

Askew #24

May, 2018

The mostly paper-only fanzine¹ produced by

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Jim Mowatt - 3 (pub), 4 (guitar), 5, 6 (bank lobby), 7

Image Googling – 4 (muntjac)

Since I've been gone

Yes, I have been away for a while. Now that the election cycle for the 2018 TAFF race is over and done with, I can finally get back into producing this small and hopefully frequently published paper-only fanzine. Aren't you glad you waited? I am.

Valerie and I are getting ready to host the newest member of the TAFF winners club, Johan Anglemark, when he visits us in early August this year. The unique thing about this is that Johan will attend ArmadilloCon 40 with us over the weekend of August 3 – 5, and then will come back to stay with us for a couple days to relax – I will be arranging a visit to the Science Fiction and Fanzine Collection at Texas A&M University as part of his visit – before we take him back to Houston's George H.W. Bush International Airport, where he will depart for points westward. I do not know all the specifics of his trip yet, and will let him make his complete itinerary known to the public, but we are definitely excited to welcome Johan here to College Station, Texas. He shall be well fed, too.

This is also one way how Valerie and I can show our appreciation for all of the folks who offered up their homes during my TAFF Trip last year. This is what lies at the heart of science fiction fandom: the openness, warmth, and camaraderie of sharing our lives and interests with each other. Without question our favorite thing to do last summer where-ever we stayed was chatting with our hosts, which usually lasted past midnight on the first night of each visit. Okay, every night no matter where we were. Just talking away, sharing stories, or what-not. It was simply the best way to unwind after traveling: sit, rest, and chat. In a sense, every stop was like a mini-relaxacon, and I can't think of a better way to travel than that. Through the auspices of these long-established Fan Funds, this is how to help foster connections between people separated by giant swaths of geography. I heartily recommend standing for a Fan Fund. If you don't "win" one year, try it again in a couple years. No matter what, the mere act of stepping forward and being a candidate helps fans in other countries get to know who you are.

¹ Because it is now May, this, the formerly labeled April issue will be published first on efanazines.com, with paper copies to be printed and mailed Real Soon Now. So sue me. I dare you.



Okay. That is enough proselytizing on my part. The next section of this issue is about our stay in Cambridge, England, with Jim and Carrie Mowatt. Jim was the TAFF delegate to LoneStarCon III in San Antonio, Texas in 2013, which is where we first met. That seems like so long ago...

When in Cambridge, Punt

*To provide a bit of continuity into this next segment of my 2017 TAFF Trip Report, the first four paragraphs of what follows are reprinted from "Skeltons in the Closet," which appeared in **Beam #13 (April 2018)**, edited by Nic Farey and Ulrika O'Brien.*

On Sunday afternoon of 16 July 2017, Valerie and I were shunted off to Stamford, England, by our initial trip hosts Paul and Cas Skelton. We had spent a marvelous first weekend with them, joined on Saturday evening by Pat and Mike Meara for a massive dinner. Before departure on Sunday, everyone took photographs of the Mearas, Purcells, and Skeltons standing outside. Hugs were given all around, then Mike and Pat got into their car after saying "See you in London," and their car turned left onto the street while the rest of us wedged into the Skelton's car and went off to the right. Our goal was to go south on the M62 to Stamford where the four of us would meet Jim and Carrie Mowatt at approximately 4:00 PM,



Paul and Cas Skelton, me, Pat and Mike Meara.

Greenwich Mean Time. Fortunately, we were nowhere near Manchester's dreaded Ringway Airport parking lot, so Paul had no trouble getting onto the M62, despite Siri's oft confusing directions. Naturally, this played right into Cas Skelton's strength in confounding and insulting Siri, which Valerie and I found very entertaining. Driving down the M62 to Stamford was even interesting for the plethora of speed check signs along the route. Every time one of those appeared, Cas would admonish Paul to watch his speed, to which Paul answered with a standard reply, "I know where all the cameras are!" What a pair. To be honest, Valerie and I would love to return just to see this couple again.

By this time I had concluded that weather in England is variable yet predictable. Guaranteed cloudy and drizzly mornings would sometimes become pleasantly warm, partly cloudy afternoons and evenings. As the sky gradually cleared, I enjoyed looking at the lovely rolling hills of green, patchwork hedges, and enjoying the landscape. An additional bonus were the various exit signs for assorted cities and towns that provided still another source of entertainment: Uttoxeter, Burton-upon-Trent, Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Coventry, Swadlincote, Derby, Loughborough, Leicester, and my favorite, Uppingham. When we passed signs for Sherwood Forest and Nottingham, I wondered aloud if there were road signs warning vehicles to "Roll up windows. Watch for arrows," "Merry Men X-ing," and the like. Even though we passed signs for Stratford-upon-Avon, we had no desire to go there because the Skeltons and Mearas described it as too touristy and expensive. So the goal was to simply drive to Stamford and hook up with the Mowatts.

