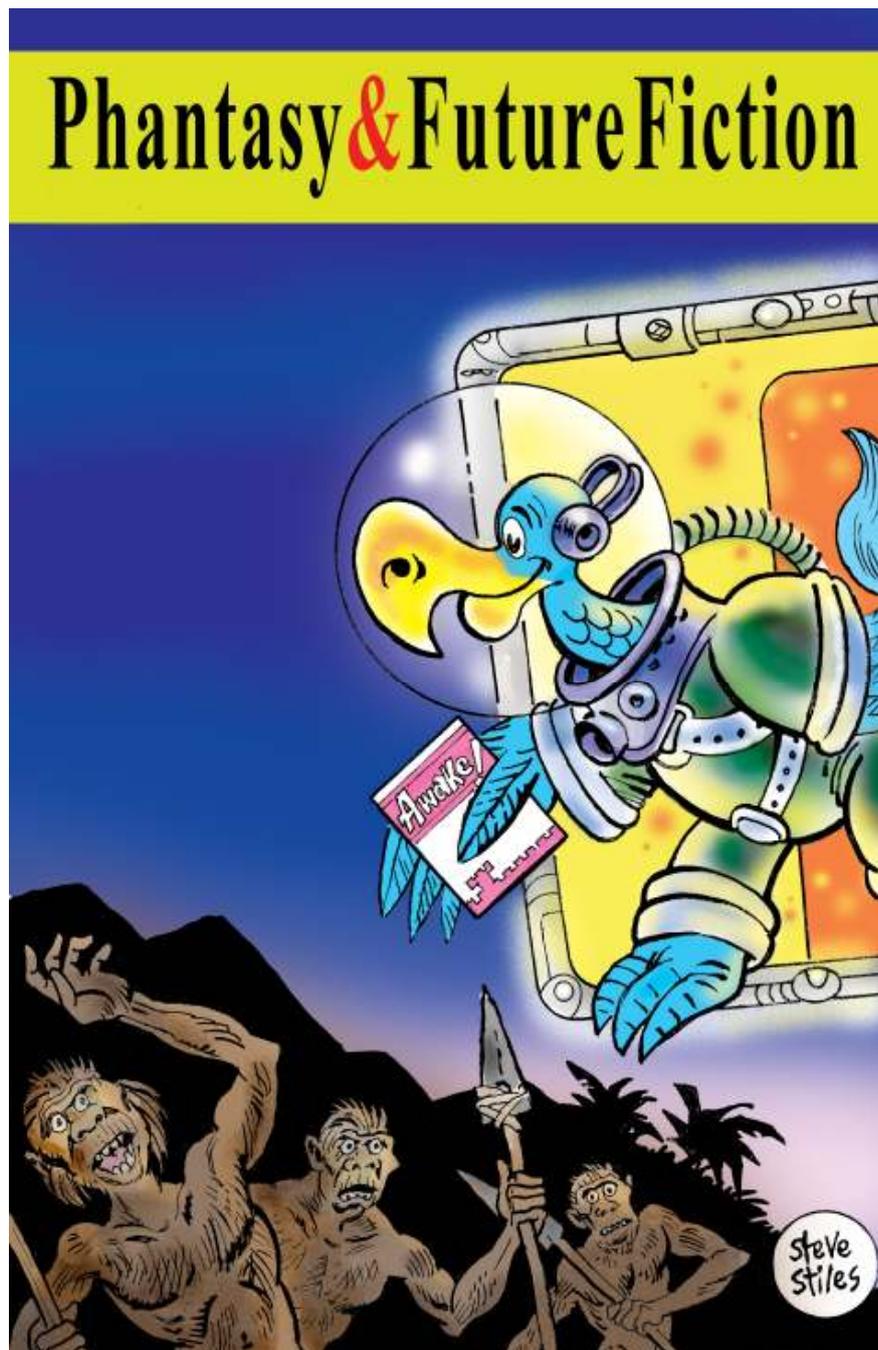




S.DAK. 1956
VIBRATOR 2.0.37

February 2017



Hello everybody. It's been a long and stressful month which sort of accounts for the late arrival of this issue. I won't go into details but it involves various degrees of mayhem, inflammation, convulsions, and body fluids spewing from various orifices, resulting in me being very familiar with the route to my local hospital. When I turned 70 I was fully prepared in accepting imminent death. I just didn't figure the younger members of my family would be cueing up behind me to have their own shot at it.

But hey, let's not get too depressing. We can rely on Donald Trump to provide that level of excitement, after all.

On a brighter note, we have acquired a new cat, who is a somewhat thick tortoiseshell named Jenny by the family, and Mipsy by me, because, well, she seems a bit brain damaged and childish.

This issue in No. 37 brought to you as usual by Graham Charnockj:
graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk

Remember to vote for me in the next round of Hugos, whenever that may me. Ha ha ha.

AMERICA THE DAMNED

THE WEST VIRGINIA MINE WARS

The history of the early years of 20th century America is populated by various labour disputes. This is hardly surprising since workers rights were in the forefront of socialist thought at a time, when socialism was on the rise in the wake of the Russian Revolution and Marxist and other philosophies. Revolutions both major and minor, localized and widespread, were won and lost because of the spread of democratized unionization, and how efficiently, or not, it was handled. Henry Ford hated unionization whilst his more accommodating son was willing to talk and mediate with it's leaders, much to Henry's annoyance. Eventually compromises were worked out. Elsewhere, as in the West Virginia Mine Wars, the labour dispute hinged upon not only economic events but certain charismatic characters. Few labour wars and disputes had prominent female protagonists, but one such was Mary "Mother" Jones, born Mary Harris Jones, an Irish immigrant school teacher and dress-maker.

Hardship and tragedy were not unknown to her. Her husband and four children all died of yellow fever in 1867. Yellow fever was a big problem in certain areas of America at this time, and in fact caused the depopulation of cities such as Memphis by their white

population, which in term opened them up to opportunities for the less-privileged black classes. Her dress shop business was also destroyed in the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, In 1902 she must have done something right because she was called "the most dangerous woman in America" for her success in organizing mine workers and their families against the mine owners. This mostly happened during the West Virginia Mining Wars, a conflict of organized labour which has had less publicity than others.

An early precursor of this and her engagement in labour matters was when In 1901, workers in Pennsylvania's silk mills went on strike. Typically Mother Mary exhorted women to use whatever was to had as weapons, brooms, kettles and pans, but mostly it must be said to wield them metaphorically only, not to use them in actual violence.

So what was going on in the greater world when Mother Jones forced her way onto a quite small American stage. Well, the First World War had not yet pitched the whole of Europe into chaos and individual European states had strong mining industries, coal being the mineral that at the time powered all economic development, including the Empire-related aspiration of the British. America had far more localized problems to bother with though, of course, and so was not interested (yet) in Empirical expansion.

Perhaps the most notable local event on 1902 was when on Feb 22, A fistfight broke out in the US Senate, and Senator Benjamin Tillman, a white supremacist, suffered a bloody nose for accusing his fellow South Carolina Senator John McLaurin of bias on the Philippine tariff issue.

