

LONG DISTANCE VOYEUR

#1



1/28/88

Long Distance Voyeur #1 is another fine mess from Bop-a-Bee Press, a wholly-irresponsible product of Paul Valcour's imagination at 351-C Craig Henry Drive, Nepean, Ontario, Canada K2G 4K9 (613) 723-2485 (home)/(613) 232-2979 (fax).

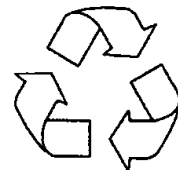
Technical assistance was provided by Dave O'Heare. Chocolate chip and pecan cookies were kindly supplied by Heidi Rath.

The swell Bop-a-Bee Press logo and front cover art is that of Michael Skeet in Toronto, Ontario. Interior cartoon (ahem) is by Valkor. The back cover art, courtesy of the Winnipeg in '94 Worldcon Bid Committee (of which I am a member), is that of Phil Foglio.

Long Distance Voyeur is available for the usual: art, articles, letters of comment or fanzines; \$2 Can. (\$2 US outside Canada) for the shy.



A modified version of this issue of *Long Distance Voyeur #1* was originally published in the *apa Galactus #46* (November/90). The print run for this edition is 150 copies. *Long Distance Voyeur #1* is printed on recycled paper.



LONG DISTANCE VOYEUR - #1

(December, 1990)

CONTENTS

To CD, or Not To CD	2
Have You Joined a Video Club Lately?	2
Who is This Guy Anyway?	3
<i>Canadian SF Quarterly</i>	4
Incident in Northern Ontario	4
Con-Version VII/Canvention 10	5
1990 Canadian Unity Fan Fund (CUFF)	6
1991 CUFF	6
A Midsummer's Night in Edmonton	7
Last Comments About the 1991 CUFF	7
The Fringe	7
Homeward Bound	8
Last Words on <i>Canadian SF Quarterly</i>	10
<u>Tigana</u>	10
The Return of <i>Science Fiction Review</i>	10
An Evening and the Morning After With Elizabeth	11
A Layman's Advice on Computers	12
A Critique on "The Science Fiction Attitude"	14
Random Observations	15
Total Recall	15
Twin Peaks	15
SF Information in Canada	15
But, then again... ..	16
The Spectre of Regional Bias	16
I Am Apolitical, But There Is a Limit	16
'Condom'	16
The New vs Old	16
Natter	17
Extro	17

LONG DISTANCE VOYEUR - #1

(December/90)

To CD, or Not To CD

I'm lounging in a stuffed leather chair, browsing through my record collection. An album by The Moody Blues is playing on the turntable. Nostalgia plays with my emotions while my critical faculties seek to solve my current dilemma, not that I'm overly worried about my task at hand.

Through a series of inter-connected events and mishaps which can be traced back to last year's Pinecone debacle, I now find myself the owner of a new car stereo system. My last one was stolen while my Supra was in at my Toyota dealer getting a second transmission put in this summer as a result of an accident I had while going out to Calgary's Con-Version VII/Convention 10.

(Yes Robert, fate is still blowing sand in my face.)

Because dbx is no longer manufacturing and selling their terrific noise reduction (and dynamic range expansion) systems, as a result of the mass market acceptance of compact discs (CD's), I took the opportunity to upgrade to CD's in my car. CD's are less sensitive to extreme hot and cold temperatures than cassette tapes; they are not subject to wow and flutter, and are not as easily damaged. Of course, the sound reproduction is phenomenally good. And best of all, my insurance paid for it (after intensive negotiations and price comparisons).

So now I'm faced with the pleasant prospect of starting up a small library of CD's. I've always been dismayed at the prices of CD's in retail stores. With a modest record collection of approximately 400 albums, I am not likely to duplicate even a quarter of them in CD format. Too expensive; not necessary either. Thus my perusing the spines of neatly-shelved LP jackets and grooving to long-unheard (and suddenly realized missed) tracks of music and memories.

By chance, there is a price war being waged in downtown Ottawa between two record stores: HMV and Records on Wheels. Many classic rock and folk/rock albums have been selling for \$13 to \$15. The usual prices for CD's are typically \$19 to \$26. Good timing for me, since my disposable income is not that great these days.

My first 5 CD's purchased were:

Bob Dylan's *Greatest Hits*

The Eagles' *Greatest Hits*

Fleetwood Mac's *Rumours*

J. Geils Band's *Freeze Frame*

Carole King's *Tapestry*

I am determined to acquire only my favourite albums on CD's. Easy to say; definitely not so easy to do. Even ignoring the financial constraints, there are so

many good albums I could choose. Mood is also a factor. I have to allow for that. My preferences often reflect my mood: rock'n roll, drivin' music (à la Bob Seger or ZZ Top), jazz, rhythm and blues, or folk/rock.

So far, additional albums I have decided I would like to have in CD format are:

Ry Cooder's *Borderline*

Dire Straits' *Brothers in Arms*

The Moody Blues' *Long Distance Voyager*

Bob Seger's *Stranger in Town* and *Night Moves*

Paul Simon's *Graceland*

Cat Steven's *Teaser and the Firecat* and *Tea for the Tillerman*

Jennifer Warnes' *Famous Blue Raincoat*

Without question, I will also buy a couple of CD's each by The Beatles, The Rolling Stones and Credence Clearwater Revival. I just haven't figured out which ones I like best yet. Other artists and groups I will probably get around to buying a CD, though there is no hurry since I've got good LP copies, are Joan Armatrading, Eric Clapton, Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, The Doors, Led Zeppelin, Supertramp and Steve Winwood. (Oddly enough, I prefer listening to and seeing jazz and R & B performed live.)

Of course, at one or two CD's a month, this is going to take a while.

Have You Joined a Video Club Lately?

One of the few bright spots this year for me has been my meeting and becoming friends with a lovely woman, Tasia. (Attending Con-Version VII/Convention 10 and visiting Robert Runté et al in Edmonton were also nifty cool). Not only are her tastes in science fiction similar to mine (we both like Ray Bradbury, C.J. Cherryh, Samuel R. Delany, Philip K. Dick, Stanislaw Lem, Theodore Sturgeon...), but I find our discussions exhilarating. She frequently challenges my opinions which encourages me to think out my ideas before verbalizing them, or at least be better prepared.

This aspect of our relationship is not confined to science fiction. We've forayed into philosophy, history, historical fiction, movies, television and music. Her knowledge and critical acumen is very good.

As a result of her influence and talks about the cinema - movies, directors, actors and actresses - I found myself doing more reading and research in the field since my return from the West. (I am not surprised at this. Burning out on organizing SF

conventions has left me thirsty for moving on to other areas of interest, a balancing of the pendulum if you will.)

A few weeks ago, I came across an ad for the CBS/Columbia House Video Club. In the past, I have usually avoided such offers, not wanting to submit to the constraints and risk of being forced to buy so many items a year for something I may not care for. However, when I read the ad, it did not appear to have any of the pitfalls or drawbacks to club memberships prevalent in clubs during the seventies.

The deal was: buy 5 movies for \$.50/tape plus shipping and I had the option of purchasing up to two more tapes at \$14.95 each plus shipping. The only requirement was one has to buy three more movies (5 movies if you did not choose the option) at regular club prices over the next three years. I could live with that, especially in light of the following:

- club prices were now averaging \$25 to \$40 rather than the ridiculously exorbitant prices of \$60 to \$100 common during the eighties;
- I indeed would choose the option; thus, three movies in three years is not very much;
- the quantity and selection was excellent with movies from all time periods: the '30s through the '80s in particular; there were even some European films;

and

- one was not forced to keep, pay for or even spend money returning unwanted films sent if you had forgotten to send in your reply card (a traditional sore point in the past for many people).

Well, I checked my bank account, then my lunch money and decided I could afford to join. Choosing which movies I would enjoy owning was as interesting an exercise as choosing CD's. I even got Tasia involved in the process.

My choices were as follows:

The Abyss

Blade Runner

A Clockwork Orange

Dangerous Liaisons

The Road Warrior

Tootsie

The Unbearable Lightness of Being

I already had *Batman*, *Casablanca* and *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* through special store sales. Two movies which lost out in the final cut were *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Shining*. I shall obtain them

at a later date. Like albums, there are so many other bloody good films.

My selection was based on a number of factors:

- taste, of course;
- how expensive the movie was likely to be (ie. buy the more expensive ones at the sale price, leave the less expensive ones for later... I can afford their regular prices);
- and
- availability (classics will always be around; maybe not other good, but less popular films).

Who is This Guy Anyway?

Hmmmm. Good question. I suppose I'm different things to different people, sort of chameleon-like. Traditionally more comfortable being a satellite member to various interest groups, not wanting to be tied down by cliquish protocol and politics, I could enjoy the company of a variety of folk without compromising my values or opinions. The latter is not always right or healthy for character-building or maturing, but I never made enemies.

Brother, did that ever change.

As a result of changing my way of living in dealing with an illness five years ago, I became more outgoing, participative and active. Not only do I regularly go to the theatre, movies, ball games and parties (quite a change from the quiet bookworm I used to be), but I am now an associate member of an artist co-op here in Ottawa, a (retired) SF convention organizer (World Fantasy Convention, Canvention, Pinecone, Maplecon, SMOFcon), a nominal (amateur) freelance critic in SF, fantasy and horror, and a part-time volunteer in programmes and clubs for the physically-handicapped.

