



JERK CARTER.

XENIUM 2.5

is finally being published by Mike Glicksohn, 141 High Park Avenue, Toronto Ontario M6P 2S3, Canada. As always, it is being published because the editor wants to have the fun of putting it all together and sending it out to his friends and fellow fanzine freaks, and naturally it would not appear in the form that it does without the support and help of a goodly number of talented writers and artists to whom the editor is deeply indebted. This issue will not be going to FAPA (Dave Locke was right) and will thus go to quite a few people who haven't seen it before. They are asked not to enjoy it too much, since future issues may go back into the primordial abyss of the Eofan's Graveyard, should my activity credits fall due around publication time. XENIUM is not available for traditional fannish indications of interest, although contribution of acceptable written or drawn material will cause it to appear with incredible lack of regularity in your mailbox. Letters are a delight to receive, even though they may not be published. Martinis, Bloody Marys, Black Russians or shots of Chivas Royal Salute are coin of the realm for any fanzine I publish.

SSScotch Press #45

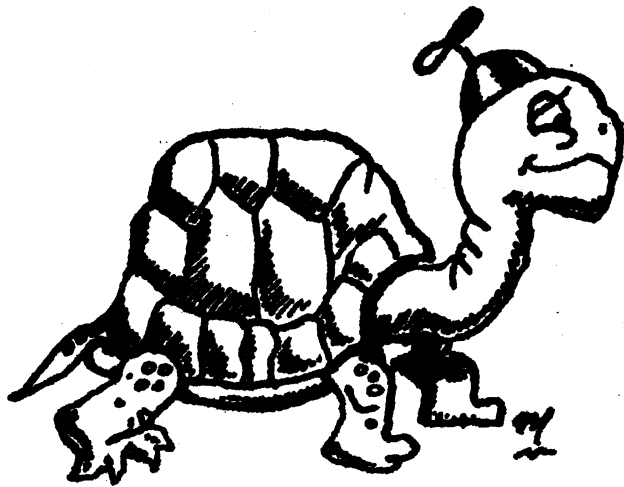
November
October 1975

And think it soon when others cry, 'Too late'.
Elizabeth Barrett Browning

It's been a full ten months since I last published an issue of XENIUM, and I mean that adjective "full" in all its senses. One of the reasons I initially began the publication of this highly-irregular fanzine was that I could produce it on a schedule that suited myself, instead of feeling overly obligated to my readers. However, I never really intended for it to be an annual, which would be perfectly acceptable were I doing it entirely by myself. But I'm not, and my contributors should not have been kept waiting this long. I apologize for the delay, and hope that someone somewhere out there will be willing to take the chance on sending me something for a future issue. Otherwise I'll have to write it all myself, and that's no way to win a FAAN Award for best single issue.

The Year of Our Lord Nineteen Hundred and Seventy Five has been a busy, rewarding, enjoyable and above all expensive time. I've already been to ten conventions so far in four different countries, and have travelled approximately forty-five thousand miles for that and other purposes. Faced with the imminent threat of an expensive teachers' strike at the end of this month, I did the only reasonable thing and bought myself a five hundred dollar colour TV set. To my credit, though, I've discovered a palatable scotch that's two dollars a bottle cheaper than the brand I had been drinking, so I'll pay off the Sony Trinitron in a year or so...

This issue of XENIUM is The All Pets Issue I've been contemplating for some time. In addition to whatever the shoebox and the scotch bottle will produce from Ye Editor, there is material from John J Alderson, in his own unique brand of Australian English, a well known Australian fan who raises sheep for a living, and by Joe Haldeman, a little known American pro who raises goats by entirely different methods and for entirely different purposes. There is matter both frivolous and of import herein and it is to be hoped it will entertain and enlighten you. The issue is herewith dedicated to the memory of that Boa Wonder of the snake world, LARSON E... sniff...



The time of the singing of birds is come,
and the voice of the turtle is heard in
our land.

The Song of Solomon

The events of the first ten months of 1975 could easily fill several fanzines, and in fact, the three weeks spent in Australia and New Zealand will do just that once I find a few weeks free from other fannish obligations. If the teachers' strike does materialize in a couple of weeks, and if the seemingly unavoidable mail strike happens next Wednesday, I'm going to have a fair amount of free time with no fanzines to read and no locs to write. Maybe I'll

be able to get my Aussiecon report out before Rusty publishes his DUFF report, which certainly would be a wonderful thing. But that has to do with koalas and wombats and Tasmanian devils, and they are scarcely pets.

There were many other trips, of one sort or another, that happened during the long hiatus between issues which will probably never get written up in the detail they probably don't deserve. Huh? There was another trip to England, brief and hectic and unexpected, to attend the British Eastercon and renew friendships established last summer. And drink copious quantities of Guinness, the world's best brew. There were conventions in Ann Arbor, with Johnny Walker induced artificial calms that dissolved upon the completion of certain public speaking obligations into quivering masses of helpless hirsute hopelessness, and in Washington, where certain inept individuals sat behind the wheel of automobiles for the first time in aeons and endured with stoical patience the indignities of a small-minded and petty Thunder God, and in Kansas City, where a promising acting career was nipped in the bud while a hotel with delusions of grandeur was revealed to wear the Emperor's new clothes, and in Toronto, where a half-decade of good Canadian fannish reputation swirled drearily down the drain amid an otherwise dry and partyless weekend, and in Chicago, where the highlight of the con was a marvellous cheap double martini in the bar, and various people did various things not exactly in character. But conventions may deal with animals, though they rarely touch on pets, so...

There was, however, a five week tour of the eastern United States with Sheryl Birkhead that included such potentially fanzine-filling activities as the launch of the Apollo half of the Apollo-Soyuz amalgamated propaganda-making mission, a visit to the Mammoth Caves, tours of Underground Atlanta with their quart-sized rum punches, Disney World with its quart-sized colony of red ants inside our tent, and the St. Louis Museum of Natural History with its quart-sized Director whose Title escapes me at the moment. So let me tell you about my tortoise...

Amidst all the exciting tentative- and pseudo-plans behind the six thousand mile, five week hegira throughout a sizeable portion of the United States that I shared with Sheryl this summer was an underlying hope/expectation that we might encounter a snake and/or a tortoise on our travels. It has long been apparent to me that there is a conspiracy afoot to deprive me of exactly the sort of fannish pets that I've traditionally been associated with. Some of you will be aware that I once had a snake of a certain legendary reputation, and a tortoise of considerably lesser notoriety. Both unfortunately died, in spite of my best efforts on their behalf. Since those sad days I have been constantly made aware that the appearance of snakes and tortoises is a regular feature of the lives of just about everybody around me. Except me, of course. Friends, associates, colleagues and newspaper-salesmen I've met remark on the latest incident in which a black snake has forced itself into their domestic tranquil-

ity, or a tortoise has imposed its unwanted presence upon them. On the subway I hear commuters remarking on the relative absence of black snakes of late: "Haven't had a black snake in the house since Thursday," one will observe, upon which his companion will snort something to the effect of "Hmph, you haven't been around our neighbourhood lately, that's obvious..." It all seems remarkably unfair.

The world seems to be filled with people who go around shooting, tromping or running in terror from a simple snake I'd be delighted to take home for a pet. And tortoises, you ask about tortoises? If there's a motorist in America who hasn't run over a tortoise in the last few weeks I've yet to find him. One could almost envision a monstrous lottery of the turtle kingdom, with thousands of noble losers rushing under the wheels of passing automobiles for some unknown and ancient form of expiation. So it seemed reasonable to hope that in a lengthy motoring tour of the eastern states, we might encounter a few of this ubiquitous creatures.

Of course, we didn't. Or almost didn't. We twice spotted dead snakes on the road, and on several occasions passed the shells of crushed tortoises. And in Florida we had the depressing experience of encountering numerous dead and mangled armadillos by the side of the road. I hadn't known these creatures were so common, and even remarked on that fact to my host of the time, truefan Jay Haldeman. Jay explained that they were known throughout Florida for their remarkable ability to lie crushed and lifeless by the side of roads...

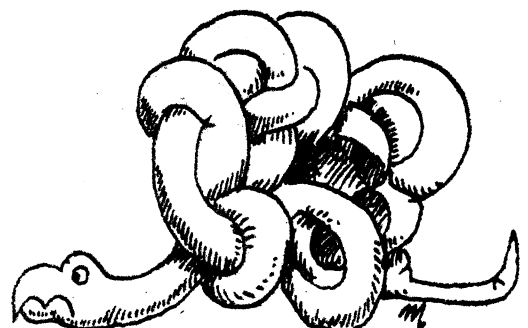
Once, speeding through the inky blackness of some little-known state like Arkansas or Louisiana with me at the wheel getting my first taste of night driving and Sheryl fitfully dozing beside me whenever she fainted from the nervous strain, we did pass a large tortoise by the side of the road. I stopped the car in record-setting time and had the delightful experience of backing up in total darkness by the side of a second-rate country road. It was all for naught, though. When I'd backed about as far as I thought I ought to, an intense investigation showed that The International Conspiracy To Keep Glicksohn Tortoiseless had used the intervening minutes to abscond with the beast and leave a large chunk of cast-off retread in its place. At times it is a cruel universe we live in.

By the time we'd gotten back to Gaithersburg, some fifty six hundred snakeless miles after starting off from Cincinnati, I'd pretty much resigned myself to living alone once I got back to Toronto. (My roommate of the past two years was moving away while I was voyaging, abandonning backgammon games and glasses of scotch with me for the comforts of his wife and home in Ottawa. Some people have strange standards.)

The morning we left Maryland for Toronto, we'd gone about nine miles when we rounded a corner to find a box tortoise ambling across the road in front of us. If the windows in the car hadn't been open, my yell would probably have shattered the windshield. Sheryl managed to miss the beast, I leapt from the rolling car, and dashed back down the road. Another car came round the corner at about sixty, and I had visions of seeing it roll right over my new pet right before my eyes, but luck was finally with me and the tortoise was in the right part of the road for the car to drive over it instead of on top of it. Chortling happily to myself, I picked him/her up and placed him/her in the back of the car, down on the floor in front of the back seat.

"Do you think it'll be all right back there?" Sheryl asked.

"Oh sure," I said with every confidence. "I've checked and it's too big to get under the front seat, and I don't think it could climb over that hump in the middle of the floor. It'll be trapped right where it is."





It was, of course, to laugh! We'd stumbled on the only tortoise in America who was training to scale Everest. It was a matter of mere minutes before the beast had scrambled over the hump and was exploring the over side of the back seat. So I brought it back to the area behind the passenger side of the front seat and started erecting a fruitless assortment of barriers to try and keep it there.

