

PIXEL SIX

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PIXEL SIX

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“To me there are three types of minds.”

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Notes From Byzantium

Suitable For Children?

At The Lady Killers blog (theladykillers.typepad.com), Jane Finnis wonders whether her books about Aurelia Marcella, set in first-century Roman Britain, would be suitable for a youngster and decides they would be.

Why do I think my stories would be all right for a mature 12-year-old? Because they are moral, in that justice is done and evil is punished; and there are some young characters in them, with whom perhaps a young reader can identify. The only slight doubt in my mind is that among the first-

century blood and gore my heroine encounters, and which I know most kids would lap up, there's a human sacrifice at a Druid ceremony. Might this scare some sensitive young souls?

I'm not sure what is suitable for kids and what isn't. The real world tends to expose its dark underside to us earlier and more emphatically than books do anyway. I suppose I would not like youngsters to be reading books that depict immoral behavior as commendable or normal. I am not thinking of sexual immorality but rather things like the almost salacious depiction of violence that has become so trendy.

But people will never agree on what books are "adult."

When I was in grade school I was barred from the science fiction room of the local

library, because those books were considered adult. The Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew (neither of which I had any use for) were kept downstairs with Winnie the Pooh (which I despised). For some reason the Andre Norton, Lester del Rey and Robert Heinlein juveniles sat cover to cover with the adult novels of Ray Bradbury, Arthur Clarke, Robert Sheckley, Theodore Sturgeon and the rest. Perhaps the intellectual content, the questioning of the status quo, the imagining of alternate realities, rendered them all unfit for children of the fifties.

Or maybe one of the librarians had dipped into the del Rey adventure in which a character drowns in the incoming tide after getting his leg stuck in a giant clam, although not before attempting to hack through his ankle with a knife.

That never happened to anybody in Winnie the Pooh. I could only wish...

My parents talked the library into bending its regulations and I spent the next decade or so gorging on sf and fantasy. I didn't suffer any harmful effects from my early exposure, unless you count a nagging, inconvenient conviction that, despite what most people think, the world doesn't have to the way it is but is just one, lousy, possibility which could be supplanted by something better if only enough of us believed that.

Well, I do tread carefully on beaches.

Eric Mayer

Illustrated by
Brad Foster

Astronomers Walk the Dog

That's right, they've taken Pluto outside. Now there are only eight planets left orbiting. And Pluto isn't one of them. That's the way it goes – planet today, dwarf planet tomorrow.

I liked the first proposal with a former asteroid planet (Ceres), a newly discovered planet (Xena) and a double planet (Pluto/Charon).

I say this is hitting below the Kuiper Belt and a lot of space rocks are going to be crying the blues when they hear the news :

Leading astronomers declared Thursday that Pluto is no longer a planet under historic new guidelines that downsize the solar system from nine planets to eight.

For now, membership will be restricted to the eight "classical" planets in the solar system: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune.

Much-maligned Pluto doesn't make the grade under the new rules for a planet: "a celestial body that is in orbit around the sun, has sufficient mass for its self-gravity to overcome rigid body forces so that it assumes a ... nearly round shape, and has cleared the neighborhood around its orbit.

Pluto is automatically disqualified because its oblong orbit overlaps with Neptune's.

What startled me was the following statement:

It was unclear how Pluto's demotion might affect the mission of NASA's New Horizons spacecraft, which earlier this year began a 9½-year journey to the oddball object to unearth more of its secrets.

Let's see, they'll turn the spacecraft around

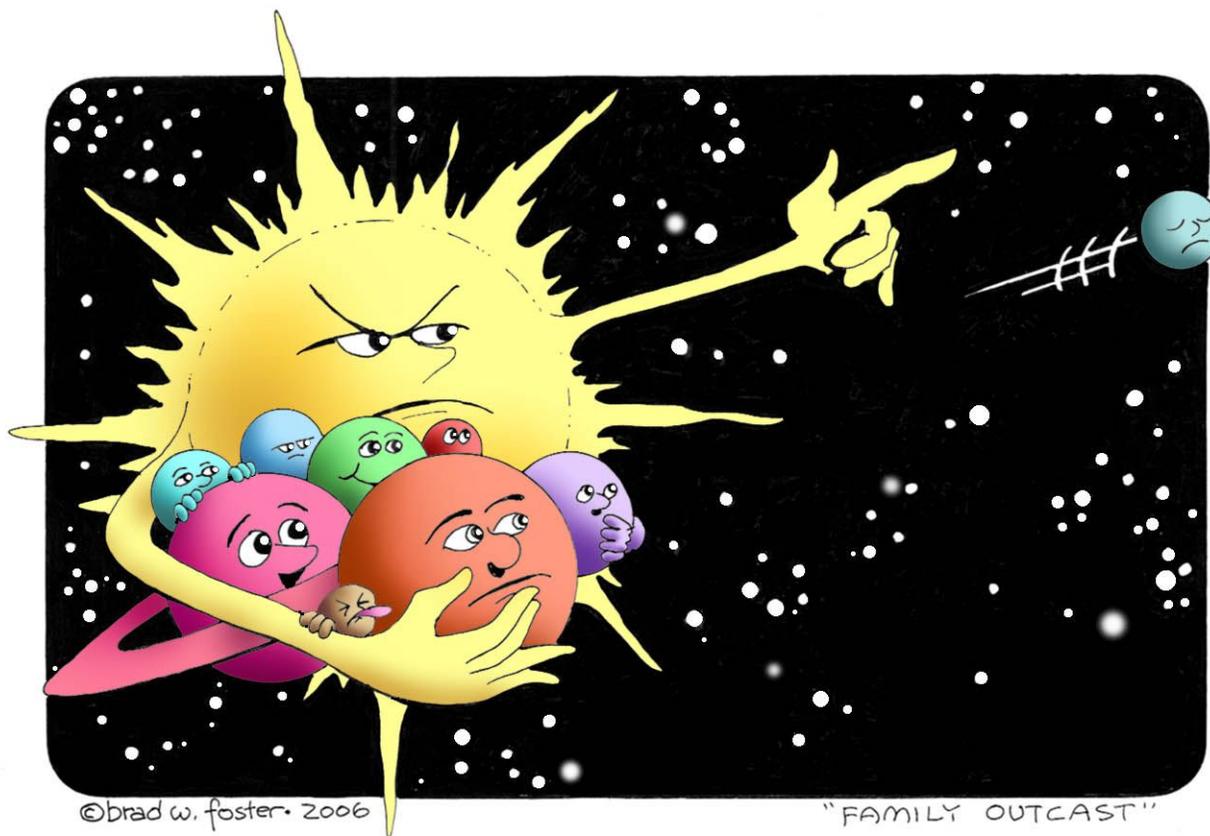
and bring it back. Or alter its course for a real planet instead.

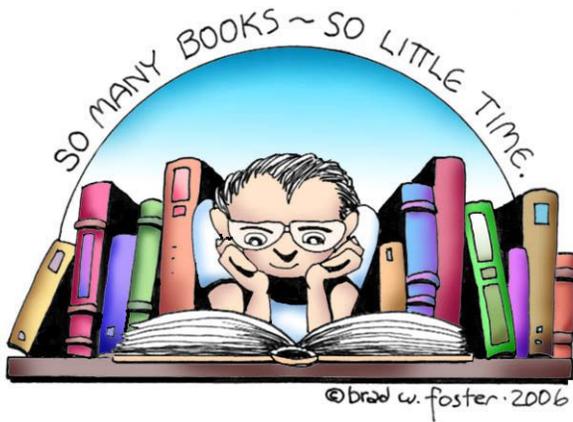
No, wait. Maybe the spacecraft's programmed to head for planet Pluto and now that Pluto's changed, poor New Horizons won't be able to find it.

In fact, since Pluto's been demoted what's to stop it from packing up its moon and heading off to some system that appreciates small, icy

bodies.

The way some of these stories are written you'd think changing the name was going to change the object itself. Pluto is what it is, kind of like Popeye. Planet's just another word (for nothing left to lose?) As the philosopher (or crank, depending on your point of view) Alfred Korzybski said, "The map is not the territory."





The Need to Read

It's often said that anyone who wants to write needs to read a lot. I don't entirely agree. For what it's worth, I've read very little fiction during the ten years Mary and I have been doing our mystery novels.

I do think writers need to have read a lot at some time, to have developed a feel for how books work. I don't believe it is important to read a lot of current fiction. If you want to keep up with trends in the marketplace, if you want your writing to reflect what's happening in publishing today (probably not bad ideas) then, I suppose, you need to know what other authors are up to. But for better or for worse, Mary and I write pretty much the way we want, regardless of what the fashion might be. Maybe we'd be doing better if we paid more attention to what's selling, but then I doubt I could write something fashionable if I tried.

Up until I started writing professionally I spent endless hours reading. As a kid I devoured all sorts of books, particularly science fiction. I spent more time on Mars than in my backyard.

I have much less time to read now. Most of the spare time I used to devote to reading books goes to composing them. And I write even more slowly than I read. I can (or rather used to be able to) read a short mystery novel in the time it takes me to write a single chapter of one.

Then too, historical mysteries require a lot of research, and thus, I peruse far more non-fiction than I used to, further cutting into my fiction reading time.

Finally, I purposefully avoid reading anything remotely like what we're working on. I tend to be a sponge. I'll soak up whatever I'm reading. And that's dangerous. I don't want to find myself being unduly influenced by someone else's work or, even worse, subconsciously copy anything.

Despite reading little fiction these days, my aesthetic sensibilities are rooted in the hundreds of novels I've devoured over the years. To me, books are not, as they seem to be to some writers, pale imitations of television or the movies.

Baseball In The Air

In mid-August the air is heavy with humidity and baseball. By now the season has taken shape. During the last heat of the summer, teams fight to position themselves for pennant races that may well be decided in the chill of October evenings.

It's been said the baseball season is too long, stretching from April until nearly November but in the northeast that's perfect. It covers every month when it's possible to be outside without a jacket.

I'm a fan so baseball is a constant presence

for me. It was present, literally, when we lived in Rochester, New York. We lived about a mile from Red Wings Stadium, which back in the eighties was home to the Baltimore Oriole's Triple A affiliate. We used to walk to ballgames. It was more relaxing than battling the traffic and competing for parking.

The lot was inadequate which is part of the reason why the stadium was demolished and a new one built on a larger parcel nearer downtown. Fans parked on lawns. Local residents did a tidy business during the summer, renting three or four spaces on the postage stamp sized yards in front their houses. With over 60 home games a year, it added up. They must have been sorry to see the stadium go.

From our house, as night fell, the glow from the stadium lights could be seen over the tops of the mulberry trees in the backyard. When the air was right the chords of the organ inciting the fans would drift through the windows, and sometimes very distinctly came the voice of the stadium announcer. "Now batting..."

