



idea
Number 13

She 2007 Woodlark

Inside front cover
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Pemmi-Con Mooseletters can be downloaded at main.pemmi-con.ca/about/publications/

Proofreading help from Karen Johnson and Fred Levy Haskell. Photoshop masking and transparency rescue by Pat Virzi. All remaining errors belong to the editor.

Idea Volume 2, Number 13 **December 2023** **Geri Sullivan, Editor**

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A SMOTHRA publication. Member & Past President: fwa.
Founding member: Minnesota Fanzine Recovery Act. Fellow of NESFA.

Where was I, Jon?

Twenty-three years, that's not too many.

Well, yes, actually it is, but – in this case – it's better than 24, 37, 42, or 73. And it's good, so good, to be back.

Why now? The credit belongs to fan extraordinaire Alison Scott. This past April, she mentioned the Meet Cute she'd written. Being an old fan and tired, I asked, "What's a Meet Cute?" She told me. Not only that, she remembered my interest and a few weeks later, after recovering from Eastercon, she sent it to me. The subject line? "Meet-cute article possibly for Idea *"

Alison's introductory text consisted of the footnote: "*but you have to plan to pub your ish reasonably soon!" She agreed late

autumn qualified as soon enough, and I'm nearly making that.

As spring turned into summer, I mentioned my publishing plans in various conversations and more fans quickly offered a wealth of articles: fan fiction from Ted White; the ninth installment of "Adventures in the Wimpy Zone" from Jeff Schalles; filk lyrics from Lenny Bailes; an installment of Sandra Bond's TAFF trip report... I'm thrilled to be publishing all of these and more. It would be an embarrassment of riches if it weren't so darned gratifying.

Sue Mason has waited remarkably patiently since 2001 to see her cover art printed. For most of those years, I had a copy of it taped to my office wall, first in Minnesota and then in Massachusetts when



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Contributors:

Lenny Bailes
Sandra Bond
Randy Byers
Jeanne Gomoll
David Greenbaum
Lee Hoffman
Craig Hughes
Mikołaj Kowalewski
Sue Mason
Jeff Schalles
Alison Scott
Dan Steffan
Ted White

Please see page 117 for contributor contact information.

I moved from Toad Hall to Toad Woods in 2004. (With a 5-month interstitial stay with Joe Siclari and Edie Stern at Fanhihall where I learned how to properly season food from watching Joe in the kitchen.)

The Idea folders both physical and electronic contained other articles and letters that turned out to be surprisingly timeless, or enough of a trip down Memory Lane to be worthy of inclusion. And I reached out, asking for articles and art. You know, like a real faned and everything. The wheels may be rusty, but they haven't fallen off.

=====

So, where have the last 23 years gone? A few months after collating the pages of Idea 12, Jeff Schalles and I broke up. Amicably, which I am enormously grateful for and heartily recommend. I moved to Massachusetts and settled in at Toad Woods, bringing my graphic design business with me.

Randy Byers joined me as guest editor-publisher of Lee Hoffman's Science-Fiction Five-Yearly in 2006, and the 55-year-old publication won the Best Fanzine Hugo Award the following year. Yowser.

A few weeks after the Hugo Awards Ceremony, I learned that Marc Abrahams at Improbable Research was looking for someone "in the Boston area" who knew InDesign. The Pioneer Valley isn't commonly thought of as the Boston area, but my graphic design skills and InDesign expertise were the more important factors and I soon could legitimately and happily lay

claim to being an AIRhead. I was the graphic designer for the Annals of Improbable Research (AIR) for the next 14 years until I retired in 2022. Fortunately, I didn't have to retire from the Board of Governors of the Ig Nobel Prizes. Our meetings are the best. So. Much. Laughter.

Gavi Levy Haskell, my honorary niece, came to the Pioneer Valley in 2011. She graduated from Smith four years later then spent a year in London getting a masters degree in art history. Gavi lived and worked in Cambridge (the one in Massachusetts) before moving to New Haven and starting her Ph.D a year later. I love that she's near.

=====

Since 2000, Terry Hughes died. Jeff's and my dog Willow died. Mom died. Lee Hoffman died. Daddy died. Susan Palermo, Jim Young, Kate Yule, and Randy Byers all died of glioblastoma. My sister Sue died. Denny Lien died. So many more friends and loved ones died. You'll find articles and letters about some of them, *from* some of them, in these pages. They're gone; their words remain. We are fortunate in the latter, though certainly not the former.

My very favorite thing about aging (so far) is the expertise that comes from experience. My least favorite thing is all the obituaries.

So it goes. I intend to publish Idea 14 in 2024, so while I believe it's never too late to send a letter of comment, you might not want to wait until I'm 92 to send yours.

See you on the Funway. – Geri

ALISON and STEVEN's MEET CUTE: the EXTENDED FAANFICTION SCREENPLAY

by Alison Scott

SCENE: We are in a bar. From establishing shots we discover it is the bar of the Royal Angus Hotel in Birmingham. It is November 1988, and we are on the Saturday night of NOVACON 18. FANS are talking animatedly. ALISON, a young woman who is talking more animatedly than most of the rest, notices a man in the conversation. 'I don't think we've met,' she says. This man is STEVEN, a very clever and very cautious man in his late twenties. He is beginning to lose his hair, but ALISON does not realise this because she is rather short and he is rather tall.

At this point the scene shifts to the writers' room for this anecdote. WRITERS are arguing furiously. Do we need to clarify that ALISON is already married, but polyamorous? MIKE doesn't really appear much in this story, after all. Eventually, when the dust settles, ALISON and STEVEN will be together in a relationship that is monogamous apart from being just the tiniest bit fuzzy round the edges and which has persisted for far longer than ALISON and MIKE's starter marriage did.

RESEARCHER'S NOTE: The word 'polyamorous' first appeared in 1990 and was popularised when the

Usenet group alt.polyamory was formed in 1992. This makes it the first of multiple anachronisms and inconsistencies in this mess of an anecdote. For that matter, 'starter marriage' as a term first appears in a footnote in Douglas Coupland's 1991 novel *Generation X*. Also, this marriage was not strictly a starter marriage because it lasted rather longer than five years, but it totally was anyway. The phrase 'it totally was anyway' is obviously also anachronistic for this anecdote, which is, as we remember, set in 1988. Which was 35 years ago. Dear Lord we are all so very very old.

Back in the bar, CAROLINE is being helpful. CAROLINE is ALISON's fannish mentor, a handsome woman a few years older than ALISON who is at this point vastly better connected than ALISON is. She comes to the rescue here. 'Don't you know STEVEN? Everyone knows STEVEN, he comes to the City Lit SF group.' ALISON knows that this is the regular London SF evening class, and has attended on occasion when in London for the weekend. ALISON and STEVEN start a conversation and the world slips away as ALISON has eyes only for STEVEN (WRITERS: this is a terrible cliché and surely we can

do better?) At some point STEVEN mentions that one of his hobbies is ‘the Japanese game of the chess family’, as he does. ALISON replies ‘Shogi,’ realises that they have a deep love of board games in common, and this relationship is away to the races.

Over the next couple of hours, in a montage, FANS gradually leave the bar to go to room parties or to bed with their own or other partners, there was legit a lot more of that sort of thing going on in 1988, and at some point the only people left in the bar are ALISON, STEVEN and DRUNKEN FUCKWITS.

RESEARCHER’S NOTE: The term ‘drunken fuckwit’ later became closely associated with TOBES, but in this case it probably included people like GAMMA, DAVE MOORING and MARTIN SMITH, all of whom are notable because they were always in the bar late at night at cons and they all died young. When ALISON realised this, many years later, she significantly reduced her alcohol intake, especially when not in convention bars.

At this point, one of two scenes happened. ALISON does not have a great memory, especially when drinking (though she was drinking less in those days) and she does not remember which.

RESEARCHER’S NOTE: This directly conflicts with the previous paragraph, but was not an error; between 1988 and 2023 ALISON ramped up her drinking and then ramped it back down. Wait for the sequel anecdote FIFTY SHADES OF VOMIT.

STEVEN probably knows which scene it was, but this entire anecdote will be much less good if STEVEN is allowed to fact-check so that is definitely not going to happen; that’s why they call it faanfction.

SCENE A: The bar is now closing. ALISON says something like ‘I am having a lovely time and do not want to stop talking to you.’ This accurately reflects the balance of conversation: ALISON was talking more in those days. STEVEN says, ‘Oh, why not come back to my room’. ALISON thinks, not unreasonably, ‘Wahey I have pulled.’

SCENE B: ALISON and STEVEN are having a great conversation but are getting sleepy. ALISON says something like ‘I fancy a coffee.’ But the bar is not serving coffee at that time of night. STEVEN says, ‘I have coffee in my room.’ ALISON thinks, not unreasonably, ‘Wahey I have pulled.’

As they leave the bar, the camera pans over the grimy tables. As well as empty and near-empty glasses of various sorts, there are some slightly beer-stained copies of *Lip*, *Empties* and *FTT* and Erica Jong’s 1973 novel *Fear of Flying*, from which the term ‘zipless fuck’, referring to no-strings-attached casual sex, originates.

SCENE: A bedroom at the Royal Angus hotel. ALISON is very much expecting sex, not unreasonably. In a montage, we see ALISON and STEVEN sitting up all night talking and very much not having sex in a varied range of positions until it

gets light and they go for breakfast together. ALISON is thinking WHAT JUST HAPPENED? THIS WAS NOT THE ZIPLESS FUCK I ORDERED. There are also no mushrooms.

Later that day, Novacon ends and everyone goes home. (Everyone was going home on Sunday in those days.)

This is a historical romcom so we need to make clear for the benefit of young people in the AUDIENCE that, although the technology existed at the time, neither ALISON nor STEVEN have a mobile phone or the internet. Text messages were not invented until 1992. They do not exchange phone numbers at this stage because ALISON is irritated and STEVEN is oblivious.

SCENE: BRIAN, CAROLINE and ROGER's annual party in Wealdstone, THREE WEEKS LATER. FANS abound. ALISON and STEVEN are chatting animatedly in the kitchen. At some point STEVEN gets a word in edgeways and explains that he lives with his friend ANDY and they have just bought a flat together in Clapton.

At this point ALISON thinks, not unreasonably, 'I have acquired yet another gay best friend. FML.'

RESEARCHER'S NOTE: The use of the expression FML is an anachronism in this scene; this term was first documented in 2005. However it accurately reflects ALISON'S mental state at the time. The writers' room for this anecdote continues to hotly argue whether it's appropriate. For that matter, the term 'gay best

friend' doesn't really see use until the late '90s.

After the party ALISON returns home to Chester, empty-cunted.

RESEARCHER'S NOTE: The writers' room for this anecdote is even more conflicted on whether this expression is 'inappropriately crass' or 'funny', but it wins by two votes to one, with one abstention.

There is now a completely fictional SCENE in which ANDY and STEVEN sit and drink a beer on the IKEA sofa in their soulless, boxy, Clapton flat. Although ALISON later drank beer with ANDY and STEVEN on the IKEA sofa in their soulless, boxy, Clapton flat on many occasions, and had many conversations just like this one, she can't know what went on at this point, but for plot purposes it's necessary that the AUDIENCE learns some information.

ANDY is so short that even ALISON can spot that he's losing his hair, but he is larger than life. He will die later in this anecdote purely for the purposes of providing emotional growth to ALISON who had not previously had a close friend die. This will add contrast and resonance to the story and remind readers of the importance of taking opportunities. After all, YOLO.

RESEARCHER'S NOTE: While 'you only live once' is a longstanding phrase in the English language, with an exact citation from 1896 and similar expressions from long earlier, and the earliest documented use of the abbreviation YOLO is 1968, the abbreviation was not popularised until 2011.

ANDY is telling STEVEN about a FOXY CHICK. ANDY has many FOXY CHICKS in his life, and he numbers them in order of importance to him. ALISON will later become FOXY CHICK #7. The key thing they all have in common at this stage is that ANDY is not sleeping with any of them, though he later meets and marries JANE, who doesn't appear in any detail in this anecdote but who ALISON has been meaning to message on Facebook for a couple of years, ever since JANE congratulated KYLIE and ROBIN on their wedding and ALISON spotted ANDY and JANE's shared and very uncommon surname and thought, 'Huh, it's a small world.'

ALISON has not done this because there is no not-awkward way to message someone and say 'Hi, you probably won't remember me but I'm ALISON who is still happily married to STEVEN who was the flatmate and dear friend of your husband ANDY who died tragically a long time ago and would you like to be Facebook friends with STEVEN and/or me because it would be nice to know how you're getting on but I understand that you have probably moved on in a big way since the early '90s and that getting a message like this could be super upsetting in all sorts of ways because normally when we say "starter marriage" we don't mean one where one of the parties dies of cancer after a couple of years' and ALISON remains a coward in matters of the heart though she is gradually improving.

ANDY is not particularly beautiful but he is charming and witty, and much more successful with women than his hilarious stock of anecdotes about FOXY CHICKS who he clearly adores but who all reject him for one reason or another would suggest. At any rate, it is in the telling of one of these anecdotes that the AUDIENCE realises that ANDY is not even a bit gay and therefore it's quite likely that STEVEN isn't either.

ANDY and STEVEN also talk about their mortgage. The WRITERS' ROOM wants this not to be too clunky, but this story is set in 1988 and, for the benefit of people who were not even born in November 1988, we need to explain that the housing market had become super over-heated due to tax shenanigans. Groups of young adults, fearing that they would never otherwise be able to buy a property in London, were buying soulless boxy flats despite not being in romantic relationships, and then furnishing them from the brand new IKEA store in Wembley. The AUDIENCE realises that this is what has happened here.

Fortunately it is a two bedroomed flat, and even more fortunately STEVEN has the larger bedroom because it's hard to see how ALISON and STEVEN would physically fit into the smaller bedroom, let alone get any sleep; that's how small this bloody flat is. By 2023 standards it is of course palatial.

SCENE: A New Year's Party in COLIN's house in Cambridge.



Alison & Steven's 25th Anniversary dinner.

FANS abound. ALISON is beginning to suspect that STEVEN (a) is not gay and (b) actually quite likes her, but things are progressing very slowly indeed due to ENGLISH EMOTIONAL REPRESSION and a complete lack of the INTERNET. STEVEN explains that he will soon be in Chester for a few days on an audit visit to a government office there. They make no firm plans to meet, because they are both very very stupid.

RESEARCHER'S NOTE: There is no historical data for the exact sequence of events here, there are no contemporaneous notes, and none of it makes much sense. STEVEN could probably sort out the timeline but WHERE WOULD BE THE FUN IN THAT?

SCENE: The Bridge Street Rows in Chester. The weather is cold and it is pouring down with rain. STEVEN, smartly dressed in a suit and with a briefcase and black

umbrella, leaves work having finished for the day. He is surprised to run into ALISON who happens by pure chance to be doing a bit of shopping. She is a bit wet so he offers her half of the umbrella. They go to FRANCS, a bistro nearby that was famous at the time for being delicious and romantic, fall in love properly and permanently, and live happily ever after.

STEVEN's visit to Chester was not random. A sympathetic member of the admin team had rigged the selection for him having heard he had met a woman who lived there.

ALISON had been waiting, just out of the rain on the upper part of Bridge Street Row, and watching the street for signs of STEVEN for over an hour. She has never admitted this to him. Until now.

Years later, once this has all been untangled, STEVEN remembers the previous convention, WINCON, where he sat up very late into the night drinking coffee in his room, with JEFF, a man so tall that STEVEN could not tell whether he was balding or not. He now wonders whether JEFF was thinking WHAT JUST HAPPENED? THIS WAS NOT THE ZIPLESS FUCK I ORDERED.

JANE and ALISON became Facebook friends about twenty minutes after the first draft of this anecdote was produced because written down like that it did look a bit daft.

RESEARCHER'S NOTE: We have fact-checked this and STEVEN does not appear on the membership list for NOVACON 18. Was he even there?



Regarding Burnt Toast

by Jeff Schalles
September 7, 2023

I'll be seventy-two in October. My long-time physician told me at my recent check-up that I have the body of a 45-year-old. Ever since I read Linus Pauling's meta-analysis of vitamin C and the common cold, I've been taking 3 grams of time-release C. Yes, every fucking day. The time-release is the secret. It's also dirt cheap and there's always a bit of C sweeping-up the free radicals flowing through my arteries. I'm almost never sick.

I just finished reading a paperback book last night, "burnt toast," by Peter Gould, out-of-print for years. After college, I lived for a spring and into the summer at a place in New Hampshire called the Cold River Collective. I began reading "burnt toast" while living there, in the spring of 1973. My copy came from a table full of paperback books with the front covers torn off, in a grocery store

in New Hampshire. I'd heard of "burnt toast" from a college friend, David Riggle, now living in the U.K. The paperback got "lost" in my growing world of books sometime in the late '70s, but I never forgot about it. There was magic in that old paperback.

There were three old farm-houses and a bunch of cottages on the Cold River property. The Collective was up a winding road, following the Cold River. I only lived there for about 4 or 5 months while 3 of my college friends and I cooked up the idea of bicycling from the Cold River, traveling north to Canada, and riding west to British Columbia. By the time we got to Winnipeg we were exhausted from pushing against the west-to-east winds. Who knew? The two Bills gave up and put their bikes on a train going South to the States. Martin and I sold our bikes and

kept going, hitchhiking west on the Trans-Canada Highway.

While I was living at the Cold River, I believe that a very wise, very wonderful young woman living in one of the cabins somehow graced me with super powers. I can't explain it, and I only lived there for a couple months. She was just an interesting friend, now long gone from my ken. I was just passing through. That was 1973.

The Collective began as an idea by some older friends at Grove City College. We were the early 1970s token hippies because our parents went to GCC. Several of the "Grovers" had wealthy parents, and we all got together in creating a Collective/Commune. Most of us didn't have rich parents, but we were all welcome to come aboard. The handful of original owners found an abandoned brewery for sale in New Hampshire, and bought it. This was just across the Connecticut River from Bellows Falls, Vermont.

The Cold River flowed down from the mountains and past the western bank of the Collective. I waded across, and climbed to the top of the mountain on the opposite bank, on the June Solstice after taking Peyote. The Northern Lights were blazing above. The

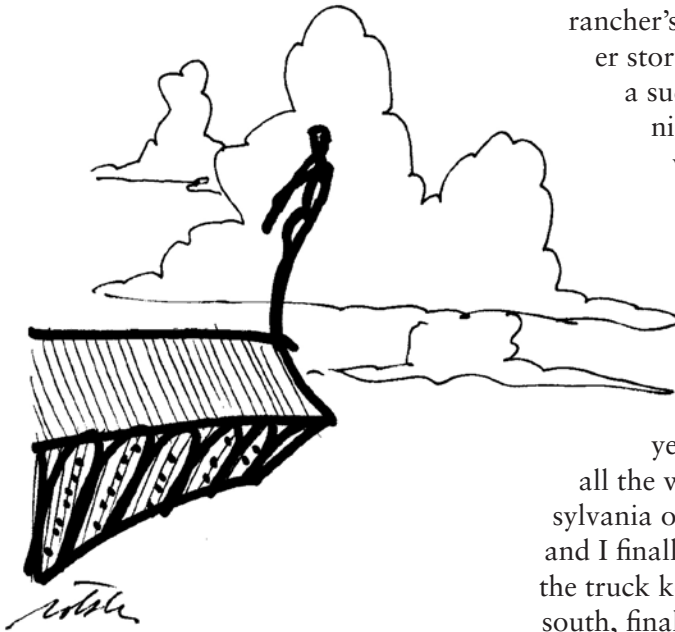
small animals all came up to me, I was leaning against a boulder with a blanket, and the little animals kept me safe all night. I came back down the mountain with the sunrise, feeling invincible. Oh... and... there was a small open patch on the mountain top, which was where some of the Cold River gang had a pot farm....

Several of the people living at the Collective went to the same weird, fake "Presbyterian" college in Western Pennsylvania, Grove City College. Both my parents, and all three of my grandfathers, went to GCC. These days the college has become full-blown uber-Republican. But, I digress....

The Collective's founders were among the many people I've been truly blessed with deep knowledge in my life, and I spent that Spring living in the roofed porch of one of

the of houses. The Cold River Collective was the jumping-off point for me and three college friends, we bicycled from New Hampshire, straight north through the Adirondack Mountains, and, finally, onto the Trans-Canada Highway to Winnipeg, Manitoba. The two Bills gave up on making it to British Columbia, our original destination, the winds were totally against us.





They went south into Minnesota. Martin and I sold our bikes, hitchhiked west on the Trans Canadian, and ended up working on a hay and cattle ranch in the Okanagan Valley of Washington State, working until the frost. We'd bought an old panel truck from the rancher, and we drove it over the Cascades and down the coast to a friend's house in San Francisco, around the corner from Haight & Ashbury. We stayed there about a week... and then it was time to head for home.

Martin and I went East on the Interstate and saw... everything. Just fucking everything. We parked the truck in the dark one night by a pull-off ramp in the middle of some desert. The stars overhead were awesome! The highway sign said Devil Dog Road. We had two hitch hikers and a puppy in the back (Martin had gotten the puppy from the Okanagan

rancher's daughter, yet another story for later....) All of a sudden, in the darkest night I've ever known, we were totally surrounded by howling coyotes! That poor little puppy was the most terrified....

We kept occasionally yelling *fucking shit!*

all the way back to Pennsylvania on I-80, where Martin and I finally split up. I gave him the truck keys and hitchhiked south, finally alone. Martin drove back to his parents place in Eastern PA. I hitchhiked down I-79 to Pittsburgh and took a metro bus to near my parents house in Pleasant Hills. They weren't expecting me, I just showed up.

(Side note: Later I drove Yellow Cab taxis in Pittsburgh for five years.)

The Cold River Collective lasted a decade or two. After I moved to NYC I drove up to the Cold River Collective a couple times, reconnected with my friends. Regarding "burnt toast," my copy turned up a couple weeks ago while going through boxes in the basement. Pages are brown, but readable. Used copies go for \$300 these days. The author unfortunately let it go out of print, for his own reasons....

I feel like I've already lived forever....

Excerpt Regarding Burnt Toast, 50 years-on

by Peter Gould

"I didn't know where to begin. In fact, I hadn't even thought of beginning, yet. The call always comes from some place else; it comes to remind you of a mystery you're born with, as people in old times used to be born with Sin (so I've heard). That night on the near shore of Spirit Lake, I wasn't thinking about finding anything out, except perhaps what Lila smelled like, when she was close, and how she moved.

I was only dimly aware that the vision of burnt toast that I had barely had, a few times, and was beginning to have again, that night, was in all its various disguises, a nameless ascendant mystery to me and for my good, a game and a code in my blood, stirred to a waking by my dreams by Spirit Lake, by Sam and

Lila, but my father about to vanish without ever going on his quest or sharing mine, by my lungs filled by fresh air or the sweet smoke, by the forest, the moon, the white birch, the cottontail deer, by anything I see as if for the first time..."



SAM WALKS UP TO THE SUGARBUSH

changed pleasantries, and then Sam explained that he wasn't feeling very well. The monkey was very sympathetic:

"Easily remedied," the monkey said, "you just have to show your body who's the master." Then he showed Sam a dance he could do to drive out the sickness. Soon Sam was feeling as fit as could be.

"Monkey," he said, "why don't you come and have supper with us tonight?"

At supper that night the monkey ate all the banana bread and pissed all over the corn fritters. Sourdough was the first to complain:

"This has gone far enough, Sam," he decided. "Last month it was a raccoon that pelted us all with the



"The good news is that the transmission failed so that's how we found out it was raining in the truck." – Rick Kovalcik



A Brother Remembered

From the Memorial Service held November 28, 2001

by Craig Hughes

Terry Hughes was my brother and I loved him dearly. Terry was a gentle, caring person who defined selflessness, the first person to ask after a sick family member or inquire about a recent vacation and the last person to call attention to himself. He was an intensely private person whose self-consciousness allowed him to share very little of himself with others even as his generosity knew no bounds. He was an enigma. Even I, who have known him as long and as well as anyone, must confess there is much about his life I don't know. I don't believe he was intentionally secretive, but rather, felt that his life was of relatively little interest to others. He was wrong on that point, for



Terry and Craig playing in the front yard of the Hughes family home in Windsor, MO. August 1959.



Mota 2 cover by Craig Hughes

he was loved and the lives of those we love are always of interest to us. My hope is that as we celebrate his life this afternoon, we have the chance, each of us, to learn some things we didn't know before, some things that will just as likely add to the mystery as to scrape away at it. Things that will help us to appreciate his memory all the more.

While compiling photos of Terry's life to share with you today, I was flooded with memories and was struck by many things; not the least of which was how bad my family was at photography. I found that certain periods are woefully

under-documented and others are captured only in scant, slightly out-of-focus family snap-shots. I found that particularly in later years, Terry had an annoying habit of camera avoidance, seldom looking up, trying his best to fade into the background. I encourage you to flip through the photo album and marvel at the sight of Terry with a buzz cut or in a tuxedo.

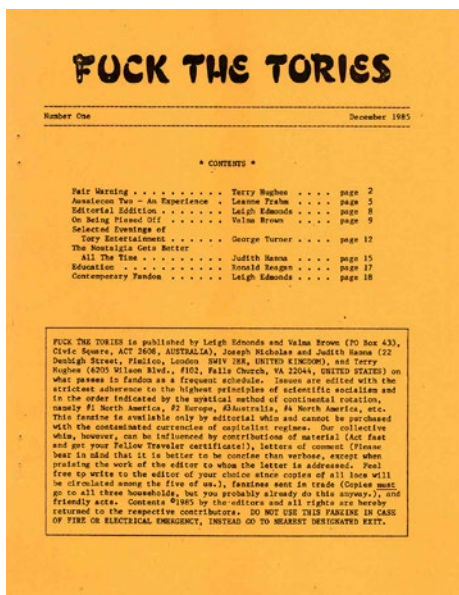
In putting the album together, I also found, not surprisingly, that much of Terry's photographic history is shared by me. More than just brothers, we were friends, and I'm happy to be able to say that our lives were closely linked throughout. It was Terry who urged me to move to Washington, D.C. many years ago after a period of wanderlust informed him that life in the east suited him better than life on the west coast. His interest in popular culture, politics and his thirst for knowledge was such that he had



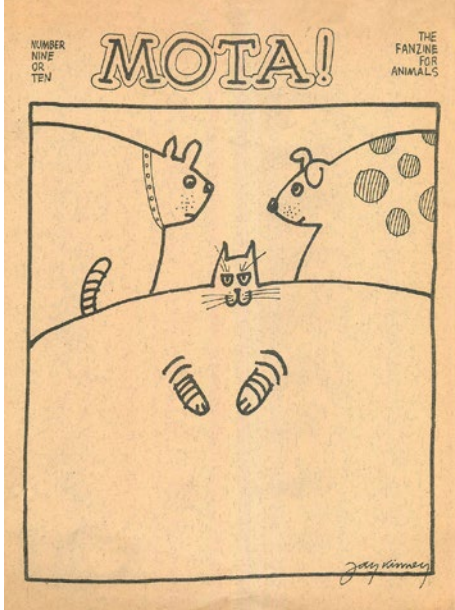
Terry Hughes in England circa 1953.

already determined that our humble mid-western surroundings were no longer right for him, even though he had found a sense of belonging among fellow science fiction fans in Missouri. It was that community of science fiction fans that ultimately brought Terry to Washington and it was not much later that I followed him, and in those early years we shared a succession of apartments together. I'm thankful that as we grew older and tired of sharing living quarters with each other, that we remained near one another and that we remained close.

