

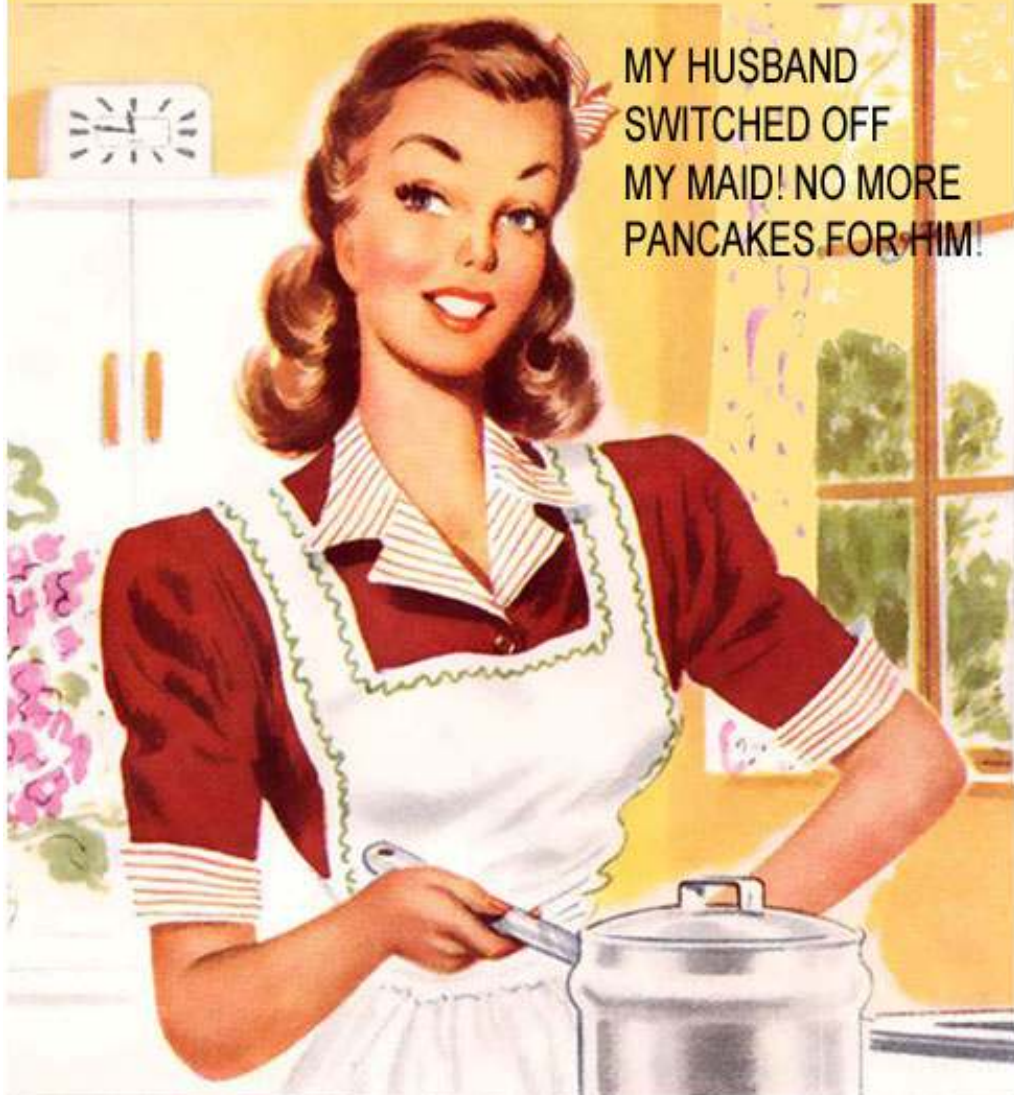
BRITISH
1/6
EDITION

NEBRASKA
VIBRATOR 2.0.17

STARTLING SUBURBAN STORIES!

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RACY TALES FROM THE RETRO FUTURE



MY HUSBAND
SWITCHED OFF
MY MAID! NO MORE
PANCAKES FOR HIM!

Hello folks, here's another blast of fannish sunshine from the fundament of Graham Charnock, as Andy Hooper would describe it. My, those grapes are sour.

This is Vibrator 17, dated June 2015, and comes to you from Graham Charnock, graham@cartiledgeworld.com, to whom all letters of complaint and offers of gratuitous sex, should be directed.

People may wonder, or they may not, why I include loccers contact emails at the foot of their letters. This is usually because they (apart from D. West) usually don't send me any actual postal information. I would like to think other fanzine editors may be stimulated to send them their own fanzines and thus spread the glory that is participative fandom. When I was putting the mailing list for Vibrator together I had to go to many sources beside my own address book. Fanzines like Banana Wings and Trap Door, all of which have a dedicated following, were obvious examples. I'd like to hope Vibrator encourages other people to produce fanzines and am more than willing for them to cull from my mailing list, but I suspect I am one of a diminishing breed. I've made lots of new *Fannish* friends (and a few enemies) on Facebook but it is sometimes painfully obvious to me that they are of a different fannish generation from me and we may never be entirely conformable in each other's company, me discussing the intricacies of Heinlein and Tom Disch and they discussing Game of Thrones and whatever teenage vampire series is flavour the current month. This reflects in a way how I felt myself when I first came into fandom as a blazing young turk, shooting down members of the Knights of St Fanthony with all barrels. Now I find myself veering towards my own redundancy as part of what is important to the Next Generation. People say there are many fandoms, which probably explains my discomfort at big-tent convention. I don't particularly like to brush shoulders with the many fandoms represented at these, especially when I'm standing behind them for a place at the bar. The readership of these fanzine represents a slice of *my* fandom; all are welcome but you either like it or you don't. Those who don't will be judged by their lack of response and may obviously then end up being removed from the mailing list.

NIC FAREY LEADS OFF WITH HIS LATEST TAXI ADVENTURES: THURN UND TAXIS

No reason for that subhead other than I might be either running out of taxi puns, or just too lazy to think of a funnier one. OK, how about this:

HOW NOT TO PISS

I *did* have that in mind for a sub-topic, and it's ever since stuck in my mind that it could be a warped version of a Monty Python sketch ("How not to be seen" - "Stand up please, Mr. Putey... <BANG!>"). As I've mentioned previously, we pretty much live or die by our shift averages, which are posted every day, along with the low and high book numbers. Well, for the first time ever, two days ago (at the time of writing) yer ever-so-'umble correspondent high booked for the first time. In fact, I almost always book average or better, and there are several ways to get to that level of consistency. One is utter dishonesty: cheating the punters by long-hauling, and several other ways in which the unwary can be taken advantage of, especially if English (or indeed criminality) is not necessarily their first language. One of the bits of "common knowledge" in the trade is that Orientals don't tip, and because of this and their general naivete, it's ok to take advantage by going the insanely long way round, and if you think you can get away with it, telling them that the meter fare is *per person*. Believe me, this has been known to work. Milking the drunks is another good one, since a lot of them are too utterly fucking stoned to realize what they're paying (if cash), so with their money mixed up, it doesn't take too much *legerdemain* to get them to fork up a Benjamin when they really only meant to give up a yuppie food stamp.

It might or might not surprise readers (given my previous) to know that I go about *my* business honestly. That's to say I play by the rules, have a strategy for maximising my book, and I don't piss. We're entitled to take an hour break on a 10-hour shift, 75 minutes on a twelve, but unless it's that busy the whole time you'll have sometimes substantial gaps between rides (up to two hours on a really slow day). Some of this time you spend driving around, or driving back from some outlying drop, a lot of it is spent waiting on stands and inching up one cab at a time. We're not supposed to leave the cab while staging (TA regulation, ticketable offense), so you rather train yourself to Not Piss

for lengthy amounts of time. I'm sure the usual plethora of medical expertise which constitutes the readership of this multiple-award-winning rag will be keen to weigh in on what a bad idea this is, and certainly when it's been fermenting in there for that amount of time it does occasionally sting a bit coming out.

In Gay News, we frequently pick up from the Las Vegas Lounge (notorious staging area for transsexual hookers) and environs where they reside, and as I had been warned, the English accent is a magnet to the extent that I've had a couple of the girls (a) begging me to skive off for naughtiness, and/or (b) shamelessly grabbing the squidgy bits. There are times when having chronic ED is actually helpful. See glossary: "Fruit loop".

At certain times, and from certain locations, we're encouraged to take deposits from the punters, although personally I find it generally embarrassing to ask. If the ride is out to the suburbs (or really, anything that will meter over \$20), it's often a good idea. A driver told me this story:

"Picked up a couple of perverts from the Green Door, taking them home down into Henderson, about a \$40 ride. They get there all in order, but the guy's card is declined, his second card is declined, and the girl's card is also declined. A bit of whispered conversation in the back seat results in the lass putting up her legs, hoiking up her skirt (no knickers) and suggesting "Can you take the fare out of this?" Driver has a look and says "Hm. You have anything smaller?"

LICHTMAN MEMORIAL GLOSSARY, TO BE REPRINTED IN A ISSUE OF TRAP DOOR NEAR YOU:

Benjamin : \$100 bill, because Benjamin Franklin (cf "Yuppie food stamp")

Fruit loop : The Paradise/Naples bar area, which includes gay hangouts Piranha Club, FreeZone nightclub and QuadZ video bar. The doorman/valet at Piranhas is an utter dick who I would cheerfully modify with a 1934 Chevy starting handle. I hate dropping rides there (although a lot of the LVL crowd relocate to the place) almost as much as I hate picking up there, although a lot of the clientele are fun and friendly. The doorman at FreeZone is much nicer.

LVL : Las Vegas Lounge - a dive bar with a primarily transsexual clientele, many of whom are available for up to \$300/hr.

High book : The best meter total for a shift. **Low book** now being obvious, shurely_?

Yuppie food stamp : \$20 bill.

--Nic Farey

MODERN MYTHS OF OUR TIME 1: RENEWABLE RESOURCES

I recently got taken to task by a Facebook idiot (Roger Gray, since you ask) because I stood up for Victoria Ayling, a UKIP candidate, who said "What happens when renewable resources run out?" The idiot jumped on the anti-UKIP bandwagon by pointing out the bleeding obvious dichotomy in her statement in a *look-at-me-I'm-so-much-clever-than-them* manner.

Obviously for the woman it was foot in mouth moment, but I kind of got what she was thinking of, or was at least willing to give her the benefit of the doubt and try and think it through rather than prove how Smarter-Than-Thou I was.

(Besides rabid doctrinaire UKIP haters needs putting in their place occasionally as much as anyone else who can't see beyond their doctrinaire beliefs.)

I was watching a television programme recently about a house-hunting couple who wanted an eco-friendly house. *Renewable resource* is a current buzz-term which is so often mis-used. The agent pointed out the flooring of this house was made from renewable sisal. Well, no it wasn't. If the sisal wore out it was stripped out and dumped and rotted and wouldn't instantly renew itself as sisal. If people stop growing sisal it will not be renewed. The kitchen counters were made from *renewable beech*. No they weren't. On the same principle if you wanted to renew them you wouldn't plant them again, so they would grow new beech trees, but dump them and relied on nature to provide more wood, either beech or otherwise, or not. On the other hand, coal is often cited as a non-renewable resource, when in fact given sufficient geological ages, today's forests would easily be capable of renewing themselves as coal-fields. But in a typically anthropomorphic way, we have a remarkable short-term view of such things. The only real renewable resources seem to be natural phenoma, wind and waves and solar energy, for example. But these are not *renewable resources*, but are simply constants we can choose to exploit or not; they are resources which may or may not be used. If there is not the political will or money to build energy conversion

systems to utilize them, then they are not renewable but unexploitable and will *run out* in practical terms as much as any other resource..