For the record, I am a management accountant. My employer is really great: the Office of the Auditor General of Canada. Normally, it wouldn't matter one whit who one works for when writing a (or for a) fanzine; but, to be honest, I like these guys and what we do. Some of you, in Canada, may even be familiar (or at least remember) our report tabled in the House of Commons a few weeks ago. I've audited a number of organizations and Crown corporations over the years in Canada. For me, it was challenging and interesting work. I have now moved on to what I consider more creative work: system analysis and design.

Many of you already know me to some extent. Others, in particular, those in fanzine fandom, may not. I trust, through *Long Distance Voyeur*, and correspondence, this will change. I look forward to settling down and doing what I originally wanted to do six years ago (before my illness) - namely, write. For the moment, I am content to write non-fiction: editorials, reviews and articles.

It makes no sense to spill my guts telling you all my life history or character makeup up front, first time out; best to let that unfold, if at all, gradually over time.

What do I like? Reading science fiction, fantasy, horror, mystery, historical fiction, the classics underground theatre, films, art, music, SF conventions with thoughtful, participative programming.... writing and editing, playing chess, poker, pub-hopping, dancing preferred cuisines: Mexican, East Indian, Szechuan Chinese, Italian my favourite toy: Black Beauty ('82 Toyota Supra GTS) weakness: all-night rap sessions on fanzines, writing or smocking.

Dislikes? Romance novels, *The National Enquirer*, 90% of commercial network television programming basketball, cricket (I've got to pick something), politics, chartered banks and insurance companies, country music dishonesty, inconsiderate folk, Mulroney, Reagan prefer not: to eat at MacDonald's or to eat Japanese sushi, squid, octopus, clams.

Canadian SF Quarterly

A few of you will no doubt be wondering about the status of this SF magazine. For those of you in the dark, *Canadian SF Quarterly* (CSFQ) was to be (and still could be) the successor to Michael Skeet's three-time Casper Award-winning fanzine, *MLR*. CSFQ was to be reshaped into a semi-professional SF newszine cum critical/review journal. (The more traditional fanzine elements of *MLR* were being carried on by Con-Version's *XenoFile* edited by Ron Currie in Calgary.)

Dave O'Heare (ass't editor) and myself (managing editor) prepared a comprehensive business plan for the organization, staffing, publishing and marketing of CSFQ earlier this past summer.

Staffing was progressing adequately: 3 contributing editors were confirmed, Michael Skeet being one of them; 4 book and film reviewers had agreed to become regular contributors so far, Keith Soltys being one (his experience in reviewing for *Fantasy Review* and *Science Fiction Review* is noteworthy); 2 part-time volunteer staff assistants were lined up, one having just completed a summer job working for the Edmonton-based speculative fiction magazine *On Spec*; and I had my first foreign correspondent lined up in Germany (an ass't editor for their national SF newszine).

Canadian SF Quarterly was a dream magazine for a managing editor in one respect: there was no shortage of written material or subjects. I couldn't believe it. The first four issues had theme topics already; I had a cover for one and a very good new artist wanting to do another, and I still had not pursued my stronger contacts for art material (without even venturing outside of Canada yet); 4 interviews of writers and artists had been done; a series of profiles on specialty SF bookstores across Canada was firmly established; we had obtained permission to transcribe

and publish a CBC radio documentary by a Toronto-based SF writer interviewing well-known authors about alternate histories; and so on. All this, and I haven't even mentioned news items, convention reports, submitted or promised essays, con listings or letters yet. Whew!

So, what happened? Money!

During the spring and early summer I was marginally hopeful CSFQ would be at least viable. In the wake of my experience with Pinecone, it was important to do three things properly:

- (1) CSFQ must be properly organized and financially sound;
- (2) CSFQ must be adequately planned and managed; and
- (3) CSFQ must have competent, qualified staff (my interpretation of this latter point is liberal enough to include developing and promoting new talent, and good amateur/fan writers and artists).

The business plan was the first essential step. (A lot of other parallel activities, such as recruiting and advertising, were being carried out as well, as one would expect.) It was ready for my trip out West in July. I received the not unexpected constructive advice from chosen writers and fans out West. (The Easterners were scheduled to see the plan upon my return.)

Incident in Northern Ontario

But fate intervened. The audacity, and hence the folly, of my aspirations was cruelly mirrored before me.... an 18-wheeler driving a few hundred feet ahead of me lost a 1-foot cube metal load leveller and steel rod off the transport onto the gravel track of construction road we were both travelling on. Having driven a couple hundred kilometres in such dusty conditions, the item was essentially camouflaged; that and the fact the transport was kicking up a fair bit of dust. With one track to follow (we were going over a gully, and there was no shoulders or guardrail), Black Beauty had to eat the damn thing.

The transmission and bell housing were destroyed; the gas tank was severely ruptured; the stick shift and console were no more; and I had an ashtray in the ceiling of the car.

I suppose there is a good side to almost everything: the load leveller had not gone under my seat. (Now I know the feel of black humour.)

Northern Ontario is beautiful country with its rugged, natural scenery and colours. But it is no place to have your car break down. Within a couple of minutes of being stranded, it started to rain heavily. It took nigh on twenty minutes to flag down a vehicle, despite there being lots of traffic; luckily, I was on the Trans-Canada Highway. One of the large, heavy duty construction dump trucks stopped going the other way.

Some pick up. No matter. But man, I'm 5-foot tall and the bottom of the passenger door was a good deal higher than that. It was very much a climbing expedition just to get into the sucker.

The driver was great: a young chap from Toronto workin' up north for good pay. About five miles back, there was a small roadside canteen which he drove me to. He knew who to phone in Dryden, the nearest town (20 miles away). When I found out he was headed back to Guelph in the fall to be with his girlfriend, the least I could do was recommend checking out Sleeman's beer when he got there (a vice of mine Keith Soltys has to take full responsibility for).

Spending the afternoon at this so-called diner was an experience in itself. The proprietor was an elderly lady. The patrons were mostly cats. An old, bearded gentleman bicycled by during my stay; briefly stopping, he bought a coke, chatted a bit and left. The lady then proceeded to relate how she had sold the chap, who lived a few kilometres up the road, the bicycle 10 years ago. Every day, summer or winter, he bicycled down to her store. That was the high point of excitement that afternoon. The few blokes who meandered in (construction workers) were not a talkative lot.

Have you ever sat in a small restaurant in a rural area or small town, and had the feeling everyone was looking at you, sizing up the city slicker? Even the proprietor settled down to complacent, sultry staring. It was a long, gloomy wait for the tow truck.

I, and what was left of Black Beauty, made it into Dryden just after everything closed down for the evening (to be expected, of course). I registered into the cheapest motel I could find. No television. No radio or clock. There was a MacDonald's across the highway. (Fate is indeed cruel.)

Bert's Auto Wrecking

- cutting • welding
- 24 hour towing service
- 15 tow trucks • buy and sell
- mobile phone

Phone (807) 937-6744 Bus.
(807) 937-5187 Res.

If no answer ask operator for Mobile Y.J. 72289

Bert and Brian Besyk,

Box 845, Dryden, Ontario, Canada P8N 2Z5

Located 3½ miles west of Dryden on Hwy. 17.

Photo by R. Ettinger

23732R

I phoned Linda Ross-Mansfield in Winnipeg and explained my situation. She and John had been expecting me earlier that day. Fortunately (?), we did not have to carry out the contingency plan of her driving out to pick me up (a four hour drive, each way).

It took a day to sort out with my insurance broker in Ottawa, and the insurance adjusters and body/wreck (cringe) shop in Dryden who was going to do what. The adjuster wanted to write the car off; but I pointed

out I had an appraised \$20,000 replacement cost insurance policy on the car; he quickly decided it was cheaper to spend \$4-5,000 fixing the car. (Humbug! Read on.)

They gave me the keys to a Tilden rental car to continue the rest of my trip; it was included in my insurance coverage, so they said. (The Tilden manager was a witness to this.) And off I went; not happy, but relieved to be on my way to see everyone in Calgary and Edmonton.

* * * * *

Aaargh!.... I get a phone call while in Winnipeg.

"Oh, Mr. Valcour, we regret to inform you that you are eligible for only \$450 car rental fees. New Ontario insurance regulations relating to one car accidents."

(The driver of the 18-wheeler had not noticed he had lost the load-leveller, nor noticed my predicament; hence he had not stopped. No, I didn't see any distinguishing company logos or licence plate.)

The total estimated rental bill, round-trip, was \$850.

John Mansfield and I walked down to Tilden from Linda and John's store (Pendragon Games) in downtown Winnipeg to see if I could return my rental car, or at least leave it there until I returned. No I couldn't. I would have to pay a \$150 one-way drop-off penalty, then rent another vehicle at twice Dryden's rental rate to go back to Dryden, and pay another \$150 one-way drop-off charge for leaving their car there.

With what little rationality I had left, I opted to minimize the damage by parking the rental car in Linda and John's garage for the remainder of the trip. They were kind enough to adjust their departure time from Winnipeg to accommodate my arriving in Calgary in time for Con-Version's 8:30 a.m. bus departure (for concom and guests), Friday morning for the Royal Museum of Paleontology near Drumheller, Alberta. This was no small thing for the Mansfields to do. They already had a lot of merchandise to take for their dealer's table at Con-Version; and I had a good deal of stuff with me because of the magazine. All that in one small Toyota Tercel station wagon.

