

Weber Woman's Wrevenge

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This issue typed on a Taiwanese copy of an Apple II microcomputer, using the word processing program AppleWriter II, printed on a Brother CE-60 daisywheel electronic typer with IF-50 interface, and printed on a Roneo 750 duplicator (recently acquired from John Bangsund), except for the cover and this page, which are photocopied. Electrostencil on page 16 by Allan Bray; other e'stencils by Ron L Clarke. Collating and envelope-stuffing assistance by Eric Lindsay. Missing question marks by Apple-Brother connection, except where I've corrected them; perhaps by next time I'll sort that one out. Meanwhile, strange punctuation thish.

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Dover Publications' "Women: A Pictorial Archive from Nineteenth-Century Sources" (1978), 7	

COVER

Kerrie Hanlon writes of this cover:

"The girl carrying the robot is tongue-in-cheek, and a suitable response to all those 'traditional' artworks of robots carrying off women. The role reversal appeals to my sense of humour (and justice!) and hopefully it will appeal to you, too."

It certainly did, Kerry.

THE RUBBISH

BIM

(An editorial, by

Jean Weber)

"If Montezuma's revenge is what they call what you get in the gastric area in restaurants in Mexico, and Napoleon's revenge is slang for alimentary disorders in Paris, is Weberwoman's Wrevenge what you get when sexism gives you the shits?"

Thanks to Jonathon Scott for the Quote of the Year, and I wish I'd thought of it first!

This issue of Wrevenge is the first typed (direct to stencil from word processed text, using a Brother CE-50 typewriter connected to my Apple look-alike computer. I do hope it's a success. (There are still a few bugs in the system, however. For example, the typer evidently does not recognise the computer's signal for a question mark, so you will note some peculiar punctuation, where I haven't manually made corrections.)

Last issue ran into several minor disasters, not the least being the sudden death of Ron Clarke's electrostencilling machine just as I was completing the layout (using dot matrix printout). I quickly rejected retyping the entire issue onto stencil, and decided I had neither the time nor ambition to reformat it for the Brother, so opted for photocopying. My apologies to Leigh Edmunds and others with poor eyesight - I didn't like the result much either! I do hope this typeface, though small, will be more readable.

This is also the first issue of a return to a quarterly, rather than bimonthly, schedule. I just can't keep up the pace! The good news is that there should now be time for overseas locs to reach me between one issue and the next (and the word processing allows me to type them in as I get them, then put into topical order and edit at the last minute before printing). The bad news is that I have even more material in my backlog - though that's probably "good news" too, since it should force me to be more selective in what I print.



An apology is due to Julie Vaux, whose cover drawing last time is really much better than the reproduced version. The original had lots of lovely gray shading that dropped out on the photocopier, leaving a much starker result.

Enough looking backward; a few words about this issue. Leading off is a follow-up article on the subject of pre-menstrual syndrome; it includes (surprise!) some factual material (from Sally Bessley), not just subjective commentary. Will wonders never cease! This is followed by more letters on the subject, only a sample of all I've received.

Following another humorous visit with Lyn McDonchie and her manageria, and a (mercifully brief) set of diary notes from me, there's the lettercolumn. And if you think it's long, you should see all the bits I left out! And finally, a few book reviews. I hope you find something of interest in the mixture. And if you're getting tired of the topics under discussion, how about writing and introducing a new one?

PMS - PART 2

((Editor's note: this is a follow-up to a "Dialog" between Eve Harvey and myself in Wrevenge #16, January 1984. Sally Beasley leads off with more background factual information than I provided, and also includes some paraphrases of quotes from a similar recent discussion in A Women's Apa. Her article is followed by several letters on the same topic. - JHW))



Some Technical Points on PMS

by Sally Beasley

The Menstrual Cycle

The menstrual cycle consists of two phases, the follicular phase and the luteal phase. The follicular phase is that part of the cycle before ovulation, and is of variable length. In an "ideal" menstrual cycle, the follicular phase would be 14 days long. Of course, the "ideal" menstrual cycle of 28 days is a myth. In one study, more than 2000 women were asked about their menstrual cycle lengths over one year. Less than 13% had cycles which varied in length by less than 6 days between the shortest and the longest!

During the follicular phase, the hypothalamus sends a chemical message to the pituitary gland, which then produces FSH (follicle stimulating hormone). This is released into the bloodstream, and travels to the ovaries, where it stimulates follicles which produce oestrogen and release it into the bloodstream. When there is a critical level of oestrogen, the pituitary gland stops producing FSH and begins to produce LH (luteinizing hormone). This travels to the ovary and produces ovulation.

At this point the luteal phase starts, with the egg leaving the ovary. The luteal phase is always fourteen days. Following the egg's release, the follicle in the ovary starts to produce progesterone as well as oestrogen. The progesterone level keeps increasing till a critical level is reached, at which point the pituitary stops producing LH. The follicle (now a corpus luteum since the egg's release) now begins to die, and production of progesterone and oestrogen decline. Menstruation begins when these have reached their lowest point.

This is all very technical, but the explanation for premenstrual syndrome is very technical.

Pre-Menstrual Syndrome

It's estimated that a very high proportion of women have some physical and/or emotional symptoms in the premenstrual period. Estimates range from 30% to 100%. In my opinion the true proportion would be about 75%-80%.

Physical symptoms described include tension, migraine, a feeling of bloatedness, breast tenderness, giddiness, fatigue, constipation or diarrhoea, and backache. Not every woman has all - or even any - of these symptoms, of course! Emotional symptoms described include depression, irritability, unprovoked crying, insomnia, and craving for sweets. Again, not all are present together. Sometimes a woman's husband or lover, or her family, may be aware of emotional symptoms of which she isn't aware herself. My mother always used to know when I was premenstrual better than I did, when I was a teenager.

Some women's observations of their feelings (not direct quotes):

"Approximately one week prior, I bloat up, feel fat and clumsy, get very irritable."

"A quiet reflective time for me - I enjoy the melancholy."

"My skin breaks out in spots, I get short-tempered, depressed, near tears. I've just discovered I write poetry and feel very creative at that time too."

"Emotionally and physically menstruation is the best time of the month. The worst is just before, but symptoms vary month to month."

"It's hard to explain that I'm actually feeling quite good when tears are pouring down my face."

(continued.....)

"I become a cross bitch about 4-7 days before my period, snap at my children for nothing, put down my husband, get shaky if I have to deal with stress, can't stand loud noise. My period's arrival brings me to a more optimistic frame of mind. About midway between periods I can almost determine the moment of ovulation. I now begin to crave sweet snacks until my period arrives."

"I get a severe migraine almost seven days before, which lasts a day - sometimes I throw up."

"A few days before my flow is to start, I feel the need for extra sleep at night; and if I don't get it, I become easily irritable."

"For some reason, the longer my cycle, the worse the symptoms seem to be."

One way to recognise whether or not you have pre-menstrual syndrome is to keep a diary of the presence or absence of symptoms during each day of the month, or even just a diary with a note of when your period arrives. I only became aware of premenstrual symptoms of depression, fatigue and irritability when I kept a diary.

Theories

There are a number of theories about the causes of premenstrual syndrome. One is that it's all in the mind - possibly as a response to this culture's attitudes towards menstruation. However, a study of 24 different cultures (by Janiger, Riffenburgh and Kersh) found that PMS seemed to be "a universal phenomenon" which was "subject to great individual variation in the incidence, nature and severity of its symptoms".

Dr Katherine Dalton, who coined the term PMS in the 1950s, believes that it is due to progesterone lack. She has had some success at treating women with pure progesterone. However, her dosages had to be tailored to the individual woman and her results have not been replicated. In fact, there have been studies in which progesterone produced some premenstrual symptoms!

Another theory is that PMS is due to fluid retention. However, some studies recently have found no significant changes in body weight or water during the luteal phase, in women either with or without premenstrual symptoms.