Graham Charnock would like to point out he does not endorse the political views of UKIP in any sense, but is always ready to forgive anyone a slip of the mouth, except David Cameron.

JOHN NIELSEN HALL MISSED THE LAST ISSUE SO IS FIRST TO HEAD THIS ONE OFF.

I see where Fred Smith, an old and unreconstructed jazzier, is asking me to reconsider what I actually meant when I heaped such fulsome praise on that old Tornados single. Well, perhaps I should have chosen my words more carefully. I should have said " the greatest instrumental pop 45 of all time", to distinguish it from all those old trumpet 78's Fred no doubt has stacked up to the ceiling and among which are, I have no doubt, many sides that Fred thinks are far more deserving of such an all encompassing mythical award.

But perhaps I shouldn't. After all, Telstar starts with a lot of science fictional noises (or what Joe Meek thought was science fictional from the distance of the Holloway Road of the early 1960's) which by themselves set the record apart from any old toot-tootler effort of twenty plus years before, to whom science fiction was just American comic book crap, incapable of having any halfway serious content. Offhand I cannot call to mind any record from the big band era that used sound effects of any kind. Nobody really thought about record production in terms of sound in those days, although arrangers, taking their cue from classical music, knew a lot about imparting colour to a piece. Sadly, very few jazzers saw the necessity for this, not even when it became obvious that particular orchestras/ bands had an immediately identifiable sound. My old man had loads of old records from his youth in the war years, a lot of them American, and from listening to a lot of these it became obvious to me how the well known records from that era were as successful as they were: Sound. You could tell Glenn Miller records as soon as they came on- same went for Paul Whiteman or Tommy Dorsey and a few others. Other sides were by outfits who, however worthy their contributing soloists or writers, could have been anybody. I think they relied too much on the listener needing to appreciate their virtuosity as if they were live, which was to misunderstand entirely what recorded pop music was and still is about.

If you want to appreciate what a musician can really do, you should be in a concert hall. Whether we are talking 78's, 45's or MP3's, pop music is about the Sound, the song, if you will, not the singer- or the guitarist, trumpet player, or any other musician whose own importance leads him or her to get in the way of what the medium is for. This is why Jazz died the death as popular music, and now Rock has gone the same way. Musicians getting in the way of the music. They should be stopped. Well, between rappers and techno-geeks, I think they have been.

I read and enjoyed Nic's Tax driving column. Fascinating stuff. But when I am in the big bad smoke these days, I use a mini-cab firm I can call on from an app on my phone, and whose drivers use some sort of text system , not open radio, to communicate with their base, so there's no danger of rivals earwiggling and stealing their fares. As near as I can figure it from casual observation, the driver presses buttons which must give standard responses to queries or to acknowledge instructions, and should anything need more detailed discussion, base rings their mobile, which of course is all blue-toothed and comes over speakers. Systems like these seem to be urgently needed in Vegas.

John Nielsen-Hall can be found at johnsila32@gmail.com

JERRY KAUFMAN SPEAKS

What would your email inbox be without an end-of-month note from me? Don't try to shoehorn this into your June issue! Let it mature, then throw it out.

I liked the front-cover illustration of the 19th century steam locomotive. Is the art by James Bacon, perhaps? I know how much he likes trains. Hat off in any case, to whomever drew it. (This is just raillery.)

I have a question about the Tynecon - who was the Guest of Honor? I can't remember that anyone has mentioned him/her/it. Was the Sunday brunch speech as memorable as Lucy Huntzinger's?

You have peppered this issue with many anecdotes and considerations and comments that cry for response that I hardly know where to begin. But I'll hitch up my jeans and start with your comparison of a bit of dialogue from GRR Martin on his blog (possibly from *Game of Thrones?*) and from Graham Greene. I wondered if this was a fair

comparison - the two situations seem much different, with the Greene scene being a much more emotionally charged one, while the Martin scene is a fairly quiet one of two people, dancing, and sparring verbally. (I think they're dancing, based on a quick skim of the entire chapter.) And Greene is a much better writer than 95% of genre writers. If I could find a bit of dialogue from a non-genre work, as flat and lifeless as you find the Martin, would you consider ceasing to read all non-genre fiction - excepting, presumably, old Graham Greene novels?

I found the Martin "excerpt" on his website. It's the last page of an entire chapter posted there. Glancing through the chapter, I saw that there's quite a lot of dialogue, and much of it is phrased in a mildly archaic form that even the best epic fantasy uses. As to the characters being interchangeable, I'm going to guess that you mean "with characters from other similar books" rather than "with each other." That would make no sense. Even then, I would hesitate to agree, based only on this small example.

Is there something to be done about the FAAN Awards? Aside from lack of enthusiasm (I'm an unenthusiastic voter at the best of times) the major problem with the award participation is that a large chunk of fanzine publishing fandom thinks the award is only for Corflu attendees. They actually think that the administrator(s) deliberately do not count votes for fanzines that they don't like or approve of. This kind of paranoia will be hard to overcome. Having Andy Hooper write your suggested "unbiased roundup" of fanactivity won't help, because the "outsiders" automatically will consider him biased (as well as other active Corflu people like Randy Byers) and will either discount his opinions or, even more likely, not read them at all. (See numerous comments in letter columns in Joseph Majors' *Alexiad* for examples.)

Nic Farey is again interesting on the subject of taxi driving, with this rundown of taxi terminology and jargon. Every occupation has such - some more interesting than others. Traditional restaurant terms for different dishes is very colorful, insurance terms are either boring or downright confusing, even to insurance professionals.

John Nielsen Hall's list of bands that have used bits of "Apache" (have I got that right?) includes one performer I like a lot, even though she's primarily a hip hop performer - M.I.A. I love the variety of textures she works in from middle Eastern and Sri Lankan music, and the unique (to me) quality of her voice and accent.

Thanks for tackling *The Irrational Atheist* and saving others the bother. But I'm not sure you've got a grip on some of the ideas you report. China is, to the best of my understanding, run by atheists, and so was the Soviet Union. Neither is, or was, 100% populated by atheists, as you say, but I don't see that being run by an atheist government, and being populated by atheists, are the same thing. I do think that both nations tried to suppress religions - I haven't studied their histories enough, though, to know how much physical destruction of churches, temples, etc went on. And pointing out that atheistic governments have destroyed religious centers may contradict Dawkins, but only means they are no better than countries run by religious persons (whether run as separate entities or as explicitly of one religion or another) as many have suppressed religions they don't favor, and have destroyed religious centers - mosques, shrines, odd churches or compounds. So ultimately I agree with your critique, though I got there by a different route.

I hope that I was clear, but I am afraid that my argument is too convoluted and that I condensed what I should have expanded. And I think I've already gone on too long. I'll add only that I too will miss Art Widner. (I already knew I'm mortal, however. If I live anywhere near as long as Art, I might start to forget.)

(EDITOR: Jerry, GoH at Corflu in Newcastle was Avedon Carol, who merely stood up, said thank you, and sat down again. A big disappoint to many people, especially those who were looking forward to a long meandering Greg Trend type diatribe.

Many people have pointed out my comparison of Greene's and Martin's styles is like comparing chalk with cheese, but I don't see it that way. I am comparing literature according to the standards of the era in which they were published, sure, but it remains a comparison of literature in general. Standards change, I know, but it's strange how they invariably seem to dumb down as far as genre fiction is concerned rather than evolve upwards. Has any genre writer ever written with the skill and compassion and intellectuality of Graham Greene, or Joseph Conrad, or even Thomas Hardy? That is another question.)

Jerry Kaufman can be found at JKaufman@aol.com

LLOYD PENNEY THOUGHT HE RESPONDED IN TIME, BUT LITTLE DID HE KNOW...

Getting caught I am, and also discovering that I might be missing an issue, and just didn't have it in my electronic IN box to respond to. As a result, I have issues 13 and 15 of Vibrator, and here's what I've got to say about it, besides being once again a completist...

13...No more Corflus for me. They are simply too far away, and too expensive. I'd like another one in Toronto, but few would go to it.

Where and how one shops...I was just watching a documentary on the CBC about boomers and how and why they shop, live, travel, etc. Yvonne and I realized how atypical we are. We're in our late 50s/early 60s, and rather than see our friends pass away, or grieve at their passing, we have been finding new interests and new friends. Why feel old, simply because some company who wants your money tells you that you are, and then tried to sell you something you really don't want?

I get messages from friends of Mrs. Colulibaby all the time. I now know which continent is the richest...Africa. They seem to have billions of dollars in banks that only we can help to release. How about Scottish bands? I am old enough to remember the Bay City Rollers when they first escaped into some form of prominence, but smart enough not to have liked their music. Saturday night, Saturday night...

My loc...weight loss up to about 10 pounds, but it's getting much tougher. Perhaps I should cut off a leg and be done with it.

15...more awards for your fine fanzine! Yvonne and I are up for an Aurora Award each, but we won't find out who wins what until November. Still, we're hoping. Neat little things, aren't they? Awards, I mean? They mean so much more than you don't make them yourself.

I miss Geri Sullivan, I really do. She is a force of nature, and she truly gets things done, far better than I ever could. I hope to see her again at a convention, but I doubt that shall ever happen again.

Are people thinking that there's a certain set of fanzine fans who are winning the same awards year in and year out? They are being changed much the same way the Novas will probably change?

I remember watching the original Trek on the NBC station in Buffalo, New York. We all thought the show was a grand adventure compared to other shows. A shame about the passing of Leonard Nimoy, but other have passed as well, including Grace Lee Whitney.

My loc...TNG was so different, yet part of the original Trek timeline. The new movies look so much like the original, yet is part of a different timeline. I'd rather go for the original, and see more shows. There are so many fan-produced Trek episodes, and they range from good all the way down to crap, but there is the attempt to make more of what people like.

Yvonne is at Murray Moore's nearby mall every Saturday. I hope he enjoys the new supermarket there. And, the passing of Art Widner. Who ever thought The Eternal Fan would ever leave us at the age of 97? We will all miss him, he was a fine example of how to be a fan.

And I finish up this loc by finding out that I am writing it up on the exact deadline for responding to the issue at hand. What a coincidence! It is actually June 1 as I listen to Radio 2, so off it goes to you as you sleep, and hope you discover it in the morning. Thank you for these two issues, finally caught up, and see you with the next one.

Lloyd Penney can be found at

STEVE STILES IS CONFUSED ABOUT A U.S TREASURY WAR BONDS POSTER

Nice cover of Ms. Marvel, if that is indeed the lady; comic books have been going through so many changes since the days when I could actually afford to buy them that I can never be sure of who is wearing what or not very much at all. Of course, I couldn't compete with this cover because most of my cartooning fanac is on hiatus for the time being mainly because of a comic book: I'm penciling and inking 200 pages of one, but no superheroes in it—just mainly politicians and all the great and wonderful good that they do for us all (so why 200 pages?). Maybe after getting my

next paycheck I can splurge on some Gilbert Sheldon comics, but the bulk of it is going to repair our rapidly disintegrating front steps, ruined by a really rough winter here in Maryland.

The other reason for the current hiatus is that I've run out of Vibrator sight gags. Maybe your readers can come up with something, like the cartoon contest on the last page of the New Yorker.

