

Catchpenny Gazette

#4 - August 2004



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ROCKET SURGERY

editorial/column
by david burton

Excellent Choice!

Last spring, not long after I'd become active in fandom again, I decided to attend Midwestcon 55 in June. It seemed a natural: it's in Cincinnati, Ohio, a scant hour and a half drive from my palatial single-wide mobile home (not *trailer*, thank you – it's not *going* anywhere short of being blown into the next county by a tornado) here in beautiful Lawrence, Indiana. And it was the second (and last) convention I graced with my presence in my previous faanish incarnation. I figured 34 years was certainly time enough for fandom to have re-

covered from the stunning 2-day imitation of a deaf-mute wallflower I treated it to the last time around. I don't suppose I was any more socially awkward than the average 16 year-old kid, but fandom baffled me because, unless I did some really *stupid* 16 year-old thing (which I often managed to do), fans were willing to treat me as an equal; something I was definitely *not* used to in the mundane world.

On Saturday the 26th of June, as bright and clear a day as you could want, I hopped in the Kia and headed down Interstate 74 for the Queen City, chock full of anticipation. As some of you may know, I'm trying to work my way *up* to the poverty level financially, so I planned on spending

just Saturday afternoon at the convention. There were a number of people I wanted to meet at the con. Dave Locke, with whom I'd been carrying on a voluminous e-mail correspondence for four or five months, had encourage me to attend. There were also going to be a few people from a small print APA that I'm in (FLAP) and I wanted to be able to put faces to names there as well. And I thought there was probably a more than even chance that I might possibly connect with some of the fans I knew Way Back When. So I tooted down Interstate 74, enjoying the trip with musical accompaniment by various Little Feat CDs.



Things turned ominous 90 minutes later, though, as I exited 74 for the I275 loop around Cincinnati. Casually checking my rear-view mirror I noticed enough flashing red lights that, had I been epileptic, would have immediately induced a seizure. Glancing at my speedometer, I saw that I was only doing 70 mph, which on I275 means that I

was almost parked. I was being passed by *everyone*, including one blue-haired elderly matron who had stuck her left hand out the window, middle finger raised as she passed me, apparently drying some fresh nail polish.

As I pulled over to the shoulder, wondering dismally how much money I *didn't* have this was going to cost me, I got the obligatory registration and insurance papers out of the glove box. As the policeman approached, I handed them and my license out the window; all I wanted was to get this over with as quickly as possible and get to the con.

“Mr. Burton,” he said, apparently satisfied, barring blood samples and DNA testing, that that's who I was.

“Huh?” I answered.

“We have an all-points bulletin out for you.”

“Huh?” I answered again, wondering why in the world the police would want me, *me*, who lives a squeaky-clean life. The nearest I come to anything criminal would be an overdue library book, and I had trouble believing that Ohio was so crime free that an APB was called for for some-

thing as heinous as that...

“You were voted Best New Fan of 1970 in the EGOBOO poll, right?”

“Huh?” Damn, I thought. I'm gonna have to work on my Snappy Repartee if I expect to impress anyone at the convention.

(See CATCHPENNY GAZETTE #1 for further details about the EGOBOO poll.)

“Some fans notified us you were coming. Sir, we haven't had a celebrity of your stature in our fair city since Jerry Springer left. We'd be honored to give you a police escort to the motel.” At just that moment, three other police cruisers and half a dozen motorcycles joined us, lights flashing and sirens wailing.

Somehow I resisted the urge to blurt out another “Huh?” and instead answered loquaciously, “OK.” Off we went, zipping through traffic like the proverbial shot through a goose.

I thought how wonderful this all was, and I pictured my “celebrity” entry to the con after 10 these many years. Unfortunately, barely half a mile from the motel my police escort was diverted. Apparently a mini-crime wave consisting of 6

bank robberies occurring simultaneously all across the city took precedence over my triumphal return to Midwestcon. Go figure.

