



## VIBRATOR 2.0.5

DANGER, FATHERS, SCRIBBLING IN  
BOOKS, AND LOTS OF DEATH.

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Climb aboard the calliope, folks. It's another issue of Vibrator, the only fanzine not guaranteed to be free of smut and innuendo. We are not afraid to tell you what's in and what's out and whether or not you should shake it all about. We are not afraid to take that squirrel by the scruff of its neck and tickle it until it squeaks. Squeak! We give you fun and excitement, which is more than can be said by similar productions by Arnie Hooper and Andy Katz, who are frankly crap at producing fanzines. Sorry, I said \*crap\* without realizing it is reserved as a copyright judgement passed by Frank Lunney. It's June, the sun is shining and masonry bees are filling up the cracks in my walls with sweet honey. Honey Walls. I did tell you there would be some innuendo, didn't I?

Rising postage costs and corresponding lack of response from US fans who can't even seem to be able to afford to send an email (Obama care must not be working) mean this fanzine will only be distributed in the US by emailed PDF, but subscribers will at least receive it several months in advance of people just hoping to pick it up on efanzines. UK fans may still be able to expect a solid thump on their doorstep when their telephone directories are delivered, and a lighter one when Vibrator arrives. If I do say it myself this fanzine has one of the most vibrant (geddit?) and up to date loc responses around. Be part of the movement. This issue is scheduled for distribution in June 2014. Just about.

Do remember to keep it touch. It is your participation which will make this fanzine a Hugo winner if I can grease enough palms. Write me at [graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk](mailto:graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk)

**HERE'S THIS MONTH'S PICTURE FROM THE ARCHIVES. PETER ROBERTS AND GREG PICKERSGILL HANGING OUT AT LAWRENCE ROAD**



## **WHAT'S LEFT TO DO THAT'S DANGEROUS, APART FROM HANGING OUT AT LAWRENCE ROAD**

Sometimes, especially when I sit down to watch another episode of The Great British Bake Off with a Coors Light in my hand, I feel that life is simply not dangerous enough anymore. When was it ever? Well, apart from those tight-rope walking adventures of my youth, I suppose I could have gone to San Francisco Bath Houses in the seventies, and rubbed shoulders with Harvey Milk, and really lived dangerously, but those opportunities for enjoyable self-destruction aren't around anymore. Surely something must have replaced them.

### ***Bath Salts***

I suppose I could become a Zombie. But both Zombies and Bath salts have had a bad rep. A famous zombie who was supposed to be acting under the influence of bath salts, wasn't a Zombie at all in fact. When 31-year-old Rudy Eugene chowed down on the face of homeless Miami man Ronald Poppo, it turned out to be completely unrelated to the drug. Eugene was listed as having only marijuana in his system when he was killed by police after refusing to stop chewing on Poppo's face. Still, consuming bath salts does seem to be dangerous in what it does to your mentality. The drug is not the stuff you actually put in your bath, of course (sorry to disappoint, and perhaps I should have mentioned it earlier to stop you experimenting before you actually reached the end of the paragraph) but primarily a variant of *methylenedioxypropylone* and has effects similar to those of crystal meth: agitation, hallucinations, high blood pressure. I guess if you already have high blood pressure it might be considered especially dangerous, and therefore appealing, at least in the context of this article. But beware, taking BP medication in conjunction with bath salts will probably kill you even quicker. And if you eat a grapefruit as well you are truly doomed.

### ***Drinking & Driving***

Is of course politically incorrect and also incorrect under any behavioural circumstances you might care to apply. Which of course makes it desirable as well as dangerous, and one of the preferred sports of the rich and famous. Despite the chances you might kill innocent people, or at least drive your car through the window of a branch of Snappy Snaps, there is a lot to be said for drinking and driving which people from Mungo Jerry to Jackson Pollock have always appreciated. Thinking you are in control when you are not is a peculiar buzz that possibly you can only enjoy to the full if alcohol and fast cars are in conjunction. I wouldn't of course advise people to go out drinking and driving on the public highway (although it *is* fun) but maybe just hire Brands Hatch and go out, drink a couple of cans of Special Brew (other high alcohol content drinks are available) and drive into a wall.

### ***Civil Disobedience***

Time was you could go out and protest, and be safe because you thought people had a human right to protest. They never did, of course, and still never do. If you protest these days you stand a good chance of being kettled and unable to relieve your bladder for six hours. If you do relieve your bladder you might be arrested on entirely different charges, which makes it a bit of a double-bind. Otherwise you might get beaten down by cops with truncheons. That sounds pretty dangerous especially if you are an alcoholic newspaper seller with a heart condition. So this is probably a good one to go for. Don't expect a Police Commission to reward you with any damages, though, because we know this is not what it's all about, right? Living dangerously should be its own reward. Remember when we faced down the police horses in Grosvenor Square outside the American Embassy? No, neither do I.

