

ETA

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Sighting along the cue, I send the white ball shooting into the pack of reds. They scatter in all directions.

If it's November then this must be NOVACON, and so it is, but this is a much different hotel than our usual venue. The Excelsior resembles one of the remoter out-buildings of a 1950s aerodrome - which, given its proximity to Birmingham Airport, is very likely how it started out - with air-conditioning to match, unfortunately. The Excelsior's environmental control is wretched, and I'm not the only one during the course of the weekend to complain of pounding headaches that can't be attributed to alcohol. (And how terrible to suffer 'the morning after' when you haven't had the night before.)

Avedon wasn't interested in attending NOVACON this year, and the inroads ex-Chancellor Nigel Lawson's interest-rate policy had made into our disposable income had made giving it a miss an attractive proposition. I had my own varied and complex reasons for wanting to attend however, including having promised to be on a programme item, a bloody-minded determination to show I was in no way intimidated by a certain organiser of the last MEXICON telling me "...do us all a favour and don't come to any more of these, eh?", and - most of all - because this was Geri Sullivan's first British convention. Bright and bouncy, Geri had taken Avedon and I under her wing during this year's CORFLU, and I wanted to make sure she had a good time at the con. This might be NOVACON, but I (and, I suspect, Geri and Chuck Harris) experienced it as the final act of CORFLU 6.

Though intending to travel to the con alone, I bumped into Martin Smith on the train to Birmingham and we travelled through that bright, crisp Saturday afternoon together, he reading PULP and me gazing out at the frosted fields beyond the window. On reaching the con hotel I paused briefly in the bookroom before heading for the bar, where the first person I saw was Geri Sullivan herself.

It was Geri who organised the special fund that brought Chuck and Sue Harris to Minneapolis for COREFLU 6 in April, and Geri who hosted them and us after the con. Avedon and I had gone mainly for COREFLU - just about the perfect convention for those who count themselves fanzine fans - but also to keep an eye on Chuck. No way could



Atom

we allow one of PULP's star columnists to be plied with liquor by unscrupulous Americans and tricked into signing away the fanzine rights to his future writings. No, we had an investment to protect and so kept a close watch on him, being careful to secure the rights to all of his best quips. We were determined to do our bit to stem the flow out of the country of so much of Britain's cultural heritage. Undeterred by this, Geri resolved to visit the UK in response. She flew into Heathrow early in November and, following trips to Daventry and Belfast, spent a few days in London with us shortly before NOVACON.

Sitting with Geri when I entered the bar were Chuck, Vinç Clarke, Hazel Ashworth, and D West. Not unnaturally, conversation turned at one point to D's 'review' of my fanhistory project, THEN, in a recent CRITICAL WAVE. I thought that while this was superficially well-written most of his arguments were dopey, and told him so.

"Posterity will decide!" he proclaimed, and then walked off.

On the Tuesday before NOVACON, Geri and I had gone to London's Cambridge Theatre to see RETURN TO THE FORBIDDEN PLANET, a hugely enjoyable experience we were recommending to anyone who'd listen. Basically a musical version of the 1950s film, RETURN goes back to the film's original inspiration (it was based on Shakespeare's THE TEMPEST), puts the Shakespeare back in (sort of), and adds some classic rock'n'roll numbers to make what must be one of the best shows in town - I've certainly never seen such enthusiastic standing ovations before. RETURN is already achieving cult status, and being talked of as the new Rocky Horror Show. Not everyone at NOVACON needed convincing. Bernie Peek was walking around with a sheaf of flyers for the show sticking out of his breast pocket and, inevitably, Chris O'Shea was already organising a group outing. Most of RETURN's box-office is generated by word-of-mouth, the word spreading from person to person by apparently random motion, creating a complex web of shared experience.

Our motion through the bar was rather simpler - though hardly harmonic - and as the evening got under weigh Geri, Chuck, Vinç, and I found ourselves around a table at its far end. Maureen Porter came by, handing out flyers for the 'Friends of Foundation' group that had been set up after the August BSFA meeting in London.

"You have to join, Rob" she said, "since it's all your fault, anyway."