Pillows, suitcases, bags and a motley collection of other impediments were stuck between the two sides of the back seat, all to no avail. Eventually, with the singleminded stubbornness that has made tortoises famous since the days of the ancient Greeks, the creature would somehow clear the barrier, sometimes actually climbing onto the back seat, sometimes tumbling with a noisy thump onto the floor the other side of the separation. Oh, it would fall flat on its back the first dozen or so attempts, but it was not easily discouraged. Arching its neck an amazing length, it would firmly plant the point of its beak on the floor and, like a wrestler doing neck bridges, rise up and flip itself over to attack the hill once more. Much of the time between Gaithersburg and New York was spent trying to find the tortoise and return it to where we could keep an eye on it.

And that wasn't all. I was driving along the Jersey Turnpike at one point, when I suddenly found a tortoise climbing on my right foot. My scream of surprise woke Sheryl who managed to extricate him/her from under the accelerator but from then on it was even more fun trying to keep track of the thing. At one point I had to drive for about thirty miles with the tortoise firmly wedged under the brake pedal. It was impossible for me to get at it, and Sheryl was asleep. Rather than wake her up I took the chance that I wouldn't have to stop before she awoke: if anything had happened, though, it would have been goodbye Mr. Tortoise.

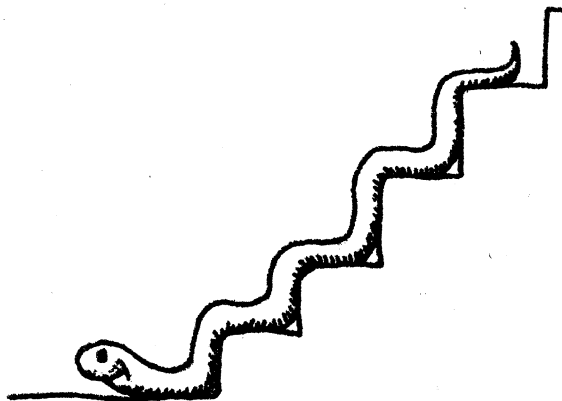
After several hours of picking the tortoise out of the front seat, the back seat and all points in between, and still not knowing whether to refer to it as him or her, I decided on a name for the beast. So please welcome Hillary to the legendary set of fabulous fannish inhabitants of the Glicksohn zoo. It's a safe asexual cognomen as well as perfectly suited to a creature that sneers at vertical surfaces and has its sights set on Olympus.

Carrying Hillary into Canada promised to be a mite dicey, since I'm not at all sure there isn't some Federal regulation against knowingly transporting tortoises across the International border for purposes moral or otherwise. (Never mind that hundreds probably scramble back and forth on their own every year, no-one expects the government to be logical, and I didn't feel inclined to risk Hillary to find out.) It seemed reasonable to try placing him in an empty Kleenex box (you'll note I think of Hillary as male, but that's merely the overt sexism I've long been famous for) and putting that under the front seat. We'd have to hope that his scrabbling about would not be noisy enough to pique the curiosity of the Customs' official investigating the car.

Well, ~~Howdy~~ Hillary had a few thoughts about that subject. The Kleenex box managed to contain him for about a minute and a half, after which time he was merrily trundling across the tops of my shoes once more. When the border suddenly appeared in front of us (they didn't actually move it, just redesigned the approaches since I last crossed at Niagara, so it sort of snuck up on me) I barely had time to grab Hillary and wedge half of him under the front seat beneath me. I sat there in beatific innocence, hoping my feet would hide the indignantly scrabbling rear legs of my latest acquisition, and by some remarkable stroke of good fortune the pleasant lady border guard allowed us across with just a verbal declaration and without stopping us to look through the car. Hillary had reached civilization safely!!

Remarkable creature though he/she is, Hillary has turned out not to be a Renaissance Tortoise. Hisher scaling ability far outshines any spelunking talents the noble beast possesses.

I live on the second floor of a house and my rooms are reached by two short sets of stairs at right angles to each other with a landing in between. The door that separates me from the landlady below is on the first floor level and I pointed this out to Hillary when I first set him loose to explore the place. I was confident that the sense of self-preservation would be firmly instilled into his reptilean genes. Ho, ho, ho...



I was sitting at the typewriter engaged in one of my periodic attempts to improve the quality of OUTWORLDS by pretending there had been good things in the latest issue when I heard Bomp-bomp-bomp-bomp-bomp-bomp-bomp and soon found Hillary stuck on his back on the landing below the top set of stairs. Returning him to the proper plane of his existence, I once again pointed out the essential difference between climbing upwards and falling down and left him to be more careful of his shell in the future.

I'd scarcely renewed my encouragement of fandom's foremost feeble faned when...Bomp^{7th} once more. Well, maybe Hillary doesn't learn too quickly but my broad mental horizons were filled with visions of countless hours wasted trudging up and down stairs to rescue my dumb little friend, an endeavour only slightly less useful and interesting than the reading of crudzines, and I decided to Do Something to forestall such a development. (This decisiveness and adaptability is what separates man from turtle, I suppose, and explains why no known turtle has ever invented calculus, made a passable martini or published a Hugo-winning fanzine.)

And that explains why visitors to my extremely humble abode have to step over a wooden barrier at the top of the stairs. It may not be exactly esthetic, but harmony now reigns between us and a successful conclusion has been brought about to yet another exciting chapter in the history of the interdependance of man and tortoise. I feed and water him, and in return, late at night, he protects me against pink elephants, a veritable plague of which seems to have infested the area. It's an enjoyable and mutually-rewarding symbiotic relationship...and beside all that he already plays a better game of backgammon than my ex-roommate.

AND NOW...A WORD FROM OUR ROTSLER

"I want to thank those who voted a Hugo for me. I first learned about it when Harlan Ellison called and woke me up. 'Congratulations,' he said. I mumbled something about what for. 'You and I won a Hugo last night in Australia,' he said. Then he did something that a lot of people do or think. 'What's this make, your second? Third?'

The notion that I have observed is that people think Fan Artist Hugos go back to 1953 when the "other" Hugos started. And that Bjo Trimble, Arthur "Atom" Thompson and I somehow had all collected a number of Hugos back in this medieval period of fandom.

'Taint so, folks. The Fan Artist Hugos started in 1967 with Jack Gaughan winning both Fan and Pro awards. Since then Vaughn Bode, George Barr, Alicia Austin and I have won one each, and Tim Kirk has won four. I think this attitude has lost Bjo

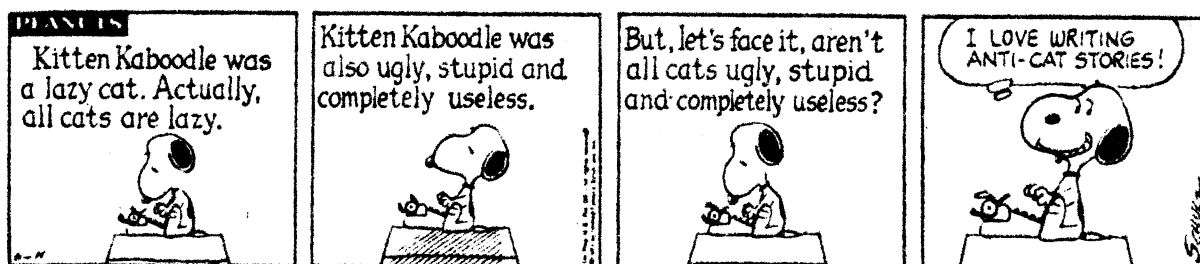
and Atom well-deserved Hugos and may explain (among other reasons, I'm sure) why they are producing less these later years.

But I certainly thank those who voted for me. It will probably make Tim Kirk feel more comfortable, too. He was getting embarrassed and kept mumbling things like 'This should be yours' and stuff like that.

And I thank those who also voted me the first FAAN Artist (Humorous) award. It's nice to be liked."

-----Bill Rotsler

Of all the Hugos I've seen given out at nine awards' banquets, Bill, none was deserved more than this long-overdue recognition of your ability and generosity and of the position you hold in the world of fanzines and have held for over quarter of a century. The wheels of justice may grind exceedingly slow, but sometimes they do get to where they should have been years before. Congratulations, Bill, and personal thanks for all the many things you've done for me in the last five years. (Take heart, Bowers; only fifteen more years to go...)



INFERIORITY FELINE

More than three decades ago, in one of fandom's less admirable chapters of history, a somewhat unreliable man named Degler caused a few raised eyebrows with an idea called The Cosmic Circle and a slogan "Fans are Slans." Although Cosmic Claude was eventually debunked and disappeared into the pages of ALL OUR YESTERDAYS, it was the man himself who raised the ire of his peers, and to this day there are many who feel his belief in the superiority of fans was justified. "Fans are Slans" may have its historically humorous connotations but its vitality as a serious statement of fan-nish philosophy is remarkable, despite the monstrous body of proof to the contrary.

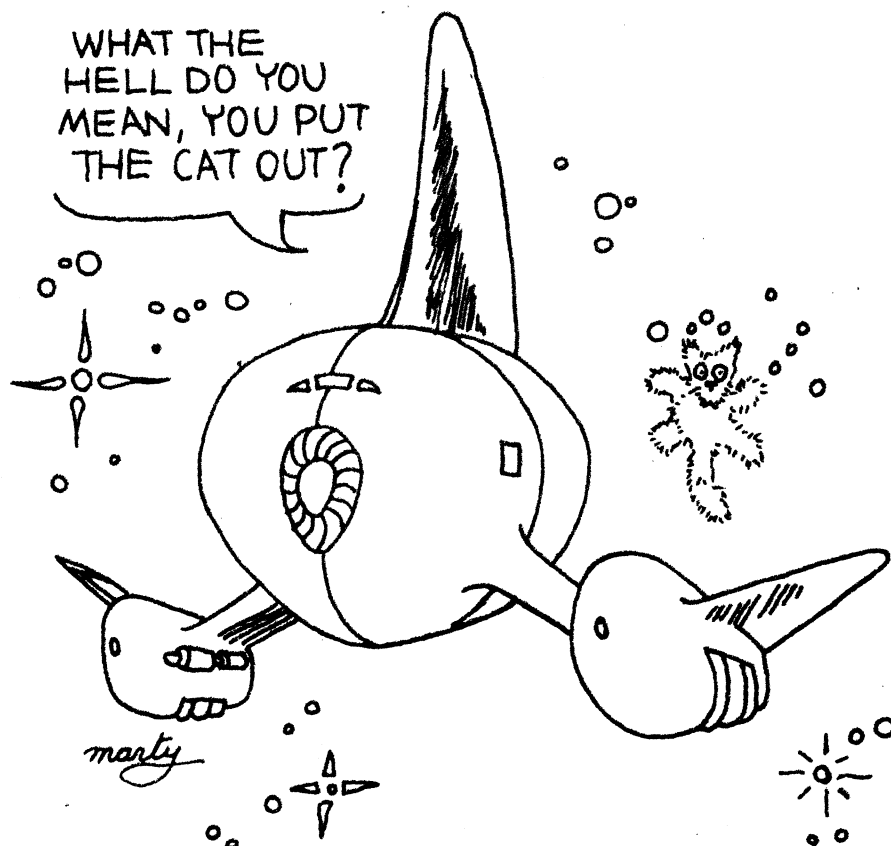
As anyone who has had sufficient contact with fandom (that is, has met two other fans) can tell you, fandom is filled with fuggheads. This alone suffices to lay low the slannish belief as any sort of generally applicable description. However, it is also true that many people in fandom are creative, talented and truly fine individuals. Perhaps these are the slans among us?