There are a number of researchers who believe PMS is due to B-complex vitamin deficiencies, especially Vitamin B-6. It certainly does seem, for many women, that high dosages of vitamin B-6 reduce the symptoms. I have found that they reduce the emotional symptoms but not the physical ones; the emotional ones are the

hardest to deal with, though! Again, long cycles appear, for me, to be worse than short ones, and vitamins are less effective.

The most interesting line of current research is on the endorphins, brain chemicals which are affected by oestrogen and progesterone. There seems to be a peak production of endorphins in the luteal phase, and endorphins could indirectly produce most premenstrual symptoms. Endorphins do have an effect on appetite and thirst, and on insulin production. This would explain the difference observed in glucose-tolerance tests from the follicular to the luteal phase of women with PMS symptoms which include craving for sweets. This group had normal glucose tolerance in the follicular phase, but abnormal in the luteal phase. Endorphins also affect the brain's production of its own opiates, and may thus account for the observed lowering of the pain threshold during the luteal phase.

Unfortunately, there are as yet no medications which directly modify endorphin levels. It seems that high doses of Vitamin B-6 modify endorphin levels indirectly and that progesterone may also do so. It helps to get plenty of sleep, to take Vitamin B-6, and to eat small high protein meals often if your appetite is affected. It also helps to be aware that irritability and/or depression are physically based.

References

- Paula Weidoger, FEMALE CYCLES.
Judy Lever, PMS: THE UNRECOGNISED ILLNESS
Charles Hebravner, "Premenstrual Syndrome" in MEDICAL ASPECTS OF HUMAN SEXUALITY, Vol 17, pages 215+, 1993.

((Editor's note: I'm not quite sure what Sally had in mind for "large doses" of Vitamin B-6, but I take 100 mg a day and the packet suggests two tablets (200 mg) during the luteal phase. However, very large doses (several grams rather than a few hundred milligrams) can be dangerous and should be avoided. I recently read that an American fan, Jodie Offutt I believe, had suffered bizarre neurological symptoms which turned out to be linked to megadoses of Vitamin B-6. Too much of a good thing can be just the opposite!))





The Menstrual Cycle, Emotions and Socialisation

by Sue Thomason

I'm one of those unsympathetic women who never believed in bad periods until I had one. (One was enough: I've never cared to repeat the experience.) These days the only pre-menstrual physical symptom I get is a dull ache (not always that). It is worse if I get hungry, cold, tired, tense, or need to shit. As for psychological symptoms, I don't get clumsy. I do get more sensitive to my environment, and my reactions are less damped by models of polite behaviour: I get more angry, more sad, more delighted, more easily moved in any emotional direction. I have very vivid dreams, and I tend to get a lot of creative work done - and need a few days of purely "routine" mindless drudgery afterwards to take me down from the creative frenzy. I feel the whole "problem" of PMS is as much one of self-perception as it is of helplessness in the face of bodily overrides to logical, rational ways of behaving.

It is certain that the menstrual cycle (all of it, not just the paramenstrum) has a profound physical, emotional and psychological effect on all the women who undergo it. We have been taught that there are two "sides" or "poles" to our cycle, the "full-moon" socially acceptable face of ovulation, and the "black moon" face of menstruation. Full moon behaviour includes being calm and shining and giving out (reflecting back) the light of solar rationality (often seen as male). Black moon behaviour involves seeing one's own needs, being unable to reflect others'. Women are taught to pay attention to others' needs and to deny their own; it is demanding and possessive and dependent to have needs. So the needs rot and fester and become a pain in the gut.

Being clumsy means you are not in tune with your environment. Given some of today's environments, I'm not at all surprised by this.

But we have been taught that our perceptions are distorted, that the world is okay the way it is and that we are wrong. We have been taught that it is wrong and inferior to be irrational (intuitive). Rubbish! Science depends as much on intuitive leaps as it does on methodical recording.

We have been conditioned to hide our menstruation. It is taboo. It is the curse, being on the rag, being "indisposed". No wonder we don't feel too good about it. When I had my first period, my mother cried, and told me, "you're a real woman now, you can have a child." But the flow of menstrual blood is the sign of a missed conception, a failure to have a child. The advent of the blood is a tensely-awaited occasion for many women, an occasion of guilt, and the blood can signal either relief or disappointment, depending on the woman's desire for, or fear of, pregnancy.

As for how we socialise ourselves into a kind of mild insanity: imagine a young, newly menstruating woman who feels pain. Does anyone say to her, "Pain is always an important signal from your body to you that it's unhappy about something. It doesn't mean that something is physically wrong (though it might). Are you worried about something that's making you tense (have you been dreaming well)" No. What she is told is "It's women's lot. You just have to shut up and put up with it. It might get better as you get older, but it isn't something you should talk about or acknowledge in polite company." She tries to ignore her body. Like many ignored people, it tries shouting louder. She hurts. Anxiety, pain, fear are stored up for next time. She feels bad and she is blamed for feeling bad ("irrational women"; "ignore her, it's just that time of the month"), told that it shouldn't happen, and if it does it's all her fault for being an inferior model, etc. The negative cycle reinforces itself.

Bloody hell! (to coin a phrase) - the menstrual cycle is not a handicap. It is not a "period" (saying "it's just a passing phase" is a classic method of discounting experience). It's a way of life. We are always at some stage of the cycle. And as we have been taught that what happens at menstruation is nasty, we find it difficult to see the positive side of the dark face.

Say I am approaching my period. I'm clumsy. Getting up, I slip on the stairs and bang my hip on the table. Let's see - yes, the stair carpet is loose, needs fixing. Hadn't noticed that. Table doesn't have much room round it on that side, I'll try moving it a few inches. I have a headache and I feel grouchy. Classic tension

.....

headache. Now that I notice it, I'm clenching my jaw. I'm angry. Who/what am I angry with? The weather; it's cold and grey and horrible. Yes, okay. I go shopping and see my friend Liz. "You look miserable," she says. "Yes, I HATE this weather." "So do I. Let me buy you a coffee." This is good. She's noticing me, being nice to me, making time for me. I feel good. I get a good story idea and go home to write it down. It's still cold, but I write for two hours, the last ten minutes of which are spent scribbling increasingly slowly and disjointedly, ache in belly, angry, miserable. Time for lunch. Make myself a lunch full of treats: hot chocolate, toast and cheese, oranges (two; I'm in an orange mood today). Feel tired. Okay, am tired, will go to bed. Fantastic luxury of bed at 2.00 pm. After an hour's drowsing feel terrific, back to writing, clean house, cook supper, more writing, bed, vivid dreams.

I'm lucky I can do this with my life. But I organised my time at work to do the right things at the right time. Let a pile of routine boring paperwork accumulate and then went and hid in the back office for a day writing catalogue amendments.

As far as taking pills goes, pills are designed to make an unbearable situation bearable. If you can't change the situation, take the pills, but don't be conned into thinking the fault is in you.

Linda Pickersgill
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South Ealing
London W5, U.K.

8 April 1984

I have to admit that I do not suffer from acute PMS. I have my days of irritability and my periodical bout with the blues - or as my mom and sisters used to call it: "the can't help its". You know the kind of mood when someone asks you why you're crying or why you're kicking the cat around the room and you say, "Don't know... I just can't help it". Growing up in a house full of women as I did, the can't-help-its were perfectly valid emotions within themselves; and looking back now I can see it was probably our PMS. Still, I'm lucky in that my depressions aren't too severe and I have a very supportive husband who knows I'm not crazy.



Weberwoman's Wrevenge



James Dean Maryk
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2 April 1984

From my biology readings I knew that women had a tendency to act differently during certain parts of the cycle, but it wasn't until I met a girl from our local university that I became directly involved with the fascinating transformation. Right on cue she would change into a different person and we would have a fight and she would end up crying. Luckily we both have a decent education and were able to deal with it in a rational manner. But I think it is important that knowledge about this type of behavior becomes more accessible, in order for people to understand themselves and other people better. In turn it will make for better and more lasting relationships. However, despite all the logic one can apply to the situation, my other girlfriend refuses to discuss it in a mature manner.