We arrived in Stamford before the Mowatts, so the four of us started wandering about Stamford, which simply exuded an aura of "Welcome to auld Englishe towne." Even the air breathed old. That may have been because of the humidity, but this is when Valerie started our running narrative for the trip, "Welcome to Europe, where history began." Out came our cellphones again, and we began to overload their capacity by constantly clicking away. What can you do? We couldn't help ourselves but take



Left to right: Valerie, Cas Skelton, Carrie Mowatt, Paul Skelton, and myself. Photo taken by Jim Mowatt at the pub in Stamford.

Too Many Pictures. This would come back to haunt us in the Netherlands, but that's getting ahead of the story. Let me just say that Stamford is a beautiful, extraordinarily photogenic English town, and I found the 14th century church particularly fascinating not just for its age, but for the World War I memorial that dominated its street-side, commemorating all the English divisions and young men who lost their lives during the War to End all Wars. If only that had been true.

Eventually we made phone contact with Jim and Carrie, and we wandered back to our agreed upon rallying point. Baggage was efficiently transferred and we all trooped off to a pub for lunch. Finally it was time to depart for Cambridge and begin the next leg of the Purcell Invasion of England and Europe, so Valerie and I bade goodbye to our new best friends and future selves, Paul and Cas Skelton, then sat in the backseat of the Mowatt's car for the two hour drive to Cambridge.

We were greeted at their door by an escaping cat. Carrie identified the fleeing feline as Tabitha. Their other cat, Bertie Wooster – a name I love because this beastie was named after a P.G. Wodehouse character – eyed us suspiciously as we lumbered in with our luggage, then disappeared into parts elsewhere in the Mowatt abode. Once again I carried everything up to the second floor where the bedrooms and bathroom – er, I mean, water closet – were located. The room set aside for us was easily identifiable: →



Once again, we sat for a spell with our hosts, which in this case was a chance to catch up from the last time had seen each other at LoneStarCon III, four years earlier. Carrie told us about her position at Cambridge, which impressed the heck out of us (she is a product manager for the Royal Society of Chemistry), while Jim regaled us with tales from running around England: he does these tortuous physical activities called marathons. I reminded him that the initial person who ran from the plains of Marathon to the gates of Athens collapsed dead after crying out, "The Persians have been defeated! AAARRRRGGGHHH!!!" Fortunately that has yet to happen to Jim, and we truly hope it never does. (Aside: Alison Scott now is

running marathons, so this kind of physical activity is dangerously close to becoming a fannish *tradition*, but I really am digressing here, aren't I?)

While chatting, a familiar feeling came over me. It was my "there's a guitar nearby" sense. Sure enough, hiding in a corner of their living room was an acoustic guitar. My fingers began twitching, and I'm afraid



that the look on my face was like a drug addict badly in need of a fix to calm down. It was a nice looking guitar (a name brand I didn't recognize and now can't remember offhand), so I asked Jim if I could gently fondle and caress that sleek, slender neck with its lovely rosewood fretboard, strumming my fate with... "Here" Jim said, getting up and handing it to me, obviously disgusted at my slathering and slaughtering a perfectly good pop song. "I just bought

this a couple months ago and have begun learning how to play it. Maybe you could give me some pointers while you're here."

"Gladly," I said, tuned it up, and gave the guitar a little test run before showing Jim some simple tricks on playing four common chords. It has a nice, bright sound, and the neck is thin enough to barre chord without causing wrist and fingers to cramp. Handing it back, I asked Jim which chords he already knew, so while he formed those chords I showed him the easiest and best way to apply pressure to the strings by using the ball of the thumb to roll under the neck while that hand's fingers pressed down on the strings. Jim caught on quickly, and should be ready to play the Palladium in a fortnight or three.

