

Weberwoman's Wrevenge

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This fanzine is available for contributions, letters of comment, artwork, interesting clippings, uncanceled postage stamps, arranged trades, editorial whim, or A\$2 or equivalent per issue (air mail extra).

I prefer some sort of personal response.

The Rubbish Bin

Welcome to the latest incarnation of this fanzine. This marks a return to longer issues, at least for the next few, while I catch up on a backlog of material.

I'd intended this issue to include a complete report on my trip to North America, but it wouldn't appear for another year if I waited till I finished it. So here you have the first installment, covering ten days, plus some other material.

Some of the report is linear, but some of it isn't. The article on Aquariums brings together and compares things I saw and did in different cities. I'll be interested to know what you think of the different approaches to 'what I did on my holidays'.

I'm also using the next few issues as opportunities to improve my skills with desktop publishing tools (I do earn part of my living using them, and I need to become more efficient in their use - as well as learning more about graphic design).

Everything in this issue has been written by myself, except for the letter column.

Coming next time: Minneapolis and (maybe) Virginia; cancer research scandal in New Zealand; book reviews and letters.

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Art Credits

Taral, front cover

Alexis Gilliland, page 14

Arts & Letters clip art, everything else.

Countdown to departure

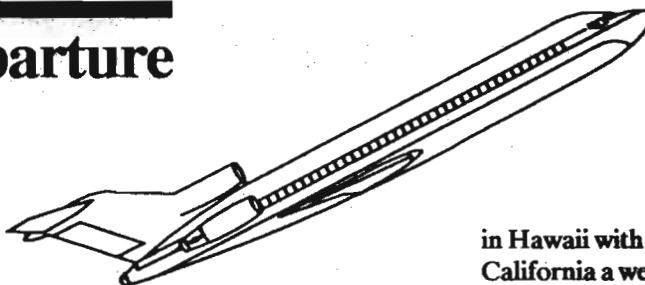
The last week before my trip was busy, but not quite in the way I'd expected. I'd finished my paid work early, and was mostly twiddling my thumbs, waiting for November 30th to arrive.

The excitement came when my credit union statement arrived, and I discovered that a \$2,550 cheque that I'd deposited 6 weeks previously had not been credited to my account. To make matters even worse, I had been charged for \$1,200 worth of travellers cheques that I'd ordered but had never received (see box headed *Tracking the Elusive Travellers' Cheques*), and I had been unaware of the charge. I'd withdrawn a similar amount of cash to buy the cheques elsewhere. Consequently, my account was somewhat overdrawn. The 'good news' was that I have an overdraft authority, so none of my cheques had bounced.

Fortunately, my credit union has a toll-free number, and the people there are quite helpful and polite. The case of the missing deposit wasn't the fault of the credit union, anyway. I deposit my cheques at a bank, which forwards them to the credit union. This one hadn't been forwarded.

The fun began when we tried to find where it had gone. You see, I don't always deposit my cheques in the same branch of the bank. And wouldn't you know it, the branch stamp on that particular deposit slip was smeared and illegible. So the credit union started with the branch nearest my flat; they claimed no knowledge. Then they tried the branch near Eric's house. Bingo! The response was 'Oh, good, we were hoping someone would call and tell us what to do with this cheque.' Apparently it had become separated from the deposit slip. I was irritated, to put it mildly.

The charge for the not-received travellers cheques was a credit union matter, and easily reversed. With two days to go, I was solvent again.



A stop in Hawaii

Wednesday 30th November finally arrived and I departed Australia on schedule in mid-afternoon. After a stop in Auckland, New Zealand, we reached Honolulu in the early morning of the same day. I hadn't been able to sleep much, despite my 'survival kit' (earplugs, black eye mask, and inflatable neck support), so I wasn't at my best.

Clearing customs took forever, but was otherwise painless. When I finally emerged, I found Kris Sellgren holding up a sign with my name on it. (We've shared an apa for years, but had never met.) She was beginning to worry, as someone had said (incorrectly) that everyone from my flight had cleared customs some time before. She deposited me at the house she shares with David Ennis, gave me a map and instructions on how to get to the beach and the shopping centres, and rushed off to work. I said hello to the cat and collapsed for a few hours' sleep, then walked to the beach, read my book for awhile, and walked back. The weather was typical of a very pleasant tropical winter: not too warm, not too humid. Apparently there'd been a lot rain in the previous few days, as large puddles were everywhere, and indeed clouds gathered both nights I was there.

Kris and I had a chance to chat, though far too briefly, over an impromptu dinner that evening. She was hoping I knew how to get in touch with Alyson L Abramowitz, who was at that time in Sydney, but I hadn't heard from Alyson before I left and didn't know where she was staying. Alyson was supposed to be spending several days

in Hawaii with Kris on her way back to California a week or two later, but Kris was going to be in Spain. This trip had been organised on very short notice. We decided that although it was most annoying for Kris to miss a visit from Alyson, at least Alyson was quite capable of taking care of herself and coping with unexpected developments. We had a chuckle over the mixed nuisance and delight of having so many globetrotting friends.

Somehow I'd expected Kris to be taller. Something in her writings made her seem tall. That's probably a compliment to her (assertive people tend to seem taller than they actually are, studies have shown), and an indictment of our society's prejudices about height - also my own unpurged and unrecognised stereotyping of people.

Unfortunately, my visit with Kris was cut short, because she had to leave the next day for a stint at a telescope on Hawaii Island. We'd hoped to get together with Phyllis Eide, another member of the apa we share, but the three of us didn't have the same time free while I was there.



Continued from page 3

The next day (Thursday), Kris dropped me off at Ala Moana Center, a large shopping mall across from a pleasant beach park about halfway between Waikiki and downtown Honolulu. I phoned Phyllis, who hadn't got my letter saying when I was arriving, and didn't recognise my name immediately, which made for several paragraphs of strange conversation until we sorted out who I was and why I was telephoning. We met for lunch and got acquainted, and I was

reminded of several of the few American delights that I miss in Australia: iced tea, icewater with every meal (usually without asking) and non-smoking sections everywhere.

After lunch I did some window-shopping at the mall, napped in the shade of the trees in the beach park, then took the bus to Waikiki and walked to the Aquarium, managing to arrive just as it was closing. Catching another bus that wandered along the beaches, I eventually returned to Kris' house, just as she was about to leave

for the airport. We chatted a bit more, as the taxi was late.

The next morning, David dropped me off at the airport on his way to work. I checked my bags, then caught the bus back into Honolulu. I kept thinking 'I know I've spent a day here before, but I can't recall when'. The answer finally came to me: when I emigrated to Australia, the ship spent a day in Honolulu. I had wandered around some of the sights easily accessible on foot from the passenger ship terminal, since I didn't know anybody there to visit.

