



CATCHPENNY GAZETTE

Illustrated fanzine and home companion

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I saw the Earth's shadow crawl across the face of the moon and blot it out last night. So did a lot of my neighbors who, like me, were standing out in the middle of the street and peering through binoculars.

Much of the conversation, during the course of the hour spent outside, was quite amusing. I think I had to explain to three or four people just what it was that we were seeing.

"Let's pretend that you're the sun, and you're the Earth, and you're the moon," I said, positioning three people. "You, as the Sun, are setting aglow this part of the Earth, but as the moon steps behind the Earth you'll see that the Earth's shadow covers the moon. You see..."

Naturally, people wanted to know such things as why this event didn't happen every night.

I think the best line was when somebody asked me if it wasn't the Sun which illuminated the stars and caused them to shine.

During all of these various conversations I noticed that one woman seemed to be just as amused as I was by it all. She didn't volunteer to get involved in the conversation, but her face wrinkled up each time someone asked something new.

Finally I got around to talking with her, and discovered that she had studied math and astronomy in college. She introduced herself as Mrs. Goddard, and then dug around in her car and located two of the latest issues of Griffith Observer, a magazine published by the Griffith Observatory and devoted mainly to astronomy and related subjects. When we started talking in earnest on the subject of astronomy, everyone else drift-

ed quickly away, but in this particular instance it was my turn to feel ignorant. She kept a lot more current on the subject than I do, that's for sure.

The Griffith Observer has a regular feature (in these two issues, anyway) entitled *Astronomical Anecdotes, Curiosities and Quotations*. One item makes note of the fact that famed astronomer William Herschel had trouble getting his name spelled correctly in scientific circles. Various spellings were Mersthel, Hertschel, Herthel, Herrschell, Hermstel, and Horochelle. Yes, by gosh, I guess he indeed did have a problem with that. Herschel was the discoverer of the planet Uranus in 1781.

Another story concerns an unnamed astronomer who had never seen a total eclipse of the Sun. He was always too busy, being inside of a dark tent taking photographs of the eclipse or using a spectroscope. Never actually got around to seeing one first hand...

An old lady told an astronomer that she could understand that the path of the Earth around the Sun was elliptical, and that the Sun was at one of the foci of the ellipse. At that point, however, her understanding crapped out. She couldn't fig-

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ARTWORK

Our usual masthead figure, Mr. Noah Count, is taking a much needed vacation. Filling in for Noah is his attractive sister, Mrs. Ellie Mentary.
 All other artwork is either from clipart/dingbat fonts or unattributed from the Internet except page 7 and 10 by William Rotsler.

ure which of the foci occupied this position. The astronomer's reply was: "The right-hand one."

A story is told about the noted American physicist Robert Andrews Millikan, whose maid answered a telephone one day and said to the party on the other end: "Yes, this is where Dr. Millikan lives, but he's not the kind of doctor that does anybody any good."

One last item from this column: An observatory astronomer was approached by a visitor who wanted to look through the telescope at the moon. The astronomer was willing to oblige, but told the fellow that he was a bit early. The moon wouldn't rise until about half-past two the following morning, so he told him to come back in five or six hours and he'd be most happy to let the man look through the telescope. The visitor, however, thought he was being put off. "Of course the moon is not up," he replied, "anyone can see that. If the moon had been up I could have seen it without your telescope."

Well, so much for observatory humor.

It may be that my outlook is naive, but my sense of wonder gets tweaked whenever I look at the nighttime sky and its big display of pinlights. It always comes to mind that what I am viewing is a picture out of the past, created by emissions of light which years and years ago began the journey which finally brought them to the eyes of anyone here on this planet who might happen to look up and see these messages from a variety of yesterdays. Lives which basked in the warmth of that same light are now less than ashes. And the sunlight which streams in this window next to me may one day be glanced at by an uplifted alien face, long after the flowers which I will fertilize have recycled themselves out of existence, and that alien might think to himself: "It may be that my outlook is naive, but my sense of wonder gets tweaked whenever I look at the nighttime sky and -" •

Originally published in 1976

NOTES FROM BYZANTUM

Eric Mayer

Coming Home to Roost (on eBay)

From time to time Mary does an Internet sweep to check up on our books – who's reviewing them, what they're being sold for, where all those arcs that were never reviewed are being sold. Today she was startled to see, up for bid on eBay, *Desert Island Eric*, a mimeographed collection of writings (mostly humorous essays) from my days in sf fandom.