So I arrived at the con by myself. Not wanting to embarrass anyone with the obviously misplaced sense of priorities that governed the Cincinnati police department, I never said a word about it to anyone. Apparently they felt the same way, because no one said anything to *me* about it either.

After 20 minutes I finally managed to get to the motel pool (who would have thought a motel would have security rivaling Fort Knox or that brazenly walking right in the front door would be the best shot at getting in?), and recognizing him from photos, spied Dave Locke holding forth at a table.

Strangely enough, as I approached Dave to introduce myself, I saw no sign of flames billowing from his nostrils, and detected just the faintest whiff of smoke coming from his left ear; apparently a Good Day for Dave.

Dave was gracious enough to act as my “host” and introduced to me to a number of fans, some that I “knew” through fanzines from the Olden

Days (like Mike Glicksohn and Bill Bowers), and some that I didn't. Fans came and went from the table, and "Big Hearted" Howard DeVore was there most of the afternoon, regaling those assembled with various stories, some of which were actually funny.

One of the things that struck me as I sat there was how *old* these fans were. Now, I don't mean they were *old* exactly, but my impressions of them had been formed when they *were* younger by some 30+ years. So it was a bit of a mental shift to all-at-once update that previous image with the reality of today.

Even though I somewhat reprised my wallflower role from the Midwestcon I'd previously attended (and I thought I was *over* my shyness...), I had an excellent time. I also got to meet (albeit too briefly) a fair number of my fellow FLAPans: Carolyn Doyle, Gary Grady, Roger Sims, and of course Dave Locke.

After four or five hours of lounging around the pool, Dave and his wife Vicky, Midge Reitan, and a Toledo fan known to me only as Dr. Jim (a pediatrician who was self-admittedly recovering from Too Much Fun at a con party the night before) ad-

joined to a local Olive Garden. Our waiter (so young he apparently had gone through puberty just the week before) declared each and every menu item we selected an "Excellent Choice!" and this became the catchphrase, not only of dinner, but of the whole convention for me.

After dinner I drove home. As I got off I74 onto the I465 loop around Indianapolis, I kept glancing in my rear-view mirror, wistfully thinking that yet another police escort would certainly crown the day. Recovering my senses, though, I remember that this was *home* and any flashing red lights would mean only trouble.





Adventures in Modern Medicine

Dave Locke

Every once in a while I'm plagued with a boil. This appears in the most unlikely places. Like in my earlobe, where it can be attacked from either side, or on one of my cheeks where it can be attacked by any chair that I happen to rest in. Or on the side of my nose, causing me to fail nasalgraph tests (it's embarrassing to blow a nasalgraph test).

This time I got a boil on the underside of my right testis. It caused me to walk funny, and sit funny, and stand funny, and lying down was a process akin to setting down a bottle of nitroglycerin. I asked a fellow I worked with if he knew of a good doctor nearby. He didn't say he did, but he gave me the phone number of the doctor his wife goes to.

When the sweet voice on the other end of the line inquired as to the reason for requesting an appointment, I had a moment of hesitation in deciding a suitable cover story to send out over the airwaves. I had overlooked the need to explain the problem, or I would have perhaps been better prepared. As it was, I couldn't bring myself to tell her that I wanted an appointment because I had a boil on my nut.

I could probably have gotten away with telling

her merely that I had a boil which required lancing, as it is unlikely that I would have had to be more specific. What I wound up telling her, though, was that my leg hurt me.

I hadn't altogether lied. I was fully prepared to tell the doctor: "My leg hurts me because it bangs my nuts around when I walk, and I've got a boil on one of them."

He rammed the needle into my boil and I sucked in every molecule of oxygen in the room.

The sweet voice advised me that I could come right down. So I told the boss that I was bowing out for the rest of the day and then I took off, slowly, bruising my knees on both sides of the doorframe.

It was the smallest waiting room I've ever seen, even though it took me over two hundred steps to get to the nearest available seat. By the time I sat down, over half of the people ahead of me had been treated and released. I decided I'd better start getting up so that I wouldn't miss out when my turn came.

The fellow immediately ahead of me was called, and he threw down his magazine and moved briskly into the inner chambers. I waited. And waited, and waited. Then the rest of us all looked up, with rapt

attention, as an ambulance came screaming into the driveway.

Two men jumped out of the ambulance and went into a side door of the building, and came out carrying a stretcher. They hustled it into the ambulance and the vehicle screamed off.

It was the guy who had gone in ahead of me. I looked down at the magazine he had been reading. It was an old copy of HOLIDAY.

I was called, and shuffled into the inner sanctum. I stripped down, and laid on the leather-covered table which was only about five feet long. Several inches of me hung over the end. I lifted my knees and set my feet flat on the table, thus raising my boil off the table. The doctor came in.

"Sorry for the delay. I had to perform emergency surgery."

"He sure looked healthy out in the waiting room," I observed, as he took hold of my right testis and stared at it.

"He wouldn't have been here if he were healthy."

"I guess not."

"That's a damned funny place to get a boil, son."

"I don't dare laugh," I told him. I kept sliding on the small leather surface, and scuttling back into position.

He swabbed my boil with a cool liquid, and I

scuttled again. "Brace yourself, son," he told me, and came forward with a needle that looked like something you'd decorate a cake with. Every time I tried to brace myself, I slid. By careful calculation I found that by lying there in a semi-limp state I could maintain my position. I broke out in a cold sweat.

He rammed the needle into my boil and I sucked in every molecule of oxygen in the room. My knuckles cracked and my toes snapped and every drop of sweat burned off with a hiss of steam.

"Hold still!"

"Aga...harst ahhh gah gah gah..."

He stuffed a wad of cotton into my nether region and held it there by pushing my legs flat to the table. As my mind began to clear I broke out in another cold sweat at the possibility of him using adhesive tape to hold the cotton in place.

"Your shorts will hold the cotton. Hold it while you're getting off the table until you can get them on. Are you all right?"

"Aga..."

"What?"

"The pain...the pain..."

"What?"

"Pain hurts."

"I'd usually put somebody in the hospital for this sort of thing. But it's a lot cheaper if I do it here."

"I've...got...insurance."

"Good. Anyway, it's over with quicker this way. See the receptionist for an appointment card. I want to see you tomorrow and find out how well it's draining. Lie there as long as you need."

I got dressed. I saw I'd put my shorts on backwards, but said to hell with it. It didn't look like I'd be using anything down there for a long time, anyway.

I made it out to the hallway before the world started rotating. My knees started shaking, and that hurt, but I couldn't do anything about it. They gave me a mask and a tank of oxygen, and I sat there in another room someplace until the shakes went away.

As I walked out into the waiting room, and stood at the receptionist's counter, all eyes turned to me. A person who had been there before I went in whispered to somebody about the doctor amputating my sun tan.



The sweet voice, which I now discovered had a sweet face behind it, inquired whether my leg felt better now. I replied that no it didn't, but I had hopes that things would look up in the near future.

As I started to walk away, she called out: "Take wider strides and maybe your leg will be easier on you."

I walked out to my car, wondering if Marshal Matt Dillon had had two pounds of cotton in his shorts to make him walk that way.

The next day I was back in the waiting room again, feeling pretty good if not still a little bit drained. People came and people went, and the woman ahead of me threw down her copy of HOLIDAY and flounced to the inner sanctum. I picked it up and started leafing through.

A few minutes later an ambulance came screaming into the driveway. The magazine fell out of my hands. Everybody looked out the windows. I saw two men hustling the woman into the ambulance, and then they left a ply or two in the driveway and soon the siren faded in the distance. Somebody called my name, I knew, but I was too enmeshed with the mental image of people hanging on meathooks in the doctor's office. "Butcher," I whispered.

"Mr. Locke, you're next!"

I picked up the copy of HOLIDAY and put it back on the stand.