Our childhood was a simple one, the sons of plain folk who didn't have a lot of money but who showed us that a loving and caring family environment was far more important. Our father served in the Air Force and Terry was born in Las Vegas, Nevada in October of 1950 while Dad was stationed at Nellis AFB. A year later, the family



Fuck The Tories 1 cover



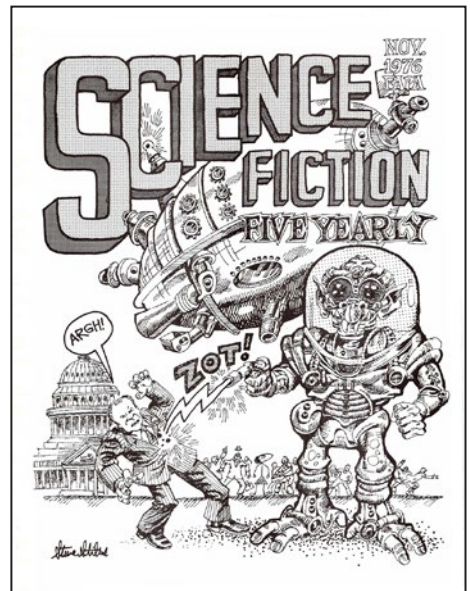
Mota 9 cover by Jay Kinney

moved to England, where Dad was stationed at Ramsgate for three years; long enough for me to come along. From there, we returned stateside and landed in Windsor, Missouri a small rural town near Whiteman AFB. A baby sister joined us soon after, but she was sick from the start and died as a young child. Uncharacteristic for a military family, Windsor was to be our home throughout our school years. Our father remained stationed at Whiteman until his retirement, save for a one year assignment in Thule, Greenland while Terry was in the fourth grade. Mom, Terry and I stayed behind in Windsor and Dad rejoined us when his tour was over.

Windsor was the kind of small town where everybody knew everybody and we would never think of locking the door behind us when the family piled in the car to spend a week at our grandparents in Ohio.

The small town supplied enough to fuel Terry's imagination and feed his intellect. It had two drugstores with racks of comic books and the television stations 90 miles away in Kansas City supplied us with a steady diet of cartoons and Saturday morning reruns of Flash Gordon and Commando Cody serials. This was fertile stuff for Terry's imagination, just as the wacky fifties sensibilities of Ernie Kovacs and Steve Allen fueled his sense of humor. In this little part of the world, Terry grew curious and intelligent.

Terry was always the smartest guy I knew, the guy I looked up to and wanted to be like. While in public he often felt compelled to disassociate himself from his younger sibling as kids often do, but at home we would spend hours playing super heroes together and reading the exploits of Spiderman and the Fantastic Four. It was a



SFFY #6 cover by Steve Stiles

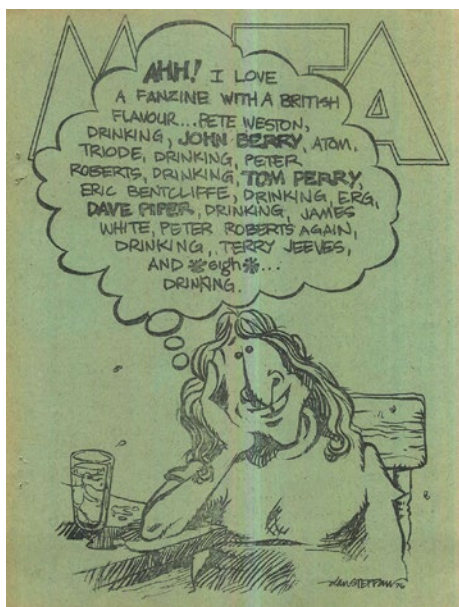
good childhood, and we were typical brothers, with all the ups and downs that come with it. For those of you that think of Terry as this quiet, peaceful guy, I can speak from the experience of spending afternoons locked safely out of his reach inside the family's 1958 Chevy, waiting for Mom to come home. I can also speak from the wisdom of my years that such occurrences never came unprovoked and were always quickly forgotten.

During high school, Terry was always at the top of his class. Always something of a bookish nerd, back before it was the hip thing to be, he was in the honor society, the Latin club, was the manager of the sports teams, never the athlete, and worked on the yearbook staff. In 1968 he graduated as class valedictorian and set off for the University of Missouri in Columbia. In an environment where his thirst for learning could

be met more adequately, he never returned to Windsor for more than a short visit again.

In 1973 he moved to the Washington area and after a series of odd jobs, somewhere around 1982 he found himself at the International Monetary Fund in a career he truly loved. Others can speak with greater authority than can I as to what an odd fit he was there at first, what with his long hair, his tweedy sportcoats that never seemed to fit quite right and his nondescript striped ties. But fortunately there were those that could see past these surface characteristics and see the man, his mind and his capabilities. It was a career decision Terry never regretted. A place filled with people he loved.

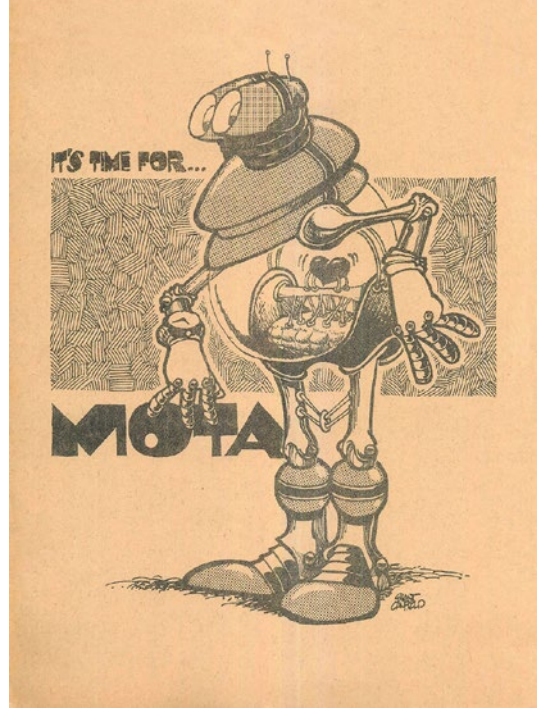
Choosing to remain a bachelor for Terry did not mean not being a family man. Terry remained close to me and my family and doted on my boys like the best of uncles, showering them with gifts at every opportunity. He would urge Elise and me to go out more often to give him more chances to baby-sit. He loved Noah and Ethan, and they loved him. And Terry was a loving son to our mother. Dad died in 1978, shortly after being diagnosed with lung cancer. Mom moved to her childhood home in Ohio to care for her mother and stayed on after her passing. As more than thirty years of diabetes took its toll on Mom, and her health began to decline, Terry and I moved her here to Washington and between periods in nursing homes and hospitals,



Mota 19 cover by Dan Steffan

she lived with Terry in his apartment in Arlington. This was a difficult period for Terry as Mom's needs greatly impacted his personal life until her death. But he understood family obligation and he loved our mother deeply, and so, he did what he needed to do and never thought of doing otherwise and I admired him all the more for it.

Shortly before Thanksgiving last year, after a period where his vision appeared to him to be growing blurrier, Terry awoke one morning no longer able to read. Never imagining the worst, perhaps choosing to deny the potential truths, Terry put off telling anyone, even me, what he was experiencing for several days. After seeing first an optometrist, then a neuro-ophthalmologist who presumed a minor stroke, on the Friday after Thanksgiving Terry was diagnosed with Glioblastoma multiforme at the Fairfax emergency room where I took him after discovering his symptoms to be worsening. At the time, a staff neurologist advised Terry against surgery (the tumor was too big, too deeply centered in the eloquent area of the brain), and suggested that in the worst case, Terry had no more than two months to live. Thanks to a talented surgeon and oncological team at Johns Hopkins, Terry fought his tumor and survived nearly a year, the statistical average for GBMs. And throughout his surgery, radiation treatments and chemotherapy, Terry maintained an amazing outlook. He kept things



Mota 10 cover by Grant Canfield

in perspective and recognized that anger and sorrow would not help him or change his diagnosis. Instead, he clung to the notion that every day he lived past those first two months, his worst case prognosis, was bonus time, time to be savored and enjoyed. Time to reach closure with his friends. Time to spend with his nephews. Time to be thankful for. When Terry was first interviewed by Dr. Willner, a staff physician at the Hospice In-patient facility in Arlington a month or so ago, Dr. Willner marveled at Terry's disposition and his perspective. "Terry you really are a glass is half full kind of guy," remarked Dr. Willner. And he was right. And that was just one of the reasons why we loved Terry as we did.

Two days ago, we buried Terry's ashes in a family plot back in

Windsor, alongside our parents and sister. While we were there, we met with the local public library board to discuss the Terry Hughes Room, the plans for a children's reading room that will expand the small library's facilities by approximately a third. One of the greatest ironies of Terry's illness was that it manifested itself when he lost his ability to cognitively understand written word, losing his ability to read quite literally overnight. A cruel irony because Terry was a voracious reader and had been his entire life. Reading was one of life's greatest pleasures for Terry. His love for literature came from two sources: our mother who read to us daily from a very early age and the Windsor library where he started with Dr. Seuss and went on to read everything else they had worth reading. When Terry discussed plans for his estate with me as his condition declined, he included a sizeable donation to the library



Craig and Terry at their grandmother's house in Ohio. Summer 1970.

in the hopes that his contribution would help ensure that tomorrow's young readers in this small rural town will find the same love of books that he found. He would likely have been embarrassed at the thought of his name being attached to the library extension, but he would have been very happy with the plans that have been laid thanks to his generosity. And I have learned that this gesture has already been an inspiration for others who have recognized that those things that are important to us can often be taken for granted and that the simple act of giving can help so much. But Terry never took these little things for granted. That was the kind of guy he was.

*Lou Stathis, Terry Hughes, and Frank Johnson at Noreascon Two, 1980.
Photo by Jeff Schalles.*





BARBIE'S INFERNO¹

by Jeanne Gomoll

The Christmas catalogs arrived in early fall and there was a lot of time to dreamily thumb through the toy sections of the Sears' and Penney's catalogs and pick out what I hoped Santa would bring. But I took personal offense at all the girl-toys which involved cleaning up boys' messes, or fixing meals for them, or bandaging them up, or which otherwise disguised work for play. Maybe all toys do that to some extent, but the work that these catalogs implied were appropriate for little girls didn't interest me at all.

Dolls bored me. I never asked for one and made faces when parents or grandparents suggested I might like one as a gift. My favorite game was "spaceship," which my brother Rick and I played downstairs. We would construct a control panel with miscellaneous, discarded bolts from Dad's work bench and doodads from Mom's sewing stuff, nailing the items onto a hunk of

plywood, and labeling the buttons "deep space accelerator," or "Venusian slime monster blaster." Then I'd draw a map of a section of outer space on a big blackboard and we'd blast off to our adventure, Rick the captain, me the cap-i-tan. It was great fun.

I did not want anything from the pink section of the toy catalogs in which little girls were pictured raptly observing some automatic process or a holding a boring plastic baby. The blue-toned pages which showed dynamic little boys drawing, climbing, building or riding seemed much more interesting.

Once, when I was about eleven years old, I lusted after an especially unorthodox toy at Christmas time, and in order to increase the likelihood of finding it under the Christmas tree, I abandoned my former strategy of filling a whole sheet of paper with a long list of wishes. That Christmas

¹ An earlier version was published in *Harlot*, edited by Anne-Laurie Logan and Avedon Carol, 1983.

I insisted that the only thing I wanted was a Lincoln Log set.

“The Deluxe set,” I specified.

“That’s for boys, Jeannie,” I was told. In those days my name had two syllables.

“They are not. That’s what I want for Christmas.” I stood firm. My reading that fall had included a few novels about American settlers and farmers on the prairies and I was eager to build a covered wagon, cross the Great American Desert (transformed from the basement floor), and build shelters for courageous American pioneers.

My parents probably figured I’d forget by the time Christmas rolled around, and they gave me a Barbie Doll that winter. But I hadn’t forgotten, and I was devastated. My brother Steve got a flashy, red fire engine, which he promptly took to a sink, filled its reservoir with water, and squirted our dog Tippy until the beagle retreated for the day beneath the living room sofa. My other brother, Rick, got the Lincoln Log set, the deluxe set, which of course, made me furious since he quickly made it clear that the wood construction set was “off limits” to me.

If my Barbie had survived I might have eventually sold her for big bucks: she was the first of her kind. She had long, blond hair tied

in two places. She lacked bendable knees and elbows which her later, evolved species developed. She wore a fashionable, striped, one-piece swim suit, came with her own carrying case, a party dress, a sports outfit, and, of course, a wedding gown. There was also a catalog that advertised other accessories and wardrobes for sale. She was a boring toy.

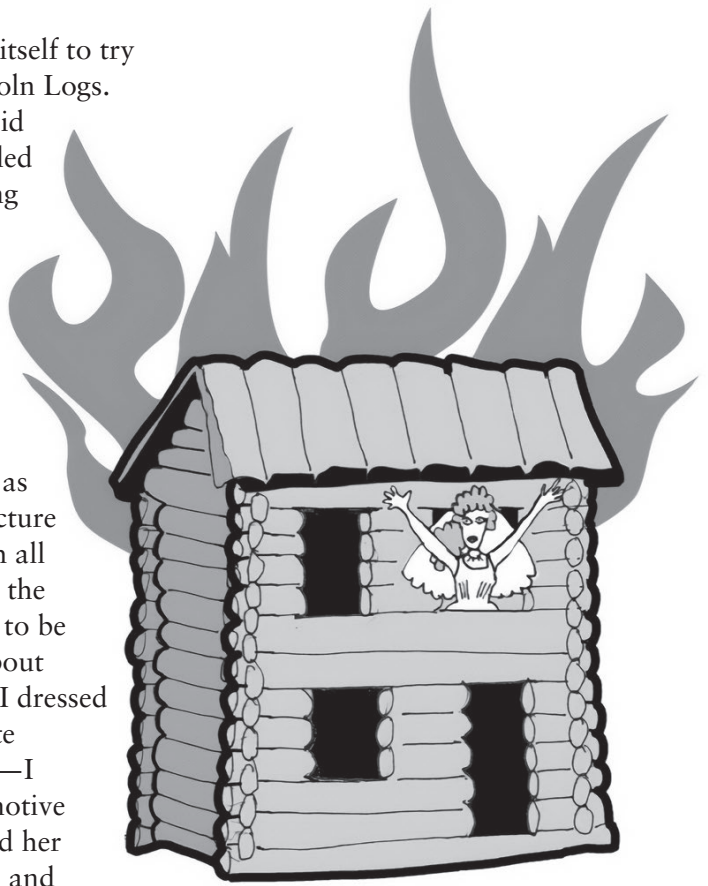
Undressing and dressing her wasn’t the sort of pastime that could keep me occupied for long. I failed to identify with this unappealing fashionista. Barbie languished in her box for a few weeks after Christmas, I got lectured several times on my “bad attitude,” and I went back to playing down in the basement with a collection of plywood astro-navigation toys. I pretended that the old, lumpy easy chair was bolted into the cockpit of my spaceship and I zoomed through the galaxy looking for adventures. I liked to draw the ship’s course on the blackboard and would navigate through clouds of deadly “ions” and “space gas,” landing on exotic planets where I would sometimes be kidnapped and forced to eat nails before I escaped and plotted more adventures with strange aliens.

But soon Rick and Steve tired of their new Christmas presents, and



the chance presented itself to try out Rick's set of Lincoln Logs.

Cautiously, to avoid interruption, I smuggled the box of interlocking logs, roof slats, clips, signs, chimneys, stands, and gables down into the basement. On impulse, I grabbed Steve's fire truck and the box of Barbie paraphernalia as well. The largest structure I could construct with all the pieces included in the deluxe set turned out to be a two-story house, about eighteen inches high. I dressed Barbie in the elaborate wedding gown (with—I swear—no ulterior motive at this point), installed her into the second story, and crawled back to admire my handiwork. It was an impressive scene, I thought. Barbie, with her unbending arms stuck straight out through the window reached toward me, looking as if she were crying for help. And with the fire truck parked nearby, the obvious scenario occurred to me. So I filled the fire truck's reservoir with water from the faucets in the laundry tubs at the other end of the basement, and



“made pretend” for awhile.

Barbie was screaming for help. She was going to be late for her own wedding, and now the house was on fire! Oh no! I imagined that fire was leaping over the logs as my fire truck raced across town. Would the truck arrive in time to douse the blaze, save Barbie, and get her to the church on time? Bruising my



knees in the race to save the burning log cabin, breaking speed limits, stopping traffic, I—the brave firefighter—saved Barbie’s life over and over again.

But after a while I got a little bored. Something about the situation lacked drama. I felt a bit cynical about Barbie’s sincerity, and looked around the basement for something to make the game more realistic. I found some matches on my father’s workbench, lit one, and tossed it through the ground floor window. Quickly I dashed back to the laundry tubs and waited for the fire alarm. Seconds later I screeched the alarm with an appropriate falsetto, and pushed my knees and the fire truck into another mad race with the clock. Halfway there, my pretended anxiety pulsed into very real horror when I noticed actual smoke seeping through the logs. When the truck and I arrived on the scene, I could see that the fire had actually caught on inside the log house, and I desperately unwound the water hose, pressed the little spray button, and pointed the hose through the little window opening.

Unfortunately, I’d filled the water reservoir only half-full, and the water only dribbled out the end of the hose. Without thinking, I attempted to blow the fire out.

The fire leapt higher. Barbie’s lacy wedding dress caught on fire. Fine strands of plastic hair blackened and curled into kinky, smoking tangles. An awful, disgusting smell filled the basement and the smoke stung my eyes. Abandoning realism, I picked up the fire truck in my arms and ran, not crawled, back to the opposite end of the basement, filled its reservoir to the top, and ran back to the now blazing Lincoln Log building. Barbie’s plastic face was collapsing inward with the heat and one of her arms was bending in a way that even the later, more evolved Barbies’ would never do. The smell of melting plastic mixed now with that of burning wood, and flames crackled above the scorched roof. If Barbie made it to church now, she was going to have to take her vows nude and disfigured, but I thought at least there might be a chance to save most of the Lincoln Logs. Perhaps I could hide some of the more severely blistered ones.

I aimed the toy firetruck’s hose determinedly at the conflagration, but its progress was not much diminished by the pitifully small stream of water issuing from the truck’s reservoir. And even that was rapidly losing pressure as I desperately punched the spray button. The Lincoln Logs were



providing fine, dry tinder for the chemically-fed fire. Melting plastic ignited sporadically with hot purple flames until the green roof was totally consumed by flames. I held the quarter-inch hose between my fingers but now had backed up a little distance from the bonfire and shielded my forehead from the heat with my hand. With the other outstretched arm, I frantically waved the slackening stream of water at the blaze, but Barbie slid from view as I watched: her surrealistically curved arms dribbling down over the window after her unrecognizably melted and quite bald head. The addition of new fuel created a new flare-up and the chimney collapsed into the crackling fire. Things were not going at all well.

Then things got worse.

My father appeared at the bottom of the basement steps, perhaps concerned about the wails and screams of the brave firefighter. Indeed, the fight to save the Lincoln Log building and get Barbie to the church on time, now appeared to be a minor task compared to that of saving the basement, and I was panicking. Desperation did not obscure my understanding, however, that I was in Big Trouble. Instead of making another run for a refill of reservoir water, I paused to think of

a good explanation for my illicit use of Rick's Lincoln Log set. My father declined to wait for the explanation and in a moment had dumped a pail full of ice cold water over the blazing Lincoln Log rubble and me. The Lincoln Log set collapsed into smoldering red lumps, a condition it would soon share with my backside.

Time has blanked out the details of the humbling punishment that no doubt followed that episode. But ever since then I've disliked igniting matches and have been positively antagonistic about dolls of any sort. The experience did convince my parents that no matter how "appropriate" the gift, they weren't going to turn me into a proper girl by that route.



Editor's note: This updated version *Barbie's Inferno* is also in **Pretending**, the first volume of Jeanne Gomoll's memoir. The second volume is titled **Becoming**. The two volumes contain over 800 pages of Jeanne's writing! Jeanne plans to publish both in 2024.

Jeanne read *Barbie's Inferno* during the fanzine readings hosted by David Emerson at Minicon 23 (1988). The recording is on the FANAC YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZlagJoQ9juE



How I Brought the Ig[®] Nobel Dramatic Readings to Poland

(Spoiler: with a little help from my friends)

by **Mikołaj Kowalewski**

I am writing these words – I mean this first sentence, not the following text – waiting for the live broadcast of Ig Nobel ceremony 2023 to watch it for the first time. I've known about Ig Nobels since around 2010 I think; I read somewhere about the levitating frog Ig Nobel Prize and started following the topic. I read the lists of awarded works, laughing and thinking about them, just like the awards motto says.

In a meantime I also got into fandom, I started attending conventions in 2015 and I was gophing at almost every convention since my second. In 2018, I joined Avangarda Association from Warsaw, Poland, where I was studying by the time. With Avangarda, I started running conventions (Zjava and Bazyliszek in Warsaw and online convention Konline which started at the beginning of pandemic). As many of my fandom friends in 2019, I travelled to the island of Ireland to participate in Irish Worldcon in Dublin and then Titancon – Eurocon in Belfast. In programme of both conventions I have found “Ig Nobel dramatic reading” and I knew I would like to join these events. I do not remember why I didn't make it at Worldcon, but I managed to do so week later, at Eurocon. I

even became a timekeeper for that event which sounds much more serious than it was. Geri, who ran this event, just asked who from the audience wanted to be one and I was eager enough to say “me, me, pick me” along with another fellow convention member. For the following hour I was saying “quack” a lot of times, looking at a clock and laughing at the read articles, and even sometimes thinking about what I heard before. It was great event, as well as the whole convention. I enjoyed it very much.

This may be good moment to explain what the Dramatic Reading, and maybe the Ig Nobels themselves, actually are for those of you who have no idea what I am writing about. During dramatic reading Luminaries (of various wattage) do brief two minute long dramatic readings from seemingly absurd, genuine research studies and patents. Some of those studies and patents have won Ig Nobel Prizes. All of them make people laugh, then think. The Luminaries may answer questions afterwards, despite and because they have no previous knowledge of the studies they will be reading. The compere of the event attempts to keep some small degree of structure. So what are the Ig Nobels then? As the Improbable

The person reading this paper to you
has no familiarity with what they are reading.
They saw it for the first time just a few minutes ago.



Mikołaj reads the titles of the extra paper at the end of the Ig Nobel Dramatic Readings in Warsaw, Poland. Photo by Weronika "mau" Rędziniak.

Research website explains, the Ig Nobel Prizes honor achievements that make people LAUGH, then THINK. The prizes are intended to celebrate the unusual, honor the imaginative — and spur people's interest in science, medicine, and technology. The first Ig Nobel Prizes were awarded in 1991.

Getting back to actual story, I became a head of programming for Bazyłiszek¹ 2023 convention in Warsaw taking place at the beginning of June. It was fifth edition of this convention, second after pandemic and the third one I was involved in. I started as registration coordinator in 2018, I was co-chair of the 2022 edition responsible for the venue. We stayed in good contact with culture centre Alternatywy and we organised there also the 2023 edition. I was no longer living

in Warsaw by that time; I have moved to Copenhagen, Denmark, to study there. Therefore I stopped being a contact person with our venue, instead I became the head of programming. I was mostly helping and advising my wonderful team, but having in my mind memories of dramatic reading from Belfast I got an idea to run it at our event. I had no access to the programme book of either Worldcon or Eurocon and I was not sure who ran these events there, but luckily Marcin "Alqua" Kłak advised me to contact Geri since she was the one. And so I did. Geri connected me with Marc Abrahams who is a founding father of Ig Nobels. We exchanged few emails, and met once on Zoom to discuss ideas, problems and opportunities of running dramatic readings in front of possibly a not

¹ *Basilisk, legendary creature living in Warsaw's sewage system*

fully English-speaking audience. On various levels we were looking to experiment and see what will work and what should be quickly forgotten. Fast forward a few months to the event itself, Saturday evening, closing of the second day of the convention. We started our experiment at 8 pm. We introduced the event, the Ig Nobel prizes, and how the readings would go. This is how it was done:

Our first decision was to limit speakers to guests of the convention. All the invited guests were asked if they want to participate in dramatic reading, eight of them agreed to do so. I had prepared 20 articles which were awarded Ig Nobels in the past and translated five of them into Polish. I also added two Polish papers about theology, “Did Pope John Paul II play chess?” and “Graphic methods in theology.” We also had a translator on stage to translate live articles read in English and a timekeeper with a bike horn. First read was a famous dead salmon paper in English. It was the moment where we encountered the first problem. The audience knew English well enough to laugh at the fun bits, likely not good enough to understand the science happening there and they were not so interested to listen to it in translation after that since they already knew the funny bits. It was the only paper we translated live on stage. Things that were translated worked really well as well as Polish papers. Things in English were not so popular among guests, possible because of the

pressure of performing in non-native language. Our American guest Luke Crane, however, felt the vibe perfectly when he presented paper “Swearing as a response to pain.” An additional feature suggested by Marc was a paper in language unfamiliar to any member of the audience. A friend of mine can speak Akkadian and he read pieces of Mesopotamian myth “The Descent of Istar to the Underworld.” It was a blast. People were recording this, and the tone of questions was more or less on topic. It worked really well. We had some spare time at the end and we made an open call for a readers in the audience. One person stepped up, so the event ended up with ten papers presented. At the end I presented titles of all papers that were not presented by the speakers.

I hope I know what worked and what failed and I am looking forward to doing it again next year, most likely with all the papers translated for the comfort of the audience and the speakers.

I would like to thank all the speakers Krystyna Chodorowska, Anna Studniarek, Anna Musiałowicz, Luke Crane, Jędrzej “Sznurek” Mikulski, Kamil Śmiałkowski, Łukasz Kucharczyk, Maja “Yuka” Szafranśka, Magdalena Salik and Marcin “Ezechiel” Zaród, the timekeeper, Adam “Karl” Tkaczyk, translator Weronika Zapadka and Geri Sullivan and Marc Abrahams for a huge help and knowledge they provided me with while I was trying to make this happen.

