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New Toy is published whenever I
feel like playing writer,
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NEWTON

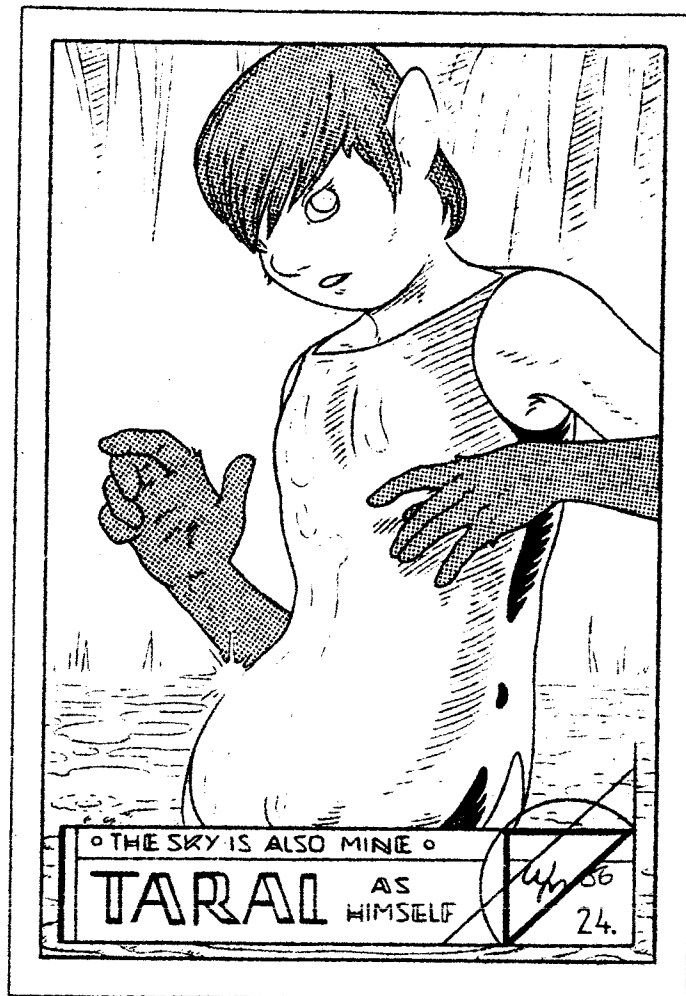
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There are several things that can be said about this issue. It is fully word processed. It is prefabricated from material not written for it. It flies in the face of fashion. It costs more than the first issue.

For well over a year I've been putting off the completion of a foolhearty project called "The Illustrated Fan". It grew out of an installment of a column about fanzine art that would have sketched out a history of the practise of defacing stencils with a stylus. In the end I realized that I'd begun a small book, in spite of which I kept at it until I had a completed rough draft. The draft was

shown to a number of artists and arbiters for their advice back in the summer of '84. I took advantage of my stay in Los Angeles that summer to do some small research through Bruce Pelz's immense fanzine collection. This rounded out my knowledge of fan art circa 1949 and earlier a little better, and produced a wad of yellow five by three slips of paper that I used to make notes. These, along with other notes made at home, a bulging file of correspondence, selected source material that I borrowed, the scripture of All Our Yesterdays and A Wealth of Fable, as well as the first draft itself, were such an overload of information that I virtually lost track of what was going on in the manuscript.

I'd undertaken no superhuman job by trying to write The Illustrated Fan, but by nature I'm a miniaturist. When I write, I've had my say in a few pages. All that interests me about art can be drawn in black and white, inside an eight-and-a-half by eleven frame, much to the mystification of some cartoonist friends of mine. A sixty or seventy-five page manuscript, and additional material from a half dozen sources, had simply gone beyond my ability to keep it all in focus.

The answer, to you superhumans out there who write forty page review columns and twenty-nine page performances, is clear enough. You re-type it. When there is something to add, re-type it again. And when you see the need to re-organize the material, you re-type it a third time. Then you re-type a finished draft. And almost certainly you'll need to type a legible copy in the end. My answer to that was, forget it! I wasn't going to touch TIF again until I had a word processor, and could edit and alter the text as much as I pleased, without ever having to re-type a single page. Best of all, such a vow put the increasingly messy job off into the unforeseeable future.

Little did I know that I'd get a job. Oh yes. To my infinite relief and personal fulfillment, the last time I'd held gainful employment was in 1977. I missed the paychecks, but as no employee is a free man I felt that I'd had much the better side of the bargain that traded money for time. This summer however, sinister circumstances conspired against my freedom. All the previous year, it'd been a hard lot. I was selling less art, nor coming by money by other means usually at hand. I'd been broke most of last winter, broke in the spring, then broke as summer began. Soon I was supposed to fly out to LA again, visit, then drive with Schirm to the worldcon. But as I got closer and closer to the wire, I was still broke. Finally I had to give up travelling this summer as hopeless. Then, just as I had no reason not to have a job, my sister presented me with one.

It seemed that they needed a replacement driver where she worked. One of them was on one week's vacation, and another went on two week's vacation right after. Did I want to fill in? Not very much I didn't. It would mean getting up six or eight hours earlier than I was accustomed to. I'd have little time to write or draw. I'd have to drive in city traffic, hour after hour, day after day. It might be easier just to cut my throat... But it turned out not to be a bad job in many ways, and I profited by it in more than money.

I suppose now is as good a time as any to admit what I was hired to do. I was a tooth fairy. Or rather, a tooth ferry. The pun doesn't work in print. My sister worked as a sort of shipping clerk in a dental lab, packing dentures and bridgework for delivery. My job was to deliver them. It's a stupid job, but I suppose somebody has to do it...

I began my first day of work in more than nine years at 8.30 a.m. on Monday the fourteenth of July. It was bright and sunny. The weather so far that summer hadn't been very good, and I'd spent most of what pleasant weather there'd been indoors, drawing at night while the late shows rolled one after the other. It was nice to be outdoors, facing a whole day of sunshine and activity. How could I know that the next several weeks would be the worst summer weather of the century? Or that the driver I was replacing for a week would quit? In the end, I stayed on for nine, rainy, muggy, overcast weeks, learning first one route, then switching to another to start all over again. Then I had to learn a third before I had one to call my own and perform routinely.

For all of that, it wasn't a bad job. Although I've lived all of my life in and around Toronto, it wasn't until I drove for a living that I really knew how to get around. I saw a lot of parts of town that I knew very poorly until then. My driving must have improved radically, since I was discovering all sorts of things I could do that I never knew I could do before -- weave in and out of busy lanes like a shuttle, left turn through any gap in traffic that was at least a shoe-size larger than the car, and accelerate from thirty to sixty in ten seconds, changing three lanes, and exiting a highway only a few tens of yards from an on-ramp. Perhaps learning habits like these are debatable improvements in my driving style, but I couldn't have pulled stupid stunts like that before, not without seriously altering my working environment. ie: smashing the car to abstract sculpture.

I was in fact in three accidents. You'll be happy (or disappointed) to hear that none of them were my fault. Twice, during rain, the day-dreaming mole behind me rear-ended the car. Damage was so slight in both cases that a dog lifting his leg on the bumper might have done as much. The morning after the second mishap was a bit strained, though. Rocco, a sweet, soft-spoken Italian who ran the whole show from the ranks, asked me again if I had the license number from yesterday's accident. Sure I said, ever careful to cover my ass. But why? The dimple in the bumper could be filled in with pancake make-up. Someone had seen the car coming in to work, though, and he'd described the damage in terms more in keeping with the sinking of the Titanic, or the Hindenberg disaster. I had to see how Worlds could Collide, with me right in the car and not knowing it, so I went out to look. Sure enough, the rear right quarter of the Chevy Celebrity was crumpled in like a beer can.

Sometime between eight, when Rocco brought the car in to work, and 3.45, when I arrived, person or persons unknown had struck the car in the parking lot! Later that week I took the Celebrity in to a garage for a repair estimate, and discovered how misleading first impressions can be. To look at the dented fender and twisted bumper, you expected the worst. Hundreds of dollars. But nothing of the sort. Thousands of dollars! To repair the fender, inner wheel well, bumper, bumper supports, moldings, chrome trim, rear light fixtures and glass, the floor of the trunk, and sundry supporting members would cost an estimated \$2,200. With new parts, that is. Hammering out the old ones might knock five or six hundred bucks off the bill. Paying in easily laundered cash might permit a bit more of a discount than that.

Not two weeks later I took the Celebrity in again, to have the power steering looked at. It was freezing up when the car was first started, and Rocco thought all it might need was a fluid change or something. Surprise again. The car was so well designed that there was no way to repair the rack and pinion unit. It had to be replaced, for eight hundred dollars more... Needless to say, the car was never repaired at all, and was when I left the job held together mostly by Turtle Wax.

Depending on the route I was assigned to, I sometimes had ridiculous amounts of time to myself on the job. I could be finished my morning rounds as early as eleven or eleven-thirty, and not be needed until two that afternoon. The problem was that I couldn't really leave the lab. We drivers, a term I apply to myself provisionally, had a room of our own. It was about ten feet square, and lit by overhead fluorescent fixtures. The tubes that came on at all took five minutes of flickering to come to life. We had one chair too few, but standing was hardly less comfortable than the patched, rock-hard swivel chairs that were presumably bequeathed to us after they were judged injurious to the health of the lab technicians. The only window overlooked a stairwell. In all fairness, lest you think the work environment sub-standard, I should mention that there was another window in the stairwell, that we could see perfectly well through, if, that is, ours were ever cleaned. (In fact, it had been scrawled all over with a ball of red wax, but that's another story.) It was no place to read for three hours, or even thirty minutes.

I tried drawing, but gave it up after the first time. Light that bad would send Medieval illuminators to the picket line s. Then I tried my hand at letters -- illegibly scribbled, maundering, ill-written letters that passed the time of day. It scarcely mattered if neither I nor anyone else could make out the hand-writting. It

took all of about two weeks to write to everybody I could think of. Then I was so desperate I started to loc fanzines. I tried to write a short story, and sweated blood to produce two pages that I wouldn't be ashamed to feed to a goat. In the end I took naps.

The worst of having time on your hands, though, was the compulsory company of the other drivers. There were four of them -- Gord, Paul, Murray, and L.J. (for Little John, who was indeed little, and had a split lip). Up to a point I liked them all but for L.J. Gord could be a creep sometimes, who liked to play heavy metal over our radio dispatch sets, who had more speeding tickets than paychecks, and had kicked the plaster walls of our cell full of more holes than Blackburn Lancashire. Paul was an older man with a slow, quiet way of speaking. He was from a farm and rolled his own tobacco still. (And actually he was not very much older than me, even though everyone seemed to assume I was about the same age as my 17 year old sister!) Murray hung out in singles' bars like a hungry pup outside a butcher shop. It was a good thing that he had a sense of humour, because he was a total klutz with the girls, instinctively saying the exact right thing to spoil his designs upon them every time. He and Paul were always easy to get along with, and enjoyable to talk to. In particular, they responded admirably to that old artists' play for popularity, cartooning them on the job.

Except L.J. that is. He was something else again. It isn't held in much esteem to criticize the retarded in these enlightened days, but L.J. would have been an asshole whatever his I.Q. It was plain that he was abnormally unintelligent from the first time I saw him. But he was chipper, and knew his job. (Which by the way wasn't driving a car. He delivered downtown, on foot.) It didn't take long to dislike him, though. To begin with the minor irritations, L.J. was the most limited conversationalist I've ever met. Everything he could think of to say was said on the first day I knew him. Thereafter were only variations on a handful of subjects along such lines as the lake-front condo he'd blow all his lottery winnings on. Or that the government was taking too much income tax from his paycheck. That immigrants shouldn't be let in the country to take our job was another favourite theme of his, not to mention those disgusting dirty magazines, (is that one there I can look at?). Worst of all was the running commentary on prime-time TV. He had three jokes. Every morning he met you with, "you got here at last, did you?" On pay day he said, "I got my allowance." And whenever he thought any of us had made a mistake, he quipped, "have they fired you yet?" L.J. had a more feeble grasp of the elements of humour than Lucille Ball, hard as that is to believe.

In spite of running a short tape-loop, he was unfortunately a chatter-box as well. He would not shut up. Ever. Especially if at any time you took out a book and tried to read it. For some reason, L.J. was quite unable to notice that he had been talking to the back of a book for the last twenty minutes, yet when he finally ran down, he'd notice instantly if your eyes strayed for a second from the page, and start again. It was a contest of wills in which I suppose it was an actual advantage to be a half-wit.

When I could take it no more, I brought him a book of his own. I thought I was being clever, using my native intelligence to out-think him, because he'd said the day before that he liked science fiction. When the supreme moment came, and I wanted to read, I presented him with a copy of The Best of Avram Davidson. What's that for, he asked. For you to read, I said. You like science fiction don't you?

"Oh, yes," he said. "I like to watch it on television. I only read the TV Guide." Game, set, and match for the half-wit.

But he wasn't being quite honest with me. In fact he was a subscriber to a Lost In Space fanzine from the U.S. that he read avidly. He brought some issues to work one day, for me to look at. I think he thought he might have found a potential fan in me.

Just to depart from the thickening plot for a moment, Murray was also a fan of a sort. He attended local SCA functions, and went to Dr. Who Parties. Luckily, it'd never occurred to me to tell those I worked with that I had any connection with fandom. At one time, not very long ago, no one knew what it was, and it took

considerable explanation to make yourself known as a fan. "Do you read that crazy stuff like Star Trek? What do you do at conventions? Is that against the law?" Then all of a sudden it seems that half of the people at work talk glibly of being science fiction fans! I decided on the spot to say nothing too incriminating about my own part in the affairs of fandom.

To return to the thread of events, L.J. was not merely someone with the misfortune to comprise the wrong end of some psychologist's bell curve. This sterling example of human potential was also a white supremacist. He believed in the innate superiority of the Anglo-Saxon such as himself. Pity that he was Irish, actually... I also wonder how well L.J. has been getting along with the new driver who replaced me, who happens to be a Viet Nameese refugee.

And yet it's easy to feel sorry for Little John. He has folks but lives alone with his TV set, watching god knows what drivel as it erodes what little intelligence he has. He arrives every morning a full hour before anyone else does -- as soon as the lab it opened by the janitor -- and there he sits in the drivers' room until the others turn up. None of them like him overmuch. Two of them called him a squinty-eyed little moron when out of his hearing. Although he did his job well enough, he had it only because the personnel manager was off the day he was hired, and he couldn't be fired without cause. He'd been there for twelve-and-a-half years, longer than any but two or three of the senior technicians, but made five-lousy-seventy-five an hour. I could and did quit on September twelfth. But unless the company switches to a courier service, L.J.'ll still be there twelve-and-a-half years from now. There but for the grace of a few billions synapses go all of us.

Very little of which is to the point. What is, is that I made a round sum of \$1,800 before taxes. Not bad. The first thing I did was draw up a list of priorities. things that I've badly needed for too long, other things that I'd just like, things that would extend my range of options, things I couldn't get out of spending money on, and debts. I tried not to be too imaginative in some of the former items, nor too generous with the later ones, then totalled up the amount. There was actually going to be some left over!

Not as much as I'd like, you can be sure. It cost just about \$100 alone to go to and from work. I was painfully frugal for the first two weeks, but when I got my first paycheck, I added the expense of a carry-out breakfast every morning. I bought shoes, socks, underwear, and hardware. I paid about \$300 I owed to various people. Little John's favourite menace, the tax people took their bite too. I'll claim that back, next April, but in the nonce that's another \$300 deducted from my hoard.

The visit of a friend up from Los Angeles, welcome as it was, made its effect felt too. Schirm's visit was a hectic one. In the fourteen days I talked him into staying, we saw a dozen different people, held a party, been to stores, museums, and a swamp (that Schirm almost fell into wearing one of my jackets). The weather rarely ever co-operated, continuing the fine example it set during my employment. Most of the time it was damp, overcast, and blustery, when it wasn't outright raining. In fact, the evenings were getting prematurely downright cold. There was blue sky and sun every now and again, but never for as much as twenty-four hours in a row. Some days were so bad we spent the time at home, getting all my books and fanzines out of place, getting the grease from potato chips on my records, and spoiling paper with our doodles. (Possibly none of which are fit to be seen.) At one point Schirm broke a huge styro-foam timber across my butt. You might want to know why, but don't ask. With perhaps that slight exception, I wouldn't have missed a moment. It was however an unaccounted expense.

Perhaps I should have refrained from many of the little things I bought, the odds and ends in the stationery line, the blank tapes, the cassette cabinet, the models B-29 Superfortress and Colt .357, the comics, books such as the new collection of Herriman's Krazy Kat and the E.C. Segar Popeye, and a fair assortment of paperback fiction. I fight an urge to run on. Each of these was a small triumph to acquire --

every one of the Kate Bush albums and top maps are stories, if only to me. What's life without a toy box to fill?