* * * * *

If you think driving through Saskatchewan on the Trans-Canada Highway is monotonous and boring, you should try doing it at night. Nothing twice over.

Con-Version VII/Canvention 10

I shall save the description of my activities as CUFF winner and ordinary, mortal fan at Con-Version VII/Canvention 10 for issue #2. Suffice it to say, I enjoyed the con, the hospitality and conviviality very much. I would go back anytime.

1990 Canadian Unity Fan Fund (CUFF)

What I write here and in the next *Long Distance Voyager* will form a rough draft of my CUFF trip report. I shall begin writing it in January. Dave O'Heare has offered to help out on formatting and layout. The main trip report is going to be a fanzine. Shorter versions will appear here, and possibly in *XenoFile* if the editor, Ron Currie, wants them. (Take note Ron.) The fanzine will hopefully be ready by next spring. The delay is partly due to burn-out, partly because of finances, and partly because I'm tired from all the overtime I've put in at work.

The fanzine may contain photographs taken during my CUFF trip. It will contain copies of gathered memorabilia. Cartoon illustrations are planned as well; if anyone wishes to contribute in that department, they of course will get one or more copies of the fanzine. I'd gladly provide an outline of events and anecdotes ahead of time to assist creativity.

Those fans who played an important role in the CUFF trip, such as providing accommodation, rides, great conversation, etc. and those with whom I wish to correspond or trade fanzines with anyway shall receive the CUFF trip report fanzine.

It has been suggested by Robert Runté I consider mailing the fanzine to all those who donated money or voted in the CUFF balloting this year. Tradition may even dictate this, though I'm not sure. It is a reasonable idea. I must consider my finances first. CUFF does not pay for trip reports. The CUFF winner pays for it. But the more I review the numbers and the potential for goodwill, the more I will likely do it.

If I write a short version, I will submit it to *XenoFile*. It would be written to convey much of the goings-on during the trip to quite a broad group of fans, including those who voted. It may also serve to help promote participation by more fans, something CUFF still needs to work on if it is to remain financially viable.

For all others, they will be able to obtain it for a nominal price or trade.

Any comments?

I will publish a CUFF financial report in the next *Long Distance Voyager*.

1991 CUFF

I couldn't help but notice questions being asked in *Galactus* #45, about which way CUFF may be going next year, and one fan's suggestion that enquiries be sent to Robert Runté. The answer to the first question is: CUFF winners travel in the same direction as Convention.

As to asking Robert, he is certainly one of the most informed fans in Canada on the subject, especially with him being the CUFF Administrator in 1989. But anyone may also direct their enquiries to me, the 1990 CUFF Administrator.

Enough with titles. The Fund is currently in my hands. The responsibility for recruiting candidates and nominators rests with me, though I by no means will

discourage active soliciting by others in that department.

Generally speaking, candidates should be recruited by the end of January, 1991, if we are going to have time for distributing and receiving voting ballots by the end of March, 1991. We need approximately two months to arrange transportation and accommodation. I will assist in any way I can.

One of the toughest decisions I have to make as Administrator this year is the request by one of the potential candidates (and some of her nominators) to run for CUFF on the platform of sending her to Westercon in Vancouver rather than Context '91/Convention 11 in Edmonton next year. I shall not divulge her name in this issue out of courtesy. She requires 6 nominators - 3 from the West and 3 from the East; I do not want to embarrass her if she failed to achieve that.

However, that is not likely to happen. She is well-known and liked, and has a strong base of support in Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver.

Interesting. It would be useful to have guidelines.

Here is how I see it: CUFF is not officially tied to, nor necessarily associated with the Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Association (CSFFA), which is, as many of you know, the parent body for Convention, the annual Canadian national SF convention. Starting with Keycon 5/Convention 8 in Winnipeg ('88), two major events happened:

- (1) the CSFFA made major revisions to its constitution, ostensibly to upgrade the quality and profile of the Casper (now Aurora) Awards and to recognize the realities of the Canadian SF environment; CUFF was appropriately not dealt with or included in the the constitution at the time - not enough input from fans involved in past CUFFs or fanzines;

and

- (2) CUFF got itself untracked, financially and administratively, adopting a similar east-west nature of subsidizing fan trips to coincide with the direction of Convention.

So, if there is a CUFF candidate or race for 1991, then it must be east to west, since Convention is out west next year. To have it otherwise would throw everything out of wrack. However, there is nothing binding in the CSFFA constitution nor are there written guidelines elsewhere for CUFF which specifically requires a CUFF nominee to go to Convention.

The objectives of CUFF (the rewarding of deserving fans; the sharing of ideas across the country; allowing fans in one part of the country to put a face to a name they've heard so much about over the years; having fun... definitely high on my list) can still be met by sending a fan to Westercon. I'm sure fans would be just as interested to read a trip report to

Westercon as ConText; both cons are bound to be excellent. The one concern I've got, other than the potential for hurt pride on ConText's concom's part, is Westercon's acceptance to honour the CUFF candidate special status. I suspect that will not be a problem. Comments?

A Midsummer's Night in Edmonton

Robert and I had a very interesting conversation on the subject of CUFF while I was in Edmonton. Such aspects as guidelines, eligibility, voting procedures, required distribution, accountability and obligations of the winners are all important. However, nowhere is anything explained or laid out.

My general opinion is that CUFF is for active or noteworthy SF fans, regardless of their field of expertise (eg.- fanzines, convention organizing, writing, art, costuming...). Candidates should qualify on their merits, and the desire of other fans (peers) to meet them. By definition, this would exclude fans only involved in non-SF areas (eg.- comics, SCA, mystery...). I would also exclude professionals.

As in anything, one has to judge each case on its own. For instance, Janet Hetherington and Elizabeth Holden more than qualify for eligibility because of their long-standing and important organizational work for Maplecon, despite the fact they are predominantly known for their work and expertise in comics. Also, if a professional contributes a significant amount of time towards fan activities, then they would be eligible. They just aren't eligible simply because of their professional work.

On the other hand, Robert takes the interesting position that CUFF could be for fanzine writers, artists and editors alone. It doesn't matter what the fanzine is about: SF, media, mystery, sociology, computer science, comics, Star Trek, etc. This was quite an eye-opener for me. I am used to the traditional fanzine editors' lament for the good ol' days when fans were fanzine fans. But it always centered around SF (in this context, this includes fantasy and/or horror).

His position also leads to exclusions: club and convention organizers, costumers, writers and editors of small press/semi-professional magazines, comic book artists and publishers, etc. who are not involved in fanzines. (*Please correct me, Robert, if I have misstated your opinion.*)

Now I know this will generate feedback.

So Robert's argument was refreshingly new, and led to the toughest debate I've had the pleasure of participating in all year. (This, more than any other reason, is why I go to conventions or visit fans in other cities. Late night discussions and correspondence/fanzines still represents the *heart* of trufandom. Alas, I digress.)

By mutual agreement, we reckoned our debate to be an even draw.

I was lucky. Robert can fix those steely eyes of his on you, under the subterfuge of kindly, professorial interest, all the while wringing every last ounce of reasoned logic you can muster. One's collar becomes too tight; your palms become sweaty; caffeine no

longer seems sufficient to drive your brain (already in overdrive); you begin looking for an escape route. Of course, he could have just opened up the living room window, but no. Robert is an accomplished tactician. He had me on his turf, and I was going to pay for it. If my arguments had any merit, they would survive such minor, materialistic hurdles.

Only after six or seven hours of gruelling interrogation, at around 4 o'clock in the morning, did I discover the true depths of marshalled ingenuity of my opponent. He finally opened the windows to allow fresh air in - for indeed I was bunking in his livingroom that night. Within twenty minutes, undressed, lights out and winding down from exhaustion a noticeable buzzing of several hundred mosquitos assailed my ears. It wasn't long before they found the body attached to those ears. I swear I could hear a fiendish cackle upstairs (behind closed door).

Beware, oh upstart debaters, the rewards of winning the respect of your betters.

Last Comments About the 1991 CUFF

As mentioned before, CUFF is administered, in body, by the current CUFF winner and, in spirit, by a loose set of ideas held by a few active fans (such as previous CUFF winners). Such concepts as 'precedence', 'objectives' and 'eligibility criteria' do play a role, but only informally.

I hope to some day work with other fans towards preparing guidelines, without the weight of bureaucratic rules, for CUFF. But until then, I will have to do the best I can without them. I will consult others and I shall try to be fair, even when I may have other preferences.

For instance, regardless of the arguments and positions taken in my previous anecdote, there is no definition of 'fan'. The wording I agreed to let ConText '91 use in their upcoming progress report for 'eligibility' was as follows:

"The person must be Canadian, and must be an active fan in clubs, convention-running or fanzines."

For the present, that will have to suffice. The above 'eligibility' criteria applies to nominators, CUFF candidates and voters. If I do not know the person or their qualifications, I will make every effort to follow up.

The Fringe

Edmonton's Fringe Festival took place a few weeks after I visited the gang in that city. I was most disappointed given my fondness for underground theatre.

I did manage to catch the tail end of Winnipeg's Fringe Festival on my way out to Calgary, thanks to artist, Robert Pasternak. I had scheduled an interview with him at his studio. A most amazing place; and quite an interesting dude to spend time with. Well, his

studio is in this really neat old relic of a building. The elevator groaned and banged, and had sliding iron-grille doors. This building was at the edge of one of the parks hosting the Fringe activities.