I laid there, again like an upside-down crab, and the doctor came moseying in while wiping his hands on a towel.

"Guess you saw the ruckus out there. I

I saw I'd put my shorts on backwards, but said to hell with it. It didn't look like I'd be using anything down there for a long time, anyway.

had to perform some emergency surgery." He threw the towel down and stared at my right testis.

"Again?" My voice quavered, and I scuttled.

"Eh?"

I cleared my throat. "How does it look?"

With his eye and hand on my right testis, he reached his other hand behind him.

"Brace yourself, son," he told me, and then took a pair of small needlenose pliers and pinched off the scab.

I had just inhaled, so this time I collapsed both lungs and filled the entire office with carbon dioxide. As well as with a small, strangled choking sound.

"Dammit, son, you're half off the table again." He helped me back up and then went right back

down there and squeezed my right testis between thumb and forefinger. I had an immense fear that before he left he would place a small feather on my chest and I would have to lie captive on his table for the entire weekend.

"It's drained pretty good," he told me. "Put your shorts back on." He gave me another pound of cotton. "Check with the receptionist on the way out. I want to see you again in another four or five days. She'll give you a card."

I laid there, staring at the ceiling, resolving never again to eat fatty food, to bathe my testes in astringent three times daily, to work up enough strength to get off the table and flee.

I walked past the receptionist. "Here's your appointment card, Mr. Locke. The doctor told me he'd like to see you again next week."

"Aga..."

"Please, Mr. Locke, take the card."

A week passed. I phoned in. "Won't need to come in. Feeling fine." Want to stay that way.

"The doctor said he'd like to check you out again. But if you're sure you're all right -- it's up to you."

"Never felt better. In the pink. Fit as a fiddle. Goodbye." Click.

I still feel guilty about that unopened bottle of astringent on the bathroom shelf. •

Dave's saga of testicular fortitude first appeared in YANDRO in 1971



From the **Librarians Don't Write No Gooder Than Me Dept.**

(four errors in two sentences!)

From a sign on the checkout counter of a local branch:

Please do not put
small Children on the counter
Thank, You



God's Will Is Best

Br. Jerome Leo Hughes, OSB

One of my readers wrote to me recently: *"My heart sank as your prayer requests went out for "Tim and Ilya Smith, whose house burned down on Ash Wednesday, killing their daughter, Felicia." and then shocked when you wrote: "God's will is best." Because of the proximity of the two sentences, I believe I understand you to say that it was God's will that Felicia suffered and died. If that is what you meant, please, please explain to me your understanding. It is contrary to everything I know about*

our Lord. It is my belief that Jesus wept over such an event, even though it did not catch him by surprise. It is my belief that the mystery of her death can only be partially understood in the context of living in a broken, fallen world, where God, making us in his likeness, gave us free will; and that it is our fallen nature, which causes us to suffer these kinds of things, not God's intention or purpose. "

We're on the same page here without realizing it. I

fully agree, God has never willed human death or suffering, never even willed corruptibility. All of those things came on the scene *solely* because of fallen humanity, because of our free will. I fully agree that God weeps with the broken hearts of Tim, Ilya, Felicia and all who suffer. I fully believe that God recoiled in pain at Felicia's end. Were this not the case, I would have no relationship with God other than fear, and I'd hope to have enough personal integrity to not even have that. I tend to be not really fond of mean...

Ah, but come quite inevitably suffering and death did, and with us they shall irrevocably remain for all time. No one, no one at all is exempt from their terrible whimsy. Not innocent children, not even dumb animals nor inanimate elements are spared this all-encompassing decay and pain and loss. Not even Jesus and His Mother, the two most wonderful humans to ever live, were spared. Not for an instant. That should tell us something very awesome about God's firm resolve to respect our free will utterly. He left us with all those earthly consequences, even though, in His changeless Love and Mercy, He gave us His own Son as a sure way to getting eternally out of them in heaven.