PMS is a good example of socio-biology, a subject that intrigues and fascinates me, particularly since I too must behave in predictable ways. I noticed too that I, and I infer other men as well, have a regular cycle of ups and downs, hormonal changes, etc. I wonder if this is just bio-rhythms, or do men suffer from a form of "PMS"? Have you heard from anybody who might know of this

((Obviously men can't suffer from pre-menstrual problems, but I have read several articles expounding hypotheses on men's "cycles". I can't recall the references, though. Perhaps some readers can help. - JMW))

R Laurraine Tutinasi
P O Box 432
Downey, CA 90241
USA

16 April 1984

I'm one who can't really identify with people who have pre-menstrual syndrome. At worst, I have a pre-menstrual tension headache for a couple of days and mild cramps during my period. I've tried monitoring my moods, and they don't seem to have anything to do with my period or anything else. In any case, I am usually cheerful. I have to admit, I am a bit skeptical about PMS; but I try to take people who suffer from it seriously. I just can't help thinking there must be a psychological component to it.

Malcolm Walsh
7 Brian Avenue
Dalton, Huddersfield
West Yorkshire, England 18 March 1984

PMT seems to affect nearly all the women I know. One friend summed it up like this: "When I've got it, I could throw myself out of the window, or throw someone else out, and could not care less. Even though I know what is happening to me, knowing does not help."

I really sympathise with Eve Harvey. It does feel like you could go off your rocker at any moment. I suspect that most of us are habituated to the problem; there is not really any choice about it anyway. There are some months that are harder to cope with than others, and there have been times in my life when I have experienced a series of really bad months that have left my nerves raw and my relationships with others distinctly on the cool side.

I have found that when a group of women work together, their menstrual cycles begin to coincide, so that everyone would get the horrors about the same time. Knowing that everyone was enduring the same feelings of rage, intolerance, irritation, and recognising the source of the problem, helped. What usually happened was that all conversation was cut down to the minimum, and the work got through.

I have also noticed that PMT is a bit like catching a cold, in that if your resistance is low for any reason, it hits with a lot more force, and it will start sooner than usual and last longer. However it seems to me that there is not a lot to be done about it, except to try to be nice to yourself. I find that taking saunas and eating bars of chocolate eases the misery a little.

I agree with you that this aspect of the female condition should be recognised in the workplace. Periods are still something of a taboo subject with many people... periods are a part of normal life, yet women during their periods have a stigma attached to them.

Pete Presford
Ty Gwyn, Garwell Close
Ewle/Suckley
Clwyd, North Wales 30 March 1984

I'm pretty sure we all have cycles. Trouble is, most men won't admit it. And I think with men the number of days is quite less. I know mine only last a couple of days or so. And it is of course more of a mental one than a physical one. I should think it is fair to say that most men ignore their wives for a weekish each month,

with the thought... "Time to keep out of the way again." But when it happens the other way around, a man expects people to put up with his grumpy nature. Perhaps this is worse because he doesn't know what is happening. I know our worst 'does' are when we both hit the month at the same time. I'm pretty sure we must act like a couple of spoilt kids.

Andy Anruschak
PO Box 006
La Canada-Flintridge
CA 91011, USA 31 March 1984

Thank you for publishing the dialogue on PMT. Maybe I am a bit old to go back to school, but I can still use some education on these matters. Perhaps this kind of fanzine may be the best place for a male fan to learn more about the problems that females have and which we tend to ignore.

Eve Harvey
43 Harrow Road
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U.K. 19 May 1984

I want to thank you for the excellent way you presented my article. Whatever JM thinks, you still have the best "feel" for editing a discussion in my view.

It's weird, but if I re-read that article between 10th and 20th of the month, I think it's good (not the writing, but the expression of what I feel); at any other time, though, I cringe because it seems as if I'm merely wallowing in self-pity. And that is even with the wonderful Vitamin B6 which, while not helping with the increasingly painful physical manifestations, at least helps keep my head more in order and the depression at bay. Still, it comes down to taking pills for the rest of my life all the same!

((Not to trivialise your concern, Eve, but you shouldn't have to take the B6 pills for the rest of your life - only another 20 years or so! - JM)) ((Sorry, bad sense of humour.))





ANIMAL DAZE & JUNKETINGS

(In which no one gets their just desserts)

by Lyn McConchie

Last issue I said that only having the cats and Little Boy (the goat) wasn't usual for me. Since then, Jeremy Sheep has arrived and become almost a permanent fixture.

Jeremy actually belongs to Roger and Dallas, who live just around the corner from me. He started as a tiny lamb, motherless and loud about it, given to the children as a pet to bring up on a bottle. He is now a hulking great weather, of an indeterminate but large breed, who is imbued with love for all humankind.

Roger turned up a couple of months ago and asked if Jeremy could share the lawn with Little Boy. I was a bit dubious, as I worried about inter-species warfare. The possibility was averted by tying them on separate fences so that while they can talk together, they cannot meet by some 4-5 feet.

Jeremy is very good. His only faults are humans: having been raised by humans, Jeremy adores them all with a vast and totally indiscriminate enthusiasm. This translates into Jeremy trying to climb into one's lap, anywhere, anytime. If you don't have a lap (being in an upright position), you will speedily acquire one as Jeremy simply attempts to climb up to it, usually resulting in the climbed one flat on their back with Jeremy in their lap (where else).

His other reprehensible habit is drifting silently up behind you and just standing there. Happy, or so I presume, to bask in the radiance of a human's presence. This morning I headed out to the garage before I went off to catch my bus for work. I have a big copper loo cistern there, that I have been meaning to bring in to work to give to a friend who wants it as a planter box.

I had a spare ten minutes, so I figured if I could get it, and find suitable wrapping, it could go in with me today. Yesterday, I had shifted Jeremy so he could have shadow to go into. This put him in comfortable reach of the garage. At a quarter to six it was still darkish, and I forgot that my woolly pal was there.

I opened the garage door, ferretted around, found the cistern, and backed out dragging it (I didn't want to pick it up as it was covered with dust and cobwebs). I got about six paces backwards and was just going to turn round when I discovered (somewhat violently) that Jeremy was standing right behind me.

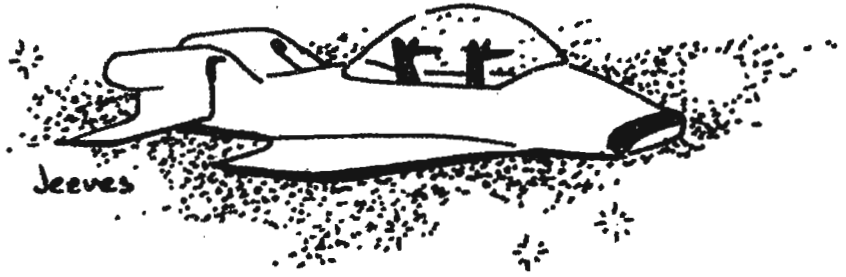
As a result I went backwards in an ungainly sprawl flat on my back, still clutching the copper cistern. In my surprise, I used words which are not usually used at full volume on one's front lawn at 6 am. My neighbours on the other side are there for a few weeks holiday. So are several of their friends, who are in a tent on the lawn.

The commotion produced neighbours like rabbits. One moment darkness and silence, then a yelp of surprise, a startled baaa, then a description of a sheep in vitriolic terms, and bingo! LET THERE BE LIGHT! and there was light, nine people peering over the fence, two small children asking if Jeremy was OK, and Jeremy bawling that his feelings were hurt. And me, sitting on the lawn, clutching a loo cistern to my chest, and temporarily lost for words.

There's something about having animals around the place that inures me to people embarrassing me. Funny, that.