Tracking the elusive travellers' cheques

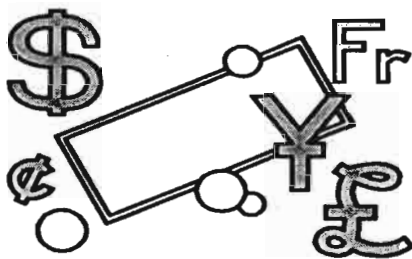
My credit union had a 'special' on American Express Travellers' Cheques: no service charge. I like to save a few dollars here and there, so I called their toll-free number and order some for my overseas trip.

No problem, except that this was a new arrangement and the Sydney branch of the credit union didn't handle the Travellers' Cheques directly. Only the Head Office in Melbourne had them. They'd send some up to the Sydney branch and I could collect them from there. Fine. I still had several weeks before departure, so was in no hurry. Also I was at the time working near the suburb where the credit union's Sydney branch was located, so it would be reasonably convenient to pick them up.

Except that they never arrived. After a week or so, I phoned the Sydney office and learned that (a) no one in Melbourne had told them the cheques were on their way, and (b) no cheques had arrived. They'd investigate. A few days later, I was informed that the package – correctly addressed to the Sydney office – had been returned to Melbourne marked 'Addressee Unknown'. Would I like them to try again?

Never mind, said I at this point. I'll

buy them somewhere else. In the meantime, the Australian dollar had gone up several cents against the US dollar, more than enough to cover the fees I would otherwise have saved buying them several weeks earlier.



Little did I realise what other hassles awaited me. First, American Express would not take a personal cheque. I could charge them, but only on an American Express card, which I don't have. The money machine would give me only \$400 a day, and I didn't want to take 3 days to withdraw enough. A bank would cash a personal cheque to a maximum of \$200 (because my money's not in the bank, it's in the credit union). Getting out to the credit union's Sydney branch was too much trouble - if I could be bothered to do that, I'd have got the travellers cheques there after all.

Finally someone told me the easy and – in retrospect – obvious solution: get a cash advance on my Visa card. This wasn't even going to cost me a high interest rate, because my Visa card is a *debit* card, not a *credit* card. The money is taken directly out of my account.

So I did that and, nervously clutching about \$1,100 more cash than I like to carry around with me, I scuttled the two blocks from the bank to the American Express office. There I found a queue stretching out the door, and moving very slowly. I hadn't thought about the fact that the shift in the value of the Australian dollar meant that lots of people were buying U.S. dollars – cash, travellers' cheques, whatever they could get – as investments. The harassed woman selling T.C.s said she had very few left, and those not in popular denominations. The man ahead of me had abused her loudly – as if it were her fault! She was polite but firm with him, though he didn't deserve politeness. I sympathised with her.

But I got my travellers cheques in the end, and went home pleased that the last chore was finished and all I had to do was wait till departure day. Little did I know!

You can't get to Seattle from here

Eventually I returned to the airport to catch my flight to Seattle. This turned out to be a variation on the theme of *Insidious Tortures* – not quite in the category of *Nightmare Flight to Hell*, but working on it. To start with, the plane was close to full. There were two empty seats in my row, but they filled as soon as we were airborne: two refugees from the smoking section took them. Not that they found those seats much of an improvement, as we were only two rows in front of the smoking section and the smoke carried at least 8 rows further forward (I know, I checked). Dozens of people were complaining, to no avail. I stood up as much as I could, as far as I could get from the smoking section, but still felt ill after an hour or so. Was the air circulation system at fault? I don't know.

So I wasn't at my best when the pilot announced that we wouldn't be arriving in Seattle at all that night, folks: Seattle was fogged in, the airport was closed to both incoming and outgoing traffic, and we were going to Portland, Oregon. A ragged cheer arose from the passengers who were expecting to transfer in Seattle for a connecting flight to Portland. Various moans and groans were heard from other passengers. I said loudly, 'Okay, bring on the free drinks', but none appeared. The large contingent of people returning from a week or two holiday in Hawaii, possibly led by their tour guide, began singing. The Fasten Seat Belt sign went on and – thank the goddess! – so did the No Smoking sign. We were advised that we might have to circle Portland for as much as an hour, due to the unusually large numbers of planes now trying to land there.

Eventually we landed. Then we sat on the runway for over half an hour until a berth became free. Another an-

nouncement: 'We have arranged accommodation for you at a motel, our expense, but there is no one to unload the baggage. Also you'll have to find your own way to the motel, and be reimbursed. Sorry.'

I tagged along with a motley group of people trying to find a taxi. With several hundred unexpected visitors all vying for taxis, this was not terribly successful. And Americans don't queue up considerably at taxi ranks! It's a real free-for-all. An hour or so later, still unsuccessful, we spotted a shuttle bus bearing the logo of our motel (Red Lion) and pounced upon it. And so the weary traveller reached the motel, checked in, ate some supper, and collapsed into bed. It was 1:30 a.m.

Now comes the cautionary tale. Almost always, when I travel by air, I carry an emergency kit with me, just in case my suitcase gets mislaid. This kit includes my toothbrush, a change of underwear, usually a clean shirt, and so on. This time, I didn't pack the kit.



My reasoning was that I would be staying with a friend from whom I could borrow anything I needed until my suitcase showed up. It never occurred to me that I might never get to Seattle. *sigh*

I telephoned Janice Murray, who was supposed to be meeting me in Seattle. She, of course, had already learned about the delay. We made ar-

rangements for Saturday, assuming that the airport re-opened. I debated phoning a Portland acquaintance, but wasn't sure how she'd take to being called after midnight. (When I spoke to her several days later, she said, 'Oh you should have called! I keep late hours.')

One useful item I did have with me was my travel alarm clock, so I was up and dressed and down at the shuttle bus stop by 6:30 a.m. Beautiful view of Mt Hood in the dawn: a dark silhouette against a pink sky.

At the airport, it was a case of wait, and wait, and wait. The flight was scheduled, then postponed, then, at 11:00 or so, cancelled. The plane went back to Hawaii. We passengers looked at each other and said, 'Hope they took the baggage off first.' We were scheduled on another flight. It was cancelled. Someone phoned Amtrak (the passenger railways) and got details on the train to Seattle. People began badgering the airline (Northwest) to release the baggage, and complaining about the lack of an airline-chartered bus to Seattle (some other carriers had taken their passengers on the previous night, or early that morning, by bus).

Northwest made excuses about no charter buses being left (quite likely true, at that point), and began offering people a refund of the equivalent to a fare from Portland to Seattle (\$90) if they'd go away and find their own transportation. A mild stampede on the rental-car agencies followed, resulting in a lack of cars.