### ***Single handed sailing***

Or sailing of any description for that matter. This is a good buzz especially if you can't swim, don't know anything about sailing and especially good if you choose to do it off the coast of Somalia and hate sharks, the real not the human kind. Cruising in a flotilla off the coast of Macedonia doesn't count, I'm afraid, unless you are in a party of HIV-positive gay hedonists or if there is a genocidal war going on in the mainland. You are too likely to survive and end up drinking Retsina in a bar on the quayside of a small Mediterranean port. That could possibly only be dangerous if you have terminal pancreatitis.

### ***Being a War Photographer***

Not so many being killed these days, but you still stand a chance, because, heaven knows there are no shortage of wars, despite us having fought the War to End all Wars several times over (complaints under the Trades Description

Act should be addressed to the War Ombudsman). Probably the most risky element is trying to persuade a newspaper to send you into a war zone, when you only have a Kodak Brownie, but then you probably wouldn't get the gig anyway. Most newspaper editors hold out for a Nikon or a Canon at the very least these days. My personal advice it never to go into action with a huge telephoto lens; it can draw attention to you and people may think you are a Japanese tourist and fair game.

### ***Mushroom Roulette***

It's the season for mushroom gathering. What the hell. Go out and gather up whatever you can find. Don't consult any field guides. Go by your instincts. Cook them up in a nice risotto and then take a chance. If you're lucky you will get a mild hallucinogenic buzz. If you're not, they will destroy your kidneys, and leave you on dialysis for life, but you may be able to write a book about the experience, although possibly not a cookery book.

### ***Drumming in a Rock Band***

Yes, it's true they usually die early, although possibly in many cases not early enough, let's face it, but why would that stop you from trying it? Being a dumb drummer could mean you might get access to a whole lot of other fun and dangerous things to experience ranging from drugs to electrocution and choking on your own drumsticks (both at once if you are really daring). If in fact it didn't, I don't think you could call yourself much of a drummer.

The only problem with taking up this option would seem to me in learning to play the drums, but if Jon Bonham could do it I'm sure you can.

### ***Having Children.***

Unfortunately this is only an avenue of enjoyable self-destruction available to women. It is pretty dangerous though, especially, I gather, if you are in a third world country, like the United Kingdom. Men have little to fear from having children unless they rebel against you in later life and slaughter you with a shotgun.

### ***Being a Football Referee***

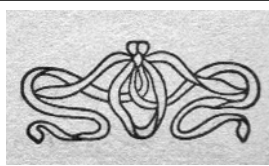
Of course nobody likes the referee, fans and players alike. Being verbally abused, spat on and maybe even drop-kicked are quite mundane dangers that may await you but if you had foreseen being decapitated and then dismembered with a scythe by disgruntled fans, you might have considered staying at home that day with nothing more dangerous than a cup of Ovaltine

It happened in the Maranhão region of northeastern Brazil, previously famous for its friendly matches. Thirty-year-old Josenir dos Santos Abreu approached the referee, 20-year-old Otávio Jordão da Silva, during a match to argue a call. Abreu reportedly threw a punch at da Silva, who then took out a knife he was carrying with him during the match, and stabbed the player. Abreu died of his wounds en route to the hospital.

Meanwhile, the player's friends and family invaded the pitch and attacked da Silva. They reportedly tied up the referee, beat him, stoned him, lynched him, and then quartered him. When they finished, they cut off his head and placed it on a stake in the centre of the field.

No one is denying that the sport of football here displayed a genuine sense of theatre often lacking in everyday Premier League matches.

Well, that's it. Now go forth and have a good time and kill yourself whilst having fun. That's what life is all about, after all.



## **REFLECTIONS ON FATHER'S DAY**

I generally view Father's Day as merely a marketing scam. My own children know of my disdain and therefore never give me anything. Maybe I should change my approach... Pat says she bought me a huge box of cherries for Father's Day this year, but since I'm not her father, I hardly think that counts. I can't say I felt any great affection for my own father. He was a blunt man without much of an internal life, and I was a typical rebellious resentful child. He could on occasions be imaginatively generous, and I admired his skills and application as an engineer, but his road was never one I ever wanted to travel down myself. There is also no doubt he provided a secure and stable family environment for his three sons, and loved my mother whom I think he sometimes found exasperating, as we all did. He would much rather spend time on his own in his various workshops than undertake a social role. Once he invited me, rather than my mother, to accompany him to an annual reunion of British Speedway Federation members. It was embarrassing for both of us. He was a fish out of water in such dress-code company, being more used to overalls than suits, and I of course was unable to give him any real support. I often wonder why he took me. Maybe it was an attempt to impress me or to bond on some other level. I just ended up feeling as bemused by it all, as he obviously did. I am now older than he was when he died, but I still feel like a child.

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## **EUGENE, LEAVE THAT LIBRARY BOOK ALONE**

Playwright Joe Orton and his partner Kenneth Halliwell used to deface library books by pasting obscene content into them as a protest against what they thought was boring anodyne material.