There were big expenditures too. It had been an ambition of mine for a long time to do something about the state of my fanzine collection. In the first place, when I was first in fandom I had about enough zines to fill a single box that was maybe a foot deep. Although I noticed that there were a couple of different titles by the same person, the significance of this didn't sink in. It was clear in each of these cases that the extra titles were minor ones. It took no feat of memory to remember that I had to find Mike Glycer's Speed Of Dark with Prehensile, for example. So I went on keeping them in order by title. By the time I had twenty feet of fanzines, this'd become a problem. Now I had much more to remember. But the effort to re-sort even twenty feet of fanzines was somewhat daunting. I let it go. The situation this summer, however, had degenerated to a nearly impossible state -- I had forty-five feet of fanzines, and in some cases it took looking in several places to find something filed under one of many possible titles. Should I be looking for The Squirrel's Tale under Fanac, for instance, because I kept Ellick's other fanzines with the one he co-edited with Terry Carr? Or, because of Terry, were they all kept under Innuendo? If I hadn't put Terry's zines under his other major title, Lighthouse, that is. Or have I put Ellick's fanzines under a title of his own after all? Was it Fafhred? No, here it us under Taff reports...

Handling fanzines anymore than is necessary is, needless to say, undesirable. They crumble around the edges. The pages sometimes fold back, no matter how carefully you replace a zine each time you remove it. Staples tear the covers of the zines to either side. The last pages fall off. Obviously, what I wanted was some convenient way to handle my fanzines, and to re-sort the collection.

So what I did was I bought 1,500 nine-by-thirteen comic book bags, and bagged one or more issues in each one. It took three days, which were well rewarded by the opportunity to re-acquaint myself with things I'd forgotten I'd had. I also discovered a few zines that were separately kept, that I hadn't realized were published by the same fan.

Re-sorting took another three days, spending much longer hours. In fact, deciding exactly HOW to re-sort forty-five feet of fanzines was a problem. In the end I sorted it alphabetically by thirds, so that I didn't have to have the whole forty-five feet on the floor in six-foot piles. The aftermath of this effort was that I was boyishly pleased with myself. As I went along I'd even made a list of editors and their major titles for quick reference. In theory, now, I can find anything PDQ. What? What was that title again? Cum Bloatus? Smoke? The Fantasist? Of course I can't find any of them -- I've forgotten the publishers... no system is perfect.

Buying a printer for my word processor was undoubtedly the biggest expense. Now you can see that this editorial hasn't ambled entirely aimlessly from trivia to minutiae. I've developed a coherent, if self-absored, narrative from the start. The computer was my sister's actually, who bought a Commodore 128 with a colour monitor just so she could play space-invaders. It took her about as long as I predicted it would to get tired of it. To make room for her latest craze -- exercise equipment -- the computer was moved down into the basement with me. It was an occasion to make major changes in my basement which displaced endless numbers of things, and kept me busy for days after. All of which was fascinating to me, but not apt to interest anyone else. You presumably couldn't care less whether I kept my Sopwith Camel where my copy of Molesworth went, or whether I store boxes of toy soldiers and chemical elements where I should be keeping pajamas. I don't know why this is, exactly, but hard experience has persuaded me of the essential truth that people don't generally care about such things as much as I do.

It all comes down to the purchase in September of a Commodore DPS 1101 daisy-wheel printer. It cost me about \$250, (and was down to \$199 within the week of course). It uses ordinary IBM or Correctype ribbons and does letter-quality copy at 17 characters per second, in 10, 12, and 15 pitch. I was told it should be able to cut stencils. Even as I wrote that, however, I hadn't tested the printer with a stencil.

(First I had to fix my broken Gestetner.) I also spent some weeks trying to find a Juki-compatible wheel in 12 pitch that I could afford. The machine came with a standard 10 pitch Courier that puts only about 85% as much on the page. Then for the longest time I was afraid there was no way to lay the pages out for art, and mightn't be able to use the printer for New Toy at all. If I were a British fan, the last difficulty wouldn't have been a problem -- I'd just load the text onto a disk and command it to download onto stencil. The text would start at the top, run from margin to margin, and stop at the bottom. No problem. But my ambitions weren't that limited, and fortunately neither was my software once I became thoroughly re-acquainted with it. Fleet Writer 64 still has grave flaws which require eventual replacement with something like Paperback Writer 128, but in the meantime I can live with it. All the same, it wasn't until Christmas that I knew for sure how I was doing the issue. Thanks to Bob Webber* I have the print wheel I couldn't find, and thanks to several hours up to my elbows in ink I was able to prove I could cut stencils with it.

There have been word-processed fanzines before, and printer cut stencils before, but as far as I know this issue of New Toy is the only fanzine yet produced that's also letter-quality. (And it comes with a plastic bag to protect your collector's item for only \$1 extra.)

Word processing means many fewer typos, of course, and no messy jobs of correction. In principle there should be no spelling errors at all. The spell-check function should eliminate them entirely. But in the real world, hi-tech perfection is only an illusion, and the spell-checker is quite content to leave "if" where it should be "in", or "thin" for "thing". And last-minute changes open new avenues for mistakes with every stroke of the keyboard. I know of at least two errors in the first seven pages. Still, I think there'll be a noticeable improvement.

The printer also means I have to finish The Illustrated Fan after all, dammit.

But it isn't the printer, or the cost of other minor computer accessories that makes New Toy an expensive issue. Blame the cover, which couldn't be offset at the usual place because of a prohibitive amount of black and detail at the same time. They referred me to another place that did the job at a somewhat higher cost than I was happy to pay. To help defray the luxury I've put the price of New Toy up to \$3. Next time I may lower it again to \$2, but I rather doubt it. In part this'll depend on the art I use, but also on the increase in postage on the way. The worst post office in the free world wants a 5% raise, while proposing to limit service. 5% isn't much. However, it already costs ninety cents to mail a copy of New Toy to the United Kingdom. It was only possible to mail copies of the last issue because Alan Rosenthal so generously stole the postage from the meter at his father's office. The inevitable question arises with each issue -- can he get away with it again? If not, you may be seeing a three or four dollar price on all future New Toys.

Hell, people pay \$3.95 to read Piers Anthony, don't they?

Although I said earlier that I wanted to avoid formula in New Toy, I have quite clear ideas of what the zine should be. A formula is after all only a device for achieving identical, repeatable results, and the lack of one does not at all imply a lack of guiding principles. In this case I want New Toy to be different from most, if not all, the fanzines I currently read. Whatever the fashion among Cafe regulars I persevere in my liking for attractively made fanzines, with a high standard of art. While evidently fandom is too much a part of me not to write about it, (and at excessive length it seems to me), what I want most of each New Toy is to be fannish only in its style and approach to the reader. Two of the three articles in this issue, for instance, could as easily have appeared in the local literary "underground" as in a fanzine. (And I might yet seek such an audience for them.) I also place a high value on doing the unexpected. Whatever you may think of the first two issues, so far I've held back and haven't come near to cutting as loose as I might. The third or fourth issue is going to be utterly unlike what I think most of you will want to read. Why publish it, then? For me. Not for you, for me. Though

of course I'll be delighted if anyone throws away the rules with me, and enjoys himself as he watches me play with my New Toys.

Perhaps it's perversity on my part to risk straying from what I know people like. I also like to read the in-bred FIAWOL-style zines that are so popular at the moment. I can't disagree that they're the social cement that holds the aging body of fanzine fandom together. But that sort of thing isn't something that I can do well on a continuing basis, nor is it something I'd want to. I like interviewing cartoon characters more than I like writing con reports. I'd rather make something up from whole cloth than try to build up a humorous piece from a handful of bon mots at a party. Not to mention my own circle of friends and contacts, I have a lot more interest in Asterix the Gaul and Plains Indians than I have in fandom per se. It's natural that most of my writing, my art, and therefore my publishing, is going to reflect this. If fandom's interest in me is the same, that's the price I pay for doing what I want. I don't expect anyone to elevate New Toy to the ranks of Lan's Lantern or The Greater Columbia Fantasy Costumer's Guild Newsletter by nominating it for a fan Hugo. (Heaven forbid such a public embarrassment!) But in the society of misfits, I know there's a place for those who mis-fit.

In fact, I'd argue the position that the best fanzines of the last couple of years have been just those that don't fit the current ideals. Mainstream, Groggy, Trapdoor, Still Life, Warhoon, Nutz, Chuch, Time & Again, Whimsey, and yes even Holier Than Thou and Sticky Quarters, along with special issues such as The Best Of Susan Wood and The Best Of Frap, have been the high-points of fanzine fandom, not the topical rapid-fire comment-and-response zines that date in six weeks. And haven't been all that visible in the last two years in any case. Look where their particular line of reasoning has brought us...

Around 1980 we were told that the time for the fat, plodding, pretentious genzine that came out once or twice a year was over. The zippy little fanmag was the thing that made fandom an exciting and on-going experience. So for a couple of years the prominent zines were dashed off in six to twelve page issues, and arrived in ragged monthly volleys. Then the familiar titles began to miss their deadlines, more and more often. The longer intervals between issues were formally established as bimonthly schedules. Then quarterly. Then irregular. And so the zippy little fanmags were no more frequent than the jumbo genzines had once been. Therefore it was time for a new idea.

Co-editing. Fanzines appeared that were edited by two, four, six, and more editors, working together from Europe, Australia, and the Americas. Second issues followed promptly on the heels of inaugural issues. Third issues were somewhat later. Fourth issues were awaited with concern, and no-one waited at all for the next one after a few months. So we arrive at our present state of affairs, where teams of editors publish six and eight page zines as often as one had done.

The next obvious step is for someone to suggest that we all collaborate on a single zippy little fanmag. That way, we can collectively publish our six or eight pages in 1987, and by 1988 at latest be done with it once and for all.

You didn't read it here.

*Bob Webber, by the way, not Bob Wilson, who also founded the Canadian Unity Fan Fund (CUFF) as a one-shot device to subsidize a visit by Mike Hall to Torque 2 in 1981.

New Toy The first thing you might as well tell us, Rocky, since I know it'll come as a surprise to some of the readers, is what does the J. stand for?

Rocky Jasmine. You'd think with my obviously girlish voice that the little tots in TV Land would have figured out that Rocky J. was a girl squirrel. Just so that you don't ask, I've been a female ever since I can remember. My folks told me that I was a girl at least as far back as September 9th., 1925, when I was born.

New Toy In Frostbite Falls?

Rocky That was just some gag of Ward's. Maybe he was born there, if there is such a place, but I was born in a poor section of central park, New York City. I grew up in the middle of the depression, you know, and had to beg for peanuts as a little girl.

New Toy Were people calling you Rocky even then?

Rocky Oh, no. I picked that name up in flying school, where I was... well, let's start from the beginning. I'd been a tom-girl all my life, and when the war began I joined the Woman's Army corp so's to run away from home. Since I was only 16 I had to lie, without knowing how useful a skill it'd be later. From the WAC's I transferred to the new Army Air corps, hoping to get nearer to some action. But all I did was office duties at Edwards ((Air Force Base, in California)). Then I got fascinated by flying, but I was still a WAC, you know, and couldn't transfer to active duty. What I did was borrow fatigues from one of the supply sergeants, who was also a WAC, and dress like one of the boys attending flight class, whenever I could. I guess I didn't expect I really would, but by the end of '42 I qualified for my wings. By then it was an open secret among the other students that one of us was a bit "odd", of course. Once they nearly set me up to date myself! After that,



whenever I was asked how my romantic life was, I'd just answer, "rocky, rocky as usual", and that was what they started calling me, "Rocky". It was only natural that the flight instructors wondered who the quiet student in the back was, and finally learned he had a name after all. But there were no records on a "Rocky" in flight school, so I couldn't get my wins, you know? With the help of some of the boys I faked "Jasmine's" records, and thereafter belonged to the 141st. Army Air Corps fighter squadron. Under full name I wrote, "Squirrel, Rocket J." I loved flying, but, geez, that was a dumb move.

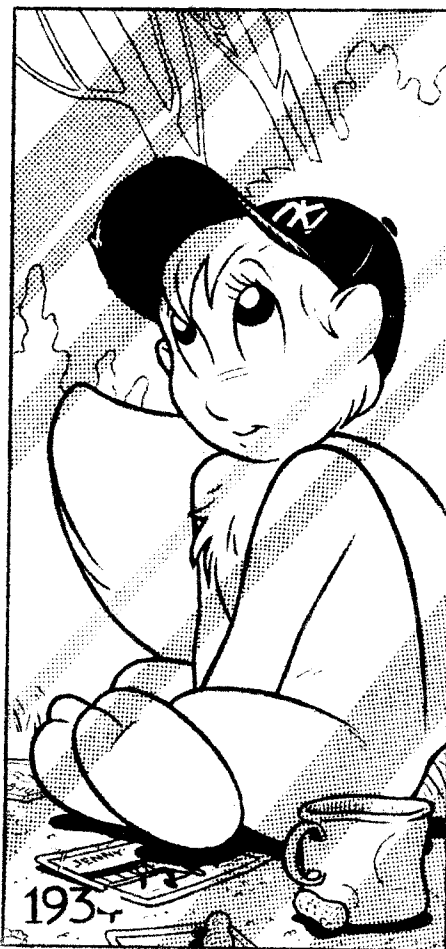
New Toy Your fans know you flew in the Pacific during the war. You shot down eleven confirmed "kills" before you were discovered and quietly discharged from the service. How was becoming an air ace and hero a "dumb move"?

Rocky Why? Have you ever tasted quinine tablets? Talk about bitter, quinine tasted so bad that some of the boys preferred to palm them, and caught malaria instead. They said they never regreted it either. The pills would literally turn you slightly yellow, and there used to be jokes about whose side we were really on. It rained every night, except the nights the Japs flew over and dropped bombs. There was nothing to do but drink and play cards. Your clothes were mildewy, and stank all the time of sweat. And then, if you were lucky enough not to come down with dengue, you had a chance to be shot at by the Japanese. What they didn't tell us in flight class was that in those days the Zero was far superior to anything we could put up in the air, and their pilots were first rate. They shot us down in most fair fights until we had more powerful planes, and worked out ways to use them successfully.

That was in the early days, though, when we were hanging on to the Canal by the skin of our teeth. People picture the Japs as ragged, barefoot, starving, and racked by jungle disease as they crouched in treetops, but that was us in '42. They were well dressed and well fed, and the Marines were ragged, starving, and diseased. Later it'd be the Japs' turn, when they were loosing.

We were flying a handful of Wildcats out of the Cow Pasture, a bit north of the main fighting. ((A few USAAF personnel were on loan to the Marines temporarily.)) I don't know if you ever saw a Wildcat, but it was a barrel-shaped, stubby-winged antique even in 1942. It was slower, clumsier, and more poorly armed than the Zero it flew against. Even when we outnumbered the enemy, we generally lost more boys in a mix-up than the Japs did. But if you were good, or had a break, you could draw a bead on a Zero, and the Zero was remarkably flimsy.

I must have had a break, because I know I



wasn't all that good to begin with. Nobody is, you know. Most casualties in the air are pilots on their first few flights. If you live to your fifth or sixth flight, you have a better than 50/50 chance of completing your tour of duty. The odds are much, much worse until then. All the same, a fight materialized around me on my second time out of Henderson, and somebody hung a Zero in front of my sights. My first impulse was to roll away. I think I was sure I'd run into him. Then I remembered why my thumb was poised over the joy stick, and pressed the firing button, putting four streams of .50 cal. bullets into his tail. I still remember it was dark green, with huge red meatballs. He rolled over two or three times, then I banked and saw him go into the drink without exploding. After that I had to gain some altitude and was away from the thick of the fight until it was over. These things rarely last more than a minute or two. So that's how I got started as an "ace". dumb luck. That Jap had no business being where he was, and must have been as green as I'd been. We lost three planes -- I was the only one to even get a good shot.

New Toy Surely you didn't have a lucky break for each of your eleven confirmed kills?

Rocky Don't be too sure. In a way, every time you climb out of your cockpit after combat, you had a hell of a lucky break. But you're right. With a little experience I turned out to be a pretty good flyer.

New Toy You're too modest. You led your own squadron in the end, and several aces, Dick Bong for one, said you could fly rings around a bat in a dark hanger. What was it "Pappy" Boyington said? --

Rocky On "Baa, Baa Black Sheep" he said I was born with wings. What he actually said was that I was conceived on he wing, and he embellished the story with a textbook description of the aerial acrobatics necessary for the feat. The nonsense that I was literally a flying squirrel grew out of that. I got even with Boyington later, by sticking a dead rat under his seat. He must have smelled it the next time he climbed in, but you're in a hurry at such times, and can't stop to look for dead rats. Have you ever smelled a dead rat that's ripened in the sun and then baked in an aluminum can? Then climbed in with it and pulled the lid shut?

New Toy Boyington was a pretty tough customer, as I recall. How'd you get away with a stunt like that?

Rocky He couldn't punch a girl. So I knocked him down, then shook hands and we were friends.

New Toy What was your closest call? Your most difficult victory?

Rocky Let's see... They were pretty much the same occasion, I guess. Most victories are literally shooting ducks in a barrel, and pilots were mainly killed when they've let their guard down, and suddenly found someone shooting at their pin-feathers. That's about what happened to me. This was in '44, when we were trading in our Lightnings for Mustangs. The Aerocobras and Tomahawks and Wildcats were long gone, and we had air superiority then. The average Japanese pilot was less experienced and less well trained than our own by then too. But there were crack groups. One was led by a notorious ace who painted the cowl of his plane with rabbit ears, and we called them the Banzai Bunnies. (Lt. Mizusako Usagi, who died shortly before the end of the war, was never decorated for his bravery, and was unknown by name to American flyers.)) It was my group's bad luck to be flying against them during much of the bitter Okinawa campaign, and we barely held our own.