Sorry to have made such a phewtrid impression on you in Newcastle. It was about four in the morning for me at that point and I wasn't up to scintillating just then. That, and reading about Sartre, Kant, Kiekegaard, and all those other deep philosophers on the flight over, had slipped the meat to my delicate sensibilities—what does fandom mean, anyway?-- so it wasn't until early Saturday evening that I began gaining something like traction. Maybe I should just stick to Colin Wilson in the future.

Even in my more extroverted wide-awake moments I find that I don't usually seem to have as many conversations with as many people as I'd like to at conventions. Still, it was a pleasure meeting Harry Bell; he's somebody whose artwork I admire, and I was glad that Elaine purchased four of his landscape prints. On the other hand, I missed meeting Jim Barker and wasn't even aware that he was at Tynecon (maybe that was on the day when my existentialism hadn't worn off). Even so, this was more of an art-oriented visit to a convention than other Corflus I've been at. I now know that Newcastle has a number of fine art museums, but the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, which was in walking distance of the hotel, wasn't one of them: we went over there on Saturday and viewed two floors of the work the late Jason Rhoades, whose forte seemed to be arranging piles of junk in uninteresting displays. Anyone who knows me knows I appreciate much of abstract art, especially the nuttier and more eccentric stuff, but this was a sad waste of space and time.

Later, in London, we checked out the Tate Modern, which had a wide variety of modern art from the nineteenth century on to the present (mostly good works, some crap, but nothing as audaciously bad as Rhoades') as well as over priced and insipid food in the museum restaurant. A few weeks into April I got a fanzine from Fred Lerner, who had been at the Tate Modern that same week: he hated the art and loved the food.

On Sunday afternoon I took a train with Ian Sorenson, Spike, and Tom Becker—until the train broke down and, finally giving up on waiting for a bus on that cold and blustery day, we took a taxi to the city of Sunderland where we were going to meet Bryan Talbot, author and graphic novel artist. I had never heard of Talbot (he, however, had heard of me!), but I later checked out his website and was impressed with an output ("The Adventures of Luthor Arkwright," "Brainstorm!", "Alice In Sunderland") that I can envy. Sunderland also featured some seaside walkway art that a friend of Spike and Tom's had been associated with, Chaz Benchley, now living in the Bay Area.

After Tynecon, we stayed with an artist friend of mine in London, originally a fan from Baltimore, Sylvia Starshine. Various people back in the states had recommended checking out Highgate Cemetery—I was less than enthusiastic about that but it was in walking distance from her place and turn out to be more interesting than I had expected. Aside from the famous Marx monument (the one Greg Benford had once urinated on), my vote for best tombstone there was the 8' thick gray metal slab with large letters cut into it, running diagonally and reading "DEAD." My hat's off to the deceased, who was, of course, an artist.

Steve Stiles can be found at stevecartoon2001@gmail.com

ANDY PORTER IS APPARENTLY STILL TALKING TO ME

I decided today to read a whole bunch of what I now realize are back issues of VIBRATOR, on a clean-out stuff kick, because I like to keep as much free space as I can on my computer. And if I don't have a bunch of your back issues taking up space, I don't have to feel guilty about never contributing.

I'm also trying out scanning in my artwork, so I can send it out. But not having too much luck so far. You never knew I did artwork? Hey, I've been doing it and getting it published since the 1960s, not just in my own zines, but in actual other people's zines. Just not too smart, yet, about how to scan stuff in.

So this, in its dimwitted way, will have to be a LoC. As it were.

I was wondering what you were doing, talking about Milt Stevens being in the midwest. Maybe mid-western Los Angeles, but otherwise...

Thrilling Shopping Adventure Stories: I am happy to say that I'm really spoiled, because, not having a car, I can still shop several places for food. There's a not very good supermarket half a block away that I never go in. The prices are high, the selection is bad, and they have a reputation for slapping more recent dates on food that should have been sold a few months ago.

I'm one block from one subway line, 4 blocks from another, about 5 blocks from two more. I can walk to all sorts of shopping. Within two blocks (maybe 500 feet) I have a 24-hour market, a pizza place, 3 Japanese restaurants, a butcher, numerous small food stores, a liquor store, a Chinese restaurant, a middle eastern restaurant, a pub, 3 hair dressers, 2 nail salons, a pet store, a toy store, a 24-hour diner, the above mentioned supermarket (which though has a pharmacy), plus several Zagat-rated restaurants. Also two college dormitories, so I get to see all sorts of 20 year old college cuties walking by.

Going further, there's a big (for NYC, meaning no parking lot and narrow aisles) supermarket and a couple dozen more restaurants, a bagel store, a dozen banks, real estate and cell-phone stores, a couple hotels, even more stores, courthouses where the current FIFA foofaraw is happening, and Hillary Clinton's campaign office.

And when I buy books, I go to a nearby independent bookstore, BookCourt; no shopping on line, definitely no Amazon.

Which is why I love living here.

Oh, and every day, thousands of tourists from around the world come through the area. But you can't eat them -- if you do, make sure you get rid of the bones.

Nic Farey would love driving me around, because I not only don't have a car, I never learned to drive. OTOH, think about how I never have to get up at 6am to move the car to the other side of the street so the street sweepers can come by, nor pay \$2K a year for insurance. And the big thing in NYC of late has been tearing down gas (petrol) stations to replace them with apartment buildings, so locals have to go farther and farther away to gas up.

I've passed Nic Farey's taxi driving column on to my retired Exeter cabbie, Alison, my wonderful (but now retired) Exeter cabbie, who might find it fascinating. It was through Alison I've stayed in Port Isaac, Cornwall half a dozen times, including at places no longer there, such as the Castle Rock Hotel. Best place is the Old School Hotel, right on the cliff edge, likely Very Expensive now. Get one of the rooms with the big beds, windows overlooking the cliff. The exterior of the Old School is used as a school in DOC MARTIN.

Alison also took me to Lynmouth, where I stayed at the Rising Sun, on the recommendation of Seattle's Frank and Anna Denton. Wonderful place! Also Crackington Haven, from which I stole wonderful rocks, worn away by the tide into smooth stones with bands of multi-coloured quartz in them. Also stayed in Portreath, Falmouth, Marazion, St. Ives, Fowey, Launceston... Not even gonna mention my trips with Alison to Wales, or Dorset, or...

Coming RealSoonNow: another loc on another possibly outdated issue.

Corflu: I've had good times at CorFlus I've gone to, but that wonderful Mr. White likely to be in attendance at future ones, I've decided not to go in the future. Besides, when I go to the worldcon, even if it's not the worldcons we remember from our misspent youth, I still know a lot of the people there, and can have a very good time anyway. (Although at LonCon I wasn't on the program for the first time in decades because someone noticed I'm an old white guy, so my memories of SF and fandom are likely suspect. Owell. Or maybe even *sigh*.

Last year I signed up to go to this year's worldcon by train, which means taking the train from NYC to Chicago and changing there for the Empire Builder, which takes me all the way to Spokane, arriving in the middle of the night. Also, I booked a roomette. I've always wanted to take the trip, but having had a coach seat to/from the Chicago worldcon in 2012, learned my lesson. The cost includes all meals, and is only about 5 times as much as taking a plane. It's likely 300 times as long as taking a plane, because I'll be en route either way for several days. But I don't have to take off my shoes at the train station, nor limit myself to 3 oz of liquids, so...

I've forwarded Nic Farey's taxi stuff to my retired Exeter cabbie (who lives in Kennford), so I'm waiting for what she says in comment.

Star Trek: I saw it (with Ted White, matter of fact) before almost everyone else. Harlan Ellison brought the pilot to the 1966 Westercon, the infamous one at the Stardust Hotel where the committee gaffed before the convention, leaving the raw space and banquet booked, but no programming, art show, etc. The place where the hotel accused the fans of tearing up the golf-course because we didn't use the service of the Navy wives who were hooking out of the bar, so the hotel couldn't get its cut. Out of which con came the filksong "Bouncing Potatoes" and Rotsler entering an overcooked fried egg in the artsow, with a sad little face drawn on it in green marker.

Ah, those were the days...

Theodore Beale, aka "Vox Day": Today's word is "fugghead".

Almost Washed My Hair: When I developed diabetes, I noticed my skin got considerably drier. I always take a shower, never a bath. Over a year ago, I decided not to use soap any more, as it contributed to dry and itchy skin. I use a sort of loosely gathered feathery thing to scrub myself. I don't need soap to get clean. I do use shampoo on my hair, what there is left of it. I don't smell. After I dry off, I use lotion on my feet.

I've noticed that UK hotels and B&B's often don't understand showers, for instance having a shower curtain which is only an inch or so longer than to meet the top of the tub, hence water goes everywhere. Or there's a shower head over a very smooth tub with nothing to grab on to. And the tub is several inches above the level of the bathroom floor, so it's always a major operation to get into the tub without slipping and killing yourself. From what I remember, Lee Jacobs, a well-known Southern fan, died in his shower; don't know whether he had a heart attack there, or slipped and fell.

Here's a photo I took of Curt Phillips's favorite animal (*EDITOR: You'll have to imagine a picture of a turtle at this stage*); I'm gonna send him the full-sized version. I "shot" mine at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. As a little kid, I remember my Dad showing us kids a turtle, putting a big nail in its mouth, then watching the thing bite clean through the nail. I have never ever, to this very day, had the urge to stick a finger into a turtle's mouth... In fact I promise never to stick any of my fingers into anyone's mouth. Just sayin'...

Hey, wow, caught up with your publishing schedule. Now I can go back to being an inert slug for another few months!

Andy Porter can be found at

JOSEPH NICHOLAS DROPS THE BIG ONE

Many thanks for *Vibrator 16* -- a considerably more substantial issue than many previous, or so it seemed. Letters from ancient revenants Dave Cockfield and Kevin Williams -- a long article by Curt Phillips -- you on your struggle to get into and then out of a bath....the latter of which reminds me: when I was posting photographs to Facebook of the remodelling of our bathroom in February this year, you were responding with demands to call around for "a quick wash" and similar, yet in this issue you say that your default is not to bathe at all. So should I take your Facebook responses as merely a wind-up, or were you suggesting that our new tiling scheme and our spiffy new taps were such as to overwhelm your default terror of getting into a bath at all?

I did start reading Curt Phillips's lengthy article about growing up with guns, because I thought I should, but I have to say that I soon started to skim it because it was about, well, guns -- a peculiarly USian obsession which, as he notes in passing, is not shared by Britons. (That he has no less than nine guns in his house is eye-opening, even if some of them are antiques and replicas used in his re-enactment hobby.) I appreciate, of course, that he had a rather different upbringing from his peers, but the apparently casual use of guns to shoot things "just because" is still slightly disturbing. Although many farmers in the UK are registered shotgun owners, because having a gun to shoot something for the pot or even for sale to a wild game dealer is readily explicable, ownership of and skill with guns is not -- as seems to be the case in the USA -- something that Britons actually celebrate. Indeed, whenever one hears of "shooters' rights" in a British context -- for example, the arguments put forward in defence of the actions of farmer Tony Martin, who in 1999 shot and killed someone breaking into his home, and served a short prison sentence for manslaughter in consequence -- they sound deeply weird. Why should people have the right to shoot at things just because they wish to? Why do these shooters believe that they need pump-action shotguns and high-velocity pistols? Isn't it the function of the police to investigate crime and arrest the perpetrators rather than lone vigilantes claiming to be defending their property? And so on.

