

Information Facts

Serving Size 1 zine (40 pp.)
Servings Per Container 1

Amount Per Serving	Zine	Zine with Envelope
Trivial Facts	27	29
Completely Trivial Facts	16	18
% Daily Value *		
Frivolity 16 items	23%	23%
Utter Frivolity 12 items	17%	17%
Sarcasm 7 items	14%	14%
Veiled References 5	22%	22%
Total Humor 36 items	21%	21%
Jokes 3	10%	10%
Puns 28	78%	78%
Non Sequiturs 5	11%	11%
Weird Ideas 12	36%	36%
Opinions	102%	102%
Sports	0%	0%
Sercon	3%	3%
International News	1%	2%
Swedish Fan Feuds	0%	0%

* Percent Daily Values are based on an intake of 2000 facts per day. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your information needs.

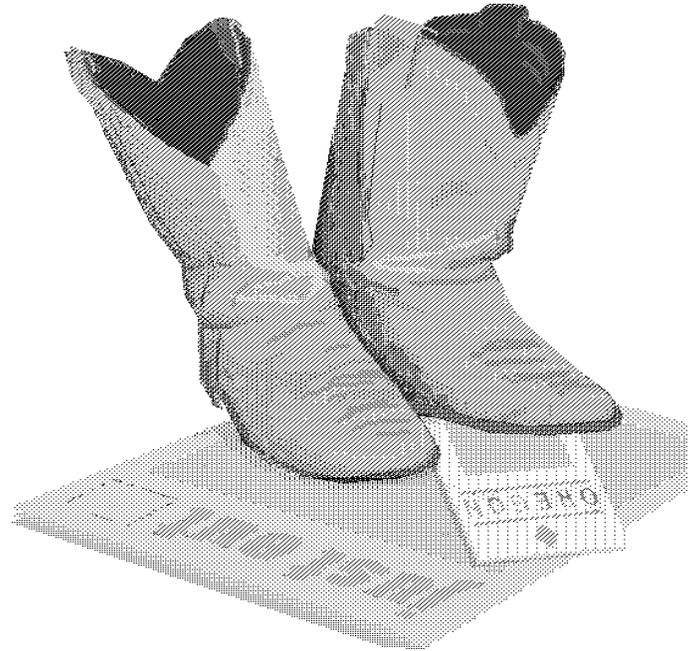
Bento #6 is a Bento Press production Cover & Cellphone Person by D. Levine

David Levine and Kate Yule (503) 232-1727

1905 SE 43rd Ave.
Portland, OR 97215

It is available for The Usual (Letters of Comment, tradazines, editorial whim, or \$2).

Bento #6



**A zine by David Levine and Kate Yule
For Potlatch 4 — February 1995**

The Worldcon that Wasn't

Why did we do it? I don't know. Perhaps we were mad. Perhaps we were just slaves to our own tendency to plan ahead. Perhaps we were seized with a sudden inexplicable fit of do-goodery. I'm not sure why, but we did it—we went to Orlando for the Worldcon that Wasn't.

Of course we knew what we were getting into. We had watched in horror, like the rest of Fandom, when Hurricane Andrew plowed into Central Florida leaving devastation in its wake. We knew from Usenet and the SMOF grapevine that the con was off, the convention center smashed, half the committee homeless. But we had our plane tickets, we had our hotel reservations (and yes, we called ahead to make sure that there was still an airport and there was still a hotel), we had vacation days laid out. So, what the hell, we went, packing donated clothes and supplies instead of costumes. And the latest issue of *Bento*, of course.

All in all, about three hundred people showed up. Many of them were members of the Permanent Floating Worldcon Committee—perhaps they couldn't imagine doing anything else on a Labor Day weekend—and most had come for the same reasons we did. (Scott and Jane Dennis sent a hundred buttons that said "What the hell, I had Labor Day off anyway"). But there were a surprising number of people—at least 30—who showed up at the hotel expecting there to be a convention. Even in these days of CNN and

cellular phones and USA Today, when it seems like you can't avoid the news even if you want to, there are people who go blithely along through life without paying attention. And these people vote?! Still, most of them pitched in to help like everyone else once they understood the situation.