Well, this one time we were dropping 500 lb. high explosive on an enemy held ridge, and six or seven Franks -- high performance jobs -- came diving out of the sun on us. It was a big surprise since we usually had high altitude cover, and thought

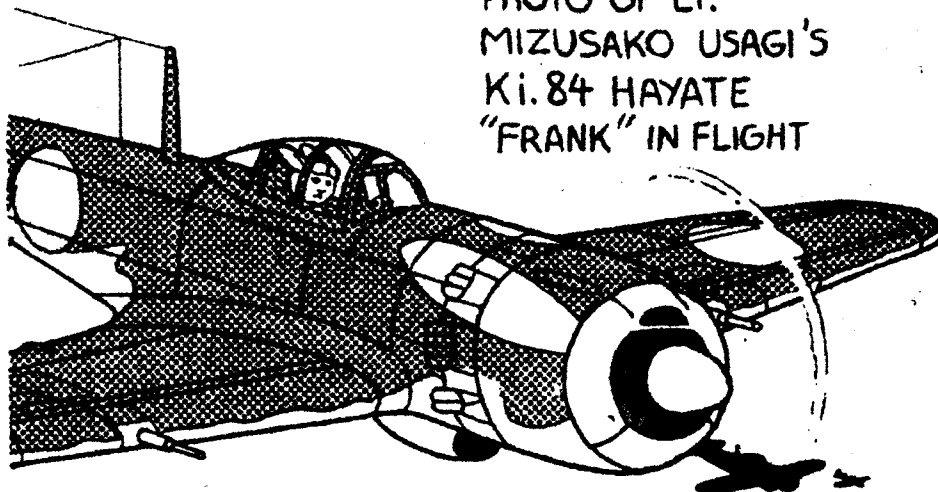
we did this time too. Right away they nailed two of my boys, and a third ran right into the ridge in panic. So it was six (or seven) against three. I slid over the ridge and down the other side, pulled the rudder hard over to the right, and literally skidded around in a 90 degree turn, and caught a Frank square in my sights. I flamed him, and damned if there wasn't another Frank right behind. I got him too. It was then I realized that I was still carrying my load of two 500 lb. bombs. A single bullet in either one could blow me out of the sky. I pulled the release. Nothing happened. They didn't drop the next dozen times I pulled the release either. So I pulled around again, and broke for cover in a pall of black smoke coming up from our crashed P-51. At least two of the Franks were up high enough that they never lost sight of me, and took off in hot pursuit.

With two bombs hanging in the airstream I lost my 40 m.p.h. edge on them, and another 20 or 30 besides. They were catching up. So I slammed the rudder around again, then slammed it the other way an instant later. I'd hoped to trick them into a turn, to get inside mine, and then get out of it before they could react. And that's when the shackles picked to break on the starboard bomb. The release threw me one way, and the bomb in the opposite direction, which turned out to be more or less straight ahead. One of the Franks behind me flew right into it. Bam. The other had turned as I'd hoped, but because of my own unpredictable maneuver, we were flying parallel. That's when I noticed the rabbit ears painted on the cowl, and knew it was the Banzai Bunny himself.

The next couple of minutes we hectic as I tried to outmaneuver one of Japan's leading air aces with a hobbled aircraft. Several times the Mustang shook as it took hits. More by accident than anything else -- the effect of the drag created by the remaining bomb on a left turn was like grabbing a pole as you went by -- I got behind his tail for just long enough, and put a well placed burst into the Frank's wing and rudder. It hit something vital since he began smoking immediately, and broke away from me. He didn't go down, but I'd won, and being alive still was prize enough.

The rest of the squad brought down one of the remaining two or three Japs without loosing another Mustang, so the score was four to three, in our favour, but just barely.

PHOTO OF LT.
MIZUSAKO USAGI'S
Ki.84 HAYATE
"FRANK" IN FLIGHT



New Toy You were mustered out shortly after that, right? One of those bullets tore through your arm, and you were found out in hospital.

Rocky Yeah. The squad knew. I think even the Japs knew sometimes. But not the brass.

New Toy What did you do then? You didn't go to Hollywood immediately.

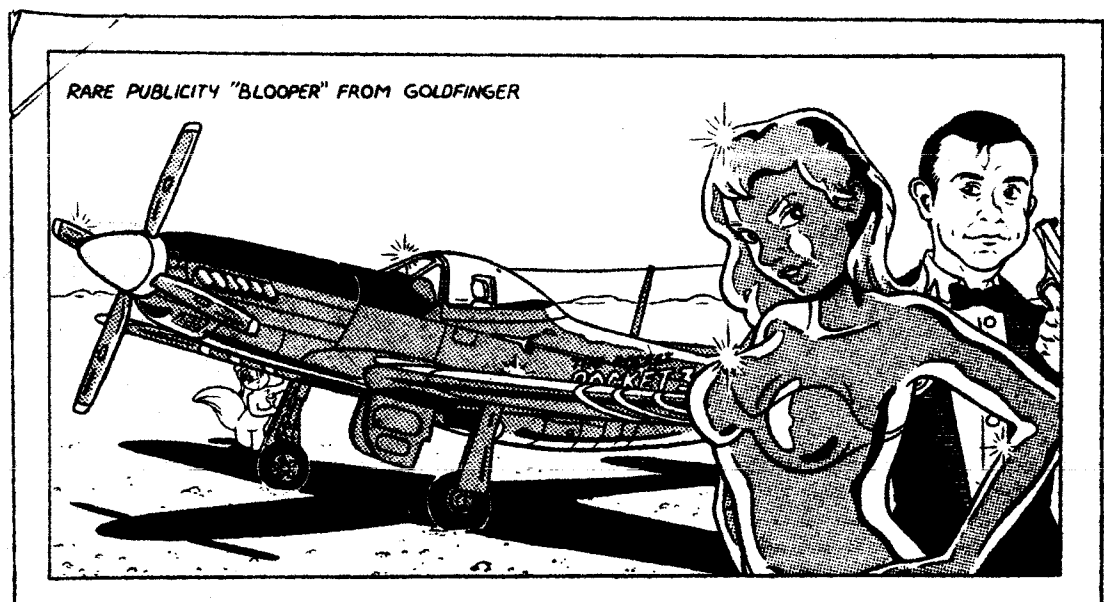
Rocky Far from it. I did stunt flying from the end of the war until 1954 or '5, then tried to get into air racing. The war department was selling off surplus aircraft for a song at the time. I save up and bought a P-51H, the light-weight, souped up model that came out so late in the war it didn't see much combat. Fast as hell. Had a top speed over 480 m.p.h. I painted it gold, from tail to spinner, with some red trim and a black panel out ahead of the cockpit. But it takes money to keep one of those flying. Unless you win prizes you have to be rich. I did alright for a while, but as the Pocket Rocket IV got older, the cost of running it ran far ahead of my winnings. And the worse maintenance got, the fewer races I won. In the end I was wrapped around the end of a monkey wrench instead of around the end of a joy-stick, and was helping other pilots win races from the ground.

New Toy So what happened to this gold plane of yours?

Rocky I had a bit of property with a run-down ranch house near Barstow, in the Mojave, where I had the Rocket towed. It sat next to the house under a carnival tent I got from a travelling circus. On weekends I'd roll up the sides so people driving by could see, and oddly enough that's how I got into show business.

New Toy How's that again?

Rocky A producer on a Sunday drive with his mistress happened to go by my place, and saw the Rocket. He stopped and asked if he could rent it for his next film, some beach-party thing for teenagers. Gave me a thousand dollars and paid for the towing.



After that, it got to be one of those in-jokes in Hollywood, and over the next few years the Rocket appeared in... must be about a dozen movies. All junk, of course. The only one you'd likely remember seeing the Rocket in was Goldfinger. Flew it myself. The part where Goldfinger is overseeing operations at Fort Knox from the air, and strafes Bond and Pussy Galore. (Now she was a cool cat!) The important thing was that I was mixing with people in Hollywood, you know, and met Jay Ward. He heard about the stand-up routine I was doing around Barstow, and dropped in one time to see me. From there it was a logical step to the Rocky show.

New Toy Let's back up a bit. You were doing a comedy act for two or three years. I've even heard a record of yours, and I must say it was pretty surreal the way any word in your act could be the jumping-off point for a complete change of topic. But how did you get to the stage from repairing aircraft?

Rocky Well, I didn't, of course. An old buddy of mine from the 141st. came to me one time and asked for a loan, and I wanted to know what for. He had a small record company that was on the skids. I looked at the business, liked what I saw, and bought in as a partner instead of making him the loan. His problem was that he had a poor repertoire of worn-out crooners and retreaded show-tunes that nobody wanted to hear. So I made him a condition of buying in that he'd drop all the nostalgia and try recording local talent for the young audience. All sorts of music was being performed in bars, at dances, and occasionally even over the air at that time, including 'Track. So in my spare time I began managing a 'Track label. It was being ignored by the major labels then, so I was able to record a lot of good people.

New Toy Bunny Holly... Chuck Bear... The Birds...

Rocky Yeah, so I got around to a lot of bars, scouting bands, and they got to know me. I suppose it was inevitable that sooner or later someone would have dragged me onto the stage to introduce me, but it was such a small world at the time that it was sooner. I was pretty flustered the first time. The next time was almost as bad, but soon I was bantering with the band leader like an old pro. I still acted naive and got cross at jokes I pretended I didn't understand, playing straight-man to the band leader, who'd turn out to be too smart for his own good. Somehow I'd get him all tangled up in what he was saying, changing the meaning of his words, my Gracie Allen to his George Burns. Didn't now I could do it until I did it, but I guess it wasn't any different than how I'd look innocent at the brass while double-talking them. Later it wasn't spontaneous, and I got paid a pittance for performing. A pittance was about a peanut less than the band played for. Certainly not enough to give up tuning carburetors for a living.

New Toy I think the Gummed Label you produced was swallowed up in endless corporate mergers, wasn't it? Do you still own a piece of that action?

Rocky Naw. Everybody got fucked over when 'Track music got to be big business. I sold out the year after I joined Ward at his studios. It seemed like a good offer at the time, and I was busy with "Rocky and His Friends". Although it doesn't technically exist anymore, the Gummed Label repertoire belongs to Paul McCartney, now, or the mafia. I forget. I don't want to know. I don't care. 'Track is where Rock'n'Roll, and R&B and Folk have gone, wherever that is. Bye bye American pie.



New Toy You began working with Jay Ward

in 1960, and people are still talking about "Rocky and His Friends". Nobody can take that away from you. What sort of man was Ward to work with?

Rocky Actually, the show can, and was, taken away from me. But let that pass and let's talk about Jay. He was a madman. I'm sure you've heard everything there is to know about him, but it's worth talking about any way. Jay would do anything for a gag, and once cemented an arm into the sidewalk out in front of his studios. He signed "Walt Disney" in the wet cement, which didn't amuse anyone over at the mouse-factory. You can still see the hole in the sidewalk where the rubber arm was. Unfortunately it was stolen after about a week. At work he was just the same, and you really had to watch that your bath-tub wasn't full of banana-cream pie before you got in, or that Jay didn't dub a new soundtrack over your rushes. The worst of it would be that his ad libs would be funnier than your original lines.

New Toy You worked to a script?

Rocky At first, yes. Later we got the message and began taking off from the script, using it for a launching pad at best, and only coming back to Earth when we needed to make a gesture of plot development. Usually we had to tie up all the loose ends in the last episode. It didn't make any sense, but Jay never wanted it to. We could never be crazy enough for him. For a wildman, though, Jay was curiously shy. He hardly ever let strangers take pictures of him, for instance, though he would talk freely with anyone.

New Toy Did you meet Bullwinkle for the first time at the studio? Tell us about Bullwinkle.

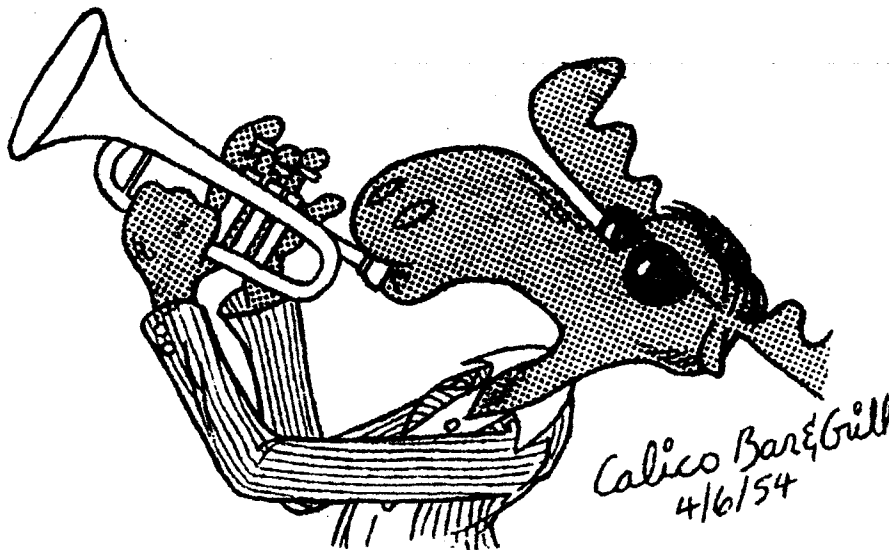
Rocky I had seen Bullwinkle before working together. It was at a Barstow club, and he was performing -- are you ready for this? -- as a musician. bullwinkle, whose real name is John Robert Alces by the way, blows a hot trumpet. Bullwinkle performed as Bullwinkle though. Nobody seems to now where he got the nickname. I heard that he was pretty wild in person, but didn't know him at the time. When I did meet him it was rather a shock, because he was just like Ted Baxter, you know. If he were still alive I don't think I could say this... but Bullwinkle was incredibly vain. About his acting, about his looks, about everything. And like Ted Baxter he could always find a way of lousing up his lines. Fortunately, whatever he did was always funnier. There wasn't anything prim about his sense of humour. He'd do anything on a dare, and always brought a keg of some cheap local band of beer he'd just found to parties. He'd drink the stuff all by himself, dressed like a dandy, then when the keg was empty he'd try log rolling with it in the swimming pool. I've no doubt at all that his animated life style led to his early death.

New Toy Never did drugs, did he?

Rocky Too sophisticated. Too au courant. Bullwinkle had course tastes, and probably didn't own anything worth more than about \$10, except his clothes and a motorcycle he won once in a crap game. And his trumpet. I sometimes wish he'd stuck to the trumpet. I like to think that he'd be alive if he had, but he would have had as many opportunities for self-destruction in the music business as in the movie business.

A lot of people who only knew Bullwinkle through the show thought he was dumb. He wasn't really. He would just do goofy things as a result of a thought process no-one could follow. And he was so wrapped up in himself that he wouldn't explain. But he didn't miss a clause in his contract. It was no accident that the show was retitled "The Bullwinkle Show" two years later.

New Toy You were good friends with Bullwinkle, weren't you? What did you think of retitling the show that way?



Rocky We were awfully good friends, and I won't pretend that Bullwinkle didn't hurt me. I think he was afraid I was in love with him, and was scared into slapping me in the face like that every now and again.

New Toy Were you? In love with him?

Rocky No. Most of the time I didn't think so, at least, but we were damned good friends, and still were after the show.

New Toy Gossip column-ists had you involved with Boris Badeno v for a while, didn't they? I understood that there was nothing to it, but do you know how the rumours got started?

Rocky How does news about two-headed babies and flying saucers get started in the National Enquirer? Same way I suppose. Boris was actually a very charming man, if you knew him well enough to break down his reserve, who did have an east European background. Educated in the classics, impeccable manners, very witty. He suffered terribly during the McCarthy era, when a certain actor who had a later political career denounced him to the Committee of Unamerican Activities as a communist. Boris hated the Russians. He had relatives he's never heard from that he's convinced died digging the Moscow canal, like thousands of others, and the idea that he'd collaborate with their murderers drove him to tears. Then to drink. But he said he wouldn't inform for the Nazis, and had no intention of informing or McCarthy either. When I met him he'd managed to overcome his drinking problem, but he still went through terrible fits of depression. He used to joke that it was his Slavic temperament. He also saw the irony of his role as a spy from an obviously totalitarian police-state. But frankly I thought it hurt him as much as it made him laugh. When "Rocky and Bullwinkle" ended, Boris retired from show business, relieved of a great burden it seemed to me. We continued to meet each other from time to time, but it's been years now since I've heard from him. He never married after Natasha died in '79. He owns a limousine service in Santa Barbara that supports him and his wine cellar and his regrets. A very sad man.

New Toy Let's see, there's Sherman and Peabody... Dudley Do-Right?