Why anyone would buy such an item I can't imagine. (Neither can anyone else, apparently, since it has 0 bids.) It was basically a kind gesture by some fan friends, designed, I suspect, to ease the sting of sf fandom's general dismissal of my efforts over the years. The completed booklet, which had a very small print run (less than 3 figures I'm sure) was sprung on me as a wonderful surprise.

It probably says something unpleasant about the artistic temperament (okay... the artistic ego... well ... okay ... okay... *my* ego) that I'd write for amateur magazines for a decade and a half, for fun, but still hope for some sort of ego gratification besides. ("Faunch for egoboo" as we put it

in fandom.)

Then again, to me, writing is all about connecting with an audience. Positive feedback is proof I've done a good job of communicating and entertaining. Lack of positive feedback shows I've failed. What fun is it to fail?

It always bothered me (as the friends who produced the collection well knew) that my fan writings never cut it with the hobby's cognoscenti. Typically, my stuff received a mixture of faintly damning praise and backhanded compliments. I was "competent," "a journeyman." Certainly never among the best. As for awards... don't make me laugh.

So I hope you'll excuse me admitting that I experienced raptures of unholy delight (if that's possible) when Mary and I started getting award nominations and starred reviews in *Publishers Weekly* and *Booklist*.

It could be argued that the difference is that my fiction is co-written with Mary, but in truth, we share the work, and the whole isn't any "better" than the best either of us can do. What's different is the audience and, of course, the genre, I'm working in.

Now who would ever think that a writer who wasn't considered better than aver-



age, judged against folks writing for a hobby for mimeographed zines with circulations of 100 to 200, could garner outstanding reviews in the largest industry publications, while being judged against professionals?

Not me. I was shocked when my books got better treatment than my fanzine articles. Which leads me to the lesson there is to be learned in it (aside from the fact I'm still bitter...) It's a lesson anyone starting out writing should take to heart. If I had, it would've saved me years of frustration.

Don't allow a single audience, or even a few different audiences, to discourage you. Don't let a handful of critics in a particular venue convince you that they have the measure of everything. Maybe you're just writing the wrong things for the wrong people. Don't waste too much time and effort trying to win over readers who aren't going to be won over. Move on. Find those readers who'll appreciate your efforts. You might surprise yourself.

Let Them Eat Goat

Now that I'm a vegetarian I will probably never eat goat. I guess I can live with that. It isn't a big problem. Mary and I have been vegetarians for about eight years and this is the first time it has occurred to me that I won't be eating goat.

Every year, I used to go to a folk festival where you could sample all manner of ethnic foods. I kept putting off the Jamaican Curried Goat. The meat chunks swam in a red sauce. They didn't resemble goat. They could have been chunks of anything. Something more palatable than a goat. Their siren bleat called to me.

However, I was never much of a meat eater. What if goat tasted like the venison my father brought home once when I was a kid? Or the squirrel? But what if it didn't? What does goat taste like? Is it worth the chance?

I always found an excuse to avoid the goat. "Curried goat probably won't sit well with Korean Kimchi," I'd tell myself. Next year, I'll have the goat

instead. But I never did.

And now I'm a vegetarian.

Life Is Filled With Missed Opportunities

Mary and I received a royalty check recently for some anthologized stories. We were amused by the \$13.60 we got for "A Byzantine Mystery."

What amused us was the fact that the story first appeared 12 years ago, in Mike Ashley's *Mammoth Book of Historical Whodunnits*, and has been laboring away on our behalf ever since. Last year we had \$4.20, but now the anthology is in a new edition.

When the collection came out in 1993 we certainly never expected it to be still financing several weeks worth of coffee (Millstone Hazelnut this year) well into the next millennium. While we can't say it is a full time job being the authors of a "A Byzantine Mystery" nevertheless, the story's lifespan has amazed us.

The tale marked the first appearance of our detective "John the Eunuch" who was little more than a spear carrier for the twist ending, which, incidentally, revealed a personality utterly at odds with the character we depict in later stories and novels.

Our only regret (aside from the fact that the detective named "John" wasn't actually "our" John) is that it is the shortest story we've had published and royalty payments for contributors are in proportion to their length (I think). If only we'd realized how long the anthology would keep selling we would've found some extra words to stick in.

Had Any Good Dreams Lately?

That was the way my buddies and I greeted each other on lazy summer mornings. Television was in reruns during that season. The Flintstones hadn't been up to anything new. Our dreams were original programming.