The con, immediately nicknamed "HurriCon", felt like a cross between SMOFcon, summer camp, and *The Road Warrior*. We were staying in a nice hotel (only slightly flooded) with a bunch of the Worldcon regulars, but during the day, instead of programming, we cleaned up people's houses or delivered food and clothing to outlying areas. In the evenings we staggered back to the hotel looking like the Walking Dead—every night's party felt like the Dead Dog. But there was a filksing in the Clarion lobby every evening, and yes, there was a daily zine. Mostly I remember images:

- The "meet the everybody party," where the main activity was scrabbling through boxes of damp and formerly-alphabetized name badges in search of yours
- The surprise and delight at the Red Cross shelter when we showed up with boxes of convention T-shirts and water bottles

- The unofficial Site Selection vote, which was decided conclusively when someone pointed out that Scotland doesn't have any recurring natural disasters (unless you count the English)
- Fifteen fans singing "Gimme That Old Time Religion" as a work song while mopping water out of the basement of the Kissimee Baptist Community Center
- Ben Yalow with his tie off and his sleeves rolled up
- The replacement Hugos, hurriedly crafted out of broken broom handles, being "presented" in a brief ceremony in the bar one evening: "Accepting the award for Mr. Asimov will be Gary Feldbaum... accepting the award for Ms. Kress will be Gary Feldbaum... accepting the award for Ms. Bujold will be Gary Feldbaum..."
- Con co-chair Edie Siclari, looking very dazed, sitting in a corner weaving convention ribbons into blankets for the homeless

"HurriCon" had no dealers, no Art Show, no bid parties, no Business Meeting (though Bruce Pelz tried hard to convene one). But it had a bunch of SMOFs working their tails off, bitching like crazy, and having a good time doing it, and that sounds like a Worldcon to me. —DDL

all the background sights and smells whenever she calls to chat. I'd seen a hundred movies and sitcoms set in New York City, read a hundred books—it is an all-pervasive archetype of American culture. And I could have gone on reading them all my life without the insights that came from just two short weekends there. It's frustrating to try to write about this, because the whole point is that what we learned about New York from being there, could not have been communicated any other way. But now that I've been there, every New York scene I see has a new richness of remembered atmosphere. (OK, so it's car fumes. Whatever.)

Carl Djerassi, in his book *The Pill, Pygmy Chimps, and Degas' Horse*, tells of a hiking trip in the Yellow Mountains of China. The landscape became stranger and stranger, until one day he realized that the odd-shaped boulders and mountains found in a particular tradition of Chinese art were not a stylistic quirk—they're what the artists *really saw*. The fields of Provence are dusted with poppies—those same that grow in Flanders' fields—and to walk beside a wind-ruffled grain field where the shimmering, shifting green is dusted through and through with red poppies, purple thistles and cornflowers, and little white blooms, is to understand what the Impressionists were on about in a way that

Being There

My first trip to Europe was a quest to go stand in a lot of famous places. I wanted to be where Liza Doolittle sold her flowers and Mary Poppins fed the birds, tuppence a bag. I wanted to climb into Anne Frank's hiding place, see every artwork of Michelangelo's as described in *The Agony and the Ecstasy*, and frame the same shot of the Eiffel Tower in my viewfinder that my father had thirty years before. It was a voyage of re-creation.

That urge seems to have faded in later trips, not only because I've done most of the classic landmarks by now. In fact, the emphasis has slowly reversed. We have larger destinations now: Venice rather than the *Pietà*, Provence rather than Paris. And instead of books and movies telling me what I want to see, the places I see illuminate and transform my experience of books and movies. At the Phillips Collection in DC, I stood before painting after painting saying "Yes! I've seen the sun turn the Arno just that shade of gold! God, you can feel the New York humidity on that rooftop... Yes! The light in Arles is just like that—I've been there."

Trying to understand New York City from books and films is like trying to picture a friend's new house from her description over the phone. There's just no substitute for dropping by in person, however briefly—and ever thereafter, you will mentally fill in

no art text could ever convey. On the previous trip we saw sunflower fields, and suddenly Van Gogh wasn't abstract at all.

The importance of Being There drove me to plan a trip into the Eastern Oregon desert last summer. Fourteen years in Oregon and I'd only ever crawled around the edges, rarely straying from the twin axes of I-5 and I-84. Every night the Oregon Public Broadcasting announcers told me the weather forecasts for Baker, Wagonfire, Plush and Paisley—unknown towns out there on the dry side of the Cascades, in an interior that could swallow Ohio. It was time to breach the Tumbleweed Curtain and go have a look.

Ducklings can imprint on people, at a young enough age. In my family, Dad's penchant for multi-day "scenic drives" meant we imprinted on car windows. Give me a map on my lap and a squeak-free cooler chest in the back seat and I am happy. David had no such early training, so this expedition into the great beyond was undertaken with my friend Michael, who brandished a yellowed Sunday-paper clipping about the dam at Owyhee Canyon, 375 miles away.

We had a goal.

We covered 1000 miles in 72 hours. If we were going to make it to Owyhee, there just wasn't time to be leisurely. That was OK. We saw enough of the Painted Hills to know that they're worth coming back to someday. Ontario turned out to be onion country: every curve or bump in the road had a few that had fallen off a

truck, and drifts of onionskin lined the ditches. We toured an old opium den in John Day and the Oregon Trail museum in Baker. We missed the Oregon Trail ruts over the Blue Mountains, because I hadn't noticed that none of the cute schematic Tourist Bureau maps actually showed where they *were*. Central Oregon was lumpier than I'd pictured it. The beauty of Owyhee Canyon was worth every hurried mile.