Many of the arguments around "the right of the people to keep and bear arms" seem to turn less on what that constitutional amendment meant at the time than on how it can be re-interpreted in the modern era, to the point where gun ownership shades over into gun fetishisation and a small number seem to compete amongst themselves to demonstrate how elastically the wording can be stretched. Nothing perhaps demonstrates this more than the USA's current "open carry" movement, in which gun freaks parade around shopping malls, supermarkets, airports and restaurants with machine-guns slung over their shoulders and claim the constitution in their support. Such people seem to implicitly demand that the wider public trust them to behave themselves, and not use their guns as an intimidation strategy when (say) they think they're having to wait too long for their latte; in addition, they implicitly demand that the owners and operators of the shopping malls, *et al* not just tolerate their behaviour but accept it as normal. But if the open carrying of guns were to be normalised, what would be next? Calling out someone for a duel in the street, per the Wild West of yore?

Reading Robert Lichtman's description of how his local shops have changed or closed, and how difficult they are to reach anyway, makes one glad one lives in London, where there are local shops on almost every street. If we discover that we're short of milk and yoghurt for our breakfast, we walk to the top of the road. If we want some freshly baked Turkish bread, we go to the next corner. We don't have nearby bookshops or coffee shops, but then we don't need them every day (or even every month) so don't miss them. Indeed, if we need to shop for anything other than food, we head for the bright lights and pulsating tempo of Wood Green, or even (whisper) head into Oxford Street. (We recently bought new pillows and a new mattress from John Lewis, and no longer crunch down against the slats when we get into bed.)

And now for the big one. I rolled my eyes a bit at your response to my two sentences on anthropogenic climate change. "How and why the [IPCC's] research is undertaken and financed by whom, and with what agenda is entirely what the argument is about." The IPCC's financing, chiefly by grants from the World Meteorological Organisation and the UN Environment Programme, is entirely open and above board; the implication that there is something questionable about it is typical of the conspiracist mindset -- as is your assertion that its work is driven by "political and multinational corporate imperatives" and that the argument over climate change is "entirely" about why this work is undertaken in the first place. No it is not: the only people who foreground these lines of argument are climate denialists; no one else gives them the time of day, because there's nothing to them.

Your assertion that the IPCC's latest report contains a number of "hedged bets" and your flagging up of such terms as "most, very likely, greater than 90% probability" demonstrates only -- I am sorry to say this -- a lack of understanding of scientific language. Science doesn't deal in absolutes, despite what you may have been taught in school (adding reagents to mixtures of chemicals, deriving voltages from the direction of magnetic currents); science instead strives to demonstrate the likely validity of theory (what has not been disproven, or which cannot be shown to not be true) in the current state of our knowledge of the natural world's nuclear, physical, chemical and biological processes. There are no cast-iron certainties, because any theory propounded today can be overturned by tomorrow's discovery. (Your go-to term here, which you should look up, is "Popperian falsifiability". Also see, while you're at it, "Kuhnian paradigm shift".) "Greater than 90% probability" is not "woolly statisticising", but what is ordinarily described (by other than climate denialists) as a statistically significant result. (While I'm at it, I'll add that 95% is so statistically significant that it is unarguable.)

You note that "There have been at least five climate swings in the form [of] major ice-ages over the course of the last 5 million years ... none of which Man can ever be said to have contributed to", but this is irrelevant. Denialists typically seize on the natural climatic variations to which the Earth has been subject during its history to try to undermine theories of anthropogenic climate change, but the very large differences in the time periods concerned -- millions of years versus the last 200 years -- means that like is not being compared with like and such comparisons are therefore inoperable. Natural variations are attributable to long-term fluctuations in solar output, even longer-term shifts in the Earth's orbit around the sun (from elliptical to circular and back again), the 41,000-year-long precession of the Earth's rotational axis, plate tectonic processes which alter the ratio of land to sea surface, how much of that land is covered by vegetation, the ability of the oceans to absorb carbon dioxide, and more: these are entirely different from the non-natural (excess) injection of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere by humans since the industrial revolution. The impact of these emissions on the atmosphere was first described -- as "the greenhouse effect" -- by the Swedish chemist Svante Arrhenius in 1896; it is noteworthy that no denialist has ever attempted to refute his argument.

But I shall stop at that point. There's probably more that I could and should say about other things in this issue, but we'll be away in Cornwall for a week from this Friday so I need to get this and other locs done before we go, otherwise they'll probably (note that term!) fall off the list of things to do when we return and thus never get written at all.

*(EDITOR: You argue very cogently and almost convincingly about Global Warming. I would say that regardless of the sources of its direct funding, the job of the IPPC is surely to consider the evidence of *all* research. It is the funding of the original research which concerns me, rather than the funding of the body considering it, silly conspiracist that I am. But you knew that. I accept that the IPPC is an entirely independent unbiased body, but that is not the issue. I would like to see a breakdown of the research projects and papers under consideration with details of their funding, but I suspect you will be unable to supply this.)*

Joseph Nicholas can be found at excellenceingardening@gmail.com

MODERN MYTHS OF OUR TIME PART TWO: ANCIENT BURIAL SITES

A plot of land designated as a Sacred Apache Burial Site has been sold off to developers. I'm sure all our collective Earth Mothers are turning in their own respective burial sites, but it means nothing to me. I'd like to believe in the myth of Apache Holy Lands and other *sacred* Native American sites, but somehow I don't, beyond tv shows and films and novel which so often use them as plot devices. Is the graveyard my mother is buried in in Herefordshire a sacred site? No, it's just a place where she and many other people are buried. Could it be turned into a car park for a new homes housing development. Well, certainly. Who would worry. Only a lot of people who cling unnecessarily to the past defying reason and logic. Nor do I give much credence to the famed Australian Aboriginal Dreaming. Nor to people who like to hug trees and find some sort of *connection* to them which they are often unable to quantify or even explain at any basic level. Nor to ghosts and spirits in general, and especially the fairies Arthur Conan Doyle photographed at the bottom of his garden. "Ghost" was a good movie though., and Pet Semetary was a good novel. Let us not be deflected by fiction, however, into believing the ontology of the unreal actual exists.

I'VE NEVER UNDERSTOOD CRICKET

Here I do more of what Andy Hooper would call blowing fannish stuff out of my fundament and talk about that great Fannish preoccupation with... Sport. We all know fans are the least sporting people around. In a participative sense. You only have to look at ancient photos of Silicon football matches to know that. And what was the last time you saw Andy Hooper swing a baseball bat?

I think possibly a lot of UK cricket fans listen to the radio (possibly these days on their mobile devices) whilst watching Test Cricket (as pointless a game as Baseball, but longer). They have to do something to alleviate the boredom of sitting in a field for eight hours watching little men dressed in white run around propelled by some meaningless logic. (Someone hits a ball and they hold up a card with 4 on it, as if to prove their brains are still functioning, on anything more than a subliminal autonomic Pavlovian level). But don't ask me. The last live sport thing I saw was a QPR (Queens Park Rangers) match in 1970. I think they lost.

My first contact with Sport was at Grammar School, where we forced to do IT on some level or other. Our parents had to prepare us for this horror by providing us with a draw-string kitbag, containing plimsolls, socks and a change of underwear, presumably in case incontinence struck us. Usually it also involved being forced to shower naked with other people which is why it has bad connotations for me. At school, Jock, the PE teacher (can you believe it) put us through cricketing routines in the gym and signalled me out as someone to watch for his batting style. Unfortunately this didn't translate into performance On The Team, where I was invariably bowled out by bowlers who didn't give a fuck for my *batting style* but threw balls at me very fast which I was unable to dodge.

Later when Roy Kettle lived nearby he was instrumental in instigating Badminton Thursdays, when a group of us, including Rob Holdstock, would go off and thrash each other relentlessly (on the court) and then also be subject to the universal indignity of showering naked under the shadow of Roy's awesome erection. This was precipitate sport at its harshest. Rob had a sort of instinctive sense of how to handle his shuttlecock, and my mate Stuart was always far too wirey and strong for my taste. Roy could hit things hard but without direction, which gave me pause to worry about his future career as a Ministerial Advisor. The women we played with were always lust objects but unfortunately they showered in a different part of the changing rooms, and we could only watch them by crouching down with our eyes against the keyhole. Ah, sport, don't you just love it.

Go Pats!

IAN WILLIAMS SENT DISGUSTING PHOTOS, I CENSORED THEM

Some muttering about disliking cute cats on the interwebs/Facebook. I love cute cats on the interwebs/Facebook. Not all the time but I do usually watch a cute cat video about once a day. I have to really as I've been officially designated as a **Crazy Cat Man** (or: Ian Williams, CCM). I considered, just to be awkward, attaching a couple of photos of cute cats I've either got living in my house or rescued and re-homed, but then rejected the idea. So instead I'm attaching a couple of photos of the damage to the back of my right hand caused by being bitten three days in succession by a not-so-cute cat I'm currently fostering. It may seem strange on my part but I like looking at photos of physical damage to my person. Oh well, nobody's perfect.

(EDITOR: Photos have been censored in deference to those of our readers who cannot stand the sight of blood.)

I notice that music is still a recurring topic so in reply to Steve Jeffrey, I do so have some Reggae in my collection but as it happened when I moved two and a half years ago at least one box full of CDs went missing/stolen which included various reggae compilations and a Bob Marley best of (though they remain on my Ipod) and all I have physically left of West Indian music is the 3-disc **Beginners Guide To Ska** -I prefer Ska to Reggae anyway.

On SF, this is a more detailed comment on you disliking **Cordwainer Smith** which you mentioned on Facebook recently. Not that long ago I bought the **NESFA Press** editions of his complete short stories and single novel and enjoyed them as much if not more than back in the 60s and 70s. So sad that he didn't live long enough (we're both older than him when he died) to write more. There's a sophistication and imagination that makes he stand out from his contemporaries with his imagery verging on the surreal creating a unique strangeness.

Dave Cockfield mentions he never learned to drive and had a succession of accidents on person-powered transport. He's missing so much as I used to cycle a lot in my teens and couldn't manage without a car -been driving for around 34 years give or take and not had a major accident yet, though I'm very unsafe at a speed of less than 5mph, especially when reversing- so it's not surprising that my danger dreams are of imminent car crashes caused by my inability to reach the break pedal. But Dave's are of drowning. Odd, as he doesn't mention if he can swim. I go swimming at least twice a week and never dream about it. I know Harry Bell, probably correctly, considers these anxiety dreams and not specific to the means.

I'll pass on your habit of not bathing as commented on that on FB -feel free to reprint it if you think it adds to the discussion. No? Okay. In brief: I'm on Graham's side.

Curt Phillips on guns. I confess to having a British knee-jerk reaction (or maybe it's just me) but I hate guns and see their ownership as completely unnecessary and the American obsession with them to be completely insane. Curt, however, does provide a fairly good explanation why he and people like him (who don't live in cities) actually do need guns; though as an animal lover, I deplore the shooting of squirrels and snapping turtles even if the latter are vicious bastards. I have never ever wanted to eat squirrel pie. But gun ownership still makes my skin crawl.

Right, with most of the American TV series that I've following coming to the end of their runs, it's time to catch up on some of the many of the films on DVD/Blu-Ray that are piled up behind me which include **Ex-Machina**, **Back To The Future Trilogy**, **Tremors Box Set**, **Vampire Circus**, and many more.