We always knew when something exciting happened, when a Red Wing had hit a home run or made a great catch, because then you could hear the crowd, a sound like distant thunder. •

Eric's column this month first appeared as entries in his blog: journalscape.com/ericmayer



Whither Fandom?

In his column in *Pixel* #5, Chris Garcia says, “I always assumed that all children of fans end up being fans...” And he acknowledges that this assumption was wrong; Walter Coslet’s son Tim, with whom he works, is not a fan.

Neither is my daughter, Kit. But there was a time when she was going to more conventions than I was.

A very interesting thing happened to me during my first year in fandom. I was a 13-year-old, and it was at that age my habit to share my enthusiasms with my mother. I showed her the fanzines I got, I showed her the books I read, and sometimes she read them. My mother, who was much better educated than I am, was a teacher who owned and ran her own private kindergarten. She was also a good writer, and I probably got my talent for writing from her,

although she was never professionally published.

I had been sharing with her the books I read by Robert Heinlein – mostly, but not exclusively his juveniles – and she also enjoyed them. One day she handed me a handwritten little piece. It was about Heinlein’s books and her son who had introduced her to them. I read it with increasing amazement and pleasure, and when I’d finished it I told her it should be in a fanzine. “This is really good,” I told her in a voice which hadn’t broken yet. It was light-hearted, almost whimsical – better fanwriting than I was then capable of by a wide margin.

(After that time she wrote several books – family history, mostly – for me alone, neatly handwritten, accompanied by many photos, and a series of “Kitten books” documenting my daughter’s childhood from her first month onwards, which my daughter now has.)

She shook her head. “No, I wrote it just for you, Ted. I don’t want it published.”

“Why?” I asked, perplexed.

She tried to explain it to me. “This is your hobby, Ted. If I started doing things for fanzines, I would be joining your hobby. And I don’t think that would be fair to you.” She was of course absolutely right. Had she become an active fan, I would have been in her shadow, perhaps elbowed aside. I wouldn’t have been *me* any more. I would have been *her son*. I would have lost my independent existence as a fan.

Not that this was very likely. My mother had an exhausting schedule with her school. She had little time for ongoing fanac. But I argued with her at the time, because I could see that, first, her piece was *good*, and also that she *enjoyed* science fiction and aspects of fanac. And I discounted her objections that she’d overshadow me (which she phrased more subtly than that) because I lacked her insight.

Since then I’ve watched other parent-child family fanac. My second wife, Robin, was the daughter of two New York City club fans (whom I met four years before I found out they had a daughter – and I met her at a Lunacon). And there was Norm and Leigh Couch, St. Louis area fans, whose three children were all active fans, two of whom, Lesleigh and Chris, are still around.

By my reckoning, my daughter, Kit, is – on her mother’s side – a *third-generation* fan. Except that she’s not really a fan any more, if she ever was.

I could never get her, or, subsequently, my son Aaron (who is now 18) interested in fanzines. She never connected with them, although she knew what they were and saw plenty of them around the house while she was growing up.

Ted White

I used to take her to WSFA meetings, back in the late '70s and early '80s. (She was ten in 1980.) She wasn't too fond of Charles Gilliland – who was roughly her age – but she liked Eric Pavlat (son of Bob and Peggy Rae Pavlat), and they became friends. A few years later, when they were both teenagers, they went to conventions together a lot, mostly to party. I never asked too closely about what they were doing at those parties, but I know it involved the usual late-teen stuff, including drugs and sex. Kit and Eric went to lots of conventions I didn't go to, most of them local to the Washington-Baltimore area, but some up in Philadelphia. Their group included Dave Etlin's daughter, and a half dozen to a dozen other teenaged offspring of fans.

It was like they had their own "fandom." It was a social group based on both age-affinity and the fact that all of them had parents who were fans. Their parents were into fandom, though, on a level the kids did not aspire to. They were in a fandom-auxiliary, you might say. They too read SF and fantasy, but the literature was no longer in a ghetto, and I don't think they read it the same way we, their parents, did. They knew about fandom, having grown up in it, but they took it for granted, as a *structure* in which they carved out their own spaces. Fandom for them was like a convention hotel for us: a convenient place to party.

I think they eventually outgrew fandom. My daughter abandoned fandom and her friends there for the club/bar scene and new friends there. She lived for a time in a group home, and later in an apartment in a converted house which also housed several of her friends. Then she made an agreement with my mother, and the two of them moved into a house together where

my daughter basically took care of my mother for her last years, as a full-time care-giver. My mother died, at 96, in December, 2004. By then Kit was also the single mother of my granddaughter, Jora. Jora turned six this year.

So what conclusions do I draw from all of this?

You can lead your kid to fandom, but you can't make him or her a fan.



The 94th issue of Chris Garcia's *Drink Tank* is the "Worldcon issue," timed for this year's Worldcon in Los Angeles. I'm pleased that Chris led off the issue with my piece on NyCon3 (1967), but what grabbed my attention was John Purcell's piece on MidAmeriCon (1976).

That was John's first Worldcon, and he has a lot to say about it. It was mostly a very different convention for me, but we intersected at this point:

"Heinlein was also at the center of one of fandom's most embarrassing moments, and it wasn't really his fault. During his guest of honor speech, which rambled and wound around almost incomprehensibly, some fans became disgruntled and bored, so they *booed* and *heckled* RAH from the safety of the darkened balcony. This surprised me no end. Even if his speech *was* long and rambling – Heinlein was soon to undergo surgery to remove a blockage to his brain, and later admitted to being 'mentally impaired at the time' of his speech (Resnick) – this kind of behavior seemed very disrespectful of one of science fiction's true literary giants. Even now, 30 years later, the memory makes me shake my head in wonder-

ment."

John, those "some fans" were Dan Steffan and myself. And while the balcony did not seem to us "darkened" and consequently offering "safety," and we were hardly "bored," we *were* "disgruntled" by the crap we heard issuing from Heinlein's mouth.

Keep in mind that this was not my first exposure to His Imperial Majesty, Robert Anson Heinlein – a man whose first juvenile had made me a SF fan for life, and whose works I collected. No, I had met him, very briefly, in 1960 at that year's Worldcon, where he put in a surprise appearance. And he was far more in evidence in 1961, where he was that year's Worldcon GoH. (He was also at the 1962 Worldcon, but less publicly.)

He turned me off. He acted like he was too good for the likes of us (and in fact that is how he really felt). Women like Karen Anderson literally sat at his feet while he reclined in a throne-like chair, and looked up at him with adoring expressions. Unlike the other giants of the field, like Sturgeon or del Rey, his manner was off-putting and made it difficult to converse with him, one person to another. (My experience of Heinlein in this period pales in comparison to Earl Kemp's. Earl, the chair of the 1962 Worldcon, felt Heinlein had jerked his chain intolerably.)

Then there was his politics. Heinlein had, in the '50s, moved significantly to the right of even such right-wing organizations as the John Birch Society. And part of his ultra-right-wing screed was the notion that nuclear testing was *good*, and that radioactive fallout was *beneficial* – it caused mutations and we all know how important they are for evolution. His 1961 GoH

speech was all about a trip he'd taken to the Soviet Union, and the evils of Communism. No doubt there were a few in attendance at that convention who ate it up, but the majority of us were disgusted. Factor in the slimy approach to sex unveiled in *Stranger*, and a lot of us were experiencing disillusionment with a man whose earlier works we had adored. We had discovered Heinlein's feet of clay.

I'd seen him earlier at MidAmeriCon. Always with his "handlers," who routinely cleared out elevators before boarding him, moving the fannish rabble out of The Great Man's way. He moved and looked like a zombie, and he wanted our blood. (Who would collect the blood of Worldcon attendees, cranked up on too little sleep and too many drugs?) The news that he'd experienced a blood-flow blockage to his brain, revealed soon after the convention, came as no real surprise.

By 1976 Heinlein had written and published several truly awful books and was clearly over the hill in terms of his writing career. He had alienated many of his biggest fans, myself among them.

And here we were, Dan and I, finding seats in the balcony at the last moment, settling in to listen to Heinlein's speech, and...it was a reread of his 1961 speech. Less coherent, rambling, but full of the same reboiled crap. If in 1961 it had possessed any relevance, that was long gone by 1976. It was when he started in on his "radiation is good for you" shtick that we lost our patience.

I think I did boo him. but what Dan did was to emit a loud long whistle which descended in pitch, like a bomb falling. It carried very well. When, a day later, we caught the whole affair rebroadcast on the hotel's closed-circuit TV, that

descending whistle could clearly be heard.

I don't know if Heinlein heard it. He didn't react to it.

I didn't care. I thought *Heinlein* was the "embarrassment." It was his fault. I think he took a verbal crap on that stage. I think he deserved worse than a few boos and a long loud whistle. He deserved the hook. Heinlein's speech was a display of bigotry and intolerance. It says something about fandom that no one threw a tomato at him, or a rotten egg.

John also mentioned the closed-circuit TV broadcast of MidAmeriCon programming. I did not avail myself of it to the extent that I might have, but I did see Patia von Sternberg's faux-strip act while I was at a room party, on the hotel TV. This was during an intermission of the masquerade and most of her moves I recognized as yoga moves. It was a relatively G-rated performance, and what had us all falling about with laughter was the *music* she had chosen to use with her act. She "stripped" to Joan Baez's recording of "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down."

Think about that. Baez's cover of the Band's song was pretty wimpy to begin with, but it was totally incongruous for a strip act. It was surreal.

I said as much in a fanzine after the convention. Patia read it, and invited me to see her *real* act, at a D.C. strip club. Dan and I took her up on it and got to see her totally nude and doing things which might have made even Heinlein blush - such as smoking a cigarette vaginally - while the other (male) patrons seated around us openly masturbated. Amazingly, she was still using Baez's "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down" as one of

her musical accompaniments.



As I write this it is Friday, the first or second day of this year's Worldcon. And I am roughly 3,000 miles away.

At one time a situation like this would have caused me distress. I would have been missing all my friends at the Worldcon. I would have felt like I was the only kid on the block not at the big party down the street.

I went to my first Worldcon in 1955. It was in Cleveland, and I drove out to Cleveland with my buddy John Magnus, in his car. This was not only my first Worldcon, it was my first convention of any sort. But I'd been a fan for four years and I'd been putting out a fanzine for two, and I was ready to meet my fellow fans. I missed the first two days of my senior year in high school, due to that convention.

The first fan I met there was, of course, Forry Ackerman.

At John's urging we'd arrived in Cleveland late Wednesday. When we got up Thursday and went down to the hotel's lobby, there was Forry, sitting quietly, waiting for a fellow fan to turn up. He was very pleasant and got the con off to a good start. And it only got better. John was well-connected with midwestern fandom, having been to several Midwestcons, including the one which more or less immediately followed the gathering at which he'd helped to found "7th Fandom." We ended up sharing a suite with Harlan Ellison, Fred Prophet, George Young and Roger Sims.