Can I claim to "know" Eastern Oregon? Hardly. But I don't just tap my foot in impatience at OPB's long-winded weather reports any more. The towns and counties fit together to form a puzzle that I can solve because I've seen the picture on the box. *I've been there.*

It makes all the difference. —KY

But there were 56 Elvises, up 19 from the year before.

Notes from an Expedition to the Cellphone People

The Cellphone People are composed of numerous tribes. Although mutually dependent on each other, these tribes are fiercely competitive, and a good deal of their time is spent maneuvering for position, forming and breaking alliances, and making deals in order to gain an advantage over other tribes. However,

pletely devastated, and often can neither work nor sleep until it is restored or replaced.

The power of a *toi* is generally proportional to its size. (Curiously, though, within a class of *toi* the smaller objects generally confer higher status.) *Toi* are usually carried in a leather box called a *brifcäs*, which is rarely found far from its owner's hand.

The lowest class of *toi*, carried by almost all Cellphone People no matter what their status, is a small leather-covered book containing religious texts and personal notes. This common book is known by many different names; for example, among the Tek tribe it is called a *dätima*, while among the Intel it is called a *franklin*. The Cellphone People believe that all important events, both past and future, must be recorded in this book, and few will take any action whatsoever without consulting it. A typical scene in daily life is the sight of two or more Cellphone People seriously consulting their *dätima* for a propitious date for some upcoming event.

The second class of *toi*, the *bipa*, is a small box which is usually worn on the belt or carried in a pocket. This box is never opened; it is believed to contain a small but powerful *bip*, or god-messenger, which conveys summonses and instructions from the gods. When the gods are angry or wish to direct the carrier of the *bipa*, the *bip* is believed to make a high-pitched noise or to jump violently about in its box. Often a Cellphone Person will excuse himself suddenly from a gathering with the excuse that his

they seldom if ever engage in actual warfare. Instead, a special caste of shamans known as the *aturni* conducts complex and ritualized formal contests for dominance. These contests sometimes take years or decades to be decided, and at any time a tribe may be engaged in contests on dozens or hundreds of fronts. Because of the complexity of these contests, it is not atypical for both combatants to claim victory no matter what the actual outcome.

The costume of the Cellphone People is uniform across all tribes and all levels of status. It consists of a woolen jacket and matching pants in a dark color, and a shirt of cotton or polyester in a lighter color. The overall somber appearance of this outfit, or *süt*, is relieved by a band of brightly colored fabric, called a *nektai*, worn about the neck. The significance of the colors of this band has not yet been determined, although it is of only limited use in determining the wearer's status. Status is instead displayed by subtle differences in cut and quality within the rigid framework of the standard style of clothing. A more reliable indicator of status is the presence or absence of various totemic objects.

Cellphone People are usually seen to carry at least one totemic object, or *toi*, on their person at all times. These objects are used to communicate with the gods and obtain their guidance and blessings for any and all weighty events. Ownership of a powerful *toi* confers both power and prestige upon the owner; a Cellphone Person who is so unfortunate as to lose his *toi* or have it stolen is com-

bipa is vibrating, and he must consult with the gods to determine the cause of the disturbance.

The third and most visible class of *toi* is the *celfon*, from which the name of the Cellphone People is derived. The *celfon* is similar to but larger than the *bipa*. Only shamans may carry a *celfon*, because it is believed to convey messages both to and from the gods. When in use, the *celfon* is held close to the head; often the user cups a hand over the ear or mouth in order to ensure good communication. During this communion the shaman's eyes are typically either closed or rolled heavenward, and he may take violent exception to being interrupted.

The pronouncements of the *celfon* are given great weight. For example, during one expedition I observed a group of Intel patiently waiting for an airplane. Suddenly, their shaman announced that his *celfon* had told him that there was snow in Denver and they must change to a different flight, or they would never get home on time. Immediately the rest of the group gathered their baggage and went off in search of a different airplane.

The fourth and highest class of *toi*, carried only by shamans of the highest order, is the *notbuk*. The *notbuk* is a large flat box which opens like a book to reveal a display of tiny religious icons.



Sticks and Stones

It combines the functions of the *dätima* and the *celfon*; the owner is believed to be able to both record events and transmit them directly to the gods by touching the icons in a certain sequence.

Although the great power of the *notbuk* is never debated, it has curious weaknesses. For example, while a *celfon* can be used anywhere, the *notbuk* generally cannot communicate with the gods except in certain places of power. Often a shaman will be seen wandering through an airport holding his *notbuk* and peering anxiously about for the sacred symbol of the *dataport*. Similarly, while the reliability of the *dätima* is never questioned, the owner of a *notbuk* is sometimes at a loss even to determine his own daily schedule. The *notbuk* seems to be treated as something of a god in its own right; although it is capricious and often troublesome, the shaman who has been selected to carry one generally considers it an honor of the highest sort and is extremely loath to part with it.