HER BEAUTIFUL MISTAKE chapter 5: Pemmi-Con, Winnipeg, 19-23 July 2023

by Sandra Bond

Day thirteen of TAFF, unlucky for some. Sandra Bond – already befuddled by her travels and overwhelmed by the generosity of North American fans – has left Minneapolis and has hitched a lift with Minnesota fans Curt Gibson and Alice Ableman in Curt’s mom’s SUV, riding north for NASFiC.

No, you haven’t missed any previous instalments; they will be published elsewhere, in due course, and eventually a complete version will follow. I’m starting with this chapter, partly because Geri is publishing it and chapter 1 will largely be about her as my first host, and partly in order to air some issues arising from Pemmi-Con while the iron, so to speak, is hot.

[19 July]

More storm clouds were gathering as Curt, Alice and I gunned it north along the Canadian highway. I wasn’t bothered. I didn’t have to do any more driving (insurance wouldn’t cover me north of the border); all I needed to do was to sit in the back, enjoy the relief of having made it through the border crossing, and revel in being on a Manitoban road.

Not that the road or its environs were so very different to their counterparts in North Dakota. The road number had changed, and we were now on Highway 75; but even that was barely different, since before the US built Interstate 29 up to the border, the road that north led to the border crossing at Pembina was US-75.

We progressed north, past a string of little towns all of which seemed to be named Saint Something. (“What next? Saint Elsewhere?”), and then the rain hit just as we arrived in road works. It came down forcibly, as though the raindrops were made of lead rather than water, and road conditions soon became so bad that I stopped looking forward to the con and started worrying whether we’d even make it there.

But Curt had a safe pair of hands on the wheel and as we approached Winnipeg’s southern precincts the rain died away.

Over the Assiniboine river, a left turn, and we were there, at the Delta Hotel. Curt managed to cram the SUV into the bay at the front (which confusingly served for both taxis and drop-offs), and we set to

unloading my cases. Curt and Alice were staying elsewhere that night, having only belatedly decided to come up on the Wednesday and found the hotel full; they would transfer to the con hotel on Thursday.

I checked in, where I heard the welcome words “Ah, your bill has already been taken care of.” Waving goodbye to my good samaritans with promises to see them during the con, I took stock.

No luggage trolleys were to be seen. The lobby was cram-jam with fans, many of them clutching large musical instrument cases; later I was to find that filk was one of the few subcultures of fandom who were well catered for by the convention

(The “programme” tab on the con website gave a drop-down menu with just two items; “filk musicians” and “filk music concerts.”) Every now and again a trolley came back empty and was seized upon. I started to wonder if I’d get my copious luggage up to my room by the end of the con.

A familiar and welcome face hove into view; Murray Moore.

I’d been worrying about my attendance at the early welcome dinner. The con website had a link to a Google document which invited you to complete your menu choices, but by the time I was certain I’d be arriving in time for it, the document was no longer accepting inputs. I’d emailed the convention hopefully,

but received no reply. Murray didn’t know anything about it – why should he? – but he did know that people were gathering in the lobby at 1830, less than two hours away.

At this point an empty trolley came past, and I seized it in a grip of steel, letting Murray escape.

My room was on the fourth floor, and though it wasn’t a suite, I’d seen hotel suites that took up less space in total. Indeed, whether by accident or design, I’d been placed right next to the con



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Wednesday, July 19, 2023

Welcome from the Co-Chairs

Welcome to Pemmi-Con, the 15th North American Science Fiction Convention. We are very pleased that you could make it, whether in person or virtually. We both hope that you enjoy the next few days.

— Linda Ross-Mansfield and Robbie Bourget

Move In

Pemmi-Con volunteers are busy moving in and setting up the convention. Here is the on-site registration desk, on the second floor in the Delta Hotel.



Elayne Pelz and David Guon at Pemmi-Con Registration

Map and Directions



Pemmi-Con is in the Delta Hotels Winnipeg and the RBC Convention Centre South Building, connected by Skyway.

From the second floor of the Delta, go up a short set of steps to the Skyway. Cross above Carlton Street to the RBC Convention Centre. In the middle of the building, go through the doors on the left to the Gallery. Check out the Indigenous art on display. Keep left and cross the bridge to the South Building. You can take the escalator or elevator up to Hall D, or take the stairs or elevator down to York.

To avoid the steps, you can exit the Delta lobby at street level. Go left and there is concrete tower with an elevator to the Skyway. This gets you past the steps and the rest of the route is accessible.

All the Moose that Fits

The Mooseletter welcomes your contributions! Do you have a party announcement, restaurant review, panel review, or interesting story to share? A cool photo (with attribution and permission)? Please send it to newsletter@pemmi-con.ca.

suite, which had an identical size and layout. I eyed my bed longingly, but nobly took the trolley back down before permitting myself to slump for a too-brief rest.

Venturing forth again after a little zizz, I found Karen Schaffer and Michael Ward, who pointed me at the committee member in charge of the dinner. She didn't have her list, but she knew I was on it, and I finally crossed it off my list of worries where it had been sitting for several days. I also took the opportunity to divest myself of the baggie full of 1973 US cents which I'd picked up in Minneapolis... or so I thought; the baggie was not quite as full as I thought when I passed it over, and I kept finding more pennies at the bottom of my handbag for the entire remainder of my trip.

At the appointed time I hooked back up with Murray Moore, plus Garth Spencer and a cluster of other fans, and we set off on foot for the Old Spaghetti Factory. Despite this being 2023 and us all having mapping technology on our phones, we inevitably got lost.

We knew the restaurant was at The Forks; we knew The Forks was on the river. We even knew the river was to the south of us, and had a River Trail along the bank which would lead us to the watering hole. What we didn't know was how to find the south, or the river. Eventually we found a cab driver whose taxi was sitting morosely with its hood raised, and he directed us along what would have been a



pleasant walk if we had been less tired and in less of a hurry to catch up with the sensible people who had taken cabs there.

Finally we made it. Half the dining room was replete with sensitive fannish faces, some of which in turn were already replete with pasta. But we were in time to order. Reminding myself that I was on TAFF to meet as many people as I could, I sat with two of the bunion-derby party who I didn't previously know, Eileen Capes and Cliff Samuels of Calgary. They proved delightful company, and added themselves to the growing list of fans who insisted on picking up TAFF's dining tab. The food and service was good, too, considering how many fans they had to cope with. And nobody died during the meal, an observation I must sadly make because (as I did not yet know) US fan Bill Laubenheimer

had done exactly that during breakfast that morning at a different restaurant.

As we staggered in, we'd made noises about getting a cab back, but we felt sufficiently refreshed to walk out, past a random Prisoner style penny-farthing hanging on the wall, and back to the hotel by a more direct route, under a long railway bridge.

I kept my eyes out for likely restaurants, bars, or other places of interest on the way, but saw few if any. Oh well, I told myself, look again in the daytime.

We arrived back at the hotel in time for an early arrivals' mixer event. Unfortunately so did everyone else who had already made it to the convention, and instructions were issued from on high that we were on no account to go wandering around the room, but should remain where we were sitting to avoid matters degenerating into chaos.

Call me old-fashioned (oh, go on – everyone else does) but I find that mixers work so much better when one is actually allowed to mix at them. I sat around hopefully for a while, then decided it wouldn't hurt me to retire to my room, rest up for the remainder of the night, and (in theory) be refreshed and full of beans in the morning.

Looking at Facebook from the comfort of my immense bed, I found a second hint that things at Pemmi-Con were not as might be hoped; a despairing message from Craig Glassner that there was no clue, with only a few hours to go,

of how the virtual con might be accessed. I did some poking around, and found that Grenadine wasn't working either. Panic! I did eventually discover that Grenadine did work, as long as you did it via a web browser window rather than the app, but I couldn't help Craig or anyone else. I didn't have the contacts, the savvy, or the spoons.

Having sussed out how to make it go, I checked Grenadine. A number of panels; more than I'd normally let myself do at a con, but as TAFF delegate I felt duty bound. But ho! What is this? A signing session? A kaffeeklatsch? A reading? All... for *me*?

Two readings, in fact; one of my own work, one for someone called Gerald Brandt.

More in hope than expectation, I fired an email off to the convention pointing out that my name had become attached to someone else's event, and started to worry about the other things. I didn't have a single copy of either of my books with me, nor would any be available in the dealers' room. My editor and I had sought in vain for a dealer who might sell us a sliver of table space.

Eventually I decided there was nothing to do about it – at least I had some badges with my book covers on, thanks to Pat Virzi – and went bye-byes.

[20 July]

Came the dawn. Contrary to my normal custom, I threw myself out of bed and into my clothes with

haste, eager to go and explore. Also, to get breakfast; given the choice between breakfast and sleeping in, I usually choose sleeping in, but at UK conventions experience has shown that a decent breakfast (which comes with the hotel room) is only common sense, as one never quite knows at a con when one is going to find time to eat again.

My impressions of central Winnipeg from the previous night were confirmed – all offices and parking lots, not much in the way of creature comforts. I found a small and rather cheerless cafe, and spotted a couple of sensitive fannish faces through the window: I went in, and the fan types immediately got up and left. I ate a solitary breakfast and told myself things could only get better from here, then returned to the hotel via the local grocery store where I stocked up on energy drinks. (Hooray for Canada, they still make my favourite no-sugar Monster there – the pale blue can whose contents taste like ground-up Refresher sweeties, long discontinued in the UK.)

Back at the hotel, things were still pretty quiet. I decided to take the walk down to the convention



#1

Thursday, July 20, 2023

2024 NASFIC Site Selection

Voting to select the site of the 2024 NASFIC is open on Thursday Noon to 6 PM and Friday 10 AM to 6 PM in the Exhibit Hall. All members of Pemmi-Con can vote on the site selection, subject to paying a CA\$40/US\$30 Advance Supporting Membership (voting) fee, which makes you a member of the 2024 NASFIC regardless of who wins the election. The results of site selection voting will be officially announced at the NASFIC WSFS Business Meeting on Saturday morning at 10 AM in Charleswood B (Delta).

Masquerade Desk Hours

The Masquerade Desk is on the second floor of the Delta, across from Registration, and will be open Thursday and Friday from noon to 5 PM. Someone will be at the desk the whole time.

Play the Best Pinball in the World

Pinball machines are now up and running in the Kildonan room of the Delta, including Godzilla, currently ranked #1 by pinball fans on Pinside. We also have Star Trek (ranked #10), Star Wars, and The Mandalorian.

Bill Laubenheimer

We are deeply saddened to hear that Bill Laubenheimer passed away suddenly, in Winnipeg for Pemmi-Con. Bill had a brilliant creative mind, and a gentle and cheerful soul. He will be much missed. Condolences to Carole Parker and their many friends.

Freya's Festive Fundraiser Friday

FREE cat videos! Two Bite Brownies! Custom badge ribbons! Cool merchandise! And NINE amazing raffle prize packs, including a William Shatner autographed photo, a Steampunk rocket lamp, and much more!

Join us on Friday from 1 PM to 4 PM in Assiniboia A, to celebrate the 10th birthday of Laurie E. Smith's kitty, Freya Silvertoes!

We will be welcoming you with music, entertaining you with videos, and offering some amazing incentives to donate.

It is our pleasure to be raising money for Nimbus, our "focus cat" at the Winnipeg Pet Rescue Shelter. Nimbus has high medical bills and the need for future care. With your help, we aim to erase his vet bills completely, and to raise some money toward paying the medical costs of another deserving kitty.

So mark your convention calendar and plan to attend this great event! Let's eat brownies, buy beautiful swag, win prizes, and HELP A CAT IN NEED!

— Freya Silvertoes and Laurie



Nimbus

centre and scope things out, since I had a panel at 2.30pm (before the opening ceremony.)

The convention centre was linked to the hotel by a long and grim walkway, and it was as cavernous and as empty as Arthur C. Clarke's Rama. Here and there, surly officials sat behind security desks, and vending machines hummed tunelessly along the passageways. Sheets of A4 with arrows and text were to be seen here and there, as though the convention had only realised in the nick of time that fans would need a spot of help to navigate through the howling wasteland.

There were TV screens which had evidently been intended to guide the querent to their destination, but in a splendid exemplar of failure, they all simply read “NASFIC THE NORTH AMERIC...” Presumably the full text would have given the names of panels and the rooms they were in, but they were all truncated, and hence quite useless.

I walked on and on. The paper arrows pointed mockingly further and further from the hotel.

(Later, I discovered that the convention couldn't afford, and doubtless didn't need, the entire convention centre; and whether by design, by accident, or by necessity, the part that they had booked was the section as far away from the hotel as it was possible to get, necessitating long dreary treks between the two.)

In the end I gave up, found my way through a maze of twisty little passages all alike to street level, and hit up a bagel joint that someone had recommended. Returning to the convention centre with my spoils, I sat at one of the myriad empty tables in the main passageway and nibbled at my bagel while hoping somebody I knew would go past. Not only did I see no familiar faces, but almost nobody at all came along, apart from somebody cosplaying as Waluigi. “Wah,” I greeted them; “Wah,” they replied, and walked on. I couldn't help noting they were going away from the convention centre.

I thumbed my way through the Grenadine programme on my tablet

as I ate, and was struck as I had on my previous glances by how little there was in the way of fannish programming. On one level, this didn't bother me too much, since there was a wealth of sercon and professionally oriented stuff, and now that I'm balancing with one foot in the pro camp and the other still in fandom, I could see I'd still find plenty of interest.

On the other hand... I reminded myself that I was here thanks to the Trans-Atlantic **Fan** fund, not **pro** fund (which doesn't exist, and whose would be unpronounceable). It seemed rather cheeky of me to spend my time in Winnipeg schmoozing editors and publishers at the expense of fans, but what choice was there? Little or none, that I could see. I sighed, screwed up my bagel wrapper, and headed for my first panel.

This went by the name of “Knowing the Roots: Representation in the Genre Before.” Before what? I don't know; that was how it was listed on Grenadine and in the email I was sent. I assume there was meant to be more to the title.

(The programme as a whole showed every sign of having been thrown together by robots with no human eyes; for instance, the registration field had a space for you to enter your “organization.” I had put “TAFF”, which was fine, but Tanya Huff had foolishly essayed a little joke by putting “I am not at all organized” in that field, and was rewarded by having that phrase appended to her name on every

single programme item featuring her. Others were flagged as variations on “n/a” or “--”, or found themselves billed as representing the organisation of “Myself” (Rich Horton) or “Julie E. Czerneda” (go on, guess). And Nisi Shawl – a fucking **guest of honor**, and consequently on many programme items – was accompanied on every occasion by the tag “I believe you already have my bio and photo.” Apparently they didn’t, since her “photo” was the generic one used for people who hadn’t supplied any.)

“Modern SF is often considered to be inclusive. But when did the genre begin to include representatives of BIPOC and/or LGBTQ communities? Our panellists point out hidden examples of early SF that treat these communities with respect.” That was our brief.

In practice we pointed out very few such examples, since Cheryl Morgan, Nisi Shawl and myself all found it easier to find egregious examples of when early SF did not. Inevitably, Robert Heinlein came up. Cheryl reiterated her theory, which I’d first heard at Eastercon this year, that Heinlein was trans, an argument I wish Heinlein had lived long enough to hear and respond to. The quality of the debate was not strengthened by the room having not a single working microphone, so that we all had to bellow at the audience in the cavernous room, and then strain our ears when they talked back to us. This would have spelled disaster

for anyone trying to listen-in via Zoom, except that the convention Zoom – for which fans around the world had laid down no small sums of money– still wasn’t working. (We got off lightly; I heard another programme item had to be cancelled when it was first allocated a room with no projector. Then, when hastily moved, the projector wouldn’t talk to the presenter’s Powerpoint slideshow.)

Unsurprisingly I was feeling pretty tired when the time came to end the panel. We had to do so on the scheduled dot, since we only had fifteen minutes to get to the opening ceremony, halfway around the world back at the hotel.

I wouldn’t have been particularly bothered about missing it, except that the convention email had warned that I was scheduled to take part in it. I’d frantically scratched together a few words, and sat in the big room waiting for it to begin trying to put them in some kind of order.

It turned out that I was spared having to speak, or play any part in the ceremony at all. Matters began with the sound of Heather Bjorklund, of the First Nations, welcoming us with drumming and singing. I hardly like to carp, since one of the few things Pemmi-Con got right was in its firm acknowledgement that it was taking place on tribal land, but her performance featured three distinct songs and went on for Rather A Long Time, and I cannot say that I derived much pleasure or entertainment from it.

Perhaps that was meant to make us feel as though the subsequent entry of the committee was shorter than the longeur it actually was. If so, it didn't work; the committee processed across the stage, like planets round an orrery, and were introduced with the usual faint round of applause, one after another, followed by such guests of honour as were actually in attendance rather than having dropped out because of scheduling conflicts or death. Since the opening ceremony, too, was devoid of any working microphones, I was not left much wiser about who was who.

Then we were regaled by the First Fandom Awards. I'm sure Mike Moorcock is very proud of being in the First Fandom Hall of Fame. Likewise, John L. Coker III carried off the Sam Moskowitz memorial award, and I'm sure this was well deserved and not just because Coker happens to be the boss of First Fandom these days.

Eventually the opening ceremony morphed uneasily into a reception. I stayed around for a little while, before fleeing to join Karen Schaffer and Michael Ward, who had thoughtfully invited me out for dinner at an Indian buffet.

The buffet, named the East India Company, turned out to bear a startling resemblance to the dear old Indian Veg restaurant on Chapel Market, Islington. I found myself sitting with a couple of fans strange to me, Dave (DJ) Johnson and Susan Kirby-Johnson; making conversation with them, Dave

remarked that they'd come to the con all the way from their home in Las Vegas because they knew of no organised fandom in Vegas.

Well, yes. Of course I had to point out to them that I, though not even American, knew plenty of fans in Vegas. A few swift messages soon confirmed that it was fine to put them in touch with the current crop of Vegnants, and furthermore, to invite them to the TAFF party to be held in my honour there a week hence. I felt a proud glow that TAFF was living up to its long-avowed intent of putting fans from far-flung locations in touch with one another. (For the sequel to this, you'll have to wait for chapter 7 of this report, dealing with my adventures in Vegas...)

The meal went on for quite a time, which I didn't mind, since most of the other scheduled programming that evening was filk, and by the time I got back to the hotel, the room parties were starting to get going. On the way back, we found an Irish pub and eaterie, which claimed that "New disposable and lamented menus are available." I lamented their proof-reading, and passed on.

Seattle and Glasgow were both throwing parties that night. Sad to say, they were doing so in two ordinary hotel rooms next door to each other, and both of them soon became cram-jam-crowded in short order. This touched off a problem which was to mar the entire convention's social side; someone from the hotel came past, was

horrified to see the struggling masses, and demanded that all parties be restricted to a suitable number for the size of the room they were being held in, namely four people.

Hasty arguments ensued, and the number was grudgingly raised to ten, but the hotel would not budge on their other diktat, which was that parties must cease at 11pm. Some said that this was sheer bloody-mindedness by the hotel; others that the convention hadn't thought to warn the hotel that fans like to party. Both may even have been true. It would be quite feasible. It didn't affect me directly, since by the time ten people were packed into one of the party rooms I felt crowded out, but given the amount of food and drink they'd brought along, Seattle were righteously peeved by these restrictions.

In the circumstances, it was at least a relief to see that the majority of attendees were masking up in parties and programming.

Before going to bed, I checked Grenadine once again to see if any of my programme items had changed (again), only to be greeted by a warning that the site might have been

compromised and I should upon no account attempt to visit it. It transpired that this was the anniversary of the domain being registered – presumably when the NASFIC bid was successful – and nobody had remembered to renew its security certificate.

[21 July]

I didn't have much time for breakfast on Friday, and resorted to a hasty and shameful Sausage McMuffin across the road, before hastening to my first programming commitment of the day, "Human Rights: a primer," in the same room as my previous panel. Thankfully, working microphones were now



#2

Friday, July 21, 2023



Philp John Currie, George Freeman, Heather Bjorklund, Julie E. Czerneda, Tanya Huff, Nisi Shawl, Linda Ross-Mansfield, Robbie Bourget

Opening Ceremonies

Opening Ceremonies began with Toastmaster Tanya Huff introducing Heather Bjorklund. Heather drummed and chanted three songs as part of Pemmi-Con's land acknowledgment. Tanya introduced her fellow GoHs who were physically present: Dr. Phil Currie, Julie Czerneda, George Freeman, Nisi Shawl. Co-Chair Robbie Bourget and Linda Ross-Mansfield opened Pemmi-Con and welcomed the members.

First Fandom Hall of Fame Awards

The First Fandom Hall of Fame Awards were presented Thursday at Opening Ceremonies, by Vincent Docherty, to authors: Michael Moorcock and Will Murray. Posthumous Hall of Fame: Conrad H. Ruppert (fan/printer), Ken Kelly (artist).

David Ritter presented the Sam Moskowitz Archive Award to John L. Coker III.

Volunteers Needed!

You can help the convention work, meet people, and see bits of the convention you would not see otherwise. To volunteer, come see us in St. Vital in the Delta, on the second floor. It is near St. James (readings) and Kildonan (pinball).

Zoom Today

Check your email for "Friday Hybrid Links".

Pemmi-Con apologizes for the delay in tech setup. It's working now.

Party Announcements

Minneapolis in 2023 will be partying in room 534 Friday and Saturday nights. Come drink some blog, eat some Peeps, and pre-support our Worldcon bid. It's our negative 50th anniversary!

Mensa Dinner Outing

Friday 5:30 PM Delta lobby — Mensa members & friends gather for dinner outing (destination TBA)

provided; less happily, this gave the loudest member of the panel a chance to talk over everyone else. Since he was acting as I'd expect a moderator to do (even if a moderator who liked the sound of his own voice too much), and since I was not very awake, I let him have his head. Afterwards I learned that he had arrogated that position to himself and that there was no moderator for the panel as such.

There was just time for me to grab another bagel from the nice bagel place before I had to double back and find the dealer room where my signing session was to take place.

The dealers' hall was a huge and cavernous affair where the few hucksters had space to rattle around like the last few peanuts at the bottom of an almost-empty packet. In the circumstances, it was easy to locate the signing table, which for this session I was sharing with Heather Rose Jones, who writes (and podcasts) queer fantasy romance. Unlike me, she had brought several neat little stacks of minty-fresh books along. I looked at them mournfully, dug into my handbag, pulled out my stash of Pat Virzi badges advertising *The Psychopath Club* and *The Devil's Finger*, and emptied them onto my half of the table.

The best that can be said for the next hour is that it gave me time to eat my bagel in a leisurely manner, and for Heather and me plenty of time to get to know one another

(she was charming). Neither of us got to sign so much as the back of a till receipt, and Heather had to take her supply of unsold books away again. Frankly, I hadn't expected to be asked for a signature, but I had at least hoped to be disappointed.

I couldn't stay to look round the dealers' hall or art show (which shared a space) because yet again, I had fifteen minutes before I was needed back at the hotel for my kaffeeklatsch. The room I needed was concealed with devilish cunning around the back of the hotel swimming pool, and I arrived out of breath and in a dubious temper, expecting to find nobody there to feed me coffee and talk to me about either my fiction or TAFF.

I was wrong; I had an audience of one. Stand up and – not for the last time in this report – take a bow, Chris Marble, who had turned up because he thinks TAFF is a worthy cause to be encouraged. Chris, a hirsute and ebullient fellow, put me at my ease immediately and we passed a cheerful hour chatting about TAFF and other this-and-thats. Frankly, this was just what I needed. By the time we parted company I was feeling considerably more relaxed. This was my last programming commitment of the day and I could now do whatever the hell I wanted.

Finding nobody I knew in the hotel, I once more ventured on the trek to the far side of the convention centre, glad that I was for once in no hurry, and made my way around

the dealers' den and art show, neither of which took very long. What was there, was okay, but there just wasn't very much of it. There's much talk nowadays of whether SF conventions are a dying phenomenon; if they are, it seems to me that the dealers' room is the part that's gone gangrenous first.

Then I turned a corner and was confronted with a large and unexpected photograph of myself.

Closer investigation showed that this was the article which Claire Brialey had written about me for the con's programme book. Before I left on my travels, she'd asked me if I wanted to vet it, and I'd declined, preferring not to meddle. Since Pemmi-Con had failed to provide so much as a pocket programme for attendees, far less the programme book itself, I still hadn't seen it. (Indeed, at the time of writing this, I

TAFF Delegate

Sandra Bond



Photo Credits
Eve Jones (top)
Oliver Facey (above, left)

Sandra Bond does words.

She's a fine fanwriter and editor, of course, getting started in fanzines in the late 1980s and also participating in APAs and postal *Diplomacy* fandom, meaning that she's raised expectations for her TAFF trip report before even leaving home. She writes fiction as well, across genre; her novels published so far (*The Psychopath Club* and *The Devil's Finger*) demonstrate deft plotting and characterisation alongside a flow and precision of language that come as no surprise to anyone who's enjoyed her fanwriting. Sandra also writes poetry and lyrics that share those qualities and often, too, the humour that shines through at relevant moments in all her work.

In case it's not obvious, Sandra does performance. She was the singer, songwriter and guitarist in north London indie rock band *The Danutsh* — and has taken care to have the range of occupations that novelists need to list on their book jackets. She's the showrunner and host for the well-established and popular *Corflu* panel game 'Just a Mimac' (inspired by a British radio show), and she brings to the fan funds longstanding experience as an auctioneer, where she combines her skills as a performer with deep-rooted fannish expertise.

Because, among her extensive fan activity which is far too varied to detail here, Sandra (or indeed *S&ra*) does fanhistory in a way that means you'd always want her on your convention quiz team. She found fandom as an enthusiastic teenager, giving her the chance to meet some of the legends and get started on the source material at an impressionable age. (Her longest-running fanzine title, *Quasiquote*, stands in the tradition of *Slant* and *Hyphen*.) These days, the people who were actually there frequently ask her what happened before her time; she almost always resists the urge to make it up.

Sandra Bond is talented, knowledgeable, entertaining, generous, kind, and quite brilliant. I hope you've met her now and seen that for yourself, but for posterity I'm delighted to be able to introduce her as the 2023 westbound *Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund* delegate.

— Claire Brialey

still haven't received the programme book, nor do I know any fan who has.) Claire's write-up delivered a dose of egoboo of such proportions as to be dangerous to administer in a public place such as this, and I left the echoing hall with the disturbing sensation of my feet having risen to about six inches off the ground.