Against this background of overriding National angst and petty squabbling there was then little respect for Health and Safety issues, and Jones, who, remember, had lost her four children already, was outraged to learn many women and children mill workers were missing fingers due to working accidents and pursued Franklin D. Roosevelt with many petitions to meet with her, which were declined.

Martial law was declared in West Virginia in 1912, one of the few cases the US government has used militia against its own citizen. The response of Mother Jones was typically to speak and try and organize against what she saw was an iniquity. She was arrested in 1913 and bought before a military court. She served a short ime in prison before being released, mostly due to public demand.

But what lay at the heart of the West Virginia Mine Wars? The disagreement was based on fairly standard protocols: the miners demanded better pay, better work conditions, the right to trade where they pleased, rather than buy goods at exorbitant prices from company shops and recognition of the United Mine Workers (UMW). The mine-owners responded typically by refusing to negotiate. They armed themselves and as organized labour started to walk through their territories they threatened to respond with violence. Their lobbies in the government were powerful enough to ensure that government militia supported them.

Coal miners were beginning to unite and unionize and in Ludlow Colorado in 1914 things finally came to a head when some two dozen people, including miners' wives and children, were killed by a National Guard.

This came to a head and culminated in The Battle of Blair Mountain For five days in late August and early September 1921, in Logan County, West Virginia, some 10,000 armed coal miners confronted 3,000 lawmen and strike-breakers, called the Logan Defenders, who were backed by coal mine operators during an attempt by the miners to unionize the south western West Virginia coalfields. The battle ended after approximately one million rounds were fired.

Wiki: "The massacre, the culmination of an extensive strike against Colorado coal mines, resulted in the violent deaths of between 19 and 26 people; reported death tolls vary but include two women and eleven children, asphyxiated and burned to death under a single tent. The deaths occurred after a daylong fight between militia and camp guards against striking workers."

Mother Jones was imprisoned many times during her campaigns, one suspects purely because the authorities found her troublesome,

Mother Jones died in 1930. By 1936, the miners had saved up more than \$16,000 and were able to purchase "eighty tons of Minnesota pink granite, with bronze statues of two miners flanking a twenty-foot shaft featuring a bas-relief of Mother Jones at its center." On 11 October 1936, also known as Miners' Day, an estimated 50,000 people arrived at Mother Jones's grave to see the new grave stone and memorial. Since then, October 11 is not only known as Miners' Day but is also referred to and celebrated on Mount Olive as "Mother Jones's Day."

GYPSY GRAHAM'S FANNISH HOROSCOPES

ARIES

March 21st to April 19th

It's convention time again. Have you paid your membership? Have you booked your room? Have you asked yourself whether you really want to go after all. If you do you will meet a stunningly attractive man/woman who will get you drunk and whisper lascivious nothings in your ear. If you don't no one will even miss you. It's a no-brainer really. Oh, and don't put off writing that loc to Vibrator

TAURUS

20th April – 20th May

You will receive something unexpected in the post. A copy of Ansible. Which is strange because you thought Dave Langford had dropped you from his mailing list years ago, perhaps because you never wrote him a loc. Let that be a lesson for you. You wouldn't want it to happen with Vibrator, would you?

GEMINI

21 May – 20th June

Hard to be specific about details, but I can safely predict you will get into an almighty row on Facebook and someone will call you a dick-head. Maybe you should have written that loc to Vibrator after all.

CANCER

21st June – 22nd July

An old fannish friend will visit unannounced and ask you for money. If he challenges you to a game of dominoes you are advised to refuse and just knuckle down to writing that loc for Vibrator instead.

LEO

23rd July – 22nd August

Happy times. You will discover an out of the way stationery shop that not only sells coloured staples, but has a supply of twilltone duplicator paper. What a shame you sold your duplicator years ago, but at least you won't need one to write your loc for Vibrator.

VIRGO

23rd August – 22nd September

You will discover that somebody purporting to be a friend has posted an old photograph or you at a convention slumped in a chair with a bucket on your head. Your internet will go down and mean you have to go to the post office to buy a stamp to post your loc off to Vibrator.

LIBRA

23rd September – 21st October

You will come across a rare edition of a Badger book by Bron Fane in a second-hand bookshop, priced at only £200. You go to a cash-point to get out some money but when you return to the shop you find the owner's cat has chewed it to shreds. Why not write a loc to Vibrator about it?

SCORPIO

22nd October – 21st November

You will stand for Taff. How can you fail when you are nominated by Nic Farey, Curt Phillips, Dave Langford, Steve Green and Randy Byers. Easily, because you not only don't

wash but don't read science fiction. Beside you are too old to shag. But don't be bitter about. Get your feelings out in a loc to Vibrator

SAGITTARIUS

22nd November – 21st December

You may find yourself snowed in by unseasonal summer storm storms. Mind you, you are called Nigel Rowe and are in Chicago, so it serves you right. Still, an opportunity to snuggle up to a warm fire and write that loc for Vibrator.

CAPRICORN

22nd December – 19th January

You will be invited to a room-party. But don't go. Stay in your hotel room instead having a crisis of confidence because someone has written a critical loc to your fanzine. Not that you'd ever do that to Vibrator, would you?

AQUARIUS

20th January – 18th February

A month of surprises. Someone called Martine Hoare will offer to buy you a drink. Someone else will send you a photo of what he had for lunch, Jim Mowatt will post a photograph[h of himself in a hot tub, while Ian Williams will re-house yet another cat. You will be busy but will easily find time to write that loc for Vibrator

PISCES

19th February – March 20th

Tragic events remind you of man's mortality. You will regret many things left undone, publishing that fanzine, reading that book, but fortunately not forgetting to write that loc for Vibrator



NIC FAREY

Very, very nicely done with the pretty seamless stitching of the write-ups and remarks on Peter Weston's funeral and memorial.

Although I'd been *aware* of Pete (and how could any Britfan not be) to the extent that he was such a presence, particularly at Novacons which I started attending (and working at) in the mis-80s or so, and certainly knew enough about him to do a fannish song parody*, we'd never really interacted at all until Corflu Zed. We made up for lost time by having hours of convo, with Pete actually being kind enough to allow me into it enough that it might actually be termed a dialogue. This was, of course, the last time I saw him, and it's a fond memory. It seemed that he'd always been in his element with an audience to regale, and was never less than entertaining (as well as occasionally contentious), but I found on that occasion that he could be a thoughtful and, yes, generous conversationalist one-on-one.