For dinner, the Mowatts took us off to a small restaurant – a pub, in British parlance – a 'short walk' away through a wooded park. Valerie and I cringed at that 'short walk' phrase, but for Jim and Carrie, this was only a twenty-minute walk from their home. It was a very pleasant stroll, and we enjoyed the conversation besides the local flora and fauna. While we were on a path through the woods, we heard something crashing in the brush, but could not spot the cause. Jim opined that it was a small variety of deer, called a muntjac. Since this critter remained unseen, Valerie and I doubted its existence, but Jim was adamant that the area did indeed contain this beastie. I had to look it up on my Google app to confirm that it really lived in the area. Sure enough, it does, and we all know the Internet never lies, right? Besides, All Knowledge Is Contained In Fanzines, so there you go.



The mythical muntjac of Cambridge.

The dinner was indeed in a lovely pub that was built in the early 19th century, refurbished over the years, and is as charming as the surroundings. We enjoyed a delicious meal and wandered back to the Mowatt's home. The rest of that first night was quite relaxing as the four of us chatted and Bertie and Tabitha circulated around, collecting laps and lots of petting. We retired relatively early this time – before midnight! – as Carrie had to go to work, and Jim was going to take us on a personal guided tour through Cambridge University the next day.

Having Jim Mowatt showing us around the University meant that we saw more than simply the beautiful architecture of the 31 (!) colleges that comprise Cambridge. The entire city, in fact, is breathtaking. As a city, Cambridge dates back to 1209, even though there were Much Earlier settlements by ancient Britons and eventually Roman legions. The city's skyline is described by church spires and towers

topping out assorted college buildings. Cambridge University is home to world-renowned Cavendish Laboratories, King's College Chapel (which we saw), Anglia Ruskin University, which evolved from the Cambridge School of Art, the Cambridgeshire College of Arts and Technology, and churches too numerous to mention. We went inside St. Benet's Church, which is a mere 1000 years old, making it roughly the same age as Westminster Abbey; in fact, St. Benet may only be a couple decades younger. Many streets are cobblestoned, and I swear the trees lining the River Cam wear their centuries well. In short, welcome to England: History is made here.

Speaking of history, we passed by the Cavendish Laboratory building again, then crossed the street and entered probably the most famous pub in science, the Eagle, where Watson and Crick ran from their lab to publicly announce their discovery of the double helix structure of DNA in 1953. The historic blue plaque on its outside wall has been dutifully amended (by hand) to include the last name of Rosalind Franklin, their chemist and lead x-ray crystallographer, who did a lot of the work to establish the structure of DNA and RNA. Watson even suggested that Franklin ideally should have been awarded a Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1962 along with Maurice Wilkins, but the Nobel Committee does not make posthumous nominations. Fate can be fickle. Anyway, having lunch there with Jim felt pedestrian considering the history of the Eagle. Never in my life would I have ever thought I would be in a city where earth-shaking discoveries were made, let alone announced. To celebrate, I proudly ordered "bangers and mash," which I have wanted to say in a pub ever since arriving in England, and it was very tasty. Heck, you can't go wrong with sausage and mashed potatoes swimming in a pool of gravy.

Leaving the Eagle, we wandered the historical streets some more, crossed a bridge over the Cam, doing our jolly best to skirt hordes of Chinese tourist groups, which were all over the city. (Later stops on our trip were equally inundated or overrun by even more monster-sized Chinese tourist groups: Stonehenge, everywhere in London, and especially Paris.) This was funny to Valerie and I twice that day. The first time was seeing a group of at least 40 of them queued up before a Chinese restaurant on the main street in Cambridge. I guess they didn't want to try the bangers and mash. The other time was on the river Cam.

Yes, I followed Jacqueline Monahan's lead. During her 2012 TAFF trip, Jacq went punting on the Cam with Jim and Carrie, but I don't think she did what I did: actually attempting to punt. This is where you have to stand on the aft platform of the punt boat, which is a shallow, flat-bottomed boat, and you push along the riverbed with a 20-foot pole. Jim is quite good at it, and asked if I'd like to give it a go, so I did. Amazingly, I was able to get the hang of it fairly quickly, and did a reasonable job of punting us along without smacking into other boats or the brick walls lining the Cam, although I did head us into a low-hanging willow. This may have been the exact same willow tree that Jacq wrote about in her marvelous trip report, *Same Planet, Different World* (copies available from yours truly for a modest donation to TAFF *kaff-kaff*).

The preceding was an unpaid, unsolicited, and uncalled for shameless plug for Jacq's trip report. Now back to our program.

Valerie and I on a bridge spanning the river Cam in Cambridge, England. I wonder how this city ever got its name?



