

REPORT

FROM THE PACIFICON II COMMITTEE

ON THE CANCELLATION OF THE MEMBERSHIP OF WALTER BREEN

The Pacificon II Committee has cancelled the membership of Walter Breen and it refuses to allow him to attend the 22nd World Science Fiction Convention. We have not done this because Walter Breen is allegedly a child molester, but because legal counsel lead to the conclusion that if he molests minors at the convention, legal action will probably be taken against us.

Whatever may be the moral judgements on Walter Breen by individual committee members, obviously no fan's morals—including Walter Breen's—are committee business. Nor are any fan's actions—including Walter Breen's—committee business unless they affect the welfare of the convention, its membership or the committee.

While it has not been reported that Walter Breen has been involved in any incidents at the four previous worldcons he has attended, he and his actions have been a matter of concern to responsible fans in the U.S. and abroad. This concern has increased each year. The Discon committee was on the point of cancelling his membership, but decided not to do so as they had no direct evidence. We have direct evidence. After all, Walter Breen lives in Berkeley, not in Washington.

In the last few years that Walter Breen has been living in Berkeley his behavior has become more blatant and more obvious. This may well be due to the organic brain damage he has claimed in FANAC. We, and other Bay Area fans, became very much concerned.

We were concerned about Walter Breen's behavior from both a moral and a practical standpoint. From the moral standpoint—and from the legal one as well we find—we felt that a convention committee owes to convention attendees substantially the same protection we as individuals owe to guests in our homes. We do not feel that Walter Breen's actions with young boys and girls are good for them. We feel we owe them some protection. And whether or not Walter Breen molests children at conventions, he makes contacts there he can follow up later.

We were concerned from a practical standpoint, because if Walter Breen did molest a minor at the convention and a complaint were made, the scandal, furore, and public reflection on the convention members and fandom would be immense.

For several months we discussed this question with great care and corresponded with fans throughout fandom asking their advice. Various alternatives to cancellation were presented and discussed. The idea of giving him a stiff warning was abandoned because, although it had kept him out of various homes in the Bay Area, he flatly announced that he was going to attend the convention. Someone suggested contacting various people close to him to get him into a hospital; this was rejected as naive and impractical. Finally, we consulted an attorney. He emphatically told us that we would be responsible up to our necks, and that we had no choice but to cancel Walter Breen's membership.

We are not responsible because Walter Breen might commit a crime, but because of the damage he might inflict—the law regards child molesting as extremely damaging—and because of our negligence in letting him attend, knowing his general reputation. We are not responsible for ordinary pecaddillos and misdemeanors or even for most crimes.

Considering all this, on Tuesday, January 21, we sent Walter Breen a letter (Registered Mail, Return Receipt Requested) which, according to the receipt, he received on Thursday, January 23. We told him that we were considering cancelling his membership and that if he wished, he could come to the hearing on this question which we were holding on Friday, January 24. We also told him that if this date were inconvenient, he could call up and arrange another date within a week.

Walter Breen was advised by his supporters not to attend the hearing and it proceeded without him; however eight people attended to speak against the cancellation. The following summary of the causes to cancel his membership was made:

Walter Breen's conduct in the homes and gatherings of science fiction fans has been such that he is a cause of uproar and tumult, and it is likely cause in the future to subject the committee, the convention and its members to public and private action, abuse criticism or ridicule. Many instances were detailed. They are in part:

1. Walter Breen has been excluded from the homes of some science fiction fans because of his conduct.

2. Walter Breen has engaged in a course of action which constitutes a crime in this state in that he has engaged in acts in the presence of witnesses which constitute a felony in this state, to wit a violation of section 288 of the Penal Code of the State of California (Lewd or Lascivious Acts with a Minor Child with the Intent of Arousing either his own Passions or those of the Minor Child).

These acts are also a violation of the California Welfare and Institutions Code, Section 702 (Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor).

They may also be held to be a violation of the Penal Code of the State of California, Section 245 (Assault and Battery); and Section 650.5 (Conduct Contrary to Public Morals and Health and Decency; Outraging Public Decency...).

