

CHUNGA



AGNIUHO

CHUNGA is the continuation of diplomacy by other means, as was famously said by someone or another, Clausewitz maybe, gimme a sec and I'll look it up online, presented to you by the collective efforts of Andy Hooper (publisher), Randy Byers (editor), carl juarez (designer, utility infielder), and of course our esteemed contributors, including Stu Shiffman, who is responsible for our cover, depicting what will happen if the staples are in the wrong places. *Chunga's* mailing address is 1013 North 36th, Seattle WA 98103, & as we all have collections we prefer one copy each of any zines if at all possible; email may be sent to fanmailaph@aol.com, rbyers@u.washington.edu, and cjuarez@myrealbox.com, respectively.

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Festoons

An Editorial for Diverse Hands

With a lurch and bump, we return to the fanzine rhumba. Sometimes, in my view, the production of a fanzine approaches a kinetic/symbolic state akin to dance, or mime — when I move *this* way I'm soliciting articles from other fans, and when I move like *this* I'm flipping through my file of ancient fillos to find the perfect Rotsler What I've enjoyed most about producing *Chunga* so far is the tempo between Randy, carl and I — much more *andante* than the *allegro furioso* fanzines of the recent past. Or perhaps I'm simply lagging behind the beat — the other two balefully await my opening notes as the weeks drag on, and the pages of submitted material pile up.

In fact, there is an argument to be made that this is by far the most leisurely fanzine of at least my fannish career, as I've been conspiring with a succession of potential co-editors ever since *Apparatchik* ended in 1997. I produced a handful of fanzines on my own, collaborated on various one-shots with Victor Gonzalez, but nothing ever got into a rhythm, or seemed worth pursuing beyond two or three issues. Now we definitely intend *Chunga* to be a continuing title, and have already spent some time talking about what we'll do with issues two and three.

I've no particular agenda in regard to this fanzine beyond the generic — I like having a place to publish my own material, as well as articles and art by other fanzines I enjoy reading and seeing. We did have a secondary goal of letting people know that Seattle fanzine fandom had not been completely extinguished since the 2000 Corflu, a conclusion that people might be excused for reaching. But then we also solicited and received material from writers in the U.K., and dug up some fan art from Australia, so like most "Seattle" fan projects this one has contributors on three continents. We've certainly ended up with a wide variety of fannish subjects and otherwise, so I hope everyone will find something of interest in *Chunga*.

The mailing list is being assembled more or less on editorial whim, and it will likely stay that way. All three of us love to get fanzines ourselves, but trying to work out a formal "trading" relationship on a three-for-one basis seldom results in a very happy situation. Paper letters of comment, as well as zines intended for our fanzine review columnist — if he or she is ever successfully identified — should be sent in care of Randy. We've tentatively set a deadline of

October 31st, 2002 for issue #2. Dance on, oh Gypsy Mutants!

— Andy Hooper

Well, I want to have a place for Andy to publish his writing, too. Fandom has been deprived for too long of long, nuanced — not to mention funny — digressions on Napoleonic baseball leagues and other forgotten cryptozoography. And as long as we're going to print Andy's stuff, why not call in carl to bend the margins and carve out a typeface? I could sit back and just watch those two make great fanzines. If only they'd let me call myself the Editor . . .

Of course, I have a long history of fannish parasitism to atone for. I don't help out with cons, I don't raise money for fan funds, I don't laugh at awful puns. It's about time I put something back into fandom, and putting out a fanzine seems like the easiest, pleasantest way to go about it. After attending the past three Corflus, I even begin to feel an approximate sense of the great talent out there waiting to be tapped in such an endeavor. In fact, I just met Max and Claire at the last Corflu. Hey, kids, we could put on a show!

It was also at the last Corflu that Jae Leslie Adams, under the influence of too much pirate rum, no doubt, proposed that paper fanzines were becoming delivery mechanisms for artwork. Yes, I'm slow on the uptake, but I've only lately begun to realize just how many really fine fan artists there are out there. We've made a beginning on recruiting some of them, but we need to do more. I envision *Chunga* evolving into a round-robin comic strip about the adventures of a mutant gypsy vacuum cleaner and his small, wooden sidekick, Philip Kafka van Vogt. That should be around issue number 23.

Right, carl?

— Randy Byers

Yes, he lied, peering through the memories of layouts past and never to be seen again towards the end of the column where the byline would go.

Overhead, without any fuss, the stars were falling out of the drop caps.

— carl juarez

We even took a classically long span of debate and discussion regarding the title. *Chunga* finally surfaced through a discussion of our mutual interest in the work of the late Frank Zappa, including his 1970 album *Chunga's Revenge*. That album itself is an interesting preview of most of the themes that would appear in the soundtrack of Zappa's movie *200 Motels*, and featured some of his first studio work with Mark Volman and Howard Kaylan, formerly of the L.A. pop group The Turtles. As Volman and Kaylan were under an exclusive contract with their former band's label, they performed with Zappa under the names "The Phlorescent Leech and Eddie." The outer cover is noted for a picture of Zappa in his signature mustache/goatee/ponytail with eyes closed and mouth wide open as if screaming — but both he and the photographer confirmed that he was in fact yawning when it was taken. The inner cover has a fanciful Cal Schenkel illustration of a control room/gypsy camp scene, captioned as follows:

A Gypsy mutant vacuum cleaner dances about a mysterious night time camp fire. Festoons. Dozens of imported castanets, clutched by the horrible suction of its heavy duty hose, waving with marginal erotic abandon in the midnight autumn air.

So that's what the title means.

— Andy

WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO BE A LATTE, TOO?

BY LESLEY REECE



I noticed it first in a Dr. Pepper commercial. “I drink Dr. Pepper and I’m proud,” sang a regular-looking guy in a vest as he danced down a city street. “I’m part of the original crowd!” He stopped to tip his bottle of Dr. P to a smiling woman, who held hers up to return the salute.

Original crowd? I thought. At 13, I had seen enough advertising to know what I was being told — Dr. Pepper didn’t taste like cola. Well, duh. The commercial was ending with the dancing guy marching a host of grinning Peppers past a gaping postman, a waving traffic cop, a twinkle-eyed green-grocer whose gaze said *Ah, to be young again!* “Be a Pepper, Dri-i-i-ink Dr. Pepper . . .” If I drank Dr. Pepper, I wouldn’t be just like everyone else. I’d be just like a much smaller mob of people, all of whom had the capacity to startle civil servants.

The adults I knew were already telling me to “Be Myself.” *Ee-yezz.* How many 13-year-olds want to be their orthodontized, goofy-haired selves? Instead, I strove for total conformity: Farrah hair, Nikes, cherry Lip Smacker on a lanyard where I’d have it handy just in case — Omigod! — my lips suddenly dried out.

By high school, though, the popular crowd had raised the stakes to stuff my family couldn’t afford, like Pontiac Trans Ams. I dropped out of the game with few misgivings. By then, I’d already messed up too often. I was weird. Besides, it was what was inside me that counted. And by the time I got to college, nobody would give a damn anymore.

I bought the lie.

We, fans, know the lie, and we live with it. The truth: people of any age will regard you as a weirdo unless you’re like them. Every time you encounter that herd instinct, it’s another painful surprise. But owning your oddity doesn’t work either. Being weird on purpose is exhausting, and to paraphrase Joe Pesci, what are you? A clown, there to amuse them? I thought it was better to ignore the whole thing, so I did. Until Starbucks. Well, no, until Tully’s.

For years, Starbucks and Tully’s have vied for the honor of selling Seattleites their three-dollar cups of coffee. Starbucks opens a store, Tully’s opens one right down the block. Tully’s is still the underdog. You can tell by the tenor of the customer service. Tully’s baristas aren’t some bunch of pink-haired slackers, nosirree Bob. They act like you’re from Zagat’s. *Ooh, very good choice, Ma’am,* they coo as they bustle over to the espresso machine to make your drink.

If the service smells of desperation, the coffee differs little from that at Starbucks, and Tully’s stays open. Tully’s was second. They opened after Starbucks had established the market. But Tully’s was first to understand something important about espresso.

For those unfamiliar with espresso, I’ll explain. If you order coffee in a regular restaurant, you get a cup of coffee. Your choices are black, cream, cream and sugar (or fake sugar product). That’s it. Espresso’s options, however, baffle the regular-cof-

Do you want another flavor, like almond, hazelnut, vanilla, mint, caramel? How much foam do you want? Do you want cinnamon on top? How about vanilla powder? Whipped cream?

fee drinker. How many shots of coffee do you want? Do you want milk? OK, what kind? Regular, skim, lowfat, chocolate, soy? Do you want another flavor, like almond, hazelnut, vanilla, mint, caramel? How much foam do you want? Do you want cinnamon on top? How about vanilla powder? Whipped cream?

Most espresso newbies try five or six combinations before they find the one they like. I know this because I'm regularly stuck behind someone who's still searching. They ask a zillion questions and when they get their drink they look at it like it might be poisoned. You just have to keep trying, I think. It'll come to you, as it once came to the woman in front of me who had ordered a double-tall half-caf skinny caramel latte (one shot of caffeinated espresso, one shot of decaf, and caramel flavoring, all diluted with steamed nonfat milk).

"Hey!" she said, grinning at the barista. "This one is really — me!"

"What is it?" asked an anxious-looking woman a few places behind me. "I can never find one I really like."

A few years ago, I noticed that the Tully's barista nametags didn't just say *Jason* or *Sarah* or *Dakota* anymore. They said *Jason, quad mocha*, and *Sarah, skinny double latte*, and *Dakota, half-caf macchiato*. Suddenly, they were what they drank.

So this is why people pay three dollars for coffee. They want to be drinks, too. They don't want to be just like everyone else. They want to be just like a much smaller mob of people, all of whom have the capacity to communicate with baristas. The original crowd lives on, squicking the beverage mundanes with their off-the-wall tastes. What a bunch of characters!

In the last year or so, people from outside the USA, especially Europeans, have been much more public with their complaints about Americans. There were always people who thought we still rode horses. Some thought we all dressed like Elvis; others thought we spent our lives in bunkers, coming out only for target practice on the neighbors. I excused those assumptions; I think we all did, but that isn't what I'm talking about.

Some of the more recent criticisms are understandable, and I'm not going to get into those here. But some of them, I don't buy.

Like this response to the question, "What's so bad about America?" asked by a *Slate* reporter. An Italian girl said America had given the world the stereotype of "the strong, victorious man." The Rugged Individual. OK, we did that. But: "The moral and spiritual penetration is insidious and it is everywhere," she continued. "McDonald's, American movies . . ."

Hold up. I get what she's saying about the movies, and I'll be kind enough to gloss over the nationalities of two of our biggest action heroes, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Jean-Claude van Damme. But McDonald's?

I admit, I haven't eaten at McDonald's for at least twenty years. But that makes me a weirdo. McDonald's passed "6 Billion Served" when I still ate there, and they've long since stopped posting the figure on their signs.

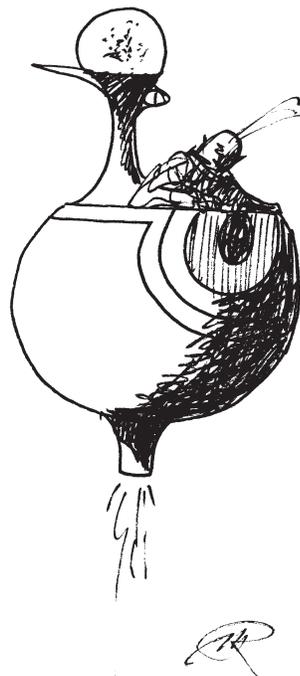
McDonald's is popular precisely because it offers only one thing: the hamburger. At other restaurants, you, the diner, might have to waste your eating time making a bunch of choices. Not so at Mickey D's. "Combo Meal Number one, please," you can say to the counter person in any McDonald's anywhere on earth, and you get a burger and fries and a cola. NO SUBSTITUTIONS, says the menu.

