

# gambit 47

is edited, published, and usually written by Ted White, whose new address is 339 - 49th St., Brooklyn 20, New York, U.S.A. GAMBIT is a fanzine-within-a-fanzine; under most circumstances my editorial column in VOID. Sometimes, as here, it reverts to previous status and Walks Alone.

HELLO OUT THERE! I pulled a slight change in schedule this year, and I'm holding my annual genzine publishing gafia in the spring instead of the fall. I figured it out: why waste time and effort putting out my best zines of the year at a time which will render them all but forgotten when Poll-Time comes round...? Seriously, however, lovely rationalization though that may be, the real reason for VOID's annual delay is that we've moved out to Quiet Brooklyn, and the focal point that was NY fandom, Towner Hall I, is no more. Towner Hall II is considerably larger, being consolidated with our living quarters in a seven-room duplex apartment. The place has required a good bit of fixing up to suit our tastes (and this is by no means finished), and the job of Moving all of the mounds of stuff from both the Hall on West 10th St. and our apartment (four flights up!) on Christopher St. all the way out here was fantastically time and energy consuming. I'd like to publicly thank all the fine people who helped us with this: Les Gerber (who helped more than anyone else, contributing most of his free time over a period of several weeks), Andy Main, Fred von Bernowitz, Terry Carr, Pete Graham, Ebob Stewart, George Willick, Dan Adkins, Steve Stiles, and no doubt at least one other whose name has slipped my mind at this crucial moment. Thanks, all.

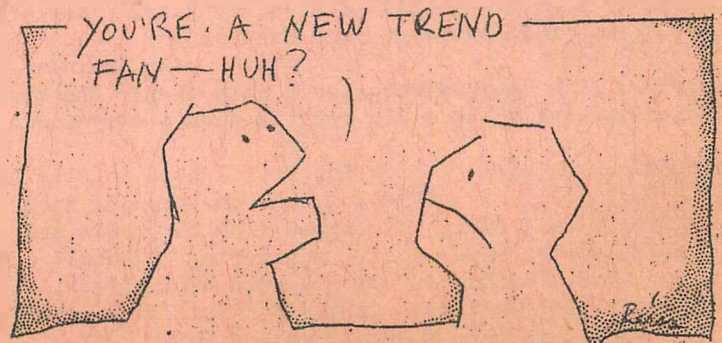
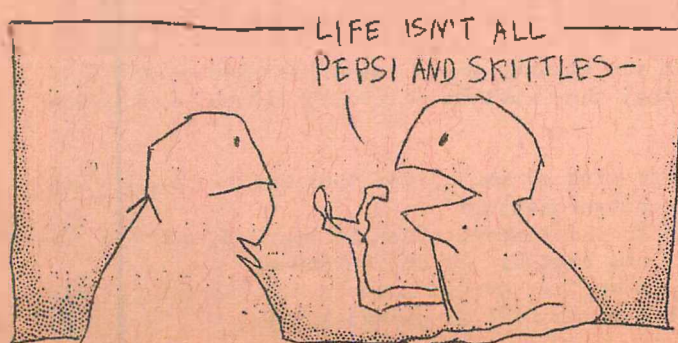
Things have certainly changed drastically around here, what with moving and all. Jock Root helped me install a new stereo system (which is a Fine Thing). I trimmed my massive beard to a mere goatee, and with luck I shall soon hold a Real Job. I know this will be bracing news for my fans in Newark; they've been sweating over rumors that I couldn't afford a lawyer, that my wife was supporting me, and all that...

My reason for publishing this issue of GAMBIT is a very simple one: I have some things to say. Much of the material which follows was written for inclusion in VOID (and under this same title), but since VOID has been delayed and some of my material is of a detable nature, I'm publishing it here.

THE FAN ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS: Are not intrinsically worthless. I think entirely too many fans have allowed themselves to be swayed by the emotional issues involved in the Prosser statuette, the supposed committee misunderstandings, and Willick's own notariety. The statuettes were junked as of last fall, and the rest has nothing to do with the awards themselves. Of course if I was running the show, I'd handle it quite differently, and so would you, but the way to get what you want in the way of Fan Awards is to work for an improvement of existing plans--not to bomb-shell everything which doesn't exactly meet your specifications. I've had my doubts about various aspects of fan awards in general, but I think it's about time we asserted ourselves at conventions to the extent of recognizing fandom and fandom's achievements as well as those of various second-rate pulp writers and hack movie and TV producers.

It may not be apparent at an extravaganza-type convention (and frankly the Chicon-Nycon-Pittcon-Chicon 3 type conventions give me a pain right in my Bigger-and-Better), but conventions are wooed and won from fans, put on largely by fan labor, and for the most part financed by fan money. An annual recognition of these Forgotten Men at the grandicus flops our Dave Kyles and Earl Kemps produce for self-aggrandizement seems not inappropriate.