DIARY NOTES

DID YOU CANCEL THE PAPERS
AND POST MY LOC?



by Jean Weber

Eric and I decided not to go to Melbourne for the Australian NatCon this year, despite its being organised by people whose cons we always enjoy, and the probable opportunity to see a lot of people we rarely see otherwise (such as Peter Toluzzi, who was on a flying visit to Australia). We were just feeling too stingy to pay airfare, and didn't have the time (in Eric's case) nor stamina (my back would never survive) to go down by car or bus. So we spent the 4-day week-end at my place, reading, typing, collating etc.

The travelling Peter Toluzzi Party reached Canberra on the Tuesday after Easter, when it played to a small but enthusiastic audience at Mark Denbow & Kim Lambert's house. Considering the God, and his famous parties, this one was relatively sedate - though it did continue till 4 am in proper traditional style, I'm told (I departed about midnight, as is my style). Kim provided half a dozen types of delicious candies (Kahlua-flavoured chocolate balls were my favourite, barely beating the fudge). Peter had the dregs of a bottle of Cuervo 1500 tequila (how did that survive Eurekacon, I wonder), and numerous other eatables, drinkables and smokables were in evidence.

In April, a young woman named Clara moved into the spare room in my house. She's learning to play the guitar, so often fills the house with the sound of her practicing, but is otherwise fairly unobtrusive. When she does play recorded music, it's classical! (that a delight.) She also appears to keep rather different hours from me, so we don't clash in the bathroom in the morning, or the kitchen in the evening - very handy. The ideal tenant, I always say, is rarely seen or heard, but pays the rent on time, cleans up the kitchen after using it - and feeds the cat when I'm away.

Clara's arrival gave me the needed excuse to buy some "real" furniture for the second bedroom, since there wasn't any bedframe (just a mattress) and I'd moved the wardrobe (long since converted into a storage cupboard with many shelves) into my office a few weeks ago. I bought a cheap pine bedframe and a veneered wardrobe (both unfinished) and set about

staining them. Since it's a small room, I didn't want a dark stain, but plain pine seemed too boring. Selecting a wood stain from a colour chart is always a risky business, and when I did my test patch (on the underside of the bed), I wasn't sure I'd made the right choice.

"It looks like dog shit," I thought, and called Eric in from the next room. "What do you think of that colour," I asked in what I hoped was a positive tone.

Eric looked vaguely uncomfortable and said, "It looks like dog vomit."

We looked at each other, then at the chart, and back at the test patch again.

"Maybe it will look better when the finish is on," said Eric helpfully. (I am pleased to note, a week later, that the colour - and the furniture - looks quite good.)

I've been to see another film: Silkwood. I have no idea how true to Karen Silkwood's actually life the film managed to be, but it certainly portrayed her as a complex, realistic person, making the best of bad situations; a woman with more education than many, but no less engulfed by circumstances. Her courage bordered on foolishness, but I certainly admire anyone who does what s/he knows is right even when turning a blind eye might be "smarter" in the short term. I had expected the film to be a bit more blatant in suggesting that Karen was harassed (and ultimately killed) by The Company, but thought the suggestion was there, it wasn't presented as other than a strong possibility. Perhaps that's because the film was about a real woman who had worked for a real company (and the latter still exists), so they had to be more careful than if it all purported to be fiction. I think the film was stronger for that uncertainty, though.

The fanrith delivery service strikes again... A couple of months ago I read in Thyme (an Australian newszine) that John Bangsund was selling his Ronco. I need a duplicator, so I rang up John immediately and told him I'd buy it, sent him a check, then set about trying to find someone to bring it back from Melbourne for

me. This turned out to be rather more complicated than I'd expected, considering the number of people attending Eurekacon from the Sydney and Canberra areas. Not being at the con myself further complicated matters, as I had to try to arrange everything in advance. All worked out quite well, though.

On the Wednesday after Easter, Richard Krychewicz rang up to say he'd brought the Ronco back to his place in Sydney. Susan Thompson takes up the tale:

(The scene is the interior of an automobile on the Melbourne-Sydney highway, near the turn-off to Canberra.)

Outside, the freezing early morning air battered against the casing, searching for a way to flood out the inner warmth. The sun, a blazing ball of fire, inflamed the eastern horizon, sending fiery fingers to light the hilltops. Small clouds of mist hovered over every pool or puddle of water; wisps of steam rose above farm animals that huddled together against the coming dawn. Inside, the driver kept careful watch over the instruments as the machine strained to go ever faster.

"We could divert through Canberra now that we have stopped for sleep along the way."

"Have you worked out the route to Jean's house?"

"Yes, it is reasonably direct. We would be there about 6am, though."

"Then there's the extra holiday traffic to get through on the way out."

"She may not even be in Canberra this weekend."

"That's true. So what do you think?"

"No, she can work out how to transport the Ronco back from Sydney. Let Jean sleep."

The irony of this little tale is that Jean wasn't asleep. I had intended to spend the week following Easter at Eric's, but changed my plans after getting ill on Easter Monday. Thus poor Eric had to take the bus home on Wednesday (at 7 am) - but he also had an extra day off work on the excuse of no transport (thus enabling him to attend the Peter Toluzzi party Tuesday night). Ah, the lengths I go to, to help out!

But back to the Ronco. Park Denbow and Kim Lambert were able to collect it a week or so later from Sydney. Then it sat in their living room for a week due to our not having the same evenings free. Finally I collected it and returned it to my garage, where it sat on the floor for another 2 weeks awaiting someone (Eric) strong enough to lift it into its intended place. Now all I have to do is organise Leigh Edwards and I to be free on the same night, so he can show me how to use the thing!

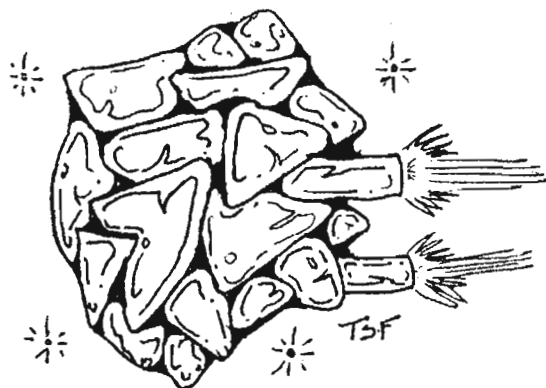
(It's 6 July as I'm typing this, and I still haven't accomplished this final feat.)

Nothing particularly of note happened during May or June. The highlights for me were a couple of trips to Eric's place (he was unable to come down here). One Sunday we both drove up to John & Diane Fox's new home in Dullaburra, not far from Faulconbridge. It's quite a nice place and made me rather envious. After lunch, we stopped at a real estate agent's to see what was on the market. Not that we're going to buy anything soon, but it's always fun to fantasize a bit.

I'll just mention the latest news from Eric's side: for over a year he's been expecting to be transferred to somewhere he has no intention of working. It finally happened in mid-June. He considered quitting on the spot, but remembered in time that if you quit, you have to wait six weeks to draw unemployment benefits (if you're sacked, you can apply immediately). Besides, he didn't want to get severance pay before the end of the tax year (June 30), and his holidays (a whole month's worth) are due to start the end of July. So he's been sick a lot - with medical certificates.

Then this week I had to spend a night in hospital to have a minor operation, and expected that I'd need someone to fetch and carry for me for several days (I did, too). So a friend sent Eric a suitably-worded telegram, and he took the week off (without permission) to come down here. (Yes, I'm doing all right now, thanks.)

So, in a month or two, Eric will probably be unemployed, giving him time for serious writing, among other things. And we will take that trip to Queensland that we'd planned for next year but had to postpone because of my nose. But overseas travels may be a bit constrained for a few years, at least for Eric. Tune in next issue for the latest news.





NATTER & ANTI-NATTER

(An explosive lettercolumn)

Pamela Boal
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England

22 May 1984

I cried for Lyn ((McConchie)) and also for the knowledge that in spite of welfare systems and adoption societies able to be most stringent in their checks of adoptive parents, even today sick minds like Lyn's guardian are in the position to inflict such damage upon children. I hope Lyn will not mind my hoping for her that some one will come into her life who can at least ease the pain of those memories.