If my favorite old Mad Tory Uncle (J) wants to give me a weedy 30% on my tax return ability and lack of smartphone spreadsheets, I'll return with a solid 0 for him on the US tax system. I don't *need* to keep any records at all other than for my own edification, since them as has paid you dosh are required to punt various forms by the end of January, in my case either a W-2 which shows all declared income, taxes paid ect ect or a 1099 which shows other income on which taxes may or may not have been paid - as it turns out I got a couple of the latter from strip clubs, since the declaration threshold is apparently \$600 (not a couple thousand as I had thought). I apparently got a bit more than the \$1,000 I'd estimated, though not massively so, which has only slightly bugged up our already filed tax return. These official numbers just need to be plugged in to some tax return software (TurboTax in our case) which does its thing and files the requisite forms for you, obviating the need (for a regular employed-by-a-firm bloke like me) to keep any kind of accounts at all.

I did used to be quite nifty with spreadsheets back in my computer-programming days with Scholl(UK), 25 years ago, but it's not something I've had any need to have at since then, and have shurely forgotten it all.

Nic Farey can be found at fareynic@gmail.com

RICHARD LUPOFF

Although I never knew Peter Weston (but I knew *of* him) your tribute issue was quite effective. The tone was light and personal, yet affectionate and respectful. It seems that a fannish generation is passing, although I suppose mortality is a constant process and we notice it more when it hits close to home. Still, recent deaths have been particularly impactful. David Kyle was a friend of Pat's and mine--we met Dave and Ruth at our first Worldcon, in Pittsburgh in 1960. Didn't know Art Widner nearly as well or nearly as long, but I remember seeing him at several events.

And losing Sid Coleman was a real blow, as was losing Frank Robinson, and--most recently--Joyce (Fisher) Katz.

Well, one of these days I know it will be my turn. I enjoyed a heart attack on September 1, 2016 and wound up in emergency surgery. Recently asked my cardiologist if my heart had actually stopped and if I'd been clinically dead for a few minutes, and he said, "You still had a few irregular heartbeats--atrial fibulation--but you were headed that way."

I told him I'd had a strange out-of-body experience while on the operating table.

A good, hard-headed man of science, he said, "Your brain wasn't getting much oxygen."

Ah, wonderful! I love the guy. (And he did save my life.)

Anyway, a fine issue of *Vibrator* . . . including the thoroughly enjoyable essays on books and the first-rate letter column.

Dick Lupoff can be found at lupoff1975@att.net

GREG BENFORD

I sent Peter Weston fanzine articles for his SPECULATION, mostly reflecting on the New Wave wars and later skirmishes. Then I gave him a story for his first ANDROMEDA anthology but he rejected it, saying it made him uncomfortable. It was one of the first stories I wrote, "In Alien Flesh." In it the protagonist only belatedly realizes that the opening in a massive alien, the small "welt" he has crawled into, was quite obviously some sort of sexual orifice. So I sold the story elsewhere, regretfully, for I shared a perception of our field with him: Bad fiction uses the glossy generality; good writing needs the smattering of detail, the unrelenting busy mystery of the real, with the fantastic.

So I recall a story: Peter & me in the bar of the hotel where the New Orleans worldcon was buzzing about. I saw him talking to a shapely lady in a slinky dress. He came over to me and said he was shocked to be propositioned right out in public. Not that he was

interested, but--was she a hooker? "It's worse than that, Peter," I said. "Look at the Adam's apple."

Peter turned sheet white. He had found the notion of brazen prostitution a bit of local color, but have chatted with but not spotted a transvestite? It made even his sciencefictional mind reel.

Greg Benford can be found at xbenford@gmail.com

LEIGH EDMONDS

Thanks for another issue of *Vibrator*, a good read as usual. Here's a letter of comment in response, though a short one this time I fear.

Thanks for the various reports on Peter Weston's funeral. It seems to have been a fairly enjoyable event and, from the reports, seems to have represented Peter well. Living in this far off antipodean land I've had next to nothing to do with Peter through the many decades that we shared in fandom. The only time I met him was when he won TAFF and I won DUFF in 1974 and we were at Discon II together. We had a table there selling memberships and stuff for Aussiecon, which took place the following year, and Peter spent a goodly amount of time helping us out. We had a lot of opportunity to chat, and did, but all these years later I cannot remember a single thing that we said. I do have the memory that we may have marveled over what Americans call sandwiches, but that's about it. He struck me as a thoroughly enjoyable fan, but far too organized and efficient for me, at that time anyhow. I've since learned those bad habits.

I enjoyed even more Curt Phillips article. In my job I've had the opportunity to visit lots and lots of people in their homes and I'm always amazed at the number of people who don't have any books. Or if they do, a miserly little pile in a tiny little case hidden away in the corner of the lounge. How do these people live? I usually travel with my back pack on public transport which is always equipped with reading matter. Today I went down to Melbourne equipped with *Vibrator*, a book on history and, as a backup in case I finished reading both of those, my device with Gray Lensman on it. And I would have needed it too if this trip had been like the one I recounted in this issue. This time around, however, everything went like clockwork so I got to the surgeon's office a good half hour ahead of time. I'd just settled down to finish off *Vibrator* when he stuck his head around the corner and asked I was ready, so I finished there a good fifteen minutes before the appointment time. As I walked back to the tram stop I could see the tram sitting there (it's the end of the line so they do that). I expected it to trundle off just as I arrived at the stop but, no, it waited until I was on board before departing. This meant I got to the station from which the country trains leave five minutes before the Ballarat train left and, as a result, I got home two hours earlier than I expected, and the Gray Lensman remains unread.

My visit to the surgeon was just a check-up after the job he'd done a few weeks earlier, which is memorable in my mind because it was the day before the Trump inauguration. I remember this vividly because, although I was supposed to be done and home before the end of the day some poor punter had a major occurrence in the operating theater so, while I was supposed to be done at about 11-11.30 in the morning I didn't get wheeled into the theater until about 3.30 that afternoon. Because of this long delay they decided to keep me in the hospital overnight which was a serious nuisance because, not wishing to have it knocked off while I was out to the world, I had not taken my device and the Gray Lensman with me. The result was that I was forced to watch television in the evening. Those who know how uncomfortable hospital beds can be will understand it when I say that I found it difficult to sleep. So I watched one movie, and then another and then the ABC's 24 hour tv news service said it was going to show the inauguration so I turned the tv off. As a distraction I turned on my little transistor radio but the only station I could find that didn't broadcast rubbish was the ABC's 24 radio news service. I'd just about relaxed and was ready to doze off when it too went over to the inauguration. Surely the sound of bagpipes or chain saws would have been better. Anyhow, I drifted off to sleep finally and awoke an hour or so later to discover that I had missed the Trump speech. 'The ghods are with me at last', I cheered, but then the ABC played it in full for me a couple of hours later. Boy I needed that.

Back with Curt's article. I've never really been a collector of anything, but rather an accumulator. The large collection (call it an accumulation) of books that Valma and I have is the result of spending too much time in too many book shops over too many years. There was a lovely second hand bookshop in the Ainsley shops not far from where we lived in Canberra, not big but with some lovely stuff in it. There was Elizabeth's in Fremantle - which is where I bought, in the late 1980s, the book that I'm now reading (see, we'll get around to reading them all in time) and there was the excellent Corio Bookshop in Geelong where I spent a few happy hours browsing. The last time I was in Geelong I went to visit it again but it had turned into an up-market cafe or some such. Mainly I would buy history these days but we've passed a rule that we don't buy any more books because we don't have room for them. I did sneak a couple in last year, and there's a recent book on history in Australia that I might look up, if I lose control and with the justification that it's a tax-deductable 'tool of the trade'. How do we not buy any more books? We don't go into book shops and we don't even stop to look in the windows. It's not impossible, it can be done.