Ah hah! I had a suspicion I might have set the ball rolling but this was my first confirmation. While doing research for THEN, I'd visited the SF Foundation a couple of times to go through their collection of British prozines. During conversation with Joyce Day, the Foundation's part-time administrator, I learned of its non-existent budget and how it relies in large part on the donations and goodwill of individuals. I hadn't known any of this and nor, I imagined, had most fans, so I printed a plea in THEN #2 for donations to be made out of convention surplusses and a specific request from Joyce for a couple of issues of NEW WORLDS that they particularly wanted to obtain copies of. (These were issues #183 & #214, and after reading THEN #2 Michael Moorcock supplied them with the latter - anyone out there got a copy of #182 they can bear to part with?) Beyond that I'd not really given much thought to anything beyond maybe getting the Foundation's 'wants list' printed up and circulated through fandom, so I'm delighted to see that people have got together and created something rather more substantial. According to Maureen, I chatted to her about all this

during a party at our place (that my diary says took place on Saturday 25th June 1988). I was trying to talk the CONTRIVANCE committee, who were also there, into donating a part of any profit they made to the Foundation, but this was already promised to other charities. Nonetheless, Maureen, Rob Meades, Roger Robinson, and others were sufficiently interested in the idea to spend a fair bit of the party discussing it in our front room. More than a year later, this had developed into a full-blown proposal for 'Friends' that was floated at the August 1989 BSFA meeting. Sometimes, it seems, you set things in motion without realising it, and they strike off along paths of their own.

Not far from where we sat chatting was another table, at which Dave Wood and various people clustered, looking glum. Soon ol' Dave, displaying a hitherto unsuspected sense of irony, passed Chuck a note that read "Let me save you from those Boring Old Farts". He further underscored his ironical intent by joining us later, at which point we'd also attracted Martin Smith, Zy Nicholson, John Brunner, Bob Shaw, James White, and Ian. "Ian who?" I hear you ask, which was my question too when this tall, bespectacled, and frizzy-haired guy, whose badge identified him only as 'Ian', came over and said, "Hello, Rob - you don't remember me, do you?" I didn't, but then this was hardly surprising as we'd never met before. "I once rang you up, pissed, on New Year's Eve", he prompted, as I slowly started to remember, "...and I used to live in the Orkneys." Ah, someone from the old EPSILON mailing list! I wasn't the only one he'd surprised, I later learned. He seemed to know everyone, but very few remembered him, so his effusive greetings caused great puzzlement and consternation. Dave Wood took me aside when Ian was at the bar and told me that he'd been evicted from the dramatic rendition of the Epic of Gilgamesh that GoH Geoff Ryman had been delivering to a closed main hall earlier in the day.

"He fell asleep" explained Dave, "and started snoring so loudly that they had to stop the proceedings to wake him up and eject him from the hall."

I wrote this down for Chuck, who was still chuckling about it as he drove Vinç, Geri, and me to Daventry later that evening. We were all staying the night at Chuck's house. Sue Harris was already in bed by the time we got there, but she had left a fine spread for us. There was a complete roast chicken, sliced ham, salad makings, bread, cakes, etc., etc. It was an a la carte meal superior to anything on offer in the Excelsior and we fell on it like locusts. Thank you, Sue.

The next day, Sunday 19th November, we were all up bright and early, hoping to get a good start on the day. While Sue cooked breakfast Chuck showed me a souvenir of his US visit. This was a large replica of a pool ball, a black '8-ball' with reputed abilities as an oracle. Holding the ball with the number uppermost you asked it a question. Then, turning the ball over, you found an answer appearing on the bottom. Neat. It was only a toy, of course. The future is no more predictable than is the motion of every ball when you make a wild shot in a game of pool. There are too many variables. All you can do is keep the 8-ball in play until you're ready to take it out, and hope for the best.

The old village of Daventry still has a set wooden stocks on its green, a link to a past that seemed almost tangible as we drove through the flat Northamptonshire landscape on our way back to the con. Though the brilliant winter sun was already burning it off, the ground mist that remained gave an eerie aspect to the level fields bordering the road we travelled. Soothing, but strange.

Ian Williams was in the bar of the Excelsior having just come from a signing session at the Andromeda Books table in the bookroom at which, he merrily informed me, ten copies of his recently-published novel were sold. This was the first time I'd seen Ian in quite a while. In the last year everything seems to have gone right for him what with one of his novels finally seeing print and him getting married. He was plainly a contented man and, waxed lyrical on marriage:

"It's the most important thing in my life. Everything else is secondary."

I could certainly sympathise with that sentiment. It was good seeing Ian happy, and I hope that his life continues along its current path.