3. The committee has been emphatically informed by its attorney that having prior knowledge of Walter Breen's actions and general reputation, that if it permits him to attend the Pacificon II, and if he performs similar acts there, parents may seek a legal remedy, both civil and criminal, against the committee and any responsible parties of the convention.

4. If Walter Breen ever has legal action taken against him for any of these acts, the committee, the convention and its members are subject to considerable notoriety, and in view of our prior knowledge of his general reputation, it can be said that we have condoned his actions.

In addition, in the course of possible legal actions taken against Walter Breen, the convention, its members and the committee may be subject to an investigation into their private and public lives which could be both embarrassing and time consuming.

5. Two members of the committee witnessed certain of these acts with two different children. We have letters written by Walter Breen admitting to other acts. We have letters from other fans telling of their own direct knowledge of such acts. We have material published by Walter Breen in his own and other fanzines defending and advocating such acts.

We therefore decided to cancel Walter Breen's membership. However, those opposed to our intention strongly urged us not to take action until he had had a further opportunity to consult an attorney on points of law and on his rights

vis-a-vis the committee. We therefore agreed to continue to study the question and to hold up any action until February 10, 1964, and on that date to proceed unless some adequate reason for dropping the matter had been presented to us by then.

None was.

No further hearing was scheduled. The claims of Walter Breen and his supporters that one was scheduled for February 10 are the purest hogwash.

It has been objected that the hearing was a "kangaroo court." Obviously it was no court, kangaroo or otherwise. A Pacificon II committee meeting is not and cannot be a court of law. We have no legal or moral right to conduct ourselves as if it were. We are not required or even allowed to present evidence in a legal fashion or to prove something "beyond the shadow of a doubt".

Our problem was very simple: Walter Breen had by his general conduct and actions at fan gatherings and by his own statements in fanzines has solidly established his general reputation, and we, by our legal responsibility and our knowledge of his reputation, had to do something. The hearing was not held on THE GREAT BREEN BOONDOGGLE. The points at issue were our moral and legal responsibilities and our knowledge of Walter Breen's general reputation. The hearing only stated the uncontradicted facts—all of which were known to us long before the BOONDOGGLE was published.

Walter Breen and his supporters have claimed that our accounts of his actions, particularly those given in the BOONDOGGLE are entirely false or partially false and grossly distorted.

To date, the only valid correction received for any of the incidents detailed in the BOONDOGGLE has been that Walter Breen followed one child into the bedroom when he was sent to change into his sleepers, not into the bathroom as stated in the BOONDOGGLE. (It might be added that the child's mother followed and took care of the situation.)

It has also been claimed that Walter Breen and another child were "on the bed," not "in bed" as stated in the BOONDOGGLE. Walter Breen and the child were lying on an unmade bed; the kid had only his shorts on and Walter was "cuddling" him. (And got heaved out immediately.) After all the phrase "in bed" does not mean "under the covers."

On Saturday, February 8, we received a letter from Walter Breen's attorney asking us by what authority we were cancelling his membership, telling us to cease and desist, and that if we proceeded we would be held responsible. But his attorney neglected to ask for another hearing and did not cite any authority to the contrary. Our attorney told us to ignore it. We did.

On Tuesday, February 11, we held a meeting and cancelled Walter Breen's membership.

It has been argued that our action was extreme and unnecessary as "Walter has always stopped bothering any child when told to do so and therefore would not do anything like that at the convention." Miriam Knight said this at the hearing, but many others have said the same since.

Tony Boucher's reply to her still seems the best answer: "It seems to work to tell Walter to stop bothering this little boy and that little boy, but it seems impossible to effectively tell him to leave little boys alone entirely."

We have been reproached because we could have expelled Walter Breen "without publically humiliating him." Can you imagine the outcry if we had expelled him without telling fandom why? The present ruckus would be mild in comparison. And does anyone seriously suggest that parents be kept in happy ignorance of Walter Breen's activities or that Walter Breen's reputation be protected at the expense of children?

But to reiterate: with his own public statements and actions, Walter Breen had solidly established his general reputation long before the BOONDOGGLE came out. It only stated the uncontradicted facts.