I was only able to live among the Cellphone People for a few months, but I gained enormous respect for their courage and sincerity in the face of their harsh environment. It is to be hoped that the great faith of these simple people in their gods and totems will not hinder their progress as they join the civilized world.

[Grateful acknowledgment is given to Intel Corporation for its financial assistance in this research project.] —DDL

You made my day, now you have to sleep in it!

apropos of my “Does anal retentive have a hyphen?” t-shirt, “Does it matter?” I stamped my foot and said “of COURSE it matters!!” “Silly question,” he murmured.)

So I changed it. I made lists from time to time, all my favorite names. It had to go with Yule. It had to have a good formal version for signing checks and contracts and things, Jimmy Carter notwithstanding—I always think it sounds ridiculous to have a Corporate Vice-President named “Suzie.” My middle name was out; Mom’s already using that. The lists grew shorter.

At my first convention—1500 people, 1497 complete strangers—I registered as Kate, just to try it out. For seven years I used one name for business, another with friends. When I got married, I ended this double life and became not Barbara Levine (who??) but Kathryn Yule.

Getting others to acknowledge that change isn’t always simple. Am I comfortable that talking the bank into a fresh ATM card was enough to get my Social Security card updated? Would I really *want* it to be harder than that? And where does Meier & Frank—a department store—get off being the hardest entity of all to convince? I’m trying to give them money, and they just give me grief! (The really maddening thing was that the Customer Service rep I was dealing with changed her name during the course of the correspondence. You can bet she didn’t have to bring in a notarized bridegroom before they issued *her* a new credit card!) The

The first time David’s aunt called me Katy, I stood there, blinking. “Didn’t they call you Katy when you were growing up?” she asked. “Um, actually—No.” She clearly thought David’s girlfriend was a few bagels shy of a deli. But I’d just been hit with a completely new concept: Katy. It’s not a very common nickname for Barbara, you see...and *that’s* the name I had all the time I was growing up.

Well, except for when it was Babs, or Barbie, or Barbie-doll, or Baba Wawa, or Barbed Wire, or St. Barbara’s Wheat (I owed *that* one to a social-studies unit in 4th grade, thank you very much Mrs. Wagner). I spent a year in Munich, being called “Ba-ba-ra Yulie,” and four months back in Portland going out with a guy named Ken. Miraculously, no one seemed to notice. It was too late. I loathed my name.

It didn’t help that I knew “Barbara” was related to “barbarian.” Just what every fan-geek-bookworm-loner needs: a constant daily identification of self as stranger and outcast. But when my linguistics prof said that barbarians were called that because they just made outlandish noises—“ba-ba-ba”—that did it. That was the last straw. I was a language major, for crying out loud. I was NOT going to go through the rest of my life with a *name* that *meant* “Person who can’t even talk right.” So what if nobody else knew. I knew, that was the whole point. (Someone once asked,

State Department insisted on issuing me a passport that said “also known as”, since I hadn’t been using the new name for five full years yet. Now that was reasonable.

Every so often, people come up with ways of addressing me that take me by surprise. I still can’t get used to being mistaken for a “Kay.” Wasn’t she one of those waitresses on *Alice*, with a napkin corsage? “Katie” seems to come from the same kind of people who would have called me “Barbie” in a prior life. (Incorrigible, every one of them.) “Kathryn” just makes me wary, because it shows they don’t know me as well as they’re pretending to.

Names really do have power. Consider the Parental Scolding Reflex—that clenching in your gut when someone uses your full name, all three barrels, and your Inner Child looks quick for a sibling to blame. For whatever reasons, “Barbara” and its variants had acquired the power to make me feel like a major schlub. Shedding it helped me leave that whole persona behind. Kate is more competent than Barbara ever was. Thank god.

And yet I should mention in closing that my friends Brian and Chris can call me Barb and Barbara to my dying day. Those names, in those voices, warm the cockles of my heart. Enough true affection can make even “Hey, mushmouth” into an acceptable form of address.

—KY

Searching for an English Settlement

As I write this I'm listening to A Flock of Seagulls' eponymous first album, dated 1982. I bought it just last weekend after years of searching. I didn't know for sure that this was really the album I was after. In fact, all the time I was searching I didn't know the title of the album, or what it looked like, and I wasn't even 100% certain of the artists' name. But when I heard the first track... then I knew I had found it, and it was good.