I'll have to pass over the letter column for lack of time and just say again how much I'm learning about what it's like to be a taxi driver in Las Vegas. I'm glad that Nick is doing it so I just get the story second hand. I have to dash off and read another book, one that I've written. The publisher had just sent me what you'd call the page proofs (if such things still exist in reality) to be read again. Actually 'my publisher' is Dot who Valma and I used to live next door to, but she and her husband and another friend run a little publishing business which specializes in stuff about the Victorian goldfields - they wanted

to branch out from that restricted topic and I wanted a publisher, so we came to an agreement. So I've got this 276 pages that I have to read through again, 'carefully' Dot says. Consequently, see you next issue.

Leigh Edmonds can be found at hhandc@hemsleypark.com.au

JIM LINWOOD

Just a couple of brief notes on the excellent Peter Weston Tribute Vibrator:

Marion and I once had a coffee bar drink with Peter after a BSFA AGM at Conway Hall in London at which he was the GoH. He told us that, despite your differences, he had a great admiration for you as a fanwriter and you often had him rolling on the floor with laughter.

Malcolm Edwards thinks that Ed James had probably known Peter longer than anyone in fandom other than Rog Peyton. I first met Peter at a Brum Group meeting in Rog's parents house back in 1963. He was picking Ken Cheslin's mighty brain on how to produce a fanzine which materialised as Zenith a few months later. Darroll Pardoe, Keith Freeman, Doreen Rogers and others would also have met him back then.

You got our email address wrong; its jlinwood@aol.com - sack your proof reader!

Jim Linwood can be found at jlinwood@aol.com, apparently.

PAUL SKELTON

Those were very nice tributes to Peter Weston, particularly Mike Meara's well-constructed piece which provided the framework around which Claire, Dave, Malcolm and Rob provided their additional insights and memories.

I never met Peter. The closest I guess I came would be various Eastercons in the seventies, or the '79 Worldcon, or possibly the only Novacon I ever attended. We'd occasionally be in the same room or corridor, but we never exchanged a single word. Nor, for that matter did we ever exchange a single fanzine. This was primarily down to me and the fact that, being a shy and diffident neo, I didn't want to bother important fannish personages. There was also the fact that I felt our interests lay in different directions. At the time Peter was particularly interested in Science Fiction whilst I was concentrating on being a twat.

Also, in terms of fanzines, I think we sort of cross-gafiated. Certainly, when he revived *Prolapse/Relapse* in 2006, I was AWOL and, by the time I returned in late 2012, it only had a couple more issues to go, so I missed it. Well, I missed it then and for some reason I never thought to seek it out on *efanzines.com*. I tend to have this blind spot regarding Bill's site. Every-so-often I go there and look to see if any new stuff has been posted that

looks like it might be of interest to me. There never is though, with the possible exception of Dale's *Opuntia* which I occasionally look through for the photographs. Then I go away again, forgetting that there is a lot of older stuff archived there that I'd probably find fascinating.

Long story short; when I read that Peter had died I went onto *efanzines.com*, downloaded all issues of *Prolapse/Relapse*, and binged on them over the following couple of weeks...almost entirely fascinating stuff. So, bearing in mind that the current output of interesting fanzines is insufficient to support life, and reminded by Peter's zines that one needn't restrict oneself to current fanzines I started dragging out some now accessible boxes of my fanzine collection and began going through them reading the zines I'd not previously gotten around to (the reason behind which circumstance would be a long story long).

The current box all begin with the letter 'C' and I was just reading *Cry of the Nameless 135* (January 1960 – 10th Annish) last night when I discovered that somebody had ripped out pages 27-30, leaving some tattered remnants still stapled in. This was right in the middle of John Berry's Detention chapter of *The Goon Goes West*. Who would do a thing like that...and why? The history of my copy is problematic in that, being a 102-page issue with both front and back covers; it must originally have been mailed in a long-gone envelope. My copy of issue 134 had originally belonged to Archie Mercer, whilst my copy of 136 had originally been mailed to Ken Cheslin, neither of whom had a reputation as fanzine despoilers. It may have come to me via Mike Meara (some issues definitely did, but I already had others), but he seems an even less likely suspect. Obviously I'll never know who else's hands this issue passed through. It's not the content of the missing pages that bothers me (I have a copy of the complete edition) but rather the ruination of a particularly fine issue of a very good fanzine. In a small way it's like the desecration of a work of art.

Paul Skelton can be found at paulskelton2@gmail.com

JOHN NIELSEN HALL

I have much sympathy and agreement for what you say about Pete Weston in your opening remarks. I remember how dismissive he was of ratfandom in general at the Worcester Eastercon in 1971 (I think). At that time his fannish buddies were the blazer-and-tie wearing St. Fantony crowd. Peter was conservative with a small c. He was very slow to embrace change, although I think he did manage it in the end, which is more than can be said for such as Ted Tubb. His fanzines back in the day (*Zenith & Speculation*) struck me then as interminably dull and boring. Whether I would find them more interesting now at this advanced stage of life, I don't know.

But among his qualities was loyalty and I think it was this that helped to make *Prolapse/Relapse* such a success. When he got wind, via Harry Bell, of my "lost" MS about

my stay in John Brunner's house he was at once excited and fearful. We had protracted e-mail correspondence about how I would rewrite it (it was originally a horrifically lazy piece of work) and how it would be balanced. Peter had always had good relations with John Brunner and considered him a friend. He didn't want to print a piece that merely slagged Brunner off, now that he was dead. To do so would have been to go against that quality of loyalty which Peter owned innately.

And so began a very rewarding email friendship with Peter mostly in the aftermath of his printing that piece, as more and more research took place into John Brunner and his antecedents. Then one day he mentioned he wasn't very well. He would get back to me. I hoped, despite news I got from a couple of sources as to how serious his illness actually was, that he would beat it and return to fandom. It was not to be. I am very sorry. I liked the bloke a great deal, and will miss him. I read the accounts of his funeral and wake with enjoyment, but they made me very gloomy.

David Redd, despite having read SF at least in his youth, appears to have woken up to find he is now living the stuff, and that we are all caught up in a labyrinthine dystopia of climate change and an inexorable drift back to tyranny. Well, I don't know if it really is that bad but I do find myself out of sympathy with those of your correspondents who bewail the state of the world and where will it all end? Whoever thought it would be better than this was, I am sorry to say, foolishly naïve, perhaps seduced by looking at too many pulp cover illustrations. Wake up, all you folks.

And thank heaven for Nic Farey.