The panel I was on was titled 'That Was The Decade That Was' and originally due to start at 11.30am. The other panelists were Bob Shaw, James White, and Ken Cheslin and the topic was British fandom in the 1960s. Jimmy Robertson was moderating and I was there as a sort of 'fact-checker' because I'm currently researching the 1960s for THEN #3. We were a rather odd group to talk about fandom in the 1960s since only Ken had been truly active then, but the panel seemed to go reasonably well, judging by the audience reaction. At one point I realised that the stories James was telling about the 1965 British Worldcon had actually happened at the 1957 British Worldcon, but the audience were enjoying them so I kept my peace. And then it was over. The panel had started late but we got no extension, much to Jimmy's disgust. I took off as soon as the item was finished...and discovered the snooker room.

The snooker room was the one place in the Excelsior where such air-conditioning as the hotel possessed seemed to work, and by the numbers of people in there I wasn't the first to figure this out.

"At the start of the con I had this room all to myself" said Martin Tudor, ruefully. "It was somewhere to get a bit of peace before panel items, but now everyone's found it."

He shrugged, and smiled at Pam Wells. He then mentioned that "the pros' con" may be held in the Excelsior next year.

"'Pros' con'? Oh yeah, you mean FANTASYCON" I said.

"Yeah. When Steve Jones found out he was in the overflow hotel he said 'You do realise, of course, that this means I'll have to give the con a bad review in SCIENCE FICTION CHRONICLE?'"

"I'm sure NOVACON will survive it."

There was a convention snooker tournament being played in the room but the spare table was open to all, so I challenged Martin Smith to a game. Fool that he is, he accepted. Sighting along the cue, I send the white ball shooting into the pack of reds. They scatter in all directions.

In some ways, snooker is like fandom. The table is a level plain on which all the balls are the same size, but despite this they are not all of equal value. (And God forbid that you should try to rub the nap the wrong way). When you send the white ball into the others you impart a motion to them, and for some that motion is not what you expected. On the face of it, action and reaction would

seem a relatively simple thing to calculate even if few of us possess the precision necessary to make the initial action of exactly the right force, yet some reactions seem to confound this expectation. To play the game at anywhere near the level of exactitude required you would need to be as emotionless and calculating a player as Steve Davies, and as we all know that level of apparently emotionless calculation does not make you popular with the masses. Alex Higgins is popular. At his best he plays the game electrifyingly, but these days he gets more headlines for his abuse of tournament officials. Nonetheless, he remains popular with the public and has his own intensely loyal cheering section. Charisma, it seems, excuses the most unpleasant behaviour.

There are more red balls in snooker than any other, and as each of these is pocketed you get the chance to pot a larger-valued ball of another colour of your choice. This is then put back on the table, the red neofan replaced by the fully-fledged trufan, if you like. As long as there are red balls the number of coloured balls remains the same, but as soon as the reds are gone the colours too begin to disappear. By sheer attrition alone, their various trajectories carry them off the table, and soon that green baize plain can start to look mighty lonely. Of course, in snooker once one game is finished you set the balls back on the table and begin again...but there are only so many frames in a match. And so on. You can carry parallels only so far before your metaphor collapses under its own weight. Snooker, after all, is just a game.

Everytime I see Zy Nicholson his clothes get more and more 'sixties'. This NOVACON was the first time I'd seen him since he enrolled at Warwick University, and his 'look' was pure Jimi Hendrix, spoiled only by the fact that Zy is white and blond. After I'd beaten Martin at snooker (I was the least inept of the two of us) I told him that he was unlikely to find anyone at the con he could beat. He beat Zy. I left them playing their game, returning later with Geri and Chuck. When Geri had finished messing around on the table I decided to show her something. Making sure she's watching, I sight along the cue. The white ball shoots up the table. Bouncing off three cushions, it pots the black. Geri is suitably impressed.

The Nova Awards are given to Jan Orys' VSOP for Best Fanzine, Simon Polley for Best Writer, and Peter Mooring for Best Artist. I didn't vote for any of these, but the results were reasonable enough. Soon after the awards ceremony we decided to leave. Ving and Geri were staying another night with Chuck and Sue but I wanted to head home. Aftersaying a proper farewell to Geri (who was flying back to the US on Tuesday) I headed for the train. I hadn't seen Avedon all weekend and I was missing her. She was missing me too, it seems, and was all over me when I got back. If this is the sort of welcome I can expect when I go away perhaps I should go away more often. Except, of course, that being together is so much better. That evening Gary Farber rang us from New York. He started by heaping praise on THEN:

"I may not have written a LoC, but I just want you to know how important I think what you're doing is. At Worldcon I praised it on a panel I was on, and Sam Moskowitz stood up in the audience and enthusiastically agreed."