To quote Wicki:

'What would a librarygoer in 1960 think in picking up The Collected Plays of Emyln Williams and finding they were about to read plays called Knickers Must Fall and Fucked by Monty?

They also altered the blurbs for the books in a less than tasteful fashion. Dorothy L Sayers's Gaudy Nights, for example, was the writer "at her most awe inspiring. At her most queer, and needless to say, at her most crude!"

Readers of another of her Lord Peter Wimsey books, Clouds of Witness, are advised to read behind closed doors "and have a good shit while you are reading!"

Both men were jailed for their endeavours. British justice in those days was pretty unremitting especially when dealing with crimes which showed a spark of existential imagination.

Some people, I hear are wont to insert ex-libris plates into their books or even emboss covers or title pages with such information. To me that is the equivalent of having a fine piece of silver engraved with your name which every antique dealer will tell you immediately devalues it. The only inscription in a book I will allow is that of the name of the author himself (or herself) and even that is better without any degree of personalization. Now I have this first folio edition of Hamlet signed by someone claiming to be \*William Shakespeare\* and dedicated to his drug dealer. Any offers?

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## **DANIEL KEYES DIES**

Flowers for Algernon was that rare thing, a once in the lifetime brilliant idea beautifully and sympathetically handled with enough pathos to pull at even the most hardened heartstrings. The only thing that comes close to it (but no cigar) is Robert Silverberg's Dying Inside which follows a telepath gradually losing the powers that made him special and becoming reduced to a \*normal\* human being. Outside the genre, Andrew Sinclair in The Breaking of Bumbo poignantly dealt with the breakdown and disillusion of an idealistic young man in much the same manner. Three books I've always aspired to emulate, but am in no way capable of.

**BRAD FOSTER SENDS NEWS FROM HIS NECK OF THE WOODS. I DO WISH PEOPLE WOULD KEEP UP WITH ISSUES RATHER THAN EXPECT ME TO KEEP UP WITH THEM, BUT MAYBE I AM CREATING SOMETHING OF A PRECEDENT BY PUBLISHING SO REGULARLY**

What's this, -two- issues of Vibrator still waiting in my inbox, only a couple of weeks apart? You people and your "getting things done" good habits! Guess I should try to catch up before a third arrives. Let's see...

issue 2.0.3

Well, I would say that I learned a new word with this issue, "sintering". But that would be a lie, since, although I did look it up to find out what it meant, I can't say I will really be able to retain that information for long. So, have I, in the end, learned anything at all?

Appreciated the comments of Mr. John Nielsen-Hall this issue, re the difference between a debate and an argument. I am in a couple of groups on FB that either have "debate" in their title, or their group descriptions. Debates rarely occur, but the arguments are frequent and often. (I'm the trouble maker sitting off to the side, refusing to get pulled in, and just occasionally posting a snarky "meme of comment" in the middle of it all, poking fun at both sides of the issue.)

The patch of ground round about our house is just a few weeds short of being thought of as a wilderness area. I try to at least keep the various things that sprout there cut to the same height from time to time, thus giving the illusion of a cultivated yard. But, evidently not often enough—went out a couple of weeks ago to find it all hacked down. Evidently one of my neighbors had had enough of it, and did it themselves. Yes, it seems I am about to become one of "those" neighbors. I swear I will not let this happen, and will wail away at my own weeds with a cutting device of some sort at least now and then.

Big surprise to see my colored version of the shrew here! Feel as proud as the small child whose parents have selected one of his--- yes, his!—coloring book pages to tape up on the refrigerator door for all to see! (My a nice bit of fillo art –does- certainly look good in there, breaking up the long stretches of text a bit. Would be nice to see more in the future..... ?)

issue 2.0.4

This one opens on the screen with a bright purple swath across the top, informing me "Please fill out the following form. You can save data typed into this form." Yeah, right! These spammers are getting more and more clever, I know not to do anything like that. I nice, old-fashioned email in response, that's good enough for this kid!

Death and suicide? Naw... my personal plan is to live to be at least (I repeat, at –least-) 111 years old, just 'cause I think it would be a cool number to reach. Beyond that... hey, I'd love to see what goes on.

Okay, that's more than enough from me... I should go do some drawing now!

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**SPEAKING OF KEEPING UP, JOSEPH NICHOLAS WAS YET AGAIN LATE FOR THE PARTY, BUT I LOVE HIM SO MUCH I'VE ALLOWED HIM TO CREEP IN HERE, HIS SKIRT RAISED PROVOCATIVELY ABOVE HIS SILKEN THIGHS**

Very belated thanks for the second and third issues in the new series of *Vibrator*. Very belated thanks, too, for printing such a large chunk (all?) of my response to the first issue in the second, although of course there wasn't a lot I could say in response to myself.

I did read your comments about losing or not losing arguments gracefully in the second issue, and my immediate thought was that it must have been written in response to something which happened in the IntheBar Yahoogroup.