I do not think so. I haven't thought so for a long time. And the evidence is clear and obvious to all. Even among fandom's elite, the group from whom Homo Superior might conceivably emerge, there exists incontrovertible evidence of a definite lack of superior discernment. I refer, of course, to fandom's unfathomable preoccupation with and affection for that lowliest of creatures, the cat.

This aberration of feline fancying is widespread and in the face of the incredible range of possible sources of companionship and solace, both animate and in-, the selection of so worthless a being is bizarre indeed. Selfish, demanding, petty, inconsiderate, aloof, unrewarding...the adjectives that spring readily to mind when

To be fair in these matters, though, it must be admitted that some cats have a certain physical attractiveness, especially as kittens. But invariably they grow up to be actual cats, and most lose even that virtue. At this point, the sensible thing to do would be to toss the animal in with a nearby python and start over again with a fresh kitten. But few cat-owners are capable of such logical reasoning. And how can one even think of comparing the cross-eyed spiteful malevolent ugliness of a typical Siamese cat with, say, the sheer beauty and elegance of a bottle of twelve-year-old Chivas Regal? There simply is no comparison...

No bottle of Glenfiddach I've ever known has gotten out at night and created havoc in my household and in the neighbourhood. Not a single Glenlivet has ever needed expensive operations to keep it from smelling up the house or constantly assailing the ears with horrendous noises. I've never sought out a Cutty Sark in order to share some small triumph and found it gone through some open window, and whenever



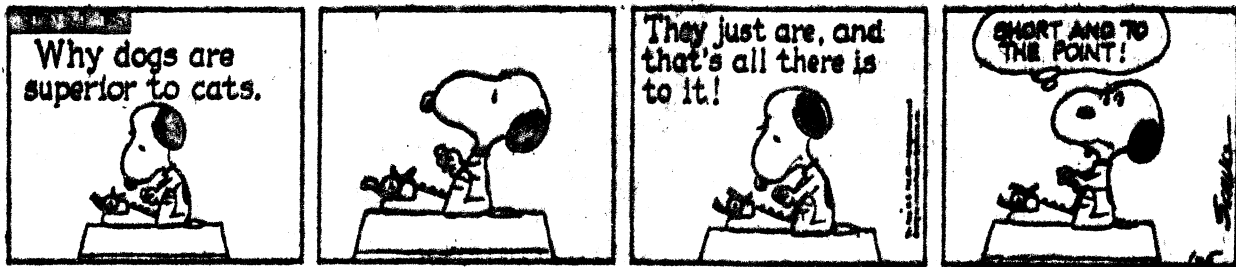
I have needed to console myself over some temporary setback, my J&B has never let me down, nor wandered off from where I last left it. The natural superiority of the malt, blended or otherwise, is overwhelmingly obvious.

Once again to be fair and unbiased in these matters, I must admit to the existence of those who have been known to make public spectacles of themselves due to their failures to develop a seemly relationship of the sort I have been espousing. But as the great Samuel Johnson once wrote, "A man who exposes himself when he is intoxicated has not the art of getting drunk." And even the worst such cases pale into insignificance beside the nauseating spectacle of a roomful of supposedly intelligent people confronted with a fluffy white kitten.

Historically, too, the evidence is on the side of whisky in particular and spirits in general. It was Robert Burns who wrote "Freedom and Whisky gang thegither!" but nowhere is it ever recorded that he thought "Freedom and Cats go together." And Fitzgerald hardly became famous by thinking "I often wonder what the catmen buy/One half so precious as the Goods they sell", now did he? As for Lord Byron, his "There's nought, no doubt, so much the spirit calms/As rum and true religion" is famous for its conspicuous failure to mention cats. Add in the historical significance of the Whisky Rebellions (in contrast to which the only heated debates over cats have centred on the proper way of cooking them and have merited nary a stitch in the great tapestry of human civilization) and it is quite obvious that whisky is and always has been of far greater significance and use than cats.

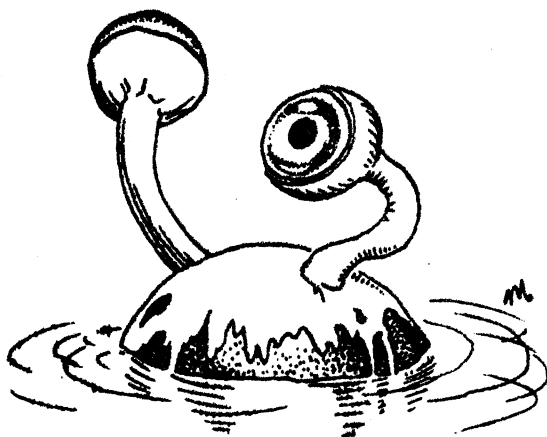
I could go on, of course, but I think the case of whisky has been established, so I shall let the lucid exposition of the above evidence stand by itself while I go and say hello to a few of my friends. And in leaving may I share with you the words of one of our greatest poets who wrote...

A fan with a tortoise named Hillary
For his views found himself in a pillory.
He stated quite flat
"There's no worth to a cat,
I'd much rather have a distillery."



"It's an unusual place to write messages," he said, "on a snake's belly. But perhaps it is a logical place to write hidden messages. If I were a Power looming above the world, where on the world would I write messages that might not be immediately discovered? Why not on the hidden side of an object that has a certain repulsiveness? Who will investigate it willingly?" R.A.Lafferty -- ARRIVE AT EASTERWINE

I have seen more cases of idiocy from this cause alone than from all the other causes of insanity. It is opposed to moral purity and vigour; it keeps up the influence of unhallowed desires; it gives the passions an ascendancy in the character; fills the mind with lewd and corrupt images; and transforms its victim to a filthy and disgusting reptile. Dr. Woodward on "spermatorrhea" in
FAMILY BOTANIC GUIDE by William Fox, M.D. (1907)



workshops

CLARION

IN PECULIAR

JOE HALDEMAN

A writer's workshop is usually an enjoyable waste of time, a chance to play critic, a place to meet your buddies, a transparent excuse for not sitting down at the typewriter and working. Yet I doubt that I would be a writer-for-a-living if I hadn't attended one particular workshop.

Some of my closest friends, I owe to another.

And another workshop financed my master's degree and a summer in Europe.

And one last month blew my mind away.

Science fiction workshops are not like the workshops in which the rest of the literary world indulges: Tar Heel Writers' Roundtable, Cuyahoga Writers' Conference, University of X Short Course in Poetry, and so on. These "straight" workshops seem rather low-key affairs, primarily social events where fledgling writers chat with more-or-less established ones.

(Some of these fledglings have been in the nest for decades. A cliché workshop denizen is a person toting around a dog-eared manuscript decorated with comments by Pynchon, Vonnegut, Kozinsky, and other heavyweights -- that will never cross an editor's desk. Why should it? It is being published, after all, seriatim, to a very elite audience. At no small expense to the author, however.)

It would be difficult to prove, but I suspect that young mainstream writers who are exposed to these get-togethers are more likely to succeed in spite of them than because of them. A basic problem is that while attending a writers' workshop, one "is" a writer, by definition, and to "be" a writer is the important thing. Not to "become" one, a process that usually involves grinding out a few hundred thousand words of gradually improving prose, as a minimum physical investment. And discovering along the way that the ability to put words into pleasing and sensible patterns is only a prerequisite tool.

UNIVERSITY WORKSHOPS

I know of two university programs that seem worthwhile for beginning writers: Iowa and Oklahoma. There may be others.

The University of Oklahoma Program in Professional Writing has an enviable track record, with many of its students publishing commercial or literary fiction while still enrolled in the program. Its secret is no secret: every student is required to write a thousand words a day, seven days a week, for two years. Anybody who could maintain that regimen and not get published probably has other virtues.

Although it's relatively difficult to get into the Iowa Writers' Workshop, the Work-

shop makes no stringent formal demands on its students, once accepted. One can muddle through the program by taking easy courses for two years, finally producing a few short stories to serve as a master's thesis. Some people do just that, but overall the Iowa record is impressive. One reason is that the Iowa myth perpetuates itself: enough people believe it's the best, so it attracts the best, not only in faculty and visiting lecturers, but also in students. And most of them work hard -- once you get to Mecca you unroll your mat and get down to business.

MILFORD

Science fiction workshops -- without exception, to my knowledge -- are more intense, more demanding, and more productive of constructive criticism and published manuscripts than any "straight" workshop. The reason is that science fiction workshops have to live up to the example of the Milford Science Fiction Writers' Conference, conceived by Damon Knight and Judith Merrill in 1955, brought forth in 1956, and still going strong. As Damon Knight says in the introduction to A Pocketful of Stars (Doubleday, 1971):

We were too innocent to realize that a "writers' conference" is usually a bunch of paid professionals talking to an audience of paying amateurs. We took the phrase literally -- we sat our writers down in a circle and started them talking to each other. They have been talking ever since.

Only writers who have published science fiction are invited to Milford (though the stories they workshop need not be science fiction). Some twenty authors come to the eight-day affair, divided fairly evenly between old pros and new writers who have shown some promise (this division is a recent feature of the workshop; formerly, only one or two new writers were invited each year.)

Five or six stories are workshopped each day, a reading load of 15-30,000 words. Criticism is usually specific and often quite harsh: none of the "This is okay but, well, I just didn't like it as much as other pieces I've read in the pederasty-in-ghetto-nursery-schools genre ... I'm not sure why ... have you read The Painted Bird?" school of blather. Tempers can run high, gallons of tears have been spilled, but the general feeling is one of comrades-in-arms helping one another through a difficult and exciting job.

Evenings at Milford are given over to group discussions centered around a pre-established topic: characterization of alien creatures, planet-building, good and bad editors, and so forth. The tenor of the discussions ranges from reasoned discourse to shouting match.

The rest of the time you talk and talk; when you get hoarse, you read; when you can't keep your eyes open, you sleep; then get up to talk and read some more; then gather up your notes and stumble into the conference room, caffeine and alcohol slugging it out in your bloodstream.

On the last day there's a party that would make a Shriners' convention look like a church picnic.

I owe a lot to Milford. In 1970 I was newly out of the army, finishing up my first year of graduate school. I'd sold a couple of stories but the first flush of success had worn off, and (looking at the size of the checks) realistically, I could only see writing as an on-again, off-again hobby -- totally engrossing, but not a practical way to make a living.