This was all very gratifying (tho' it's still not too late to LoC, Gary). He then went on to say that he'd heard we'd be over for CORFLU next May (another reason we're watching the pennies) and to offer us crash space at his apartment if we intend staying awhile in New York after the con. His place sounds a bit small, but we'd certainly like to hang out in the Big A for a while so perhaps

something can be arranged. With Gary's call, about CORFLU things seemed to have come full circle, breaking the spell in some way. Or so it seemed to me. Events may be random but we are cursed to see patterns in them, to discern meaning where only coincidence exists.

The white ball shoots up the table. Bouncing off three cushions, it pots the black. Geri is suitably impressed. It's a trick, of course, but then you can't play this game as many years as I have without picking up a few tricks.

WWII BOMBER FOUND ON MOON! Though Avedon didn't attend NOVACON she did have a membership. This being so she voted for the Novas. I put her ballot in the box myself. VSOP, Simon Polley, and Dave Mooring - the eventual winners - all appeared in various positions on her ballot. How strange, then, to read this curious piece in THE INTERMEDIATE REPTILE:

"Leeds once again triumphed in the Nova Awards, with Jan Orys's VSOP winning the Best Fanzine category, Simon Polley Best Fanwriter and Dave Mooring Best Fanartist. After her revelations last year that those voting for the productions of Britain's Fanzine City were acting under the influence of Secret Mind Rays, investigative journalist Avedon Carol was thought to be 'sick as a parrot'."

Also, I note from the 'gossip' column in a recent CRITICAL WAVE that I cut a forlorn figure at NOVACON, spending the whole convention wandering around aimlessly with no-one to talk to. News to me. While it wasn't the best NOVACON I've ever been to, I quite enjoyed the convention. And for the most part the only aimless wandering I did was on those occasions when I left Chuck, Geri, Vinz, Martin, Zy, Dave Wood, and whoever else was at our table at the time, to take a piss or to clear my head (that air-conditioning was murder). Once again, it seems, fiction appears as fact in Britain's so-called newszines.

MOTIONS And here it is, a new decade already! I wrote the above con report the weekend after NOVACON. It's sat on disc since then due in large part to events in Eastern Europe. I've always been a news-junkie, rushing home from work every night in order to catch the six o'clock news and discover whether or not anything earth-shattering has happened while I laboured. In November it did, and it's been happening ever since. The opening of the Berlin Wall on my birthday (and I can't think of a better present) signalled a dramatic acceleration of the already incredible changes underway in the East, and since then I've been even more of a news-junkie than usual, watching more TV, reading everything on the changes I can, and discussing them in letters and in apazines. We appear to have come to an important crossroads, one of the major pivotal points of this century, and the international order that's been in place all my life may soon be swept away. When the assumptions on which the superpower relationship that has existed since before you are born begin to crumble, and when the immediate future for Europe looks both as uncertain and as hopeful as it does, it's inevitable that anyone even the slightest bit plugged in to the world about them is going to want to grapple with the changes they're witnessing. In this I'm no exception, but it's time to get this stuff out now, hence this fanzine.

This next piece first saw print in a zine I did for an American APA some months back. What with the copies sent through the APA itself and a few print overruns

I sent out to certain fans, maybe 25 people in total have already read it, but enough of them have suggested it should have a wider audience that I'm reprinting it here. It's the story of what I did on my holidays, and is titled:

A CORFLU DIARY

Thursday 27th April 1989

My growing feeling that the omens were against us seemed to be confirmed when I found my assigned seat on the Northwest Airlines DC-9 taking Avedon and me from Washington DC's Dulles Airport to Minneapolis/St.Paul. At check-in I'd requested a window seat and been informed that the only one left was in the twenty-second row, at the rear of the plane. "Fine", I'd replied, "as long as I can see out I don't care." Imagine my surprise on discovering that the 'window' serving the back row of a DC-9 is in fact a solid and opaque section of the fuselage. Coming on top of my earlier discovery that I'd left a bag containing my camera and the book I was reading back at Avedon's folks' place, this naturally put a downer on the journey for me and I spent most of the flight sunk in depression. Matters were not helped by us arriving three-quarters of an hour late through having to avoid a storm front. Nonetheless, by the time we eventually landed at the Twin Cities airport my spirits had lifted a little and I was beginning to look forward to what lay ahead.