We believe that Walter Breen is sick, not evil, and that he needs help and treatment, not punishment.

Recognized psychological authorities agree that all child molesters are psychopaths, not just kooks or neurotics. Child molesters are concerned only with the gratification of their own desires without regard to the consequences to others. They are not able to control their own actions.

Walter Breen and some of his supporters are angry at the cancelling of his membership and are striking back at the committee. We have been told of several false and malicious stories about us that are being spread, sometimes by innocent persons who believe the stories.

The only rumor that need concern us here is the one calling the Pacificon II the Copcon I, and insisting that because of the expulsion of Walter Breen, the police will infest the Pacificon II and that the normal fannish hilarity and jollity will be impossible.

Anyone who knows the slightest thing about police procedure and operations knows that our action re Walter Breen will be reassuring to the police. We have proven our good faith. And really, the police are just not interested in the ordinary fannish misdemeanors. If they were, they'd have most of the East Bay in jail, including the committee.

We have never been happy about this situation or liked any of the alternative courses of action confronting us. Naturally we have made mistakes. There are some things we could have done better or more effectively.

But in the end it all boils down to the fact we just couldn't take the risk of letting Walter Breen destroy the convention.

J. Ben Starks
Al Halvy
Alva Rogers
Bill Smith

PERSONAL STATEMENTS OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

J. Ben Stark

To the readers of the report on the cancellation of the membership of Walter Breen, it should be pointed out that the decision was a committee action fully concurred in by all members of the committee. My personal opinion is that we could not fulfill our legal and moral responsibilities to convention attendees and to fandom in general except by expelling Walter Breen.

Further, this action was not a vendetta conducted against Walter Breen, but an action necessary to protect the committee against possible civil and criminal liability. The implication that Bill Donaho has hypnotized the remainder of the committee into this action is a slur on both our integrity and intelligence.

J. Ben Stark

Bill Donaho

It has been claimed that the parents of the children I alleged Walter Breen to have molested were at the hearing to defend him. The BOONDOGGLE listed incidents involving four children. One of the children has a parent on the committee. He was certainly not defending Walter Breen. The parents of another child mentioned were not at the hearing and have told Walter Breen that if he comes near their child again, they will kill him. They were certainly not defending Walter Breen. The parents of another child were at the hearing, but they stated emphatically that although they were protesting the committee's action, they were not defending Walter Breen. He was defended by the parent of only one of the four children.

In any case defense by the parents would be irrelevant. We did not cancel Walter Breen's Pacificon II membership to protect Berkeley children, but because his behavior with Berkeley children told us what to expect of him.

As stated in the committee's statement, none of us have been at all happy with this whole mess. We do not like the strained relationships and violent disagreements with our friends. We do not like the whole bloody business.

Nor do we claim to be perfect. We have made mistakes and missjudgments. We could have done things better. Hindsight is always useful. But we did the best we could at the time.

One of the biggest mistakes was made by me personally. In my concern to tell the truth and to "name names" I was too little concerned with the right of privacy of Berkeley parents. I have unintentionally hurt the feelings of several of my friends. For that I am very sorry. I strongly apologize to the parents involved.

I would like to add that whatever their feelings about minding their own business or the illegitimacy of social exclusion, Berkeley fan parents took steps to protect their own children. No one made a scene at the time, but a repetition of the incident was prevented.

Bill Donaho

Alva Rogers

Walter Breen has been barred from attending the Pacificon II. This is the sum total of the action taken on this matter by the committee of the 22nd World Science Fiction Convention.

To hear some people talk we've kicked Jesus Christ out of heaven.

However, we did nothing so dramatic: we simply told Walter Breen he was persona non grata at the convention, and specified why.

The why is spelled out in the joint statement of the committee. The charge made by some—or the assumption of others—that the cancellation of Walter Breen's membership from the convention was instigated by Bill Donaho through the writing and distributing of THE GREAT BREEN BOONDOGGLE is utterly without foundation. A careful reading of the committee's statement should make that eminently clear.