Thus energised I headed out of the convention space in search of proper nourishment. I'd noted the existence of a craft-beer-and-burger joint a few blocks away, named The Topsy Cow, which got good online reviews; having found nobody to invite along, I made my way there solo, not unhappy to have a brief respite from having to deal with other people, and enjoyed a decent meal from a very attentive waiter named Adam, clad in a Spider-Man tee shirt, who was fascinated to learn there was an sf convention in town. I almost wished I could have recommended him to come along, sign up and join us, but by now, it was already clear that if I'd wanted to recruit him as a neofan, dragging him into Pemmi-Con was not the way to go about it: "There is a growing swell of feeling that the con is lurching along one step from falling apart," I wrote on Discord to those back home, then felt constrained to add, "(Yes, yes, I know, every con...)"

An easy and not particularly hasty saunter back to the hotel later, I was in time for what Grenadine called the "Manitoba reception in BC." My swotting up on Canadian geography before leaving home

tripped me up here; surely Manitoba and British Columbia are separate provinces, some considerable distance apart? But Manitoba was the geographical descriptor, and BC the room name – it was the big hall where the opening ceremony had been. I found my way there, and discovered some actual people I knew! (be still, my heart).

No smof I, I wouldn't normally inveigle my way into conversations about Worldcon politics and procedure, but I was happy enough to sit and listen to Sharon Sbarsky and Kevin Standlee expound upon the woes of trying to keep such things on their normal rails from North America while the Worldcon takes itself off to China. Kevin, if my notes can be believed, seemed most concerned that there was no Emergency Reserve Gavel to send to Chengdu; or perhaps he was worried that it was going to be sent there and never find its way back. He also regretted the absence of John Mansfield, fan guest of honour, who had passed away in April 2023: "the Sergeant-Major to my Second Lieutenant". (If you surmise from this that I had returned from the Topsy Cow a little off-sober, you surmise correctly.)

I was still cheerful when room party time rolled back around; cheerful in that kind of way you get when you're defying the failings of a really duff convention, and indulging in Desperate Fun regardless rather than letting the circumstances get to you. Developments had ensued



Well, ain't that
a coinkydink!

TAFF supports
Minneapolis in
'73 as well!

Ask SANGRA
BOND the
current TAFF
delegate 'n'
she'll tell ya
the same...



after the problems on Thursday night; the hotel had now caused a guard to be stationed by the elevators, blocking access to the party floor if it were deemed too crowded. Since my room, as I've mentioned, was on that floor, this caused annoyance, but also gave me an excellent excuse to demand access no matter how bloody crowded things were.

Some genius – it may well have been Karen Schaffer – had struck a deal whereby the Minneapolis parties on Friday and Saturday nights, rather than being confined to the cramped rooms suffered by Seattle and Glasgow, were to be held in the con suite. This meant not only that there was much more space to play with – a larger room plus the roof area outside – but made it easy for me to pop in and out of my own room as I saw fit.

2023 being fifty years after 1973, Mpls marked this banner occasion by holding a Minneapolis in 1973 party on one night and Minneapolis in 2073 the next. My notes become sparse and less than legible at this point – I blame the Minneapolis blog, which contained more alcohol than you'd have thought from its sweet fruity taste. Of names I knew, Murray Moore was there, for sure; so were Jannie Shea and Eva Whitley. "Leathers the filker," my notes say – Graham Leathers, I guess? Chris Marble was there and toasted my TAFF status once again, the dear man. My notes also mention someone who looks like "Clark Weirdo," but analysis and

internet research suggests this must have been Clark Wierda. What interactions I had with him are lost to the blog and are fog. And after that, my notes peter out in an illegible scrawl like the Book of Marzabul, and leave a blank page for the rest of the evening.

[22 July]

I awoke with drums, drums in my ears.

Fortunately I didn't have an early panel on Saturday; my first one (back on the dark side of the moon in the convention centre, of course) wasn't till 11.30. It had the plonking title "Editors Are Sort Of Human Too, You Know." Having been blessed with editors who seem not only entirely human, but who catch my bloopers and don't make unreasonable demands or fiddle around with my work for its own sake, I wasn't sure how much I'd have to contribute; but I was looking forward to sharing a panel with (and scraping acquaintance with) Robert J. Sawyer, one of the best (and best known) writers at the con. (Listen, I'm not proud, and I'll do a lot of stuff I would normally shy away from if it'll help my nascent pro career.)

Except that he'd pulled out. He had, apparently, supplied the convention with a list of times when he would be available for programming, and times when he would not; and they had scheduled **every single appearance** in the latter, causing him not only to drop out of the relevant panels, but to

make a public post to social media saying just what he thought of the Pemmi-Con programming team, which wasn't much. ("Sending out all your programming emails from an email address that says 'no-reply@grenadine.com' does NOT make communication easy." Hard to argue with that.)

Once again, I breakfasted lightly off a bagel, and headed for the convention centre; a journey not made easier by the fact that the one accessible

elevator en route had now been shut down (I heard differing opinions on whether this was the hotel being ornery for the sake of it again, or whether it was simply because it was the weekend... but surely they **must** be used to people needing to use it over weekend events?)

And once again, I sat down in the corridors of the centre to eat it and people-watch. This time, though, I was interrupted by someone who'd been in the human rights panel the previous morning, and wanted me to educate him about how Europe approaches the topic. I found myself at a considerable loss: I don't mind getting into internet debates on this subject, but

having to explain my views verbally is quite another matter, and trying to explain the views of an entire continent upon which the UK had not too long ago turned its back, another and tougher matter still. I must have come up with something satisfactory, though Christ knows what, because eventually he thanked me and went away, leaving me feeling half flattered to be asked and half cross with myself for not being more articulate. Still, no time for rumination; the panel was starting.

In the absence of Robert Sawyer, alongside me on the dais this time were Canadian authors Karl Schroeder and Edward Willett... and, subbing for Sawyer,



#3

Saturday, July 22, 2023

Freya's Fundraiser Financial Figures



Freya's birthday bash was a great success! We raised \$939 for the Winnipeg pet rescue shelter. Thanks so much to everyone who contributed!

Kokeb Restaurant

There is a great Ethiopian Restaurant a few blocks away called Kokeb Restaurant. They have meat but also vegetarian dishes. A vegetarian combo cost \$13 including taxes. It's at 266 Edmonton Street. Phone number 204-784-9267. It is open from 12 noon to midnight but phone to make sure and to order ahead of time so you don't have to wait so long for your order.

Paper Airplane Fling!

The Ig Nobel Awards wants you. Or at least wants your paper airplanes. Gather a group and record yourselves throwing paper airplanes straight at the camera. Fling for science! Tonight at the Mpls in '73 party, 10 pm, in the consulte (room 410).

CSSFA Tea Party

The Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Association (CSSFA) tea celebrates Canadian pro and fan award winners and takes place at 5:30 PM Saturday in the Charleswood A room.

All visitors to the CSSFA tea may pick up a free fine art print by Leo & Diane Dillon, or by Kelly & Laura Freas.

Worth the Walk



If you have not visited Hall D in the convention centre, you are missing, among other attractions, At Bay Books (Winnipeg indie press, the owner of which is a bookbinder as well as publisher); an *Amazing* (as in the magazine) display of the life and writing of prominent 1930s Czech-American SF writer Miles J. Breuer; examples of the trophies given to Aurora Award winners; examples of cartooning and drawing by Rotzler Award winners, 1998-2022; displays describing Pemmi-Con's nine Guests and two Fan Fund Delegates; *On Spec*; The Canadian Magazine of the Fantastic; the Art Show; IFWA (Imaginative Fiction Writers Association), Calgary-based SF&F writers.

David Levine, a face I was pleased to see because while he's not a close friend or anything, he was (and is) at least a **fan** goddamnit, and like myself he's made his way up from fan to pro in the same way as me (the way you don't hardly see no more), only he started earlier, and has done better.

I didn't have a vast amount to add to the panel, as I'd expected, but there was no lack of anecdotes and grouching about editors who feel they need to justify their role by changing as many words as they can for synonyms (a habit that in *sf*, goes at least as far back as Horace Gold), and egregious editorial horrors such as the wretch who combined a pair of brothers in a John Brunner manuscript into one character, evidently believing that Brunner had merely been careless with the first name.

In fact, my primary moment in the spotlight came when at one point the topic turned to punctuation, and I was delighted that David Levine mentioned the well-remembered Minicon panel about "fannish accents" (in which Teresa Nielsen Hayden was accused of pronouncing the comma in 'Mesa, Arizona'). I was able to confirm that – as, one day, people reading this report in its proper order will already know – I'd just helped Geri Sullivan unearth a cassette tape of that panel, the appearance of which upon fanac.org I'm looking forward to... right, Geri?

From that panel I yet again had fifteen minutes to scurry back

to the hotel for the "Poetry in Speculative Fiction" panel, upon which I'd found myself despite my poetry generally having little to do with any particular genre. This was compered by Wendy Van Camp, a poet hitherto unknown to me despite being poet laureate of Anaheim, CA; she did a splendid job and I jotted down as much information on markets, marketing, and resources as I decently could.

Like the last panel, this one too had an unexpected high point, when Danny Sichel of Montreal stood up in the audience and wondered whether anyone remembered John M. Ford, and in particular his poem "Against Entropy." Evidently fearing they did not, he began to recite it from memory. Multiple voices, mine among them, chimed in with the final line: "Say what you mean. Bear witness. Iterate."

I challenged him to repeat the trick with another of Mike's classics, "110 Stories," from which I stole a trick for my least unknown poem ever ("A Ballade of Facebook"), but he couldn't or wouldn't.

With a little more forethought (it seemed) I could have stayed in that same room at the end of the poetry panel, because the next scheduled item was the fan fund auction; but I had to scoot up to my room to collect the box full of donations I'd amassed on my trip thus far. Returning, out of breath, I found to my dismay and anger that the auction... had been cancelled, and

the room was setting up for some other panel.

Exhausted and cross, I took to Facebook to grumble, eliciting much support from the community (the pithiest response, with which I felt much sympathy, was “Fuck these people,” coming from Andy Hooper, who has auctioned more fannish material for worthy causes than Ted White has enjoyed hot tokes).

By way of consolation, I found this cancellation enabled me, after all, to get into proximity with Robert J. Sawyer; incredibly, there were still free spaces for his “Thematic Approach to SF Writing” masterclass in the Tuxedo Boardroom (no tuxedo required). A selection of quasiquotes from this:

“We have never knowingly published anyone with an MFA.” (– attr. Ginjer Buchanan)

“My thematic approach means that I don’t start with characters, but with topics.”

“Look for the character who will be most put out by your premise or theme. Focus on them.”

“All SF is not about the year it’s set in, but the year in which it’s written.”

I was pleased to find that Sawyer is a self-assured and knowledgeable man, lacking in few things except self-importance, and overflowing with tips which he was happy to cast all around him, seed sewn broadcast. Once again I was pleased

with my decision to focus on sercon matters at the convention in the absence of much in the way of fannish programming, rather than sitting in a grump bemoaning the latter.

I emerged from the masterclass, and checked to discover that the fan fund auction had been revived. Muttering epithets about the programming committee, I rushed back up to my room **again** to retrieve the box of donations, and started to look for a room called “Assiniboia A.”

This turned out to be a remote outpost, down in the hotel basement, and if there was no sign on the door saying “Beware of the Leopard” it was only because the convention had probably stuck it on the wrong door. The previous item in the room had been yet another filk concert, which fact was evident from the fact that the place was littered with amps, mic stands and similar paraphernalia.

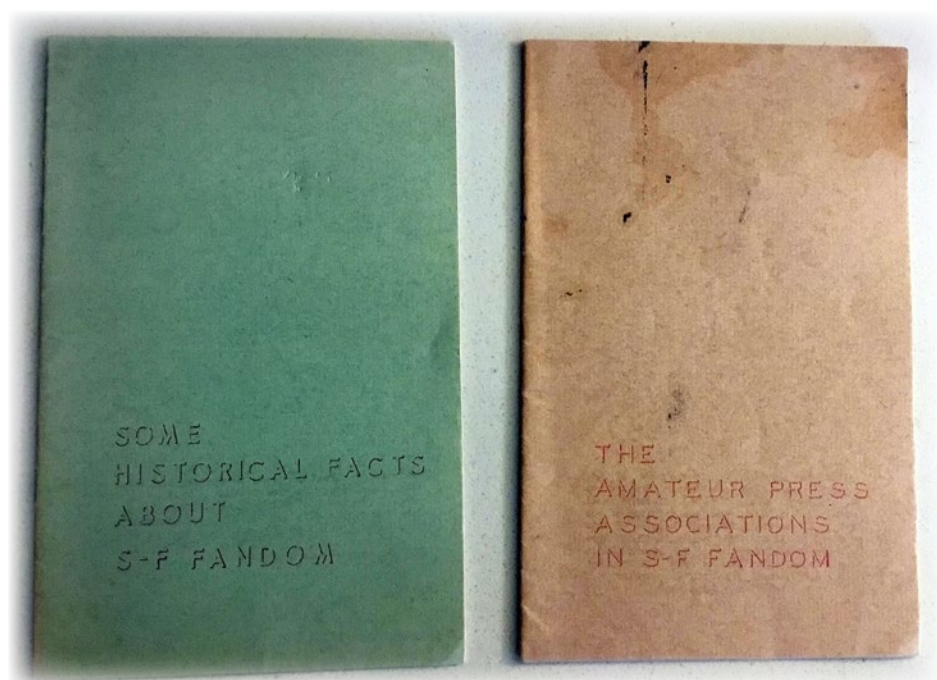
I waited for gophers to come and take them away and prep the room for the auction. I waited for people to come and form the audience who would bid on the auction. I waited in vain.

CUFF delegate Garth Spencer rolled up with a much bigger box of auction lots than I could boast. We started to spread them out on the one small side table available to us, glancing at the door in hope that **someone** would show up. And eventually, they did; four of them, including once again that hero of TAFF, Chris Marble.

Garth and I looked at each other in resignation; it was already well past time for us to start, in theory. And so, start we did. We had no runners, we had no cash float or cash box, we had nobody keeping records. All we had was some guitar stands, three fanzines, and the truth.

There are not many records I can claim in fandom; but I do think that Garth and I deserve a place in song and story for running the only fan fund auction that has ever been, or is likely to be, where everyone in the room bought something. One of us would pick an item and start hawking it, while the other scrawled down the result of the last bid on the file cards which were all we had by way of paper, and then scabbled for the following lot. It should have been a recipe for disaster, yet somehow, we made it work.

Top bid for a TAFF item was \$17 for “The Best of Xero,” donated a few days ago in Minneapolis by Gary Farber, and carried off by a fan with the badge name “Star Bright.” Garth himself secured another Farber donation, a very fat copy of the Chicago Style Manual which I was relieved I’d not have to lug as far as Seattle and Andy Hooper. I broke my own rule about Not Buying Books Or Fannish Shit On This Trip, and knocked down to myself two 1960s N3F pamphlets, retrieved by Joyce Scrivner from the estate of Denny Lien, and so can now regale anybody curious with Some Historical Facts About S-F Fandom (as compiled by Donald Franson) or details of The Amateur Press Associations In S-F Fandom (retailed by ‘Bob’ Lichtman).



Auctioneer Sandra sold these two 1960s N3F pamphlets to Bidder Sandra.

Eventually both Garth and I were worn to frazzles and the auction was allowed to stutter to a halt, with TAFF richer by \$70 Canadian. I hope the intrepid quartette in the audience enjoyed either their bargains, or the sight of two fan fund delegates trying to sell shit in a frenzy, or both.

Part of the reason I was so exhausted was that I'd barely had time to eat today, the auction being the last in a continuous string of programme items which had begun at 11.30am. I couldn't face a long trek for dinner and resorted to the Elephant and Castle, the expensive "pub" restaurant attached to the hotel, where I had no sooner sat down than I was immediately hailed by a table full of the Glasgow 2024 Worldcon staff, inviting me to join them in tones that would brook no



Above: Vincent Docherty and Steve Cooper from the Glasgow 2024 team. Photo by Sandra Bond.

Below: Selfies are hard. Vincent Docherty gives it a go with Steve Cooper, Sandra Bond, David Bamford, and Alan Fleming as the Glasgow 2024 team at Pemmi-Con enjoys dinner with the TAFF delegate.



denial. I was happy to accede to this request, all the more so when – yet again – I found myself prevented for paying for my own dinner by main force. This generosity was all the more noteworthy since I knew two of them on barely nodding acquaintance, and two not at all.

Relaxed at last, I compared notes with the quartette – Vincent Docherty, Alan Fleming, David Bamford, and Steve Cooper. They had done quite well for Glasgow, but they could only agree with me that *All Was Not Well* at Pemmi-Con. I pointed out to them that this could hardly fail to make them look good by compare, next year. I think this was where I learned that the Zoom problems besetting the convention, which I'd assumed were now fixed, were far from that; for instance, those hoping to watch the masquerade had found themselves with sound but no picture, and somehow I feel that a masquerade you can't watch must be lacking that certain something. The words "Pemmi-Con fuck up bingo" appear in my notes at this point; presumably whoever collects the entire set of mishaps on their card shouts "House!" and gets to run the next convention.

I was starting to fall into an evening routine, now; a circle between my room, the con suite and the nightly Minneapolis party, a wander round downstairs, and a session on the four pinball tables which the con had provided. This prevented me from feeling stale or 'peopled out.' I'd hardly expected to

go to Winnipeg to play pinball, but I'm happy to indulge that hobby of mine on any occasion (pinball tables no longer being easily found), particularly when able to play for nix.

I was meant to take part in a turkey reading session that night, but couldn't find it. I expect it had been moved, or retimed, or both. Or maybe I was just too tiddly to locate it. Garth later assured me that it had happened, but like Eliza Doolittle with Henry Higgins, they had done bloody well without me.

Eventually the stern guard by the elevators wore away my desire to keep circulating, and I remained in the con suite, watching people colour in and/or write captions on Ken Fletcher cartoons of dirigibles, and taking further refreshment aboard, until sleepiness began to supervene. Let's just say that by that time, it was a good job only a dozen steps separated my hotel room door from the con suite's.

[23 July]

Sunday morning was, it seemed, the morning for author readings.

A quick final check of Grenadine showed that Gerald Brandt had finally been granted the basic right to do his own reading instead of me having to do it. I was half tempted to go to it, but instead, after our previous interactions during the con, I plumped for David Levine's.

David regaled us with a chapter from his upcoming novel "The Kuiper Belt Job." The 'job' turned out to be a scientific twist on

the Ocean's Eleven type of heist, and he read it entertainingly. Afterwards I made a joke about the "Caper Belt" and he visibly winced, but whether out of sympathy or by way of revenge, he came along to my reading from "The Psychopath Club," and only pointed out one place where I'd used a UK English turn of phrase instead of a US one.

The last programme item I attended was on the subject of Writing Support. Here both notes and memory fail me, and all I can offer is "No mics AGAIN!," "Tiptree foundation?," and "So many faceblind ppl!" Anyone who can derive any support from that lot has my admiration.

The closing ceremony was like the opening ceremony, only with working microphones, and with a bagpiper in addition to a reprise from Heather Bjorklund and her drum.

Only one item remained unticked-off, now, on my list of commitments; I'd been invited to the Staff Dinner that evening at the other, even posher, hotel restaurant. I didn't feel hugely sociable or hugely hungry, and I was wary lest



#4

Sunday, July 23, 2023





Masquerade Awards

Performance
 Young Fan — Our Hats Off to You: Hat Kid
 Judge's Choice in Novice Class: Turaga Vakama
 Novice — Honorable Mentions: Tangible Artifact, Miss Frizzle
 Time Lord, Mrs Aching
 Journeyman — Throwback Barbie Award: Tour Guide Barbie
 Master — Cthulhu Jelly: Beneath the Bay of Insmouth
 Best Master: Exile
 Best in Show: Hut of Baba Yaga

Workmanship
 Best Recreation and Use of Corrugated Cardboard: Hat Kid
 Most Tangible Memory: Tangible Artifact
 Honorable Mention: Historical Hat Recreation
 Best Crochet — amazing stitches: Miss Frizzle
 Best Use of Modern Tech — 3D print, electronics, applique: Turaga Vakama
 Honorable Mention Historical Recreation: Tour Guide Barbie
 Best Use of Alternate Materials: Beneath the Bay of Insmouth
 Best Use of Stash and Recycle: Exile
 Best in Show: Hut of Baba Yaga

Art Show Awards

Best in Show: "Breatharian" — Robert Pasternak
Best Body of Work: Orion Smith
Best 2-D: "Octavia" — Alan F. Beck
Best 3-D: "Generation Ship" — John Douglass

Played and Won!

Badge #322 has won the copy of Kaupapa. You can come pick it up in Gaming anytime during today's hours.

Pemmi-Con thanks Kura Rēhia for their donation of this game. Kura Rēhia offers a variety of language learning games at <https://speak.maori.nz/>. Thank you also to everyone who tried Kaupapa out this weekend, for helping celebrate the work of Indigenous creators!

— Petréa Mitchell

the staff ask me what I thought of the convention, in which case I might have had to tell them and cause alarm and despondency; but I once more reminded myself that I was on TAFF and here to meet people, and besides, it was free.

The ghost of Robert Heinlein chuckled quietly in the shadows at this point, but I didn't hear him.

First off, I couldn't find the dinner in the half-empty restaurant. It turned out to be hidden in a back room of the restaurant, and by the time I discovered it, most people had already ordered.

Then, it soon became clear that the restaurant staff were absolutely overwhelmed by the size of the

dinner party – some thirty people on three tables. Food began to inch its way out of the kitchen toward the other end of the dinner party. None of it came downstream as far as me or my fellow late arrivals, Publius Carson and Reggie Franchi.

Con chair Robbie Bourget kept trying to make conversation on my right, but that is my deaf side, and – to steal a line from Dave Langford – Robbie is a member neither of Large Fandom nor of Loud Fandom. Publius and I passed ribald comment on the hipster soup dishes, whose brims sloped downward rather than upward from the edge of the actual bowl part, rendering them quite useless in the event of spillage. Chris Marble said some things about the french fries which I can't read in my notes, but which may not have been polite. John Harold made up for Robbie's quietness and more by being loud and outspoken from further down the table. The heat death of the universe silently inched closer.

Eventually, 82 minutes after our orders had been taken, Publius and I finally received some indifferent food. By this point we could have eaten crudzines on toast and felt ourselves lucky.

And then, before I'd even finished, I found myself presented with a bill of no small extent. Guess what? Apparently the invitation to the staff dinner as an honoured guest did not, as I'd assumed, mean that my food would actually be paid for. I dragged out my credit card,

suppressing a snarl, and thanked every fannish deity that TAFF was solvent enough to pick up the slack here and pay for the worst meal I'd eaten in Canada.

I discovered later, from what journalists call A Reliable Source, that the Committee Slack had described the meal as “Help us fulfil the last of our F&B requirement.” In other words, the hapless staff of the convention, as well as its guests and hangers-on such as I, were having to pay from our own pockets because Pemmi-Con had failed to fulfil its contractual obligations to the hotel. Well, goodness.

Apparently an email to staff members from Jannie Shea had also given them details on where to go and when, along with the confirmation that they were on their own as far as payment went; but this didn't even make it to the Slack channel, far less to us mere mortals who, of course, knew nothing of this.

I wish I could say that this chaotic failure of communication was the sole instance of such at the convention; but as perspicacious readers will have noted, it was the rule and not the exception. I considered making a scene, but both exhaustion and my sense of dignity as a TAFF delegate militated against it, and I simply tucked my credit card away again and slunk out, grateful that the food and drink at what different official sources called the Dead Moose or the Dazed Moose Party would at least be free.

Moreover, even a bowl of peanuts or M&Ms would be tastier than what I'd just consumed.

A general air of relief permeated the con suite. Various fans whom I'd already met at the con were there again, making weary conversation, some of it not about the convention's failings – Sharon Sbarsky, Michael Ward, Karen Schaffer, Murray Moore – as well as some I had managed to miss so far, such as Janice and Chip Morningstar, and convention department head Kim Monson (I didn't dare ask which department, in case it was one of those which had crashed and burned in the face of difficulties). People wandered out to the deck, and back in to the drinks, in the great circle of life which characterises all convention dead dog parties. Equally characteristic was the amount of alcohol on offer which nobody wanted the bother of taking home with them.

I was just about to call it a night when I found myself sandwiched between Jay Spitzer of Chicago, and Stuart Cooper of Edmonton, both of whom pressed cans of interesting-looking beer upon me. Politeness and greed combined forces, and insisted that I should take both. I calculated that I could probably manage one more without immediate disaster, and opened it, tucking the other one away in my handbag for future reference (it went with me as far as Las Vegas, where I rediscovered it in circumstances which – once again – you must wait to learn until chapter 7 of this report). I sipped it quietly,

and nursed the last of it until I was sure nobody was looking my way and about to press further alcohol upon me; and then I made a break for it.

I covered the distance between the con suite and my room in five seconds flat – which would be more impressive if I hadn't already confessed they were next door to each other.

I shed my clothing in heaps all over the floor, set my alarm, and climbed for the last time into that enormous bed.

I wasn't quite sure how, but I had survived Pemmi-Con.

And tomorrow, I was going on a road trip.

Envoi: “What we have here is a failure to communicate”

As I wrote on Facebook on Monday 24 July: “And so Pemmi-Con tumbles into its pauper's grave, mourned more for what it might have been than for what it was. I wish I could say it was a good con, but it really wasn't very well run at all.”

Why was Pemmi-Con such a disaster of a convention, in so many ways?

As a fan who avoids, as much as she can, running conventions – I know my limits – you should take my opinions with a pinch of salt. But here are some observations.

Trying to get a response out of the convention, either beforehand or during it, was apparently quite impossible. I was lucky; I had the saintly Murray Moore watching



over me, and he evidently had a direct line to God's ear denied to less fortunate members. Emails went unanswered; so did too many pleas on social media.

Linked to this, signage varied between atrocious and non-existent. It hardly needs a planning genius to realise that it's required when running a con that covers as much physical space as Pemmi-Con.

Similarly, to require conventioners to consult an online resource as the sole way of finding out what's going on is not acceptable; too many fans lack easy access to the net even nowadays, especially when (as here) a good many of them are travellers from another territory and having to pay eye-watering roaming rates. And yet, there was no programme book (as mentioned above, there still isn't); there was no pocket programme. If you couldn't look at Grenadine, your only option was to cluster round a chart affixed to the wall near registration, where people with good eyesight could just about make out an events list in tiny print. Hardly once did I pass that

spot without there being a clump of people peering at that chart.

Furthermore, as I've remarked already, the convention's Grenadine was wildly variable as regards accuracy, and as regards being kept up to date.