I heard Damon Knight describe Milford at a talk in Baltimore, and timorously sent him a story. He invited me to the conference.

I pitched a tent on Damon's front yard and crossed his GO AWAY "welcome" mat, and inside this fabulous old house met people whose work I'd been reading since grade school. And they accepted me as a fellow writer.

The roundtable manuscript discussions scared the hell out of me. Stories better than mine were shredded and stomped. When mine came up, about the third day, I was a nervous wreck.

Everybody except one fellow beginner liked it.

I relaxed and started talking: Bova, Budrys, Dickson, Ellison, Knight, Laumer, Spinrad, Wilhelm ... they all had advice and encouragement. But mainly, they were examples. They were making it; maybe one day I would, too.

One morning I was talking to Ben Bova about a novel I wanted to write, a mainstream novel about Vietnam. He liked the idea and said that if I'd outline it, he'd give me a letter of recommendation.

I went home floating six inches off the ground, then settled down to writing 1500 words a day, for the rest of the summer. Everything I sent out sold. September came and I went back to school; the second day I got pissed at a professor and dropped out to write for a semester. The next week, the Vietnam novel was accepted.

That semester's stretched out to five years and seven novels. In some alternate universe, I'm probably a systems analyst wondering what it would be like to write full-time. In this universe, I can't imagine wanting to be anything other than what I am, and the Milford workshop is what put me here.

SPINOFFS

When I came back from the 1970 Milford I told my brother, who was just starting to write seriously, how much the workshop had done for me. He suggested that we round up some local writers and try a smaller version of it. (Damon Knight had said that other groups were emulating Milford; he was all for it.)

The Guilford workshop, named after the section of Baltimore where we met, assembled every six months or so for several years, until a combination of geography and penury broke it up. It was composed of a hard core of six or seven regulars (all male, mostly under thirty, most of whom were just starting to get published) plus a floating population of visiting writers. We always invited one or two unpublished beginners, some of whom evidently profited from the experience.

The daytime sessions were patterned after Milford, but there was no structure to the evenings. We sat around and bounced ideas off one another, read the next day's manuscripts, gossiped about editors and such writers as were not present, drank and doped and in general had a fine old time. There were typewriters on every floor, and people often disappeared to work on their current projects, or put down an idea while it was fresh.

(People rarely write during Milford; there's too much else to do. One exception is Harlan Ellison, who wrote "Repent, Harlequin, Said the Ticktockman" during the



1965 (I think) session. The infuriating thing is that Ellison will be writing while all the rest of us are reading; then will come down and flip through a manuscript and find something that everybody else had missed.)

For all its good memories, Guilford is a prime example of a workshop that became ingrown, incestuous. After one of the regulars had criticized a dozen of your stories, you had a pretty good idea of what he'd think about any new piece. There were surprises, of course, but not too often.

One piece of collaborative fiction came out of the Guilford. One of the last meetings was a ten-day affair in which participants were asked to bring novels-in-progress, long plays, novellas ... which put the reading load at 40-60,000 words each day. By the end of the workshop everybody was completely burned out.

Rather than simply getting thoroughly intoxicated, which was the usual way to wind down a Guilford, we set up a musical chairs poker game: seven seats for eight people. The odd one out had to sit in the dining room and write. When his muse had been purged, he'd come tap somebody on the shoulder, switching places.

It continued until dawn, and the result was a pornographic novel so quintessentially perverse that not even its title can be quoted in this family fanzine. No normal sexual act, and few routinely abnormal ones, sullied its pages: new perversions were invented, named, and described in revolting detail. It was enough to make Linda Lovelace gag. The person entrusted with keeping the manuscript wisely claims to have lost it. I suspect that it crawled away under its own power.

(It might have been publishable, though. I wrote a playlet after one Guilford, mainly to try out my brother's new typewriter, brain softened to mush by overwork and gin. Sent it off to my agent, not in hopes of marketing it, but because I thought he might find parts of it amusing in a sodden way. He sold it for a nickel a word.)



All of the regulars, and one of the unpublished beginners, from Guilford are full-time writers now. Science fiction will nevertheless survive.

Other workshops modeled after Milford appear now and then. One that seems to be a permanent fixture is the Windy (City) Writers' Conference, which meets every month or two in Chicago.

Most of these "spinoff" workshops have little effect on the overall science fiction microcosm. They give writers a small but immediate audience for their current work, and provide sympathetic company; or they form the nucleus for academic science fiction writing courses.

But there is one that may eventually prove as influential as Milford itself.

CLARION

Robin Scott Wilson started Clarion -- the Writers' Workshop in Fantasy and Science Fiction at Clarion State College -- in 1968, as an experimental application of Milford principles to the teaching of creative writing. Evidently the experiment was a success: four years later, more than a third of the

workshop's alumni had sold stories.*

Wilson's idea was to assemble some twenty beginning writers for six weeks, to be "taught" (quotes substituting for the well-known truism) science fiction writing by six professionals, Milford veterans, each presiding over the group for one week at a time. Though the pros had considerable latitude as to how they would conduct their individual weeks, they all used the Milford-style roundtable as a nucleus.

The difference was that the stories submitted for criticism were written there at the workshop. Evening until early morning, the dormitory halls were filled with the sounds of typing, cursing, paper crumpling, typewriters being hurled to the floor.

When I first heard about this method I was appalled. For me writing is, or has become, a solitary vice: I don't work well when anybody else is around, however unobtrusive, however sympathetic. The idea of being cooped up with two dozen rivals, forced to listen to the tap-tap of their progress while I stared at an empty page, was a vision of Hell.

But over the years I met people like Bryant, Effinger, McIntyre, Thurston -- good, heavy writers all, graduates of Clarion, most of whom praised the workshop highly. So when Len Isaacs, coordinator of Clarion in this year's Michigan State incarnation, asked me to teach for a week, I accepted eagerly.

My wife and I arrived on the campus fresh (well, not so fresh) from a week of sailing in the Bahamas and a thousand-mile drive. Len Isaacs installed us in a small, comfortable apartment in the Clarion dormitory and gave us tickets good for free meals in the adjacent cafeteria. Our only food expenses would be for Tums and BromoSeltzer.

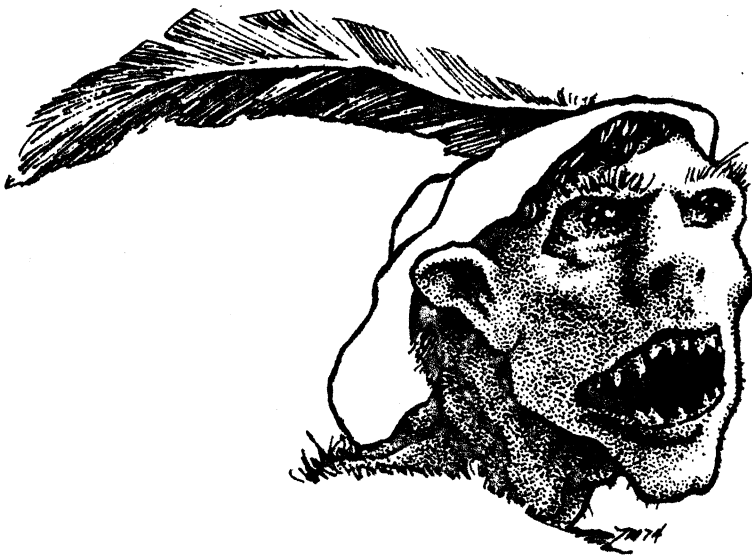
Roger Zelazny, the previous instructor, had thoughtfully left two sixpacks in the refrigerator. I went down to the basement, where all the students were staying, to find a drinking partner who could fill me in on what had happened during the first three weeks.

It took me back fifteen years: blistering paint in annoying pastel shades, exposed pipes decorated with fluffs of dust, swirls of grime etched into the floor by perfunctory mopping, and over all the subtle olfactory trace left by fifty generations of freshmen discovering their gastric limitations. A dorm is a dorm.

The first sign that this dorm might be something more was the bulletin board. It was crowded with an ostentatious display of wit: cartoons, parodies, parodies of parodies. Someone had laboriously lettered and matted "The Doc Savage Code of Ethics," in comparison to which the Boy Scout Creed is undemanding. A critic had defaced it repeatedly with a rubber stamp that shouted JESUS BULL FUCK. With a novelist's sensitivity to interpersonal relations, I suspected that a certain amount of tension had developed.

It was midafternoon and almost everyone was napping. I found a student I already knew (three people from my science fiction course at Iowa University had been accepted to Clarion) and we talked for a while. I read the four manuscripts scheduled

* Clarion statistics are slippery, and this is the only one I'll quote (from Robin Scott Wilson's preface to CLARION II (Signet, 1972)). As Grant Carrington points out in the June, 1975, Fantastic, some Clarion workshopppers had sold a story or two before they came to the workshop. These maiden voyages sometimes find their way into the statistics.



for the next morning's round-table.

I had come armed with four daily assignments, each one illuminating a writing problem unique to science fiction. Someday I'll have to find a use for them. It was obvious that this crew was doing too well for me to slow them down with too much structure.

In retrospect, I should have used at least one of the assignments. Some members of the group were slowing down, getting costive; a couple had been solidly blocked for more than a week.

By the second day we had established a pattern that would continue for the rest of the week. From 9 to 12 in the morning we'd workshop 3-5 manuscripts, followed by a short talk, usually about some specific marketing problem. After lunch I would have individual conferences with the students. After dinner and in the early morning I would read the manuscripts scheduled for workshop and conference, and type up notes about them. Evenings, usually into the wee small, were devoted to talking and drinking with those who weren't installed behind their typewriters. These sessions usually started up in my apartment, then moved downstairs when my wife (poor mortal) had to get some sleep.

Thursday night we had a party in the conference room, that started out quietly but gradually took on certain aspects of the Attica prison revolt. Sunday night there was a welcoming party for Damon Knight and Kate Wilhelm at Glenn Wright's house (he coordinates the workshop on alternate years); we managed to break that worthy's couch under the strain of a friendly drunken group-grope that included over half the workshop.

I admire their stamina. By the end of the week, I was ready for an intensive care ward. Not just from dissipation; ragweed is Michigan's state plant. Dissipation helped, though.

The writing was superb. I'm sure that fifteen or twenty of the students will become professional writers if they can survive the rigors of apprenticeship. Kate Wilhelm bought eight workshop stories for her Clarion anthology, and I'm sure many others will soon appear in the magazines and original anthologies.

The temptation is strong to close by recommending to your future attention the work of the four or five students whose stories impressed me the most. I resist the impulse partly out of caution, partly compassion, partly superstition.