I doubted that they'd give me a refund, since I was travelling on a 'Visit USA' pass, but the harassed ticket agent said 'I don't know if it's allowed, but I'll give it to you anyway'. I made a reservation on Amtrak, and joined the group of impatient travellers demanding their luggage.

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The next half hour were reminiscent of your favorite thriller-type TV show: with 3 seconds until the entire world blows up, our hero saves the day. You know the sort of thing. Well, here I am, wondering just how long I can wait for my suitcase and still have time to get to the Amtrak station before the train leaves. Real nail-biting drama, believe me folks. Yes, I made it, but only just: grabbed my bag, barged out of the luggage area (trying not to trample elderly people in the process), raced to the escalator, down to the tunnel, under the street, up the escalator? stairs? (don't remember now), and towards the bus stop - where another person from the plane was preventing the bus from departing. Fortunately the bus was full of

people in a similar situation, so they didn't complain, and the driver seemed highly amused. I collapsed into a seat, clutching my possessions, and we charged off. Managed to reach the Amtrak station with plenty of time to spare (the next bus might not have), so I wandered around the immediate area with a French woman I'd met, who lives on some South Pacific island and has travelled a lot in the sort of conditions that single women are advised to avoid. Getting stranded in a strange city was no big deal. She told tales of airlines in New Guinea and elsewhere, and I swapped stories of airlines in Central America. I liked her a lot. Pity I didn't get her address. (That part of Portland, by the way, is pretty rundown - typical, I think, of unrenovated areas near railway stations

in American cities - so we weren't terribly inspired by our brief walk. Well, at least no one hassled us.)

Amtrak was very comfortable. The seats leaned almost all the way back, and there was both a legrest and a footrest. What luxury! We departed Portland in mid-afternoon, and got a good view of Mt Hood with the westering sun full upon it. Later admired Mt St Helens in the distance.

I tried to sleep as much as possible, but was distracted by the manic behaviour of the train crew. I don't know when this crew joined the train, but they acted as if they'd been on it since San Diego, two days previously. I mean, they were punchy. Reminded me of a con committee on the 3rd day.



Aquariums

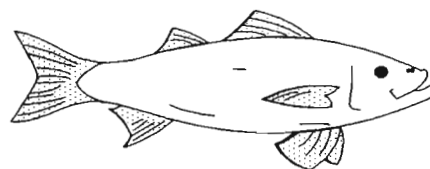
A comparative survey of public aquariums was one of my projects for the trip. I didn't quite manage to visit an aquarium in every city I visited, but I did see quite a few.

I began with the recently-opened Sydney Aquarium, located in the Darling Harbour redevelopment area. It is small, with a limited number of fairly well-done displays, but the A\$10 entry fee is considerably higher (for what you get) than the fees at aquariums I visited in America. There may be good reasons for this, but as a visitor I would react negatively to a high price even if I knew it was justified.

The most dramatic displays were the two clear 'donuts' through which visitors walk through (under) a huge tank. The fish and other mobile crea-

tures are above you as well as in front and behind you. One contains fish, invertebrates and plants typical of parts of Sydney Harbour. I found it interesting, but not particularly exciting. The other tank, however, was quite impressive. It held a large number of sharks, skates and rays (among other creatures). I wandered along just at feeding time. Two divers were in the tank. One was cleaning the walls of the donut tube; the other was distributing food fish to the inhabitants.

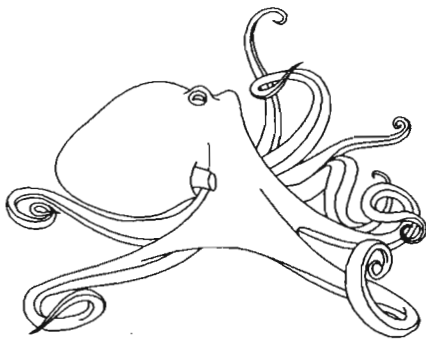
The show started slowly. The sharks didn't seem all that interested,



much to the disappointment of many people in the crowd, who apparently were hoping for a feeding frenzy from which the diver would barely escape with his life. The critters that stole the show, however, were the rays (or maybe skates; I'm never sure which is which) and a small shark. The rays stayed only a few centimeters above the sandy bottom. One came slinking over the donut tube, just above my head, then settled on to the diver's back, on the air tank. A collective gasp arose from the onlookers. The diver, obviously used to this, swatted the ray on the nose with a fish, and it swam away. A few minutes later it came back and repeated the performance.

Meanwhile, a few metres away, a small (1 metre or so) shark was inspecting the (closed) wickerwork bait

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box in which the second batch of food fish was stored. The shark appeared to be trying to open the catch on the box, but only succeeded in tumbling it over. Reminded me of some small children I've known. The diver would occasionally swat the shark away from the box.

Several people I've talked to seemed to find the Sydney Aquarium impressive and good value, but I suspect they haven't seen many for comparison. I wonder what the Japanese tourists think? I've heard there are some public aquariums in Japan that are quite well done, but I've



never seen them.

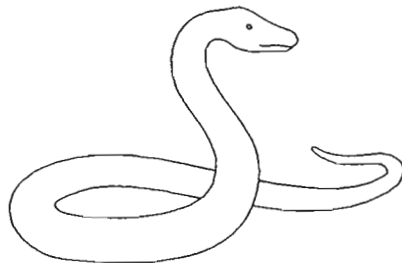
I haven't been back to Townsville (North Queensland, Australia) since the Great Barrier Marine Park Authority's aquarium display opened, but I understand that's quite good.

I was disappointed to miss the Waikiki Aquarium in Hawaii. I arrived just as it was closing, but also found a sign saying that part of it was closed for renovations. Nor did I visit any in Seattle or Minneapolis (don't know if the latter even has one).

The Baltimore Aquarium was my

next stop. I've kept hearing about the Baltimore Harbour redevelopment, both from friends and from my parents, who had grown up in Baltimore and knew the old harbour well, having seen its last decline and eventual resurrection as a tourist complex. The similarities to Sydney's Darling Harbour are striking, both in their histories and in what's been done to revitalise them (and probably in the complaints of some citizens over the cost).

The Baltimore Aquarium was fabulous - easily the most impressive I'd ever seen to that point. It was huge, had many well-done displays including some interactive ones, and had



staff demonstrating biological principles to groups of school children. There were several levels to the building, with a large walk-through aviary at the top as part of a rain forest display. One major section was devoted to the ecology of the Chesapeake Bay area, but there were many others as well, from diverse parts of the world. I thought it was a really fine example of a modern museum: colourful explanatory displays of photos and diagrams, on ecological, biological and geological topics; living creatures in tanks; hands-on exhibits (touching tidepool creatures or looking through microscopes at tiny structures); lots of staff to explain things; and a general overall air of 'science is interesting, ex-

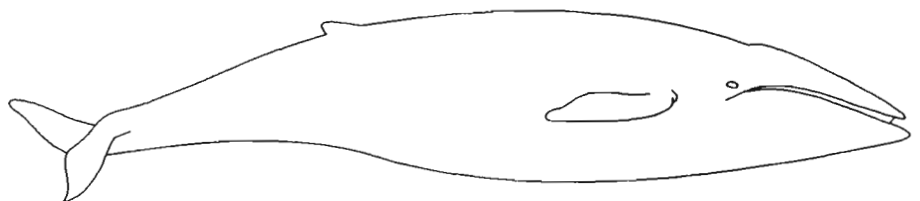
citing and fun, not dull at all'.