None of this was the way God planned things. None of it. Check out Eden, check out Paradise, that's what God willed and that's all He willed: perfect joy

and bliss and union with Him. And God never changes. He does not will one thing today and change His mind tomorrow. That optimal best of a love so exquisite that we shall be eternally overwhelmed by its wonder is His will for each of us. Nothing at all can thwart that love and will except free will, and the garbage of millions of years of human insistence has left us with a tangled cobweb of past bad choices than none can escape in this life.

Jesus died. Mary died. Felicia died. So will you, so will I. It would be nice if our yet to come ends were in our own bed, with the priest beside us and the oils of anointing fresh on our foreheads, but they could just as well be otherwise. Surely most those who crashed into the Pentagon and the World Trade Center on Sept. 11 had often hoped for a peaceful and easy end, but it was not theirs. Evil, death, suffering, illness, corruptibility, transience, all of these wag dangerously in our fallen world like broken power lines in a hurricane. Like those inanimate power lines, they neither think, plan, nor care whom they strike. Alas, that is the human condition. We speak almost casually of the brokenness of the world without realizing that the brokenness extends to hearts, to even our deepest and holiest loves. Surely the love that God-fearing people like Tim and Ilya had for Felicia wished so much more, only the best



for their promising daughter in college. That their love and their hearts were broken and crushed did not necessarily have anything to do at all with the purity and holiness of either. It happened, perhaps, in spite of such purity. Only in heaven shall we regain the ability to love purely and have things guaranteed to work as we'd wish. Here, even our dearest love is at risk and we are powerless to remove that risk entirely, just as God Himself was powerless to spare His own Son as soon as He became human. We all reap the bitter fruits of a one-time human insistence on *our* plan. Miserably, our plan lacked the wisdom of God, as is all too readily apparent.

Humans were not the

only ones to rebel, nor the first. Angels did, too. Now there's a problem: the fallen angels have greater intelligence and powers than ourselves and they meddle against the will of God endlessly. We are not powerless, as Christians, against Satan and his followers, but they can certainly get in the way of things temporarily! Our Christian faith, baptism and grace can and do protect us from them in a real sense, but they can still annoy and bother!

Why mention Satan? Because, even when we agree to cling to the will of God with all our hearts, there are other entities, human and otherwise, busily cooperating with evil, whether knowingly or otherwise. This can create a *lot* of short-term problems, although, if we only trust and love God's will, the long-term victory is assured us. In the meantime, all these counter forces shuffling pieces of the puzzle to their own designs can really slow things down, even temporarily divert the trains altogether. But *only* temporarily.

God and God alone can turn evil to good. God and God alone can turn loss into triumph. When we accept His will, rather than undergo it, we plug into that inestimable ability of God that only God has. God permits evil, permits suffering and death. They are part and parcel of the idea of His giving us free will, and God cannot go back on His word. So yeah, all those painful

things that are the result of original sin still happen, but also yeah, God can and does use them for our highest and unimaginable good. We have only to allow Him! Believing His will is best for us is how we allow Him, so is trust, so is love.

Trust me when I tell you that I know from experience that human life can be crushingly awful. It can. As I look back on some of the worst times, I am **so** glad I didn't get my way – it could have been so much worse, and so much good would have been missed. Had God asked my 47-year-old Dad and me whether or not we wanted him to die, both of us would have doubtless said no. My Dad would have cringed at what might have happened without him. I was only ten. I thought my world had ended. Still, I would in no way be the person I am today had he not gone to God. Not possible. Wouldn't have happened. Probably wouldn't be a monk and probably wouldn't be writing this. Thanks Dad, thanks God. I owe you both! Much of who I am came to be precisely *because* the things that my Dad would have wished to prevent befell me. God is not thwarted ultimately, not ever!