Spike and Johan Schimanski met us at the airport and drove us to Geri Sullivan's house in South Minneapolis, where we'd be spending the night, then left for Luke McGuff's place. Chuck and Sue Harris were already at Geri's, having arrived from the UK an hour or so earlier, and we greeted them warmly, welcoming them to America. Geri was exactly as I'd imagined she would be from reading her letters and fanzines, a mass of energy and bubbling enthusiasm. I liked her immediately. After she had fed us, Geri drove the four of us over to the pre-con party at Fred Haskell and Susan Levy's place, dropping Avedon, Sue, and me off while she and Chuck continued on to the airport to pick up Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden.

The Gillilands, Art Widner, Don Fitch, and Lenny Bailes were already there when we arrived, and we were soon joined by Moshe Feder, Lise Eisenberg, Luke McGuff, Spike, P&T, Chuck, newlyweds Jim & Kathryn (Craemer) Young, and various local MN-Stfers, not all of whose names I caught, I'm afraid. Avedon asked if smoking was allowed and was informed by Fred Haskell that not only was it allowed but actively encouraged, in a tone that told me instantly that he was grateful for 'allies' in what was probably a predominantly non-smoking local fandom. His fiancée, Susan Levy, was pretty striking and bore a remarkable resemblance (insofar as a human being can bear a resemblance to a cartoon character) to the title character of the OMAHA THE CAT DANCER comic produced by local fans Reed Waller and Kate Worley. Avedon and Chuck also noticed this, but we were assured the resemblance was accidental.

Many of the people at the party were old friends, most of whom I hadn't seen since CONSPIRACY some eighteen months earlier, so we had a lot of catching up to do. As well as a number of the splendid pads produced for the con, Geri had also brought along the computer/word processor hired to enable Chuck to fully participate in con panels, and before the night was out he already had a couple of pages on disk towards a con report.

Friday 28th April 1989

The first day of CORFLU 6, the fanzine fan's convention, and for some of us it

got off to a spectacular start. Around midday, when it was time for us to leave for the con hotel, Geri announced: "Your limo awaits!" I smiled, imagining this to be an exaggeration born of enthusiasm and, hefting our absurdly heavy suitcases, struggled out to the perfectly ordinary auto that awaited. Only it wasn't an ordinary auto: it was a fucking honest-to-God full-grown limousine! "Jesus!", I whispered, as the suitcases slipped from my hands. Geri was outside already, enjoying hugely the expressions on the faces of Avedon, Sue, Chuck, and me as we each came out in turn and caught our first sight of the monster. With oldtime Minneapolisite Jim Young (now a DC-area resident) acting as guide and Kathryn Craemer as hostess (she was doling out the champagne, ale, and other liquid goodies that had been so thoughtfully provided), we were taken on a tour of Minneapolis and its suburbs, a truly scenic city, ending at UNCLE HUGO'S SCIENCE FICTION BOOK STORE - where I bought a hardback of Delany's THE MOTION OF LIGHT ON WATER as a present for Avedon, and was delighted to find a used copy of Damon Knight's THE FUTURIANS for \$2, a basic text for a fanhistorian such as myself and a book I'd been looking for for years. We stayed at UNCLE HUGO'S for maybe forty minutes before eventually piling back into the limo and being driven to the Normandy Inn, venue for CORFLU 6. Our transport had been a nice touch, and I was well-chuffed. After all, how many other fans can claim they've been driven to an SF bookstore in a limo?

Since the con proper wouldn't start until early evening Avedon and I spent most of the afternoon in the bar with Jim, Kathryn, George Flynn, Art Widner, and others, talking fandom, SF, absent friends and the like. As the afternoon wore on more and more people began to show up. Pat Mueller was 'with child', as they say, but hers wasn't the only pregnancy at CORFLU. Dana Siegel went one better than Pat by actually giving birth during the con to a son, Zoltan. Pat, Avedon, Jeanne Gomoll, Patrick Nielsen Hayden, and I had a meal in the hotel restaurant a little later. I had a steak and once again noticed, as I had been noticing all during this trip to the US, that the quality of restaurant and diner food had declined since I was last in America two years earlier. In fact, I would go so far as to say that these days the quality of food for those eating out in the UK is probably higher than for those eating out in the US. Britain has a reputation for bad food, one that was fully deserved up until as recently as six or seven years ago but isn't any longer. A number of those American fans who were at both the '79 and '87 Brighton Worldcons remarked to me that while they hadn't much enjoyed eating out at the former con it had been a pleasure at the latter. I agree with them, but the connection between Britain and bad food is so ingrained in many people's minds that it may never be broken.