Then I got to California and visited the Monterey Bay Aquarium. This is easily as good as, or better than, the



Baltimore Aquarium, though less varied. It concentrates entirely on northern California habitats, and includes a three-story-high kelp forest tank. It had all the features of a modern museum (including plenty of places to sit, think about what you've seen and rest your feet, and a cafeteria full of yummy food). I was very impressed.

Finally, I visited my old friend, the Steinhart Aquarium in the California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco. I'd hoped to say hello to my former boss, Dr John McCosker, the Director of the Aquarium, but he hadn't returned from a trip to Antarctica. The Aquarium has been enlarged since my days there (1972-74), but the extensions had opened before my last visit in 1980, so there wasn't anything new for me to see. The 'fish round-about' is their version of a huge tank suitable for ocean fish; here the visitors stand in the donut's hole with the fish swimming around them. The other exhibits are much as I remember them (and some of the older, more faded signs are ones I can recall making myself when I worked there): well done, but not dramatic, and with little space for the sort of explanatory material that newer museums use.



Seattle: Business meetings with fans

Janice Murray met me at the Amtrak station in the early evening of Saturday 3 December, not quite a full day later than planned. We collected my bag and trundled off to the home of Marci Malinowicz, where I would be staying. Marci has a really nice third-of-a-house: big bedroom and bath upstairs, kitchen and living room downstairs. The guest bed is cunningly tucked into the space under the stairs, and was quite comfortable.

We must have eaten dinner, but I can't recall what. Probably Marci had prepared something; I recall several tasty meals, on various days, but didn't keep a record. We were all busy simultaneously getting acquainted, talking to Fern, Marci's elderly red setter, and watching the end of an episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. (I managed to miss all but snippets of every episode broadcast during my stay in the States, because of Saturday-night parties or other events. Since *ST:NG* hasn't been shown on television in Australia yet, this was particularly disappointing. I did have the chance to see an episode or several on videotape at the end of my trip, at Alyson Abramowitz's, but hadn't the ambition that day. Besides, by then I'd heard lots of arguments regarding whether it was worth watching or not.)

But I digress. The first Saturday of the month in Seattle is Vanguard, the fannish gathering: not quite a meeting, not exactly a party, but certainly lots of people. This time it was held at the home of Vonda McIntyre, a writer whose sf I very much enjoy (but I've only read one of her *Star Trek* books).

I hadn't had the chance to meet Vonda on my previous trip to Seattle, in 1980. When I mentioned that I wished I'd been able to bring all my copies of her books to be autographed, she suggested that she could autograph some bookplates for me. What a clever idea!

The front room was full of people talking computers. Sometimes I find this boring, but this time I was delighted because on this trip I wanted to find out a lot of information and perhaps buy some software or hardware. Several people were most helpful, and I collected a pocketful of business cards to use as evidence that I'd attended a professional meeting during my stay.

One person I particularly enjoyed talking with was Karen Savage, a consultant to small business in setting up appropriate computer systems. This is an area in which I'd like to do some

(travelling eastwards does have its advantages). As we were leaving, John Berry and Eileen Gunn were arriving. John gave me a copy of *Wing Window*, in which he discussed his DUFF candidacy. I had somewhat mixed feelings about that, since John has been to Australia before, but I thought he covered all the points very tactfully and thoroughly in his zine, and obviously many of the voters didn't consider this to be a problem, since he won (and has already made the trip to Australia as I type this).

For Sunday, Marci and Janice had organised a brunch at a Chinese dim



sum restaurant. Besides us, attendees

work, and she gave me some hints. I barely said 'hello' to Suzanne Tompkins, who came in and left again immediately, but had a chance to talk at slightly greater length with Jerry Kaufman. I'd stayed with them on my previous trip, and found them interesting - perhaps because, rather than in spite of, the fact that our interests don't overlap that much. Even though we all do fanzines, their approach is quite different from mine. Jerry's now involved in a pro publishing venture, so we chatted about that.

About midnight I realised that I was going to fall over from exhaustion, even though my internal clock still thought it was several hours earlier

were Kristie Austin, whose Arcadian Bookshop was soon to open, and James Lane, with whom I'd discussed laser printers at the Vanguard meeting. James' company is called HanZon Data Inc. I love clever punnish titles like that. We gorged ourselves, even though we couldn't tell what many of the dishes were, and the staff couldn't explain them very well. We may have been the only non-Chinese in the place. It was very smoky, too, which was a bit off-putting for me. Otherwise, a pleasant gathering.

At some point (after brunch, perhaps?) Marci and Janice and I visited Kristie's bookshop, which smelled

wonderfully of new pine shelving. There weren't many books there yet, since the shelving was still under construction. The bookshop is located in the basement of an old house not far from the University. I do hope it's a successful venture.

I'd phoned my parents sometime on Saturday, and they had suggested I check out the place they're buying in a retirement community called Panorama City, near Olympia, Washington. Janice drove me down there on Sunday afternoon. At the managers' offices, we found my parents' contact person, who drove me around and let me into my parents' house, which was vacant.

Several times during our conversation he said 'Does this meet with your approval?' It finally dawned on me that of course many adult children of prospective purchasers would check on what the oldies were doing with their money, especially if the oldies are a bit out of touch with what's going on in real estate and money matters generally. Since I still consider my father to know more about such matters than I do, at least where the USA is concerned, this hadn't crossed my mind until then. I was just having a snoop around, since it might be years before I came to visit again. I didn't tell him that, though: I tried to look and act like I was seriously considering whether my folks were getting good value for their money or not.

(My parents do defer to my sister's financial knowledge these days - especially on taxation - since she's recently passed all her CPA exams and is working as an accountant and tax agent. Pity she can't help me!)

On Monday everybody went to work, and I went to the University Bookstore, where I bought as many computer books as I could carry, and staggered back to Marci's with them. I took the attitude that the price difference, even considering the postage cost, was good enough that, when in doubt, I should buy the book - I could always sell it to someone in Australia if I later decided I didn't want it.