Rocky I never knew them well off-stage. We never worked on the same segments of the show, remember? Dudley was cold and always correct. The rumour around the studio was that he was a prominent official in the KKK. That wasn't true, but it went to show how little anyone really knew about Dudley's private life. His name was actually Dudley, Dudley Milque. How he ever got to be a comedian kept me guessing for months until Jay told me he'd found Dudley performing for kids in a Children's Aid Society home. He loved kids! And unbent around them like he couldn't for anyone else. In a way, the mountie character was the Dudley he was too shy to be. Jay was so much an overgrown kid that somehow he got Dudley to unbend for him too, and brought him into the show. I don't know what's become of him.

Sherman and Peabody were almost exactly what they seemed in front of the camera. Peabody taught history to high-schoolers, but was a mine of obscure off-colour stories about anybody you could name, from Churchill to Cleopatra. He also had the

He also had the most amazing propensity for puns that would kill underarm odour, or crash a PC in the next room. You could never check his stories, but the few times he was challenged he'd always produce his source the next day, so no matter how much you doubted him, you had to take his word. I suspect most of his stories were whoppers. But he knew enough true stories that were so outrageous that he could get us to balk, then he'd prove he was telling the truth.

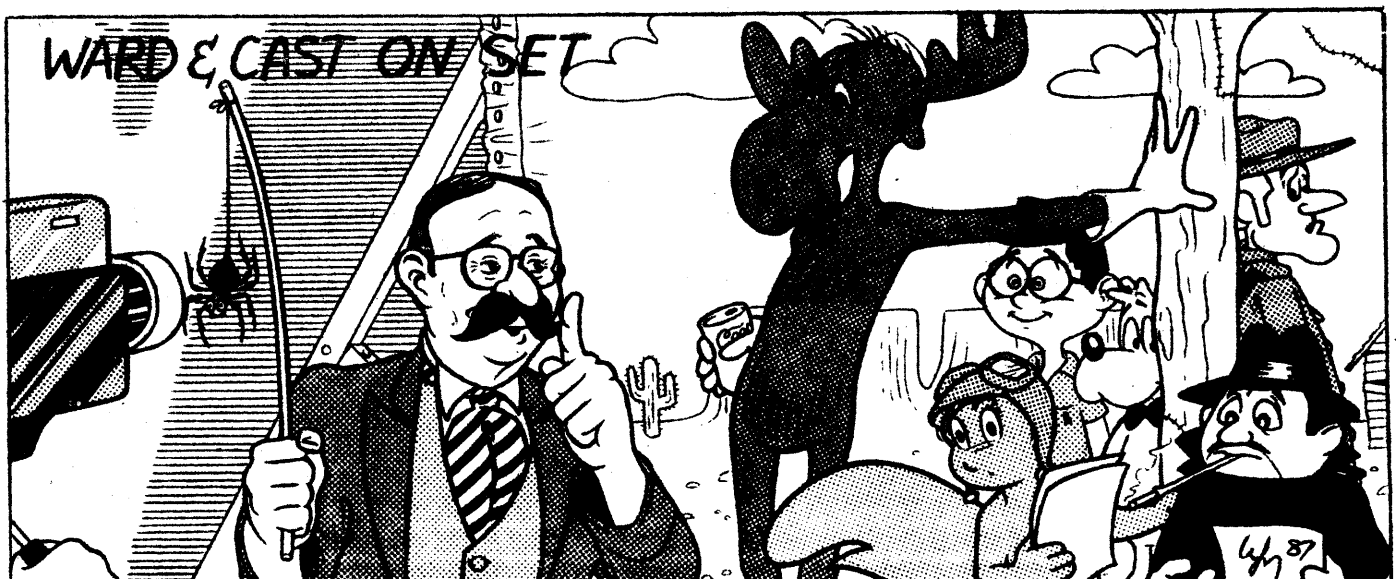
Sherman was one of his grade 12 students! He was really a nice kid, and a lot like a lost puppy on stage. I'm not sure but I think he's a junior vice-president in charge of cut-throat bidding and bribery for Lockheed, or something like that now. Peabody went back to teaching, in spite of rumours that he was an advisor to the CIA, and other rumours that he wrote science fiction under some odd pen-name. Wainright Jones or some such. He never confirmed or denied anything, but seemed to know an awful lot about Fidel Castro's personal habits, so you'd wonder...

New Toy It sounds like you enjoyed working on the Rocky and Bullwinkle shows, but what did you think of the show itself? Was it good? Has it dated?

Rocky Well, I suppose everything dates, at least somewhat. And yet I can't say that I've heard of anything else like it, except some of Jay's other productions. None of them were ever as popular as Rocky and Bullwinkle, but they were all quite good, occasionally brilliant. But his first show ((actually, it was his second)), with us, broke ground, you know, and nothing he did after could do that again, so in that way Rocky and Bullwinkle was his best show. I also think we were less conventional than, say, "George of the Jungle". For all the Jay Ward touches, George still had to tell a story, and lead you to believe you were watching real events happening as they happened. Plot was the furthest thing from our minds with Rocky and Bullwinkle, and we rarely tried to let on that we didn't know the audience wasn't there. We knew that you knew that we knew you were there. In short, yes, I think the show was very good.

New Toy "The Bullwinkle Show" was cancelled in 1962, virtually ending your career on television. Were the ratings falling, or was there a problem with the network?

Rocky Neither, though God knows Jay Ward had constant problems with the network over his scripts, attitude, and everything else. He was thoroughly professional, but they couldn't see where he was coming from. There's no truth to the rumour that Bullwinkle held out for a half-million dollar contract either. The facts are stranger than fiction. If you remember, there was a Beatles cartoon



show, and we mingled socially with King Feature's doubles. They in turn introduced our show to the real Beatles, who took an instant interest in the Rocky and Bullwinkle show. They paid a huge amount of money and acquired the rights to Rocky and Bullwinkle from Ward, planning to produce us themselves, with lavish budgets, complete freedom to write our own material, the best promotion money could buy... everything they thought we needed to become THE TV show for the Aquarian Age. And like most of the grandiose projects The Beatles took on, nothing ever came of it. Eventually the property was entangled in the Apple litigations, then held in receivership for years. Meanwhile the show was in suspended animation, so to speak. Several years later Paul McCartney bought the Gummed Label from EMI, because it was once mine. And that's how The Beatles own everything about me but my Mustang. I'll never sell the Rocket.

New Toy Do you fly the Rocket at all?

Rocky When I can. Few times a year I have it towed out to the airport for a week, and put in some solid flying. Also, I get paid for appearances several times a year, even now. Most of the time I pilot for other people, who want to fly into Oregon for some fishing, or whatever, and lease the plane from a small airline that caters to that sort of thing.

New Toy Have you considered going into show business again?

Rocky For Jay, anything. But for no-one else. I was only accidentally a comedian, don't forget. My first true love is still flying. It makes me feel young, like a girl again, and has never, never let me down.

New Toy Love. How is it that love keeps coming up in your life, and I haven't asked anything about it yet. Except to correct the story that you'd been involved with Boris Badenov. You've never married, and I believe you've broken off more than one serious relationship. You dated Secret Squirrel --

Rocky Who was a shallow twit. One gag comedian who took the womanizing part of being a spy literally.

New Toy -- and it didn't work out either. If it isn't too personal a question, have you had a very successful romantic life... er, Jasmine?

Rocky ((Sighs.)) I don't mind too much I guess, but all I can say about live is what I used to say as a young girl with her new shiny wings. It's been "rocky, sir, rocky."

LAST RIGHTS

20

What if we got to choose our own death? I remember a friend of mine asking that once, and another friend replied that he'd like to drown, like the painter Tom Thomson, a hero of his. There was a discussion of the relative merits of his choice after that. It was pointed out that drowning may be poetic in some Byronic sense, but it hurts like hell while it's happening. I didn't give an answer to the question, but I later gave it some thought. And this is how I want to go:

* * *

SCENARIO -- A room in a Termination Facility. A nurse enters the room with another woman, who is wearing a felt bag over her head. (This is the future, and the reader has to accept that people do things that may seem strange to us.) The bag billows oddly. I'm lying in bed, snorting over yet another article on the superiority of computer clip-art over the human artist. It is 2037: Carl Sagan has been sainted by the Secularist Church of Humanity, L5 Colonies are full of out-of-work aerospace workers, The Toronto Maple Leafs have won their first Stanley Cup since 1967, but there still hasn't been a woman president of the United States. Or indeed a different, or American, president of the United States since 2017. I have an incurable case of one of the diseases in the Literary Life-Syle Related Factors Group (LLiS ReF).

"Well, how are we feeling today Ms. Taral?"

"Mr. Taral to you. Though people make that mistake all the time. Must be my legs, the only good looking part of me."

The nurse looks up from her clip-monitor at the patient. "Yes, of course, how silly of me. And how are we?"

"We as in the average for the people in this room, or the median?"

She enters a note on her clip, and says, "chipper as usual."

I scowl.

"Well, we have bad news for you I'm afraid. Your prognosis hasn't changed overnight." She taps one of the meters over my bed, so as not to leave any possibility untried. The reading of my metabolic basal rate remains as it was. So there is no hope. Tsk. "And the special Euthanasia Therapist you requested has another appointment today at eleven. In Bangkok." She nods to the other woman. "It'll be another three months before you could make another appointment, so it looks like it'll have to be this morning, unless you want to risk a nasty NATURAL death waiting." We all shuddered at the thought of a person's heart involuntarily stopping, of the blood clotting in their brain, and horrid little bacteria gorging on the stifled tissues...

Phooey. I wasn't supposed to have to die until the day after tomorrow. To stick to schedule and get the last forty-eight hours of my life I'd have to sign up for something different on the Phibe's List. Maybe an orgasm induced heart attack, or be shot in one of the Facility's fantasy role-playing games (CIA mission in Montreal, duel with pistols, drug bust,

shoot-out at the OK Corral, etc). Oh well, what difference does it make? All I planned to do with those forty-eight hours was try to catch up reading Crad Kilodney, whose best sellers had been piling up the last fifty years. If I never finish reading them, it would weigh heavily on my conscience in the next world, but there were worse men than I gone to their reward. "Okay. What do I do?"

The nurse put me in the care of the other woman. Up to this moment she'd been silent beneath her peculiar purdah, and now she only beckoned me out of bed. Then she led me in PJ's and slippers down a hall to a room away from the main body of the Facility. Along the way I passed a number of specialized rooms for exotic death-wishes. Their doors were tastefully labeled in traditional lucite, white on black, and filled me with curiosity. Deep Space Environment. Womb Re-introduction. Historical Holo Reconstruction. Wheel of Karma. Pearly Gates. Unfortunately you only die once. The room I was conducted into was empty except for a pile carpet, track lighting, and a small, low dais against one wall, opposite some draped windows. It looked like an unused gallery.

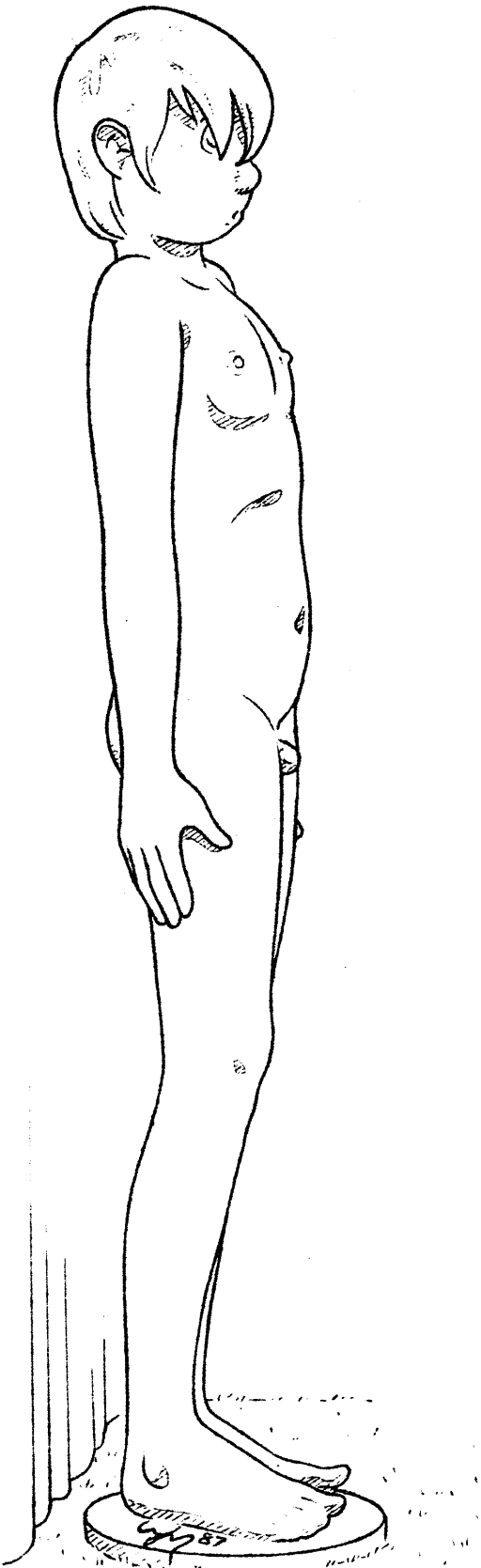
Then the therapist spoke to me for the first time. She had a nice voice, in spite of its sibilant quality. "Step over there, please, up on the dais."

"That all?" I said, doing as I was asked.

"The rest is up to you, of course, but I suggest you strip those rumply pajamas off first, and the slippers." She loosened the strings tying her hood, and waited.

Of course. I'd envisioned it this way all along, so how could I forget and stand there in foolish bedclothes. But I was nervous. There were no second chances, after all. I tossed the bundle of unneeded clothing away and stood facing the therapist, tense with anticipation, glad that I hadn't gained weight again since my last de-lipid shot, glad my balls hadn't fallen, glad that I hadn't wrinkled, wishing that I could have afforded minor plastic surgery so that I could have had something like a chin for the occasion, doing my best to suck in flabby stomach muscles...

"Don't try to pose for me," she said, "it rarely works for most people. Just relax as you are. Maybe bend your knee a little, put your other hand on your hip. Like so. Hold still." Step by step she advanced on me, until we were face to face.



"Wait!" I took a felt pen out of her breast pocket. Then I scrawled "WM" on the dais, and took my place again. Perfect.

She laughed, and pulled the bag away, showing me a pixie-ish face framed by slender darting serpents. Literally fascinated, I felt snowy crystals of stone form over my body like a frost, and freeze me through. What better final work of art than to turn the artist turned into a statue?

* * *

Not a very serious answer to a serious question, was it? Oh no? I think I would like to be a statue, rather than rot or burn to ashes. I just don't want to turn into stone NOW, or at any foreseeable time, until I'm demonstrably at the end of my line. By then, unfortunately, it's too much to hope a person would make a half decent bit of art. Either you're withered up or obese, and attractive only to those kinds of painters and photographers who like faces to be lined with worry and toil, like an interesting piece of old shoe leather. Nutz to them. Let them worry and toil if they admire the look so much. I'd like to be a wee bit pornographic... or if Mr. Crosby the censor won't let me, then a wee bit erotic. I'll have a face lift the day before the gorgon comes for me, and have a sculptor touch me up later.

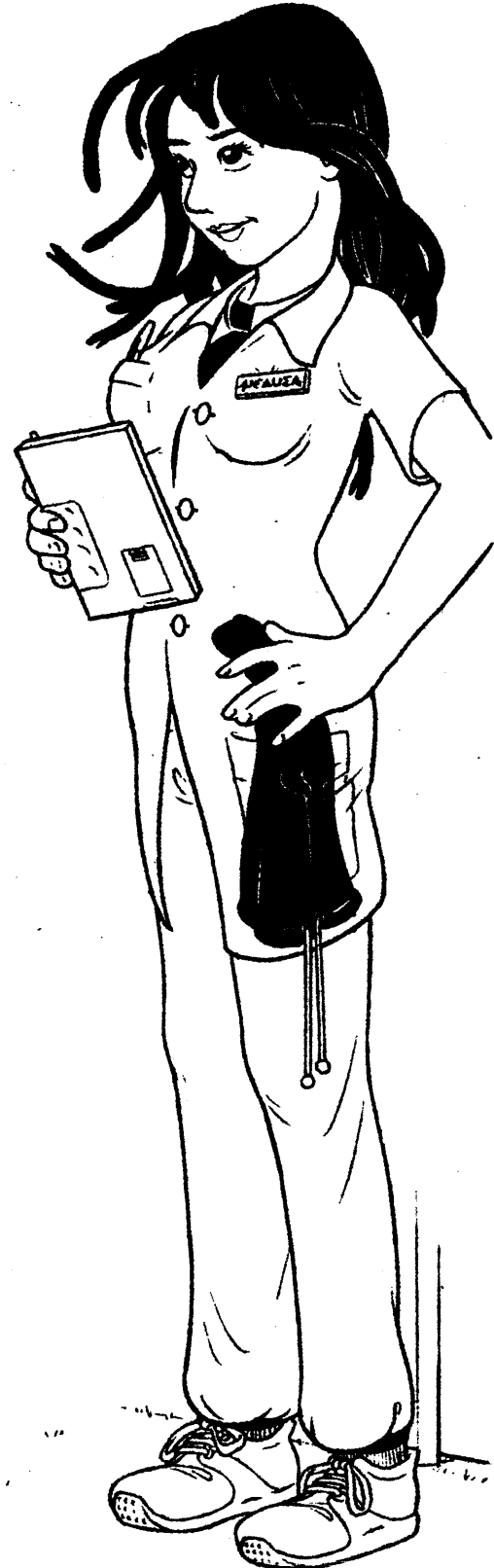
Oh, and a final note before I depart... Medusa looks not a little like Kate Bush. I thought you'd rather be told.