McDonald's is probably "insidious" in its promotion of pedestrian, unhealthy food, and it's certainly "everywhere." But those facts prove that Americans embrace, not reject, the herd instinct (no hamburger pun intended).

We can't be individualists, much less rugged ones, if our definition of civilization includes only those places with accessible Combo Meals. Individualism has to terrify us. Otherwise, we wouldn't confine our own quirks to safe areas — rainbow socks, loud ties, green hair — where we can point, chuckle, and mutter "original" at them.

Maybe that's our problem. What do you really want, Peppers? Low fat? Whipped cream? Something that doesn't taste like a cola?

World peace, please. No substitutions.



Some thought we all dressed like Elvis; others thought we spent our lives in bunkers, coming out only for target practice on the neighbors.

hangers

by Randy Byers



“Are we having fun yet?” my sister asked.
“No.” I fought to maintain my calm.
“I’m not sure I can go any further,” I said, thinking, *I’ve got to get the fuck out of here.*
“Is that right?” LaVelle said. Her tone was steady—just another day in the park.
“Go ahead,” I said, scrambling awkwardly to both get out of her way and maintain firm contact with the ground.
She worked past me and continued on.
I looked at the edge of the cliff.

The Crooked River Canyon, in the high desert plateau of Central Oregon, is actually a canyon within a canyon. The river cut a wide, curving gap into one ancient bed of basalt, and then, when the Cascades dumped a fresh load of lava that filled the first canyon halfway, the river carved another, narrower chasm into the new basalt. Since the inner canyon was cut along one face of the original, the result is a four-hundred foot cliff of striated rock on the north bank of the river, while on the south bank, another cliff ascends two hundred feet to the broad, flat floor created by the later lava flow. Across the floor, a third cliff climbs to the same level as the northern face.

My parents have a house on the rim of the upper south side, with a spectacular view not only of the canyon but also of Mt. Jefferson, Three-Fingered Jack, and the Sisters in the Cascades to the east. Every summer, I spend vacation time at the house. That’s how, on more than one occasion, I’ve found myself staring at the edge of a cliff.

A few years back, my brother, Lonnie, told me he’d seen something interesting while fishing the

Crooked for trout. There was a tree where thirty-odd turkey buzzards had gathered to snooze after bathing in the river. Turkey buzzards are a common sight in the area. Usually, you see one or two of them gliding silently overhead, or maybe a half-dozen in the distance sending signals with their circling that some poor critter is dead or dying. It was something, Lonnie said, to see so many of them in one place, muttering to each other and taking the waters. He suggested that we hike down into the inner canyon and take a look. LaVelle, was interested in seeing them, too.

We set off around 9:00 in the morning. The desert sun was already hot, but not too hot yet for a hike. We found a break in the lip of the lower cliff and made our way down to the grassy, dirt slope that briefly interrupts the cliff’s perpendicular drop. A deer trail provided good footing. Occasionally, there were places where rock or sagebrush made the going more difficult, but it wasn’t really a problem. It was hotter down in the canyon than it had been up top.

We stayed on the trail for maybe a half a mile before Lonnie recognized the spot above the buzzards’ tree. He left the trail and headed toward a point lower on the slope where we’d be able to see over the cliff. I followed, and LaVelle brought up the rear. I wasn’t thinking about much of anything, although I was paying attention to where I placed my feet. Even on the trail, I’d been conscious of where I was stepping; now, without the trail to guide my decisions, I was even more focused on the choices.

Lonnie forged quickly ahead and disappeared around a grassy bend. I’d gone fifty yards off the path when I lost my footing twice in a row and abruptly realized how steep the slope actually was and how close we were to the edge of the cliff below us. One false step, and I’d be sliding toward perdition.

I was already worked up from the exertion of the hike, but now adrenaline added its jolt. The edge of the cliff came into sharp focus, no doubt making it look closer than it really was. Panic rang the buzzer, ready to answer. I planted my skinny butt on the slope, unable to regain a sense of balance.

That’s when LaVelle startled me with her question, then left me to my private session with the abyss.

I had to get the fuck out of there. But how? The ground I’d covered to get to this point was just as slippery and steep as the ground ahead of me that I no longer dared attempt. In fact, the ground in every direction was slippery and steep. Panic buzzed again impatiently.

The trail we’d left continued on a gentle incline in

the same westward direction as our own unbeaten path, so it was probably above me. It was probably closer to me straight above than back along the way we'd come. I had to get to the path *now*. Straight up it would be.

I had a pair of binoculars in a boxy leather case slung on a strap over one shoulder. Until now, it had rested unobtrusively against my back. Now, as I clawed my way upward, it swung wildly, banging my ribs and dropping again and again off my shoulder. I cursed it furiously. Even "motherfucker" had no effect on it. Irritation fed on fear and grew into a white rage. Rage pried open the gates holding back fear.

I scrambled up the slope. Thought was almost impossible in the surge of panic and anger. *Get to the trail* was the frantic mantra. I grabbed at clumps of slick, dead grass. My feet planted themselves willynilly. I was still able to understand that if I gave in to the fear completely and rushed too fast, the danger of losing my footing increased. (Or was that understanding simply another, more cunning, form of fear?) I slowed down. Now I was angry at the necessity of patience. I had to get to the path *now*.

The path arrived. I was safe.

The fear began immediately to subside.

My embarrassment at the fear had begun already when LaVelle startled me in the first moment of panic. With the fear dissolving, embarrassment took over. I quickly set out along the trail in the direction that Lonnie and LaVelle were traveling, hoping to regain some portion of face by looking at the buzzard tree from my higher vantage. "I was having some trouble on the slope, so I decided to stick with the trail." Harrumph, yes, stiff upper lip and all that.

I quickly came even with LaVelle, who hadn't made much progress below. I caught her attention, and she immediately climbed to join me. Good. Now I wouldn't be alone in my inability to follow Lonnie. Face was regained. We continued along the trail until we saw Lonnie returning below. He saw us and climbed up.

"I saw the tree," he said, "but the buzzards weren't there."

"Can we rest in the shade?" LaVelle asked.

We strolled to a big juniper nearby and sat on the boulders beneath its branches. The last of my adrenaline burned away in the cool shade. I wanted to say something about what I'd just gone through, but I was still embarrassed — not to mention stunned by the sun and raw feeling. We rested for five or ten minutes, then climbed up to the lip of the canyon and immediately found a place where we could easily scale the last fifteen feet of rock.

"Need help?" Lonnie asked.

"No," I said. "I can handle this part."

Back at the house, a half hour later, the young golden eagle who had been born in a cliff aerie just below the deck landed at the old nest. Lonnie immediately pulled on his boots and climbed out on the outcropping of rock at the cliff's edge to take a look.

"He has no fear," I said to Dad.

Lonnie reappeared to beckon us, and we put on our shoes to join him. We peered over the lip of rock and saw the young eagle perched only ten feet below. It was unaware — or unafraid — of us. As with all raptors, odds were fifty-fifty that it would be dead before it was a year old. It was unaware and unafraid of that, too.

When we returned to the deck, I told Dad and Lonnie the story of my moment of panic. "I almost lost it," I said.

"Well, I don't think the slope that's steep," Lonnie said. "If you slipped, you'd be able to catch yourself before you went over."

"I guess so," I said. "The edge sure looked close to me."

Lonnie shrugged. "It would've been easier if you'd been wearing hiking boots. Your tennis shoes don't have enough tread on them."

Dad agreed. He showed us the worn treads on his shoes. "These don't work for climbing at all."

So we talked of shoes, not fear.

It is, of course, easier to talk about shoes than fear, especially since in retrospect I can see that I wanted absolution for my fear. More than that, I wanted to find something valuable in it, something that made it worthy and not shameful. Indeed, a couple of days later, as I hiked the paved path to the routine crises of work back in Seattle, I told myself that the fear had been a sign that I love life and that the whole episode had been a revelation and a gift. I love life! It's all good!

That just seems like confused thinking now. Fear of death is not love of life.

So it was more practical, after all, to just get a good pair of hiking shoes and forget about absolution.

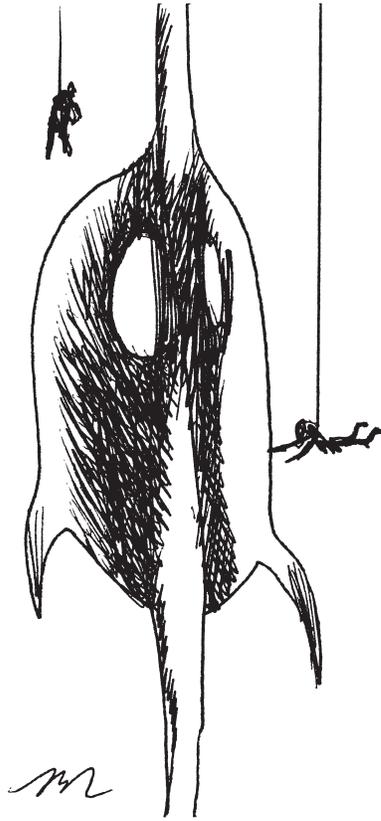


"Nice day," Terry said.

"Beauty," I agreed.

She shaded her eyes against the desert sun with one hand and scanned the floor of the canyon, then she went back inside the house. I took a sip of coffee and scanned the words of the paperback I held open in one hand.

It really *wasn't* unusual that Lonnie hadn't



returned from the river yet. He was fishing.

Still, it had been hard enough climbing that creaky ladder down the cliff with the crawdaddy trap in one hand. How much harder with the trap in one hand and the fishing pole in the other? And if the loose rock had slid once, it could slide again.

I picked up the binoculars and studied the lip of the inner canyon.

The summer after our exciting adventure in search of buzzards, Lonnie and I went down the cliff to the river. Earlier in the day, we'd gone into Redmond so that he could buy a new fishing pole, and we'd stopped at a brewpub to test the quality of the local ale. We downed a couple of pints apiece and headed back to the house for dinner. The wine served with the meal left me in a mellow, happy mood.

"I'd like to throw the crawdaddy trap in the river and leave it there overnight," Lonnie told me. "Want to come along? I'll drop the trap in, try a couple casts with the new rod, then we'll come back up."

"Sure," I said.

Mom and Terry (Lonnie's wife) rolled their eyes at us when we tossed a couple of Lonnie's homebrews into the backpack.

"You guys be careful," Terry said.

"Piece of cake," the wine said, using my mouth. I donned my new chunky-treaded boots.

The sun was setting as we left the house, but the clear sky was still full of its fading light. We drove

to the lower level and parked by the pasture that's all that's left, aside from the house and barn, of the cattle ranch that once ruled the canyon.

There are a couple of ways to get down the cliff all the way to the river, but we had agreed to try the old ladder below the ranch house. Lonnie grabbed the backpack and fishing pole, and I took the crawdaddy trap. We traipsed across the pasture, found a break in the rim rock, and descended over a rough scramble of boulders and down to our old friend, the deer trail.

"I guess I won't bring Ryan down with me tomorrow when I come back for the trap," he said, referring to his six-year-old son. "This is rougher than I remembered."

"This would probably be pretty tough for him," I agreed.

