



CHUNGA

REELING IN A VORTEX OF DEJA VEGAS, *Chunga* WAS ONLY SUPPOSED TO WAIT IN THE BAR UNTIL OUR SUITE WAS READY, BUT SOON TERRIBLE THINGS LOOMED ALL AROUND US. A HUGE BEAVER GNAWED ON A REAM OF TWILLTONE, THE CARPET WAS A CORFLU-SOAKED SPONGE, IMPOSSIBLE TO WALK ON, NO FOOTING AT ALL. "ORDER SOME GOLF SHOES," WE CROAKED. "AND QUIT GIVING BOOZE TO THESE GODDAMN THINGS!" THE RED SHARKS AND SWARMING MANTA BATS CACKLED HYSTERICALLY IN REPLY.

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in order of first appearance

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William Rotsler 4, 8, 11, 15, 21

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Graham Charnock 17, 19

Lisa Freitag photos 22-25

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Harry Bell 30

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Steve Stiles back cover

correction to last issue:

Harry Bell 27 (photo of GC and CP,
thanks PW)

Tanglewood

Looking up the fundamentals of a gift economy, or not daring to

The creation of fanzines is voluntary, of course. It's also expensive, a lot of work, and fraught with hazards for the easily-bruised ego. Sometimes it's hard to think why it's worth all the hassle and anxiety. Then along comes something like Dan Steffan's tribute to Bob Tucker, and you remember: *Right, this is why we do it.* This is simply one of the best pieces of writing I've ever seen by Dan. Of course, getting an article from Dan also means getting some of his awesome artwork as well, and the cover for this ish makes me want to dangle my devil and dance. Between this work and the Lovecraftian illos in *Trap Door 25*, he deserves a Hugo now more than ever. Why is it that he doesn't even get nominated?

Ah well, perhaps it's enough that he inspires us to keep pubbing our ish in the face of the death of fanzines and the graying of fandom and other mortal coils. Although there's also the competition from young upstarts like Chris Garcia, who makes his first appearance in *Chunga* with this issue. A while back at an editorial ~~plenary~~ meeting, we agreed only half-jokingly that we would stop publishing so much goddamned TAFF material and from now on only publish articles about people on our mailing list who have recently died. (We hope you don't consider it worth your while to become grist for our mill.) Thus we can't mention that Chris is the current TAFF ~~plenary~~ delegate and administrator — yukking it up in Croydon even as I write this. Congratulations, Chris! Beware the squirrels! Hell, we have to keep publishing just to try to remain relevant in the brave new world Chris seems to be defining single-handedly. (Ghu help us if he has formed an alliance with James Bacon!)

Okay, so anyway, we took a long break between issues 12 and 13, but we seem to have our energy and Will to Power back again. We may yet reach issue 23, featuring Philip Kafka van Vogt, as promised in a previous editorial.

—Randy

I cheerfully join Randy in whistling in the dark. Publishing *Chunga* is a habit, not an addiction. I can quit anytime I want, right? He's also correct that receiving great submissions as we have published here is always a tonic for flagging energies, and keeps us coming back for more.

We tend to use conventions and similar events as deadlines for completion of an issue, and this one will hopefully be out in time for Corflu 25 in Las Vegas. It's very satisfying to see the convention for fanzine fans reach its silver anniversary, particularly having seen some very tentative and sparsely-attended versions of Corflu in its adolescence. Our return to Vegas promises to be quite a party; the list of convention members includes a tantalizing collection of familiar names with half-forgotten faces. Maybe we'll have you over to our place next time!

This issue will also appear in the gap between the announcement of Hugo nominations and the close of final balloting. We didn't reach the list this year, which makes it much more comfortable to evaluate the field. I always like to see someone new win the Best Fanzine Hugo, so if you ask me to pick from this year's field, I might well choose Guy Lillian's *Challenger*. With two decades of devotion to fandom and science fiction to its credit, *Challenger* seems like a good fit for a Western Worldcon like this year's event in Denver. Steven Silver's *Argentus* may break through on the strength of its online following, but *Challenger* paid its dues publishing on paper, and I think that still counts for something.

—Andy



In the Land of Lagadaga

by Andy Hooper

Iwouldn't blame you for skipping this—most theater stories are pretty awful. Modern acting is an internal process, so listening to an actor expound on his interpretation of *Shylock* or Stanley Kowalski is not unlike hearing a description of a long, confusing dream, and equally soporific.

Looking back from a distance of two decades, the experience of being on stage seems like a pleasant fog. But memories of the people I worked with are very distinct, and the pleasure of their company came close to leading me into acting as a profession, for good or ill. The close friendships that came out of my experience in theater also set the tone for future adventures in fandom. They cemented my preference for the company of creative, expressive people—and revealed that they were most likely to be understanding of my own creative outbursts.

In the early days there were holiday pageants at school, skits in Cub Scout pack meetings, and puppet shows on the back of the living room armchair. In 4th grade, Mrs. Garber, lately returned from a decade living on a kibbutz, cast me as Moses in a dramatization of the saga of Israel. The staff and cotton-ball beard suited me; later, it shocked me to learn that he led the Israelites across the Sea of Reeds, a salt marsh, rather than the Red Sea. Even in 4th grade, I had invested in my process, imagining the rippling, watery curtain to either side as I led the people across the sea bottom.

In 7th and 8th grades, a schoolmate named Colleen Elwood convinced her mother to be the volunteer supervisor of an after-school theater club. We practiced improvisation and mime and stage make-up, and presented a little performance show-

case at the end of the school year. Most of the kids in the club continued on to theatrical activities in high school. Some appeared with other amateur companies in the area, sang chorus parts in Gilbert and Sullivan shows with the Madison Savoyards, or even appeared in University of Wisconsin Theater productions, then the most prestigious in the state.

My former classmate Colleen also continued to perform, but turned her attention to music. Along with a close friend, Laura Lindeen, Colleen was a founding member of an indie folk-pop band called Zuzu's Petals. They toured nationally in the early 1990s, and enjoyed some college airplay, but ultimately broke up after making two albums. Lindeen achieved greater notoriety by marrying Minneapolis rocker Paul Westerberg, and has published a memoir of her career titled *Petal Pusher*.

I remained interested in acting, but first entered the University with the intention of reading history. My complete lack of fluency in French, Greek and Latin proved to be a serious handicap in that field. After my first year, I decided to switch my speculative major to Theater and Drama, and applied for admission to the program in acting. Things developed quickly. I had barely met my freshman acting class before going out for my first audition. The show was *From Morn to Midnight*, a translated work by German expressionist playwright Georg Kaiser. The director was the chairman of the theater department, Bill Elwood; and I quickly realized he was also Colleen Elwood's dad. This suddenly became the worst audition of my life, as I wondered if he remembered the ill-considered impression of

an epileptic woodpecker I'd presented to him in the 7th grade.

From Morn to Midnight is the story of a teller in a German bank, a man who has given 20 years of loyal service to his employer. Overhearing a conversation with a wealthy depositor, he becomes aware that his boss is unapologetically corrupt. Disillusioned, the teller absconds with millions of marks, and embarks on a wild career through German society, reveling in his ability to excite forbidden behavior in his peers by spreading around his embezzled fortune. In some ways, the play presages Terry Southern's *The Magic Christian*, with the shared theme of exposing the venality and greed present in all levels of society.

Auditioning for this play was a unique experience. Elwood wanted to capture some of the sleek decadence that the Weimar period is noted for, but also wanted a few grotesques out of Fellini. So he wanted to see me with my shirt off, which made him nod happily. Then he asked me recite nonsensical phrases: "Can I cash a check? Cash a check? Cash a Check? No, but I might do it later, no, no, no!" He explained he was looking to "create texture, as much as text," and had us chant random sounds, as in: "Lagadaga, lagadaga, lagadaga, lagadaga!"

The pock-marked, nimble-tongued rabble that resulted was one of the most unique casts anyone could imagine, and we were fiercely loyal to Elwood's vision. We shortly dubbed him King Lagadaga, and were ready to dance the polka, cross-dress or bark like a dog at his merest suggestion. The dressing rooms were known as the Lagadaga Lounge, and we took to playing golf with a ball of electrical tape and a bamboo cane, an event titled the Lagadaga Open. We reveled in freakishness, and saw ourselves as perpetuating an angry tradition that ran from people like Bertolt Brecht and Georg Kaiser through contemporary deviants like Lydia Lunch and Hunter S. Thompson.

When it works well, being in a play with a large cast has many of the same attractions as being on a sports team or in an infantry platoon. Every member is willing to put themselves at some risk for the benefit of the others, but the institution will survive the departure and replacement of any individual. We all found friends that we were particularly happy to work with, and you stuck with them until one or both of you graduated, and were replaced by another wave of clever, handsome freshmen actors.

The University Theater was both twistingly hierarchical and breezily anarchic: Leads in big productions went to graduate student actors, and the shows were directed by high-clout faculty members.

But there were dozens of scene study and direction classes, experimental productions, and children's theater shows, plus local companies like the Broom Street Theater, hungry for actors who could learn their lines and show up on time. You really could have all the work that your class schedule allowed, and in an astonishing variety of styles and periods of theatrical history. Most shows were staged out of academic and aesthetic motives, and had only vague ambitions to attract and entertain an audience. So in addition to my expressionist adventures in *Von Morn bis Mitternachs*, I appeared in plays by Woody Allen, Wendy Kesselman, Sam Shepard, Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur, Jean Tardieu and Lillian Hellman. I didn't have leading roles in any of them, but it quickly became clear that it was much better to have a small part in a good show than to have a big part in a poorly-realized play that no one wants to see.

Lest I create the impression that my only interest was in stage time, I would hasten to point out that being in the theater department also had a social component that was akin to a perpetual fraternity Rush Week. Few other schools would tolerate students openly downing cases of Rhinelander beer in the so-called "Green Room" prior to and during rehearsals (although, curiously, I attended two other such bastions of academic alcoholism, Wisconsin's English and Anthropology departments, and also imbibed within their walls on at least one occasion.)

Just as I could rattle off nearly twenty plays I worked on as an actor or construction crew, there were probably two dozen taverns that we did our best to keep in business: the Black Bear, the 602 Club, the Church Key, the Flamingo, O'Cayz Corral, the Plaza, and the Caribou. And no theatrical education was complete without entry into all five of the bars at the Hotel Washington, including Rod's, the leather and levis bar in the basement. The rumor that some professors held office hours there was only that, but it wasn't a bad place to have a private conversation with some of them.

Rehearsing and performing with some of the people I met in theater gave me the same sensations of giddy excitement that I get from being at an sf convention with fans from distant cities. I'd go to class with them in the morning, rehearse with them in the afternoon and evening, then drink with them until after midnight. And it still felt like I didn't get enough. There were parties at someone's apartment every weekend, performances and previews, lectures by visiting dramaturges, and graduate showcases. In the summer, we staged fun shows like *Dames at Sea* and *The Front Page* that

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employed up to twenty actors and brought in big crowds.

Three actors from the Lagadaga Lounge group, Charlie Cheney, Tim Gadzinski and Eric Hetzler, formed a folk-punk vocal trio and called themselves "The Fabric Indicators." The Indicators became the semi-official band of the acting program in the middle 1980s, and their semi-annual reunion shows kept many of us in touch well into the 90s. They also performed at my 26th birthday party, an event I still regard as one of the best single evenings of my life.

The only problem with all of this extroverted fun was that I was not really a very good actor. I had physical problems because of my weight, and that also cut down on the number of roles that I could credibly play. I got good grades on all my written work, but I was often sloppy in performance classes and perpetually on some kind of special probation. I didn't read music, could not dance without crushing small villages in my path, and tended to be cast in roles that allowed me to wear the same extra-large brown suit every time. And when Rodney Dangerfield came to Madison to shoot his movie *Back to School*, I didn't even try

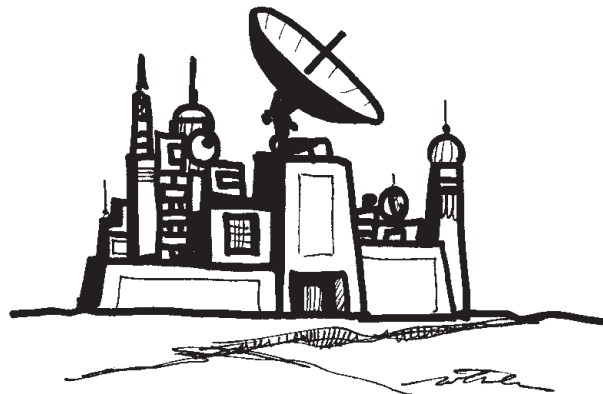
out for the roles of "Puking Freshman" or "Mugging Bookstore Clerk" like the rest of my peers. I quietly drifted into the English department and entered the witness protection creative writing program, where waist size was seldom an impediment.

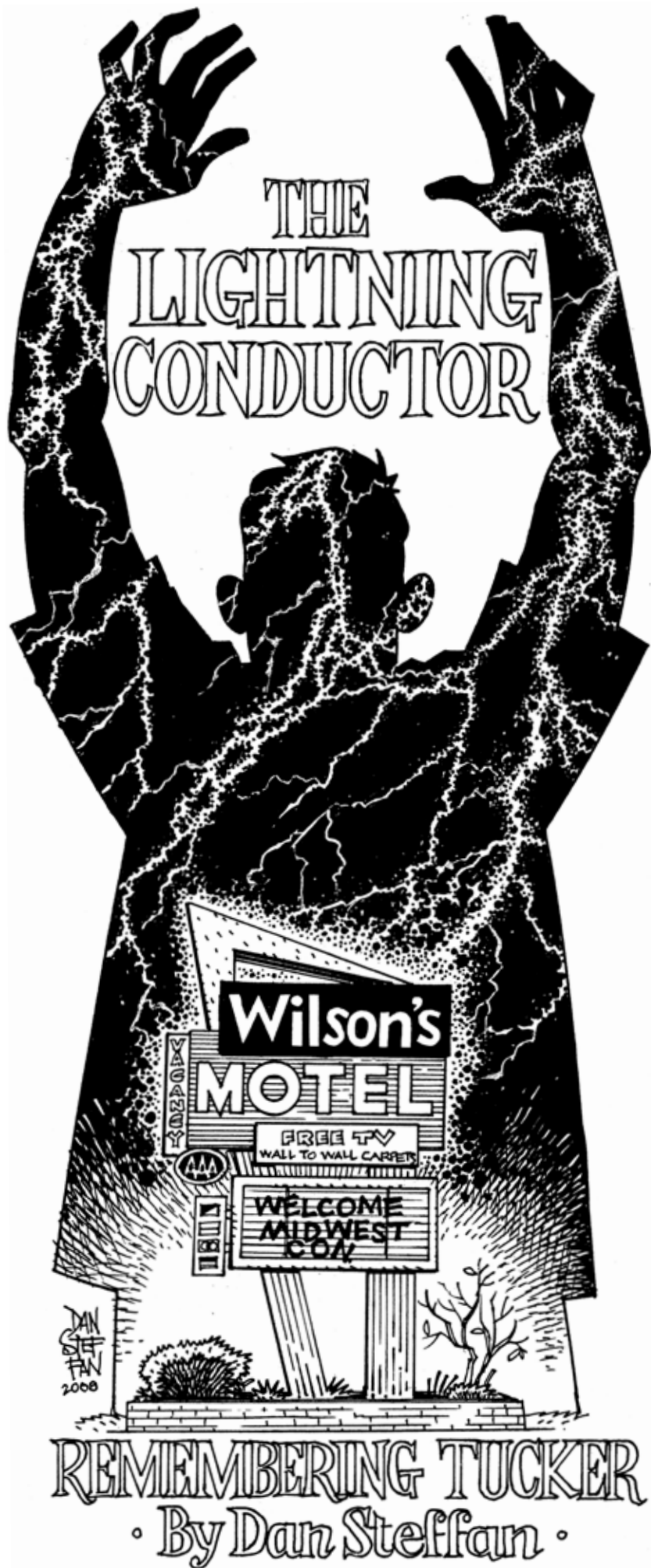
Of course I've wondered what I might have accomplished in the field, had I been willing to work harder and fight the long odds against having a successful acting career. But at the same time, I've always felt as though I'd had the very best part of a life in the theater. For almost three years, I was constantly challenged and surprised by the work and the people around me, and had only just begun to feel slightly over-saturated by the time I made my exit. And even after slinking away into anonymity, I got the chance to return, and played the latter title character in *Wiley and the Hairy Man*, a children's play based on an Alabama folk tale. That show was a great success, and we even took it on the road to the International Amateur Theater Olympiad in picturesque Detroit. But that really is another story.