The newsletter was widely available, well laid out and printed, and often amusing to scan; but a great deal of its content was mere whimsy when it might otherwise have served as a valuable source of hard information. The committee were feeding info to the newsletter team, weren't they... weren't they?

Then – this is mere hearsay – I heard mutterings from more than one source that the con was understaffed. What staff they **did** have, at least below committee level, seemed to be working devotedly and at full capacity; but the list of lacunae – in tech ops, in gophering, in (yes, again) communication – meant that too often rooms that were meant to host this or that item were in no fit state to serve that purpose.

The hotel, while efficiently run **qua** hotel, showed every sign of starting out from an attitude of bare tolerance toward the con, and becoming steadily worse from there. Whether the convention can shoulder any blame for this, I don't know; if it were the only flaw in the event, I'd give them the benefit of the doubt, but when stacked up alongside all the other issues, one is forced to wonder what went on in hotel liaison before and during the event.

I'm even less qualified to comment on financial matters than I am any other aspect of the con; but rumours abounded regarding the convention's cash status, and how dire an outlook it was wearing. And indeed, the report presented to fandom, on 15 August 2023, showed a deficit of only a whisker short of twenty-five thousand Canadian dollars.

What's more, and I quote:

"Please note that the financial report that we submitted to this year's WSFS Business Meeting is an interim report, not the final report. Thank you!" (Pemmi-Con, 12 October, Facebook)

I don't know what the final report may say, nor whether it will show any improvement in the above figures or – as seems more likely – a further descent into the financial maelstrom, nor (more importantly) when fandom may expect to see it.

Any of the above failings might be expected from any convention; but to see them all together in a row, like sad and empty bottles after a room party, causes concern. After all, there's another NASFiC next year in Buffalo, and it can hardly benefit Buffalo to have to put on a con overshadowed by such a string of failings as Pemmi-Con displayed.

Or perhaps everyone will say that no matter what mishaps Buffalo may run into, "Oh, it's not as bad as Winnipeg!"

I hope they'll be able to say so with genuine feeling, and not as mere whistling in the dark.



Editor's note: Sandra read Chapter 6, part 1 – "Moose Hats and Medicine Jaws" – on episode 98 "Finally Manitoba" of the Octothorpe podcast, available online at octothorpe.podbean.com

The next TAFF race will be eastbound, sending a North American fan to Glasgow 2024 A Worldcon For Our Futures.

Nomination and voting deadlines will be announced on Dave Langford's splendid, unofficial TAFF website and on the TAFF Facebook page.

taff.org.uk

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TAFF donations always welcome!



BARRETT'S PLANETEERS

Once upon a time, in my hippie Space Cadet days, I used to imagine that I was the reincarnated descendant of an ancestor who piloted a spaceship that crashed here ages ago. Pink Floyd, it seemed to me in 1966, somehow, shared Jungian racial memories of that voyage, presented in their best and most famous song, *Interstellar Overdrive*.

So, patterned after a song written by the great Stan Rogers, I wrote:

THE LAST OF BARRETT'S PLANETEERS

Oh the year was Nineteen Sixty-Six
(How I wish I was in N-Space now)
An album of songs that we could sing
For the trippiest voyage I'd ever seen
God bless them all! I was told
We'd cruise the stars through a stretched manifold
We'd break no spaces, shed no tears
Now I'm a stranded fan on a parallax bier
The last of Barrett's Planeteers.

Oh Sydney Barrett, cried the town
(How I wish I was in N-Space now!)
For twenty brave men, all hypernauts, who
Would make for a multidimensional crew
God bless them all! I was told
We'd cruise the stars through a stretched manifold
We'd break no spaces, shed no tears
Now I'm a stranded fan on a parallax bier
The last of Barrett's Planeteers.

“For all the time spent in that room
The doll's house, darkness, old perfume
And fairy stories held me high on
Clouds of sunlight floating by.”

Syd Barrett

*British singer-songwriter, musician,
poet, composer, artist, and
co-founder of Pink Floyd.*

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Our hyperdrive sloop was a Dali-esque sight
(How I wish I dwelled in N-Space now)
The reborn six-hundred would find their teams
All the kooks in the scupper with the slagers and dreams.
God bless them all! I was told
We'd cruise the stars through a stretched manifold
We'd break no spaces, shed no tears
Now I'm a stranded fan on a parallax bier
The last of Barrett's planetees.

On the Chief's birthday we warped past C
(How I wish I was in N-Space now)
We were nine million clicks to the dog star's field
Pulsing like math men who won't yield
God Bless them all! I was told
We'd cruise the stars through a stretched manifold
We'd pub our ish. feel no fear
Now I'm a stranded fan on a parallax bier
The last of Barrett's planetees.

To be continued?

BY LENNY BAILES

Freakin' \$28 Dollars of Freakin' Apples

by David Greenbaum

Years ago, after a delicious meal capped by a wonderful *smooth* Norman cider, my friend Mike and I decided that we would try to make our own cider, the kind that makes you happy but puts your legs to sleep.

It isn't easy, making cider, when you don't know how. I mean, you **know** about sterility and temperature control and sugar control and acidity, but it's all theoretical, out of books. We didn't have the money to buy proper working containers and other assay equipment, and we reused (after careful cleaning and sterilization in boiling water) bottles so we could ferment in the bottle. I remember at the time thinking that the carbonation in the wonderful Norman cider **had** to be the result of second fermentation, like champagne. And I thought it would be much more clever to control the yeast by using a particular champagne yeast, so we could do the malolactic thing. So we pasteurized the cider in a pressure cooker after we pressed it.

The pressing of the apple pulp needs to be described. We didn't take the apple orchard up on their offer to pulp the two bushels of apples that we bought (four different strains, McIntoshes, Jonagolds, Akanes, and this

Norman apple that was very astringent), because we didn't have containers to transport the pulped apple in. And anyway, the apples would have started to work during the drive back to Mike's kitchen. So we were going to use Michael's 1½ quart Cuisinart he borrowed from his mother.

Have you ever tried to grind up two bushels of apples in a 1½ quart Cuisinart? Ahem. There were oxidation problems – viz. the apples turned brown before we could finish all of them. But I especially liked the number of times we had to run the Cuisinart, and the couple of hours we had to let it rest because it was getting too hot.

We pressed the apple pulp in old pillowcases (laundered in Clorox and rinsed **very** well), by putting the pulp in the pillowcases and twisting. Very tiring, but we pressed three gallons of cider.

Okay, sterilized bottles, pasteurized cider, champagne yeast, added sucrose to bring the sugar percentage up to seven percent. Corked, wired, topped with condoms (hey, don't laugh) it was a way to measure the productivity of the yeast – the evolved CO₂ would diffuse through and around the cork into the condom, inflating it. If you know the permeability of

Originally posted on rec.arts.sf.fandom mid-May 2001.

the latex, and you know the surface area of the ballooning condom, you know the volume of gas evolved over time, and thus, the amount of sugar digested. It's a way to tell when the fermentation is finished.) Laid down in the basement in the furnace room (steady temperature of ~60 degrees, as opposed to the rest of the unheated basement) and worked for three months.

Pop! Bang! Shatter! Crash! Crash! Bang! Out of eight 750 ml champagne bottles we filled, six exploded over the course of the primary fermentation. Had a great comment from my friend Howard "You really fill your condoms well." Bang. The sound of the seventh being smashed against the floor after it ejected its cork under considerable pressure and promptly rotted. Not vinegar – putrefactive rot. The sugar content must have been a bit *too* high.

The eighth bottle. The last hope. Thirty hours of labor, about forty dollars worth of apples, yeast, various simple brewing paraphernalia.

I was at my parent's house one weekend, and Mike drove down from Ithaca with the last bottle of cider. We had decided to give up on trying any secondary champagne fermentation to bring the presumed alcohol up to

11% – this one wasn't in a champagne bottle, and a couple of the ones that exploded were. We didn't want to let this sit for malolactic fermentation – who knows what would have happened, and anyway, this couldn't possibly be a good way of doing this.

So, we went into my mother's laundry room in the basement, where the big sink was, with this lonely last bottle of cider and a couple of wine glasses. I wanted to taste forty-dollar homemade sparkling cider.

Tape unwrapped, condom removed.





“The cork looks good! It isn’t wet and it hasn’t moved out of the neck any distance!”

Good sign. Eased the cork out, slowly, slowly, **pop** the sound of rapidly expanding impounded CO₂.

“It kept pressure! Yay!”

A little mist rose from the bottle spout as the gas solution de-saturated. I was careful not to joggle the bottle, to keep the gas from bursting out of solution swiftly.

“So, who’ll taste first?” asked Mike. He looked at me expectantly. The cider had been **my** idea.

I handed him the bottle and picked up the wineglass. He poured out the cider carefully. The color was good, golden with a hint of red. The consistency looked okay – it looked a **bit** more viscous than water, and the meniscus was more concave, wetting the sides of the glass more easily. The bubbles were larger than I’d thought they’d be, but probably that was gas nucleation on suspended sediments. We hadn’t rebottled or filtered it, you see.

“Looks okay.”

I swirled it in the glass and sniffed. It smelled like apples, there was the tang of the ethyl alcohol, and something heavy and pungent that I couldn’t nail down.

“Smells like apples. Cyanide smells like almonds, too.”

Michael watched me intently. His glass was on the countertop, empty. Clean. “Taste it.”

Very slowly I raised the glass to my lips and sipped a couple of milliliters.

Carbonation... slight sweetness... Waugh! Acetone! Paint thinner! I could feel my optic nerves tingling. My head swam. I bent over the lip of the laundry sink and spat it out. Poured out the wineglass, started the cold tap, filled it, and took a big mouthful to swish and gargle. The commercial paint-thinner taste was nothing compared to the musty rot aromatic after-taste. I remember thinking – “can fusel oils and methanol kill that quickly?”

“It isn’t good?”

I coughed. “Taste it.”

“I don’t think so.”

“Taste it, you son-of-a-bitch. I had to taste it.”

“I had to eat part of that duck, too. I’m not tasting it.”

“Then don’t taste it.”

I took the bottle and upended it over the sink. Smelled like apples, as it spun down the drain. The first and last time I ever tried home-brewing. He’d brought a bottle of the good Norman cider from Ithaca, though. And we enjoyed it with dinner.

The Further Adventures of

GERI SULLIVAN, GIRL HOMEOWNER

by Geri Sullivan

In 1983, a few months after buying Toad Hall, I had to call my dad to find out how to start a furnace. A boiler, actually, but the basic issue was the same: I needed to turn on the heat, and I didn't know how.

Daddy soon had me on the right track. Just one flood from the overflow tank through the bedroom closet floor and the living room ceiling later, the boiler started and the house began to warm.

I didn't feel like a competent homeowner that day. Not only didn't I own a portable drill, I didn't even know how to turn on the heat.

Yes, I know. Lots of homeowners don't own portable drills. Others who do own them probably don't know how to use them. But I grew up in a house where one of the homeowners, Daddy, fixed pretty much everything himself. I grew up thinking that homeowners were supposed to be able to fix pretty much everything themselves.

It took until my 30s to learn that calling the repair guy was a legitimate way of fixing things. Actually, I have Fred Levy Haskell to thank for that. Someone had broken a window trying to break



Originally posted on LiveJournal August 4, 2006. Updated a fair bit from that.

into Toad Hall. The double-keyed deadbolts foiled the burglary, but there I was with a broken window to fix. I called Fred and asked how to replace a broken window. He told me to look under “glass” in the yellow pages. Huh. I never would have thought of that.

As it turned out, a fan I was dating at the time knew how to replace windows Daddy’s way. He explained the process and offered to come over with putty and glazier’s points. So I learned two ways to replace a broken window in the process of replacing one. Win-win.

Fast-forward 23 years. Fast-muddle, actually. At Toad Hall, many repairs languished until Jeff Schalles moved in and turned his attention to shoring up various corners of the house. “If you can take it apart with a putty knife, it’s not wood anymore,” he proclaimed as we were scraping paint from what proved to be rotted window sills. He taught me how to paint

a house, a skill I’d put to good use at Toad Woods painting the new boards for the fascia and soffit bits that were being replaced as part of a gutter repair. Heck, I was even wearing one of the same T-shirts I wore when painting Toad Hall. I could even see a smear or two of Gingerbread, the pigment-rich orange-brown paint we used for pinstriping on the trim. The story never ends....

Two years after I moved into the Zeppelin Hangar at Toad Woods, I was confounded for a few hours by a lack of electricity to my garage door openers. The overhead lights worked, the circuit breaker was fine, but the doors wouldn’t budge. Thank goodness for manual overrides.



What Jeff taught me at Toad Hall is just as true at Toad Woods: “If you can take it apart with a putty knife, it’s not wood anymore.” 2020.

It was too hot to go poking around in the garage, so I called Kip Williams and Cathy Doyle and suggested dinner. I rather desperately needed to pick up water softener salt, which entailed driving 30 miles in **some** direction unless I wanted to risk whether or not WalMart would have the iron-reducing kind I use. I usually shop elsewhere, and driving 30 miles in Kip and Cathy's direction held the added benefit of seeing them and Sarah. Win-win.

The garage had cooled off to a tolerable temp by the time I returned, so I went poking around. It took only a few minutes to discover a previously-unnoticed GFI outlet. Tripped. Hey, that was easy! One push of the reset button later and the doors were once again going up, down, up...all at the push of a button.

Flush with satisfaction at having figured it out before hunting down and calling an electrician, as I'd been envisioning, I came inside and proceeded to replace the fluorescent bulb above the kitchen sink. I'd guessed the right size to buy when shopping (lists are not my friend), but what should have been an easy maintenance item seems to have morphed into yet another home repair. The new bulb didn't do the trick.

Hmmm. The house and I ended the day tied.



New chimney liner to boiler installed. 2017.

The contest resumed the next day in a rather alarming way. I filled the water softener tank and reset the three timers on the entire filtration system. We'd had a lot of power outages lately, and they were several hours behind. This only matters in terms of when the system backwashes, but I do like to pay at least some attention to this routine maintenance issue.

I was on the back deck just finishing up the replacement top coat of paint that was washed away in Wednesday's sudden storm when one of the tanks started backwashing. WTF? That wasn't right. It was supposed to be a middle-of-the-night process. While 5am might be credible, 5pm was certainly not!

I headed back to the basement, figuring I'd probably set a timer wrong. Nope. All were fine, but the neutralizer was backwashing. Hmmm.

There was a manual control that I'd never used. The instructions said to push it in, and the little lever

already looked pushed up against the edge of the casing, so I thought I might have accidentally pushed it in when replacing the cover. So I turned it a bit, and pulled it toward me.

Big mistake.

The innards went *S*P*U*N*G*.

There's a heavy, plastic camshaft kind of thing that came completely loose, no longer in contact with any of the eight metal tabs that control whatever it is they control. Nor was it on contact with the front piece, the one with the clock and all the little tabs telling it when to backwash and such.

I tried putting it back together. No such luck. I got a light, a chair to stand on, some screwdrivers to push the little tabs to the side in the hope of noodging the camshaft into the correct position. I held the little plastic lever between my teeth so I wouldn't lose it.

It's a fix-it-yourself homeowner kind of thing to do.

Several dozen attempts later, I became concerned that I'd break something and make the problem much worse than it already was. I figured I'd call Well Guy on Monday. He

installed the filtration system, he'd be able to pop the camshaft back into place no problem. It didn't matter that the neutralizer wouldn't backwash before then.

It's a once-a-week process, and it had just just backwashed a half-hour earlier. I went upstairs. I worked, doing a quick proof of a 126-page document and generating a new PDF after making a few corrections. I went to the kitchen for something to drink and noticed the paintbrush that I'd been going to clean a few hours earlier, only to be distracted when I heard the system backwash. Oops! I adore that paint brush!

(Owning favorite paintbrushes is typical of fix-it-yourself homeowners.)

The paint was latex, so I quickly ran the brush under the faucet. The faucet that yielded a cup or two of water before trickling to nothing. Fuck. That camshaft didn't just control the backwash cycle, it controlled the entire operation of the neutralizer. And without the neutralizer working, water doesn't flow through the system and out of my faucets.

In retrospect, I'm pretty sure there's a bypass...if not for each individual tank, then for the whole water treatment system. But I wasn't thinking of that when I headed

downstairs.

Leaving home for the weekend was a distinct possibility. I didn't consider an emergency plumbing call; it didn't seem like *that* much of an emergency.

When the garage was organized. 2017.



The pressure on the water pump was just over 50 pounds, which is a tad higher than I remember seeing it before – hmmm. I unplugged all three of the plugs for the water treatment system (one for each tank), and discovered that one of the metal tabs on the neutralizer relieved pressure and enabled me to

move three of the other tabs that had been impossible to move earlier. Okay. That counted as progress.

I closed the valve between the water pump and the treatment system in the hope of attaining a pressure-free work state. It took a bit more fiddling, but eventually the camshaft settled into place and the little lever that lead to so much trouble slipped smoothly through the freshly-aligned holes. Goshwow.

Then I came upstairs and turned on the faucet. Flowing water! Yay!

I cleaned the paintbrush, which looked only a little worse for the delay. I expected to find out for sure the following morning, when I planned to add top coat to the other side of the boards and be finished with the project.

That night, I kept a close eye on the pressure valve, and read a fair bit online about well systems, water pumps, and typical water pressure ranges. If my system was set to



*The old well pump and water treatment system. (Yes, the one that went S*P*U*N*G.) 2004–2022.*

operate between 40 and 60 psi, all was well. If it was set to operate between 30 and 50 psi, another common set-up, I could still have been in trouble.

All of which is a long way of saying I didn't yet know the day's house vs. girl homeowner game score. But I did have running water again, and I didn't for awhile there. And I didn't even have to call Daddy or anyone else to get it going again.

I looked forward to telling him the tale when we talked the next Tuesday night. I knew he'd get a kick out of it, and quite likely have some useful things to tell me about water pumps.

Afterword: I've now lived at Toad Woods 19½ years. The Zeppelin Hangar is still standing, which I count as a win for the Girl Homeowner. Overall, while I'm still far from Daddy's level of home owner

Doing it right: a new dry well is used for backwashing the new water treatment system. 2023.



The new water treatment system...in boxes. So many boxes.

*It doesn't look like the new controls can go S*P*U*N*G. That hasn't stopped it from finding other ways to malfunction.*



competency, I've kept up with routine maintenance, repairs, and various upgrades here at Toad Woods considerably better than I ever did at Toad Hall. Most of the projects and improvements happen using the Fred Levy Haskell approach – I've hired plumbers, electricians, lawn guys, and more to get things done rather than following Daddy's D-I-Y model. Last winter, I hired a new well company to replace the water treatment system after the old well company

got out of the water treatment business and their equipment was well past its freshness date (i.e., life span). The new system is better in all ways, not just because there's no longer a little plastic gizmo that can go S*P*U*N*G and turn off the water in the process. It has other ways of malfunctioning, and I have been remiss in getting the one failure fixed, but the water tastes fine so I know the system is working.

Friends help, too. While he was living in here in Wales, Howard

Whyte swapped out the overhead light fixture in my dining area after Joe Siclari and Edie Stern gave me a fixture with a stained glass shade that I like ever so much more than the fixture that came with the house. Howard also dug out the access points to my septic tank after a few years of sanding the driveway in winter and many weeds completely blocked them.

This September, the wood-carved alien that followed me home from Ruidoso, New Mexico only to have both legs accidentally shattered by a bellhop while moving into the Boskone hotel in February came on yet another road trip with me. We went to Carlisle, Pennsylvania as part of Local Susan's surprise for Howard's 70th birthday. When I returned to Toad Woods, the alien remained behind in Howard's workshop where Howard used his wood-working expertise to repair both legs. In the process of being restored to good health, the alien revealed that his name is Burt. (I should ask Howard to write up the experience for a future issue of Idea. It was...otherworldly, as is only fitting.) Burt is now solidly and happily living at Toad Woods, where he welcomes visitors and protects the frogs, toads, and other denizens from harm.



Top: Pat Virzi came all the way from Texas to give my cedar tree a much-needed pruning. And the magnolia tree. (Okay, we also drove to Toronto for Corflu, visited Niagara Falls, and had an awesome time at the Corning Museum of Glass.) 2018.

Bottom: Elaine Brennan used that same cutter to vanquish the weeds taking over the back deck. We also went to Tree House. Because Tree House. Because beer. 2022.

Howard Whyte assures Burt he's safely home. (Burt loves the cushy blanket Liz Phillips knit.) 2023.

Back to more earthly means of helping, Larry Sanderson set me up with a far superior basement dehumidifier when he visited in July; the improvement was both profoundly noticeable and swift. Elaine Brennan has restored order to my front garden a couple of times over the years, though I haven't then managed to keep up with it either time. That didn't stop her from having at it when vines invaded the back deck.

There have of course been a few missteps along the way. The time I misunderstood the septic system map and had the driveway paving company completely pave over one of the access points is the leading contender for the biggest misstep prize. Oh, well, it wasn't too hard to fix that, and the fix included installing risers so I now can see where the access points are. Well, when they're not under 3-5 inches of sand, that is. Arguments can be made that I should be hiring the professionals for pest control, too, though a bucket trap was enough of a winner in the Girl Homeover vs. The Mice campaign that I'm feeling like D-I-Y is working well enough for now.

So it all goes.
Let's not talk about
the gutters, okay?

Joe Siclari and Edie Stern came up to Toad Woods for a potluck I hosted. We all starved, of course. 2019.



Look who Local Susan brought with her! Lucy and Hitchcock enjoyed visiting. 2021.





Corrie and I got along well and I enjoyed her stays at Toad Woods. (Despite the positioning of these photos, she and Burt never met.) 2018.



(Above and left) Teresa Nielsen Hayden hand-lettered the title to A TAFF Guide to Beer during Toad Woods Boxing Day. So glad Cass Trainor was here, too. 2018.



Gavi Levy Haskell and I spent months of the 2020 Covid lockdown at Toad Woods when we discovered we both did better together than enduring lockdown alone. Her lei crown was from the picnic my niece Sara Burkhart hosted during the Fitzgerald Family Reunion weekend that we held on Zoom after it became clear that we wouldn't be spending it together at Holiday World in Santa Claus, Indiana.



State of the Nation

by Randy Byers

Written & posted to LiveJournal January 25, 2008

So yesterday evening I took my undercapitalized co-editor to the Harborview ER. He had an infected tooth and was hoping to get some antibiotics. The day before, the Harborview Dental Clinic had turned him away because he wasn't delirious or swollen from the infection. Yesterday, his face was certainly swollen, and he was in a lot of pain. Pain, he said, was not a symptom the clinic had been interested in.

I spent a number of hours in the waiting room, reading the last pages of *She* and the first pages of *Diva* and watching life's cavalcade around me. There was a shattered-looking woman whose husband had apparently been in an accident and was in critical condition. A minister who was there separately for treatment of his own problem advised her that if God thought it was time for her husband to go, then praise God. Quite a bit later, another woman came in, sobbing, with her young son. Apparently another of her children had just been brought in by ambulance. The woman's sobbing jolted the shattered-looking woman out of her chair. She wandered in aimless circles around the waiting room, then sat down again. A fresh burst of sobbing from the other woman jolted her out of her chair

again to drift around the room, eyes darting here and there, as though seeking the elusive source of the pain.

Behind me a homeless guy who was there for some warmth on a freezing night sat with a guy waiting for treatment and watching CNN. First was an inane celebrity "news" show that was all Heath Ledger speculation, all the time, except for the occasional "outraged" bits about Britney Spears and a custody battle between Denise Richards and Charlie Sheen. Later it was an "analysis" show where an outraged pundit inveighed against the (admittedly useless) Congressional economic stimulus plan. "It's a handout! It's more spending! It will only increase the deficit! Which is what caused the problem in the first place!" (No, you dumbfuck, it was greedy conniving Wall Street dumbfucks chasing El Dorado into a wasteland of financial mirages that caused the problem. And they'll probably get bailed out because public watchdogs like you will look the other way and blame Congress, you useless fuckwit.)

A woman on the show said, more quietly, "Other countries are watching this closely. Their economies are tied closely to ours."

The homeless guy behind me said, “I see what they’re saying. People from other countries are coming over here to buy houses. They’re asking for loans, and they’re getting them with no questions asked!”

“Yeah,” said the other guy. “People from other countries.”

It was almost a relief that they weren’t actually grasping the idiocy spewing from the television, even if their own theory seemed like a complete non sequitur to me.

After four hours of this (although it didn’t seem that long, perhaps because it was such a scene around there), I was taken back through a maze of corridors to where the undercapitalized co-editor was being treated. It wasn’t just going to be antibiotics after all. They had called for an oral surgeon. We discussed the next issue of our fanzine and the general topic of our editorial process. The oral surgeon showed up and rather obtusely (I thought) lectured the undercapitalized co-editor on his failure to see a dentist before this became a problem. (In the background I heard a nurse asking another patient, “How long have you been homeless and uninsured?”) After more waiting, they made an incision in the gums to drain the infected area. The oral surgeon at least had the good grace to make note of the fact that his clinic had turned the undercapitalized co-editor away for no good reason the day before.



Randy Byers at the Corflu XXX beer tasting.

Six and a half hours after entering ER, we exited with bleeding gums and a bag full of antibiotics and painkillers. He came back to my place and spent the night, just in case there were any further complications. Today the dental clinic will see him to deal with the underlying problem.

Doot doo doo doo-doo doot doot, living in the USA. Do you think that it’ll be easy? Do you think that it’ll be pleasin’?



“You can actually ignore the nameplate. These are called drunk jellyfish.”



THE LAST FAN ON EARTH

BY TED WHITE



Oscar Osprey, Ozzy to all who knew him, sat in his concrete bunker, safe from the raging winds outside, and the stifling heat. He sat at his desk, on which he was trying to surf what remained of the internet. Behind him were floor to ceiling shelves holding his yellowed and crumbling collection of science fiction magazines.

He loved to browse those old issues. It was a large collection, and probably the last one left. At least he knew of no others. He had thoroughly read only a fraction of them, and paged through another bunch, mostly looking at the illustrations, which struck him as quaint. He had a lot more time now, so he expected he'd eventually have them all read. He didn't look forward to that. Then what? Start rereading them? He wasn't sure. Then again, he wasn't sure how much longer he'd last. He was still middle-aged, with decades of life still in him. But conditions....

The lights flickered for a moment, but not long enough to cause the battery-backup to kick in. The solar panels were well anchored and should survive the constant gale-force winds. He fleetingly wondered, not for the first time, if he'd have been better off going with a wind-powered generator. Too late to change his mind now.

The failing internet was his last contact with the outside world. He wondered how they were faring in the Lower 48. If things were this bad in Juneau, they must be far worse in the south.

He switched to a view from his front door camera. It was hard to see much. The wind-driven dust swirled in quick eddies, almost dust-storm-like in its limitation of visibility. No real change, then. A real storm would be nice. Rain would settle the dust at least.