(Perhaps an earlier version of the piece was itself posted to the IntheBar Yahooogroup?) However, it also struck me that to respond appropriately to the points you were making, by constructively elaborating on them in order to extend and reflect on them, I needed to be in a more philosophical frame of mind than I actually was. Which means, probably, that the opportunity to do all that has now passed.... except that I feel that I should respond to John Nielsen Hall's assertion that arguments are inherently confrontational by pointing out that one of the dictionary definitions of the term is (to partially quote Michael Palin from an old *Monty Python* sketch) that an argument is a connected series of propositions intended to support or undermine a particular case or theory. In that sense, an argument is not confrontational at all. (The term is also used in mathematics, where it has a different meaning again. The joys of the English language, which perhaps so baffles non-native speakers....)

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### **MY FIRST EVER LOC FROM A GENUINE OBE (OLD BORING EGOTIST)**

Dear Mr Shamcock

Good to see that your new Vibrator is out. I honestly didn't think you'd got it in you.

It's been a long time since I received a fanzine with little stickers on the front to correct errors. In fact, I don't think I ever have. Most people these days use print directly on the page, as they did in those days too. But once again you're stretching the boundaries of fanzine design beyond, well, design. I'd quite like the next lot of stickers to be peelable so I can see what was underneath. And reusable - there are a lot of spaces in my England Panini album now and I think the anger-management course will have kicked in soon. Kicked in - aaaagh. Oh, and can you do some e-stickers for the interactive PDF (whatever **\*that\*** is) that you claim to have made available somewhere. No doubt you'll be keen to know that several paragraphs in the rest of the issue seem impressively error-free.

Credit where credit is due. I should point out that the Pismo Beach quote which John Brosnan did indeed use was originally from the cartoon strip *The Wizard of Id*. As was his other quip "That bastard Charnock has stolen all my quips".

I think the thing I disliked the least (sorry, liked the most - these typos you know) in the latest issue was the way you managed to emulate the style of potential correspondents well enough to make it seem as though they'd **\*actually\*** written to you. To be honest, I thought that writing everything in the same way but just adding a different name at the end might not work, but it had an element of plausibility that could convince the incredibly gullible.

Your rather desperate, and frankly quite sad, attempt to ingratiate yourself enough with anyone at all to get a vote in next year's FAAn awards continues as does your even more desperate and sad effort to become the next fwa Past President. However, the pity fix does seem likely to be in at the next Corflu. I don't know why you complain, though, given the success you have had at the Hugos in past years writing under names such as Enrico von Vast-Penis, Humongous Dongous and the quite simply unlikely Philip K Dick. Rest on your laurels, Mr Hamhock. Or at the very least enclose some cash with the next issue if you want votes.

Very best wishes

A well-wisher posing as an unconvincing correspondent.

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(The editor replies: You know how it is with stickers. You print out half a dozen copies and then notice something is wrong. You should think yourself lucky you got a stickered copy. It will be worth a fortune in not so many years. Besides Pat bought me a Brother label printer for my birthday so printing one-off labels is no big deal.)

## **DREAMS**

We all have dreams (I assume) which impress themselves into your mind and are remembered long after their actual significance has ceased to register, if it ever did. Often mine are ostensibly inconsequential. I have dreams every day, that's thousands of dreams in a lifetime. How come some are embedded deeper than others? There is a dream from years ago which has never left my mind. It involves me being in some kind of war-torn or eroded city, seeking shelter behind existing architecture. And another where I leave my home and travel to the suburbs to find a made-over reservoir. There was no real resolution to any of these dreams. I should have put them behind me by now, surely. But the persistence of memory is a strange and uncontrollable beast.

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## **PAUL SKELTON HATES GARDENING AND DYING, BUT NOT NECESSARILY IN THAT ORDER**

Lloyd Penney says he hates "...this getting old crap ". That's as may be, but it sure beats the only available alternative...and when it ceases to do so I guess there is always Dignitas. Except of course there isn't. Not if you can't afford the expense of carer-accompanied travel and a stay at their clinic. If only they did takeaways, or rather 'free home delivery'. Surely it would be cheaper for them to send a hit-man round on a cheap away-day ticket? One thing that puzzles me though about Dignitas is how they get their 'Customer Satisfaction' surveys completed?

I think the first fairly-close relative to die who was younger than me (by about 6 months) was my cousin Ian in his early thirties. He went into hospital for some tests feeling sort of minor debilitated and whilst there they discovered that his body was completely riddled with cancer. No point in any operations or any form of treatment whatsoever. He deteriorated very rapidly and never came out again. I'm sure the fact that he worked in construction engineering, helping to build nuclear power stations had nothing whatsoever to do with it. Goodness me, no!

The deaths of both my parents were unexpected, but oddly not traumatic. My father went into hospital with a broken hip. No problems expected, but whilst there he picked up a superbug and he also went downhill very fast and in the end his death was a bit of a relief. The hospital rang us in the middle of the night to tell us he was going (apparently they can tell because the breathing changes and somebody was with him enough to spot this). Even though Cas and I managed to get to his bedside and hold his hand he remained unconscious and just slipped away.