Seeing as I've mentioned TV I may as well comment briefly on the **Wachowski's** TV series on Netflix which I finished binge-watching last night -**Sense8**. In a year of really good shows this may be the best. It's one of those shows people are either going to love or hate and obviously I'm in the former group. Let's get the technical side out of the way: photography, direction, acting are all excellent. The script by the Wachowskis and JM Straczynski is superb. It's also hard to describe. Sense8 is a very humane show as it spends about 11 hours/12 episodes exploring the characters of the 8 protagonists, plus several more with whom they're individually involved, and gradually revealing their pasts. Which could be boring -and will be for some people despite the outbreaks of brutal violence and explicit sex- but isn't because of the depth and subtlety of the script and the quality of the cast, plus the superb editing in which a conversation can be shot between two people thousands of miles apart and cutting between locations and if that sounds confusing you're just going to have to watch it. Oh yes, and it is SF. But really it's about love. And other stuff. It's the sort of show you're going to want to spend hours talking about with another fan.

Christ, that was serious. Okay, in the first episode there's a really hot lesbian sex scene with Freema Agyeman and Jamie Clayton (a transgender actress). There's no way on Earth I wasn't going to watch it till the end after that.

Ian Williams can be found at ianw700@gmail.com

PHILIP TURNER IS FEELING FOXY.

Nice, bright colourful cover. I did consider sending this on June 31st to spare your pants an irrigation but I ran into a small practical problem calendarwise. We too have urban foxes in our green belt. My late father observed foxes strolling along the middle of Carlton Avenue at night several times. And I was actually able to get some pix of a daytime visitor. My niece, a keen wildlifer and also visiting, spotted one availing itself of the facilities a couple of years ago -- that's swanning about on the terrace at the back of the garden rather than anything antisocial.

Technical Note: The only way a butterfly flapping its wings in an English meadow can set off a tropical storm on the other side of the planet is in a computer model, where friction has been omitted. Here in the real world, the butterfly's efforts are lost in routine atmospheric turbulence right away. Further, the concept of "scientific consensus" is all to do with politics and nothing to do with science. Which is why sensible people brace themselves for a load of tosh whenever they hear "butterfly effect" or "scientific consensus".



If it's not a rude question, how big is Ian Williams, your biggest fan, and are you sure that you have measured all of your fans to be sure that he's the biggest?

*(EDITOR: Philip, Ian Williams is absolutely *Massive*. Ian Sorensen cannot even walk in his shadow, Ian is so *Immense*)*

Your bath story set me wondering how long it is since I last stretched out at full length in one. In my present unmanoeuvrable state, I don't think I'd be able to get out of a bath without the aid of a block and tackle. As I mentioned to Taral Wayne the other day, my membership of COKOB** is fully paid up for the moment. My father got round the problem by acquiring one of those half-length baths with a seat and a door in the side. It can also be used by a shower by someone who can't wait for the bath to fill up.

(** Confederation Of Knackered Old Blokes)

Like Paul Skelton, my family has been well served by Stepping Hill hospital. My mother was actually a patient there when the insulin poisoner was operating. Luckily, she was in the diagonally opposite corner of a rather large site; as far away from his ward as it is possible to be.

By Steve Jeffrey's definition, even though my record collection overlaps his a lot, it still has to be classified as frivolous rather than sensible. I'm still working out whether I should be bothered by this.

I don't think publishers crave 100,000 words any more. The current practice of bulking paperbacks with larger type and lots of line spacing soon gets what should be a 300-page book to a pseudo-blockbuster 500 pages to make it look like you're getting a LOT for your money. I'm currently reading *The Outcast Dead* by Elly Griffiths and that's just 25 lines per page and a prime example of bulking.

I enjoyed Nic Farey's further adventures, and Curt Phillips' article on working guns -- as opposed to guns for fun (and robbing pawn shop and liquor stores). This is real gun culture, in a literal state. I was also inspired to revisit Sparky's Magic Piano on Utube -- we used to have this on 78s years ago, and I must get round to Arlo @ Alice's sometime soon.

Okay, I'd better stop before this becomes an Article of Comment instead of a LoC (if it hasn't got there already).

Philip Turner can be found at farrago2@lineone.net

DAVID REDD WOULD LIKE TO SEE JEREMY CLARKSON AS PRIME MINISTER – I THINK

Well, thank for thish and for the reassurance that I am low on any potential chop-list. Already enough stress in life under Tories without *that* threat. Austerity, fracking, TTIP, neonicotinoids, and, oh, the likes of PriceWaterhouseCoopers turning a blind eye to Tesco misdeeds for ages and now advising local councils to price community life out of existence...

This is because I just listened to a 1959 Goon Show with a line of dialogue which sounded very like “Happy New Year? But the Conservatives are in!” Made me dig out a more recent quote from the great Welsh humourist Neil Kinnock; remember him? “I warn you not to be ordinary, I warn you not to be young, I warn you not to fall ill, and I warn you not to grow old.” What a wit. Never mind, the Tories will put everybody in work (zero hours contracts) and then tax them all (except the rich) so the tax revenues will soon balance the national budget, real soon now because mere wealth-creating manufacturing or farming are being phased out in favour of the much more reliable financial sector. I must have been reading too much Mark Steel.

No, I blame Jeremy Clarkson. Soon after laying aside *Vibrator* an idea struck me out of nowhere, or possibly from noticing a mention or two of him in the media. After the apocalypse, future archaeologists digging up printed books from the rubble will be 100 to 1 more likely to find a Jeremy Clarkson book than the works of Keats. And lacking any other evidence they’ll regard him as our civilisation’s greatest social commentator. Like most households, I have some Clarkson prose easily to hand as evidence.

Years ago, his car parking problems in Oxford led him to write,

“If the car is banned and out-of-town superstores are encouraged, town centres will die.”

Actually, I’d noticed that myself, but later than Clarkson I think. I was also a little behind him observing that children’s viewing habits had changed from watching programmes all through to swift channel-flicking between attention-hooks. Yes, social comment. He sees, he writes. “I suspect Britain isn’t multicultural at all. It’s simply a land mass on which an unknown number of immigrants and indigenous people happen to live.” Debatable, but you can’t say he was wrong to debate it.

To politics, when defence secretary Geoff Hoon was cutting back on Eurofighter orders because “Hoon seems to think that Russia is safe”. Clarkson wrote, “It’s all very well saying the Soviet empire has crumbled but have you seen *Fatal Attraction*? You thought Glenn Close was dead, you relaxed, and then, whoa, she reared up out of the bath with that big spiky knife.” Absolutely, Vladimir Putin might say.

But those 31st Century archaeologists might get puzzled by lines like “Shark attacks are simply God’s way of telling surfers to get a job.” They wouldn’t realise that their successor to Montaigne was simply churning out 1,000 words or whatever a week as entertainingly as he could for the triple Muses of ego, publicity and bank balance.

He explained his method in one of his motoring columns (you know, those articles in another part of the paper where he chunters on at random before suddenly changing direction to slag off the worst-designed car in human history, every week) as being based on an old family mantra: “What’s the point?” Like Algis Budrys judging sf stories, “Why are you telling me this?” or James Blish with “Who does this hurt?” if you apply the principle to every sentence, you find it works. Clarkson is as ruthless as Stephen King at constantly grabbing the readers’ attention.

Wish I could find that old *Independent* comment on book sales c. 2005, surmising that the chart-topping *World According to Clarkson* was flying out of bookshops because customers were afraid if they didn’t buy it he’d biff them one.

Also in 2005, he was suggesting that plastic packaging should be returnable to the manufacturer for disposal, thus pricing plastic bottles etc out of the market in favour of glass. And he pointed out a side benefit: “Those who go around at night glassing each other are the sort of fat oafs who are doing the littering. If therefore we switch to glass, they end up dead, and there is less litter on the beach. Everybody wins.” My 31st Century archaeologists will appreciate his informed social commentary. They may wonder why he wasn’t Prime Minister.

Okay, Graham, cut out the foregoing if you like, but I’ve just (in the pause after the last paragraph) at last found the article I wanted. In 2004, Jeremy Clarkson highlighted the problem of young people being so educated and travelled and entertained that by the age of 18 ... “I have a horrible feeling that my kids are going to leave school not prepared for the world but sick of it ... done much too much, much too young. This will mean they’ll spend the next 10 years of their lives eating crisps and drinking beer while shooting aliens on the PlayStation.”

That’s it. A perfect explanation of our downfall that the future archaeologists will be very glad to find, since it’ll tie in with so much other evidence. And there’ll be so much of Clarkson’s stuff around that *his* explanations will have a lot better chance of survival than anyone else’s.

Ah, getting that insight down was worth a pair of tired eyes. I can now downsize the Clarkson book and keep *Vibrator* instead.

Incidentally, that Nic Farey can grab readers' attention as brilliantly as Clarkson or King any day. Pity you pay him a lot less.

(EDITOR: I've always had a soft spot for Jeremy Clarkson myself, David. Mostly because he didn't pander to political correctness, thus outraging people who saw political correctness as more important in a commentator than wit and insight. Russell Brand has something of the same effect on a lot of people and I like him for the same reasons. Some people like Katie Hopkins, however, manage to be politically incorrect without showing even the slightest evidence of wit or insight.)

David Redd can be found at dave_redd@hotmail.com

JIM LINWOOD: MEMOIRS OF AN OLD JAZZER

Like Kevin Williams I had an early exposure to jazz. As a teenager in the late 50's I was an avid listener to the nightly Voice of America Jazz Hour broadcast from somewhere in Germany. It was hosted by Willis Conover who became better known and respected in the Eastern Bloc than in the States. I later learned that Conover was a pre-war fan who published the fanzine *Science Fantasy Correspondent* and was a friend of Lovecraft. In 1956 the Musicians' Union ban on American jazz musicians appearing in Britain was lifted provided there was an exchange of artists: we got Louis Armstrong and they got Freddy Randall. The first American artist I saw was Big Bill Broonzy supported by the Chris Barber Band at the Nottingham Mechanics Institute. This gig made the headlines in the musical press as Broonzy was refused entry on racial grounds to a hotel he and the band had previously been booked into. The lifting of the Union ban gave me the wonderful opportunity of seeing and hearing my idols live in Nottingham and Leicester: Ellington, Basie, Brubeck, Gerry Mulligan and Jazz at the Philharmonic featuring Dizzy Gillespie, Ella Fitzgerald, Stan Getz, Oscar Peterson and Coleman Hawkins.

Most weekends I hitchhiked down to London to frequent the seedy jazz clubs of Soho, the Marquee and Flamingo, where I heard the likes of Ronnie Scott, Tubby Hayes, Joe Harriott and Phil Seamen. Phil was a demon drummer, a real life incarnation of Frankie Machine, who died due to his heroin addiction in 1972. When I went to Paris for the first time in 1959 I caught Bud Powell playing in the basement club, *Chat Qui Peche*, on the Left Bank.

When I moved to London in 1962 I was fortunate to live a stone's throw away from the Railway pub in West Hampstead where I and the rest of the Kingdon Road mob went once a week to the jazz and rhythm n' blues club *Klooks Kleek* where we saw the likes of Ronnie Scott, Tubby Hayes, Don Rendell, Zoot Money and a MC who thought he was the English answer to Lenny Bruce. Unfortunately, when I returned newly-wed to Nottingham, the club began to feature the likes of The Moody Blues, Sonny Boy Williamson, John Lee Hooker, Howlin' Wolf and Buddy Guy and I wish I'd stayed around to hear them. Sadly the club closed in 1970.

For the next few decades I didn't have the time for jazz gigs and concentrated on record collecting frequenting shops like Doug Dobell's in Charing Cross Road. Since retirement I've caught a few gigs by the likes of Ornette Coleman, Lee Konitz, Herbie Hancock, and Johnny Dankworth in the rather sterile atmosphere of the Royal Festival Hall and Queen Elizabeth Hall on the South Bank. My favourite jazz venue now is Cadogan Hall in Chelsea where I recently saw the divine Cleo Laine.