Though I could gladly spend hours interviewing Robert, going through his three-dimensional art displays and art portfolio, we eventually headed out to partake the sights, sounds and food of the Fringe. Robert was particularly keen on showing me one artist's work. He was a Mexican, on tour in Canada. Robert swore this guy could do a painting, which I would consider paying bucks for, in five minutes flat.

I was glad I didn't bet. He was right. With gas mask on, this artist used nothing but aerosol spray (from cans), a tin plate, the top from one of the spray cans, a quarter and crumpled paper towel.... and like wow! The colours were striking; the speed, ease and dexterity was incredible; the scenery in the paintings was varied and beautiful. His stuff was as good or better than much of the art one finds in typical art shows of your average SF convention. Alas, I neither had the bread nor means to transport a painting. Robert, however, did buy one. \$20! Can you believe it.

The variety of food and acts was greater and more interesting than a carnival. Stand up comedy routines, jugglers, puppet shows, outdoor plays, the list goes on. Everyone sitting on benches or the grass. No hassles. The atmosphere was great.

My only regret was I did not get an opportunity to see any theatre plays while in Winnipeg.

Homeward Bound

I shall leave the bulk of the account of my stopovers in Edmonton and Winnipeg for next issue. But I should relate to you here my torturous return trek through northern Ontario. It is this, more than any other reason, which tipped the balance of fate for *Canadian SF Quarterly*.

My stay in Winnipeg on my way east was to be for only a few days. The auto body repair shop had close to two weeks to find and install a new transmission, weld the gas tank and fix the console stickshift. The insurance adjuster had assured me, during a phone conversation in Calgary, everything would be ready by the time I got back.

Ha!

I get a phone call (one of many to come) from the adjuster, the day before I was supposed to leave for Dryden, explaining how difficult it was to find major Toyota parts in such an isolated area.

"Fine. How long will it be?" I ask.

"About a week. Joe Nickle believes he has tracked down a Supra transmission already." was his reply.

"Okay, I can wait. Call me as soon as it is ready." I had visions of nickle and dime stores turned auto wreckers.

Linda and John were most considerate hosts. They never complained. John even seemed happy. He had someone to smof with. With that prospect in mind, I made a point of checking out the entertainment scene and nightlife in Winnipeg.

After several evenings and adventures, I tempted fate by calling the adjuster again. He was sorry (he was sorry!) to inform me they had found another engine part damaged in the accident: a gear. It could only be obtained from the United States. It would take a few more days.

This necessitated more phone calls: my boss; my brother at home; my friend, Dave O'Heare, for a favour. I am beginning to get annoyed. The car rental bill is mushrooming; but it is still cheaper to keep the car based on the information at hand. All my vacation time is going down the drain. The Winnipeg office of my organization is essentially closed for holidays.

I become seriously depressed. I spend more time puttering around the Mansfields' house. The cats call me by name now. Even reading *Footrot Flats* fails to cheer me up.

Linda tries to snap me out of my doldrums. She gives me something to do: design an accounting system for the Winnipeg in '94 bid committee. Kids stuff; but it works. Next, she hands me early drafts of the Winnipeg in '94 Worldcon Bid (Fall/90) progress report. This exercise leads to brainstorming sessions, smocking, sore eyes and a close-to-satisfied feeling that I might have earned my room and board for two weeks.

I finally feel like checking out some of the foreign pavilions at what is perhaps Winnipeg's major annual event: Folklorama. (More on that next issue.)

The days continue to draw out. I cannot understand why the gear is not expedited by courier. My patience is running out. My boss is concerned I am not being forceful enough. He is right. My work is piling up. The car rental bill is skyrocketing. I'm bored silly. And my youngest brother's wedding is only five days away.

Enough is enough. I pack all my gear. I tell the adjuster I am coming and I need the car. They will either have it ready or pay the freight to have it shipped to Ottawa.

I pat the cats goodbye and thank John and Linda. They take me out for dinner to one of the few places in Winnipeg serving pasta. Spiffy. We dined in a mock railway caboose. Bring on the wine, bread and garlic. Lots of garlic. I didn't care. I was going to see my adjuster.

* * * * *

Twelve hours later, slightly hungover, eyes heavy from too little sleep at a cheap roadside motel, I walked into Tilden's Rent-a-Car in Dryden, Ontario. So the car was a little dirty. I never wanted to see it again. The bill came to \$850. Ouch.

My adjuster came to pick me up and take me out to Joe Nickle's place. The car was ready to go. (So to speak.) My stereo didn't sound so hot. Swallowed Nickle's cassette. Served him right. The adjuster wasn't impressed; so I let it pass. I wanted to get home. The engine and transmission behaved fine in Nickle's garage though the stickshift acted stiff. I thanked everybody. Paid my deductible. Signed on the dotted line.

My heart sank during the short drive from Nickle's garage back to Dryden. I had to renew my car licence (I'm a Leo). Black Beauty groaned out of Nickle's driveway. She could barely accelerate to 40 kilometres per hour. This was not good. We crawled into Dryden.

My adjuster agreed to cash a \$200 personal cheque so I could get home. All my funds had been used to pay off the car rental (less \$450), insurance deductible, motels, bus fare, gas and food to date. He said he would try to see what he could do about the car rental. (I did not believe him.) Meanwhile, he tried cajoling me with the line that all cars behaved differently after major repairs. I called my insurance broker back in Ottawa. We were going to have a serious talk when I got back. Smiling, the adjuster offered me some doughnuts and coffee, and mapped out a safe detour around the 200 kilometres of construction facing me. Nothing was too much for a beleaguered client. Small town hospitality, ya know.

I just wanted to go. On walking me to my car, I noticed my passenger side mirror was cracked. Smiling real friendly like, I pointed it out to the s.o.b. It had not been broken before my mishap. (It had not been broken during the accident either). I would have it looked after in Ottawa (which I did, at the insurance company's expense).

* * * * *

The first 50 kilometres were hell on Black Beauty and me. She couldn't accelerate worth beans and she refused to go above 60 km/hour. The highway for this portion of the drive home was under construction. I felt every jarring jolt, afraid something would break down. I did not delude myself; I was as stressed out from lack of sleep and anxiety as Black Beauty was from its internal hack job. Transport drivers became impatient. Heck, drivers of 3-cylinder compacts became impatient.

Where was that detour?

stations. No more than 20 cars did I count on that stretch, and me with a lame car.

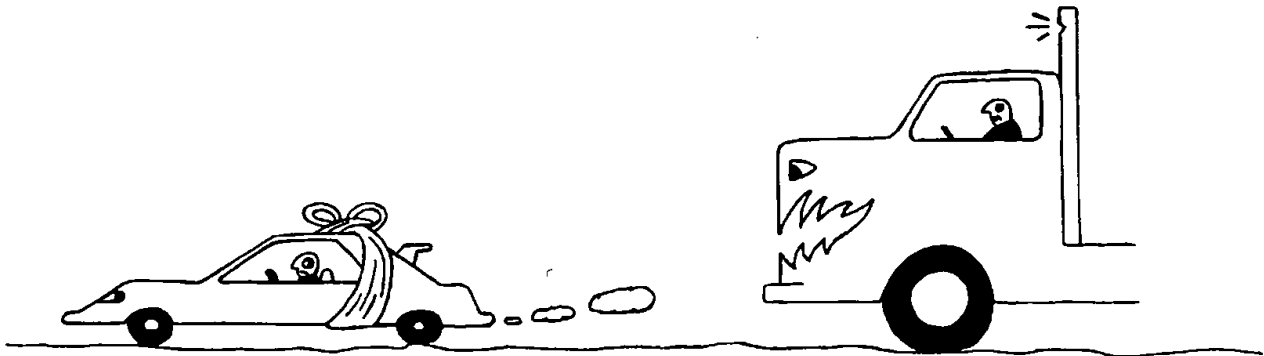
It was along this highway when I figured out what was wrong with the car. The gearing was all wrong. (By the way, the car has a 4-speed automatic transmission with manual overdrive. So I hadn't noticed at my previous slow speeds.) By edging the speed up, I ascertained that the transmission was kicking from 1st to 2nd at 40 kph (normal is 10 -20 kph), from 2nd to 3rd at 80 kph (normal is 40 kph) and from 3rd to 4th at 100 kph (normal is 60 kph). Just knowing this helped.

Out there in the middle of nowhere, I came across a really spooky place. For miles I had been driving along a high metal mesh fence. Top secret-like. As I approached what I thought to be a major business or military operations area, I was confounded by the continued lack of vehicles. No traffic and nothing parked inside. The place was immense. Huge freshly painted buildings, tall smoke stack. No company name splashed in advertisement. Not a soul in sight. Slowing down out of curiosity, I noticed a small sign at the front gate. It was a toxic waste disposal plant.

Not 20 kilometres away, I arrived at a small Indian village. I am also now near Quetico Park. I wondered if what I saw signifies what the provincial government thinks of natives and natural habitat?

I stop for a hamburger and strong coffee at a local diner on Highway 11. The car is overheating. At this rate, I decide to drive all night. Traffic on the Trans-Canada would be next to nothing, and Black Beauty would be less of a road hazard. I had only 72 hours to make it to my brother's wedding. By driving at night, I could maintain good speed in higher gear and thus, hopefully, keep the engine temperature stable.