It doesn't help Lyn any, but I feel that it should be pointed out that overall attitudes should not be taken from any one person's experience. It so happens that my experience has been of women doing the beating, the first time when I was one of six children evacuated to a farm. The woman also sold all our clothes and deprived us of food except for such scraps as she thought may not be fit for decent people to eat. I for some unknown reason was not beaten, though the no food or bad food (a treat of liver and onions turned out to prove her suspicion that the liver was off; we were all very ill and I'm allergic to liver till this day) and being made to stand on a stool in a corner for hours, I shared with the others. As she told us, children from London were filthy, foul mouthed and thieves, and we must be treated as the animals we were until we learnt the ways of decent folks. It was in fact a man who discovered what was happening when he wondered why he never saw any of the evacuees about the place (we were locked up when the men came in for meals) and called in the authorities. Of course that woman was also motivated by greed, being able to get hold of extra ration books and money for our keep; but, as with such sick minds, she believed what she said about us - and of course proved her point about us being dirty when the set of clothes she left us with obviously got grubby.

It just so happens that I knew more mothers than fathers who beat their children, and the only child I knew to be adopted at that time of my life was much envied because she was the only one of the group who didn't fear a beating if caught out in some misdemeanor. There is only one connection between Lyn's experience and mine, in that while casual beatings were an accepted part of daily life, those children who were severely beaten on a regular basis also hid the fact and were ashamed. Street-wise kids knew and avoided the subject and didn't press Jimmy or Jane to come swimming or shed long sleeves for summer games in the park.

Despite my close brush with Lyn's experience, my overall experience and feelings are very much akin to Bev Clarke's, especially her closing paragraph. I suppose I'm militant in as far as if I see a job to be done that I can do and feel it's worth doing, I'll get on with it. Yes, although there have been times when backlash from more militant people's action has made my work more difficult, equally if not more often the backlash has taken the form of my quieter approach being accepted.

Ian McKeer
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10 June 1984

"I Remember" is the sort of thing which is reported from time to time in the media, usually when the poor child dies from such maltreatment, but Lyn's description makes a much deeper impression than any newspaper report because here the victim speaks out. It's also worse than any report because it highlights something that wouldn't ever be published/broadcast: the consequences down through the years of such maltreatment to a child. One of the more annoying things about the way news and current affairs is presented is this firefighting approach, whereby you hear about the dramatic incident but hardly ever about the consequences for those involved. There are exceptions; I can

recall articles about therapy for torture victims at an institute in Denmark, and also psychological counselling for hostages taken by terrorists. Just think of how many lingering tragedies there must be behind the headline of today which is forgotten tomorrow. It's depressing just to think about it, and I digress from the one particular case anyway.

You also can't help wondering how Lyn's guardian ever got into the state of mind that allowed him to do such a thing to her... Yet I think there's something positive that comes out of Lyn's article too. Judging from the words of explanation at the end, it appears that this is the first time she's said anything about her childhood experiences. It's an awful cliché, I know, to say that talking about it helps, and clearly from her own words the effects are so deeply ingrained that she doesn't think she'll ever change now. But I'd like to think that it's a hopeful sign that Lyn has been able to put these things down on paper and allow people to know about them.

Judith Hanna
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28 May 1984

What struck me was the contrast between Kevin McCaw's and Lyn McConchie's pieces. On the basis of his treatment by one selfish girl, Kevin seems to have decided that it's alright for men to treat women badly. That particular power game is not played only by women, as most women know. It's a game that can be played in any love affair where one partner is more in love than the other - selfish men act like that too. It's a game that is also played in homosexual affairs. By Kevin's reasoning, any woman who's been badly treated by a man is then entitled to walk all over the next male sod who gives her a chance, just to even up the score... Of course, I know Kevin didn't really mean all this - he simply didn't think about what he was saying as his conclusion to his piece. The problem is that all too many (both male and female) do justify their thoughtless actions by this "I've been hurt, why shouldn't others suffer too" vengefulness...

There's not much I can say in response to Lyn, because she herself sets out her position so ably. From the academic studies, I know that the scale of men's violence against women is frightening: around 90% of all serious assault and murder of women is committed by the men they live with - husbands, lovers, less often fathers. The violence committed against men is mainly random violence from other men, that committed by women against men is a very small

percentage. Women more often flee than strike back. Most of the cases of women assaulting men were abused women turning on, and generally killing, the man who had for a long time been beating them up. This asymmetry in abuse of physical power is the bottom line of the various other inequalities that feminists point out - in upbringing, education, employment opportunities, earning power, etc. Particularly in laws about violence, and in attitudes towards the way men are entitled to behave not only towards women and children but towards other men. The striking contrast with what Kevin wrote is that Lyn, after eight years of violence and abuse from her guardian... has not generalised to blame all men for the actions of one, but is able to say "I like men" even though she can't bring herself to entirely trust any man.

Dave Rowley
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U.K.

7 June 1984

With reference to Kevin McCaw, how familiar this tale of woe is. I was led on by a girl when I was at school. When I discovered I was the butt of a joke among the girls of my class, I became very wary of any sort of relationship. I even refused dates from apparently nice girls, ones who only knew me slightly, that is. My problem, I think, is that I tend to be an all-or-nothing sort of person. No wishy-washy inbetween sort of thing if that makes sense. We all have these mad phases, so I can only suggest he stops being so easily manipulated.

Lyn McConchie brought back other memories. Unwanted memories from deeper in my past. The sight of a ceiling rushing towards me as my father lifted me as if I was a ragdoll. Then the flying through the air and the sudden pain from the piece of wood inside the back of the settee. The rough hands on my clothes again and the treatment repeated. "When I'm old enough I'm going to leave." "You don't come back if you do." Some threats! Yet by the time my siblings and I were grown up, things weren't so bad. Maybe because he had problems with his breathing, caused by his spraypainting job.

Joy Hibbert
((address as for Dave Rowley))

There really isn't much that can be said about an article like Lyn's, except to sympathise and to wonder again at a society which so strongly upholds a man's right to damage his child in this way. At least she hated him, so didn't internalise it too much. As I get older I see

how many of my friends are agonising over the fact that they don't get on with their parents. They've all convinced themselves that their parents are/were nice people really, that they deserved the abuse their parents heaped on them, and that they are somehow at fault for not being exactly the sort of people their parents would accept. It's almost refreshing to hear from someone like Lyn whose hate is still pure and without guilt. But I must admit, if I was her, I'd try and do something to get out of this cycle of love and disgust, though I know it may be impossible.

((Editor's note: I almost declined to publish the following letter, which I consider extremely offensive in the way it attacks Lyn as a person. As I have stated before, I am trying to keep personal attacks out of these pages - argue with each other's ideas, but don't degenerate to that level. I sent a copy of the letter to Lyn and asked if she wanted to reply, but she declined; however, she suggested I go ahead and publish it, and see what sort of responses it gets. In the meantime, I wrote to Martyn and received a reply, both of which are also reprinted below. I now consider the whole exchange a possible learning experience for many of us. - JNW))

Martyn Taylor
Flat 2, 17 Hutchinson Square
Douglas, Isle of Man 2 June 1984

It must be convenient to have a childhood trauma to fall back on - Lyn McDonohie. So she suffered. So what. It is horribly not unusual, and hers is by no means the worst you will hear. Go ask a social worker, or a policeman, or whatever the Australian equivalent of the RSPCC is. She knows what her "problem" is, but rather than conquer it she uses it as an excuse to evade the commitment of love, knowing six months is all she can manage, so six months will be all she will manage. Does she tell her "lovers" right from the off that six months is all she's going to give them? Not that she knows what love is, because it is giving and commitment and effort. She's never been loved, in bed or out of it, she's just been fucked and fucked by herself because that is just what she wants to feed her martyred heroine trip. So she suffered, she and most of us to a greater or lesser extent.