Caution: I don't want to look like an ass when the writers I recommend wind up on Skid Row or punching computers, and one I didn't recommend wins the Hugo and Nebula in 1977. Compassion: writers' egos are usually delicate little things (little!), and I want to protect the twenty who wouldn't be mentioned, in case they happen to see this article. I know how absurdly hurt I've felt when a critic reviews an anthology and neglects to mention my story. Superstition: too often one sees an author say in print "Stanley Resnick is the greatest thing since sliced pizza," and poor Stanley never publishes another line. Kiss of death.

WORKSHOPS IN GENERAL

How much a beginning writer can get out of a workshop obviously depends largely on the writer's personality. At one extreme, you have writers whose egos are so bloated that they honestly can't understand how people can find fault with their manuscripts. (They usually retaliate with a bitter point-by-point rebuttal and thereafter have nothing good to say about the work of anyone who criticized them.) Some of the best writers -- Dostoevsky was pretty good -- have this kind of blindness; we just have to live with it.

At the other extreme are those who take any criticism to heart, no matter how sincere or competent, and brood on it until they're convinced their work is worthless. One fellow in the Iowa workshop spent most of a year working on a novel, a good novel, and then workshopped the first section. Most people loved it, but one person said he thought the style was derivative. The author was suicidal for a week, and only constant support from his friends kept him from throwing the manuscript away. And it was a long time before he could work on it, or anything else.

Some particularly starcrossed individuals manage to combine both of these personalities under one skull: the first public and the second private.

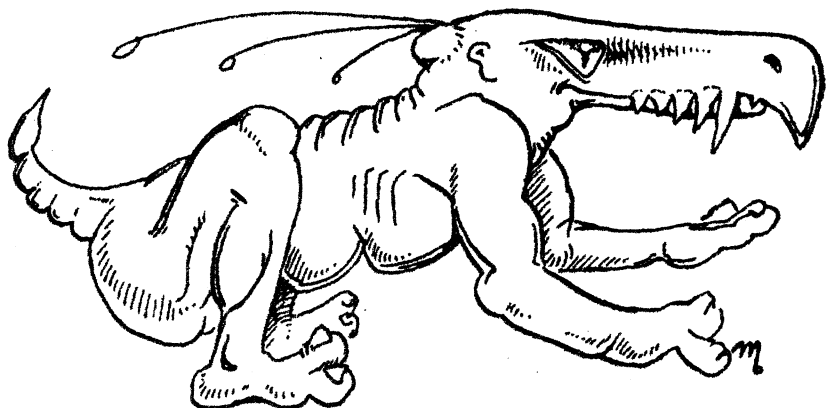
The writers who fall between these two extremes are the ones who stand to profit most from a workshop situation. This is not to say that they will, or should, run home and rewrite the manuscript to incorporate everybody's suggestions. For one thing, if he's a professional, the manuscript is probably out in the marketplace already; it may already have been sold in spite of its flaws. But as Damon Knight says, the point of workshopping a story is not so much to make that one better, but to improve the next one.

My own opinion, as a grizzled veteran of eleven different kinds of workshops, is that the main benefit doesn't come from the comments you get on your own work. Even if you know a piece is flawed, you have an emotional investment in it that gets in the way of learning. It's the comments people make on other work, and the effort to be objective and fair in your own criticisms, that can eventually improve your writing.

Should a workshop have a leader? The Milford pattern is "no chiefs and no Indians," and it obviously works. But Milford is extremely selective.

In workshops I've taught at the university level, I've always elected myself nominal leader. I require each participant to write down his criticism, hopefully without consulting the other workshopppers, and give it to me before the session begins. When a story comes up, I first read everybody's criticisms aloud, including my own; then I take off my Leader hat and we have a freeforall.

I don't impose this structure (I tell myself) out of elitism, but rather to combat two specific problems. One is personality: some people dominate a workshop with forceful rhetoric, while others are scared stiff by any audience; just mumble a few words and pass the manuscript on. I want the quiet ones to be heard. Also, writing down the criticisms ahead of time prevents "snowballing." If



eleven people in a row badmouth a story and the twelfth thought it was just dandy, that twelfth person may either temper his opinion or go overboard in defending it. One may be good theatre and the other comfortable unanimity, but they're equally false as criticism.

* * * * *

Rereading this essay, I think I may have been unfair to mainstream workshops.

Literally tens of millions of words of science fiction are published each year, all of them for money. Any participant in a science fiction workshop has a fair crack at the limited fame and fortune our field can offer.

But very few people in a mainstream workshop have even the slightest glimmer of hope as to making a living from the limited market for "straight" fiction.* Most of them will place a few short stories in literary magazines, and settle down to a teaching position (for survival -- not because their work is less important to them than ours is to us). Some of them, of course, would prefer the ivy-covered womb of tenure to the pressures of writing for a living: deadline panics, feast-or-famine income, compromising Art for editorial requirements, the terrible threat that the next piece of blank paper that goes into your typewriter will stay blank for a long time.

Of course, not everyone can write science fiction.

Last spring I was sitting in the office I shared with a fellow Iowa workshopper, who also had teaching duties. He was grouching about typing his fingers to the bone and getting paid only in reprints of little magazines. He was desperate for money and started making a list of things he could write for cash: porn, Westerns, confessions, men's-magazine stiffeners. My wife came in while he was talking, and suggested he try science fiction, where there was both money and a little dignity.

"Hell, no," he said with a straight face. "You gotta have brains to write that shit."

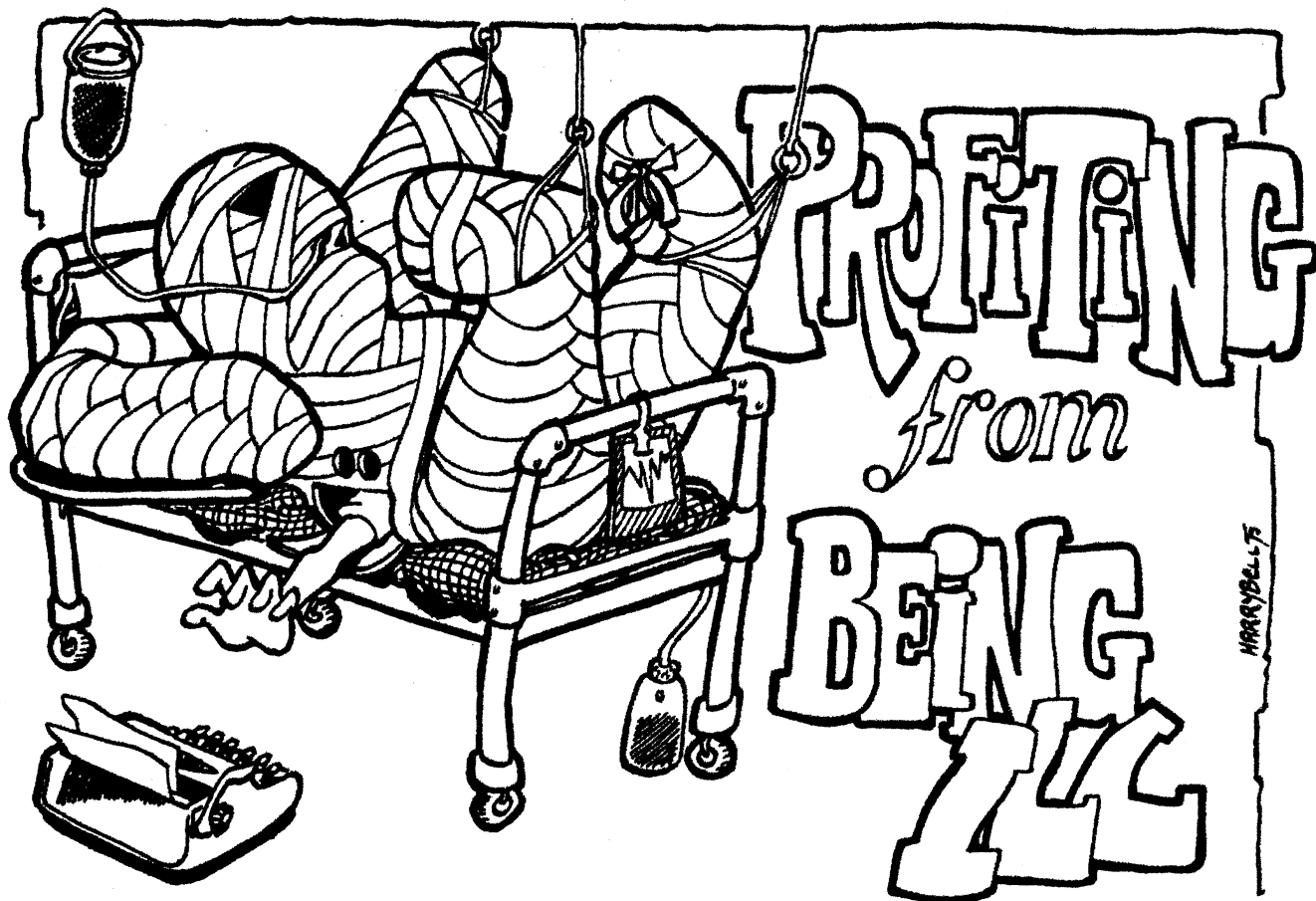
* In two years of the Iowa workshop, our seventy five people sold a total of five novels and fifteen short stories. One science fiction writer sold four of the novels and eleven of the stories.

A POSTSCRIPT FROM ROBIN SCOTT WILSON...

... (the people) who attend Clarion and never sell a word get their money's worth anyway, I think. I hear periodically from a fair fraction of these people, and I have gathered the impression that for many of them Clarion was a kind of a once-in-a-lifetime experience, even though they did not come out of it as writers. I suppose it is the integrating function of art, however unsuccessfully pursued: a good, serious try will get your shit together just about as much if it is unsuccessful as if it is successful. Serious Sunday painters know this as do good amateur musicians and thespians.

The art of communicating instruction, of whatever kind, is much to be valued; and I have ever thought that those who devote themselves to this employment, and do their duty with diligence and success, are entitled to very high respect from the community, as Johnson himself often maintained. Yet I am of the opinion that the greatest abilities are not only not required for this office, but render a man less fit for it.

JAMES BOSWELL -- The Life of Samuel Johnson



BY JOHN ALDERSON

"Poor nurse, I'm sorry you are ill what says my love."

Juliet in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet

Having had a spot or so of illness in the last little while, I have been capitalising, so to speak, on it. Indeed, I am almost, if not fully, an authority on the benefits than can ensue from this state. This little piece is the first draft of a definitive paper I expect to write shortly, a paper I expect will get me recognized as an authority on this subject as well as all the other subjects on which I am an authority. If this sounds a little pretentious, so be it; I cannot help the way things fell out. I should have been born quads, at least.

Now letter-writing is the bane of my life. It wouldn't be so bad if my feet didn't freeze as well as my forefinger and head getting sore while I am typing. What on earth can a man say? Well, at present, what I have to say is provided for me ready made. So I answer a letter that has been nagging my conscience for the last eighteen months...