(EDITOR: See Greg Benford's loc in this issue for evidence how deeply Peter was embedded in his conservative views. It was, I think, our major bone of contention. We both wanted each other's leopard to change its spots, but that was never going to happen.)

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

DAVID REDD

Thank you for this, especially for the farewell to Peter Weston. I remember all the things he meant in my life – fanzines, pro editor, superfan, human being (see attached) – and realise this was only a small part of his family, social and business world. What a man. Glad to see the last line about the funeral “I thing Peter would have approved.”

Usual excellences – what else? Enjoyed greatly (of course) Curt Phillips' reminiscences of book collecting. And your recollections of early reading. For my own tiny self, c. 1952 and later, Mickey Mouse Weekly had occasional sf content and the Rupert annuals had fantasy elements. Tarzan Adventures got interesting when a young lad called Mike Moorcock took over. I saw the Eagle comic with Dan Dare, Pilot of the Future, but was more taken with a short-lived mid-Fifties Eagle clone called Rocket the Space-Age

Weekly. It had trouble finding a full complement of sf picture-stories, and was more successful with text material, its sf serials by Conrad Frost and lighter short stories by William F Temple. (Recently Peter Weston rediscovered Rocket and wrote about it.)

Then I followed the usual library route in which the likes of Arthur Ransome and Tove Jansson got accompanied by sf writers, leading to paperbacks (Caves of Steel, Sands of Mars) and magazines on a trajectory too familiar to bore you with here. However, you remind me that my earliest reading was probably that same Sunny Stories and the like, not that many would admit to Enid Blyton as any influence. I recall that her serial In the Fifth at Malory Towers sounded very grand and grown-up to a tiny. Only later as a parent I discovered that Blyton had neatly sidestepped the serious business of fifth-formers growing up, instead filling the book with their younger relatives larking about. Good for her.

Nowadays I listen more than read. Are we still discussing America? Recently I've heard Bill Bryson unabridged in his old The Lost Continent and Made In America, with enough of Bryson's trademark pessimistic little asides – visible from Notes from a Small Island on – to portray a USA steering itself uncaringly and unstoppable into ruin. In Vibrator here's Dave Cockfield suggesting "wait until he actually tries to do something terrible before protesting in force." I have a vision of a black smoking crater with two eyes peering out: "NOW we protest?"

And don't ask about pangolin scales.

David Redd can be found at dave_redd@hotmail.com

FRED SMITH

Many thanks for the latest V. Many (deserved) tributes to Peter Weston and anecdotes from those who attended his funeral. A sad occasion, of course, and he was obviously a real trufan. I enjoyed *Prolapse/Relapse* and after #21 I wrote to Peter asking when we might see the next ish. He very kindly replied that, following two operations, his bowel cancer had returned and he was now undergoing chemo therapy. This was December 2014 and he said that he was in the process of getting rid of most of his books, magazines, etc. in anticipation of his removal to a new address the following month. There was little likelihood of another *Relapse* and in fact he had (understandably) lost all interest in fandom and was devoting his time to his family and four grandchildren. That was my last contact with Peter but I wonder if he did in fact have any further communication with fandom during his remaining two years, even in a small way.

Interesting, Curt Phillips (and your) tales of early reading and public libraries which remind me of an experience I had when I used Clydebank Library. This story serves as a warning about things small boys can get up to when nobody's paying attention. I discovered a book (in the children's section!) which gave detailed instructions on how to make fireworks so was immediately inspired to build a rocket ship! Take an old

aluminium torch, remove any batteries and bulb (this leaves a nozzle-shaped opening at one end), construct a paper cone (like a dunce's cap) to serve as a "combustion chamber" making sure that the open base is slightly smaller in diameter than the torch body. Put the cone into the torch, open base at the nozzle end. Now mix saltpetre, sulphur and charcoal (the quantities given in the book) in a pestle and mortar and pour into the other end of the torch packed tightly round the "combustion chamber". Then screw on the cap. I didn't know it but I had made gunpowder! So much for Health and Safety! In fact, if the nozzle end hadn't been open I would have made a bomb! Anyway, I glued aluminium wings to the rocket ship, sat it on a step in the back garden and lit it through the nozzle with a fuse. Whoosh! and it took off flying about a foot. This ended the experiment and I found chemists refused to sell me the ingredients for gunpowder again. Word must have got out!

Your reply to David Cockfield that "many Americans live under the delusion that their soap operas and cop shows and "reality" shows are in fact all reality" seems a bit harsh although I do agree that many of Trump's ideas appear to have been plucked from some cloud cuckoo land existing only in his head. There is some reassurance in the opposition that has already appeared, however, so maybe his worst excesses will be curtailed.

Nic Farey's assertion that E.E.Smith's stuff was a "load of misogynist shite" is going a bit too far, I think. Sure his heroes were all-American clean cut white males, mostly, but there were also the non-human lensmen Tregonsee and Worsel and I didn't notice any misogyny in the novels I read. Cite examples? Anyway, I do share Nic's love of van Vogt while at the same time disagreeing with his views on Damon Knight. I don't care what you say, IN SEARCH OF WONDER is good fun and even vV managed to survive Knight's critique.

Steve Stiles' mention of the students who didn't know if the U.S. had fought Germany or Russia during WW2 reminds me of the TV game show *Pointless* which one time asked six contestants to identify the authors of some very well remembered poems. Four of the people (20s-30s age group) confessed that they only knew one poet: Byron and couldn't answer any of the questions. It took one of the two middle-aged contestants to identify Wordsworth as the author of "Daffodils". It would seem that poetry is no longer a feature of English education and yet I (with no particular love of poetry) could name all the poets in question and even quote parts of their verse. So I'm not surprised at the students who don't know their own history.

Lloyd Penney says "America the cursed" which immediately makes me think of the (alleged) Chinese curse: "May you live in interesting times". We certainly do!

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

DAVE COCKFIELD

I've been away while Flat being trashed and rebuilt. Also Hospital appointments that have finally confirmed that Blind Pews Black Spot on my left lung was a false alarm. A great weight off my mind that only needs to be followed by losing great weight from my stomach. Consequently I have only just got around to your/my Vibrator. So this is not really much of a loc other than to say that it was sad news to hear about Pete and Mike.

I never really knew Pete Weston. I remember him at the WorldCon in 79 giving the Deputy Manager hell for daring to try and shut down the Faan Room. I also had one night in his company when he was staying at the Central Hotel on business in Newcastle. I think it was Harry Bell who took me along and I was surprised at how pleasant a guy Pete could be. Mike on the other hand was such a wonderful outgoing guy and it was always fun to be in his company. I probably first met him at a Novacon in the 70's and although he was never a close friend he was someone that I always enjoyed having conversations with at Cons.

No pictures of Pete in my collection, only a great copy of Speculation that was a Cordwainer Smith special, but one of Mike interviewing William Gibson. Either at a Novacon or Mexican.