Her tale doesn't grab my sympathy because she uses her damage to escape her responsibilities to others. Maybe her encounter with feminists will teach her that she is responsible for herself and no more to push the responsibility for her failings onto someone else than allow the responsibility for her talents to accrue to someone else. I hope so,

but I doubt if I'll be interested in finding out. Self pity is self defeating.

((Martyn, your statements not only demonstrate a complete lack of understanding of what she said, but they are phrased in an extremely offensive manner. Why? Even if you were correct in your interpretation - which you aren't - why express yourself so arrogantly and rudely?

Firstly, I find the idea that because someone's pain is not unusual, or is less than the pain of someone else, then the first person's pain is somehow of less importance, or doesn't count, to be a value judgement with which I cannot agree. Did she, or I, suggest this was a worst-case story? Not at all.

Secondly, in no way did Lyn's article suggest that her childhood experiences were an excuse to "evade the commitment of love". Quite the contrary. The first step to conquering a problem is to recognise that problem for what it is. For many people, it helps to talk about the problem openly and honestly. It took a lot of courage for Lyn to let me publish her article. It was not self-pity, it was self-analysis. By acknowledging her "problem" and its consequences for others, she is taking responsibility for her actions.

I think talking about these things can help people to overcome them. But sneering at a person's efforts certainly isn't very helpful. You don't have to be sympathetic, but hostility is a very petty response. It makes me wonder what your problems are. - JNW))

Martyn Taylor
(address above) 20 June 1984

Thanks for the letter. My first reaction was "What is this woman raving about?" Then I got out my file. Gulp. Did I really write that ... it is so out of character I can hardly believe it was me. Rude. Arrogant. All that and more. There are rules of civilised discourse and I broke them. No excuses, and the reason - that I was very tired at the time - does not take away one shred of culpability. I apologise unreservedly. I have written to Lyn apologising to her and asking her to have the graciousness to give me the forgiveness I don't deserve.

I have no objections to anyone discussing anything in print, as long as we recognize the potential problems of communication and the sort of misinterpretations that sends yahoos like me galumphing in at delicate moments. I have reread Lyn's article - several times - and I still see a hell of a lot of self pity in it, the transferring of one man's guilt onto all men. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe you know better, know Lyn better, but all I can do is read the words as I

understand the English language and in the light of my own experience, and I am not prepared to be dishonest and say I don't see self pity when I do see it. Lyn has been as honest with us as she can, and it would be a gross insult to her integrity not to reciprocate that honesty even if we disagree.

I see that I have said I don't care whether Lyn overcomes her difficulties or not. That is a crime worse than rudeness, an unChristian act for which I will have to answer to someone who knows all the answers. Not only that, but I have increased the burden on a fellow soul when I ought to have tried to lighten it. As someone who is basically happy, I don't call that spreading a little happiness. That isn't self pity, that is self disgust. Lyn opened herself to me and I ought to have received her with gentleness and respect. I didn't, and even if she can forgive and forget I trust I shall not.

Andy Andruschak
(address earlier)

4 June 1984

Lyn McConchie's article is very much what I have heard (and have told myself) at AL-ANON A.C.A. meetings. That last stands for Adult Children of Alcoholics. The legacy of living with an alcoholic parent, or guardian, living or now dead, recovered or not, can affect a person years after last contact.

I do think Lyn needs help, and in fact I am sure she recognizes the need herself. I am not sure if Al-Anon ACA can help her, but the address should be in the phone book: look in the yellow pages under "Alcoholism". Even if her guardian was not a drinker, she can attend the "open" meetings, and always providing that she abide by the tradition of anonymity, and not relate who she sees or what she hears. She may or may not learn things, it may or may not help her.

But the fact is that the 12 step program worked out by AA, and used by Al-Anon, is also used by other recovery groups, such as Overeaters Anonymous, Cocaine Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and so on.



Judith Hanna
(address earlier)

To take up the discussion of power within a relationship from what Sue Thomason said: Sue's point that "in a close relationship for every transaction there has to be a giver and a receiver, i.e. there has to be an inequality" is true as far as it goes. But: a close relationship involves myriads of transactions, and there is no need for it to be always the same person winning, and the same person losing. What often seems to happen is that a relationship reaches, as Jean says, a "dynamic equilibrium", in which the outcome of certain transactions is agreed: He's the tidy one, so she is (sort of) licensed to indulge in untidiness in return for which he is licensed to nag; she is calmer than he is, so it's always he who blows up at an upset which leaves her as a calm foil to the performance. In other relationships, the roles of each might have been the opposite - she might have been the excitable one playing to a calmer he. The problem seems (to the outside observer at least) to come when the sum of the different transactions does not cancel out as a rough balance of power, but rather adds up to one partner dominating the other.

Ian McKeer
(address earlier)

Your exchange with Sue Thomason also provokes me to some comments. For a start, Sue says that it's easiest to get stuck at the bottom of the energy slope and that's fair enough, path of least resistance and all that. The question that immediately comes to mind from that statement though is "why doesn't everyone try to get there?" What happens in those crucial periods at the beginning of a relationship to define who ends up where in Sue's energy level analogy? One thing I do agree with her about it that once the positions are defined, changing them is very awkward.

Your analogy of dynamic equilibrium makes more sense to me, as if there can be an interchange between the two energy levels in a "good" relationship. Maybe you are both limiting your discussion too much by considering only one relationship. After all, we're all involved in several areas in our lives, most obviously work and social life. Perhaps the dynamic equilibrium isn't so much between levels in the same relationship as between them in different ones, because in one place it's easiest to be at the bottom and at another it isn't. The classic example, I suppose, has to be the individual who has a bad day at work when chewed out by the boss and consequently arrives home and takes it

out on his partner or the children, exploiting their dependency. The alarming thing is when somebody has nowhere to go to release their anger. Heaven knows it would be far better if people could resolve the tensions due to pressure by themselves instead of turning on an innocent person, but if you've nobody to do that to and can't ameliorate the tension on your own, what does it do to you Your comments leave me with an image of a complex network linking people through both space and time, stacking each of us in different energy levels with respect to all those we know and those they in turn know etc.

James Dean Waryk
(address earlier)

1 May 1984

Beauty is desirable in people because beauty represents perfect health, a true consideration in the mating game and the propagation of the healthiest. Just because humans take a lot of things to excess does not mean the underlying meaning of a ritual should be considered bad.

I think what is needed is more promotion of intelligence as well as beauty. Would you believe that my ex was upset when I told her the truth about our relationship: that I went out with her for her mind, and did not consider sex a significant factor in our relationship! Despite being highly intelligent and highly educated, she was still confused by that statement, and felt that physical attractiveness was a significant part of any healthy relationship. Well, I agree with her, so now I am going out with another girl.

((I don't think it's "bad" to appreciate beauty, but I believe that what is considered "beautiful" in the human body (male or female) is as much a matter of the fashion of the day as is the length of a skirt or one's hair. Certainly healthy people may be beautiful, but when the appearance of beauty becomes the goal, it may require practices which are actually detrimental to health.

For example, a slim, trim body may result from a proper balance of food and exercise, and generally good muscle tone, and thus be a sign of health. But if slimness becomes a goal in itself, rather than a consequence of exercise, people often attempt to achieve the look by "dieting" - which often leads to harmful consequences to overall health. Similarly, "beauty" in certain circles is linked to a tanned body, which could be a consequence of healthy outdoor living (and exercise) but is more likely linked to sunbathing for its own sake - and frequently results in skin cancer.

Then there were the past fashions in beauty both shall live", that sort of archaism.

that dictated how small a woman's waist should be - leading to tight corsets and consequent health hazards. One could go on and on. Beauty, however defined, is an artificial concept, and not linked in any meaningful way to health or good genes. In fact, many healthy practices are often deplored in women: participation in sports, for example. Though sports may be acceptable under certain circumstances, they are not taken seriously or the women who choose them are considered odd or "unfeminine". One theory is that men fear strong, capable women, especially those who have learnt to cooperate with other women through the medium of team sports.