Mother was slightly different in that she was in for respite care in one of the more minor hospitals when she slipped and hurt herself, requiring transfer to the main hospital at Stepping Hill (the one on the news recently where patients were poisoned by having their drips tampered with). Initially she seemed to recover physically but as even my brother John noted on visiting, "Mentally, she's with the fairies". But then she too went downhill and again the hospital phoned us in the middle of the night to say she was dying too...then called back even before we'd gotten dressed to say she'd died. We can't prove anything but we both reckon she was already dead when they first called and that in her case nobody had been with her to spot the onset of death in time. We still went in. The hospital was only a couple of minutes drive away, especially at that time in the morning, and when they've called to tell you your mother has died you don't just roll over and go back to sleep.

Mother had been suffering increasingly from dementia and she was becoming a trial for the home-carers (hence the respite care) so again grief was offset by a sense of relief that she hadn't continued a long terminal decline into bewilderment.

Oddly, the death that affected me the most was that of Mike Glicksohn. Partly because he was such a good friend and partly because it came like a bolt out of the blue. For weeks afterwards I was in some form of denial. I felt there simply had to be something I could do to make him somehow not dead after all...if I could only just think of it. They do stuff like that all the time in Science Fiction stories.

Anyway, enough already with the LoC. I'm thinking of gafiating again, temporarily of course, just until the whole of fandom stops behaving like Gardeners Bloody World.

I **\*H\*A\*T\*E\*** fucking gardening!

I don't even really enjoy sitting out in the garden. Flies, wasps, creepy-crawlies, all that sort of shit. Not to mention slugs. There was an article in the Daily Mail a few Saturdays back that reckoned there were around 20,000 slugs in the average British garden. Who in their right mind would want spend time surrounded by 20,000 fucking slugs? I rest my case.

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*(Editor's note: The death that affected me, as I've said many times, was that of Rob Holdstock, not only because he was a close neighbour and a close friend, but mostly because he was such a vibrant and lively person and none of us saw it coming. Also he seemed to have lived a far less dissolute life than mine, and I couldn't understand how he had died, and I, for all my sins, remained alive. It still puzzles me, but, I guess, as Kurt Vonnegut said, So It Goes.)*

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### **FELIX DENNIS (1947-2014)**

The multimillionaire publisher perhaps most notorious for his involvement with the counter-culture OZ magazine, which resulted in him being tried along with the other publishers for obscenity, has died recently from throat cancer, really hardly surprising considering the number of substances he must have put down his throat in his lifetime.

I shared a flat with him, Chris Priest and two others during the Sixties. He could be a charming charismatic man, even back in those days. A salient memory is when we dared him to run from our house to a nearby telephone box several hundred yards away, dressed only his underpants. He took up the challenge immediately and returned victorious. He also had an antique book which I tore a leaf out of to use in a fanzine. Wracked with guilt about it, I confessed it to him, but he was all toothy smiles, as if suggesting, you realize this puts you in debt to me. I once came upon him fucking in our front room, and he greeted me with the same smile and didn't stop in his humping. Charming and charismatic but also a rogue and a villain. He obviously had good business acumen, which coupled with a sawn off shotgun got him a long way. He was in control of OZ's production and printing budget and in those days printers were not averse to greasing your palm very liberally in return for your custom. After OZ he founded Dennis Publishing and was quick to spot and exploit several niche markets. Notoriously he once claimed to have tossed an adversary off a cliff, although he later rescinded this when he realized he might be charged with murder. He made a lot of friends by being able to grease a lot of palms, but I think he also made a lot of enemies. Not many will mourn him. Certainly not me.

Chris Priest in an obituary on his blog related once being threatened by Felix with a knife and includes me in the knife-threatening scenario, which I must admit I have no recollection of. In fact Chris only disclosed his experience to me at a fairly recent party, so I wonder if his memory of the whole affair may be a false one, at least as far as including me. Also Chris seems a bit obsessed in his tale about personal hygiene, which never bothered me, as we were all pretty scabrous and smelly in those days. I don't recall doing any cleaning or washing up in the flat either, but then I obviously wasn't so obsessed with it as Chris appears to be. We were young men pretty much living out the Young Ones scenario after all. Chris is right in his blog that Felix was basically unintelligent or rather non-intellectual. I think he always laboured under the knowledge of that shortcoming, and indeed was stung when the judge dismissed him as such in the OZ trial, which is possibly why in later life he went into vanity publishing with his poetry. If anyone could afford to do it, and launch readings backed up with free wine on the back of it, I suppose he could. I think he was always somewhat disassociated in his moral outlook, amoral rather than immoral, and totally expedient in the way he dealt with people. He had been deserted by his father who I gathered was a Romany, and he doted on his mother, in an almost unhealthy way, irrationally threatening anything who dared speak a word against her, as if they would. I think he desperately needed to be accepted on a level other than his wealth, which I think in retrospect is probably the saddest feature of his life. You don't get Alan Sugar needing to write poetry. I hope he finds some kind of peace in whichever anteroom of Hell he has been consigned to.