I plowed on. Sunset soon turns to dusk and darkness. There is little traffic on Highway 11. In fact, I see very little traffic from there on in. The balance of the trip is a blur of driving in the dark, pitstops for coffee and doughnuts, tanking up for gas, rain and



Highway 620. Paved. Scenic. And deserted. For 120 kilometres, no houses or businesses. No radio

sacking out in a recently sold, rundown motel, which for some reason which still escapes me, was still

operating in Wawa, Ontario. But at 5 a.m. in the morning, it really did not matter.

Oblivion. That is the only way to describe my sleep until 4 p.m. the next afternoon. Back in the car and 14 1/2 hours later, at 6:30 a.m., I roll up in front of my house. A neighbour, a nice Italian lady, is walking her white cat. We exchange friendly greetings and she asks "Did you have a nice vacation?"

Fortunately, my brother's wedding was at 7 p.m. So I wasted no time catching up on sleep.

.... I hitched a ride to the wedding.

Last Words on *Canadian SF Quarterly*

And there you have it. Upon my return, I set about increasing my work hours to make up for two weeks lost pay and I had a good long sitdown chat with Dave O'Heare about life, the universe and everything.

Knowing that good decisions seldom come under duress, we gave each other two weeks to think about the real commitment involved, the inherent risk and initial financial investment needed. I needed time to cool off.

What little money I had set aside for *CSFQ* was gone. The monies generously collected and donated out West to help defray the losses I absorbed from *Pinecones I and II* were spent in extended vacation costs and my next rent. Fate, itself, was too full of negative vibes. And I realized, I just didn't have the energy to begin another major project so soon after helping to put on four cons in 14 months.

Canadian SF Quarterly is a great idea. The timing is right in this country. As Judith Merrill aptly puts it, the professional output is reaching 'critical mass'. Fandom is growing and learning to communicate.

But for me and Dave, we ended up making the same decision. We shall pass on this historic opportunity.

Besides, I could do with more first-hand experience writing freelance. Reviving my social life would also do me a world of good.

Tigana

The best new novel I have read this fall is Guy Gavriel Kay's *Tigana* (RoC hc, 673 pp., 1990, \$25.95). Kay had already proven his prowess as a writer of fantasy with the publishing of his acclaimed *Fionavar Trilogy*; however, I couldn't help but feel awed anticipation upon opening the book and reading the dustjacket. It is rare to find such eloquent description in so brief and commercial a place, yet a book review could scarcely do greater justice than what RoC's editors did for *Tigana*. The cover itself, with Mel Odom's distinctive illustration, is pleasing and in sympathy with the richness of the epic to be found within.

Tigana is the tale of a land divided by two competing tyrant, warrior magicians and the struggle of a few to rid a curse that lay upon the people of one of the provinces, namely Tigana. The diabolical

ingenuity and cruelty of the curse unfolds as the lives of individuals and families growing up are depicted, for no folk not of Tigana may hear or understand the word describing the once proud province. Others only know of it by a crude name given it by its conqueror, Brandin. Devastation took care of Tigana's heritage, culture and art... but it is this loss of identity which smites bitterness into the few who quietly remember and resist.

There is a grand tapestry of travel and scenes which feels true. The story abounds with travelling actors and musicians, farmers and traders, sailors and mercenaries, courtiers and nobility intertwined in plots and events both straightforward and complex.

The patient plotting and sense of purpose of the renegades, the maturing of a young man destined so he thought to be a theatrical singer, the wounded pride of a duke stripped of his powers and family honour, the lonely struggle for revenge by a beautiful mistress turned bittersweet, ordinary barkeeps and traders quietly harbouring and abetting those opposed to the warlords: all are presented in human terms.

In *Tigana*, there is no unnatural inevitability of events; the tyrants are not omnipotent nor all-knowing. And Kay chooses to draw his characters with colour, not the black and white stereotyping of good and evil. Honour has its limits and burdens. Deliberation and doubt haunt *Tigana*'s protagonists. People struggle and die. There is treachery, as well as heroism.

Women have strong, sensitive roles. *Tigana* very much plays on the senses in music, love and passion. All the while, Kay balances depth of characterization and realism of ordinary life with an excellent story of intrigue, adventure and rebellion.

The elements of magic are integral, but subordinate to the story. Magic is part of the fabric of the players' world, and indeed plays a balancing of power; however, the reader finds the guts and feel of the story in the characters. One could liken the role of magic in Kay's fantasy to religion in the courts and countryside of Renaissance Europe.

Tigana will likely be a leading contender for the Aurora Award as best Canadian SF/fantasy novel. It is certainly deserving.

The Return of *Science Fiction Review*

I am in seventh heaven. I had noticed an ad in *Locus* earlier this year about the new *Science Fiction Review*. I remember being surprised, since Richard Geis had truly sounded tired of doing the magazine after so many years. Well, John Mansfield had the first two issues of the new series on sale at Con-cept '90 in Montreal. I am notoriously slow in getting around to mailing in subscriptions; so I bought both on the spot.

Richard Geis is neither publisher nor editor of the new periodical (a quarterly). He is, however, editorial advisor, columnist and reviewer. And what would *Science Fiction Review* (SFR) be without Geis' "Alien Thoughts" column and his 'Alter Ego'?

The new publishers are Elton Elliott and Gregory Hinkelman. Elliott is also the Editor. There is a further number of 5 or 6 editorial/managerial staff plus Pamela Sargeant, George Warren and George Zebrowski as contributing editors.

SFR is still being published out of Oregon in the U.S. (There is a fair bit of activity in that neck of the woods - similar to Edmonton in Canada - when one notes that the successful, upstart hardcover magazine, *Pulphouse*, comes from there; the *SFR* publishers do mention thanks to Dean Wesley Smith, Kristine Kathryn Rusch and Debrah Gray Cook of *Pulphouse* for advice and hospitality.)

The new *SFR* has gone upscale in format: heavier, colour covers, slightly more modern layout and more articles by professionals. Though the table of contents and the whole mag is laid out with the same feel as the old *SFR*, it is also better thought out. There is still lots of 'opinion' articles and a wealth of book reviews, but *SFR* now has a terrific section on science. In issue #1, it was on nanotechnology; in #2, it was spaceflight; in future issues (the third should be out now), the topics will be: chaos theory; human genetic engineering; biotech; wormholes, time machines and faster-than-light travel; and modern astronomy.

SFR is now publishing short fiction. It continues to publish great interviews and essays on the literature. Happily, fan art and cartoons continues to grace the pages of *SFR*. Such familiars as Gary Davis, Alexis Gilliland, Tim Kirk, and William Rotsler pen much of the interior illos or cartoon quips. A sizeable amount of varied art was also contributed by Russ Fletcher, Monika Livingstone and David Transue.

I shan't do a critique on the articles or stories in this issue of *Long Distance Voyeur*, but I hope, from time to time, to do so for some of them in the future. There is just too much stuff. The first issue alone was a double issue.

Some of the highlights so far, in addition to the science features, are: Robert A. Heinlein's last interview; an interesting retrospective interview with Richard Geis; a lecture by Gregory Benford titled "SF, Rhetoric and Realities" given at the Fiction Beyond the Year 2000 Conference in Leeds, U.K. in 1989; the short story "The Human Shore" by Pamela Sargeant, which touches upon the neutralizing of gender specific human nature; interviews with Ursula K. Le Guin and Roger Zelazny; Darrell Schweitzer's "The New Vivisector"; Jon Gustaffson's "The Gimlet Eye" (about art) and reviews by Geis, Charles de Lint and Gene DeWeese.

There is even a letter section. Thank goodness. (On this point, I am a traditionalist.) There is no mention of *SFR* giving copies for LoC's; I assume the magazine is essentially available by subscription only. Perhaps fan art may qualify for copies, but articles and stories are likely paid for. Writers and artists should write to *SFR* for info.

I really must not procrastinate sending in my subscription. It is that good. *Science Fiction Review* is part of SF history and tradition, still in the making.

The subscription rates are:

\$18 U.S. for 4 issues

\$22 U.S. for 4 issues (1st class)

\$32 U.S. for 8 issues

\$36 U.S. for 8 issues (1st class)

For Canada: add \$2 U.S. to the above categories

Foreign rates: \$25 U.S. for 4 issues (sea mail)

\$35 U.S. for 4 issues (air mail)

Lifetime rate: 10 times per above rates

Back issue: #1 - \$10 U.S.

Subscription payments should be made payable and mailed to:

SFR Publications

P.O. Box 20340

Salem, Oregon

97307 U.S.A.

An Evening and the Morning After With Elizabeth

Visiting Elizabeth Holden is like visiting the world. All at once. There is a calm, graceful aura about her which lulls you into pleasant conversation. All the while, a stream of personages, history, cultures and topics flits through the minutes, then hours of conversation. You hold onto a life-preserver while digesting just how much this woman knows, has done, and is currently doing.

Elizabeth is an excellent cook. The vegetarian, Chinese dinner with lentil soup and pumpkin pie was delicious. The album, *Abbey Road*, played in the background. (I made a mental note to consider getting it in CD format.)

We watched what probably was the best *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episode either of us (at least for me) have seen to date. The story was called "Reunion". It featured the return of Galvar, the half-Klingon, half-human lover of Worf. The plot was more complex than any other episode I can remember, with twists of interwoven sub-plots giving rise to suspense, tension and passion. Both Elizabeth and I agreed this episode should have been made into a two-hour episode. Neither of us recognized the writers. What happened to Worf, Galvar and others surprised us, but the story certainly reflected a maturing sophistication of this television series.