I met and made many new friends at that convention, and this set a precedent for me. At each of the Worldcons which followed, for the

next decade or more, I met and made new friends. And, with a couple of notable exceptions, I attended every Worldcon, every year, from then on.

The exceptions? The first was the 1957 London Worldcon. One year out of high school, I had no way to afford a transatlantic trip. And the second was the Worldcon in Germany. That was in 1970, and my daughter was born on August 28th, 1970. No way. And in 1971, I missed the Boston Worldcon because of the maliciousness of a friend's wife, who cost me the money I'd intended to use for that convention. (Thank ghod my friend divorced her.)

I didn't miss another Worldcon until 1975, when it was in Australia. That was beyond my means. But I made it to MidAmeriCon in 1976, just to boo Robert Heinlein. But by now Worldcons weren't what they'd once been. No longer "family reunions," they had become three-ring circuses. Nonetheless, I met Karl Wagner at Suncon (1977) and bonded with him there.

But I missed the 1981 Denver Worldcon. I'd intended to go, but the fools running it sat on my check for membership for a full year, and then got upset when they finally deposited it and it bounced – because I'd closed that account (in New York City) a half year earlier. They wanted a new check, for a much larger amount (the fee had increased as the time shortened), and were insulting about it. I told them to fuck off. Anyone that incompetent did not deserve my patronage.

Nonetheless, I made the next six Worldcons – including the 1985 Worldcon in Australia because I was FGoH and my way was paid, and the 1987 Worldcon in Brighton, to which I took my daughter and my stepdaughter. But I missed

New Orleans in 1988 and, newly remarried with a new son, I couldn't afford the next several. From then on, my attendance at Worldcons has been spotty. I made MagiCon in 1992, and Intersection in 1995, and the Baltimore Worldcon in 1998 (to which I commuted each day), and Philadelphia in 2001 (where Joel Nydahl and I finally met, almost 50 years after our first contact as fans). But that one, five years ago, was my last Worldcon. Maybe my last Worldcon ever.

I enjoyed it, but I regretted going to it as soon as I got home. I really couldn't afford it, and this fact was crushingly obvious to me after the fact, as I struggled for the next several months with bills. A Worldcon consumes about one week of time, now (starting around Wednesday and ending the following Tuesday), at increasingly extortionate hotel room rates, plus meals and other expenses, plus travel fares. The hotel bill alone can approach or exceed \$1,000. An out of town Worldcon can cost around \$2,000, total – more if it's overseas.

Contrast that to my 1962 Worldcon (in Chicago). I rented a trailer and towed my first wife's belongings to Chicago, anticipating that her reimbursement of my expenses would pay for my con hotel bill. But, surprise! She had no money to reimburse me with. I had about \$20 to last me throughout the con and the return trip. I ate one (cheap) meal a day, and found three friends to share my room, and I managed to survive on that \$20.

Or, how about 1964? After I'd bought a Greyhound ticket to Cleveland, I had about \$25 left. But in Cleveland I met up with a pregnant Marion Zimmer Bradley, her 13 year old son,

and her new husband, Walter Breen (we met at a Cleveland coin convention, where Walter was king of the roost), and I drove them out to Berkeley, California in Marion's Mercury. Marion paid for my food and lodging on the trip, and I stayed at her house in Berkeley, taking her car or the bus daily to the convention in Oakland. Somehow, after that convention and after I'd hooked up romantically with Ardis Waters, I managed to *buy* a car for my return trip (a 1961 Chevy Greenbrier van) from a local fan named Gene Bergman, for \$1,000. I borrowed \$500 for the down payment from Harlan Ellison and Marion, and repaid them (and the remaining \$500 to Gene) by selling my comics collection when I got back to Brooklyn.

I look back upon those days now with amazement. *What was I thinking?* How could I have set out with only a few bucks in my pocket (and no credit cards – people like me didn't have credit cards in those days) and no idea where my next dollar would come from? How could I go out to California with no idea how I'd get back? But I did, and I don't think I even worried about it. I just went with the flow. In those days I'd go to the Worldcon come hell or high water.

Now? I'm writing this while some of you are hanging out at the Worldcon in L.A., and, you know, it doesn't even feel like I'm missing anything. Part of that has to do with the fact that Labor Day is still more than a week away. I might feel a residual twinge on Labor Day weekend. But it's hard to feel anything like that as I sit here in the offices of Beta Court Reporting, writing a column for *Pixel* because there's no work to do right now.

Whither fandom, indeed. •

Much Nothings About Ado

Mind Your Own Business

All my life I have been told that I do not think like other people. I'm not quite sure what they meant by this and when I was young I felt there was something wrong with me because of it. However, when I first got into science fiction fandom I met a local fan by the name of Jay Crackel. Jay was brilliant, acerbic, and gay when it was not at all even remotely politically correct to be so. He was also eccentric, and once he told me that I was a genuine eccentric. When he said that, I decided that not thinking like other people wasn't such a bad idea after all. However, I still wonder *why* and *how* my thinking is so different.

I guess one thing is that I mostly do not think in terms of stereotypes. When I was growing up it never occurred to me that *Amos and Andy* meant all African-Americans were lazy or stupid or however they were portraying them on the

show. It was just a show with certain individuals, not a group as a whole; any more than *Our Miss Brooks* was typical of school teachers or such. Perhaps the only peoples I thought of with any disparagement were the Japanese and the Germans, and that was the citizens of those countries with which we were at war and not any who lived here or were allies of the U.S. People are individuals and I have difficulty thinking of them as a group.

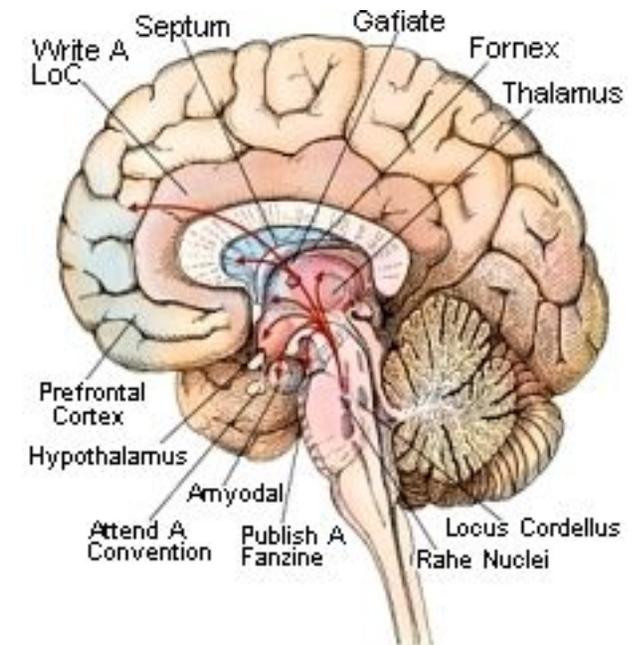
Another way I seem to be different from most others is my ability to "step aside" and look at things from a dispassionate viewpoint. Thus I drove people crazy because I refused to render an opinion during the O.J. trial until I had heard all the evidence; and conversely, I refuse to agree or disagree with the verdicts on other trials unless I have seen the complete thing. In other words, I have trouble "going along with the crowd."

I also seem to have a weird mathematical mind which works by analogies. First I have to understand the process essentially, and then I can go from beginning to end without doing

the intermediate steps. I once took a multiple choice two hour final exam that was mainly statistics, worked out none of the problems and made the high grade in a class of eighty-odd students. This seems to work with gaming as well. If I understand the strategy, I win.

The next point I have to make concerns how minds in general work. Other people may have said this as well, but if this is so I haven't personally come across it so this is my own idea.

To me there are three types of minds. The first I like to refer to as the DaVinci mind. This type of mind is interested in many different things, scatters all over the place as the whim strikes. At the opposite end of the pole is the Einstein mind.



Lee Lavell

This mind settles on one subject and delves into it as deeply as it can. In between is the third type of mind which is what most people have: neither scattered nor obsessive. This is not to say that all Einstein- or DaVinci-minded people are as brilliant as their namesake's minds, but they do have that tendency to scatter or obsess. My mind is of the DaVinci type. I have a lot of different interests and reading or hearing about something can send me off in a whole new direction. Specializing in one thing is unthinkable to me. If it's interesting to me I want to know more about it, but being stuck on it forever is anathema. Perhaps that is why I like science fiction, since it hits on so many different topics.

Now I am going to dip into something I know very little about, but that has never stopped me before, so why should it now. That subject is *autism*. I bring it up because I feel that it is the extreme end of both the DaVinci and Einstein minds. It would help explain both the savants and those autistic ones who never seem to be able to shut out all input. In fact, I think I read or heard something about both Einstein and DaVinci possibly being autistic. The big question that looms, then, is whether a person can be a genius *without* being autistic, or is that a requirement, a necessity for it. And, if so, is autism a bad thing, an aberration? Or, is it a natural state and generally should be left alone and the person be allowed to develop along those lines? Of course, the extreme ends are debilitating, but extremes usually are. Perhaps, instead of trying to "treat" the mildly autistic person, we should instead be trying to develop their minds to take advantage of the way that they think. Just because they do not fall into the middle of the road does not make them wrong,

just different.

I suspect I may be one of those undiagnosed very mildly autistic types, which could be the reason I "don't think like other people." I do have a few other characteristics that seem to fit into some form of autism although not Asperger Syndrome, which appears, from what little I have read about it, to fit the Einstein type of mind. One of these is a tendency to closely associate names with colors for no particular reason. Perhaps there is a form of autism at the DaVinci end of the spectrum that I simply am not aware of.

Whatever, I don't think like other people and take it or leave it, that's me.



I generally am very skeptical about any and all forms of ESP and while I enjoy watching such television shows as *Medium* I look with a jaundiced eye upon such things as being any form of reality.

So saying, I can personally authenticate one case of precognition and that bothers me. This event occurred quite a few years ago, not too long after Jim and I were married. We were living at the time in a house that was located only five blocks north of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway grounds; so close, in fact, that we could hear the cars practicing if we had our windows open. We did not have tickets to the race then, although we went regularly later, but we did follow the race as it was broadcast on the radio (it was not televised at the time).

Early in the morning before the race Jim awoke me, yelling. He had just had a terrible nightmare, he told me. He dreamed he was

sitting in the stands of the Speedway. The sun was overhead, meaning it was noon yet there was no race going on although it should have started an hour before. The crowd was very quiet, and he slowly became aware that a bad crash had occurred, although the race had never been red flagged up to that time. As he is sitting there an announcement is made over the public address system that the Speedway regrets to announce that Eddie Sachs was killed in the accident. It was at that point that he woke up.