-- revised from an April '86 letter to Avedon Carol.

A LATE ARRIVING LETTER FROM ROBERT LICHTMAN

You probably months ago gave up on getting any more LocCs on New Toy 1, and since I haven't seen any more issue I guess your plan to publish three times a year has fallen by the wayside into the land of RSN. But I simply cannot let it simply go unnoted that I got a huge kick out of the Rotsler Lettraset and would go so far as to say that in my opinion and recollection it takes the cake as the single best piece of fannish artwork of 1986. If anyone does a poll it will definitely make an appearance on my ballot sheet.

[Thanks, but... in the perverse state of mind of an artist, to single out that one piece of art you imply you're underimpressed with the rest. You can't win, Bob, I won't be flattered. Taral]



BLUE CORFLU BLUES



A few of the people I spoke with last year have said they're tired of reading reports of Corflu that say, in essence, "I was stoned out of my mind all weekend and can't remember a thing... I must have had a wonderful time."

Cheer up Ken, Anne Laurie, Brian. I never touched a roach or hash pipe all weekend, and I remember everything.

Almost everything. I might as well admit it now, at the start, that I missed the live fanzine ala Spanish Inquisition on Saturday. This wasn't my fault. I woke up Saturday with every expectation of attending the much vaunted program for the afternoon, but some of my friends had other ideas. Ron and Linda Bushyager, Leslie Smith, and Hope Leibowitz shanghaied me to drive a car into the wilderness of central Washington. They wanted to see a well publicized exhibit of Impressionist paintings at the national gallery. I yielded with surprising grace after questioning everyone's sanity, imprecating several lively curses upon their ancestry, and predicting our deaths in a flaming wreck somewhere in Arlington or Georgetown. In the event, we were all disappointed. The exhibit was sold out, and we got back safely. I'm told the live fanzine went splendidly.

I'm also told that Teresa Nielson Hayden was selected by the Desk Set as the Corflu 3 guest of honour, and was presented with a pie in the face. I'm sorry, I missed that too.

Upon arrival and registration, most members noticed that their nametags were already filled out, and that they were filled out identically. "Hello, my name is Richard Bergeron," they read. Then "Richard Bergeron" would have a chuckle or two, and five minutes later curse the concomm for every thinking the joke funny. It was. At first. But there were just enough people at Corflu who weren't in on the joke that it was a nuisance explaining, first, that you weren't Richard Bergeron, and

secondly, why your nametag said you were. Within a few hours, most tags had been written over, or flipped over to the backside, and the member's real name substituted. Variations on "Corflu" were rampant. "Coffee", "Kung Fu", and "Cor Blimey I've Got the Flu" give the reader some idea of the desperation with which people struggled to escape the Desk Set's little joke.

The program book was a study in the economical meeting of simple needs -- a single sheet of twiltone with a small body of text. All the "o's" had been tastefully and fannishly on purpose cut out by the manual typewriter used by rich brown.

Rather more formal in its presentation was the art folio designed by Dan Steffan. "Arty Fellers" was a spotless white envelope with an adhesive label in red and yellow drawn by Dan. I've got the contents out of order, but, anyway, the fifteen plates are offset on what feels to be about 20 lb. bond, and include art by Dan, Stu Shiffman, myself, Rob Hansen, Steve Stiles, Alexis Gilliland (all present at the con to sign my copy), Jay Kinney, Ray Nelson, Brad Foster, Joan Hanke-Woods, Steve Fox, ATom, Jeanne Gomoll, Bill Rotsler, and Jim Barker. There were a couple of pieces that I flatly dislike, one that I hear Dan equally likes. By and large, though, the folio is a fine display of the artists' various talents. A year's worth of first rate covers shot to hell with one round. The cost is three dollars, and I'd imagine there are plenty of the 150 copies printed available from Dan. His address last time I checked was PO Box 409, Falls Church VA 22046.

I should mention one other piece of Corflu memorabilia that I thought less successful than the folio. The traditional Corflu T-shirt. Since I don't know who designed it, I'm not sure whose feelings I'm hurting by saying that I didn't understand the joke, and when it was explained to me it still didn't seem very funny. Or timely. As I recall, the shirt was a lampoon of a Frankie Goes To Hollywood T-shirt of the year before, amended to read "Jophan say pub your ish". The first Corflu T-shirt was a lovely thing, and the second was fitting. I wish the unknown designer of the third Corflu T-shirt had better kept the tradition.

I think rich told me there were about 95 people present, but don't quote either of us. I made a list of fifty-five people I could remember talking to when I got home, though, and I know that I saw a substantial number of others I didn't recognize. Ninety-five seems about right. I got the impression, too, that Corflu broke even, or thereabouts.

If there weren't ninety-five people in the con-suite in the evenings, it can only be a failure of higher mathematics to account for the crush. Usually it was standing room only, and the bar was accessible to only the ruthless. It was smoky too, with the combined vices of nicotine fiends and chain dopers running out of control. The first to light up prodded the monkey on the backs of the others, who all lit up within a minute. Eventually the cigarettes would burn down, and the pipes go out, and the cycle began again. A non-smoker would gladly have stepped out into the atmosphere of Venus for a breath of fresh air. There was a better alternative than that, fortunately. A non-smoking room across the hall was a haven for those who simply couldn't stay in the con-suite another moment. But few remained there long. Most everybody was usually in the con-suite -- a few hard cases never left -- and if you wanted to talk to them you had to take a deep breath and make the plunge. Otherwise you spoke to no one in the evening except the few fans whose eyes burned and lungs ached at the mere sight of an unopened package of filtered menthols. It was worth having an ounce or two of smoke particles settle permanently in your lungs to be in the con-suite. Where else, even at Worldcons, would you find Tom Perry, Terry Carr, Dan Joy, Art Widner, Victor Gonzales, Steve Stiles, Larry Carmody, Jerry Kaufman, Gary Hubbard, and Fred Haskell talking with Pascal Thomas, Len Bailes, Sarah Prince, Arthur Hlavaty, D. Potter, Ken Josenhans, Alexis Gilliland, Tom Weber, and Terry Hughes? Besides, most of the food and drink was in the con-suite.

Avedon Carol and Rob Hansen were there, but almost weren't. It seems that the day before, Avedon's face had swollen into a painful need for root canal work, and she was almost forced to miss the con. She was lucky enough to have emergency treatment, and arrived safely, if heavily sedated, the day after originally planed. Rob, of course, was too much of a gentleman to leave her behind. Though he may have been

thinking of it.

It was a bad con for root canal jobs. Bob Webber, who drove down with Hope and I, almost had to cancel out for the same reason as Avedon. We'd have cheerfully ditched him to get to Corflu, but he was the one renting the car. We had no choice but to be gallant about it. Fortunately he found an idle dentist in time and our friendships weren't put to the test.

I might mention that I've had a few twinges in a front tooth as well, but no, I won't play on the reader's sympathy.

Russell Chauvenet was there with Art Widner. I'd never met Chauvenet before, but knew of him as the man who invented the word "fanzine". Whenever I write about fanzines outside of fandom, I like to mention this. "Fanzine" is not altogether in the public domain, the intellectual property of SF fans, comic fans, rock video fans, and beer can collectors alike. A particular, knowable, living fan invented the word on a specific date in the nineteen forties, and that fan was Russ Chauvenet. We SF fans have pride of place... if nothing else.

Linda Bushyager was there with Ron. But this you know already, since she was among those who abducted me to drive the car on Saturday. Linda has been avoiding Disclave lately, to avoid breaking another leg, so I hadn't seen her in a couple of years. During a conversation with Moshe Feder she surprised everyone by saying she was thinking of running for Taff. To run for Taff, she was thinking of publishing a fanzine. The Old Farts of the 50's have had their uncontested way for long enough. Could this be the start of a wave of returning Old Farts from the 60's? Linda (and Leslie) are two issues of Duprass into their game plan already. Did Moshe talk Linda out of the Taff race, or is that her next move? Ron only knows.

I want to mention Moshe Feder again, for the simple reason that I play a little game with him that advanced several spaces to "Go -- Collect \$200" at this con. Moshe, as many of you know, collects Coca Cola memorabilia. Memorabilia in most cases is a fancy word for trash. Moshe's collection is no exception, as much of it was rescued from the waste-bin. It's my private game to bring him as much Coke material as I can find between cons, and the object of the game is to crowd him out of his home. By far the best step toward this ultimate goal was the item I brought to Corflu. I led him with his eyes shut into a prepared room, then said "behold": It was a six foot cardboard Coca Cola Christmas Tree with a Coke star and ample base for the product. It can't possibly be better to give than to receive, judging by Moshe's delight, but it was the most fun I'd had in several weeks. Naturally, he wouldn't have it any other way but to take the tree, base and all, down to the con-suite to show off. It made quite a commotion as people emerged from the quasi-twilight of the smoke-filled room and discovered a late blooming Christmas tree in the hall, and not a few pictures were taken of Moshe and Lise with the newest addition to their family. Moshe beamed, and I schemed to top myself next year. Damned if I know how though.

Even Martin Morse Wooster was there.

During the afternoons, the main hang-out was the fanzine room. It was in the basement, next to the banquet room. A pool and sauna, and video arcade down the hall gave those with short attention spans something to do when bored with all the fanzine room had to offer. Rich brown barricaded off one corner of the large, well-lit room for selling memberships, folios, and T-shirts. He could usually be found there and talked to from noon to dinner time. (Except possibly during the live fanzine. I can't say if the fanzine room was open then or not. I was busy getting culture, remember?) Around the nearer walls, the east coast branch of Gary Farber's Travelling Fan History and Fanzine Show filled several tables. Dan Steffan took advantage of the situation by propping art up against the wall, including the original drawings of his unfinished illustrated Enchanted Duplicator. There was a little space left at the end of the line of tables that I took myself, for a few coloured pieces I brought with me. The far end of the room was given over to mimeography. There were two typers, a modern electrostenciler, an automatic Gestetner mimeo, supplies, and normally someone using each of the above. Quite a number of small one-shots were turned out over three days.

A number of regular issues were passed out at Corflu as well. This is also a tradition, I gather, but fortunately there were no Genre Plats this time around. Those of you who missed Avedon and Rob's Church, Nothing Left to the Imagination, Patrick and Teresa's latest Flash Point, the collate-it-yourself issue of Crank, and other zines given out at the con, had to wait for yours in the mail. Better late than never. If ever.

Sunday at two was the buffet brunch, featuring Lobster Neuberg, roast beef, chicken, Rice Pilau, vegetables of the boiled variety, salad, jello with whipped cream and edible impurities, cakes, and coffee. Almost anyone could have found something they liked, and I can vouch for most of it as decently prepared. Except perhaps the rice, which was bland enough for Rice Pillow. Around three, a waiter came and wrestled my second helpings away from me. Ted, Dan, Lynn Steffan, and rich arrived looking like a hung jury, and took places at the head of the room. The verdict was harsh -- speeches. Terry Carr spoke first, delivering a long, mumbled monolog that I mostly missed. Not only was I unable to hear him clearly, I was busy sketching Lise Eisenberg at my table. (She has an impossible face.) Teresa Neilson Hayden gave the next speech. It contained no surprises, but much positive constructivism, and was not the speech she originally meant to give, I understand. But Patrick thought that dwelling on the signs of decay in the fanzine community was inappropriate to an event celebrating ourselves. Teresa, perhaps unfortunately, allowed herself to be persuaded to Patrick's views, depriving us of what might have been a challenge to fanzine fandom to do something about our narrowing horizons. Or so went the rumour mill. Since Teresa was chosen guest of honour only the night before, she hadn't much time to prepare. Perhaps that's explanation enough for a tame speech.

A past president of the Fanzine Writers of America was chosen next. The winner, if I haven't mixed things up, was Lucy Huntzinger. The choice seemed a peculiar one, in as much as Lucy had published only one solo zine at the time, and co-edited a few one-shots, but I'm one of those people who have to constantly remind themselves not to take things too seriously. A number of awards were also presented. This seemed a self-indulgence on the part of the Desk Set, as most of the tiny bronze typers were given as private jokes to their friends. I only remember Avedon as one of the winners. After the buffet and speeches I noticed her with the bronze typer still in her hand, and couldn't resist an impulse. I went over to congratulate her, and pumped her hand vigorously, with the award still in it. She looked down in some dismay at the crumpled slip of paper in the platten, but there was no real damage. Otherwise I'd have felt like a sore loser.

The auction that followed the speeches was terrifying. Come off it now, you think, how can an auction frighten anyone? Easily. Copies of Seamonsters and Stop Breaking Down flew from auctioneer's hands to eager grasping fingers in the audience, and \$20 bills flowed back. A complete set of seven issues of Walt Leibscher's 40's fanzine, Chanticleer, sold for \$250 to Ted White. Victor Gonzales paid \$100 for a single issue of Kyphen. (An issue I remember paying 25 cents for, to a dealer



lambasted by Pong as a rip-off artist.) Watching the money move, I thought back to the bad old Good Old Days, when some of the people tossing twenties at the auctioneer had polled their pocket change to buy a communal plate of chips. (Fries to our American cousins. Not crisps, if you're British.) On the other hand, any reasonable fanzine collection ought to be worth a cool fortune at those prices, so maybe I have a pension fund without knowing it. But of course, nobody pays \$100 an issue of Hyphen unless it's for Taff. (Proves that fanzine fandom doesn't need convention fandom's handouts, you see.) And the Chanticleers were sold to raise money for Gary Farber.

Gary, it seems, had been seriously ill in Seattle for some time, and his medical expenses had only established that he didn't have spinal meningitis. To find out what else he didn't have was going to cost still more money, and altogether the Corflu auction raised nearly \$500 to defray the cost of his specialist's new golf clubs. It was a spontaneous and impressive act of generosity.

While no one believes that the Taff auctions indicate the real value of old fanzines, I wonder. If Taff auctions are in fact the only occasions in which old copies of Quandry or Hyphen are likely to turn up, then the auction prices are de facto their real value. \$100 a copy is clearly a record for some time to come, but I feel that the day of the \$5 Void is nearly over.

At the end of the auction Dan Steffan put up a few pieces of his Enchanted Duplicator art for sale. Prices were low by comparison with the fanzines, an absurdity I think I should speak out against. But even Dan seemed satisfied that a one-of-a-kind work of art was less valuable than one of fifty or a hundred surviving copies of a duplicated text. That's the free market for you.

The final order of business was determining the site of the next Corflu. This was a simple matter of asking the audience if Bill Bower's proposal to hold it in Cincinnati in 1987 was alright with them. And the answer was overwhelmingly "yes". There were no concrete details to report at that time. Such as when, or where. But as everyone knows now, Corflu for will happen over April third to fifth, with a certain untried toastmaster, and the Autoclave 1 committee as special guests. The guest of honour, unfortunately, is still a mystery.

Already there was a contest for Corflu in 1988. Both Seattle and Dallas are still interested. In Dallas, Pat Mueller spearheads the effort to gain the convention with Neil Kaden's help. Surprisingly, to those who were hoping he'd died, Leland Sapiro is connected with the Dallas bid as well. The Dallas bid wasn't the favourite. Patrick Nielson Hayden expressed skepticism in a letter, to the effect that it'd be unfortunate if everyone tried to jump on the Corflu bandwagon. Patrick also repudiated this letter at the convention, but he was still skeptical that the Dallas bid was really a suitable host for a fanzine convention. This should in no way be construed as a plug for Dallas, but in the interests of mutual understanding I'd like to point out that Patrick's letter was printed in an issue of Pat's fanzine, The Texas SF Enquirer. Neil, whose zines I traded for while he was a resident of Ottawa, handed out copies of Confessions Of A Failed Yuppie at the con. And Leland Sapiro... Well, I'm told there is a recent issue of Riverside Quarterly, whatever else may be said about him. Dallas IS a fanzine fandom.

Before the bids were announced, Pat and I talked a bit about Dallas and Corflu in principle. The idea emerged that other groups might hold other Corflu's in the same year. By extension fans might refer to any relaxacon or small convention as a "corflu".

"Been to any good corflu's in your area?"

"I'm going to the annual British corflu, how about you?"

"I have to cut back on the number of corflu's I attend this year."

The ultimate degeneration could be only a few years down the road, when an unknown St. Louis or San Diego group sponsored by Monsanto announces a 30,000 member Star Trek corflu with Carl Sagan as guest of honour.

Seattle is seemingly the favourite for the '88 Corflu, backed by Jerry Kaufman and Suzie Tomkins, whose reputations for Mainstream, Span Ing, and Imryrr (I asked for unmarked bills, Jerry) are impeccable. Just guessing, I'd say whichever bid loses the '88 spot stands a good chance for '89 if they care to have it.