Unfortunately, the issue has been greatly muddied by two things: 1) George Willick's personal eccentricities (to use charitable terminology); and 2) an apparently semi-organized opposition to Fan Awards qua Fan Awards among a number of midwestern fans who consider themselves big shots on the convention circuit. Depending on your point of view, either the latter group has prodded Willick into some rash actions, or Willick has prodded them into some rather strong reprisals. What is being lost in the shuffle, amidst



the clash of personalities, is the actual issue of the fan awards themselves. Motives seem murky, but I am greatly perturbed by the fact that at the 1961 Midwestcon, almost a year ago, certain factions were already attacking the idea of fan awards, despite the fact that none had then been proposed. I am equally bothered by the actions of the Chicon committee, which has been trying to block the outside presentation of any Fan Awards on its program (while still bowing deferentially to the utterly assinine Big Heart awards) for no reason discernable to me; and by the tactical move of Howard Devore in calling for a vote to shelve the awards. Anyone who is familiar with SAPS knows that Devore, for his own reasons, is rather violently opposed to George Willick (whom he compared with Degler), and the terminology of his attack on the fan awards makes it plain that he equates the two.

It's a neat trick: take an idea which fandom as of late last summer was in favor of, and then suggest that no one really is after all, smudge a few reputations, and call for a new vote (on the ridiculous grounds that none had ever been taken!). Unless the odds are heavily against you, you'll succeed in torpedoing the idea. Yet, the very desperation of such a move strikes me as false: what could happen if we did not call for a vote as Howard did? One thing--the awards would be left to flounder or succeed on their own hook.

I have no idea why, if he was so certain fandom did not endorse the Fan Awards, Howard did not simply do this. The awards need more than votes; they need the monetary contributions. A poor showing on votes and contributions would have been as effective a vote of No Confidence from fandom as any straw-vote such as AXE conducted. And it would be quite a good deal more valid. Can it be that Devore, or parties friendly with him, were opposed to the idea that the Awards might have succeeded? I don't know. As I said, things are murky from where I sit.

But I think the timing of the present attacks upon Willick and the Fan Awards from certain obvious quarters should be viewed with suspicion, and it is certain that a lot of air needs clearing. There's dirty linen on both sides of the fence.

**GODS & HEATHEN:** Tied into the above are my sentiments regarding the curious dichotomy of Fans & Pros which while put to rest in the fanzines almost ten years ago still flourishes on the convention floors.

Let's face it: there is nothing inherently superior or inferior about either fans or pros. We're all human beings with failings and graces. When we forget artificial distinctions we all get along together pretty well, the only intrusion being the perennial one of individual personalities. Fans no longer seriously speak of "dirty pros" as they once did, when bitterness and distrust ran high between the two. Why, this year the editor of F&SF won the distinction of being Best New Fan Of The Year...

And yet a few wish to maintain the social boundaries. Sadly, most of these are pros or would-be pros, whose own feelings of insecurity in Mundane have led them to insist upon a rigid and artificial microcosm where they may play God. I've mentioned specific individuals in the past in this connection. One of them, a woman some-time writer, makes it a point to even snub the writers she considers lower caste than herself, and her deportment at conventions has been the personification of rudeness. One ex-proeditor, a fat old lecher, has been known to push fans out of his way with a pudgy hand in their faces--usually in the pursuit of a fan's wife or girlfriend. Another, a rather insignificant writer of insignificant science fiction, whose fame rests largely upon his organization of his fellow writers into an ersatz fanclub, has asked fans of talent why they stick around in fandom when they could enjoy his superior company. And so it goes: a small but militant minority escaping the failures of Life with pseudo-successes in the Fantasy World. Strangely, these individuals who most value their superiority over the lowly fan are those who most enjoy appearing at conventions in hopes of being lionized, and yet they are the most careful to maintain a distance from the run of the mill fan. At conventions they seem to regard as being held in their honor (and sometimes they're right), they spend most of their time carefully cloistered in a special nook of the bar.

These selfish tin Gods are, thankfully, still a distinct minority, and there's hope to believe that their numbers decrease with every year. They are, after all, greatly outnumbered by the Davids, Shaws, Budyrses, and many others.

At the next con you attend, don't let these Microcosmic Gods annoy you with their discourtesy; pity them. Remember that they must be painfully reduced in circumstances to wish to be a Big Frog in such a tiny pond.

**BRINGING UP FATHER:** "Dick Lupoff," I said to Dick Lupoff with my mouth, for that was his name, "why have you this unreasoning fear of chitterchatter?"