The reason I looked so long for an album I knew so little about is that it got played to death in my architecture studio during my senior year—1982. It belonged to a guy named David Giuliani whose taste in music, like his clothing and his architectural designs, was a little too *outré* for the real world. But with this album and several others I went from “what is this noise” to “I don't like it, but I find myself singing along with it because I know it so well” to “hey, put that tape on again” and finally it became completely lodged in my synapses. I guess it was something like brainwashing. But then I graduated, left the field of architecture, and forgot all about it.

Until one day, about three years ago, when I was in a record store—bemoaning, as usual, the fact that you can't pick up a record and flip through it to see if you might like it. The only reliable way I know to find records you might like is to remember songs that you like and buy more by the same artist. I cast my

information I can be fairly sure of is the copyright date: 1982. David Giuliani was much too trendy to be listening to last year's music.

I had a big breakthrough last year when I used the computerized song database at Tower Records to resolve one snatch of lyric (“I am the fly upon the wall, seein' seein' seein' seein' it all”) into the album title *English Settlement* by XTC. Unfortunately, although there are plenty of XTC albums in the used record stores, *English Settlement* isn't one of the ones I've been able to find. Yet. But I'll keep searching. Some day I'll find it.

So here I am trying to recreate the record collection of this greasy guy I knew in college. I didn't even like him. Hell, I can barely remember what he looked like! But his music is lodged in my brain and I must seek it out. Oh well, could be worse—could be Barry Manilow.

[Epilogue: About three weeks after writing the above, I did find a copy of English Settlement. It's great. Unfortunately, the CD didn't come with a lyric sheet, so I still don't know what some of those songs are about...] —DDL

Jamaica has a whitewashed finish with handcarved wood detailing.

mind back to try to come up with a song I liked and didn't already own, and a long-dormant synapse triggered. Blast from the past. But all I had was a melody, and it's hard to know which bin that's filed in.

In addition to the melody, though, I had a snatch of lyric that I thought might be the title of the song. I looked in the store's copy of Phonolog, and there it was: “Sex Dwarf” by Soft Cell. It took a few months to find a copy of the album (*Non-Stop Erotic Cabaret*), but when the needle finally hit the groove it brought back a rush of memories—memories of late nights and the smell of graphite and the kind of deeply shallow conversations one has in college. Them was the days.

Records are fragile, so I always copy them onto cassette, and it's a bit of an obsession with me to put related albums on the two sides of a C-90. What I put on the other side of *Non-Stop Erotic Cabaret* was Kate's copy of *Friend or Foe* by Adam and the Ants, another one of David Giuliani's albums from 1982. The search was on for the complete set.

It's been an interesting exercise. Sometimes I know the title of the album, or the name of the artist, but often I only remember a tune and a few of the lyrics. I don't know what any of the cover art looks like, because despite the number of times I *heard* them I never *saw* anything but the second-generation cassette copies (probably pirated) in David Giuliani's shoebox. The one piece of

Helpful Moving Hints

Every so often, helpful entities like the phone company come out with lists of moving tips. Things like, “Pack,” “Don't forget to turn off the stove,” and “Tell us where to forward your bills.” Well, we all knew that, didn't we? Herewith a few less obvious hints for the prospective mover.

- If you are planning to move, have a nice thorough fire during the previous year, to winnow things down.
- If your housemates have any tendency towards procrastination, pack the television first. For maximum effectiveness, label it “holiday china—FRAGILE.” This will keep it boxed up until everything else is settled at the new place.
- Do not pack the raincoat in whose pocket you put the spare house key.
- When packing, if you have something you absolutely, positively want to find on the other end, put it in your refrigerator. You're not going to lose track of what you did with the milk and eggs...not for long, anyway.
- An alternate method is to put checkbooks and other urgent papers in a box prominently labelled “LAUNDRY”. This method assumes that (a) you have a washer and dryer for it to land near and (b) you can be counted on to use them soon. (Thanks for the vote of confidence, Mom.)

- Instruct your helpers in the dangers of heresy. When using non-virgin boxes there will be many labels, but there is only One True Label. Be not swayed by false labels! Accept no substitutes! (Follow the gourd!)
- If you advise n people of a desired action (put the desk against that wall, save that box for the chandelier, don't move the vacuum cleaner yet), the $(n+1)$ th will take the equal and opposite reaction.
Corollary: never tell anyone helping you not to pack the trash.
- The VCR may not survive the demonstration. In fact, shortly after moving in, your car, health, and/or new home will develop major and expensive problems. The universe is testing you. It's an essay question. You may begin. —KY

Dancing with Men

David here. When last I wrote, I had just decided to follow Kate's lead and take up square dancing. I've now been dancing with the Ramblers for over a year. It's been quite an experience, dancing with a gay club. It's given me a chance to experience life in a group of true outcasts. That statement may seem radical in these enlightened days, but consider this: people look down on Trekkies, but nobody's ever tried to write anything into their state Constitution claiming that Trekkiedom is "abnormal, unnatural, and perverse." They tried that with gays in Oregon, and over 40% of the voters thought it was a good idea.