If there was one fly in the ointment, the Bergeron nametags were the tip of the wing showing. They were only the first instance of a tendency for the con to define itself not by its own cohesion, but by who it excluded from its sense of community. There were to me several sour notes in the harmony of the con, when a well-known patsy would be ceremonially abused in front of the audience, winning a few cheap laughs. In the case of the nametags, this is understandable. But the other incidents seemed unnecessary and spiteful. This isn't something I blame the Desk Set for. Rather, it seems to be the temper of much of fanzine fandom today, and I sincerely hope it's a passing phase.

Getting to Tyson's Corners in February, (Washington D.C. for all practical purposes), was bad enough. All it did was snow, lightly, part of the way there. Getting home again was far worse, taking over thirteen hours to navigate a dense fog caused by freak thawing conditions. Then on the last leg of the trip, the road froze again. Even with WebBob at the wheel, we spun out only a few miles from home. Fortunately he'd screwed up only minutes before, and we were on the wrong road. It was empty, and we hit nothing on our way into a snow bank. I'm pleased that there'll never be another Corflu in Tyson's Corners. Nothing could be worth the risk of another February drive to get there. Of course, we knew that before we went the first time, and it didn't stop us then.

We aren't smarter than other folks, I don't think. Just luckier.

* * *

The discussion I had with Pat about Corflu wasn't academic. Nor the only one I had at the con. Alan Rosenthal and Catherine Crockett were also there -- alas, Mike Glicksohn wasn't able to attend -- and we four were thinking of holding a Corflu in Toronto. We had alternatives in mind as well, and part of the time Cathy, Alan, and I were sounding people out about the idea. As it happened, Corflu was booked solid until 1990, and we weren't prepared to wait one year longer than the bidding lasts for a Worldcon. So we fell back on Plan B, to convince people that more than one Corflu was needed a year. Even then, it would be pointless to run one in Toronto in the same year as Corflu in Cincinnati, so we'd have to wait until 1988. We could still do this, if we make a presentation in Cincinnati. But it was felt a better idea by those I talked with to start a second, separate fanzine convention. So we fell back on Plan C.

We'd already considered this option, and had a name for it. Ditto. Alan, Cathy, Mike and I have already had our heads together and can announce a number of details. The date will be July 29th. to August first, 1988. The hotel we found is a nice modern place in downtown Toronto, The Bond Place, with rates that will be \$75 for a single, and \$82 for a double. This isn't the best rate I've ever heard of, but remember we're talking Canadian dollars. In U.S. currency that's only about \$55 and \$60 respectively. The same bargain rates apply to restaurants, books, and souvenirs. (We're sorry, but conditions other than local currency exchange rates affect the street value of dope.) A lot of people have said they'd like a good reason to visit Toronto, and we're prepared to capitalize on it by offering informal tours of the downtown area, its bookstores, headshops, and tourist spots. And rather than a banquet, we're thinking of a Great Wall in Toronto's enviable Chinatown. Failing that, we can order in pizza. Since the main attraction is the peculiar tribalism of fanzine fandom, we figure we'll have to make a special effort to play on fannish loyalties. Like Corflu we may offer a T-shirt. We'll publish a boosterish and entertaining little zine like "The Desk Set Gazette". (Called "Impressions From the Ditto Masters" if you like. Or if you don't.) We won't have an art folio like "Arty Fellers", but we've decided we'd like to publish a collection of Toronto fan writing. Also, unlike the folio, we can make the collection a bonus of membership. In fact, membership might be the only way to get your copy. Best of all, our initial calculations suggest we can break even with sixty members at a \$15 (US) membership rate. (\$20 Canadian, eh?)

Our first issue of Impressions is in capable hands, Mike's, and should be ready to hand out at the upcoming Corflu. Save us thirty-nine cents why don't you, and be sure to be there.

Local COLOUR.



SEHRM77

TIM FAY

729 Kimball St. NE, Fridley MN 55432

My dad is addicted to All Star Wrestling, so I naturally enjoyed your comments and insights on the current state of the... sport? It was interesting how you pointed out that the symbols of rebellion -- long hair, rock'n'roll -- had been assimilated into mainstream, conservative American culture. There was a related item in today's news that might interest you: recently, shipments of hashish, apparently from Afghanistan, have been intercepted by U.S. drug enforcement officials. It is suspected that the Mujahidin are using revenues from the drug trade to finance their war against the Soviets. The bails of hash were stamped with a label saying "Help Smoke Out the Russians -- Buy Afghan Hash." But the real kicker is a quote from one U.S. official who said the labels were probably a marketing ploy used in an attempt to exploit American patriotism. Praise the bowl, and pass

the ammunition. You waste commies, and we'll get wasted. Funny, huh? I expect I'll die laughing...

CHUCK HARRIS

32 Lake Crescent, Daventry, Northants NN1 5EB
England

If I didn't have my dear wife screaming bloody murder at me about cutting the lawn before the grass grows higher than her head, or taking the consequences if she gets lost in the green wilderness and never finds her way back to the house every time she goes out to pick a sprig of mint and blah, blah, blah, why, I'd write you a real spiffy letter to say how much I liked New Toy.

Most of all I'd tell you how marvellous the Rotsler lettraset was. It really made my day. It's one of those infrequent things in fandom when you really appreciate the microcosm and feel vast pity for all those poor people outside.

I took it to work today and tried to explain it to the people I work with, a sort of fan missionary bringing light to the benighted. "There's this fellow Rotsler in California, see. He always uses the same characters in his cartoons for fanzines see... fanzines are a sort of amateur magazine see... so this other fellow made up this Lettraset see... no, we KNOW it's not a REAL Lettraset... ah! forget it, hmm?"

Susan has just found the grass box from the lawnmower and dumped it on my lap. Could it be she is trying to tell me something?

As for the would-be androgynous lady on the cover, well... er... hmm. I guess the candy stick is intended to give pleasure and at last she won't get caries on her teeth that way.

[But I might...

Taral]

SKEL

25 Bowland Close, Offerton, Stockport, Cheshire,
SK2 5NW, England

Odd that I should get a zine from you at this time, as I was just thinking of you a couple of days ago. It'll take a while to set up the context, but I trust you won't mind. After all, I know you've nothing better to do. That's the thing about paper fans -- you don't have to associate with them. If you had something better to do right now than read this letter, something you'd rather be doing, then you'd bloody well be doing it, wouldn't you? Course you would. So, I'll take some time out and explain why I was thinking of you, safe in the knowledge that if you do have something better to do you will put this letter aside until such a time as that no longer holds true. Right, I was thinking of you. Here's how it came about:

Dave Rowe and Carolyn were visiting us just over a week ago. Dave expressed interest in holding a party here while he was visiting, to meet all or many of his other fan friends who he might not otherwise have the time to link up with again on such a short visit. Two of the people we invited were Mike and Pat Meara. Now when Mike arrived one of the first things he did, other than pouring himself a drink of course, was hand me my copy of the latest Mainstream, which Jerry had handed to him for me at Mexican. Now I'm not sure when Mexican was, sometime in February I think, but it was certainly a-sod-of-a-long-time ago. Fuck only knows when I would have gotten my copy of Mainstream if Mike and Pat hadn't been visiting us that weekend. Mind you, I shouldn't complain -- in exchange I handed him their Christmas present from me and Cas for last year. It's Mainstream that is the link. In that zine Jerry and Suzle chose to print the comments I'd sent them on your cover for the previous issue.

The way it got me to thinking was this -- the artwork in fanzines generally draws very little comment. Artists in fandom have always got the shitty end of the stick when it comes to feedback on their contributions. This is basically because to most fans artistic talent and magic are virtually the same thing. It is a mystic talent of which we have no real comprehension. We have neither the ability nor the background knowledge required to talk about the artwork, and we are of course far too embarrassed to waffle on about not knowing anything about art, but knowing what we like, so we basically say very little. Usually just a few brief remarks to the effect that we liked it, but rarely more than that, and often not even that. We don't feel competent to comment upon the artwork. This doesn't seem to bother us when it comes to the written contributions. We all feel competent to hell and gone when it comes to commenting upon the written material in a fanzine. Are we not after all masters of the written word? "Dear Milkman -- Three pints tomorrow, please." That may be as far as we've gone, but it's writing, isn't it? And besides, when we LoC, aren't we exercising a degree of familiarity and expertise in the very area upon which we are commenting. But artwork? Bloody hell, couldn't do that to save my life.

And yet our lack of competence to comment on artwork shouldn't prevent us from writing about the artwork, should it? After all, it doesn't prevent us writing about the written content of a fanzine. You see, the type of comment we pass on the written content of a fanzine isn't the nuts-and-bolts type of criticism that we are so worried we can't make on the artwork. We say we liked it. We say it moved us. We say it made us laugh. This sort of comment we make on the artwork too. But... we don't go on about the mechanics of it. We don't talk about the techniques of the piece. Well, we probably don't feel any more competent in that area than we do with the artwork, but, and here's the difference, we don't feel self-conscious about our inability to respond in this manner when it comes to the written word.

What we do mostly is say "That reminds me..." and make some personal, anecdotal response. Or, we address the issues raised. Now there's absolutely nothing to stop us doing this with the artwork too... but we never do. Why is that? Of course we can't always take that way out. We can't say "Ah yes, now the last time I was a unicorn in the forest..." or "I remember when I was an alien female doing strange but satisfying things with a piece of candy under a Christmas tree." But, we can do a lot better than we do. So, I made a positive effort to comment about artwork in much the same manner that I comment about written material in fanzines. So far I've tried this on three covers. Yours on Mainstream, Dick Bergeron's on Time And Again, and Stu Shiffman's on the latest Potsherd. I have tried to comment on the content of the artwork, as distinct from the techniques or the quality of the execution, or the style.

Which brings me back to thinking of you. because I was wondering if that sort of comment is satisfying to a fanartist. Does knowing that you've stimulated some-one into making that sort of response generate the same satisfaction in an artist that it generates in a writer? That is to say, a different satisfaction to what one gets from a technical appreciation, but one that complements the other. The thing is, if such response does bring some satisfaction, then it would pay to advertise the fact, because I've never seen the subject addressed before. I am in favour of anything that reveals to the average fan that he can too make some useful feedback to the fanartist. On the other hand, if an artist is somehow different from a writer, and does not obtain any satisfaction from that type of response, then I'd be chuffed if you

would let me know. I suspect the latter case somehow, because otherwise we would be in a position where I have had "An Original Thought", and that is too ludicrous to even contemplate.

Getting back to New Toy 1 again, I want to comment on the cover. It reminded me... no really it did... of some of Kelly Freas' artwork. It was the light that did it. The liquid light, the way it reflects off the stuff wrapped around the tree. There is this superb feeling for reflected light in a fair bit of Freas' later work and your cover uses, or so it seems to me, the very same technique and captures equally well that superbly "wet" feel of light as almost a liquid. It gives a fuzzy substance to the tree itself and yet there is the strangely contradictory feel of stars shining out of the blank emptiness of space. To me the rest of that cover is simply an artistic frame for that tree and it's lights and decorations.

Liked the written elements of New Toy 1 too, but don't feel competent to comment upon them. Oh yes, the Rotsler "letraset" was a gem.

[I can't speak for all fanartists, who show a wider range of motivations for their fanac than writers in my experience, but I do appreciate any intelligent remarks on my art, even if those that are misguided or naive.

You're quite right that most fans get hung up on style in artwork, and forget that it's the content of most fanwriting that they actually respond to. I suppose this is inevitable, because the medium we use to discuss writing is the written word. To discuss art we still have to use the written word, even though it's only a translation of something that's non-verbal by nature. There was an apocryphal music teacher who was asked if Beethoven's Fifth Symphony was about such-and-such a development of musical phrases into larger structures, and what he said was "No, it's about dum, dum, dum, dummmmm..." Like music, art is about art, and no description of a work of art is the same as the art itself.

But I think we're in great danger of too much subtlety here. Art can be talked about with no great difficulty, as your remarks in more than one fanzine have shown. (And this artist did appreciate them.) So far as I can tell, most fans don't comment on the art in fanzines because they're mostly not interested. Art is a visual medium. The next time you see a room full of fans partying at a convention, count how many of them wear glasses and think about it.

It was an Impressionist, I think, who said that light was all there was in a painting. The longer I work, even in simple black and white outlines, the more I see to his point of view. Taral]

GREAT MOMENTS IN LETTER-HACKING

#1



Writing the casual, offhand, witty letter of comment.

WJR

BRIAN EARL BROWN
11675 Beaconsfield, Detroit MI 48224

I don't like ghost stories, as I explained to Eric Mayer just recently. He'd published a lot of LoC's with spectral incidents in the new Groggy. Personally I hope to never meet a ghost. I don't believe in them; they have no place in a materialistic, atheistic universe. But late at night when I'm alone, my disbelief sometimes doesn't seem enough.

Your cat-ghost story was very well written, better than anything else I've seen of yours. Very evocative of time and place. I think you should consider doing what Eric is, and try to place the story with a professional mag, after excising the material about fandom, of course. Either Cat Fancy or the Saturday Evening Post seem a reasonable place to start. Eric, by the way, mentions a second sale, of his meteorite piece in MSD 9 to a secretaries' magazine.

Couldn't pass up a little U.S. bashing, could you, even if it's disguised as an article on Big-Time wrestling. I was waiting for the shoe to drop, and it did -- on page 16. Look! There are a lot of things the U.S. can be ashamed about, but for love's sake don't hold the entire country personally responsible for WWF wrestling! Once people went to geek shows to watch wino's bite the heads off chickens. (This was pre-Ozzy Osbourne.) Now they go to pro-wrestling matches. But that doesn't mean they're ready to bomb Russia back to the ice age, or anything like that. And it's television's fault anyway. After decades of I Dream Of Genie, Bewitched, and Good Times, television has severely impacted people's ability to distinguish between the ridiculous and the sublime. It was this impacted perceptual system that got Reagan elected, not any American desire to play Captain America with real guns, planes, and nukes. Americans, if you ever get the know any of them, are real sweet people who never gouge eyes when the ref isn't looking.

The problem, I think, is that people get into these American-bashing jags because they know the U.S. won't do anything about it, (because they're sweethearts). Only, enough gets to be enough, and we do a little bombing of Lybia, who you have to admit was asking for it. And that brings another round of America-bashing... because now we're NOT the easy-going sweat-hearts we're supposed to be. We can't win!

Anyway, having seen modern professional wrestling, I admit I can't see how it maintains its popularity. Sure, wrestlers are actors, but this crop are such BAD actors. You can SEE them not hitting their foes, faking throws, etc. You'd think they'd at least learn to fake a fight as well as a Hollywood stuntman! God, I don't want to talk about it.

All that aside, I do appreciate my plug for my Taff candidacy. And even the slogan ("He promises to return"), which I wouldn't have dared to use myself.

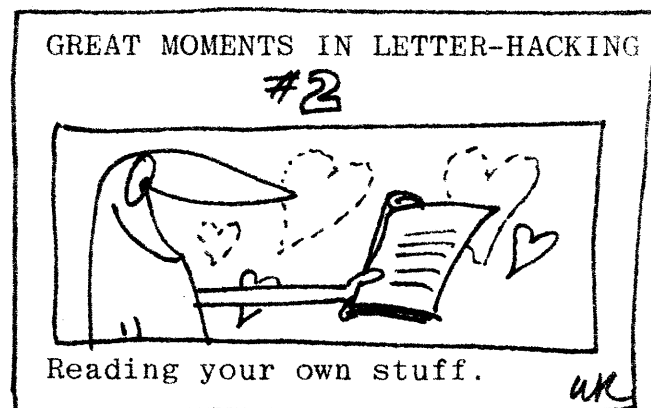
I liked the way you ran the Schirm portfolio. It avoided the crowding of putting more than one piece on a page, without drastically expanding the size of the issue. The little page numbers of Schirm's you used, I think, tended to be too small to really stand out. Perhaps they would have worked better stuck in a box in the corner in somewhat larger size, with the text running beside it to the bottom of the page.

I suspect the back cover (the Gestetner ink selector chart) was ripped off from work years ago, since I've seen the identical chart at Detroit's dealer. It would be nice to think, though, that you actually have all those colours. The truth, I think, is that Gestetner doesn't have half of them any more. Pity.

Susan Wood was not the only person fascinated with Van Loon's Lives. Steve Allen did a series

of programs called "Meeting of the Minds", in which actors impersonated various historical characters called to a round table discussion by moderator Allen. The show was carefully scripted, and the characters meshed well.

"Fan Loon's Lives" was well written and worth the extra length it took. I'll look forward to further "dialogs". Will you be using the same fannish myths or collecting a different group for the next session, and if so, who? I can't think of any archetypal fans other than the four you used last time. Maybe there could be a colloquium of fannish deities on myth-making. Or maybe you're planning to use famous deceased gaffiates like FTLaney, Degler, etc. (So what if Degler's still breathing...) By the way, hasn't Robert Asprin used "Mything Persons" as the title of one of his books?



[You really know how to hurt a guy, don't you? No, I don't think he has, and I certainly hope I'm right. There are some people I'm uncomfortable enough sharing a planet with, let alone a title.

There was another program that was very like "Meeting of the Minds". It was called "Witness to Yesterday", and was produced for the CBC by Patrick Watson. The series was so successful that a second was also produced, called "Titans". The only difference was that Watson interviewed one figure out of history at a time. I don't suppose it was at all an accident that Steve Allen once appeared on the show, to play the part of George Gershwin.