And what did I learn from my immersion in the actor's method, the process of building characters and portraying them? That your deepest feelings and values are subject to the most ham-handed manipulation imaginable, that you can talk yourself into believing and accepting almost anything, and find a rationale for even the most inexplicable behavior. And the lasting legacy of that insight is a profound distrust of your own emotions, and the haunting suspicion that you are manufacturing everything you feel in order to justify the choices that you secretly want to make. And once you recognize this in yourself, it's a minor leap of reasoning to apply the same logic to everyone around you, until you suspect that all humanity lives by a code of constant dissemblance behind a cynically painted mask of involvement and concern.

I did warn you that most Theater Stories were awful, didn't I?

March 6th, 2008





I'm not sure where I first saw Bob Tucker's name. Maybe it was in an issue of *Worlds of IF*, in one of Lin Carter's "Our Man in Fandom" columns. That's where I read about fandom's existence for the first time, so it seems likely that I came across Bob's name there as well. My interest in digest sf magazines was a by-product of my intense passion for comic books. I always hit the local pharmacy on Wednesday to scout out the new arrivals and there were often copies of *Galaxy* and *IF* mixed in with the comic books and kids magazines. If there weren't any good comics to look at, I would usually look through the sf magazines instead. Those Jack Gaughan and Vaughn Bode covers were hard to resist. That's how I discovered that one of my favorite comic artists, Wally Wood, was also an sf illustrator. Not long after that, I started buying the magazines regularly and began ferreting out back issues at used bookstores in downtown Syracuse.

Despite having read a bit of fantasy and sf before this time, it was really those two magazines that opened my eyes to the world of science fiction and fandom. Those Lin Carter columns were where I first read about conventions and worldcons (like NYCon 3), fan clubs and parties (like The Fano-clasts), and about the existence of these curious things called fanzines. That's probably where I got Buck and Juanita Coulson's address, which led to the first real sf fanzine I ever received — a trial issue of *Yandro*.

I was totally mystified by *Yandro* when it arrived at my house. It was nothing like the dittoed comic book fanzines I'd seen in junior high school. Compared to an issue of *Batmania* there were hardly any pictures at all in *Yandro* and it was full of names and opinions that meant nothing to me whatsoever. Oh, and it was terribly, terribly beige, too. The paper it was printed on was the same color as the slacks my mother kept buying me when she wanted me to wear something "slimming."

I was obviously out of my depth, but I liked the idea that somebody could create their own little magazine and I tried to make sense of it all. For some reason, the Coulsons kept my name on their mailing list for the next several issues and I read each one cover to cover and pretended that I actually understood what was going on. That's probably where I first began to get an inkling of who Bob Tucker was. His name popped up a lot in the pages of *Yandro*. Then, in January 1969, the Coulsons became the publishers of *Le Zombie* #66 — the first new issue of Bob Tucker's legendary fanzine to appear in over 20 years — and somehow I ended up with a copy. Did I send away for it or was it mailed



to me as a rider to one of those issues of *Yandro*? I haven't got a clue.

Unlike *Yandro*, which was kinda stuffy and boring, *Le Zombie* ("Published every time a Zombie wakes!") was strangely cool and funny. It came as something of a revelation to read a fanzine that had a sense of humor—even if I didn't get a lot of the jokes. There was a weird drawing of a couple of spooky-looking zombies on the front cover—a reprint of an old Ronald Clyne cover from 1943—and the back cover was a photo of some guy dressed up like The Shadow's brother-in-law. It was goofy and I liked it. My mother's objection to the drawing of a semi-nude woman on the inside front cover only made it that much cooler in my adolescent eyes. As I recall, she had nipples the size of the knobs on our television set—and I *ain't* talking about my mother!

Looking at it today, I'm amazed at how funny and clever that issue of *Le Zombie* was. Reading it now I actually get most of the jokes and recognize most of the names as well. The lead article, a slice of domestic fannish bliss, was written by Madeleine Willis and is so clever and witty that it makes me wonder if, like Dick Francis' wife, she didn't secretly have a major hand in her husband's legendary prose compositions. Tucker's old pal Bob Bloch contributed a very fannish convention report about the 1965 London worldcon—"And the moment I saw the route into town with the highway signs reading 'London 12 miles. This way to Arthur C. Clarke,' I felt perfectly at home."—while Tucker himself took a jaundiced look at the banalities of *Star Trek*. Having written the article while the show was still on the air, hindsight has proven him prescient. And The Shadow's brother-in-law turned out to be none other than Dean Grennell in a floppy hat and what looks like his wife's tablecloth tied around his shoulders.

But the best thing in the issue was an interview between Tucker's Asian alter-ego Hoy Ping Pong and a certain elderly Dr. Josef Fann that reads like the transcript of an old fannish Bob and Ray radio routine. Pong, ever the dedicated fanboy, tries to keep his subject on track, but the old doctor is only interested in getting some tail:

PONG: Please, great one, let's get on with this interview.

FANN: Not in the mood. Do you have their phone numbers?

PONG: Numbers?

FANN: Those twelve female fans. Wow! 23 skidoo!

PONG: Old man—go to MidWesCon and get your own numbers.

By the summer of 1971, I had become totally immersed in fandom, as only a wide-eyed neo can be. I'd gone to a couple of conventions, I'd joined an apa, I'd published a genzine, and I'd managed to start getting some of my primitive cartoons printed in the pages of other people's fanzines. Linda Bushyager was the first faneditor to get one of my cartoons into print in an issue of *Granfalloon*. Despite my obvious lack of skill and experience, Linda placed my immature sketches alongside those by Tim Kirk, Jack Gaughan, Doug Lovenstein, Grant Canfield, and other accomplished fanartists that I admired. That proximity made me realize that I still had a lot of work to do and encouraged me to try harder.

In 1972, Linda published a new edition of Tucker's *A Neofan's Guide to Science Fiction Fandom* to hand out at that year's Los Angeles worldcon. It was such a success that she was asked to do it again the following year for TorCon. She had used a Bill Rotsler cartoon the first time around, but decided to be more ambitious this time and asked me to draw a cover specifically for the new edition. I was delighted to be asked. It was really my first big fan assignment and I was nervous that I'd screw it up, but eventually I came up with what I thought was a clever idea—one that would represent a neofan's journey from being an unknown outsider to being part of the In Crowd; an experience I was going through at the time myself.

The finished product, while hesitantly drawn, totally captured my vision. It was two covers actually, the front and back covers offering a before and after motif. The front cover depicted a groovy room party in progress and a young neo, who looked a bit like me, hovering anxiously in the open doorway. He is a spectator to all the wicked fannish abandon going on all around him. One of the partiers notices him standing there and says aloud, "Hey Look! It's a Neo!" while everybody else stares at the newcomer. The back cover had exactly the same image, except now there was a different young neo at the door. His predecessor, in the meantime, had replaced the earlier partygoer and now *he's* the one who says, "Hey Look! It's a Neo!"

I thought it was a pretty subtle statement, especially when you consider that I was still pretty wet behind the ears myself. Nevertheless, I thought those covers had successfully captured the spirit of Bob Tucker's fannish ideals, and I felt a small bit of pride at my accomplishment. By that time I'd read and reread Harry Warner, Jr.'s *All Our Yesterdays* and had finally begun to understand some of what Tucker stood for and what he had meant to fandom's evolution and progress. He had given fandom

its funny bone and taught it not to take itself too seriously. I was all for that.

Warner's book quoted Tucker as saying in 1939, "I am doing my darndest to provide fandom with a big bucketful of that humor it so sorely needs, and above all, I am not trying to bait, tease, ridicule or besmirch anybody." In the next paragraph Warner adds Bob Bloch's 1946 declaration that Tucker had "become a legend in his own time and it would be impossible to imagine the curious microcosm, science fiction fandom, as it might have evolved without his influence." I believed every word of it. And I still do.

Linda and some of the others involved with the reprint weren't quite as pleased as I was with the finished drawings. For one thing, there was a nek-kid young femmefan in the party scene and she was having what we now call a "wardrobe malfunction"—and her nipples, among other things, were showing. They apparently hadn't noticed them before sending the artwork off to the printer and were now quite concerned that my depiction of fan-nish fun might upset some impressionable young neofan or, even worse, some impressionable young neofan's parents.

It was too late to get a cleaned-up version of the artwork into print, so they went ahead and used the existing covers and hoped for the best. I don't know if they actually got any complaints about those covers, but when they reprinted *A Neofan's Guide* again the following year, it featured another generic Rotsler cartoon on its cover. It was too bad, really. I had gone out of my way to make sure that her nipples looked nothing like the knobs on our television set.

After moving to Falls Church, Virginia, in the spring of 1974, I started going to a lot more science fiction conventions, including the annual MidWestCon, held each year in Cincinnati. I usually made the trip with Ted White, who'd been attending the con since the 1950s. Inspired by the antics of Ken Kesey's *Merry Pranksters*, we did everything in our power to make those drives across Ohio as memorable as possible and we took in many strange sites along the way that probably eluded most other travelers on the highway. Going to the granddaddy of all relaxicons was a revelation to me. Prior to that, I'd only been to urban conventions, like Philcon and Lunacon and Disclave. The 1974 MidWestCon was the first time I'd ever gone to a convention held in a motel. It was the first convention I'd gone to that seemed to take place mostly around the pool instead of in stuffy hotel rooms. It was also the first time I met Bob Tucker in the flesh.

Attending a con like this as Ted's sidekick was an invaluable asset for me. With Ted next to me, I got into any party I wanted and talk with anybody I wanted. Despite my shy nature, I made a lot of friends around that pool, including Bob, who recognized my name from the *Neofan's Guide* cover and commiserated with me about all the trouble a guy can get into when it comes to mammary glands. He made me feel like he was genuinely sorry that I'd been hassled about my drawing. "Hell," he said sympathetically, "I don't know what all the fuss was about. Some of my best friends have boobs." And then he slapped me on the back and gave me a wink.

Bob seemed fascinated by my last name. Unlike many others, he never asked me if it was really my name. Instead, Tucker announced that I was the first person who was destined to be a science fiction fan. "This young man's name is *Steffan*," he'd say when introducing me to someone like Lou Tabakow or Rusty Hevelin. "With a name like that he *had* to become a fan. He had no choice. He was born to be a fan." I appreciated the attention, even though I knew he was also razzing me a bit at the same time. Nevertheless, his teasing never bothered me because I noticed that he seemed to give everybody he met a bit of the ol' nudgenudgewinkwink. I would have been concerned only if he had *not* been kidding me. Tucker always had a little zinger or a knowing glance or a funny story for everybody he met. If my name made me memorable to him, I wasn't gonna complain about it.

Before the weekend was over, I found myself basking in the glow of Bob's camaraderie at some





late night room party or other. The place was buzzing with chatter all around me, but I was watching Tucker. He had momentarily put his running conversation on pause to take a long, thick pull from the bottle of Jim Beam that he'd been carrying around all evening. I watched his eyes narrow and a long, thin smile snake across his face as if he were savoring a favorite poem about Nantucket. The next thing I knew, he was handing me the bottle and offering me a swig. As he passed it to me, he held his other hand over his head and kept it there. He looked like the only kid in the classroom who knew the answer to the homework assignment. I took a gulp and passed the bottle to the next guy on the bed — possibly Ted — who took a hit, raised his hand, and passed the bottle down the line. By the time the bottle made its way back to Tucker everybody in the tiny room, including me, had their hand raised over their head. Then, with one sweeping arc of his long arm, the assembled fans exhaled a collective chorus of “smoooooth,” and then the room was once again buzzing with chatter. Afterwards I felt like I'd been let in on something akin to a Masonic ceremony or a fraternal ritual. It was like I'd been taught the secret fannish handshake.

This was something I'd experienced before at conventions. It was one of the things that had always awed me about fandom. The fact that I was now a fan meant that I was somehow welcome in the company of people who were obviously older, smarter, funnier, more talented, and way more successful than I was. There was no good reason for it except that I was now like them in one small way. I was a fan and that was good enough for them. Looking back on it now, I still don't know why it happened that way. Why did Terry Carr invite me



to tag along for a sercon moment at a Pghlange one year? Why did Brian Aldiss invite me to have lunch with him during a Lunacon at which he was the Guest of Honor? Why did Dean Koontz offer me his address and phone number the first time I met him at a Philcon — even after I admitted to him that I'd never read any of his stories?

Was it my sensitive fannish face? Was it simply the benefit of the doubt? Or was I just lucky? Yeah, I think that was probably it. I was damned lucky. Lucky to be one of them.

I accompanied Ted to several more MidWestCons over the years. Tucker was always gracious and seemed happy to see me. During those years I had become the artistic mascot for Terry Hughes' brilliant fanzine *Mota*, and had begun publishing my own fanzine called *Boonfark*. I was also becoming more and more interested in fanhistory, and at some point during my second or third MidWestCon weekend I asked Bob if he ever planned to publish another issue of *Le Zombie*. It had been nearly 10 years since the previous issue, I reminded him, and then volunteered on the spot to draw a cover for him if he ever did return to publishing. He said he liked that idea and would get back to me as soon as he was ready to start working on that next issue.

I always assumed that he was being nice to me, but typical of the Tucker I was getting to know, he seemed to mean it. For years after that, whenever we'd come across each other at a convention, he'd always tell me that he still wanted me to draw that cover for him Real Soon Now. It became like our little running joke. It was the zinger he'd jab me with whenever we met. The truth be told, I would have jumped at the chance to draw the cover to a great and legendary fanzine like *Le Zombie*. Who wouldn't?

Sadly, I never got a chance to draw that cover. When Bob finally did publish another issue years later, he gave somebody else got the honor of providing the cover art. Too bad, it would have been a real thrill to join the ranks of *Le Zombie* cover artists, like Hannes Bok, Damon Knight, Roy Hunt, and Ronald Clyne, among others. But I had stopped going to most conventions by the time Tucker published his 67th issue in 1987, and we hadn't seen each other face to face for quite a few years by that time. Because of that, I like to think that he hadn't forgotten our little running joke, but that it had simply faded from his memory as our association receded into the past. Had I suddenly appeared before him at that year's MidWestCon, with a grin on my face and a beer in my hand, I have no doubt he'd immediately have said something to me about doing his next cover.

MidWestCons began to mutate as they moved towards the 1980s. After a couple of summers at the same motel, they began to change the location almost every year. The motels got bigger and the convention became more ordinary. Within just a few short years a lot of the intimacy seemed to have been lost in the shuffle. A generation gap of sorts had started to materialize, separating a lot of the older fans from the young whippersnappers — dividing the drinkers from the smokers, if you will. There was less time spent outside each other's comfortable cliques and more time spent getting wasted in private.

Indicative of the convention's growing pains was the changes around Tucker himself. The "smooth" ritual had grown beyond all reasonable bounds. Now it sometimes took 20 minutes for the bottle of Beam to make its way around the room and the resulting shouts of "smooth" could be heard all over the convention. The ritual's popularity had begun to spin out of control and Tucker's stamina was sometimes tested by the demands that he assume his role as head cheerleader.

We used to laugh about the fact that now there were parties full of new fans who seemed to know all about the Jim Beam chant. They knew all about raising their hands and they knew just when to join the assembled chorus. But afterwards they would all vie for Bob's attention by gleefully calling out his name: "Wilson!" they would shout. "Wilson, over here," somebody would call. "Have another drink, Wilson!" After that, the ritual seemed to lose something and sometimes it seemed like more of a performance than an act of tribal bonding. Out of self-preservation, Bob eventually began to spend a lot more of his convention time with smaller, closed groups of friends. It offered him some hint of privacy and some relief for his overworked liver.

During one of those late 1970s MidWestCons, Bob stopped by our table in the motel restaurant — where Ted and I were having dinner with the likes of Brad Balfour, David Emerson, and probably Jeff Schalles — to ask us if we could get together with him later that evening. Tucker had something important he wanted to discuss with Ted and wanted to do it privately. He whispered in Ted's ear and then arranged to snag us at some party or other and then we'd all get together somewhere for a little chat.

Later that evening, in some room party that was probably full of filk singing and endless debates about the magnificence of Diana Rigg, we ran into Tucker as planned and whisked him off to the quiet solitude of somebody's room. Bob pulled a small bottle of Jim Beam out of his pocket and Ted pulled

out his pipe and a film canister full of his best combustible matter. And that's when it struck me like a slap in the face — *Bob Tucker wanted to get stoned.*

Tucker sat on the edge of the bed and rubbed his big, weather-beaten hands together as Ted filled the pipe and cautioned Bob about the dangers of taking in too much smoke at one time. Ted passed Bob his pipe and Bob passed him the bottle of liquor. Around and around they went, each of us taking small hits from both and then passing them on. After a few minutes, Tucker's shoulders relaxed and a wide, mellow smile creased his face. Everybody talked in rapid whispers and laughed together at the absurdity of this schoolboy prank — the fannish equivalent of smoking in the boys' room.

After a while Bob gathered his wits and his bottle and bid us adieu. "I must leave you now," Bob said in a stage whisper. "I have discovered the Fountain of Youth," he smiled, "and it's not polite to keep her waiting for too long." We all laughed and he put his long finger up to his mouth and shushed us mockingly. And then he was gone. We all looked at each other and burst out laughing, the hysterics of naughty children who had just gotten away with murder. "We just got stoned with Bob Tucker," I mouthed with glee, and everybody started laughing again. We had just shared a special moment with one of the great fannish icons and nobody said the word "smooth" even once. I still smile when I think about it more than 25 years later.

The last MidWestCon I ever attended was held at yet another crappy motel somewhere in Cincinnati. I no longer enjoyed them very much. The con had become some kind of symbol of the Midwestern fannish aesthetic: kinda conservative and a little over-the-hill. Attendance was light that year and the Sunday night Dead Dog Party was so small that everybody fit into one tiny motel room.



◀ Robert Bloch, Bob Tucker, Dean Grennell

During most of that weekend the con had taken place inside the motel around the poolside rooms, the vague smell of chlorine flavoring every breath we took. But by Sunday night we'd ended up in an exterior room that faced the parking lot and a row of trees. The air outside was heavy with humidity and the occupants of the room shared a certain damp boredom, the letdown after a so-so weekend of partying. The bottle of Jim Beam was being passed around as usual, but the ritual choruses of "smooth" lacked conviction and the conversations were plodding. And then it began to rain.

Somebody had opened the long curtains that hung floor to ceiling across the room's large plate glass window and the gathered fans sat quietly watching the approaching storm through the glass. Too tired to entertain ourselves, we chose to leave the show to Mother Nature. Lightning began to flash across the brooding skyline. Each jagged blast of light got a little closer, along with the approaching storm. As the light show increased in intensity, I noticed that Tucker had walked out of the room and was standing alone on the sidewalk outside. He stood in front of the window and watched the storm's rapid progress towards our little motel. The distant flashes of lightning silhouetted Bob's lanky frame like a Chinese lantern puppet behind a parchment screen.

Suddenly, Bob thrust one of his arms straight up in the air and as if on cue a huge bolt of lightning streaked across the sky. The flash of light momentarily lit up the room full of comatose fans and startled us out of our stupor. And then Tucker thrust his other arm towards the sky and yet another crack of light and a rumble of thunder answered his call. This time we all applauded. Next it was both arms pointing at the dark clouds and another

crash, brighter and louder than before, lighting up the room like a hundred headlights switching on their high beam in unison. Now we were all hooting and cheering.

A flick of his wrist brought on another clap of thunder. Each sweeping arcane gesture seemed to create another flash of brilliant light and then another after that. Inside the room we were all yelling like we were witnessing some kind of miracle — a bit of fannish alchemy to amuse and delight the Peanut Gallery. A bit of Bob Tucker magic. Tucker went on making silent incantations to the Thunder Ghods for at least 20 minutes and never once did he miss his cue. It was a lightshow worthy of any rock concert I've attended and a performance that had more true sense of wonder than anything I'd witnessed in a long time.

After a while, the storm passed and Tucker finally turned and faced us, took a long bow, and we applauded wildly in response. The man had battled Nature herself and had come out the winner. He had conducted a lightning symphony for a roomful of Dead Dogs and had brought them back to life. He rubbed his hands together confidently as he came back inside the room. Somebody handed him the ubiquitous bottle and he raised it in a toast to his admirers. "Thank you, thank you," he said. "It was nothing. Just a little something I do in my spare time."

It was nothing but a little fannish trickery courtesy of Hoy Ping Pong, Joe Fann, and that old Zombie himself, Bob Tucker. But the trick that night wasn't that he'd managed to control the heavens above, but that he'd magically changed the worst MidWestCon I'd ever been to into one of the most memorable conventions of my life.

The last time that I spent any time with Bob was at the 1993 Corflu in Madison, Wisconsin. The committee that year had made arrangements to bring Tucker to the con as a Special Guest, and even published "The Tucker Gallery" — a collection of written portraits by 13 of his admirers, including Dean Grennell, Bob Bloch, Art Rapp, Walt Willis, Ted White, and others — to celebrate his attendance.

On Saturday night I found myself a part of a large fannish dinner gathering in the hotel's panoramic rooftop restaurant, which wasn't located on the roof at all, but on the panoramic eighth floor instead. Our group had swollen to 15 or 16 people, including Tucker, and to accommodate all of us the staff ended up putting two tables together, a round one and a rectangular one, and assigned us our own exclusive waitress. Bob sat at the intersection

Thanks to Curt Phillips, Earl Kemp, Bruce Gillespie, and Toni Weisskopf for help gathering photos. The mighty Tucker Issue of Bruce's *SF Commentary* (no. 79) is available at efanzines.com. Have a look!



of the two tables and I was lucky enough to end up sitting beside him, though I was technically at the other table.

I couldn't have asked for a more engaging dinner companion. Periodically he'd lean over to me and pass on some fannish tidbit from his chatty tablemates and I'd give him the gossip that was floating around at our table. We exchanged over-the-shoulder chatter throughout the meal, and afterwards, as the staff cleared away the wreckage, we had an intense conversation about a mutual friend, someone Bob knew mostly on paper. "Is he, you know, retarded or something?" Bob asked earnestly. Naturally, I laughed. But Tucker was dead serious. A few brief encounters had left him wondering if our friend might, in fact, be a little "slow."

After a few minutes of conversation I managed to convince Tucker that our friend definitely wasn't retarded—he was actually quite witty and well-read, I explained—but was just a bit on the shy side. He was relieved to hear it. "He's always seemed so sweet and quiet to me," he explained. "So naturally I thought he might have had a little bit of inbreeding in his family tree."

I assured him that while our friend had spent some time in the Ozarks, he was not an inbred hill-billy or anything. "The Ozarks!" Bob hooted. "This could be worse than I thought. Are you sure he isn't the secret love child of Claude Degler?" Sadly, I had to admit that he wasn't, though I was sure he'd have been very amused at the notion. Afterwards Bob begged me not to tell our friend of his wayward theory and I never did. Besides, he probably wouldn't have believed me if I had.

Bob was in top form that weekend. He seemed to thrive on the good fellowship and interaction with other fans. As the convention wore on, Tucker just seemed to be gaining energy and stamina, while the rest of us Junior Fanboys and Fangirls gradually lost our head of steam and grew more and more frazzled as the days passed. His speeches were warm and funny (and short), and everywhere he went he seemed to be surrounded by a different coterie of friends and admirers. As I watched him it struck me that he was like an old Vaudeville performer, a very specialized kind of entertainer. Tucker the Magnificent. Hoy Ping Pong the Fakir. Always ready to Put On A Show if his public called, but never pushy or manipulative about it. He was an equal opportunity swami and everybody was welcome in his tent.

I think that was the secret to Bob Tucker's long and successful career as a fan. He had the ability to look you right in the eye and make you feel like he was really interested in who you were and what

you had to say. He would always share a little of himself with whoever he met and made them feel like they were his peer and his confidant. He did have close friendships with many of his contemporaries, BNFs like Bloch and Grennell and Hoffman—and later fans like Dick Smith and Leah Zeldes and Keith Stokes—but when you were in Bob's company, you got the feeling that for one moment you were as good as any of them.

Making people feel welcome, like they were part of the gang, was Bob Tucker's gift. It's why he was such a great ambassador for fandom around the world. Unlike, say, Forry Ackerman, Tucker never went looking for recognition for his achievements in fandom, but instead took the responsibilities offered him with humility and grace. He just wanted to have a good time and thought that everybody else should too. You didn't need to be Robert Bloch to entertain him or be entertained by him. He had charisma and wit and never let his fannish seniority go to his head. He felt no entitlement. He lived that way for 92 years and he never let a single one of those years get in the way of his enjoyment of life. Or his enjoyment of fandom.

When I heard that Bob Tucker had passed away last October 6th, I momentarily wondered if it was true. Was it perhaps another hoax? He'd been declared dead twice before in his fannish life. The first time was in the 1930s, at the height of the Staple Wars, when his death was announced in the pages of *Astounding's* letter column, "Brass Tacks." The second time was just prior to the CinVention, the 1949 worldcon, where a fan named Ben Singer thought it would be rilly, rilly funny to tell convention goers that Bob had died in a fire after falling asleep drunk in his projection booth at work. Tucker had been forced to work that weekend instead of going to the con, and his absence had seemed to confirm the story until somebody bothered to check with his employer, who indignantly denied everything.

However, the news of Tucker's death this time around proved to be sadly genuine. Bob's wife Fern had passed away earlier in the year and, despite the myth of him as a womanizer and a Dirty Old Man, I suspect that it was just too hard to keep going without her. She was his bedrock and his partner in life. Together they had raised children and lived lives that had nothing to do with Staple Wars, Chinese Dolls, Natural Insemination, or the price of Jim Beam. Without her, his life probably just wasn't that much fun anymore.

This time it was the real thing. This time the Zombie would not wake again. ☒



An earlier draft of this article appeared in the FAPAazine STEFFAN-dango #1.

Stuck in the Warehouse

by Chris Garcia

It was a dark and stormy California night. Yes, we have them once in a while between the extended periods of balmy surfing weather. I'd been asked to stay at the Computer History Museum's Warehouse on Moffett Federal Airfield from 6pm until the truck carrying our newest Supercomputer arrived and cleared the required checks that it would have to pass through at the gates of the base. Why did we have to keep someone in the warehouse? Well, the real reason is because of a very silly decision to have the alarm, when turned on can't be stopped except from the inside between the hours of 10 pm and 6 am. Strange? Yes, but we're also so cheap as to not want to pay for the hold-over fee that comes with having a truck wait until folks would regularly be around. I was OK, I didn't have much to do that night so I started a journal which I kept throughout the night. This is the essence of that journal.

6 pm Arrive bright-eyed and bushy-tailed at warehouse. With me I have 1 tub of Baked Potato Soup, one small tray of homemade Enchiladas, one six-pack of Dr. Pepper, a box of Thin Mint Girl Scout Cookies, and a tin of Honey Roasted Peanuts and Cashews. I've also got a Portable DVD player with the DVD of *Forbidden Planet* that I've been asked to review for *Some Fantastic*, an Eton Portable Radio with PowerCrank and several fanzines in my backpack. I also brought a pillow and two blankets since there's no heat in the building.

7 pm Have cooked and eaten the soup. The power went out to the building, and as I understand it, the entire base. I crank up the portable radio and begin

to listen to the replay of *Wait, Wait, Don't Tell Me* on NPR. The sound of rain pounding on the metal roof is annoying. I'm forced to turn the radio up full-blast.

8 pm Radio stops working. Rain is louder, but power returns. I am yawning at 12 minute intervals. I begin to read *Banana Wings*, but stop when I discover that one of the machines in the corner is marked "Working, July 7th, 2004". It is a PDP-8, a minicomputer from 1972 or so. I resist the urge to plug it in, but I study it for several minutes.

9 pm Radio sucks. Yawns are now at 7 minute intervals. Proceeding to administer Dr. Pepper. Have heated and eaten the Enchiladas. Burned the roof of my mouth in the process. Start to read *Banana Wings* again, but the soft siren call of the PDP-8 is too strong. I spend several minutes dragging it over to the main power outlet. It is cold enough to see my breath.

10 pm PDP-8 powers up and does not catch on fire in the first five minutes. There are many large toggle switches that I flip, making various lights flicker on and off. I have no idea what these lights mean, but I figure out how to make a neat-o light show. The machine warms an area roughly five feet across and I am sweating within fifteen minutes. The power fails again. I am forced to drag the com-

puter back wherefrom it came by candlelight. It's not nearly as romantic as it sounds. Yawns are now at four minute intervals.

11 pm The lights are still out, so I use the battery on my Portable DVD to watch *Forbidden Planet* and write my review. I pause twice to use the restroom. I finish off the Dr. Pepper and am forced to drink water the rest of the night. There is a gentle smoke scent wafting through the warehouse. It's coming from the PDP-8. I fan it in hopes of cooling it down. Smoke increases. Good thing there's no smoke alarm.

Midnight Watching Movie. Lights still out. Yawns disappear as wired feeling settles in.

1 am Start writing review. Set it down, completed, after forty minutes. Lights still out. Candles fading. Begin using DVD player as light source. Some minor twitching is noticed in my eyes.

2 am Read review I've written of *Forbidden Planet*. For some reason, there are numerous veiled threatening references to the Spanish Monarchy sprinkled throughout and I've managed to misspell my name in by-line. Somehow managed to write entire review without using the word 'the'. Lights return.

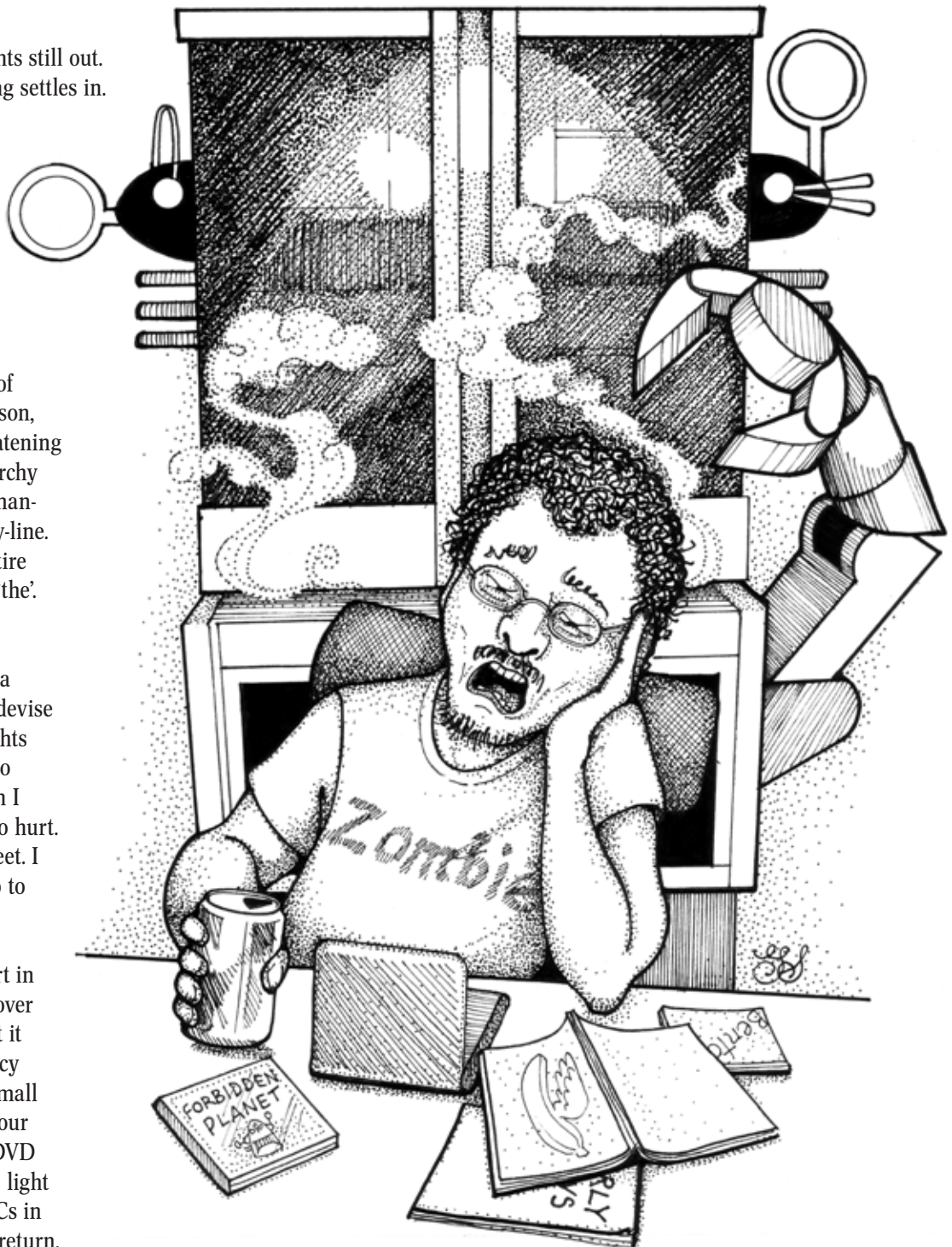
3 am On an exploration, I find a crate full of parking peanuts. I devise a game. I climb up various heights of the pallet racks and jump into crate in attempt to see how high I can jump from before it starts to hurt. The answer turns out to be 16 feet. I go to my car and find foot wrap to manage injuries.

4 am Read *Bento* and then start in on *Banana Wings* again. I discover an original Apple Mac and start it up. Manage to locate Bureaucracy game by Douglas Adams in a small pile of software. Play it for an hour before the lights go out again. DVD batteries are drained. Use small light from Portable Radio to read LoCs in *The Knarley Knews*. The lights return.

5 am Sky is beginning to lighten. I finish my nuts and then start listening to BBC World Service on NPR. Return to Bureaucracy and manage to finish game. Yawns return at three minute intervals.

8 am Fall asleep in comfy chair that was a part of PDP-1 system at Lawrence Livermore National Labs.

Noon Wake up with hacking cough from inhaled dust. Truck has still not arrived. I go to my cell phone and call. Truck hasn't even arrived at gates. Call my boss. Required to stay at Warehouse until



The Computer History Museum recently got itself a shiny new toy. It's called a Difference Engine, entirely based on the designs of Charles Babbage, the 19th century's Ron Popiel as it were... only far less successful. The design was amazingly complex, tolerances that were far outside of regular industrial techniques of the day were required, along with plenty of the Sterling that required Babbage to act properly and make friends. The fact that a complete Difference Engine was never built in his lifetime should explain the man's attitude.

The machine made the trip. I had seen it just a couple of weeks earlier, shining in the light of the Science Museum in London across from the original that had been built by my boss Doron Swade's team in 1990. When it came to the Museum after a flight from Heathrow to SFO, it took a crane and four hours to get it into the building. The wrappings came off and a sigh came from the techs who came across to make it ready for use.

The freezing temperatures on the flight led to the formation of ice crystals that pierced the protective silicon coating they had put over it. When it rewarmed, there were corrosion spots all over. Such things happen when you're the first people to ship a Difference Engine by plane. Maybe we should have tried a schooner instead.

The Engine will have a public unveiling at the Computer History Museum in Mountain View, CA on May 10th around noon. There'll be food and folks in 19th century garb and Steampunks and tinkerers and Hackers and all the rest of those folks who just love a good piece of Big Iron...or brass, in this case.

Computer History Museum,
1401 N. Shoreline Boulevard,
Mountain View, CA, www.computerhistory.org

truck arrives, but I'm told to go home and shower, change and reload on provisions while Billiam replaces me for a few hours. I have a strange feeling odd things have gone down the previous night.

5 pm Night is falling and the truck has still not arrived. I've restocked with a tub of Split Pea Soup with Bacon, three short ribs, a tin of mixed nuts, a six-pack of Dr. Pepper, Taro chips, a small bag of grapes and several Peanut Butter Cookies with Hershey Kisses pushed into the middles. I've also brought a completely recharged DVD Player, a new box of candles, the Portable Radio and several fanzines. I've also brought a copy of *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* to read when the other materials run out.

6 pm Have eaten soup and ribs and chips. Doze in comfy chair.

7 pm Try to read more of Mr. Norrell, but the wind is making quite a racket. Start to read *Banana Wings*, but am distracted by the robotic arm in the corner. Start pacing back and forth in the warehouse. Yawning is strong and roughly five minutes apart.

8 pm Start a strange recreation of scene in *da Vinci Code* using robotic arm. Try to read *Banana Wings* again but am forced to play with arm more. Yawns are two minutes apart. Administer more Dr. Pepper.

9 pm Eat cookies and use restroom. Return to discover that the PDP-8 still smells of smoke. Push it into a further corner of the warehouse. Try to read *Mr. Norrell* again and discover that I've lost the bookmark. Start over.

10 pm Plug in Macintosh and play version of MineSweeper. Realise I am no good at said game and plug in electromechanical adding machine. Create long lists of numbers that must be added together. The result is 1,234,309,038. Recheck sums on another mechanical calculator and the result is 1,234,495,093. A check on the Macintosh reveals 1,234,304,048. Abacus confirms the Mac's answer.

11 pm Write a fully reasoned argument in my head on why Linux is evil.

Midnight Completely forget fully reasoned argument on why Linux is evil.

1 am Can see breath again. Plug in PDP-8 and

huddle around it. Power goes out again. Machine continues to radiate heat for the next hour. Am practically hugging machine. Yawns are now four minutes apart.

2 am Sit down to read *Banana Wings* again. Truck arrives. Go to the door to realize that I've not been given key to main delivery door. Have to hand-carry supercomputer portions in through regular human door. Curse the inventor of keyed locks.

3 am Am told that the second truck will be along in the next few hours. Swear just loud enough under my breath to sound like I've gone crazy.

4 am Finally finish reading *Banana Wings*, Realise that I'm late in providing a review of gender-switching films to other Magazine. Quickly dash it off on the Macintosh and dump it to 5.25 inch floppy. Then write LoC for *Banana Wings*, *Bento* and *Knarley Knews* on same Mac. Write *Drink Tank* article on the Vampire Teens. Yawns are now less than two minutes apart. I start giggling at the word Penguin for some reason.

5 am Drink all of the Dr. Pepper and then go climbing. Make it to the top of the highest pallet rack. Dangle from it upside down for a moment before heading back to my comfy chair. Slight shaking is noticed again.

6am Second truck arrives. I help them load the pieces in. One of them starts reading *Banana Wings* as partner and I carry in power supply. He seems very amused.

8 am Return to office having wasted Wednesday and Thursday nights. Am comped Thursday, Friday and Monday in return. I go and try to bring Mac Word Files onto the modern Macs we have in the office. No 5.25 drive found with iMacs. Search the collection and find one. Doesn't work. Begin fiddling with it. After five hours of trying, I finally get it to work.

1 pm Finally go home. I fall asleep in my clothes only to be woken up by phone call less than ten minutes after I've arrived. I provide the telemarketer with several new swear words I've had time to think up on my down-time.

1:34 pm Unplug phones so I can sleep. Remove batteries from smoke detector just in case. ☒

Unfolding Stars

fanzine reviews by John Hertz

if you had an imaginary tortoise, and both of you wanted to publish a fanzine, and the tortoise won, you just might take the name *Tortoise*. Sue Jones and Siberia did. The cover of *Tortoise* 24 has a photo of Saturn and Jupiter and Mars — statuary of the gods, which Jones saw on the clock tower of Cardiff Castle. There's a visit to a monthly storytelling club, and a story, which is about 16th Century painted glass, the Earl of Orford, the Earl of Bridgewater, St. Mary's Church in the town where Jones lives, and the grandson of Thomas Cook the travel agent. I think it's a true story. There's Kevon Kenna's report of Contemplation ("the tribulations of working at 14,000 feet.... One cannot enjoy singing among strangers when they are so few.... I learn nothing, but am not bored.... I don't understand her worry about weightless copulation.... I was alive again, almost") — the 2007 Eastercon at Chester, his first convention. Usually there are fanzine reviews; Jones' own drawings, she's a Triple Crown candidate; letters of comment, the Lettuce Column. People still talk about the cover for T20, which in two layers showed Siberia working in the garden; the T21 collage cover by Jae Leslie Adams was also swell. *Verve* is no compliment to a Briton, it's better as a U.S. jazz record label, but there's a limpid vitality in this zine.

Sue Jones, Flat 5, 32-33 Castle Street, Shrewsbury SY1 2BQ, England, U.K.

Surely *Trap Door* is one of the finest fanzines. *Mature* is no compliment to a fan like Robert Lichtman, and calling him a Sage is about as reasonable as saying I used to live in Haight-Ashbury, but he has a sense of history, and his light shineth. I mean *fine* with the power of its root. The parts of this fanzine match, the gears mesh, the chimes accord. We feel the fanedi-

tor's focus. If he hangs a gun on the wall at page 2, it will have gone off by page 29 — or 39 — or if it doesn't, we need not wonder why. *Trap Door* 25 has a Harry Bell cover — with a trap door — and if there's recently been more Bell around, like this and the Corflu XXIV Program Book cover, and if I had aught to do therewith as one of the judges who gave Bell the Rotsler Award in 2004, I rejoice — and loving appreciations of Calvin Demmon (1942–2007) and Sidney Coleman (1937–2007). Demmon one day in high school saw Lichtman reading a fanzine, and asked, "I explained. His face brightened.... Within a year he was celebrated as one of fandom's premier humorists"; way to go. About Coleman we hear from Greg Benford, fan, pro, and physicist, who knew him each way; Benford quotes Carol Carr, too. *Trap Door's* correspondence section "The Ether Still Vibrates" is resplendent, and here on the back page is the Typo of the Ish, "Thanks for soldering on." If I'd written that, modestly peacefully or heatedly omitting the vertical letter, I'd thank the faned who left it.

Robert Lichtman, 11037 Broadway Terrace, Oakland, CA 94611, U.S.A.

Steve Sneyd, poetry editor for Langley Searles' *Fantasy Commentator*, on his own publishes *Data Dump*, four halfsize handwritten cardstock pages. DD118 was my herald of the death of Derek Pickles, reporting he in *Phantasmagoria* first called "the usual" what we exchange for fanzines, LoCs, accepted contributions, our own zines in trade, and first printed John Brunner, a 1950 sonnet "Door". You'll find Gerard Manly Hopkins' instress and inscape, or "Eh?" is Line 1787 of 'The Egnisomicon', of which DD will not repeat its past error of describing this verse epic as 'unpublished', D.F. (Des) Lewis having written to point out that it had, in fact, appeared in an edition of 2 cop-





ies, each different” (DD117), or a note of John Grant’s *Introduction to Viking Mythology* (“the unfortunate Andhrimnir, Valhalla cook, had zilch scope to be a superchef, as the menu never varied & he’d only one cooking pot”, DD116), or a time-traveling hat in the 2007 Manchester Literary Festival (DD113); a “long list” for a 2008 DD Award to s-f poetry published in Britain (DD120); a Drew Morse bibliography of s-f poetry in 1930s fanzines (DD121). Things creep into the margins, hyphenation is breathtaking, and a U.S. wise guy keeps piping up “Pouting Only Enrages Mordor” or “Pick Out Earthy Memes”.

Steve Sneyd, 4 Nowell Place, Almondbury, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire HD5 8PB, England, U.K.

The White Star Federated Spaceways *Armadillo* is on the cover of *Munich Round-Up* 175, Forry Ackerman on M176. Published over fifty years, it wasn’t yearly all that time. In M176 are 17 questions to Jesco von Puttkamer, the rocket engineer who won the NASA Exceptional Service Medal, wrote s-f, and belongs to a noble German family dating to the 13th Century; he answers, “All consciousness expansion or rising is preceded by a widening of horizons”; “we should not continue making the age-old conceptual mistake of seeing ourselves in the future as statically unchanged from today.” In M175 are Joe Mayhew drawings; photos of the Glasgow Worldcon; a discussion of Emil Robert Kraft (1869-1916) reviewing half a dozen of

his proto-science-fiction novels, sparked by a 2006 re-issue of the 1998 biography. Waldemar Kumming was part of creating the fearsome drink *vurguzz*. He has done so much so long for so many that in 2005 he was given the Big Heart, our highest service award. MRU is in German and English.

Waldemar Kumming & Gary Klüpfel: Kumming, Engadiner Str. 24, D 81475 München, Germany; U.S. agent, Andrew Porter, 55 Pineapple St., No. 3-J, Brooklyn, NY 11201, U.S.A.

Surely *File 770* is one of the finest fanzines. Named for Roger Sims’ room at the St. Charles Hotel where a party upstaged Nolacon I, Mike Glycer’s newszine and quodlibet has survived his chairing a Worldcon, fanguestofhonorng at another, marrying, and fathering, dauntless, sharp, and full. Speaking as a regular contributor I can say that describes his editing, which sparked as it may be with praise or cheer will also contain at suitable moments — I quasi-quote — Would you mind explaining what you intended by *that*? In his pages the rise of technology that enables photographs has not eclipsed fanart, by the famous, the shouldbefamousalready, and the new, Grant Canfield, Brad Foster, Bill Rotsler, Taral Wayne, Alan White, Ray Capella, Jennifer Gates (see her work on the cover of F150). The rise of technology that enables blogs — although to me *blog* is a drink — has not eclipsed paper fanning, as indeed Marshall McLuhan told us forty years ago. The sense of story, the sense of event are here. In F151 James Bacon reports on Novacon (“A beanie: well, it was a Calvinistic moment if ever there was one”), Hope Leibowitz reports on Ditto — combined in 2007 with Art Widner’s goth birthday, and Migly reports on Mythcon (“Having Ellen Kushner sing to us was like being showered with emeralds and rubies”). In F152, the 30th annish, gosh, among the news and notes Chris Garcia reviews F7, Taral reports on working at the *Daily Planet*, I report on Nippon 2007, and Migly prints two pages of Terry Jeeves drawings in honor of Jeeves’ winning the Rotsler Award.

Mike Glycer, 705 Valley View Avenue, Monrovia, CA 91016, U.S.A. ☒



**UNFORTUNATELY THE
NEW BONGOES WERE
PROVING SOMETHING
OF A DISTRACTION**



HMMM,
BONGOES...

HMMM,
NOVEL...

Harringay Lit by Graham Charnock

Donna came round to drop off Kylie while she went to the hair-dresser. I told her I'd started on my novel, and she asked to see what I'd done so I showed her the flow charts and the character outlines and my punchy pitch-line: 'Thelma & Louise on ice, except with men'. Donna said it all sounded very interesting, and if Kylie got grumpy just give her some Calpol. Donna wants to write a chick-lit novel based out her experiences in Sainsburys in Harringay. I can't see it myself. I told her Highgate would probably be more suitable, but she pointed out that there isn't a Sainsburys in Highgate and, in any event, Harringay is quite near the Hornsey Borders.

Yvonne Dingle, the Social worker came round this morning, checking up on young Jason, just 'cos he hasn't been to his nursery group for three days, and that interfering hussy Ms Daniels thought something funny was going on. I was doing the nappies in the garage and had forgotten where Jason was but she eventually found him under the Volvo with nothing worse than grease stains. Can't see I did anything wrong, but nevertheless, she says, be careful or she'll have me sectioned. It's fun being a single mum isn't it? If I couldn't occasionally escape to the kitchen for tea and hobnobs and scribble off a few pages of this novel, I don't know how I'd cope.

Girls night out last night. Me and Donna and

Cheryl went to see *Hellboy* in the West End. Cheryl wants to break into comics. She's a talented graphic artist, for a transsexual, but, as I keep telling her, it doesn't help having a neo-Nazi partner like Greg, but she says no, he gives her lots of useful detail about the SS-Waffen, particularly their uniforms and helmets. I think she'd like me to collaborate (i.e. provide plot) but I tell her Jason probably knows more about the media and its heroes, I mean Minghella, and Alan Moore and Neil Gaiman and such-like, not actual heroes, although I did once go to a signing session and dump Jason on Neil Gaiman while I went to the toilet, only to return and find Neil had disappeared and Jason was deep in conversation with Mick Farren.

Tumble dryer was crocked again, last week, which meant I had to take stuff down the launderette to dry it, and they make you feel so guilty because you're not doing a full wash. Also the New Neo-Nazi Management has banned smoking, which I can't understand, because it means people just stand outside on the pavement and smoke and the smoke gets sucked into the launderette anyway. I tried to tell them this but they (I mean the new awful gorgon manager Monica Blessup) just made sarcastic remarks about how I wouldn't like her to come round and blow smoke into my house. Well, I said, I wouldn't mind as long as I got my clothes dried.

Two guys came round to fix the tumble dryer, Fat Belly and his young assistant, called Dominic, who was good looking and very well-spoken with nice pecs and abs and an ass to die for.

Dominic noticed my copy of 'The Craft of Novel Writing' and we got talking. He wants to write a lad-lit novel about the bastard son of a famous intellectual aesthete and socialite who reacts against his privileged background by doing menial labouring jobs, like plumbing. He asked if I could maybe help him out on his dialogue and I said I'd give it a toss.

Finished first ten thousand words so took Jason to the sand-pit to celebrate, but it was full of doggy doo so sat on wall with a ciggie while Jason head-butted a nearby tree to the gleeful approval of a gang of his peers. Studiously avoided eye contact with single fat balding dads and cyclists posing in Lycra shorts, but did get a wink from a Senior Citizen with a military bearing, although it might just have been a facial tic. Got

into conversation with Vera, the lollipop lady from down St Anne's Road. She is apparently writing a sex-comedy about an Septuagenarian who goes to Tenerife as a tour rep for the 60-80 Club. I pointed out the basic implausibility in the plot but it didn't seem to deter her. She said she could use some help on the sex scenes because her memory was getting dim. Said I'd do my best, but pointed out my own memory in that area wasn't that good either.

Since I'd met so many aspiring writers I thought I'd try and organize a local creative writing group. Told all the people I knew and put a card in the local newsagent's window. Agreed to meet in the Salisbury on every alternate Thursday. First meeting was generally a success but, horror of horrors Monica Blessup, from the Laundrette, turned up. Apparently she too is a would-be novelist and wants to write what she calls a 'serious' novel about an anthropologist in Papua New Guinea which will win the Booker Prize. She is obviously a driven woman and I believe she may just do it. But she has horrible halitosis, or maybe it is the laundry fumes clinging to her clothes. It's hard to believe someone like that is interested in aerobics. Anyway it was generally an agreeable evening fuelled by lots of Stella Artois and Vera the lollipop lady's endless tales of sexual debauchery in the Greek Islands.

New Year's Eve. Jason's father turned up out of the blue after six years. Claimed he'd been laid off because the North Sea Oil rig he'd been working on had been decommissioned. I told him I was at a very difficult point in my novel, where most of my characters had just fallen pointlessly into a huge ice gulf, which wasn't even metaphorical, but he didn't seem impressed

AS I'M SURE
YOU ALL KNOW,
ALAIN ROBBE-
GRILLET DIED
RECENTLY -



and simply asked me if I had any cans of Stella Artois. He claimed that since we were still technically married he was entitled to something called connubial rights. I told him to piss off, kicked him in the balls and chucked him out into the snow. As he lay there groaning amongst the garden gnomes I had the sudden idea that my characters might find themselves in a model village that had lain under the snow for aeons or possibly decades.

I don't know how much longer I can go on with this. Being creative is just such hard work sometimes and I wonder if I've chosen the wrong medium and should perhaps be making homemade jewellery, or even scented candles. I might at least be able to sell candles to the other people in the workshop, although I don't think Her from the Laundrette would appreciate them unless I perfumed them with chlorine and possibly hydrogen peroxide. What's bought this on, I hear you ask. Well, the washer on the kitchen tap has gone, and I've had to send out for a plumber who will charge me a £50.00 call out fee, and then spend an hour doing a 5 minute fix for another £50.00. Most expensive bit of failed rubber since the condom that resulted in Jason.

Then again Jason fell out of the shopping market trolley yesterday whilst reaching for some Curly-wurlies (why do they have to put them on the top shelves?) and dislocated his shoulder. I just knew social services were going to accuse me of child abuse, so I buttonholed anyone I could find who might have witnessed the incident and got their names and addresses and cell-phone numbers, but following them up I found most of them to be false, except for Arnold Gabbot, an insurance salesman and single supermarket cruiser, who said he would only testify if I slept with him. Oh the fickleness of the British witnessing public.

And the supermarket claimed that due to a power failure in the alternate back-up generators, their video recorders weren't recording at the time, which is a handy get-out in case I should choose to sue them for the shoddiness of their trolleys, which surely should be capable of carrying any child weighing up to 80 kilos.

I'm also having difficulties with that advertisement where the woman arrives home and refuses the sexual services of a host of Italian sexual gigos in favour of a mint chocolate drink. Is she mad? Well, obviously, yes. Or I am.

Plus I've started sending off synopses and specimen chapters of the novel, to agents and publishers, and the response has hardly been encouraging.

I read Biffin George's supposed seminal book on 'How to Submit Manuscripts' (Terminal Willy

Press, 1938) but found that nobody even bothers to send you an acknowledgement any more, even as a form letter, reading something like: "We thank for your submission. It is receiving our attention, and we will let you know as soon as we have reached a decision."

Most of them simply ignore you, and when you follow up with a phone call, you're invariably put through to someone's voice mail, which promises to get back to you but never does, as if it ever could. (Didn't even receive a reply from Richard & Judy now I think about it, despite including a stamped addressed envelope as requested. I suspect it's another tv scam and they sell the stamps back to the post office at a percentage.)

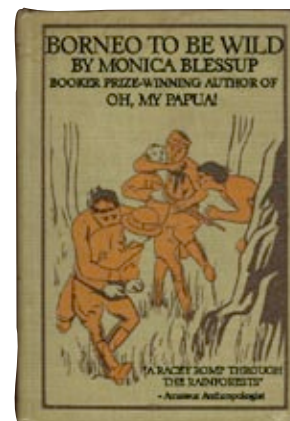
A few did deign to reply. Books About Horses, responded saying my novel didn't appear to have any horses in it, and especially ones which would appeal to pre-pubescent teenagers, which proved at least that they had read it. I've offered to replace the sledge-towing huskies with horses, but haven't heard back yet. I'm sure I will because they seem quite nice people. Beside I sent them a box of sugar cubes.

Malcolm Edwards, who is some kind of high-up at Orion Books, replied saying, "Unfortunately this isn't the sort of book we normally publish, since it seems to involve aspects of science fiction and alternative universes, and is also quite witty. Besides we are afraid the Roy Kettle character is obviously based on a real person and we are worried he may sue." Which was patently silly. Maybe the gossip I'd heard on the grapevine is true and he is undergoing some kind of mid-life crisis brought on by the fact that he can't grow a moustache, and has in fact entered into therapy because of this problem.

John Jarrold (recommended to me by someone I met in a pub as a potential agent) replied. "Jesus, yes but, no but, yes but, no but, leave me alone, Chelsea Quinn Yarborough, yes but, no but, yes but, she sold a novel once. Leave me alone." Which was more than Chris Priest said; he just gave me the finger from across a crowded room.

Also in desperation drafted a letter to Channel 4's 'A Place in the Sun'.

"Dear Zilpah, Amanda, or whoever is presenting your programme now, my partner and I would like to buy a holiday property in Las Vegas, preferably near a beach. Please can you arrange a three week visit for us to inspect properties within our budget of \$500,000, at the end of which we will of course decide nothing was really right for us, although we will promise to return later to visit other properties. Perhaps we could do some shoots





in some of the casinos.”

This time I actually, and surprisingly, received an answer, telling me to piss off. Attempted to cancel my subscription to Channel 4, but discovered, rather disturbingly, it was a terrestrial channel and there was no way you could choose not to receive it, although you could of course always choose not to select it. This doesn't exactly have the same air of retribution to me, because only I would know I'd done it. Besides it doesn't work because at ten o'clock there always some soft porn which you'd quite like to see, as you settle down with your milk chocolate digestives.)

So I am going to give up writing and for now on just concentrate on looking for occasional recreational sex with passing tradesmen.

I feel kind of sad that I will cutting away the ties with the various characters I have been writing about over the last few months, but however attractive they may appear they are after all simply fictional characters. And although I appear to have left them stranded in a model village on an Isle of Wight, submerged under a huge ice-plate (just in case you hadn't got it) with no hope of salvation, it's hardly as if they are going to escape in an airship and seek me out and exact some kind of revenge, is it? That would be kind of truly weird.

You must pardon me now because the doorbell just rang, and I think it's the plumber.

Went down Sainsbury's. Left Jason at home this time, playing with his Game Boy. Should have put out the scented candles before I left. If the house had burnt down, I'd have been branded by the tabloid press as a heartless mother who abandoned her child. But what can I do? If I take him to the supermarket he'll only end up in hospital due to Sainsbury's negligent racking and rickety trolleys.

Saw one of those sublime moments of embarrassment which couldn't have been written. A woman had lost her child in the supermarket and was prowling the aisles shouting 'Killian Killian!' A man turned and looked at her intensely and possibly quizzically. What you staring at, she said, have you never lost a child in a supermarket?

It's just that you were calling out Killian, said the man, and my name is Killian.

Was he telling the truth or just very quick-thinking. I'd like to think the former but I suspect the latter.

Last night I had everybody in the group round for a quiche and confessional soul-searching. Unfortunately Her from the launderette thought we were going to do some readings and had a hysteria attack when she pulled out a copy of *The Da Vinci Code* and we all laughed. We all got legless after watching one of the eternal re-runs of the *Frank Skinner Show*, and the next morning I found a page in my printer which I didn't remember writing. It suggested that after I'd left them for dead in a model village in a huge ice crevasse, the characters in my novel somehow escaped, using a model airship, and were coming to see me out and exact some kind of revenge. I mean, how likely is that to happen? Especially now I've stopped taking the Seroxat.

Jason has been playing up all day. At first I thought he might be going down with meningitis, but I did the bottle test on him, and decided it was just flu. Dosed him up with Carpool.

Went to the cash-point to try and draw out money to buy alcohol, chocolates and perhaps a style magazine. But there was a queue. It wasn't even a queue alongside the cash point but a queue across the width of the pavement, with passers by passing

through it willy-nilly, which I really couldn't handle. Waited at the bus stop, pretending to be waiting for a bus, until after half an hour the queers, or do I mean queuers, had sorted themselves out and there was no longer any queue.

I put in my card but had one of those weird moments when I couldn't remember my pin number. Tried three times but then it threatened me with withholding my card if I made another mistake, so of course I didn't.

Withdrew my card and ignored the lout behind me who called me a cow for taking so long over a simple transaction. Went home in very bad mood, without alcohol, chocolates, style magazine, or even any cash to pay the plumber for sex.

Phone rang and I left it for the answering machine, but when I checked the answering machine, I found the tape had run out and not re-wound as it should have done, because the small bit of plastic enabling it to tape over itself had inadvertently been broken off.

It presented me with something of a dilemma. Should I take it back to the shop I bought it from, which was a pound shop on Green Lanes? I can't imagine they'd be very interested. And I don't think the manufacturers would honour their warranty for something that cost a pound. Alternatively, I suppose I could have bought twelve reels of sellotape for a pound and used some of it to tape over the hole so the tape would be re-useable. But I had another plumbing crisis which distracted me. A blockage. The plumber came round and had to use his plunger very vigorously. Seemed to take forever for him to get the job done, and I got quite bored watching him after a while. Fortunately he was able to take a credit card.

Decided I might give the novel a final try. Jason fell asleep at 12.30 pm, or possibly 12.32, so I thought I'd try and catch few zzzzs myself, even though I'd reached a very interesting point in my novel, where the characters had escaped from the ice chasm in an airship and were coming to hunt me down. Wonder where I got that idea from?

I did actually fall asleep slumped over the kitchen table. Jason woke me up, screaming *mummy, there's an airship above our garden and men and huskies are abseiling down ropes.*

If it's not one thing it's another.

I agreed to a trial reconciliation with Jason's dad, telling him he could come over on Fridays and stay over weekends. Since our creative writing group switched to Fridays, due to A Certain Person having aerobic classes on Thursday, this meant he could at least baby-sit Jason and if

the group went badly and I got depressed I could at least rely on a comfort shag when I got home. His heart's in the right place, the trouble is that for him that's either a beach bar in Falaraki, or any high street bookies. And I suppose, all being said, he's good with Jason. He even promised he'd take him down the local pool hall.

The last group meeting was something of a milestone meeting for all of us.

Vera the lollipop lady hadn't managed to sell anything but had linked up with the Octogenarian head of a French pornography Publishing House who it seems was even more up for it than her.

Dominic had met Martin Amis whilst on a call out to fix Martin's washing machine, and he had agreed to forward Dominic's synopsis and outline, for his lad-lit novel, to his agent for consideration, providing Dominic waived the call-out fee.

Cheryl & Greg had sold the idea for a graphic comic based an alternate reality where transexual Nazi's, tampering with transdimensional fluxes, had tapped directly into Hell and unleashed demons in the shape of huge dogs into a blighted post war world. It sounded a little familiar to me. But what the hell, good luck to them.

Donna had actually sold her chic-lit novel to a lesbian publishing commune, Raw Vulva, having only had to make minor changes to the sexuality of the characters, and the rationale for the whole plot.

And wonder of wonder Monica Blessup's novel, *Oh My Papua*, despite mediocre sales, had been short-listed for the Booker prize.

So it was champagne toasts all round.

I told the group how I'd been visited by a group of characters I thought I'd invented, and after talking to them I had decided to tear up my manuscript because it was obviously so unbelievable.

Everybody looked at me as if I was mad, except Vera who complimented me on my rich imagination.

But I know those guys weren't imaginary because they left me one of their huskies.

And a very faithful and affectionate bitch she has turned out to be.

The meeting broke up with many hugs and kisses, and I went home to the best shag of my life. ☑





(Kawasaki: Monday, Tuesday)

I'd booked a room for us in advance, knowing that we'd be arriving in Japan late at night after three plane flights over fourteen hours. On second thought, I booked two nights, even though staying anywhere near Tokyo Haneda airport was fantastically expensive. In fact, booking anywhere in Japan in advance was expensive. But I figured we'd need at least a day to get oriented, and possibly more than that if our luggage needed to catch up with us.

The travel agent at AAA hadn't even realized that Tokyo had a second airport, and seemed to think anyone not flying into the real airport, Tokyo Narita, was slightly insane. But we'd chosen Tokyo Haneda as the airport nearest Yokohama, since that's where WorldCon would be held at the end of our trip. The only reasonable hotel (as in, only \$180 per night) the travel agent could find was in Kawasaki, which seemed to be within taxi reach of Haneda, and had the advantage that I could easily remember the name, since I learned about Kawasaki Disease a long time ago.

The hotel turned out to be a long and anxious taxi drive from the airport. I hate it when I don't know where we're going, or how far it might actually be, and those digital numbers just keep going up and up. Particularly when the taxi driver has had a long, worried conversation in Japanese with several other taxi drivers, involving the piece of paper on which the name of the hotel had been typed, unfortunately in English, not Japanese. One begins to doubt the existence of the hotel, let alone the existence of pre-paid reservations.

It didn't help that the drive was along streets

from a Jackie Chan movie, narrow and lined with buildings that seemed to be made from pieces of other things. The only lights visible, apart from the street lights, came from vending machines set every block or so. They were filled with three rows each of mysterious squarish objects lit from behind. I recognized Coca-cola, but little else. They were surprisingly clean and un-vandalized for the sort of beneath-the-railroad-tracks place we were driving through.

But in the end, after only about 3,700 yen (\$34.00), we pulled up in front of the rather fine Hotel Nikko, which did in fact have our reservations and a sort-of-English-speaking guy working the front desk. The room, once they found one with three beds, was on the fifteenth floor and was barely big enough for the beds and our suitcases. The bathroom was about four feet square — including toilet, sink and bath tub — the sort of thing you'd need if you were expected to bathe on an airplane. But the beds were nice and cool, and we slept like rocks, even though by then it was almost morning in Minnesota.

I woke to the Japanese sun shining through the window. Actually it was leaking around the curtains that were nearly touching the foot of my bed. I was very aware that this was truly a Japanese morning, and that outside that window would really be Japan. I parted the curtain, first the thick drapery, then the lighter gauze screen, and squinted into the blinding light.

I was looking from fifteen floors up across a large plaza at an equally tall building, down which, streaming at least ten floors were four brightly colored banners. Three of them were incomprehensible. Japan, at last! The other featured a variety of logos, in English, all clearly the names of stores. It had to be a giant mall. As my eyes adjusted, I was able to make out the city beyond this tower, miles and miles of grey-white buildings fading into a hazy distance. Signs dotted the rooftops, mostly Kanji, but here and there something recognizable — “apartment,” and “The City,” and, promisingly, “SALE.”

At street level, below all this, hundreds of cars were tangling at a six-lane intersection, a train passed silently every few minutes, and hundreds of pedestrians made their way through the morning streets. They all of them seemed to know exactly where they were going, as though it was really nothing special, but I had landed in the middle of it with no idea where I could fit in.

Of course, there was nothing for it but to get dressed and go down the elevator fifteen floors to check things out. The first challenge was breakfast, which seemed to be part of our hotel price. It was a buffet seemingly produced by people who had seen photos of Western breakfasts but never actually

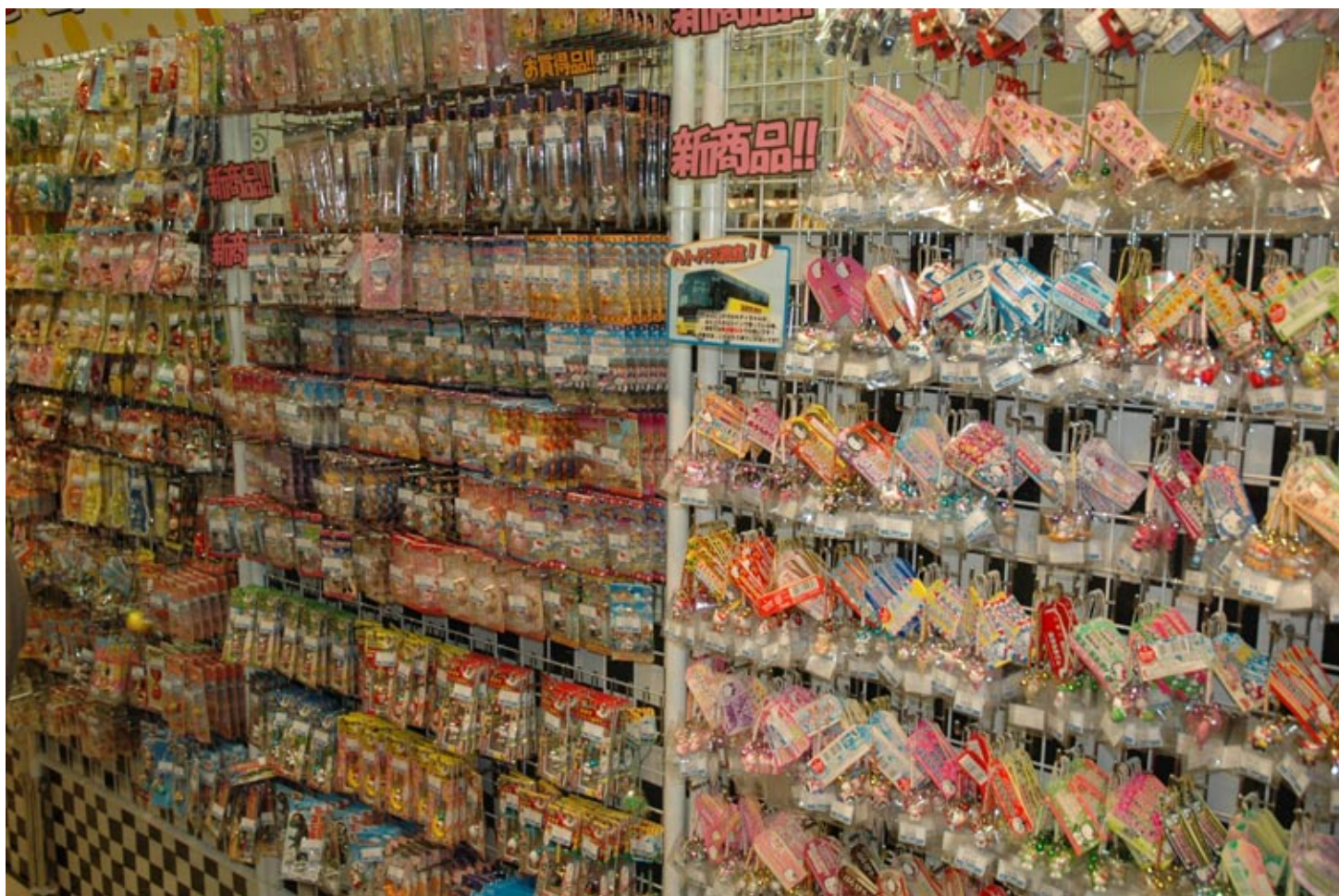
eaten one. There were things that looked almost like eggs and bacon and pastries, but did not taste anything like them. We were obviously really supposed to eat the Japanese food provided.

I'd never considered having Miso soup for breakfast. Or pickles, or bits of sushi, or most of what else was available. My favorite was a basin of grayish lumpy glop (rice gruel, I think) surrounded by four little bowls labeled “To Add The Things That Is Lacking.” These contained a pink powder which added fishiness, red crystals which were sweet, shredded dark green stuff obviously seaweed, and pine nuts which were tasteless compared to the other Lackings. The real thing that was lacking was brown sugar. Is there even a Japanese word for brown sugar?

Thus fortified, we had no choice but to brave the outside. So out we went.

The first mall we encountered was right under the hotel. Maybe we weren't quite ready for full daylight yet. A sign declared, “Azalea Underground Mall,” so we continued down on the escalator right between our hotel and a staircase that seemed to be closed off due to an infestation of giant inflatable bugs. I took photos.

The Azalea Mall had dozens of tiny shops scrunched along little passageways labeled helpful-



a sort of
Bladerunner
set without
the acid
rain

ly in English with the names of flowers. All of the shops seemed to be sorted out by type, so first we passed dozens of clothing shops, then bunches of handbag shops, then little kitschy tourist shops. No signs were needed with merchandise spilling out into the corridors. The restaurants were all together in the last row, called “Gourmet.” There were dozens of windows with plastic examples of the food offered within, mostly noodles with questionable things arranged on top of them. These were next to little doorways hung with tiny squares of cloth and leading to three or four tiny tables.

Prices for all of this were in recognizable numbers and seemed fairly reasonable, once changed into dollars, though it was hard to tell about the noodles. But women’s shirts for 2,000 yen (about \$18.00) seemed pretty cheap, even made from material that wasn’t going to last very long. I didn’t buy anything, unable to figure out where to even start. We needed to find the tourist office in the Japan Rail Station, so we could convert our vouchers for 21 days of travel on JR trains to actual working tickets. The Kawasaki JR Station was supposed to be very near the hotel. So emerging from underground, we made our way in the direction of the railroad tracks. We didn’t find the station, which was actually in the opposite direction along a second set of tracks, but we did find another mall.

This one didn’t have a name, or at least didn’t have an English sign. Perhaps it wasn’t actually a mall, but more like a roofed-over alleyway lined with tiny shops spilling stuff out onto the sidewalk. This mall defies description except in little glimpses—racks of truly cheap clothing, black-haired teenagers wearing t-shirts with nonsense English logos, tentacles with suckers vacuum-packed in plastic on a low table, little old ladies on bicycles, dozens of Hello Kitty charms in tiny packages, and a McDonalds recognizable only by the golden arches. Overhead was a peaked glass roof, containing panels of stained glass flowers and hung with banners and signs in Kanji.

It should have been noisy and smelly and dangerous, a sort of *Bladerunner* set without the acid rain. But all the buildings, though old with worn out paint and plaster, were clean—no graffiti, signs fresh and bright, and there were still wet spots on the sidewalk where the shop owners had hosed it down just that morning. The people passing by were quiet and, even on bicycles, seemed intent on taking up as little space as possible. There was an occasional muttered “sumimasen” or tiny “ding” from a bicycle bell. There was a whiff of fish from near the tentacles, a brief hint of frying hamburger, and the smell of wet concrete.

I could only stare in awe. I couldn’t make any sense of any of the words flowing around me, either written on the signs, or spoken by the people swirling around me. When a shop-keeper spoke to me, I could only smile and nod. Interest in an item could bring a barrage of language, and my only choices seemed to be to say “sorry” in English and walk away, or to produce money, which I hadn’t yet changed into yen. Prices were extremely cheap, if I was understanding them correctly. So I took photos, and was astonished, in silence. The shopkeepers undoubtedly were, at best, shaking their heads at the silliness of tourists, but I couldn’t do anything about it. I was illiterate, and deaf.

At the end of two or three blocks of this, we came to a multistory building called “DICE,” which turned out to be a giant department store. We got over our culture shock by riding the escalators, then returned to Gourmet Row in the Azalea Mall for lunch. At least we had half a chance there of having some control over the meal ordered, by pointing to the plastic food and smiling. The noodles we got that way were really quite good, though I have no idea what they were called or what was actually swimming with them. It was less than \$20 for the three of us.

We still needed to get our Japan Rail Vouchers exchanged for actual Japan Rail Passes, so fortified by noodles, we eventually found the Kawasaki Station. It was huge—an entire city block lined with stores and restaurants and who-knows-what because everything was in Japanese—and teeming with travelers, who all seemed to know where they were going. No one spoke English at the end of a line labeled “tickets” or at a little stand labeled “information.” With perseverance turning to desperation we finally found someone who spoke some English and seemed to know what they were talking about. Who told us that we needed to go to Yokohama Station to get our Japan Rail Passes. We decided to tackle that on another day. Meanwhile, we decided to follow signs up an enormous escalator to “Lazona Kawasaki Plaza,” which could have been almost anything but turned out to be another mall.

This one was bright and shiny, with wide hallways ranged around indoor and outdoor atria, and all the shop names were in English. They weren’t any shops I’d ever heard of, except Banana Republic and Gap and, oh well! maybe there were a bunch of things I recognized. But most of the stores were called things like “Lazy Swan,” “E hyphen World Gallery,” “Pink Pretty,” “Jeanasis,” and my favorite, “Human Woman.” They all sold clothes with the same label as the store, also in English. The prices

were quite high — 50,000 to 120,000 yen, which sounds only a little better in dollars — \$45.00 to \$100.00 for a blouse. No one had moved any merchandise for sale in the wide, shiny corridors.

But it was here that I saw my first Shinto shrine. On the top level of an open atrium stood a tiny altar behind a small red Torii gate and reached by a few stepping stones over an artificial pond. It was set in a small garden, away from the mass of stores. At first I thought it was just for display, to be taken no more seriously than the merry things that appear at Christmas time. But, wanting a photograph, I had to wait while a young, very trendy woman stood for several minutes, head bowed.

Again, stores were organized by type. There were an awful lot of clothing stores and shoe stores, and we had to ask for toys. There were only a couple of toy stores, tucked in a back corner. Most of them had baby clothes with assorted retro toys that may have been only for decoration. But in one store with the unlikely name of “Olympia,” we found a hoard of Miyazaki things, and spent a bunch of money on Totoro and Laputa robots, getting only little things because this was still the beginning of the trip and we’d have to carry them all over Japan.

All the restaurants were grouped around the top floor of the open atrium. There were again win-

dows with plastic food displayed, and little prices on cards next to them. Not all the prices here were in numbers. The numbers we could read were quite a bit higher than down at street level. But at the end of the row was something called “California Pizza Kitchen.” It was exactly that — the chain restaurant transported intact to Kawasaki. The menu was entirely in English, with all the things you’d expect on a pizza available. It was with some despair that I realized how wonderful it seemed, after only one day in Japan, to be able to read an entire menu. How would I feel after a whole month of illiteracy?

We went in, ready for a familiar meal in a familiar setting. But there, in that very American mall, in that American chain restaurant, we still had to point to things on the menu to order them. The waitress didn’t understand English. There were two guys at a table not far away who were speaking English with British accents, but we did not quite dare interrupt them. We spoke only to each other as we devoured pizza obviously made and frozen and shipped from America. Later in the trip, we might have bombarded those guys with language, but we had not yet realized how alone we were. I did not know how I would feel after a month of silence. ☒





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Harry Bell

Thought it was about time I thanked you for continuing to send me *Chunga* despite my resolute silence. I also wanted to thank you for including in this issue the key to the photographs you published in No.11. It confirmed my suspicions that those three fat old blokes were indeed people I once knew rather well.

And can I heap praise on that nice Mr Charnock's "American Sarco"? Is this the best thing he's ever written? Yeah, like he hasn't ever written something with greater panache and wit than this. Sorry, I expect you'll get yet more from others in this vein. Yeah, like you get so many LoCs commenting on Charnock's wit and wisdom....

Andy: This letter was accidentally trapped in an iceberg for a year or so, along with your credit for the photos we published in the letter column of #13. It is helpful to get some comments on Graham's work, otherwise he feels the need to comment on it himself.

Edmund R. Meskys

I was intrigued by the hokum lists, and puzzled by some of the entries.

I can see Asimov as a writer with a convincing scientific background. *Destination Moon* was made to the best knowledge of the time, assuming a nuclear engine could be built. I have never seen *Marooned*, but by reputation I probably agree. Since it was done after the start of the space program the science was probably more up-to-date.

Under Hokum #4: Leigh Brackett & Wells / Hoffman & Einstein / *Apollo 13* & *The Andromeda Strain*: I find these juxtapositions very strange. I have only read a little Brackett, but I picture her fiction as very romantic (in the non-amorous sense) space opera and science-fantasy. *Apollo* was history, not fiction, and I found the novel *Andromeda Strain* total hokum. I never bothered with the movie. The author is supposed to have graduated from medical school, which means he had a thorough

background in biology. He totally misunderstood how evolution works. New populations displace old generations *only* if their survival is better. A new population does not simply displace an old population in such an arbitrary manner. I think the author wrote himself into a corner and pulled a magic rabbit out of a hat to end the story. And in the secret lab, I do not think an optical-fibre magnifier would surpass normal lenses in resolving power.

Andy: I always enjoy a good rant on Michael Crichton's command of science, so thank you for that. I think you've grasped the fun here—trying to figure what sort of rationale might give two seemingly disparate people or objects the same score. But for more on the placement of *Apollo 13*, read on to my response to Jerry Kaufman below...

Jerry Kaufman

I'm somewhat baffled by the Hokum Chart. Looking down the movie column, for instance, I can't figure out why *Apollo 13*, based on actual events, gets a 3 on the scale, higher than entirely fictional (though hewing to scientific fact as then known) *Destination Moon*. I suppose if I knew more about some of the scientists you list, I might get that column's judgments more—for instance, why does Einstein rate a 4? Seems pretty high to me. I think I get Isaac Newton's 5, since he continued to believe in Alchemy and other Hermetic belief systems all the while he was inventing physics. But why does Louis Agassiz share his spot?

As for the writers, did you base this on the distance from science each writer wanders? Or on their personal beliefs in addition to or in opposition to their writings? Asimov wrote about time travel and interstellar flight, which according to Geoff Ryman and his Mundane SF movement, are both hokum.

I'd mostly forgotten how long ago Stu wrote the early Alternate Cinema pieces, or that I laughed at the Yiddishisms and in-jokes of the Zetz Tummel-

e Pigge

man material. Even then, I don't get all the jokes, and of the ones I do, they depend on my having remembered that Emmanuel Goldberg changed his name to Edgar G. Robinson. If I'm wrong, then I'm laughing at nothing.

Stu's Woody Guthrie seems to weave real Guthriana with fake in such a way as to cast doubt on everything I think I know about Guthrie, and the discography looks real enough, too. I haven't tried to look them up for fear of spoiling the whole thing, but I know that Billy Bragg and Wilco did one, maybe two, albums of previously unrecorded material. In my reality it was called *Mermaid Avenue*.

Bob Webber mentions early in "The Most Monstrous Show on Earth!" the "live-action 'entertainment' based on the studios' interpretation of monsters..." and before I went any further I marked the spot, so I'd remember to tell you about a channel on Comcast's On Demand service. *Something Weird* is the brainchild of some Seattle-area guy with a huge collection of old film from which he extracts what he considers to be really odd, usually bizarre exploitation material, monster movies, commercials, educational films and cartoons, etc. One of the selections when you look at the channel is "Trailer Trash," consisting of really teeth-clenching trailers for various genres. Like, say, sf movies, spaghetti Westerns, hot rod movies. A month or two ago, the "genre" was live horror shows much like the stuff

Bob talks about, all warning of hideous sights on stage, zombies or vampires walking though the audience, etc. It was hard to say, from internal evidence, just when these flourished.

Andy: Thank you for the psychotronic referral, Jerry. I agree that the Woody Guthrie piece is probably Stu's most seamless effort in the microgenre to date—it seems so plausible that Guthrie could have enjoyed a Hollywood career that I found it hard to keep the fact that he didn't actually have one in mind. The Hokum lists were mostly created by committee, so some of the rationale behind individual choices may be hard to recreate. To take one example you chose, we (apparently) felt that the well-meaning deadpan of *Destination Moon* was more inherently "genuine" than the glossy historical fiction of Ron Howard's *Apollo 13*. Scientists were ranked higher for adherence to lately-discredited theories, but also got points for self-promotion and academic feuding. And in some cases, I know the point was to arbitrarily quantify a set of people or works to see if anyone cared to offer an argument in rebuttal.

Alexis Gilliland

Thank you for *Chunga 13*, which arrived during September 2007, just as advertised on the cover, which is a nicely executed cartoon by Schirmeister;

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GREAT CARTOONS,
BUT EVERYONE
SAYS THE ONE
OF ME IS
NOTHING LIKE

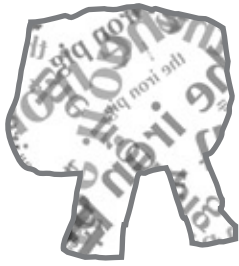


WELL, OF
COURSE



THEY'RE JUST
TRYING TO
BE TACTFUL

BUT DON'T
WORRY
ABOUT IT



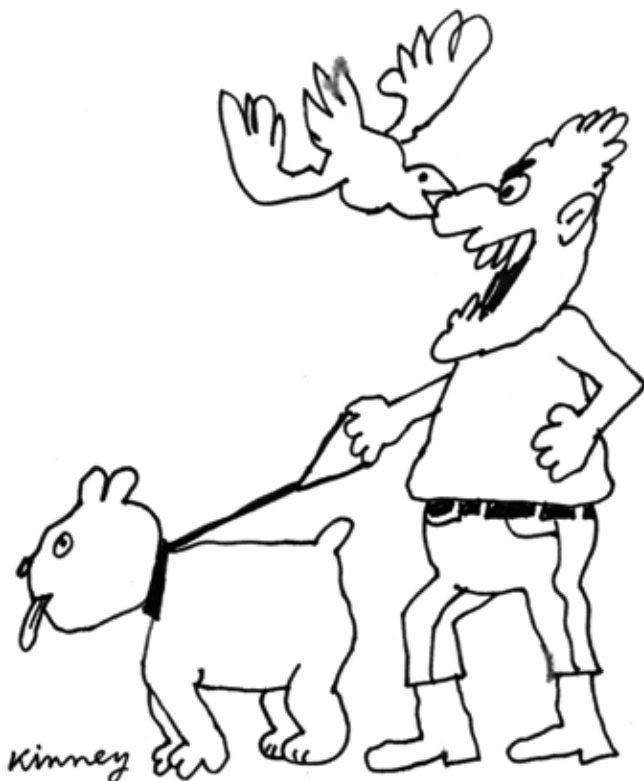
Steve Jeffery
44 White Way
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UNITED KINGDOM

funny, too. Stu Shiffman's interior illos were excellent, and his page 5 tip of the hat to Hirschfeld was quite amusing.

Since issue 12 came out back in the spring of 2006, quite a bit has happened at Chez Gilliland, most of which would be of little or no interest to Chungans. What might be of interest is that I have a website in preparation, www.alexisgilliland.com, on which most of my cartoons are to be posted. I turned up 2,700 by hand, which Lee cleaned up with Photoshop, and going through my 29 boxes of fanzines with an exacto knife produced maybe another 3,000, fixed to sheets of paper with double-sided tape and scanned onto DVDs via the hard drive. In the near future, after Lee cleans them up, they also will be posted online.

Lilian Edwards wonders about *Titanic* conventions. *Titanic* fandom is much smaller than SF fandom, but differently crazy, perhaps because the *Titanic* draws in drama queens like you wouldn't believe. As far as old time fans go, the answer is yes, and they have organized themselves into several groups, though on the *Titanic* forums the serious scholars have pretty much been displaced by the trivia buffs.

Eric Lindsay wonders about slow glass becoming a reality. They're working on it. Step one, producing a material with a negative refractive index has been achieved. Step two, putting this stuff in the core of an optical fiber, is still being worked on, but in theory you could make photons stand in place



until you summoned them, a case of science imitating science fiction.

Steve Jeffery

I'm still trying to get the image of a roller skating version of Gernsback's *Ralph 124C4U+* out of my head. Thank you for that. I think.

Why does Chris Priest get a Hokum rating of 8? If he's there, someone like Hal Duncan must be way off-scale. And Harlan Ellison?

If you mention shows like *Stingray* to anyone outside fandom (certainly anyone under the age of 40, which is much the same thing these days) they look at you oddly, as if your making this all up. Of course for real fan credibility you have to have fond memories of *Fireball XL5*, or even better, *Supercar*, with Jimmy, Mitch the Monkey and Dr. Beaker. I used to have the Supercar 'Time Machine' episode on an lp record, now sadly lost, and which I knew almost by heart. None of my family remembers this, which is a pity, as it turned up a while ago on a collectors program on the radio, where they played a bit of it (instant nostalgia). I gather it's worth a bit. Like a lot of my other toys, such as the *Thunderbirds* Fab 1 Rolls Royce, original Batmobile and James Bond Aston Martin DB5, which I made the mistake of actually playing with rather than stuffing, still boxed and mint, in the loft, as a hedge against the dwindling prospects of a future pension. Wonderful thing, hindsight, though completely wasted on 8 year olds with a handful of shillings burning a hole in their pockets.

Andy: I'm afraid I take a generally dim view of the idea of trying to preserve toys and other cool stuff as investments. The play value you got from wearing out the spring on the ejection-seat of that little Corgi DB-5 was probably worth more to you than whatever you would get for the pristine vehicle today. Besides, they make reproductions of all the cool stuff, which always undercuts the value of the original item. I say take them out of the box and play with them! Even the pink Rolls-Royce....

Why does Chris Priest rate an 8 on the hokum meter? I think I was busy helping orphans to make seasonal art with macaroni and glitter the day that page was generated.

carl sez: I believe it was the habitual use of unreliable narrators that won Mr Priest the gong. Hokum is not inherently a pernicious force (*viz* RA Lafferty), unless one believes overly in one's own (*viz* too many to mention).

Robert Lichtman

Gilliland's reference to bookcases that are "the chipboard with veneer kind which you assemble yourself" reminds me that this was the variety I had scads of, mostly mismatched, in my Glen Ellen apartment—and they were the items most easy to give away when I moved in with Carol two years ago. Here I have some hundreds of shelf feet of built-in redwood cases that Terry used to keep his prozines in. Their only disadvantage is that they were built at a height that doesn't allow anything bigger than a pulp SF zine to fit. So in another part of the house I have my considerable number of oversize books separately shelved.

Can't depart from LoC mode without special praise for Craig Smith's two artistic contributions, Schirm's delightfully demented front cover, and Dobson's carry over "art" from his piece in *TRAP DOOR*. Oh, and to chide you for misspelling Rotsler in the art credits.

Andy: I find the same problem applies to all kinds of shelving and storage hardware—CD racks, for example, are always designed to hold single jewel-box albums, but can't handle double-sized multi-disc sets. Those end up in a little colony by themselves somewhere. What would really be helpful to me is some sort of elegant analog to bricks and boards, that have the same flexibility of arrangement, but don't make you look like you just moved out of the dorm.

Tim Marion

Thanks for the latest issue of *Cthunga*, er, I mean *Chunga*. I had actually thought I was such a fake-fan (for not responding) that I had been lopped off your mailing list. Glad to see you guys are still there.

I was pleased with Andy's review of "Le Fin Absolue du Monde," which was surely the most disturbing episode to come out of Showtime's *Masters of Horror* series. As with the lethal filmstrip featured in the story as "the monster," I was alternately fascinated and horrified by this story—it seemed much more like something David Cronenberg would do than John Carpenter.

Someone should tell Bob Webber about the Hammer movie *Vampire Circus* (1972). Pretty bad, really, but hey, even the worst Hammer movies are a lot of fun.

However valid Chris Garcias complaint may be, it reminds me of F. Towner Laney's *Ah Sweet Idiocy!* A fanhistorian of my acquaintance assures me that much of it was written as a complaint regard-

ing or protest against LASFS (in its day, which was the 1940s?) turning into a meeting place for older men to meet younger boys with the express intent of starting a sexual relationship with them. Obviously I was too obtuse when I read the tome as I didn't get much of a sense of that. When I was going to conventions in the 70s, however, I observed the phenomenon of couples who come to a convention together, sleep in separate beds throughout the convention, then reunite for the trip home. (Perhaps by the time they get home they are "hotter than pistols" to use the clichéd phrase.) It's not up to me to judge, was my thought at the time.

Andy: From my previous work in this fanzine, I should think it clear that I regard fans' amorous interests and sexual drives as an important component in the stew of unrealized longings that bring people into fandom, and make it attractive for them to stay here. At one time, the great preponderance of kids in fandom made the legal age of consent a recurring issue, but at this point, fandom seems more interested in the senior special than the student discount. But if young female anime fans—real or imagined—still want to behave in a predatory manner toward fannish gentlemen of a certain age, I hardly feel like it is our place to stop them. I have to admit, taken alongside this idea, Nessie and the anomalous big cat seem dramatically more plausible than before.

Lloyd Penney

Hokum is definitely fannish, and probably SFnal, because the linguists among us might agree that the plural of hokum is hoka.

As I go through the pages of this zine, I realized it's been so long since I've seen the fine artwork of Ken Fletcher. How's every little thing, Ken? I am certain your fellow Minneapolis fan John Purcell has been in touch recently. You realize, of course, that if you're going to have artwork show up here, it's going to need to be everywhere else. That's my hope, that is.

Mention of Nessie in the local reminds me of this new movie that came out at New Year's called *The Waterhorse*. I might like to go and see it, time allowing, which it rarely does. Has anyone seen it, with good or bad comments on it? It looks like it could be some fun, seeing what Nessie is and isn't supposed to be these days.

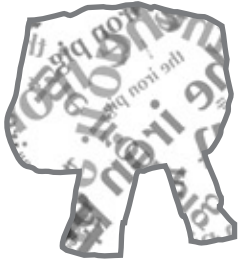
Andy: The Water Horse didn't make much of a ripple, but as always, televised trailers made it unnecessary to actually see the film. Some



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Scottish boys discover a kelpie's egg, which hatches, and they spend three reels trying to conceal its ever-increasing bulk in wardrobes and bath tubs. This Nessie seemed clearly inspired by the Surgeon's photo, with taxonomic features of both seals and aquatic dinosaurs like the plesiosaur. As with all such chimera, it is hard to imagine how an animal that has to surface to breathe could remain so perpetually underobserved.

Brad Foster

My cup runneth over this month with actual real fanzines popping up in the mailbox. Maybe my good luck in getting all these zines is to counter-balance this sudden attack of shingles. Spent about 30 hours in bed at first, now able to function for a couple hours a day, so getting better. Of course, since they say this will take a couple of weeks to clear, I'm set for Halloween: half of my face is covered in bulging blisters/sores, big red blotches, and my right eye is swollen shut. I'll just make myself an "unclean" sign to hang around my neck, ring a big bell, and clean up on collecting the candy! (If I can stay awake long enough to walk around to all the houses.)

Loved the Schirm cover, fun picking out all the little bits of action going on everywhere, like the lead actor about to get brained from the dropped hammer.



And great logo, too. Perfect job! Plus, a whole issue devoted to one of my favorite fan things, the fake flick.

(I'm still looking for the James Whale "*Cthulhu*". I don't care what you say, that's too good to not be something I can actually see. So there!)

Andy: I'm relieved that the issue with our last consideration of the monster culture (for now) arrived after your illness had already manifested itself, otherwise I would have been concerned that it had inspired you to take on the appearance of a movie monster yourself. You might indeed get a lot of Halloween candy that way, but people might hurl it at you from the top of the stairs.

David Bratman

I don't spend a lot of time thinking of unmade films (and not even much on unwritten books), though I enjoy reading about them. But a few years ago I did think thought of an unmade adaptation that would have been such a perfect match between a filmic style and the ethos of the original novel that I've been regretting ever since that it did not happen. The team that made the 1960s SF TV show *The Prisoner*—the actors, writers, designers, cinematographers, the composers, everybody—should have made a film adaptation of G.K. Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday*. It would have been a perfect match. For some reason *The Prisoner* is always described as Kafkaesque, but the wit, energy, and kaleidoscopic surrealism are much more akin to Chesterton, with whose work the series is strangely never compared. I want to change that. Just think of it: Patrick McGoohan as the querulous and inquisitive hero Syme, and—of course—Leo McKern as the large but boisterously energetic Sunday.

But sometimes such perfect matches do occur in the primary world. Had I not seen it myself, I would have thought Randy was hoaxing us with his description of the 2005 silent b&w *Call of Cthulhu*. Here the film-makers grasp that Lovecraft's fiction bears the essence of the 1920s, and that the film style of the 1920s is the right medium to adapt it in. A current-style horror film adapting Lovecraft would only be gruesome and in bad taste. Lovecraft is about dread, not gore. Today his fiction is still effective but quaint, so it needs a still effective but quaint film: the stiffness and stylization are a perfect match. I was delighted by this merely by concept—as you say, “a slam-dunk on the conceptual scale”—even leaving aside the result.

Andy: I feel like grue and dread can co-exist in an adaptation of a Lovecraft story, but I've



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yet to see a very satisfactory attempt. I think the idea of filming it in a mannerist idiom is a good one—I see a lost episode of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* based on “The Music of Erich Zann,” starring Peter Lorre and a young Leonard Nimoy. In the interstitials, Hitch would saw or pluck tunelessly on a prop violin until a pane of prop glass shattered.

Eric Mayer

From LiveJournal:

To be honest, my knowledge of movies is so pathetic that it hardly matters. Years ago Mary and I did take the double-cassette of *Intolerance* out of the library, as an educational experience, figuring we might be able to bear watching it, in small doses, over the course of a week or so. Amazingly we watched the whole thing straight through. Turned out to be engrossing, sound or not. However, there weren’t many old classics available from the library back then and I have remained largely ignorant of the cinematic art, silent or otherwise.

I was reading the article on the Lovecraft film (since I do enjoy old H.P.) before I read the editorial and I was thinking you were discussing an actual movie. It did all sound a bit peculiar — you know, just, somehow ... wrong — but then I can be very gullible. Heck, I don’t even know the first thing about Woody Guthrie. What an admission. Well, OK. He had a kid named Arlo, right? The artwork was really pretty cool though. That will teach me to read zines in the order they are meant to be read.

I also noted that Loc (from Edwards) you mentioned harvesting from your LJ comments. Why not just let fans comment on one’s LJ, if they have one? Indeed, then you could, theoretically, have a “live” discussion following every issue. I could have made this comment on her loc months ago. If anyone wanted to comment on my comment, they could. You might have part of the loccol for *Chunga* 35 before issue 14 appears. Which is perhaps a good argument against it. What you wouldn’t have is the static, but nicely edited, traditional loccol.

Actually I think it is only oldpharts like me who got locked into the idea of fanzines long ago who are bothered by such things.

Particularly liked the back cover by the way. Of *Chunga*. LiveJournals don’t have back covers, do they? Or is that a paid feature?

Andy: You and any other reader of the fanzine are free to comment upon it in news-groups, live journal, e-mail or podcast as you see fit—we appreciate any and all reaction to the work. But we would still present our “nicely

edited traditional loccol” that distilled that comment into a form that fit our hidebound presence in print. *Chunga* has certain virtues to its credit, but the facilitation of rapid fan-nish conversation is just not one of them. My goal is to publish frequently enough to keep people from asking if we are dead or not—but there was a gap of more than a year between #12 and #13, and no one seems to have been very concerned. Anyone interested in a timely response should always try to contact the author of interest personally. Our circulation is small enough that no one reading this should be totally unknown to anyone else on the mailing list.

D. West

A little late to be commenting on past issues, but Dave Langford’s piece on John Brosnan and the Steve Stiles Herriman pastiche both deserve applause. Not much, though, for all the material on imaginary films. Perhaps because neither the originals (where I know them) nor the inventions seem like the kind of thing I’d ever have much desire to watch. (But then I have very simple tastes — lots-andlotsa car crashes.)

A general thought on contributions: it would help if you gave some idea of what you wanted and your publishing schedule. And perhaps it would also help if you sent a sworn notarized statement promising not to fuck things up with unnecessary reductions, flattening the contrast by printing on dark tone paper, or sticking completely irrelevant and dopy interlineations at the bottom of every page. In case you hadn’t realized, I still think your design is lousy: cluttered, over-elaborate and ill-proportioned. Why not just keep it simple? The impression you give is that you have so little faith in the quality of your written material that all this busy-busy junk is thrown in as an attempt at distraction. Not exactly flattering to your contributors.

Still, if this sounds harsh, at least I’m sending you some more stuff to practice on.

carl sez: I keep trying to tell the other guys that we need to severely simplify our design. It may seem hopelessly archaic, or horribly affected, to imitate the austereness of mimeography (which you, sir, have brought to its *sine qua non*) but I apologize for the experimental aspects, e.g. typography and layout, which have, despite best efforts, crept into my work.

Henceforth, nothing modern, and no shrunk-en ducks either.



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Kip Williams

I kept wanting to say something about “Cthulhu’s Chariot” on the back of that fanzine of yours that I keep refusing to put away (because if I put it away, I’d forget I wanted to say something).

By a great coincidence, Sarah brought this [see above] home from school, where she said her kindergarten classmate David made it for her and left it on her desk. I think it is its own comment on CC—a tribute by somebody who didn’t even see the fanzine. I’m impressed.

Sarah referred to it as a car with an octopus driver. Sounds like how somebody who doesn’t know arcana would describe Cthulhu driving a dragster.

carl sez: *Chunga*, the zine that symbolizes itself and leaks into the lives of your children’s classmates if you don’t respond. Yep, sounds about right. Is this a source of comfort or a warning sign? Please discuss.

Gregory Benford

Standout in a super issue is Stu Shiffman. His version of *Moon Is A Harsh Mistress* as a movie was great, calling up my own imaginary movies from sf novels. I think Anderson’s *The High Crusade* would

make a great movie, though it’s been done in horrible fashion in German already.

There are reasons sf gets crunched in tinseltown. I’ve worked with Hollywood for decades now, on several novels—*Timescape*, *Eater*, *Cosm*, *The Martian Race*. Friend Michael Cassutt and I got a good agreement with Mandalay Productions to do *The Martian Race* as a miniseries, after only one pitch to the CEO. (Elisabeth Malartre & I wrote it together in 1998.) But then Mandalay crashed. Months later, somebody came out of left field at us, as well—a small production company that had tried to buy the rights the year before. Elisabeth Malartre and I tuned in, puzzled by a short note in the TV schedule: *Escape From Mars* on UPN. It was the original Malartre-Benford story, wrenched around and with eye-widening technical errors.

They used centrifugal gravity on the way to Mars, as any expedition must, to avoid the effects on the body of more than a few weeks of zero-g. But their scheme had the ship as the axis, while the counter-weights spun around it, so that the weights felt the centrifugal effect, and the ship and its crew did not. It sure looked pretty, though.

Add to this dreadful acting, stilted dialog, lousy science—including the obligatory meteorite storm, with pellets smacking into the Martian soil every

few meters, like a red hail storm — and it was a truly awful film. A consortium of Canadian investors had struck a deal with Paramount to produce 25 two hour films for UPN, and then used only Canadian “talent,” which got them big Canadian tax benefits.

So we sued. They acted outraged. Lawyers traded shouting phone calls and documents for nine months. Got nowhere. So we told our lawyer to file — and within an hour the *Escape From Mars* office gave in. We got a lot more than I would’ve expected for the TV rights to the novella. Paramount killed the 25-film deal and a major source of down-market “sci-fi” died a timely death.

Several other such shopliftings have happened, too, over the years. Why is theft so common in Hollywood? You can teach technique, but you can’t teach talent. Logic and facts don’t matter if you can keep the viewer’s eyes moving. The Law of Thermodramatics dictates that plot momentum trumps all other suits. Shut up and deal.

Hollywood views science fiction as a genre of detachable ideas. That is why so many science fic-

tion works have their concepts and story structures shoplifted, the serial numbers filed off, presented anew with a fresh wig and some lurid lipstick. Behind this lurks the more insidious notion that writers of short stories and novels don’t have screenwriting savvy or skills. That’s why so much “sci-fi” (a media term) has wooden speeches and cliché logic.

Defeating these assumptions will take a lot of effort and some counter-examples, such as the tight collaboration between Arthur C. Clarke and Stanley Kubrik for *2001: A Space Odyssey*. I remember my last conversation with Phillip K. Dick, when he had just returned from seeing the rushes for *Blade Runner*. He said plaintively, only a few weeks before his death, “I sure wish they’d let me work on some of the dialog.” But then, he lived in a small apartment in Santa Ana and didn’t wear sunglasses indoors.

Sigh...

The other pieces in *Chunga* are equally deft. Great zine! Published in 1955, you’d have been #1. Some things do improve. 📺

We also heard from...

Henry L. Welch
I’ll have to leave to others like you to tell me more about the more interesting things in life.

Jason Burnett
I love Craig Smith’s SFnal take on this iconic “Big Daddy” Roth image.

Ron Salomon
Well, sort of. Not really. But he was my parents’ favorite vegetable.

Howard Waldrop
I’m going to become a glorified Kato Kaelin the Houseboy.

Leigh Brackett
One used to get some pretty sour pix in the old days, but the quality of the artwork has improved tremendously.

Anita Rowland

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend’s or of thine own were. Any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind.

— John Donne

On December 10, 2007, Seattle, and fandom, became a much smaller place. After a long, determined fight to hang onto as much time and as much life as she could protect against a terminal cancer diagnosis, Anita Rowland took a sharp turn for the worse, and in the late afternoon, with husband Jack Bell holding her hand, died. Even at the end, visiting friends encountered her waking from a dream, chuckling at memories of other days, and the antics of her dreamed companions, and sharing the laugh. That was Anita: an unstoppable font of cheery, puckish good humor.

No biography can do justice to a human life. Especially when trying to capture Anita Rowland. Anita was a woman of parts—lots and lots of parts. She really was involved in mankind. She was among the first pioneers of online journaling and blogging, and rare in bringing the two constituencies together where otherwise the twain never meet. She was the founder and den mother of Seattle’s blogger Meetup, known there for making all comers welcome. She drew newbies into the circle, and the conversation. Anita was the rock on which recent Seattle Potlatches built their hospitality, the heart of any Potlatch convention. Anita was there, feeding the masses, making them welcome, plying them with beer and chocolate. With husband Jack, Anita was active in the Cacophony Society, attending organized



public pranks, including Santa Rampages—marauding gangs of oddly-assorted Santas roving the streets to spread wacky cheer and give candy to the avowedly naughty.

Wherever she went, Anita found the fun, started an interesting conversation, and included people in. In all her worlds, she was known for her graciousness, her warmth, and her unsurpassed talent for bringing disparate groups together into a single, happy, gabby mix. As a writer, she could be trenchant without being unkind, forthright without bludgeoning home her point, clear-eyed about even unhappy events without losing her basic good cheer, and her ability to laugh at herself. There was no one like her, and now she is gone. Together, we are all diminished.

—Ulrika O’Brien



TODAY
IS THE
FIRST
DAY OF
THE REST
OF YOUR
LIFE!

steve
stiles