Aside from the possible physical health hazards of the pursuit of "beauty", there are the very real mental health hazards. Too many people, especially women, worry that they're too fat (when they aren't), or their hair is the wrong colour or texture, or their nose is too big, or they are too tall (women) or too short (men). Women worry that their breasts are "too small" (as if size were related to function - evolution only cares about the ability to produce milk), and so on. They fear their lovers will leave if they don't measure up (or conform) to what the advertising industry is selling as "beauty". These fears are no doubt realistic in some cases, but how sad and stupid that they should be.

I don't argue that men aren't genetically primed to seek out "beautiful" women - perhaps they are - but I do argue that "beauty" is a cultural concept, and that any relationship with health is purely coincidental. It may not have been in primitive societies, but it sure is today. -- JKW))

Martyn Taylor
(address earlier)

17 March 1984

I have to wonder just what sort of arrangement (Joy Hibbert) means by marriage. By my dictionary the word means the state or relationship of being husband and wife; the legal union or contract made by a man and woman to live as husband and wife; the religious or legal ceremony formalising such a union. You could argue forever about the exact meaning, but I'd have thought that the commonly accepted meaning of the term includes some acceptance of that quaint old notion "fidelity". Let me say here that I make no comment on the way Joy and Dave went to live their lives; that is down to them and nobody else. I wish them joy (no pun intended), happiness and contentment. Most of us would probably agree that entering into marriage involves a promise to "cleave to no other so long as you both shall live", that sort of archaism.

Now then, according to surveys, most of us are looking for something old fashioned in the way of marriage - life partner, roses round the door, thick and thin relationship, helpmate for old age, etc. That is what we want to see any relationship develop into, so they say... It seems as though even when we both say that all we want is a quick fuck, something inside us is urging us towards love and something more permanent...

Which brings us back to Joy and why the boys won't flirt with her... By stating from the outset that all it is going to be is that "quick fuck" with no emotional potential, Joy may very well be admirably honest, but she is stating that she isn't prepared to play by the "house rules", sort of proclaiming "It's my ball and we'll play my way", only not quite if you see what I mean. I don't think she can honestly claim to be surprised if others are a little reluctant to join in her game...

((I don't think Joy was "surprised" at the reaction; her statement was that she was "annoyed" - and not that people declined her invitation, but that they didn't believe her when she made it. If a man or woman decline to become involved, at any level, with a married person because of their own feelings - desires for deeper relationships, whatever - that is fair enough. What is not fair is making assumptions about the other person's relationship.

Can you explain to me why having a "life partner, thick and thin relationship, helpmate for old age, etc" must include sexual fidelity Other than the fact that people are conditioned to feel insecure without that fidelity It seems silly to me that what you happen to do with your sexual organs is so much more important than anything else. After all, one can be utterly unfaithful in many ways - lying and stealing, for example - which to me are far more important to a relationship. It depends on what you actually promise to your partner, rather than assumptions about what marriage includes. I had quite a debate in an apa on this subject, and the other person's case eventually boiled down to: whatever you and your partner agree to is okay, just don't call it marriage unless it fits certain rigid assumptions. Well, I think we need to widen our "definition" of, or assumptions about, marriage. - JHM))



Alex Stewart
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England

1 May 1984

I'm sure ((Joy Hibbert)) would be outraged, and quite properly too, if anyone were to suggest that a woman should automatically leap into bed with any man who asked her; but isn't this precisely what she's expecting men to do under similar circumstances Surprising as it seems, men do have feelings you know.

((No, Alex, as I said to Martyn above, I don't think Joy was annoyed that men didn't accept her propositions; I'm sure she wasn't suggesting they were expected to do. What she does want is for them to believe her and take her seriously. Then of course they can decline if they want to - JHM))

James Dean Waryk
(address earlier)

2 April 1984

I have met only a few "open" couples in my lifetime, and I find it difficult to perceive how such a relationship can work, and work well. I have seen ordinary marriages with their share of problems, let alone one that regularly introduces new participants.

((I think it's a matter of trust, both in your partner and in yourself, and also a matter of self-confidence. Of course an open marriage has risks, but so does a closed one. Based on my own experiences, desiring something forbidden can be a lot more damaging to the primary relationship than indulging a fantasy and discovering it's not what you believed after all. Similarly, the opportunity to do with others what your partner isn't interested in can prevent a lot of pressure on the partner ("if you really loved me" sort of emotional blackmail) - and I don't mean just sexual adventures; this applies to other hobbies as well. - JHM))

Joy should not be upset about what I see as a simple lesson in psychology. How in hell is a guy supposed to react when a woman propositions him in front of her husband I know of a wife who did that even though their marriage was definitely not open! ...I myself was propositioned at a fantasy role playing game (I was playing, she was serious), while her husband sat on the bed and just nodded.. I took a rain check on it though.

I share ((Joy's)) desires to have a more open world and for people to be more realistic and mature in their handling of personal

relationships... Here in the Great White North, it is the guy who does all of the chasing and the girl gives permission. It can get very frustrating... Men are always ready, and indeed fantasise and brag about being picked up and/or propositioned by a woman.

((Surely that is a myth or else men simply aren't confident enough to turn their fantasies into reality or does the fantasy only encompass unmarried women - JHE))

It must truly be a great relationship for two people to be so unselfish to allow the total spiritual and physical freedom of each other. It is a goal to be worked towards, but I think the animal in us will blunt progress in that direction for some time to come.

Dave Rowley
(address earlier)

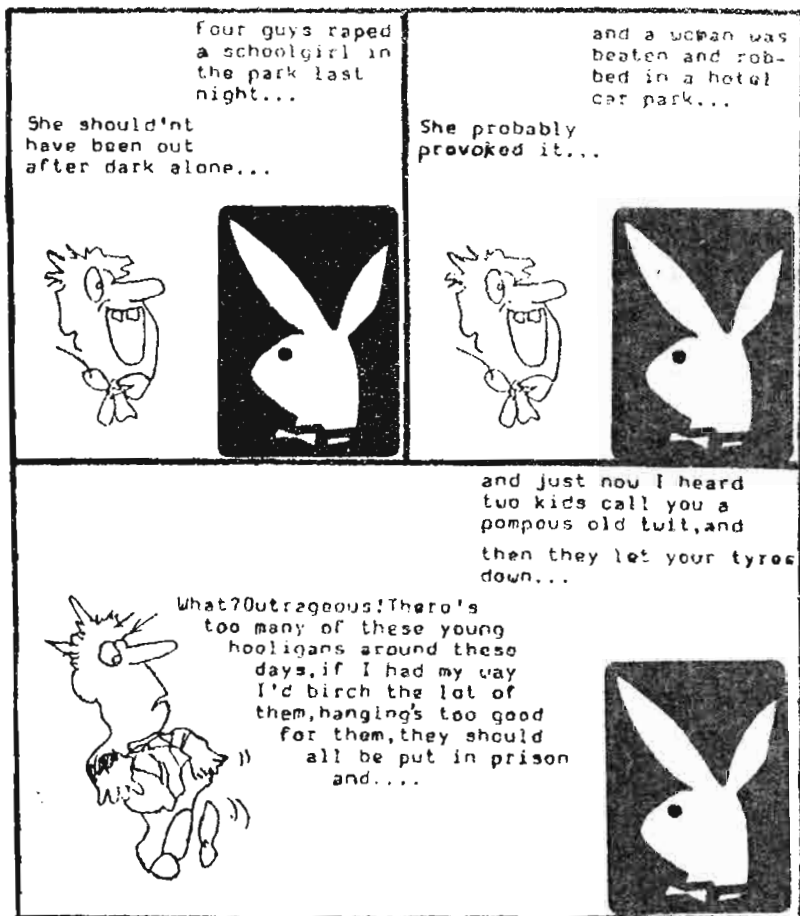
24 March 1984

Talking of ownership in marriage reminds me of my second convention (before I was married). There was I, had been introduced again to "the woman from Hatlock with big tits". She appeared to be spending the entire con with a male fan

who she wishes to remain anonymous (because nothing was happening anyway). I thought she was with him. She thought I was ignoring her. Finally, at a select party, she got drunk, collapsed on my shoulder, and we have never looked back. Oh, sorry, Joy, shouldn't I have told her that

Actually, Jean, I have been invited "to watch", but not to my face. Although he is taller and more muscular than me, he was quite prepared to stand there while I acted the outraged husband and beat the shit out of him... This, despite my having thrown the room keys at him several times! ...He also suggested to Joy that he would be happier if I sat in the corner and masturbated, so that he would know where I was. I declined when Joy told me of this request.