By the time we left the restaurant CORFLU was up and running and still more people had shown up. Hope Kiefer gave me a hug, and I finally got to meet Andi Shecter, Stu's significant other and the person who finally got him out of women's underwear ("It was comfortable, but the time had come" explained Stu). I was introduced to Emma Bull (like many of those present I really enjoyed her book WAR FOR THE OAKS and am sorry I wasn't in Minneapolis long enough to do the tour of those places that appear in it), renewed my acquaintance with Taral, greeted Nigel Rowe (who is this man and why does he keep following me around, from country to country?), and retrieved my bag and camera from Ted White, who'd called in on Avedon's parents on my behalf and brought it along to the con with him. Andy Hooper was handing out fanzines, as were all manner of people (I was one of them, with PULP #12 and THEN #2), and I pulled in a fair crop. Here memory dissolves into a pleasant haze of conversation and laughter, none of which comes into focus until the point at which I crashed out (around 1.15am), and returned to our room, where I was dismayed to discover Avedon and Patrick &

Teresa loudly and smokily discussing British fanpolitics. Though I was trying to sleep they carried on with this for another two hours, and I was in a foul mood when I eventually drifted off.

Saturday 29th April 1989

At 8.15am we were all awoken by the phone ringing, a wake-up call apparently booked to the wrong room. None of us was able to get back to sleep but since, on my performance so far this trip, this was around the time I would've awoken anyway I wasn't too perturbed. Not so the others. Thinking thoughts of karmic justice I headed out for a breakfast of bacon double-cheeseburger at the local Burger King (and was deeply unimpressed by their service), leaving the others to their coffee and the long process of 'coming-to'.

CORFLU's noon opening ceremony began sharply at 12.45pm with Fred Haskell impromptuing at the podium in lively and amusing fashion, and continued with Jon Singer performing strange incantations. Jeanne Gomoll followed this with a very funny reading of her fanzine article 'Burning Barbie', which led to her con badge being 'Shiffmanized' (a process of personalisation carried out by Stu on the badges of at least half those present) to read 'Jeanne Gomoll - Barbie Burner' under a drawing depicting a match being applied to the unfortunate doll. Next was a 'debate' on methods of fanzine duplication with the audience being divided into 'traditional' and 'modern' camps. Despite doing much of my actual writing on wp (this, for instance) most of my duplication is done on the trusty Gestetner in my den so I naturally sided with the trads. It was of course an artificial debate, but since fans will argue about anything (it's one of their most endearing/infuriating qualities) a good-natured debate was soon in full flow. In no time we had been characterised by the mods as Luddites wedded to the potato-cut and tray of hekto-jelly, and Lenny Bailes was soon referring to us as "the potato-peelers", a name gleefully taken up by others on his side of the room. The main failing of the trads, I feel, was that we didn't come back with a name for the mods for what, after all, is any debate without a healthy dose of name-calling?

The next two items were a panel on fan-funds (interesting, but I won't go into the details here as you can probably supply most of the arguments yourselves) and one on the pro/fan divide and the awkwardness sometimes felt by those with a foot in both camps. Since this featured, among others, P&T, Emma Bull, and Kathryn Craemer, I was tempted to stay for it, but I was also hungry so when Jerry Kaufman and Suzle suggested a meal in the coffee shop I went with them.

Spent the rest of the afternoon sitting around chatting before going off for dinner in hotel restaurant with Chuck & Sue, Ted, Geri, and Jeff Schalles. Later, I spent a while talking fanhistory with Joe Siclari and Moshe Feder, two people particularly interested in the subject, and surprised them both with the link I'd uncovered between fandom and the Beatles (as I'd earlier surprised Ted with it when I visited him in Falls Church during the first part of our trip). In fact, Joe seemed to think I was pulling his leg at first but I wasn't, and the full story will be in the next issue of THEN. The evening was rounded out by a long session around a table at the poolside, with Ted, Teresa, Moshe, Joe, Fred & Sue, Don Fitch, Lenny Bailes et al. Ted was holding court and regaling us with tales of his early days in New York fandom, stuff I'm a sucker for. As always, I was impressed by Ted's stentorian tones, but his wasn't the deepest voice I heard this trip. Having been brought up in a household whose father was almost deaf, Avedon developed a strong voice, as did her mother. These, however, are the women of the family. Her brother's voice has to be heard to be believed.

Rick's voice is the deepest I've ever encountered. Though we've met before, this trip was the first time I noticed his voice was so deep that when he spoke to me my chest-bone vibrated! Ted really couldn't compete. Bed beckoned some time around 3am, and I answered its seductive call.