We made our way easily to the ladder. It is a rusted, zigzag structure of metal poles and steps miraculously bolted who knows how long ago and at what cost in human life to the naked basalt of the lower cliff, and it is showing its age. The shudders and creaks as we climbed onto it promised eventual, likely imminent, collapse. I held the crawdaddy trap—four feet in length and one in circumference—out in front of me with one hand and grasped a rail with the other. Because of the trap, I took the precipitous steps face forward, as though on a stairway, which meant that I could only get the heels of my feet on the narrow, flat rungs. It occurred to me that this had all been a fatally drunken error in judgment.

But it was a piece of cake. At the foot of the ladder, artesian water roared from the base of the cliff, splashed across a scree of boulders, and streamed into the river. We scrambled over the slick, mossy rocks and came to the trees on the riverbank.

"It's darker down here than I thought it'd be," Lonnie said.

We had entered a well of dusk, with twilight still visible higher up the canyon wall. I sat next to a concrete structure that supported the probable cause of the ladder: a rusted hulk of machinery that looked like an old generator, although there was no sign of a waterwheel or any other mechanism to tap the flow of the river.

I popped open a beer, lit a cigarette, and sat silently in the deepening dark beneath the trees, while Lonnie tossed the trap in the water and then flipped lures expertly into promising pools and currents. The only sounds were the rattlesnake buzz of his reel and the dull roar of the river. Across the water, the opposing cliff towered four hundred feet into the sky in thick strata of vertically striated rock. Bats skittered low over the river, whizzed past my

nose, and darted into the shadow of the generator's crumbling foundation. Everything but the ember of my cigarette melded in shades of gray.

Lonnie threw back the one trout he caught. It was middling small. He put his fishing gear away and drank his beer, and we talked about nothing much.

"We better get going before it gets too dark," he said. He left his rod and tackle box, since he'd be coming back for the trap in the morning.

Back to the slimey scree, where we paused to watch water spray from the cliff into moonlight. Lonnie vaulted from one rock to another, which turned out to be loose, and landed on his backside. He looked sheepish and said he was okay.

Without the hindrance of the trap, the ladder was easier to negotiate, though it still trembled under our weight. We climbed to the deer trail, where I made the mistake of looking down at the river and was seized by dizziness. My knee stung from a nettle's kiss.

"I don't know about you," Lonnie said, "but I'm not really interested in walking all the way back the way we came. Let's just go up here, by the ranch house."

"I'm with you," I said.

Up we went, and home again, home again. We sat on the deck and plucked seeds that had hitchhiked on our socks, then crowned the evening with whiskey on the rocks.

I heard Lonnie drive away at dawn the next morning, on his way to collect the trap. When I got up a couple of hours later, he hadn't returned. I could see his car parked by the pasture below.

I ate breakfast and went out on the deck with a book and a cup of coffee. Every few minutes, I looked to see if he was coming up over the lip of the cliff or crossing the pasture. Dad came out to look once, and Terry came out a couple of times. Fear wormed its way into my heart.

Lonnie has always pooh-poohed the idea of taking a cell phone along on his fishing expeditions on the river in case he gets in trouble. It had never seemed like a big deal to me before, but I now found myself irritated at his nonchalance. What if he *did* get in trouble? What if he fell and broke a leg? Or worse? Two fatherless sons, and Terry a widow.

Could one atheist pray for another? To whom or what? I formed prayers without address and tried to focus on the book.

A half hour later, he returned, as he always has. The crawdaddy trap had been empty, but he'd caught a couple of trout.

Fear had spoken to me again. The message this

somewhat impatiently, "I mean I'm a patient man."

time was very different from what I'd heard the year before, and this time it really was a message of love: I love my brother, and I don't want to lose him.

But the way he keeps dragging me out onto cliffs, I've got to wonder whether he's trying to lose me.



FANZINE REVIEWS FROM PLANET X

Convention Girls' Digest 3

Allyn Cadogan, Sharee Carton, and
Lucy Huntzinger

Holy shit! This certainly came as a welcome surprise. It's been eighteen years since the last *CGD*, and Lucy's the only one of the girls who hasn't completely gafiated in the meantime. The story of how this zine came to be is crogging in itself. Something about Lucy running into Sharee in a sleazy Melbourne bar at the Australian Worldcon, and a drunken long distance call to Glen Ellen. Whatever! What has come of it is a pastiche of the Wizard of Oz, in which a young fan from the plains of Glen Ellen (Allyn) conks her head on a mimeo and wakes up at a convention in Oz, where she befriends the Scarecrow (Sharee), the Tin Woodman (Spike Parsons), and the Cowardly Lion (Lucy). Our young heroine has inadvertently killed the Wicked Witch of the East (Richard Bergeron) and is pursued by her sister, the Wicked Witch of the West (Harlan Ellison), who keeps threatening Allyn that this (boohaha!) will be her last dangerous vision. It's all very frightening, and our only hope is that loveable old humbug, the Wizard (D. West, of course). Or is he? With beautiful Denslowesque illos by Dan Steffan. Welcome back, girls! I look forward to the secret garden convention.

— Randy Byers

TOBES FOR TAFF — WHAT *have* WE DONE?

by Max

“Sudden horrible thought - Tobes for TAFF?”
*Robert (nojay) Sneddon, rec.arts.sf.fandom,
March 1998*



he very first time Mr. and Mrs. Brown found Paddington Bear, he was sitting on an old leather suitcase, behind some mailbags near the Lost Property office. He was wearing an old and rather shapeless hat and he had a label tied around his neck that read, quite simply:

Please Look After This Bear.

I've got this odd picture in my head in which Paddington is replaced by Tobes. It's going to be an airport, not a train station, I suppose, but they must have lost property, too. I don't expect Tobes has the hat, but if someone put one on his head it would probably stay there for some time. The label would have to be amended to *Please Look After This Drunken Fuckwit*, of course, and I don't quite know who'd be playing the role of the Browns.

It's a nice tableau, though, isn't it?

You think otherwise? Looking for someone to blame? Well, let's start with the following: Jae Leslie Adams, James Bacon, Dave Hicks, Anders Holmström, Ted White, Claire & Mark Fishlifter, Damn Fine Con and ninety one voters who put their name to votes for Tobes for TAFF. And if fingers are being pointed I suppose I might have to admit to having had something to do with it.

Among these names are FAAn award winners, at least one Hugo winner, the founder of the James White award and the kind of people who turn up as Fan Guest of Honour at some of the bigger conventions. They're people who know the fandom game and want to play it. They know what they're

doing. Even if what they're currently doing IS sitting around going “Gosh, he won. He's really the new TAFF delegate. Do you think this might go horribly wrong?”

The TAFF race in 2002 has been odd in some respects. Tobes stood for the second time, his first time in the race being treated largely as a joke. Even by Tobes, whose platform began:

Fish, aardvark, hat-stand—alright, why should you vote for me? Buggered if I know.

Although he took more UK votes than one of the opposing candidates (Tommy Ferguson), Tobes came in third overall (in a three way race) and Sue Mason attended Chicon, the 2000 Worldcon in Chicago. It wasn't really a surprise. On top of the flippant platform he presented the word on the street was largely in keeping with Alison Scott's comments on rec.arts.sf.fandom:

[. . .] *I'm certain that he would be quite appalled to win, and while he'd be a fine ambassador for UK fandom—in a manner of speaking—I would be very surprised if he'd welcome the chance to administer the fund for two years.*

(rec.arts.sf.fandom, December 1999)

After all, they pointed out, this guy was known for partying. His fanzine went by the name of *Drunken Fuckwit*. The stories that travelled were “Tobes got drunk and . . .” or “Tobes had a room party and . . .”. But they were tales told with fondness rather than malice and somewhere along the line “Drunken Fuckwit” became synonymous with the name of Tobes, and Sue went off to America and everything settled down.

Personally, I was watching from the sidelines. The first time I took part in something fannish that didn't revolve around the online world it was a simple meal in the East End that was arranged while people were visiting from America. Lots of things were discussed there and the good(?) name of Tobes was included. Weeks later I went to the London Circle First Thursday meeting and, having asked to be introduced around a bit, I was greeted by Maureen Kincaid Speller (among others) who was accepting assorted TAFF related odds and ends from other attendees. She gave me a brief guide to what TAFF was about. I read around the subject afterwards and filed away the information. The major players were largely strangers to me at this point but the idea seemed like a good one. I've since formed a theory that states that the reason the TAFF exists is not solely to perform the stated purpose of bringing well-known and popular fans across the Atlantic, but to provide a focal point of controversy to draw fans together—if only to feud.

(subject suggested by
Tony Keen)

Some have pointed out that Americans sometimes show concern for the proliferation of alcohol at British fannish events. There are jokey references to fan X thinking fan Y might have a drinking problem because they saw them order two whiskeys in one night. Tobes is, as we've already seen, known for partying. Stick him in a fan fund race and there you have it: instant concern and controversy. Yet, there's not so much in the way of concern when the candidate is one of three and his being there appears to be the fan fund equivalent of a spoof convention bid. In the 2000 race Tobes' presence wasn't a big deal. But things changed a little by 2002.

One aspect of the controversy surrounding the race in 2002 has been the question of fanac. "What's Tobes done, then?" asked challengers, "You know, apart from party?" Since the race in 2000, Tobes' campaign had become a bit more serious. For a long while it was known that Tobes intended to stand for TAFF, but no opposition was forthcoming. The rules of TAFF don't allow a one horse race. Various people were encouraged to take to the TAFF stand (many ran away screaming at the prospect) and run the race, if only so that Tobes could stand a chance of winning this time around. Tobes himself, meanwhile, had put out a fanzine without the "Drunken Fuckwit" title, this time going by the name *Strangeness and Charm*. Within it lies the short piece "You both read books" which states:

[. . .] *in fandom people generally know who Wittgenstein was, but would be surprised that I do. I'm a victim of my own image I suppose.*

His platform this time was more serious, too, and read:

I am a European, rather than just a British candidate. I'm standing because friends think I'd make a good candidate, a fun person who also cares about fandom. I do, but what I care about most are fans. These people are my friends and I enjoy nothing more than talking, drinking and partying with them at conventions. If I win, I will go to Worldcon and I will have fun or die trying. I'm looking forward to meeting American fans on their home turf.

You'll note that the inevitable references to drinking and partying remain, but they come after "friends", "good candidate" and "cares about fandom". Cast your minds back to the guilty parties lining up to be counted among those friends. Award winners and celebrated fen. Some of the people who make things happen in fandom. And look what they made happen this time around.

"Good," said Arthur D. Hlavaty on rec.arts.sf.fandom, "It's about time they sent us a drunken fuckwit."



Of course, few would claim that the opposition wasn't worthy. Chris O'Shea stood with the support of BNF nominators, too. People like Sandra Bond and Maureen Kincaid Speller. Somehow, though, the Chris for TAFF campaign never gained the momentum that Tobes' side of the race did. Damn Fine Con has been described as a thinly veiled disguise for Tobes-for-TAFF-con, which in retrospect might have been an unwise move on the part of the staunchly supporting committee given that both Tobes and Chris were in attendance. While Tobes seemed, all along, to have gained the majority of the UK vote it was thought for some time that Chris and his filk connections in the USA would tip the balance in his favour over there. Concern was raised over what would happen if neither managed to gain the required 20% of the vote in either country. In the post mortem dissection of the figures it turns out that the US voting was neck and neck, actually going slightly in Tobes' favour by the endpoint.