Jim Linwood can be found at jlinwood@aol.com

STEVE JEFFREY AGREES WITH JOSEPH NICHOLAS, SORT OF.

I remember that flea market on Tynemouth Metro station that Joseph mentions from when I worked in Howdon for a few years in the late 1990s. I was working as a consultant after being made redundant when the research center in Oxford closed shortly after we'd relocated to Oxford from West London (typical), to help one of the subsidiary companies set up their own research lab in the North East. Not a bad gig, I worked on a two weeks on, two weeks off basis, commuting up and down every fortnight, and still ended getting paid more than I had in full time employment. But it left alternate weekends with little to do but explore the various markets and galleries within easy Metro distance of Whitley Bay. There was also another flea market with a good bookstall in The Land of Green Ginger, in a

converted church in Tynemouth, as well as a sizable Saturday indoor market in Whitley Bay itself.

"All scientist are sceptics" writes Joseph later, regarding the climate change debate. (Although two sides refusing to hear or acknowledge the other's position or arguments is hardly a debate.) Well, yes, that is the ideal scientific method, of a guarded scepticism that all theories are provisional until actively disproved by contradictory data. Since science is done by actual human scientists rather than by machines, this ideal tends to get shunted aside due to reasons of prejudice and wishful thinking as often as not, leaving the public confused when the media report "scientists say" this one day and then its exact opposite the next. (They wouldn't like it if we reported that "journalists maintain" X one day and Y (that is, not-X) the next, so why do they do it. It's lazy, and obviously too much effort to read beyond the first sentence of a press release.)

The climate change argument is just the latest and most vociferous of these. It is the same with anything where one or other side has a vested interest, such as badger culling or GM, or evolution and Darwinian selection. Or even when it doesn't, apart from personal reputation, as with quantum theory (where Einstein was a vociferous denier) or the big bang/inflation (ditto Fred Hoyle).

Joseph is right, though, that claiming something "is just a theory" is not grounds for dismissal. The opposite in fact, since it suggests that it this is the best explanation supported by the currently available evidence.

Steve Jeffrey can be found at srjeffery@aol.com

PAUL SKELTON

Cas and I got back yesterday from taking Bestie for his morning road walk, this time through the nearby neighbourhoods of Davenport and Woodsmoor. The latter no longer has any woods or moors, but what it does have, among other things, is a couple of charity shops where I usually manage to pick up a few books. Also, it's a sort of circular walk and by doing it clockwise I don't have to carry the books very far before we're back home. Yesterday I had two bags, one from each shop, containing eight books between them. On arriving back we found the postman had been, and he'd left us the latest issue of your twice award-winning fanzine (as I think I've read somewhere), in which Dave Cockfield gives us a cut down list of the authors he reads. Whilst I can't do *exactly* that, serendipity means that I can at least be right up-to-the-minute (or, to be strictly accurate, way-ahead-of-the-minute) and give you an even shorter list of the ones I'm likely to be reading next.

Seven of the books are in the 'Mystery/Thriller' category, by Jefferson Bass, John Harvey, Dennis Lehane and, as if just to prove I'm an equal opportunity kind of guy, Tania Carver, Gillian Flynn, Elly Griffiths and Cath Staincliffe. Apart from Harvey and Lehane, the authors are all new to me. Basically I bought the back cover blurbs. I may already have read the Harvey but I didn't recognise either the cover or the blurb so decided to take a chance on it, given the price. It was free. Well, the cheaper of the two shops has all paperbacks for 50p each, or 3/£1, and I'd already picked out the Flynn and Lehane.

The other book was actually SF, by Greg Benford & Larry Niven, but I've just noticed it's a bloody sequel, so that'll have to wait until after I find *Bowl of Heaven*. Oddly enough I did almost buy another SF novel, precisely because it was a sequel. Niven's *The Smoke Ring*, thinking I could then read it right after reading his *The Integral Trees*. Then I came to my senses. Well, I've had the first book for over three years now but every time I pick it up and read the blurb I sort of go off the idea. The last thing I need is a sequel to a book I can't seem to bring myself to read... which of course raises the question of why I bought it in the first place. I can only conclude that it was the third book of its day. I certainly didn't buy it for its cover.

Speaking of covers (I may do 'continuity', but I don't do 'subtle'), there is something about your cover that indicates to me that it is not a 100% authentic "Official U. S. Treasury" War Bonds poster, though I can't quite put my finger on it. I would of course, it should go without saying, like to put more than my finger on it. Oddly though, other than that you got it printed for free, you seem to have kept all information about this cover even closer to your chest than the lady's apparel. Could this be, I ask myself, your shot at a 'Best Cover' award for 2015, which would of course then make *Vibrator* a triple award-winner?

I would not put this past you Graham, given that you are obviously a man with a long-term plan. When you write that "We will all look back on this and laugh in a hundred years time", I suspect you are speaking only for yourself. I

do not believe that any of your readers expect to be looking back on things in a hundred years time. Indeed Mike Meara has this very day stated, itb, that he expects not to be around to change any battery that has a ten-year life.

The 'Game of Thrones' stuff reminds me that, back when it first started (or obviously shortly afterwards), our daughter Bethany lent us the first series on DVD, assuring us it was absolutely ace TV (or some such). To this day neither Cas nor I have ever seen a single episode of the various series, and we really should return those DVDs to her this afternoon when she is calling round.

I am puzzled as to what David Redd's "limitations of screen reading" are. Screen reading makes it easy to increase font size or whatever. The only limitation I find, which admittedly is almost totally overwhelming, is that I don't currently have a screen to read other than this not totally user-friendly laptop. Oh, I have a small eReader which is great for books. Far better for books in fact than are books. But it only really does novels. Son-in-Law John has an iPad-sized, android-based, Samsung Galaxy tablet which he is bringing round later this afternoon to see how it interfaces with my Seagate GoFlex network drive. If it does the biz I will have one by this time tomorrow. This would then give me the perfect device to read eZines, books, watch videos & films, in bed or wherever, whenever, whatever. I am keeping my fingers crossed.

And indeed everything worked, but Cas insists we are talking the day after tomorrow, as tomorrow is somehow inconvenient for her.

So what other startling insights does your esteemed journal have to offer? Ian Williams asserts that Fish & Chips is not a 'Cordon Bleu' meal whilst Randy Byers advises that it is conceivable that there may be better actors than Bing Crosby. One can only wonder from where we obtained our information before *Vibrator* came on the scene.

But enough! I could write more. I really could. I haven't even mentioned how I can doubtless piss Kevin Williams off (by explaining how I YouTubed the Armstrong/Teagarden *Rocking Chair* but never got to the bit where he wrote "When Armstrong leads the way out with his horn, the emotion of it all is enough to bring you to tears" because about halfway through I switched off out of total indifference). Oh, bugger, I just did. Anyway, I am conscious that you have limited space and I regularly take up more than my fair share of it. Enough is enough.

MILT STEVENS REPORTS ON DRY TIMES

In *Vibrator* #15, I commented on Chris Garcia as follows, "Of course, now that he is married, his output may be limited for awhile." Twins! Twins he gets. Maybe I should have phrased that differently. Anyway, they do have cute little typing fingers.

In #15, you spend some time writing about your neighborhood environment. Here in Southern California we have a drought. That isn't unusual. The drought has been going on for several years. That isn't unusual either. The drier it gets the friskier the bureaucrats become. They have already proclaimed it will never rain again, and they will be in charge forever.

After the bureaucrats did prophesy, a new industry arose. For a price, there are people who will replace your lawn with a selection of sand, gravel, and rocks. These new rock gardens can make any neighborhood look like a desolate wasteland. You might wonder why people wouldn't just cement over their lawns. That would be cheaper, easier, and look better. Maybe the only good thing about the new rock gardens is that they are temporary. They will undoubtedly wash away during the next floods.

I live in a small three bedroom house with lawns in front and back. I find that I really like having living thing around me. Around breakfast time every morning, a squadron of little black birds stop by for a snack from my back lawn. Varieties of lizards and squirrels rush by in a mad scamper to avoid being eaten by something larger. That's ecology for you. The drought has driven a variety of creatures out of the hills. These include snakes, deer, raccoons, and bunny rabbits. In some other fanzine, I mentioned the case of a worker who entered a crawl space under a house and found himself face to face with a mountain lion. Fortunately, mountain lions around here don't seem to be hostile to humans. Generations of surviving on leftover French fries at fast food locations has left them unable to identify us as a potential food product.

You may recall that we have had some very large fires in Southern California. In 2003, we had a fire that burned an area larger than the country of Luxemburg. It seems likely that we will have some large fires in the next couple of months. If I don't stop this letter here, I'll probably think of something even more depressing.

Milt Stevens can be found at miltstevens@earthlink.net

BRYN FORTEY DIGS THE JAZZ VIBE, MAN

Corflu sounded great, but was too far away for me; and maybe, anyway, I prefer to remember you all as you were in the seventies.

Kevin Williams second LoC was of interest. My number one all-time gig was Louis Armstrong at the Empress Hall, London, in 1956. A show that featured Peg Leg Bates, a one-legged tap dancer, I kid you not. People oftendoubted that particular reminiscence so I was more than pleased to find him mentioned in an Ella Fitzgerald biography. 'Satch Plays Fats' and 'Louis Armstrong Plays W.C. Handy' are long standing favourite albums, along with all the Hot Five and Hot Seven tracks of course.

My mother shook hands with Louis and chatted to vocalist Velma Middleton at the Empress Hall while I was stranded on the other side and missed the opportunity, but it made her day.

'Weather Bird', a trumpet/piano duet recorded by Armstrong with Earl Hines in 1928 is the only definite starter in the crematorium musical extravaganza when I head for the flames. I keep changing my mind about the other tracks to be played, but not about that one. There are many recorded examples of his brilliance, and that is one of them.

Over the years, Louis Armstrong recorded countless duets and 'Now you Has Jazz' wasn't the first he did with Bing. 'Gone Fishing' from many years before was another occasion when he blasted Mr Crosby out of the water.

I also like a lot of Stan Kenton's work, though 200 albums does sound a bit excessive.

A letter writer in the last but one VIBRATOR mistakenly referred to me as Brian, but never mind, I've been called worse.

Byrn Fortey can be found at brynfortey@yahoo.co.uk

PAUL SKELTON TAKES HIS SECOND BITE OF THE CHERRY AND ADDRESSES THE GUN ISSUE

I had ignored Curt's excellent article on his guns. One tends to forget that the justification for the right to bear arms is that...

"A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free state..."

...and that a Militia is simply "a body of men trained and drilled as soldiers" which includes the UK reservists (what used to be known as the Territorial Army) and in the US the National Guard of the United States, albeit that, from the press coverage it tends to get when students are involved, 'well-regulated' might be a bit wide of the mark. There are also, according to Wikipedia various 'unorganized Militia' (as defined by a 1903 act) and that historically the term 'Militia' has been used to include any able-bodied man not currently in the armed forces. Of course we might point out that we find it possible to train and drill as soldiers without any right, constitutional or otherwise, to keep and bear arms at all times.

Another thing we in the UK tend to forget though, given that the US is an incredibly rich and powerful nation, is that even today there are probably US citizens who rely on hunting for a regular part of their diet. How could they do this without the right to keep and bear arms?