Sunday 30th April 1989

Muffins and coke, chips and ranch dip, turned out to be a surprisingly pleasant way to start the day and I was one of four or five hardy souls who breakfasted thus in the con suite around 10.30am. Most everyone else was still abed but Susan Levy had gotten up and dashed about putting this repast together. It was, however, a mere appetizer...

The traditional CORFLU buffet/banquet was at noon. I managed to rouse my reluctant roomies in time for this, and the food wasn't bad. As usual at CORFLUs, the GoH was chosen by having his name pulled from a hat - and this time it was Stu Shiffman. The Madison group formed a human pyramid for him, and he got to listen as various people (Andi, Avedon, Jeanne Gomoll, Moshe, and Andy Hooper) came to the podium and delivered testimonials to him. There are people who have been honoured more by fandom but few, I think, held in such genuine affection by so many of us. Jeanne Gomoll gave her Toastmaster's speech next, a stunningly good piece perfectly delivered, one at times clever and funny, moving and inspiring, that I will not spoil for those who have yet to read it by trying to excerpt from it here. Both Avedon and Chuck tried to get the typescript for publication immediately afterwards, and it ultimately saw print in PULP #15.

The final 'business' of this session was the auction. Conducted largely by Joe Siclari (with assistance from Jerry Kaufman) it raised money for TAFF, DUFF, the Harris Fund, and CORFLU variously. The prices were pretty impressive for the most part, a set of the first 44 issues of Terry Carr and Ron Ellick's late-'50s newszine, FANAC, being knocked down for \$215, and Moshe Feder picking up five copies of NOVAE TERRAE (circa 1937/8 and donated by Vinç Clarke) for \$150.

Those who had to be in work tomorrow began leaving soon after this, and Avedon and I only just managed to catch Patrick and Teresa in time to say goodbye. Around 5.30pm or so, we went out to eat with Emma Bull, Will Shetterly, Jon Singer, and John M. Ford (known as "Mike" to friends) On the way we passed a turnoff to Cretin Avenue, a name which made me laugh, not surprisingly.

"Guess what the high school on that road is called." said Will.

"Not...Cretin High?" I replied.

"That's right. There are many other Cretin Highs in the US, but that's the only one that cops to it. It's a private school, too"

"I can just see them supporting their school team on sports days: 'Go Cretins, Go!'"

We ate at a Tex-Mex joint called 'La Cucuracha' (I know it's a common name for Mexican restaurants but it still seems odd eating at a place whose name translates as 'The Cockroach'). Good food, good conversation, good time, nuff said. Back at the Normandy it appeared that those fans who hadn't gone home had gone out to eat and it was curiously depopulated, a situation remedied when the diners returned. By my estimate, we had some 60% of the convention staying over so another night of fun looked set. And so it was, the usual haze from which little can later be reconstructed followed and a good time was had by all. The evening ended with Art Widner showing slides of '40s fandom and Jeff Schalles

showing slides from the early-'70s. Hard to believe rich brown was ever so thin, which led me to ponder the possible lack of permanence of my own waistline.

Monday 1st May 1989

Breakfasted with Spike at LE PEEP and finally got the lowdown on the tensions in Madison fandom that I'd been hearing about. Fandom is much the same everywhere, it seems. Avedon and I checked out of the Normandy at noon and got a lift back to Geri's with Canadian fans Catherine Crockett and Colin Hinz. CORFLU might be over so far as the hotel and most of its attendees were concerned, but for us it still had another day to run.

Byerly's is a rather large and magnificent supermarket (it featured in Jonathan King's piece on Minneapolis on his ENTERTAINMENT USA show on British TV) and that afternoon it was visited by a contingent of fans consisting of Geri, Chuck & Sue, Moshe, Lise, Catherine, Art Widner, Avedon, and me. Working for a major UK grocery chain, I had a certain professional interest in the store. I bought some imported beer (Bass) and some dips (mainly jalapeno and that rather delicious ranch dip I'd had for breakfast the previous day) towards the party at Geri's that night and, like the others, marvelled at one particular sculpture on sale in the gift store. There, among the Lalique and Waterford crystal was a bust of Ronald Reagan that its creator (clearly a sick man) wanted \$3000 for. That was too rich for my blood but seeing it had whetted my appetite and I decided that I wanted a souvenir of the great man for myself, something intimate yet inexpensive. I wondered idly whether Byerly's stocked Ronald Reagan dartboards....