I expertly extricated our punt from the long hanging branches of the willow by slowly backing it out. Valerie started imitating the “beep-beep-beep” of large work vehicles when they’re driving in reverse, then once back out into the river, I poled ahead toward a lovely part of Cambridge that we hadn’t seen before. Once our boat passed underneath two bridges and went around a small island, Jim took over punting duties and poled our way back towards the dock area. Along the way we passed a boat filled with a dozen or so Chinese tourists, and one young man was desperately trying to master the poling technique. No local guide was on that boat – which is the prerogative of the people renting the boat for a “relaxing” ride on the Cam – and this poor fellow was being loudly coached by a few compatriots, then started yelling back at them, nearly falling overboard from his exertions. Despite his best efforts, no matter what he tried to do following “directions” shouted at him, all that boat did was spin in circles, at one point coming dangerously close to hitting ours. Once we were a safe distance away, I quietly said to Valerie, “Now that’s definitely a slow boat to China.” She howled. In that young man’s defense, though, I will admit that punting is not easy, but it does require a keen sense of balance and understanding water flow against the direction of the pole using “reverse” causation as your guide: hold the pole up under the water’s surface and to your left, the boat turns right; then *vice versa* to turn left. Jim and Valerie were impressed, but I am still astonished that I didn’t fall into the bloody Cam! At least I avoided the prophetic words of Ensign Bluebottle from *The Goon Show*, “He’s fallen in the water!”

Our river excursion over, Jim informed us that we were to meet Dave Haddock, who was another British



fan I had heard of but never met. A short walk later our tour group became a foursome, and off we went to see still more historical buildings, both ecumenical and educational, throughout Cambridge. I discovered a fudge shop that offered free samples, and indulged. The orange chocolate deliciously melted in my mouth, and I practically swooned at the smoothness of the coffee chocolate, let alone the chunk of dark fudge that was simply the most wonderful chocolaty goodness I

have ever tasted. But that orange chocolate was the best of the available samples. Heavenly.

I probably would have stayed in that shop in hopes of more sample offerings, but the four of us wandered off to a bank so that Valerie and I could exchange some of our American dollars for British Pounds Sterling. Even the bank lobby was incredible, as the above picture by Jim illustrates. It was a posh Bank of America in Cambridge, England. Makes perfect sense to me. Transaction complete, our little group trooped off to see more sights before arriving at the Mitre for a Cambridge fan meet-up for dinner.

The Mitre is yet another lovely pub, but without the airmen’s graffiti that adorns the Eagle’s ceiling. Well, you can’t have history everywhere you go now, can you? Jim, Dave, Valerie and



I were joined by Sarah Haddock (Dave's wife), Paul Treadaway, Andrew Chamberlain, and then Jim's wife Carrie arrived, bicycling over from work. We had a wonderful dinner with this assemblage. Valerie and Sarah hit it off (I could tell by their laughter), and I had a cracking good conversation with Paul and Andrew about their personal histories in fandom, both local and national, since I had never run across their names before over my forty-plus years of fan activity. Dave Haddock and Leroy Kettle - yes, these gents I knew from letter columns in assorted fanzines, notably *Banana Wings* and *Vibrator* - were just as funny in person as they were in print.



Cambridge Fan Meet-Up L-R: Valerie, top of Carrie Mowatt's head, Sarah and Dave Haddock, Roy Kettle behind me, Paul Treadaway, and Andrew Chamberlain. Photo by Jim Mowatt.

The few hours we spent in the Mitre sped by and all too soon it was time to disperse to our various residences. We said goodbye to everyone – except Jim and Carrie, of course – and off we went. It was dark when we left (that tends to happen whenever fans get together and lose track of time), so Jim hailed us a proper British cab instead of walking home. Carrie ignored his protestations and said she would still cycle home, which was surprising. She made it back just fine; I would not have attempted this, but she is a young 'un, so it didn't bother her despite wearing a dress.

Jim, Valerie and I were greeted with a rousing welcoming chorus of meows from Tabitha and Bertie that I am positive translated into "You left us all night with empty food dishes! You bastards!" Jim took care of them straight off, and by the time Carrie returned the cats were comfortably curled up on laps, purring contentedly. Tonight's unwind-time chat did not last as long as the previous night's, so we carefully removed the cats from our laps and went to bed.

The following morning we bade a tearful goodbye to Carrie and the cats – she had to go to work, the cats off to whatever cats do during the day – since Jim was taking us to the train station to ~~get rid of us~~ catch our train to London's Liverpool station, where Claire Brialey would meet us. Jim bade us farewell, and Valerie and I thanked him profusely for their hospitality and furry feline overlords, then clambered aboard with our pile of luggage. Settling into our seats after utilizing our by now patented Drag-Along Methodology Needed (DAMN™) system to stow our goods, we enjoyed the train ride into London.

