

CHUCKLES #4

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The topic is "Fandom." Oh what to say — for I am a fan of oddness. It seems that I find the term as foreign as the subject from time to time.

I found fandom when I made friends with a tall patron (Ross) of the restaurant that I worked in. He would come in each day to grab a sandwich and leave, we spoke and I learned that he did not eat well at home and I demanded that he make time to sit and have a hot lunch — he did and sixteen years later we got married. But, I am getting ahead of myself.

It was about a year after I met Ross that I needed an apartment and there was one in the building that he lived in, so now I saw him at lunch and in the evenings. It was the end of summer and I was about to have my 21st birthday; Ross was helping with the arrangements for a science fiction convention and busy, but he asked me if I would like to go, I said yes.

I would go down to his apartment each week to watch Star Trek and other offerings on the T.V. that were in any way fiction or SF. I had seen every movie I could on the SF theme, but I was not a reader. I had gone to several fandom gatherings with Ross and I felt a little out of place at first. I had no idea what they were talking about most of the time — later I was to find out that they did not either.

Back to the weekend of my 21st, we walked into the hotel in New York City that had been taken over by NYCon 3 and I knew that I had been transported into another world! There were costumed people

of every type. There were artists, writers, actors, collectors, and the sellers of items that I thought one could not buy. There were hundreds of fans who wanted you to have a copy of their "fanzine" and many more who wanted to know what one I wrote in.

I saw people covered with pins from all over the world and others covered with pins that all spoke of winning the next world-con. I met so many that I will never remember them all, and some that I will never forget.

I was learning that the fans were as different within their group as any I had been in before. It took me a long time to realize this, maybe because I feared too much contact with people who read the volumes that these people did.

We saw a movie. I do not remember which one. We saw a new Star Trek show before it aired on the T.V. as well as about an hour of out-takes from the show. We saw a costume show with some of the oddest shaped Federation officers ever assembled. We went to a dinner and listened to a much too long joke that no one would ask to be stopped and then to the speaker, Lester DelRay.

There were Hugo awards presented and predictions for the future (most of which have not come true) given. What I remember the most was a nice young fellow who gave me a button which to this day I cannot read. I am told it says "Frodo lives" in Elvish. Now, if that is not what it says then I have to seriously rethink the idea of wearing something that I cannot read, but no SF fan

would tell me an untruth, right? Also standing out in my memories was the way the fans in general were open to the new to the world of fandom as well as their old friends. It was so easy to join into conversations and feel comfortable with total strangers.

With all of the parties and good weather as well as the high spirits, the weekend of my 21st birthday was one to remember.

I have to say that as a first SF fandom convention, a world-con is not the best to go to. It was not the lack of anything but rather the over amount of everything. In the next few years I went to some other fandom conventions in New York, they were dull by comparison. I know that local and international are bound to be different but I so enjoyed the life and energy of NYCon 3.

For a while I wrote in an APAzine, my offering was called "MeOne" for it was my first. I went to a few more local gatherings but I was becoming disenchanted with the big city life.

At last I moved from New York to the mountains of Virginia and then to Boston. One day Ross called and said that he was coming to Boston for another world-con! I was overjoyed. I do not remember the year, in the early 80's or so. It had been about 14 or 15 years since NY and I was ready! I was not disappointed!

Again the place was filled with costumed people, but this time they added a "Dr. Who," whoever that was (I do know now). The fanzines were slicker and there were fewer of them. The buttons were everywhere and the politicking for future world-con's was everywhere. I got a set of SF Tarot cards which had the art work of many of the best SF artists (Ross did the four of Cups). I

even saw the Movie "Bambi Meets Godzilla" for the first time. Behind it all this was the same spirit of fun that I had felt at my first world-con and I was so happy. (It was also nice to see Ross again!)

It was a year or more later that Ross and I wed. From NY and Boston we moved to Ohio. Our fan life was stifled there for we found no groups to meet with. I heard that there was a Star Trek group and in the same breath was told that they were lacking in any sense of fun. All play and no fun make... so I never made contact. This might have been the end of my brush with fandom, but then Ross was offered the chance to transfer to the west side of the country and here in Las Vegas fandom is alive and well. Ross has been dismayed that I have not gone to any to the local SF conventions, but I have been saving myself up for a world-con to come to Las Vegas.

At the beginning of this offering I called myself "a fan of oddness." I often still feel this way. I do not read well. Therefore, I get my SF from the audio and visual formats. I feel I miss a lot. I also still like Star Trek and its branch-offs. This is not so popular with all of the fans here in Las Vegas. It feels odd when I realize that I am not taken as a serious fan by those around me. I love to write and would be more involved if I felt like I fit in. It will come in time... until then I will keep chuckling and enjoying the things that make me do so.

Fandom is a neat thing to be involved with. It helps make reality fit into the realm of acceptance, within a world gone mad for power.