It has been further charged that this action on the part of the committee is a vendetta against Walter Breen masterminded by Bill Donaho who has completely subjugated the rest of the committee to his will. Any fan would be out of his mind to take such drastic action as we did simply for the sake of working off a personal grudge. Neither Ben Stark, Al Halevy or I would have tolerated for one minute any suggestion that we bar Walter Breen just so Donaho could work off a grudge. To bar any fan from a convention without the most serious cause would be an act of immature irresponsibility. We had most serious cause to bar Walter Breen from the convention, and recognizing our responsibility, did so.

Too many fans seem to ignore the principle of responsibility—at least, so it would seem from the reaction in some quarters to a clear assumption of responsibility by the committee. We are responsible for putting on the convention, and we are responsible to the members of the convention that they will not, through our negligence suffer "public and private action, abuse, criticism or ridicule."

My own personal assumption of responsibility for others besides my children where Walter Breen was concerned was a little slow in coming, but once I realized that as an adult member of society I had certain obligations to that society that transcended any obligation to a fan or to fandom, there was no equivocating.

My attitude towards Walter Breen (which has been one of qualified friendliness—or, more rightly, tolerance) was radically changed when I found him with my son. When I walked into my sons' bedroom I was confronted with a sight no conscientious father should be expected to tolerate. Walter Breen and my youngest son were lying side by side on an unmade bed. Walter had his arm around Bill with Bill's head on his shoulder. Walter was fully dressed, but Bill, who had been getting ready for bed when Walter went in uninvited, was dressed only in his jockey shorts. Breen was given clear evidence by both Sid and me that we wanted no more of that. However a couple of weeks later he was again caught cuddling a reluctant Bill. The next day, Bill, on being queried on his opinion of Walter Breen, said, "He's all right, but why does he always have to keep touching me and putting his arm around me?" We had no alternative but to tell him why. We were then told that he and his older brother had been invited to visit Walter in his apartment and "look over his coin collection."

Following this we told the boys they were to have nothing further to do with Walter Breen. We were somewhat croggled to discover, at the next GGFS meeting held at our house, that the boys had anticipated the possible presence of Walter Breen (he didn't show) by barricading the door of their room with boy scout gear to keep

the wandering Breen out. This was their own unique response to our injunction to avoid further contact with Walter Breen.

All during the fall months of 1963 the committee had been discussing the possibility of barring Walter Breen from the convention without reaching a decision. However, on November 4, 1963, I took a step which at least took care of Walter Breen as far as my family was concerned. I wrote him a letter barring him from my house and forbidding him to have any contact with any of my three children. Note well that this action on my part was taken a good two months before Donaho wrote the BOONDOGGLE.

Now, it has been variously suggested that my reaction to Breen's attentions to my son was (1) Due to jealousy at another man's usurpation of my role of father; (2) A misinterpretation of his intentions; or (3) Assuming Walter Breen did in fact have a seduction ultimately in mind, my reaction was lamentably "square".

All I have to say to (1) is that it is a pretentious and immature bit of analysis.

(2) Under the circumstances as I saw them I don't think I misinterpreted Walter's intentions—particularly in light of the second cuddling scene and the invitation to visit his apartment.

The argument given for (3) is that even if Walter was making a preliminary move leading to a physical seduction the experience would not be particularly harmful because Walter genuinely loves children and could introduce a child to sex without guilt. This, of course, is a specious argument. Whether or not Walter loves children is immaterial. A child, boy or girl, cannot be entirely guilt free following a sexual experience with an adult. The immediate incident may be without guilt, but sooner or later the child comes into contact with the prevailing social mores regarding sex and under the influences of others than his parents. Guilt is almost always an inevitable delayed reaction occurring sometimes many years later which has profound effects on the older child's—or, by this time, adult's—psyche.

As to being "square" for objecting to my son's learning about "guilt-free" sex from a man....

Now, what does all this attempt to prove? That Walter Breen is, beyond a doubt, a child molester? No. It does suggest, though, that a parent confronted with the evidence of his own eyes, as I was, would have no alternative but to assume so. I assumed so. I am, after all, not without some years of experience in life in many of its varied aspects.