A chime sounded. He had an email! The first one in – how long? A week? Hastily, he opened it.

“Hey, Ozzy,” it read. “Greetings from Center City, Antarctica! Are you still alive? Haven't heard anything from the North in a while now. Not a lot of us left, you know. And by 'us' I mean us fans, 'course.” It was from Alphonso Rede. He called himself a “fan,” but Ozzy knew better. The man was barely literate, had never read any science fiction, not even novelizations of his favorite skiffy shows. He was a media fan, at best. Ozzy had little use for media fans – he wouldn't even call them “fen.”

But Rede was right. There weren't many fans left, anachronisms in these end times. Hell, there weren't many people left, with the equatorial regions no longer habitable now. How many years ago had science fiction predicted just this outcome if industrial pollution didn't cease? Ozzy took no pleasure from the accuracy of all those predictions. After all, science fiction wasn't supposed to be predictive – it was supposed to be a warning. And that warning had not been heeded. Too late, now. Much too late. Earth was turning into Venus.

“Hey, Al,” he said, his words appearing on his screen as he spoke. “Hanging in, as always. Working on a new issue of Last Shift now.” He hit “send.”

“Oh, damn,” Rede responded. “I forgot my deadline. Still have room for my review of Dune?”

“Of course. How much longer do you need?”

“I haven’t written it yet, but it’s all in my head.”

Rede was referring to the final remake of the classic movie, released decades earlier. Like most of the last of the movies, it was obviously AI-generated, and none too well, either. Ozzy hadn’t bothered to see it, but he could trust that Rede had. Rede had seen all the Dune movies, and what Ozzy wanted to see from him was an overview of the many versions of this classic movie. But he doubted that was what he’d get. Rede betrayed little insight into the movies he watched. He was an enthusiastic fanboy, uncritical of what he saw.

“Well, if you can get it in within the next few days, that would be best.”

“I’ll get started on it now. Talk to you later,” Rede said on the screen, and signed off.

Ozzy was pretty sure Last Shift was the last and only fanzine still being published, and he wasn’t sure why he continued to bother with it. Its audience was nebulous. It had no mailing list, but was just posted online. A typical issue had less than a dozen anonymous downloads. Someone was still reading it, but there was no feedback any more. No letters of comment – “LoCs” – Ozzy chuckled to himself whenever he pronounced the acronym in his head – no egoboo. “Egoboo” – now there was a word Ozzy liked. He suspected he was the last person in the world to use, or even understand, the word.

So why keep doing a fanzine? Was he just whistling in the dark, or maybe spitting into the wind? Did anyone else care?

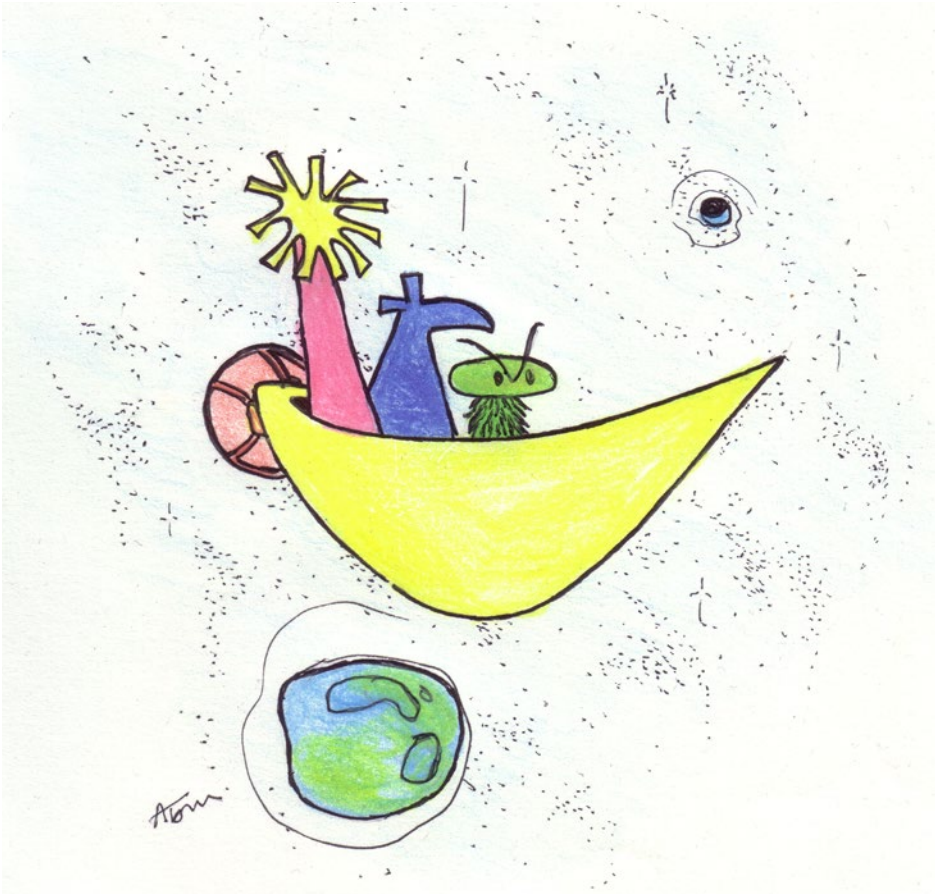
It didn’t matter to Ozzy. He didn’t do a fanzine for the gratification of others. He did it for himself. For his gratification. For the pleasure of putting his “ish” together, juggling all the contributions, mostly his own, like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, fitting them together perfectly into a whole.

And he liked doing the layouts, finding an appropriate photo or having AI generate illos in the styles



*Just for the record, Friday’s windstorm was not my fault.
I put the Corflu blue pinwheels/windmills in every
window of the consuite AFTER Toronto tried to smite
Pat Virzi, Rob Jackson, and me as we walked back
from the Merrill Collection.” - Geri, May 2018*





of Bill Rotsler, Steve Stiles, ATom, or Dan Steffan. More pieces for the issue's jigsaw puzzle, along with the bits of poetry by Lilith Lorraine he reprinted.

It satisfied his creative urges – and they had no other outlet now. This was it. Ozzy lived in a tiny, constrained, physical universe that consisted of six rooms in an isolated bunker. Just him and his collections. *Last Shift* was his only real connection to the outside world, such as it was.

He picked up the copy of *Planetary Stories* sitting on his desk. One of the last prozines ever

physically published, and rife with clumsy writing. He'd bookmarked a particular passage in Emily Bluto's "Tri-Sexual" for quotation in *Last Shift*:

"She snarled, 'What!' like the panther she was."

Ozzy laughed. You couldn't really "snarl" an exclamation. He loved to collect samples of bad writing, and this issue was full of them.

Another bookmark: "James watched the disparate pieces of Idris's face chase each other about as he tried to get his thoughts in order."

And another: “Just before performing his critical experiment, Professor Schmednik’s eyes were throwing sparks out through his glasses”

You couldn’t make this stuff up! They made great page-enders for Last Shift. And this was what Ozzy lived for, assembling such bits and pieces for his fanzine. He scanned them all and OCRed them, more than a dozen examples of clumsy or bad writing.

A while back he’d gotten a comment from someone hiding behind “Gearshift” who took him to task for such quotations. “If your [sic] such a science fiction fan, why you always knocking it?” Ozzy had actually published that, with his response: “I’m a fan of good science fiction.” That was the last he’d heard from Gearshift, but he’d wondered about that handle. A gearshift was an anachronism – as were cars – and that implied something. But what? The question receded with time, but he still remembered that response. It had, after all, been an actual response at least to his fanzine. And those were few and far between. Not to be ignored. Even negobo had value these days.

These days.... Ozzy shook his head. These days were not good days. He wondered if or when the dreaded fasia would overtake him. When his food ran out, or the climate overwhelmed the puny defenses of his bunker. He was a science fiction fan. He thought ahead. He’d prepared. But....

He recalled, almost bitterly, an old, rather cliched story: “The last man on earth sat in a room. There was a knock at the door.” Obviously, the person knocking was the last woman. That at least held promise: Procreation, new life for humanity, albeit inbred – but you had to start somewhere.

Ozzy had no woman in his life now. Once he’d been married – but with no children. He hadn’t minded that. Children could tear up his magazines. But he missed Jane, his wife. She’d left him, called him “insane,” and demanded half his future income. He wondered if she was still alive. He doubted it. She hadn’t believed in climate change, had mocked him for buying this land in Alaska, demanded he sell it so she could get half the proceeds. He’d successfully resisted that, at least. “The last fan on earth sat in a room....”

There was a loud bang at his door. Ozzy activated his camera. Was someone actually out there? He saw only the swirling dust at first. Then, down and nearly outside the camera’s view, he saw it: An indistinguishable dark object. As he watched, a wind gust caught the object and turned it, then blew it out of view. Something picked up by the wind. Nothing more. He sighed.

It was indeed a proud and lonely thing to be a fan.



CHASTITY

ROTSERFSKY

Park LoC It

Paul Skelton

Thursday 4 January 2001

Another issue of Idea, another day off work through illness (albeit mine own this time, just to be even-handed). What is it with THE CURSE OF Idea? Here I am coughing huge amounts of white phlegm over the screen, and it's all your bloody fault. Can't give me anything for it either, can they, on account of the 'white' back there. That means it's viral, hence no point in antibiotics. "If it had been green, then no problem. That'd mean it's bacterial, and I could sensibly prescribe something." Was a time you'd go to the doctor's and they'd always prescribe antibiotics, just to be on the safe side. Then the Government complained that all this over-subscribing of antibiotics was leading to a reduction in their efficacy, and also to a severe overrun on the NHS budget. Since then everything has become 'viral' and "Take it easy for a few days. Next please." In England no patient has seen an antibiotic for years.

This illness has also caused me to be unable to remember which version of 'its' gets the apostrophe, despite the fact that I know I knew it last week. Maybe part of what I'm coughing over the screen is brain cells, which would explain my sudden inability to differentiate my it's from my its.

Or maybe it's down to my treatment. I'm taking codeine linctus (not to be consumed with alcoholic

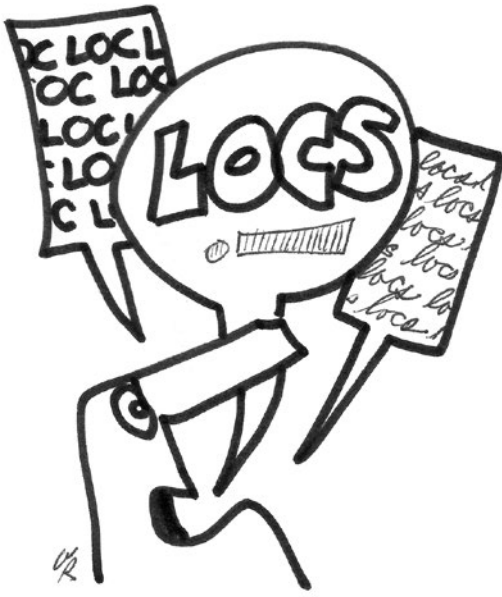
medicines) whilst drinking substantial quantities of iced Southern Comfort (which I am not taking as a medicine, so that's OK) and eating satsumas. The efficacy of this survival strategy will be borne out by my LoC (or absence there of) on Idea 13.

Always assuming I get Idea 13, because this is not exactly a LoC on Idea 12. Nope, this is just a LoC on Idea 12's Letter Column, which reminds me of all the things I didn't say in my response to Idea 11.

For instance even though I responded to the idea of Kipple-after-Death, in respect of Brian Robinson's kipple, I never made the mental leap required to associate it with my own 'stuff' (for instance never even noticing the bit Vijay quoted about "the treasure of stuff, the comfort of stuff, and the burden of stuff". It can of course be all three, and I pity Joseph Nicholas in his inability to perceive 'stuff' in some of those dimensions.

But I come to 'stuff' from an odd direction. Do you recall the old Monty Python 'Four Yorkshiremen' sketch? That's my background. A poor background. 'Stuff' was basically what was in the china cabinet and what was in the button-box.

As a young SF reader, in order to buy new books (which of course were only 'new' to me) I had to trade in my old books. I think it took 3 old paperbacks to get a new one. No chance of becoming a collector there. However, as time passed and my disposable income increased another factor took prominence. I have a piss-poor memory. I think about the third time I bought Eric Frank Russell's 'Three to Conquer' or 'Wasp' it finally dawned on me that it might be more cost-effective to actually keep the books I particularly enjoyed.



But something went wrong, and I ended up keeping everything. I was never really a ‘collector,’ more an ‘accumulator.’ This kept on until one drunken night at a fannish party at the Skelhouse when Cas and I had the desire (but not the wherewithal) to attend the final Tyncon. So I sold basically my entire book ‘collection’ at 10p a book to my fannish guests. I recall one book dropping from the top of a pile as someone carried it to their car. Mike Glicksohn picked it up and asked, amazed “You’re selling a mint first edition paperback of Heinlein’s ‘Puppet Masters’ for 10p?”

Damn Right!

What had been a treasure and a comfort had become a burden. We had a great weekend at a convention we wouldn’t otherwise have been able to afford to attend, and when we came back I was...FREE OF STUFF!

For a while. There were still the SF magazines of course, but eventually even these became burdensome and I gifted my friend Mike Meara with any that he didn’t have in his own collection.

But what was left had a mind of its own, and over the years expanded to fill my storage space. This time there was nobody convenient to pass it onto, so we hauled it down to the local Cancer Research Goodwill store (run by my mother’s next-door neighbour). Free again! But of course there were still the fanzines. It was unthinkable to part with any of those.

I agree with you and Robert about how nice it is to have one’s zines to hand. Originally I had mine in two large bookcases that I built specially (the lemming-wood ones about which I once wrote in SFD) giving me 18 feet of available shelf-space. Unfortunately the zines soon outgrew this and I was forced to store some in cartons in the loft. I boxed up all the zines that had ceased production, on the grounds that the space so freed would enable me to keep expanding the runs of those still being published. I went through this loop several times, and eventually ended up sticking them straight in cartons as soon as they were read.

Thus it was that the unthinkable began to be thought. After all, a large number were crudzines, and even of those that weren’t, I would never feel the urge to re-read most of them. Most of them were just STUFF, and I was being overwhelmed again. So when Brian died, and we had all those books of his that Martin Tudor was going to come up and collect, I took advantage of the situation and culled my fanzine collection mercilessly. I was brutal. I think I kept about four boxes out of 20, with the discards going off with Martin, I think destined for Gregg Pickersgill’s Memory Hole project.

As regards fanac, I was now about as ‘stuffless’ as it was possible to get without having the initials ‘JN.’

FAST FORWARD >>>

...to a couple of months before Christmas 2000. Mike and Pat Meara came for an overnight visit, mainly as an excuse for me to get severely rat-arsed on good wine. This is not something I do very often. Normally I get sr-a on fairly cheap stuff. For their visits though I buy some good stuff, they bring some good stuff, and a good time is had by all. The other thing they brought with them this year were 22 cartons of fanzines. This was by arrangement, I hasten to add. He'd written to advise me that, having lost interest in his collection he had decided to pass them on to me.

Despite my aversion to STUFF, this was definitely a 'good thing.' My own fanzine collection had of course grown again since its severe cull, and the average quality was again way down. Mike too had a lot of run-of-the-mill stuff, but there was also a much higher incidence of quality fanzines. Mike & Pat had always had much more disposable income than me. Mike had in fact subscribed to some fanzines (something I was never able to justify) and also had bought many fanzines in auctions. In fact a not-insignificant number of my quality items were in fact duplicates he'd picked up at auction and subsequently passed on to me (and some of which I'd later auctioned off to help finance our first US visit).

For instance, I'd always assumed that I'd never own a copy of Hyphen. I mentioned as much to Walt in my LoC on the final issue he produced a few years ago. Walt immediately mailed me 3 issues of which he still had copies. I thanked him profusely when I loded them (which was of course the least I could do). After the Meara donation however I now find to my amazement that I now have all

but two issues, and the 3 Walt sent became duplicates which I was able to pass on to good friends. I also thought briefly that I now had a complete run of SLANT, until I checked in my now spare copy of Warhoon 28 and discovered that there were seven issues, not just the five I had. Having a spare Warhoon 28 is really quite handy because it means I can keep one copy, as I've always done, with my 'Special Fanzines', and still have a copy filed in with all the other Warhoons.

Of course sorting through Mike's zines was a major project. He had most of them filed alphabetically, but in two separate streams, 'read' and 'unread'. In addition there were a few cartons of unsorted stuff that he'd acquired after storing the other zines away. My own stuff formed a third alphabetic stream, along with another couple of unsorted cartons.

It took every spare moment between then and Christmas to get them sorted into two other alphabetic streams – the stuff I wanted to keep, and the B-List, both of which I indexed on the computer. I also got them reboxed into bigger cartons. Mike had them standing vertically in old liquor cartons, whereas I prefer them spine up in larger cartons which originally held 11" x 14" computer listing paper. I now have 27 of these cartons, of which 12 hold my new collection (apart from the 'specials' which fill 2'3" of bookcase and which are the only zines currently 'to-hand.'

That's why I was jealous when I read of your and Robert Lichtman's filing cabinets. A great idea, but most British houses are rather small, and there just isn't anywhere I could put several filing cabinets. Or so I thought, but then I was thinking of the large, deep, 4-drawer kind we have at work. I happened to pop

into an Office Superstore the other week though and noticed they had a special offer on some smaller 2-drawer 'home' cabinets down from £54 to £20. They assured me they had 'plenty' of them, so I went home to see if I could get 10 of them into my den to replace the bookcases. Also, if I'm lashing out that sort of dosh I need to discuss it with Cas. Went back a couple of days later to make the purchase and decide which colour we wanted only to discover they only had three mismatched ones left, and that their idea of 'plenty' had been the few I'd seen on display when I first went in. As the next cheapest ones were £40 we had to give up on the idea. We pass the store every week though and the next time they have any cabinets on sale I'll be in like Flynn.

Of course the 12 cartons of my collection are not a problem (other than not being 'to-hand'). The other 15 cartons (of duplicates & dross) are just STUFF which I have to get rid of. I gave Mike Glicksohn first shot at the B-List but the swankpot picked out only half-a-dozen items. Bill Bowers was less picky and took over 7 kilos. He also offered to auction off the remaining good stuff on my behalf. I don't anticipate **enormous sums** but anything he gets will be additional spending money for our next US visit. There will of course still remain an awful lot of STUFF!

Disposing of it could be a problem. No fanzine of course should ever be thrown away. Even the worst crudzine represents an enormous amount of effort on somebody's part, and exists in a very small print-run. Most of the B-List of course aren't crudzines, they're just not generally top quality

fanzines. Until I sort something out, there's always the loft.

But as I mentioned earlier, there's the A-List to think about. When I die this will instantly become STUFF. It won't mean anything to my kids. Also, whilst it is probably quite valuable now (some of it at any rate), it will probably not be so valuable in the future as the number of people interested in old fanzines will probably diminish, and my kids won't know how to realise what value it retains anyway. The sensible course would obviously be to read my way through it and then try to sell it as I come to the end of each carton. But I'd only fritter the money away, and I just don't bloody well want to sell them anyway!

The good stuff isn't STUFF.

But then that was once true of all those 1930s Astoundings that I gave away.

So, not even a LoC on the whole letter-col either.

Cover by the way, was a technical wipe-out. When I had a portable typewriter and a mimeo I published fanzines. When I upgraded to an Amstrad PCW I published only an Eric Mayer collection and some trip reports. Since I got this splendid computer with a scanner and a photo-quality colour printer I've published sod all.

It seems such a waste somehow.

I should also point out that since Idea 12 arrived, my fanzine collection is no longer all neatly filed in alphabetic order. But I can't think of a better zine to start the next batch off.



Paul Skelton

Sunday 6 May 2001

Off work again today, but being observant you'll have spotted that this is because it's the weekend, and not attributable to any Idea-induced illness this time. Perhaps the Yang of an issue of your zine requires only the Yin of a single illness to achieve Cosmic Balance. Achieving Cosmic Balance is not something I shall do in a hurry today as I'm currently sipping Guinness from a small wineglass. Actually it's Murphy's (which was on special at the supermarket) not Guinness (which wasn't), but all Irish stout's are much of a muchness to me (though I seemed to hear Al Curry's strangled squawk off in the recesses of my mind as I typed those words).

The reason for the wineglass and the sipping is that it's actually far too early in the morning to begin drinking, but when I sat down at the keyboard to continue my response to what is after all one of the best fan-zines currently being published I was brought up short by the realisation

**HE LIKES THE
LAST ISSUE...**



that when it comes to fanac I need the crutch of alcohol to tackle that blank page/screen. It's purely habit. When I was an active fan, pubbing my ish, loccing, or writing pieces for other faneds, I would usually do it in the evening after work, consuming a relaxing couple of pints the while. Whenever I'd stop to collect my thoughts I'd reach for the glass. Still do, and it's mentally jarring when it's not there. Slows the typing out of all proportion.

Hence the Guinness in the small wineglass. Don't knock it, it seems to be working.

Enjoyed Jeff's piece, but with an added frisson when he mentioned crossing the bridge in the dark over the Ohio river at Wheeling, crossing "that little sliver of West Virginia pretty quick" on a route he'd used often returning from "many Midwestcons."

It wasn't dark when Cas & I crossed it, returning from our only Midwestcon with Mike Glicksohn and Susan Manchester, back in the Summer of '98. Of course Jeff, being alone in the car, couldn't turn to his companions as I did and remind them that "This is where Billy the Kid came from. At least he did if you can trust the lyric from Billy Joel's 'The Ballad of Billy the Kid', which contains the line "From a town known as Wheeling, West Virginia, came a boy with a six-gun in his hand..."

"Hey, that's right!" replied Mike, proving I wasn't the only one to have obtained my 'degree' in History at the University of Vinyl.

We too were heading for Baltimore, where we were to spend a few days enjoying the Bennett's hospitality, but we couldn't follow Jeff's exact route as we were going via Gettysburg and Hagerstown. Not having relatives in

the area we broke our Journey in Chambersburg on Susan's enthusiastic recommendation (based on childhood memories). Once there she found nothing familiar and slowly realised that she'd been thinking of some other 'burg entirely.

However it proved to be a pleasant town for strolling around, and we found a fantastic bar in which to eat and drink the evening away, the setting sun coming in through beautiful stained-glass windows, being reflected from crystal-clear mirrors and quietly illuminating lots of dark, richly-polished wood. A very pleasant evening vouchsafed entirely upon a faulty memory.

I won't bore you with the details of that fabulous roundabout trip back to Toronto with Mike & Susan (I'll bore you with something else instead), nearly 3 long years ago now. That's a long time not to see good friends. Fortunately, out of the blue, they announced that they'd be able to come over and visit with us in August so we're able to look forward to them, rather than back. But there was one problem with their impending visit...

STUFF!

You may recall from my previous letter that I now have 25+ cartons of fanzines. These were piled about Cas' den. Unfortunately Cas' den also happens to double as the guest bedroom. Actually that's not strictly true as it's a bit on the small side and when the sofa is converted into a bed there isn't room for guests' suitcases. Also, whilst the sofa-bed is reasonably comfortable once you've learned



its foibles, it takes a few nights to achieve such mastery. Thus it is that, whenever we have houseguests, we move into Cas' den and let them have our bedroom. However, with over 25 boxes of fanzines in it, nobody is going to sleep in there. But that's only one category of stuff.

Our son Nicholas and his partner are buying an apartment. In the meantime a lot of his stuff is stored here, in Cas' den and mine. My den is very small, and was further reduced to a small walkway from door to chair in front of computer, whilst the rest of the room was piled high with STUFF.

Eldest daughter Deborah and her husband Matt now have an eight-week-old son (Zachary Austin Django Wilde), and are living in a small flat from which they will soon move (as there is a 'no children' clause in the rental agreement), so a fair bit of their baby stuff was also being stored here.

Youngest daughter Bethany and her husband John have a 2½ year old daughter (Adele Charlotte Nelson) whom Cas looks after during the week whilst they're working. A 2½ year old granddaughter is quite small. The toys and other accoutrements that go with a 2½ year old granddaughter however are not significantly less massive than your average neutron star.

Frankly, we were having trouble fitting ourselves into the house, never mind guests.

“Where the fuck are we going to put all this STUFF?”

We do have a loft, but we have been sticking stuff up there ever since we moved in 27 years ago. Of course we had to sling everything away eight years ago when the al Authority insulated it for us, but we’ve been refilling it ever since., and it was already ‘full’. The problem with it is it isn’t floored. You go up there and all you have are the joists, to the bottom of which the plasterboard of the bedroom ceilings has been fixed. If you stumble it’s quite easy to find your leg sticking down into the bedroom through a brand-new hole (as Mike Glicksohn once discovered). There is a reasonably sizeable central area up there, but the only way to utilise it had been to remove all the insulation over to the far half (it wasn’t laid between the rafters but rather in huge swathes across them), place some form of planking across the rafters (eg. Old cupboard doors, tops of coffee tables, old bed headboards) and place pile the STUFF on top of these. This is not a particularly efficient way of utilising the space.

“We could get a lot more stuff up there if it was floored.” I idly remarked. “Why don’t I floor the loft?”

Believe me, if ever there was a question which should be rhetorical, and forever remain rhetorical, it is “Why don’t I floor the loft?” Particularly if you are over 50, not very good at DIY, not used to spending days on end bent over in a hot confined space, and don’t really like having very sore knees having spent same days on end crawling over very hard flooring on them. I shall draw a veil over this

period. It was after all a fairly short period. It had to be. Whilst Mike and Susan aren’t due until August, we heard from Eric Lindsay & Jean Webber that they’d like to visit with us immediately after the Eastercon this year.

I got half of it floored, the empty half, managing to cut down the fibre-glass insulation and fit it between the joists and under the flooring. Then we filled it with all the STUFF. We also made several trips to the local dump and we ended up with a functioning house again. We finished the reorganisation the day before Eric & Jean arrived for their visit.

They had been scheduled to arrive on the Tuesday but contacted us on the Sunday to say they’d managed to arrange a lift from the Eastercon on the Monday afternoon with Bill & Mary Burns. We laid on a cold collation on the assumption that they would arrive about tea-time, and didn’t have much trouble persuading Bill & Mary to stay and eat before driving on for their visit with Harry Nadler.

Eric had stayed with us for one night many, many years ago, but I had no real memory of him. We certainly enjoyed ourselves showing them around. We recalled that when we were last in the States with Mike & Susan Dick Lynch had shown us around Washington DC as a dry run of the tour he was going to give the TAFF delegate. We thought this a sensible idea and took a similar opportunity with Jean & Eric to ‘practice’ a couple of trips we’re hoping to make with Mike & Susan later in the year, when hopefully the weather won’t be as variable. We had sunshine every day, but we also had snow or hail every day too.

