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Gilgamesh

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An Open Loc to CONVENTION GIRLS' DIGEST:

Dear Convention Girls,

Despite the extraordinarily accurate description on page one of the method by which fwa screens its potential members, allowing to party with them only those trufans who can be depended upon to pub their issues and possibly even issue their pubs by the end of the year (or was it "raise an issue in their pubs"?--no, Malcolm wouldn't have said that, for he'd have long known that saying such a thing would make me violently ill)...despite all these things (including these asides, which are more numerous than the rune ED COX DOODLE IN THIS SPACE in fanzines from Fandom's Golden Age published by fans who couldn't stencil artwork, and less to the point)...and more, such as my most enduring memory from the convention, which of course took place at the foot of Ted's mushroom and consisted of the serious constructive insurgent discussion I had with Dave Rike--because Avedon's line was busy--on the question of how many ways there are of digressing (which is nine points of Burbee's style, after all) while in some way known only to fans of Jonathan Livingston von Daniken contriving to write a sentence Jack Speer could speed-read...and even more than that--yea, even unto ellipses, which are getting redundant here--I must remain adamant in saying that I ultimately was forced to the conclusion that your report on the recent worldcon is a cataract of lies, half-truths, and falsehoods by ommission.

(Excuse me for a few seconds while I catch my breath [I don't mean this to be a digression.])

As one example of lies in your conreport, I with the certainty of Judith Hannah listing every use of the past tense in PONG point to the sentence, "Terry Carr rolls across the end of the bed and drops catlike to the floor." I was there, and though sometimes the past is dim I do often get short-term memory flashbacks, which makes my life seem a little like a Philip K. Dick novel read by (or perhaps to) someone wearing a tee-shirt whose legend proclaims BATTLESHIP GALACTICA IS CLOSE ENOUGH FOR FANAC, but which does cause me to see the past as a continuous scroll displayed in an unlit room where a sufferer from Farnsworth Wright's disease enables me to read it by shining a penlight directly over this, that, and then the next phrase; the results are fragmentary but very clear, and in one such moment kissed by the White Light, many minutes ago but still alive in my memory because even more minutes ago I forgot to keep breathing enhanced air, I relived the moment I rolled across the bed and dropped to the floor, and it wasn't at all catlike: it was done with a grace more like that of the wombat. I gyrated and plummeted to the floor like one stunned from reading an entire page of STICKY QUARTERS without a single typo, solely because I needed a secure place where I could take the Null-A pause --my need for this being occasioned by Dave Rike's remark that he had just finished writing a fifty-page Cultzine consisting from colophon to membership roster of a single sentence in which he used, at one time or another, every single key on his keyboard, upper and lower case, including his umlaut. You can see why this suddenly recalled interlude from my life remains engraved or perhaps engrammed on my brain like the work of Dale Enzenbacher in his next incarnation, so you must understand why I recognized this lie.

As to half-truths, I'll give you the benefit of the doubt, as I was just remarking to Dick Bergeron we should all do: quite possibly the incidents you describe, accurately enough but lacking the full context in a way that seems to give them different meanings (sometimes no meanings), stem not from a deliberate attempt to mislead, as for instance it would have been if you'd mentioned Rob Hansen's testimony to Avedon's probity but not mentioned that it was I who had asked him in front of Elmer Perdue and everybody if he could honestly do that (I liked his reductio ad absurdum explanation that Avedon always sees double whenever his name is mentioned), but rather, from stenciling of the original draft so unfortunately wonky that at times whole sentences, maybe even paragraphs, were inadvertently overlooked. I realize my willingness to put such a good light on this matter is even fairer-minded commentary than you've come to expect from me, but what the hell, Ted White recently agreed with at least two consecutive pages written by Joseph Nicholas, and he isn't even a saint (as Dick Bergeron was remarking to me recently).

I must give you an example of what I mean by a half-truth. You write, "Allyn goes over the waterfall with Rob Hansen. There are no witnesses." True enough, but you left out the fact that Jay Kay Klein actually took a photo of this event even though he didn't notice it: Jay Kay was photographing Timothy Zahn standing under the waterfall holding his Hugo for "Cascade Point," a fine example of Analog humor that I'm sure we'll see in that magazine's pages soon. So you were, I fear, misleading: there'll be about 100,000 witnesses when the photo's printed.

I suppose the falsehoods by omission in your conreport may be explainable, too, as something more benign than, for instance, telling Cesar Ramos he won't be able to vote in the next TAFF election (even if one thought it was true--that error has been made before in even less believable contentions about, um, somebody other than L. Ron Hubbard [or LRH, as we call him]). So I feel no hesitation in giving you the benefit of the doubt (or, as I like to call it, Saint's Option). I realize William Rotsler now says I'm not saintly, just bland, but I don't really care which one I am: whichever description is correct, it just describes me (as a holy man in Oregon once told me--no, not John Varley), so I do what I do...I know that sounds profound, but I'm not trying to be "preachy." The heavy things are really light, after all.

I don't think I can even count all the falsehoods--well, let's call them errors--by omission there are in your report, but one will be enough: I don't want to flog dead horses, or repeat myself a lot here, saying the same thing over and over. You didn't even mention that Andre Norton wasn't there, and that will probably make a lot of fans who don't know her think that she was there, and they'll be disappointed that they didn't get to meet her. (Dave Langford, for instance.) But fortunately, not only are the heavy things really light but the big things are really small. (This is 1984, as Greg Benford was telling me the other day.)

On balance I think CONVENTION GIRLS' DIGEST gets a 5 on my rating scale. I was bothered by the half-truths and errors by omission, but I don't think they'll drive anyone out of fandom so what the heck. As for the deliberate lie, I guess I of all people shouldn't complain about that, so never mind what I said. (I've never seen a wombat fall off a bed anyway.) And there were lots of funny things in the true parts, like: "'So how was Britain?' he enquires of Lucy. 'Great,' she responds, 'just great.'" So thanks for letting me have a copy; I'm going to file it between the 1984 Westercon Pocket Program and COSMAG Vol. 1 No. 1, March 1951, which has drawings in it by Jerry Burge.

Sincerely,