Again, the campaign side of things can be held partially responsible for this. Mark and Claire put out a fanzine tailored to support Tobes, or at least give the voters a good idea of what they were voting for. "I expect many of them will read it and immediately put in a vote for Chris," mused Claire. In the

Info for this article was gleaned from:

Plokta News Network
www.plokta.com/pnn

TAFF
www.dcs.gla.ac.uk/SF-Archives/Taff/taffhist.html

Google Groups
groups.google.com



online forums there were a small but visible group of fans signing off with “Tobes for TAFF” sig lines, while Sandra Bond alone ended her posts with the “Chris for TAFF” line. There was no fanzine put out by or on behalf of Chris. The “Tobes for TAFF” logo I knocked together one afternoon did the rounds, winding up as a T shirt design, a temporary tattoo and a filler in the Tobes For TAFF fanzine as well as the long awaited new issue of *Banana Wings*. In contrast even before all the votes were in, Chris admitted that he didn’t know how he felt about standing again should he lose, but that he “didn’t do much campaigning this time, which probably didn’t help my chances”.

Part of it was probably the fanzines. There’s a core group of voters who believe quite strongly that TAFF is about fanzines, that the trip reports that have gone by the wayside are a testament to the failure of the TAFF concept, that both Tobes and Chris are semi-non entities because they aren’t well known for their contributions to fanzine fandom. Perhaps the TFT zine has a lot to answer for. Perhaps the fact that Tobes has written fanzines, (just hasn’t managed to get them out there and into the memepool due mainly to handing them out in person rather than running a mailing list) counted in his favour. Chris, after all, is far better known for his performing in terms of song, music, puns and magic than for his writing. Further, he has had a hand in numerous conventions and is more of a known name in that arena than in terms of writing. Chris maintains that fanzines are not necessarily what TAFF is all about. Several fanzine fans disagree vehemently.

I’m a fanzine fan, albeit a recent convert. In my view the fanzine doesn’t need to be an integral part of what TAFF is about. Fanzines aren’t why I voted

for Tobes. I voted for Tobes because he is a character. He’s the sort of person of whom anecdotes are told in his absence and whose absence is rare within the realm of the big UK cons. It seems everyone knows who Tobes is (the drunken fuckwit, right?)*. It surprised me a little to come across the “semi-non entity” accusation as my understanding was that enough of the tales would have made it across the water through the UK zines. You see, you don’t need to be a fanzine fan to make your mark within fanzines. You don’t need to produce worthy writing or wonderful art to make a mark in fandom. Sometimes all it takes is a bit of charisma, being a fun person and caring about fandom. Tobes fits this bill.

The renowned drinker reputation hasn’t necessarily done Tobes any favours. There’s been concern voiced over whether he’s really a good person to be administering the fund after the trip. As Tobes himself, says, though: “I would be quite capable of administering the fund, I hold down a responsible administrative job. Just because I go to cons and party hard and clown about doesn’t mean that it’s all I do.”



There is some incongruity to the idea of Tobes getting up and accepting a Hugo on behalf of an absentee (as a certain fanzine fan in Edinburgh put it, “Oh. My. God.”). It’s said that if he follows recent form he may well end up presenting one, too. The Hugos are all prestigious and austere. Tobes, well, he isn’t. At least, so says his reputation. And we’re back to the victim-of-his-own-image theme. Will he scrub up nice and do the job? Or will he oversleep after an enthusiastic room party that goes on until the following afternoon? Neither scenario is beyond belief. Will Tobes write a timely trip report and handle the distribution? Make a good impression on the other side of the Atlantic? Do a good job of the administration upon his return? Inspire faith in TAFF as a concept and play an integral part in raising funds for future races?

Has *anyone* managed all of the above?

How the story will play out remains to be seen. One certainty is that, should he need it, Tobes is going to get support from his friends in fulfilling these duties. The only reputation he’s got to lose is one of drunken fuckwittedness. It’s unlikely to go horribly wrong because people who really care about fandom are going to look after its interests. Anyway, if it *does* go disastrously wrong . . . well, TAFF has survived worse and those guilty parties are the ones likely to help it back on track.

Tobes for TAFF: What have we done? We done good.

*On the TAFF web site Tobes is the only candidate identified by christian name alone: *Vijay Bowen attended... Sue Mason attended... Victor Gonzalez attended...Tobes will attend...*

While this can be attributed to his name being unique among fans, I am unaware of other Vijays or Ulrikas. This says something. I couldn’t tell you what.



Skiffy Corner



Beginning Operations: A Sector General Omnibus by James White
Introduction by Brian Stableford
511 pp., Tor Books, 2001

It was easy at first to roll my eyes. The technology was so clunky you could practically hear the tubes humming. No computers, and no net. Yet they had faster than light space drives, tractor beams, pressor beams. That sparked an interesting what if: What if we were contacted by a species with basic 1950s sf technology? (I think I saw this story in *Analog*.)

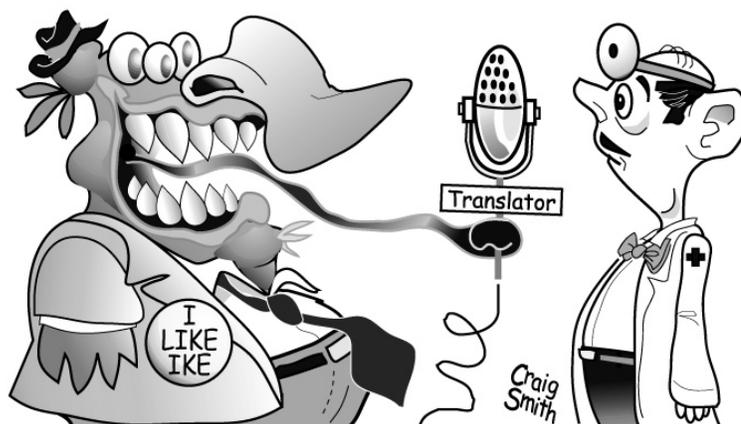
More important, the sociology was also clunky. As Nalo Hopkinson and others have pointed out, the early Sector General stories and most sf from that time period takes place after some vast, unmentioned plague has wiped out all people slightly darker than the palest Anglo-Saxon (and in this case, all but one human female).

And the dialog was so manly. I'll admit it: refreshingly manly, even while I chuckled and thought myself better. In *Hospital Station*, the first novel, the chief psychologist says, "What do you expect, praise? My job is to shrink heads, not swell 'em."

So why did I read this? Well, I remember a passage from a Sector General novel I read when I was a teenager. All I remember is that one passage, but it stuck with me all these years. Okay, I read it at 17 and it was about sex, so I'm sure that's part of it. But, in a few sentences, it encapsulated why I read sf. A few years ago I read something about the Sector General series that put that passage into context for me, and I've been idly curious to read the stories ever since. Then this book leapt into my hands at the U Bookstore.

I was immediately struck by the variety of aliens. Chlorine breathers, methane breathers, bugs that lived in superheated steam. Six-legged elephantine monsters from high-G planets. Delicate dragon fly insects from low-G planets. Is it that we know too much about physiology now, how unlikely this range of creatures is to be? Or has print sf become too influenced by the latex-faced aliens of *Star Trek*?

Curiosity kept me going past the eye rolling. The first novel in this omnibus was published in 1957. Back then, the most sophisticated medical imaging was X-rays. Now we have CAT scans, MRI, and more. How would he introduce new technology into the future? To me that was an important question



because our medical technology today is better than Sector General's.

The solution turned out to be pretty simple. He just introduces the technology; no sleight of hand or rationalizing. For example: The way aliens understand each other is that each carries a Translator. In the first book the Translator is just presented, without explanation. It's there like the tractor and pressor beams. In the second, after mainframe computers have entered business, the Translator is powered by—a mainframe computer! And just in time to be a plot device, too.

I was also curious about the sociology. And that, too, was handled naturally as part of the progression of characters and story. The last story involves a continent sized creature threatened by the dirty nukes used by another intelligent species on the same planet. The one Earth human female, introduced as a romantic foil for the protagonist, is by the last book likely to become Senior Pathologist.

After the curiosity was satisfied, what kept me going was these are just plain good stories. The characters are consistent; the problems are well thought out and developed. The plotting improves steadily. With the first couple stories, my reaction tended to be *Why doesn't he just...?* By the last story, my reaction was "How is he going to figure this out? What's next?" And the writing improves subtly all the way through. Yes, there are serializing problems in that the stories were originally written as novellas, then minimally revised to be novels. The novels were put into the omnibus without revision. So you get a little tired of the explanations of the Translator or the four-letter lifeform classification. But these are minor complaints against the fact that I liked it. It's the value of the characters and the stories that stands up.

— Luke McGuff

The Sector General novels and anthologies of James White:

- Hospital Station*
(Ballantine, May 1962)*
- Star Surgeon*
(Ballantine, March 1963)*
- Major Operation*
(Ballantine, February 1971)*
- Monsters and Medics*
(Ballantine/Del Rey, March 1977)
- Ambulance Ship*
(Ballantine/Del Rey, October 1979)
- Sector General*
(Ballantine/Del Rey, March 1983)
- Star Healer*
(Ballantine/Del Rey, January 1985)
- Code Blue – Emergency*
(Ballantine/Del Rey, July 1987)
- The Genocidal Healer*
(Ballantine/Del Rey, February 1992)
- Final Diagnosis*
(Tor, May 1997)
- Mind Changer*
(Tor, November 1998)
- Double Contact*
(Tor, October 1999)

* included in
Beginning Operations

A Brief Interview

Transcribed from the Baird rotary television by Hal O'Brien and Andy Hooper

Welcome back to the program. In the new dangerous world of the future, we find ourselves fighting to preserve Democracy as our hindfathers did—from Valley Fridge to The Grinning Generation, each American has a sacred duty to ignore the excesses of the present to honor the sacrifices of the past. Today's arsenal of freedom must reach far and wide to arm our boys in brown, with weapons as wild as remote imaging and as commonplace as the humble Hostess Twinkie. Our guest this segment is John Forquetung, Director of Public Information for Yoyodyne Propulsion Systems, a technical contracting consultancy and astrochemical-testing forge based in Grovers Mills, New Jersey. Mr. Forquetung, thank you for joining us.

JF: I'd no idea you were falling apart, but you're very welcome, and it's a pleasure to be here.

Mr. Forquetung, as many of our viewers are not familiar with Yoyodyne or its mission, can you briefly describe both for their benefit?

Of course. Yoyodyne Propulsion Systems is a growing, excited company that works on a contract basis with the United States Department of Defense. We work with many other government agencies and offices as well, but Defense ends up ordering—or seizing—most of the work we do.

And forgive me for asking but your name is unique in my experience. Forquetung?

It's French.

Of course. And what is Yoyodyne excited about now, Mr. Forquetung?

Our efforts are currently focused on a project for the U.S. Department of Justice. Particular documents in the National Archives have apparently become embarrassing to the current administration. I should clarify that—it's not the document itself but the public perception of its relevance—lots of copies have apparently circulated, and people quote the text as if it is supposed to guide the Administration's conduct.

How inconvenient.

Anyway, we've been given a new, shorter, much more efficient draft of this document, and Yoyodyne's task is to secretly replace every single existing copy of the old document with the new one. Our CEO, John Whorfin, believes this task is of such importance that he insisted on the placement of a Yoyodyne contracted consultant on the Bush cabinet.

Really?

Yes. John Ashcroft. We're extremely honored and proud.

This is a remarkable development—U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft is an employee of Yoyodyne?