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## **MARION LINWOOD REPORTS ON DOMESTIC IMPROVEMENTS, AMONG OTHER THINGS:**

I've just heard on Radio 4 that guys in their 70s start to appreciate their wives more as their male friends get less mobile. I haven't personally noticed this yet except that Jim has just taken a dangerous metal coat stand away from the bottom of our stairs and replaced it with six hooks he fixed on the wall. He really is very good at home improvement – about once every 20 years!

“Thingy” is a very useful word to use when retrieval from the memory store won't work. Our next door neighbour, John, is a retired elderly care-home nurse and is not keen on being resuscitated in a hospital when his time comes. He has researched various life-exit mechanisms and considers gas, with whacking big cylinders as being impractical. He recommends a plastic bag, a tea-spoon and a “thingy.” Shot guns, as used by Alice Sheldon and Tom Disch are not readily available in the UK.

What's the point of having a second childhood if we can't play with toys, i.e. woodwork, ceramics, sewing etc? Name any so-called “Adult Learning” that was ever fun. I go on organised walks of about 4 miles each Tuesday to places I would not go on my own. It's nice chatting to fellow walkers – mostly retired teachers. I started the walks when I was 65, still manage the 4 miles and I'm glad to have reached that level of fitness. At the end of each term we are given an “Individual Learning Plan” to fill in with questions like “What will you do next?” I usually write “Get older and die” – what a waste of time to ask! Can't the Local Authority work that out for themselves?

Do you think I'm a grumpy old woman? No, don't answer that!

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## **AND HERE'S ROBERT LICHTMAN COMING FROM BEHIND WITH A FINAL SPRINT, HE'S GASPING, BUT HE MAKES A FINAL LUNGE AND JUST CROSSES THE TAPE INSIDE THE DEADLINE**

My first experience of death, other than (like you) a childhood hamster (and goldfish), was when I was in high school. One boy in our class died when, alone one night and perhaps (though this was never spoken of) intoxicated, he slipped and fell in the pool surrounding a fountain near the school, hit his head, went unconscious, and drowned in a few inches of water. He'd been a friend, though not a close one, and while it was traumatic for the class as a whole, I recall rationalizing it as an unusual event and didn't think of it as something that might be relevant for me personally. Life went on.

I was still a teenager when, during my first year in fandom (1958), a series of fans and pros passed away: F. Towner Laney, Vernon L. McCain, E. E. Evans, Cyril Kornbluth, Henry Kuttner and Kent Moomaw. It became known as “the year of the jackpot,” this being an unusual convergence of deaths in a fandom that was still mostly pretty young (and much smaller in numbers, thus closer). And so were many of these men. Kuttner was in his 40s, Kornbluth in his 30s, and Moomaw was only 18. His death was particularly tragic: he committed suicide after going to register for the draft, apparently unable to face the prospect of military service. Although I definitely thought of Kent when I did the same a couple years later, I was still young, imbued with invincibility, and confident that I would never get drafted, and if I did I would find some way to beat it (which, many years later, I did).

The first close-in death I experienced was when my grandfather died sometime in “the '60s.” At that time I had the standard-issue long hair and beard (but, for reasons long forgotten, no moustache) and my must-keep-up-appearances-at-all-costs parents forbade me to attend any of the family affairs related to his passing. He and his wife, my grandmother, had lived for years on the far eastern end of the greater Los Angeles area—and one enduring childhood memory was the intense boredom of the long pre-freeway trips to visit with them. So, in order to make things easier taking care of granny, the house was sold and she was installed in an apartment about a mile away from where we lived near LAX. My grandmother was a paragon of unconditional love and a damn fine cook, and she totally accepted my appearance. But when she died a few years later I was once again denied access to her funeral.

Fast forward to the '90s. My father died in September 1995 at a nursing home in San Diego, where he'd been since January of that year after his physical combativeness burned out the couple my brother had arranged to live with

him and my mother after they were no longer able to live, due to dementia and Alzheimer's respectively, in their longtime home in Los Angeles. Neither my brother nor I could stand him, so we didn't miss him; but we went through the motions and gave him a decent funeral that was well-attended by immediate family and a few of their former neighbours in L.A. My mother followed him on Christmas Eve 1999, when pneumonia mercifully claimed her after over a decade with Alzheimer's. At the funeral my brother and I talked about how strange it was to suddenly be the elders of the family, and we did miss her even though who we missed had left her body long ago. At that time he was in remission from lung cancer, but sadly he succumbed to that early in 2001. You published my remembrance of him in the fourth issue of *Bye Bye Johnny*.