On the Tuesday we took them for a couple of hours drive through the local countryside, figuring that would be the day for them to kick back and recharge their batteries, and also get all their laundry done. We also went shopping so they could choose precisely the sort of stuff they wanted to eat during their stay (in the course of correspondence planning their stay they advised that they had either allergies or health restrictions to most of the stuff we normally ate, or so it seemed at the time, but it seems these were general rules from which path they were allowed to stray on occasion, and 'on occasion' appeared to be defined as 'mealtimes').

I don't normally drink a lot of white wine, and most of the stuff we were planning to eat was definitely better accompanied by white wines, so I got Eric to demonstrate his expertise in the area of 'vin antipodean.' It was all about 40% dearer than he was used to seeing but he made a large, varied, and I have to say 'excellent' selection to which I added some variety from various other countries so that his visit wouldn't be entirely treading known paths on the viniculture front.

Jean has some sort of problem with skeletal misalignment which can cause problems when not getting two hours swimming every morning, spending time travelling in confined spaces, and sleeping in unfamiliar beds. Oddly the problem surfaced on this GUFF trip (which was comprised entirely of missing regular exercise, sitting for enormous amounts of time in either car or airplane seats, and spending every night in a strange bed – who'd a'thunk it?). When she arrived she announced she'd need a Chiropractor, and Wednesday was the earliest appointment we could get

her. As it happened the Chiropractor was situated close to our Deborah's, so we dropped her off for her hour's session and took Eric to visit Debi, Matt, and grandson Zach. There we got to watch an almost 1-hour nappy changing session (Zach shitting again umpteen times immediately after Deborah had cleaned him up from his previous efforts...the Skelton 'full-of-shit' gene is obviously proving to be dominant).

After the floorshow we picked Jean up and asked her how it had gone. She couldn't say because apparently it takes several days before any results are noticeable, and often they aren't. It seems to me chiropractice is a licence to print money. Especially as foreign visitors are the most likely 'patients' (given the exacerbatory nature of travelling). By the time they realise you didn't know what you were doing they are probably several continents away.

We headed off for Derbyshire and the 17th century plague village of Eyam. Plague was rife in London at the time and it arrived in the village in a box of clothing sent to a local tailor. Rather than flee and risk spreading the plague throughout the local countryside the residents chose to isolate themselves in the village, with food being supplied by a local landowner via a drop-off point. The plague did not spread beyond the village, but nearly 300 inhabitants succumbed and died. As there must have only been about 400 villagers this was a major local disaster.

Not your normal touristy place, but there's an excellent pub serving fine food and excellent ale.

We couldn't go too far that day as we had to rush home to watch Manchester United play their most inept football of the season and get

turfed out of the European Cup by Bayern Munich!

Thursday we drove up to the Lake District, a 1½ hour thrutch up the motorway, then some winding local roads past all the ‘Blair Must Die!’ placards (this being farming country and the Foot & Mouth outbreak then being at its peak) to Bowness-on-Windemere where we potted around the town a while and Cas managed to find the teddy-bear shop and splash out a fortune on yet another bear. After the superb Miner’s Arms in Eyam none of the town pubs came up to scratch so we opted for the Lake View Restaurant, which did indeed have a truly superb view...but alas ‘plastic’ food.

Afterwards we drove on to the town of Keswick and a visit to Derwent Water, where we sat in the hot sun and admired the scenery. That was the point at which Cas departed from the script.

We were supposed to retrace our route and be home in about two hours...but Cas suggested that instead we might return “the pretty way,” to which suggestion Eric & Jean stupidly agreed.

So instead of driving south we headed east into the Yorkshire Dales. Cas was determined to show somebody how pretty that countryside was. We’d tried to show Mike & Susan a particularly scenic route home on one of their earlier visits but the mist descended and you couldn’t see anything more than forty yards from the car.

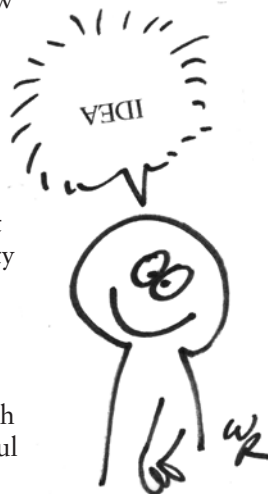
That was on returning the day after we’d stopped the night at the Racehorses Hotel in Kettlewell, at which we’d arrived after a beautiful

drive over the sunlit dale top on an incredibly narrow road. The plan was now to head for Kettlewell and have our evening meal there before driving home. Beautiful scenery on the way. Ha! You’d think Cas would have learned.

We drove into Kettlewell this time from the opposite direction, on a roughly equivalent road, but instead of the glorious sunshine we were hit by a sudden hailstorm and visibility was down to about 30 yards. Eventually we emerged once more into glorious sunshine but weren’t able to pick up the pace as much as we’d have liked because of all the Foot-&-Mouth disinfectant traps we had to keep driving over, some of which forced you to reduce your speed to almost zero. The farmers may not be able to stop you driving down these twisty lanes the first time, but after hearing the underside of the car and the exhaust banging and clanking on some of these you’ll make bloody certain you don’t drive that way again. I particularly wanted to go to the Racehorses hotel after the disappointing lunch because I remembered that the menu had included a ‘Barnsley Chop’ that they stressed you should only order if you

were either very hungry indeed, or an entire coach party. Sadly it wasn’t on the menu this time. What was on the menu though was a very tasty farmhouse pie.

The other drawback was that I could only have a single pint as this time we were not staying the night, but driving home afterward. No large portions of single-malt to finish the bottle this time.



Whilst the weather had dramatically changed for the better shortly before we arrived in Kettlewell, it wasn't all that long after we left that evening then night descended and indeed on our drive home the magnificent Yorkshire Moors were completely obscured by darkness.

It was turned 11.15 when we finally arrived home and whilst everyone else tumbled almost immediately into bed I was far too wound up after all that driving and had to first pour myself a large Bundaberg OP (which Eric & Jean had brought to share with their various hosts, and given the amount of 'sharing' I did they better not have too many more hosts) and coke.

Friday we stayed at home to allow Jean to 'unkink,' other than driving out to Manchester to collect their hire-car. This in theory was an utter doddle as I knew precisely where the 'Budget Rentacar' depot was, and how to get to it. Again, Ha!

There you are driving down this major road, and ahead in the distance, on the corner, is the Budget Rentacar depot, their name emblazoned all over the building. Where their name isn't emblazoned is on a small sideroad you have already passed, where the only sign was a somewhat diffident 'Car Park.' Accordingly, with no access to the depot on this road, you assume it is via the road around the corner (the full significance of the small unsignposted sideroad you have passed not yet having come to your attention). Once around the corner you are on an even more major thoroughfare of the sort where u-turns are not permitted and where it becomes evident there is still no access to the rental depot.

"Can anyone actually see a sign saying 'No U-Turns'? I asked."

"No" responded Eric.

Several screeches of brakes and honks of horns later we had reversed our course and finally managed to debouch into their yard. Hiring the car, which had already been done and paid for, seemed to take an interminable age. When the papers were handed over I did not however see any large list of existing vehicular damage. Now I have recently had several hire cars through work and they are all accompanied by a list of minor defects which I have great difficulty in even finding (until I simply stopped looking). Apparently what they got was a small piece of card tucked into the driver's door space. So I wandered round the car and spotted this really major scratch low down on the front passenger door. I pointed it out to Jean, who in turn pointed it out to the rent-a-car guy. He grabbed the card out of the driver's door and...guess what? It wasn't marked. Sic transit £250 deposit, eh? "I'll mark it on my copy," he instantly said. Bastards!

Eric and Jean left on the Saturday. They were heading for Scotland. When we got back inside from waving farewell there was a message on our answering machine...from Ian Sorensen...hoping anxiously to reach them before they set off, and asking them to contact him on his mobile. Too late of course. I hope it didn't betoken a serious problem for them. His place is after all is where they were headed next.

Anyway, that's what's been keeping me too busy to send you the LoC on Idea 12 that you really deserve.



Two LoCs, taking up a mere 10 pages of the Idea lettercol, and all from Skel! Your editor swoons in delight.

I do think I've come up with a clever scheme for prolonging life, what with my waiting 23 years to publish Idea 13 and thereby giving Paul the opportunity to demonstrate the efficacy of his survival strategy mentioned way back on page 73. (And here you all will be thinking I'm writing this for the opportunity it provides to point out the lettercol started on page 73, which was not deliberate in any way, I swear. The number does seem to have an affinity for me....

I off-loaded several thousand pounds of STUFF during my move from Toad Hall at the end of 2003, but as it's now 20 years later (the length of time I lived at Toad Hall), the Zeppelin Hangar here at Toad Woods is overstuffed and then some. Thanks to Zoom SORT! sessions I've been holding with friends on both sides of the Pond since June of this year, I've emptied 14 boxes of stuff that followed me home from my sister's house in 2019, and I've shredded over 100 gallons of paperwork containing whatever sorts of personal information are best kept out of the hands of bad actors and the like.

Alas, all of that progress is but invisible compared to the amount of STUFF that needs dealing with. Like you, I am an accumulator. I continue to savor the comfort of STUFF and the joy of STUFF. But the burden of STUFF? Every bit of that I can minimize is to my benefit!

Thanks so much for the accounts of your fannish travels with Mike & Susan, Bill & Mary, and Eric & Jean. Such fine times, and they remind me of the pleasures of fannish road trips with Randy Byers, Pat Virzi, and others over the years. – gfs

Jason K. Burnett

4 March 2004

I'm a newcomer to fanzine fandom and just discovered Idea on eFanzines.com. All I can saw is "WOW!" Do I understand you correctly that you are able to reproduce the photos, artwork, etc. that I saw in Idea 12 using a mimeograph machine? Apparently I don't understand the limitations of mimeograph technology – to my mind "mimeograph" means the worksheets with purple printing that the teachers ran off for us in elementary school. I would love to get a hardcopy of Idea so I can see what mimeograph is truly capable of.

Jason [no signature on file]

It's somehow reassuring to see ditto mistaken for mimeo decades after both technologies became antiquities, unknown to most people – even fans – of Jason's age. – gfs



Earl Kemp

14 October 2001

The Enchanted Convention

Thank you very much for sending me a copy of Idea 12. I received it with much pleasure and really enjoyed going through it.

What a refreshing thing it is to see mimeo again and in such superior style. I really like the feel of the paper and the ink coverage is really excellent throughout in whatever color was being used. I like the layout and the way you handle your run-arounds and picture inserts as well. Color covers 1 and 2 are beautiful and frivolous and too damned expensive.

Reading through Idea 12 brought forth these words of wisdom (?):

Jeff Schalles “We Jump Off the Etc.” at page 8, lamenting his job



situation, wrote “When desktop publishing came along” everything went to hell.

I’d like to include John D. Berry in this also (page 45 typographer@earthlink.net) because I suspect he might have some similar feelings.

I became a typesetter in the 1970s, on a CompuGraphic 7500, and I got to be damned good at it, so much so that I became a typographer (hey, John) far above the field of “typists” I ran with. I did all the special stuff, the display type, the class ads, the super critical copy called out with the most meticulous specs you ever saw. And even then I would go over it and improve on it and make it look even better than the client ever thought it could be. Regardless of their nit picking and pettiness and insistence on making some arbitrary changes. They bothered me almost too much.

Then Jeff’s statement kicked in at that point in time. Suddenly most of my clients who had been such driving, demanding hardasses were allowing their own minimum wage English-as-a-second-language clerks to input their copy directly into their PCs. All of a sudden and overnight, lots of things disappeared instantly, as Jeff pointed out, starting with the proofreaders.

The typesetters were next to go, and the typographers following them.

And the ex-client was unbelievably happy with the crap turned out by his staff who couldn’t spell or punctuate on a bet and all of us know how helpful Microsoft’s Spell Check is... don’t we?

Next we get down to Harry Warner, Jr. (at page 54) writing about Al Capp and Li’l Abner. My fuzzy memory clouds some things like times and dates, but I think it was

the New York Worldcon in 1956. I had been doing some work with Basil Davenport and socializing with him a bit so it wasn't unusual when Basil came to my room but what was unusual was that he brought Al Capp with him. The three of us spent hours together, mostly sitting on various beds (Capp had difficulty with his artificial leg) and roaming around from room party to room party for most of the night.

I was particularly pleased because, as a youth, Li'l Abner had been a particular favorite of mine. I felt we (Abner, not Al) shared similar backgrounds.

Next we get down to Cy Chauvin (at page 57) writing about "Dozens of beautiful photos...from Ben Jason...I hope you get a chance to see these!" And so do I. Can you be of any help in that regard?

And that's about it, Geri, Thanks again for the reading pleasure and keep up the good work.

Best,
Earl [no signature on file]

I was just getting into desktop publishing during the year or two when 40% of the type shops in Minneapolis went out of business. We had a few years of the service bureaus. They produced output that I placed on boards for the printers to work with, and eventually directly had film negatives made that the printers created printing plates from. Soon after that, enough of the printers had caught up with the future and I uploaded files directly to them and the service bureaus were soon out of business as well. I learned so much from Jeff's comments about the client files he had to contend with at work that the printers I worked with regularly commented that if everyone's files were as clean as mine were, their pre-press folks would be out of their jobs. – gfs

Brad W. Foster

26 December 2000

Thanks for the copy of the very colorful Idea 12! I've sworn that I will catch up on all of the unanswered mail and un-loced zines before the end of the year, now only a few days away. However, since my note here says I got this issue on December 6th, looks like I'm getting close. Having a mini-flood in the back studio Christmas evening meant having the spend all of the next day between being outside in the freezing rain, digging ditches and moving a sump pump around the yard, or being inside crawling around with a wet-vac trying to suck as much water as I could out of the carpet. Now, with several heaters going and the smell an...interesting...one back there, I've discovered I've no distractions from leaving the front room with the computer, and thus may actually get caught up today!

And did any of that really matter? Ah well....

First, since I always feel guilty getting a zine without having contributed to it in some way, and especially a large and entertaining one as this, enclosed is a bit of Foster fillo-doodle, one of my "Argent Park Flora," that I hope you might feel like putting into some stray corner of a future Idea, if for no other reason than to geep the guilt from eating me alive. Thank you.

And, speaking of art (and isn't that all of life, after all?), I have to admit to being a tad surprised at having my butter-ific artwork from Chicon described as "a Godzilla butter dildo, complete with pleasure ridges," when I honest-to-God, hand-on-the-bible swear I was trying to make a cow with toothpicks for legs. Indeed, my main recollection of the smooth and

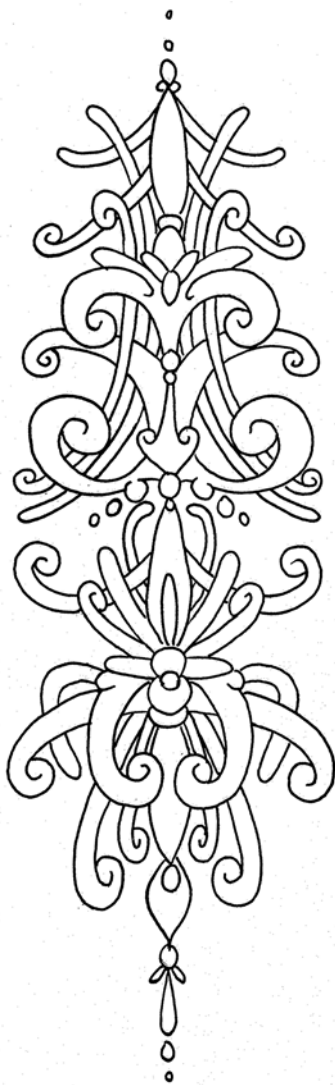
creamy event was trying to get the damn thing to balance on those spindly legs. So, either someone screwed around with my dairy creation after I left, or the saying is true than an artist is never really understood in their own lifetimes. (Besides, had I been going for the dildo-approach, it would probably have been of the French-tickler variety, having more opportunity to put little useless bits of decoration on it, like most of my artwork does.)

Ulrika's article was quite illuminating. I've been approached two or three times over the years about possibly standing for DUFF or TAFF, just sort of "we could use someone to make it a race" kind of inquiries, and I turned them down explaining that, while I'd dearly love an all-expenses trip to a foreign land, I'm not much of a social animal and have no memory at all to connect names and faces unless having seen the two together over the course of a year or two. My trip report (while I always thought if tricked into this would at least be interesting in being done mainly through graphics), would be heavy on the what I did, and low on the mentioning of much of anything of a fannish nature. Her long article on the realities

of getting involved with the funds just shows I've made the right decision. I am not a good fan fund candidate. (On the other hand, Cindy would be great on the face to face stuff, though she hasn't gotten involved with the print end of fandom. If we could combine the two of us into a single fannish entity, it just might get pulled off. I always tell her that ever since we got married, she makes me look good. We meet someone, I talk about

myself, then I let the person talk about me. Then they usually say something about themselves that I can't recall two minutes later, and then Cindy remembers a casual comment they made about some member of their family when we last met three years before, and they both talk for a while, and when we walk away, they think "What nice people," as if I had anything to do with that. I love this lady!)

The Langford Minicon recollection just made me recall how much we enjoyed being able to attend those few years ago, and wishing we could again. However, it seems the decision to ensmall the con, while making it much more fun to attend, cuts back on the number of folks I can fool into buying stuff off my dealers table, and help to finance the



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trip. However, if we hit the lottery, we will definitely be coming back again – maybe not even having to sit behind a table the whole time and see even more of it all! (It's always amazing to compare the memories of conventions in my mind between the majority where we set up most of the time in the dealers room, and the few I've been lucky enough to be the Artist or Fan Guest, and thus free to wander about, talk to folks, attend programming, get away from the building now and then. I think the second kind are much more fun. (Not to mention perks like the surprise back-rub during opening ceremonies for all of the guests at ConQuesT this past year!))

On the LoCs, would it be possible to find out what The Beck really thinks about Yanni, he seemed a little nebulous on that point....

So, now I that I've got to find something to fill my time for the next few years until Idea 13, I guess I'd better get busy!

Stay happy~



It's been rather a long time since Chicon 2000, but my memory remains surprisingly clear that Ctein sculpted the butter dildo. I remember him plunging it into ice water to keep it standing firm, rather the opposite effect of what would happen with the real thing. – gfs

Dale Speirs

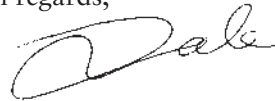
22 December 2000

The convention reports remind me why I don't get involved in con-running and stick to zines. I am, however, quite active in stamp shows, usually as publications editor plus

set-up and teardown grunt work. Stamp shows in general are not quite as disastrous as SF conventions, although ESPANIA 2000, an international held this year in Spain, will be talked about for years to come. A storm collapsed the entrance of their exhibition hall during the show, killing a postal worker at one of the dealer booths. The next day, the President of the convention was blinded by stage footlights during a ceremony and fell three metres into the orchestra pit. His wife had a heart attack when she saw him go over (he survived with multiple broken bones, she survived as well). So I guess if the art show isn't set up properly at an SF con, then be glad nobody got killed by a falling panel.

One thing that is noticeable is how small SF conventions are. A national stamp show in Canada expects several thousand paid visitors for the bourse, exhibits, and seminars. The last international in Canada got 20,000 paid visitors, and the American internationals get about 200,000. In Asia, 200,000 to 500,000 paid admissions over ten days is usual.

With regards,



Yikes. What an unwelcome set of problems at any event! I recently attended the U.S. National Bonsai Exhibition where SF fan Don Wenzel from Ypsilanti, MI, had one of his bonsai trees accepted in the juried exhibition. As a convention runner, I find it interesting to see how other hobby groups organize their conventions and other gatherings. Back in the 1990s, I heard that SF fandom was second only to square dancers when it came to the size of conventions run completely on a volunteer basis. – gfs

David Bratman

9 December 2000

Dave Langford isn't the only fan to have had an uncomfortable transatlantic encounter with a rugby team. Berni and I found ourselves sharing a United flight from San Francisco to Heathrow in 1995 with a Canadian rugby team. They exhibited most of the behavior patterns of the species described in Dave's Minicon report, including hijacking the drinks cart from the understaffed flight-attendant crew, weaving around loudly, plopping halfway into one's lap to start a conversation, and crawling around underneath Berni's skirts to retrieve small and possibly nonexistent objects they'd dropped.

Ah, but we had our revenge. While waiting in the departure lounge for the flight home three weeks later, I noticed the same rugby team. Not, perhaps, as bizarre a coincidence as

one might think. A quiet word to the head flight attendant before boarding, and as results I witnessed, during the flight, an attendant denying one of the rugby men a second drink, saying, "We were warned about you."

Rob Hansen's account of The Great Cornwall Eclipse is quite moving, especially for the unearthly run of luck he had. Arriving in Torquay two minutes before totality: he's fortunate he didn't catch a train like unto the one that didn't quite take Dave Langford to Gatwick. And the sun came out! Definitely a first for Britain.

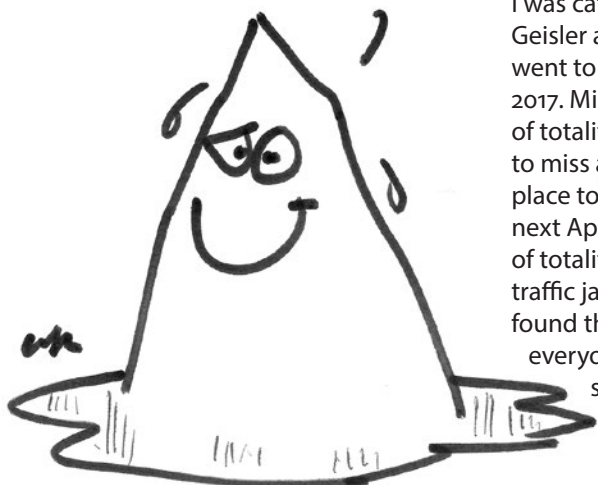
I've stood in a grove during a partial solar eclipse and watched the patches of sunlight between the shadows of the leaves grow weirdly crescent-shaped and then back to normal. I've never seen totality and wouldn't want to take a cruise, the usual way of visiting it. But I already have my calendar marked for August 21, 2017, when one will sweep across the U.S. all the way from South Carolina to Oregon, and I hope you do, too.

Yours,

David Bratman

I was cat- and house-sitting for Deb Geisler and Mike Benveniste when they went to Wyoming to see the eclipse in 2017. Mike's photos, and friends' accounts of totality convinced me I didn't want to miss another. Plans are currently in place to be at Ben Yalow's home in Texas next April 8. He's moved into the path of totality, so we may even miss the epic traffic jams that so many Americans found themselves stuck in when everyone tried to leave their viewing site at the same time in 2017. – gfs

**WOW!
LOGS!**



Sheryl Birkhead

21 December 2000

What a gorgeous cover! I drooled over the new color laser printers, but it was only a passing fancy – and way beyond anything I'd ever need – but, how was the cover printed?

Because my Mac is so old, I cannot buy a printer it can support – so it looks like I'm going for a whole new system. My LC works just fine – slow, but.... It will be analogous to when I get a new car – WOW – look what has ((moving right along – Jan. 19...)) improved in the interim. I have ordered the system by not (yet) figured out the software upgrades – i.e. well, you get the non-picture. I think I need to buy a lot of diskettes and try to keep using the faulty LC while I figure out system 9 and how to do what.

Ah, the feel of Twiltone.

Yeech – I can imagine a lot of foods deep fat fried, but **not** pickles (uh, sweet or dill...no, ignore that.)

Feb. 8 – whew – Idea and this not just resurfaced... The new Mac G-4 is here, but the software upgrade still isn't working. It has to go in steps (v3 > v8 > v9) and v9 won't open v8 ("but it should" – Right) – and in two weeks the trial version 8 degrades – along with access to all my records unless the problems can be figured out. The most recent direction was to download "SNITCH" and use it. I haven't the faintest idea what SNITCH even is let alone what it does – I just try to follow directions.

Feb. 15 (this is getting to be truly ridiculous) Idea is a beautiful package. You have a great batch of artists... heck – all your contributors have done you proud.

Better late than never. I see that Atom won the Rotsler Award. No one deserved it more.

I see that Naomi Fisher and Patrick Malloy won DUFF. Well, I also missed out on the voting this year. I'll try to do better next time. (I had the best of intentions...).

I will mail this.

Thanks,



The more things change, the more they stay the same. The equipment as changed in the past couple of decades. Diskettes and ZIP drives have been replaced with flash drives and SSDs. Systems are ever more complex and I still miss using Eudora for my email.

I used to have a handle on where files and resources were and how to use



"They can prise the salt lick from my cold, dead hands."

— Stephen Boucher, 3 December 2024



various software programs and tools. With every generation of new equipment, everything seems to grow more complex. Apple started hiding folders in an effort to protect users from ourselves. It's hard to mistakenly delete the Library folder or move it somewhere it shouldn't be if you can't see it. But, damn, it's annoying. Don't get me started on font management or subscription software schemes!

Back to your opening question: the cover and inside front cover of Idea 12 were printed using an ink jet printer. Probably my first Epson. I've gone through a Canon or two, an HP, and am now dealing with an ailing Epson. If I buy another ink jet printer – and I probably will – I really need to invest in a ink tank system. Color laser printers are nice, and I wouldn't be without mine, but I've yet to find one that can match ink jet quality on photographs. My main problem with ink jet printers is that I just don't use them consistently enough. Ink dries out, jets get clogged, and quality tanks.

Your inline comments about the weeks it was taking you to finish your LoC pale in comparison to the decades it's taken me to print it! Here's to perseverance, our continued good intentions, and the occasional successes that come our way. – gfs

Linda Bushyager

21 December 2000

Naughty you – forcing me to do something I haven't done in a long while – write a LoC or at least a NoC (note of comment). Idea 12 stuck its head out of my pile of unread mail, and when I smelled the Gestetner ink I was forced to read it. Then I found myself reading it from front to back without missing any parts. Great zine!

Ron and I have been very busy here of late. We are getting older (aren't we all I hear you cry). Some parts of this are actually good, such as having Ron retire this year at age 59. Some are not so good, since my Dad (79) dropped dead of a heart attack in July. I went to Orlando to help my Mom. She greatly depended on my father, and didn't drive, so it was obvious that she couldn't stay for long in her lovely 3-bedroom house on a lake. We all thought about the possibility of her moving in with either my sister or myself or my niece, but none of those possibilities really would work. So we found a nice “assisted living/independent living” apartment that serves meals and has lots of activities and transportation. I helped her pack up the house, throwing or giving away all manner of ‘stuff,’ and then move and unpack in the new 1-bedroom apartment. The good news was that she could keep her 2 cats.