We sat on the cool, bare earth under a pine tree, while the heat of the day slowly gathered and out in the sunlight insects flashed

amid the phlox and distant lawnmowers buzzed. We recounted the chilling terrors that had enthralled us during the night.

My dreams were worth telling in those days. The door to my bedroom closet would open onto illimitable plains littered with skulls. I climbed swaying staircases, high as a skyscrapers, with broken railings, rotting wooden landings, and missing stairs. Giant alien robots on stilt-like legs stalked the street where I lived and peered over the roofs of familiar houses. As often as not, I flew. I was always amazed to be soaring, exhilarated at how I had learned to remain elevated. It was easy enough, once you had the knack. Every time I'd think to myself how like a dream it all was, except, luckily, I was flying with my eyes wide open.

These days I seldom remember dreams and the ones I do recall are gray and jumbled, neither terrifying nor exhilarating, merely disturbing and disconcerting. My nights are no longer populated by monsters but by people who are dead or gone. Whatever terrors cause me to wake with choked screams, slip away into my subconscious and refuse to be pulled out into the day light. It has been a very long time since I've flown.

Where are all the good dreams when you really need them? •

Eric's column is extracted from his blog, located at journalscape.com/ericmayer



From the **Wacky Headlines**
Department:

**"Hospitals are Sued
by 7 Foot Doctors"**

Presumably all former NBA
players.



FOUND IN COLLECTION

Christopher Garcia

There are parts of the collection of the Computer History Museum where few ever travel. These places, these dark places, are located behind large cabinets which comprise even larger computer systems. I spend a fair amount of time trying to gain access to these areas when we are called on to provide provenance for some machine or when we have an opportunity to have one of our pieces show up in a magazine or a documentary. There are things behind them that God himself can not imagine. One such thing was discovered when I went climbing behind one in search of a number. I ended up on the floor after having lowered myself into place. It was sitting on the edge of the pallet that the IBM 7030 Core Memory Unit was sitting on. It was a simple little magazine called *Galileo*.

As far as I can tell, *Galileo* was a pretty successful mag in the late 1970s. They ran stories from some of the names that I've always enjoyed, like Connie Willis and Robert Silverberg. They also seem to have done a lot of interviews. Issue 9, the one I found, had a long interview with Fred Pohl. The interview was solid and interesting, but even I had seen better interviews done with him. I took a look through the stories, which were good though far from great, and then

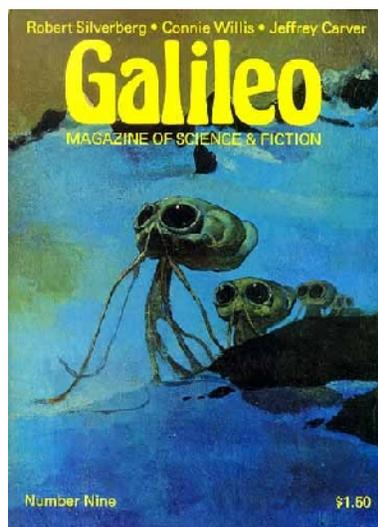
went back to look at the articles. I completely got why we had kept this one after I read the article entitled "Think of a Number" by a Mr. James Hogan.

The article basically looked at the world of Dr. Lawrence Pinneo. I knew I had heard of that name before, though I had no idea where I had heard it. It actually turns out that he had been featured on a little show called *In Search Of* back in my childhood. Hosted by Leonard Nimoy, *ISO* always tried to find the truth behind the strange and mysterious things in the world. The *ISO* Big-foot episode was easily the best thing done on Sasquatch ever, and it still holds that distinction. The basic premise is that Dr. Pin-

neo had figured out a way of having a brain control a computer; in this case, a Digital Equipment Corporation LINC-8 computer.

While Dr. Pinneo was working at Stanford Research Institute, he started working on finding specific impulses from the brain and detecting them with the computer. This research actually made it possible to do brain surgery without the subject being conscious, as was usually the case in previous years. The Advance Research Projects Agency, ARPA (the people who brought you the Internet, among other things) got involved and said that they'd like to see the impulse go both ways, with an impulse being able to cause the computer to do something and for the computer to be able to send a signal to make the body do something. This took time, but it kinda worked out. The article talked about many of the possible applications, such as visualization helmets. It was a brilliant article, and it certainly seemed to fit in with our collection, but there was something more there.