In the afternoon I visited Marilyn Holt and Clifford Wind. Marilyn has a business, Holt & Company Business Development and Management, which operates out of her basement. I'm not sure of the full range of her services, but she does technical writing and desktop publishing on IBM-compatible equipment. We discussed some of the fine points of Ventura Publisher, and she demonstrated some of the features of the latest ver-



sion. Cliff, who works the graveyard shift at the Post Office, eventually emerged and I joined them for dinner. I'd met Cliff several times in Australia (some years ago he lived in Perth), and may have met Marilyn in passing at Aussiecon. They were a delight to talk to, as well as giving me lots of suggestions on professional publishing matters. We also discussed the possibilities and problems associated with emigrating to Australia - a matter upon which I am no longer an expert, since the official and unofficial rules have changed dozens of times since I moved.

Tuesday I was taken to a Mexican restaurant for dinner by Bev Clarke and Steve Galaaci. Great food and company. Bev has been a frequent correspondent to *Wrevenge* for years, and is also a technical writer. Again the conversation turned to, among other things, emigration.

Several people I particularly wanted to see weren't available for various reasons. Some I managed to talk to on the phone; others I never caught up with. Amy Thomson had picked up some illness at Tropiccon over the weekend and didn't want visitors; okay by me - I didn't want her

flu. We did talk awhile. Fran Skene was unavailable. Elinor Busby dropped in on my last day; I was glad to catch up with her. She'd also been suffering from the Tropiccon virus, but was recovering. Shelley Dutton Berry had tried to meet me at the airport, but was defeated by the fog. I saw her briefly at Vonda's before she disappeared into the smoking section downstairs. I didn't realise until we were about to leave that that's where she'd gone, and she was ill the rest of my visit, so we never really caught up with each other. *sigh*

Anna Vargo, Marci, Janice and I spent a pleasant evening consuming champagne and chocolate torte, and talking about lots of things.

Other memories of Seattle are blurred and vague.

The tall, stooped, shabby young black man standing in the lee of a building near the university, hunched against the cold drizzle, quietly murmuring 'Spare change?' to people waiting for the traffic light to change.

The 'half price' book and software store near Marci's where I found some sf books but nothing for my computer - that stuff gets obsolete so quickly.

The Burger King with crisp salads as well as the usual burgers, fries etc, and I could get it without salad dressing if I wanted to.

Trying to figure out what the local word was for 'mineral water'.

The helpful Post Office person who didn't need to be told about mailing bags of books overseas.

I didn't try to do any sightseeing in Seattle. I did a bit of that on my previous trip, under slightly more congenial weather conditions. It would have been nice, but not worth a lot of effort to me. Janice had hoped to have a day or two off work, but didn't manage it. Elinor did offer to show me around, but I had other plans that day. Actually it was pleasant to do just what I did - a bit of shopping, leisurely packing of my purchases to mail home, chatting with interesting people, and reading a book. Can't complain.

Australia Post strikes again

This past spring and summer was wet in Faulconbridge, and Eric and I grew weary of drying out soggy mail, especially fanzines that the postie had failed to shove all the way into the letterbox. So, we lashed out and signed up for a private box at the Potts Point post office, just around the corner from my flat in Sydney.

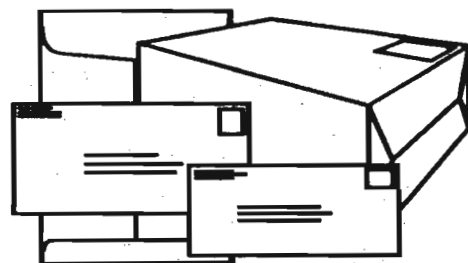
Little did we know that the gremlins in Australia Post were lying in wait for us. (You didn't warn us, Terry Frost! Or you either, Julie Vaux.) Eric got the keys and the box number in December, after I'd left for my trip, and we didn't get around to telling very many people the news before I returned, so we didn't expect much mail until late February at the earliest.

After awhile, though, we began to get a bit suspicious when we received very few pieces. Also we got a bit tired of all the mail for the former oc-

cupants of the box, but that was to be expected. Even with a redirection on mail, some slips through to the old box number.

Then two large paychecks never showed up. I knew when they'd been sent, and who sent them. I worried. I speculated on the possible causes. I even guessed the right answer, but dismissed it as too silly. I didn't talk to the post office staff at this point, because I knew what they'd say: the problem was somewhere else in the system.

Finally, someone phoned to say that they'd received an envelope they sent to me 10 days earlier, and which was addressed correctly, marked 'Unknown - Return to Sender'. I collected the envelope and fronted up at the post office with my evidence. After a long wait, I was told that relief staff hadn't known the box had been reallocated, but now all was sorted out.



Several days later, the truth came out. I received a call from someone higher up in the branch office. It seems that Eric and I had been assigned to a box that was already occupied by a company that had used the same box number for many years. They had finally complained about all of our mail they were getting (and sending back), and about *their* mail that *we'd* been sending back.

So we now have a new box number, and several items have been redirected to that box from the wrong one, and maybe all will be well. I certainly hope that no important overseas mail was returned, especially to people who don't know me personally, and who were sending stuff I'd ordered and paid for.



{I don't pretend that these are 'reviews'; they are more like an incomplete list of what I've been reading the past several months, with commentary. - JHW}

Michaela Roessner, *Walkabout Woman*, Bantam Spectra, 1988.

Fortunately the author says on the first page, 'Although I did intensive research for this book, hoping that the detailing would give the tale a sense of believability and accuracy, the individual characters and their lives, especially the religious experiences,

are solely a product of my imagination. In no way should they be regarded as a real description of the way the Aboriginal people experience their lives.'

I found this a fascinating blend of ideas, including a nifty encounter between a Celtic witch and her Aboriginal counterpart. I thought Roessner did as good a job as Patricia Wrightson with similar material, with one except which marred my enjoyment of the book. American readers would probably not notice, but almost every time one of the characters spoke in white Australian slang, she got it wrong. Fortunately, this didn't happen very often; the vast bulk of the dialogue had no flavour of Australia at all. This is fine, because the action seemed very Australian to me, and the lead character is a strong, vital woman.

C.J. Cherryh, *The Paladin*, Baen, 1988.

More of an alternative history (set in China or Japan) than fantasy, but the usual excellent Cherryh writing and characterisation. This one will appeal most to readers who like her detailed studies of character development and interpersonal relationships, as these overshadow the action.

Cherryh, *Cyteen I: The Betrayal*, Questar, 1988. (Part 2 is *The Rebirth*; Part 3 *The Vindication*)

Set in the immediate universe of *Downbelow Station*. Focus is on Dr Ariane Emory, a brilliant scientist who clones and programs people, and an important political figure who has far-reaching and complex plans for Reseune, her city-sized research and cloning facility. *Port Eternity* intro-

duced us to the azi, the clones, who are conditioned through tapes from birth to fulfill the roles they were designed for, and this book (in passing) also makes the link with *40,000 in Gehenna*, a 'lost colony' populated mainly by azi. Other main characters are Justin, Ariane's student and lover, and Grant, Justin's azi companion.