The Gestetner ink sheet was indeed pinched years ago, in 1977 to be precise, during the winter and spring I worked there. Since then they seem to have dropped an average of one colour a year, so that I'd be surprised if Gestetner stocked more than black, blue, red, and green any more. All too soon there may be no mimeo ink of any colour, to be had for love or money.

When I began the first Fan Loon's Lives I wasn't sure if there'd be another. But now I have the outline for a sequel, that'll be quite different from the first. Perhaps the less said, the better. The cast of real characters may pretty much have to remain the same. I can only write about the people I know, after all, and want a plausible social group as well. This rather limits me to you-know-who, though to be sure I regarded it less as a limitation than a challenge.

The arrangement of the Schirm folio was an idea I'd had kicking around for ages, but when it came to implementing it, I did the folio that way with relatively little forethought. The page numbering was also an experiment. I could do it again and again, until I get it just so, but I'm satisfied with having made the experiment with reasonable success just the one time. There are other experiments to try...

By the way, try not to blame YOURSELF for what thick-headed white-house aids and Neanderthal Navy fliers do in your name. You

didn't bomb Lybia, so you needn't feel ashamed in place of the people who ought to. After all, what are you, some sort of cell in a collectivist group mind called "America"? Down with everyone's nationalism, mine too! Taral]

PATRICK NIELSEN HAYDEN
75 Fairview #2D, New York NY 10040

New Toy was good, REALLY good, one of the best things I've ever seen from you, in fact. Editorial, faan fiction, an anecdote, and a story about the editor's cat -- sounds pretty grim to describe it that way, but I found it one of the freshest, most interesting fanzines I've read in months. Thanks.

Instead of telling myself that I'll write a lengthy letter full of printable response & personal gossip & meat & pith & all, and then never writing anything (my famous trick), though, I'll simply make the three comments that sprung forth most forcefully from my reading of your fanzines. 1) The story about the '30's fan you replaced with "Fan Loon's Lives" sounds great, and I don't see why you don't think there'd be a market for such a thing; F&SF and Asimov's publish oddball stuff like that all the time. If nothing else, do publish it in New Toy. 2) The last piece in the portfolio attached to your apazine made me gasp out loud, with the lovely Asterix takeoff. I really enjoy the books-that-never-were that you've been slipping into your art for the last several years. 3) Your marvelous piece on wrestling (quite successful both esthetically AND didactically, I thought), makes it sound as if Toronto fandom retains some similarities to my mental picture of it.

[(I have to admit to some self-indulgence in printing this letter of Patrick's, but he refers to some things I wanted an excuse to talk about. And in any case, egoboo from Patrick is nothing to dismiss too lightly. Unfortunately, in editing his two page letter for publication, I had to delete dated news about Teresa's health, unintelligible answers to forgotten questions, and remarks about getting together at Atlanta, etc. What remains is rather more an artifact of my editorial license than a letter by Patrick, but bear with me.)

1) I continue to have my doubts about the 30's story you mention, "Roach Motel", as commercial property. In all likelihood I'd have published it in New Toy. However, I got two or three inquiries about it before long. Steve Stiles was a little slower on the draw, and had to settle for my regrets. The early bird who got the worm, on the other hand, bides me to be silent about his identity. Something to do with his sense of the dramatic. This stifles my sense of total indiscretion, but I aim to please. In the end perhaps I can still try a professional market after "Roach Motel" has had a bit of fannish feedback.

2) The drawing is part of a folio that appeared in State of the Art. SotA is a zine I do quarterly for the funny-animal artists' apa, Rowrbrazzle. Brazzle probably isn't too well known in fannish circles since I think I'm one of the few current member with many ties to what I point at when I say "fandom". Yet there are several quite interesting members -- Jerry Collins, Brad Foster, Steve Gallacci, Joshua Quagmire, marc schirmeister, Jim Groat -- who are doing creative things in the indies, (independent comics). Brazzle takes up 60 of my 90 or 95 copy run of State of the Art. The extra copies are mailed to an extremely limited number of closer friends in fandom, not for any elitist reasons, but because I can't afford a quarterly postal bill on top of what it already costs to mail New Toy. The best I can do is to re-cycle whatever material in SotA that ought to have a wider audience. The interview with Rocky the Flying Squirrel is a case in point.

The drawing, "Alternate Worlds", appeared in SotA 8, but was done especially for the portfolio Dan Steffan published for the third Corflu. Copies of which, by the way, are almost certainly still available from Dan for \$3, in case you still haven't sent away for one. (I told you get one, pages and page ago, didn't I?) Sometime or other I must publish "Alternate Worlds" again. 3) What sort of mental picture of Toronto fandom did you mean? Characters like Red and Hadji? Or dull-witted louts groping each other in clumsily choreographed farces. Perhaps both are right, who knows? Taral]

GREAT MOMENTS IN LETTER-HACKING

#3



Reading your own stuff and discovering how much has been edited.

BRAD FOSTER
4109 Pleasant Run, Irving TX 75038

Liked the opening salvo of "Taraltorial Imperative", with your Mom giving the classic mom-reaction, "get a job". It's tough being a struggling artist, ain't it? Ya just don't get no respect.

Beautiful cover. Sure seems familiar, but can't place where I saw it before, unless it was in a mailing of Brazzle. Softness of the tones is lovely, even the "solid" of the tree feels like you could touch it like fur if you stroked the cover.

I hope you can, indeed, publish New Toy a couple of times a year. (And I remain fortunate enough to stay on the mailing list?) Don't see enough of your work around, so it'd be nice to know I can look forward to a large fix of Taralstuff a few times a year.

I've tried "Fan Loon's Lives" twice now, and gotten pretty lost both times. Just haven't been around fandom long enough to really be able to pick up on the background of the characters, which would obviously add to the enjoyment of the story. Still, maybe with more exposure I'll start to pick up on things through sheer osmosis, and be more receptive for future bits of fan writing in a like vein... or artery.

Hate to say this, but my very favourite item in the whole issue was non-Taral. I figure this is a one-time fluke, but that 'toon by Schirm on page 25 was a killer!

ERIC MAYER
1771 Ridge Rd. E., Rochester NY 14622

Thanks for New Toy. Beautifully produced -- the "Rotsler" insert was neat and the bacover very interesting, not to mention the excellence of the front cover. If this LoC is a bit short it's because my editorial in Groggy echoes many of your thoughts in "Taraltorial Imperative". In fact, I could practically have lifted certain paragraphs of your explanation of New Toy and used them myself. Yeah... I want Groggy to be something for me to play with.

I have to admit that I loved the idea for "Fan Loon's Lives", but not the article. No

offense... I doubt I'd enjoy anything that featured the Nielsen Haydens. I probably would hate it if Thurber had written an essay called "The Secret Life of Patrick Nielsen Hayden", or if Bester had written an SF novel called "Teresa, Teresa". Why lie to you? The illo was, however, terrific. Not that I'm going to hang it on my wall, but it was fascinating seeing the real and unreal personages reduced to, or elevated to, each other's same reality level -- or something like that.

However, I much enjoyed the other two articles. About ten years ago I had a momentary interest in wrestling which I haven't been able to regain despite the current mania. Heh -- fake is fake. I don't know why anyone would think that there's anything to be gained from scripting a sport. Baseball alone offers more drama, more unexpected twists, terrific plot-lines, soap operas, etc, etc, in a week, than wrestling can concoct in a year -- and real and utterly unpredictable things too. And any sport that doesn't feature the fabulous Moolah has got to be better than one that does. I think she became champ in 1957 or something like that. I remember seeing her beaten by Cyndi Lauper's wrestler, but I guess that must have been a long time ago. I can never keep up with the champions anyhow... there are so many, and things are always going on in places like Scranton.

Highlight was the article about the cat... a very evocative piece of writing... exactly the sort of thing I most enjoy in fanzines. Great job.

[After the Follies Bergeron, no matter who I wrote about, probably somebody, somewhere, would wish I'd written about someone else. It would be interesting in an academic way to try and assemble a totally inoffensive group of people, but I wonder if they'd be interesting to read about? Oh well. I don't know any totally inoffensive people anyway. Speaking of which... Taral]

GREAT MOMENTS IN LETTER-HACKING

#4



Mailing the letter, then reading something that proves you were wrong!

UR

AVEDON CAROL

9A greenleaf Rd, East Ham, London E6 1DX England

Your fanzines arrived yesterday. I thought they were pretty good. NT had your usual Book of Kells touch -- very nice production, ambitious work etc. I liked your story about the party at Corflu with Jophan et al showing up. I was particularly amused by your having the simple solution kept secret after talking about Van Loon. But you never make it clear whether you preferred the company of the fake people to real ones. Although you didn't exactly flatter the great myths -- still, you were pretty ambiguous about the results of your little experiment. By the end of it, I still remembered that it had started with a discussion of whether you liked real people.

[Oh? While it's true that I didn't say in so many words that I like real people better than the fictional ones, I thought my preference was stated well enough by the less than fully human performances by Jophan, Hoy Ping Pong, Goon Bleary, and Q. Wertyuiop. With one or two exceptions, the humans had the final word, and always had the subtler personalities. In the end, however, I decided that the myths and the people were one and the same if you knew how to look at them. Taral]

MIKE GLICKSOHN

508 Windermere Ave. Toronto Ontario, M6S 3L6

Well, as I promised, a LoC, albeit not of the quality it deserves, on New Toy. Not everything in the issue works for me but taken as a whole this is a tour de force, a marvelous demonstration of what one talented and imaginative person can do when putting together a fanzine. Congratulations on producing what will definitely be one of the top ten issues of the year!

The cover... well, I'm a little ambivalent about it. It's a great idea and I like the tree and the other gifts and the title tops it off neatly, but for me the actual POSE of the Kjolá is just a little too arch and cute. Maybe it'd help if I could somehow think of blue furry creatures that look like you as sexy?

I'd mention the small scattering of typos and dropped words in the issue but after what happened when I did that to Brian Earl Brown I'm scared to lose my place on your small and difficult to crack mailing list. So I won't say anything about them... weren't many, anyway... just a handful... not bad for a non-word-processed fanzine...

"The Ghost on My Bed" was good evocative fanwriting. I don't like cats but you made a pretty good case for Scratch while at the same time revealing a little about yourself, and making some good points about the changing nature of fandom. I'd rate this the best thing in the issue.

No, make that the SECOND best thing in the issue. The BEST thing in the issue (and how could it not be since it'll probably be the best thing in ANY issue of any fanzine this year) was the Rotsler letraset, which is a stroke of imaginative genius of which I stand in awe! Congratulations on conceiving such a thing and then executing it so beautifully!

When I was ill I used to attend wrestling matches at Maple Leaf Gardens, along with more than ten thousand other people each time. It took me six or eight visits to figure out it was all an act and lose interest, which I like to think indicates that the wrestlers back then were somewhat better actors than some of today's "stars". Still, while it's true that wrestling is a big-buck entertainment nowadays, don't dismiss the old days completely. At its height of popularity in the fifties, a so-called World championship wrestling card could pretty well fill the Gardens, so it wasn't exactly small-time stuff even then. (I think you're reading a little too much symbolic meaning into modern wrestling anyway. From the bouts I've seen lately, wrestling is still two or more large but out-of-shape hams making fools of themselves with patently absurd personae, aimed at mentally deficient children. Trying to make it a metaphor for modern American patriotism is stretching things from the evidence I've seen.)

"Fan Loons Lives" was a neat idea and the artwork for it is excellent, but for me the actual writing didn't come off. I got the impression you weren't quite sure where it was going to take you, so you wandered somewhat aimlessly around a few ideas without getting a focus on what you were going to do with the characters. (If you had a definite structure and concept behind the piece and I failed to see it,

I apologize, but I came away feeling nothing much had been accomplished.)

Summing up, the material is excellent, the artwork superb, the layout is imaginative, the typos are infrequent, and the issue is probably the best Canadian fanzine of the year. But you'll never hear me admit that, of course.

Please get a job. I want you to be able to afford this at least twice a year!

[It's ironic, or should I say perverse, that one of the things most raved about in the first issue was the Rotsler lettraset. I forget who said it, but someone told me that I'd probably get so sick of hearing how wonderful it was that I'd eventually regret I ever did it. I scoffed at the time. But you know... maybe he was right. It's not that I worked so much harder on this or that other thing in the issue, than on the Lettraset, as it is the dependency on the idea on there being a Bill Rotsler. It's a little like being a professional Elvis clone. As yourself, no-one would listen to you perform, and only because of Elvis do you have an audience. That's putting it a bit strongly, but I doubt Al Sirois lettraset, or even Taral lettraset would have had the same impact. Partly because the lettraset is a comment on Rotsler's long-term repetitiveness, but also because no-one is quite so emblematic as a fanartist. So... would I do it if I had it to do over again? You bet your beanie I would.

It wasn't so much that I was using pro wrestling as a metaphor for American patriotism as the WWF was using it as a metaphor for American patriotism. Why else all the red, white, and blue bunting, the national stereotypes, and "Born in the U.S.A."? But after all these months, I think it was a passing phase that maybe no-one but imbeciles ever took seriously. Signs point to the cresting of the wave of "Reganism" in the American psyche. There'll be conservative crustaceans in the tidal pools left behind, for some time to come, but we can hope that the worst of the absurdity is over.

By and large, what you say about "Fan Loon's Lives" is true. I kick around a few ideas, and it didn't matter much which ideas, or what conclusions were reached. But there was also a structure, a very rigid one in fact, that moved from the premise, to the introductions to the characters, to their arrival, to the party, to my thoughts at the end. The structure is identical to Hendrik Van Loon's. Not the best model, of course, but what can you do once you've decided to write a "Fan Loon's Lives" at all? Later "Lives" could explore other forms quite easily.

By far more vague than the structure were my intentions. Given that I didn't want to publish a very fannish zine, why did I write such a thing in the first place? Not merely because I'd had the idea, surely? To be honest, it was partly a appeasement, to the fans who I was afraid HAD to

have some fannish rigmarole or ignore the zine. But also it was a parody, an unhumorous ne plus ultra of a kind of writing that I'd seen an awful lot of in fashionable zines up 'till then, that I was beginning to get a little tired of. "Fan Loon's Lives" was a reducto ad absurdum of the trend, which even if it didn't end it, would at least cast a shadow of sorts across whatever came after. Did it? Was it worthwhile doing? Did I think anyone would notice or care? Those are questions I'm not even going to try to answer. My head-space must seem murky enough already.

To make it worse, I don't know whether to be delighted or disappointed that most readers preferred either of the other articles in the issue.

Get a job? While I might make enough to afford to publish more often, I wouldn't have time enough to publish more often if I held a job. Of the two trade-offs available, I prefer the status quo. Taral]

JOSEPH NICHOLAS

22 Denbigh St. Pimlico, London England SW1V 2ER

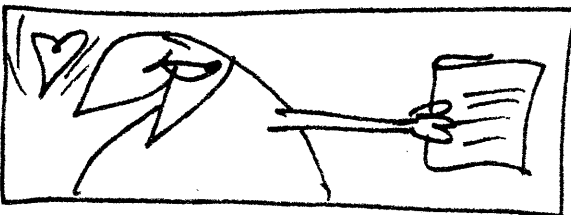
This fanzine of yours is... is... Not as bad as an issue of Holier Than Thou? Not as good as an issue of Fuck The Tories? Not as... not as good as it could have been, I think I have to say. "Fan Loon's Lives", for example, embodies a good deal of what I've always thought is wrong with much North American fanwriting -- namely, the transformation of an idea that's little better than an intellectual conceit into a fully-fledged article. (And never mind the question of who'd want to sit up all night discussing FANDOM anyway, with invented fannish caricatures or otherwise.) As an idea, summoning up Jophan et al for a night of raucous fun is okay -- but it should have been left as an idea. To dramatize it, to turn it into a story complete with dialogue and in-group references was a waste of time; the resulting piece is turgid, repetitive, unimaginative, overlong, and fucking pointless. And because it comes at the end of the fanzine it destroys all the good feelings that have been built up prior to it with "The Ghost On My Bed" and (particularly) "A Bout Faces". (All right, so the latter IS extremely ideologically correct. But it's also a good and illuminating piece about US political fundamentalism as mirrored in a debased popular US cultural form.)

On the other hand -- and on a more positive note -- I must applaud your comment in your editorial that you don't intend to print very long letter columns. I'd unload a recently-developed theory of why long letter columns are a pain and a thoroughly bad idea in order to demonstrate why I applaud this promise, but I as I suspect you've arrived at this position through a similar understanding you'd probably find little new in my elaboration of the underlying ideology. So instead I'll end this letter here.