Yes—I would have thought this apparent, given that we've made no effort to alter his appearance. But this is far from the first time Yoyodyne employees have been asked to pitch in at Justice. We had a similar situation during the Nixon administration.

Do you mean Attorney General . . .

John Mitchell. Again, we were extremely proud. John Dean was also an important element of our program, but he was burdened with a self-contradicting mission program, and we ended up working at cross-purposes there. Fortunately, when trouble arose, we already had wiser heads in place on the Federal bench.

Yoyodyne controlled a judge?!

Indeed, Judge John Sirica. The Nixon pardon was our finest hour. Halcyon days for the company, long before the Overthruster debacle damaged our reputation with Wall Street. The director of operations, J. Gordon Liddy . . .

Pardon me, but aren't you referring to G. Gordon Liddy?

That began as a common typo in the press, but John embraced it—part of his penchant for deep cover.

[Pause] If you've just joined us, our guest is John Forquetung. These revelations of political influ-

ence are remarkable, but if you don't my asking, what does any of this have to do with Propulsion Systems?

Not much actually — we keep the name out of tradition. We're not the only technical institution to do so — when was the last time you heard of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena working on jets?

Point taken. So getting back to this project for Justice, what kind of progress have you made?

A great deal, actually. Version 2.1 is completely finished, with our friend John Ashcroft's assistance. I think Americans could be surprised how efficient government will become without the time-wasting guarantee of rights or frivolous separation of powers that characterized policy to this point. Where Yoyodyne can help the most is in implementation, replacing untold millions of copies of the Constitution on the same night.

Did you say the Constitution?

Yes — did I pronounce it wrong? Being an immigrant to this country, English is not my first language.

No, your pronunciation is impeccable. Your accent is undetectable.

Thank you. It's why Lord John Whorfin —

Lord Whorfin?

Pardon me, that's why *CEO* John Whorfin assigned me to represent Yoyodyne among the monkey boys.

Monkey boys.

A bit of slang favored on my homew — in my home country. We find it goes over better than “pink ones.”

One can see why. What else does Yoyodyne have planned?

One of the more interesting challenges we face is something you might consider a human resources problem. We have some of the best minds in the firm working on the issue. You see, through a strange quirk of coincidence, every single Yoyodyne employee shares the same birthday.

Incredible.

Yes, and at first it seemed like quite a burden — imagine having to buy, wrap and deliver 3,000 birthday presents in a single day — but management realized this meant we needed only one company-wide birthday party per year. Instead of losing twelve days of productivity with monthly parties, we have one six-day orgy of Twinkies, vodka and yellow record music and gain more than a full work-

thousand years a man has the face he deserves.

week back in the balance. But soon we're going to confront the consequences of this policy, when every single Yoyodyne employee is required by law to retire. On the same day. Retraining costs alone will be astronomical.

Yes, they would be.

When coupled with recent events concerning our 401(k) program, it's not surprising some employees have chosen to betray — err, to leave the company early.

We've heard a lot about foundering 401(k)s lately. What is Yoyodyne's story?

Yoyodyne isn't a publicly traded company. It's privately held by Lor — by our CEO, John Whorfin. We felt outside management firms like T. Rowe Price



and Fidelity were an imperfect fit with Yoyodyne, so investment work was done in-house. The committee headed by our Chief Operating Officer John Bigbouté decided that we would emulate a group of companies involved in energy technology, accounting and communications, whose morals, cash flow, business model, and ethical relationships most closely matched Yoyodyne's. Unfortunately, those companies turned out to be . . .

Enron? Arthur Andersen? Worldcom?

Anyway, we're working with Congress on a potential bail-out bill, but we've been hampered by the resignation of our representatives John Hatch and John Gingrich.

John Hatch—I assume Orrin is a middle name? And it's really John Newton Gingrich?

You're not so pink, you catch on fast. Well, they're not much of a loss. Hatch seemed like an alien even in the Senate—have you heard his album? And John Gingrich never played well with himself, let alone others. We knew he was lost to us once he went native, married a monkey girl of his own.

Another quaint expression of your native France?

Ah, I think your colloquialism would be "trophy wife." Anyway, everyone wants to go to Planet Ten, but no one wants to plunge themselves into solid matter to get there.

Now, what about John McCain? If I read the pattern right, isn't he a Yoyodyne employee too?

Oh no. He's one of yours.

But—

No, he's like that all by himself. No help from us.

What is Yoyodyne's comment on the allegations regarding the release of toxic material from your facility?

We've been a feature of the New Jersey landscape for over 60 years now. Our slogan is "Yoyodyne Propulsion Systems! New Jersey wouldn't be the same without us!" We would never share any of the toxic material we have in our plant. I mean, it's *ours*.

Of course.

On the other hand, there is a lot of peer pressure from other New Jersey companies, carting firms, sewer commissions. We hate to look like we don't want to do out part.

And I'm afraid that's all we have time for. My thanks to John Forquetung of Yoyodyne. Tune in

next week, when Donald Trump, Pete Rose, Don King—

John King? That hair! We're very proud, he's John Whorfin's favorite son.

—Don King, and George Steinbrenner will join us to discuss ethics in Sport. Good night.



FANZINE REVIEWS FROM PLANET X

Twinch 1

edited by Arnie Katz and Daniel Webster

Politics and fandom make for strange bedfellows, but even so it was a surprise to receive this joint effort from the dean of Las Vegas fandom and the champion of American Federalism. What is most interesting about the fanzine is the way in which the two appear to have carefully chosen material that creates the image of a harmonious editorial platform on which both can hopefully stand. In this post Mexican-American War/September 11th world, all manner of compromises seem suddenly practicable. In his previous fmz (most notably, *Dartmouth College v. Woodward*, *Gibbons v. Ogden*, and *McCulloch v. Maryland*), Webster typically argued the primacy of Federal regulation above State law, and supported the right of Worldcon committees to withhold money from fan fund winners. Arnie, of course, is famous for his more insurgent or even secessionist agenda—but he began his professional career writing about frozen food, while Webster was once a Whig, so role reversal is hardly new to either. Arnie's passionate discussion of the origins and history of pastrami sounds the trumpet of universal fannish brotherhood and deli worship. Webster offers a bleak portrait of the suffering caused by the collapse of several large media conventions, arguing that literary fandom owes media fans compensation for the loss of their investment in now unusable hall costumes. Their fan-fictional collaboration which juxtaposes John C. Calhoun and Dean Koontz on a raft composed of lashed human corpses is a trifle heavy-handed, but does involve some really funny gags. The fanzine reviews by Henry Clay are best praised for their brevity.

—Andy Hooper





Another Skiffy Corner



Trouble on Triton by Samuel R. Delany
Introduction by Kathy Acker
312 pp., Wesleyan University Press, 1996

In 1976 I snatched up *Triton* as soon as I saw it. *Dhalgren* had transfixed me and my friends. We'd all read it and talked about it, sometimes racing each other to read through the same copy (if Aaron's bookmark got ahead of mine, he'd get to take it home. That never happened.)

Triton was not *Dhalgren II*. I didn't like it. But still the battered paperback stayed with me, through cross-continental moves and nearly three decades of life. Whenever I looked through my bookshelves for another box full to sell, *Triton* always got put back. Maybe I thought I'd read it again someday. That someday came when I saw the Wesleyan paperback at the U Bookstore.

It took me such a short time (seconds, nearly) to realize why I "really" disliked *Triton* as a teenager that I chuckled forgivingly to myself. Hah! Who could like someone like Bron Helmstrom (all those self-interruptions!), "reasonably happy man" (at least at the outset) though he might be? So self-conscious! So laden with editors! So blind to himself (later herself)! So...so...so much like me.

Here's a passage from one of her (Bron has a sex change because the only way he'll find the perfect woman is to become her) counseling sessions:

When Bron was silent thirty seconds, Brian asked: "What are you thinking?"

"When I was a child"—Bron was thinking about the Spike—"I remember once I found an old book, full of old pictures...."

There. I've done that: had my counselor ask what I was thinking and then fabricated a reasonably true story that bore absolutely no relation to my thoughts. Of course, I hadn't done that at 19, when I first read the book, so maybe I rolled my eyes (or gritted my teeth) in derision (or frustration). With the twisted ego of a 60s Catholic upbringing yearning for the sexualizationships of *Triton*, I thought I would never do that. And here, at 45, I have. More than once. Hopefully, not more often than not.

Earlier, Bron goes to dinner with the Spike and is so overwrought with impressing the waitstaff (based on his ideas of decorum that are literally from another world and 12 years out of date [not to mention complex role playing completely inapplicable to the current situation]) that he has a miserable time. And

and a slight but immediate thickening of my beard.

if he begins to notice that his girlfriend's spontaneity and directness impresses the waitstaff more than his frigid role-playing, he sees it as their indulgence of her naïveté (he barely notices that he's the only person wearing shoes in a restaurant carpeted with lush, soft, living grass). Oh, at 19, I was sure I'd never be so boorish at dinner, never so pushy afterwards that I got a sharp elbow to the gut. Well, I have.

Later (as I said above) Bron becomes a woman (the same afternoon as most of *Triton* is destroyed in a war, in fact) because an offhand comment convinces him that the only way he'll find the perfect woman is to become her.

Life has brought me to greater sympathy with Bron. I've been brought up short (a few too many times) by my own self-blindness; a few too many times, I done the things I've said I would never do. So now instead of rolling my eyes I have a faint chuckle of sympathetic connection with Bron—whether she's tossing and turning all night over something she's said (oh, I've done that a few times. This week!) or he's trying to impress a young woman by stultifyingly pontificating.

And Bron Helmstrom, the person, is so well thought out, so richly described, and his (later her) society is so equally well thought out (every time the war is described as being fought "without the loss of a soldier on either side," I saw airplanes hitting towers), so well described, that, at 70, I could well find this the funniest book in the world, unable to read for the laughing tears rolling out of my eyes.

— Luke McGuff

Oh, at 19, I was sure I'd never be so boorish at dinner, never so pushy afterwards that I got a sharp elbow to the gut.



Helicon Fanzine Blues

by Claire Brialey

Dave Hicks looked thoughtful. Ten minutes earlier you might have thought he just looked hungover, but the drinks had arrived and the panel had started and Great Thoughts were going to be expressed any minute now. Well, within limits: the limits being that this was a panel at a British Eastercon about fanzines. On Sunday. First thing in the morning, practically¹. But the audience outnumbered the panel and we were sitting there all receptive to hearing the panel's ideas about 'Choosing the Best of Fannish Writing' so that we could participate in a stimulating debate².

Any minute now.

Dave Hicks, Michael Abbott, Lilian Edwards and Tobes Valois . . . went into a pub. No, that won't do: a list of names like that really needs to become part of a classic three-bloke joke which is hard to do with four blokes of whom one is a woman.

Let's try again. Dave, Michael and Tobes went onto Lilian's fanzine panel and everything went pretty much as you'd expect until the point at which Tobes said he didn't think there should be any more focal point fanzines. Unless that was in the 'Fanzines That Shaped the Age' panel the day before. In which case Tobes wasn't on this panel, which makes it go like this:

Dave Hicks, Michael Abbott and Lilian Edwards went into a pub programme item, and one of them said, 'The question is whether producing fanzines is a substitute for sex or for love,' and one of the others said, 'No, the question is, which of us is going to write that article now?' and the third one said, 'The

real question is whether someone can get away with including an anecdote in a fanzine article if she can't remember exactly who said what.'

OK, from the top:

Dave, Michael and Lilian went into a programme item and Dave said, 'Fanwriting is our version of the blues. Con reps and fanzine reviews are our standards. Anecdotes are our riffs.'

