by its mate, but by other vultures in the area. “Vinnie, what the hell ya doin’? Angie’s cryin’ her eyes out. Go bring her some nice carrion and stop carrying on, or so help me!”

It seems some species have mastered what intellectually gifted bipeds have not been able to achieve. Is it love or pheromones? Instinct or infatuation? We may never know, or care enough to court insight, let alone each other.

In his classic “Let’s Fall in Love” Cole Porter wrote, “Birds do it. Bees do it. Even educated fleas do it.” (Well, termites are actually more loyal. Fleas are absolute whores). Porter himself was never exclusive about gender when it came to affairs of the heart.

Nevertheless, I’d say he was onto something (or someone), wouldn’t you?

— JacqMonahan



# Arnie Katz

Joyce and I were sitting in my office, listening to Howling Wolf tell the world that, “Someone’s calling... on my telephone,” when our conversation drifted to Bettie Page, the darkly erotic pin-up queen of the late 1940’s and early 1950’s.

I propounded my theory about Bettie Page’s place in the intricate process that formed the lurid mental images of the American male.

The very next day, Alan White sent me a URL that led to a story that said that Bettie Page had died of a heart attack that previous day. She’d had the attack a week earlier, quickly gone vegetative and was removed from life support in the Los Angeles hospital in which she was a patient.

Much as I admire Bettie Page, I hadn’t planned to write about her for *Idle Minds* at this time, but her death certainly seems an appropriate time to do so.

Bettie Page certainly evokes some images and memories for most men, even those who never saw her. I know the name “Bettie Page,” never fails to stir my libido.

Precocious as I may have been, I’m not nearly old enough to have seen Bettie Page’s photos when they filled page after page of both newsstand “tease” magazines” and packets of fetishistic photos dispensed primarily by mail and in big-city adult bookstores.

I eventually became aware of her when I began to visit New York City’s backdate magazine stores at about age 16. My sidekick Lenny Bailes – he may claim that I was *his* sidekick – and I went to these establishments to find old science fiction and fantasy magazines.

Lenny and I patrolled Sixth Avenue, not yet gussied up as “The Avenue of the Americas,” to search from the mid 40’s to the mid 20’s. As related in a story I recent wrote up for *Askance*, we found many science fiction magazines from the 1950’s, which led directly to our first contact with Fandom..

The backdate places were not science fiction shops; they were *magazine* stores. They had heaps of *National Geographic* and *Time*, and many had old books, too. The stock of digest-sizes Science Fiction magazines generally got a couple of small shelves or rows in a bin display.



Bye-Bye  
BETTIE  
PAGE



For convenience, most of the stories kept digest “tease” magazines close to the SF titles. Both types of publications needed essentially the same size retail shelves.

The Tease magazines thrived in the morally ambiguous climate of the post-WW II United States. Men wanted more sexual content, but censors kept a lid on it. The result was a class of publications that specialized in the minimum amount of female flesh exposure needed to spark the male libido. Their pin-up photos didn’t show anything you couldn’t see on the beach or at the shopping center, but the poses and accompanying copy reeked of titillating innuendo.

I can’t speak for Lenny, but my natural male curiosity caused me to discreetly thumb through one or 17,000 copies of *Tab* and *Flirt*. Unlike *Playboy*, which showed bare breasts and more, these magazines didn’t contain articles unless they were associated with at least three pictures a page. They wouldn’t have sold me those magazines, but I was a big boy for 16, already approaching my eventual 6’3”, so the retailers didn’t seem to object to me browsing them.

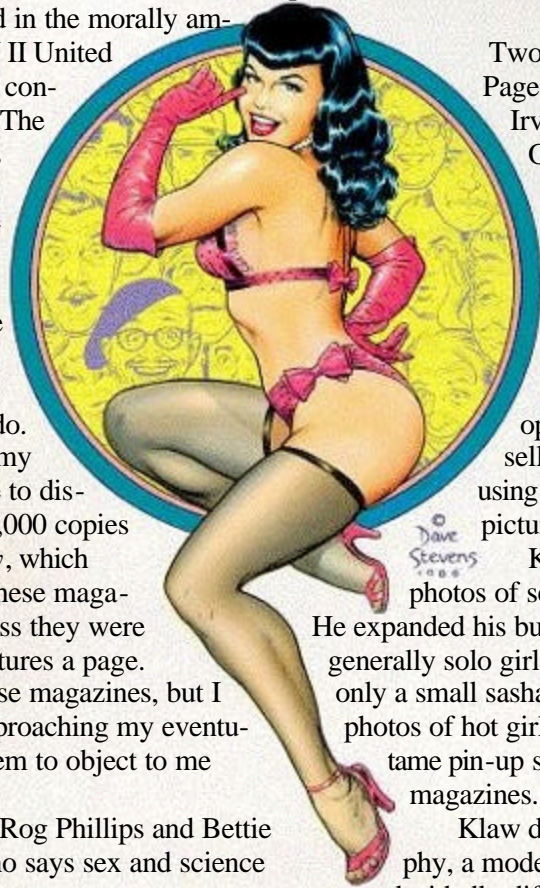
So it was that I encountered Rog Phillips and Bettie Page in the very same place. Who says sex and science fiction don’t mix?

“The Clubhouse” was tremendously important to me, because it pointed me toward Fandom. Yet seeing the provocative Bettie Page in all her exotic splendor sparked something, too.

Many have speculated that Marilyn Monroe’s premature death solidified her status as an enduring icon.



She is frozen in time in the skirt-blowing scene. Bettie Page didn’t die, but she did vanish. And she left a legend of a sweet girl who posed for the most salacious photos most had ever seen.



Two men profoundly affected Bettie Page’s life during her modeling career, Irving Klaw and Estes Kefauver.

One helped create the legend, while the other did his best to destroy it.

Irving Klaw opened a small publication called *Movie Star News*. He and his sister Paula built the family business in a modestly profitable enterprise in the post-war 1940’s. He developed a good mail order business selling photographs of the stars, using *MSN*’s files as the source of the pictures.

Klaw couldn’t help noticing that photos of sexy actresses sold especially well. He expanded his business to include pinup photos, generally solo girl and non-nude. From there, it was only a small sashay to a thriving business in sexy photos of hot girls only slightly steamier than the tame pin-up shots found in the day’s newsstand magazines. .

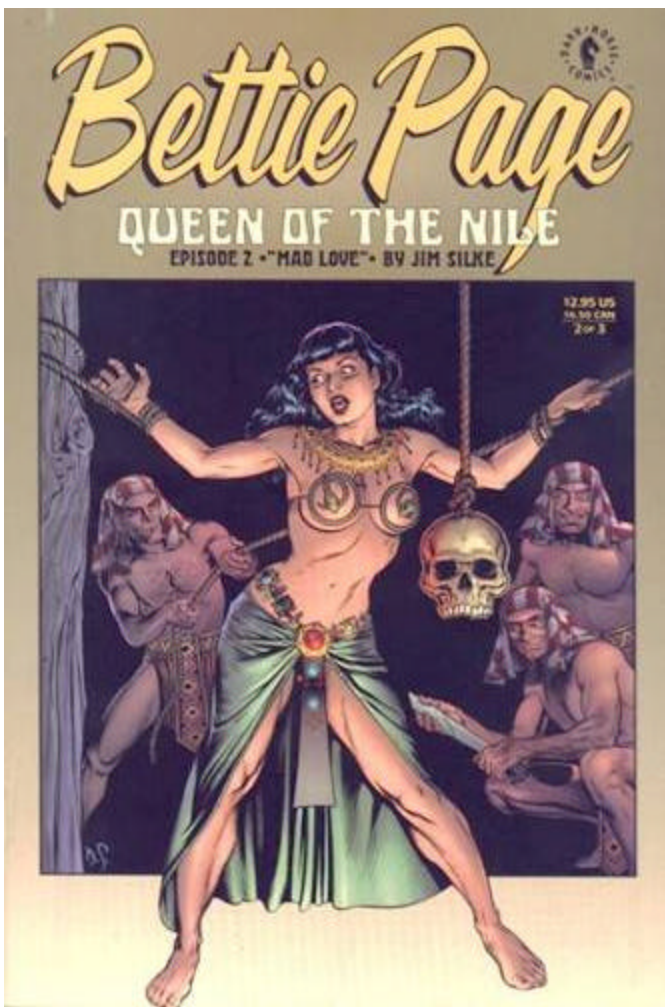
Klaw discovered a talent for photography, a model named Bettie Page and a market decidedly different than the beach poses and lingerie shots. He began turning out fetishistic photo sets that starred Page and other provocative models. They featured women in high heels, stockings-and-garter belt, corsets and similar attire in poses that were more suggestive than explicit.

Estes Kefauver wanted to be President. He only made it as far as the Vice Presidential nomination, but it wasn’t for lack of willingness to immolate any luckless person who stood in his way.

Witch-hunts were all the rage during the early 1950’s heyday of red-hunter Senator Joseph McCarthy. Tennessee Senator Estes Kefauver, a Democrat, built a national image as a no-nonsense reformer by relentlessly grabbing headlines and manufacturing crises that called for drastic, mostly unconstitutional, action.

Kefauver conducted some sensationalistic Senate hearings that warned American of the evils of comic books, rock ‘n’ roll, teenagers and anything else that might shock staid 1950’s America. He was sort of a mid-Century version of Senator Joseph Lieberman.

These two men collided at hearings of the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency. They



iconic status, for many years until Greg Theakston brought her back into the light and, in concert with artist Dave Stevens, helped Page get at least a fraction of the millions of dollars in royalties she should've earned from use of her stills and films.

The news story called Bettie Page “a 1950’s pin-up queen.” That’s like calling Babe Ruth a 1930’s athlete. It is correct as far as it goes, but it doesn’t go nearly far enough.

Bettie Page *was* a pin-up queen, but she was also one of the three great female sexual icons who essentially created the popular sexual image of women in American popular culture. Even now, in 2009, more than a half-century after their heyday, the American concept of female sexuality is still formed to a great extent by those three women: Marilyn Monroe, Diane Webber and Bettie Page.

Each woman embodied a facet of our visual expression of sex.

Marilyn Monroe radiated naive sexiness, an innocently exhibitionistic girl with powerful animal magnetism. I liked Jayne Mansfield better, but her public persona wouldn’t have existed without Monroe’s breakthrough. I don’t think many men are immune to Marilyn’s allure, even now.

Today, many people would like to reduce beauty to

tried to make Klaw responsible for juvenile delinquency, despite the fact that his pictures had no overt sexual content and were sold only to adults.

Irving Klaw was just a small businessman overwhelmed and overmatched in a confrontation with a powerful political figure with full media support behind him.

Even in that benighted era, they probably couldn’t have touched Irving Klaw. They could, and did, frighten him into folding his business and burning more than 80% of the photos he took of Bettie Page. The loss would’ve been total, except that Paula couldn’t bring herself to torch some of Bettie’s best work and squirreled them away for posterity.

Bettie Page, a fairly naive and remarkably wholesome girl from the rural South fled to the obscurity of a redneck rural existence in the South. She underwent a religious conversion and married a guy, twice, who apparently beat her for the fun of it. She had a complete nervous breakdown and went into mental hospital for a 20-month stay.

Bettie Page remained in obscurity, ignorant of her



a set of numbers, a set of dimensions that theoretically guarantee physical perfection. Marilyn's "numbers" would be ordinary, if that, by current standards, but no one's a mathematician when she turn on her high-impact sex appeal.

Diane Webber was the free-spirited American girl of the late 1960's and 1970's, except that she set the pattern with photographs taken mostly in the 1950's. She was the predecessor of the *Playboy* Playmate – ripe, uninhibited and clean.

Her photos weren't as super-glossy as those that would soon be appearing in *Playboy*, but they displayed a natural exuberance and an unchained spirit. You had a feeling that Diane Webber didn't so much pose as allow photographers to take snapshots of her life.

Bettie Page represented the more colorful, and yet decidedly darker, side of American sexual cravings. She was dark haired, wore striking make-up and in many photos, various types of fetishistic gear. Even though the government browbeat the wife of Irving Klaw, who took more photos of her than everyone else put together, into destroying the photos, there are many, many images of Bettie Page in corsets, high heels and such.

Even though her photos had no nudity or sex (real or simulated), they disturbed the censors far more than Marilyn's perpetual tease or Diane Webber's nudist lifestyle.

Bettie Page did regular pin-up work and was even a *Playboy* Playmate in 1956, but she was best known for the stark, yet arousing, photos of her in various provocative positions and fetishistic outfits..

Fandom was no more immune to the influence of these icons than the rest of US society. In the 1960's, Katya Hulan (later Atkins) was certainly the Marilyn Monroe type – and Dian Crayne was the Bettie Page of the same era.

Diane Webber? Maybe it was Joyce in her pre-Bette Midler period.

I thought about Bettie Page when I got that email from Alan White. She had disappeared from public life for nearly 30 years and then was rediscovered living a poverty-stricken rural life that left her ignorant of what a personality she had become.

She was helped by several people and ended up living in Los Angeles, apparently in some comfort, in her last years. She had the hardest life of the three, yet she lived the longest. Good-bye, Bettie Page.

Remember, properly viewed, everything is news.

— Arnie



# Aunt FANnie

Dear Aunt FANnie,

My girlfriend and I are in a terrible state and I don't know where else to turn. We're very much in love and extremely compatible in almost every way. We both are fans. We both enjoy reading science fiction, drinking tea with exotic women in oriental restaurants, going to conventions, lying in the moonlight and having lobsters crawl over our naked bodies... all the usual stuff. But there is one thing about which we do not agree which has caused us great emotional pain and I worry that it will eventually develop into 'irreconcilable differences' resulting in our breaking up. You see, she is bored at little conventions like, oh say a Corflu for instance but she simply loves big ones like the Worldcon. I, on the other tentacle, prefer small cons like Corflu and hate conventions like the Worldcon. Please help...

(signed) CONFused

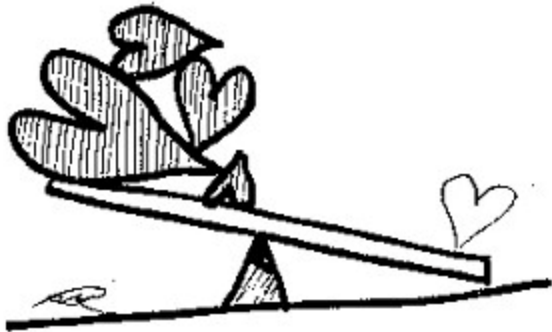
**Aunt FANnie says :** Hurrumph! Big ones, huh? And they say size doesn't matter. Good Ghu Meyer, I dunno how you got mixed up with such a deceitful soul-less hussy, but dump the rotten con-whore and get away while you still can. To make amends to the Ghods, say 10 "Good Ghu's" and 20 "Hail Willis'es" and read all of the newest fanzines available at [eFanzines.com](http://eFanzines.com)! And may Burbee have mercy on your fannish soul...

Dear Aunt FANnie,

HELP!

My mother is ruining my marriage! Me and my wife of four years used to be real close. We used to spend every minute we could together doing the fannish things we love. One of my favorite times would be when I used to sit on the floor and color in my favorite Rotsler illos while she sat by the fire and knitted a fanzine. But these days I hardly ever see her 'cause she and my mom have become BEST FRIENDS! Gak! They're always running around town, shopping or out seeing a movie or driving to Canada for a convention or something. She never seems to have time for me anymore and I'm afraid my mom is gonna come between my wife and I. What should I do?

(signed) Charlie Wildroot



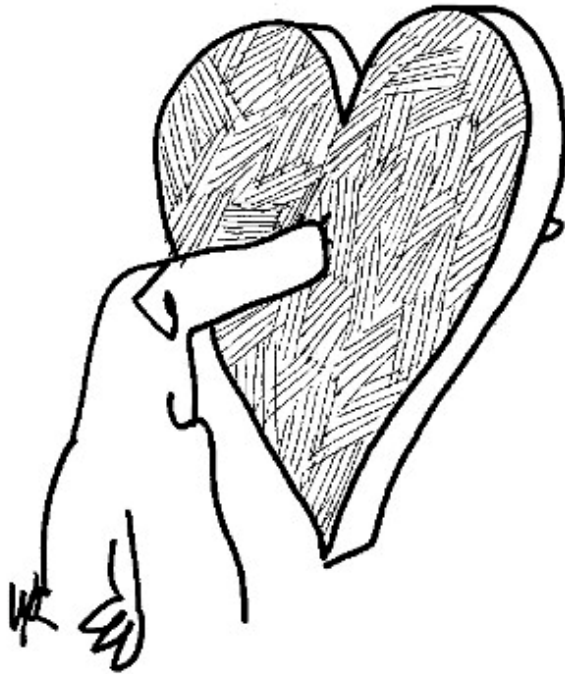
FANTASY

ASK

AUNT

FANnie

Advice to  
The Fanlorn



**Aunt FANnie says :** Stop whining Charlie. After all, it IS her basement...

Dear Aunt FANnie,

I have a decision to make about which I am stuck. I just can't decide on my own. I know how good you are at answering questions so I have elected to write and ask for your opinion.

I've just been offered the opportunity to get a collection of every Science Fiction and Fantasy book ever written for my wife. What do you think?

(signed) A.K.

**Aunt FANnie says :** I'd say, that's a great deal. MAKE THE TRADE!

Dear Aunt FANnie,

I am a fan married to a fan and I think my infant son is already showing signs of his fannish genes. This morning while I was warming his formula I was surprised to catch him actually teething on my first edition copy of "The Immortal Storm" which he proceeded to shred in a fit of what I presume was sheer joy, then after breakfast he crawled over to my fanzine collection and somehow found my copy of "The Enchanted Duplicator" which he eventually spit-up on, though it was Vegas Fandom Weekly he really vomited on... but then when I was cleaning his face he plopped down on a copy of "The Drink Tank" and made a big poo-poo! Is

it an omen? Do you think it means he's destined for fannish greatness?

(signed) Gracie

**Aunt FANnie says :** No. I think it means he's sick you dummy! Get the poor kid to a doctor! Sheeeesh...

Dear Aunt FANnie,

Is there a practical way to socially integrate mundanes, the 'average Joe', into a group of 'average fans'?

**Aunt FANnie says :** Great Ghu, NO! Why would you WANT to?

Dear Aunt FANnie,

My current lover is wonderful, except for one thing. He insists that I dress-up as Betty Paige when we have sex! It takes forever to get into one of those damnable corsets and my legs weren't made for stiletto heels. My calves and my feet are killing me! And after all that effort and a stroll once-around-the-bedroom, he just wants to rip it all off and make mad passionate love all night! I just feel so used. What am I to do?

(signed) Mrs. DePoint

**Aunt FANnie says** Yeah... that Arnie Katz is a scamp, ain't he? But, it's an age old custom to have one's mate dress-up, or adorn themselves with special paints and trinkets, to enhance the experience of arousal for their partner. And being an age old guy, it's no surprise it would be among the Kingfish's preferences. And since Joyce insisted he stop leaving stains from special paints on the sheets it was a logical progression. So, just count your blessings that he doesn't ask you to dress up like Art Widner... anymore.

Dear Aunt FANnie,

I am a amiteir righter. I right some good sci-fi stoorys. noT sum bad onez like uther onez, but reel gud onez. My Mom sayz there was the beast righten shed ever node. Mi kweshiun is... shud i git a agint and be publeeshed?

signed Faulkner Fitzhemmings

**Aunt FANnie says :** NO

Remember to send your important personal queries, questions and quandries to your ol' Aunt FANnie. She can't wait to answer each and every one of them each and every week ('cause she's not paid until she DOES!).

-- Aunt FANnie (Bill Mills)

# Joyce Katz

I came by it naturally; my mother lost hers when she was just a child. She had a fruit jar full of them, collected one by one for years. She prized them highly; they were her shining treasure. But Grandma made her give some to her sisters, so after that Mother dug a hole and buried them under the front porch, so she wouldn't have to share.