Being outcasts gives the gay community more solidarity than fans, and yet they are also more independent from each other. In particular, the men and the women are almost completely independent; you've heard the old joke about "there can never really be war between the sexes, because there would be too much fraternization with the enemy"? In this case, there is no particular reason for the gay men and the lesbians to fraternize at all, apart from banding together against the scorn of society at large. And yet fraternize they do (even though they may go to different bars after the dance).

There's also more independence because gay people have less in common with each other than fans. Face it, Fandom consists almost entirely of white middle-class baby boomers. Most have

glasses; most are well educated; variation in religious belief is small by comparison with the populace at large (there may be Baptist fans, but you can bet they keep their mouths shut about it). But the gay community is symbolized by the rainbow for a reason—as the slogan says, "we are everywhere!" Gay people can be found in all races, all social/economic classes, all professions, all hobbies; this means that the gay community is incredibly diverse, with only a single thread binding it together. By contrast, Fandom has at its core a certain personality type, a certain set of interests, a certain outlook on life. This gives it a uniformity that is refreshing if you're just coming into it from the mundane world, but can be stifling in large doses. (Fandom's unifying thread is *not* science fiction, whatever we may claim; SF is only a convenient litmus test for the fannish frame of mind. Many fans with unquestioned fannish credentials don't even read SF.)

Fandom's common personality leads to a certain uniformity of mundane professions. If you need your computer repaired, you can turn to any of a dozen local fans. But what if you need a windshield replaced, or a fireplace built, or an antique table refinished? These skills are rare in Fandom, but all of them are present in the Ramblers. It's shown me how sheltered my life was and how many *other* kinds of interesting people there are in the world.

Dancing with the Ramblers has also helped me think of gay men as something other than sex objects. (Stay with me here.) The

classic straight male worry in relation to gay men is "but what if he propositioned me?" Most men would consider this a great offense. In fact, people have died for it. I think that this reaction is so visceral because, deep down, there is some kind of connection between sex and hunting. Many men—and the more Neanderthal the man, the more common this attitude seems to be—think of women as something to seek, track, hunt down, and fuck. This kind of man is *terrified* at the thought that another man might think exactly that way about *him*.

Anyway, although I would personally find it flattering to be propositioned, I must have a bit of Neanderthal in me because I also found the prospect somewhat unnerving. But after a few weeks of dancing I found that no, nobody propositioned me. Nor did I see a lot of people propositioning each other. In fact, I came to realize that gay men were about *more than just sex*, even when they banded together in groups explicitly for the purpose of being with other gay men. I suppose I had thought that all those gay mountain-climbing clubs and gay bowling leagues and gay windsurfing expeditions listed in *Just Out* were nothing more than excuses to get together and have wild gay sex. Wrong. They are excuses to get together and have mountain-climbing and bowling and windsurfing, *without having to worry about being "different."* Sure, some of the members of these clubs do sleep together, but no more so than in similar straight groups—and in the Ramblers, at

least, I see more people dragging their non-dancing partner into the club than I see people pairing off within it.

So every Wednesday night and alternate Saturdays Kate and I go down to the church and square-dance with a bunch of queers. I started out learning the boy's part, because I figured that way I'd be able to dance with straight clubs as well, but after trying one evening of "normal" square dancing I decided this is a non-issue—I was bored silly, and anyway I have more in common with the queers than with the straight square dancers. These days I usually dance the girl's part, although I'm "bidansual" and will dance whichever part complements my current partner.

Lately I've begun learning to two-step, too. Kate's been after me to, and hey, some of those guys are pretty snappy dancers.

—DDL

LoC-a-Bye Baby

As usual, the thing our correspondents choose to fixate on always surprises us. This time it was bug pressure.

WAHF: Linda Blanchard, Amy Thomson, Lindsay Crawford, Teddy Harvia, Donald Wileman, Roger Waddington.

A feeling is 1/100 of a thought because it's sentimental. — Arthur Hlavaty

gender, having always had a tendency to join groups that were once considered to be concerned with male interests. Derek (my husband for 37 years) is not a joiner, he has always been happy to ferry me to and from meetings but rarely have I been able to persuade him to attend. More than one acquaintance having listened to my account of some event, remarked "Every one you have mentioned as saying or doing anything of interest has been a man. Doesn't Derek mind?" Both Derek and I were astonished, it had never occurred to us that common interests and friendship between people of opposite sexes, other than a partner, is regarded as a threat to a partnership by so many people. [Oh yes. A woman I work with "had to" give up golf because her husband objected to her playing in mixed groups. I find that terribly paranoid and limiting. On the other hand, I've become very good friends with a guy in the square dance club, we do things both with and without David, and sometimes the social dynamics do get a little interesting.] People tend to go to dances with their partner so it is natural that homosexuals should feel more comfortable establishing their own dance club. [Careful here—the two clauses may each be true but the one does NOT follow from the other—gays have partners just as straights do, there's no inherent reason why the two kinds of couples cannot socialize together. Bigotry, yes, but let's not call that natural. If everyone's already partnered up, all the more reason why their gender preferences are moot.] Once a club is estab-