I ALSO HEARD FROM Lyn McConchie, Lucy Huntzinger, Adrienne Fain, Jessica Amanda Salmonson, Kevin McCaw, Gary Barber (whose LoC was mostly written in crayon), Joan Dick, Julie Vaux, Kim Huett, Steve George, Debi Kean, Frances Jane Nelson, Elaine Wechsler, Tim Jones, Buck Coulson, Leslie David, James Styles, Susan Crites, and probably several other people whose letters have gone astray.



BOOK REVIEWS

uh... start
reading...

here.



Marion Zimmer Bradley (ed), Greyhaven, Daw 1983

The fantasy stories in this anthology were written mostly by people who are, or have been, members of two households in Berkley, California: Greyhaven and Greenwalls. They do not centre around Darkover or any other particular world or universe. As with any anthology, the quality of the stories (and poems, in this case) varies, but for my taste these are of a generally high standard. One of the most interesting parts of the book, however, is the short introductions which accompany each story, wherein Bradley tells a bit about the author and often about her relationship with them.

Ursula Le Guin, The Compass Rose, Bantam, 1982.

A collection of previously-published stories by Le Guin (going back to 1974), most of which I had not read before. All are of the high standard one expects from Le Guin. Several take place in Orsinia, in an alternative universe in central Europe, but most are independent of any particular place - and are more "science fictional" than much of Le Guin's recent writings that I've seen. My personal favourite in this collection is a delightfully tongue-in-cheek 5-page item called Some Approaches to the Problem of the Shortage of Time.

Suzette Haden Elgin, The Grand Jubilee; And Then There'll Be Fireworks, Berkley, 1983.

These are the second and third volumes in the "Jzark Fantasy Trilogy", following Twelve Fair Kingdoms. An amusing read, with a touch of seriousness behind it all, but not quite to my taste. It is rather nice to find some fantasy

not immediately based on Celtic mythology, as Haden Elgin handles the Jzark version of American English very well, but it all fell a bit flat for me. Humour is, after all, a very personal matter.

David Brin, Startide Rising, Bantam, 1983.

A fascinating account of a starship (crewed by dolphins and humans) which crashes on a planet while being pursued by a motley collection of galactic races who are fighting with each other for the opportunity to capture the Earth vessel. My complaint with this book is that too many momentous things are discovered by the Earth ship: just a bit more "coincidence" than I could take. (Perhaps I'll learn in the next volume that it's not coincidence at all, but that doesn't help this story.) But Brin does a magnificent job in describing dolphins and humans working together (with even a token neo-chimp for contrast), and all the species' varied reactions to pressure. Only a few potentially heroic types here, and those in limited ways. Most of the cast have their fears, and feel their inadequacies, in a most realistic manner. There's much in this book to please devotees of both "hard" and "soft" science fiction. Recommended despite its flaws.

Roger Zelazny, Eye of Cat, Timescape, 1982.

I put off reading this book because the jacket blurb made it sound like a typical hunter-and-hunted story, which (like "war" stories which concentrate on tactics) bore me. I should know better than to believe the blurb. This book is much, much deeper than that. The main human character, William Blackhorse Singer, "the last Navajo tracker on a future Earth", is mainly concerned with confronting his own fears and feelings and his heritage. The reader gets tantalizing glimpses of Navajo ritual and ways of relating to the world. Zelazny uses snatches of news (headlines and partial reports) and interspersed poetry to great effect. It's an effect I very much like, though one certainly has to pay attention to not miss something. With the exception of a few longish descriptive chase sequences (reminiscent of travels through Shadow in the Amber books, for the detail), Zelazny wastes few words in creating a compelling image of his protagonist's struggles with himself. I was impressed.

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Oris Lessing, *The Making of the Representative for Planet 8*, Knopf, hardcover, 1982.

This is the most tedious book I've worked through in many months, I'm sorry to say. At least there were only 145 pages of it! As a Lessing fan from 'way back, I was most disappointed - especially since I actually liked the first three of her "Canopus in Argos" books, though many other Lessing fans didn't. Don't waste your money buying this one.

Lisa Tuttle, *Familiar Spirit*, Berkeley, 1983.

I bought this book by mail order because I like Lisa Tuttle's writing, and I'm glad I did. If I'd seen it in a shop, marked "Horror" as it is, I'd have skipped it. I've rarely liked any of the "horror" books I've read; they seem too silly to be believable. This one isn't exactly believable, but the creepy things that happened were sufficiently close to my own experiences that I was able to get quite involved. The main character, Sarah, moves into an old house and soon finds herself pursued by a spirit which is trying to possess her. It resides first in a rat, and later in a cat. I have no fear of rats, and I generally love cats but find some of them exceptionally strange. So that part I quite enjoyed. The most "realistic" part of the book, though, for me was the varied reactions of people to whom Sarah finally confides her fears. The most annoying part of the book was Sarah's obsession with her former lover, with whom she keeps hoping to "start again". This was unfortunately also realistic, especially as Sarah is otherwise a competent, intelligent woman - I know only too well how the rational and the irrational can co-exist, and how embarrassing it is to feel so wrapt in a situation that's clearly unsuitable.

George R.R. Martin, *Fevre Dream*, Pocket, 1982.

The last few years have seen quite a spate of extremely well-written vampire stories, each told from quite a different point of view than the stereotypical "dracula" sort. This one takes place on the Mississippi River in the 1830's, mostly on the large, luxurious paddle-steamers. The vampires are generally in two camps, those who consider humans to be inferior "cattle", and those who feel it is morally wrong to feed upon humans (and especially to kill them). The factions vie for power among themselves. The story is told from the point of view of the

human co-owner of the steamerboat *Fevre Dream*, who doesn't fear the vampires so much as he dislikes being kept uninformed. Another well-told, highly descriptive, gripping tale.

Joe Haldeman, *Worlds Apart*, Viking Press, 1983.

The second volume of the "Worlds" trilogy. Although I quite liked this book, I found it much more superficial than I recall the first one. Too many momentous things are happening, and none are explored in the detail I would have preferred (the book covers 3 years in 225 pages). Marianne O'Hara narrowly escaped from Earth before WWII started, at the end of the first book. Here she works in an overcrowded Earth satellite, preparing for the launch of a generation starship (upon which she is slated to travel), worrying about her Earthside lover Jeff (presumed dead in the war or the plague that followed it, but who eventually turns up alive), and adjusting to her two husbands and her series of administrative jobs. Alternating chapters describe the situation on Earth, mostly from Jeff's point of view in Georgia and Florida. It's fairly grim, and it's a credit to Haldeman that he pulls no miracles (especially inappropriately happy endings) out of the hat. I liked this book; I just wish it had been about 3 times as long, as there were so many things I wanted to know so much more about. Recommended.

C.J. Cherryh, *The Tree of Swords and Jewels*, Daw, 1983.

A sequel to *The Dreamstone*, this fantasy involves war among men, on the fringes of the Eldwood wherein dwells the last of the elves, Arafel, the Lady of Trees. This tale has many of the qualities of Cherryh's earlier work, which dwelt very much on the inner concerns of individual characters, and how they faced their obligations. Well written, but I still find the old spellings of names to be very distracting from the story, despite a glossary of pronunciation. Definitely not for lovers of fast-paced action.

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