Of course this does not apply to most people in the US who hunt. Yes, they probably eat what they kill, but they do not hunt out of necessity. Nor do they do it as a civic duty. Can one see the man-of-the-house looking up from his newspaper at breakfast and saying to his wife...

"According to the paper the deer population around here has increased alarmingly and is becoming a threat to the environment. I shall have to phone into work and tell them I am taking a few days off in order to do my civic duty

and help with the unofficial cull. You'll have to dust off your venison recipes I'm afraid, darling. I'll be leaving as soon as I've spoken to our psychiatrist to arrange some counselling sessions for afterwards given that blasting away at helpless animals will, as usual, leave me severely traumatised."

...Eh? Never going to happen. They do it because they enjoy it. They do it for fun! Well, folks who think it is fun to kill harmless animals are not people I want to associate with. We humans are very arrogant creatures. We divide other creatures into two main groups – those we have found a use for, which we call 'domesticated' and those we have no use for, which we call 'extinct'. There is a sub-category of this latter called 'vermin', which is English for "We haven't managed to make them extinct yet".

Which brings me back to Curt's article and those snapping turtles. I Googled them. One of the hits was The Tortoise Trust, which describes them as...

"...creatures who are entitled to regard the brontosaur and mastodon as brief zoological fads" and

"Snapping turtles, embodiment of turtles who shared the earth with the dinosaurs for a time and are now obliged to share it with the human species, might well report that the former companions were far less stressful."

He describes them as "...nasty, stinking, ugly creatures..." and goes on to add that they "...routinely killed any fish which made their way down the creek that fed our pond..." Obviously just because they are nasty, stinking and ugly is no justification for killing them. I know several people who are nasty, ugly or even stinking (though obviously not you Graham), but that wouldn't be an excuse for killing them, so at first I thought he was implying that they needed to fish the pond for food and it was either them or the turtles...but if that were the case it would obviously have made sense to kill all the turtles, not just the ones that presented a difficult shot. So obviously he was killing them for fun, for the pleasure it gave him in practicing and developing his marksmanship.

Now I know we are talking a pre-teen child here and that children see things differently than do grown-ups (which is part of why it is called 'growing up'), particularly any child growing up on a farm, so I'm not being judgemental. It just made me feel uncomfortable, which was why I initially shied away from this response.

And of course the problem with "...the right to keep and bear arms..." is that some people never do grow up. This was exemplified just yesterday by the mass-murder of those folks in a church in Charleston, South Carolina. Cas heard a subsequent interview on the radio of some pro-gun guy called (she thinks) Larry Pratt who insisted that if only the guys in church had been armed they'd have been able to look after themselves, implying that it was **their** fault for being unarmed, rather than the fault of the pond-scum that shot them. So obviously people should go to church armed to the teeth and everyday life as a series of crazy gun battles would be nothing to which to take exception.

I would say it beggars belief, except that unfortunately it doesn't. Not everyone is as sensible and moral as Curt. There are some who should not have the right bear any arms more deadly than a ripe banana.

Paul Skelton can be found, as always, at paulskelton2@gmail.com

LLOYD PENNEY

Yes, it is spring, but on Sunday, it becomes summer, hurray! The birds are chirping, the squirrels are scrambling, and the leaves on the trees grow bigger, thicker and just plain leafier. That means no more sweaters, tees and shorts, sunscreen, and making sure the air conditioners work, and set to arctic.

I dare say that those of us still around, saurically dominating the earth we tread upon, telling the rest of us How Fanzines Should Be Done, are in the final days, and will cease to roar and lecture. And I wish The Rapture would hurry up and get here, and take all the religious nutjobs away.

You had a bath? There's enough pollution in the water as it is, stop that! We'll blame you for fracking and climate change, too.

Milt Stevens says that now that Chris Garcia is married, his output may be limited for a while. Milt's not right; the wife just had twins, so Chris' output is just fine, thank you very much. However, with two babes to look after, his writing may suffer. Big difference.

A device to read e-zines...a tablet with two staples embedded in the left-hand side of the casing. But then, some would say there should be three, and the wars start all over again.

Nic Farey's still driving taxi in Vegas? Thanks for the warning, this has been a Public Service Announcement. If you want to meet "interesting characters", then driving a taxi is what you want to do. Just don't make a mess.

The mall Murray Moore lives close to is the Applewood Mall. We're sometimes there ourselves. Recently, a little supermarket and a great little independent coffee shop were torn down, and replaced with a high-end, expensive supermarket and a Starbucks. I thought renovations were supposed to mean progress.

Lloyd Penney can be found at penneys@bell.net

JOHN D. BERRY CATCHES UP ON VIBRATOR 15

Lamb numbness (which sounds like a dinner dish): I'm struck by your juxtaposition of an excerpt from George R.R. Martin with one from Graham Greene. I haven't read that much of George's work, and I agree that this particular passage seems pretty much rote. But I have read, or seen performed, entirely enough of Graham Greene. He's very skillful, but I am simply uninterested in the dramatic questions that he focuses on. I realized at one point, after watching a play by Greene, that his drama was essentially Roman Catholic in a way that doesn't speak to me, not having grown up in that particular cultural milieu. I simply don't care about what he cares about. Well written, though.

Oh yes, FAAn awards again. You're right: recognition by ten peers is as valid as fifty peers. I anticipate your round-up of all the fanzines, fan writers, and fan thingies worthy of consideration for next year's awards. With annotations, I hope. Yes, seriously, it would be helpful. And yes, seriously, it won't happen.

Dave Cockfield's recollections of Bob and Sadie Shaw prompt my own. I visited them well before they repaired to Cumbria, when they were still resident in Belfast and at the heart of what was still considered Irish fandom (q.v.). I can think of few people who were more considerate and tolerant hosts; I only wish I had been anywhere near as considerate a guest. (And even more so: as considerate a guest with Walt & Madeleine Willis, whom I was staying with before they moved me to the Shaw household. Callow youth? It was I.) I thoroughly enjoyed all the time I spent with both of them, and I only hope they enjoyed the time they spent with me. I did get to see Bob again (though not Sadie) when he was Fan Guest of Honor at Norwescon in 1982, and I must have seen him at the 1987 worldcon in Brighton, though my memories of the latter are less specific. All my memories of Bob, however, are good.

It must have been at my first (and only) British Eastercon, in Worcester in 1971, that Bob and I found ourselves at a party hosted by the German fans (this was just one year after the worldcon in Heidelberg), being offered the famously powerful Deutsche-fannish liquor "Verguzz" (I may be misremembering the spelling). It had a reputation, as powerful alcoholic drinks often do, of putting the drinker right under the table in no time flat. It was, in its small glasses, a bright green in color. Bob and I each took a glass, looked at it for a moment, then drank it down. "Ah," said Bob. "That's quite nice!" I agreed. The expectant hosts were surprised when we both asked for another.

Coming back to Dave's reminiscence: "Both of the Shaws are greatly missed." Yes they are.

Oh yes: I think Nic's taxi regalements assume a bit more familiarity with the professional lingo than most of us have. Though his description of "back-loading" and when it's legit did add to my practical knowledge.

On consideration, after finishing the issue, I suspect that in your editing of the letters you get, you're not quite following Boyd Raeburn's excellent principle, when he was publishing a fanzine in the late 1950s that you would probably have enjoyed reading: print everything that's worth printing, whether it's one line or several pages. But nothing more.

Ian Maule sez: "Running a bookshop specialising in Science Fiction was an ambition of mine, and Janice, at one time..." It's a wonderful side-effect of the lack of inflections in English that I can't tell at a glance whether Ian means that Science Fiction was an ambition of Janice's, or if Janice was an ambition of Ian's.

Thanks for Rich Coad's account of knowing Art Widner, including Art's last few months. Art's interaction with younger fans was sometimes hampered by his deteriorating hearing, but apart from that purely physical impediment, he was a wonderful example to all of us of living and thriving into your 90s. I'm only sorry that one of my nonagenarian friends is now gone. I hope that when I reach my 90s (if I do), I have as many younger friends as Art did, and enjoy interacting with them as much.

John D. Berry can be found at typographer@earthlink.net

JOHN NIELSEN-HALL

Please tell me what the cover illo is actually about. Why is the latex wonder woman sitting on and posing against a background of WW2 aircraft? I am mystified by it.

There is much to enjoy in this issue as always, but not a lot to comment upon for me, apart from Curt's arsenal.

Now, I am not going to have a go at Curt- he is a fan and a decent human being, and he is not responsible for the culture he lives in and was brought up in. I have, as you know, been to the USA a few times, even lived with a woman there once and she carried a gun in her handbag/purse and no amount of expression of misgivings on my part would dissuade her from doing so. Possession of guns is just part of the fabric of life in the USA. But that doesn't make it sensible. Since I read Curt's piece, some little wanker shot nine people in a church in Charleston and President Obama, to whom it seems no one ever listens, said again how sooner or later America has to face up to the fact that shootings like that happen way more often than they happen anywhere else in the world. And that is because of the sheer scale of gun ownership and the lack of any kind of federal control over it.

Curt quotes just about the whole of the second amendment which makes it clear that the context in which the right to bear arms was enacted had to do with the need for states to have militias, which two hundred plus years ago was probably reasonable enough. However, nowadays, the USA has more law enforcement personnel per head of population than many places that are often referred to as a "police state", in addition to the National Guard and the world's biggest and most well equipped armed forces. Militias and armed citizens are well surplus to requirements. The second amendment is merely an excuse in the 21st century.

On the other hand, if it were possible to enact gun controls tomorrow, there are so many firearms at large in the country their impact would probably be negligible. What in the end would change? The answer is "nothing" for a long time, but like water dripping on a rock, the notion that having a gun is a normal thing, like owning a car or a telephone would have to change and if guns were harder to come by, little wankers who can't get used to the idea that people with a different skin are still as much people as they are would not get given them by their loving mummies and daddies. You can hope that there would come a day, even if you and I and Curt don't live to see it, when only hunting rifles and shotguns are kept, and those in secure cabinets and boxes with the ammo in a separate place and even the average patrolman might have nothing more offensive on him or her than a riot stick and maybe some pepper spray. Of course, I am a Buddhist and hopelessly naive, but then again when I was a kid no adult I knew thought that men would go to the moon or that everyone would use a computer, so things can change- even in America. All it takes is the will of enough people to make it so. In the meantime, though I love America and all my American friends, I am so glad I live in miserable wet old Blighty.

I'm glad I got that off my chest- don't bother printing it, its probably too boring.

John Nielsen Hall can be found at johnsila32@gmail.com

ROBERT LICHTMAN

Your mention in "Spring Break" of "frequent rampages by visiting foxes" is very evocative. I suppose there might be some foxes around here in the Oakland hills, but I don't recall ever seeing any. What we have a lot of year-round is squirrels. In season we have deer passing through and occasionally pausing to graze – both they and the squirrels love the ripe volunteer plums that fall to the ground from the many wild trees on our and surrounding property. We

have seasonal birds, too – the blue jays have just departed – who don't wait for the fruit to fall before pecking into them and then, apparently not happy with the taste, letting them fall on the ground.

Joseph and Judith, you write, "have a small but serious garden, chockfull of wonders for such a small space." When I moved here in 2005, we tried to grow tomatoes and hot peppers – the main crops (plus cucumbers) I grew for many years in the back yard of my apartment in Glen Ellen – in pots (the peppers) and in a special growing bin we bought from an on-line gardening supply in Michigan. It was all in vain – the climate here isn't conducive to peppers (too mild compared to the hot summer days in Sonoma County), and despite our best efforts to protect them the squirrels and birds destroyed our tomatoes just as they showed signs of ripening.