I was pained to hear Elizabeth's decision to drop out of *Galactus* for the time being. It did no good to plead on hands and knees asking her to reconsider. With infuriating calm, reasoned logic she rhymes off all her other activities and writing commitments. The enticement/excitement of joining a new Legion of Super Heroes apa was also understandable.

I racked my brain feverishly to come up with ploys to win her back again. She pointed out we could still write to each other, but I feel she has said this before to others. Alas, what am I to do? Wait. Bide my time. Tempt her with copies of *Long Distance Voyeur* and loaned *Galactus*. Her eyes sparked with recognition of my tactics when I

reminded her she had asked for advice on acquiring a computer in *Galactus* #45. With playful mischievousness, she accepted the challenge.

A 'Who Cares' party was going on that Saturday night. A popular local fan, Harry Middleman, was hosting it. We decided to walk to it. The weather was brisk, but clear. I learned more about Elizabeth's sordid friends and past and before I knew it, we had finished the mile or so walk to arrive at Harry's apartment building.

Harry's Who Cares are always well attended. The Ottawa SF Society (OSFS) exec were there passing out the latest (November/90) issue of the *OSFS Statement*. The big news was that there was no news, ie. the same exec members were the only ones (to date) nominated and willing (key word) to stand for election at the annual OSFS elections.

(As an aside, I have resigned as OSFS Archivist and Librarian. Since the OSFS/Mensa Reading for the Blind project was going nowhere, I resigned as member of that subcommittee too. In a year or so, I plan to do research on existing audio cassette libraries and perhaps begin my own small project. I may seek the assistance of Ed Meskys, the co-editor of *Niekas* in New Hampshire. I am overdue in corresponding with this likeable chap.)

The Convalescence crew were also there, basking in the organizational success of their relaxicon. They were satisfied with the approximate 70 paid attendees (a maximum of 100 had been set). I was pleased at their decision to donate \$100 to Maplecon.

Naturally, it had not gone unnoticed that I had not attended Convalescence. All three of their guests, Lloyd and Yvonne Penney and Larry Stewart, are friends of mine. However, I can and do see them other times; and the activities at Convalescence were not my cup of tea.

Harry's pre-recorded videocassette collection is big. I estimate he has over 200 films and epics in his library. Not a few fans went over to browse through it. Talk about a conversation item..... Elizabeth, not surprisingly, blended in to the party crowd, sparking up conversations with practised ease. She has taken the habit of wearing basic black to Who Cares. She looks terrific, especially with those punk black leather, low-neck boots..... Charles Mohapel is passing around his latest binder collection of convention photos. He balls a fan out (he does that a lot) for spoiling a photo shot at Ad Astra..... Joe Casey is quietly drinking the beer he has brought in a corner. (Current Ottawa SF club parties and Who Cares are conspicuously non-alcoholic, non-smoking and devoid of music. *Elsewhere old-time fans nod knowingly why Ottawa parties have become dull*.)..... The *Apaplexy* gang come in late, because of their collation. They leave almost just as quickly to eat somewhere else.

It was around midnight when I was amused at Elizabeth saying goodnight to me. She had accepted the offer of a ride home with friends. (She was tired and I suspect she had forgotten one minor thing.)

.... It was a cold, lonely walk back to her place to fetch my car. Brrrrr.

* * * * *

Elizabeth phoned me up the next morning. I had promised to return her coat this weekend, but had forgotten it the night before. Because it had hung in my closet already for a few weeks, I offered to return Sunday morning. My partied-out brain was not amused.

So, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed (on the outside, anyway), I show up at eleven o'clock. I find her in the middle of reading onto tape one of her Dorothy Dunnett novels, *The Game of Kings*. She has taken on a commission to record a number of Dutton's books for a friend. She accepts my offer of a lift later downtown to a meeting of the Lyngarde Writers' Group. Her energy continues to amaze me.

I chose to peruse her bookshelves, finally settling on an historical reference book *Who Was Who in the Greek World* by Diana Bowden (Washington Square Press, 1982) to keep me entertained while Elizabeth continued her taping project. Her attention to precise pronunciation and verve of dialogue was admirable, even professional. That, and cooking lunch too.

Over lunch, we discussed the latest *Apaplexy* (she's in that too). Thomas Wray had included an interesting short quiz on history, geography and philosophy. Remembering a statement she had made earlier, "One can never have enough reference books.", a quote by Alistair Crowley which Thomas Wray included asking "Where did it refer to?" led to her fetching a book of Crowley's writings and travel memoirs. Like pulling a rabbit out of hat, she located it and had answered the rather obscure question. I was suitably impressed.

The leftover food prepared by Elizabeth was great. We had more pumpkin pie while discussing movies, though the Holmes in me noticed a discrepancy: some of the pie had disappeared since last night. Aha!

I offered to take Elizabeth out to see the film, *Henry and Ruth*, my treat; call it guilt at my mooching ways. She accepted. Great. Not many of my other friends, I was sure, would like this movie.

C'est tout. We bid farewell downtown and I continued on the still early Sunday afternoon to visit my good friends, Dave O'Heare and Heidi Rath. But that's another story....

*(Elizabeth Holden is a recently-turned professional comics critic writing for the trade magazine, **Amazing Heroes**. She is a renowned comics fan and letter-hacker. An active SF fan to boot, Elizabeth donates a fair bit of her time working for Maplecon.)*

A Layman's Advice on Computers

In *Galactus* #45, Elizabeth asked for advice on the following:

- obtaining a microcomputer for writing correspondence and fiction, and for cataloguing her comics collection;
- choosing a monitor and a printer;

- modems and computer bulletin boards;
- and
- choosing a word processing programme.

Keeping costs down was also specified as a major consideration.

No doubt, there are fans in every city who could give competent, professional advice on what to look for. For the purposes Elizabeth stated, she need not spend very much money. She is essentially doing the same thing as I am.

I found a perfectly serviceable used IBM XT clone with 20-meg hard disk drive, CGA monitor and graphics card and keyboard for \$1,000 (Can.) two years ago. The same thing now would go for about \$700 - \$800. A printer and modem will cost extra. Used equipment for sale continually crop up on computer bulletin boards. Asking a friend to keep an eye out on the bulletin boards for good used equipment is a good idea.

In rudimentary terms, monitors can be monochrome, black and white or colour. Monochrome is specifically for text, non-graphic work. Resolution is usually better, thus cutting down on eye fatigue. For graphics, one needs to have a non-monochrome (it does not have to be colour) monitor and a graphics card installed inside the microcomputer. There are three basic kinds (levels) of graphic cards. From the simple to more sophisticated, they are: CGA, EGA and VGA. One does not need to know more than the following: the better the graphics card, the better the resolution and graphics capability. Naturally, price goes correspondingly up. When buying, many monitors are designed for specific graphic cards. The more expensive ones will handle more than one kind. As mentioned before, my inexpensive CGA monitor serves my purposes.

As to choice of printer, you should ask yourself, "Do you want a printer to produce letter quality typing? Or would near-letter quality suffice?" You are looking at maybe \$500 for an inexpensive, letter quality printer. The best dot matrix, 24-pin printers will run more than a \$1,000. They will allow you to use different font styles and slightly sharper graphics, but if you require a professional look to the finished product, take your material to someone with a laser printer. Though there are less expensive laser printers now coming out on the market, they are still more expensive than what Elizabeth's (or my) needs warrant.

A note of caution, when using a laser printer (or any printer, for that matter), enquire what formatting capabilities are available. For instance, the Hewlett-Packard LaserJet printers (one of the most common) at my office underlines everything I want italicized or bolded. It also won't print out characters larger (taller) than normal type. Now, some of this could be overcome by buying a special font cartridge which may include these features, but if you are only going to occasionally utilize someone else's printer, that is not practical. So it pays to ask first.

One ought to check out laptop computers. They are convenient, portable and just as functional. They

come with hard disk drives as well. The only major drawback is some of the laptop brands are not cheap.

I strongly recommend getting a hard disk drive of no less than 10 megabytes (and for the above purposes, no more than 20 megabytes) storage capacity with whatever microcomputer you chose. The reason for this is the convenience of storing and using major programmes (word processing - for writing; database management - for cataloguing) inside the microcomputer. It is a drag to continually change diskettes throughout your work.

Note, with a hard disk, you really only need one external floppy disk drive. Choose the 3-1/2 inch microdisk drive. 3-1/2 inch diskettes hold more than the 5-1/4 inch ones and are easier to handle. For Elizabeth's purposes, a regular, double density (as opposed to a high density) 3-1/2 inch disk drive (and diskettes) ought to be sufficient, no matter what computer she decides to purchase.

A modem itself is not that expensive. Though one can get modems which operate only at the slower 300 or 1200 baud rate (speed of data transmission), you'd be well-advised to not settle for less than 2400 baud rate. Even if you do not intend to communicate or transmit/receive information long distance, using a modem at less than 2400 bauds is frustratingly slow. Most computer nets either charge by the minute or set time limits. From experience, I never read everything I want or have enough time to write responses on some computer boards even with my 2400 baud modem.

A modem can be bought more cheaply as a modem board (like a graphics card) which you can install inside the microcomputer. That will save you approximately \$100. A 2400 baud modem board will cost roughly \$200. Modems are also available at 9600 and 19,200 baud rates. These are only recommended if you plan to do a fair bit of long distance calling (it cuts down costs considerably) or plan to operate a computer board of your own. They will cost 2 to 3 times that of a 2400 baud modem.