Houses burned, daughters and fathers dead, loves lost and lives apparently ruined are terrible consequences of a will *other* than divine, our own free will and that of others. However there is great hope, even

in this. None of the things, not one, that happen in this life cannot be turned to good, to eternity of bliss, to God. That is His power to overcome *all* evil ultimately, of whatever sort. In fact, He already *has* overcome the world. It's just that our finite eyes cannot see that yet, but it *is* a reality. *All* temporal loss is apparent. Tough, no doubt, but not lasting. Only God lasts.

The Lord told St. Faustina that *all* creatures do His will, whether they want to or not, whether they know it or not. That means that the will of God for our best good is already out there as a whole reality, a done deal. We can plug into it or join the on-going resistance. The choice is ours. He will always, always, always lead us to the best. For our part, we need only trust and follow! •

Br. Jerome is a Benedictine monk of St. Mary's Monastery in Petersham, MA, where he is Guestmaster. He publishes a daily reflection on the Rule of St. Benedict, from which this article is reprinted with permission

From the **One Of The Problems With Using a Spell-Checker Instead of Proofreading Dept.**

From a letter soliciting funds for a mission trip from a local church:

“You may have never heard of Neon, Kentucky, but it was formally a prosperous coal mining town that has been struggling in poverty for generations.”

EPISTLES

Black words by you / blue words by me

DAVE LOCKE

I know relatively little about where my roots take me. I know the Lockes and Porters were the first two non-Injun families who together settled in the Indian Lake area of the Adirondack Park in upstate Nyok in the first half of the 19th century, and that before that they'd lived in Vermont. In fact, they started out where my son now lives, in Bennington.

I keep expecting to find out that I'm my own 10th cousin twice-removed.

Having for all practical purposes started school in the 5th grade, I managed to miss these golden rules which Ray Shaffer says are learned in kindergarten. It was quite late in life when I picked

up on Ray's favorite, "take a nap every day." Life would have been a lot simpler if I'd picked up on this some five and a half decades ago.

Back in my younger, rowdier days, it was the "thing" to take a short nap in the early evening, so you'd have the "stamina" for a hard night of partying. I suppose it's just one of those signs of age that I now find myself going to bed about the time I used to be heading out for the evening...

The rule "don't hit people" is something I picked up as "don't hit people unless they hit you first" and later modified by appending "or tell you they're going to." I remember reading a book where the protagonist had bested the bad guy who then told

him he was going to find and kill him, so then and there the protagonist sent him off to Bad Guy hell just to avoid the situation. I remember it made a lot of sense to me. Just more book larnin'.

I've pretty much avoided physical confrontations all my life. The one exception was the five years in the early 80s when I worked as a loss-prevention manager for Target stores. They sent me to school and I became a special deputy, which meant I had full police powers when working. Plenty of situations there that became *real physical real fast*. It only took being sucker punched once before I learned that if things looked like they were going that route, being first off the mark was a Good Thing. Taking control quickly and decisively in those situations is critical. Unfortunately, I became *way* too proficient at slamming people against a wall with their wrist a fraction of an inch away from breaking; one of the reasons I quit that particular line of work.

Never did CB, but I remember Dean Grennell got into it back in the mid-'70s, and brought at least three people into fandom as a byproduct. Two of them stuck around for perhaps a half dozen years, and the third may still be around though I haven't heard reports for about a decade now. In the '60s I

knew a guy who was into ham radio, but that was geeky tech-oriented stuff more on a par with the early computer days. CB, tech-wise, reminds me of people who plug in a computer out of the box and dial-up AOL and send you lengthy "me, too!" emails and all the latest "pass this on!" items which hit their mailbox.

Like I said in the piece, there were people in the group who were just interested in keying the mike and talking, and others (me included) who were more into the technical aspects. I've heard that a lot of the more serious CBers went the 2-meter ham route when the "no-tech" licenses came out a decade or so ago (even some truckers who were more interested in conversation than "smokey reports"). The folks I know who got into 2-meter were not much different than the people I knew in the local CB group – just on different frequencies with somewhat more sophisticated equipment.