Woke up this mornin' . . . which is more than can be said for the panel.

There weren't many new fanzines around at Eastercon this year, so we had to make our own entertainment. Late at night in the sort of fan lounge there were slots available for fannish readings from old fanzines, replacing the original idea for Fanish readings trailed in the draft programme on the convention website. Not enough people know about the Fanish these days, and they are much misunderstood. In their basic outlook they're not so different to the rest of us. All they want is to keep their fan activity simple and hold their fannish community together, and they reject any modern technology which doesn't contribute to these goals; the Plokta cabal might consider they take just the same approach — but with the bar set somewhat higher.

This time around, however the Fanish approach wouldn't have worked, since a lack of advance warning left quite a few fans keen to hear the fannish readings but none with handy copies of their favourite fanzine articles concealed about their person. Step forward the laptop, the CD-ROM, and the Internet connection, as electronic publishing came to the rescue. Alison Scott read about bras. Michael Abbott read about Beta fandom. Damien Warman read about Australian fans.

Giulia de Cesare asked me if I'd be willing to read something. I was quite pleased; I enjoy reading aloud and it was rather flattering for someone to assume that people would want to hear any of my pieces again. Giulia suggested I might read my very funny article about Fuck Me Shoes, if I could retrieve a copy from somewhere. I could. I knew where to find it. It's just that . . . the thing I wrote about shoes is only one part of an — inevitably — much longer piece. But it did provoke a response. Light began to dawn. I enquired tactfully of Giulia whether what she was remembering might instead be Yvonne Rowse's very funny article about Fuck Me Shoes. Giulia looked like this wasn't a question she needed to be asked: 'Oh god, were there two of them?' My moment of fannish glory: the time someone thought I was capable of writing one of Yvonne's articles.

¹ Middy.

² Shout 'Bollocks!' in an engaged and well-informed way.

So much for the reading; what makes good fanwriting? Lilian Edwards has got a theory, and fortunately at Easter this sort of statement wasn't yet making everyone burst into song in poor imitation of the musical episode of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Lilian's theory was that good fanwriting has to be by people you know; or, rather, that you appreciate an article far more when you know the writer, or you know where they fit in to your map of fandom, or when it enables you to get to know more about them. Sometimes, in fact, it makes you want to get to know them better in person. I think the main contention here is that good fanwriting is not only intrinsically part of the fannish community but that it also fosters a sense of community in its audience.

I have two qualms about accepting this, persuasive though the high-level summary I've put on it may be — and Lilian may also wish to comment at a later date if I'm misrepresenting her all over the place, either in what she actually said, or meant, or in the conclusions I'm drawing. Firstly, it suggests that we're saying no one new can produce good fanwriting, or at least that they won't produce *really* good fanwriting until their initial endeavours have brought them in, made them welcome, given them the keys to the fanzine fans' washroom, and thus either added to their original abilities a gloss of belonging or just made them smell right to the pack. And part of me thinks that this may well be true, at least in respect of the way that we perceive new people; and part of me is jumping up and down and shouting about elitist bollocks³.

Secondly, it makes it seem as if we only like stuff that's all about us, whether as individuals (or at least fannish characters), or events that we attended, or opinions that we share, or the fandom that we recognise. And maybe that's true too, but the combination of the two really makes us seem rather shallow.

New people notwithstanding, there were some noticeable absences amongst the regulars at Eastercon this year, mostly due to the location and resulting cost of the Channel Islands venue (and this goes some way to explaining the shortage of new fanzines). Despite the proximity of the Channel Islands to France, Jim de Liscard stayed in his mountain fastness waiting for the snow to come and make snowboarding a bit more exciting. Jim had registered for the Eastercon in a fit of misguided forward planning of the sort which Kjersti Thunem had avoided. She eventually got round to claiming Jim's membership so close to the con that she ended up with his badge. So the Eastercon was treated to

the sight of a very tall, very slim Norwegian woman clad in a small amount of black leather and labelled 'Jim de Liscard'. As Meike Benzler pointed out, it's what Jim would have wanted.

What Tanya Brown wanted was another matter entirely, but was not uninfluenced by the look and potential feel of *The Fellowship of the Ring*. In simple terms, Tanya wanted Legolas but was willing to compromise with Aragorn and Boromir. There was a train of thought which identified a certain look of Boromir to Tobes, but it fell into a large glass of wine and was lost forever. One can only chide the reluctant members of the TAFF-winning community present at the Eastercon who were unwilling to take part in the proposed Fellowship re-enactment in the masquerade, although I should make it clear that losing candidate Chris O'Shea was ready to stand in as Aragorn should the need arise. Now, however, you can play fantasy fannish Fellowship of the Ring for yourself, picking additionally from Ron Bennett, Peter Weston, Lilian Edwards, Christina Lake, Sue Mason, and Victor Gonzalez, with Eve Harvey available in a special transfer deal from GUFF in order to get the numbers right.

Deprived of the next-to-real thing, Tanya sought solace in Kinder Surprise chocolate eggs, sold by Forbidden Planet in a seasonal spirit of profit-making and promising a *Lord of the Rings* figure in roughly 20% of the eggs purchased. An Aragorn was secured early on, but the other eggs yielded only a female elf of whom Tanya disapproves and some strange wheeled contraptions which looked like rejected prototypes from the Wacky Races. Painstaking post-party assembly of one of the figures on Monday morning eventually brought Flick to the revelation that 'I don't think this can be Boromir. It's got a roof.'

At a similar stage on Sunday, there we all were with the panel waking up and developing a set of criteria for good fanwriting: a sense of the community; a sense of the person writing. The voice of the author, commented Michael Abbott as he revived from his teetotal excesses with the help of tea, is even more important than Lilian suggested. Some of the very successful fanwriters are people whose writing sounds as if they're talking to you. There's a stylistic point there, which perhaps also comes back to fannish readings and how easy an article is to read. But I think it's true that when you can hear a fanwriter's voice in your head while reading their piece, there's an added level of engagement. Sometimes it makes the whole piece seem more alive. Sometimes — when we're dealing with the less vivacious members of fandom — it makes everything

Lilian's theory was that good fanwriting has to be by people you know; or, rather, that you appreciate an article far more when you know the writer, or you know where they fit in to your map of fandom, or when it enables you to get to know more about them.

³ Which a simple operation can cure these days.

Think of those
vehement polemicists
who turn out to be
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someone's face —
or else laughing
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seem very depressing. But it's another way of providing a connection with the writer, who they are and the way they see things. Greg Pickersgill does it, in both his fiery denunciations and his passionate enthusiasms. Nic Farey does it, all articulate in writing but still redolent of a certain essential Nic-ness. Eve Harvey does it, thereby producing one of the more successful fan fund trip reports of recent years in *A Brighton Belle Meets Skippy*— a conversation with Eve in which she tells you all about her GUFF trip but, unfortunately, you can't join in directly. Tobes Valois does it too, and I hope this will result in a similar dash of realism in his accounts of his TAFF trip this summer. And anyone who's had a conversation with me may have comments to make in this context about the length of my fanzine articles.

Introducing artifice into the authorial voice, a point came up in the panel but was never really developed about the personas which fanwriters cultivate. Dave Hicks has written about the cast of fannish characters who appear in British fanzines, but inevitably we can do it to ourselves too. Think of those vehement polemicists who turn out to be softly-spoken people who you can't imagine being rude to someone's face — or else laughing mischief-makers who just wanted to see the rest of us run around. Those articulate, witty reporters of fandom who seem strangely subdued in person. Those paper flirts and online airheads who turn out to have a serious and intellectual bent. Those methodical yet uninspiring letterhacks who prove to be informative and entertaining company. And, of course, those grumpy old gits who really are grumpy old gits. Sometimes a fanzine allows you to play at being someone you're not usually. And if that's the person you get known as in fandom, that may be the person you become in your fannish life more generally.

But she's not like that at home. Or maybe she is, and maybe she'll tell you all about it.

Early on in the panel Lilian — who seems from this account to have been doing a lot of talking — made some passing comment about there being no need for science fiction in fanzines, and indeed that good fanwriting rarely involves sf. I don't intend to spend any time on a lunatic contention like that, but this does all bring me to another problem I have with fanzine content: the confessional article. Lilian felt that good fanwriting needn't be personal or confessional, but that most people do seem to prefer that style when choosing their favourite articles. I'm clearly way out of step again here.

I'm not saying that articles about personal experiences or beliefs can't be very powerful, nor that they aren't sometimes worthwhile pieces which provide

real insights into the personality and worldview of the writer. Max and Sue Jones — in *The Cosmic Hairdryer* and *Tortoise*⁴ respectively — have both recently written articles like this, and I can quite see in those cases why they wanted to write the article, why they wanted the fannish community to know about their experience or what they feel about the subject in question, and why they chose a fanzine as the vehicle to do so. It's part of an introduction, or the centrepiece to a theme, or the big news which made them want to communicate with fandom again.

But then there are the fanzines where I've been trundling along reading something thoroughly unstartling about the writer's cats or their job or the sf film they saw last month and suddenly there's an article in which they explain that they like to be licked intimately by llamas as a result of a traumatic experience with an unfinished tin of Spam in their childhood. And I have to wonder why they wanted me to know, and indeed why they wanted me to know only after I also knew about their trip to IKEA and before I read about their new stereo. How do I respond — either in print or when I see them in the bar ten minutes later? Do they want response, or just to make an announcement? What will they do when confronted with the inevitable response from the more pedestrian letterhacks? When is an entire mailing list a community of intimate friends? How does this engage with the rest of fandom?

Michael, in expressing his own preference for articles which are funny, pointed out that using humour doesn't necessarily make a piece ineffective at tackling a serious subject. Personal articles can deal with something intimate or potentially embarrassing in an amusing way, and that may be the brilliant solo performance which stands out from the convention reports and the fanzine reviews and the ongoing soap opera of our own regular character set. However, I don't think everything can be made to be amusing, and sometimes the pressure to be light and funny seems to drive people towards sharing experiences which I think print fandom can do without. There's a time and a place for childbirth stories, and personally I think it involves a few close friends, several bottles of wine and a closed door. So I shan't commit my own gynaecological experiences to print, hysterical though I naturally believe them to be.

But maybe I'm still just grouchy because I can't write those sorts of articles. I'm quite wary about what I want to record for posterity, even if posterity is a carrier bag of unread fanzines in someone's attic.

⁴ New chain of British theme pubs.

Fanzine anecdotes, however, allow you to record the antics of other people for posterity which they themselves might not have chosen to immortalise in the attic. Fortunately, once again modern technology comes to our rescue. When all of this is already captured on video, and when digital photos have been sprayed all over a website that several people have looked at once and then forgotten about, writing about it months after the event in a paper-based fanzine is not unfair at all.

Anyway, this is only about the Brits losing at sport again. The hasty might rush to lay responsibility for the reintroduction of competitive sport to an ageing British fandom at the young and fit feet of Damien Warman and Juliette Woods, but in fact it was Peter Weston who started it. And that other rabble-rouser Dave Langford.