I looked at the photo that came with the article and noticed that it showed an actual LINC-8. There were a fair number of these made, but I had a hunch that we had the one. I grabbed



the article and took it to the area where we kept our DEC equipment. I quickly found the one that I thought might be it, wrapped up in plastic from the days it was transported out to the West Coast. I didn't open it, it really didn't matter, but I set aside the magazine and finished up the work I was doing.

A few months later, we had a researcher who wanted to take a look at the LINC-8. I pulled it out and unwrapped it. I figured the guy would appreciate it if I gave it a thorough cleaning, so I gathered the materials and started in on the beast. After I got the front shining like a star, I opened it up and found something taped to the inside of the door. It was the

photo from *Galileo*, which had been taped up inside with the words "March 1978" on the bottom. I figured that this was when the picture had been taken. I cleaned the rest of it, but looking at the paper, I knew that it would be best if it was left where it was. The paper had gone beyond yellow and there were crumbling pieces on the bottom side. I gently cleaned the inside and set it away.

I wondered why we would have had *Galileo*, as we didn't usually collect magazines, even if they had articles that featured items we had. While I was looking through, I noticed that *Galileo's* offices were on

Newbury Street in Boston. Furthermore, they were just a few doors away from the offices of one of our long-time board members. Then I noticed that one of the production staff had also been a Museum employee, though they had left long before I got there and were only known to me through notes on artifact forms. It seems that the museum and the magazine had deep roots, and why not? They were both formed in Boston at about the same time.

I've read *Galileo* a few times since, and though the stories are pretty good, I can see why it didn't last. There was quality, but nothing to set it too far apart from everything else. A shame, as I really enjoyed what was there. •

EPISTLES

L E T T E R C O L U M N

Joseph T. Major

I envy your being able to get by on so little sleep. I suppose I get four hours of sleep some nights – I just don't get by on it. My mother slept poorly too. I take after her in a lot of things. Not all of them, I hope.

The producers of "Street Smarts" probably went to some trouble to pick goofballs. They wouldn't have a show otherwise. Like on those "reality shows" where after the players started cooperating, the producers realized that they weren't getting the conflict they needed, and so began screening for incompatible people.

But then, ignorance is becoming increasingly common. My brother who is a university professor is appalled by the lack of reading skills among his students. Now these are presumably not mall rat slackers. One hopes they are not mall rat slackers. (I never could understand not being able

to read, but then nobody ever taught me to read.)

Eric Mayer would be pleased – misery loves company, as they say – to hear the story about my AMC Pacer. The rubber under the hood was riddled with dry rot. As I discovered the morning the thermostat froze up. The hoses burst and the heater core cracked. It was around zero.

Fortunately a friend managed to help me get the car to a dealership which could venture to repair it. Everything right away except the heater core. Except I was supposed to go home for Christmas [the next day].

So I tried. Now if Eric thinks looking through a three inch square aperture is fun driving on city streets, how about doing it on an interstate highway? I got about fifteen miles out of town and gave up. (I will spare you the subsequent argument I had with Mother about "dressing up warm and driving down".)

And then there was the car I bought to replace that one...

The Sam's Club here in Louisville occasionally puts out old boxes for customers to use. I have to go to the local one today to get envelopes for my two zines, labels, and disposable razors. (I used to use an electric razor but found I was leaving myself with peeled skin and stubble, and switched.) That's after I go to the dentist.

Most of the groceries in town have self-scan. Don't know what they do about non-scanners, or cheaters. I've never been re-scanned. Admittedly you go scan at places besides the regular cashiers, so perhaps that helps. Wal-Mart has started having self-scan, too.

Chris Garcia

Another Catchpenny arrives at my doorstep and it is good.

I also have weird sleeping habits. One is the most annoying though. No matter what time I set the alarm clock for, I always wake up before it rings. Even if I'm just taking a nap for twenty minutes and set the alarm so I don't forget to pick up The Little One at school, I will wake up with at least 5 minutes left on the clock. I hate it so. I don't watch much late night TV, because once Iron Chef comes on and the secret ingredient is announced,

I'm out like a light.

In 1998 or so, they actually discovered that the number of possible configurations of regular snowflakes is 2×10^{158} . I believe that's more than the total number of atoms in the universe by a far margin, but since snowflakes are repeatable, they folks figure that there are identical snowflakes, but most likely not at the same time. The same group managed to discover ways to create natural, identical snowflakes, but it took them a number of steps that nature would never take.

Eric makes a lot of good points on aspiring writers not giving it 100%. I certainly tried (imagine me putting in as much effort as I do into LoCing and *The Drink Tank*, but only to writing fiction and that was my 2001-2003) and failed miserably.

Figuring at the rate I read, and the number of books I have on my to be read shelves, it would take at least 120 flights to New York from San Jose to exhaust them. I'm figuring at one book 5 hours and no sleep, which for me never happens on a plane. I actually do better reading on trains. I've finished many a novel while taking the train the 90 minutes up to San Francisco. There's not much to look at and no sleepiness for me, so I tend to get a lot of reading done there.

Peter Sullivan

"Street Smarts" sounds suspiciously like the old Hollywood Squares/Celebrity Squares format, only without the celebrities and without the weak jokes. Which, given that just about the



only point of Hollywood Squares **was** the celebrities and the weak jokes, is like trying to do a version of Hamlet without the man himself, the ghost, the player king **and** the arras.

Like Eric, I always used to enjoy the logical ambiguity of the phrase "one-eyed, one-horned, flying purple people eater," wondering where the aforementioned beastie would actually find a plentiful supply of one-eyed, one-horned, flying purple people. I guess great minds think alike -- or maybe we are both just terrible pedants.

Re: my own article – I should point out that this article was originally written in the context of postal games zines, rather than SF fanzine fandom. Hence the reference to subscriptions – postal games zines worked on a mixture of trades and subs, as opposed to the SF fanzine model of "the usual." The overall conclusions are just as valid for both, I feel.

British bank notes tend not to suffer the degradations and deprivations that Eric describes, so I guess a UK version of "Where's George?" wouldn't really work. Any annotated notes would be regarded as "damaged" and quickly get swapped over at the bank. For the record, the back of the £5 note is currently prison reform campaigner Elizabeth Fry (previously George Stephenson) whilst the £10 note is now Charles Darwin (previously Charles Dickens). The front sides are all of course HM Queen.

Tying together a couple of separate themes from the lettercol, Wal-mart bought out the UK supermarket chain Asda a few years ago. (It was probably the most "Wal-martish" of the major chains.) At the time, I predicted that the lettering on the plastic bags would, over time, evolve from "Asda" to "Asda, part of the Wal-mart family" to "Asda-Wal-mart" to "Wal-mart-Asda" to "Wal-mart." So far, we seem to be between steps 2 and 3...

Gregory Benford

Eric Mayer & Chris Garcia are right--pro writing is mostly ordinary horse sense plus lotsa work.

These days are far harder on free lances methinks. I had an early success but wonder if it would be easy now.

Even so, there are editorial oddities. I wrote a science column for *F&SF* for a decade, then Gordon van Gelder lost interest, canceled it, & was forced by irate readers to restore it. But he kept sending back columns so I quit. (Sold them all elsewhere.)

Nonfiction seems easier both to write and sell these days. I and a colleague, Michael Rose, have started a series of commentaries on science & society in the new Amazon Shorts program, where one can download essays or stories for 49 cents each. So far, they're selling. Rose & I are the only people writing a continuing coherent series, so there may be reader follow-on attention.

I've always thought the best way to make a splash in the sf magazines is to write a series set in a coherent future, as did Varley. Each gains strength from associations with earlier stories. Of course, fresh ideas must keep coming. Varley told me recently he didn't think he could do it again!

David Mattingly

[Regarding Chris Garcia's comments in last issue's installment of "Found In Collection"] My original idea for the cover was to use a Cray supercomputer, but the Cray machine at that time wasn't recognizable to the average person as a computer. I actually used the old movie *Charlie* with Cliff Robertson as the source for the tape drive, which the average person sees as a computer.

Eric Mayer

You've probably noticed that my blogging is rather sporadic. Trying to write something even every couple days sure drains your brain fast. I thought I had a sea of inspiration and already I'm down to a mucky swamp. How long you'll be able to find enough for a column I'm not sure. What's worse, when I'm stuck, I write about writing, which seems the most popular blog topic but doesn't fit fanzines very well.

I'm going to sound like an overage fanboy but I was tickled by Gregory Benford's loccol remark. How cool is that? If I were writing sf novels I could use it for a cover blurb! Oh, I get some mileage out of the mysteries Mary and I write but I'll consider myself a REAL author when... well...probably never actually.

I enjoyed Chris Garcia's museum mystery. Sounds like the basis for a series – investigating the background for obscure items in a museum collection constantly gets the curator into hot water.

Dave Locke's argument in favor of the possibility of identical snowflakes makes sense. Given the countless billions of snowflakes that have fallen, what are the chances no two have ever been alike? Small, I'd think. Of course, we must remember that when we refer to a "snowflake" we are using an abstraction (as Korzybski would say) since each snowflake is unique -- in time and place, if not, in every case, physically -- and so we should more correctly refer to "snowflake 1", "snowflake 2", "snowflake 3" etc. Actually this has nothing to do with anything but I actually read all of *Science and Sanity* and I've got to put that to some use. Ghu knows I also read *Dhalgren* and haven't found any use for that – except to mention the accomplishment in fanzines. So you can bet I'll never read Proust no matter how many plane trips I might take.

Peter Sullivan writes interestingly about the Internet attention economy. You come up against this as it relates to writing. A lot of writers think, wow, now I can make my opus available over the web to the whole world. I'll publish my book on the Internet, or self-publish and advertise on the Internet, and millions of people can get to it as easily as they can purchase the new Stephen King. So they put the stuff out there

and wait for fame and fortune... and wait...and wait...get 12 hits on their site or sell 2 copies through iUniverse. What they didn't reckon on is that there are millions of other things competing for attention.

Finally, as for stupid TV...I don't watch TV anymore. Once in a great while I find myself in a hotel room and when I turn on the TV and flip through the channels I find the aggressive stupidity appalling. I guess it's in the interest of advertisers and politicians to make people feel good about stupidity but unfortunately morons might buy products and vote for idiots but they can't solve the world's problems.

Lloyd Penney

My sleeping habits are fairly regular...no matter what I get, I never seem to get enough. I like to say that if I was ever to truly catch up on my sleep, you wouldn't see me until next decade. I watch very little television because I can't find anything on it I truly want to watch. Much of television these days disgusts me in that the so-called entertainment in it consists of showing the utter stupidity of people, or of laughing at their dreams, and laughing harder when they fail. (The Idol shows... American, Canadian, disgraceful.) It is frightening to see the levels of stupidity on television, and then to run into it in real life on the bus, the subway, the street. Stupidity has become the character of the average Joe, almost to be cherished, and any sign of intelligence is ridiculed, in print and in movies and television. That's even more frightening.

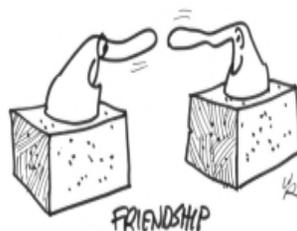
The only person I know who makes his living from writing alone is Robert J. Sawyer. He's a good writer, and he's also good at marketing and suggesting ways to

promote his books and promote himself. He employs his wife, Carolyn Clink, to be his marketing manager. And, he's got his agent looking after things as well. No wonder Rob's books are everywhere, and he has a full schedule of writing and of touring.

I have a box of pulps under my worktable that I've had for some years, and I have yet to do anything with it. It contains a run of *The Original Science Fiction Stories*, a pulp magazine edited by Robert A.W. Lowndes in the 50s. I see the names Wilhelm and Silverberg on the covers. I'd like to sit down and read them cover to cover, but these days, I simply don't have the time.

Interesting idea that the new money will not be information, but attention. There's lots of people out there who are the target of advertisers, jumping over each other to get your attention so you can slavishly buy their products. The attention span of the average citizen is getting shorter all the time; those of us with longer attention spans are too educated to be taken in by those advertisers. Sell to the idiots!

We know about the business practices of Wal-Mart up here, too. When a union was able to get into a Quebec Wal-Mart, Canadian head office's reaction was to announce the store was shutting down because of low profits. Wal-Mart does not care about the people who shop there or the people who work there; I will not shop at a Wal-Mart. Ever. I do shop at a Loblaws, which is one of the major grocery chains in this country. We own several Loblaws shopping bins, green and purple which makes it easier to get the groceries home, and reduced the number of plastic bags we hang onto. •





“He May Have Hairs Upon His Chest, But Sister So Has Lassie”

Peter Sullivan

There comes a time when you're at Northallerton station at 7.30 a.m., with an hour's trip to college at Durham, and you've got nothing to read. The kiosk has already run out of non-tabloid newspapers. On the magazine rack is the “Summer Special” of *True* magazine. Well, I've always wondered what such periodicals are like, and they're a phenomena of cultural and social interest, and there's nothing else to read, it's only 99p, and anyway I might get a page of copy out of it. Well, that's my excuse and I'm sticking to it.

There are, I gather, two main strands in the teen romance magazine market. The better-known, satirised frequently by *Viz*, is the photo-romance. Much older, with a tradition stretching back to the 19th century, are the text-based magazines, although even these will use photographs and pictures to spice up the layout. I guess these don't sell as well, but are probably more stable performers in the long run.

This particular magazine has twenty-five stories, mostly from 1 to 3 pages long. For the purposes of this review, I have read what is hopefully a representative sample of twelve of them. I should really read all twenty-five, but I'm afraid my brain would burst if I tried.

The stories are, of course, all highly moral, and I can deduce the following guidelines for the modern Miss on holiday:

- 1) Don't always assume people will behave as you expect.
- 2) Honesty is the best policy.
- 3) Sometimes friendships can develop into something

more.

- 4) People aren't always what they seem.
- 5) Some men can be very arrogant.
- 6) Sometimes fantasy can be better than reality.
- 7) Ghosts are strange.
- 8) Some people will never change.
- 9) Things aren't always what they seem.
- 10) If you both play it cool, you may miss out on romance.
- 11) Loneliness is not the same as love.
- 12) Becoming a ghost is strange.

In general, I'm not sure whether all of the stories can strictly be described as romances. There are at least two out-and-out ghost stories, plus at least another marginal one (lonely shop assistant falls for living shop dummy). There's also one murder, which rather worryingly presents the murderess as heroine, taking justified steps to dispose of her self-opinionated, domineering and cheating husband. Is this really the image of matrimony we want to present to impressionable young ladies?

As far as, erm, intimate moments go, the teen market has followed the trends of the *Harlequin Romance* series, and it is now acceptable for the heroine to go to bed with the hero, as long as they really love each other. Of course, it's vital to have protection – there are two unwanted pregnancies.

As well as the stories, there are also several non-story features. These vary from a small space-filler with tips on how to say “I don't love you” and “I am

already married” in five languages (“Ben evliyim” in Turkish, apparently) to a fairly restrained two-page spread on fashion, a theme which I personally would have expected to be much more prominent.

However, the best of the features in the magazine must be the “What Does His Beachwear Say About Him?” which is illustrated with several line drawings, some of which look suspiciously like *sf fen*. Thus, it says of the speedo-wearing but somewhat big-boned chap, “Trendy and extrovert, he knows how to look good and he wants a girl with an equally fashionable image. Do you fit the bill?” Meanwhile, the slightly muscular but nerdy type is “Mr. Cool and probably Mr. Passionate too. Careful, you might get killed in the rush!” So there you go.

Finally, the adverts are pretty much as expected. Adverts for feminine hygiene products, dating agencies, modelling agencies, and cross-promotion for other titles in the group. There were very few adverts overall, but I expect this may just be because of the “Summer Special” nature of the issue – it might well even be intended as a loss-leader issue to attract people reading the thing for the first time.

Oh, and five brownie points to the first person to identify the original source of the title of this article. •

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I hate Arnie Katz's current fanzine, *Vegas Fandom Weekly*; I really do. All right, one of Arnie's current fanzines – he and Chris Garcia are locked in some sort of power struggle to see who can publish the most titles concurrently, and how often they can publish them. I don't know where they get the energy – I generally have to lie down with a cool drink and then take a nap after reading their zines I'm so bushed – but it's kinda fun to watch.

Anyway, as I was saying, I hate *VFW*. Well, not all of it; it's developed into a pretty good overall zine. What I really hate are the parts that deal with the goings on of Las Vegas fandom. It constantly reminds me that I have no local fans to socialize with. Apparently, what I gather from reading *VFW*, no one even has to drop a hat in Vegas for dozens of fans to get together. "It's 5:15 on a Thursday, let's party!"

I suppose it wouldn't make me feel so bad if I hadn't experienced just how much fun fans can have when they get together. As I've written about in these pages previously, in my former faanish incarnation, there was a small but very active group of local fans, and there was always some sort of fanac going on, whether it was just sitting around shooting the breeze, publishing fanzines, or having an actual scheduled meeting once a month.

These days, that isn't the case. There is a group of local fans – in fact, an apparently numerous and robust group – they even have club officers and put on a yearly convention and all that stuff. But from all that I can gather, they're way too sercon for me. So these days, it really is a Proud and Lonely thing for me to be a fan.