You write "I realize that digital zines (I **hate** the term "electronic" when applied to fanzines - nothing "electronic" here, although it's certainly all digital!)". Yeah, yeah, ya' maroon. Try unplugging your computer and see how far you get at eFanzines... The first definition of 'digital' in my electronic dictionary is "(electronics) of a circuit or device that represents

magnitudes in digits". THBPPTH (from Calvin & Hobbes)...

I'll fess up that I was a touch hasty by saying "nothing "electronic" here" – of course anything digital *is* electronic, but by the same token, not everything electronic *is* digital – although I'll admit that the distinction there is getting pretty blurry. My own feeling is that *digital* describes fanzines done on a computer better than *electronic*. Anyone who wants to call CPG *electronic* is liable to find themselves slammed into a wall with their wrist a fraction of an inch away from breaking. Old habits die hard.

You definitely have some of the very best layout/graphics skills I've run across in fandom. Very eye-pleasing presentations.

Thanks, Dave. I've missed working in graphic arts, which I did for 12 years, and doing CPG plus my **digital** zine for e-APA and my two print apazines (FLAP and FAPA) let me play around with design *without* the short deadlines that I used to hate and dread so much. I find the format I'm using for an onscreen zine a touch confining, but we'll see what happens.



THE RETORT

ROBERT LICHTMAN

I kinda didn't notice when **CATCHPENNY GAZETTE** No. 2 was posted on eFanzines, but when No. 3 showed up a week ago I printed both of them out and brought them home for off-screen reading. They're certainly attractive publications, with good use of color. One innovation I don't recall seeing in other electronic fanzines is the use of a different color typeface for editorial interpolations in the lettercol. As for the format, it's very much like John Foyster's **eFNAC**. My print-outs are "tumble-down" so that I can move from one page to the next without having to flip the whole zine over and back again. It's like reading a full-sized issue of Dale Speirs's **OPUNTIA**.

Using a different color for my comments to letters isn't original. I know Joyce Katz does it in **SMOKING ROCKETS** and I believe I've seen it in one or two other PDF zines as well. Seems to make sense since color doesn't cost anything doing a digital zine! (When I was designing Web sites back in 95-96, one of the "selling points" I always stressed was "64 million colors at no extra charge!"). I took John's eFNAC as my "guide" for laying out an onscreen fanzine. He had it figured out. I don't quite

use the ideal page size that he did, but that's not **my** fault. I spent hours and hours changing settings and permutations of settings, trying different PDF creation software, etc. only to find that I could not create a PDF with a custom page size because there's a known bug between Acrobat and WinXP that causes PDFs using custom page sizes created in WinXP to default to 8 1/2 x 11. Arrgh. So I'm using the A5 size, which comes close enough.

In No. 2 I was most taken with your lead article on CB radio, something that we got into in a big way on The Farm back in the '70s. We weren't adopting it as a hobby, but as a useful means of communication in an environment that otherwise had to rely on our own internal and unreliable eight-party hardwire phone system. Our use of it predated the big CB craze of the Bicentennial year and beyond, so that when books on the subject began appearing we were well-positioned to do one of our own. And it turned out to be one of the leaders in the marketplace. Probably you've heard of it: **THE BIG DUMMY'S GUIDE TO CB RADIO.**

With its cartoon rabbit on the cover and the light and easy and well-illustrated approach inside, it was an easy sell.

Back then I was working for the Book Publishing

Company, and in 1976 I could go out for a week in a full-sized American station wagon loaded to the rafters with copies of **THE BIG DUMMY'S GUIDE** (and more modest quantities of the other Farm publications) and travel through several states. Armed with lists of where the CB specialty shops were – and checking out the Yellow Pages as I hit each town – I could sell hundreds of books in a day. I most vividly remember a CB shop on the remote outskirts of Cleveland, Ohio, situated in a no doubt long-abandoned gas station. The owner was a porkpie-hatted Hungarian dude who reminded me of my grandfather and who took 150 copies right off the bat. (They were packed 75 to a case.) Three weeks later he ordered another 150 copies by mail and paid in full with his order. Meanwhile, I could sell two, three, maybe five copies apiece of the other Farm publications to more conventional book outlets who for the most part weren't interested in the CB book at all. Oh, it was a heady time.