So far, so good. We had only been in England all of five days and felt like we had seen so much of this sceptered isle called Britain. Ahead of us was a week at Fishlifter Central in Croydon.

We were finally going to be in London, England: where History is made.

Fanzines

Here are some fanzines of note recently received. In fact, the first two are related, as you shall see soon enough. The third fanzine is... well, it's strange. The fourth is from Taral Wayne, who is talented.

Sizzo-Link's Weekly Spotlight #22 (April 2018). Alan Sissom, P.O. Box 842, Greenwood, IN 46142 USA

This is one of the publications from a member of the United Fanzine Organization (UFO), which was originally formed in the 1970s. This is small group of independent self-published comic artists/writers, and Alan sent his latest issue. Included is a listing of the publications from each UFO member, and offers copies of his comic series for sale. It is nice to see that there are still people who care enough about this form to produce and promote their own works. I can't draw worth a crap, so getting this in the mail reminds me of my days 40 to 50 years ago when I was an avid comic book collector. Ah, youth! E-Mail: a1960boomer@yahoo.com

Tetragrammaton Fragments #249 (April 2018). Rob Imes, 13510 Cambridge #307, Southgate, MI 48195

This the primary newsletter of the aforementioned UFO group. Rob Imes is the chairman and produces this compendium of commentary from each member on their individual comics, much like the amateur press associations (apas) most sf fans know, plus the constitution of the UFO, and lists the zines from each member. This latest issue includes a strip from UFO member Gavin Callaghan. E-Mail: robimes@yahoo.com



Least Wesel #69. (February 2018). Gaston J. Feeblebunny & Gisella Werberserch-Piffel, editors.

Address: unknown – which is probably a good idea.

I honestly don't know what to say about this crazy fanzine or who is really responsible, but I am positive it has been done so under assumed names. Even the contributor's bylines are dodgy: Bathsheba Finkelstein, Siddhartha Green Blatt, and Horacine Clutch. Names have obviously been changed to protect the criminally insane. It is a lot of fun, though. Available at every fanzine fan's favorite local website, www.efanzines.com

Rat Sass #8 (April 2018). Taral Wayne.

245 Dunn Ave., Apt. 2111, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6K 1S6

Getting a fanzine from Taral Wayne is always welcome, even when he's taking fanzine editors to task, as he does in this, his latest contribution to the Rowrbrazle APA (Amateur Press Association). On top of his writing and artistic skills, Taral was just elected Past President for 2017 of the Fan Writers of America at Corflu 35, held in Toronto, Canada. Good for him. I am positive he can handle the job.



Skewed Results - letters from readers

*The above photo is a courtyard inside Cambridge University. I just can't imagine teaching at a school with such a rich history matched by its beauty. At any rate, here are some letters that I actually *gasp!* edited to possibly keep the size of this fanzine under the one ounce weight limit. We shall see how that turns out.*

Bob Jennings
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18 Feb 2018 fabficks@aol.com

I noted with a minor sense of amazement your comment that various chapters of your recent TAFF trip write-up appeared in what, three different fanzines so far? Incredible! I remember when TAFF winners composed their report, printed up a one shot, sent it to all the voters and other interested parties, then went back to their regular fannish lives.

Nowadays it seems that TAFF winners are expected to write a book only slightly smaller than the unedited text of *War And Peace*. The report is expected to cover every aspect of the journey, every single waking moment, every morsel of food eaten, every single person met, every sight observed, every single experience at every level, and then those written moments of wonder and mundania are spread around over a myriad of different fanzines.

I note that certain TAFF reports continue on for years, sometimes decades after the actual trip was completed. Writing a TAFF report seems to have turned into a Calling, somewhat akin to the work done by those medieval scribes, translating and laboriously hand copying religious manuscripts. In this kind of atmosphere one might well ask 'Is There Life After TAFF'? What's left after winning a TAFF trip anyway? It would seem that TAFF, and the Monster Report has become the fannish equivalent of the Holy Rapture---fans selected are taken up into the paradise of the Journey, bask in the glory of the Foreign WorldCon, and then, when returning to earth, are obligated to explain their Voyage Of Wonder in endless written installments covering their every experience so that every single fellow fan they encounter can also know about the Glory, at least vicariously, thru the endless written reports.