We shop at farmers markets instead.

David Redd concludes his letter with, "The excellent other fanzines you mention are known to me but now off-limits due to limitations of screen reading. I remain grateful to *Vibrator* for its physical manifestation." I wonder what limitations he means. If it's only a matter of the print being large enough, Acrobat Reader does allow one to increase a PDF's viewing size for easier reading.

You write that you're "constitutionally incapable of getting rid of any book I have ever acquired." Does that put any sort of damper on purchasing books for fear that, if unfettered, you would overrun the confines of your house or, at the very least, encroach into the living space for the other occupants? I used to have the same problem, but on a couple of significant occasions I've been able to overcome it. The first time was back in 1971, when in a fit of reducing my "material plane" in preparation for a possible move to Tennessee I disposed of my books, record collection and even my fanzine collection in various ways, some of which resulted in considerable money coming my way. I don't recall how many books I had – surely in the hundreds – and some of them were rare collectibles even then (a first edition of Ginsberg's *Howl*, for one, and the original hardcovers of Charles Olson's *Maximus Poems* for another). I had a couple thousand LP records and around 300 45 rpm singles. Fellow fan Greg Shaw (of *Bomp* and *Mojo Navigator R&R News* fame and before that fanzines such as *Karnis Bottle's Metanoia*) was happy to inherit the 45s and some of the albums. What I regret most from that period was getting rid of the fanzines, even including the file copies of my own stuff. Memory says that I gave them to long-time fan friend Andy Main, who was then living in the Haight-Ashbury, but he has no recollection of this (probably under the "if you can remember the '60s, you probably weren't really there" clause).

Wow, I'm drifting here. Fast forward to around 1994 when Paul Williams pulled up stakes in Glen Ellen to move to San Diego to live with Cindy Lee Berryhill. He dropped a lot of paperback science fiction on me, including but not limited to a bunch of Heinlein's oeuvre, since he would be living in much smaller quarters and also didn't really have room in his car to transport them. I kept these paperbacks for many years, studiously not rereading anything, before my own ongoing book acquisition cried out for more space. It was with a certain pang, though not as big as the 1971 pang, that I offloaded them (and more) in various ways – even including successfully selling some few of them on eBay.

These days I look over what's on my book shelves with "will I ever want to read that again" running through my head. So far I haven't succumbed on that front, but my fanzine collection is another matter. It's many times larger than the one I parted with in 1971 and I am determined not to devote any more of my remaining floor space to more file cabinets to house it. I've been weeding it in successive waves, each one a little more painful, and selling off much of what I decide I can part with to a couple of collectors I "met" on eBay, as well as in auctions there. I need to do that again soon, in hopes that I can make enough new open space to bring some of the overflow that's now in boxes back into the file cabinets.

Is there a point I'm trying to make here? Perhaps not, but I'm trying by my example to give you leave to think more on your constitutional incapability.

In "Almost Washed My Hair" I sympathized with your difficulty in getting in and out of the bath tub. And I marveled at your well-constructed rationalizations about how there's really no need to bathe at all. But mostly your comments reminded me of the late Elmer Perdue, writing in the first fanzine of his I ever saw (which he handed to me at one of the first LASFS meetings I attended), who lamented: "Gentlemen, did you ever stop to think that after a

certain amount of corpulence is attained, the *only* way stockings can be donned is by lying flat on your back in bed?"

Allison Scott is incorrect when she writes that she "was sad to hear of Art's death, but only very momentarily; it is not in fact sad to die after a short illness at the age of 97 having been beloved by everyone." It was *not* a "short illness" at all, but rather a prolonged one that involved fighting prostate cancer for at least 15-20 years. His periodic trips from the remoteness of Gualala down to Santa Rosa to receive medical treatment for this provided many occasions where he and I would get together for lunch when I was still working. It's a cruel irony that if not for his illness we would not have gotten to know each other so well.

Jim Linwood writes of the FAAn awards that "ranking five of my favourite fanzines and writers in a 1-5 order when I consider them of equal merit" is something he finds difficult. I have that problem, too, but then I think what a wonderful thing it is that even in fanzine fandom's much-reduced state (in terms of number of participants and fanzines) there are so many who are worthy of recognition that this is the "problem," instead of not finding enough worthy names to fill in five spaces.

I would never have imagined before reading Nic's latest installment of "Adventures of a Las Vegas Taxi Driver" that people having various forms of sex while being his passenger would be something that actually occurs. What a sheltered life I've led!

It was good to get to read Curt Phillips's gun article again, and to have it in a more permanent form than the illusory list post. (Yes, I could attempt to search the archives for it, but that's become increasingly fruitless with Yahoo's ongoing "improvements.") His mention of shooting rattlesnakes and copperheads reminded me of how we dealt with snakes on the Farm. First, we had no guns; instead, we had "snake kits." This consisted of an empty 5-gallon pickle bucket (the kind fast food restaurants get their condiments in) with a tightly closing lid and a long sturdy stick with a tightly forked bottom. Onto the latter was strung (through some eyehooks) a length of strong twine with a loop at the bottom adjacent to the fork. When a rattlesnake was encountered, the trick was to use the fork to firmly hold the snake to the ground just behind the head and then to tightly loop that twine around the head so that the snake could be lowered into the pickle bucket, the twine loosened, and the lid of the bucket tightly closed. These latter moves took some fast movement and occasionally a snake would manage to get away. Once captured, we called someone from the state wildlife agency to come pick up the snake. We had a number of these snake kits on hand so that they could collect more than one of a visit. They had a large cage of fine mesh into which they dumped the snakes from our buckets. They told us that they relocated the snakes to a rural preserve, but I always suspected they may have shot them.

Robert Lichtman can be found at robertlichtman@yahoo.com

DAVID REDD RETURNS FOR A SECOND BITE OF THE CHERRY

Looking again at Vibrator 2.0.16, as one does, I must chide your correspondent David Redd for calling 7 billion people "boneheads". I note that in a Peter Wimsey story his lordship Peter commented (if I heard Ian Carmichael correctly) on the word "idiots" thus: "Most people are, but it ain't kind to tell them so." Clearly Mr Redd wasn't kind. Must try harder. Later the same story contained another Dorothy L Sayers comment-for-everyone in "You'd think it's obvious, but it's taken people hundreds of years to realise it." That's people for you.

Alison Scott really is on her own buying new music. I bought a brand-new CD this month, but it doesn't count because it was on the cover of *Mojo* full of mostly 50s Freddie King, Howlin' Wolf, Eddie Boyd etc. Felt some kinship with Boyd's song for the line about the steel mill "Five long years every Friday I went straight home with all my pay." I felt that because of my uncle Jack. He worked in Port Talbot steelworks; he threw his pay packets into the drawer for my grandmother and never looked at them again. Eddie Boyd was spot-on.

Nearly everything I buy is old, usually from charity shops or vinyl specialists.. Kevin Williams might recognise my recent "Louis Armstrong plays W C Handy" (1954 original, on CD with bonus rehearsal tracks.) Surprising that my two most expensive Records are both blues – I've avoided the stuff almost totally for 7 decades. What's broadening my tastes, music chat in Vibrator, or old age?

You think washing is basically unhealthy, I see. You may have a point. Our being largely hairless on a dirty high-UV planet is a naturally unhealthy condition. I think our evolution went wrong – we were meant to be hippos as you can see from the shape of so many of us. We should be shoreline dwellers all year round, not just on holiday.

David Redd can be found at dave_redd@hotmail.com

FRED SMITH GETS SEXY WITH SAXOPHONES

That's quite a picture on the front cover. Was it really a poster advertising war bonds? If so, why the beautiful supergirl? And why would a U.S. poster show a Hurricane and Spitfire along with the B17G when it should be more appropriate, surely, for an escort of a pair of Mustangs or maybe Thunderbolts?

Dave Cockfield and his encounters with vehicular transport I can sympathise with. As a small boy I too built a Bogie, in my case with wheels provided by half roller skates (3). The front one collapsed, however, and half of one of my nails was torn off. A bit later I fell off a bicycle, tearing some skin off my leg. I've also been in three car crashes (in only one of which I was driving) and had to have anti-tetanus shots for a cut afterwards. On the other hand my many flights in gliders and light aircraft have been uneventful proving that flying is, indeed, safer!

Re. the election I'm not sure if Dave is pleased or otherwise by the result and, it seems to me, fans in general appear to be left wing (including your good self!)

Your difficulties with bath time suggest to me that you will definitely have to get a non-slip mat before you attempt it again twenty years from now. My own solution is to shower and not sit down in the bath.

Alison Scott revealing her love of "new" music to the extent that she might even buy it is astonishing. I gave up listening to the radio a long time ago because the stuff played was so awful and I do still buy CDs as almost the only way I can hear music I like.

Randy Byers reply to Art Widner's disparaging comment about the saxophone, "But it's sexy!" is well said. The instrument is even used in Dixieland bands. And "sexy" - listen to Phil Woods' alto solo on "The Gypsy" (with Quincy Jones's Orchestra) where he interpolates a snatch of "If I Only Had A Heart" (from "The Wizard Of Oz"). A girl I once knew when listening to that had to lean over and plant a big kiss on me! Sexy? Oh, yes!

I wish we could receive Curt Phillips' Big Band Radio show. It's bound to be better than the stuff that's put out on radio here (with the odd exception - generally at inconvenient times!). Apart from Glenn Miller, Curt, do you also collect other big bands, like Dorsey, Shaw, Herman, etc., and including "air shots" of these? The trouble with Miller, I found, was that he was too "commercial".

Speaking of guns, (as Curt was), I seem to remember that it was either Bob Pavlat or Dean Grennell who had a small collection of hand guns, including a .357 Magnum, with which he and some friends used to shoot rats at a city dump. I said at the time that they would be useful for shooting any burglars who broke in but the reply was that the cops didn't take kindly to citizens who potted intruders!

*(EDITOR: Yes I found the cover illo's choice of aircraft puzzling; and the attire and stance of the girl certainly *modern* in terms of the subject. What can I say? I ripped it off from Google images without a qualm, although I've since been unable to re-find it by goggling similar items. Curt's show is available streamed from the college radio site and Pat used to listen to it on her DAB radio. Maybe she or Curt will advise on how to receive it. I agree about the sexiness of the saxophone. The most fun I had in a band was playing along with an excellent saxophonist steeped in Charlie Parker and John Coltrane. It is certainly the musical instrument which most approximates the human voice in its singing tone and expressiveness. I have never been able to *sing* properly, so perhaps I should take it up.)*

Fred Smith can be found at f.smith50@ntlworld.com

VIBRATOR BACKSIDE

Batmobile



The downside of Vibrator is that, in words of the immoral George Harrison, All Things Must Pass (£35 on ebay) you have a whole page of Vibrator Backside today thanks to Steve "Mr Cartoon" Stiles.

This issue is dated June 2015. The next one will be July 2015 and will have a deadline date of June 30th.

The next issue will be dedicated the World's Oldest Profession, yes, Fanzine Editing. No, I mean prostitutes or as we have coyly become accustomed to describe them : LADIES OF THE NIGHT. I asked people to share their experiences of this noble profession. All the seedy and frankly repulsive memoirs can be read in the next issue. What do they say in advertising: DON'T MISS IT!

I'm also hoping Pat will be able to contribute an article on how to contract food poisoning and survive it, but don't hold your breathe. Or in fact your several breaths.