Later on we tune into the radio coverage of the race. On the first lap there is a terrible crash involving multiple cars. The race is red flagged and the cars not caught in the crash start coming into the pits, and as they do so Sid Collins, the announcer, is identifying them. We listen and where is Eddie Sachs? Where is Eddie Sachs! Finally, at noon, came the announcement that the Speedway regretted to announce that Eddie Sachs was killed in the crash. •



Sachs/MacDonald crash of 1964

Dream Lover

His voice came screaming out from behind the cover of trees. "Make things simpler, Locke. We're going to get you."

"The hell you are." I set the heat-beam on scan and sprayed the line of trees in the direction of his voice. Fronds and leaves burst into fire like strips of magnesium. I singed bark on a dozen alien trees, and the smoke rose lazily in the air.

"There are twenty of us, Locke," said the voice. "If we have to hunt you down and shoot you like a dog, we'll do it. Come out peacefully and maybe you'll live a little longer."

There was a humming sound in the air, and part of the rock that I was crouched behind suddenly turned into sand. It showered all over me. I had to move, and fast, but they had me trapped in these rocks. I sat there mentally beating the hell out of brain, but I was out of ideas. And about out of life. They couldn't afford to let me live, not after I had discovered their horrible plot against the universe. If I gave myself up it might save a couple of their lives, but they knew better than that. It looked like I was breathing my last cubic foot of air.

There was a noise behind me. I threw myself flat to the ground and gripped my gun-wrist with my left hand.

It was a kantgaroo, its football-shaped face smiling down at me. The kantgaroo was named after Terra's kangaroo because of certain similarities, notably the large pouch in which it carries its young. But the kantgaroo is much bigger than its Terran cousin, and so is the pouch. This one was without its young, so I pulled open the pouch and climbed in.

"Follow that taxi," I said. But the animal just smiled down at me. "I'll give you an extra five if you'll get me to the spaceport on times," I said. The kantgaroo didn't move. "This pouch doesn't hide all of me, and if you don't move out of here they'll kill us both." The kantgaroo moved.

We hopped towards the woods in a zig-zag course at sixty miles an hour, my heat beam spraying a hot death to either side of us. Pieces of the forest floor shot up all around us, but the kantgaroo's course was too erratic to make us a good target.

"Faster! Faster!" I shouted.

"I'm all through. You can have the bathroom now."

"Eh?"

"I said you're next. It's another workday. Hop to it."

I crawled out of bed. I shook the sleep out of my head, and the dream went with it.

Over morning coffee and cigarettes, I looked at my wife and asked a trivial question. "Why did you say 'Hop to it'?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Why do you answer a question with a question?"

"Is there anything wrong with that?"

I bit the filter off my cigarette. "I've never heard you use the phrase 'hop to it' before, but it fits in with my dream."

"I don't want to hear about it."

There's a reason she didn't want to hear about it. For the first five thousand years of our married life, my wife had a pet peeve. I had two of them. Phoebe's pet peeve was that I could never remember my dreams, and sometimes I couldn't even remember that I had dreamed at all. This bothered her, because she always remembers her dreams.

Every morning she would tell me what she had dreamed about, and would berate me for not remembering my dreams. Those were *my* two pet peeves.

Perhaps she thought I wasn't telling the truth. And that I was holding something back from her. Maybe my dreams would have been banned in Tijuana, or something.

"You mean you can't remember *anything* you dream about?"

"Nothing."

"Well, let me tell you about *my* dreams. I dreamed I was back home at Mom & Dad's place and I was riding the horse through the fields and..."

I bit the filters off a lot of cigarettes in those years. I'm a kindly person, and I hated to tell Phoebe that listening to someone tell about their dreams is not one of my favorite forms of recreation. Especially over morning coffee and cigarettes. So, I never hold her that. I was more subtle.

"Honey, did you ever dream that I came out one morning for coffee and cigarettes and then beat you senseless because you insisted upon telling me about your dreams?"

Dave Locke

"No, I never dreamt that," she said. But last night I dreamed that we were living back in Ballston Spa again and etc., etc., etc., etc."

"Yargh..."

"And what did you dream?"

"You know that I don't remember my dreams. Hell, I don't even remember who *I* am when I get up in the morning. Just about the time I figure out who I am, the dream dissolves from my memory. I have the feeling that one of these days I'll remember my dreams upon awakening, and the memory of who I am will be lost to me forever."

"You live in a dream-world anyway. I don't know why you can't remember your dreams."

"What do you mean?"

"Your elbow is in your coffee cup."

And then it happened. The morning came when I remembered my dreams. Oh yes, occasionally I'll remember a dream, but that hadn't happened in the first few years of marriage until that one particular morning. That one particular morning was quite unusual in other respects, and that's the reason I remembered my dream.

When I wake up in the morning I fell like a balloon filled with water, just about to hit the pavement after being dropped from a third-story window. That's an awful feeling, man. Mornings are very bad for me until I make that agonizing walk into the bathroom. I've very slow and fuzzy and lethargic in the morning, and not filled with vinegar. But boy, that other stuff... That morning was unusual. My bladder pushed the panic button at 3:00 a.m. It said, "Sorry, I can't wait until the alarm clock rings. Go..."

At three o'clock in the morning I'm in even worse shape than at seven o'clock. Even if I haven't gone to sleep yet. My mind was so dulled that the waking-up process was almost at a standstill. For this reason, my dream didn't dissolve. It stayed, floating around in my mind. I latched onto it (not with my hands - they were latched onto something

else). I turned the dream over and inspected it. I studied it. I memorized it. I went back to the bedroom, grabbed hold of my wife, and shook her severely.

"Wake up."

"Wazza...wazzawant. Cutitout. Damn sex maniac."

"There's something I have to tell you." I told her my dream. At 3:05 in the morning. I was flying in an airplane, and it had a glass floor and you could look through it, but you could see fish and it wasn't really an airplane, it was a boat, and it was floating on the San Diego Freeway and it had five on the floor and four horses hitched up front and foot-pedals in the back to provide auxiliary power, and when I took the next off-ramp the horses had skis and we were going down a big snowy slope, only I wasn't in a car it was really a large Christmas tree on roller skates and I was the ornament clinging on top, but when we got to the bottom of the slope the bartender took my order, so I sat back in the gondola sipping Los Angeles branch water just as the man with the checkered flag signaled to me that it was time for a pit stop, and ...

"You're crazy," my wife said, drawing the covers over her shoulders.

"I thought you would want to hear my dream. It's the first one I've remembered since we got married." I looked hurt.

"You're crazy. Get away from me. It's three o'clock in the morning, I don't want to hear any more of your dream."

"You've been after me for years to remember my dreams."

"Never again. I'll never ask you again."

"But tell me yours." I looked hurt.

"Never again. You're crazy."

"Now that we're awake..."

"I have a headache. It's from your dream."

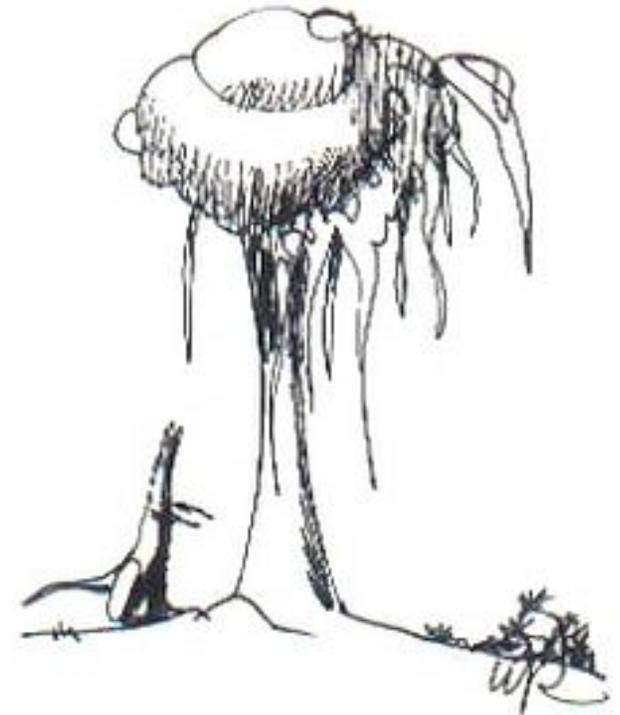
"You might as well hear the rest of it."

"You're crazy. They're going to come and get you."

We went back to sleep. His voice came screaming out from behind the cover of trees.

"Make things simpler, Locke. We're going to get you."

"Like hell you are," I said. •



William Rotsler

Found In Collection

Bug found at Computer History Museum

There's a long tradition of the British at the Computer History Museum. While there are probably more Japanese computer scientists per capita that visit the museum, it seems that the Brits are more likely to invest time and effort in us. We've made several of them Fellows of the Museum, including Maurice Wilkes (once got in a fight with Arthur C. Clarke over an umbrella, I'm told), Tom Kilburn (supposedly enjoyed Charlie Stross works quite a bit at the end of his life) and Tim Berners-Lee (invented the World Wide Web and attended at least one WorldCon). That's a good group of folks (all with minimal SF ties, but still...). We've had lectures from guys like Tony Sales, who rebuilt the Colossus code-breaking machine at Bletchley Park, and Tommy Flowers,

who built the original Colossus at Bletchley Park. Our new Guest Curator is a South African who's been working at the Science Museum of London for more than fifteen years. The ties are deep, so it shouldn't be surprising that we got a visit from the current TAFF delegate, Bridget Bug Bradshaw.

Until I'd received her TAFF race zine, I'd never really heard of Bug at all. My knowledge of British fandom isn't as huge as it should be for a guy who is running for TAFF. I know the *Banana Wings* people, Peter Sullivan (whose idea this whole TAFF run of mine was), Pete Weston (the last British fan to tour the museum) and Cheryl Morgan...who might actually be an American by fannish standards. I've interacted with a few others, but not as many as I should have. She came down to our BASFA meeting, where the silliness included nominating her Ambassador to TAFFlasia, the secret nation that stretches from New York to London. It was a good time and she got to see us at our weirdest. We always bring out the good crazy when company comes over. Bug

Chris Garcia

asked if she could visit the museum the next day, and of course, I said yes...and not just because it might get me another vote from the far side of the Atlantic come TAFF voting time (though I won't say that didn't cross my mind!).

So, Tuesday morning rolls around. I'm snug in my desk, visions of websites dancing across my screen, when the phone rings and Bug has arrived. I head down and let her in.

"Good to see you, Chris."

"And you as well." A good response, likelihood of getting her vote: 73%.

We started to walk around the Visible Storage area. The first thing you're greeted with is a wall of old PCs. There's everything from the old IBM PC (the machine that got me on CNN and World News Tonight just a few days before) to the old Apple 1. Most visitors will look at the wall and stare dumbly at it, trying to figure out which ones they used.