I'm surprised you had time left over to produce and issue of *Askew*, although I note it is only 8 pages long and much of the issue is devoted to TAFF, past, present, and future. So, tell me, candidly, was TAFF really better than sex? Just asking.

While I admire and enjoy most of Ursula K. LeGuin fiction, I could not get into her Earthsea books. I believe this is because I encountered them as an adult, an adult that had read quite a lot of science fiction and fantasy already. The series is clearly aimed at the young adult market, and I wasn't a young adult then, plus the concepts seemed a bit too familiar to me. The writing and characters were fine, but reading one of the books did not inspire me to read any more of them. I'm glad you are enjoying the books though. You need something to relax and take your mind off your Holy Mission or writing a 400,000 word TAFF report.

So far as the lettercol comments about small fmz vs long ones, my response to fanzines received has always been, first, how much time do I have to devote to doing LOCs, and second, how many points of interest I found reading the zine that I could make some sort of comment about. Some small or even micro-zines offer a wealth of comment hooks, while there are a fair number of big zines, especially big zines that talk about the daily lives of the people creating the fanzine, that do not inspire me to LOC. It comes down to time available and points of interest. I suspect that's the situation with a lot of other fans as well.

Bob Jennings

*Thank you for sharing your thoughts about TAFF Reports, sir, and how they have been published or distributed in the past. Over the years I have seen them written in parts and wholes, with various fanzines hosting bits and pieces of someone's trip report appearing across a span of many years, sometimes decades, if at all. My goal is to, by August of this year, write out all of the significant places Valerie and I went as individual articles, ship them off to assorted fanzines, then blend them all into a continuous narrative next year. In a sense, this is my way of paying back contributors to my fanzines. As for your question "was TAFF really better than sex?", all I can say is that I *am* a gentleman. Now if you had asked about "sex while on a TAFF Trip," well, then... *snicker**

When I write letters of comment to fanzines, it all depends on whether or not there is something that strikes me as worthy of response. Some loc-writers, notably Lloyd Penney, try to write to as many fanzines as he can as a matter of courtesy. I believe in that, too, but as you noted, it all depends on how much time a potential loc-writer might have provided something piques their interest.

Jerry Kaufman
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20 February 2018

I hunted for your zines in eFanzines so I could find your email address - with success. You didn't include it in this issue of *Askew*, and I don't have it memorized. (Problem solved by editing my Address Book.)

Suzle and I plan to vote in the current TAFF race well before the deadline. I'm not familiar with the candidates, and all of them have good rosters of nominators, so I've been considering voting "No Preference." However, we spoke to one of the nominators, who enthusiastically promoted his/her nominee. I'm still thinking.

You're certainly enthusiastic about writing your trip report and getting the segments out there. I've read a couple of them already, and look forward to the others. When I wrote my own report (for my DUFF trip), I didn't think any of the chapters stood well on their own, so I worked on the report slowly, and issued it as a whole document to equally enthusiastic silence...

I haven't read the Foundation Trilogy since I were a sprat. If I were to re-read it today, I'd note the implicit or explicit sexism, but likely I would read on. (On the other hand, if I were to find it boring, I might stop.)

I also think it might be time to re-read the Earthsea books - I've only read the original trilogy, not the subsequent volumes, of which I believe there are three, not two. *Tales from Earthsea* is the sixth book, so far as I know.

John Berry and I have a similar approach to editing a letter column - print the good stuff. I'll also include some banalities if they add much-needed egoboo for one or another of the contributors. Often, the artists don't get enough recognition, so I'll want to print "I liked Pen Inker's cute piece on page 7," even though there's nothing informative or entertaining about the comment.

Jerry Kaufman

*First off, my apologies for not including my email address in the last issue. My fault there, and henceforth this error of omission shall hopefully be avoided. Secondly, you are right regarding my excitement at writing this fershlugginer TAFF Trip Report. Valerie and I had a wonderful time, surviving periods of stress – train scheduling, getting through customs, booking reservation changes at the last minute, etcetera – and so far the response has been positive. Since the end of March, a whole slew of segments have appeared in assorted fanzines, so I nervously await the verdict of the readerships of **Banana Wings, Beam, Exhibition Hall, Inca**, and of course my own zines. Indeed, I have been a busy boy.*

Leigh Edmonds

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21 February 2018



A small sample of candy items in the chocolate shop in Cambridge I wandered into.