With the conviction crystalized in my mind that Walter Breen, if not stopped, posed a potential menace to one or more of my children, the moral and social obligation was imposed upon me to have the same concern for the welfare of other children than my own.

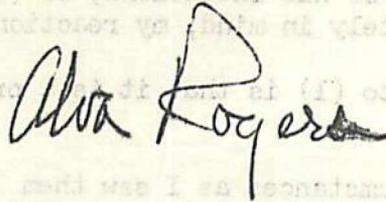
To disclaim any responsibility for children beyond one's own family is to disclaim membership in the human race.

But, more immediately, as far as the committee's action is concerned, Walter Breen's conduct with my son is a clear-cut example of why the committee could take no chances on Walter Breen at the convention, or could place any reliance on his word that he would behave himself.

Walter Breen, on the evidence of his behavior with my son, has clearly demonstrated that he has little or no regard for the barest minimum standards of social conduct. He apparently is so confident of the limitlessness of fanish tolerance, and the universality of a belief amongst fans in behavioral permissiveness where sex is concerned, even in regards to their children, that he has no qualms whatsoever about attempting to seduce the son of the people in whose home he was an invited guest.

If Walter Breen cannot be trusted in a private home and ignores all evidence of disapproval of his conduct by the parents of the child by his subsequent cuddling and invitation to visit his apartment, how far is the committee expected to trust him in the freewheeling atmosphere of a convention?

I, personally, cannot trust him.



Al Halevy

On March 11, 1964 I returned to the Bay area after a four and one-half months trip that took me principally to Israel. In my absence Pacificon II affairs were managed by the three other committee members. During this period of time the committee acted to cancel Walter Breen's membership in the convention.

I returned to a Bay Area and to a fandom quite unlike anything I had left. While in Israel I had received letters apprising me of the situation, and later I paid a visit to fans in Germany and Seattle. But nevertheless I was unprepared for the situation that greeted me. Whereas in October I had left a group of fans who had been interested in the novel, though not uncommon, idea of holding a worldcon and all that means, I returned to a fandom divided into two camps on an issue which had nothing to do with the convention itself, but with how to run it and how not to. The situation might have seemed a rare opportunity to get some new ideas, but instead it promised only more problems and misery for the committee. As if we didn't have enough already.

The issue itself seemed innocuous. Walter Breen's membership in the Pacificon II had been cancelled. His actions and general reputation were such that the committee felt that his presence at the convention would be both dangerous to the members of the convention and too heavy a responsibility to the committee. Perhaps the committee has made some mistakes in handling the situation, and I'm sorry if we did. But like all human beings, we are not saints. The simple fact of the matter is that Walter Breen's alleged actions are so antisocial and so brazen that the committee felt it had no choice in the matter.

It is interesting that many of the fans who now yell "Foul!" agree that they do not like Walter Breen and do not want him in their homes. Some believe, as we do, that he is sick and needs medical attention. Others believe that though he may seduce children, seduction isn't such a bad thing, and anyway the kids like it. Rubbish!!!

Fandom has always believed itself to be composed of individuals who accept the unlikely, the new, the barely possible, the imaginative, and the like. It believes that it is composed of people more intelligent than most. This may be true. But it does not mean that fans cannot have the same superstitions that other people have, and it is clear, in this case, that they do. Medicine has been saying for years that

mental illness is a disease, just like any other, whether it be cancer, leprosy, or the plague. Most people do not believe this, and they try to hide symptoms of this disease. A few people do not try to do this--rather they use it as an excuse--witness the recent defense of Jack Ruby.

Walter Breen is another: he has used his illness as a defense for his actions, and apparently some fans accept his excuse. Excuse it is--not defense--because no thoughtful person would want to associate with anyone who is so sick that he commits acts which are against the mores of his own life or home. It is of little consequence if this sick person defends his sick actions by rationalizing them and by attacking society; he is still sick.

Walter Breen is a sick man, very sick. If we the committee, or fans, act as a crutch for him, accept his symptoms as just eccentricities, and rationalize his conduct with children, we are just as sick as he is.

The committee and I will not accept this judgment.

al Halvey