Is going on-line worth it? Accessing and communicating on computer nets can be fun and very definitely addictive. I incurred almost no long distance charges and still managed to correspond and make friends with folk in Minneapolis, Denver and Philadelphia by accessing SF boards already carried here in Ottawa. Many boards carry a variety of conferences (subject discussion areas). On SF alone, one can find conferences on SF writing, convention organizing, Star Trek, fandom and so on. There are two or three good ones originating from Minneapolis (due to the influence of The Scribbles writers group in that city, I suspect).

The down sides to computer nets are as follows:

- you frequently have to sift through large amounts of junk (or uninteresting stuff) to find letters and comments of interest;
- if you already do a lot of writing or cataloguing on a computer, fatigue and eye strain becomes a factor;

- the calibre of writing and thoughtful correspondence, I find, is lower on average than that found in fanzines and letter correspondence (possibly due to time pressures or the transient nature of the medium);
 - to maintain a running correspondence, you need to log on several times a week (every night for the busier conferences) or else you will miss responses;
 - unlike letters and fanzines, everything is temporary (one can print hard copy on your printer, but that takes valuable time);
 - some computer nets are expensive (unless you have a business to write such costs off, search out the free or nominal membership fee boards);
- and
- last but not least, waiting in queue to log onto some computer nets or boards is frustrating and ties up you and your computer (waiting as long as 20 to 60 minutes is not unusual for a busy board).

I rarely access computer nets anymore. I prefer reading and writing fanzines and letters.

Choosing a word processing programme is a personal matter. You will get a different answer from everyone. There are those who swear by WordStar or MicroSoft Word or WordPerfect or something else. I originally chose and still have MicroSoft Word because of its features, logical menu-driven commands and writers' approach to word processing. However, my employer (office) uses WordPerfect exclusively and a number of crucial, computer-literate friends/fans (Dave O'Heare comes to mind) with whom I correspond with also use WordPerfect. So I finally gave in and got WordPerfect. It generally has better printing/graphics capabilities than MicroSoft Word. Despite numerous updates of features, WordStar is antiquated in its commands and procedures. Regardless, choosing any of these three programmes will not prevent you from transferring/converting your material to language understandable by the other programmes.

Try not to spend more than \$300 for any word processing programme. They make writing and corresponding easier, but not that much better than more basic text/editing programmes.

A Critique on "The Science Fiction Attitude"

(The article "The Science Fiction Attitude" was written by author, Ray Faraday Nelson, in the July, 1990 issue of Writer's Digest.)

Whoa boy. For the first page or so of this article, I was disagreeing with nearly everything Ray Faraday Nelson had written. To his credit, he continued presenting his arguments with some credible examples.

However, after all is said and done, what his article boils down to is: one (practical) framework of mind for writing 'commercially-successful' science fiction. And of course, that is all he or the *Writer's Digest* is setting out to do.

So why did I state what appears to be obvious (above), as Nelson ends up doing in "The Science Fiction Attitude"?.... Well, other than the extremely useful points about 'background' and 'analogy', there are some glaring taken-for-granted statements made which are full of hooey. Nelson also ignores the distinction between speculative or critical science fiction and what constitutes entertainment.

Let's take things in order. His term: the Cosmic Ratio. Practical perspective. It indeed explains, on the surface, the awkwardness and frequent absence of characterization in SF literature. By sizing up your market and audience, a writer is often well-advised to dispense with characterization in favour of telling a rip-roaring good adventure. That has been known and practised for decades for any genre, but particularly for SF, westerns, detective and adventure. Edgar Rice Burroughs is a prime example of this during the first half of this century.

But science fiction need not deal with the far future at all. Good SF will tackle social problems hitting us today, by looking just around the corner of tomorrow. A classic example is Thomas M. Disch's *334*. This book is a series of vignettes about people and survival in New York in the very near future. *334* is an address on East 11th St. None of the three R's (rockets, robots and rayguns) are present.

The essence, and purpose (I refer to the usefulness, rather than the entertainment value), of SF is just as applicable to our immediate future as Stapledon's *Last and First Men* is indicative of the long view.

"From the standpoint of the Cosmic Ratio, the life of one individual is not worth that much attention." (Tell that to Kirk and the gang in *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock*.... I don't believe I just said that.)

One of the major reasons why characterization has traditionally ranked low in priority in SF over the decades, particularly in the pre-New Wave ('60s) era, was the predominance of adventure-oriented, pulp magazines in SF publishing. Paperback publishers and editors may be more sophisticated nowadays, but they still know what sells: space adventures, military SF stories, fantasy fluff.... better still if they are trilogies or series.

There are always exceptions, of course; but Nelson's statement is also just plain wrong. Good SF doesn't necessarily exclude good characterization. Since the New Wave, the SF field has attracted writers concerned about style, characterization, psychology, the individual in society. Women SF writers have made a significant impact in the field the last twenty years. Their influence has changed the nature of writing SF. Vonda N. McIntyre's *Dreamsnake* and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* are cases in point. C.J. Cherryh's background in anthropology stands her in good stead in the creation of believable aliens.

Also, good characterization does not equate with being less popular. Again, C.J. Cherryh's works also

attest to that. Stephen R. Donaldson's 'Thomas Covenant' series is another example in fantasy. But one example stands out in my mind: Daniel Keyes' thoughtful portrayal of characters in "Flowers for Algernon". Not only did this story win a Hugo Award, but an outstanding movie was made based on it, *Charly*. Cliff Robertson won an Oscar for best actor that year for his role as Charly. (This is also another excellent illustration of near-future SF).

Does one need know anything of science? My initial reaction is to say yes; yet it really depends on the writer's objective or theme. Ray Bradbury's works could just as easily fall within the realm of the fantastique, like so many other great mainstream authors who are inexorably drawn to dip into that well of imagination. Bradbury is more interested in the man within.

More than half of science fiction would disappear if SF writers confined themselves, while writing, to the known scientific, technological possibilities of the day. Stories of the future are rife with speculation, postulations, guesses, even assumptions. For instance, if the writer's purpose is to speculate what it would really be like living in an environment hostile to man, which man seems bent on doing in space (undersea, as well) in the future, then how they get there may very well be immaterial to the theme of the story. Candas Jane Dorsey's Casper Award winning story, "Sleeping In a Box" (*Machine Sex and Other Stories*, Porcopic/Tesseract Books, 1988) amply illustrates this point.

In addition, it has been argued before that tomorrow's scientific breakthroughs could make today's impossibilities possible.

Nelson's story about Marion Zimmer Bradley only reinforces my low respect for Bradley's acumen as a writer. Much science fantasy is pure escapism. From the point of view of this article, she certainly represents 'commercially-successful'. But it is only SF in the broadest sense.

Nelson's example of a cardboard character in "Eight O'Clock in the Morning" brings to mind another well-known cardboard character: in Keith Laumer's 'Retief' series. For the longest time, no one even knew what the hero looked like or anything of his background.

As mentioned earlier, Nelson's comments about 'background' and 'analogy' are his strongest observations. Notwithstanding what I've said up to now, the flavour of SF usually is that of the far future and how technology plays a role in it, for good or bad. The trappings of hardware and technology give the feel to SF. It is hard to have a western without cowboys and horses, guns and Indians; or a mystery without a detective.

Note, I didn't say "a mystery without a crime". The latter is the essence of a mystery. SF's essence is the speculation of man's future involving science and technology. (This is not my definition of SF; but it is close enough for the purpose of this critique.)

The advent of Cyberpunk SF, though often viewed as the antithesis of the optimistic American gun-ho style of SF, appropriately follows Nelson's dictum that background is all. Nanotechnology, computer

programming, reliance on hardware/information systems: just newer, updated SF icons. The individual is often overwhelmed by the system (note the expanded meaning now).

'Analogy' is a necessary evil when trying to communicate to a large number of people (eg. readers). Philosophers frown upon the use of analogy as being too frequently tinged with bias, at best too narrow. Politics is fraught with it. Writers of SF must seek a balance. There is nothing the matter with long tracts describing inventions and gadgetry; but sometimes, for the sake of story-telling or conveying concepts, a writer may feel compelled to use analogies. Regardless of whether one takes the optimistic view that SF writing is more sophisticated and mature these days or the cynical view that audiences are less patient now than before (wanting entertainment over substance), analogy is a useful tool.

Futuristic environments and concepts are difficult to convey. The farther into the future one delves, the harder it is to transmit realism to the reader without some analogies to provide a rudder.

This last point ties in better to Nelson's Cosmic Ratio than does his remarks about characterization. But one would be quite right to fear overuse of or unimaginative analogies from a writer espousing characterization may be ignored.

Random Observations

Total Recall: The first time I saw this film, I was impressed with the sets, cinematography and Philip K. Dick's story line. I was startled upon second watching at the rampant slaughter and violence throughout the movie. Really. There are other flaws in this film, but the violence sticks out; and I'm not convinced it was necessary.

"Blowing the suspension of disbelief" is a fair assessment of many viewers' reaction to the ending of the film. But I still consider *Total Recall* to be a good film. The story line was pure Dick.

Twin Peaks: I am stubbornly rebelling watching this programme. Canned artsy-fartsy. I seriously suspect the thematic credibility of this series. Is it "L.v. noir", satire, "nouveau pop weird"? Has the North American populace thrown in the towel on coping with the preponderance of unsolvable problems and crises of the world? Or have soap operas like *Dallas* and *Falcon's Crest* barely slaked the audience's thirst for passive taboo-breaking?