Dave Cockfield can be found at daverabban@gmail.com

PHILIP TURNER

Whilst looking through a small heap in search of something, I came across Vib. 36, which hadn't been filed. Worse, it still had notes for a LoC inside it. But I have a good excuse for losing track. I'm about to finish off a novel I started in 2003, so I've spent the last month reading, tidying up and apply uniformity to 500+ pages. And then there was a new jacket to design. But anyway, Vib 36:

Peter Weston got an impressive send-off. Trust Mr. Charnock to pick a somewhat less dignified picture than the one on the Wikipedia page.

Crumbs! What a megocentric view that was from Curt Phillips. He can't survive without books, so no one else should be allowed to deviate from this platform. Surprise! Life would appear to offer lots of obsessions other than bux. On the Sunday after Vib 36 arrived in Romiley, a letter in the *Sunday Post* quoted a survey which reckoned that 10% of British homes do not contain a single book. Get out of that! And then there were these amazing childhood memories. As I don't have anything similar to offer, should I be megocentric and assume he was making them up for literary effect? Well, why not?

I never have any mousy intruders myself. I put that down to the speed of next door's cat when he decides he's bored with the great outdoors and it's time for a tour of inspection of my premises. As soon as I open an outside door, there's this black-and-

white streak and he's in.

Oh, well, back to the editing.

Philip Turner can be found at farrago2@lineone.net

ROBERT LICHTMAN

Thanks for your excellent account in *Vibrator 2.0.36* of Pete Weston's funeral and memorial service, and for also printing what Dave Langford, Malcolm Edwards and Rob Hansen had to say about the day. I only met Pete once, back in 2005 when he came over to go to the Corflu/Potlatch serial weekends in San Francisco. I only went to the Corflu because from experience I've found that Potlatch isn't for me – too literary, with a “book of honor” that one must have read to be able to participate fully in the programming. (But I would drop in the night before the convention officially opened in order to visit and party with the people there who, other than their love of intense analysis of SF, I liked and enjoyed.) Pete and I hung out and conversed here and there, and one evening I took him to dinner at some kind of ethnic restaurant in easy walking distance of the hotel. I liked him, and it seemed to be mutual. We had correspondence off and on over the years, much of it in connection with his *Prolapse/Relapse* fanzine. Our last exchanges were in 2015 – and were about our respective conditions. He was the first fan to whom I revealed (under strict DNQ) that I had multiple myeloma, and we had some back and forth about our respective maladies and our prospects.

In mentioning Nigel Rowe you related that he “says he's trying to see more of what remains of his family.” I've also been doing that – at least with my four sons, their wives/girlfriends, and my grandchildren. There are other branches, too. My parents had five siblings between them – most of whom had children – but my parents (mainly my father) had *issues* with them, so all of those relatives have completely disappeared. My late younger brother had a boy and a girl, but neither of them make any particular effort to stay in touch. Carol and I saw them both late last year for the first time in ages at my youngest son's wedding in Santa Cruz. Our interactions were friendly, they again said they'd like to have more connection, and we agreed that would be a good thng. But despite our sending them e-mails afterwards, at their request, so they'd have our current contact points, nothing has happened.

Unlike Curt Phillips, as a child I had no trouble getting “my hands on a book,” because like his parents mine had an assortment of books around here and there in various pieces of furniture that included some shelving: the back side of a desk in the living room (where my mother wrote letters to relatives and paid the bills) and as part of a couple of units below the windows in the “den” that also included closed cabinet space. When I got older, I realized that these books were there more for interior decorating (the “visuals”). But there was an encyclopedia set that (as Curt reports for himself) they'd

bought largely for my brother and me, some novels that my mother must have read in the distant past, some *Readers Digest Condensed Books*, and a couple of interesting volumes that I discovered as a kid and would sneak-read when the coast was clear: an illustrated *Arabian Nights* and a “marriage manual” with religious-toned language about how to fuck, etc. The “stack of the usual children's picture books for me” was kept in the bedroom I shared with my brother, later to be joined by comic books.

I never had a mentor librarian like Curt, and learned to navigate libraries on my own. I was always a voracious reader of whatever was in front of me – and I mean *whatever*: cereal boxes, the daily *Los Angeles Times*, the women’s magazines my mother got, the “youth book” series then extant, and so on. I also read that encyclopedia I mentioned above like it was a novel, and learned a lot of stuff which, at that age, I actually retained. This was useful much later on when the Trivial Pursuit game became fashionable among people I knew – and still is now and then when a factoid will dredge itself (sometimes surprisingly) out of my deep buried consciousness at just the right time. Oh, and my parents never expected me not to read – good conditioning on my part – and seldom suggested I should just go out and play. I did have friends, though most of them were fellow young nerds. We traded comics back and forth, and later science fiction books.

Like you, Graham, my parents were “crap at hiding presents” and I always knew what I was getting for Christmas well before the big day. Books were often my present fare for both birthdays and Christmas, but at various points I got a bike and a huge manual typewriter. My first fanzines were done on the latter.

Quoting probably too much of Dave Cockfield: “The majority of the people in the US also appear to detest him. So how did he get in? Quite simply he lied to the unemployed, the poor, and the lesser off white working class promising jobs and prosperity. Along with all his bigoted promises these are patently unachievable.” This sort of lying is, of course, not new to Trump – it’s been the standard Republican playbook during elections since at least Reagan: suck up to the middle and lower classes with *concern* and faux empathy, but then once elected govern strictly for and by the rich. Repeat the cycle as needed. That there are enough people in the country who are gullible enough to buy this (and/or are seriously lacking in attention span and/or memory) is what got Reagan and both Bushes into the White House before Trump came along and ramped it up even more. It should be obvious (but so far, judging from interviews I’ve seen, it’s not) to even the people who love him that he’s advancing that playbook even further by installing a bunch of Cabinet heads whose primary mission is the exact opposite of those agencies’ purview. There appears to be possible cracks in the armor, however, as witness the crowds of people turning up at Republican congresspersons’ “town hall” meetings in their districts outraged at the prospect of losing their health care with no real replacement in sight. (According to a poll I saw, a third of them weren’t aware that “Obamacare” and the “Affordable Care Act” from which they were benefiting were one and the same.) “Access” to the opportunity to buy health care with inadequate government support is

apparently what's being considered. From some of the leaks about this "replacement," it sounds good only for the well-off. For the majority of people, flat-sum tax credits (the same amount no matter your income) just won't cut it, and most people can't afford to set aside money for retirement much less "health savings accounts." I could go on, but I realize I'm starting to rave.

Well, one more quote from Dave: "I can't help feeling that it would be more effective to wait until he actually tries to do something terrible before protesting in force. At least then there would be the weight of hard facts against him and his government that would hopefully inflame the American public into positive action." He's already doing terrible stuff, and surely there's more to come. Since he's obviously being steered by Steve Bannon, we can probably be assured of it. Meanwhile, I don't see people getting "tired of seeing this on the news every day and eventually will become complacent." If anything, plans are being laid in many quarters to highlight and oppose the beyond-mere-standard-Republicanism, and I don't see it stopping at all. How and what will eventually derail his/their train I don't know, but I look forward to the prospect of a big turnaround in voting coming in the 2018 mid-term elections – similar to 1994 and 2010 – that would put Democrats back in one or both houses of Congress, so the present imminent rubber-stamping of Trump/Bannon legislation can be at least stalemated and hopefully reversed. Okay, end political section.