Dear Aunt Agatha,

I am very sorry for the long delay in answering your lovely letter, but the truth is that I have been very very ill and today is the first day I have been sufficiently well to sit down and type a little note to you so you'll know you are always in my thoughts. As soon as I am able I shall write a long long letter. Now I must close because I feel faint and I don't want a relapse,

Your loving nephew

JOHN

Well, that's that out of the way. Never let it be said that I neglect writing to dear Aunt Agatha. Now for my sister...

Dear Sis,

Sorry I haven't written before but I've been as sick as a dog and this is only a hurried note before I have to get back to bed again. I've been trying to mend my shirt, the one that got torn when Murphy's dog chased me through the barbed-wire fence. There should be a law against fathers of pretty girls having dogs and barbed-wire fences. It's the only shirt I have and I hope to have it mended ready to wear for my birthday next week. I hope I am well enough again by then to get up and light the fire and cook myself a slice of toast as a birthday treat. Must close now, my back is killing me.

Your loving brother

JOHN

Can't lay it on too hard with a sister. They're diabolical creatures; see through a bloke like he was made of glass. Still, that letter ought to get me a new shirt for a birthday present, and perhaps even a birthday cake. She's not a bad cook that sister. Fact she's a real good sort, the one most like myself.

One can try for more tangible things... My brother-in-law...different sister.

Dear Bill,

Hell, I've been crook for weeks now. It's agony to get out of bed for a leak. Damned if I know how the sheep are getting on, I suppose they should be got in and looked at...wonder if you could come up some time?

Sincerely

JOHN

Of course, the answer is likely to be as follows...

Dear John,

Sorry to hear you are crook as I was just about to send Janice up to ask you to come and look at things here as I've slipped and done me back in. Come as soon as you can,

Love

BILL

There should be a law against this imposing on the community!

Like crows around a dying sheep, the creditors gather around the invalid. But Jack is as good as his master ...

Dear Mr. Fieff,

With regards to your letter concerning my overdue account" I very much regret that I have been seriously ill for some time now and have not been able to attend to these matters. As soon as I am able I shall come and pay this account.

Yours faithfully

JOHN

This usually settles things for a couple of months. However, the inevitable follow-up letter has to be written...

Dear Mr. Fieff,

Re your communication of the 7th inst. No-one more than myself regrets the protractedness of my illness which has pre-

vented me from attending to my account. What has made it worse is that my doctor has insisted on my having the proper food to have any chance of a speedy recovery. In view of this I must ask you to allow me credit to the extent of another 200 dollars. Knowing you will understand my position,

Yours faithfully
JOHN

There's nothing like attack to provide a good defence. And asking for more credit whilst appealing to humanitarian instincts may prevent a summons. If the worst comes to the worst, one can pay the account.

However, Bank Managers are singularly devoid of humour (and almost every other social virtue including credit.) One writes...

The Manager
The Four Mile Bank

Sir,

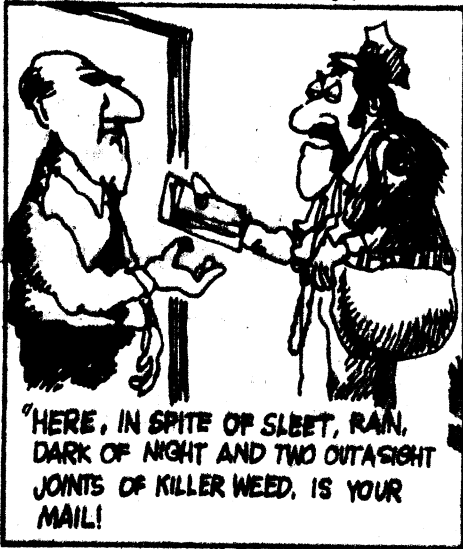
With regards to your gracious request for a reduction in my overdraft, I wish I could oblige. Truth is that for several months now I have been extremely ill and consequently unable to work, and hence not receiving any income. Under these circumstances, much as I would like to, reduction of my overdraft is at present impossible. However I shall attend to this as soon as I get my wool cheque,

Yours faithfully
JOHN

Obviously this is not the time to tell him that the next wool-cheque would be paid in about ten months time if the money was not to be taken to pay for the sheep you bought on tick, and about which you did not inform him as he didn't supply the credit. However, sometimes Bank Managers write very rude letters, the texts of which usually read, "Come and see me immediately about your account." Being quite ill, you wait a week before replying...



FRANKLY SPEAKING... by phil frank



The Manager
The Four Mile Bank

Sir,

I am confined to the house with my illness, and most of the time to the bed. I would be obliged if you could visit me some warm afternoon when I may be able to get up and talk to you.

Yours faithfully
JOHN

This letter is more cunning than it appears on the surface. On warm afternoons the Bank Manager plays golf with his rich clients. Nor is he likely to want to damage his car on a fifteen mile wild bush track they call roads in this shire. Perhaps that should be 24 kilometres but I don't know if our shire has heard of them as MacAdam seems to have

just become known to our engineer.

Now this is the time of the year when all good Australians send in their income tax returns. So sometime in September, that is well past the deadline even for farmers, you take the matter in hand...

The Deputy Minister of Taxation

Dear Sir,

In view of the fact that I have been very very ill this past year and still am very very ill and unable to furnish a return, I wonder if you could permit me to submit a late return? Also in view of the fact that being ill and what with medical and doctor's expenses and the like, and not being able to work and thus having no income, could you stretch things a little and return the 100 dollars tax I paid last year under the income levelling arrangement for Primary Producers?

Thanking you in anticipation
JOHN

One can hope for a reply running somewhat as follows...

Dear John,

I am terribly sorry to hear of your misfortune and I hope you are already much better. I have conveyed your letter to the Commissioner who sends his regards and best wishes, and his personal cheque for fifty dollars. Herewith, too, is the 100 dollars tax you paid last year which the Commission urged me to send by return. You are not to worry in the least about your return until you are completely restored in health. Believe me, there are some fellows like John Bangsund who are getting paid far more than they need or deserve whom we can slug for what we need.

All the staff here at the Department wish you all the best and a speedy recovery. We saw fit to take up a tarpaulin muster and herewith enclose a cheque for \$400.79, the amount collected,

Sincerely and obediently
The Deputy Minister of Taxation

Naturally, this is a pipe dream. The best that could be expected would be ...

Dear John,

With regards to your letter asking permission to lodge a late return on account of your illness: the return must be lodged with this office by the 20th of December. With regards to the \$100 you paid in tax last year: nothing can be done about this until your return for the immediate past year is lodged with this office.

Yours faithfully
The Deputy Minister of Taxation

Sometimes I envy those fans who sit down and loc about thirty fanzines in a night. Here am I, someone who sits down and takes all night to write one loc that the faned won't print anyway. Ah, but now this is solved. I wrote a loc that faneds won't print anyway...

Dear Mike,

My nurse tells me that XENIUM 2.3 has arrived from Canada. Thank you, Mike; as soon as I am well enough I'll read it. My nurse tells me it's real pretty.

Hoping you are well

JOHN

P.S. Plese excuse the spellen. The nurse aint a traned ~~stenhoffa~~ tipst.

Now I know what people are going to think when they read this last. Something like this...

"Eh nurse..."

"Aw right I'm comin, and keep yer hands under the blankets while I take yer tempera-ter."

"I wanta bottle."

"Aw right, keep your shirt on."

"Naw, not that bottle. Get another from the cellar."

"Yer had three today already. That's wot's makin yer sick, too much plonk."

"Three bottles nuffin, must be two thousand left. Eh, giv'us that bottle, 'll use it while yer away. I'm pretty crook, me bladder's weak."

Which, of course, is far from the truth. I ain't got no nurse, trained stenographer or otherwise. And even worse things befall me at times. Taking my ailing health in my hands I venture forth to the town and am met by an old acquaintance:

"Hullo, John, you're looking well." And here's me near death's door!

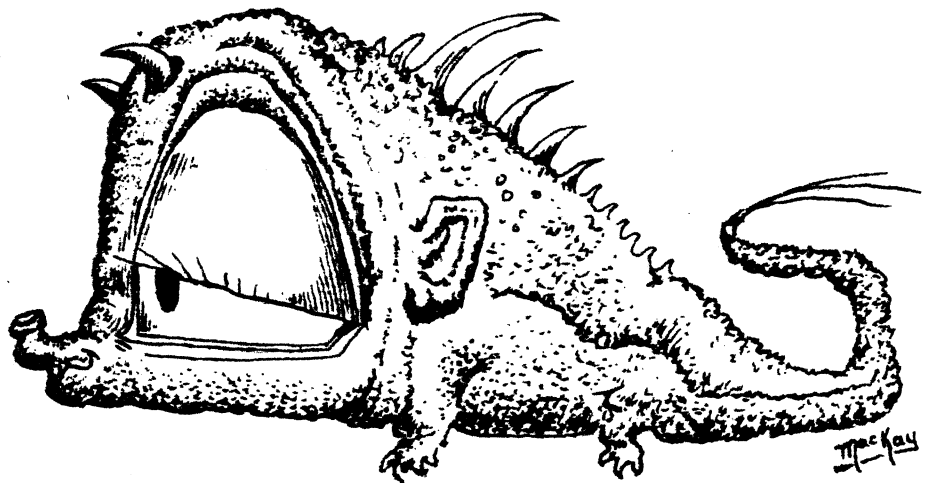
"It's me back, Joe, damn near kills me at times."

"Rub it with turps.
Fixes cows down with
milk-fever. They're up,
up and away in a few
minutes."

That I can vouch for,
which is why I am not
rubbing my rump with
turps.

One must keep one's wits
about them: meeting the
bank manager...

"Good morning, Mr. Alder-



son. I thought you were ill. Better now I see."

"Oh, no," putting much anguish into the voice, "just crawled out of bed to see the Quack. Can't get the barstards to come and see you now. Get their money too easily nowadays."

Then I meet one of the delights of my life... "Hi Ginger!"

"Hullo, John; you're looking that fit you must be dangerous. I'm off!"

And here I am, still at death's door. So I limp impressively along to the Opportunity Shop, buy what science fiction they may have at five cents each and drive home for a further lengthy convalescence. Somebody has been bound to have told old Fieff that I am up and about again. I knew I should have stayed home; I can feel a relapse coming on...

OOOOOO



WHAT'S-IN-A-FRAME-OF-REFERENCE DEPARTMENT:

"Your letters of comment are important to any faned: the established ones...and the brand new faneds...A pat on the head can give a young fan remarkable energy. It did me and I thank you for it. You've done the same for countless other neo-fans. You've been the one who always manages to take the time out to drop a few lines into a mailbox. Much of fandom owes a debt to you..."