The commercial success (and hype) of this programme is too similar to that of *New Kids on the Block*. (Shudder) Call me suspicious.

SF Information in Canada: It is not that hard to keep abreast of what is going on in western and central Canada. The trick is to try or ask. There are a number of publications (unfortunately, *Canadian SF Quarterly* will not be one of them) and fans one can correspond with. I was surprised at how easy it was to

do over the last two to three years when working for the Caspers and Convention. Admittedly, I worked at it, but fans and pros are generally eager to talk about their activities locally or in their part of the country.

Despite what I just said, I was also appalled at how many fans were ignorant of who was doing what in other regions. This applied to Canadian SF literature as well. That was one of the major reasons why Pinekone II/Convention 9 published information sheets on what had been published and/or prominent fan activities in Canada with the 1989 Casper Awards nomination ballots. *MLR*, improvements in Aurora (previously the Casper) Awards information and ballot distribution, renewed interest in CUFF, and hopefully *XenoFile* all have or will continue to help improve the situation.

But, then again... : The Maritimes is a black hole. Letters, phone calls and questions sent to fans down there get lost or forgotten. Barely any news gets out. Both John Mansfield (of Winnipeg) and I have our contacts down there, but we both have had difficulty. If I had gone ahead with *CSFQ*, breaking the communication barrier would have been high on my priority list.

The Spectre of Regional Bias: One fan good-naturedly commented, upon learning Dave Duncan's *West of January* won the 1990 Casper Award for Best Long-Form Work in English, that Calgary should be barred from ever having Convention again. Though I may agree with the critical assessment of the novel (when compared to some of the fine competition this year), I daresay wouldn't go so far as barring Calgary from hosting the national convention again. For one thing, the Calgarians put on a mighty good show.

However, I do find it even more striking, and of concern, that all the English and fan awards (six in all) went to Albertans (as cynics in eastern fandom relish to point out, Skeet is essentially a transplanted Albertan waiting to return home).

Robert Runté noted in his acceptance speech at Pinekone II/Convention 9 in Ottawa, 1989, how the emphasis in providing information sheets and expanded distribution of nomination and voting ballots that year resulted in winners from all across Canada. He himself beat out a very popular local Ottawa fan artist (Larry Stewart) in the Fan Achievement (Other) category. Though Eileen Capes did a good job as the 1990 Casper Awards Administrator, I am sorry to say the same degree of effort was not evidenced this year. The job really does require a subcommittee.

Part of the blame must rest with us fans here in the East. Things fell apart locally and in Toronto in the aftermath of Pinekone. Few fans were interested in promoting the Casper nominations and voting here in Ontario. Quebec pros and fans felt less involved in the process. I, myself, was not in a position nor really inclined to participate last winter and spring (something which I still feel guilty about; Eileen understood though, for which I am grateful).

Consequently, the votes were down approximately 35% from 1989, and regional bias reared its ugly head again to taint the legitimacy of our fledgling national achievement awards.

I Am Apolitical, But There Is a Limit: I have learned to dislike Brian Mulroney and the Progressive Conservatives very much this year. (I wasn't keen on them before.) His handling of Meech Lake was offensive, the Oka Indian Seige Crisis cowardly and discriminatory, the Persian Gulf Crisis anti-neutral (thus blowing years of earning a peace-keeping role and image) and the Senate stacking manoeuvre insulting to the Canadian public. Respecting the latter, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) may be a fairer tax, just as free trade with the U.S. may be rational (neither are perfect in PC implementation plans), but if Mulroney and the PC's cannot legitimately pass legislation to enact it, then they should work towards solving the problem.

Senate reform could and ought to have been addressed in constitutional talks by now. For Mulroney to point out that the Liberals had their opportunities in the seventies is ducking the issue. His party has been in power for most of the eighties.

The GST could have been made more palatable. I give them credit for lowering the GST rate for real estate. But taxing books and magazines flies in the face of tradition, of the need to upgrade reading and writing skills, and of supporting the publishing industry disadvantaged by geography and small scale of economy. To add insult to injury, they have scrapped the small publishers' mailing subsidies programme (which allowed Canada Post to charge small press magazines less) and replaced it with a much smaller scale grant application programme. (The *Canadian SF Quarterly* was thus doubly hurt by Tory legislation: GST and next to no financial assistance in mailing.) It is ironic the Royal Canadian Mint is issuing a gold, collectors' coin commemorating the International Year of Literacy.

'Condom': The term 'Condom' does seem to have crept into fanspeak. Art Widner's terrific fanzine, *Yhos*, had a running debate/series (called "Fandom vs. Condom" in *Yhos* #47) for a few issues recently. The objective, quite surprisingly, was to discuss means and ways of revitalizing interest and participation in fanzine publishing and writing (art too) among fans within the convention environment. I say 'surprisingly' because the tenor of debate impressed me for its constructive approach to the problem rather than the usual diatribe of whoas.

Humourously, 'condom' is also a fair description/commentary on the environment it refers to.

The New vs Old:

"One of the problems with handwritten zines is that you can't run them through a spellchecker."

(a quote from *Galactus* #45)

.... One of the problems of using a spellchecker is one becomes lazy, and ceases to learn how to spell properly.

Natter

I just received in the mail the fanzine *Stet*, by Leah Zeldes Smith. In her introduction, she confesses it was easier to write *Stet* as a personal fanzine (perzine for the neofan) rather than advertise for art and articles. Something about not having a track record....

Well, the same applies to me. I have not done or corresponded enough, to date, in the fanzine world to call upon friends and acquaintances to contribute to *Long Distance Voyeur*. Unlike *Canadian SF Quarterly*, I have no firm idea what *Long Distance Voyeur* should be.

Right now, as you can witness, it is a perzine with a mix of personal story-telling, reviews and critical commentary. If there is any wit or humour, it stems from the social atmosphere and people I found myself with. This social aspect is why fanzines will survive as a medium of expression among fans. It is a way for many of us to get to know each other and stay in touch during those long months and years between visits and conventions.

But it is the challenge of writing critical reviews and essays, and creating this whole package in a readable, (and hopefully) entertaining format which enticed me to publish *Long Distance Voyeur*. I extend an open invitation to participate in this equally valuable exercise of SF fandom within the future pages of this zine. Every fanzine editor will tell you they need more art, essays and letters of comment (LoCs). I'm no different.

It will be interesting to see how *Long Distance Voyeur* evolves. I would like to see good artwork for its covers; who wouldn't; I'm crazy about satirical or comical cartoons. SF is a broad enough subject for writing almost anything. Anecdotes and humorous articles are fun, and balances my penchant for thought-provoking material. Heck, I even enjoy song lyrics, poems, recipes... if they are presented right. Creative, quality writing and art is always more appreciated.

* * * * *

I have already expressed my thanks, in *XenoFile* and the *OSFS Statement*, to a number of friends who helped me weather the past year. I need not repeat them here. My gratitude remains, however.

Long Distance Voyeur begun as a result of my joining the apa *Galactus*. Writing in an apa (amateur press assoc. collection of fanzines for the neofan) was

an activity I never really saw myself doing. They are essentially closed circuit markets, the readership numbering anywhere from 10 to 30 on average. I just couldn't see myself spending all that time and energy for so few.

Believe it or not, I still have not changed my mind. The *Galactus* gang snagged me because I knew and respected many of the contributors in North America, and the writing was good. Perhaps, it was Keith Soltys' homemade beer and Nancy's lasagna. But, in any case, true to my character, once I started writing, I couldn't help but notice that the material was appropriate for a more traditional fanzine. So, voila!

Extro

In wrapping up this issue of *Long Distance Voyeur*, it is only appropriate to thank those fanzine publishers who were kind enough to mail me their zines over the last couple of years. My apologies for not writing back. Reading *Long Distance Voyeur* might give you a flavour of what kind of year or two it has been for me. I shall try to do better in future.

There are two people I wish to make special mention of. First is Geri Sullivan. Bumping into her at Tropicon 7 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida two years ago was like running into a mini-hurricane of enthusiasm and activity. She took the time to introduce me to what was happening at Corflu 6 in her hometown of Minneapolis and explain the Chuch Harris Fund. Her good-natured spirit was infectious. I now have some Walt Willis *Hyphen* and *Slant* fanzines because of her and Joe Siclari's auctioneering charm.

Since then, she has sent me her beautiful fanzine, *Idea* and Spike Parsons' *Chasm #1 (Chuch Harris Appreciation Society Magazine)*. Wow! Talk about exemplary fanzines. There is a sure fire way I can tell something is going to be good to read: my cat, Tasha, invariably decides to lie upon it. Well, these two fanzines are among Tasha's favourites. And as I've come to learn, there is no teaching a Himalayan cat how to roll over.

The other person is Art Widner. We have never met; and it is not likely he knows me beyond having my name on his mailing list. Yet, he and his fanzine, *Yhos*, epitomized (for me) the tradition and kindred spirit of fanzine fandom. *Idea*, and hopefully *Long Distance Voyeur*, may present a newer, more polished look to fanzines today, but I must admit to being touched by the feel of *Yhos*. The articles and letters bridged old memories with today's hope of garnering new apprentices in fanzine pubbing, writing, art and letter-hacking.

Perhaps that is in the back of my mind, when I send *Long Distance Voyeur* to Art and other good folk. I may not be part of the past, but I would like to be involved in the future.

FIN (ALLY THE END)