Sending me a paper fanzine (Goshwowboyohboy!) is one thing, but including only a snail mail address in the expectation of me sending you a paper letter in response is too much. I'd have to go to the post office and buy a stamp - which would probably be half the GDP of some African countries - and stick it on an envelope. I don't know if I still have one of those in the house.

I was going to make some comments about your comments on your President. However, I've just heard him say that the solution to stopping mass slaughter in schools is to arm teachers too. I'm speechless, my fingers are speechless too ... You will forgive me if I don't feel the urge to visit your great nation any time soon.

Thanks for your Asimov and LeGuin reviews. I've only recently become aware of Asimov's reputation, which is a real pity and disappointing. While not condoning that kind of activity, now or in the past, we are in danger of judging past practices by current day values. If somebody had impressed upon him that his activities were unacceptable in 1950 his reputation now might be quite different. Anyhow, I agree that his Foundation series, and other books, are still good reads.

I agree with John Berry on most things, including line length. That's why ghod invented columns and software designers built them into their word processing programs...

This paper copy of *Askew* leaves me with one novel problem. I don't keep paper these days unless that is a legal requirement so what am I to do with it. Throwing in in the paper recycling seems WRONG.

Leigh

*I appreciate your closing comment about neither recycling nor disposing of **Askew #23** in one manner or another. This is, of course, a historical document worth preserving.*

*Normally I don't wax politic in fanzines or in public forums, unless it is a controlled environment, such as **my fanzines** or in conversation with like-minded friends. Suffice to say that since this is my personalzine, don't be surprised if sometimes I toss in assorted pithy comments about other craziness going on in America, such as arming teachers to control school violence. Uh, huh. What could possibly go wrong there?*

Ray Palm

(but send mail to this address because apparently his local Post Office can't figure it out otherwise:)

Boxholder

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9 March 2018

It's not often I open my PO box lately and find a paperzine waiting for me. Besides the declining number of hardcopy zines being produced I also went digital only with my own publication, no longer trading via snail mail.

Lilac? Did they have a sale on lilac copier paper at Staples? :) Actually, the print and color combo were easy on the eyes.

I came across a review that criticized you for including an anti-Trump rant in *Askew*. Well your publication is a personalzine (perzine), not the *New York Times*. The critic said such rants wouldn't change anyone's mind. That's true. A blind Trump supporter is dumber than a burlap bag filled with broken doorknobs.

Living here in the relative safety of "liberal" New York State, far from the Lone Star State, it's not often I hear about a Texas resident bucking the pressure of conservative superpatriots. So no villagers wielding pitchforks and torches have showed up at night outside your door yet?

RAY

*Wait. What?!? Are you implying that my fanzine was reviewed by the **New York Times**, or just merely stating the obvious, that **Askew** is not the **New York Times**? Man, wouldn't that be something if my silly little fanzine was reviewed by such a major national newspaper? That would be the culmination of my fan-pubbing career. Where's my damned Pulitzer?*

Lloyd Penney
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March 17, 2018

Happy St. Patrick's Day!, and I hope you have a party to go to; for once, we do. I will work on this loc until it's time to go. It's on *Askew* 23.

I have been working, but...our finances are in a scramble because my hours have been cut back to between six and ten hours every two-week pay period. It's a reminder that the job is indeed a part-time job. I know voting on TAFF ends soon...could I send in a Canadian fiver with my vote? It's really tight right now, and the job hunt is on again. Because I am having trouble with work yet again, Yvonne is looking for work, even though she is retired. She wants to save enough money to return to England in 2019, but some of that money will go to paying the bills. For that return to England, we'd like to see Bath. What fanzine did that part of your report appear in? *Exhibition Park*? *{Exhibition Hall #28 , available on efanzines.com. – ed.}*

...A shame about losing Ursula K. Le Guin (we met her some years ago at the Merril Collection in Toronto), but that loss has been doubled by the loss of Kate Wilhelm. I search my book shelves, and see not only fine authors, but old friends.

...If there are fanzines that are frequent, I sometimes can't get to any given issue fast enough, and I wind up doing, as you have commented on before, multi-issue locs. Every good fanzine deserves response, but time sometimes just doesn't allow for a response in a timely manner.