"Personally I don't give a damn what you do with /my next issue/, your attempts at discouraging neos don't interest me in the least, and I take pleasure in noting that all fen are not like you."

"Thanks for your letter. Thanks also for not responding with one of those 'heavy' locs that fans are always composing at the wrong time. That the urge to communicate was born of primordial reasons does not detract from the pleasure of hearing from you again -- the fan who writes like Bill Bowers might write if Bill Bowers could write. The fact that you composed the letter after five martinis makes it even more pleasant (providing you ain't one of them there vodka martini drinkers). You obviously could go far. Perhaps you should consider publishing a fanzine."

Letter from Ed 'Wild Pickle' Cagle

"This is not the moment to discuss the passion for self analysis in the United States, but I do think the British are inclined to take everything more flippantly, an attitude which has doubtless landed us in our present predicament. As some cynic so aptly put it, we are gradually sinking giggling into the ocean." BEAR WITH ME, Peter Bull

THE FAANNISH INQUISITION



Having a lettercol in a fanzine that comes out once a year is probably as futile as taking the time to correctly spell anything that's going to be retyped by Bill Bowers. However, as a letterhack, I know how I appreciate the publication of even a paragraph or two of a loc I've sweated over for often as much as five or six minutes, so here are excerpts from the few letters generated by the last issue. Major chunks of egoboo have already been xeroxed and forwarded to their proper recipients who would probably join me in expressing very genuine

gratitude to those who were kind enough to react to what was published here despite the chance that their time and effort would very likely not result in the egoboo of publication. But enough of this needle nurdle noo...

ROBERT BLOCH "An exceptional issue, this: take my word for it and shove that in your shoebox. While I do not agree with what Harlan didn't say about Bob Silverberg, I will defend to the death his right not to have said it."

JACKIE FRANKE "People who are in the public eye, like Andy or the other writers who fertilize the roots of our sub-culture and keep it going, attract many unwitting attacks, mainly because people get so damned up-tight about approaching them. If they're more sensitive than usual -- some writers seem to build a secure armor about their egos quite early in the game -- they get just as hurt as Joe Phan who's had some smartass snap off some pointless insult at a hallparty gabfest. Writers are as human, as vulnerable, as anyone, sometimes more so than the average guy, since appreciation of emotion is often part and parcel of their talent in writing."

"Fandom often treats its writers like ghods, and then turns around and treats them like sacrificial victims. We seem to demand two things from the producers of SF -- that they display more wit, more intellect, more charm than we more "ordinary" mortals, and at the same time be even more humble, more self-effacing, more receptive to (if not actually thirsting for) "constructive criticism" than any human being could possibly be. We want them to be special and yet more average than the guy next door. We want them to tower over us, at the same time we want to bend over and spit in their eyes. And they must, by all means, smile continually at everything we do or say to them."

What you mean "we", white man? But sadly, you're right: there is a great deal of pro-worship in fandom, and to me it's just as absurd and wrong-headed as the attitude of some insecure fans that pros are there to be shot down for ego-gratification. As you point out, pros are people, and can make excellent friends or be shmucks, just like the rest of us.

DON D'AMMASSA "Andy Offutt's article/speech struck a few chords. I'm one of those people who just doesn't enjoy the pursuit of the pro. Not that I have anything against pros. I am frankly in awe of many of them. There seem to be two operative forces involved. First, I've seen too many of the aggressive, immature, and rather brash type who insist that the pro justify his existence, and I don't care to be identified with them even in the widest possible terms. Second, I have enough ego to want to avoid being placed in the position of expressing or appearing to express slavish admiration. I try to act as if pros were just other fans. I would no more approach Harlan Ellison uninvited than I would Bill Bowers, with neither of whom have I had personal contact. On the other hand, I'd be as perfectly willing to talk to Michael Coney or Michael Bishop as with any of my other fannish correspondents. I think I'm rather too over-impressed with people I have admired from afar to confront them without some expression of mutual interest beforehand, which probably means I'm going to meet very few pros on a one-to-one level."

In essence I agree with you completely, but I'd likely extend my willingness to approach fans or pros to cover those with whom I've had fanzine contact even though no personal correspondence. And I have a big enough ego to believe that certain of them would be pleased with that contact. You should too, Don; your work as a writer and editor in the fan press has made you someone a great many fans and pros would be delighted to meet.

SAM LONG "I did not see it first in XENIUM: I saw it first in Peter Egg Roberts EGG 1, 10 these many years ago, viz, an article on tissuememology (the art & science of collecting toilet paper). Peter Egg included a free sample to help found readers' collections. Mr Cruttenden mentioned, however, in an loc in EGG 2, that "...a serious hobby based on toilet paper actually exists under the lovely name of Cloacapapyrology." And he gives an address to write to for further information! I can't help thinking, though, that "Copropapyrology" would be a more classically correct name."

As it happens, I had completely forgotten Peter's prior inclusion of toilet tissue in his fanzine, even though I received the issue. However, if you'll read what I wrote, Sam, it was the suggestion of putting paid advertising on toilet paper that was appearing for the first time in XENIUM, not the paper itself. Still, what else could we expect from someone who only moved to England as an adult, and hence was raised in the American educational system? To paraphrase Johnson, it is not strange that you read badly, but that you read at all...

PETER ROBERTS "I enjoyed your latest ish, as expected. I'm somewhat surprised about your comments on London, though. Perhaps your disillusion is the result of the false and nostalgic memories of your childhood, or the blinkered stories of the average tourist (who doesn't make a point of visiting Hammersmith and other such places). I think, at any rate, that London has a false image for most Americans (as does Britain in general), and I don't think we can be blamed for failing to live up to the glossy adverts and the romantic novels."

First, Peter, I wasn't disillusioned with London, just aware of its warts, that's all. I still consider it possible the most fascinating city I've ever known. My feelings, definitely, were the result of a conflict with childhood memories, but whether those were "false and nostalgic" is the question. My father, who grew up in London and lived there for most of forty years had the same reactions as I did after having lived once again in the city for over two years. I'd hardly say his memories were "nostalgic". London is a great city and the English are a great people, but as I see the evidence, both are on the decline. I mean, Guinness at 26 p a pint.....

JERRY KAUFMAN "England sounds dreamy, except for all the bombing going on now, and the imminent bankruptcy. I keep reading how the Arabs are going to buy it all up, or would, if they weren't so crafty. I can see them buying it as a home land for the Jews, telling Israel, "We've built Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant hills. Just like the song. Salaam alekim and shove off."

Sorry, Jerry, but I cannot take seriously any remarks about the danger of living in England or the potential bankruptcy there when such remarks originate from an inhabitant of New York City!! And say, fella, I'm trying to run an exclusive, quality fanzine here, with an elite readership: be careful with your copies, will ya...?

JON SINGER "I just overturned a pot containing a baby Agave americana, spilling sand all over Jeremy Kaufman's copy of XENIUM, which he was kind enough to loan me so I could confound you, you Canadian fink, by LoCing it. What more auspicious opportunity could arise? Now, you filth, don't you feel all mean and nasty, saying those terrible things about me in the lettercolumn of RUNE about how I never sent you anything but worthless American money in return for ENERGUMEN, and now I LoC a zine you didn't even let me know existed?"

Now I think I know what they mean by "the Good Old Days"...send \$\$\$, Jon...

JOHN J ALDERSON "I note with some appreciation that things are getting better for travellers now, inasmuch as they have toilet paper provided. In my wandering days, one had to supply one's own, and this sometimes in hotels. Ships were not so bad, buses and cars however did not supply them. This reminds me of one of our country magazines which ran a competition for the best idea for toilet facilities for farm workers. The winner was a simple drawing of a spade with a roll of toilet paper hung on the handle."

AND I ALSO HEARD FROM Loren MacGregor, Eric Lindsay, George Flynn, John Carl and Mike Gorra. My thanks to you all, once again.

THE ISSUE AT HAND -- OR -- WHAT A SILLY PLACE FOR A TOC

The publication of this issue has been further delayed by a rampaging attack of Virulent Apathy, coupled with a month-old national postal strike which shows no immediate signs of drawing to a close. However, I'm now involved with a city-wide strike of high-school teachers which will probably keep me picketing two hours a day until Christmas, so I'm using some of the extra time I've reluctantly fallen heir to in order to put the finishing touches to this long-delayed fanzine. Isn't capitalism a wonderful thing?

ART CREDITS: Front cover is by Derek "Delbert the Prune" Carter and it's a delight to welcome him back to the Vast Glicksohn Irregular Publishing Empire. Interior artwork, ignoring the professional cartoons, is by (in order) Barry Kent MacKay (2), Vic Kostriken, MacKay, Marty Larson, MacKay, James Shull, Grant Canfield, Jim McLeod, MacKay, Harry Bell (2), MacKay, Rotsler, Mackay (3). Back cover has a logo by Sheryl Birkhead topping a cartoon, reprinted completely illegally, by Mal.

Immediately following this page is a poem, but fear not, it is not a fan poem. It is the only poem I've ever had the slightest inclination to print, and I think it's one of the best pieces of poetry I've ever seen. So if you usually skip poems in fanzines, don't this time. You're in for a real treat.

I'll tell you what, Harper. At this point, if someone came in here and said he was Superman and he could piss that shark away from here, I'd say fine and dandy. I'd even hold his dick for him. ---the only good line in JAWS, by Peter Benchley

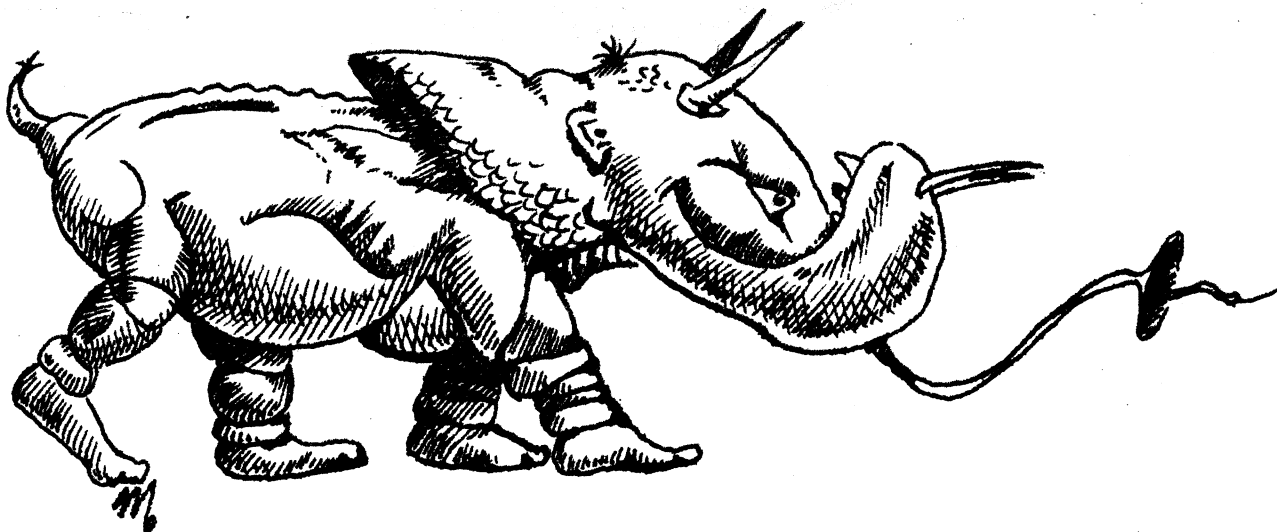
THE NATURAL HISTORY OF ELEPHANTS -- Milton Acorn