Ariane is killed, and her comrades clone her. The clone child Ariane is not subjected to tape, but is raised as closely as possible to the original Ariane's experiences, in the hope that the replacement will be as brilliant and have similar interests. Intrigue abounds. Justin and Grant are caught up in it. This volume ends before Ariane II matures. I do wish I had not been so stingy, but had bought the hardcover and had the opportunity to read all three parts at once. It's a complex, rousing tale combining all the great features of Cherry's style.

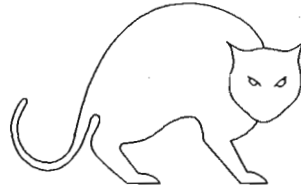
Cherryh (editor), *Troubled Waters*, vol. 3 of *Merovingen Nights*, Daw, 1988.

Continues the adventures of Altair Jones, Thomas Mondragon and their friends and enemies on a planet which has slid backward technologically since some aliens nearly destroyed many years ago. I'm still enjoying this series, but I wish we'd get beyond the everyday political intrigues among the technophobes, and see something different happen, such as the technophiles pulling off some major stunt or event.

Clare Bell, *Ratha's Creature* (1983) and *Clan Ground* (1984), Grafton.

These reprints will appeal to lovers of animal fantasy. They are well written and enjoyable but nothing outstanding or unusual, except possibly for the heavily anthropomorphised sex scenes. Ratha is an intelligent cat, capable of speech. Her 'creature' is fire, which she learns to tame despite

the fear all her kind have for forest fires. She becomes involved in a conflict with other cats, not of her clan.



Jack Dann and Gardner Dozois (editors), *Magicats*, Ace, 1984.

An anthology of unusual stories, mainly reprints, featuring cats. Not of the 'cute sapient feline' variety as in Claire Bell's books. Lots of fun.

Lois McMaster Bujold, *Falling Free*, Baen, 1988.

The book version of a novel serialised in *Analog*. Focuses on a bioengineered group of humans with two extra arms where most of us have legs – much more useful in free fall! Lots of politics, prejudice and philosophy mixed with plenty of action. As do many books today, this one asks questions about the status of engineered humans – does their maker own them? Are they (or should they be) free citizens? If they are brought up away from the nastier aspects of human life (greed, corruption, etc), how do they cope with these aspects when they suddenly have to? How are other people going to react to them? Well done. Claire is a strong female character.

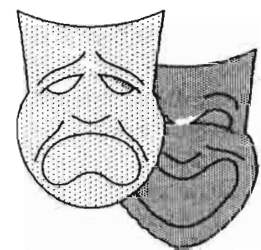
Bujold, *Shards of Honor*, Baen, 1986.

Cordelia is a survey ship captain who gets pressed into service in a war against a culture which isn't nearly as awful as the stories about them would have her people believe. Hence, they don't believe her when she tells of her experiences. The enemy mostly fights among themselves, and Cordelia ends up in the middle of it.

Lisa Goldstein, *A Mask for the General*, 1988.

This book really impressed me. Imagine California under martial law. Most of the rebels simply refuse to recognise the law, beyond largely obeying the curfews. One group, who wear animals masks, has decided that it is composed of alien visitors who are quite apologetic when the break taboos that they find utterly incomprehensible. Some of its members appear to be insane, but it's the sort of insanity that is necessary to survive in such a repressive environment. Create your own reality, indeed, and survive!

One maskmaker decides that what the military ruler, the General, really needs is a mask of his own; then he'll come to his senses and set the people free. She makes the mask and starts it on its journey to the General. She is arrested, along with several friends, who eventually escape from prison and go on to do various other things. A lot of improbable stuff happens, but Goldstein makes it all believable, at some level, to me.



Lisa Goldstein, *The Red Magician*, Unwin Unicorn, 1987 (c 1982).

Somewhat different from Goldstein's later fantasy. Focuses on the Jewish inhabitants of a small village in central Europe, just before, during and after the Holocaust. The rabbi has magical powers (but not enough to save his people), and he clashes with a red-haired magician who tries to warn the village of the coming danger. Main character is Kicsi, a teenage girl, drawn to the Red

Magician and the thought of a wider, more exciting world outside her village. Some good material in here, but it didn't grab me as her later books have done. None of the major events felt true, even the worst horrors. Thus a light read, of interest but not compelling. Disappointing for that reason.

Kathleen Herbert, *Bride of the Spear*, Bodley Head, 1988, hc.

More of an Arthurian historical romance than fantasy. I read little of this sort of book, so can't judge its originality, but I certainly found it well written and interesting.

The main character is a woman, Taniu, who has been dedicated to the Old Gods in childhood (though she doesn't realise it), but who tries to escape from her fate (a political marriage) by becoming a Christian nun.

There is an annoying series of the sort of coincidences common in romances (and situation comedies), relying on the members of the cast not knowing who each other really are, though the reader knows. Mind you, it's a realistic case of lack of communication. Each makes certain assumptions, and simply never asks the obvious questions which would lead to learning the truth. I kept wanting to thump the characters in exasperation, even while recognising that their situation, while contrived, was extremely common in 'real life'.



Anne McCaffrey, *Dragonsdawn*, Bantam, 1988.

Tells of the landing and early colonisation of Pern by humans. How the first Threadfall after their arrival took them rather by surprise, and how they survived. The bioengineering of 'Dragons' from a native life form, the fire lizard.

This book started very slowly, with a lot of scene-setting aboard the colony ship and during the early days on Pern – probably necessary for us to get a feel for the sorts of politicking that went on later, but all I wanted to do was get on with the action! The story soon picks up, however, and maintains a fast pace until the end. A must for Pern fans, and pretty good reading for anybody else as well.

Jo Clayton, *Blue Magic*, Daw, 1988.

Sequel to *Drinker of Souls*. Brann and her alien, shapeshifting companions are drawn into a conflict between the gods and mortal magicians. I find Clayton's tales excellent reading, with strong female characters and lots of action. This one's no exception.

Jo Clayton, *Shadow of the Warmaster*, Daw, 1988.

Shadith and Swardheld from the *Diadem* series return in this book which focuses on a young woman zenoethnologist enslaved by the bad guys. Her mother is trying to rescue her. Plenty of action.

Orson Scott Card, *Seventh Son* (1987) and *Red Prophet* (1988), Tor.

These fantasy volumes are set in an alternative North America, where magic is real and history is quite different than in our world. Not easy to sum up briefly. These books are major, thoughtful works about human rela-

tionships with nature as well as with other humans. The superficial reader would probably enjoy them – enough interesting things happen – but their real value is beyond the superficial. More volumes in the series are forthcoming.