"What was your first computer?" I asked, fully ready to point it out.

"The first one I actually had was an Amstrad PCW." She answered.

Damn, we ain't got one of those blasted British machines out here.

I walk her around, showing her ENIAC, the Enigma Machine, the bullet holes in the WISC computer, all the highlights. We head back to the front and she sees a shelving unit she had miss-



Bridget "Bug" Bradshaw

ed on the first pass.

"Oh my God." She says in that particular British way that makes everything seem like an Olivier death scene.

"See something you recognize?" I say.

"Those are HP calculators." Bug says.

"Yeah, in the 1990s, HP gave us one of every model they'd ever made."

She looked at me with a strange form of amazement.

"My husband Simon collects electronic calculators. He's only got about eight, but he loves them." she says, pulling out her camera. She snaps a half-dozen photos and a short video of the wall.

We walk around more and talk a little TAFF. I tell her who I ~~snookered~~ convinced to nominate me. She seemed a little confused.

"I'm not as in touch as I used to be, but which of those people are your English nominators?"

I explained that Peter Sullivan is the King of UK eZine letterhacks and that John Neilsen Hall is a former Rat fan and current editor of *Motorway Dreamer*. We talked about her plans to do a paper TAFF report, and a plain text TAFF report (for Ed Meskys) and a CD TAFF report with full colour photos for the Ploktans while we were looking at the large supercomputers.

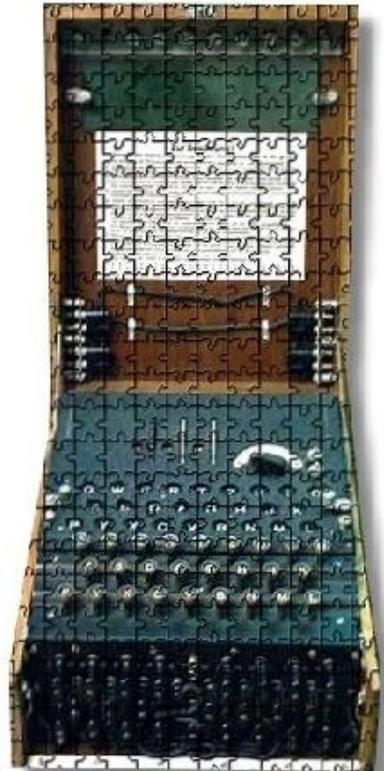
"The one pledge I've made is that I'll have my trip report complete in 30 days after my arrival home."

If you've ever looked at a house cat that's trying to make a jump it can never manage, that's the kind of look she gave me. We continued on our tour and I took her into the dark places... Dense Storage. That's where we keep the little things and the big things that aren't ready for the prime time that is Visible Storage. We talked

about various fannish and computer-related things, wondered and chatted and I realised that this is exactly why I want to be a TAFF delegate: to meet people with weird accents and get to know them as more than those strange people with weird accents.

The tour finished up and she walked her way down to Google. I went back upstairs and started writing the article you're now reading. It took me almost three hours to come up with a title that included computer and Bug.

I really am stupid. •



Some Spam is Better than Others

Now you don't need a huge car or expensive watch to prove that you are not at all size-challenged. You will have to learn to handle your thicker longer tool in just several weeks.

Increase your male value in bed and beyond it - add a few more inches and be happy! You'll be laughing when anyone tries to prove size does not matter. You know best!

Just imagine how wonderful your life would become with a bigger size and increased duration.

You don't need to spend huge money on luxury items - it all will be worthless without decent physical equipment.

Women say size does not matter only not to upset you. In fact, it matters a lot! Get ready to hear girls spreading gossip behind your back about your new size.

Fools build houses, and wise men live in them. One years seeding means seven years weeding. Tongue nah gat teeth but he ah bite fuh true.

I'm too busy learning to handle my longer thicker tool to worry about that.

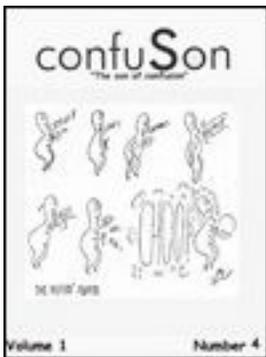
The Allinace Enterrpise Corporaiton announced today a breakthrough in developing an Areal Landimne Sysetm aimed at locating, detecting and mapping deadly landmines.

Now that the easy stuff is out of the way, they're going to tackle using a spell-checker.

Being Frank

Confuson 4 (Shelby Vick)

There's a good summary of a mailing list discussion on sensawonder in science fiction, and a lively letter column. But the keynote article in this issue is an article by Arnie Katz on the subject of Amateur Press Associations. He talks about the history of paper APAs, and considers digital APAs as the future. It looks as if SNAPS, the local Las Vegas digital APA, may be expanding into a more general na-



tional/international APA, similar to e-APA. An interesting piece.

The original version of this issue had several layout flubs, most notably that a whole page of Arnie's article was missing, and some of the text was quite blurry. However, Shelby has now issued a revised version, which is a great improvement. With computers and electronic distribution, this is much easier in days of yore, of course. Although Shelby would no doubt want to point out that, if it weren't for computers, he wouldn't be having all of these layout problems in the first place...

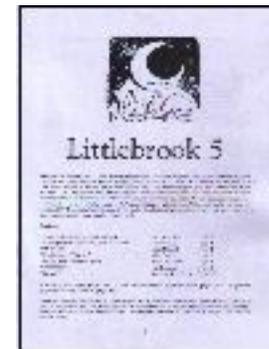
Littlebrook 5 (Jerry Kaufman & Suzle Tompkins)

Jerry leads off with a con report of last year's Worldcon in Glasgow. It appears that the story of the "Klingon in the kilt" is rapidly reaching urban legend status, in that everybody's talking about it, but haven't actually seen it for

themselves.

There are good "slice of life" articles by Luke McGuff, John Berry and Bruce Townley - this sort of personal writing is the sort of thing that fanwriting is excellent at. There's a long letter-column, and then Suzle finishes off with some initial observations on her TAFF trip, ahead of a full trip report Real Soon Now.

Jerry and Suzle have been publishing together since at least 1974, and the whole zine exudes the sort of gentle competence and efficiency you'd expect from a 30-plus years' publishing record.

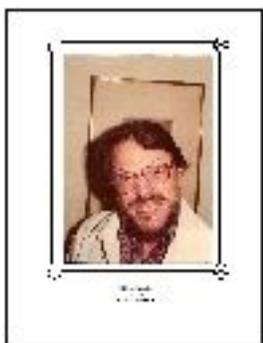


No Award 16 (Marty Cantor)

No Award is, of course, notoriously the only fanzine to feature on the Hugo Awards ballot every year. But that's mainly because no-one has ever bothered to start a fanzine called *Please Detach Along The Dotted Line and Return the Bottom Portion*. Rather less well-known, but probably more important when they come to write the definitive history of electronic fandom (All Our Electrons, anybody?) is that it was the first fanzine to be featured on Bill Burns' efanazines.com website.

This issue, the first in almost two years, is mainly a selection of reprints from some of the fannish mailing lists. Marty puts up a reasonably convincing case in the editorial for this - not ev-

Peter Sullivan



everyone is on every mailing list, or even on the Internet at all – and certainly all the material was new to me. There’s a pair of short humorous pieces kicking off the issue. D. Gary Grady analyses the history of the universe in terms of fan activity, whilst Curt Phillips talks about an

ish he never quite got around to pubbing. A long piece by rich brown about media fandom, basically agreeing (but at length) with a Ted White remark that SF in film, TV, comics and so on tend to get judged to much lower standards than written SF. Rich knew whereof he spoke, being someone equally at home in “traditional” fanzine fandom and “media” Buffy fandom. Peter Weston complains about the youth of today. I appreciate that hobby legend would have it that this could be a description of almost any Peter Weston piece, but I think it’s possibly justified in this case. Rich Coad suggests a cross-over sport between those two staples of Americana, baseball and stock-car racing. There’s an excellent Gray Charnock piece spoofing the kind of earnest, middle-class Christmas letters that seem to have migrated from America to Britain these days, whilst John DeChancie provides some suggestions on how to write. The lettercol has a wide range of participants, mostly responding to the editorial the previous issue about problem tenants.

It’s difficult to explain why I like this issue so much. There’s nothing you can point to and say that it’s wholly exceptional. But the whole thing

seems to hang together well, with a nice mix of material. And I don’t care what anyone else says – I like the layout. After all, we can’t all be David Burton.

Number One 9 (Mike McInerney)

This is an interesting insight into FAPA, still the largest and most prestigious of the paper-based APAs (Amateur Press Associations). Although it’s not uncommon for people to make the fanzines they do for FAPA also available on the web, these don’t always tend to give the full flavour of the APA, being more genzines or perzines that – almost incidentally – happen to be distributed via FAPA, rather than specifically written for FAPA.



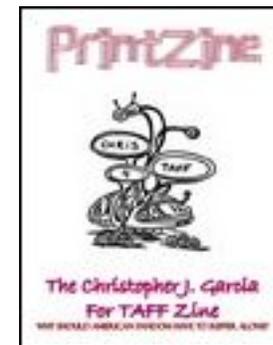
Number One, by contrast, is pretty much entirely mailing comments on other

FAPA zines, at least this time. I must admit that, as a minor APA-hack myself (in e-APA), for me mailing comments make an APA zine in the same way that clothes maketh man, or the choccy bits make choc chip mint ice cream. Mike has a clear style in his mailing comments, making them understandable both for non-FAPA members and for FAPAans who can’t remember back to the last distribution. There’s also a very good and personal piece about rich brown, whom Mike both roomed with and fanned with from the 1960s onwards.

It’s worth noting that, for pretty much the first (?) time in its long history, FAPA not only has no waiting list, but spare places. Anyone interested in joining should contact Robert Lichtman for details of minimum activity requirements and postage dues.

PrintZine 1 (Chris Garcia)

Just in case you haven’t noticed, I guess I’d better start by noting that Chris Garcia, resident columnist and letterhack around these parts, is standing for the 2007 East-to-West TAFF race. He’s deliberately conducting a rather more “activist” TAFF campaign than in previous years, both to raise his profile among potential voters on both sides of the Atlantic, but also to raise funds for TAFF in the process. This is actually the second issue of his TAFF zine, since there was also a number 00 (with a Chris Garcia “glossary”). But issue one features a mix of reprint articles (such as a fictional piece by Chris about a film that Quentin Tarantino may or may not actually get around to actually making in 2009) and new material (e.g. Chris’ plans for TAFF and the help he’s getting on TAFF from his work colleagues). There’s also various endorsements (some of them even non-ironic) from hobby celebrities and Chris’ friends.