I've never been accused of being the sharpest pencil in the box, but one of the things I noticed when I got back into fandom a

BARKING SPIDERS

DAVID BURTON

couple of years ago was that, remarkably, everyone had gotten older. I'm not sure why this took me by such surprise – after all, I'm certainly not the same winsome youth of 16 I was in 1969, even if I still feel like it – but it did. In a self-centered sort of way, I suppose I expected everyone to have existed in some type of stasis just because I wasn't around. And of course I mourned the passing of those who had departed this life in the interim.

Another thing that struck me (and I have the welts to prove it) was that not only was fanzine fandom populated largely by older fans, but there weren't many young fans in evidence. Oh sure, there were younger fans around, but that's a relative term. When I first joined the ranks of fans back in the late 1960s, there were plenty of young fans around, fans in their teens and 20s and even younger. As I recall, there were about a million fanzines being published, although I suspect my memory is playing tricks on me there – it was realistically probably no more than a couple of hundred thousand – and there was a real sense of Something in the air (other than the acrid smell of cannabis), a real excitement about what was going on. It was, I suspect, tied in with everything else that was happening at that time – the anti-war movement, the hippies, the burgeoning drug culture, and the pervasive sense

of rebellion that seemed to be found among us young folks, even those not involved in the "counter-culture." The youngsters of today (who from my remote vantage point seem little like those of my day, in general and more specifically in fandom) have more outlets for "faanish" activities – a whole variety of different "fandoms" that didn't even exist previously, more conventions (which seemed to have gained in importance in the last couple of decades, or at least in size), and for those inclined towards

the written word, certainly more avenues where they can be published and read. I doubt traditional "fanzine fandom" will be able to survive the passing of us old pharts, since there don't seem to be many youngsters evincing any desire to pick up and carry the torch.

At any rate, until recently I felt a little left out joining the group of "older" fans. Mainly because I have always enjoyed good health, and one of the topics that are prevalent whenever those over a certain age (fans or not) gather is health.

That situation took an abrupt turn in mid-August. While sitting at the computer early on a Friday evening, doing some important work (you'd consider working on a ten-under round at Torrey Pines while playing *Tiger Woods PGA-Tour* important, wouldn't you?) my heartbeat was suddenly replicating the drum solo from the old Iron Butterfly song, *In A Gadda Da Vida*. And continued to do so for even longer than that damned song used to last. It didn't help that it was a dark and stormy night. Not only was my heart going berserk, but I felt like I was stuck in the start of a clichéd short story and couldn't get out.

I've had heart palpitations for a dozen years. When they were first diagnosed, I was told to lay off caffeine (which I've done ever since) and nicotine (which I have been largely unable to give up). If

I smoked more than usual, or got a little stressed out, my heart would start its conga dance, but in a little bit things would settle down and be back to normal. But these new ones were different; stronger, and more long lasting (New and Improved!). In fact, they went on all weekend. They were so disconcerting that a couple of times I was dressed and ready to head to the hospital if they got just a *little* bit worse, and for someone with my long-standing fear of hospitals, that's saying something...

So I got to my family doctor on Monday and he determined I should see a cardiologist, again telling me to lay off cigarettes and try and reduce the stress in my life – I had been having a really hectic couple of weeks at work beforehand. (And in the meantime he prescribed Toprol for my somewhat elevated blood pressure.) Since this wasn't considered an emergency, the earliest I could get in for the cardiologist to do a echocardiogram and stress test was the next week.

Talk about a nervous wreck... I imagined every possible outcome, and *all* the worst-case scenarios when I was actually taking the test. In fact, I published the last issue of CPG the day before my appointment, Just In Case.

Now, I'd never had an echocardiogram done before, and I have to admit that it wasn't entirely unpleasant to be lying on my side and having an attractive young woman, half on the examining table herself and breathing in my ear as she groped my naked chest taking a sonogram. And I had fortunately worn a *very* baggy pair of shorts to the appointment, which managed (barely) to hide just how *much* I enjoyed it. An added benefit of this little excursion being that I was assured that at least *two* organs were functioning properly.

Fortunately, none of the Dire Circumstances I foresaw happened. The verdict was that my heart was entirely healthy, doing just what it should (aside from the palpitations), and again, I

should quit smoking and reduce the stress.

So now I have my own story to relate when the topic turns to health and doctors and What Ails Me, and I won't feel quite so left out. •

From the **Interesting But Probably Useless Information Dept.**

Almonds are a member of the peach family.

The eye of an ostrich is bigger than its brain.

There are more chickens than people in the world.

There are two words in the English language that have all five vowels in order: *abstemious* and *facetious*.

Women blink nearly twice as often as men.