Lloyd Penney

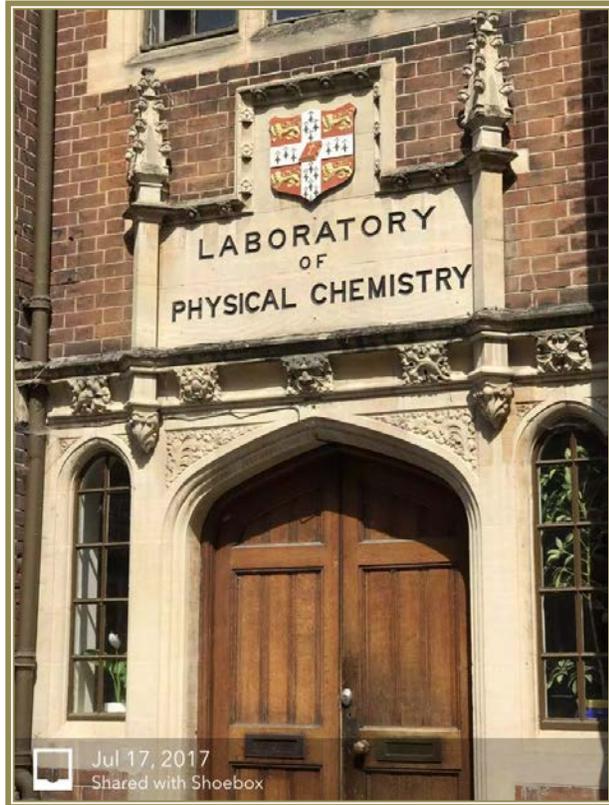
*Yes. You reinforce exactly what I meant in response to Bob Jennings' loc. While there is probably something worth responding to in every single fanzine we see or receive, time availability is most often the limiting factor. Oh, my! I just got an idea for a fannish parody video version of the classic Twilight Zone episode, "Time Enough at Last." Imagine Joe Phan - a meek clerk in a bookstore in, say, Iowa City - who survives a nuclear blast by reading fanzines in the sub-sub-basement employee restroom, and emerges into a blasted landscape. He eventually stumbles across the remains of the University of Iowa library and discovers that the Mike Horvat Fanzine Collection is completely intact and unscathed by the blast. He starts sorting the zines... January's reading pile is **Energumen and A Women's APA**; February's is a complete run of **Yandro**; for March Joe Phan plans on plowing through **Rune**; and so on. As he bends over to pick up a faded copy of the 1975 edition of **The Neofan's Guide to Fandom**, he slips and....*

Richard Dengrove
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April 10, 2018

Once more, I have received *Askew*, which is *Askew* without being askew. The only thing askew is it is issue #23 and the last issue I received was issue #21. Otherwise, we have plenty that's not askew. We have stuff on TAFF, stuff on Trump, stuff on Asimov and LeGuin, and stuff on student loans...

[I] get to the books you reviewed. One was Isaac Asimov's *Foundation*. You find that he lacks female characters, and wonder whether that has something to do with his later behavior toward



women. I remember a book that he wrote that had even more to do with it, John. You remember when the books *The Sensuous Man* (1971) and *The Sensuous Woman* (1969) were popular. Well, such was the tenor of the times Isaac had no shame about advertising what he was doing. He called his book *The Sensuous Dirty Old Man* (1971). In addition, Isaac made fun of the other books: the snippets I read of it were deadpan parodies of them.

But that was not all there was to that book. George Wells got his edition of it at a convention sometime in the early '70s. Unfortunately, Isaac wasn't at that convention. So George decided to have all the people of some fame there autograph the book. Such was the tenor of the times an incredible number did. In fact, I think some women signed. It was as if they all had written *The Sensuous Dirty Old Man*.

I guess anything else I say, for good or evil, will not be compete with the above. However, while I'm glad I didn't write the book *The Sensuous Dirty Old Man*, I am only too glad to write about my retirement. I have been retired from my technical library job now for over six years. Nonetheless, I

don't seem to have any spare time. That I am writing a book that I will never finish helps. That I am active in Toastmasters helps. That interest keep popping up helps. Maybe I should get a job so I will have some spare time.

Rich Dengrove

*Ah, yes. The Good Doctor was quite the character. For all of his faults, one cannot deny his imagination, productivity, and larger-than-life persona. He truly was something else. Like I have mentioned many times over the years, I never met him, nor Heinlein, Clarke, or any of the other giants who have trod across the SF field. The book **Sensuous Dirty Old Man** probably holds a special place on the shelves of Asimov completist collector's hearts. Oh, well.*

"So now, the end is near, and as I reach the final curtain..."

Stop that!

Here I am at the bottom of page 14, and betting that when I print off copies it will require postage for the additional ounce. We shall see when I weigh it out in an envelope. In the meantime, enjoy the pixelated version on efanazines.com, along with many other splendid zines. Happy trails, y'all.