Pamela Boal

Wantage, Oxon, England

3.1.94

I wonder if once you have a good sized fly or perhaps better still, bluebottle, in the house if you provided it with high calorie nourishment on a regular basis you could build up its stamina? I would suggest sugar rather than meat for if you have a female it might waste energy laying eggs. Just before you open doors and windows you should hide away the food and then when your trained bluebottle [*Eric the bluebottle, is it?*] is zipping around looking for its food it could well provide the speed which equals the bug density. Two would probably be more effective than one but then it is difficult to sex bluebottles and again there is an obvious potential for energy wastage if you inadvertently get one of each sex.

[Not to mention the obvious potential for bluebottles.]

Coincidentally, Kate, you're the second fanzine editor to have recently mentioned square dancing. The other person mentioned the fun of clogging as opposed to straight square dancing. Your experience has indeed been life enhancing as well as fun. I have never had much problem with people's sexual preferences or

lished with a hobby such as square dancing it is the hobby that is the focal point, so I am not at all surprised that your personal sexuality was regarded as unimportant.

Parents are advised to cut the ears off the dog, discard the toy and send both ears and name and address for a \$10 refund to Fisher-Price...

Bill Yule

Kennewick, Washington

September 29, 1993

I would like to see a label sometime on something reading "If you haven't enough sense to come in out of the rain, DO NOT attempt to (whatever) because if not handled with a modicum of care, it could cause you grievous bodily harm."

Re Trabi: Either the IRS has been much more diligent in plugging the loopholes, or the French are much cleverer at coming up with tax dodges. I suspect the latter. Maybe it's the water.

[Or maybe there are equivalent programs here—we'd never know, we're not their target audience. Like the time the Anglo-Indian waiter in York berated us for the US immigration policies that were keeping him from his dream life in Florida—we don't know what the INS rules are, we never needed to.]

STARS!?! I deliberately said polka dots!

Vicki Rosenzweig

New York City

2 October 1993

Bento 5 is, as always, a delight. As I read it, I kept laughing out loud, and then having to read bits of it to Andy, because of course he wanted to know what was so funny, and share it at once.

I love the fireworks warning labels, especially the “does not contain mercury” one, though they confirm my feeling that I will let someone else play with the explosives, and watch from a safe distance: the other side of the East River is about right.

[Does anyone know what's behind the Heinz vinegar labels that say “Not made from petrochemicals”? Are they just slandering the competition or what?]

Kate, thanks for the update on square dancing. I particularly like the image of a convention of multilingual redheads named Kate. I'm still nervous every Corflu, which is as much a gathering of people like me as any group of more than six people could ever be (and it would have to be a very specific seven people). And every year (almost) I go, and have a wonderful time, and remember that sometimes nervousness isn't about anything, it just is.

The movie-snack-bar sushi is a croggling thought. Also somewhat croggling, to my mind, are movie theaters that sell real food: I've heard that people actually go to the Angelika, in lower Manhattan, for lunch, even if they aren't interested in seeing a movie. The idea ought to appeal to me, and in some ways it does, but it seems to be a violation of the Order of Things.

Luke McGuff

Seattle, Washington

11-20-93

Thanks for Bento 5, which provided much amusing reading en route to Seattle. Like the metric conversion. I remember seeing one a few years ago that included “decacards” and “terabull”. And then there's the homeopathic stomach medicine—Femto Bis-mol—for when your stomach's only the tiniest bit upset. Hah!

George Flynn

Cambridge, Mass.

Feb. 17, 1994

I wanted to say how much I liked the *Bentos* (*Benti? Bentoi? Bentissimi?*) that I picked up in the ConFrancisco Fan Lounge. I'd heard rumors of the zine before, but had never actually seen one. They're quite delightful (in spite of your depraved practice of putting odd numbers on the *verso* pages), and almost as cute as you two are.

Your heterosexual experience of, and insight into, the closet is also fascinating, and I'm impressed at how concisely you were able to state it. (My own experience, as a bisexual in a long-standing relationship with someone of the other sex, is a bit different, of course; I can pass without too much trouble if I omit a few things...things that seem small if you don't have to decide whether it's safe to mention them...but am never really comfortable doing so, if only because I know that the people who really want me to keep quiet about it tend to be the ones who wish it weren't true.) I'm inclined to agree with you (rather than Mark Manning) that, aside from clarifying the rest of your material, it is worth pointing out that there are, in fact, a fair number of straight people who don't think of gays as a separate species. (On the third tentacle, had you not specified “straight girl,” and knowing you and David are a couple (and now married), I would probably have assumed you were bisexual. ~~Oh, well, another daydream shot to hell...~~) In any case, the square dancing does sound like fun.