"Gosh," said Dick. He leaped from his chair and ran to the window. Then he bounced back and leapfrogged into the chair again, murmuring "Shazam!" under his breath. "I don't know--"

His wife, Pat Lupoff, interrupted him. "Dear, there's another garden hose in our bathtub again!"

"Well, just wait till it thaws," said Dick Lupoff, his mouth full of peanut butter.

"I wanted to take a bath," wailed Pat.

"Well, I don't know," Dick said. He waved his arms.

The doorbell rang. Lupoff rocketed from his chair and narrowly beat Snoopy to the door. Both barked frantically.

"Well, hello, Bhob," Dick said, enthusiastically. He greeted Bhob Stewart warmly. "I see you're early for your stint as Art Editor of XERO!"

"Uhhmm, yes," replied Bhob, wiping the peanut butter from his cheek. "Now that I'm not working, I've got more time, if less money. I've got the offset copies with me for the special art section, and--"

"Fine! Now just sit down," Dick Lupoff set up the mimeoscope in front of Bhob, "and see if--"

"--they cost every cent on me, and--"

"--see if you can't get the last twelve pages done on XERO 9, so you can get started on XERO 10, which will be our last issue and for which I want lots of art, and...here, Bhob, relax. Would you like a cookie? You look peaked."

"--and I had to walk the forty-two blocks from the printers because I didn't have subway fare." Bhob's voice ended in a gurgle.

"Dick, about this issue of VOID you reviewed," I said, thrusting a copy of VOID 28 into the gap in the conversation.

"Yeah, just a minute, Ted," Dick Lupoff said. "I'm feeling kind of queasy around the midriff." He bounded off towards the bathroom. "Pat!" I heard him shout; "What are you doing with that garden hose?"

I looked around, somewhat dazed, and noticed Bhob sitting rather quietly in a chair with his legs drawn up around his head. "I'm wearing new pants and I want to keep them out of Snoopy's reach," he said.

"Say, Bhob," I asked, "what's going on around here? This place is a--"

Before I could finish, I heard the phone ring and be answered, Dick Lupoff's cheerful voice coming distinctly through the two closed doors separating us.

"Hello? Yes! CAPTAIN MARVEL #14 is up two bits? Sell. I can always pick up another when the market rebounds. No, no, hold the WHIZ COMICS. Yes, hold them. I think we're going to get a big rise on those numbers... Yes, fine. Okay. Goodbye."

"You guys over at Towner Hall think you're the leaders of New York Fandom," Bhob said, sadly, gently. "You just don't know." He reached into a nearby wastebasket, and pulled out the tattered remnants of a fanzine. I looked closely at the white confetti emblazoned here and there with spots of black and orange. "Here," Bhob said, "here is your fanzine, VOID 28. It was, heh, 'reviewed' by Snoopy before Lupoff ever bothered to review it."

"But, but--" I sputtered, "how could he review a zine which he couldn't even read?"

"Dick doesn't find that a necessary requirement for fanzine reviewing," Bhob said. "He--"

Suddenly the door banged open and Dick Lupoff shot back into the room with the odor of burning rubber curling from his shoes.

"Well, Ted White!" he announced; "Where were we?"

"Never mind," I said. "I was just leaving anyway."

JOE GIBSON vs. EVIL: I've been alternately amused and disgusted at Joe Gibson's recent campaign in SHAGGY and G<sup>2</sup> to prove what a Great Big Man he is, particularly in relation to the rest of us defenseless faaans. At the outset I should say that arguing with Joe about what he did or did not mean to say in his articles would be sheerest idiocy, inasmuch as he has submerged most if not all of his actual points in some of the murkiest first-drafting and chest-thumping I've seen in ages.

However, several of his points do stand out with enough relief to command attention. One of them appears to be that fans are inherently suckers for their fellow fans, and indeed they are so gullible that they won't even blow the whistle on known "Cheats, Frauds," and etc. Joe wants us to staunchly name names, if I read him right, and spread this information where it will do the most good.

Funny thing, though: almost all such cases which I am familiar with occurred to fans whose eyes were wide open, or before any fans had an inkling of dishonesty in connection with the party involved. Fr'instance: a fan (we'll call him Nameless Nameless Jr.) was active several years ago, moving about the country, contributing to marital strife, and swiping & hocking typewriters from his hosts. After these pedations had added up, fans who'd been taken in by Nameless put their heads together, pooled knowledge (and in the process solved several other puzzling disappearances of valuables), and taxed Nameless Jr. with his crimes. Today he is residing, very quietly, in Joe Gibson's own area, surrounded by fans who know full well what a petty crook and betraying moocher he is. To the best of my knowledge, he moves freely in their society, throws parties for them, and is fully accepted as a part of them. I don't know why; recent reports indicate that he still makes his living illegally.