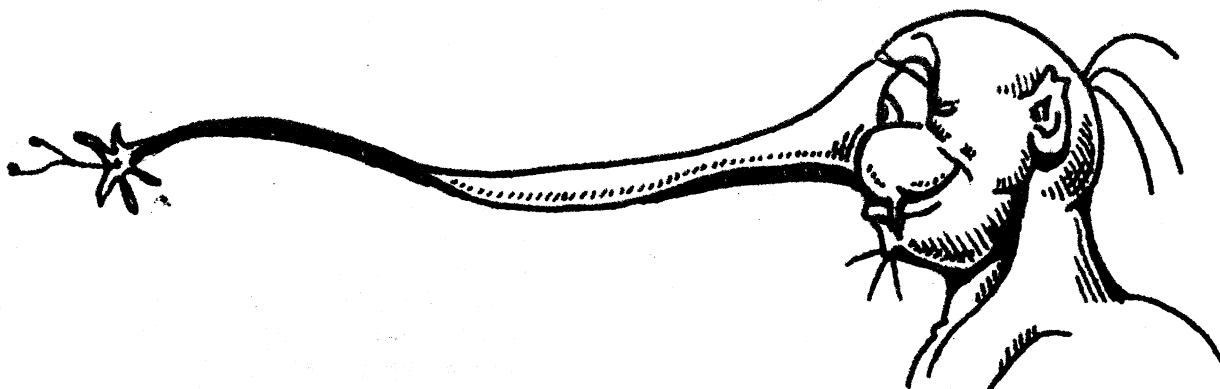
In the elephant's five-pound brain
The whole world's both table and shithouse
Where he wanders seeking viandes, exchanging great farts
For compliments. The rumble of his belly
Is like the contortions of a crumpling planetary system.
Long has he roved, his tongue longing to press the juices
From the ultimate berry, large as
But tenderer and sweeter than a watermelon;
And he leaves such signs in his wake that pygmies have fallen
And drowned in his great fragrant marshes of turds.

In the elephant's five-pound brain
The wind is diverted by the draughts of his breath,
Rivers are sweet gulps, and the ocean
After a certain distance is too deep for wading.
The earth is trivial, it has the shakes
And must be severely tested, else
It'll crumble into unsteppable clumps and scatter off
Leaving the great beast bellowing among the stars.

In the elephant's five-pound brain
Dwarves have an incredible vicious sincerity,
A persistent will to undo things. The beast cannot grasp
The convolutions of destruction, always his mind
Turns to other things--the vastness of green
And of frangibility of forest. If only once he could descend
To trivialities he'd sweep the whole earth clean of his tormentors
In one sneeze so mighty as to be observed from Mars.

In the elephant's five-pound brain
Sun and moon are the pieces in a delightfully complex ballgame
That have to do with him ... never does he doubt
The sky has opened and rain and thunder descend
For his special ministration. He dreams of mastodons
And mammoths and still his pride beats
Like the heart of the world, he knows he could reach
To the end of space if he stood still and imagined the effort.





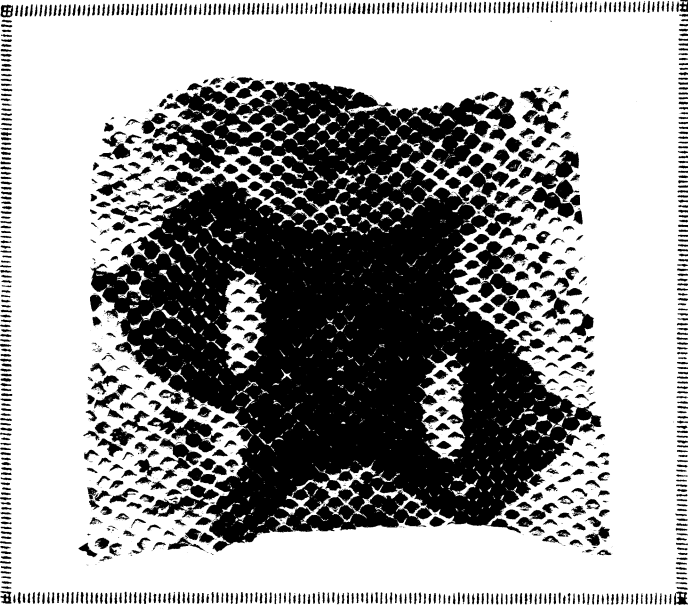
In the elephant's five-pound brain
Poems are composed as a silent substitute for laughter,
His thoughts while resting in the shade
Are long and solemn as novels and he knows his companions
By names differing for each quality of morning.
Noon and evening are ruminated upon and each overlaid
With the taste of night. He loves his horny perambulating hide
As other tribes love their houses, and remembers
He's left flakes of skin and his smell
As a sign and permanent stamp on wherever he has been.

In the elephant's five-pound brain
The entire Oxford dictionary'd be too small
To contain all the concepts which after all are too weighty
Each individually ever to be mentioned;
Thus of course the beast has no language
Only an eternal pondering hesitation.

In the elephant's five-pound brain
The pliable trunk's a continuous diversion
That in his great innocence he never thinks of as perverse,
The pieces of the world are handled with such a thrilling
Tenderness that all his hours
Are consummated and exhausted with love.
Not slow to mate every female bull and baby
Is blessed with a gesture grandly gracious and felt lovely
Down to the sensitive great elephant toenails.

And when his more urgent pricking member
Stabs him on its horrifying season he becomes
A blundering mass of bewilderment ... No thought
But twenty tons of lust he fishes madly for whales
And spiders to rape them. Sperm falls in great gouts
And the whole forest is sticky, colonies of ants
Are nourished for generations on dried elephant semen.

In the elephant's five-pound brain
Death is accorded no belief and old friends
Are continually expected, patience
Is longer than the lives of glaciers and the centuries
Are rattled like toy drums. A life is planned
Like a brush-stroke on the canvas of eternity,
And the beginning of a damnation is handled
With great thought as to its middle and end.



SOMETHING EXTRA TO BALANCE THE SCALES

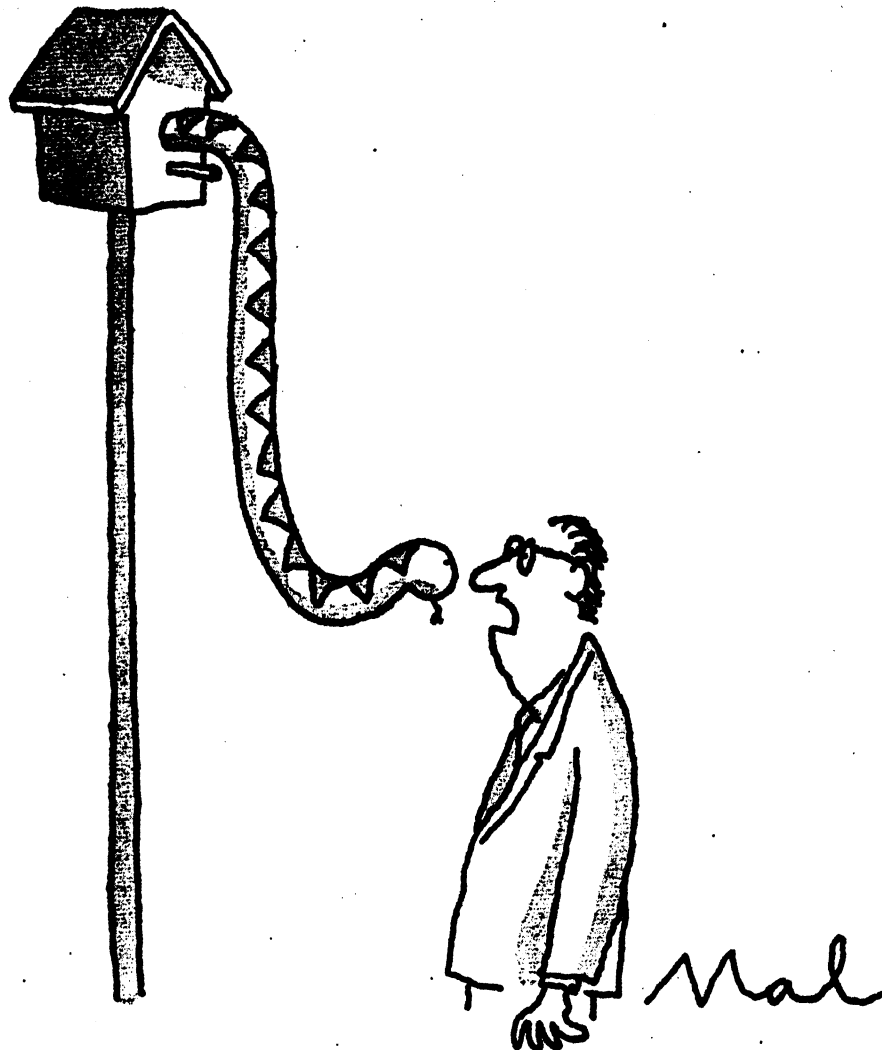
From time immemorial, the most unjustly reviled creature on this planet has been the snake. No other denizen of the animal kingdom has suffered and continues to suffer from such a bad press as the misunderstood serpent. Far from being slimy and evil, the noble snake is one of the most attractive of reptiles with numerous positive qualities that a good many fans could benefit from cultivating. The snake is quiet, contemplative, clean, lacking in prejudice (he'll eat any

small furry rodent regardless of colour or creed), undemanding, fascinating to see, beautiful to look at and generous to a fault. As you can see, he'll gladly give you the skin off his back.

In a small effort to offset some of the negative things that are said of serpents (as witness the two quotations at the bottom of a previous page), XENIUM, The Fanzine That Gives You Something Extra, presents a momento of Larson E, a beautiful and gentle creature who enriched my life and touched the lives of many people I know, teaching them the real nature of his species. Larson E was very fannish; it seems appropriate that he remains in the pages of this fanzine...



"Ah, I see you've found something."



*"Nothing personal, you understand,
but if I had wanted to build a snakehouse,
I would have built a snakehouse!"*

Xenium 8 (2.5) Original Colour Paper