One day Mother and her sisters came home from school to find no one. The house was empty, the furniture was gone. The little girls thought they'd been abandoned, and they sat on the porch crying, no idea what to do. Pretty soon, Grandma arrived to take them to their new home. It wasn't until long after that Mother thought of the jar of marbles, now lost forever. Thirty-four years later, each time we'd drive up Vinegar Hill, she'd point out the old house and tell again what happened to her marbles way back then.

I spent the first grade in a one-room country school. Poor old Miss Minnie did her best, but I was the only first grader, so she wasn't able to spend much time with me. The only thing I remember learning that year was how to draw a cat on the chalkboard. Most of the time I took naps at my desk, or moved over to sit beside my brother.

Earl was powerful in the school yard marble games, and built up a good collection of the glass globes. Mother remembered her own lost marbles, so never made Earl share his winnings with me. But now and then I'd take out the cloth bag in which they were stored, just to see and admire their beauty.

After the War, we moved from the farm to town, and I found new friends in the neighborhood. Scotty was my favorite; we played baseball in the street, endless games of tag, and king-of-the-mountain.

Back then all of us were big on jump-rope chants ("General Eisenhower went to France, to teach the ladies how to dance. How many dances can you do? One-two...") and action games like "Red Rover Red Rover, send Scottie right over." We also did gymnastics on Lanny Evans' parallel bars and high swing. Once we tied a rope between the legs of the equipment, and spent a day learning to walk the tight-rope. We also shimmied up every tree in the neighborhood. The big maple in Pauline's yard was the best. We each picked a favorite branch, and called it our "office building." I



## BOXED IN : LOSING MY MARBLES

was the chief story-teller of our let's-pretend detective adventures.

I recall a summer in the mid-'40s when newsreels and comic strips were very heavy into finding spies. That convinced us that there were quite likely spies everywhere, and it was our duty to help root them out of our home town. We knew that spies took refuge in the underground tunnels of Paris, so we figured that was the best place for us to search. I still remember us going into the underground caverns formed by the drainage culverts in Poplar Bluff. We patriotic second-graders were small, and I remember walking upright through the tunnel under our street. The cavern was large, much taller than me, though I now realize it was just a very tiny ditch.

Our block was shady and cool from the giant oaks that lined the street, a good place for irregular baseball games. As I recall, Scotty was pretty good at it – he particularly liked my pitching, since he always scored on my slow ball. One afternoon I was short-stop, and I crept up behind him to try to see just how he made the bat connect. But I got a little too close to the back-swing, and caught the wood full-force on my temple. That was the only hit I ever got, and put an end to my participation in street baseball games.

He was definitely my first boyfriend. When summer ended, it was only natural that Scotty showed me the way to my new school, and then walked there with me every morning, carrying my books. Years later I learned he walked Tammie home each noon, and he walked Karen back to school after lunch. But when school let out in the afternoon, he took Donna home, and stayed for cookies and milk. Guess that showed which girl was actually his favorite. Or maybe it was just the pastry.

Eventually Scotty and his family moved out of the neighborhood into a different school district. I didn't see him again for several years, when all the district grammar students consolidated into the town's Junior High School.

Students from different districts were mixed into new classrooms, and Scotty was assigned to Mrs. Gibbon's homeroom, as was I. But by this time, I had developed the eleven-year-old shyness, and even though I liked him, I never dared start a conversation with him.

Instead I schemed on how to draw his attention. When I observed him in the marble games on the playground each day, I made my plan. That afternoon, while Earl was on his paper route, I opened the bag where he kept his stash. I selected a beautiful red shooter. When I held it to the light, I saw through it and it gleamed like a jewel. Earl'd never miss it, I reasoned, since he had passed beyond the age for such games.

Now, how to give it to Scotty – that was the question. A nervier person might have just presented it to him. But I was much too shy to consider that. I carried the marble



around for several days, until I finally got my opportunity. While Scotty was across the room talking to some other boys, I casually backed up to his desk. He had a notebook that zipped all around – perfect for my purposes! I reached behind me, and opened the zipper about an inch. Then I stuffed the marble inside, and reclosed it.

It wasn't long till Scotty opened his workbook, and the ruby orb fell out. He picked it up, rolled it around in his hand, and then showed it off to the other boys. I was thrilled; my plan worked! Only trouble was, I didn't have the nerve to tell him I'd put it there, and he certainly never guessed. For that matter, he never even glanced my way.

I lost interest in him as I moved into my teens. But perhaps that marble brought him luck. Years later, on one of my trips back to Poplar Bluff, I learned he'd been elected into town government as a local Wardman or something like that. In fact, his specialty was public morality. His greatest accomplishment was closing down the Peppermint Lounge, and getting all the go-go dancers fired. "Can't have that kind of thing in our town."

To tell the truth, I've always regretted the loss of that red marble. Scotty really wasn't worth it. I'm glad he never knew about it. Fortunately, neither did my brother Earl.

Remember that fine wooden cigar box I used to carry to conventions? I originally bought it at a flea market in Coney Island – found it in a stack of mixed refuse in the backyard of the junk dealer, and paid two bucks for it. It served Arnie and me (and quite a few of the fans reading this) for nearly twenty years. But the box grew old, and developed a large crack across the top. Attempts to glue it failed. Eventually the lid split into two pieces, and couldn't be mended. We needed a new one, badly.

EBay is just about perfect for this kind of thing; at any given moment there are thousands offered for sale. I started my search for similar wooden boxes, until I found one that seemed ok. It was smaller, but seemed like it'd work for my purposes, and I got it really cheap. Best of all, the handsome box was offered as it came to the dealer, filled with a collection of cat-eye marbles.

When it arrived, the box was nice, but not good for my purpose. Even without the marbles, it was too shallow to hold an ashtray, too narrow for the smoking supplies and accouterments. But I didn't send it back because I wanted the marbles. I washed and polished them, then returned them to the box for storage.

Having the collection revived my old interest, and I started browsing the eBay listings for specialty pieces.





Some of the hand-made, one-of-a-kind marbles were fabulous art items, small worlds of colored whorls and peaks that staggered the mind as I tried to imagine how they were made. A few artists leapt out at me: Travis Weber, James Alloway, Joseph Hamra, Richard Hollingshead – master miniaturists who created display marbles valued in the hundreds, even thousands of dollars. The urge to collect beat in my heart, but I stayed strong, and collected only pictures of the ones I loved most.

And, the box? The old one was ruined, and the new one was too small. I started a new eBay search for 8 by 10 wooden boxes. That narrowed the return from over a thousand cigar boxes to a more manageable list. Eventually I found one that seemed right, and the price was only \$8 plus shipping – which was considerably less than the one before that held all those marbles.

The new box is a beauty – dark wood, lined with white velvet inside. No cigar box this; it was sold as a “Graduate’s Photo Box”. The cover had a window, just exactly postcard size. I removed the picture of handsome seniors in graduation gear, and put in the Bill Mills’ Corflu Silver postcard.

No way that white velvet would stay nice, so I cut a piece of cardboard to line the bottom, and covered it with wood-toned Contact shelf-liner paper. The inside of the lid held a plastic loose-leaf photo album. I carefully cut the picture of wild horses away from the lid of the old box, and inserted it to decorate the new – a sentimental connection to the old one, forever reminding Arnie and me that “Wild Horses Couldn’t Pull” us apart (our own love song for these thirty-eight-plus years.)

Introducing the new box to our friends was great fun; everyone agrees that it is indeed a most beautiful storage container, filled with good sentiments and memories of great fan times that flood to mind with each use.

All that, and marbles, too. Life is good.  
-- Joyce Katz



### **Send Us a LoC....**

All you need to complete your perusal of this issue of Idle Minds is a glance at the back cover.

We hope you’ve enjoyed it as much as we Vegrants have enjoyed bringing it to you.

We also hope that you won’t feel you are actually done with it until you send us a letter of comment.

Send letters to: [crossfire4@cox.net](mailto:crossfire4@cox.net)