So now I'm older, and so many of the fans I grew up with over the decades are gone. The mere half-dozen who died during 1958's "year of the jackpot" seems almost humorous in the face of how the death notice column has nearly taken over *Ansible*. Well, this isn't jolly happy stuff, but neither is it to be avoided. Eventually I'll be an entry there unless I (gasp!) outlive Dave.

I forwarded your piece about your new camera to Carol, who writes: "Clearly we have more in common than being published by Damon Knight. The Nikon D40 is the camera I bought around 2006, because it was smaller and less expensive (around \$600 back then) than most others. A reviewer I liked had recommended it even though it was probably the last SLR with only 6 megapixels. That same reviewer educated me to the fact that image sharpness is more a matter of sensor size than number of pixels. I still have the camera and still love it. Unfortunately, the 18-200 zoom lens I further indulged in weighs twice as much as the camera itself, so carrying it around, whether on my shoulder or around my neck, is a great big drag (literally), and I tend to limit its use to special occasions. Bottom line, though: there's no real substitute for an SLR and this one's still a beauty. Congratulations!"

Mark Plummer's letter was a delight to read, and if it was one "of comment" I would be quaking in my boots at the prospect of his breaking my string of FAAn award tchotchkes adorning the walls, shelves and spare corners of my office. Besides the ongoing saga of the November 1941 *Weird Tales*—surely destined to take its place in the fannish pantheon alongside the April 1943 *Astounding*—and the ultimate fate of that issue of *Vibrator* with its splattered fly stain—and on a more serious note—I was fantised to read that the "nifty screen door" Mark has observed in the U.S. and in Australia apparently doesn't exist in the U.K. Now there's a business opportunity for some enterprising U.K. fan reading this. Perhaps that nice Mr. Weston's manufacturing facilities could engage in manufacturing them rather than importing them from China, and that enterprising fan could market them.

Those are lovely photos of Pat's garden. I'd recommend to anyone who only got the print edition of this issue that taking the time to type in those two links would reward your eyes with twin doses of floral beauty. The same goes for Jim Linwood's garden.

Editorial note: I would have cut out my reference to the photos I attached to my paragraph about attending my youngest son's graduation ceremony instead of including it and noting you don't publish photographs. Above on the same page, you write to Taral that you also don't publish pornographic material. My first thought was that those could be put in your Dropbox as with the phoots of Pat's and Jim's garden. My second thought was that this would still constitute publishing.

Except for the more or less steady urge that leads to responding to posts on lists and writing the occasional letter of comment, I don't wake up every morning thinking anything remotely like "I must write something." And certainly not fiction—I learned early on that I have no particular talent for that, and a small collection of rejection slips garnered in the late '50s and early '60s cemented the deal. This has saved me a lot of pain and anxiety over the years dealing with further rejection. If I didn't have that certainty on my plate, I'd probably be carefully vetting the field of competitors every time one of my stories was up for an award (or even, and perhaps especially, when one wasn't). In this non-existent alternative universe this would take the form not only of thinking I write better than them but also the form of knowing I'm secretly unworthy and that, if I were to win, all the voters for that award are delusional about the quality of my work.

That nice Mr. Breiding writes: "Robert Lichtman's loc displayed the structure and tone of a Harry Warner letter. Robert's assimilation is so complete that I understand Nic Farey has convinced Andy Hooper and Mike Meara to change the name of the FAAn Awards' best loc hack to the 'Robert Lichtman Award For Best Two Pager.'" If only I

could do it like that." I'm not sure what I think about being compared for "structure and tone" to the late Mr. Warner's letters, let alone the two-page thing. Apparently William either doesn't get *Banana Wings* or he's forgotten than I have letters in there that far exceed that size.

About my not carrying my wallet in my back pocket anymore, you write: "That must be a big fat wallet if it was giving you hip and lower back pains. Of course I would expect nothing other of you than to have a big wallet." On your first observation: Yes, I guess it is. In addition to a certain amount of paper notes, there are five plastic cards—one credit card, one ATM card, one for my auto club, one for my Costco membership, and my driver's license. In addition there's a piece of cardstock with a bunch of phone numbers on it, a few business cards, a couple of discount cards (for oil changes, ice cream and coffee—buy "x" amount, get one free), and other odds and ends. But I don't know why you would *expect* me to have a big wallet, even though it is.

About Venus fly traps you ask, "Has anybody any experience with these plants?" Not me, personally, but a dead friend of mine wrote about his own many years ago (with comments from his three children) and I reprinted his article in *Trap Door* #29, no doubt ensuring its winning the "Best Single Issue" FAAn award last year in Portland. If you go to <http://efanzines.com/TrapDoor/> and select #29, it starts on page 12 of the "two-up" PDF of that issue.