Now what good is it to name names when Nameless Nameless Jr.'s prospective victims already know all about him and still associate with him?

On the other hand, to name names is often to lay oneself open to legal action. To my personal knowledge, Nameless Nameless Jr.'s crimes are sufficiently serious so that should I name him and his crimes, unless I could prove them to the satisfaction of the police I would be open to a quite serious

charge of libel. And, unlike the current \$75,000.00 fiasco, he'd have one hell of a good case.

Lately I've heard totally unsubstantiated and highly questionable rumors about another possible Nameless whose reputed actions are heinous, and were I to nonchalantly name names and share these rumors with you here without absolute proof of their validity, I most certainly would be sued. (And, were such rumors false, I'd damn well deserve to be sued.) In this case any naming of names will have to rest with the protagonists, and I'm jolly glad not to be one of them.

Thing is, naming names in reference to ordinary run-of-the-mill fan gossip is one thing, but naming names in conjunction with reputed crimes, large or small, is quite another story. "Joe Blow leaves dirty underwear behind him when he visits fans" is perhaps a scintillating tidbit (if your name is Joe Gibson), but "George Kschnutz is peddling opium" is a charge so serious and so damaging if unsubstantiated or false, that a fan must think twice before making it casually in print.

So, what should you do if you catch a fan red-handed in a criminal act? It depends, of course, on what he's done/doing, and how much influence you exert over him. He could bash you over the head with your stolen tape recorder and make a clean exit. But presuming you've got the edge on him, you have several choices open.

1. Ask him to be a good boy, and set him free. (I'm being a trifle sarcastic, but sometimes there are extenuating circumstances and this is actually the best course.)
2. Take him to or report him to the police. I'd say that if you know of and can prove a string of offenses, or the single crime you can prove is of sufficient size, your best bet is simply to deliver him to the law. They can take care of him better than you can. (Viz. Hal Shapiro, now spending time in a federal pen for stealing a car and driving it from Detroit to Florida...)
3. If you can recover your money or property, and would rather not prosecute, you can do something else which is quite effective (and is used by stores on shoplifters): have him sign a confession of guilt in front of witnesses, and retain this document. But be careful not to use this in any attempt to coerce him at a future date; that would let you open for charges of blackmail, possibly criminal blackmail. Such a confession acts as your guarantee; should you feel the necessity to expose him at a future date (motivated by his further predations upon fans) you have proof to back your charges, and are relatively legally safe. But odds are, with that document in your possession, you'll not hear another peep from him.

Each of these actions is superior to washing your dirty linen in public as Gibson advocates. But, there is a fourth method which has been used quite effectively in fandom for a long time: when you have reason to suspect a fan of predatory acts against other fans and he's moved or is moving to a new area, appraise the fans there, privately, of your suspicions. And if the reverse is true, check with fans where the suspect has lived. Try to check out your facts as thoroughly as possible before acting upon them, however, and judge your information at least to some extent by the possible bias of its source.

For instance, one time at a convention Fan A told me that Fan X was a user of narcotics, and that indeed certain events which had seemed to me peculiar were explained by the fact that X was making his "connection." I knew little about Fan X, and I tended to believe A. However, shortly thereafter I looked up Fan B, and asked him if he knew anything about X. "Why, yes," he said; "he's an addict." This confirmed the story, and I resolved to keep clear of X, despite his apparent friendliness and pleasant personality, because I distrusted associations with "uncool" people.

Years later, however, after I'd gotten to know Fan X much better and knew he was not and never had been a user of narcotics, I asked Fan B why he'd said X was an addict. "Fan A told me," he said. Fan A had told us both, apparently spreading this malicious rumor for reasons of his own. My mistake had been in not checking the rumor more thoroughly at the time, and in not tracing it back to Fan A. A, by the way, is someone I rarely speak to these days, while X has become a good friend.

Another example: in his Season report, circulated widely through four spas, Richard Eney printed a version of an incident about a fan he wisely identified only as "Sticky Fan X." The story was, as they say, "false and defamatory," and rather viciously so. No doubt speculation was rife--for fans love guessing games and the hints were abundant--and undoubtedly some correctly guessed "X's" identity. The other fans connected with the episode, F.M. Pusby and Jack Harness, corrected Eney, and Eney privately apologized (although no public correction has been forthcoming) to "X", but the damage was done. It is minor in comparison with what would've happened, though, if Eney had named names.

Now, personally I am all in favor of identifying the cheats, frauds, thieves, crooks, and suchlike who actually and seriously prey upon the friendliness of some fans. But I don't think Gibson has advanced the cause against these vermin one bit, nor do I think his methods are particularly valid. And I think fandom manages to handle those types pretty well as it is.

-Ted White