Roger Zelazny, *Trumps of Doom* (1985), *Blood of Amber* (1986), *Sign of Chaos* (1987), Avon & Sphere.

R. Zelazny & Neil Randall, *R.Z.'s Visual Guide to Castle Amber*, Avon, 1988.

The Amber series continues. These are fun, as usual, but would make more sense if you've read the original five-volume series, and/or have the *Visual Guide* handy to refer to. Focus is on Corwin's son Merlin, whose mother is from the *Courts of Chaos*. He tries to build an unusual type of computer (artificial intelligence), but it's a bit paranoid and causes him some trouble, on top of the trouble his relatives (on both sides of the family) are causing him.

I found the *Visual Guide* fascinating, especially since it's been some years since I read the first 5 Amber books. Includes maps of the castle and trumps of each of the major members of the family.

Terry Pratchett, *The Dark Side of the Sun*, Corgi, 1976.

This reprint is fairly entertaining reading, though not quite to my taste. Who is trying to kill Dom Salabos, and why? Probability math is a science on his planet, and it says he'll die on the day of his investiture as Chairman of the Planetary Board. Dom intends to live.

Letters

Marty Cantor
11825 Gilmore St #105
North Hollywood,
CA 91606-2844, USA
21 October 1988

Marty is commenting on Garth Spencer's letter in Wrevenge 31, in which Garth says '...a lot of conditioning goes into human beings; I'm betting... that this ... factor vastly outweighs any other component of behaviour.'

I believe that there is an area of difference between individuals and their interreactions which is often overlooked, the area of generational differences. [These] are often discussed (written about) as differences between how groups look at life; and, when either reading or hearing about this, most of us immediately call to mind all of the exceptions we know.

Most of us know about generational differences in our relations to our parents. However, as the vast majority of people marry people of their own generation (with usually only a few years difference in age) and count most of their friends amongst their own generation, they tend to overlook how really different people from different generations can be... most non-work (which is a whole 'nother topic) interactions are between those of about the same age (or, in the case of fandom, between those of a very like mind).

It takes a case like that between my wife and myself to bring forcefully to home on a daily basis how different the outlooks of generations can be. I was born in 1935, my wife in 1951; in many ways my outlook on life is closer to her mother (to whom I am closer in age...). The basic problem between us is money – but we cope.

I come from a middle-class family and have much of that outlook on life, but even more critical to my personal

viewpoint was my goal-less education, something quite common to those of us who were 'liberal arts majors' in high school and college in the 1950's. Preferring a life of mental self-stimulation (I read a lot), I drifted into several jobs which gave me varying degrees of satisfaction and little remuneration. Decades of having little money left me with a horror of acquiring deep debts which could not be paid off if any emergency came along, and a reliance on the radio (for the music needed by my soul), television (for interactions with the world of strangers), and friends (for the few interpersonal contacts I needed). None of this cost much money; mostly I scrimped along and was usually either just better than broke or slightly in debt.

Then I met Robbie. She is also of a middle class background, but she is much more used to getting the things she wants. To me she often wants and wants and wants and does not want to wait to pay off old debts before she is buying more things. I think that to her I am in many ways a tightfisted skinflint.

People tend to overlook how really different people from different generations can be.

How we handle some of our money is, I think, a good way of showing our differences. Several times each month we place cash into a 'kitty'... From this 'kitty' Robbie takes a weekly stipend to take care of her daily expenses - any extras she uses for buying books and other goodies. I take money from the 'kitty' for exact expenses only (petrol, dry-cleaning etc) and do not make non-budgeted expenses. As a result of this money management system, I am

always bitching that she gets all of the goodies with money that could be better spend lowering our debts and not paying all that interest. After all, in my viewpoint, we could buy even more goodies if we had less money being spent for interest, so let us get out of debt first and then buy the goodies. And around and around we go, tempered by the facts that we love each other – and I really want those goodies too.

Our differences are not with our goals in life, but in how fast we should go in getting there.

Robbie, you see, is from a generation that feels that it has been cheated – inflation has robbed higher incomes of much of their value, so those of her generation with less than yuppie incomes have joined their yuppie brethren in producing a truly incredible mountain of personal debt to finance a lifestyle of non-stinting materialism. To her credit, Robbie is quite mild or moderate in her wants; besides, were our combined incomes greater and our debts non-existent, it would be a race between the two of us to see who could first fill up our home with more of the 'toys' we both want. Our basic difference, then, is that I want to pay off our debts before we buy the items which she is buying now. Our differences boil down not to our goals in life; rather they are how fast we should go in getting there.

Our experience certainly shows how generational differences in basic outlook interact with real people who otherwise have much in common; Robbin and I, after all, are both fans. Well, there are some differences in some of our fanac... but for both of us,

fandom is still almost a way of life insofar as all of our social interaction outside of work is with fans...

Despite much of the above ... there have been compromises: Robbie is much less demanding of 'getting everything now' (which ... is my view of what it seemed she wanted - she would use other words...) and I have acquiesced in acquiring certain things now rather than in the future... Nevertheless, we maintain - and, for me, life is much more fulfilling than it was when I was single.

{Hm, seems to me, Marty, that 'generational difference' is a subset of 'conditioning', though as you say an often overlooked subset. - JHW}



Jessica Amanda Salmonson
P O Box 20610
Seattle, WA 98102, USA
31 October 1988

One of the funniest sexual encounters I ever had was with a Jewish woman armed with knives. In a separate encounter with another woman, I had a Star of David carved on my shoulder blade. I took what I learned from these encounters, adapted them to fantasies of my own, and reversed the power-ceremony with a top, who was destined to be-

come my permanent and monogamous lover, and our encounter had me in control with the use of a samurai sword in a manner you don't want to hear about.

In lesbian s/m - which makes the nambypamby bondage you think so outrageous and/or partially unacceptable seem very lowkey - there are exchanges of power that are very, very complex. Is the top really in control? Not if she has her lover's longterm safety in mind. Do you know of the 'safe word' used by sadomasochists? All activity stops if the bottom says to stop. This gives the bottom ultimate control over how far things may go; though many bottoms find it a special kind of machismo to overdo it, or get so aroused they're not totally aware of when to use the safe word, so responsibility for the top is also very strong.

Most of the women I know who do s/m are not top or bottom, but both, with perhaps a bit more of one than the other. It is the general belief that any top who won't allow herself to be topped is made of interior stuff; and any bottom who has never topped anyone similarly doesn't know enough of the ropes to be the best lover.

The only problems I've ever heard of were more related to drugs and alcohol than to the sexuality. A drunk top is a bad lover first and foremost, and *could* do damage unacceptable to the bottom. A drunk bottom won't know if she's feeling anything or not, and is a dumbshit at best. The real issue in the sadomasochistic community is how to keep people from mixing booze and drive, booze and sex, booze and anything. Neither my lover nor I drink at all.

