



The Night of the Round Tables

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MagiCon GoH

(an excerpt reprinted from *The Enchantment*, a report of Willis's trip to Tropicon in 1988. The complete report (36 pp, 36 illos & photos) is available from the South Florida SF Society, PO Box 70143, Ft Laud., FL 33307-0143 for \$4.00 postpaid.

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Back at the hotel someone advised us to go up to the penthouse floor. Known to the hotel and no one else as "Top o' the Surf". It was almost literally out of this world. It apparently consisted of a huge platform floating in space, resembling nothing so much as the Van Vogt Spaceship in a story whose name I can't remember just now, which belonged to neither the old cigar school of spaceship construction, nor the more modern apartment building architecture of *Close Encounters* and *Star Wars*. It was simply a deck five miles long, one mile wide and six inches thick. Quite sensible, given force fields and inertia drives, and even without them excellent for a science

fiction convention. Joe told me later it was the main reason they had decided on this hotel for the Convention and I could well understand it. Nothing could be more appropriate for the broad mental horizons of us starbeggotten.

We greeted the Convention workers who were toiling away, and setting up round tables seating about ten. At one of them already were our fellow Guests of Honour Poul and Karen Anderson, whom we hadn't seen for 26 years. Poul and I reminisced about the Chicon penthouse party in 1952 with Tony Boucher and Mack Reynolds, and Karen absolved us from our guilt at missing her party in 1962 because of having to leave for Los Angeles,

and we enquired after their Morris Minor which had the little hard lump of petrol in the tank, and we mourned Terry Carr, and generally filled each other in on what we had been doing this past quarter century. They revealed it was their wedding anniversary, and we congratulated them from our even greater seniority as a married couple.

Little groups formed and reformed round the tables, in a natural and easy-going way, each person seeking some ultimate congeniality, and often finding it. I surmised that Joe and Edie had been influenced by the success in this respect of Greg Pickersgill's similarly arranged fan room at Brighton.

After midnight the num-

bers dwindled and about 1 am a little group comprising Lee Hoffman, with Joe and Edie, Mike Drawdy, Madeleine and I, set off for Fort Lauderdale Airport. Like everything else here it was further away and larger than I expected, but deserted at this hour. Joe and Edie knew their way about as if they had designed it, as for all I know maybe they had, and we found ourselves in a huge glassed-in balcony where we could watch the plane taxi in and disembark, with as little fuss as a Greyhound bus. A screen announced that the origins of its passengers included five cities, none of them Seattle.

Almost at once Buz and Elinor appeared, looking much

less than 26 years older, and in no time at all we were all shaking hands or hugging one another, all a bit incoherent. Briefly, I pulled myself together. "Welcome to Florida," I said.

Everybody talking at once we arrived at the hotel and saw the Busbys to their room: there we left them, figuring they needed a rest after that journey. We must be tired ourselves, we realised, because it had been a long day. We went to bed to check this theory and it proved correct.

We were still talking when Joe came along and told me that Ted White and Rich Brown had unexpectedly arrived, having driven all the way from



Cure for those

*"I've got those stuck in
the real world for a year
with no Worldcon" blues.*

Take optically.

Jen-U-Wine Swamp Tested
Formulae

Virginia. I looked around and it was true: there was Ted at the Registration table, with a substantial figure who must be rich brown. It was like the time at Chicon II when I fancied that Burbee and Laney were about to appear in our midst on a pillar of fire, except that this time it was actually happening. Madeleine and I stole up behind them. I asked, "Is this where you get to meet Ted White?" while Madeleine, ineffectively concealing her name badge, asked rich brown for his autograph; but he knew at once who she was.

Ted and rich slid effortlessly into the life of the round tables and the endless party that was the convention, now subtly enriched. ("I have been in fandom

for 54 years," said Art Widner, in an aside, "most of them spent editing articles by rich brown.")

We left at 5 for the "Intro. to Florida Fandom" and "Opening Ceremony", where various members of the Convention Committee introduced themselves in an informal way. I thought this was a lovely idea, for often you do not get a chance to meet the people who are working so hard behind the scenes to help you enjoy yourself. Even this time I have regrets at not having been able to thank every convention worker individually.

Then Edie formally opened the Convention and introduced us Notables, which was our first exposure in this role. We survived it, and probably went

then to have something to eat, but the next thing I remember was **The Night of the Round Tables**. We were back on the space platform again, for what was billed as the "Meet the Celebrities Party - 8 pm to ??", and there was now a cash bar ("Come with me to the Cashbar," I murmured to Madeleine, dreadfully dating us both) but really it was the same happy party going on and on into the night, now better than ever. There seemed no reason why it should ever end as each group alternated effortlessly between laughter and serious discussion, and people moved about endlessly as the mood took them in a sort of Brownian movement - you might say a richbrownian

movement, I thought, watching the perceptive way he helped things along.

I think of it as one of the most memorable occasions of my life, so why is it that I can remember so little of it? I remember the timebinding feeling at the beginning, when Joe asked Madeleine what she would like to drink, and she asked for a Tom Collins, remembering that the last time she had had one of these was in New York in 1962 while waiting for the bus to Chicago.

I remember asking Ted White what his trip was like, those two days and 1000 miles of fast driving, and finding I wasn't the only one disturbed by the behaviour of expressway traffic. I also remember

getting into one of those serious constructive discussions you can have with Ted White about fandom. He might have lost his lean and hungry look, but he still thought a lot and was a dangerous man to parade an ill-considered idea in front of. ..

I remember Moshe admiring an old photograph of Lee Hoffman and wondering that Madeleine allowed me to visit her, thereby deftly insulting all three of us. But Madeleine was able for him: "Ah," she said. "You haven't seen a photograph of me as I was then."

I also remember that round about 12 we were thinking what a wonderful convention this could turn out to be if only we could get through our program appearances tomorrow without

utter disgrace. Maybe we should get a good night's sleep to improve our chances. So we went off to bed. It was with some reluctance because although we had talked more tonight than we would normally do in a year, we felt far from talked out. We had difficulty in coming down from this exalted state and turned on the television, to find coverage of a golf tournament. Even this had no interest for us, but it did make us realise how tired we really were so I clicked off the remote control and we sank into a deep and tranquil sleep.

See you at MagiCon.