Damien wanted to know whether anyone could do the Astral Pole, as he'd been trying to follow the instructions in Dave Langford's TAFF report and thought there must be a bit missing. No one volunteered any prowess at all until it became clear that there wasn't a pole available to demonstrate with, whereupon Michael Abbott conceded that he used to be able to do it but was probably now too old and unbendy. Having thus ascended to a higher plane of knowing how easy it is to damage yourself, he could probably manage to get round with a *virtual* pole. This seemed safe, and Damien started watching attentively. Several moves in, while Michael was bringing the pole round behind him for the first time, Damien realised that he could video the whole thing on his laptop and thus have a record of where one's hands were meant to be — or, to look at it another way, of Michael Abbott appearing to perform a slow-motion interpretative dance. Michael started again. After 20 seconds he had to stop so that the camera's memory could be dumped — 'Stay like that, don't move' — and then he carried on. And stopped, poised. And carried on. And stopped, and stuck, and carried on. The only bit that seemed to be missing from Dave Langford's instructions was the bit where you dislocate your wrist under your ankle in the second half.

Then Mark found a pole. The virtual pole was a bit short, but the real pole would have been just the right length if the bottom eight inches hadn't been made of broom. If it weren't for that, obviously everyone would have been happy to have a go. We don't mention the knurdling. 'Australia defeats Britain' is not news.

Damien needed two tries but nonetheless should now be a *bona fide* member of the Astral League if anyone could remember how to do the induction.

Juliette can do it too. This provoked more of the men to give it a go, with all sorts of caveats, and most of them found that they could still do it if they didn't mind too much about the risk of breaking their ankle. Full honours here have to go to Tim Illingworth, who proved capable of doing the Astral Pole quickly, after going to the banquet, whilst wearing proper shoes and a three-piece suit and tie. Suddenly those long hours of training at the WSFS business meetings make sense.

It might have been the thought of the impact of osteoporosis on the Astral League or more generally of an ageing fandom developing an almost limitless supply of highly personal medical anecdotes which brought the panel to its final thought on good fanwriting. They wanted articles which express opinion as well as personality. Since many fans seem to have opinions as part of — or in some cases instead of — their personality this seems achievable. Not that I'd know, being the mild-mannered type with no firm views about fannish issues at all.

Presumably what we need here is a balance — not necessarily within fanzines, but between them. My own wish is to see a thriving fanzine community which interacts: fanzines that are aware of one another, fanwriters who contribute to fanzines other than their own, letters which arise from a genuine response and not a sense of duty, more artwork which either stands in its own right as a contribution to the fanzine or which is properly illustrative, and a real sense that we're all doing this because we enjoy being part of this community and want to contribute to it. Oh, and because we're science fiction fans. And while we're at it I'd also like world peace, sustainable development, and the instantaneous vaporisation of anyone who really annoys me.

When I say 'fanzines' here, this certainly doesn't exclude fanzines distributed electronically; and none of this means I despise other media. I don't think this is an issue, and I only mention it at all because I wouldn't want any arguments to get led up this particular blind alley. But if there's good fanwriting going on out there I do want to see a lot of it in paper fanzines.

I leave as an exercise for the reader that question which no one on the panel answered: are fanzines a substitute for sex or love? I don't write personal articles — and have no fannish opinions, of course — so I'm not going to tell you what I think. But it could be one more reason why fanwriting is like the blues.

Fanzine anecdotes, however, allow you to record the antics of other people for posterity which they themselves might not have chosen to immortalise in the attic.

Never Forgets

by Andy Hooper

For the past ten years, Carrie and I have enjoyed residence here in the upper Fremont neighborhood, home to numerous attractions, including the Woodland Park Zoo. As I begin writing this, the wind carries the calls of a pair of Siamangs, a beautiful primate that normally dwells in South Asia, and possesses a voice that can carry for well over a mile. Those wild cries and hoots are a reminder that we are only about six blocks away from an innovative and beautiful site continually recognized by zoological professionals as one of the best zoos in North America.

Carrie and I have been members of the Zoo throughout our residence here, and we've come to regard all its denizens as familiar acquaintances. I've treasured the chance to have such regular access to the WPZ, and over time, I've come to terms with the ambivalence that zoos have always inspired in me. Zoos have represented both the destruction of the natural world and the best chance for its possible preservation—or at least the preservation of colorful and evocative fragments of that world, and perhaps most importantly, our responsibilities and obligations toward it.

Right now, despite the opening of a new exhibit featuring African wild dogs, and the construction of a large and elaborate new home for the Zoo's jaguars, there is a cloud of concern at WPZ, ironically focused on the greatest success in the institution's history. We are fast approaching the second birthday of Hansa, an Asian elephant delivered by Chai, one of the four female elephants in residence at the Zoo. Following attempts at artificial insemination (successful only once in North America so far), Chai was sent to the zoo at Springfield, Missouri to meet an Asian bull elephant named Onyx, with whom she eventually mated. After an 18 month gestation that

stretched on for two weeks longer than expected, Chai gave birth to Hansa, a bright, active female baby that provided the Zoo with an immediate 100% increase in visitor revenue during some of the darkest and slowest months of the year.

The keepers perspired over the question of her sex for months, and gave a huge sigh of relief when she proved to be a female. Adult male elephants experience a hormonal surge known as "musth," during which they become incredibly aggressive and dangerous. The facilities at the WPZ would not be equal to the strength of a bull elephant, so a male baby would have presented a choice—build a new barn to survive a bomb blast, or send their pride and joy to live in a zoo that can handle him. They were prepared to build the new structure, but relieved when they didn't have to spend the money.

Hansa (her name means "supreme happiness" in Thai) was an important arrival in the lives of her fellow elephants as well. WPZ has a population of four adult female elephants, three Asians named Bamboo, Chai, and Sri, in descending order of age, and Watoto, a female African elephant about two years older than Bamboo. Elephants are profoundly social animals, with complex relationships that require frequent expressions of hierarchical dominance and submission to maintain themselves. Wild and semi-domestic elephant herds are typically dominated by the largest males, but in their absence, females establish an equally rigid order.

At WPZ, Watoto has always been the most dominant elephant, because she is both naturally more aggressive and possesses tusks like all African elephants. Bamboo defers to Watoto, but she is implacably committed to keeping Chai and Sri in line as a result. The arrival of the baby was most disruptive for Bamboo, as both Hansa and her mother suddenly became off-limits to Bamboo's bullying. Sri accepted the new arrival quietly, much to the relief of the staff. Watoto seems fascinated by the baby, and adapted to her arrival most quickly, since her dominance of Bamboo and Sri was not put in any question by the changes.

Hansa and her family are of particular interest to Carrie and I for various reasons. She has had a mild crush on one of the most senior elephant keepers for years now, which means we've listened to his presentations and commentary about the lives of his charges on many occasions. He has never been shy about letting the public see him use the ankus, a hooked baton of ancient design, meant to simulate the feel of a guiding tusk against the thick hide of an elephant. He has explained that in order to be able to safely care for the elephants, he and his colleagues must convince them that they are the



most dominant elephant on the scene, even though they skip around on two spindly legs and have a tiny fraction of an elephant's body weight. Elephants in the wild constantly grind down the thick layer of keratin that grows on their feet, but captive animals do not get enough exercise to keep up with the growth. If they don't receive daily attention — usually with a carpenter's rasp — their feet become painful to stand on, suffer infection, and typically lead to the animal's death.

Given the need for this frequent physical contact with the animals, it is little wonder that taking care of elephants is one of the most dangerous jobs on the planet, with something approaching a 5% mortality rate in career keepers. The obvious danger of pretending to be the world's most dominant elephant is that the real elephants may come to agree with you so fully that they behave as if you weigh several tons as well — or as if they have suddenly realized you actually *don't*. Hansa seems to have had had one of those dangerous cognitive leaps a few months back, which is how the current controversy flared up.



Hansa is a mischievous baby who seems to delight in any behavior that elicits a response from either the adult elephants or the keepers. She spent months going everywhere at full speed, and the keepers had to be very careful not to allow her to become used to careening into them when she was small — the same impulse could kill them when she grows up. Lately, she has taken to eating dirt, one of a series of what the keepers refer to as “nasty habits,” seemingly attractive because of the attention they bring from the staff. On one occasion, she was shoveling soil into her mouth when one of the keepers tried to push her head away from the ground. Hansa responded by tossing her head and trunk hard enough to bump the keeper off his feet. The keeper scrambled back upright, then gave Hansa three hard whacks on the rump with the butt end of his ankus, verbally expressing his general displeasure with her behavior while doing so. She responded by howling in alarm and running into the center of the interior enclosure to find Chai, then bellowed in anger for about five solid minutes while her mother did her best to ignore the noise.

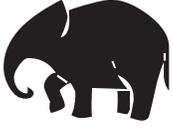
Seen in the context of a human family, this incident would not elicit a great deal of attention — ev-

ery toddler probably receives a swat on the bottom and rages in tears for five minutes in reaction at some point in their development. The blows Hansa received clearly hurt, though they seem to have been laughably short of inflicting any physical injury. But observers reacted and complained to the zoo about the abuse this seemed to indicate, and the incident has become a critical piece of ammunition for PETA, the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, in their ongoing effort to force the WPZ to close the elephant exhibit altogether.

The Zoo did not have a good track record in regard to elephants through the 1970s. Several elephants spent their lives more or less shackled in barns on the site, and their total space was best measured in square feet, not acres. Complaints about the conditions for the elephants were part of a chorus that demanded a complete redesign of the Zoo at the end of the 70s. The WPZ was begun 102 years ago by a minor Seattle entrepreneur named John Phinney — the ridge the zoo straddles now bears his name, as does the street that runs along the park's western boundary. Phinney was an early booster for the area that is now North Seattle, and founded a street car line that gathered riders from the various landings and ferries that preceded the construction of bridges over the modern ship canal. Hoping to create a popular destination for his riders, he opened a small park with a few animal exhibits to compliment the ice cream stand and pony rides. The recreational theme of the site meant that space was devoted to elements like bandstands and a miniature railroad, and relatively little to the health and maintenance of the animals. This situation persisted up to the creation of a long-term plan for the transformation of the Zoo, which included several acres set aside for an elephant exhibit and enclosure.

During the 1980s, the Zoo also became an enthusiastic participant in what are known as Species Survival Plans, or SSPs. The ultimate goal of all SSPs is to create or re-create a wild breeding population in the animal's native habitat, and the most critical contribution zoos hope to make to this process is the maintenance of genetic diversity through captive breeding programs. By embracing this ideal, however dubious its successes may eventually prove to be, the WPZ gave itself a critical sense of mission that lifted its goals above the realm of mere entertainment. After decades of declining patronage, visitors came back to the Zoo in healthy numbers when the new exhibits with SSP populations were opened. The natural unease which captive animals can excite in the viewer was mitigated by the allegedly higher purpose of species preservation, and this fit Seattle's quietly liberal sensibility.





(Oh, you didn't think we'd get through an article on elephants without mentioning Hannibal Barca, did you? The great Spanish-Carthaginian warlord was famous for bringing his war elephants over the alpine passes into Italy during the First Punic war, and he has been inextricably linked to them for more than 2000 years since. Hannibal's elephants were of a variety that is now apparently extinct, a Northern African breed that had no great tree canopy to reach with their trunks, and which grew smaller and more nimble as a result. The Carthaginians and other powers of the late Hellenistic Age seem to have used their elephants as overgrown skirmishers—they surrounded them with squads of bowmen, slingers and men with javelins, and used them to break up the battle line of the enemy so that cavalry and infantry could move to exploit the openings they created. They always had the most effect on cavalry, as horses were unwilling to be near them, and would turn and run from their approach.