[Not as bad as Holier Than Thou, and not as good as Fuck The Tories? Well, since we have have no room for false modesty here, you'll understand if I say that I have a fundamental disagreement with a part of that statement. And all but the wags among the readership will know what part. Your letter embodies a good deal of what I've always thought is wrong with much British criticism of North American fanwriting -- the central assumption that one's taste is writ into absolute literary standards, and proceed from that premise to break the offending deviation down into point by point errors. The same technique could find Hamlet or Hammet equally wanting, since neither happens to be British fan gossip. It's not so much that I disagree with your judgement of "Fan Loons Lives" as I dislike the pomposity and arrogance of

GREAT MOMENTS IN LETTER-HACKING

#5



Your first printed letter-of-comment.

upr

statements such as "Not as good as an issue of Fuck The Tories". (But what is, eh?) "What I've always found wrong with much North American writing". (Since Joseph Nicholas is the ideal model of what a fan writer should be.) "And who'd want to sit up all night discussing FANDOM anyway?". (Only people who write 28 page articles on fanzines I suppose.) Do you think this clumsy condescension goes over anyone's head, or is it just that you don't care? If I was half the ass you come across as sometimes, I might be tempted to reply in kind, but in fact I DO have standards to think of.

Also... I think you meant well for the most part. For all the snideness of certain remarks, the letter is not a slam. You liked parts, and lightened up where I was ideologically correct. Don't think I don't appreciate it. Let's say no more about this little exchange, shall we? Although I may have bitten back, I harbour no ill will.

Would that this letter column was as short as I promised. It already physically takes up eight pages, not three or four. But as you can see, I've shot the material down by 75%, so the actual length of my letter col is twice that, quite a bit more than I consider acceptable. Unfortunately, I edited the letters nearly as much as I could've, and thought they all said something worth printing. Maybe next time I'll be luckier, and nobody'll write. Tarall

CV CHAUVIN
14248 Wilfred, Detroit MI 43213

"Fan Loon's Lives" was the most notable (written) piece in this issue. I also read the Susan Wood article you note, and later bought a hard-cover copy of Van Loon's Lives when I ran across it at the Salvation Army bookstore for 50 cents. I'm afraid I couldn't get into it -- the concept obviously sounds fascinating, but what I read of the book wasn't. Maybe no-one really is at their best at dinner parties, even fictional ones. I'm not sure about your own "Mything Persons" room party. I like writing fan fiction, and so I naturally would want to encourage anyone who writes it (so few anymore). But sometimes I'm not sure what fan fiction is FOR -- just humour? Parts of "Mything Persons" are witty, some of the descriptions of the real fans are amusing, but as a whole I don't think of the story as funny. There is too much serious observation for it to be a belly-buster. "Myth that was pure invention was the best". I agree with that, and maybe what disappoints me most about your story is that it does not contain enough new invention. (Of course, I realize that you're writing about OTHER people's myths; but I can't help saying what I was HOPING for.) I also wish the story had a stronger plot. All these faults might be attributed to the model, and I am prejudiced against stories that depend overmuch on dialog too. But I think (after a second reading) that for a story that is about fannish myths, literally and thematically, "Mything Persons" is too close to a real room party for me to find satisfying. I would have preferred it to be more mythological; evidently, my appetite is more voracious in this regard than yours. So it goes.

Contrary to your comment that "myths based on real personalities were of an inferior order", what you are really disliking about "smoothing, bush hats, and pissing on British shoes" is that they've become cliches, used without imagination by those who don't stop to think of something better.

And I wrote elsewhere that I was tired of all this self-analysis of fandom, *sigh*.

GREAT MOMENTS IN LETTER-HACKING

#6



Trying to do better than Harry Warner, Jr.

HARRY WARNER JR.

423 Summit Ave, Hagerstown MD 21740ln1

It has been just over twenty-five years since I lived up to the phony achievement some fans insist on crediting me with, that of loocing all fanzines I receive. Over the long run, I probably write LoCs on two-thirds of the fanzines that come in, improving on that rate during good stretches like the past few weeks, falling far from that rate during other periods. I'm not systematic by nature and I can't bring myself to arrange some sort of schedule which would insure skipping LoCs in a way to cause each fanzine editor to be neglected exactly as often as the others. Nobody in fandom writes as many LoCs as I do over the long haul, and I'm sure there are lots of other fans on your mailing list whose LoCs you've spotted in other fanzines while they've failed to LoC yours. If you think I should improve on my reliability rate, I challenge you to a simple experiment: for the next six months, every time you feel in the mood to work on a drawing or go to a fan party or attend a convention, resist that impulse and spend the time writing LoCs instead. Long before the six months have passed, you'll inevitably find yourself failing to write a LoC and partying or con-going or drawing instead. I like to do other things than write LoCs too.

I hope that index to Canadian fanzines gets into print. Do you realize that it will be the first large-scale research project emerging from fandom since Joe Siclari published A Wealth Of Fable eight or ten years ago? It's almost 35 years since the last all-encompassing fanzine index was compiled and I don't think there's any faint hope that it will ever be updated. The best we dare hope for is projects like yours, covering manageable hunks of the total fanzine output by geographical areas or subject matter.

I can't remember too well how closely your "Fan Loon's Lives" matches the style and content of the original. Under this disadvantage, I reacted by finding some of it excellent, some of it unsatisfactory. The basic concept is good and I liked the leisurely, detailed way in which you prepared the reader for the actual encounter with these fannish myths. But I was disturbed by what seemed to be an under-current of bad humour, as if you were letting off some fannish steam in some of the paragraphs. It was particularly unfair to make fun of Teresa's physical problems. One's voluntary actions are fair game for satire but it's bad taste to extend it to the things one can't help. You didn't seem to know what to do with Hoy Ping Pong who shows in the narrative nothing resembling the real HPP, and Goon Bleary's conversation didn't ring true. There are also mistakes involving fan slang and fan history. It's FIJAGH, not FIJAGDH. The Goon Defective Agency owes something to The Goon Show, not just to John Berry's occupation. It was Bob Tucker, not Walt Willis, who invented and

popularize Joe Fann a decade or more before The Enchanted Duplicator; I don't know why Walter spelled it Jophan but I could conjecture that it was meant to make the name look somewhat more like Christian. There was never a lawsuit in FAPA. The feminists have probably already informed you about your discriminatory use of male myths only from general fandom when women like Madge and Joan Carr could have been introduced.

GREAT MOMENTS IN LETTER-HACKING

#7



Self-serving praise under a pseudonym.

[Lest anyone think Harry is getting rather grumpy in his old age, I have to admit that I strongly urged him to LoC the last ish. Not quite Or Else, but I don't think Harry had written to one of my zines since 1980 or '81, and I may have emphasized the point a wee tiny bit peremptorily...

I was led to believe that, far from being offended, Teresa enjoyed the portrait of her in "Fan Loon's Lives". Certainly there was no under-current of bad humour intended, and I'm surprised that the piece read that way to you. All I can say is that bad taste is in the mouth of the beholder, and perhaps it represents a generational difference. Other fans your age may have found the humour of Teresa's sleeping spells in equally poor taste, but were too polite to mention it.

Crediting Jophan (or Joe Fann) to Willis was a colossal mistake that embarrasses me, as an apprentice-fanhistorian. The problem of Hoy Ping Pong's personality is another matter though. Bob Tucker wrote me a postcard pointing the same discrepancy out that you did. Nevertheless, he said, he had enjoyed my interpretation. To construct a personality for Pong I went through a couple of dozen issues of Le Zombie and copies I had of several other contemporary zines as well. All told I only found about a half dozen or ten items ostensibly by Pong. Few of them said anything about Pong at all, or were written in any distinctive way. They might as well have been signed "Tucker". The only clues I had was one comic page that showed Pong as Chinese, and one "interview" with some stage-British idioms. I gambled and put the two pieces together, and as it happened I was wrong. But interestingly wrong, I hope.

The reference to a lawsuit in Fapa was mere hyperbole, a literary device rather than stated as fact. And Joan Carr was a hoax, something altogether different from a mythical person. There's no lack of the mythical femme-fan though. You overlook a character in "Fan Loon's Lives" who is every bit as female as she is fictional. Need I name her, or have I been banging my head against a wall for the fifteen years I've been in fandom?

The Canadian fanzine bibliography is in the hands of Mike Hall of Edmonton. My work is more or less done. I have to proof-read the print-out yet, and I might still turn up some older Canadian zines. Mike is continuing to look for

current zines, apazines, and whatnot, but the main hold-up seems to be personal. When Mike gets his act together we can shape the index up for publication fairly quickly, but I'm afraid neither of us knows when that'll be. There's another bibliographical project I thought you'd know about -- Bruce Pelz's. He's compiled a huge index of fanzines to the present day, and plans to publish it in his retirement I believe. It hasn't been kept up to date, and was never finished past "s", but even in an incomplete state it's an important document. Fortunately, I think there are a few copies in various hands. (I traded an early copy of the Canadian index for one.) So even if Bruce is crashed on by a falling airliner next week, we only have the one loss to mourn over. Taral]

JOHN BERRY

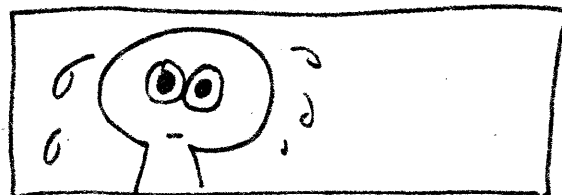
4 Chilterns, S. Hatfield, Herts AL10 8JU England.

Have just received New Toy, and as if by ESP I immediately turned to page 17 and the magnificently fannish "Fan Loon's Lives". I am naturally extremely pleased that the article coincided with the first issue of Retribution, and must earnestly congratulate you on the clever way you wrote about Goon Bleary after the thirtieth anniversary. You manipulated the mythical characters so well with their idiosyncratic tendencies in the beautifully written article, and insofar as Bleary is concerned you managed to adeptly describe his air of complete utter bewilderment. I am certainly proud and yet a little humble that you chose Bleary as one of your characters, and hope that the younger element of fandom will be duly fired to find out all they can about this elemental faanishness.

[I begin to feel as if the reader's response to this piece depends muchly on his fascination with fannish myth itself, rather than with fandom. Taral]

GREAT MOMENTS IN LETTER-HACKING

#8



Trying to achieve a delicate balance of criticism, praise, flattery, wit, and snobbery.

WALT WILLIS

32 Warren Rd, Donaghadee, Northern Ireland, BT 21 OPD

Thank you very much for New Toy 1, and also for the admonitory postcard. I had had at the back of my mind an uneasy feeling where you were concerned but I couldn't understand how it arose because I thought I had solved my fanac problem, after a fashion. Up until about two years ago I was continually putting superior fanzines in a Safe Place so that I could write a proper letter about them, and somehow those letters never got written: you can see that the better the fanzine the more likely it was that I would appear to ignore it. This would simply Not Do. So in desperation I resolved to change my entire approach: I would give up on letters altogether, it being the open-ended nature of the commitment they implied that was daunting me. I bought an

SLR camera and started making my own picture postcards, in the hope that at least one side of the message would be of some interest. Well, it worked, at least to the extent that in a few weeks I was actually up-to-date on my fanac, a condition which I don't think had obtained since early 1949. Those postcards are the LoCs you've been seeing in various fanzines... I doubt: if I wrote more than four actual letters in the whole of last year. Your card spurred me to turn up DNQ 33 to try and find what happened, and I see it must have arrived during the worst of that period of frustration: indeed I suspect it was the turning point, for I can feel again on reading your note on the envelope about the relationship between The Miscarriage of Heaven and Hell, and The Enchanted Duplicator that a long letter was called for. The problem from my point of view is that your piece and mine are so very different in nature it is difficult to compare them. I could no more write something like TMOHaH than fly to the moon. It is very impressive, and I admire it immensely, but I find it quite impossible to say anything constructive about it.

I felt about "Fan Loon's Lives" much the same as about TMOHaH. Obviously our minds work in quite different ways at times; at others, curiously similar. I feel I should re-read these two pieces, and I may just do that.

Meanwhile, thanks again for sending me New Toy, and for your forbearance in the past. I would feel a sense of real loss if I were to slip off your mailing list, and I'm grateful for the last minute warning.

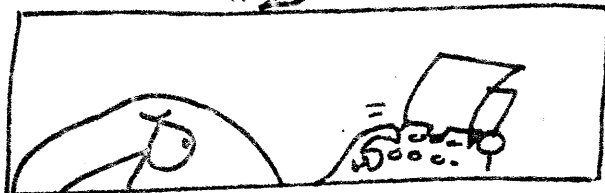
[I feel more than a little guilty. As you can see, Harry wasn't the only one I threatened with extreme measures if they didn't respond to the last issue. (I haven't even reproduced LeeH's postcard, which made me even more ashamed of my brazen demands for attention.) Don't think that I like badgering the fannish saints for a bit of paltry egoboo; I don't. Unfortunately I hadn't anyway of knowing whether or not MY attentions were wanted. I have a limited number of copies, and even more limited money for postage, and fervently needed some assurance that those New Toys sent to people I had never heard from were not wasted. It seems that I can relax. At least for another few issues, when I get insecure again and ANYthing goes... And you hoi-polloi had best play it safe. Ask yourself after every issue, what have you done for me lately? If you don't remember; write. Tarall]

I ALSO HEARD FROM

Mark Ashworth -- Richard Bergeron -- Ned Brooks
 -- Nancy Bruce -- Steve Forty -- Steve Gallacci
 -- Charles Garofalo -- George Giguere -- Jim Groat -- Colin Hinz -- Lee Hoffman -- Crad Kilodhy -- Eric Lindsay -- Pat Mueller -- Lloyd Penny -- Joshua Quagmire -- Stu Shiffman -- Keith Soltys -- Pascal Thomas -- Bob Tucker -- Jean Weber -- Pam Wells
 ...and Jay Ward, whose kind remarks on the Rocky interview will appear in the next issue

GREAT MOMENTS IN LETTER-HACKING

#5



Trying to write funny but make it look easy.

ART

JAN.	-	"Coup d'Etat"	-
FEB.	561	"Incognito"	Fan Toons
	562	"The Ghost On My Bed"	New Toy 1
	563	"A Bout Faces"	New Toy 1
	564	"Fan Loon's Lives"	New Toy 1
	565	"Trick-Sha"	File 770
	566	"Sporting Goods"	Duprass 2, SotA
MAR.	567	"Chip 'n Dale"	Duprass 1
	568	"Bubble Gum Card"	New Toy 2, SotA
	569	"Our Lady of the Morning Star"	Duprass 2
	570	"Basic Facts About the Common House Gamin"	(Duprass), SotA
	571	"The Machine Maid"	New Toy 2
	572	"Bed and Boarder"	(Duprass), SotA
APR.	573	"Torah, Torah, Torah"	(Potsherds)
	574	"Unca Roscoe Wants You"	Squinch
	575	"Chateau Roneo"	(Mainstream)
	576	"Free Fall Faned" b&w	-
	577	" " " " screen	Squinch, SotA
	578	" " " " tone	-
MAY	579	"Interview with Rocky the Squirrel"	New Toy 2, SotA
	580	"Ditto"	flyer
JUN.	581	"Nutz To You"	Nutz
	582	"Miniatures"	dollhouse
	583	"Graveside"	-
JUL.	584	"Cartoonist's Block"	(Stuff)
	585	"Wayne Efforts"	Excentric
AUG.	586	"Graveside Reader"	-
	587	"Free Fall Faned" color	(t-shirt)
	588	" " " " "	-
SEP.	589	"Mimeo Maid"	Excentric
	590	"Mesozoic Miss"	(BSFan), SotA
	591	"Aftermath"	book catalog
OCT.	592	"Cheesecake"	SotA,
	-	"Last Water"	-
	-	"DMZ"	-
	593	"Orca"	Orca (1976)
	594	"Vis a Vis"	(BSFan)
	595	"Temptation"	(Duprass)
NOV.	596	"Mistaken Identity"	(Duprass)
	597	"Share & Share Alike"	(Duprass)
	598	"The Philosopher's Stone"	-
	599	"Private Library"	(see #506)
DEC.	600	"B'r'er Saara & the Tar Baby"? 3/4 finished	-
	601	"Electric Paper Mill"	bis. card
	?	"Asterix & the Girl From Over the Sky"? 1/2 pencil	-
	?	"Check Your Guns At the Door"? rough pencil	-
COLOR	576	"Free Fall Faned"	1 copies
COMIC	-	"Heart of Dixie"	2 pages
VIDEO	-	"New Toy" (about art)	Nov.

WORDS

FEB.	"Blue Corflu Blues"	New Toy 2
	"Huitzilopochtli Effect"	Texas SF Inq.
APR.	"The Tsaddik of the Seven Wonders" -- revision	Novoid
	"Last Rights" -- revised in July (originally "Just Deserts")	New Toy 2
MAY	"Interview with Rocky the Squirrel"	New Toy 2
JUN.	"Random Access Memory" -- fanzine reviews.	(Mainstream)
	"Manifesto to John Crosby, Minister of Justice" -- protest of censorship.	-
JUL.	"First Contact" -- interview of Saara Mar (questions by Moshe Feder).	New Toy ?
?	"(R)"	-
	"Enemies"	-

FANZINES

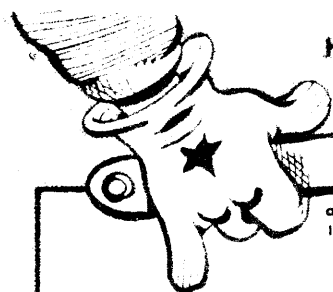
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MAR.	State of the Art 7 (apa)	162
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	State of the Art 8 (apa)	163
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?	Interview With Rocky the Squirrel	-



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