The title of the fanzine is only semi-ironic, in that (unlike most of Chris’ fanzines) it does actually exist in paper form, as

well as being available as a downloadable PDF.

For more on Chris' TAFF campaign, see:
<http://www.chrisfortaff.org/>

Science Fiction/San Francisco 29 (Jean Martin et al)

With San Francisco being "just down the road" from this year's Worldcon at Los Angeles (memo to self: remember, in Britain 100 miles is a long way, in the USA 100 years is a long time), it's unsurprising that this issue of *SF/SF* features several reports from LACon IV. Chris Garcia has a long piece, focusing on the panels he was on by day and the parties he was at by night. Andy Trembley's vision of the convention was dominated by him being chair of the hoax Hollister in



2008 Worldcon bid - he notes with justified pride both that Hollister got 79 votes on the first ballot (a record for a hoax bid) and that nearly all of these votes transferred to

other bids on the second count, showing that "we taught our supporters to vote well," making maximum use of the preferential voting system. Closer to home, there's a cosplay event in the Golden Gate Park that gets a write-up, complete with extensive colour photos. (The ability to use colour photos at will is a good example of *SF/SF* making the most of the efanzines medium - you

couldn't be anything like as lavish with colour photos in a print fanzine.) I should also mention the Bay Area Fannish Calendar, which David Moyce co-ordinates each issue - keeping on top of all those event listings must be quite a job.

Vegas Fandom Weekly 82 (Arnie Katz)

The death of rich brown was the defining event of fanzine fandom over the summer. There have been *several* other tributes to rich across fandom, with more expected to follow, but this particular publication seems to be the focal point of fandom's collective memorial to him. The roster reads like a roll-call of fanzine fandom's big names from the past thirty or forty years. Ghu knows what I'm doing in there, then.

There's no attempt to whitewash some of rich's more controversial activities in fandom, with words like "polemical" and "insurgent" scattered throughout. But the overall effect is to give a well-rounded portrait of a man who believed that, given that fandom was worth doing at all, it should be done properly and to the best of one's ability.

The breadth of rich's fannish activities supports my own view of "big tent" fandom. For although rich was a fanzine fan par excellence,



he was also an active Buffy fan as well. Fandom these days is too often not just divided but divisive. Tom Lehrer could equally have said, "Oh the fanzine fans hate media fans, the media fans hate the cosplay fans, the cosplay fan hate the Trekkies, and everyone hates the furies." But rich was a National Brotherhood Week all by himself in cutting over different fandoms. •

Confuson 4 (Shelby Vick)
PDF, quarterly-ish, 8½x11", 18 pages
<http://www.efanzines.com/Confuson/>

Littlebrook 5 (Jerry Kaufman & Suzle Tompkins)
PDF or paper, irregular, 8½x11", ?? pages
<http://www.efanzines.com/Littlebrook/>

No Award 16 (Marty Cantor)
PDF or paper, irregular, 8½x11", 20 pages
<http://www.efanzines.com/NoAward/>

Number One 9 (Mike McInerney)
PDF or paper, irregular, 8½x11", 11 pages
<http://www.efanzines.com/NumberOne/>

PrintZine 1 (Chris Garcia)
PDF or paper, frequent, 8½x11", 9 pages
<http://www.efanzines.com/PrintZine>

Science Fiction/San Francisco 29
(Jean Martin et al)
PDF, twice monthly, 11x8½", 41 pages
<http://www.efanzines.com/SFSF/>

Vegas Fandom Weekly 82 (Arnie Katz)
PDF, weekly, 8½x11", 22 pages.
<http://www.efanzines.com/VFW/>

Pixelated

Ted White

Pixel has evolved into a damned decent fanzine in a short period of time (being monthly helps). I have to agree with whoever said it's a "classic" fanzine, and #5 is a particularly solid issue, despite the absence of two important features, your editorial and Peter Sullivan's fmz reviews. (What happened? Did you both miss the deadline?) I think their absence is made up for in part by the meaty lettercol.

Thanks for the kind comments, Ted. I think the zine really started to jell after the name change to Pixel, although it was starting to take shape the last couple of issues of Catchpenny Gazette.

Peter wasn't able to make the deadline, even with a slight extension. He's promised to get his column in early for this issue. I don't write something for every issue; if there's something I want to write about, I do, otherwise not.

A nit in reference to my column. Whenever I

began a sentence or paragraph with rich brown's name, I capitalized it because rich always gave people dispensation to do that; he knew that *any* word which begins a sentence is capitalized. You lower-cased his name in those circumstances.

As a couple of people could testify, I can be a little obsessive about copy-editing, and that was a "problem" I wrestled with for a while. I finally decided, despite my word processor (which I had to bludgeon into submission to let me use lower case) and every style guide and grammar I consulted saying, as you did, that sentences always begin with a cap, that it just didn't "feel" right. I hadn't known about rich's dispensation, unfortunately...

I thought Eric's column this time was his best yet. Interesting to read that he panned a well-known fanzine back in the '70s, in *Title*. One wonders, of course, which one it was. *Granfalloon*, maybe?

And I was mildly fantisted to see that Chris Garcia works with Walter Coslet's son, Tim. I remember Walter from my first five years in fandom - which more or less overlapped Walter's last years in fandom. Coslet was an

apan, and was in both FAPA and SAPS. His apazines were not very interesting; Walter was something of a dull fellow, a sort of prototype for Norm Metcalf. He was into collecting and indexing, and did not distinguish himself as a writer.

Chris says that my job with the Collecting Channel "sounds like it was a good gig." Indeed, it was. I put in full working days, but in my own house and on my own schedule. That is, I made my deadlines (usually with room to spare), but with no one standing over me, cracking a whip. I could listen to music, break to read and answer email, eat when I liked, go out on errands, and pretty much live my day as I wished. That counts for a lot. And the pay was the best I've ever received.

This is exactly the situation I had when I worked for Ziff-Davis. Being able to work when I wanted (and in my case, since I'm an early riser, that often meant 4am, something I couldn't do working in an office) I found that I was much more productive. So much so that I could turn out a full day's work in well under 8 hours.

And having been able for ten years to "live my day as I wished" it's been incredibly difficult to return to having to punch a clock and arranging my day according to someone else's dictates.

But what started out with me working with

Letters

Illustrations by
Manfred Klein

Arnie and a small bunch of fellow content-providers (most of them fans and old friends of mine, like Steve Stiles, Bill Kunkel and Bhub Stewart) mutated in time as Management Types interposed themselves. One was a guy named Ed Dillie (I may have misspelled his last name), who was an absolute fool, and who at one point began to dictate the topics I could (must) write about. One of them (hand-chimes) turned out to be almost completely uncollectible. Later he decided I was overpaid (in addition to writing the Music channel, I managed/edited three others – Comics, Movies, and Radio-TV) and for the last month of my employment my pay was cut 25%.

The problem with the Collecting Channel was that it was a scam. It was a dot.com mirage, built on buzz-words like “partnering” and “synergy.” It raised a lot of initial investment money, but had virtually no cash-flow – except outwards. After a year and a quarter, it had used up all its money. On March 1st, 2000, thirty of us were laid off. By summer, the company was dead and the name and website were sold. For a time our material remained archived on the website, but I think it’s all gone now. I’ve archived around 60 of my music articles on my Dr. Progresso website: holeintheweb.com/drp/bhd/Biosecinthro.htm.

John Purcell seems almost incredulous that I’m really writing about fandom and fanzines in my column, but what the hey – somebody’s got to do it! John also remarks on “Fred Phillips coining the term ‘ish’.” Maybe John was shorthanding there, but I never said Fred coined “ish.” That’s a term which long predated Fred, and was around when I discovered fandom. (I think as fanspeak it goes back to the ‘40s and Sarge Saturn in the lettercols of *Startling* and



Thrilling Wonder Stories.) No, what Fred coined was the *phrase*, “pub my/your ish.”

Sandy Black wonders, “Is Ted going to tell us” which fanzine it was I didn’t keep, adding, “then again, maybe we’re better off not knowing.” Exactly. I’m on much better terms with that fanzine’s editor today, and I see no reason to rake up old coals. Suffice to say, I tore the fanzine in two and mailed it back to its editor. I’m kinda sorry I did that, now. It was, other than the portions devoted to me, a pretty good issue. But I’ve rarely been as angry as I was when I read the material published therein about me, and I think I acted with commendable restraint, considering. •

Lee Lavell

Wow, David. *Pixel* just keeps getting better and prettier. I loved the way you followed the color theme of the cover throughout the issue.

Thanks, Lee. I wondered if anyone would notice that...

“Whither Fandom”: It’s nice to see all those memorials to rich brown. Too bad he couldn’t see them himself. Perhaps, somewhere up

there he’s reading them.

“Notes From Byzantium”: Ich! I’m an arachnophobe. Before we were married Jim and I lived on opposite sides of Indianapolis. I had an apartment on the east side that had had an infestation of crickets. Chirp, chirp, chirp all night long! Then suddenly they just disappeared. Then, one night I came home and found this gigantic spider (a body at least the size of a quarter) in my bathtub. Biggest thing I had ever seen! I went “Yeeeeep!” There was no way I was going to get close enough to that thing to remove it, so I called Jim who had to come all the way back across town to flush it down the toilet. I can only guess that it had gotten so big by eating all the crickets that had so suddenly vanished. I know that supposedly “spiders are our friends”, but that monster did not look at all friendly to me.

“A Funny Thing...”: Pets. Once, way back when I was teaching, I had a second grade student bring to school a small white rat to show. Having had pet mice as a child this did not faze me in the least and my students were enthralled by it. I mentioned this to another teacher and she requested that I bring it over to show to her class. I said sure and on my break I carried it over riding on my arm. The children loved it, but meanwhile their teacher was trying to climb the chalkboard.

“Found In Collection”: Since Jim and I had no children we couldn’t have fannish sons literally. However, I am sort of an unofficial parent to the Lewtons, whose children (unfortunately not fans) call me “Grandma Lee Anne.”

“Epistles”: I enjoy your letter column a lot. To all those people who responded to my column on what is wrong with teaching, maybe some

day I'll do a column on what is right about being a teacher.

Picky, picky, picky department: Dave, you didn't credit "Bridge Game" as being reprinted from Jim and my fanzine, *Embelyon*. Shame on you. Tsk, tsk. •

In atonement, Lee, I beat my cat pretty severely with that issue of Embelyon (#4 Nov.-Dec. 1970/Jan. 1971 to be exact); she obviously lied to me when I asked her if she'd done the final proofreading on Pixel.

One of these days, if I'm really lucky, I'll manage to publish an issue where I don't have some sort of screw up like that...

Eric Mayer

Is the cover spectacular or just spectacles? I like it, even if it does remind me too much of the twisted frames clinging to my nose, which really need replacing. Not the nose. Well, actually yes, my nose needs replacing too. I've always wished for a nose with a bridge to accommodate my eyeglasses better.