The Zoo appealed to the government of Thailand for help in obtaining a collection of elephants young enough to breed, and designed the new elephant barn and exhibits with Thai architectural motifs. They also embraced the semi-domestic model of human/elephant interaction commonly practiced in Thailand, and this began decades of campaigns by outside groups to dramatically alter or eliminate Woodland Park's Elephant program. The keepers trained the new elephants to perform simple tasks such as lifting logs and stacking them on a frame, standing with one or more legs raised (critical for all that foot care), and descending to their knees so their backs can be washed. All of this is accomplished with a variety of verbal commands and the use of the ankus to guide or direct the animals. From the program's first public exposure, some people have characterized this activity as abusive, despite the obvious benefits the exercise and interaction seem to provide the animals. All the complaints by PETA and other groups concerned with animal welfare seem to focus myopically (or deliberately) on individual elements of WPZ elephant department policy, and no matter how many changes the staff make, the complaints continue to arrive.

Ultimately, a common theme emerges from this process of activism and reaction, which is that the activists will never accept anything short of the actual closure of the elephant exhibit. They believe it is innately wrong for humans to keep elephants in captivity, and that there is no such thing as a humane captive environment for elephants.

I find that I am disturbingly vulnerable to their arguments, because I have always had mixed reactions to the captivity of any animal. When I was 8 years old, my family returned to the Midwest after a few years of life in Morgantown, West Virginia. Our new home was in Madison, Wisconsin, my mother's hometown. I was unhappy about leaving our rural residence with its several acres of woods to roam through, and the universe of frogs, salamanders, turtles and other small woodland creatures that I loved to observe. To massage my 8-year-old objections, adults pointed out all the advantages of life in Madison, including the proximity of our new home to the Vilas Park Zoo, home of unusual animals not typically observed in the hills of West Virginia. But when I pressed my mother for details, she was reluctant to even talk about the zoo, preferring to emphasize the huge University of Wisconsin Arboretum, and the deer, raccoons, possum, etc., that we might be able to see there.

When we made our first visit to the Henry Vilas Zoo, even an 8-year-old could see and understand the source of my mother's reluctance. Vilas is simi-

lar to many small zoos in Northern cities, limited in the kind of foliage and other natural elements they can place in animal enclosures by the inevitable return of subzero temperatures during winter. Even if the zoo had the money to replace all the small cages and featureless concrete enclosures, what kind of natural environment could survive both the attentions of bored animals and the advent of Wisconsin's winter? No matter what kind of enrichment the keepers at the zoo provide, the animals have to spend half the year or more inside small interior enclosures. This naturally turns many of them into miserable psychotics, and makes them dangerous to themselves and humans.

When we first visited the zoo in Madison, one of the minor attractions were a handful of coin-operated plastic injection-molding machines that created replicas of a gorilla and an elephant that were once the most popular exhibits at Vilas. Congo the Gorilla was still slowly failing in his glass-walled apartment then, but Winky the Elephant was no longer a resident of the zoo, or of anyplace or that matter. Winky had been euthanized after grabbing a child who leaned over the railing too far, and smearing him around the concrete walls of his enclosure. In less-sensitive times, the vacuum-molded Winky lumbered on, and the gory story of his transgression made him a favorite purchase of junior-high field trips.

My mother has never been to WPZ, and resists our entreaties to visit it during trips here. Despite my enthusiastic descriptions of the new exhibits full of plants, water and private places for the animals, she knows that she will see some creature hopelessly pacing inside its lavish plastic prison, and her understandable attitude is that she has seen that often enough now.

As a comfortable Atheist, I've never been very big on the idea that humanity has a calling or God-given duty to dominate and manage the other creatures of the Earth. When the idea is expressed, I always find myself thinking of James Watt and the Reagan-era erosion of American wilderness areas, which seemed to suggest management by paving and burning as much unspoiled land as possible. We've proven ourselves poor shepherds to creation on an ongoing basis, and anyone might be excused for thinking that animals are best left to their own devices, and resisting the urge to "help." But I also can't help feeling that after centuries of reducing habitat and selectively hunting species to extinction, it seems a bit late for us to adopt a hands-off policy and hope that the situation will correct itself.

That seems even more absurd when applied to the relationship between humans and elephants.

Judging from the accumulated evidence in the archeological record, human beings have been fascinated by elephants since long before the advent of written language. Elephants were first domesticated, or at least trained to perform tasks at human commands, several thousand years ago, and humans have manipulated their breeding and society ever since. Humans are certainly capable of abusing elephants, and it is sometimes hard not to consider simple confinement as abuse, as in the traveling circus, another favorite target of petitions and injunctions. Yet the great majority of the people I have ever seen work with the animal seem incredibly attentive to and concerned about them, and almost fanatic about the preservation of their habitat.

But the sincere devotion the keepers feel for the elephants makes little headway with PETA members. They bristle at their characterization as “animal-lovers,” because human love has as little place in an animal’s natural life as abuse and confinement. Ideally, many feel humans should observe animals without interacting with them or affecting them at all. PETA’s complaint alleges that Hansa’s rambunctious behavior is in fact caused by the climate of physical abuse in which she has grown up, that the poking and pulling with the beak of the ankus makes her resent her keepers and more likely to attack them when she grows up.



I can’t believe it myself. I’ve heard the way they speak to her, seen the care they take in everything to do with her—in everything to do with all five animals. Even with all of their troubles and complaints, and the crowding they feel with a mere three acres or so of forest and open terrain to wander through, I can’t help feeling that these elephants are perfectly well-served by their life along Phinney Ridge. Their strange little herd doesn’t have to worry about poachers, angry farmers and their dogs, toxins in their water supply, or loggers cutting down all the trees they browse. As if by magic their band has increased by one, making everything interesting and problematic again. One of the worst dangers that face captive animals is boredom—and the elephants at WPZ have no chance of being bored, with a two-year-old whizzing around their knees, and a dozen humans constantly cooking up new “enrichments” for their attention.

In fact, the staff at WPZ is devoted enough that they have actually decided to find a way to meet

most of PETA’s demands. Largely because of the high mortality rate among keepers, new “Protected Contact” methods of managing elephants have been developed, and Woodland Park is going to implement these over the next year. The system requires a series of elephant-proof bars and barriers, with apertures through which keepers can examine the animals’ feet, teeth and other areas that need attention. They can also use shackles inserted through slats in the sides to immobilize one or more of an animal’s feet while they work on it, but that system is already in use on the open floor of the current barn, and should present little issue to the animals. And since it will be impossible for the animals to push or squeeze the keepers against the walls of the enclosure, it won’t be necessary to spend the time and effort to condition them away from the behavior.

What remains to be seen is what sort of challenge this presents with animals that have not been pre-conditioned under the old system. The whole point of this, from the staff’s point of view, is to make it possible to expand their family again by sending Sri away to Springfield, where Onyx and other bull elephants await. If she returns pregnant and can carry another baby to term, it will be an enormous achievement for the entire elephant SSP community. Very few zoos have had had much success breeding elephants in North America, and many young elephants have died in their first year—disoriented mothers have even killed their own offspring before humans could react. Successfully raising two Asian elephants would give the WPZ the reputation as a baby pachyderm factory.

And if they have the “fortune” to celebrate a male baby this time, then those big-time improvements and new structures for his benefit would soon be on the way. And perhaps then other zoos will send their demure young elephants here to make babies, surely the ultimate fantasy of the elephant keepers. But what will that next generation of elephants be like, growing up without the pull of the ankus, or the illusion that they are surrounded by pushy little elephants on two legs? They may not be able to pile up logs, or stand on their hind legs for a carrot, but at this point, any young elephant is worth its weight in gate receipts and of even greater value to the potential survival of its species. Whatever limitations they have to observe, the keepers appear committed to keeping their family herd expanding, and to helping people understand all the strengths and limitations of the animals in their care.

Sometimes, humans can help. And unlike most people, elephants are patient enough to wait while we figure out how. No wonder we like them so much.

Relatively little has been written about the possible husbandry of elephants in the ancient world. Logic would suggest that male African elephants would be impossible to control at least part of the time, so most war elephant contingents were probably sterile communities of females that were replenished by capturing young elephants from herds in the contemporary Sahel.

The classic image of the war elephant with a large platform or howdah mounted on its back is more accurate for the contingents of elephants gathered by the warlord Porus to contest Alexander’s invasion south of the Indus river. These were truly large Indian elephants, and evidence exists that both male and female elephants were used, and that certain animals were bred across several generations to serve in elite or royal contingents. These animals truly served as walking siege engines, as their passengers could shoot arrows or throw spears from concealment and the advantage of height. The danger posed by both Indian and African elephants “running amok” in the stress of battle is almost certainly overstated—the primary driver, or mahout, of every war elephant carried a wedge-shaped weapon with which they could easily dispatch their mounts in the event they attacked friendly troops.)



Things To Come

The Chungatorial triumvirate makes no claim to precognitive powers, nor do they guarantee love or increased personal happiness will come to you through and/or as a result of belief in their predictions. Another issue of *Chunga* will appear sometime after the 31st of October, 2002, so we hope that our correspondents will act accordingly.

Issue #2 may actually swim in mercury. Propelled by unimaginable and unendurable cosmic forces cribbed from Doc Smith novels, shifted through unseeable colors and unhearable tones, issue #2 may contain the following concepts and odors:

Zefram Cochrane and the Crisis in Federation Continuity, with reference to the origins of the symbiont ideal and the putative dawn of warp drive technology. This use of the personal weapon was first expressed as a passing notion during a long drive by Area 51 when overheard by Mark Alan Stamaty, who upon his stabilization in Las Vegas expressed one of the very first FedEx packages featuring the concept of the Personal Defense Satellite, and walked along in long sleeves for a bit thereafter.

The Autumnal Hour of the Monster Culture, as observed by John Agar, Mr. Mephisto, Tor Johnson and The Voice in the Box. Big Daddy Roth remembered; check out the cobra wrapped around the naked chick.

Plus (and worse yet), *the people who dote on skiffy movies and have like faceless zombies swarmed the vulnerable House of SF and are threatening to overwhelm the beleaguered readers holding out—and holding forth—inside*. It's George Lucas versus Vernor Vinge in the SF Celebrity Death Match, with the fate of scientific rationalism, human progress, and any number of precious bodily fluids at stake.

Marooned in an open boat, issue #2 might have reached safety in Tahiti, but a misguided fear of cannibals led it to turn east and thus set in motion an epic of human misery, starring Leslie Nielsen as James Whale.

Plus, if space permits:

**I was a teenage eel
Gored and pan-seared for Iron Chef.**

FANZINE REVIEWS FROM PLANET X

National Revolutionary & Gardener 23

edited by Major Major

Autumn overlooks these colder days like a satisfied lover leaving the bed in which the fresh-shaved body of its beloved lies, only in reverse, as once again patriots' mailboxes across our great land ring with the constitutionally-protected khaki-sand camo pages of the *NR&G*. Guest editor J. Gordon Liddy leads off the annual Tim McVeigh Memorial Issue by laying out the arguments for and against a first strike against Europe "to see what happens" (hint: losing Mercedes Benz, BMW, and Toblerone could be fatal), while John Paglia extends her torrid defense of barebacking for cute mixed-up Tories to include sexy rhetorical bombthrower John Coulter, who shows in the fashion supplement that jackboots aren't just for Federal thugs. You'll never see Teletubbies the same way again!

Following the usual how-to articles J. Nicholas' gardening column comes, as always, as a relief, a tour de force of provocative yet practical humanism, as he draws the connections from the horror of Columbine through the Final Horizon and scarcity economics to a kind of white riot the likes of which the Clash had never dreamed . . . though this non-gardener admits to some puzzlement as to how diesel fuel could possibly increase a garden's yield, even in conjunction with the megadoses of fertilizer suggested.

— G. Romeo Wadsworth