Great to see Dick Lupoff turn up in *Vibrator*! I agree that there's little chance Trump will be impeached given the current composition of Congress, but if as I write above this all changes with the hoped-for result (as I wrote above) after the 2018 midterm elections it wouldn't be entirely off the list of possibilities. As a neighbor and long-time friend, I was of course aware of Dick's heart attack last year – and I'm glad to read that his cardio rehab program is within walking distance. So is a very large Safeway store, where on a number of occasions I/we have run into Dick and Pat there – and all have been happy for the encounter. Dick turned 82 the other day, and I hope for many more such chance meetings – and perhaps some planned ones, too.

Of his lovely cover on #33, Steve Stiles writes: "My only quibble with this picture is that it seems slightly fuzzy; I should've sent it as a jpeg since *Vibrator* is mostly an online fanzine and tiffs are mainly for print." I pulled out my printed copy of the issue and had a look with a relatively low-powered magnifying glass – and found that it looks somewhat fuzzy in print, too, under that level of scrutiny: slightly jagged edges on all those creatures and on the border. But take away the glass and it looks just fine. Over the years Steve has sent me dozens of pieces of artwork for *Trap Door*, in both formats, and with one notable exception (that was *my* fault) they've all turned out well when printed.

Loved this from John Nielsen Hall: "I hope you will continue to battle with all adversity and continue to produce *Vibrator*. It's become a monthly tradition now. A bit like a period." Bloody hell yes!

Taral is certainly right in saying that when considering anyone for a Hugo it's only the

current year's output that should be the criteria. He mentions Grant Canfield, a much-nominated fan artist in the '70s but whose work from that period is ineligible. Only Grant's work in *Trap Door* #32 is, but the problem with that in the Hugo universe is *Trap Door's* tiny circulation. Now that that issue is available at efanazines, the potential audience is much wider; but unless someone mounts a campaign directing potential nominators to it, Grant's work will slip under that particular radar. The FAAn awards, though, that's another story.

I choose to ignore Taral's contention that I've said murder is fannish so long as two people are involved...!

Nic's mention of the Consumer Electronics Show "followed by *five* (count 'em) sizeable conventions/conferences the week after that" gave rise to thoughts that in addition to his usual (ahem) fare of driving hookers and gamblers around town his potential and actual income was much increased by such events.

Robert Lichtman can be found at robertlichtman@yahoo.com

TALES OF A LAS VEGAS TAXI DRIVER

By Nic Farey

FUCK YOUR NUGGET

Although that title may sound like a euphemism for the sort of thing some Greek/Jewish gay nazi on meth might be advocating, it's simply an expression of my distaste for the arsehole valets at a certain downtown property (and the reason I'll generally refuse to stage there), brought into even sharper relief by a recent contretemps.

A recap of sorts: the Valet Is God! In practical terms of operation, the valets, doormen (and women), bell staff ect are in charge of managing the traffic flow in and out of the properties, which of course includes the cab line. As drivers, we are bound to respect their authority and do as directed, yea, e'en as we might disagree with some of their more bone-headed decisions. This also translates to the airport terminals, where the brownies not only direct the cabs in particular situations, but also have regulatory authority and can ticket infractions. The hotel property equivalent is to "86" a driver, which can be done *ad hoc* by simply telling the cabbie to leave the property at that time, or more formally by writing them up as being banned, for a given period of time or indefinitely, in which case you can be served with a warrant for trespass if you try to go back there. As far as I know, it *should* be legit for a driver to drop at a property they've been 86'ed from (since to deny that privilege would be restraint of trade, shurely), but

deny them from staging or picking up there.

While this might sound quite fucking awful, the fact is that many of the more seasoned drivers tend to work the same stand(s) habitually, and cultivate a relationship with the valets, since the system actually works well if we work together with mutual respect for each others' jobs. With a tad over a couple years in, I've got my own favored stands (working a strategy based on "territory"), primarily the Linq, Aria North valet and Vdara, Luxor North valet, occasionally the Monte Carlo, where I'm on first-name and congenial terms with the guys there. This does translate into smoother operation, which we all appreciate, and more often than not into better tips for all of us. For example, Elza, who is one of the doormen at Aria North (and appeared on the TMZ cellphone video when Nicolas Cage and Vince Neil got into it there) , if I happen to draw a squirrely ride where the fare needs to go to the bank, some store, then back again, inevitably assures them that "Nic will take good care of you, this guy is the best", and, of course, I do, hopefully (and more often than not) getting some decent pecuniary gratitude at the end of it. Even if it's a more straightforward fare, chances are he'll talk me up anyway, and our mutual respect (and the obvious conclusion that we know each other well enough) will reassure the punter who may worry that they're going to be taken for a ride in the less desirable definition of that term.

The staff of other properties can be less amenable and co-operative. "Valet is God" definitely goes to the heads of some of them, including the spotty little shit who pretended to write me up for picking up on the "wrong side" of the Stratosphere a couple months back. What I find especially galling is that these arseholes seem to delight in lecturing drivers on how they should be doing their jobs, how we should know better, we have no respect ect ect *ad nauseam ad infinitum*. Even though I know some drivers who've been doing this for 10, 20 years, after a mere two on the job I consider myself at least a bit savvy and seasoned, certainly compared to some of the real rookies who all look like they're going to crash and burn very soon, going at it with teeth-grinding intensity. As an aside to that, I generally get a lot of compliments on my choice of in-cab music, a Pandora channel of classic ska and reggae which is both relaxing and uplifting at the same time. This stands in stark contrast to those who blast Iron Maiden and/or Rush Limbaugh and are subject to road rage and fisticuffs at the slightest provocation.

To the Golden Nugget: one of the original reasons I'll rarely stage there (either Carson side or Rush Tower) is that the corrupt and nasty valets will lie shamelessly to the punters to push them into limos (from whom they get a substantial kickback) by falsely asserting that a taxi to the airport will cost \$50, so why not take a limo for \$55 or \$60. (For the record, a cab to the port can be as low as \$28.50 if we take the more time-consuming, but shorter distance street route, around \$35 by the freeway.) Locals and frequent visitors are not fooled by this, and will refuse to tip (and often also berate) the valet for suggesting it, although the assumption is that the lying shits make more of their limo commissions than they'll lose off the regulars. It's not uncommon to wait at one of the

Nugget stands for a couple hours, watching limos get loaded.