There were maybe 40 people at Geri's in the evening, now familiar faces such as those of Fred & Susan, Will & Emma, Stu & Andi (but not Moshe & Lise, whom we'd had to say goodbye to at Byerly's) mixed with those of MN-Stfers who hadn't been at CORFLU, with the result that I hadn't met them. Denny Lien was one of these. The others all seemed to be large and bearded and named David, the men too. I chatted to Sue Harris for a fair bit and was delighted that she really seemed to have enjoyed the con. Never having been involved in our little sub-culture it was always on the cards that she wouldn't. Towards the end of the evening, I got into a long conversation with Stu and Jeff Schalles about the preservation of old fanzines and photographs, a discussion occasioned by the slides Art Widner had shown at CORFLU, slides made from old photos. A lot of early fans have been dying off in recent years, and in some cases their collections of fanzines and early fannish memorabilia have gone with them. A systematic and organised programme of making slides is a good idea for photos (a large club/group funding or fund-raising for the project and agreeing to store the slides and make copies available at cost to those who want them), but I have another idea for fanzines. Not being a computer buff I'm not sure how feasible this idea is, but it strikes me that scanning old zines and storing them on floppy disks would be a good way of preserving them. Disks are easy to copy and hardcopy could presumably be made with most any dot-matrix or laser printer. What I don't know is the time such scanning would take, or how the zines would have to be filed on the disk to make page by page access easy.

I like the idea of anyone who wants a set of HYPHEN being able to get a copy of them on disk, and I like even more the idea of the really early stuff being made available. I mean, a collection such as Vinç Clarke's holds what may well be the only remaining copies of some early UK zines - and thanks to the trashy paper some of them were printed on they're deteriorating rapidly. I think some sort of preservation and access programme ought to be organised (a project for CORFLU to

sponsor, maybe) and would like someone who knows more about computers than me to explain what it might entail.

Tuesday 2nd May 1989

Yet again I was the first up, so I ambled over to Geri's neighbourhood Burger King and had a bacon double cheeseburger. It's not that I particularly like Burger King, more that it was all that was available. (When I want fast food why aren't there ever any Taco Bell's around, I wonder?) I dropped off the remaining US copies of PULP at the local post office, amusing myself while waiting in line by perusing the FBI wanted posters pinned up by the counters. They catalogued an amazing array of death and mayhem, making me profoundly grateful for British restrictions on public ownership of guns.

When Geri and Jeff eventually got up they, Chuck & Sue, and Avedon & I, looked at Geri's slides of last December's TROPICON in Florida, the one that Walt & Madeleine Willis were guests at. Walt's trip report THE ENCHANTMENT had been on sale at CORFLU and I was carrying back a bundle to sell in the UK for TAFF. (I flogged them off at MEXICON III, raising E60 - and succeeded in selling Steve Green his copy twice.)

Shortly before 4pm we all set off for the airport, stopping briefly to take in Minnehaha Falls. At the airport we sat around until Avedon and I boarded our flight at 5.30pm (Jeff was also flying out today, leaving for New York about a half hour after our departure). Chuck was effusive with his goodbyes, Geri gave us both hugs, and then we were off - back to Britain and everyday life.

When I'd arranged our seats I'd asked for a window seat "Anywhere but over the wing". I imagine you're ahead of me at this point. Yes, to give our time in Minneapolis a certain symmetry those wonderful folks at Northworst had given me a seat right over the exact centre of the wing! Fortunately, the jumbo was more than half empty so I was able to get myself a choice seat before take-off and to watch wistfully as Minneapolis fell away beneath us. It had been a great con.

At some indeterminate point over the Atlantic it became...

Wednesday 3rd May 1989

and we landed at Gatwick around 8:45 local time, returning to a surprisingly hot and humid Britain and to climatic conditions more unpleasantly hot than any we'd encountered in America. Jet-lagged, we slept through a large part of the next 24 hours.

Sunday 7th May 1989

Yep, that's the date as I write this report. This time last week I was at CORFLU. I wish I still was. It only remains to thank Fred, Susan, Geri, Jon Singer, and Ken Fletcher for putting on such a good con, and to especially thank Geri Sullivan both for her hospitality and for being one of the main forces behind the fund that finally succeeded in getting Chuck Harris to an American convention, despite his worries. See, Chuck, I told you you'd have a good time.

This has been ETA 5 and it came to you from Rob Hansen, 144 Plashet Grove, East Ham, London E6 1AB, UK. Thanks as usual to Vinç Clarke for the electrostencils. STOP DUPER! RETURN TO THE FORBIDDEN PLANET wins Olivier Award for Best West End Musical! I think it just went from cult-status to mega-hit. © Rob Hansen 1990.