Though you pose in some of your paragraphs as fairly liberal about everything, the whole issue is really raised in a censorious manner. You seem to be stating, quite boldly in fact, that you're struggling with how to campaign against someone for doing things you disapprove of, which you imply includes everything from torturing small animals to raping small children.

I find your belief systems very flawed, but mine raises civil liberties above feminist religion. When I saw feminists picketing an 'offensive' film alongside fundamentalist Christians, I

In lesbian s/m there are exchanges of power that are very, very complex.

knew there was something wrong.

The desire to make others' sexuality politically or morally debatable leaves the road open to get your sexual choices attacked, even certain choices you may never have realised are still illegal in some places, and disapproved of in many. The only rational stand is that *anything* between consenting adults is *fine*. There are no provisos.

'Degrading to women?' *What's* degrading to women? Make it illegal to be a secretary to an attorney. Make it illegal to cook meals for a slob of a husband. Make pregnancy illegal - it's degrading to look like a fatty. Kill the really fat girls while you're at it, as they've eaten themselves into degradation. Make uncomfortable shoes illegal; they're degrading. Make fashion illegal. Make publishing crudzines illegal for women (but not for guys; it's okay for them to degrade themselves). Degradation is all relative.

If some women fantasises she's been captured by SPIES and she **WON'T TALK** no matter how they torture her, and she orgasms from this fantasy of stoicism while her top really tortures her, clearly this is a fantasy of heroism, not degradation. The exact same physical act, accompanied by the fantasy of being forced to kiss an ugly wino's dick while being lashed with a cat o'nine tails, is far more degrading. Not the *act*, but the *fantasy*. So by your worldview, I should be able to allow my top to torture me, because my fantasy is essentially one of heroism; but if my fantasy is one of being degraded, then it isn't okay. The fantasy, and not the act, is bad.

Really the only thing bad about any of it is in the eye of the beholder. You find certain things degrading because you've decided they're degrading. Therefore you degrade women. You degrade masochists, certainly, by attacking the acceptability of their desire, by finding political and/or moral reasons for disapproval, negative judgements, or even controversiality. And while you seem utterly ignorant of the fact that many, many women have powerful sadistic urges (perhaps most do; perhaps it is your suppressed sadism that leads you to make controversy of simple sexuality, to even ask that others be judged), I somehow get the impression you wouldn't approve of the women I've met who delight greatly in drawing blood from another woman's flesh with sharp, lovely knives.

Today you may say anything sweet and kind (in your judgement and perspective) between consenting adults is okay, but anything that degrades women is bad. But when the sexuality police find out you once let someone get you from the backside, and the degradation police decide you've laid under the man more than 50% of the time therefore it ain't an equal relationship and you have to go to jail, remember you wrote those rules yourself.

{I'm not quite sure whether the 'you' in your letter always refers to me personally, or sometimes to the readers of my zine generally. I had tried to present several points of view, or at least mention that there were these points of view, but you appear to have taken them all as my personal views.

{I had also tried to widen the discussion from sexual preferences to a range of reasons why one might disapprove of a candidate. Your comments suggest that you took all of the reasons as subsets of sexual preference. Now I can believe that there are people who get orgasms from the thrill of cheating on their income tax, but that's not usually a subject that I think of as related to sexuality. Nor was that the point of including that topic, or many of the other ones.

{There are many reasons why I might oppose someone's habits, reasons that to me have nothing to do with what goes on between consenting adults, sexually or otherwise. Torturing small animals, for example. Regardless of whether the torturer gets sexual pleasure from the act, I consider that the animal cannot 'consent' to the torture and therefore the human's action is ethically unacceptable to me.

{I am fascinated by the fact that you overlooked or misinterpreted that entire section of my article on the subject. This says a lot more about you than it does about me, or my views.

{You also appear to equate 'disapproval' with 'because I don't like it or think it's wrong, there ought to be a law against it'. Granted, lots of people seem to feel this way, but generally I'm not one of them. There are many activities of which I disapprove, but which I would not want to be made illegal. Marriage, for example. Most organised religions. Or most spectator sports.

{Why shouldn't I express my disapproval? Perhaps because it may aid and abet those who do want to make a law against it. To me that's the other side of the argument that people shouldn't do things because it encourages other people to think 'all women' are like that (really want to be dominated, or whatever). I think both of these statements have some validity, but not enough to support a ban on personal activities.

{I think debating what's acceptable and unacceptable, or what's degrading or not, and why, is important - even though some people will twist the debate and try to use it for reasons you and I consider wrong. By the way, I do know about the 'safe word' between s/m couples, and several of the other things you mention, but I would not have known unless the topic had been discussed in detail in apazines.

{Your reaction sounds very similar to what you say you oppose: you're telling me I shouldn't express my opinion, that I shouldn't behave a certain way. Is that not a statement from the thought police? Your opinion on the subject is

okay, but mine is not? No thank you; I don't buy that.

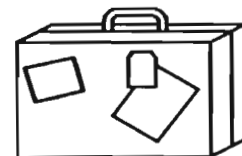
{Nor am I convinced that anything between consenting adults is fine, always. In private, and if they are truly consenting, I agree. In public, I'm not so sure, mainly because there are other - nonconsenting - people involved in public. (But again, I don't equate 'acceptable to me' with what should be legal.) I'm also highly dubious about the concept of the 'consenting adult' - because of my own personal experiences. One may 'consent' because one feels the alternatives (economic or social) are worse, even though one really doesn't want to engage in the activity. I don't judge the situation in any individual case, but I do note the possibility. - JHW}

Roz Malin
2214 SE 53rd
Portland, OR 97215, USA
21 November 1988

This last election, Oregon had a bill on a ballot to stop all smoking where the public might be. This included a person's home if he or she ran a business out of it! Fortunately this Big Brother bill was defeated, but I did not enjoy being on the same side as the cigarette companies.

I Also Heard From

Harry Andruschak, Sheryl Birkhead, Pamela Boal, Buck Coulson, Leslie David, Cathy Doyle, Kay Drache, Jan Howard Finder, Brad Foster, Joy Hibbert, Debbie Hodgson, Adrienne Losin, Dick Lynch, John Newman, Pete Presford, Sarah Prince, Neil Rest, Monica Sharp, Garth Spencer, Taral, Sue Thomason, Weller, Alan Wilson, and no doubt others whose letters have been mislaid, answered and filed, or set aside for another issue.



Where in the world are Jean Weber & Eric Lindsay ?

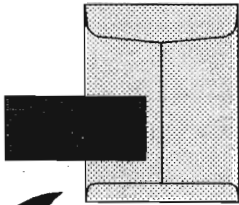
Follow the arrows...

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Letters & fanzines



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