Our rental apartment's heat seems to be provided by dwarves with tame serpents, who hiss very comfortably on chilly mornings as they keep us warm. I think they may have some kind of arrangement with the oil fairies, though, who give them the equipment to bang on and keep the serpents fed.

Taking your metric conversion one step further, I note that one millihelen=one bottle of champagne.

[Depraved but cute, that's us. The house style prefers Bentoi.]

Every time I look at that “to stop the train” thingie [*in #4*], I am reminded of Mark Twain's “Punch, Brothers, Punch” and then go on to contemplate the whole subject of obsessive verses, even unto “‘Tensor,’ Said the Tensor,” after which it takes me a couple of days to flush out my brain. These things are a menace to peace of mind, and should be stamped out as mental viruses. [*See also “Rump-titty-titty Rump-tah-tee” by Fritz Leiber.*]

I'm sorry, but the temperature of an Ideal Bug Gas is proportional not to velocity, but to kinetic energy, and thus to velocity squared. What use this information may be, I dunno. [*It means that if the bug is massive it doesn't have to go as fast to drive up the bug pressure. I wonder if swinging a Hercules Beetle or similar very large insect around on a string would have the desired effect?]*

Bruno Ogorolec

Zagreb, Croatia

Various dates

The other day I went to a dog show because of your fanzine. The reason was that I had read an ad for the show in a local newspaper, which said, among other things, that the show was sponsored by Bento Dog Food & Accessories.

Funnily enough there was *nothing* there even remotely connected with Bento. No leaflets, no brochures, no sponsor's stand,

not even a banner or anything else that would mention Bento, the supposed sponsor of the fairly big and ambitious two-day show.

I went back home to find the advert in the paper but the paper was gone, thrown away by my wife. Very curious; she never throws old newspapers away before checking with me; my work involves a lot of clipping from the papers and I take care not to lose old issues carelessly. Pressed by other problems I never really summoned the energy to follow up on the mystery of missing Bento, but I do still wonder about it.

[He later solved the Case of the Purloined Bento Ad, and sent this along.]



But if that's not possible, then what the hell, I don't really care who I dance with. The dancing part is more important. People have to be there to make up the atmosphere, but who they are is subsidiary. And if they're gay... so what?

What horrified me about the dancing article was that you felt you had to keep something integral of yourself back when talking at the dancing. It's clumsy to have to keep avoiding certain words, it's like being able to find a chest of gold if you don't think of hippos tap-dancing for the next ten minutes. *[Yes, that is the horrific aspect—luckily, for me it was actually moot.]*

The more I hear about foreign countries, the more I am relieved at Britain being relatively bug-free. The big undesirables here are flies. I carefully cultivate spiders for this purpose, but if the flies wander in on one of those few warm days and start annoying me, I go instantly into hunter mode and prowl over to the net curtains. Eventually a fly will venture into the danger zone between window and net curtain, at which point a gentle lace veil falls over him (flies, to me, are always masculine) and this is followed by a swift and brutal squash. But I don't see why you're worrying about pesky little things like bugs. Just try to get a dazed sparrow out of a greenhouse while it frantically tries to barge through the glass and ignores the huge open door. That's an exercise in patience and futility.

The speeding up of a single bug to provide adequate average temperature of the bug gas might be mechanically impractical and require great expenditure of energy. Maybe a passive approach, depending on geometry, would yield better results. The trick might be in the proper window design. If the geometry of an orifice through which a gas has to pass varies along its length, it will offer different resistance to the passing gas, depending on the direction of the flow. One should be able to design a jet-like window to offer greater resistance to the bugs coming in than to those going out.

Jenny Glover

Leeds, England

November 2 1993

To me, part of the fun of dancing is being able to be with men in an enjoyable non-sexual context. This is probably because most of the dances I'm thinking of now were in Scotland. I went to some good ceilidhs. There's something about Scottish men, which English men just don't seem to have, which may be why I married an Irish one (but he would say "British," I'm sure, he comes from Northern Ireland). There's nothing that can compare with the swirl of live music, the heat and the sweat of a small hall, the energetic dancing and the variations of clasp, a sturdy man on one side, a less sturdy man on the other, exchanging partners, smiling at them and slipping into the set patterns of the dance.

[Hear hear!]

Anyway, that's all on *Bento*, I think, except to ask if I could please, please please have the next. I liked it.

A bill introduced in the Georgia legislature would require warnings in all hotel rooms that fornication, adultery and sodomy are illegal in the state. The bill also requires that the warnings be in Braille and "internationally recognized symbols."