The fact is I'm not spectacular, even if I am bespectacled (is that a word? If I look it up and it isn't I won't be able to use it and it just appeals to me right now) Maybe that's why I'm at a bit of a loss for what to say, or maybe it is just the contents, terrific as it is, doesn't lend itself to my usual LoC routine of what can I find to say about myself that has some vague relationship to the articles in the zine?

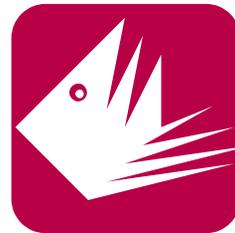
I'm not going to comment on my own column certainly. And I didn't know rich brown well enough to comment, although Ted's piece made for fascinating reading. (I did like rich's thoughtful and analytical approach to fanhistory

in what little reading I've done since my "return") Sad to say, we don't get to choose our physical ailments. I have the opposite problem from many folks in that I've never been able to gain weight. I've tried but my metabolism, it seems, won't allow me to get any heavier, so I well realize that being overweight is often equally as unrelated to what a person does, but, unlike being underweight, it has dire health consequences.

Better not say much about Lee Lavell's article. I agree. I tend to avoid talking politics. I get too wound up. I'm basically further left than Ghandi and don't give a damn what people do privately, but my own lifestyle is extremely conservative. Of course it has been proven for thousands of years that violence and war doesn't work. Why do people always think, well, yeah, but this time it will?

I can't say anything about bridge. I only know it's played with cards. Right?

Loved Dave Locke's animal article. We do see a lot of wildlife out here in the boonies. A couple days ago I had to break for turkeys. Recently a young woodchuck took up residence. Since it's too shady to have gardens we don't mind. He (or she) is amusing to watch.



Has the look of a badger in the face. We do have chipmunks. When I was a kid we didn't actually train them but they used to run under the picnic table for scraps while we ate. The last chipmunk I saw was going headfirst down a cat's gullet, however. Lots of cats around here. Not so many as a few years ago, before the neighbors tore down the dilapidated, abandoned cottage we used to refer to as the cat house.

I enjoyed Chris Garcia's amazing little coincidence. I'd heard of Walter Coslet. I can't think of much similar in my life, but then Chris meets a lot more people than I do. There does seem to be a disproportionate amount of faanish stuff showing up at a computer museum. •

Chris Garcia

1958 has always had something of an air to it. I can remember my Dad saying that if someone in fandom "went 1958" in the 1970s, it meant that they died. He wanted me to somehow work that into his obit, but I didn't manage to. I've read a bit about Vernon McCain, though not much. Ted's columns always make me feel like I need to spend more time researching fannish history and less time doing things like sleeping or eating.

Ted's look at his good friend rich brown was wonderful. I've read a lot of remembrances about rich in the last couple of weeks, but this was probably the most in-depth. It's always hardest to know what to do with the physical stuff that's left behind. You're dealing with all the serious matters, the arrangements, the notices, the family, and then you also have to worry about moving boxes and taking care of matters that are so much more trivial than the event that caused all of it in the first place. Cleaning out my Dad's place was hard, but I had cousins to help

me out.

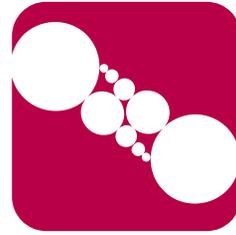
Eric Mayer is the guy from *Holier Than Thou!* I never made that connection. I loved that zine and I've got a few of the last issues that I'll be rereading now that I know. What a moron I am.

I love the colourized Brad W. Foster art. I was so glad he did a couple of Chris for TAFF cartoons for me. Just when you think a guy's got into his permanent groove, he switches things up.

Lee's article was interesting and reminds me of my last date. We went to a coffee place and a guy with a guitar came around and started chatting with us. He brought up politics (after I foolishly mentioned my degree in comparative religion) and he went on a rant about 9/11, V for Vendetta, the Israel-Lebanon crisis, and on and on. The War on Terrorism bugs me at times, so wasteful in many respects (not the least of which being human life) but I have to admit, I do feel we have managed to save a lot of lives with what we've been doing.

Sadly, I don't understand the game of Bridge. I've tried, oh my Ghod have I tried, but I just don't get it. Not at all. Mea Culpa.

Jim and Lee tried to teach me Bridge way back when, but I didn't get it then, either. (But then, I don't think it's a game designed to interest the average 16-year-old much, either.) I've never been much of a card player, mostly because I don't have the kind of memory it takes to remember what's been played and what hasn't. As someone once wrote (it may have been C.S. Lewis), if we're going to play cards for money, why don't you just tell me how much you expect to win and I'll give it to you and save us both some time.



Wow! What a lettercol? It's just freakin' huge! I guess when you're doing a zine as powerful as *Pixel*, people just get up to tell you what they think! •

I believe I will have to add that to the masthead, Chris: Pixel, the Powerful Zine. It's got a nice ring to it, eh? ;-)

Joseph T Major

"Notes from Byzantium": Have you tried using Windex on the bugs? (No, this is not "My Big Fat Greek Wedding" time.) It breaks the surface tension in their spiracles and they suffocate.

"Bridge Game": I don't play bridge, but that sounds like the sort of thing that would start happening at about four in the morning, back in the days when I could stay up until four in the morning. (Nowadays I am often up at four in the morning, but I'm not enjoying it.)

"Found in Collection": If Coslet père had wanted to know how much it would cost to every piece of SF, he could just have asked Forrest J. Ackerman.

"Epistles": Chris Garcia: Visiting hospitals can be made tolerable. When I had the CT scan a couple of years ago I imagined it as being part of the remake of *Metropolis*; Rotwang put Maria in the CT machine and fed the output to a CAD/CAM device to make the shell for Futura. Also, 4E could have a cameo as the Oberbuergermeister of *Metropolis*.

Lee Lavell: I once stepped on a nail that went all the way through my foot. Which taught me to appreciate horses. (Hint: where do they get tetanus antitoxin?)

Eric Mayer: Through observation I have learned that being drunk makes one deaf. All the people who played music full-throttle in the adjacent (usually above) apartment have been drunk. And all said the same thing: "I like it loud."

Lloyd Penney: I got forwarded an email about a teacher who asked his college class who their favorite author was. After a long and resounding silence someone finally said "Dan Brown." Funny thing was that these were student bodies where 4.0 grade point averages (straight A's, that is) were more like averages – median, that is. They got out of high school with exalted grades and never read.

There wasn't much to catching the fish. I threw the hook out and never hooked anything, until this one time when I hooked a fish through the fin. My father made me throw it back. Everyone else in the family seemed to like fishing. You had a more interesting time, looks like. Sounds like the story of my grandfather, the cats, and the eel.

John Purcell: Yes, and I wrote about my colonoscopy. •

Sandy Black

I can't tell you how much I enjoyed Ted White's "Whither Fandom?" column in the last issue. A beautifully written, heartfelt tribute to his friend rich brown, full of insights into rich's life that I'm sure only Ted could relate.

I suppose there's a common theme to Eric Mayer's "Notes From Byzantium" since it's all about insects (both the multi-legged variety and the two-legged politician type). I'd have to agree with him that there's something *magical* about seeing your words actually typeset, at least the first couple of times. It always seems to lend a bit of "legitimacy" to what you've written. It's maybe too bad that kids today won't get to feel that little kick, since everything from 3rd grade book reports on is now "set" in any one of a bazillion fonts. (Although what do you want to bet that 99.9% of everything done on the computer is done using Times New Roman?)

Not a bet I'd want to take, Sandy, since that seems to be the default font for most applications. It's a serviceable typeface, but I'm not overly fond of it, maybe because you see it used so much.

I've always used Cambria for Pixel – I find it easier to read as it's a little wider face:

Times: Now is the time for all good

Cambria: Now is the time for all good

Lee Lavell comments in her "Much Nothings" column about 9/11 that parts reminded her of a cheap SF movie. I had something of the same feeling watching the Towers collapse. To be honest, I was fascinated by it on a sort of technical level, and I felt guilty because I was fascinated by it. Maybe that was my way of

dealing with (or avoiding dealing with) knowing that thousands of people were meeting horrific deaths as those tons came crashing down.

I heard a couple of guys interviewed on PBS recently; they'd worked in the crews clearing the rubble of the Towers and had written a book about it. One of the things they mentioned (other than the gruesome fact that apparently no intact bodies were found) was that there was hardly any non-building related material found. They would occasionally find something that had made it through the collapse completely unscathed (a cell phone, or a picture frame, or an unbroken pane of glass – which they knew had come from an upper story because it was thinner glass), but for the most part things like desks, chairs, computers, and office furnishings were *completely* pulverized.

I know *just* enough about the game (and the people involved) to find "Bridge Game" pretty amusing.

Not much to say about Dave Locke's "A Funny Thing" except that it was well-written and humorous. A couple of historical notes should have been added for younger readers. A



"typewriter" is what people used to write with before computers were invented. An "antenna" was a device used to pluck television signals (usually as many as 4 or 5 stations, if you were lucky) out of the air (for *free!*) before TVs were connected to a million stations via coaxial cable or a satellite. "Electric logs"; well, let's just say they went the way of the Nehru jacket and platform shoes, and if you've never heard of any of them, bully for you. •

Janine Stinson

Catching up on several past issues:

On *Pixel 2*:

The Coulsons might more accurately have been called eclecticfen, surely?

Chris Garcia's comments on the advent of Windows in computer gaming reminded me of my first experience using Windows, when I was stationed at Ft. Riley, Kansas from 1987-89. I'd used computers before then, but those were very different from Windows. I was ecstatic when I first learned how to use Windows 3.1, because the writer in me was hopping up and down and yelling, "Wow! No more actually using scissors and tape to cut and paste! I only have to type it once! Wow!!!" and so forth. I should also add that I was an *Omni* subscriber for at least two years, and always enjoyed reading it.

In the locs, Chris asks why Brad Foster doesn't draw for *The Drink Tank*. The most likely answer is, he hasn't been asked. If I recall right, Brad never sent me anything until I asked him to, and thereafter kept me supplied with illos on a regular basis. So Chris, go ask him already.

Ted White notes that he provided personal-experience background to the DVD on Bob Dylan

for his son. I hope Aaron appreciated it, Ted; a lot of young persons of Aaron's age would not have been interested. Then again, one has to be interested in Dylan in the first place, if only a little; but Aaron now likes the Talking Heads, so he's headed in the right direction. That TH video of "Once In a Lifetime" is killer, too.

I watched parts of a few eps of *Passions* but never made it through an entire one. Too goofy for me. I just can't get past the over-acting of soap operas, not to mention the melodramatic dialogue. Oi.