I'd picked up a ride earlier in the day from, I think, the Linq to the Nugget, a couple of very nice ladies whom I'd supplied with info on downtown attractions in which they might be interested. I cruised the downtown for a few minutes looking for a stand that might not be stacked, especially checking my usual favorites (the California and the Plaza). No luck, so I beetled off to the nearby outlet mall, where I inched up over the course of 45 minutes or so to eventually pull the short ride (\$9 or so) back downtown, to the Nugget in fact (Carson side). I'll note here that the Carson side cab line does not stage on property, rather, it is across the street and round the corner of the T-junction, and cabs are called up as needed. As I'm dropping the fare, here's the ladies I brought there earlier, and seeing nice me, they naturally would like to get back in my cab for the ride back to the Strip. The shitstick valet wasn't having that, however. He's over on his toes in well short order, giving me the unwelcome and fuckin' annoying lecture about how I should "know my business", there's cabs been waiting in line for however long, and practically manhandling the ladies away so he can call up the next cab off the stand. I argued the toss, claiming a "personal", but the arse wasn't having it. The nice ladies, bless'em, actually apologized to me as they were being shunted off, when really the fuckbag valet should have been apologizing to *them* and at the very least explaining his dodgy rationale for giving me the 86, which he may or may not have done.

In purely technical terms, the valet was correct in that I would have been loading out of rotation, an offense ticketable by TA. However, if I'm claiming the ride as a "personal" the valet ought to respect that, especially since it's obvious that the passengers know me, and would quite like to get in my cab rather than the next random free pickle. Another factor is that, despite the usual insistence on adhering to the order of the line, any passenger has the privilege of refusing any given cab for another, for any reason, or no reason. "I know this driver, and prefer to ride in his/her cab", is well legit, as might be "I don't take cabs from [particular company]", or, as does happen, sadly "I don't want a [particular ethnicity] driver", or perhaps more reasonably, "I would like a female driver". I'm not even getting to wanknuts practically *shoving* nice ladies away, by any measure an assault deserving an intervention of some serious toe up the Aris.

THE LICHTMAN TRAVEL-RESTRICTED ETYMOLOGY (MARTY WTF CANTOR EDITION)

"86" : To be "86'ed" is to be ejected and barred from a property. This may have been an original Vegas slang term, but apparently has general currency throughout the US. It's origins are a bit misty. It's said that "86" was restaurant worker slang for an item no longer available on the menu, but legendary poker player Doyle Brunson gave it a particularly Vegas spin, stating that it arose from the old Mob days, where those deemed undesirable for whatever reason would be escorted out into the desert and disposed of ("8 miles out, 6 feet under"). Knowing a little about the notably wry Brunson, however, his tongue may have been somewhat adjacent to his cheek in making this statement,

though it does play into "old Vegas" perceptions.

Aris : If there's one thing that the Mighty Robt likes more than seeing his name in print, it might be the derivation of certain slang terms with which he may be unfamiliar. "Porridge", for example, as the term for being in nick, has been stated as deriving from the typical British prison breakfast (and in some cases lunch and dinner), yet was reverse-engineered to back-rhyme "thyme & borage", with the obvious pun on "time". "Aris" (= "arse") is a multiply complex and rich (not Coad or brown) term. A typical rhyming slang construction is [something] & [something], eg "apples & pears" (= "stairs") which will be abbreviated to the first word of the rhyming phrase, in that case, simply "apples". Someone might say, therefore (with and without abbreviation, and with good reference to the acquisition of new slang terms out of popular culture), "After me Captain Kirk, I need to nip up the frog to the J Arthur and sausage a gooses, all out of bees and dying for a pigs". Translated: AFter work ("Captain Kirk") I need to go up the road ("frog & toad") to the bank ("J Arthur Rank") and cash ("sausage & mash") a cheque ("goose's neck"), I have no money ("bees & honey") and I'm desperate for a beer ("pigs ear"). Of course, cashing a cheque is quite passe, and I see no reason why we shouldn't add new slang terms, especially if we can give them a skiffy twist: eg, get some bees out of the Stanislaw ("Stanislaw Lem = "ATM"). "Aris" is an example of a double distancing, double abbreviation rhyme, with a particularly clever assonance of "Aris" and "arse" The original [item] & [item] rhyme is "bottle & glass", abbreviated to "bottle", which rhymes with "Aristotle", which is then abbreviated to "Aris". Apart from my several-year residence in Sarf Lunnun, I may have spent an inordinate amount of time watching *The Sweeney*.

Brownies : Brownshirts/browncoats (depending on the season), in charge of directing vehicles and passengers at the airport pickup. They have certain police powers, limited to McCarran property but enshrined nonetheless.

Golden Nugget : A standard piece of Vegas trivia that I'll regale punters with is the answer to the question: "Which Las Vegas hotel has the largest number of rooms?" Most will light upon the MGM Grand, which does indeed have 5,000 rooms or so (some of which are getting a bit shoddy, according to one fare last week), but the Strip hotels are technically *not* in Las Vegas, rather, the town of Paradise, NV. The city of Las Vegas itself is the downtown "old town", so the technically correct answer is the Golden Nugget (3,000 rooms). The Nugget has two stands, one on Carson Street across from the frontage on Casino Center Boulevard, the other on the "back side" Rush Tower.

Personal : A ride directly booked or requested by any party to a specific driver. Can be pre-booked, or ad hoc.

Rotation : The normal logic of stand-system operation, which is first-come, first-served. A personal, or a decision by a doorman to front-load can supersede this, although we've known of some occasions where TA have ticketed drivers for loading out of rotation, despite the instructions of a doorman or valet. Typically, especially if they know you as a non-arsehole, you might get loaded right at a drop, despite the fact there might

be cabs waiting, if the ride is particularly short, and a driver who's been waiting a while might conceivably get the arse over a super-short ride. Some (by no means all) of the nicer valets will tell you to "come back around" if you get that midget, meaning that you can bypass the line and reload, although that's still technically ticketable by TA if they decide they want to be shitty about it. Once is it though. If you draw another tiny ride, you'll not get called back again. So it goes.

That was the month that was. I seem to have more time this last month visiting hospital than sitting in from of my computer. Don't ask. I continue to be in robust health whilst those around me are dropping like flies with undiagnosed illnesses.

What have I learnt today? Well, there was a Yellow Fever plague in Memphis in the 1870s (see America The Damned article in future Vibrator), and when a nurse tells you that a person who has had surgery may not be coming back to her ward, she doesn't necessarily mean they are dead.

Murray Moore has posted an official FAAn award ballot form. It is a travesty of how people should vote for FAAns in reducing each category to an all or nothing vote. I appreciate this makes it easier for the slack-wit Murray to process it, but I cannot endorse it, since the point of the FAAns is surely to spread egoboo broadly over the field, and I speak as someone who has often come runner up in many categories. I would suggest people use a previous ballot form to rank their choices as usual. Come on folks, give Murray a headache.

If Pat is well enough she will proofread this. If she isn't she weren't.

I'm Graham Charnock. Write to me: graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk by the end of March to be included in the nest issue.

Oh and if you are perverse enough to still vote for me in the FAAn awards just go ahead. As our exalted leader Don said: DAISNAID.