I do remember the book, but I don't think I ever owned a copy. If you were ever in Carmel, Indiana on one of your trips, you undoubtedly sold copies to the only shop there, owned by a couple of friends of mine.

I had a CB in the station wagon, of course, but it

wasn't mine. I traded 25 copies of **THE BIG DUMMY'S GUIDE** at one store for a used two-channel walkie-talkie and bought the right chips for Channel 5, the one we used on The Farm for internal communication, to accompany the Channel 19 chips already in it. Later my father-in-law gave me a Pearce Simpson ten-channel CB he'd had stashed in a closet for years. Instead of a microphone and speaker, it had a telephone-style attachment that did both. I still have that around here somewhere in the bottom of a box of miscellany.



Eventually the CB fad played itself out in the U.S. and we were stuck with some thousands of books that we had to get rid of somewhere or eat their loss. We sold them to distributors in places like Australia where the craze was just getting underway, and one time I got to take a load of these remainders (about 10,000 of them) down to the docks in New Orleans for loading on a steamer. A one-way truck was rented for the occasion and I took along my oldest son, who was then six years old. He still remembers the night we spent in a motel somewhere in Alabama where we watched **MARY HARTMAN MARY HARTMAN** together. I had my

walkie-talkie with me, and after we dropped off the books and then the rental truck we used it to summon rides along the interstate. One of our early rides was with a van full of Hare Krishnas who fed us and invited us to their communal scene somewhere in rural Mississippi. We demurred, and our next ride was with a nice hippie type who took us all the way to Nashville, from where we caught a ride home with one of our fellow Farmies who came up to meet us.

When I went to high school I got to work on the school paper one year, and part of that involved getting to use a linotype machine one day at the local newspaper to set some type for the issue. It was incredibly impressive to watch the Rube Goldberg-like contraption do its thing. We had a Compugraphic typesetter in the print shop on The Farm, too, and while I never used it I knew people who did and who spoke highly of its to-us-wondrous capabilities. I remember thinking that it was much more complex than the Linotype. I never got to use it.

For its time it was a remarkable machine; it's only looking back on it that it seems clunky as heck. There's no telling how much money the Compugraphic and similar machines saved small, in-house art departments like the one I worked in – and it

also opened up the ability for small typesetting shops to be run by people who could never have afforded the startup costs using traditional “hot” type machines.

In No. 3 I enjoyed "Tracing My Roots." This is something I can't really do beyond a certain point due to my status as the child of half-immigrants. That is, my father was born of poor Germans in a basement in Manhattan and my mother was born somewhere in what was then the Austro-Hungarian Empire and came over when she was two years old. So I know my relatives back to their parents, and that's it. I have her birth certificate -- in Hungarian with a one-forint tax stamp still firmly affixed -- and the immigration papers of her parents and her brothers. I have nothing of that sort for my father or his side of my ancestry. I don't actually find this particularly vexing since it was never a big deal for me, even in childhood.

It's amazing to me both how much and how little paper documentation one can find on a given individual. A lot depends on the time and place. Until someone invents a practical time-machine, I suppose there are some things about ancestors we'll never know. •



Rock outcrops on Mars

This issue of CPG was produced using OpenOffice for text and layout, Microsoft Word for some letterforms, and Photofiltre, Irfanview, and Ulead Photoimpact for graphics. Musical accompaniment courtesy of Little Feat, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, POCO, Sara Groves, King Crimson, and Jack Bruce.

Illustrations by me on pages 11, 13, and 20 were generated using Terragen.

For those who ~~have nothing better to do~~ might be interested, I have a blog online (although it doesn't have much to do with fandom) that's updated a couple of times a week. The address is: <http://aip.atspace.com>



Living on the edge