Robert Lichtman can be found at [rlitb@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rlitb@sbcglobal.net)

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### **SPEAKING OF LUNGEING FOR THE TAPE, HERE'S JACK CALVERT PLAYING CATCH-UP**

Well, this is all way late, but starting off with Point One --

I already have too many things and too many memories, so I'm not sure I'd want to live forever. Especially if that life involved periodic trips to the hospital to replace whatever organ was currently wearing out with one promised to be almost as good. Though I suppose in some stfnal future going to the hospital might be transformed into a beatific experience eagerly looked forward to by the aging masses. I confess that I am curious to know what the future will look like. (I suspect something not good.)

I cribbed Point Two and Point Three from Bill Burns's ethereal newsstand. --

Rossgate has long since faded into oblivion, and well it should, though when it flourished, it was a fine round of the popular fanish sport of kerfuffling. As it went on, my opinion swung from one pole to the other, with the pivot being the Paltrow interview. I said nothing either way because I am one of those fans who shy away from (most) argumentation. I was afraid of being left to wander alone among the smoking radioactive ruins of a formerly convivial group. I agree that argumentation is an acquired skill and few people do it well. Maybe I should disagree -- I could use the practice. One thing I dislike about conversational arguments (as opposed to structured arguments with rules, moderators, and so on) is that some people will "win" simply by refusing to consider the other argument, or to do anything but repeat the same line of thought, perhaps in different words.

No cord trousers and comfy jacket in the garden around here, boss -- it's that time of year when the weather is insufferable. By which I mean hot. Stuff keeps growing, though, especially weeds and thorny vines and cactus, so I venture out in shorts and tee shirt and clip vines, pull weeds, and prune cactus. Then come back in scratched up like I'd been in a cat fight.

I enjoyed the kitten story. Once upon a time, we found a small black kitten over on College Avenue (our local shopping area), and after posting notices on phone poles around the neighbourhood with no response, I drove the little guy down to the Berkeley Animal Shelter. They only take adoptable animals, so this kitten had to be tested for social skills. It proved to be good at lap sitting, purring when rubbed, and chasing balls, so it was accepted and went on to a new life. If it had been inclined to scratch and bite, I suppose we'd have been stuck with it.

Jack Calvert can be found at [yngvizzy@yahoo.com](mailto:yngvizzy@yahoo.com)

## **HOLD ON GRAHAM, LAST PAGE IN SIGHT.**

I will do my best, but don't expect any sparky stuff.

### **GLASTO**

Glastonbury has left me largely unmoved this year. Not enough county and western acts wearing cowboy boots for my taste. I saw Jake Bugg doing Dylan style songs with a northern accent, which didn't impress me. I saw a bit of Drengé on the BBC live feed but is kept glitching and re-buffereing so as to make it unwatchable. They did look and sound good when I saw them though, and Eoin has real charisma as a lead singer. Now if only they could write catchy tunes with more meaningful lyrics.

Every year Glastonbury seems more and more overladen with more acts than anyone in their right mind can ever hope to see, and the BBC's coverage doesn't help by screening out the dross rather than promoting it But I have never been a festival fan. I think I went to the Isle of Wight once to see Hawkwind, but have so little memory of it, I assume I must have been on drugs at the time. Camping out in a field two miles from the noise on stage somehow never appealed to me.

Just saw Anna Calvi. Now I am always a fan of an attractive woman getting up on stage (as opposed to Goldfrapp) but I would have hoped for more guitar pyrotechnics. They were provided by Metallica of course, but I was severely shocked to see they had all got haircuts. Still from what I saw of them they provided a good rundown of their more catchy songs.

I regretted not seeing Jack Black because god knows Glasto needs guitar heroes. There were very few in evidence this year. I also regretted not catching the London Sinfonietta with Johnny Greenwood. I'm glad I missed Robert Plant who I gather played a stinging but truncated version of Whole Lotta Love, which proved something about not needing the rest of the band, and I'm glad I missed Bryan Ferry singing about anything. Bring on Dolly and her massive attractions.

Why don't the Donutsh play Glasto, while callow youths like Roy Kettle's nephews can get a gig? Questions have to be answered. But first they probably have to be asked.

### **THE END OF VIBRATOR AS WE KNOW IT.**

No, tender chicks, don't fuss, it is only the end of this issue. I'm fed up of watching tired old rock stars on Glastonbury, so now must force you to face the final close down. This Vibrator may not be there for you when you wake up in the morning, but rest assured the next one soon will be.

It's been fun having you along for the ride on this issue. I wish some of you could have done more, but then I wish I could have too, instead of lapsing into a comatose state watching endless repeats of Flog It! on TV. Doctor Rob, please send me a solution I can take by mouth to cure me of this problem. Oh, you have. It's called vodka.

So far you will note, I hope if you are reading closely, I haven't mentioned World Cup Fever.

Apparently it's taken our nation by the scruff, and replaced any desire to kill David Cameron by bleeding him from the throat and replaced that entirely natural feeling with one not dissimilar involving removing someone called Junker from power. No, Miranda, I don't know what I'm talking about either.

Finally, fuck the Manic Street Preachers.

And write now to [graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk](mailto:graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk)