

SUSAN WOOD



# THE BEST OF SUSAN WOOD

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# INTRODUCTION

The introduction to a collection like this should, first of all, tell the reader something about the subject, then explain why the person writing the introduction took on the job, and, finally, some details of the collection itself. Then the reader will have been properly introduced.

Susan Wood is the subject, and the articles and columns that follow tell you as much about her public self as I can. Still, here are a few chronologically arranged facts about Susan's life in fandom. She was introduced to fandom by Richard Labonte in the late 60s, while both were students at Carleton University in Ottawa, Ontario. She married Mike Glicksohn in Toronto, and began to write for his fanzine, Emergumen. Soon she became co-editor, began writing for other fanzines, and started her own, Aspidistra, which was devoted to environmental consciousness-raising. In 1973 Emergumen won a Hugo, and Mike and Susan were invited to be Fan Guests of Honor at Aussiecon (to be held in 1975). Both occurred at Torcon, and both were slightly ironic: Emergumen folded, and Susan left the convention to live and teach in Regina, Saskatchewan.

Susan then began to write more frequently for other fanzines like Outworlds and Kratophany. She started Amor de Cosmos Peoples' Memorial Quasirevolutionary Susanzine, AKA Bill Smith (mercifully shortened to Amor), a zine that went from letter-substitute to genzine, back to personalzine and then letter-sub again. Soon Eli Cohen moved to Regina to live with Susan, continue Kratophany, and engage in a two-year battle with Canadian Immigration. He lent considerable support to Susan as she struggled to complete her mammoth thesis comparing English-language and French-language Canadian agrarian novels.

Then in 1976 Susan and her doctorate were offered a teaching position at the University of British Columbia, in Vancouver, B.C. She moved there, and Eli followed some months later. Susan found that the move was not entirely a good one: U.B.C. was a tangled bureaucracy, and Susan's workload increased accordingly. Her pleasant little house was a target (along with the rest of the block) for developers. However, she was very pleased to become involved with The Pacific Northwest Review of Books, founded by John Berry and Loren MacGregor, a magazine that reviewed more Canadian books than any other U.S. publication. She was also able to increase her visits to Seattle, Portland, and San Francisco. Her last major project was editing a collection of Ursula Le Guin's non-fiction, called The Language of the Night, published in 1979. Susan died in November of 1980.

This account, of course, leaves out her several Hugos for Best Fan Writer, her academic papers, her germinal role in creating A Women's APA and A Room of Our Own, her creation of the All Our Yesterdays room (perhaps the first fan-history display), her impact on fans who read her work or met her at conventions and parties, and came away amused, charmed, pleased, energized, excited in one of a dozen different ways. Susan was a good talker, a lively dancer, a penetrating intellect. Sometimes she monopolized a conversation. I always forgave her.

This brings you the reader to me the writer. I knew Susan for many years. I liked her a lot. I suggested to her, about 1978, that I should do a collection of her fanzine articles and columns. (At the time, I was thinking of collecting the best of a number of fan writers, starting with Sandra Miesel, going on to Susan, and then trying some of the older writers, or less known ones: Lee Hoffman, Elinor Busby, Joyce Katz.) So I did this collection, because it was an idea I'd had for a long time, and because Susan liked the idea. I've always had the opinion that Susan was somewhat insecure (as I am: self-doubt is the fatal flaw for our times), and that she was glad her stuff had made an impact, and that I had faith that people would still want to read it. I still have that faith.

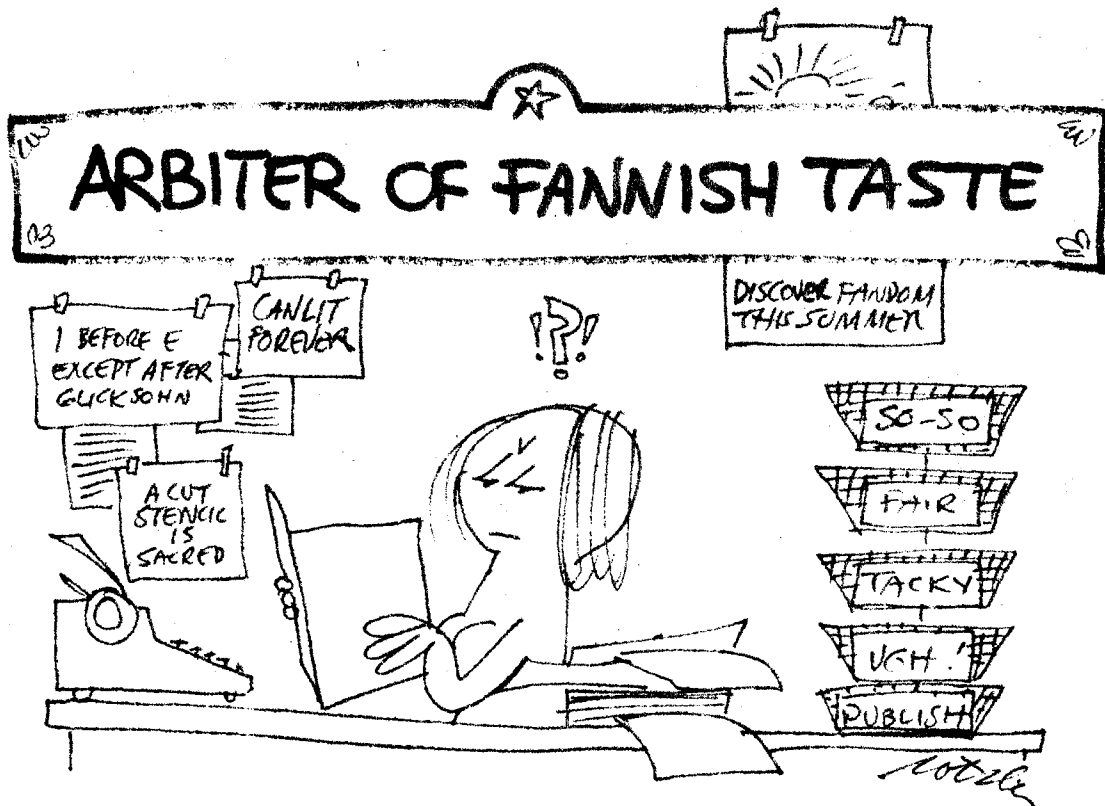
Which brings me to this collection: it is a collection of fannish writing. There are no book reviews, though there are a few articles about books. There are no academic papers, though there are a few articles about academia. The reviews and papers could make up another collection, and I'd like to see one someday. The pieces collected here are examples of the personal, informal writing that fanzines are the best at presenting: topics of keen interest to the writer, aimed at 200-400 people the writer is pretty sure will be her audience, all filtered through a common set of references to science fiction and fandom.

The columns called "My 2¢ Worth" were Susan's editorials for Energumen. "A Tale of Several Cities" formed the major part of one Amor; "Susan's Section" was part of an editorial in another, genzine, issue. "Energumwoman" and "Propellor Beanie" both had long lives in, respectively, Outworlds and Algol/Starship. (The first of the "Propellor Beanie" columns herein was intended for Susan's column "The Clubhouse" in Amazing; because of a mix-up, Susan thought it wouldn't be published there. It was, anyway.) "Tidepool" was a short-lived column for Genre Plat; "People's Programming" was a guest editorial in Janus. The Pacific Northwest Review of Books was not a fanzine, though the staff was mostly fans. Still, "Crossing Frontiers" is such a fannish piece by my definition that I felt it worth including.

I've taken a few editorial liberties, like using U.S. spellings, changing formats when the originals depended on an IBM Selectric, and correcting obvious typos. In most cases, I copied from the fanzine appearances, not from original manuscripts. In all cases where typos or misspellings appear, you may take it that I am solely responsible.

I would like to thank a few people: all the faneds and artists whose names appear on the table of contents for their quick responses to my queries and their lovely work. Mrs. Elsie Wood for lots of photocopies of obscure articles, bibliographic help, and general support. Mike Glicksohn, Jeanne Gomoll, JoAnne McBride, Gary Farber, and Richard Labonte for photocopies, comments, and suggestions. Suzle Tompkins for proofreading and cutting in electrostencils. Patrick Nielsen Hayden for huge amounts of mimeoing. Cliff Wind and Bob Doyle additional significant mimeo assistance. Teresa Nielsen Hayden for emergency lettering. And Seattle Fandom for collating.

The collection and the reader have now been properly introduced. The reader may now read.



# MY 2¢ WORTH

I have always dimly suspected that mathematics involves a creative process.

As a grade-school child, I whizzed through arithmetic, mostly so I could get on to the interesting stuff, like "reading." I figured that "rithmetic" was probably useful for looking after my bankbook, just as grammar was useful in writing--but dull, dull, dull.

Then I hit high-school math. Or it hit me. Arithmetic, you learn.  $2 \times 2 = 4$ ,  $2 + 2 = 4$ . Memorize it. Use it. Math, I discovered, you have to understand. Oh, I learned how to do problems along with Latin conjugations and the uses of the ablative absolute. And finally the day came, after about four years of memorizing, when I knew I understood Latin, not just the meanings of the words, but their sense, and could appreciate the formal beauty of Cicero's perfectly balanced sentences; or the rightness and grace of Catullus' lyrics. Math, they told me, was like that too; but I never understood it. Not that I tried all that hard--if I couldn't puzzle out the homework, there was good old Rodney across the aisle who liked sf too, and who perceived immediately which triangles were congruent, and why and how to prove it in six different elegant ways. It appeared to be intuitive, almost, and certainly enjoyable, this understanding of mathematics; it seemed to be closely akin to my almost-intuitive understanding of poems or novels, and the delight I could take in exploring their symbols or images or themes.

It seemed creative.

I passed math, passed it quite well on memory and work and a kind of faith--teacher says if I do this problem this way, I will get the right answer. With relief, I left math behind to explore the creative processes I could understand. Then I ended up, almost inevitably, marrying a mathematics teacher-to-be, the son of the chief computer programmer for Toronto. Math people!

"Of course you can understand math. You just had bad teachers," said Michael Glicksohn.

"You've just convinced yourself you can't do math. The human mind can do anything it wishes to do," said Paul Glicksohn.

"No, I had good teachers--one of the best in Ontario, even. They had to be good, to teach me the little they did. All I'm saying is, I cannot understand the creative bases of mathematics. I can barely tell a piccolo from a piano, either; and you could train me for years to talk about music and chatter learnedly about the first movement of Mahler's second symphony, but I still wouldn't have the slightest understanding of what was really happening when you and Rosemary played the record of that symphony. Michael could tutor me for years...."

"No. NO!! Not for all the beer in Ballantine's brewhouse!!!"

"And I'd never have a mathematical mind, any more than I have a musical ear."

"She's right, Dad. I came rushing home with a really elegant proof of the irrationality of the base ten logs of the integers from 1 to 9, and she didn't even care! I had to write to Bob Vardeman about it instead. No mathematical soul there, no feeling for logic and symmetry, no...."

"New proof? Let's see it, Mike." And they forgot about me.

Then Michael brought home a book for me. A Mathematician's Apology by G.H. Hardy, is a noted mathematician's explanation of his life--of his creative process. It is, even for me, a moving document.

The essay (it's only 92 pages long) was first published in 1940, when Hardy was in his early 60's. The 1967 re-issue includes a lengthy foreword (it's 58 pages) by C.P. Snow, who was not only a brilliant junior fellow at Cambridge when his friend Hardy was a brilliant senior scholar, but who has recognized and attempted in his novels to bridge the gap between the "two cultures" of art and science. While it tends to shift the balance of the book away from Hardy-on-mathematics to Hardy-the-man, the foreword is valuable to the non-mathematical reader for precisely that reason. It describes, of course, a typical, almost legendary don-figure, eccentric, early setting himself aloof from the "normal" round of human affairs to sip port and observe cricket, to share brilliant esoteric conversations and conduct brilliant esoteric research in his academic cloister. Yet it also shows a likeable human being, with a youthful "lightness" of spirit, generous to friends, the man many of us seldom picture behind the Scientist; and it emphasizes the basic meaning of the essay which follows. Snow stresses that "There is something...at which he Hardy was clearly superior to Einstein or Rutherford or any other great genius; and that is at turning any work of the intellect, major or minor or sheer play, into a work of art."

Mathematics is an art. Hardy describes, with simplicity, candor, and an undercurrent of wry wit, what it has been like to have been an artist. Make no mistake: the tone is not whining, the self-pity of an old man who feels neglected. It conveys the pride of genuine achievement: "I still say to myself when I am depressed, and forced to listen to pompous and tiresome people, 'Well, I have done one thing you could never have done, and that is to have collaborated with both Littlewood and Ramanujan on something like equal terms.'" It conveys, as well, the resignation of knowing that one's creative self is dead: Wolsey's "And so farewell, a long farewell to all my greatness." Artists, Hardy says, despise art critics; and mathematicians share the scorn "of the men who make for the men who explain. Exposition, criticism, appreciation, is work for second-rate minds." Knowingly, with ruthless logic and honesty, he condemns himself: "If I then find myself writing, not mathematics, but 'about' mathematics, it is a confession of weakness, for which I may rightly be scorned or pitied by younger and more vigorous mathematicians. I write about mathematics because, like any other great mathematician who has passed sixty, I have no longer the freshness of mind, the energy, or the patience to carry on effectively with my proper job."

Hardy's proper job was mathematics--but not "math" as the 1930's world of Bohr and Einstein, or the 1970's world of NASA, or any schoolboy knew it. Hence the apology. People say that mathematics is useful, Hardy points out, as a tool to build bridges, or war machines. Certainly, "trivial" or elementary mathematics (in which he includes a working knowledge of differential and integral calculus) is "useful" in a sense--though he indicates that scientific knowledge is not necessary to, or used by, the vast majority of people, who can turn on a gas flame without knowing how or why it burns. "Real" mathematics, pure mathematics, the realm of beauty and ideas in which he works, is not "useful," and he will not attempt to justify it, or his life, on practical grounds. Oh, certainly he takes some comfort, writing in the early years of a war he hated and could not support, that "real" mathematics is "gentle and clean" in its practical uselessness, unlike the applied mathematics of war which are destructive but essentially "trivial," "repulsively ugly and intolerably dull; even Littlewood could not make ballistics respectable." Cold comfort aside ("No one has yet discovered any warlike purpose to be served by the theory of numbers or relativity"), he insists, with total honesty, that mathematics is not justifiable on any practical or humanitarian basis; that "it must be justified as art if it can be justified at all."

Thus if it is as art that he must present his work. "A mathematician, like a painter or a poet, is a maker of patterns," he says, a creative artist producing beauty since "there

is no permanent place in the world for ugly mathematics." Ugliness? Beauty? They must be perceived intuitively; he cannot define the esthetic appeal of mathematics, but it exists-- just as "we may not know quite what we mean by a beautiful poem, but that does not prevent us from recognizing one when we read it." People commonly speak of "beautiful" chess problems, he points out, but these are only "the hymn-tunes of mathematics." Hence he presents a symphony or two, Greek mathematical theorems (and he is too honest to present "trivial" problems, logic or mathematical philosophy, anything but working mathematician's math-- which leave the non-mathematician following on faith) which will, he says, demonstrate the beauty and seriousness of mathematics to anyone who can appreciate such values.

All of this sounds like a noble artistic philosophy--but it is profoundly personal as well. Hardy's life has been spent in the pursuit and creation of mathematical beauty. He has been a worldly "success," yes--he has followed the career that his mind was best suited for, he has fulfilled his intellectual curiosity, his personal pride, his worldly ambition. Yet ultimately his life, his "useless" life, must be judged on artistic grounds: "The case for my life...is this: That I have added something to knowledge, and helped others to add more; and that these somethings have a value which differs in degree only, and not in kind, from that of the creations of the great mathematicians, or of any of the other artists, great or small, who have left some kind of memorial behind them."

His essay is one record of that creation, or, as he holds with Plato, that re-creation of an ideal reality. It is a document of conscience for any artist, an "apology" for a life spent in "useless" creation, written with no equivocations or evasions to the reader or to the artist himself. And it is profoundly moving. The artist's sole excuse or reason for living is gone; he can create no more. All the greatest mathematicians died young (Ramanujan, Hardy's protege, a natural genius who lay on his death-bed telling Hardy why 1729 was not a dull number, died at 33) or, like Newton, initiated no major advance after 50.

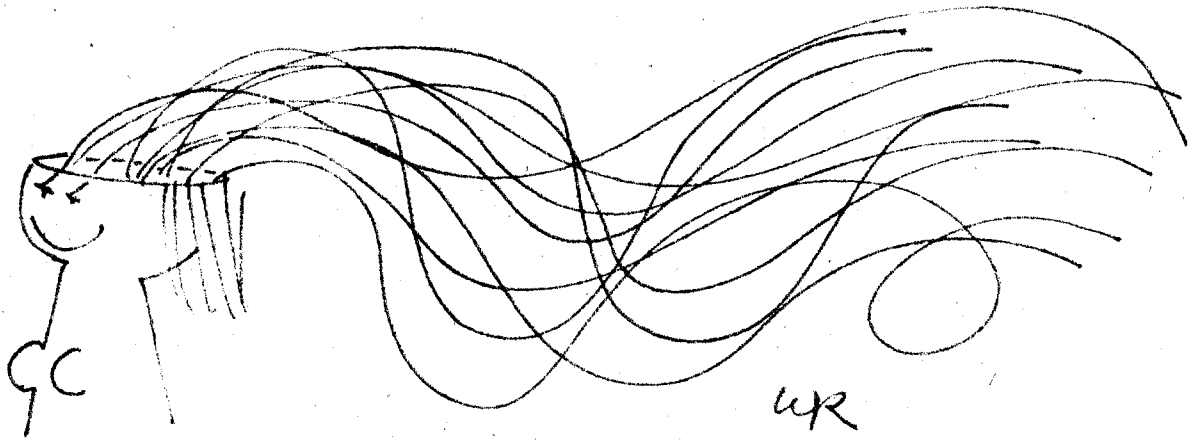
Hardy was old; a coronary thrombosis had in 1939 impaired his physical faculties and ended the sports--squash, tennis--which he loved; and he knew that his creative powers were gone. Snow says that he "took to despair," lost interest in life itself, finally attempted suicide and died soon after. And that despair, together with the joy of creating, echoes throughout A Mathematician's Apology: Hardy quotes the opinion of Bertrand Russell (his friend and former colleague) that mathematics can be a refuge where "one at least of our nobler impulses can escape from the dreary exile of the actual world," and then adds his own crucial reservation--the mathematician must not be old.

"Mathematics is not a contemplative, but a creative subject; no one can draw much consolation from it when he has lost the power or the desire to create; and that is apt to happen to a mathematician rather soon. It is a pity, but in that case he does not matter a great deal anyhow, and it would be silly to bother about him." Ah yes--but A Mathematician's Apology is not the second-rate explanation of a second-rate mind; it does, I think, matter profoundly to anyone interested in the creative process in any form; and it would be silly not to bother with it. Even if you "don't understand" mathematics.

((G.H. Hardy, A Mathematician's Apology. With a foreword by C.P. Snow. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967.))

###





## Lines from her ladyship

"Yes. Yes, Gordon. Yes, I'll try to write something for Osphimadge. Yes. Probably about how I became Duchess of Canadian Fandom."

"What of Canadian Fandom?" asked Gordon Van Toen. "I thought duchesses were old women."

"If my sweetie can be the Boy Wonder of Canadian Fandom at 27, I can be a duchess at 24, can't I?"

"Um," said Gord, dubiously. "Just have it in by next week, ok?"

Actually I don't know if there is an age requirement for the job. I don't even know what a D. of C.F. does. Shall I preside at literary teaparties? (In our tiny back bedroom with the mimeo, the snake in his cage and the gerbils in theirs, the paper supply and several thousand fanzines and Marvel comics--ha!) Shall I stride about at conventions in British tweeds and Canadian furs, being photographed for the society page of the Toronto Globe and Mail as a Personality and Arbiter of Fannish Taste? Shall I run frantically about looking for people who've written nasty things about Energumen, shouting "off with their heads" a la the Queen of Hearts in Alice? (Now that idea I like. But whatever would become of the Canfannish reputation for decency, moderation and tolerance?)

I may not know what to do with the job; but I do know I'd like to have it. The United States has its Secret Masters of Fandom, wheeling and dealing; why shouldn't Canada, with its British heritage modified by New World democracy, possess an aristocracy of merit, guiding and refining Canfannish life, above mere petty influence peddling, uniting known fannish hearts from Oromocto, N.B., to Burnaby, B.C., with one great bond of loyalty--she said, practicing the pompous verbal magnificence appropriate to the position.

I confess that the idea isn't an original one. I was reading an old fanzine, a mid-60s one, I think, when I caught a reference to "Norm Clarke and his wife Gina, the Duchess of Canadian Fandom." I thought that the fanzine in question was Terry Carr's Lighthouse, but having diligently re-read not only those, but our files of Quip, the old Foolscap, the brilliant Irish Hyphen, even Terry's earlier Innuendo and similar mimeo masterpieces, I've been unable to find the reference again. I don't know who christened Gina the D. of C.F., or why, or what her role in fandom was, apart from some good writing in the aforementioned Lighthouse and some FAPazines reviewed in it. I confess I haven't contacted her to ask if she minds my usurping her place. On second thought, it would be more tactful to promote her to Grand Duchess. Consider yourself aggrandized by the next generation, ma'am.

The interesting aspect of this duchess bit, though, is that I learned about it, like almost everything else in Canadian fanhistory, through an American, the unknown person who met the Clarkes.

I suppose I had a fairly typical introduction to fandom. Like many others of You Out There, I had been a long-time sf reader who knew that there must be other people like me--the Heinlein juveniles kept disappearing off the library shelves. When I actually made contact with such persons, it was through something called a fanzine--Hugin and Munin, published at Carleton University by Richard Labonte, who proceeded to tell me marvellous tales of people who not only read and even wrote sf, but who published more fanzines and held conventions. Most of them were American; some were British and even Australian; and (so rumor whispered) there were even--other Canadian fans! But we had to go to conventions to find them, or read fanzines, or even prozines, all of them (until OSFiC), American. Mike Glicksohn Discovered Fandom by reading an ad for the Tricon in '66 in Famous Monsters of Filmland, which is about as fringe-fannish as you can get. Rosemary Ulllyot Discovered Fandom when a girl walked into the bookstore where she worked wearing an "I Grok Mr. Spock" button, from the US fandom of a US tv show. Every so often, someone in Elbow, Sask., or South Dildo, Nfld., Discovers Canadian Fandom in the lettercolumn of the US prozines Analog, Amazing and Fantastic, or in an envelope from F&SF where Andy Porter, New York's undercover wouldbe Canadian fan mails out Torcon 2 fliers with that magazine's rejection slips. Finally, I Discovered Mike Glicksohn mostly at Boskone in '69. Isn't fandom wonderful?

Even the title "Boy Wonder of Canadian Fandom" was bestowed on Mike by David Lewton, an otherwise-obscure Indianapolis fan who gaffiated after this historic achievement.

Gradually I became aware, thanks to US conventions and fans, that Canadian fandom had a past, albeit a somewhat stunted one. I learned of the people who had put on the first Torcon in '48, mainly by reading Harry Warner's fan history and meeting First-Fandomite and convention organizer John Millard--at a Boskone. Not that I could have learned about the Torcon first-hand, since your duchess was born the weekend it took place. I learned about other Canfans at conventions from US fans who said: "Oh, you're Canadians, you must know the Clarkes." The Clarkes? We had been given the address of a Famous Oldtime Canadian Fan named Norm Clarke, but the Energumen we sent was returned by the P.O. We got the correct address finally when Mike met Norm at (where else?) Noreascon. I learned about the Insurgents, who revived Canadian fandom after the post-Torcon collapse, from US fans such as John Berry and Harry Warner, who wrote us letters casually praising early Canfanzines such as A Bas with its famous Derogations--assuming, of course, these were quite familiar to us. Mike replied: "Pardon my ignorance, Harry, but what were the Derogations?" We were told they were Boyd Raeburn, another famous Canfan, not suffering fools gladly in an extremely witty manner, but we hadn't the foggiest idea who Boyd Raeburn was. Our ignorance led to an embarrassing contretemps at Noreascon, when "the Canadians"--the '70s version--held a party. Some of their predecessors attended. Rosemary Ulllyot, Hugo-nominated Kumquat May of Canadian Fandom, looked up, saw a home-town name badge, and shrieked: "Boyd Raeburn! I thought you were dead!!" He wasn't. We had to wait until John Berry came up from New York to discover the True North before we got to meet him.

The visit was a most pleasant one, involving chatter about the Good Old Days of Canadian Fandom. Boyd, "well-known fake gourmet and bon-vivant" (to quote Robert Silverberg, who knows more about early Canadian fans than I do) mentioned visiting the Clarkes. "Why was Gina Clarke called Duchess of Canadian fandom?" I asked.

"I don't know," said Boyd.

I sighed. "That's too bad, because it sounds like fun, and I'd really like to be one."

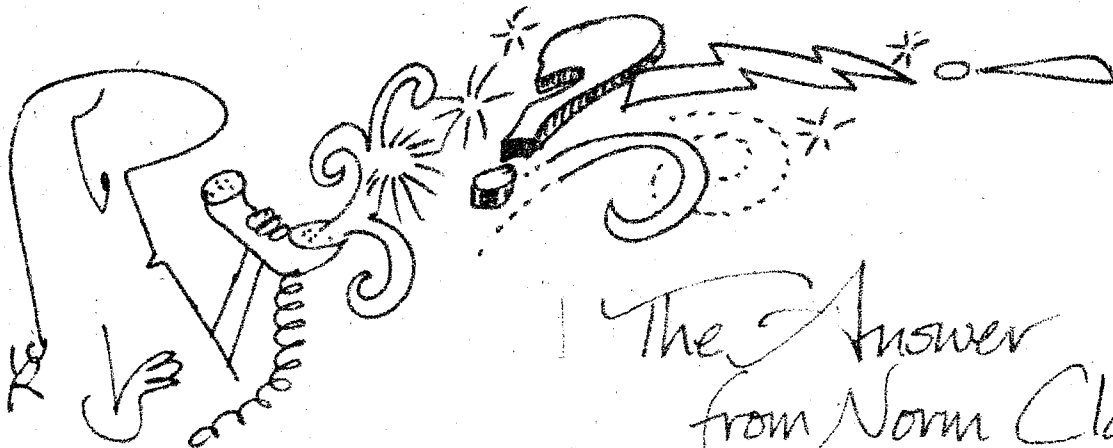
"If you want to be a Duchess of Canadian Fandom, then be a Duchess of Canadian Fandom."

"Won't Gina mind?"

"I don't suppose so. She and Norm aren't all that active; we're all Old Fans and Tired. There. I name you Duchess of Canadian Fandom." He gestured with an invisible sword.

So here I am, people. Your nobility. (Did I hear someone shout, "A bas les aristos"?) Fan history is being made before your eyes.

And just think--you read about it in a Canadian fanzine!



Quebec  
June 25, 1972

John:  
"Gina," I said to her on the phone, "this is fantastic. A fanzine from Toronto was in the mail today. It mentions your name."

"Why me? Why me?" she asked, exasperated.

"Well, actually," I said, "you are first of all referred to as my wife. I am called 'Famous Old Time Fan Norm Clarke,' and you are called, in this context, 'his wife.'"

yeah," snarled my wife.

"Oh

"But then, of course, due homage is paid to you as 'Duchess of Canadian Fandom.' You remember that stuff, don't you?"

Ellis, DoCF.

"No," said the erstwhile Dutch

"Sure you do. Think back...back. Remember those funny mimeographed things with the pictures in them printed upside down? Remember those cigar-shaped things with smoke coming out of them? Remember Bob Tucker?"

"Oh, that!"

"Yeah, it all comes back to you now, huh? Well, anyway, as I was saying: there was this Toronto fanzine--it's sort of like Canadian Fandom, or 'Canfar' as we called it 'way back then--in the mailbox today. And there was a letter with it, a letter from its editor, John Millard..."

lished Double:Bill."

"Oh yeah. He pub-

"No, no. No; that was, um, that was...uh, Wrai Ballard?"

That was Ray 'Pogo' Thompson."

"No, no.

"No, wait a minute. Son of a gun, it's not from John Millard after all. Remember him? We met him in Toronto once; and I think we met him again in Boston."

"I forget."

"Right. Well anyway, this letter is from John Douglas. Do we know him?"

"Does

he know us?"

"He seems to...know us by Reputation. He calls me--or at least his fanzine calls me-- and I quote, 'Famous Oldtime Fan Norm Clarke.' He mentions your name, too."

"Duchess of Canadian Fandom, eh? Right. Now I remember. I am the goddamn Duchess of Canadian Fandom, and don't you forget it, you punk neo."

"Right you are, baby. However, you have been deposed. Somebody named Rosemary Glicksohn--or, wait, I think it's Susan Elliott. Yes, that's it; I remember now: she was on the bus with us to Noreascon, along with Dickie Labonte. Well, anyway, she is now Duchess of Canadian Fandom. She proclaims it, right here in this Canadian Fanzine from Toronto. And, you know," I added, not unkindly, "if it's in a fanzine, it must be true. All knowledge is contained..."

"Shut up,"

said Gina, "what did you say that Bitch's name is?"

"Well, it is...let me check a minute.

Oh. It is 'Susan Glicksohn.' Say, isn't she the one whose picture we saw in the paper, with an ant eater around her neck?"

"The very one," Gina cried. "Well, I'll get her. 'Duchess of Canadian Fandom,' eh? I suppose her husband calls himself a 'Ghood Man,' or has a rubber stamp that says 'Glicksohn is Superb.'"

"No, no, nothing like that. He simply calls himself 'Boy Wonder of Canadian Fandom.' He's 27, though."

"Well, anyway...27?"

Well, anyway, who told this bitch she could usurp my title?"

"Boyd did."

"Boyd who? Oh..."

Boyd! Why, that...what does he know about Canadian Fandom anyway?"

"Now that's not quite fair, Gina. Boyd published a fairly respectable little fanzine of some four or six pages in...I think it was 1948. He was a very good friend of Norman G. Browne's, too. Oh, he has a definite niche, albeit a somewhat stunted one, in Canadian Fandom. Or, well, Toronto Fandom, anyway,"

"Oh, was he the one?"

"Hey, listen Gina...I've been meaning to ask you, and this John Douglas comes right...comes right out and baldly asks (though of course I don't know whether he's actually all that bald) 'how the original Duchess of Canadian Fandom was created.' He asks that; and I must confess that I am curious, too. How was the Original Duchess of Canadian Fandom created?"

"I forget," came the sullen reply.

"Oh come

now, Gina. This is me. Famous Oldtime Fan Norm Clarke. You can tell me."

"I'll tell you this much, you neo!" she snapped, "that title was earned on merit and merit alone! You think I just up and decided to call myself 'Duchess of Canadian Fandom'? Hah! Fans were fans in those days, boy! Just ask Frederic B Christoff, Joe Keogh, Harry Calnek, Larry Slapak, Daryl Sharp..."

"Gina," I whispered gently, "they are all...gone."

"Gerald A Stew-

ard," she continued, "Ron Kidder, Albert Lastovica..."

"Gina..." I insisted.

"...Paul

Wyszkowski," she added.

"Well..." I admitted.

"...They know why I am called The Duchess of Canadian Fandom. I am the Duchess of Canadian Fandom, and make no mistake about that!"

Well, Mr. Douglas, that's about it. I believe that Gina (formerly Georgina Ellis, DoCF)

would like her message passed along to your numerous readers in what I believe is called "Canadian Fandom of Today." "I will not have False Duchae before me," she was hollering when I hung up.

Hoping you are the same,

Norm

PS: "From what you have been told, I am no longer interested in fandom"? Oh, I dunno: why, I publish at least eight pages every year in FAPA--which is, of course, the very heart and core of Fandom. Why, I understand the Glicksohns are on its waiting list.



I was just wondering what on earth I could write for Osphimagge (or OQ 2 if the editors insist) when John Douglas called.

"Hello, John," I burbled, in my cheery fannish manner, "what do you want me to write for Osphimagge, huh, huh?"

"OSFiC Quarterly. And, er, what I really want is Rosemary's phone number. She's promised me an article, and..."

His tone was cool. I ignored it, and blithely bubbled, "Great! We'll all be in the next issue. Now, when do you want my article?"

"Er, well, actually, I don't...that is, Gordon and I...well..."

"Well what?"

"Well, perhaps you should...I mean, you're busy with your thesis and all...maybe you should stick to sercon stuff. For the third issue."

"What?!!" I wailed, at full decibel output. I have an image to maintain, after all. "You don't want the Duchess of Canadian Fandom writing for your fanzine?" I am very quick to grasp basic issues.

"No. Well, that is, you see, I got this letter from Norm Clarke," John explained hastily.

to forestall another wail.

"You did? I'm impressed. He never responded to Energumen!" A horrible suspicion squelched ickily across the surface of my mind. "He didn't like my article." We Canfan are Very Perceptive.

"Yeah," said John.

At this point, Mike (or Michael, or Boy Wonder) appeared. "What's all this about Norm Clarke, Famous Oldtime Canfan and FAPA member?" he enquired. I explained that John had gotten a loc from Mr. Clarke. "He did? I'm impressed. He never responded to Energumen!" Mike exclaimed. "I bet he didn't like your article." Sometimes it is very hard to record Brilliant Canfan Dialogue.

The phone squawked into my ear. "It's not exactly that he didn't like it, he sort of parodied it. I think Gina Clarke scorns my pretensions to rank," I explained. "She called me a bitch!" A tear stole down my sensitive fannish face. I felt...deposed.

"Seriously? They're really annoyed with you?" Mike asked.

To think we'd discovered Canadian Fandom, only to have it raise a fastidious eyebrow at our maanderings.

"I don't know. John seems to think they are, and that I should be upset, but the bits he read me were kind of funny--in a satirical, sharp, nasty way," I snivelled. "He used the Canadian Fannish Dialogue Style--and he did it better than I do!" I wailed (again). "And he got me mixed up with Rosemary! And..."

"How silly. Anyone can tell the difference. You don't swear. You wail."

"And now John doesn't want me to write for Osph...er, OQ!" Suddenly, I remembered John was waiting patiently at the other end of the line. I wailed at him, too.

"It's not that I don't want you to write for OQ," he explained, hastily. "It's just that maybe you should think about it, say for six months. Nine months? And maybe you could write, um, something sercon."

"Are you sure you wouldn't like twenty pages of my thesis?" I enquired icily.

"No, just a nice book review or two. For the next OQ. Or the one after. Or maybe the one after that..."

//////



It was Joyce Katz who scattered the first Straw-filled misgivings in my mind. Last year, at Noreascon, she greeted me with: "You're a Canfan. Tell me. Is Will Straw real?"

"Huh?" I said. Large, smoke-laden, noisy convention parties tend to affect my brain. "Will Straw? Oh, that old-time fan from Fort Erie who locs all the fannish fanzines. I don't know, I've always thought he was real. I mean, I've never met him, but he writes to Energumen, and..."

"That's the point," Joyce explained. "Nobody's met him. He sounds like someone who's been an actifan for years, but no-one ever heard of him until recently."

"We think he's a hoax," Arnie announced.

"But," I objected, "just because no-one knows him personally doesn't mean he doesn't exist. Maybe he's a hermit, and doesn't like conventions. Maybe he's an old-time fan who's just Resurgung. Like John Millard. Being Torcon chairman must have revived his Sense of Wonder, he wants to borrow all our Potlatches."

"And your Focal Points, too," said John, appearing to discuss the finer points of worldcon-

chairing with Joyce. "Will Straw? I suppose he's a real person but I've never met him."

"He's a hoax," said Arnie Katz.

Though "Who is Will Straw?" never became one of the burning fannish questions, like "Who Sawed Courtney's Boat" or "Will Bergeron ever publish the Willis issue of Warhoon?", it did occupy the fannish lettercols for some months. Various people, including Michael, pointed out that Fort Erie was a small town on the international border, so it would be easy for a US fan to zip back and forth across the bridge from Buffalo, collecting and posting mail for "Will Straw." The name, too, was perfect for a "straw man," a fabulous fannish facade made to be knocked down. Will Straw himself, rather indignantly--after all, if you were real, you'd resent being turned into a hoax--insisted he was genuine in some letters, and cunningly inserted bits of biography into others. This is just what he would do to create a phony persona, the sceptics insisted. It didn't help that he refused to shed the light of other days on his fannish origins. It was difficult to see how this apparent young newcomer to fandom could, in a letter to Energumen 10, refer casually, and seemingly with first-hand knowledge, to the mid-'60s idea of a Tape Amateur Press Association, and the doings of British fandom, specifically OMPA. Learning that someone had sent him a mass of old apa-mailings and the like, which he presumably assimilated, didn't prove, or disprove, the snowballing Straw-is-a-Hoax rumors. Neither did his statement that, somehow, his address had been misprinted so anyone coming to see him would wind up in a hotel instead!

I believed that Will Straw was Real, but then, I'm a naive soul, trusting in Santa Claus, my teddy bear, and the Boy Wonder. When John Berry visited the True North, we mulled the matter over and decided--largely because it seemed so unlikely--that Will Straw was Harry Warner, Jr., with the help of a Buffalo or Fort Erie journalist friend. After all, who else had enough knowledge of fandom, and little enough personal contact with fans, to pull off such a deception? Harry hadn't really had a serious eye operation, he had only submerged briefly to develop his Straw personality, writing fannish locs instead of Hugo-winning meaty two-page Harry Warner locs. John and I debated writing to Harry, announcing: "Aha, Will Straw, All Is Known!"--but deep down, we knew we hadn't really even convinced ourselves.

Boyd Raeburn was appealed to, but denied all knowledge of a Will Straw in his Canfannish generation. "It does sound like he might be a hoax, though. Someone will have to drive to Fort Erie and find him," he said. We agreed, and the conversation turned to other fabulous fannish hoaxes, the finer points of Greek food, and similar esoterica. Soon John departed to experience being derailed by an avalanche near Banff, Alberta, and we ceased to discuss Will Straw.

Then, one hot and muggy July night, when the air felt like steaming soggy Kleenex and Energumen's parents sat panting, staring at the piles of unironed clothes, unlocated fanzines, and unrun stencils, the phone rang.

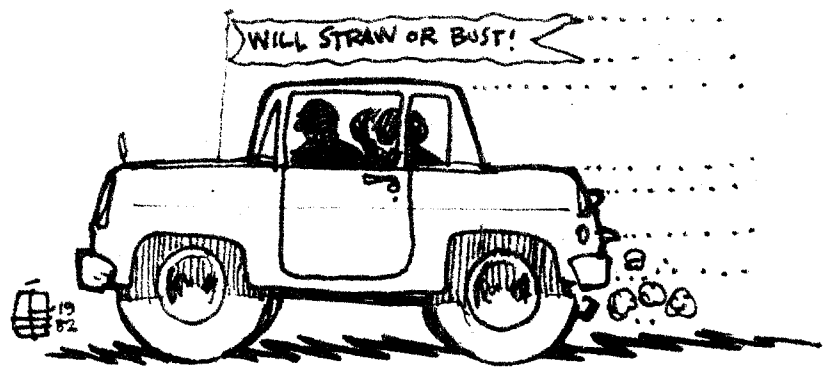
"How would you like to go for a drive in the country tomorrow?" Boyd Raeburn asked. "I thought we could go to Fort Erie and find Will Straw. I don't really care if we find him, but it should be a pleasant drive. Besides, the car is air conditioned."

We accepted, with pleasure.

Next morning, the Raeburn Automobile awaited us. I must explain that this is no mere car, but a Gorgeous Machine (a new Mercedes) which I find Aesthetically Appealing even though I generally don't like machines. It is a joy to drive in it; it's displaced the Jaguars that a former next-door neighbor, who owned the only dealership for the beasts in Ottawa, used to flaunt, on my private covet-list. It just shows what you can afford if you don't publish a fanzine...

The drive was, indeed, Pleasant, with lots of barns and leafy trees and similar agrarian-myth things for me to look at and feel I was doing thesis-research, seasoned with dollops





of small town Canadiana in Niagara-on-the-lake, a United Empire Loyalist town that oozes gentility and the aura of Inherited Wealth. We were driving through Jalna country, and all the huge houses, and manicured lawns, not to mention the air conditioning, did things to my socialist mind and luxury-despising Presbyterian soul. The ruin was complete when we stopped to lunch at the Oban Inn in Niagara-on-the-Lake, the first Historique Olde Inne I've ever seen that doesn't come all over quaint on you, to gorge on such dainties of United Empire Loyalist imperial cuisine as steak-and-kidney pie and meringues and eclairs. By this time, no-one really cared if we found Will Straw or not, though I was beginning to feel it would be a pity if he were real--a Real Hoax would add a certain cachet to Canfandom.

After another hour or so of meandering past Niagara Falls ("See the mighty cataract, dear!" "All I can see is every tourist in North America, looking for a parking spot") and of enjoyable fannish conversation about the delights of British children's books (Boyd Raeburn has read the Arthur Ransome books! Any other fans of his out there?), we passed a sign that said "Welcome to Fort Erie."

"Good. Now we'll find a gas station, fill up the car, and get directions to Niagara Boulevard," said Boyd.

"We're on Niagara Boulevard," noted Michael.

"Really? With that sort of luck, we may find him after all. How disappointing."

We counted down. 529...457...329...287...287?? The car U-turned in less space than my bicycle needs. But where was 303 Niagara Boulevard, the address at which "Will Straw" received his Energumens?

"Aha! A fake!! There's 329, and a big gap, and that church, and then the 200s start!" Michael exclaimed.

"Wait, there's something else. St. Paul's Parish Hall. Obviously an accomodation address unless the unknown Mr. Straw is the caretaker," Boyd pointed out. He pulled up beside it. Empty. Deserted. It was all Very Mysterious.

"There must be a manse, a minister's house of some sort," I said. "Look, there's a pathway up to that house on the hill."

"Mike, why don't you go up to investigate. Perhaps the priest will know who Will Straw is."

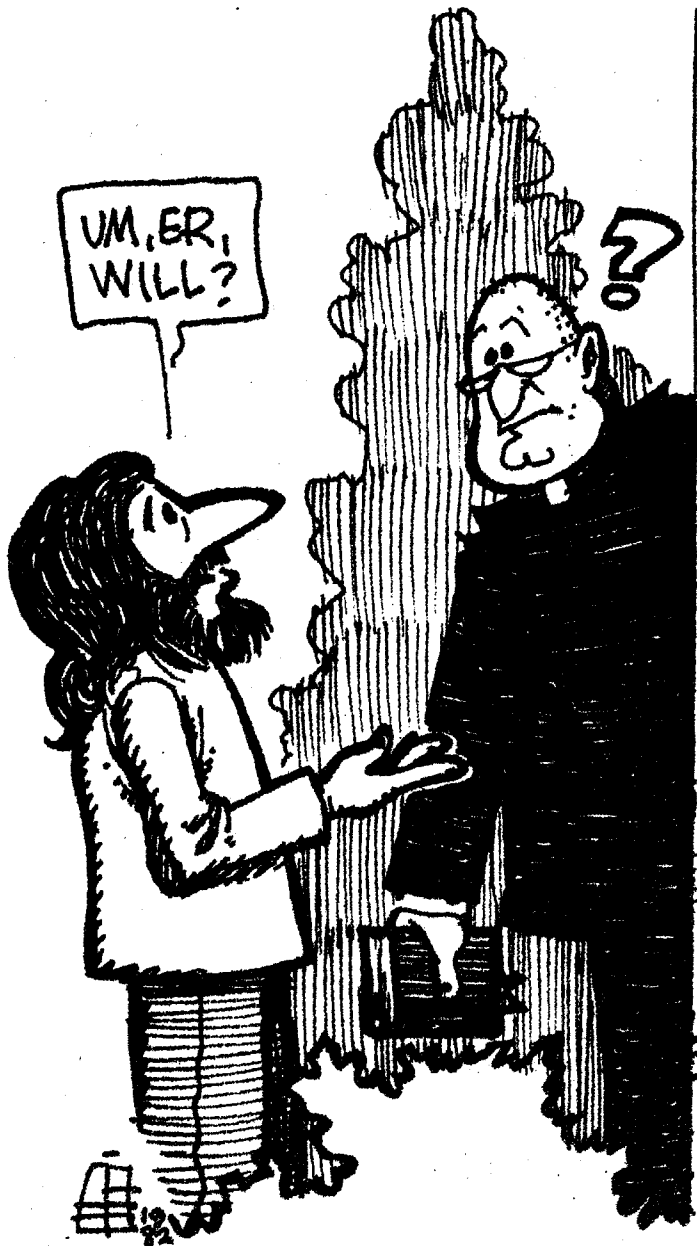
"Minister," I corrected. "That has to be a Protestant church. No crosses, and a flourishing bed of orange lilies in full bloom for the Twelfth of July Orange Lodge parade. This is probably a very Tory, militant-Protestant area, and I doubt if they'd allow a Catholic to grow an orange lily!" I am wise in the arcane folklore of Ontario. The others looked puzzled.

We were all puzzled a few minutes later when Michael returned, panting and sweat-drenched. "It is 303, but there's nobody home, just a large dog. He barked at me." Michael sounded disappointed, since he cultivates friendships with other furry animals.

"Ahah! Trained to sniff out fans and Protect the Secret!" I exclaimed. "Are you sure no-one was sitting out in the garden?"

"Not a person in sight. I found out one thing, though; no fan lives there. I looked through the window, and there wasn't a book or a fanzine in sight." We all agreed this was crucial evidence.

We found a gas bar (the car could drink on Sunday in Fort Erie, but not us) and a phone booth. Sure enough, there wasn't a scrap of a Straw in sight. On an impulse, I flipped to the Yellow Pages, and looked under Churches. There it was, St. Paul's Anglican Church, Parish Hall, and--hey! "303 is the Rectory!" I announced.



In a few minutes, we were back at the foot of the pathway. A couple of lawns away, a middle-aged couple were regarding our antics with carefully-concealed curiosity. I suggested we question the natives. Boyd suggested that I, as a respectable matron, appoint myself the interrogating delegation--at least, what he said was, "You go, you're decently dressed and if they see Mike they'll have a heart attack." I trotted off in my gingham frock, tea-party hat, and sandals, trying to look like a Sweet Young Thing.

"Uh, excuse me, sir, uh, we're looking for a Mr. Will Straw, does he live here? We're friends of his, that is, we publish a magazine he writes to, and he gave us this address, but I didn't think he was a minister. Uh, is Will Straw the minister's son, or something? We'd like to meet him, whoever he is." I had the feeling I wasn't being too coherent.

"Why, yes, William Straw is the name of the minister here," the neighbor replied, looking a little confused.

"Oh! Sh--er, goodness! (Try not to sound like an Ullyot column, Susan, I warned myself.) Oh! That's interesting. So he is real! And a minister! Could you tell me where he is, please?"

It turned out, though, that the Reverend Mr. Straw was off with his family at their cottage, and was not expected back that day. ("I thought ministers stayed around and ministered," Michael grumbled, disappointed.) As Boyd pointed out, the fact that a Will Straw existed didn't mean that the Will Straw existed; he could still be a hoax and now we would never know. So we left a sceptical note, said

we were sorry to have missed him, and departed.

A week or so later, the first mailing of Canadapa, the first Canadian apa, arrived. Among the non-Canuck members was Michel Ferron of Belgium, who expressed the hope of renewing postal acquaintance with Will Straw, whose name he knew from other apas--indicating the Unknown Fan had been around for a while. Then Terry Hughes' Mota bounced into the mailbox, containing, among other goodies, a letter from Will Straw--a letter about being ill during a drunken carouse on a train enroute to the Quebec Winter Carnival.

"Look at this letter, dear," said Michael. "Now I realize that as a trufannish ex-Jew, I don't know much about Religion, but surely ministers don't go around getting drunk in public on the way to carnivals?"

"Almost everybody gets drunk at the Quebec carnival: it's the only way to avoid the cold, but no, that doesn't sound like appropriate behavior for a respectable clergyman from Fort Erie. Maybe the minister is just a mail-drop and "Will Straw" really is a hoax! What fun!" I said.

Finally, about ten days after our visit, we heard from Will Straw Himself. As Michael pointed out, ten days was enough to time to forward our note, get a reply, forward it from Fort Erie.... Yes, the writer said, he was real. No! he said, he wasn't a minister. The minister was his father, which made him a Preacher's Kid, but he personally didn't accept organized religion. He was sorry to have missed us, but he worked six days a week, and hadn't had Sunday off, and...

We told Boyd. He remained sceptical, and proposed another safari into the darkest gardens of Southern Ontario. We phoned. A male identifying himself as Will Straw explained he was sorry, but he was leaving, the very next day, to study journalism at Carleton University, so if we came to Fort Erie, he wouldn't be there...Michael was disappointed. "He must be real. No-one could plan such an elaborate hoax that they'd have someone with a realistic-sounding story like that ready to answer the phone any time a fan called. He must be real."

Me, I don't know. I'm waiting for Richard Labonte (now the mild-mannered reporter for a large Ottawa daily) to investigate. Deep down, I think I want a Fabulous Canfannish Hoax.

In the meantime, why don't you all plan to drive up to Torcon 2? Then detour on your way home, stop for lunch at Niagara-on-the-Lake, and try the meringues. Try two. Try to get tickets to the Shaw Festival there, if you can. Admire Niagara Falls. Then head for Fort Erie, and St. Paul's church. It's a pleasant drive, and you'll be participating in the Canadian Fannish Mythos. Happy hunting for Straws!

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# Will Somebody Please Tell Bruce Gillespie I Really am Sane Sometimes?

Torcon 2 began the day I got a brick in the mail from Jodie Offutt. It ended on September 2, 1973, as I sat on Air Canada flight 161 to Regina. Numb with exhaustion, kept awake by screaming children (a special breed developed by tobacco companies to render nonsmoking sections uninhabitable), scared by the immediate future and confused by the immediate past, I tried to write a conreport. The very attempt was ridiculous. Yes, Michael, I know I promised...but what, exactly, am I doing, sitting in my apartment in Regina eight months and 2,000 miles later, trying to write that same report?

Maybe I should buy a bottle of scotch to help my fanwriting powers? Except the events I'm recording are already a blur.

What is a convention report? A chronological account of who you saw, had dinner with, partied with? (No-one who writes conreports ever seems to have come within a mile of the program.) Or is it an attempt to recreate the feel of the convention? I attempted to make a partial chronology on that plane flight. On Labor Day, while my friends were still at the Royal York watching Alice Haldeman ride her bike through the halls, I couldn't remember what I'd done in the previous six days. My last clear memory is of a pleasant evening spent ambling down the Yonge Street Mall with Jerry Kaufman, eating butter-cashew icecream, complaining about the 90-degree heat, and nattering. That was the last time I relaxed. The city filled up with fans, we moved into the hotel, the heat went up to 97 degrees with humidity to match. (This is Typical Worldcon Weather; I wonder how Melbourne will react to 90-degree temperatures in midwinter?) The worldcon began, and I sailed off on a fatigue-and-excitement high.

The spirit of my Torcon is summed up by an incident on Sunday afternoon. As usual, I was sitting (or flapping around) in the All Our Yesterdays Room, enjoying the company of the friends who made it their hangout: Linda Lounsbury, planner-by-mail, without whom there would not have been a fanhistory display; Linda Bushyager, who helped run the show; Jerry Kaufman, gopher extraordinaire; Connie Faddis, whom I was delighted to see again; Eli Cohen, Richard Labonte, Suzle Tompkins, Dena Brown...faces who tried to talk to me. I had reached the stage of having to tell my mind to slow down, formulate its concepts into simple words, and force the mouth to utter these, slowly and distinctly: "Jerry. Here, money. Coffeeshop, basement. Breakfast, please." And in five minutes food would appear, and within an hour or so, someone would force me to ingest it. I was directing a stream of verbal meaning-symbols at Eli Cohen when I suddenly stopped and said (slowly, carefully): "Eli. I'm exhausted. I'm not making sense."

He patted me on the propellor beanie Leigh Couch had donated. "It's ok. You're making sense...it's just that you're waving your hands around, and you're all jittery, and the words are coming out twice as fast as normal. You sound like you're on speed."

A Perfect Stranger turned from his contemplation of Odd 20 (the one with the band-aided dragon) and said: "Bad trip? Want some Quaalude?"

I stared in horror, waved my hands about, and said: "Huuuh? Uh, er, no!"--by which I

hoped to indicate that any interference with my metabolism would leave me, in 20 seconds, out cold, fit only to be propped in a display case labeled "FTIAWOL" for the rest of the convention. David Emerson arranged this display on Monday morning, but that's Another Story.

I wasn't on speed at Torcon, just naturally crazy. But I wish someone would tell Bruce Gillespie that I really am sane sometimes.

My Torcon was, first, the All Our Yesterdays Room, conceived as a tribute to fandom's history on the 25th anniversary of the first Torcon. Since this event had taken place nearly two months before I was born, my knowledge of fan history was limited to the memories of all the fans I could badger; resources like All Our Yesterdays and Fancyclopedia; fanzine collections, mostly Michael's with help from Terry Carr, Boyd Raeburn and Bruce Robbins; Charlie Brown's guided slidetour of fandom; and especially the archives and memorybanks of Harry Warner, Jr. I have two regrets: Harry decided his health was too poor to make the Toronto trip; and I only managed an incomplete record of fandom's history-through-fanzines --public apologies especially to Buz and Elinor Busby, editors of the Hugo-winning Cry.

I hoped to remind older fen of their past--so they'd sit around reminiscing for the benefit of the neos and sf readers at their first convention. In the process, I learned a lot about the world of Hoy Ping Pong, crifanac and blog. I bought a water pistol, briefly considered sewing a "Friar Tucker" robe, and spent one fine evening stuffing Progress Report 4 into envelopes while trading lines with John Millard: "It's Eney's fault." "He's down in the bar." "Dave Kyle says you can't sit here!" "Bloch is Superb!" The neofan coolie laborers from the local sf club were croggled, but John and I had a great time. I began to hope others would, too, when Jodie sent that brick for the Tucker Hotel.

My Torcon was, second, a chance to meet people--especially the Australians, who'd asked Michael and me to be their Fan GoHs in 1975. I hoped, especially, to meet Bruce Gillespie the Person, as distinct from B.G. on Paper, superpublisher of Science Fiction Commentary. Anyone who disliked all the books I liked, but enjoyed Loudon Wainwright and Hunter Thompson, had to be interesting.

Wednesday. We moved into the hotel, dragging boxes of Michael's comics (to be sold for plane fare to Australia); my books and clothes (to accompany me to Regina); the AOY materials (including the brick); and assorted necessities (including Michael's last bottle of IPA, for Hugo-banquet night). In the convention office, people were busy but amazingly organized. Torcon had been hanging over our lives for two and a half years; now it looked like it might actually work. Early fans drifted in. I started to feel excited as I sat down to process registrations.

And then Bruce Gillespie walked in. "Bruce!" I carolled blithely. Well, ok. I yelled. Shrieked? "Hi! I'm Susan." He looked startled, winced, but ambled over, still jet-lagged. As he turned briefly to speak to Michael, I spotted another figure in the doorway: the rainbow-shirted form of Bill Rotsler. Now, Mr. Rotsler was not only a talented cartoonist, Hugo-nominated writer and our Fan GoH; he's also a cheshire-cat-like, cuddly man. So I shrieked, "Bill! Hi!" bounded across the room, and hugged the Nice Man--who picked me up, hugged me back, and said "Hi!" before shaking hands with John Millard. I walked back, sat down, picked up the registration cards, and turned to talk to Bruce. He looked dazed, and soon politely excused himself. Pity: it was the last time I talked coherently to any fan until Christmas.

Thursday, 9 am, was setup time. Somewhere Out There, the concom was hassling with artshow hangings held up across the border, Hugos ordered in January that hadn't materialized, films that weren't delivered, registration queues. Somewhere Out There, a convention went on all weekend, with serious discussions of sf, keynote speakers, even some of the weird' n'freaky programming Richard Labonte and I suggested. I hope people enjoyed it. Meanwhile in the Toronto Room I confronted empty display cases, blank display panels, several boxes of fannish artifacts, and the realization that, however well the Room was planned in my

head, it lacked a certain...concreteness. It was a manic, hassled day, saved by the capable Lindas. They coolie-labored, ran interference with people who dropped in with materials and stayed to visit, and chatted with the security guard. He was a young West Indian who liked sf, enjoyed the crazy people, and gently closed the doors when the craziest one of all shrieked, "Oooouut! The display opens tomorrow, maybe! OOUUTT!! Oh, sorry, Bruce, not you!"--but he'd vanished.

Shayne McCormack brought in some pictures. "Have you met Bruce yet?" she asked. I explained that I had, but incoherently. "I really am sane sometimes," I explained. "I'll talk to Bruce when the Room is finished." Shayne looked dubious, observed that Bruce seemed to prefer quiet women, and left when I started shrieking, "Where is Ben Jason? He promised me his worldcon program book collection! I have a whole empty display case! Where is Ben Jason?" At which point Bruce walked in again, handed me some photos, and fled.

Dinner Wednesday night had been Japanese, with the Miesels, Rosemary Ulllyot, and Jerry Jacks. Dinner that night was French, with Bill Rotsler, Vincene Wallace (as pleasant as she is gorgeous), Rosemary, and the Trimbles. Dinner the next night was the Great Wall of China banquet, in the company of that most charming of gentlefen, Walt Liebscher. See, I can write a proper conreport! The food was, I'm sure, superb. The company was witty and entertaining; I wish I could tell stories like Bjo. But I might as well have been eating Kentucky Fried Cardboard (that was Saturday night, at the Mars restaurant) completely alone. I was tired. I was hypertense. Thursday night, the Room was still a mass of posterboard on the floor. While everyone else partied, I locked myself into the Toronto Room. At 3 am, I drifted up to the Bushyagers' party, hoping Ben Jason would arrive in the morning with his program books. Linda told me he had arrived...without. I was too tired to shriek.

I opened the All Our Yesterdays Room at 9:30 Friday morning. One Linda handed me coffee. Another spread out copies of Tucker's Neofan's Guide. And the Legendary Tucker appeared! He admired the bricks for the Tucker Hotel. He put on a propellor beanie. He smiled fondly at the 1948 Torcon issue of Le Zombie. Tucker approved! Tucker said, "I'm sorry I didn't answer your letter about the project but I was in Florida recuperating from an operation. I dug these out for you." He handed me an envelope full of photos. The photos from All Our Yesterdays. I looked at Tucker. I looked at the empty display case. And I whipped out the file of Rotsler cartoons I'd been hoping to use in the display, and, muttering, "So that's what Bill Rotsler looked like in '48!" set up a picture display in ten minutes flat.

So the Room worked. The First Fandomites hung around, trading stories. The neofans bought the Guide, and perhaps went away less puzzled than I was at my first worldcon (the hucksters were selling copies of All Our Yesterdays, and I couldn't see the point). Various of my friends made it a quiet spot to sit and chat. I met Gina Clarke, the original Duchess of Canadian Fandom. I met Ned McKeown, chairman of the first Torcon, as he and John Millard knelt in front of the case full of '48 souvenirs, and chuckled. I was made a Tucker Groupie, while Tucker and I chatted to local reporters in front of blowups of the 1948 convention coverage. "Zap! Zap! Atomic Ray is Passe With Fiends!" shrieked the Globe and Mail. "Don't Wake Up Screaming; Horror Boys Invade City" advised the Star, whose reporter had quoted "Wilson Tucker, of Bloomington, Illinois" at length. The reporters, who'd only wanted to find someone standing still, were impressed enough by the capture of the first Torcon's fan GoH to give us reasonably serious coverage--despite the Star's announcement, a week before, of a "Monster Convention" for "three thousand fans of monsters, the incredible and the unknown."

The convention came together while I fell apart. Friday night, I thought I could relax. The magnificent Rosemary Ulllyot, Elizabeth Buchan Kimmerly my earthmother, Susan Phillips the ACUSFOOS mascot (whom I hadn't seen since Fan Fair II), and a select group of Nice People--including Bruce Gillespie--found ourselves in my room. In my closet, actually, admiring Larson E., placed there for safety when people started noticing him around Michael's neck, and fainting. I believe I began to make some intelligent remarks about Kurt

Vomnegut to Bruce. I believe he began to suspect I had a brain in my head.

Then Monty Python came on. Sandra Miesel, Bob Silverberg, Eli Cohen and half the immediate world had drifted in by the time it ended. And in the midst of the party that decided to foist itself on me, an Ottawa Fandom Revival surfaced, with "Hey, remember the time at William Blake House when Fifth Avenue brought over the garbage bag full of popcorn?" "Yeah, that was the Vernal Equinox party when you promised me David Andrews the Pound specialist, so I read the whole of Ezra Pound, and I hate Pound, and David brought two cases of beer and three women!"

Imagine not one, but four manic women, giggling hysterically, while I tried to explain some of the references to Bruce, who kept muttering, "You're all mad." Eventually, I led my roomful of bodies down the hall, Pied-Piper-like, to the Aussie suite. Bruce had vanished, and I was worried. After all, tomorrow he had to announce the worldcon bid, with me as half of its Fan GoH; I was afraid he was regretting the choice. I cornered Paul Anderson. "Paul," I said slowly, thinking out the words so they'd come out clearly, "Paul, please, do you think I'm crazy, because I'm not like this normally, really, but I think Bruce thinks I'm crazy and I'm sure he's sorry about asking me to be Fan GoH because I can't talk coherently to anyone, or stay in one place for five minutes, but really I can, and would someone please tell Bruce I really am sane sometimes?" At which point I realized I was waving my hands and babbling incoherently.

Paul Anderson raised an eyebrow, looked down (he's about seven feet tall), and said, with great deliberation, "Mad? Welll...you certainly are...vivid." I abandoned my group, and my attempt to act like a normal human being, and went to bed.

Saturday morning came all too soon, as far as my brain was concerned, but my body was wide awake and bouncing around by 7 am. I put an Aussie t-shirt on it, let it bop down to the St. Laurence Market (one of my favorite places in Toronto) for apples, and pasties, and bunches of flowers for the Room. After insisting somewhat hysterically that yes, I KNEW everyone wanted to go to the consite bidding but I HAD to go, so PLEASE guard the display for me, I trundled off to the one program item I attended.

Now I was feeling fairly calm, confident that the Aussies would win, if only for the fabulous fannish spirit of their movie. But the calm, confident Bruce Gillespie was zipping through several manic-depressive cycles, running around the Canadian Room getting lights, mikes and projectors set up, whipping away my Genuine Aussie Digger Hat so Roger Zelazny could wear it while seconding the bid, checking to see that Progress Report Nought (that's zero-- I did some interpreting between speakers of the Queen's English and King Nixon's English) had been typed up since the publicity material hadn't arrived, and generally acting frantic. "Hello, Bruce!" I said cheerily. "Look, you're certain to win the bid. Everything will be fine. Calm down."

Bruce actually stopped running in circles for thirty seconds, looked at me in horror, and said: "You're telling me to be calm?"

Then John Millard pointed to the huge pile of ballots for Australia, and Bruce was off on his own private trip of high-octane egoboo. I remember leading an Aussie expedition to the local liquor store, during which I think I showed Merv Binns and Eric Lindsay that I could simulate a reasonable facsimile of sanity--but I don't think they told Bruce. I remember that the costume ball took place; and I remember attending the Aussie victory party and chatting coherently with the Miesels about Sandra's magnificent "Queen of Air and Darkness" costume. Then I dropped in to Don and Sheila D'Amassa's APA-45 party for a few minutes before bed. My goodness, all those interesting people I only knew through the mail! I folded up on the floor, carefully (I was wearing a 30-year-old satin dress of my mother's)--to have a sane, serious conversation with...Bruce Gillespie, about Australian sf. Then Will Straw walked into the room. WILL STRAW?!

"Will Straw! You're real!" I shrieked, bounding across the bed and several bodies to verify his corporeal existence, say hello, and apologize for thinking he was a hoax. Then I

went back to Bruce, and the sentence I'd been in the middle of. Bruce gave me a strange look, and soon left.

The next morning, I met Peter Gill and John Douglas from the concommittee. Peter looked unharried for the first time in months; apparently the con was Going Well. "Hey, did you hear, the artshow hangings arrived!" he grinned. "And that's not all. You know how great the hotel staff are being--" I nodded appreciatively. "Well, you know Tom Smith, the convention manager--he's a respectable executive type. But he's really enjoying the con! Turns out he reads sf. He moved his family into the hotel for the weekend; his kids are down watching the movies. And last night, about ten o'clock, there he was, running through the con-floor lobby shouting, 'Bjo! Where's Bjo Trimble? The hangings are here! Bjo!' He's as crazy as the rest of us!"

"Speaking of crazy," I said, "the Aussies think I am. Every time I try to talk to Bruce Gillespie, something happens in mid-sentence, and in ten minutes when I get back to Bruce, he's given up." I told them about Will Straw, ending with, "And so would you please tell Bruce that I really AM sane sometimes?"

Peter laughed, pointed out he hadn't talked to anyone, including his wife Judy, all week, and hurried off. John, immaculate in a three-piece junior-exec suit, raised a practiced eyebrow. He glanced from the top of my propellor beanie to the tip of a grubby toe in a beat-up sandal, protruding from under a flowing blue dress. He noted the twitchy hands, the unfocussed eyes, the fuzzy outline, and said, calmly, "Do you want me to lie?"

I was calm Sunday. Catatonic, in fact. Two hours sleep, too much excitement, and the realization that, two thousand miles and two days away, was my first teaching job, for which I was totally unprepared, can do that to a person. The knowledge that the immediate world considered me insane didn't help. Besides, we were getting uncomfortably close to the Hugos. I didn't expect to win the fanwriter Hugo; I hoped Terry Carr would. But I didn't expect to win the fanzine Hugo, either.

I'm sure people drifted in and out of the Room all day. I don't remember. Terry Carr and I were interviewed at 10 am for CBC Radio by Chuck Davis, who swears we were coherent. I don't remember. I did, finally, make a quick tour of the art show, where I saw the Alicia Austin painting Michael coveted. I did remember that, well enough to order its mate, a portrait of Larson E., as a Christmas present. And I even made it into the huckster room, where Lesleigh Luttrell asked me if I wanted to join the new film apa. I laughed. Did she think I was crazy?

Across the room, the Enzenbachers were displaying their sculptures. We'd been impressed by their work at Westercon, and had urged them to come to Toronto. Gargoyle sculptures. Jewels. An intricate silver chalice. Covet, covet. I didn't expect to win the fanzine Hugo. I knew Michael would be disappointed, would need more consolation than a bottle of IPA. Besides, I needed something spectacular to celebrate my first real job. A bronze demon leered up at me. Quickly I wrote a cheque for it, and a beautiful garnet set in a twisty silver claw.

At last, I locked up the Room for the last time, changed into the silver dress I'd made to lose the Hugo in at Noreascon, made lastminute arrangements with Rosemary who was having our Hugolose's Party in her room, and trotted off for a Fancy Dinner. Sheryl Birkhead had been coaxed out of her hidey-hole to share the company of the elf-like Jerry Jacks, the platypod Miesels, the legendary Bowers, and the fabulous fannish Glicksohn. The Boy Wonder, I mean. I was there only in the the most literal of senses. Falling asleep over my plate, I numbly excused myself, went to my room to splash cold water on my face--and suddenly was awake and down, crying and exhausted. Eventually, I pulled myself together and got to the banquet hall just as Lester Del Rey finished his pre-Hugo remarks. I don't know why he began with "Best Novel" unless he knew Isaac couldn't stand the suspense. I know I couldn't.

And then...third place to Algol...second to...Locus? And Michael and I gasped, I was on



my feet, knocking people flying...halfway to the platform, I realized I'd never heard who won. Maybe Science Fiction Commentary? And then I was clutching a wooden base with a plaque that said Energumen, giggling insanely, and hugging everyone in sight--including Bruce Gillespie, whom I knew would never believe I really could be sane, sometimes.

Ten minutes later, I finally realized what had happened. "Michael!" I said, awestruck. "We won!" He nodded. "But, but, I bought you a consolation present, because we'd lose, and now what am I going to do with it?" Michael decided it would be all right to give him the demon--as consolation because Torcon had lost all the Hugos.

Later that night, I was in the vicinity of the First Fandom party. I sat at the feet of Leigh Couch--a great lady, and a tower of strength to harried concommittees. Dave Kyle said I could sit there. He and Tucker made me an honorary First Fandomite. Above me, fabulous fannish reminiscences proceeded. All I was aware of was Leigh's blue-purple robe, with gold embroidery that writhed before my eyes. I was cold, tired, alone in the middle of 2,700 people, shaking. And I was rescued--by Bruce Gillespie and Phyrne Bacon, who chatted at me for ages because, they said later, they were afraid to leave me alone. I think they were worried because I was quiet, and sitting still. I hope they realized how grateful I was.

Monday. After three hours sleep, I packed for Regina, then packed up the Room. "Jerry. Money. Breakfast. Please. John Berry? Foolscaps! Thank you! Sign receipt. 'Bye. Coffee?" At some point, Bruce drifted in while I was trying to say goodbye to friends; make sure irreplaceable material got back to its owners; deal with the showcase-rental people; kneel at Tucker's feet; and thank my helpers. He decided I was still insane, and vanished. That was the last chance I had to talk to Bruce, or any of the fen I'd glimpsed. Not that I was able to talk. As Richard Labonte, David Emerson, and Eli Cohen bundled me onto the airport bus, I had just enough presence of mind to clutch my Hugo base, and not enough to say goodbye.

I understand there was a Torcon. I hear people enjoyed it. Ted White in Amazing, and people like Jodie Offutt, David Emerson, John Millard, and Tucker Himself in letters said they'd liked the Room. Jodie talked about sitting in the Cincy suite, listening to Tucker and Liebscher swap stories. David told me he'd been down in the bar, listening to Tucker, Liebscher, and Rotsler tell tales of the Slan Shack, "and bawdy they were, too." And I talked to at least one goshwow neo who'd had Lester Del Rey re-autograph a book he'd signed for the kid's father, at the first Torcon.

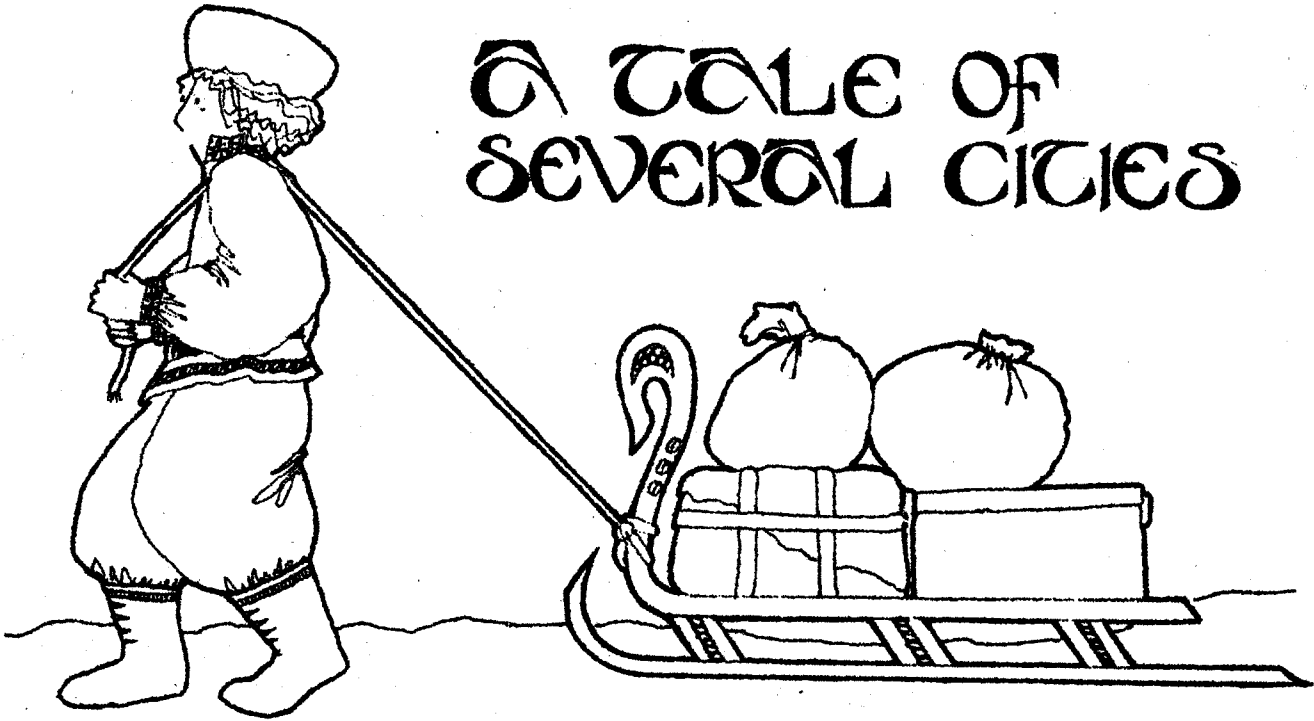
I apparently made a distinct impression on the congoers, even if the con made a blurred one on me. David's letter continued: "So...how are you doing out there in the frozen wasteland? I had an image of you walking into your first class, handing out a few dittoed sheets, dismissing class, and collapsing on the floor. Then again, that image was wearing that blue dress of yours and a propellor beanie."

Well, yes. But the months went by, with only an empty Hugo base to remind me that Torcon had happened. My classes and colleagues seemed to think I was sane. More important, I began to feel I was sane. I put out several issues of a personalzine, to assure the world I was coping with it. And I got a letter in response from Bruce Gillespie, which said, "Things seem to be working out well for you in Regina. You burble, not shout. The impression I get from your writing is that you lead a very satisfactorily crazy life."

"Crazy"...hey! Listen, will somebody please tell Bruce...

Oh, never mind.

# A TALE OF SEVERAL CITIES



## I. Regina

"Pulled from our ruts by the made-to-order gale  
We dropped Regina behind like a pile of bones."  
--F.R. Scott, "Trans-Canada"

Regina looks small from 27,000 feet.

Thirty seconds after takeoff, the city's vanished. Dark blight of the IPSCO steel mill, isolated boxes of farm buildings in flat white nothing sliced by the dark strip of highway to Winnipeg; cloud, white fluff scattered over a backdrop of white, squared off by road lines, blotched with greyblack of leafless, stunted trees. An hour of whiteness to Winnipeg.

Regina, "The Queen City": dignified name given to Pile'o'Bones when the little settlement with its heaps of buffalo bones (to be shipped east for fertilizer) became territorial capital. Fort Qu'Appelle (which Eli Cohen insists means "Fort Whachamacallit"), a lovely little town to the east, on the winding Qu'Appelle River amid the lunar, eroded hills had been the original choice; but the territorial governor, a man named Dewdney, with his friends owned most of the flat, featureless land around insignificant Pile'o'Bones....

Pierre Berton once claimed that Regina was the most beautiful city in Canada because her people, having started with nothing, worked hard to create an attractive setting for their lives, instead of destroying what nature had provided. And so there are parks, and carefully nurtured trees. The university stands on the edge of town. From the fifth floor of the Humanities building, you look east over the parking lot and highway to unbroken prairie. Or, north, you see Wascana Lake: frozen and snow-covered now. It has Canada Geese, islands, flowers in summer, a fringe of tree-covered hills: only the geese aren't man-made, and they're there because of the warm water from the power plant, and the man-provided food! The park sweeps almost to the center of town, an expanse of picnicker-covered greenery or cross-country-skier-covered whiterly.

What else besides grass and geese? Moving water in summer; in winter, a moving lake of white as snow blows and drifts over the huge empty spaces of this city, under its huge,

empty sky. Buried tips of red snow-fences. Wide quiet streets of brightly-painted houses. Regina residents seem to go in for lots of frame or aluminum siding, in turquoise, salmon pink, bright green, royal blue. One two-story house near here is entirely lavender, with vivid purple trim. Another is shocking pink with turquoise. Fences are common--high ones too, an apparent contradiction of western friendliness. In theory, at least, they stop the snow drifting and protect the gardens from wind. They also provide space for more colored paint. Someone near the highway on the north side of town painted the fence in panels of the Canadian maple leaf flag. The color looks vulgar and garish to an easterner in summer. It looks beautiful and brave to the same easterner cringing from flat whiteness in winter.

Whiteness. Space. Horizontal space. There's a new apartment near the university, tallest building in the city, rising twenty stories above Wascana Park. It's not just ugly, a grey box with poison-yellow extruded balconies; it's wrong, a vertical scar. This is a city close to its physical environment--the radio stations seem to broadcast more weather reports and highway-condition reports than records. The largest city in the province, it has 145,000 people. The entire province has less than half the population of metro Toronto.

Regina has no frills. When my friend Dianne (whose parents I'm staying with now) moved here nine years ago (reluctantly), we played a game called "Do they have X in Regina." Dianne: "Do you suppose they have tv in Regina?" Susan: "Probably not." Both sigh. Well: we don't have a good bookstore (one is trying hard, though) or a good record store, or neat boutiquey places; or bagels, or Amazing, or Duff Gordon sherry. We do have Twining's tea, though, and I've even been able to track down "Je Reviens" perfume. We have the sense of being, six months of the year or more, at the mercy of impersonal, hostile forces: shoveling snow that blows like dust, filling in the driveway as fast as it's cleared, freezing your ears under a wool hat and a scarf, sliding uncontrollably off the road and halfway down the Qu'Appelle Valley as Debbie, a friend of mine who has to travel a lot, did. We have a sense of the imminence of sky: white or deep blue or pink-and-violet, clear and star-filled, bright with Northern lights.

Just before Christmas, Janet Reeker and I were driving through downtown Regina. It was five o'clock, rush hour, which meant maybe three cars were lined up at each stoplight. (I have never before lived in a city where I could drive downtown on Saturday afternoon secure in the knowledge that I could find a parking space half a block from the main shopping area.) We drove west between department stores and dirty-brick office blocks--and suddenly at the end of the drab street was a glowing crimson sky, with a black wedge of geese stamped across it. Then it was empty again.

And it's seventeen hundred miles of snow back to everything I've known for 25 years.

One day last fall, Doug Goodhue was showing me some of his photos. A small field, elm trees shading it, goldenrod beside the old weathered logs of a snakerail fence. "Hey! That's home." And it was home: taken near Kemptville, Ontario, thirty miles south of Ottawa, where my grandparents lived. I felt positively homesick for that field, for someplace where people had lived, and left a mark.

Except: under this Western sky, people do seem to take the time to notice each other. They smile, and are friendly. I've been made welcome. "Aha!" said the university folk I met in August, "New Blood in the Department. You must come to dinner tonight!" So my good friend and earthmother Elizabeth Buchan Kimmerly gave me a long string of garlic to ward off the vampires.... Life still has space and time to be human, in little Pile'o'Bones. I'm just not sure my life can be lived here.

Partly, I'm leaving to find out.

"Oh Jesus please don't let Toronto  
take my song away."

--Bruce Cockburn, "Thoughts for a Rainy Afternoon"

We descend through dirty clouds to fields where lights bloom to the dim, shimmery horizon. Toronto goes on forever. Three and a half months ago, numb with exhaustion, I sat watching these factories and freeways vanish, wondering why I didn't care. I spent exactly three years of my life in this dirty blur, Aug. 30, 1970 to Sept. 1, 1973; and three months in Regina. It seems reversed. All I feel is apprehension: my hands are shaking and I clutch the seat.

"I'm sorry you're so down on Toronto," says Rosemary Ulliyot to me on a tape, "I like it. All the cultural life..." Three years ago, Rosemary was complaining about the cold, indifferent, expensive big city. She's adjusted. I thought I had, until I escaped.

Besides, what's "cultural life"? In Toronto, I usually sat at home. I've been to more movies, plays, concerts and so on, and shared ideas with more people about them, in Regina than in the previous three Toronto years combined. Ten days ago, I went to the Regina Symphony Christmas concert. Beside me, six-year-old Dana Goodhue chortled at the Toy Symphony. Her parents and I recognized half our colleagues in the orchestra, chorus (Rick-in-the-next-office had been practising bits of "Messiah" in the corridor at me for weeks) and the audience. On the other side of me sat Burton Weber, muttering to Susan the Seeing Eye Rat sardonic comments all through Leroy Anderson's banal, clumsy "Festival of Carols" with its incongruous transitions from "Jingle Bells" to "Adeste Fideles." As the final notes died, he burst out: "Well, at least we Jews didn't crucify Christ when he was born!"

I'm still grinning when the plane lands--several hours late. A planeload of people, impatient, shoves into corridors full of more impatient, shoving people. Noise, confusion, too many bodies...Michael, smiling and furry, rescues me.

Bus and subway. "I'd forgotten how long it takes to get anywhere in Toronto. Back home, we'd be halfway to Moosejaw." Back home.

Snow's followed me east; here, it's damp and cold. Despite all Woolff can do, I'm shivering; and my warm new boots have developed unexpected leaks in the dirty slush. My case is getting heavier; why did I buy everyone books? And why did I buy my brother Bob the expensive cowboy hat he wanted, its felt swathed in plastic: completely unpackable, I've been nursing it on my knees all the way East. I'm vaguely aware of huge buildings, huge trees, looming out of wet, snow-swirled air. I keep slipping, my feet are soaking, I'm so cold... and here at last is Michael's apartment with its beautiful leaded glass windows and its dying plants.

"Dear, what are those funny, tall, scaly things, that go straight up and down and then get all fuzzy at the top?"

"What things?"

"There, all along the sidewalk. They're tall, and black, and sort of woody..."

"Oh, those. Those are ogres, tweetie. Dead ogres. Don't you have ogres in Regina? There was a battle between the ogres and the trolls, that's what's left..."

Trees. Tall trees. Tall buildings. Vertical eastern city, blank-eyed people between the high-rises, slush underfoot, glittering Christmas stores. Glitter and dirty slush.

Wednesday, Michael and I go shopping. I revel in bookstores, and the sophistication of the window displays along Bloor St.--gold and silver, velvet and sequins, a profusion of luxurious nonsense. Regina offers the basics of life: jeans, but no crystal mushrooms; Rolling

Stone and a few DAW books, but no Canadian poetry. The first stop is the academic SCM bookstore, near the university. I pull out a list ("Don't you have any bookstores in Regina?") and move methodically through the Canadian literature section, accumulating Slim Volumes. "Look, dear, here's Doug Barbour's new book with the poems about LeGuin and Delany, and here's the Atwood books I said I'd get for Fraser, and I wonder if they have Ken Mitchell's novel, no, and..."

"MICHAEL, LOOK! MY BOOK!!!"

Slight digression. Eighteen months ago, I wrote a long, scholarly introductory essay for the reissue of an early Canadian novel: The Homesteaders (three guesses what it's about) by Robert Stead. I even scored a minor Academic Coup. While digging through Stead's papers in the National Archives, I discovered both a book and an unpublished manuscript not listed in the one-and-only Canlit bibliography. I included them in my own bibliography. The book eventually appeared from the University of Toronto Press, and the first copies were sent to me in Regina in October.

It is the most beautiful book in the world.

It was party day on my corridor, as I went bouncing around showing off the Book with its bright orange covers and my name, as big as the author's, in white letters. There I was, Published. Sense of Wonder. Naturally, The Homesteaders wasn't for sale in Regina. But here it was, in SCM. I paid for approximately \$75 worth of assorted poetry, and floated out.

The scene repeated itself in Longhouse, Toronto's Canadiana specialty bookshop, and in the main Yonge Street branch of Coles, a bestsellers-and-remainders non-specialty store. "Look! My book! It's here too!" I suppose if I were Robert Silverberg, I'd become blasé about seeing my name on a bookrack. I suppose...

Meanwhile, before the egoboo can overwhelm me, I drop in to see my thesis advisor. He doesn't remember me.

Several hours later, we squelch home, laden with exotic goodies: Arthur Rackham prints, Hungarian wine (no, we don't have socialist wine in Saskatchewan but we do have the local liquor, Beau Sejour aka Old Moose Jaw), and a hamster for Larsen E--seven feet of sluggish serpent who refuses to eat and is bitten by his dinner. He's not been well, and you have no idea how hard it is to buy a get-well card for a boa constrictor. I change quickly, put on my clammy boots, and, shivering, we head back to the subway, the streetcar, and Rosemary Ulyot's subterranean penthouse.

Rosemary cooks fabulous dinners; tonight, it's beef stroganoff, with a Rosemary Original Salad, the kind in which cubes of cheese, olives, raw mushrooms and possibly eyes of newt lurk under the lettuce leaves. Angus Taylor, accompanied by his brother Duncan and his alter-egos Bedford Cartwright, Lance Hardy and the rest, arrive. We exchange presents. Angus, who conceals a thoughtful soul under a glittering facade of wit, erudition, and scepticism, bestows upon me a beautiful edition of Blake's Songs of Innocence, with eerie woodcuts. Rosemary gives me a Bunnykins plate: for livening up lunch in the school cafeteria? Fine bookstores are, of course, one of the attractions of Big Cities; but what I've missed in Toronto is my friends.

Thursday: Rosemary calls from the airport; she's enroute to England for Christmas with her family, but the flight's delayed--the plane is stranded in London by the fuel shortage. She sounds annoyed. We say goodbye again. Then I head out into the softly falling snow. Quiet grey sky, fat white snowflakes drifting down to the faroff chime of bells: the Hart House carrillon, and behind it the university buildings, all Victorian-gothic grey turrets. Peaceful and fairytale-ish.

I spend an academic day, talking to professors, and reading serious discussions of sf in the Spaced Out Library. For some nonserious chatter, I bounce into Ken Smookler's office,

calling, "Hi, Joyce! When does the committee meeting start?" She yelps, Ken hugs me, and I promise to invite them all to my dissertation-oral party, which I figure will be the next time I'm in Toronto. "But my adviser still isn't sure who I am, I'm going to fail, and you'll have to console me!"

Ken grins. "I remember the party you planned when you were sure you'd lose the Hugo. And no, they aren't ready yet."

Since con-committee business is over and Ken and Joyce have Real Work to do, I head back into the slush, admiring, this time, the marzipan pigs and other exotica in the ethnic shops along Bloor. Doris' radio in the library informs me there's been 14" of snow, the Gardiner Expressway is jammed, the Parkway is closed, Highway 401 is clogged, the city can't get enough equipment to move the snow...ah, rushhour in the Big Apple of the North. The promise of food lures me back into the slush. A stop at Bakka for more books (how will I get this stuff home?) including Lundwall's Science Fiction: What It's All About: if I'm setting myself up as an expert, I'd better know. Then I truck next door to Anna Carter's antiques-and-handicrafts shop. As I play with a fuzzy knitted handpuppet, fuzzy Michael snowdrifts in, announcing, "Rosemary's coming to dinner with us."

"Rosemary's in England. She left four hours ago."

"The flight's delayed again. She leaves tomorrow whenever the plane gets here."

So we all went to a Japanese restaurant because we couldn't get into the Russian restaurant because Michael didn't have a tie. No, we don't have exotic restaurants in Regina.

Friday morning, the phone rings. "Rosemary! You're on your way to England! You've left!"

"The plane left--two and a half hours early. They didn't notify about ten of us, and we have to go on another flight. This evening. I hate Toronto airport!"

"Well, while you're waiting, write it up. It'll make a great column." Rosemary snarls.

I finish my research at the library, and we celebrate with hamburgers and American Graffiti. There are times when I wish I'd had a teenybopperhood. The entire audience cheers when the epilogue announces that the hero moved to Canada.

Finally, since we're spending Christmas in Ottawa, New Year's at separate locations in the US, before returning to Toronto, we open some presents to leave here. Thoughtful Sheryl Birkhead's box of handmade goodies includes a mini-afghan, for Regina winters. Great. Michael, so I'll have a Kirk of my own, gives me the cover drawing /used on Amor--Ed./; I give him an Alicia Austin portrait of himself-with-snake, a mate for the "Lamia" he bought at Torcon. Larson E, unimpressed, goes to sleep without touching his dinner again.

At last, Saturday morning, it's stopped snowing. We drag our suitcases to the subway. Never, ever, will I buy anyone an unpackable Western hat. Or books....

Bus station. Bus. Dreary streets. Expressways. Dreary suburbs. Traffic. Confusion in grey under grey as we trundle out of town. Even in three and a half months, the city's changed: buildings are down and Tower of Concrete, the huge CN communications tower not built by androids, spears the snowclouds. Some things haven't changed: crowded Yonge St., odd blend of tacky and sophisticated, with smiling freaks selling candles and hurrying, harried, grey-faced strangers. Big, dirty, cold...oh, yes, the book stores and record stores are great, and the libraries, and the whole ambience of alternatives: Regina is a very meat-and-potatoes, shop-from-the-Eaton's-catalogue, live-like-the-neighbors town. And I certainly enjoyed seeing my friends, and regret not having time to call others. But: Toronto is pleasant, but I'm not committed to it. Perhaps it's pleasant because I'm not committed to it.

I don't think I'll live here by choice again.

### III. Ottawa

"As Bytown [the city's original name] is not overrun with Americans, it may probably turn out a moral, well-behaved town, and afford a lesson to its neighbors."

--John MacTaggart, 1829

"A sub-arctic lumber-village converted by royal mandate into a political cock-pit."

--Goldwin Smith

I hate bus travel. The air is smokefilled. I'm cramped and tired. I can't read. I huddle into my seat and feel sorry for myself. Finally, there's a glow on the horizon, which can't be Ottawa so soon...but it is. The sleepy little civil service town where I grew up has mushroomed out over the farms. The fields where I picked wild flowers and fell into the creek are now parking lots in the inner suburbs. Still, dim in the twilight outside the dirty windows are hills, and little fields separated by snakerail fences, and trees: scenery. ("Don't you have scenery in Regina?" "No, wheatfields.")

The miles of suburbs and superhighways are less of a shock with each exposure, but they still remind me this isn't my city any longer. This time, what's new is the bus terminal, all clean tile and hard-edged neon. We find a taxi, load the heavier-each-minute luggage, zip through suburbs full of colored lights: no energy crisis here! (I tried unsuccessfully to get an Alberta "Let the Eastern bastards freeze in the dark" bumpersticker for Bob.) And finally, here's Mum in the doorway with a huge ball of white fluff.

Christmas with my family is quiet and warm. Christmas with Brother Bob's Samoyed puppy, Hendrix, is chaotic. Imagine all the cute-puppy antics: chewing Mum's slipper to shreds, gnawing on the rawhide bone Michael bought, eating the cat's dinner and anything else around (including a bar of soap, which he threw up in the middle of the livingroom rug), racing through snowdrifts for hours, exhausting all the humans so he has to lure poor harassed Puppy the Cat into a game of tag through the kitchen and around the tree, and jumping into the nearest handy lap to be cuddled.... Imagine all these antics performed by a lovable white fluffy creature with the face of a clown. And the body of a half-grown Big Dog. Hen kept deciding he was lonely and wanted to gambol--in the middle of the night. A five-month-old Samoyed landing on your stomach is an unforgettable experience.

Christmas night. Mum's dozing upstairs, Michael's dozing downstairs, Puppy's dozing on a chair out of Hendrix' reach, Hendrix is dozing under the tree dreaming of turkey giblets. Brother Bob's gone out with his girlfriend Marilyn, and his friends John and Clay, who were staying with us, have gone home as Christmas presents to their families. Bob's Amazing Sound System which can shatter windows for a quarter mile is turned way down; Christmas carols drift softly through the room. I sit quietly in the darkness, watching the fire, full of turkey, Christmas pudding, mincemeat and assorted traditional goodies. Eventually I tiptoe out to the kitchen for a glass of sherry. Hendrix lollops out, so I feed him some turkey. He flops by the fire with a contented sigh. I put my glass down, turn around for an extra log, and...schluurp! Hendrix licks his chops, hiccups faintly, and settles down to sleep again.

Christmas with my friends is noisy and fun. Christmas Eve, Richard Labonte's co-op holds their annual Holiday Feed: turkey, ham, salmon, home-made bread and Christmas cake for 28 or so, to the accompaniment of conversations that have been postponed since last year. Then, several days after Christmas, I leave Michael at the bus station enroute to the Haldeman clan gathering, and head off to my earthmother Elizabeth's house. "Please watch the bread, Susan," she says. "Ian and I are going out to buy a house," So I sit eating peanuts, listening to Bette Midler and making friends with the cat until the door opens. "Rosemary Billings, two English friends, and..." "John! Doctor Bag!" I squeal. And we pick up our conversation where it left off three years ago, when he went off to Glasgow to become an unemployed PhD.

"Thank you for Amor, Susan. You gave me an idea for a poem."

"That's great. About Regina?"

"No, using that line 'I dropped out of Canadapa when I went gafia before Torcon, and killed it.' Such power. Such hints of unexplored tragedy and passion. Such incomprehensibility. It's got to be put into a poem. And I'm writing an epic on the human body, based on the Reader's Digest 'I Am Joe's Big Toe' series.... Here, have some more wine, you look pale."

Having disposed of the future of Canadian poetry, we exchange gifts. It's five minutes before I can stop giggling, because Elizabeth presents me with an antique ersatz Hugo: a rocket-shaped bank that fires pennies up into its nosecone! Magnificent!

And suddenly it's early on a dull grey Saturday. I'm in Bob's pickup with the radio blaring, dashing for the airport.

#### IV. Interlude in Montreal

It's a twenty minute flight to Montreal, but Air Canada plans an hour layover on the "direct" flight. Seems that to make things more "convenient" we're to pre-clear US Customs and Immigration.

Deplane. Trudge and slidewalk miles to the baggage counter. Swelter in winter clothes. Conveyor belts start, stop, start, stop. Various flights announce final boarding procedures. Mine is one. After 48 minutes, baggage starts arriving. Snatch cases, drag to Customs counter. Polite lady informs me my Ottawa-to-NY boarding pass is wrong. I, and the rest of the flight, wait in line. We get passes. Back to Customs. "What's in the suitcase?" "Clothes." "Why does it have that 'Fragile, Delicate Instruments' sticker on it?" "Er, well, my brother works for a computer firm, and he stuck it on, and..." Rummage, rummage, toss... "Hmm, ok." Sprint down the corridor. Wait in line to be frisked. Wait in line to be X-rayed. Wait in line behind two women and a child with, oh Lord, Chinese passports, who take forever to clear Immigration. More corridors. Wait in line to be frisked, again. And back on the same blasted plane, with two minutes to spare, sweating under Woolff. If human beings had been meant to fly, we'd never have created airports.

#### V. New York

"Here we are in New York City, the hub of the universe."

"What good is it being on the hub of the universe when your hubcaps are stolen all the time?"

--Emerson and Cohen, on an Avocado Pit tape

What really surprised me most about New York was, I didn't hate it. Of course, I didn't really see the city. I saw friends.

By the time I deplaned at Kennedy, I'd grown somewhat tired of long, dreary airport corridors. At the end of this one, though, was Eli Cohen, trying hard not to look like a newly-hatched baby chick, a Sandra Miesel sensie he's still trying to live down. "Hi! Welcome! We were going to go to a Thai restaurant in the back of a pizza place tonight, but it burned down yesterday."

We chattered as the airport bus wheezed through endless shabby streets. ("Eli, where are the tall buildings? Did I get off in New Jersey?") Then the subway, and talk is impossible. Noise. Dirt. Grafitti. Litter. NOISE. An incredible, dirty, crowded station. A map like a tangle of colored spaghetti. "Look, we're here, we're going here." I nod blankly. More movement, noise and dirt, and finally...tall buildings! Columbia, hub of the universe for us boondocks scholars ("Here at the University of Southern North Dakota at Hoople..."). The Statue Where the Riots Were, back in the activist past. Double and triple locks, opening



on a zooful of furry bodies, at least one of which is David Emerson. Sense of Wonder:  
New York.

Eli reels off an impressive list of activities: a PDQ Bach concert tonight with 17 intimate friends; dinner with Jerry and Suzle and Barry Gillam; call Andy Porter; the Planetarium has a Christmas show; we've got tickets to "The Fantastiks" and the Peter Cook-Dudley Moore revue, "Good Evening"; there's a Fanoclats meeting, would I like to see Sleeper, let's go to the Met.... "Eli, it sounds marvellous, but you've forgotten something."

"The Empire State Building? Oh, of course...bookstores!"

"No. When do I get mugged?"

"Well, y'know, it's cold so there aren't many muggers hanging around, and they're really busy, but since you're a Canadian and a visitor and all I did manage to get you an appointment for Thursday at 4:30..."

I do, however, get to see a Genuine NY cockroach. And I do enjoy the city, and I am able to breathe the air...sometimes. I sit relaxing, that first evening, remembering how up-tight and miserable I'd been when we drove here for Lunacon in '71, and thinking, "Hey, this isn't so bad after all." And then, in the midst of enjoying David's superb pea soup and Eli's chicken in curried cheese sauce, I start gasping. A giant fist is squeezing my chest, and I can't breathe. Whatever the cause, this reaction recurs, annoyingly. One afternoon, Eli and I went shopping for exotic foodstuffs ("Don't you have bagels in Regina?"); we end up walking on downtown. Magnificent tall buildings rise against the sunset, flashing rose-and-gold light from millions of windows. The Lincoln Center complex is a dazzle of lights, with sculptures, graceful fountains, relaxed people wandering... "You know, Eli, I almost like New York."

"You do?" He sounds pleased, if incredulous.

"Yes, really," I say, fumbling for a Kleenex because my nose is stuffed up, my eyes watering, and suddenly I can't breathe, again...

It's a week of fragments. I pull the visitor's trick I'd demonstrated six months earlier for Charlie and Dena Brown on the other side of the continent: the sickies. Actually, it's David's fault because he shared The Bug with the Pit and me. The Bug induces fever, snuffles and other cold symptoms, and a strong desire to sleep all day, drink quantities of hot tea with honey, and stay up til 4 am, talking.

David, on fandom: "You know, all my friends are weird. The people I work with are weird. It's a relief to go home sometimes and see normal people, people with predictable behavior. I'm more comfortable with normal people." He stares gloomily at Yarik, the seven-foot decorated-for-Christmas avocado; underneath rests a quivering heap of one-two-three-many cats, and Arthur, Asenath's ex-husband, now a ceramic frog.

"David, you're a latent straight!"

"No, he's a latent accountant!"

"David, you're a latent dog person!"

Fragments: still on a face-the-class-at-8:30 schedule, I stumble into the kitchen to make some tea, and am faced by eight unblinking cateyes. Four silent, alien furry bodies stand statuelike. In the air echoes, soundless, a command: FREED US! OPEN THE TENDER VITTLES!!

Full of Szechuan food ("Don't you have...?") I nevertheless urge a Pit stop at Baskin-Robbins for icecream in the middle of a sleet storm. Seven people crowd into the store, I'm the only one buying, and I take forever to make up my mind; but the clerk isn't busy, and in fact seems impressed. "You've come all the way from Canada, just for icecream?"

"Oh," says a strange voice behind me, "I'm Canadian too. We have Baskin-Robbins now, did you know? I live around the corner from one."

"Oh, the Yonge and Eglinton branch? Yeah. But I'm from Regina."

Chorus: "Don't you have Baskin-Robbins in Regina?"

"No! But we DO have Monty Python, EVERY WEEK!" They are crushed. Still, it is a proud and lonely thing to be an apricot brandy sherbet fan in a vanillia-and-chocolate town.

The Village, in another sleet storm. (Thank goodness for Woolff, but why did I have to visit in midwinter in a fuel shortage?) For an old folkie, it's a strange experience, ten years after. There's Bleeker Street, looking dingy, but the Nite Owl is a sleazy poster shop and the Purple Onion advertises topless dancers...David play me an Ian and Sylvia album, and his autoharp, as consolation.

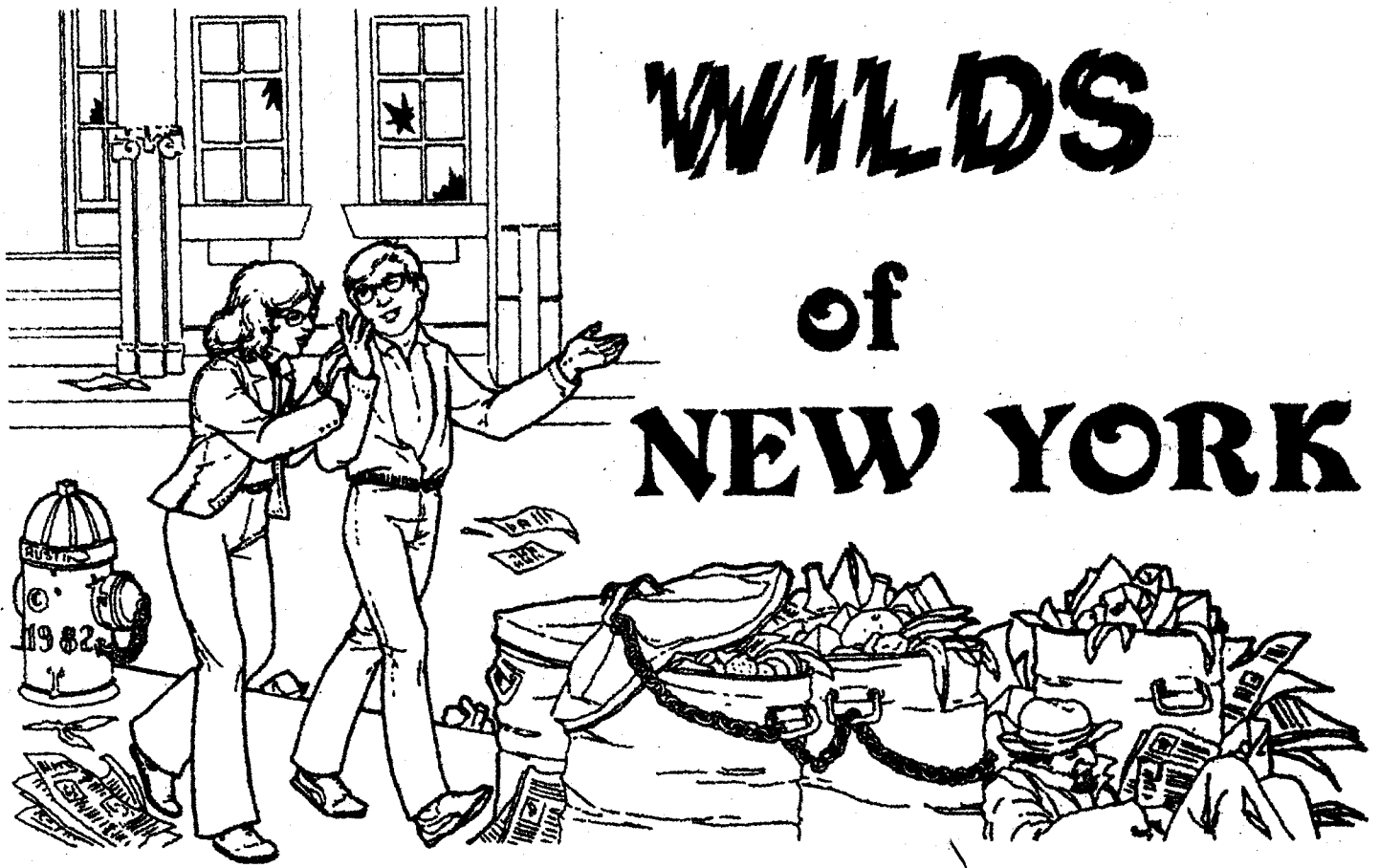
David on New Year's day, holding his stomach and moaning after a party chez Katz. "Ooh, I ate too much, Joyce cooked this huge turkey, with vegetables, and salad and lasagna and beans, and it was sooo good, and we kept eating, and then Arnie said, 'There's three cakes in the kitchen,' and I had a piece of each, and, ooh..." And he went back to preparing the black-eyed peas for southern-style New Year's dinner. I've never seen anyone with a food hangover before.

Not one, but two Japanese restaurants, the second almost deserted; six o'clock before "The Fantastiks" is my suppertime, but afternoon for the natives. The chef puts on a show for us, flourishing his huge knife and tossing steak, shrimp, and vegetables about on the grill in front of us. The friendly waitress makes us feel we are guests in her house...and then asks where we're from since we must be out-of-towners, "you are so friendly, so polite." And to finish off a perfect meal, we see two huge boats go sailing up Sixth Avenue. New York's a marvellous place.

I didn't figure out the subway (Eli: "Riding the New York subway is a Taoist experience. It all connects, but you can't see how."). Or go to the Met with Andy Porter, having reached the "thanks but I'll just stay home and die" stage. Or publish a oneshot, though Asenath kept dreaming up titles. But there's always next trip, before Discon, when maybe I'll be able to take Mae Strelkov to the Japanese restaurant, and show her the sign in the Planetarium that points downstairs to "Solar System and Washrooms." (Actually, the Planetarium was a bit disappointing. Half the exhibits were shut down because of the energy crisis. One by one, the stars were going out.)

## V. Regina

Finally, westward. Plane to Toronto. Overnight, long enough to listen to the Flanders and Swann Bestiary I'd bought for Michael, and collect my careful of books. Homeward bound? Well, back east are a lot of people I miss, but I've a suitcase full of presents for people in Regina. If home is where your friends are, I'm going home.



# WILDS of NEW YORK

When I flew to New York last year, I was a Woman With A Mission.

No mere pleasure trip, this jaunt--though Eli had tickets to five plays and the ballet; Freff was going to show me the Met's art treasures, Jon Singer, the Botanical Gardens, and Eli, the Cloisters; and we had a full schedule of dinner-dates with the city's finest fen. No mere flight from W\*I\*N\*T\*E\*R, though there was ice on the puddles and not a sign of an open bud outside my Regina house when I left April 30, while to the south the rhododendrons bloomed and a cardinal fluttered through the dogwood in the Cloister gardens. Pleasant: but I had no time for Pleasure. I had a Quest.

My friends the Millers--Gorgeous David the Actor and Talented Cathryn the Artist--had decided to retreat from the Big Bad City (pop. 145,000) to a 30-acre farm near Saskatoon. There, they said, they would live in peace and contentment, growing food, raising goats and rabbits, pruning the orchard and waiting for the Collapse of Civilization. "Money?" I said. Ah, that would come from their other vocations: Cathryn would sew and embroider beauteous custom clothing; David would build guitars and dulcimers.

It is marginally possible to be a self-sufficient farmer in Saskatchewan.

It is not possible to be a self-sufficient luthier.

David searched lumberyards for mahogany and cherry, talked wistfully of someday travelling to Brazil to buy a rosewood log. He ordered rosewood pegs, wire, and pretty beads for fine-tuning dulcimer strings, all from India. The order took six months to fill, but it wandered through Customs eventually. Finally, he ordered guitar rosettes, mother-of-pearl and gold inlays, and other exotica from faroff, fabled New York. The order had taken six months to remain unfilled.

"Susan, dear," said Cathryn, holding some art for Amor just out of reach. "Susan, dear," said David, holding the promise of an article for Amor realsoon and the cast preview of a new show at Globe Theatre that night, before me. "Susan, dear," purred the cats, holding in their claws, for a change. "Dear good friend Susan, will you run an errand for us in New York? All you have to do is go to Wild's."

"What do you want in Brooklyn? A copy of The Incomplete Terry Carr?"

"No, no, not the wilds. Wild's. They sell guitar rosettes and..."

"No, no, Cathryn," David corrected. "They have guitar rosettes there, among other things, including a lot of dust. Sometimes you can buy them. If you send them a mail order, sometimes they mail it out. If you go there with money and an order, sometimes they'll let you buy stuff and maybe even mail it to you. So here's the order, and here's a money order, and here's a map. It's not too hard to find. I got there on my bike just a few years ago." He repressed a shudder. David dislikes cities.

I looked at the little cardboard rectangle David handed me. "H.L. Wild, dealer in supplies for the professional and amateur wood worker. Established 1876," it said. "All roads lead to Wild," it said. "Directions how to come here: All Subways, Bus Lines and the Hudson Tubes have stations on 14th Street. Get off there and take the 14th Street Crosstown Bus going East marked Delancey and Clinton streets, which will bring you to Avenue A and 11th Street. We are located 4 doors from the Corner. BLUE BUILDING," it said. I looked at the map on the other side of the card. My knowledge of how-to-trek-around-NYC is limited to "here's the subway stop for the Avocado Pit, that's the street Jerry and Suzle live on," but it seemed simple enough. I did note that Wild's was near the East River.

"It's sort of a rundown neighborhood," David added. "And it's a dark little store. And the people are completely crazy. You shouldn't have any trouble. Thanks!"

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I trotted off the plane at Kennedy, and was met by Richard Labonte, looking healthy. Since I'd last seen him four months before, in Vancouver looking ill, I was momentarily disoriented. Then Eli appeared.

"Hiya! We're having dinner with the DiFates tomorrow, and Debbie Notkin the day after, and Sandra Miesel wants you to call, and I have tickets for..." and he reeled off ten minutes' worth of entertainments, diversions, treats, and messages. "Anything else you'd like to do? We might fit it in on Thursday."

"Well, yes, love. Before I can enjoy myself, I have to go to Wild's."

"Oh, sure. Friday, the Fanoclast meeting at Steve Stiles' place..."

"No, no, not the wilds. Wild's. I have to get dulcimer inlays and guitar rosettes. The career of Saskatchewan's Finest Luthier depends on me!"

"Pretentious, isn't she?" muttered Richard, who's known me since before I was a neo. I ignored him, and handed that card to Eli. "Avenue A and...oh wow, I can show you the Canarsie Line!" He sounded nostalgic.

It was late Saturday afternoon before we got ourselves out of the Avocado Pit and onto the subway. Riding the New York subway is, as Eli once observed, a Taoist experience: everything connects, even if you can't see how. Funny, I never associated the Tao with dirt, noise, pushy crowds, feltpen and spraypaint decor, "Miss Subways," Eli switching at random from the local to the express, or a feeling of total panic. However, after no more than the usual number of unexplained 20-minute waits in dank tunnels between stations, we arrived at Union Square. Eli asked to see the map. Reading over his shoulder, I saw, in small letters

at the bottom: "Business Hours: open daily Mondays through Fridays til 6 p.m. Saturdays til 3 p.m." I saw the clock above me. Beneath the grime it said 3:30.

We went off to buy Debbie's roomates a bag of bagels instead.

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Such exotic delights as bagels, Baskin-Robbins, and ballet could not distract me for long, though. Monday morning--well, afternoonish, after finishing the bagels--found me waiting for the Canarsie Line, while Eli reminisced about waiting up to 45 minutes for the train, every day on his way to Stuyvesant High. Since the train, like Entropy or God, failed to manifest itself, we eventually walked down 14th Street, to 1st Avenue, down to 11th, and then towards Avenue A.

I remembered David saying, "It's a sort of rundown neighborhood."

I saw dirt, garbage, dogshit, broken windows, shabby, furtive people, dinge and grime and decay: your average New York street.

And I saw the Catholic school, its windows barred with heavy iron on every story; and its concentration-camp fence; and its web of barbed wire enclosing the entire structure. I saw more broken buildings and broken people. Eli didn't seem to notice, except to observe: "Hey, you realize when Wild's was founded, this was probably midtown?"

We crossed 1st Avenue. And on the next block I saw: a gutted row of tenements, black and desolate; derelict cars, chained-to-railing garbage cans and filth almost blocking the street; derelict bottle-clutching humans; the local black gang holding a meeting outside the burnedout houses; a sodden lump huddled in a cellar doorway, moaning...

And there I was, a well-dressed WASP female with nearly a hundred dollars in my purse to spend on frivolities, all alone in another universe with only a little blond New Yorker for protection. But of course this was normal, this was New York, my Native Guide didn't notice anything unusual...at which point Eli clutched me, muttering, "Ohmighod, there can't be a business here, it's a slum!"

"Oh," said a little touristy part of my brain. "A real New York slum! Maybe I'll get mugged! How nice to experience the totality of a city!" Most of my mind, however, was occupied with pondering how I could get out of there, fast; and whether Saskatchewan really needed a luthier.

Then, halfway down the street I noticed a building that might once, in a happier era (circa 1876) have been blue. Dragging Eli, I made for it, trying to blend into the grubby scenery. The gang, winos, druggies, and dogs all ignored us.

The lettering on the dirt-smearred, triple-locked door said "Wild's." The sign in the dirt-smearred, triple-barred, empty shop window said "Closed Mondays."

We took the Canarsie Line home. and I took to wailing about My Failed Quest to anybody foolish enough to ask, "So what have you been doing in the city?"

Jon Singer asked that very question as, inspired by the Botanical Gardens, we sat eating mangoes so he could grow a mango tree.

"And I have to go back tomorrow to that awful place, because I promised David I'd buy his supplies, and the whole career of Saskatchewan's Finest Luthier depends on me!" I finished, melodramatically.

"Pretentious, isn't she?" Singer observed to Eli. "Easily freaked out, too. Now, we New Yorkers don't let the city bother us." He patted me. "Now where is this place, anyway?"

"Avenue A and 11th," I said, expecting Singer to ooze with nostalgia for the Canarsie Line and Stuyvesant.

Singer turned pale. "Mighod, that's where those two cops got shot...you went there? It's a slum! Eli, how could you?"

"...Cops got shot?" Eli repeated.

"Weeelll," I said, magnanimously, "it was only that last half block that was really bad."

"Yeah, I suppose," said Singer thoughtfully. "You'd be ok during the day, the junkies just stand there and sway a little, they're too far out of it to do any real damage. Didn't mean to scare you."

"...Any real damage..." Eli muttered. "Say, Jon, why don't we all have dim sum in Chinatown tomorrow, and you can come with us."

"Sure. The place sounds like fun," said Jon.

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The next day, I put my brain in gear: I called Wild's. "Yeah, we're open, why not?" growled a voice of indeterminate gender, against a background of barks, snarls, and vicious voices. Cheery, I thought, as I took off my watch and jewelry, emptied everything but lunch money and David's order out of my purse, and put on my grubbiest clothes.

Past the garbage, past the derelicts, past the wire-wound school, past the gang meeting, sauntered the three whites. Pushed open the dirty once-blue door. And found: one hysterically barking German Shepherd trying to leap over the counter to tear out our throats; one large cat, spitting; a cavern full of dust, shadows, and bits of wood, receding towards infinity or 10th Street; and a violent quarrel between a large scruffy female named Mary and a large scruffy male named Joe. The former took time off from telling the latter that her father had owned this place, he had just married into the business, and he could shut up and do as he was told, to tell the dog roughly the same thing.

Very wild.

A small, stooped person materialized to lure Singer off into the cavern, with promises of rare balsa woods--and maybe the Holy Grail, it was that sort of place. Eli petted the cat which, puzzled by kindness, purred. Thus abandoned by my boon companions, I fished out David's order and turned to a quiet woman, sitting methodically typing in the store's one patch of light. Outraged by this challenge to their authority, Joe and Mary stopped bickering, and converged on me.

I wish I could convey, in mere words, the impression of this dingey warehouse full of grubby treasures, or the effort it took to place a simple order. "Guitar rosettes? Sure, we got real fine rosettes," Joe would say, making no move to show them to me. "Sheddup, it was my father's store. Sure, honey, only the finest rosettes, all from England, really fine quality, how many didja want," Mary would interrupt, not showing me any either. After half an hour, during which I learned a great deal about guitar rosettes, I finally was allowed to see one. Wrong size, but never mind. We progressed through inlays, David's request for a current pricelist, and the fact that David's original order, sitting on the counter, couldn't possibly be re-addressed from Regina to Saskatoon. ("Yeah, Joe, ya gotta mail that parcel soon." "Why don't you do somethin' for a change." "Shaddup, it's my father's store. Now, honey, what was it you wanted again?") The robot-lady typed on, probably filling orders from 1969. Singer reappeared, clutching fistfuls of balsa. Eli patted the dog. The cat, since no-one was yelling, slept. Hours passed. I learned from Mary, Joe, and then Mary again that they had no quarter-inch mother-of-pearl. Possibly the supply old H.L. laid in in 1876 was exhausted. Certainly I was.

Finally I decided I preferred the hoods and the winos to Joe, Mary, and the existential dilemmas of who owned the store and whether they had any five-inch guitar rosettes, pattern 53B. ("Sure you don't want 53A, honey? We may have some of those.") I thrust the list at Mary, the money order at Joe, said, "Look, please, just send him this sometime, ok?" and fled.

"Those were really interesting people," said Singer, as we walked towards the Canarsie Line Station.

"Yeah, they'd make a good column for Krat," said Eli.

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Last October, I visited Cathryn and David on the farm. They'd been busy all summer, putting in crops, pruning an orchard neglected for 25 years, digging a root cellar and greenhouse foundations, pouring concrete, building the greenhouse. The parcels from Wild's had both arrived by midsummer, though, and David had taken time to set up his workshop and build a few instruments. A dulcimer hung on the wall above the couch: a lovely thing of dark wood and gold inlay, with a carved falcon head. It resonated softly as we talked.

"Well," I said, looking at it, "I guess the trip was worth it."

"Of course. Just think what a treat you had, getting to visit Wild's! But I still don't see why you were so upset about the neighborhood. All New York looks like that. And I never had any trouble," said David--the six-foot-two ex-biker.

I snarled. The dulcimer answered sweetly.

"Anyway, thank you, Susan. And you won't have to go back. I discovered oh, just before you got back, that there's a supplier right in Vancouver. Efficient, too: got my last order in two weeks."

"WHAT? All the time I was traipsing through the slums, you could've been writing to Vancouver!" I yelled. David nodded, grinning. And the dulcimer chuckled softly.

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AUTHOR'S POSTSCRIPT: As a graduation present Eli gave me a Miller Saskatchewan Appalachian dulcimer, a lovely mahogany creation of fine tone, exceptional volume and exquisite crafting. I am now learning to play it. David also makes guitars and Celtic harps to order--and Cathryn can embroider you a carrying bag. Of course, if you want to build your own, you can always go to Wild's....

###

# ENERGUWOMAN

## ARE YOU A SECRET ARCTOPHILE?

Admit it. There are thousands of us, including Sir John Betjeman, Britain's poet laureate, who immortalized his constant companion, Archibald Ormsby-Gore, in verse; one of John Paul Getty's ex-wives who has one made out of mink; a blind English lady who carries a miniature one in her purse because she's lonely, and people stop to chat when they see it; the staff of the Fine Arts section of Toronto's main library; and all sorts of normal adult people who still cherish...a Teddy Bear.

My Teddy is a proper English bear, a present from my beloved Grandad when I was Very Small. After years of faithful friendship, during which he crossed the Atlantic three times, made dull weekly visits to my Canadian grandparents endurable, and put up with being hugged, cried over, sick upon and occasionally thrown, he's a very battered bear. His fur (for some reason, Teddies are usually masculine, and never neuter) is threadbare. His growl is gone. He's had several sets of eyes and new paws. And he's still as cuddly as ever. My dolls got packed off into a box in Mum's basement long ago, but Teddy travelled to Toronto, and then to the wilds of Saskatchewan with me, where he belongs. After all, friends belong with you, not in a musty old box!

There are exceptions, of course. Peter Bull, an English actor who has become the world's leading arctophile historian, records the following conversation with a friend who hid his Teddy, for safety, under the floorboards of his parents' house:

"But isn't he lonely?" I asked.

"Not a bit," replied my chum cheerfully. "He's got a lot of old love letters to look at, and plenty of hard-core pornography."

Now I admit, my Teddy only recently found his way out of hiding. You see, several years ago I met a chap named Mike Glicksohn. "Mike" in Russian is "Mishka," which is the name given to furry black dancing bears. Those of you who have met the Boy Wonder will agree the association seems appropriate. Sandra Miesel insists I traded a small, cuddly stuffed creature for a real "furry precious." Be that as it may, the creatures did not co-exist.

Poor Teddy found himself not only displaced from my affections, but suspended from the light-fixture, contorted into weird-and-perversed positions, tortured.... Eventually, for his own safety, I banished him to the top of my dresser. When Puppy-the-cat arrived, looking for a scratching post, Teddy vanished into a drawer. Meanwhile, I found myself teased unmercifully, especially when a Teddy with a microphone in his nose was implicated in last year's British sex-and-politics scandals. Even the fact that my hulking, hip, 21-year-old brother had disinterred his Teddy didn't help; it meant that Michael could tease the entire family. I ended up thoroughly embarrassed that I, a Respectable Urban Matron and would-be Scholar, couldn't bear to part with my bear.

Then one dreary day last winter, a bad case of thesis-writer's block drove me to turn on The Pierre Berton Show. There, in a Toronto tv studio, sat a tweedy, middle-aged British character actor named Peter Bull, being encouraged (Berton being free of the smirk-syndrome that spoils US talk shows) to explain, in all seriousness, why people like me cherish their Teddies. He made a lot of sense.



I even debated bringing Teddy out to see Theodore, Bull's chief bear, who goes to lunch with Archibald Ormsby-Gore (they write each other formal invitations, and Theodore takes Bull along to play with Betjeman). Being selfish, or unconvinced, however, I remained before the set and caught a mention of a book by Bull. No title, no further information.

The next day I abandoned my thesis to pore over the Books In Print catalog in my favorite bookstore. While involving the entire staff in a twenty-minute exchange of Teddy-anecdotes, I discovered that Peter Bull is the author of Bear With Me (London: Hutehison, 1969), and The Teddy Bear Book (New York: Random, 1970). The former retails for £1.50, the latter for US\$10, Can\$12.

They are the same book.

Neither one was for sale in Toronto.

Since Toronto has an excellent reference library, I was able to examine the American edition (my nice English auntie is sending me the other, so I can read aloud to Teddy...). The Teddy Bear Book contains a history of the creature's development from 1902, with the famous Clifford Berryman cartoon of Teddy Roosevelt not shooting a cuddly bear cub. It has photos and illustrations, information and anecdotes.

Basically, however, it exists as a tribute to Teddy Bears and the love people feel for them; and as an attempt to show why that love exists. Why an Italian mountaineer, Walter Bonatti, survived a night of total despair, lost in a blizzard on the Matterhorn, by talking to Zissi, a small Teddy. Why an Englishman went to court to force his estranged wife to return "an eighteenth-century table, a cut-glass decanter, and his Teddy Bear." Why women like me marry men who physically resemble Teddies. Why thousands of people (not just the inevitable pathetic souls who live in a fantasy world, dressing up bears instead of poodles and treating them as their "family") responded to this advertisement in the London Times:

History of E. Bear Esquire. Reminiscences, Data, Photographs (returnable) urgently required by Peter Bull who is compiling a symposium on these remarkable creatures. No actual bears, thank you!

The symposium became a book; and, with publicity appearances in Britain and the United States stimulating further response, the book sparked a project to hold a massive Teddy-rally in Madison Square Garden!

What Bull calls "the whole dotty, marvellous mystique of the Teddy Bear" is based on a simple human need. Teddies are soft, furry when new, appealing to basic human cuddle-reflexes. They are associated with childhood, a world seen, by nostalgic adults at least, as one of simplicity and security. The same description, though, applies to pink kitties, blue doggies, and tacky orange-plush Poohs, which do not evoke the same universal response of warmth and appreciation. Who ever involved an entire bookstore in a discussion about stuffed bunnies?

Other toys are just that: toys. A Teddy is a Friend.

Peter Bull, reading and listening to innumerable Teddy stories, discovered that many people besides himself felt "a kind of human fellowship" with "this cherished symbol of security." Childhood, for him, was a time when "there was always somebody to tell your joys and sorrows to, and in far more cases than I had ever realized, this someone was a Teddy Bear.... Teddy's constant availability as a listener is one of the qualities which has made him so outstanding and satisfying as a friend."

Doctors and psychiatrists now recognize that Teddies, their placid expressions encouraging trust, can help children whose worlds are not safe and secure. One psychiatrist calls them father-figures, representing "goodness, benevolence, kindness. Parents who replace this cozy unharmed toy are a menace." Bull documents their marvellous record as pacifiers

and pain-relievers--as well as the traumas and bitter family quarrels which can result when some callous adult throws out a cherished bit of battered plush because a child is "too old" for a Teddy.

But surely there does come a time when a normal adult grows up, grows "too old" for a Teddy?

What on earth is that man Bull doing with a collection of the beasts?

To some extent, Bull does pander to the image a "normal adult" (a bearless child grown older) must have of him: fey, probably gay, and certainly abnormal. He presents himself as master of the arct-anecdote, as when he describes his reluctance to leave his fourteen New York bears (he has eleven in London) sitting in a tv studio overnight in preparation for a debut on The Today Show. Bull wasn't afraid the bears would be stolen; rather, he knew they would sulk. Finally he was forced by technical considerations to leave them behind, he says, but:

Theodore, my eldest and most precious Teddy friend, refused point blank... and I had to take him in my pocket the next morning. The others were in a foul temper when I greeted them, since they, too, hate being away from base without me.

But that's Bull the actor, playing to the gallery, anticipating and therefore disarming the reaction of those dull people who will never understand:

Sometimes when I'm describing some of Theodore's foibles or quirks I see a look of terror come into the eyes of the listener. For it is usually incomprehensible to the person who has never possessed or even wanted a Teddy Bear that an adult can be so passionately attached to what is apparently only a stuffed toy. But then I feel the same sort of thing when people start going on about their cars, yachts, houses, or bank balances, all of which seem to me far more inanimate than Teddy.

In fact, most of us arctophiles seem quite "normal." We ceased talking to our bears around the age of four, when we realized the bears were not answering. (That, of course, is one of their gifts, along with a lack of locomotive power. The patient Teddy is always quietly at your side to absorb confidences, tears, or even blows.) We don't dress our Teddies up or lug them about the world in special baskets as does Sir John Betjeman (although my Teddy did very kindly agree to brave the horrors of a Regina winter with me; and maybe I should knit him a wooly pullover, his fur is almost worn off...).

We don't for a minute consider parting with our Teddies, either.

We need their benevolent, loving aura. We need their companionship. Bull says, and I agree, that "just to look at a Teddy when one is upset is a help. It may sound silly, but that slightly absurd face brings things back into focus almost at once."

A Teddy is a Friend.

Fellow arctophiles, bring your bears out of the closet. Cuddle them. While you're at it, cuddle people like Dan "Teddy Bear" Steffan, also possessed of a benevolent aura...in fact, he complains bitterly that girls call him their "Teddy Bear" because "they say I'm easy to talk to," confide in him, "and that's all they're interested in, dammit!" So what's wrong with being loved, trusted, needed and cuddled?

Arctophiles aren't isolated oddities. Those people buying Chad Valley and Steiff bears by the armful, not to mention volume after volume about Pooh, Rupert, and Paddington, can't all be grandparents and aunts buying baby gifts. Get your bear out, and give him the honor he deserves after all those years of friendship. After all, Gordie Dickson and Poul Anderson gave Teddies a whole planet! In Earthman's Burden...

Anyone who loves Teddies (or Hokas) can be a member of the Teddy Bear Club. Robert Henderson, president of this unofficial organization, says that it "exists universally in the subconscious mind...the common bond of Teddy Bear consciousness binds together whole groups of people of otherwise diverse interests." Colonel Henderson has spent his life corresponding with, and bringing together, Teddy-people: from enthusiasts like Bull to lonely people who literally have no other friends. He concludes that, while dolls change and fad toys vanish, the Teddy is, after almost seventy years of popularity, firmly established as a cultural symbol:

He permeates the whole structure of society. This is because he is a truly international figure who is non religious and yet universally recognized as a symbol of love. He represents friendship, and so is a powerful instrument of good will, a wonderful ambassador of peace, functioning as a leavening influence amid the trials and tribulations of life in the modern world.

Cuddly toy, childhood treasure, symbol of security and peace, friend: whatever he is, I wouldn't part with Teddy. All true arctophiles will understand.

11/11/77

# SUSAN'S SECTION



As for mountains, there are mountains hidden in treasures; there are mountains hidden in marshes, mountains hidden in the sky; there are mountains hidden in mountains. There is a study of mountains hidden in hiddenness.

An old master has said, "Mountains are mountains and rivers are rivers." The meaning of these words is not that mountains are mountains, but that mountains are mountains. Such mountains and rivers spontaneously become wise men and sages.

--Dogen, "Mountains and Rivers Sutra," trans. Carl Bielefeldt--

One of the reasons why there hasn't been an Amor for six months (six months?) is that I have been looking at mountains.

When I walk to the end of the block, I can look north and see, cloudcapped, snowcapped, the peaks of the Coast Range. The university, and the University Endowment Lands (a beautiful green swath of trees, semiwilderness, stretching out from the city into the ocean) on which I live are located on an isthmus on the west or ocean side of Vancouver, on the south shore of Burrard Inlet. Fifteen minutes' walk west across campus (across the horrible slashes and gouges in the cedar forest where parking lots have been carved out of the green wilderness) takes me from my front door to the Pacific Ocean: cliffs, wavebattered; giant Douglas Firs, wind-bent; log booms rocking on the Straight of Georgia; blue water across to Vancouver Island, floating in the distance; space, open water, sky to the other side of the world. Fifteen minutes' walk north, through the carefully-manicured lawns and precisely-sculptured gardens of the Expensive Private Homes built on the privately-owned section of the Endowment Lands, produces an even more awesome view. Cliffs, trees sighing in the constant wind, huge pines where bald eagles nest, gullies filled with vivid green ferns even in January, tiny streams, leaves, leaves, a riot of growth—and north across the water, in the sun, the mountains.

Sometimes they stand clear and close against the blue sky: waves crashing at their feet, the beam of Point Atkinson lighthouse pulsing, the highrises and highways of West Vancouver and North Vancouver thrusting up from the shore but beaten, finally, by the solid masses of pine forest, the grey rocks, and the snow which still, in August, whitens the higher peaks. On these clear days, the mountains rise, high and majestic, blue into the northern distance as Howe Sound cuts its way into the interior. The human roads look tiny and fragile; the wilderness is still close; and I can turn my back on the clustering highrises of Vancouver's West End, to my right, on the fragile curve of the Lion's Gate Bridge, and meditate on the view of surf and rock.

Some days, the mountains are mysterious. The air is moist and misty, the light delicate, the mountains faintly outlined in pastels against the sky: Japanese watercolors, brushstroke suggestions of peaks. Often, clouds trail like banners from the sharp peaks--or the fog, rolling off the water, boils around their bases so that they seem to be floating in the sky in improbable balance.

And sometimes the mountains vanish altogether behind swirls of white fog. The Wreck Beach foghorn mourns their going--a swift trip to Seattle, perhaps, where they put in an overtime performance as the Olympics and Cascades...

The mountains and the ocean restore my serenity--or my sense of proportion, which is probably the same thing. I was sitting at my dining-room table last January, marking the first papers of the new term, and feeling Hideously Depressed. You would too if you'd returned from a marvellous holiday in Sunny California, were missing your friends, had been rained on for a solid week, and were marking 97 handwritten in-class essays of varying illiteracy. Yes. ((The other reason why there hasn't been an Amor for so long is that most of the writing I've been doing has been of red-ink comments in the margins of essays. Thousands of words--I wonder if they do any good.)) Suddenly, the dripping branches seemed to glow. Sun! I suddenly revolted against the Protestant Work Ethic which had kept me inside at the (necessary) jobs of painting and cleaning and bringing Order out of Chaos which had occupied September (see Amor #8), inside at the (equally necessary) tasks of preparing classes and marking papers which had filled up October, November, December: months vanished before I'd lived them.

I dropped the red pen beside the white pages covered in blue ink. I went outside, breathed in scent of cedar, moist grass, growth. I set off westward to find the totem pole grove beside the ocean.

Haida and Kwakiutl totem poles, and two grave-houses, part of the University's collection of Coast Indian art, had been left to themselves in a cedar grove. The sun filtered through green branches onto moss-covered stumps and ferns, small pink-white daisies, carved and mysterious cedar. The raven crowning one pole floated, grinning, above the wind-tossed trees; whiskyjacks called from the branches. The wind smelled of growing things, promising spring even in midwinter. The clearing was empty except for a woman of perhaps thirty; we grinned at each other in sheer enjoyment of the day, the place. "I work over here, in the cafeteria" (jerking her head towards Totem Park residence, off behind the screen of cedar). "I heard tell there were some totem poles over here, so I figured one day I'd come to see. You know, I've been by on this road hundreds of times: never knew this was here." "This": the quiet carvings, rooted in the earth; the trees; the peace. We grinned at each other some more. "Yes," I said. "It's easy just to never take the time. I'm glad I found them." We grinned at each other, and silently contemplated the grove.

Then the quiet was broken by a clumping band of four German-speaking tweed-suited persons (visiting anthropologists?) who gravely photographed the poles, read the discreetly-posted labels aloud, and strode off without actually looking at anything. I followed another sound, the crash of surf on rocks--found a semipath down the sheer cliff to Wreck Beach. I slithered and scrambled down half of its muddy drop, and found a seat on a huge blown-down cedar tree, in a gully full of moss and ferns and twisted trees, tumbling root over root to the pebbles of the beach, and the water clear blue to Australia.

Alas, I hear that the totem poles will soon be moved from their grove to the newly-opened anthropology museum. Chris Couch and Claudia Parrish, who stayed here for several days before leaving, yesterday, to get closer to the mountains (and I hope you didn't get stuck for 18 hours on the TransCanada highway west of Moose Jaw!) tell me that the museum is marvellous, a must. Yes, I must make time for it. Tomorrow? Right after I finish these stencils! Before classes start, for sure... Certainly when David and Cathryn and Carey and Eric and Christine come to visit in September...I'm sure the poles will look properly impressive. Yet: yet: will they have trees around them? And will the women who work in the cafeterias wander over to see them?

Once I'd reminded myself that the world existed outside...that Vancouver had a lovely setting, even if it had also brought me much more work...I used my free time to explore my surroundings. I think one of the reasons I like Vancouver so much is that I don't live in it. I make forays downtown for Murchie's Georgia Blend tea, for Bruce Cockburn concerts and Vancouver East Cultural Centre experimental plays. Caught in the crowds as the noon foghorn makes everyone jump, I remember why I don't really enjoy cities, though, like most people, I enjoy their amenities. Then I head home to Point Grey, and the green acres of the Endowment Lands forests, choosing (if I can) the north-facing side of the bus so I can watch the mountains most of the way. (On the bus leaving U.B.C., the people on the south side sit poring over anatomy textbooks, while the people on the north side, the lucky ones, stare out the window, lifting their eyes up unto the hills. The students who live in the residence towers above the University beach have spectacular views--in fact, I gave one woman an extension when she explained that her essay was going to be late because she lived on the fourteenth floor, in a room facing north, and hadn't been able to concentrate on working all first term! I also had a weekly seminar in a room overlooking the Sound and the mountains; our speculations on Canadian poetry always sounded trivial, on clear days.)

I've developed a regular route, for sunny Sundays, or clear Wednesdays, or depression-clouded anydays: down Allison Road, past the pretty gardens; down Acadia Road, as it slopes past veritable mansions, swathed in velvet lawns, ornamented with roses and rhododendrons (if you come to visit, I will show you the Tea Tray Tree, clipped for a lawn party). The road drops steeply; the houses are below you, the mountains clear ahead. Marine Drive marks the end of Private Property in all its affluence; the trails and beaches don't have hedges and guard-dogs, the wildflowers don't need Japanese landscape artists. Unfortunately, the beach does need protection, from the louts who light fires among the driftwood, and smash their beer bottles on the paths--but nothing much can harm the view. Down the beach, watching the sun on the waves, or set over that last Outpost of Empire, Vancouver Island--avoiding the sunbathers. It's easy to stumble over bodies, the last sunny weeks, if you're watching the scenery. The campus nude beach has extended itself along every available foot of sand, to the distress of the local propertyowners whose sensibilities are, one presumes, offended when they come to the seclusion of "their" beach to walk their dogs; everyone else frolics merrily in the surf. In theory, the water is warm enough for swimming, but I follow the example of three little girls I saw on Easter weekend, who, dressed in bathing suits, were optimistically bouncing down to the water, letting the waves curl over their toes, and squealing merrily. I don't squeal, but I do just paddle til my knees get cold. I can sit on a driftwood log, and listen to the water; I can hike up the trail under the firs, to the university, and sit in the rose garden, admiring the flowers, with their backdrop of picture-postcard blue water, white sailboats, white lighthouse; green trees--and of course, range on range of mountains. I go home much less Oppressed by termpapers, or whatever.

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# THE ELI IS LANDED

Department of Immigration  
Division of Procedural Delay  
Bureau of Procrastination  
Office of Red Tape

Desk of the Assistant  
Lower-Echelon Bureaucrat

Dear Mr. Cohen,

You have learned to cope with forty-degree weather. Forty degrees below zero. Celsius.

You have learned to make William Lyon Mackenzie King jokes.

You have learned to curl.

Congratulations, Mr. Cohen. You are learning to be a Canadian.

Welcome to Canada, Mr. Cohen. We trust that you enjoyed your stay in Minneapolis. Now that we, in the name of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, by the grace of God Queen of Canada, have declared you, Eli (or Elie) Cohen, by the grace of God (you wondered what it took?) Landed Immigrant, we here at the Office of Red Tape thought you would like to know exactly what unique Canadian delights await you.

You certainly won't miss New York, Mr. Cohen. Saturday night hockey on tv should remind you pleasantly of rush hour in Times Square subway station: all the fun of the mayhem and gouging, as you sit comfortably in your living room.

For entertainment, you won't want the bright lights of Broadway, what with Wayne and Shuster on tv, and Barbara Frum interviewing John Diefenbaker on the radio.

For informal evenings, gather with your friends for the relaxation and fun of telling Newfie jokes, cursing the goddam frogs, and badmouthing Trudeau, as you sip your Molson's Canadian beer or your rye and coke. For sophisticates, there's a ruby glass of Calona Italian Red or, if you prefer something imported, Turner's Old Sailor Red--from Ontario.

We have some hints for the true Canadian image you'll want to cultivate. (An agrarian joke. Har, har! Er...) It isn't really necessary to have an opinion about the price of Number One Northern wheat, as long as you have an opinion about Toronto. You hate it. Everyone does, except seventy-six new Torontonians and the travel writer for Holiday.

To be truly esoteric, one-up your conversations with statements like: "I know a really great little restaurant...in Ottawa."

Pick an all-Canadian interest. For example, learn to discourse fluently on how great Ian and Sylvia/Joni Mitchell/Gordon Lightfoot were when they still played concerts for The People at North Dundas District High. Before they went commercial, and cut a record.

Own every Murray McLaughlin record. Compare him to Dave Wiffen.

Better yet, own stock in True North Records.

Learn to recite "The Canadian Authors Meet." Faster than doug barbour.

As time passes, you will find yourself truly interested in cod fisheries and the 200-mile limit. You'll lose interest in the Democratic primaries, but you'll have strong opinions about B.C. separatism. When you remember that B.C. exists.

In five years time, Mr. Cohen, you will be eligible to apply for Canadian citizenship. That's another matter of simple paperwork, a mere bureaucratic formality. It shouldn't take more than two or three years to process an application, should you decide to make one. You can spend the time learning "O Canada"--in English and French. It is not necessary to remember how many "we stand on guard"s there are in the chorus.

You will know you are truly a Canadian, Mr. Cohen, not when you receive a slip of pink paper, but on the day when you are talking with a friend from Our Great Neighbor To The South, and observe, "Yes, but our money's prettier." When you see a car with Texas license plates, travelling through Regina in June with skis strapped to the roof, and think only, "Oh, tourist season's started again." When you catch yourself really believing that "we're nicer." When each new day begins at midnight--12:30 in Newfoundland.

Yes, Mr. Cohen, welcome to Canada. May your visit here be rich and rewarding. May the spirit of our hardy northern population, the beauty of our majestic land, the glory of the verdant woods, the noble sweep of the golden wheatfields and the magnificent amethyst ranges of our mountains enter into your soul, so that at last you become Truly Canadian. Your eyes will light up with the hope of the one, true, genuine Canadian Dream...yes, Mr. Cohen, someday you too will decide to move to California.

Yours, because we sold out years ago,

*Jean-Paul Quelquechose*

Jean-Paul Quelquechose  
Chief Flunky

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# ZEN=Center



My Zen story began in the San Francisco phone book, in which, right above "Hair Styles" you find a listing for "Zen Center, 300 Page St."

In July, 1975, John Berry and I spent over a month visiting friends, and exploring little bits of the San Francisco Bay Area. Even with a month, we seemed never to have enough time to do everything, see everyone, write, rest before going to Australia--and just sit contemplating all the information coming in our eyes and ears, all the thoughts and feelings bubbling up inside. That whole summer is summed up for me by the day we spent with Jerry Jacks and 5,000 other people, being herded past the travelling exhibit of Chinese art treasures. They had endured, serenely beautiful, for centuries, but between the pressure from the crowds, pushed through in groups of a hundred every five minutes, and the chivvy-ing of the guards who nearly threw me out when I sat down on the floor to rest, we could manage only thirty seconds to glance at each. In the restless, relentless stream of bodies moving past display cases, images moving past eyes, I stopped: rocklike: to see--an urn (who made it?); a pair of playful gold leopards, ruby-eyed (sophistication, suddenly, amid the clay pots--from where, for whom?); a cup (whose?). In the movement of days, too, there were a few hours, a few places, where we stopped to contemplate: silence, in silence: Muir Woods past the tourists; the hills near Stanford; the ferry across the Bay; the Zen Center.

Now I know as little about Zen Buddhism as any reader of Kratophany. Aside from Zen masters beating obtuse disciples, however, the little I know of the practice of contemplation appeals to me--to me as a squirrel, "caught up in mock progress, which is just going on toward going on, what Buddhists call samsara--squirrel cage of birth and death," as Alan Watts describes it. At the same time, my own ignorance, or my inhibitions caused by an over-awareness of my Presbyterian hyper-active attachment to the squirrel cage would have kept me from wandering into the Zen Center to ask questions.

But Andrew Main wanted his fanzines back.

Fanhstory: Andy Main, BEM, early '60s BNF, dropped out of fandom and most of his rather varied past in 1970. He divested himself of most of his possessions, his links to the past--including a cardboard box of his own fanzines, which he gave to John Berry. Now, in July 1975, he decided "it was time to get back in touch with that part of myself." When John phoned him at the office of the Co-Evolution Quarterly and suggested a meeting, Andrew asked us to dig the zines out of storage, and come to visit him--at the Zen Center, where he lived.

A wheezing, grubby MUNI bus carried us through some of the city's grubbier streets, down the hills to an undistinguished block of nondescript buildings. One looked larger and more

institutional than the rest; on the front steps, a bearded figure leaned on a crutch. "There's Andy--I guess. He looks different," said John.

Andrew Main turned out to be slight, dark, quiet--with an air of great energy held firmly in control. Or mostly in control--he was limping badly because, hurrying to get to the opening of the Zen Center's new grocery store, he'd dashed down the polished stairs, slipped, and fallen. So much for the contemplative life.

The center itself was large, cool, quiet: a complete contrast to the streets outside. We cached the fanzines in a corner of the wide, white-painted hall, and accompanied Andrew at a snail-pace, past the closed glass doors of the main ceremonial hall (empty except for rows of mats facing a statue of the Buddha, flanked by flowers and candles), and out into a courtyard, where fuschias bloomed and sun splashed over stone walls and balconies, decorated incongruously with the Star of David. More polished, slippery stairs took us down to the zendo, the meditation hall. We were between hours for zazen--sitting meditation, practiced at least twice a day--and the hall was deserted. A huge bronze signal-bell hung in the corridor. Andrew struck it, to let us hear its tone (who can resist ringing a handy bell?). The muted, deep note emphasized the silence: a companionable peacefulness, not the oppressive hush of some churches, which tells an insignificant mortal to be quiet or else. We took off our shoes, and stepped into the zendo.

Raised platforms of polished light wood, about two feet high, circled the walls; another long, rectangular platform occupied the center of the room. Low wooden screens separated the platforms into cubicles, perhaps six feet deep and wide. Each cubicle was, like the floor, covered with light straw matting; each contained a square mat, some topped by a little round cushion--a zafu, said Andrew, a cushion used during meditation, at which I began to see how sitting zazen for several days, or even forty-five minutes, might physically be easier than I had thought. As for the surroundings: I wouldn't want to be a traditional Zen monk, who spent his life sleeping, eating and meditating in his allotted body-space in the zazen, separated from his fellows by a low screen and the inward direction of his thoughts; but a chance to sit in this quiet hall, breathe and be still, was appealing.

Light poured in from the high windows onto pale surfaces of wood and straw; a peaceful energy welled up into the still air. "This used to be a Jewish girls' school," Andrew explained, "and this was the gym, where they held dances." John and I imagined lines of well-bred well-dressed young women lined along one wall, men along another, all shy and uncomfortable; nervous tension filled the air, along with banal music. Andrew grinned. "Yes, it's a change."

He talked a little about meditation, and the Zen Center community. "In traditional Zen practice, each person faces the wall--we sit facing each other. The traditionalists say theirs is 'warrior Zen,' ours is 'farmer's Zen'--it makes us more of a community, we share our energy meditating the same way we do in anything else."

The Center welcomes students. Members of the community who live elsewhere, as Andrew had done, come in for zazen periods; and the Center accepts guests for up to six weeks of meditation, study, services, and community life. There are fifty people in residence: priests, guests, lay people. Some work outside--Andrew was a typesetter for the CQ; others work in the store, which sells organic produce grown by the Zen community at Green Gulch farm near Muir Woods, or the Center's bakery, or its bookstore, or Alaya Stitchery in the basement where cushions, mats, and the loose pants worn for meditation are made, for the community and for anyone who wants to order a violet zafu, or perhaps six royal-blue zabutans for a Japanese-style dining room.

I learned all these practical details of who does the work (the members of the community) and who pays the rent (ditto--there's a \$160/month "teaching fee" for room, board and instruction, since this is basically a school) much later, from information sheets prepared by the Center, and from Andrew himself. At the time, I thought of questions, but something--probably the serenity of the Center itself--kept me from pelting Andrew with chatter. Besides, I wanted just to stay quiet, absorb my surroundings.

In a huge, institutional kitchen, we filled bowls with soup, rice, vegetable stew, and various delightful things. Reclaiming the box of fanzines, we moved back into the courtyard. While Andrew rediscovered bits of his fan self, and talked quietly with John, I watched: bright splashes of flowers, statues, a mosaic fountain; and, on one side of the courtyard, the city below, its noise and smog remote under a shield of glass. In the courtyard, people in floppy, comfortable clothes gathered, ate, sat sewing, moved quietly and purposefully. There seemed to be none of the austerity and regimentation which most of us would associate with a "monastery"; the life of the place was evident everywhere, moving with that same controlled energy apparent beneath Andrew's quiet surface. People smiled, seemed serene; no one spoke loudly -- or laughed aloud.

The residential parts of the school, too, were white-painted, light, simple: life reduced to a tatami mat on the floor, personalized and enriched by books, a vase of flowers, whatever one needed--even a place for fanzines. I contemplated the contemplative life. I was living, at the time, out of a backpack, all my possessions stowed a thousand miles away with spiders in a Vancouver basement. I was discovering, to my pleasure, how few of those "necessities" I needed, day by day; and here, I began to remember the pleasure of living in a supportive community, one's minimal needs for food and shelter met by shared effort, with time to study and explore. That serene atmosphere refreshed me, as we sat talking with Andrew about this, that and the Co-Evolution Quarterly.

Yet how could I accept the shrine room where candles burned beside the picture of Suzuki Roshi, the Center's first abbot; or the tiny shrines along the halls, with their flowers before picture-postcards of the Buddha?

Again, something stopped me from asking Andrew, "Aw, c'mon, how do you believe in all this?" It was easier to ask in a letter, to which he replied: "It might be difficult, actually, to separate 'purely religious aspects' out of any way of life that is seriously and completely lived. Such a life, it seems to me, is basically religious in its entirety to begin with. In other words, for one who is really practicing, there is no aspect of life that is not 'religious'--the impulse toward practice is a religious impulse to begin with. Regarding the Buddhas and traditional eastern 'clothing' of this practice, it's just that this is the form in which the practice came here, and it seems pretty much as good as any other. Some people really get into it, some all but ignore it. Most people, I think, find as they get deeper into practice that it is helpful to have forms and objects, specific places and rituals, which serve as focuses for practice. Buddhas are not gods in the western sense, nor are they worshipped. One of the Tassajara brochures has a note about 'Altars and Buddhas' which I think expresses this well: 'The Buddha is strictly a reminder not only of the historical person who realized this practice, but also of the unconditioned nature of ourselves beyond thinking and acting as well as the unity or interdependency and relatedness of all things; both of these aspects are also called Buddha. But altars and Buddhas are not necessary; one's own location in time and space is enough.'"

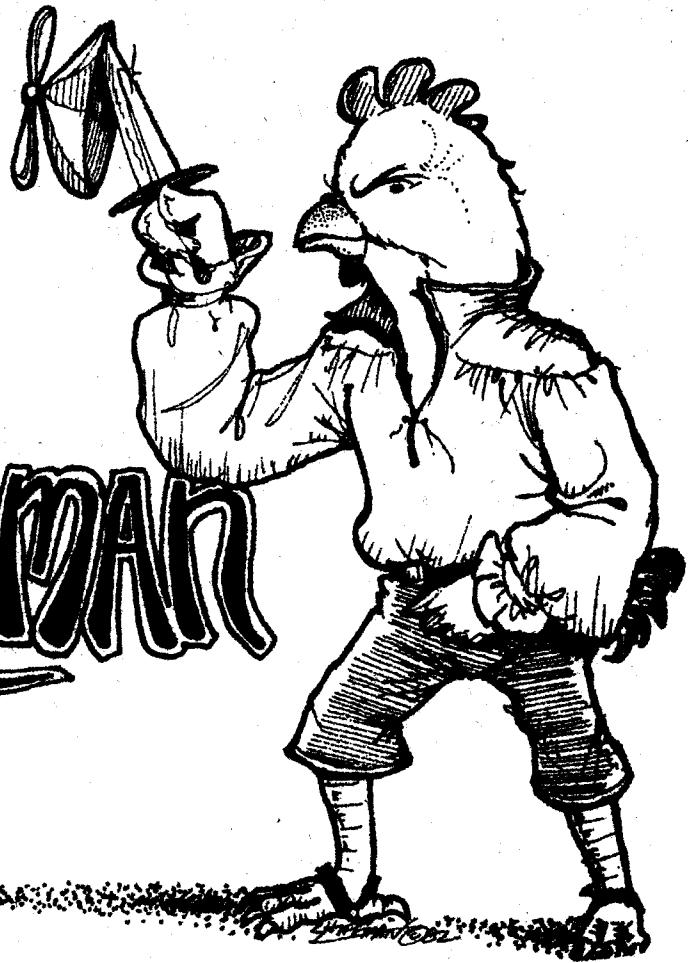
Time: a timeless few hours on a summer day in San Francisco. Place: a quiet oasis, a courtyard filled with flowers; a helpful monk with a shaven head and a cup of coffee at his elbow, who helped me rummage through the bookstore's collection of translations of the Tao Te Ching (since I didn't find one I liked more than the two I owned, I bought Gary Snyder's Earth House Hold instead); candles in a shrine; and a quiet person moving purposefully down a path leading to Tassajara monastery, far removed from this busy, no-time-to-think world of mine. I wanted to ask Andrew several hundred questions; I wanted to ask him how he'd, apparently, found such serenity after upheaval; I wanted to bridge the gap between my world and his, as he sat two feet away eating soup, beneath the hanging flowers. I didn't.

Andrew later wrote: "Actually, all discussion aside (which is where it ought to be) the best way to find out about zazen practice is to sit. Your own experience will teach you. If zazen is good practice for you, you will clarify all the other details for yourself."

One can write and ask to be accepted as a guest student at Green Gulch Farm or the Zen Center, 300 Page St., San Francisco, CA 94102. One can call: the number's there in the

((continued on page 30))

# Energumwan



It was the sports shirt I noticed first, a flamboyant plaid--that, and the grin. The crew-cut was grey, the eyes young, the man himself any age at all, yours or mine. He was joking with Juanita Coulson in the St. Louiscon con suite, and handing out shocking-pink buttons that said: "Rosebud uber alles."

"Rosebud?" I enquired softly of my companion, Mike Glicksohn. The man looked at us, admiring our stripey robes and long hair. "Hi Mike," he said. "Like your outfit," and to me, "We're all hippies, no matter what we wear--we've never conformed." Then he told me the Rosebud Story.

That's how I met Walt Liebscher. That's when I decided that if all fans were like this--fascinating talkers, friendly to neos--then fandom was a world I wanted to live in.

Walt Liebscher is one of the legendary people of fandom, and not just because of Bob Tucker's odd sense of humor and a flowery euphemism, either. In the mid-40s he lived in the Battle Creek Slan Shack, the fannish commune, where he sported a crew cut and ghodawful plaid shirts, and produced a beautiful fanzine called Chanticleer (after Chaucer's fast-talking cock) from a room called Chanticleering. Then he and his friends piled into an old car and headed for LA. "We're all hippies" indeed!

Walt also happens to be one of the world's Fine People. He told me once that when he was a neo, at the Denvention I think, sitting all alone in the lobby, he was invited to dinner and a party, made to feel welcome, part of the family, by one of the Elder Ghods of fandom. Since then, he said, he's tried to pass on some of the kindness shown a shy neo thirty years ago by Robert Heinlein.

I got to know Walt better, after the St. Louiscon, as the author of bawdy, sentimental, word-mangling letters to Energumen, of punning articles there and in Moebius Trip: Liebscher

the Lexicologist, making words jump through hoops. Then I went to the '73 Westercon. Who was sitting in the hotel bar surrounded by laughter, wearing a big grin, a crewcut, and a patchwork plaid shirt in seventeen previously-undiscovered color combinations but Walt himself, ready to adopt me as a Heinlein Foundation Protegee.

"Hi, Walt!" I hugged him. "There are palm trees outside!"

"Hi, Susan! You've never seen a palm tree before?"--and he bounced outside with me to touch one. A cable car went by, jangling. I gawked, the Ostentatious Tourist. "You've never seen San Francisco? Oh, I love it, let me show you..." So we took cable cars up and down hills. We wandered round Ghiradelli Square, looking in the shop windows at all the plaid and patchwork shirts, and I said sure, I'd make him a plaid caftan. We ate ice-cream. We wandered around Fisherman's Wharf. We talked about the city, and fandom, and everything-under-the-sun. We zoomed round the harbor in a helicopter, both of us giggling and acting about nine years old. Finally, hand in hand, we rode the cable car back to the hotel. I was starting to droop. Walt, grin and plaid shirt still vibrant, acting about twenty years younger than me, swept me along to the parties.

At Torcon, I handed Walt a package: one blue-and-red patchwork caftan, made from the material he'd chosen. The effect, especially with a blue-and-red propellor beanie, was... remarkable. While I stood blinking, Walt kissed my cheek and handed me a package.

Chanticleer. His last spare set.

I'm sitting here still recovering from a succession of moves, including two installments of 1600 miles, contemplating yet another move of 1600 miles followed by a jaunt to Melbourne. Mostly what I'm contemplating is the sheer nuisance value of material possessions, especially printed matter. Books are heavy, bulky, awkward, easily damaged, and a nuisance to ship and store. I grumble that, if I didn't need them to earn my living, I wouldn't keep them around. Beside me as I type, though, are three bound volumes of fanzines. These travel with me; these I'd rush to save from burning buildings. One was my first fanzine; one won a Hugo; and one is Chanticleer.

I remember Walt at Torcon, gleefully playing with the Gestetner display equipment, hoping to reissue some pages of Channy. The colored paper didn't provide enough contrast for the temperamental electronic stencil cutter, though. He was disappointed, a little, but... "I wonder if I could start publishing again? You know, Channy was a good fanzine. And it was fun..." Meanwhile, he was breaking into pro markets: a story in Strange Bedfellows, a paperback collection of his stories and wordplays called Alien Carnival, and, "Hey, Susan, Alicia Austin's illustrating my first story for Vertex! Isn't that great!"

Walt Liebscher, as enthusiastic as a kid at his first worldcon, with that grin and the crewcut and those neon-sign shirts. So alive I didn't want to believe the news coming from the '74 Marcon, where Bob Tucker told Walt's friends that he'd had a serious stroke, was partly paralyzed, was recovering, but very slowly.

The last letter I had from Tucker contained good news: "Walt Liebscher is alive and well and up and around, and at least once has gone out to a party. I spoke to him on the phone around Christmastime, and he was doing very well indeed..."

Walt is recovering, and I'm delighted to hear it--and not just because I've never heard him tell the story about the Rooster Who Wore Red Pants. He'd appreciate fanzines, I know. He'll get this one. And I publicly promise, Walt, that when you recover enough to publish Chanticleer #8, I'll scour the continent for plaid paper for the cover!

Meanwhile, I have the first seven issues of Chanticleer to admire. This wasn't Walt's only fanzine, by a long shot and a multitude of one shots. It was his favorite, though, and no wonder. Even Father William could learn from its graphics.

Chanticleer is an education for any '70s fan who thinks that, in the dark ages B.E. (before electrostencils--before, for that matter, Selectric typewriters, inexpensive offset, fancy covers, and Bill Rotsler) fanzines were badly-mimeod collections of clever but unembellished words. I mean no disrespect to Channy's words, impressively mimeod on heavy white stock: wit and serious commentary from the editor and Bob Tucker, even some fanfic from Harry Warner, Jr. The words are not, however, what you notice first.

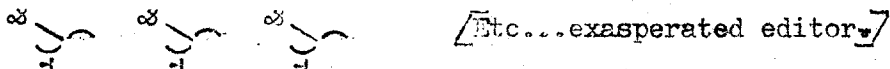
The cover, by Jack Wiedenbeck of Slan Shack, is a knockout. The Rooster, silkscreened in three colors, flaunts himself and his red pants. Inside, Walt with his styliz or Wiedenbeck himself have cut more of the latter's artwork, including an impressive full-page fantasy nude with serpents and robots and various creatures which introduces the book review section in every issue. (Sense of Wonder.)

By issue #7, the silkscreen covers have given way to heavy construction paper, with a simple title in a decorative border. The Wiedenbeck artwork vanishes after two issues. Walt still has his shading plates and typewriter, though, and all the articles feature decorative frames, painstakingly cut or carefully tapped out.

- (\* ) There are borders like this (\* )
- (\* ) all around poems (\* )
- (\* ) or, if you prefer, pomes. (\* )

-/- Borders like -/-  
 -/- this, too. -/-

Walt even turned a stencil sideways, in #5, to make a whole page of



roosters. Sixty-six of them. That, ~~faneds, is devotion.~~

Best of all, Chanticleer features Walt's trademark, his typeface faces. They grin around dreadful pomes by "Ogden Nash Rooster."

(x x)	The pain through his belly did permeate	(x x)
((-))	All on account of the wormeate	((-))
(. .)	Have you ever felt	(. .)
((:))	When the weather gets hotter	((:))
	You'd like to go nude	
(v v)	But hadn't otter.	(v v)
((o))		((o))
(o o)		

One stares ((-)) from the last page of Chanticleer #7, stencilled just before the 1946 Worldcon--stares into a non-existent future rich with the promise of a Robert Bloch column and the Pacificon: "I look forward to four days without sleep, and about 200 fans. That is the most delightful dissipation I know of."

The material itself is hard to excerpt. Walt tried to make Chanticleer "a sort of reference book for fantasy book hunters," with "a plethora of book reviews." Unfortunately, the books F.T. Laney dismissed in 1945 are even less interesting today. (The notable exception is C.S. Lewis' Perelandra, which Willy Ley in a lengthy review dismissed as "a thoroughly bad book." He objected to the central characters: "Mr. Lewis seems never to have seen a scientist in the flesh, else he would not ascribe to them the behavior of slave traders and of those politicians which have made a bad name for all politicians.") In various issues Bob Tucker, Harry Warner, F.T. Laney, Doc Lowndes and other notable fan of the era discuss their favorite fantasy stories; Donn Brazier presents "Evidence for Slan," and he and Laney tell how they discovered fantasy. Laney even contributes an introduction to jazz. The preoccupations of thirty years ago are interesting enough, but nothing stands out.

Chanticleer's famed humor, too, brings either a groan or a puzzled look. Much of it is in-groupish. The best parts consist of a sort of verbal volleyball match, starring Tucker and Liebscher, with assistance from the Slan Shack in the first five issues (before the hegira to IA) and from readers like Bloch. The lettercol, "Chanticlucks," is full of jokes and merry insults. All this gives Channy a nice friendly feeling, but that too is hard to excerpt. Chanticleer alive and crowing is a different bird from a trussed rooster carved up on a platter.

One of the pieces which can be served up, I think, is Bob Bloch's column from issue #7. Fanzines like Channy no longer cost 15¢, but not much else has changed: not even the '40s controversy over whether fanzines should deal with sf and prodom--or with fans and fandom.

.)..).).).).).).).).).).).).).).))ROBERT BLOCH'S FANTASY(((.(.(.(.(.(.(.(.(.(.(.(.(.(.(.(.

Today, everybody collects fan magazines. It is hard to observe this craze without being overwhelmed by an almost irresistable apathy.

Of course, fan magazines offer a big field. And when you go into a big field, you have to be careful or you might step on something.

I was talking to a well-known collector just the other day--in fact, I talked to him so long, he nearly dropped his shovel. He gave me many valuable tips. (Butts, tips--what's in a name?)

Before we go any further (if, indeed, we do go any further; personally I'd like to get off right here and lie down) we better define our terms.

To begin with, what is a magazine?

The dictionary says a magazine is a place in which powder is stored.

Now, what is a fan?

Again according to the dictionary, a fan is something that blows.

Put them all together and you have a powder-blower.

Now this may come in very handy for milady's boudoir, but you won't find many fan magazines there. At least, I never have. But then again, maybe I wasn't looking for them.

So let's get out of the boudoir (Come on, get out, I said!) and get back to fan magazines. We'll throw away the dictionary, too. It isn't used much in fanmagazines anyway, I notice.

At the present time, according to the latest World Almanac, there are 11,563 different fan magazines published in the United States alone.

The same source estimates there are only 115½ active fans.

This means they have to do a helluva lot of collecting.

Remember, too, that some of these magazines come out monthly, some semi-monthly, some weekly, and some only come out when they can see their shadows.

All of this means one thing...your true lover of fantastic fiction must spend so much time reading the fan publications that he cannot, under any circumstances, ever get a chance to read any professionally published fantasy books or magazines.

As a matter of fact, your true died-in-the-wollheim fan hates professional publications, because:

- 1) They are printed without typographical errors.
- 2) The contents are written in English, or reasonable facsimile.
- 3) They don't have funny borders of filler-lines at the bottom of the pages. ((As the star borderer of fandom I resent that remark!))
- 4) They contain stories and such stuff, thus taking up valuable space which could otherwise be devoted to letters about fans.
- 5) All professionally written fantastic fiction is an insult to the intelligence of fandom because it deals with imaginative happenings. Fans, as you know, are so-called because they are interested only in sex, religion, scientific formulae and equations, politics, and each other.
- 6) Worst of all, no professional publication has yet been devised so that it can be mailed folded into 18 parts, stapled 12 times, sealed all over, and bent so it arrives in ribbons.

Of course, this doesn't mean your regular publications are out of the picture. They are very valuable for collecting and trading purposes. A copy of a 1920 Weird Tales or a 1924 June Thrilling Wonder Stories would fetch a high price today. So would a 1945 Unknown Worlds, for that matter.

In order to discover the secret of a fanmag's fascination, let us appraise a typical specimen. Its title shall be nameless.

Nameless is a fan magazine published whenever its editor can get hold of enough used wrapping paper and a battered hectograph.

Its editor, one Sidney Kidney, is only 7 years old. But this is not unusual in fandom, where many prominent members are quite youthful. And Master Sidney, though only 7, has the mind of a child of 3.

(3 years, not 3 people! There is such a thing as carrying fantasy too far.)

Well, what do we find when we open a copy of Nameless? First of all, we find that the pages fall apart.

Page 1 consists of a standard "editorial" by, of all people, the editor. I will quote a brief but typical excerpt:

"I apologize because the July issue of Nameless, scheduled for publication in October, has been delayed until February.

"Our original plan of publishing a 60-page anniversary issue didn't work out, but these 4 pages should do the trick.

"Since none of the contributors we promised you have sent in any stuff, most of this issue was written by the editor. We wish to thank our able assistants, Cecil Slotch and Edgar Foop, whose efforts enabled us to get the magazine out in almost twice the time it would have taken if we did it alone. Remember the bureau that wore red drawers."

Page 2 consists of the usual story. This one, obviously in imitation of a tale appearing in a pro publication, is entitled: "I Remember Amnesia!"

Page 3, as is customary in most fan magazines, is given over to advertisements.

One Weaver Wrong offers, "Avon pocketbook reprints of Merritt, etc., originally 25¢, now \$15.00 and up. With covers, \$35.00 and up. Autographed by Mr. Avon himself, \$50.00 & up."

A rival fanmag announces, "Repulsive Stories will change its name to Putrid Tales in the forthcoming issues, which will probably not be forthcoming. Brand new stories by Edgar Allen Poe, H.P. Lovecraft, William Shakespeare, Victor Hugo, and Degler."

((continued on page 80))



# PROPELLOR BEANIE

"Why are you here?" asked Jan Sharpe, the elegant blonde from the Australian Broadcasting Commission.

"We've come for Aussiecon."

"Here" was the State Suite on the 15th floor of the Southern Cross Hotel, Melbourne, Australia, August 14, 1975. Robin Johnson, chairman of Aussiecon, had hauled me away from helping to register convention attendees to attend a press conference where he was introducing convention notables to each other and to assorted reporters.

The basic "why" translated as "What's an Aussiecon?" with faint undertones of "Why here?" "Australians are so used to believing that everything important exists in the places where they're tourists that they find it hard to believe North Americans would want to cross the Pacific and the dateline to see them, their wombats, and their Opera House. In fact, they're most courteous, hospitable to visitors, and have an amazing country. This may be the first time Algol has given a rave review to a continent.)

Since 1939, we explained, and annually since 1946, science fiction fans have gathered at "world" conventions to talk; swap ideas and fanzines; sell each other old pulp magazines; look at masquerade balls, art shows, and, especially of late, movies; meet writers who are meeting editors; give each other awards; eat dinner together; and...anything two fans do together is fanac. This is the 33rd of these "world conventions." Since it is supposed to be a "world" convention, it has been known to move out of North America, to London and Heidelberg, and so an Australian named John Bangsund thought.... Well, yes, of course, we hear writers give speeches, but it's not really like an academic conference. No, not like the sheepdip sellers' sales meetings, or the American Legion reunions, either. It's been called a gathering of the tribes, and a family reunion...but they were puzzled already, these people come to interpret us.

Media coverage of science fiction conventions tends to be sensational. The first Torcon in 1948 earned headlines like "Zap! Zap! Atomic Ray is Passe with Fiends," and one of the sensational Melbourne tabloids proved nothing has changed--they concentrated on the scanty skirts of the hired models promoting the Wang computers, loaned to the convention for Star Trek games. "Sci-fi." Sigh.

Most reporters, though, listened with interest as Robin stressed the respectabilities science fiction, the educational and cultural nature of the convention, the funds from the Literature Board of the Australian Council to run a writers' workshop before the con, the videotaping of the convention for schools and libraries.

More important, Ursula K. LeGuin emanated, inspired, intelligent interest in this "Aussiecon."

"I have a question, a serious question to ask you. What on earth are we here for?"

"Well, I think we have come to celebrate."---Ursula K. LeGuin, Guest of Honor speech, Aussiecon, August 14, 1975.

Reporters thought they could understand why Ursula LeGuin had come to Aussiecon: for professional reasons. The Guest of Honor was fittingly chosen: an acclaimed writer of science

fiction and fantasy, winner of Hugo, Nebula, and National Book awards, author of the Hugo- and-Nebula-winning The Left Hand of Darkness, the Nebula-winning-and-Hugo-nominated The Dispossessed. She must have journeyed half round the world to accept the admiration of her fans.

Admiration, however, makes Ursula LeGuin nervous. She changes the subject. She was lured from Oregon, en route to London the long way, by the chance to lead a writing workshop for 20 aspiring sf writers. She remained after the workshop, not to lecture to fans, but to share with them her delight in sf: to "celebrate" sf.

"SF is pretty well grown up now. We've been through our illiterate stage, and our latent or non-sexual stage, and the stage where you can't think of anything but sex, and the rest of them, and we really do seem to be on the verge of maturity now. When I say I'd like sf to be self-critical, I don't mean pedantic or destructively perfectionist; I mean I'd like to see more sf readers judging soundly, dismissing the failures quietly, in order to praise the successes joyfully--and to go on from them, to build upon them. That is maturity, isn't it?--a just assessment of your capacities, and the will to fulfill them. We have plenty to praise, you know, I do think sf during the past ten years has produced some books and stories that will last, that will be meaningful and beautiful many years from now." (Ursula K. LeGuin, GoH speech, Aussiecon.)

Most of us responded enthusiastically; a few people wondered where the fun of reading forbidden trash would go; and the reporters took notes. But Ms. LeGuin had more to say:

"When I say the ghetto walls are down and it behooves us to step over them and be free, I don't mean that the community of sf is breaking up, or should break up.... The essential lunacy that unites us will continue to unite us. The one thing that's changed is that we're no longer forced together in a mutually defensive posture--like a circle of muskoxen on the Arctic snow, attacked by wolves--by the contempt and arrogance of literary reactionaries. If we meet now and in the future, we writers and readers of sf, to give each other prizes and see each other's faces and renew old feuds and discuss new books and hold our celebration, it will be in entire freedom--because we choose to do so--because, to put it simply, we like each other."

I'm not altogether sure the reporters (and the attendees) fully understood the uniqueness of that liking.

Thursday, we had panels on "new directions in science fiction" and on science; Friday we talked about art and sf; Saturday found me moderating panels on teaching sf, and on children's fantasy (featuring Ursula, and Peter Nicholls of England's Science Fiction Foundation--I really enjoyed this one), followed by hard-working Ursula on a panel on myth in sf, then sf criticism, and finally Bob Silverberg reading his own work--a most serious, literary day this, ending with the Hugo banquet; and Sunday had panels on the media in sf, reading sf, and writing sf: it looked like a literary conference. (But what was that panel about "fanzines"--and this item, "The Role of Sheep in SF"--and all the announcements of the Test Match scores--and this "business session" where Orlando won the 1977 worldcon? What's this "fandom"?)

So the reporters assumed they'd dropped into a literary gathering, where Ackerman, Bova, Foster, LeGuin, Silverberg, and Tucker had flown in to meet their Australian counterparts like Chandler, Harding, Turner, and Wilder, their critics like Nicholls and Foyster. Off they went to interview Captain Chandler (and report, with pride, the presentation of an Invisible Little Man award to him at the banquet): a gentleman dignified, courteous, proud of his craft, and as thrilled as any of us to be at Aussiecon. The papers and the radio didn't report on that last trait. We call it Sense of Wonder. It knows no limits of age or distance; and it unites us.

"Why have you come to Aussiecon--from Perth, and Hobart, and Waihere Island, N.Z.?"

"To meet science fiction writers, of course."

Aussiecon was, first of all, a science fiction conference, for writers and readers. As such it attracted 604 attending members, some 500 of whom were Australians who had never heard of worldcons or fandom--who probably didn't understand why some 1,400 other fans, most of them North Americans, paid to become supporting members of a convention they couldn't attend. (Even with this support, Aussiecon may have financial problems, especially since Australian hotels, unlike most North American ones, charge for the use of function space.)

These readers, like the reporters, soon learned that what Ursula LeGuin said held true: "We like each other." The sf world tends not to split into an elite of Doers, sitting on platforms lecturing, and a supportive mass of Receivers or fans, sitting adulating. Convention: from the Latin, to come together: in order to share.

Chorus of voices: "And when I asked for an autograph, he/she talked to me! What a nice person!"

(And some are arrogant bastards, too, but they stayed home this time.)

"Why are you here?"

"Because the fans sent me to you."

Bob Tucker, a First Fandomite, legend, Hugo-winning fan-writer, and admirer of Jim Beam and pretty ladies, is also Wilson Tucker, Hugo-nominated sf writer. He flew to Aussiecon because a lot of us in the fan community love him; because a lady named Jackie Franke organized "The Tucker Bag," a special fund which collected some \$2,500 from fans to pay his way. During his first panel, on sf writing, he sat silent and fidgeting under the spotlights, feeling that only a handful of us were responding. "They're a cold audience," he complained to me. Since I was to interview him the next day on the program, we considered the problem. The spotlights for videotaping panels were too bright, the hall too dark: speakers and audience were cut off. Easily remedied. Vital, though, since we wanted to establish the lack of barriers.

"Bob," I said, "I remember my first worldcon. You were up on a stage trading one-liners about 'Rosebud' and 'Courtney's boat' and picnic tables--and I walked out. People kept talking about fandom; I didn't understand, and I was bored. We've got to introduce you properly--as Wilson the writer (Robin didn't make it clear who you are) and Bob the fan, and talk about why you're both."

Introduce fandom-as-a-Tucker creation in 50 minutes? We tried. Soon Merv Binns of Space Age Books was selling out of hardcover editions of Ice and Iron and Year of the Quiet Sun; the local bottle shops were selling out of Tucker's elixir, Jim Beam; and Tucker was handing out Rosebud buttons and calling cards to bebies of femmefans. By Sunday, he had a hall full of people on their feet going "smooooth," an arcane ritual you'll only understand if you attend a con with Bob, Wilson, and Jim.

By Sunday, that is, Australia had a lot of people not only delighted to discover somebody else read "that stuff" (remember the thrill?) but also a lot of people happy to discover the subculture of fandom.

"Why are you here?"

"The fans sent me to keep an eye on Bob, there."

Rusty Hevelin (who drinks milk) travelled with his "son" Bob as the Down Under Fan Fund winner. The Fund alternately sends Australians up to visit us, us down to them.

"Why are you here?"

"Because I'm half of the Fan Guest of Honor."

At that press conference, and all through the convention, I was hyper-aware that few people would understand what role Mike Glicksohn and I were playing as "Fan" GoHs. What had we published? What did we mean, we'd published a fanzine called Energumen which won a Hugo, articles from me that won another, and letters from him that made him a legend (though the beard, boa constrictor, bheer, and Bill Bowers helped?). What's a "fanzine"? Back to square one.

Mike and I figured that while Ursula represented the professional concerns, and he represented the fans (with a duty to sample local brews for them), I was an interface between sf and the subculture of fandom. After organizing a fanhistory display at the Toronto worldcon, I'd had some practice explaining fandom (especially to reporters, with Bob Tucker's help!). Besides--as Robin Johnson and the program book kept pointing out--I had lovely respectable literary interests, having taught sf and finished off a PhD (now I can go back to reading fanzines). I was able to meet a lot of Australians through that "professional" interest in sf: librarians, teachers, students who wanted to set up sf courses--people like me who wanted to take sf seriously, but not to take the joy out of it. (I spent one panel on Sunday trying to have the best of both worlds!)

Yet when I introduced myself, I tried to talk about Susan the fan, about why fandom interests me as much as the sf which lured me into it.

"Why are you here?"

"To have dinner with my friends."

I explained, at the opening ceremonies, that years before when I was a neofan, a friend lent me some amateur sf magazines: fanzines. Most contained discussions of sf, book reviews and such; yet one, Rataplan, consisted entirely of someone named Leigh Edmonds in Australia talking about having dinner with someone named John Bangsund, and.... "Richard," I complained, "what's going on? This isn't even about sf! Who cares?"

"Oh," he replied. "That's fannish. You'll understand someday."

So in 1975 I left Regina, Saskatchewan; and I arrived in Melbourne, Australia; and I met Ursula LeGuin at the Nova Mob meeting, and didn't fall at her feet because she said she'd be embarrassed; and the next night I had dinner at Degraives Tavern with Leigh Edmonds, and John Bangsund, and Valma Brown who happens to be a sister of mine, not by birth but by choice and fandom. And I understood: for me, fandom was a communications network that brought me together with my friends.

It was hardly a unique message, but it was as simple, and honest, as I could make it. At the panel following the introductions, "How to Really Enjoy Yourself at This Convention," Mike and Rusty and the Aussiefen repeated the same thing: "Talk to people. That's why we're here. Talk to people." And we did. From platforms and panels; in groups over coffee, supplied by Discon II, bless 'em, in the lounge outside the meeting room; at the parties by the Magic Pudding Club and the Science Fiction Writers of America (and Australia) and the '77 worldcon bidders; at Leigh Edmonds' pie-and-sauce party, that vast end-of-con tribute to Australian cuisine; in ones and twos and tens: we discussed, debated, disagreed, chattered, gossiped, heavyrapped, and got to know each other. And then we wandered back into the main ballroom to watch Sonar Graphics' unique light-and-sound show, preceding each major program segment (Aussiecon's most impressive innovation), and listen to someone else talk.

What else is there at a worldcon? There's an art show--Aussiecon's was small but impressive, highlighted by Karel Thole's work--hucksters' tables, selling books and magazines and the like; and auctions of collectable material. There's usually a masquerade, this one capably organized by Shayne McCormack, with your hardworking GoHs to judge the costumes--far simpler than the elaborate North American presentations of late, but fun. A movie program has become standard; Aussiecon premiered Solaris but I was too busy visiting. At

larger conventions, there are often two or more concurrent program items: on sf, fantasy, science, films, writing, editing, fan publishing, anything. Of course, it all leads up to the Hugo banquet, and the presentation of awards voted on by the members of the convention. Some people fall in love at conventions, and some get pros to autograph their books. Lots of things happen at worldcons.

Anyway, at this convention there was an excellent, smoothly-run program, organized by Bruce Gillespie and Leigh Edmonds, among others. I enjoyed it, and I rarely get around to attending the formal convention events (though I've never felt that I was on half the program before, either). Carey Handfield, one of the committee members, set an example of stunning efficiency by day; and then in the evening, everyone relaxed and actually enjoyed their own convention. Remarkable. I just hope they don't all gafiate. (That's "get away from it all," leave fandom, a feeling you understand after running a worldcon.)

Oh yes. A large chunk of my convention was spent talking to reporters. Taping a half-hour program on Canadian literature (my specialty, one reporter discovered to her delight) was an odd experience, but easier than trying to explain fandom as a subculture to Jan Sharpe for her "New Society" program.

"But what are you doing here? Talking to your friends--but you're a successful woman, surely you have real friends?"

On Saturday afternoon, I sat trying to tell Jan's tape recorder (because I wasn't reaching Jan) what I valued about fandom: the chance to meet, to become friends (not just acquaintances: friends) with a wide and wonderful circle of people. Look, I said, at the people you found me with today: Bob Tucker, who's a legend, and Jillian Miranda Foyster, who's an Australian schoolgirl, and her mum Elizabeth who teaches and paints lovely watercolors, and John Alderson who raises sheep (and, I thought, I want to get back down to the ballroom and talk to them). But she didn't understand--not even when I turned around and interviewed her for an article I'm writing on Australian women (I was busy, this trip, playing pro writer; scholar, too, visiting at University of Melbourne in hopes of coming back).

Young, intelligent, hip, a single mother, Jan complained she had no one to talk with, could feel at ease only with a small, elite group of people her age who shared her ideas. Yet she couldn't believe that fandom gave me exactly what she lacked, that I had flown here for a sort of giant family reunion. (It has its quarrels, but it's not a bad clan.)

I passed Jan on to Tucker, and went off to interview an advice-to-housewives columnist and the German chambermaid. Not even Mr. Smooth could dent the preconceptions with which she edited me, and Bruce Gillespie, and Eric Lindsay, though. The radio program presented the stereotype of fans as social misfits, shy, introverted, able to communicate only on paper (some of my second-year English students should be so handicapped!). Shy? Introverted? That raving bunch of lunatics munching daffodils, waiting for the train to Ballarat, and chattering away?

We come together because we value sf. We stay, because we value each other. We celebrate fandom because it is the bond that holds us together.

Well: when we talked to Malcolm Maiden--frizzyhaired freak, writing for the Australian edition of Rolling Stone--about "tribe" and "celebration" and "communications network," he understood.

And the latest issue of Leigh Edmonds' Fanew Sletter reports that sf clubs and fanzines are mushrooming all over Australia. Fans coming together, talking with their friends.

"Why are you here?"

"Because John Bangsund has a bottle of Kaiser Stuhl Bin J426 in his wine cellar for me."

Several years ago, John Bangsund, Publishing Jiant, wine critic, and all-round legend of Melbourne fandom, proposed that Australians bid for a world convention, inviting Ursula K. LeGuin as GoH. They did. A somewhat erratic career took John away to Canberra, where he became a civil servant, married a charming woman named Sally, and generally Settled Down--except for producing a steady flow of outrageously brilliant fanzines. The cosmic wheels continued to grind, of course, and they brought me, one August night, to sit in John and Sally's living room, curled up by the heater with cat Dylan, sharing conversation and wine with them, and Carey Handfield, and three more North Americans: John Berry, Mike Glicksohn, and Sheryl Birlhead.

Now John Bangsund happens to be one of the best personal journalists (synthesizing ideas, emotion, experience, into words--ok, have you got a name for it?) existing today. Not "existing in fandom." Existing anywhere--though he chooses to distribute his material through fandom's network. Through that writing, its intelligence and insight and quirky humor, he'd earned our admiration; through it, and our writing, and lots of letters, we'd formed a friendship, which gained an extra dimension as we sat talking with him.

John Berry, in San Francisco in July, figured he couldn't go to Aussiecon: he had just enough money to find a place to live, exist til he could live by writing. "Bangsund has that bottle of Kaiser Stuhl waiting for me," he explained, as he wrote the check to the travel agent. Translation: we have a friendship to confirm in person. This will never happen to any of us again. Translation: impossible in words, possible only in the feeling we share as Bangsund pulls out the July 1972 issue of Amazing, with the "Clubhouse" column in which Berry reviews (glowingly) Bangsund's Scythrop and incidentally (not so glowingly) Mike's and my Energumen; and the July 1975 Amazing in which I review (glowingly) Bangsund's Philosophical Gas and the defunct Scythrop. So we sit and praise each other's writing; and mean more than praise because it touches us, and we wish we'd written it; and we try not to feel silly.

"What is the purpose of your visit?"

"Tourist."

Sixty of the North Americans (six Canadians, including two GoHs, the Torcon II chairman, and a retired mountie) went to Aussiecon because of Grace Lundry, who with husband Don organized a group flight and kept us organized. After the con, they'd left us time to play tourist. Genie DiModica saw Ayers Rock. Alan Frisbie was bitten by a wombat. Don and Grace took lots of trains without 58 other fen. I found myself, one chilly spring night in August, in Ken and Marea Ozanne's garden waiting my turn at Ken's 10" telescope. Freesias scented the air, a cat purred in the long grass, a stream chuckled in a vast country silence: and suddenly the normal, lovely scene shifted. Polaris wasn't there in the clear north sky. The stars were strange. On the southern horizon, there at last were the five points of the Southern Cross! Alpha Centauri, nearest neighbor, new. Different stars.

We call it a Sense of Wonder.

Two days later, Australia's fabulous femmefan Shayne McCormack was handing us daffodils in Sydney airport, so we could concentrate on something besides the reality of saying goodbye several months too soon. Fans hugged fans, hiding emotions under the ritual exchange: "See you next year in Kansas City."

"Where're you from?"

"Australia."

"Purpose of visit?"

"To have dinner with my friends."

# TIDEPOOL

In a fine flush of nostalgic neofannish enthusiasm, I volunteered to do all sorts of editorial-staff chores for Genre Plat: acquire envelopes, teach Allyn how to slipsheet, write a sercon article, type up a mailing list, write a fannish column, write a fanhistory column, and bake scones for the collators.

In trufannish fashion, I have done none of these things. At last night's BCSFA meeting, Allyn rather pointedly reminded me of my promises, as she flourished a stack of brilliant-witty-comments-on-sf, her editorial, masses of cartoons, and rows of neatly-letraset headings at me. (Allyn Cadogan not only has cheekbones, she also has the ability to apply letraset in a straight line. I am consumed with Envy.)

Clutching one of Al Betz' chocolate chip cookies defensively, I mumbled excuses. I've been re-acquiring my roommate (Eli Cohen, finally fleeing Regina); I've had a hundred essays to mark in the past two weeks; I've had houseguests; I haven't had a reply from John Bangsund, who wrote the article I wanted to reprint for a fanhistory column. Besides, I'd given Allyn a dozen stencils and baked oatmeal cookies for the editorial collective and what more did they want, mutter, mutter...I hid behind Bill Gibson.

I have, in fact, been Busy. Besides grading more termpapers than I care to remember on Heart of Darkness ("Conrad described the black men descriptively as black.") I've been drawing up the outline and ordering books for my new course on fantasy; I've been working on the curriculum committee submission for a full-time sf class; I've been working on my sf-essay-book outline; I've been writing Serious Stuff about sf; I've been discussing a graduate student's M.A. thesis proposal on sf; I've been...I've been spending my fanac time on scholac, except my scholac all seems to be fanac.

I am, you see, in the happy position of being able to spend my "work" life talking about A Wizard of Earthsea, the influence of Campbell on Heinlein, and the influence of the fan community on sf publishing...while getting paid for doing this.

Let me, from the goodness of my trufannish heart, share this secret with you, so that you too can become too busy grading exams on sf to read sf, too busy organizing worldcon panels as "scholarly activity" to have dinner with your friends, too busy.... No, wait a minute. That doesn't sound right.

Let me talk about taking sf seriously...in the most fannish manner possible.

If you're a student, or a teacher, who thinks it would be all sorts of fun, and a revolutionary act besides, to talk about sf, talk about sf-as-literature, in some sort of organized way, actually get credit for studying something you enjoy (revolutionary, did I say?) and apply those ivory-tower modes of thought to Real Life...let's talk about sf courses.

I was a terribly Earnest undergraduate in English, ten years ago, when I rediscovered sf lurking in the tunnels underneath Carleton University. People had brightened the walls with clever graffiti: "Frodo is alive and well, he's lost under Patterson Hall," and such-like. ("There is no plural for grilled cheese.") Under the Tolkien references and Elvish runes, someone else had taped personal runic scrawls, decipherable as: "Interested in sf? Call Richard Labonte at 733-2811." Quiet Richard in the newspaper office was a pusher. He lent me Delany's books, he lent me strange things called fanzines, he inveigled me into writing, collating, and driving to conventions. In short, he started me on the path to Terminal Silliness, where you find me today. Enroute, he encouraged me to draw up a proposal, for the English Department, for a course in sf. These were the radical '60s, remember;

and under the combined influence of make-education-relevant rhetoric and truly literate sf, I drew up a pompous 4-page document suggesting that what Carleton launched for was a credit class in sf. In, to be precise--I'd been reading the New Wave rhetoricians, and Ellison--"speculative fiction."

"Susan," said my department chairman, raising a practiced sardonic eyebrow, "all fiction is speculative."

RULE 1: Don't be pompous. Don't be phony-academic. Don't ever, ever be defensive. This stuff we love is worth taking seriously. You know that; so relax.

In fact, the chairman was sympathetic. (The happy ending to this story is that he too is now teaching A Wizard of Earthsea in his children's literature and fantasy course...) He did give me rather a rough time about my interest in "untraditional" (read, unrespectable) subjects like sf and Canadian lit, so I'd feel defensive, work hard in my "traditional" subjects to prove I was "scholarly," make an A in his Blake class. I did.

"Susan, we'd really like to offer a science fiction class, but there's no one to do it. If you're so interested...do it yourself."

"Fine. Give me a room."

RULE 2: The only true learning occurs when you, yourself, want to learn. Do it.

The Carleton University SF Freeschool and Bookswapping Group boiled itself down to about 20 people, meeting evenings in the summer of 1969...and through the fall and winter of 1969-70. There were first year and M.A. students, physics majors and visiting cytotechnologists (Rosemary Ulyot and Alicia Austin), a math grad student not-working on his thesis, and me, in Canadian lit, working on mine; people who never went to their "real" classes, and teaching assistants who should have been preparing classes: people finding out how and what they wanted to learn. Oh, we were frequently naive, often banal. ("Heinlein is a fascist." "Naw, I liked The Rolling Stones." "Hey, yeah, their new album is sorta sf." "Wanna go see 2001 again, gang?" "What about Heinlein?" "Aw, he's a fascist.") Sometimes we were superlatively neofannish--as when I discovered that, in Canada, a bookstore could not order Ace books directly, but had to deal through a news agent (the local softcore porn distributor). Why couldn't the Carleton bookstore order us Ace Specials, directly? Because Ace said no. Why couldn't the assistant sf editor, the Specials editor at Ace, bug someone to make a Special Exception? As a class project, we wrote individual letters suggesting this arrangement to the assistant editor at Ace. At that point, there were still about 35 people in the class. It was three years before Terry Carr spoke to me again.

RULE 3: Pay some attention to practical matters: the type of classroom (as informal as possible, for discussion), the format, the booklist, and so on--because these govern how you learn. Do you want structure, or not? Above all, though, be flexible and innovative. The universities have forgotten this. The fans sometimes forget it. Be willing to experiment. Be willing to be silly.

The freeschool class showed us all valuable things, about how you got, from any experience, rewards proportionate to the enthusiasm you put in. It convinced me that a freeschool environment is the best possible forum for learning, too, if some structure can be persuaded to arise organically, like mushrooms, from amid the group. These were lessons I tried to carry over to the bed of Procrustes that was the University, when I became a real live Professor-Person in Regina, with (in 1973) my very own Hugo and my very own sf class. I had to choose the books, and order them. I had to work a format with a large, chilly classroom filled with rows of bolted-down desks. I had to "play Teacher." Still, once I got rid of the people looking for a gut course (one of whom handed in 8 hours' worth of computer printout from a space-war game as his "essay") we had a roomful of psych majors talking to biology majors talking, for the first time in their lives, to the two English majors who kept asking plaintively, "But how do you talk about sf? Can you talk about Characterization? Theme? Imagery?" "What's an imagery?" "What's a galactic empire?" "Hey,



you know, I've never actually read a novel before. This Heinlein, he's good. May I write a story instead of an essay?"

RULE 4: Nothing, nothing, not even correct punctuation, is as important as enthusiasm.

RULE 5: Break down preconceptions. And get around, under, through administrative red tape, so English majors can take Chemistry 230, Science Fiction and can talk to biologists, while chemical engineers can take English 314, Science Fiction and not feel out of place. If someone who's always been afraid of words on paper wants to write a story, encourage him/her instead of saying, "The department wants 2 essays and an exam." This is why I like freeschools, though the thrill of getting credits for fun is pleasant.

"You realize we want you to teach Canadian literature and other literature courses, not sci-fi stuff?" said U.B.C.'s English Department head.

"Yes," I smiled blithely, got the job, and proceeded to obtain permission to teach English 314, Studies in Fiction, special topic Science Fiction. This succeeded so well that, urged by the head of the curriculum committee (a full professor who wants to teach sf himself) I'm working on approval for a full year course, English 320, Science Fiction and Fantasy, and meanwhile preparing next year's English 318, Children's Literature with an emphasis on fantasy. It's strange to be Respectable, all of a sudden.

This year's course looked at the North American or Gernsback tradition, sf as a popular literature, the influence of marketing and editorial assumptions...fannish matters, as opposed to the "Susan, give us a definitive definition of sf" debates which this class, largely English majors and creative writing people, wanted to engage in. Perhaps I made a mistake. I know I refused to pin sf down to one function: cut, dried and mounted. Yet I too want to know what this-thing-we-mean-when-we-point-to-it is, so I can understand what it is capable of doing and encourage it to reach its best. That's what taking sf "seriously" means, for me.

RULE 6: There are no easy "definitions" of anything as alive as sf.

RULE 7: Keep it alive.

At the 1974 worldcon, I sat on a panel called "Teaching SF" with some Heavy Scholars and a couple of fan-pro-profs like Jack Williamson. I decided that, if I were taking sf from some of these people, I would cut class. Harlan Ellison, in the front row, was twitching impatiently, and finally jumped up to protest, in the best fannish tradition, "You people are going to kill sf! You're going to make it dull and boring!"

"Aha!" I thought, waking up. I started to heckle Harlan back, which, since I was onstage and had a mike, wasn't as unequal as it sounds. "The only reason I, or Jack, say, teach sf is because we love it, and think it's worth taking seriously."

"I love it too, and I take it seriously. That's why I don't want the universities getting their hands on it."

"Instead of the universities killing sf, maybe sf'll shake up the universities, knock down a few walls. Think of it...studying something you actually enjoy!"

The audience cheered. I grinned at Harlan. Harlan, who spends a lot of his time shaking up university audiences, grinned at me. The rest of the panel went back to talking about structural fabulation, or possibly speculative fiction.

RULE 8: "Let's get science fiction out of the classroom and back into the gutter where it belongs."--Dena Benatan

The approach to sf I've evolved means having my cake, eating it, licking the icing bowl,

and sticking to my diet too. SF's vitality comes, in part, from its "gutter" nature; from the pressure of its fans, which can limit and support; from its status as a "popular literature" that ordinary people enjoy and get excited about. Yet it can also transcend its rockets-and-blasters origins. Moreover, in North America at least, alas, the Reader Who Appreciates Literary Subtleties is a rare furry creature who lurks in university libraries. Reading sf; appreciating sf; encouraging those sf writers who want to experiment, by showing them they have an audience; even capturing part of the lucrative college book market for Ursula Le Guin, Pam Sargent, and Kate Wilhelm; having fun, getting paid, getting our gold stars for talking about something we enjoy: I want to do it all.

RULE 9: Stay fannish.

The English majors in class this year kept making surprised, pleased noises as they read sf criticism, like Bretnor's collection Science Fiction Today and Tomorrow and the essays in Robin Scott Wilson's Those Who Can. "Hey, they're writing for real people. Hey, they're so clear! Hey, this is the best thing I've read on plotting. Hey, this is real."

The class also made surprised, pleased noises when I brought in (on a budget of \$0.00) all the guests I could inveigle into the classroom: Paul Williams on tracking the wild Dick, Sturgeon and Heinlein for Rolling Stone; David Suzuki on recombinant DNA; Terry Carr on editing; Harlan Ellison on...loving sf, enough to take it seriously. As Harlan soared, exploded, and generally presented the Harlan Ellison Show, several thoughts came to me.

One was that, under the present regulations for the Hugo Award for Best Dramatic Presentation, any sf class could be eligible, as an episode in a continuing series. If Ginjer Buchanan could almost get nominated in 1973 for her efforts to turn into a koala bear, why can't a good performance in an sf class be acclaimed too? English 314, University of British Columbia, October 25, 1976, medium live theater, produced by Susan Wood and starring Harlan Ellison running through two end-of-class bells: "The Harlan Ellison Show." It was the best sf dramatic production I've seen in five years.

The other thought was a \*click\* of recognition as an idea came clear: what distinguishes sf is its sense of wonder.

RULE 10: Keep your Sense of Wonder.

If we can lure the Sense of Wonder into the university, what won't we be able to do?

I'll tell you one thing you'll be able to do. Cheryl Cline and Lynn Kuehl, of Martinez, California, took an sf class from First Fandomite Art Widner. No, they weren't looking for an easy credit, reading Heinlein; no, they weren't even intending to write essays about books they enjoyed, for a change. They were neofans, see, and their idea was to "sit at Mr. Widner's feet and learn about early sf and fandom: the personalities and events." As a result, they became even more interested in fandom. Fanhistory. Fandom. Publish. Response, egoboo. School, ditto machine, publish, fanac, CREDIT!

Thanks to a liberal school and a fannish prof, Cheryl and Lynn produced two issues of a nice, literate, very fannish zine, Brick'n'Board Journal, for school credit. Yes. Before gafiating into matrimony, I'm sure they learned more about sf, writing, editing, interviewing people, the sociology of special interest groups, graphics, and the care of ditto machines than I've ever "taught" anyone on a formal "course"--and they enjoyed doing it, and shared that enjoyment with other fans.

I think that's great. I am, in fact, terribly jealous.

"Education," someone once wrote, "is revelation that affects the individual." I've arrived at a lot of my revelations about Art, Literature, Teaching, and Learning through teaching sf. Oh, I complain about my workload (and Allyn complains about her lack of a column) but secretly I enjoy it. After all, better to have 45 papers to mark, than only two because your course is renowned as the most boring, irrelevant academic nonsense going! The

# PROPELLOR BEANIE

Critics are sometimes called upon to prove they know what they're talking about, and that can be dangerous. While writing my last column about genzines (the care, feeding, and ideal qualities of), I began boring my local fannish friends with my views on The Need For More Good General-Interest Fanzines. To prove my points, I lent them copies of Maya, Janus, The Witch and the Chameleon, some old Energumens and a Cry, various Granfalloons and a Warhoon or two. At the BC club Christmas party, sitting next to Allyn Cadogan, our information officer and newsletter-editor, I rhapsodized about the fannish immortality awaiting the capable editor who could fill the fanzine void with a regular, attractive, intelligent genzine, full of personality, witty commentary and the sense of fannish community.

"Yeah, I guess a good fanzine would be a way of making contact with people. Communicating. Getting known," said Allyn, who wants to be an sf writer.

"Yeah," said Bill Gibson. Bill, who is tall and lean, rather like my pet avocado plant, is another would-be sf writer; in fact he had just sold his first story, one he'd written for my sf class. (Luckily, I had given him an A.) "It would be neat to do a good fanzine like Maya. We could talk about sf, and stuff."

"Practice writing? Sounds ok. But what's a genzine?" said John Park, who is also tall and thin, has an English accent, and...guess what...is a would-be sf writer. John distinguished himself by finishing his doctorate in physical chemistry, and having his first story published in Galaxy in the same week.

"Yeah, and it's fun, too," I said, staring reminiscently into my glass of BC Rotgut Red. "That moment when you staple the first copy, and it's yours, and beautiful...the first loc, praising your writing...the first unsolicited contributions..." Me, I'm Susan, Old Fan and Tired, local gafiate. I'm the short one with glasses, who has no ambition to write sf. Allyn's the slim woman with the high cheekbones and the gap between her teeth. That's the cast of Birth of a Genzine. I was catalyzing something.

Allyn borrowed some more fanzines. Bill, who'd been a 15-year-old actifan at Chicon III, ungafiated and started drawing cartoons. John began muttering about the price of paper. Then suddenly, one evening at Allyn's place with the kids put to bed, Barney purring in my lap and the Canadian wine affecting my more-gafia-than-thou pose once more, Allyn uttered the fateful words:

"Let's start a genzine!"

"Great! I, uh, I just happened to do this cover," said Bill, producing a superb collage.

"Hey, yeah. May I write a column?" my voice said. (It wasn't me. I had four hundred papers to mark that term, and was already running short on sleep.)

"What's a genzine?" asked John Park.

"What are you going to call the baby?" I asked. "You can either pick a really serious sf name like, oh, Starship or Science Fiction Essays and go the semi-prozine route, or you can pick an off-the-wall name and be crazy-fannish. Call it Fred. Or Genre Plat."

"Yeah," said Allyn and Bill.

"What's a Genre Plat?" asked John.

"Now, for the first issue, we'll need..." said Allyn; and by the time we all left at 4 am, Vancouver had itself an embryo genzine.

It's really easy to start a genzine. All you need are a couple of neos with lots of time and enthusiasm; a couple of older fen with experience and enthusiasm (not to mention enough fannish contacts to make up a mailing list); and a certain amount of mood-enhancers and sheer lunacy to get you to the point at which the thing stops being a great idea for Real Soon Now, and starts being a reality. A lot of crudzines are born that way. Most die after the first issue. Genre Plat should be a strong survivor.

First off, the would-be editor of a successful fanzine has to have some idea of what he/she is doing, or wants to do. I get a couple of dozen "fanzines" every month that are just assemblages of material that the editor had lying around, stencilled, and mailed out. Allyn and Bill actually sat down and read a lot of fanzines, decided which ones they liked, and then figured out why: it boiled down to Maya and the like, for the balance of serious and fannish material, the informal tone, the artwork, and the sense of fannish community. They also knew why they wanted to publish: to communicate with other fans, to--in Bill's case at least--apply his English major skills to debating ideas about sf in a non-academic way, perhaps to create and maintain a fannish community: genzines are great focal points for loose energy, and there seems to be a lot of that in Vancouver/Seattle just now.

A word about co-editing: generally, I don't think it works. In your heart, you know you could've done it better if you hadn't compromised about that illo on page 13, right? Well, Allyn and Bill, the Official Editors (John and I became Surrogate Codparents) have worked out areas of responsibility: he the artwork, she the written material, both alternating editorials. Also, and I think this is a big factor in a successful magazine; we may be Silly, but we're mostly Grown Up. We're all in our late 20's, with Careers and Relationships and Life Experiences and all that. We're not dependent on fandom for all our egoboo, so the chances of petty feuds ("That's my tradezine!" "No, mine!" "Paste those e-stencils in my way, or I quit!!") are going to be minimal. I hope.

Genre Plat knows what it wants to be. It also has the courage to go after The Ideal Fanzine, even if it means rejecting material, bruising feelings...or, more important, having the patience to sit down with contributors and Get It Right. (The lack of real help to do better-than-adequate work is something of a problem, in fandom. You get a lot of feedback on content, very little on technique.)

∟"We want to infuriate and amuse," said Bill, asked to define his aims.∟

The planning also took money into account. Allyn did a cost analysis: reproduction methods, paper costs, envelopes, postage, electrostencils. . .all part of knowing what you're doing. Mimeography is informal, "fannish," and a community project. Also a pain, when you have to slipsheet and when you have Allyn's two- and five-year-olds to "help." Also much, much cheaper than offset. Also available, since they...we (you don't get out that easily, Susan) have access to both the BC club mimeo, and mine. (But I've done enough slipsheeting to last a lifetime...)

"What's a slipsheet?"

"We'll show you, John."

Planning. Direction. Enthusiasm. (I'm actually quite excited about this whole thing, which is ridiculous for an Old Fan and Tired. I keep volunteering to do things; I even wrote a column for the first issue and a reprint-introduction for the second, while marking exams. That's enthusiasm.) The final ingredient needed to lift the zine out of the ordinary, though, is talent.

Of course, yes, you're a great writer. Well, a good one. Well, that essay on 1984 got an A in Grade 11 English. And your friend's cartoons are sort of like Rotsler's, sure. But: are you going to be embarrassed when the first issue of Purple Ditto Monster turns up for the neos to snicker at in a fanhistory room ten worldcons from now?

I don't think anyone will snicker at Genre Plat. Dena Brown read Bill Gibson's essay on sf criticism, and immediately asked to reprint it in Locus. We passed around Bill's cartoons, and giggled. Allyn's piece on Harlan Ellison is a really fine piece of personal journalism, and her editorial...well, look, send for the fanzine, and judge. I think it has a nice community feel about it, the layouts look attractive, and Allyn has, I discovered, an enviable fannish talent: she can lay down presstype straight, a useful gift unless you have a tame calligrapher in the basement.

Get the best contents you can, for whatever type of fanzine you want: if it's a reviewzine, make them good reviews (Genre Plat's by Doug Barbour and Bill Beard discuss books and films, instead of just summarizing plots). If it's a personalzine, make us care about your life... and write about it in literate English. Don't print crud, just because it's yours.

Reproduce each issue as well as time and money allow. I get a lot of fanzines. I simply do not bother reading the ones typed with dirty typewriter keys, with fuzzy printing, crowded and messy pages, faded-to-nothing ink. If you expect anyone to care about your words and art, make them legible.

Bill and Allyn are going to spend a fair amount of money for good mimeo bond, ink, and electrostencils. We all are going to spend many, many hours running off pages and collating. We will complain, loudly. We will hold an artifact that is as good as we can make it, and beam, eventually.

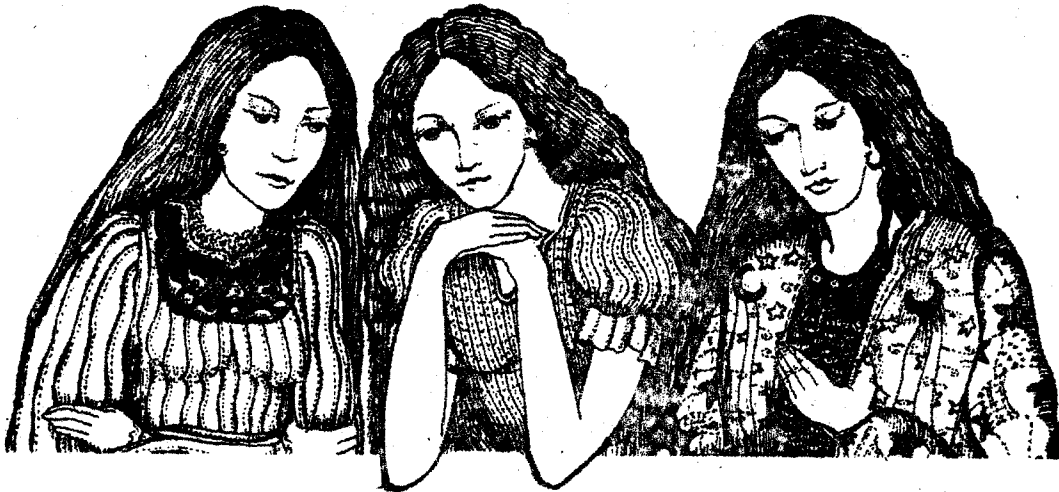
OK. You have a pile of lovely, expensive (nobody does this to make money, nobody; there are easier ways to get rich and famous) fanzines waiting for an audience. Mail them out. (There are piles of unmailed issues in closets from Brooklyn to Seattle. There are piles of unpublished material all over fandom. Whatever happened to the Willis issue of Warhoon? To Innuendo?) Borrow mailing lists from a friend, from a club. Read lots of fanzines, noting the mistakes, so you don't make them. Copy down the addresses of the faithful contributors and letterhacks, neatly, each onto its own filecard on which you may note issues sent and response received. Send your zine to fanzine reviewers; the reviewers, inundated, will not respond, but will feel Terribly Guilty, and may mention you.

As a personal piece of advice, try not to hand your zine out at a large convention. I invariably leave them at parties, resent dragging them around, and dump them unread at home with the dirty laundry. I once distributed a fanzine at a Lunacon, and it got the least response of any issue we'd published.

Personally, I think the first issue of Genre Plat has as much going for it as any firstish could have: brains, good looks, loving parents, contacts in the great world. It needs two more things to succeed. It needs a good lettercolumn. For that, all Bill and Allyn can do is to rely on the overall appearance to convince people to read it, the material to provide comment hooks, and their own skill to edit and balance a healthy exchange-of-ideas lettercol that's the heart of any successful genzine.

The second factor in making a good genzine into a potentially great one is, I think, regularity. I think people are more inclined to contribute when they know that the zine will really, honestly appear--preferably soon, so they get the egoboo of seeing their work in print, and the double egoboo of response. Fans write and draw for pleasure, but also for feedback and praise, not for your inactive file. Keeping a regular schedule--quarterly isn't impossible, for a small zine--shows a certain commitment on the editor's part. It also means you don't get stuck producing those two-years-in-the-making hundred-page monsters which destroy your fannish enthusiasm, destroy your finances when you mail them out three years later, and which no-one ever finishes reading anyway.

((continued on page 80))



## — PEOPLE'S PROGRAMMING —

When I entered fandom, in the mid '60s, I noticed two things. First, I thought I had met my kind of people, at last. They talked to me, seriously, about books, politics, ideas. They did not (for the most part) play silly sex-role games, those games in which I was a misfit "girl" in the "real" mundane world. They accepted me as one of themselves.

They accepted me as an Honorary Man.

The second thing I noticed was that, in this period, people (=males, writers and editors, and the "femme" fans who were their acolytes) were devoting a lot of time, verbiage, emotion, and hostility to something called "The New Wave." As I perceived it, this was a literary movement (if one could call it that) designed to introduce such matters as style and characterization into the cardboard-and-wiring-diagram realm of traditional North American pulp escape-reading sf.

I liked the New Wave. I liked to have my sf literate, experimental, and humanized.

I liked being an Honorary Man, too.

Now, I'm still in fandom, in the late '70s. There's a new movement, bringing fresh ideas, fresh concepts of what people can be and do and how they can relate to each other. It's affecting North American society. With the usual time-lag, it's affecting sf and fandom. It's affected me.

It's called, generally, the women's movement. And because of it, I call myself a woman.

Because one of the tenets of this movement is that the personal and the political are inexplicably related, I want to talk about my involvement in "women's programming" in sf fandom--preferably, people's programming--in terms of my change from Honorary Man to Woman Fan.

It's been a slow, sometimes painful journey, to new awareness for myself, new friends, a new pride, and a new sense specifically of what this thing we call science fiction can do to show us new models for the future. On the way, friends who liked me when I laughed with them at anti-woman jokes now dismiss me as "bitter" and "crazy." No: I and many women like me are finding a new joy and sanity, based on self-respect. Other ex-friends urge me to "stop knocking fandom" or stop trying to "destroy" fandom by erecting "barriers" (which are already there). Things, they say, are worse in the Real World; change that (and leave us alone).

But fans are educated and have a vested interest in their self-image of being enlightened

and aware. Shouldn't we really try to live up to that (often false) image, not hide behind it? What, I'd like to know, does the spectacle of an almost naked dancer, carried onstage bound hand and foot, to perform for the drooling masters, have to do with science fiction? Or with adult behavior in 1977? At this point, I walked out of the 1977 Westercon Masquerade in disgust; and a famous pro jeered at me for being uptight, repressed, and "over-reacting." If this is "normal" entertainment for an adult audience of sf readers...if my protest is "wrong"...then the fandom I love is pretty sick.

Ten years ago I'd've stayed, and silently squirmed. This year, I spoke my disgust--and became, publically, not an Honorary Man, but an Emotional Woman. Possibly a Strident Feminist Bitch. Welllll...uppity women, unite!

What do I mean by "honorary man"? Well, I mean "human being"--sort of. In the 1960s, an honorary man was a female person whom you did not treat either as a silly nuisance or as a sex object. If you were a teacher, you complimented her (unfeminine) intellectual ability by saying, "Susan, you think like a man!" If you were a young male, you traded your math homework for her English homework, lent her Analog, and treated her as an equal...almost. You let her do the dirtywork in the chem lab (because she was more deft), the pasteup on the newspaper (because she was neater), and the shitwork on the fanzine (because she had more time). As a reward you said, "Gee, Susan, you're just like one of the guys," meaning "How nice it is to avoid all the complications of sex!" and "How nice it is to talk to you. You aren't silly, like Those Other Girls."

And it was nice. Even in 1967, I knew that "You think like a man," wasn't a compliment; I knew that my women friends were intelligent and trying to hide it; but I knew, too, I wasn't a "girl." Whatever class they taught flirting in, and how to apply eyeliner, and play dating games--I missed (and so did my friends). Student newspaper work, and then fandom, were wonderful worlds to me. I want to emphasize this; I was, and am grateful to fandom because it let me talk to men and women, as equals, without those games that go on between the sexes-as-aliens.

Or so I thought. It helped that women were a comparative rarity in "my" fandom: there were the "trekkies," the flamboyant WPSFA femme-fannes, and the Conspicuous Overachievers, like, oh, Juanita Coulson (Hugo-winning co-editor with husband Buck), Elinor Busby (Hugo-winning co-editor with husband Buz and friend Wally), Lesleigh Luttrell (co-editor with Hank), and Joyce Fisher, now Katz, whom I will always revere because she showed me that women can do their own fanzines. Joyce: who doesn't trust her own talent, and cooks instead of writing her beautiful words these days.

It helped, too, that fairly soon after entering fandom at large at St. Louiscon, after several years of limited local activity, I became Partnered and then Married: as a woman (=sexual being) I was neutralized, safe. I could talk to men, without them, or their partners, feeling I was a Threat. I became a reasonably well known fan, as an appendage. Never mind that mail to the co-edited fanzine tended to come addressed only to the male editor...and etc. Never mind that, if I wanted to discuss something serious, I was told to play with my own little zine; and never mind that I was so convinced of my own inferiority that I was truly amazed when anyone read it.

What did matter was the reaction I noticed when I started acting or talking as a person who was also a woman. Admiring someone's discussion of mimeo techniques was ok; trying to discuss my feelings of frustration at the male domination of fandom was "boring," "irrelevant," and "crazy." Writing an article about social reactions to breast size (we all have our unliberated moments) was funny, ha ha; but aren't you making a fuss about nothing? Talking about teaching sf. at conventions, was ok, "people" behavior; complaining about dirty-jokes panels and strip-tease acts at those same conventions was "crazy libbers" behavior, "making a fuss about nothing" (again), and terribly "uptight." Saying that fandom was one big happy family earned me a couple of Hugos. Saying that fandom, like the rest of North American society, was sexist and did not necessarily treat women as individuals unless they denied the existence of sexism and denied their womanhood, earned me abuse. (Despite, or because,

of some of this, I also won another half-Hugo. I'm delighted and a little puzzled.)

An honorary man is a woman who is accepted as "an individual" provided she does not, ever, remind her companions that she is a woman too. Unless she comes on to them as a sex object, but that's a whole other trip. (And in this new "liberated" society, women aren't allowed the privilege of saying "no.") The woman/individual is accepted provided she does not even complain that her situation as a woman is rather less than equal or ideal. Even in fandom.

Yes, I know men have problems too. You work on them. I'll start helping you if, and when, you show some signs of being willing to help me. OK?

In your fandom--the fandom of 1978--there are people whose identity rests, in part, on the fact that they are men, socialized in certain patterns, reacting to those patterns. And there are people who are women. They meet, as individuals, at conventions like this Wisconsin and they find some programming which deals with these differing identities and how to break down the "barriers of gender" that already imprison us! They find what is mis-named "women's programming." Programming which deals with the human condition. Programming which seems traditional, inevitable. "Saturday, 4 pm, the Usual Women's Panel, with Terry Carr in absentia." Programming which only got started, in the fannish consciousness, in the early '70s.

Women's organizations in the '50s in fandom withered. In the early '70s, the women's movement was only beginning to make an impact on the sf community, chiefly through the fiction and criticism of Joanna Russ, seconded by Vonda McIntyre. They pointed out that North American sf reflected, and reinforced, a white-male-supremacist worldview. In general, its portrayal of women was sexist and stereotyped: blond victims, housewives in galactic suburbia, or evil temptresses. They pointed out that few women were, therefore, encouraged to read this stuff, which purported to portray alternate futures but really reflected North American 1950s social attitudes and pulp cliches. (And yes, that kinda limited the men's minds, too.) They pointed out that very few women were encouraged to write the stuff, unless--and you can name the Notable Exceptions--they either bought the male adventure-story norms and became "honorary men" or wrote ladies' magazine fiction with terribly intuitive but helpless heroines.

Vonda and Joanna said these things circa 1970 to '73, when I was really just discovering feminism and rediscovering myself. Hostility erupted and blood flowed, in the SFWA Forum, Dick Geis's fanzines, and elsewhere, while I stood on the sidelines and felt a little afraid of fandom. They said these things publically--Vonda was on a panel in "Women in SF" at Pghlange in 1970. ("And I got into a shouting match with Lester Del Rey about women.") I remember a talk Joanna gave, I think at the Toronto Secondary Universe conference in 1972, wittily reversing sex roles: woman makes rite of passage into adulthood by killing bear, etc. I fell down laughing when I heard that passage later in The Female Man.

Joanna, Vonda, and a very few supporters were rousinglly trashed for being bitter, vicious, feminist bitches. One small but vocal trashing minority (like most of them, a man deeply afraid of women) cornered me at a party in Vancouver honoring Judy Merrill. He asserted, sniggering, that the only way Judy acquired the stories for her famous Year's Best series was by having sex with the authors.

"First of all, how do you know that? And second, why do you assume that about a woman editor, and not about a man? Or do you think Don Wollheim and Terry Carr sleep with their authors, too?"

"You mean, you're one of those crazy libbers too?" the man stuttered. "But you're a fan. You won a Hugo!"

"Two," I retorted. "And I'm not crazy, I'm a woman, you're a pig, and I'm angry." \*click\*

Joanna, meanwhile, retreated from the fray into teaching (which takes up as much energy as any of us has to spare) and fiction writing. Vonda put her energy into constructive things:



"Of Mist, and Grass, and Sand." The Exile Waiting, "Aztecs," Dreamsnake. Meanwhile, their courage in speaking out first helped a lot of us to find our identity and courage. Thank you.

The 1973 Worldcon, Torcon II, did not (as far as I remember) have a women's panel. It was (as far as I remember) the last of the old-style worldcons, where women had comparatively little visibility. I went to none of the programming, being absorbed with running the All Our Yesterdays fanhistory display. The con chair was unmarried, a First Fandomite, and women either just weren't part of "his" fandom or were appendages. I was appreciative, and singularly honored, when he started to treat me as an honorary man, a real fan who could be trusted with responsibility for a project dear to him. I had two able helpers in the (female) persons of Lindas Bushyager and Lounsbury; I gained much assistance from Juanita Coulson; but it wasn't until Elinor Busby came up to me and said, "Why didn't you mention Cry anywhere?" that I began, dimly, to realise that "All Our Yesterdays" was a display of all men's yesterdays, plus a photo of Joni Stopa in a fountain in a bikini.

When Alexis Gilliland asked me to moderate a panel on "Women in SF: Image and Reality" for the 1974 worldcon, I said yes. I had begun to make personal connections between feminist writing, my life, my self; I had begun to learn that women were interesting. I was told that Quinn Yarbro and Katherine Kurtz would be on the panel...with me as moderator. I made a point of seeking out Quinn, trying to plan the panel. I knew a "women in sf" panel had to be not just good but excellent: interesting, well-run, supercompetent, with absolutely no rough edges to criticize. Katherine Kurtz declined to be located, but I did get five minutes with her before the panel, to establish biography and some working questions. The preceding panel, of course, ran overtime. Then, just as (trembling slightly) I was about to step onstage before a couple thousand people, Joe Haldeman said to me, "Oh, by the way, we've added a couple more people." Betty Ballantine and Leigh Brackett, as I recall... someone else? Memory fails. I do remember insisting I be given a few minutes to talk to the panelists so I could at least introduce them properly.

Well, "Women in SF: Image and Reality" succeeded, sort of. Not surprisingly, the older women--who had made their peace with the male-dominated field--said that women suffered no discrimination; and men suffered too from character stereotypes. True, but.... Kurtz, wearing an evening gown at 2 pm and being very beautiful and flirtatious, said much the same thing. Only Yarbro addressed herself to the real problems: image and reality, breaking down the stereotypes, introducing strong women characters, dealing with editors, finding time as a woman for that most selfish of pursuits, writing. Because of the delays, we had 45 minutes, not an hour, and almost no time for audience questioning. I winced when Jennifer Bankier, a Toronto feminist, started to make an angry challenge against the calm assumption that there was no discrimination against non-conformist women writers or non-stereotyped characters in sf...and against the fact that we were being hustled offstage so that the (all-male) artists' panel could go on. On one hand, I could not accept some of the assertions being made. On the other hand, I felt uncomfortable, still, about being part of anything "controversial."

And then the real learning began. As we left the stage...so groups of women, many women (and some men), talking animatedly, left the Park Ballroom with us. In the hall, in the lobby, for, literally, hours, we stood, talked, argued, were excited, moved, angry. Women suddenly came together to discuss their roles as women. Catalyzed by that panel. Catalyzed even by knowing that their discomfort and their dissatisfaction with stereotyped characters and Queen Bee women who implied, "Well, if you aren't successful, it's because you aren't talented, beautiful, sexy, and super like me," were shared.

And me...catalyzed by standing, talking seriously, passionately, almost for the first time, with Quinn and some others...about our lives, our very lives...and a Well-Known Male Pro walked past Quinn, patted her on the fanny, and said, "Caught your panel. You were cute."  
\*click\*

From Discon II, I learned many things.

First, I learned that the "women in sf" panel meant something, to the women who participated and the women who attended. It meant new ideas, a new sense of womanhood/personhood/individuality shared, a new sense of protest aired. The people grouped in the halls ...we needed discussion space, small group space such as some worldcons had already been providing for informal seminars.

Second, I learned--and I mean no disrespect to Alexis Gilliland, who is an open-minded human and did an excellent job arranging Discon II programming--that the women concerned with these ideas needed to take control of "their" programming: at least to the extent of picking speakers who would talk directly about the topic and have real things to say about establishing women's presence in the male pulp fiction world.

Third, I learned that I wasn't happy to be a token man anymore. I would have to talk with other women, and not fear that either they, or men, would condemn me. The alternative was to be patted on the fanny, called "cute"...and dismissed.

I also noticed how few women were on the program. But then I (like most fans) skipped the program anyway; there was nothing exciting on the program (axiom); I went to cons to see my friends. I sold Aussiecon memberships, and had a great time.

At Aussiecon...well, Ursula LeGuin was GoH, and she seemed to be on half the program. I was half the Fan GoH, and a Tame Academic, and I seemed to be on the other half. There were also all sorts of women on panels; and interviewing us for radio, tv, and papers; and helping to run the con; and.... Fandom felt more human, somehow. Natural. Fun. For me, that con represents an ideal: the sense that the tribe of science fiction includes sisters as well as brothers (hi, Valma! hi, Sally, Christine...) talking together about a truly human future. If I work for "women's programming," "alternate programming"--that's what I want.

OK. The time is now July 1976. The place is Berkeley, a small regional con with the Traditional Women's Panel. Again: the sense that the ideas presented here are new, exciting, to men as well as women. The audience is attentive, and the discussion (about breaking down stereotypes, recognizing our assumptions and prejudices, in our lives, our fiction, our view of the future) proceeds with energy. Mistake: seven women overcrowding the panel, and not enough preparation.

September, 1976. The panel I proposed and planned myself, on "Women in Science Fiction" for Midamericon is organized. I spent three months writing to women, asking for participation and suggestions, feeling part of a growing network of women all newly conscious of identity and common purpose: "No, I'm not coming, ask so-and-so, she's a good speaker." Example: I have a beautiful 3-page letter from Virginia Kidd, describing her transition from untroubled woman-in-man's-world to woman-writer, woman-agent, agent of new women writers very conscious of new identity and purpose. Letters, letters...and problems with some of the Mac people, the least of which is the fact that they want to cancel the panel, or run the dirty-jokes panel "to give the men equal time." (The men have the whole rest of the convention!) I politely explain, over and over, that since no-one on my panel is under 14, it is inappropriate to refer constantly to "the girls' panel." I insist on--and get--the right to use a smaller room for two hours as a discussion room, after the 1½-hour formal panel.

I chose a feminist fan editor (Amanda Bankier), two articulate women writers exploring unstereotyped characters and situations (Marta Randall and Suzy McKee Charnas), and an established, articulate writer whose excellence is finally being fully recognized (Kate Wilhelm). They lit up the room.

The audience, some 300 or more women and men, sat, and listened...attentively. None of the to-ing and fro-ing, the drifting in and out and chattering, that happens in most convention-panel rooms. These people wanted to be with us--not in the main hall, listening to the Big Draw, Jerry Pournelle (who felt called upon to put us down publically).

And afterwards, a hundred people or more crowded into the hot, tiny discussion room, and talked, and talked...and talked at the parties, and talked to me, and talked to each other. Victoria Wayne had brought the fliers for the Women's APA, so we could keep on talking.

From my mistakes, I learned. For the 1977 Westercon in Vancouver, with the help of the chair, Fran Skene, and programmer Allyn Cadogan, I organized some "alternate programming" --alternatives to the usual four male scientists building a world, or four male pros bragging. First, a lounge, A Room of Our Own, for serious discussion about sexism, etc. It became male-dominated. (We'll get to women's space in a moment.) Funny how anything involving a woman author became "women's programming" as if men were somehow exempt from attending (but the ones who care about human liberation came, and learned); or as if some women could avoid it, saying, "Oh, women bore me," or "Oh, I know I'm liberated: I don't need that radical stuff; come on honey, let's screw."

We had some programming on Saturday, in the Room and a separate area, with Suzy Charnas reading, and an important panel on "Alternatives to Patriarchy," organized by Paul Novitski, that I'd like to see done more tightly, and done again...and again. After the Women's APA party Saturday, we opened Sunday with Suzy, Quinn, and Lizzy Lynn (as I recall) discussing their creations of non-sexist worlds--and their problems getting editors to publish these new ideas. People participated, suggesting alternate sources of inspiration: Indian cultures, Oriental cultures. Then followed Allyn's formal interview with Special Guest Kate Wilhelm ("I think any woman who is aware has to be a feminist.") in the main hall. Allyn's publishing it in her genzine Genre Plat. Kate held a 2-hour informal discussion in the Room of Our Own about her problems as a wife/mother/woman/writer (no, it isn't easy), and her writing techniques. Then Lesleigh Luttrell and Jeanne Gomoll talked about setting up a feminist sf con, the Wiscon...and here we are at the second one. We had more than seven straight hours of programming for women and men. For me, it was one long, exhilarating consciousness-raising session of a genuine human community. I was no longer an honorary man, tolerated only if I kept my mouth shut about what mattered to me.

Women's programming? People programming? What do I want? That community, truly. Fandom pays too much lip service to the idea of being a tribe of equals, friends. SF pays too much lip service to the idea of being a literature of new ideas, soaring visions of human potential. Let's make it true. And let's honor the new authors and the fans (especially the women) who are making it come true.

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# CROSSING FRONTIERS: A CONFERENCE REPORT

What is "the West"?

Is it a dream of escape--the man on his horse fleeing the woman in her house, as novelist/poet Robert Kroetsch claims?

Is it a place of settlement, of eastern civilization transplanted?

Is it a cowboy movie, its males-together myths now translated into "space, the final frontier," with the Lone Ranger and Tonto metamorphosed into Kirk and Spock, as critic Leslie Fiedler argues?

Is it a flat brown field stretching to a 360-degree horizon, the tallest object a gopher seen from a bus window as we drive north from Calgary? Is it the Rocky Mountains, snow-capped and indescribable, surrounding Banff? Is it bigger cars and lower gas prices than in the rest of Canada? Is it an immense herd of galloping horses beside the highway? Is it Saskatchewan, or South Dakota? British Columbia, or California?

Approximately 260 writers, teachers, students, and interested participants from places like Ottawa, Ontario; Binghamton, New York; Davis, California--oh yes, and Moscow, Idaho; Regina, Saskatchewan; and Edmonton, Alberta--gathered at the Banff Conference Centre, April 12-15, 1978, to exchange their ideas of "West." Officially, we were attending "Crossing Frontiers: Canadian and American Western Literature Conference." Yet if anyone had ideas about what an academic literary conference might be like, they were proved wrong.

The University of British Columbia/Simon Fraser University English-prof contingent met in a Vancouver airport departure lounge, where we were joined by writer Jack Hodgins, over from Vancouver Island. "I feel as if I don't really belong here," he said. "I'm not an academic, I don't know anyone. I have no idea what to expect. They invited me to give a reading--I packed a good jacket and tie, will it be formal?"

"We don't know what to expect either," we assured him. "It won't be formal," I added, "but all I know for sure is the Dumptrucks are giving a concert."

An academic conference with a country-folkie-bluegrass band?

At dinner that evening, trundling our trays through the conference centre cafeteria, while I waved to old friends and Jack made new ones over what the cooks said was veal, Jack got his first sight of Dick Harrison--University of Alberta professor, critic, and conference chairman. Dick was hastily reassuring a conference member, "It's all right. I found a babysitter for you." Jack muttered something surprised about the chairman running the babysitting service, and visibly relaxed. It was going to be an informal gathering.

The conference was only the second of its kind comparing Canadian and US literature, history--and cultural myths. The first was a small gathering in Bellingham, Washington, in 1976, "The Westering Experience in American Literature." This produced some interesting cross-cultural discussions, a bit of awareness that Canada was different in significant ways, and a strong feeling that we might find out useful things from more cross-border talking.

The title "Crossing Frontiers" served as a useful, flexible metaphor. The most obvious

frontier was the national one. (For the banquet, author Ken Mitchell, performing with the Dumptrucks, wrote a marvellous song called "Medicine Line," its verses interspersed with typical border-guard questions: "Have you anything to declare?" "No, officer. We're just smuggling a few ideas across.)

About a third of the conference members were US scholars and writers, invited to Canada to compare and contrast views of "the West." It seems obvious to ask questions like: "What influence has US culture had on Canadian culture?" "What differences are there, and what's significant about them?" But those questions, and some answers, are only just starting to emerge. In general, it seemed, the US speakers (and the long-term US residents like Kroetsch) stressed similarities: one mythic West, the cowboy riding out to seek freedom on the frontier. Yet the Canadian scholars kept emphasizing differences. That frontier myth just didn't apply to Canadian settlement.

(At the Bellingham conference, both Peter Stevens from the University of Windsor and I had focussed on a pair of significant scenes. In the US "Western" novel, like The Virginian--and of course in the movies--the central scene is that of the hero, the lone gunman, facing his bad-guy rival at high noon. In the equivalent Canadian popular novel--a bestseller by Ralph Conner or Robert Stead--that central scene has a Mountie, whose authority doesn't come from himself but from Her Majesty's law, walking calmly up to an American desperado who's taken refuge over the line, and demanding that he hand over his gun. With the traditional oath, "blankety-blank," Idaho Jack or Montana Slim always complies. Individual vs. society, frontier justice vs. eastern law codes: they represent two very different ideas about settlement.)

As Eli Mandel, poet and critic, pointed out in "The Border League," perhaps the most original and stimulating paper at the conference, the mythic West came to Canada--came into the drabness of Estevan, Saskatchewan, where he was growing up in the 1920s and '30s--through imported culture: books, the "Westerns" of Zane Grey and others, and especially the movies. Discussing the uses of the Western myth in such different poems as Bruce Dorn's science-fictional Slinger, Michael Ondaatje's brilliant The Collected Works of Billy the Kid, and Robert Kroetsch's Seed Catalogue ("How do you grow a prairie town?"), Mandel indicated the psychological truth and power of the idea of "West."

Historical truth vs. mythic truth: the conference crossed a boundary between disciplines there, acknowledging the fact that cultural studies must draw on many areas of knowledge. Interestingly enough, one of the major US historians, Howard Lamar of Yale, speaking on "The Unsettling of the American West: the Mobility of Defeat," indicated that horse vs. house and the Wild West may have been more myth than reality south of the line, too. His study of several hundred diaries kept by settlers taking the Overland Trail between 1840 and 1869 revealed that many Overlanders were, indeed, young males who saw the experience as a proving of manhood, especially a masculine conquest of nature. Yet many of the settlers travelled in family groups, or formed wagon trains based on similar religious, ethnic, or social values--temperance, for example. Their diaries reveal that, far from escaping social restraints, they brought with them strong, repressive, Victorian values, and a sense of shared community. Yet it's the desperados who linger in our minds.

Lewis G. Thomas, the Canadian historian who spoke that afternoon, reaffirmed the view that the Canadian West developed as a colony of the East, with the agents of colonization carrying the "national dream" from the metropolis to the hinterland, and with the Mounties serving as both social worker and representative of a peaceful, orderly, and British society. The violent rancher-squatter confrontations of the US, for example, were contained in Canada. Why? What does this say about the two societies?

Lamar touched, early in the conference, on the one frontier that was only emerging into our consciousness: the difference between the male myth of the West, and the female reality. The Overlander diaries reveal that, while the wagon-trek west might be an adventure for the men, it was dislocation for the woman, either left alone back East to run the family farm or business, or "ripped" from her family structure to start life again under arduous, lonely conditions on the frontier. What do we know about the role of women in the West? Precious

little, I discovered while preparing my paper for a panel on "Women in Prairie Literature." I focussed on popular novels of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a period during which the accepted Canadian view of woman's role can best be summed up by a little poem a student of mine cut from a farm paper published sometime, not in the 1890s, but in the late 1950s:

Women are doormats;  
These mats the years applaud.  
They keep their men from going in  
With dirty feet, to God.

As I dug into the influential popular novels, those books which provided escape, happy endings, and ideals of how to live, I found too many idealized Good Women, self-sacrificing doormats. Yet I also found, in the non-fiction, an awareness of women's real plight: loneliness, drudgery, and absolute economic powerlessness. Nellie McClung, a women's suffrage campaigner, in her essay collection In Times Like These (1915), angrily criticized laws which left farm wives "with no more claim on the farm than the dog does," inheriting, if they were lucky, "one hundred dollars and one cow named Bella" after a lifetime of work. Yet in McClung's fiction, it takes only one speech by the heroine to make a drunken farmer repent, and not turn his wife and children off the farm to starve.

As the panel ended, one red-faced woman angrily denounced my "mockery" of popular literature and, she claimed, her pioneer mother who read it. "My people believed in those ideas!" she shouted. Exactly. So did my people. They believed in the picture of the long-suffering domestic angel, and they believed that any dissatisfaction with hardship was the problem of a maladjusted individual, not of an unequal social and economic order. The other women and men jamming the room--it was a well-attended panel--didn't need to be reminded that in the Irene Murdoch case of the early 1970s, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that Mrs. Murdoch, who worked for over 20 years on the family ranch in Alberta and left only because her husband broke her jaw in three places, was not entitled to any portion of the property because she had contributed only labor, not money. She's living in poverty. He's got a quarter-section of the ranch up for sale for over \$900,000. Personally, I think we ought to know more about the cultural myths that shape our realities.

In fact, the crossing of the frontier between "popular culture" and "art" was another important feature of the conference. When Laurence Ricou--a respected critic, author of Vertical Man/Horizontal World, editor of a book of "real" prairie poetry--spoke seriously about the "meadowlark school" of popular verse, something important was happening. We were all made more aware, through this poetry which stresses sentiment rather than sophistication, of what ordinary people believed and still believe: notably, the need to see Western nature as beautiful, benign, and even God-created, the need for a sense of meaning. We were reminded, too, of what distinguishes "art"--the power of the individual vision which interprets (and shapes) the common reality. What is "Western literature"?

The conference was interesting, in fact, for pointing out all that we didn't know: about the Canadian experience of the West, the native people's experience, the non-English immigrants' experience, the women's experience, much of the latter available in diaries and neglected "popular" or "minor" novels and poems. In fact, I was surprised and pleased to note that about 40% of the attendees were women: an unusually high proportion for an academic conference. None of the six major papers, however, and only one of the official "replies," was by a woman (though Rosemary Sullivan of Erindale College was one of the four speakers on the closing plenary panel). Instead, we foregathered at 9am Friday morning to hear Robert Kroetsch (author of The Studhorse Man and Seed Catalogue), in his paper "The Fear of Women in Prairie Writing," tell us that external space was male, internal space was female, and writing, performed by males of course, was a sexual act: "How do you make love in a new country?" Critic Sandra Djwa, in her reply, patiently pointed out that the horse/house view, while clever, was sustained by misreadings of the chosen texts; and besides, if women had to stay in the house, how could you expect to find a muse in the kitchen? Kroetsch just grinned.

The absence of women from the official programme reflected, I think, not so much deliberate

neglect by the conference committee, as a comparative dearth of women in senior academic positions; on the panels, which tended to be composed of junior critics, seven of thirty participants were women, including the three of us on the obligatory "women's panel." More serious, and unjustifiable, was the fact that only one of ten writers invited to give readings was a woman: Dorothy Livesay, the lively grandmother of Canadian literature, who led a compelling group reading of her 1944 documentary poem, "Call My People Home," about the deportation of BC Japanese people after 1941--another "West" largely undocumented.

Challenges to the "phallic criticism" and the cowboy mythos came, not from within the programme, but from the floor, in spirited questioning by people like Edmonton journalist Myrna Kostash. Resplendent in a bright patchwork coat, Kostash, one of my journalism idols, crackled with energy; unfortunately she was always so busy that I never got to meet her.

A journalist at an academic conference? Of course: "Crossing Frontiers" was a cultural event, well-documented by various media. For that matter, I was there as a "media person," or, as Alan Twigg of Vancouver's alternate paper The Georgia Straight described himself, a literary groupie. When John Berry, Loren MacGregor, and I realized that the centre-spread of PNRB No. 1 would be my Horizons review complete with Ken Mitchell and a wheatfield, we decided we had a perfect chance to publicize the review at the conference. (At the very least, I reasoned, Ken could be persuaded to hand out a few copies.) I arrived at the airport with a small suitcase and a large bundle of paper. "Oh, look at Susan!" exclaimed Don Stephens. "She's brought her exams to mark!"

Ninety copies of PNRB were gone within 24 hours. Ten were squirreled away in my blue-plastic conference binder, my letter-of-introduction to the Literary Stars. It was much easier to be a literary groupie when I could establish my own quasi-literary credentials. For example: I joined Doug and Sharon Barbour in the bar to discuss science fiction (at sf conferences, we talk about Can lit) and found myself next to...Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist Wallace Stegner. Instead of just blurting, "Er, hello, I like your stuff," and the usual inanities, I was able to say, "And here's a copy of a new magazine, I mention you." Then I got to listen while Stegner said, "Yes, I picked up a copy. It looks good--and we need something like this." People drifting back to their dormitory rooms to recuperate, between intensive idea-sessions and the multitude of receptions and readings, actually read the review...and told me they liked it.

PNRB also gave me the chance to meet other literary groupies, some of the most interesting people there, not academics or writers, but people who cared about literature. I spent a lot of time talking with George Melnyk. He and wife Jean have nursed Edmonton's NeWest ReView, a monthly tabloid of reviews, essays, politics, fiction, and art, through four miraculous years. ("How do you survive?" "We cut corners. I set the type." "Yeah, so does John.") I began to think PNRB might survive, too.

People met each other at the panels, they gathered in the bar, they made connections over meals. (And I haven't said anything about the Silver City Disco, wherein Jack Hodgins shed his tie and Stephen Scobie did not...Or about Laurie Ricou and me explaining "correction lines" to Jack Hodgins--Vancouver Island meets the prairie when we talk about a review published in Seattle, written by an Ontario native, and what did you say "West" was?)

The whole conference generated a sense of community. There was a feeling that we were all together, finding out new things about a culture-in-progress; and it was both exhausting and exciting. People like me, who'd intended to skip large parts of the programme and go hiking, managed to look up at a mountain, murmur a few awe-stricken words, marvel at the softly-falling snow ("What's that?" demanded the BC crowd)--and hurry off to the next session.

The real excitement came from the crossing of, obliteration of, frontiers between writer and critic, creator and audience. The daytime programme involved formal presentations and less formal panel discussions, with lots of breaks for coffee, sticky doughnuts, looking-at-books, and idea-sharing. The afternoon/evening programme was a series of readings by major Western writers. This literature is vital, finding its own voice, working out the

same ideas as the writer-critics are--and what better way to remind us than through the voices of the writers? (Cross-cultural note: the Canadians, on the whole, seemed more at ease with public readings than the Americans, and more polished as performers--perhaps a pleasant reflection of the Canada Council's determination to send writers out across the country to meet potential audiences face-to-face.)

Sketches: Rudy Wiebe, a large, powerful man, solid in boots and denim, fringed suede vest, and flowing hair: part homesteader, part visionary. He grips the lecturn, grips the audience with the passion of Gabriel Dumont's meeting with Louis Riel in Montana, from The Scorched-Wood People. (Wiebe told me later that his US agent has been trying for nearly a year to find a US publisher for The Temptations of Big Bear and The Scorched-Wood People, his monumental chronicles of the Indian and Metis defeats in the West. "They come back from the publishers with letters saying that they're wonderful books, but 'too Canadian,'" Wiebe said, adding that, temporarily at least, he's turned to film writing because "there's more money--I've got a family, after all." "Too Canadian"? As far as I could tell, the US listeners were just as moved as the Canadians--who didn't know our non-white history either, 'til Wiebe made us care about it.)

The next night: Jack Hodgins, looking like a tall, blond, shy schoolboy, confesses to nervousness, but reads the wedding scene from The Invention of the World with professional timing. Every time the audience collapses into laughter (about every second sentence) he gives a pleased grin, then continues. He's followed by poet William Stafford, a complete contrast but no less impressive. A small, gentle man, he says softly, "I've come to bear witness for the poets"--and reads simple poems, with quiet dignity. Wallace Stegner reads from a novel in progress, making us forget the mountains in his claustrophobic account of a young man trapped in squalor. Then Dorothy Livesay takes command, a frail, white-haired woman surrounded by her chorus: huge cuddley-bear Ted Blodgett, tall sardonic Gary Geddes, warm lovely Rosemary Sullivan, denimed and subdued Ken Mitchell. Perhaps the Western voice was best embodied, though, the next afternoon by that master showman, W.O. "Bill" Mitchell (who is not, Ken admitted, his grandfather). With his ruffled blue suit, ruffled white hair, smiling eyes behind glasses, he's everyone's ideal granddad, telling a story--until you realize those pauses, those repetitions, are meant to be there, are part of a superb performance.

In a brilliant move, Dick Harrison had abandoned the traditional banquet speeches for a presentation which, more than anything else, defined the mood of this gathering--the focus on the living words. Michael Taylor and Michael "Bear" Millar of the Dumptrucks, bearded and long-haired, denimed and booted (Taylor sporting an earring made from a silver dime and a bracelet made out of a CPR silver fork), got together with Ken Mitchell, with whom they'd collaborated on Cruel Tears, to develop an unforgettable programme. There were new songs by Mitchell and Dumptruck, traditional songs and Dumptruck standards like Don Freed's "Closin' Time," stories and poems--like Anne Marriot's "The Wind Our Enemy"--highlighted by music. ("Jeez, I was really nervous, doin' that stuff with guys like Stegner and Stafford there," said Michael Taylor to me the next morning. "I mean, what if I got a word wrong? Would they get mad? Then Stafford read 'The Farm on the Great Plains' and he put in the same breaks I'd put in on the guitar, and I figured it would be ok.") It was more than ok. Ken and Dumptruck got two encores and a lot of praise; and the next day their records were selling really well, over on the NeWest ReView table in the publishers' display. Ken denied rumors he's about to go on tour with the show....

Where do you draw the line between "writer" and "critic"? Nowhere at this conference, where half the writers present seemed to teach literature or writing--our universities are patrons of the arts. Not at this conference, more important, where people like poet/critic Eli Mandel reminded us that the real critic is a creative person, interpreting and synthesizing so that we respond freshly to literature (and life).

I asked Jack Hodgins--who is, after all, a teacher of English and creative writing--how he felt about having his books taught in schools.



He grinned that schoolboyish grin, and said, rather sheepishly, "I like it. Oh, I suppose I'm not supposed to say that; but it does mean that people are taking what I do seriously."

Exactly. What distinguished "Crossing Frontiers" was a feeling that we were all involved with a new literature that was taking shape, was worth "taking seriously"--and that was very enjoyable. "What is West?" isn't an "academic" question. It's a vital concern for the writers, the musicians, the teachers (at least one person, Regina's Geoff Ursell, is all three!) interpreting their place, discovering the past as a guide to the future: all of us working together. That sense of a community, sharing ideas--so many ideas we were all a little stunned by words--was the most important contribution "Crossing Frontiers" made.

On my last morning of the conference, I had coffee with Reg Sylvester, my editor in our student-newspaper days, who'd turned up the day before saying, "Hey, Susan, I hear you wrote something about me!" He's now city hall reporter for the Edmonton Journal, married to an actor, interested in western culture--but not the sort of person you'd normally expect to see at an "academic" conference. But of course, this wasn't a normal conference.

"Hey, guess what!" Reg said. "I just got interviewed by CBC. The reporter asked me what I was doing here, what university I came from."

"What did you say?" asked Michael Taylor.

"I told her I was here to see my friends."

"Well," I said, "so am I." I said a lot of goodbyes, and loaded myself onto bus and plane with a silent, exhausted BC contingent, all suffering from word-overload. As we took off from Calgary, flying over the Rockies, I realized I'd hardly had time to look at the mountains.

Memo: n.b.: next time--look up.

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ZEN CENTER ((continued from page 49))

book. You can: I doubt I will, even though these days the squirrel cage revolves with a thousand tiny, petty problems, leaving (it sometimes seems) no room for me. Or perhaps, some day.... In the meantime, there's a place, in my memory, filled with sunlight and energy--like a clear stream flowing over smooth stones, dappled with sunlight, under the patient redwoods. In the meantime, it's enough to know that such places exist: quiet, and at the center of things.

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ENERGUWOMAN ((continued from page 54))

Page 4, of course, consists of letters.

This is the most important part of any fan publication--the letter column. In it, fans communicate their ideas to the world at large. For example, an excerpt from the first letter, written by a fan who signs himself "Glbfskp." (All fans have nicknames, usually based on their characteristics.)

Glbfskp writes: "I am not mad at you for misspelling my name in the last issue. Wish 2 L U were mor karefl uv gram-r & such. Did U No Xaprid now on outs with Weemy? Lippy's rivl 2 Outsider mag called Insider replaces uth-r less fornchy next mo. Grnvsly yrs."

Is it any wonder, in the face of such evidence, that many people believe some of these fan magazines should be preserved for the sake of posterity?

It has often been suggested that certain fan magazines be sealed away in time-capsules:

I can only add that it would be a damned good idea if they sealed away some of the fan publishers in time-capsules, too.

--Robert Bloch

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TIDEPOOL ((continued from page 64))

insights--how pompous I'm getting--boil down to this:

Let's get education out of the classroom, and back into the gutter with us, where we live, where it belongs.

As long as sf will help me do that, help give me a connection between literature and life, then I'll keep teaching it. Because I love it. Because it's worth taking seriously.

Are there really any other reasons?

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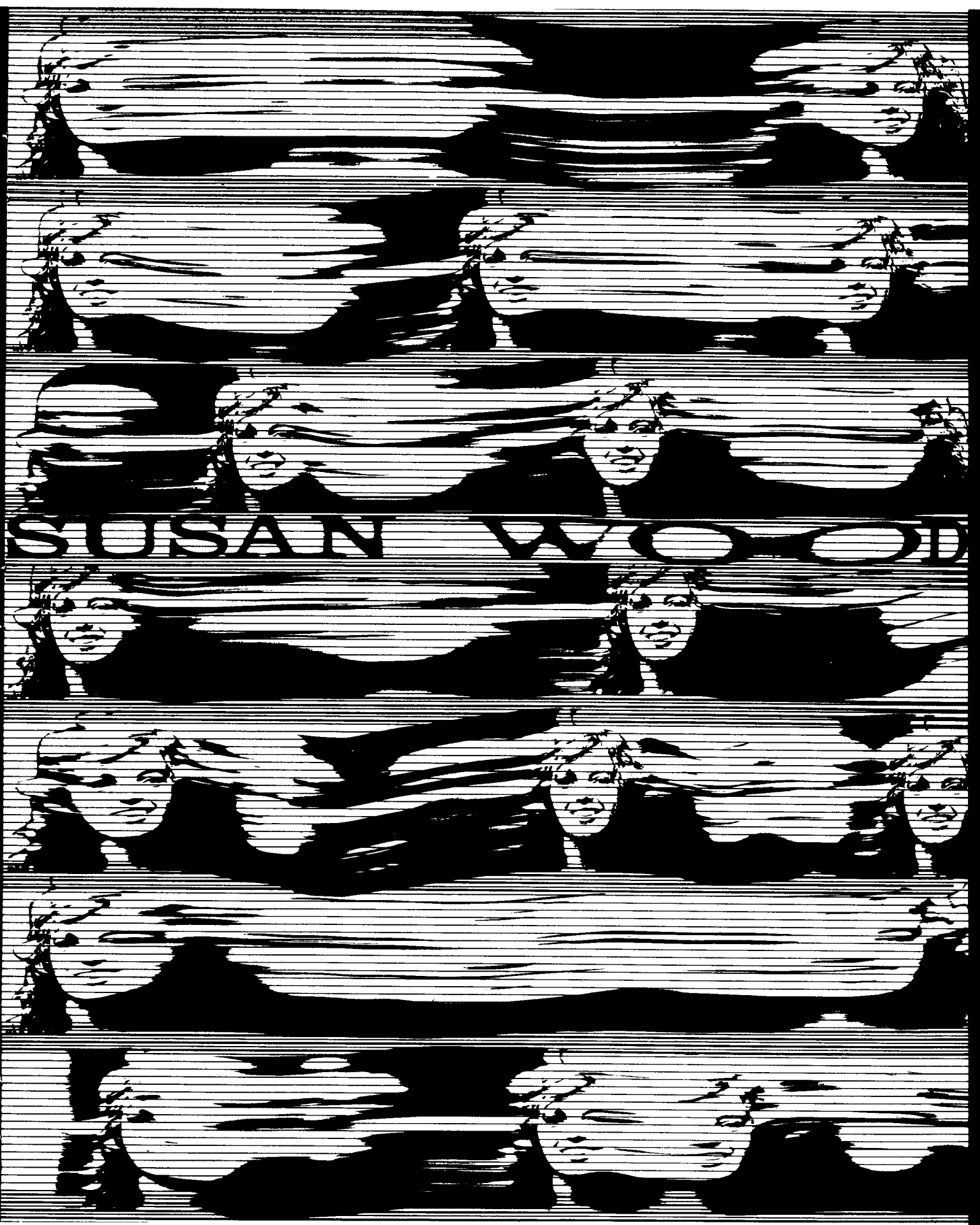
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PROPELLOR BEANIE ((continued from page 67))

Starting a fanzine is easy. You need some friends, a bottle of wine, a bottle of conflu, and some stencils. Keeping a fanzine going is harder. Stick around and see what happens with Genre Plat.

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SUSAN WOOD