Did I mention that I once met Billy Cobham and Narada Michael Walden? I thot I'd written about this to one of the fanzines, but now can't recall which one. The meeting was while I was attending Western Mich. U. and working part-time as an arts reporter for *The Western Herald*; I'd been assigned to cover a concert at Miller Auditorium, and that was where I met these two stellar musicians (both drummers, as it happens). Cobham is still playing and recording, and Walden went on to do producing for other artists after releasing several records of his own music. I have a feeling that very few of your readers ever heard of these guys, except for Ted White. But that was a great memory to revisit, so thanks to Chris for initiating it.

I remember Cobham pretty well from his Mahavishnu Orchestra days and the many "fusion" albums he played on. I particularly recall his "breakthrough" album, Spectrum.

On Pixel 3:

Eric Mayer, er, reveals a side of Brad Foster's artistic career that was unknown to me. I have to say that the examples provided were quite well drawn, but then I expected no less. One is led to wonder what was on the interior pages, given



the quality and, oh, how should I say it, provocative nature of the covers. The combination of allure and cartoonesque in Brad's art for Goodies reminds me a bit of Little Annie Fannie (hope I got the name right) from *Playboy*. Yes, some women **read** *Playboy*, for those of you who may be overworking your eyebrows in surprise. Education comes in many forms, if one is open to a variety of options. But enough of the arch comments and double entendre.

"The Silly Season Blues" was most enjoyable, reminding me of several summer vacations in northern Michigan when I noted my fellow vacationers doing stupid tourist tricks. Dave, is the Indian Lake of which you wrote also the Indian Lake memorialized (or not) in the pop song by the Cowsills? (I think that's the right group.) I remember these lyrics:

*Indian Lake is the scene you should make
with your little one*

*Just keep it in mind if you're lookin' to find
a place in the summer sun*

*Swim in the cove or you can snack in the
grove or you can rent a canoe*

*At Indian Lake you'll be able to [make?
mate?] the way the Indians do...*

I must have several brain folds strictly devoted to song lyrics, as I have this odd ability to recall the most obscure stuff.

Perhaps the fellow who went over to the bears' side of the dump wasn't so strange; that would have made an excellent photo, I think. The idea of it, at least, has the potential for potent social commentary. I would like to have seen it.

Lee Lavell's column was most interesting, dealing as it did with getting lost while going to Cincy and her first car. Those memories of woman-mind triumphant are, indeed, sweet. My method of getting lost is to drift off into reverie while driving and miss the appropriate turn for my route. If not for MapQuest, I wouldn't have dared go to Wiscon 29, having never been to Wisconsin before then.

That was a clever conceit for Peter Sullivan's fanzine review column this time 'round. But even in the U.S., one could not escape the World Cup completely. The nice thing about having so many TV channels to watch is that one can easily bypass events about which one cares not a whit.

Since there was discussion about Al Kooper's book on his musical career, I'll sneak in a reference to Ian Hunter's *Diary of a Rock'n'Roll Star*. (Memory may be off on the title, and I don't have the item to hand to verify). Hunter played guitar and sang lead for the British band Mott the Hoople, in the 1970s. They had a short run of fame, but did manage to make a hit of the David Bowie song "All the Young Dudes" (which he wrote for them). Hunter's book is what it says it is, a diary, mostly of what it was like to tour for the band and how one of the band members had to be inebriated to travel, as he was terrified of flying. Hunter has an amusing writing style, and

that made the book fun to read.

On *Pixel 4*:

Eric Mayer ("Byzantium"): I gotcher cure for needle-phobia right here: Get an acupuncture treatment. Still hurts, but needles are a cinch afterwards. I still don't watch the hospital vampires take blood samples from me (something about the sight of my own blood), but it's not nearly as traumatic now. Of course, I've had several opportunities in the last year to overcome my fear of needles (being hospitalized half a dozen times can do that). I've discovered that the only way to overcome a phobia is to just face it head-on. That doesn't say much for my reaction to spiders, which is to hunt for something with which to thwak them. My karmic debt load grows, alas. I've often captured the wee beasties and deposited them outdoors, though, so perhaps that debt load isn't all that big.

"Hamster Noir" brought back memories, not of hamsters, but of root beer fizzies. I wonder if that Internet nostalgia candy store has them in stock. Faboo Brad Foster art! I really have to get organized and start planning my fanzine content early enough to ask Brad for specific illos in time for him to fit them into his drawing schedule.

"Much Nothings About Ado": I got lost once going to a con. Made one wrong turn in Madison while driving to the Wiscon hotel last year, but it took me only a few turns to get headed in the correct direction. But I've also sailed past exits I was supposed to take off of an interstate highway, because of my mental maundering habit. Anyone who rides with me is usually warned not to engage me in lively conversation because that's also how I forget where to turn.

Re: Peter Sullivan's review of *Chunga 12*, I

don't think it's scifi.com that offers a bounty for completed and published trip reports. I believe that's the WSFS (World SF Society?), and there's one other person or group that offers a bounty for same. And why is "lead" being almost universally used for "led," opined the distraught English major? And I owe my publisher grateful thanks for his kind words about my fanzine in his review column, though I'm a bit disturbed at the vanilla reference. Oh, just kidding, really. No, really!

Lee Lavell takes you to task for your "loose" layout design in the prevish (new word alert?); I suspect she'd not like *PN's* design very much. My design method is old-school newspaper paste-up: fill in the holes, don't screw up the ads, and make sure the jumps (if any) are done properly. After that, it's headlines and photo captions, and that's about all the design technique I use. Oh, so you noticed...

Your nephew Kyle's art is very nice; hope we continue to see it. It's not much to my taste, but then I hope he knows now that not everyone will be ga-ga over his work, though it be the most skilfully executed in the room. My fine art tastes run toward Gustav Klimt, Aubrey



Beardsley and Maxfield Parrish (who was, mostly, a commercial illustrator, but what gorgeous illos he wrought!). I hope Kyle has entered some local art shows by now, as he's certainly at a level where he can successfully compete with other artists at such events. I have a cousin who was told in high school by an art teacher that she had no talent, and because of that she never did anything artistic except hair and make-up until just a few years ago, when she could no longer resist the impulse to paint. I have commissioned three works from her, all of my dearly departed dogs (don't laugh, anyone, a lot of people do this - it's more tactful than having the beast stuffed and placed on the mantelpiece), and she did a marvelous job. Anyone who wants to see them can surf over to my personal Web space at:

home.earthlink.net/~tropicsf

for a look. The originals are hanging in my living room.

Eric Mayer: I hope by now you know you should have looked for an Interstate highway, right?

Bacover: Is there something special about this photo, or am I merely supposed to appreciate it as Art? •

Guesses for grabs, Jan.

John Purcell

Another fine issue, one that reminds me more of the great genzines from the days of yore, with history, humor, personal reflection, fine artwork, great columnists, and a lively lettercolumn. The only thing missing was a fanzine review column, which Peter Sullivan can catch up with next time. (Hmm... a Lloyd Penney-style fanzine review

column? *There's* an interesting concept.)

Even though I've read Ted's memorial to rich brown in *Vegas Fandom Weekly* a few weeks ago, I don't mind re-reading it at all. This is one of the best tributes/memorials about rich that I've read so far this summer. Again, thank you, Ted, for this wonderful contribution. It sure makes me wish I knew rich personally.

Eric Mayer, it sounds like you're trying to supplant the insect denizens of SouthCentralEastern Texas with the beasties you encounter in the backwoods of upstate New York. I've been there before - back in the early 1960s with my family when my Dad went back for his 10th reunion anniversary at Hamilton College, and to Warwick not too far outside of NYC, but still in the mountain (sort of) - and I know that there are nasty critters running around there. Great illo by Brad Foster to accompany the article. That's about the size of the bugs down here, come to think of it.

I have never understood the game of Bridge. My parents used to play it all the time, but not me. Now Cribbage, yeah; love that card game. Gin, Hearts, and Whist are alright, and this is about the extent of my playing card game knowledge. But, "Bridge Game" was still very funny. I can just hear the voices in this transcript. I'm glad Lee keeps finding these little gems from Jim Lavell. This is great stuff.

Here at the Purcell Petting Zoo we've had some oddball animals at times, and not always deliberately. Currently, we get daily visitations from loads of geckos and anoles, but they're nothing compared to the Possum That Came in From the Cold when we were living in Marshalltown, Iowa before moving to Texas. One night in January, when it was a bit chillier than usual outside - subzero temps instead of the



single digit plus-zero temps that are normal at that time of the year - we heard a rather loud noise coming from the basement.

"What was that?" Valerie asked. "Beats me," I replied, counting off all of the animals in the room with us: Timmy, Pulcinella (our dogs), and Binx, Marmalade, Cucumber, Marie, and Oatmeal (our cats). All present and accounted for. Nobody in the basement to our knowledge. "Hmm," I hummed. "I'd better go check this out." So down I went into the basement, flashlight in hand. Poking around some of the boxes, I didn't see or hear anything until I opened one near the workshop room. A high-pitched "RAAWRRRERR!!!!" split the air as this hideous, angular, long-nosed face thrust out of that box.

"SHIT!!!" I yelled in retaliation. The head disappeared back into the box as I realized what it was. "We've got a possum down here!" I yelled up to Valerie. "WHAT?" she yelled back. "How the hell did it get in?" "I don't know and really don't care right now. What I'd like to know is how the fuck are we gonna get this thing out of our basement?" By this time the possum had scampered out of the box and had run off to hide in a dark corner of the

basement.

To make a long story short, my resourceful veterinary-trained wife took a length of clothesline, looped it through an eight foot piece of 2-inch PVC pipe I had in the basement, and with that and my extra-large fishing net that I had used only once to pull in a 14-pound northern pike, we snared the possum, crammed him into one of our dog carriers, and deposited him off in Riverside Park. It was quite the night.

The next night his wife was in our basement. She wasn't as large, and so it wasn't as hard to snare, net, and stuff her into a kennel, and off to the park she went.

The following afternoon I pulled myself up into the crawlspace that went up under our front porch and found a hole between two bricks just barely big enough for a small dog to wriggle through. With some loose bricks and quick-dry concrete, I patched up the hole, and we never had any other possums in our basement.

Can't happen here in College Station since you can't build houses with basements. The ground won't allow it, or so they say. It has something to do with the water table and the clay-sand mixture of the ground in this region. Whatever. I think I'd like to have a basement again.

Hey, James Vance, thanks for the update on Reed Waller. Great news to hear he's back to cartooning and such again. Reed is one of the most talented people I have ever met in fandom, besides being a helluva nice guy. At Aggiecon 37 Steve Brust told me that Kate Worley had died a couple years ago. Very sad. But even so, I am very glad to hear that Reed's doing well. If I ever get back to Minicon, he is one of the folks I really want to see again. •