Also with our aging and Ron's retirement, came the realization that we would have to move out of this house, sooner or later, since it requires a LOT of work and has a steep driveway that my arthritic knees don't like to climb. So we've just now taken the big step of buying a house in Las Vegas. Actually, we are having one built, and I expect it to be finished approximately in Aug. 2001. Since we don't drive, we found a house on two bus lines, fairly close to the “Las Vegas Strip” and within a short walk of a grocery and other stores.

We recently visited some Vegas fans including the Katzs, and also went to a party at the Foreman house. They all seem like a nice bunch of people, though I don't know how active we will be in Vegas fandom, since we



haven't been very active in Philadelphia fandom.

Reading Idea kind of stirred up my awareness of "getting old" as I noticed the LoCs and various mentions of people like Chuch Harris and James White, as well as all the commentary in the LoC about getting rid of "stuff" for deceased relatives, and the death of relatives and so on. Sort of depressing I guess.

Speaking of getting "rid" of stuff – there are two mimeographs in my garage that will soon be heading for the dumpster. And, sad to say, I recently gave away several cases of Twiltone. I still have about one box, and I'm using some of it as paper for my Laserprinter! I'm glad that Jeff was able to visit and take away the stenciler and mimeo stuff that he took. I hope you'll put them to use.

I must say it was delightful to see multi-color mimeo work. Well-done! Do I detect the work of the automatic slipsheeter device that Jeff took?

I really enjoyed Dave's Minicon Diary which was chock full of all sorts of good bits, as well as enough description to make me think I'd been there myself. The "Art of Roundsmanship" seemed to fit right in, and I also liked that enormously. Everything else was enjoyable, and the Rotsler illos were priceless.

I don't know how you two have the energy to put out such an enormous mimeoed zine – obviously its cause you are younger than I am (Jeff must be at least three years younger, or four? But at our age every day younger is more like a dog day younger...if you know what I mean).

Well that's about all for now – I have to go back to cleaning up "stuff" in anticipation of putting this house up for sale. I've given boxes and boxes of old fanzines to Joyce Scrivner, tossed out Locu's and Apple II computer magazines, and even gave away my fondue set in an effort to reduce our "stuff" for moving. I can't

get Ron to throw away all his 1965 Computer Magazines though (he did give away about half of them). But the estimate is that we still have about 300 boxes of “stuff” to transport. Maybe tomorrow I’ll toss out the tax returns for 1969-1989 – you don’t think I have to keep them, do you?

Best,

Linda [no signature on file]

Funny how timeless some LoCs can be, eh? Your move to Las Vegas seems to have served you well. Glad to see your and Ron’s names on the Corflu 41 membership list; I look forward to seeing you both come the end of February.

My favorite memory of using the slipsheeteer you gave Jeff is of Don Fitch helping in the Toad Hall Champion Mimeo Center and Frog Preserve, separating the cardboard slipsheets from the printed pages with an experienced hand, always keeping the slipsheeteer well-stocked so I could keep printing without delay. It’s a timeless memory, unanchored to any specific issue, just a moment of sheer joy. Like Larry Sanderson in a tight kitchen, Don never stood in the way, blocking my own ability to move and work smoothly in the space. He was always aware of where I was working, where I was likely to turn, and he was just never there, even if he had been a moment before. It’s a remarkable skill, to remain so aware of one’s space and surroundings when focused on your own specific task at hand. And to be such pleasant company all the while!

I shredded my own tax returns from 2004–2015 this past summer. Still have older ones in the Flamingo Loft above the garage, but those boxes will wait until I’ve made more progress on the paperwork that’s accumulated in my office! –gfs

RJ Johnson

7 February 2001

*“From prose to display,
he thought with dismay,
“all parts of this LoC
should impress her.”*

*So he laid fears to rest,
by using the best:*

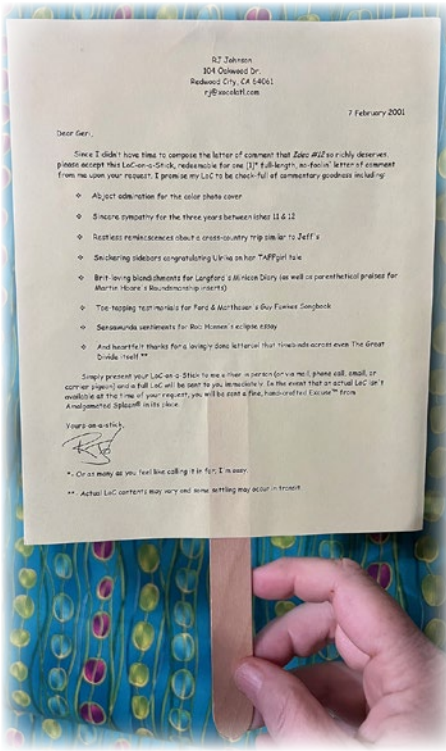
a Widower’s Tongue Depressor!

– RJ Johnson

Since I didn’t have time to compose the letter of comment that Idea #12 so richly deserves, please accept this LoC-on-a-Stick, redeemable for one [1]* full-length, no-foolin’ letter of comment from me upon your request. I promise my LoC to be chock-full of commentary goodness including:

- Abject admiration for the color photo cover
- Sincere sympathy for the three years between ishes 11 & 12
- Restless reminiscences about a cross-country trip similar to Jeff’s
- Snickering sidebars congratulating Ulrika on her TAFFgirl tale
- Brit-loving blandishments for Langford’s Minicon Diary (as well as parenthetical praises for Martin Hoare’s Roundmanship inserts)
- Toe-tapping testimonials for Ford & Matthesen’s Guy Fawkes Songbook
- Sensawunda sentiments for Rob Hansen’s eclipse essay
- And heartfelt thanks for a lovingly done lettercol that timebinds across even The Great Divide itself.**

Simply present your LoC-on-a-Stick to me either in person (or via mail, phone call, email, or carrier



sympathy in your actual LoC over the 3-year span between issues when I have gone so far over the top with the 23-year span that followed. And, look, it's another lettercol timebinding even further across The Great Divide, 'though I did make the editorial decision to include considerably more letters from living fans than from those we hope are now enjoying the Enchanted Convention.

Heck, there's even another total solar eclipse coming our way next April 8 and I look forward to experiencing what Rob described as "something quite spectacular and strangely moving." It will be my first, so long as the clouds either absent themselves from the Texas sky over Ben Yalow's home there, or that they clear it time as they did for Rob back in 1999. – gws

William Breiding

9 December 2000

pigeon) and a full LoC will be sent to you immediately. In the event that an actual LoC isn't available at the time of your request, you will be sent a fine, hand-crafted Excuse™ from Amalgamated Spleen® in its place.

Yours-on-a-stick,




* Or as many as you feel like calling it in for; I'm easy.

** Actual LoC contents may vary and some settling may occur in transit.

What a fabulous LoC! It continues to delight 2+ decades later. And not just delight, I'm shocked and pleased at how timely it remains. I can't help but giggle at seeing the promise of sincere

The mail came really late yesterday, so I didn't think any came. When my roommate arrived home from work at 9:00pm, she handed me an envelope – a new Idea! I rambled at length through the LoCs in surprise – both at this unexpected treat and seeing a lengthy LoC from myself therein. I haven't yet read Idea, but I wanted to let you know I did get it, in the event that there is a delay in response.



(Breiding)

P.S. my computer is Dead!

Ed Cox doodle here

Don Fitch

12 December 2000

Don Fitch both quoted and posted the following on the Memory Hole email list:

Colin Hinz wrote:

Way back on Tue, 28Nov2000, Geri Sullivan wrote... [chop]

We still need all the issues of "BRILLIANT," of course. We need the satisfaction, laughter, and joy "BRILLIANT" brings to our mailboxes. My argument is that "BRILLIANT" inspires some but also scares off many proto-fans. "CRUD" seems to inspire more, at least when it comes to getting started.

Funny... "BRILLIANT" passed through the mailslot here at the beginning of the week, except curiously enough, it was titled "IDEA."

A copy appeared in my mailbox yesterday, and most of today was

spent on the first-reading of it. I suppose Geri deserves a vote of thanks from Fanzine Collectors for her efforts in reducing the number of fanzines that will be produced in the future, thus reducing their workload.

Or Maybe Not. There's a good chance that a fair number of neos would want to publish a somewhat different *kind* of fanzine – IDEA appeals to a wide audience, but the number of people who would seriously want to *create* such an intensely personal & emotional genzine must be quite limited (& the number who could do it successfully even more limited) – and there seems to be a significant drift in our culture away from Competitiveness in all things, so the quality of it isn't so daunting.

Now about that next issue of NOVOID....

Don [email; no signature on file]



Geri & Don outside Atria Covina in California, 27 November 2023.

Don and I visited several times over the decades since Idea 12 and this post appeared. Less frequently than in the days we were both attending Minicon and he would stay at Toad Hall for the week after, digging up dandelions and creeping Charlie, sorting fanzines, and just plain being magnificent company, and the Covid pandemic wiped out my plans to drive cross country for a longer visit after we reconnected in January 2020. But I finally made it back to Covina again just last month and showed up with sushi for Thanksgiving dinner. Don is 95, and has been in hospice care... for over 5 years! He's doing staggeringly well under the circumstances, and, no, that doesn't mean he staggers when he walks. I can't begin to express the joy it brings me to be sending this issue of Idea his way. – gfs

Joy V. Smith

18 December 2000

Thanks much for Idea #12. You surely crammed a lot in there! The photos on the cover and inside cover are very well done, and it was a pleasure to sort of meet all those people. I enjoyed the poem on the back cover too. And I loved the illos, especially the Galactic Patrol one on p 74.

Great trip tale by Jeff Schalles. Ulrika O'Brien's background on why and how she stood for TAFF was fascinating. That took stamina! Dave Langford's Minicon Diary was a lot of fun. Fans sure work hard at having a good time.

I appreciated Jack Targonski's update and all the LoCs on people coping with cleaning up and making hard decisions after a loved one's death. I try to cull as I go along. At Oasis 13 (Orlando SF literary con) I

spread accumulated zines and things on the giveaway table (a grand piano actually) and donated a few choicer items to the club for next year's money-raising auction (for a scholarship, as I recall. See my report in File 770 #136). When I got home, I discovered I'd missed a drawer full. (I have two huge desks with with big drawers.) Anyway, I have another big batch of stuff to contribute to next year's Oasis con.

Btw, my sister collects frogs and toads, too. And she painted a little toad-stool once.

Joy [email; no signature on file]

For the last few years, I've been running Fannish Yard Sales to raise money for the fan funds at Boskone and a few Worldcons. It's helped me part with a fair bit of accumulated kipple and donations from Ben Yalow and other fans have brought in significant donations, as well.

I come from a family of frog and rock collectors. Well, accumulators, anyway. :-)

David Goldfarb

13 December 2000

On RASFF (rec.arts.sf.fandom)

Geri Sullivan wrote:

I'm relieved to hear at least one more copy has shown up in the Bay Area (most of the known delays were there), and appreciate the rasffarian egoboo accompanying Idea's arrival. Thanks, all.

Mine actually arrived almost a week ago, and I've even read it, but I've been procrastinating about LoCing. Sorry. This is actually the first fanzine I've ever gotten....

David [no signature on file]

Jukka Halme

8 February 2002

Sorry it has taken some time for me to respond, but I have had all these hopes of being able to attend the Boskone and thus delayed the inevitable. But the sobering, sad fact is that there simply isn't enough dinero's in my checking account. "Byääh!", as we say in Finland. It would have been lovely seeing you and go to the con, but such is life. Sometimes the matador wins, sometimes the bull.

I liked the Idea a lot. It was my first ever American fanzine that I've received with Argentus that came the same day as I think I mentioned earlier. This is my 2nd LoC in English! I lost my virginity to Bill Bowers... Eh, that came out a bit odd.

OH, GOLLY,
GOLLY — A
LOC WITH
PHILOSOPHY



I have seen and read some fanzines before, but that was some time ago, when dinosaurs ruled and Tand was published, so I took my time with the issue of Idea. What a beautiful item! So unlike all the fanzines we do in Finland, all photocopied and Page-makared with gleaming white paper and usually half the size. We call that A5 (5¾ x 8¼ inches). It's a good size for the cypaper-zines and very much the ruling size for Finnish fanzines. Most of the (about) 80 zines I've somehow been part of the producing team, have been that (A5) sized. Most of the American zines I've seen have been the size you use, with similar stapling. There is a wonderful sense of handicraft attached to these zines that I somewhat admire and am jealous of. I have never made a zine using a method other than either photocopying it or with a proper printing service.

Idea is unlike any Finnish fanzine we have. Our zines are pretty much all serious and constructive, most are clubzines, with a newszine here and a basically a digest a la Asimov's or F&SF there, though all our SF-magazines are basically fanzines even the ones that look like seriously Prozines. I guess you could call them semiprozines, since they actually pay for themselves with subscriptions and an occasional ads, but nobody makes a living out of them, not even a very small living. They are all labours of love.

Jeff's tale reminded me of the only reason I've ever had for owning a car (and having a driver's licence) — driving thru America. I have travelled around Europe inter-railing three times and you can actually see a lot that way. But not here. Not in America. This is Car country.

I haven't given up the hope tho. Maybe one of these days I'll be able to lure some poor unsuspecting friend of mine and drive around the States and see the sights. And hopefully go to several cons as well!

Ulrika's story about the TAFF-race was a nice read, especially since I basically just know what TAFF means but other than that...nullo ideas. Now I know!

We started a fanfund of our own last year called NOFF (NOrdiska FanFondet, methinks in Swedish). The idea was to able for Finnish fans to go to Swedish cons and vice versa. This year there isn't a big con in Finland but I hope they'll keep it up. I wouldn't mind getting a small financial help for a trip to Sweden one of these years and having a far more active co-op with our westerny neighbours than we've had lately. So close, yet so far. A bit sad actually.

The idea is to broaden the fund with Norway taking part and someday maybe integrating the Baltic states too.

Dave, the Dark Lord of Reading, is a wonderful writer. My single biggest regret of the whole moving to America for a year – business was the fact that I wasn't able to see Dave at Finncon and have a drink with him. And maybe even a chat. A very loud one, since we both have a hearing problem of sorts, though mine is more having to do with the mixing of speak with the background noise.

I did however manage to translate one of Dave's excellent speeches into Finnish. It was a bit rushed job, but I think there are some glimpses of astuteness. Obviously something of the original brilliance was rubbed off

and somehow transformed into the translation.

I have two big fan-rolemodels: DL and Darrell Schweitzer. Both are just wonderful writers, witty and smart, appearing to be able to write anything in a flowing way that looks deceptively simple and easy, but is actually simply brilliant – and very hard to do.

I loved Rob Hansen's story. That was a great piece of fan-writing. Short but sweet and to the point. Lovely.

There are no LoC-sections in Finnish fanzines. Never has been. Odd letter here and there, but nothing like in Idea or any other American fanzine I've seen. Though we Finns write a lot, somehow we have never really gotten into Loccing. Maybe it's the relative smallness of our fandom, dunno.

There are lot of comments about death of a close one. I have lost both my grandfathers and my other grandma, but not anyone really close since I've been an adult. I remember the awful seriousness of the ceremony and the sense of loss and a sudden burst of sorrow. Even though I was never that close to neither one of my grandpa's. I dearly loved my "Little Granny" (as opposed to the "Big Granny" or "Pakilan Granny" that is still alive; there was a considerable difference in height), but she died a long time ago.

I have yet to lose a friend to the reaperman. My schooltime buddies are in the prime of their life and the fandom in Finland is still relatively young, as opposed to Americans for example. Our first SF Club was founded as late as in 1975 in Turku. I don't recall more than two fans that

I've known (both mainly by their name and reputation) that have died since I have been acknowledged of the existence of fandom. May it be so for a long time to come.

I'd love to receive future Ideas and other goodies you're going to be involved with. I'm more than willing to send you Finnish fanzines, but I'm afraid those are all in Finnish.... I have had this desire of making an English issue of my perzine Resp but for a reason or other, I've never managed to finish what I have started. But who knows? Maybe the time is ripe and I finally get something done! I'd love to be able to add our corner of the world with the rest of fandom. Just you wait! (But don't hold your breath...)

Ta! And all the best,
Jukka [no signature on file]

My, the things that happened in the years since Jukka wrote this LoC! I'd forgotten that he spent a year in the US. The biggest, of course, is that he chaired the Worldcon that Helsinki hosted in 2017. Talk about adding "our corner of the world with the rest of fandom." Well done, Jukka. I didn't make it there, but greatly enjoyed following along from home and reading the reports and memories that followed. – gfs

Jim Vance

15 December 2005
The Enchanted Convention

Of the hodgepodge of zines I've unearthed from Kate's stuff, only a couple stand out as truly memorable and satisfying – White's Blat and the final series of Habakkuk. The online Mimosa, which I discovered a few months ago, was also quite good. Your Idea ranks equally with those, and I'm still ruminating over what the four of them have in common. Certainly there's that combination of intelligence, talent and commitment reflected in all of them – other zines I've seen have some of the above, but not all – and the sense that they're confiding in me now, no matter how long ago the material was written, is strong in each title.

When I was a kid I remember reading references to fanzines with names like Xero and Alter Ego and being intrigued by the idea of producing a zine of my own (not that I would have had anything to say at that age)...but I was too young to dope out the network to distribute such, and money was too tight to spend on buying other people's work, let alone produce my own, and I finally moved on to other things.



So after all these years I'm finally indulging my own decades-old curiosity on the subject.

I particularly appreciate your thoughtfulness in including the issue with the story on the music party. These little snapshots of Kate's life from the days before we met are precious to me, and the Hirschfeld-like illo by Reed was an unexpected bonus.

Of course, the showstopper of the lot is your piece about helping Jack pack up his father's effects. I'm 52, and my parents are both still alive. Kate's death was the first – and will presumably remain the worst – loss of my life, and I had no idea how to deal with it. (Still don't, for that matter; if the kids didn't need a functioning parent, I don't know if I would have ever gotten out of bed again or if I'd even be here now.) I've only recently finished going through the bulk of her things, many of which had been shoved into storage until I could deal with them. What you wrote, about the weight of the minutiae that must be gone through one piece at a time, resonated big time with me. The receipts, the con badges, the odd greeting cards, the cryptic scrawled notes...and, being a writer, all the paper she generated that I'm still trying to get into an intelligible filing system. The trash and treasure and maps without a key that add up to a life that still informs my days. I don't know how much of my own stuff I'll be able to get rid of, but I'm going to try to make sure that everybody knows who's going to get what, and that the rest is neatly filed and organized so my descendants at least know what the hell it is they're tossing into the garbage.

Jim V [No signature on file]

[Note to readers: I sent Jim a couple issues of Idea when we were corresponding in the early 2000s. These comments from him still resonate with me all these years later, especially as I work on sorting through at least some of my own minutiae that's accumulated in the Zeppelin Hangar since moving to Toad Woods in 2004. My, how the years fly by. – gfs]

Sandra Bond

13 January 2001

If I recall alright, the last time I got my act sufficiently together to compose a letter of comment on Idea was when I was living in Oxford. Since then I've lived at five separate addresses, so it seems like high time that I got my act together once again; besides which, I can't think of any other fanzine so appropriate for me to donate the following piece of doggerel verse than to yours:

*Chuck Harris jumped up,
and his face was a picture
Suggestive of imminent
bowel constricture;
He'd been through dark Ireland
with knife, fork and spoon,
But he'd not met a cook quite like
MRS. RAVOON.*

So, yes, thank you for sending Idea 12, which finally made it across the Atlantic the other day. It's an unavoidable annoyance with highly-regarded, infrequently-published US fanzines that I'm forced to sit, reading my email with mumbles of annoyance as fan after fan on Trufen or rasseff sings paeans of praise on the new issue that I know full well is unlikely to arrive for another month, six weeks or more; but I'm sure you'll be

pleased to know that I found it worth the wait. As ever the reproduction is impeccable and the content scarcely less so, leading to the unfortunate tendency of my picking the zine up with the express intent of making marginal notes against the composure of an eventual LoC and then suddenly realizing I've gone through a dozen pages without even remembering I have a pen in my hand due to losing myself. I hope for your sake that your other loccers are made of sterner stuff, or at least less easily distracted stuff, than I.

When I first lived in London some ten years ago I had an apartment only five minutes' walk or so from Gestetner's UK headquarters, and since it was on a route I often had to walk along anyway I would often take the time to press my nose to their window and marvel at the sleek examples of reproductive technology therein. I wouldn't be surprised to learn that one of those machines in their window display was a Mr Gestetner, but my experience with stencil technology remains limited to their old models such as the 400 and 460. Although as we speak (or write) I'm waiting to hear whether a chance sighting of a Gestetner with electro-stenciller and materials in support, free to anyone who'll take them away, will bear fruit....

Jeff's article awoke once again in me the never-very-deeply-slumbering desire to fly to one coast of America, hire a car, and drive it across to the other coast. I have no idea why I should want to do this – I like long distance driving, granted, but that's British long-distance where you can really drive for more than a day without landing in the sea. I'm sure that I'd undergo all the bad experiences Jeff reports upon and more if I ever

tried it, but the desire won't go away. That's me all over.

I realize that you've probably had Ulrika's article on hand for months at the least, but seeing her name on an article here in conjunction with her recent resurfacing online after several months' silence has dispelled my fears that she was undergoing gafia or a deliberate or forced variety. Quite apart from any lingering hopes that she might finish chapter 1 of her TAFF report for me, her writing is generally so good as to make her absence from fandom undesirable. And this article is no exception; not only is it well done stylishly, but well done in the sort of way I wish I could carry off and can rarely manage. Like her, I always had the impression that TAFF candidates were (or at least should ideally be) nominated by popular acclaim rather than by their own efforts; but unlike Gary Farber, I can agree that picking the right nominators is of much significance in the TAFF ballot. I've just had a brief and doubtless incomplete roll-call inside my head of people in fandom I don't much care for, and none of them would by dint of nominating someone for TAFF prejudice me against the candidate. To be frank I don't think I could tell you one single nominator on the current ballot without looking at it to check. I'll be interested to see whether I am marching out of step with the rest of fandom, as I so frequently do, once more on this issue.

Dave Langford's brilliance strikes me so dumb that I can think of few if any specific comments to make as opposed to simply shovelling ego-boo on top of the article as a whole until it's hidden from sight and mind. (I bet Dave gets fed up to the back teeth with comments such as this.)

“Is Zippy the Pinhead a Ramones reference?” she asked vaguely fishing for comment hooks.

I was thoroughly impressed by John M. Ford’s parodies. (I refer to him in this formal manner because we have a British fan who lays claim to the familiar Mike Ford, which brought me up very short indeed when reading newsgroups the other month and seeing people talking about Mike Ford’s kidney transplant; so John M. he shall remain in this LoC.) I’ve perpetrated a few parodies myself over the years, being ever so much better at creating things when I have a model to base them upon than when I have to start from scratch, and I must say that “American Pie” is the easiest song to work from that I’ve ever found, largely because you can stay quite close to the structure of the original and work in obscure references from whatever subculture you’re working in without the result having to mean anything because the original doesn’t anyway. That sort of parody I can turn out by the ream, though I don’t suppose I could promise to do so as wittily as JMF.

Although I read Rob Hansen’s article on raseff many (ahem) moons ago, it was worthy of immortalising on Fibretone and I’m glad to have a permanent copy thereof. I found the media hype surrounding the eclipse a complete turn-off and so stayed in London, thus missing the totality. Even so most of the office where I then worked swarmed out onto the roof and the fire escape to watch the affair. One fellow not too blessed with brain cells took his pen, poked a hole through a cardboard work file, and tried to watch the eclipse through that with disappointing results; turned out he’d misheard the instructions on

HM — DO LOCS
HAVE WIRES
AND A CLOCK?



the radio that morning about how to make a pinhole camera.... Very nice illo by Craig Smith after the article, by the way.

Jack Targonski made me fetch up with a jerk when I got to the phrase “a 35-40 mile one-way commute to work.” Having re-read the sentence I now realise what he meant, but at first my mind whirled as I tried to picture how this fellow could be returning from work if not by car, and how his car got home without him ready to take him back to his employment the next morning.

It’s ironic that you should comment about how you’d tried to update loccers’ addresses over the past three years directly below Mike Scott’s letter, which you grace with an address where he hasn’t lived since the summer of 2000 or so. (If you

need the new one drop me an email and I'll dig it out; he's now in London.)

Nice of Jerry Kaufman to send you a special postcard (maybe even a pocsarcd, given the fannish nature of the cause) just so you could have his signature reproduced in the LoC column. I'm saved from having to do likewise by the fact that this letter is being composed at my parents' house in Devon; here there are few distractions to keep me away from catching up on outstanding fanac (I've also locced the current Twink and composed FAPA mc's during this visit) but there is also no computer, only this elderly (though surprisingly well-tempered) typer last seen in fandom creating the best forgotten pages of Nowhere Fast ten years ago. This you may blame for any typos or infelicities of style, as well as my inability to supply you with Mike Scott's current address.

I always thought there was something peculiar about Joseph Nicolas and this letter proves my point. How can anyone remain in fandom (I know Joseph keeps saying he isn't really any more, but his letters to faneds such as you and I belie this) and be so ghod-damn tidy? It's just not natural. I'm with you and (I suspect) with most



other fans; I have accumulated over the years a slew of papers, books, oddments, and detritus without which I wouldn't feel comfortable. These fragments I have shor'd against my ruin, &c &c. I have very occasionally and sotto voce wished I could be a little more like Joseph – or like my partner Simon Amos, who seems to be simply immune to the Kolektinbug's itchy bite; I wish he could explain how he achieves it – but mostly I only kvetch about it when I have to dust My Stuff. It collects it like nothing on Earth.

I've been known to opine that it's a rare fanzine that I can read without discovering at least one significant or material fact of which I was previously unaware, and Idea is no exception; I suppose I might have guessed it if I had stopped to think for a moment, but I never previously suspect that the name on Jim Trash's birth certificate does not match that by which he goes in fandom. He has a wild talent to match his wild hair and general demeanour, and this letter is a fine example thereof.

Vinç. Sigh. Chuch. Sigh. James. Sigh.

The two little dots over the 'o' in 'Brönte' are what we grammarians call 'a mistake.' The Brontë family placed the over the 'e' by habit.

When correctly placed they are of course an umlaut, or else a diaeresis, both of which words are doubtless spelt wrongly but Chuck isn't in a position to care anymore (sigh) (not that he ever did care a jot for my opinions; for some reason he took a dislike to me on my entry to fandom that I never could shift, much to my sadness).

Nice to see Mike Glicksohn still loccking away, though as he says it's perhaps lucky for him that the

primary organs involved in locating are the fingers and brain, and not the liver.

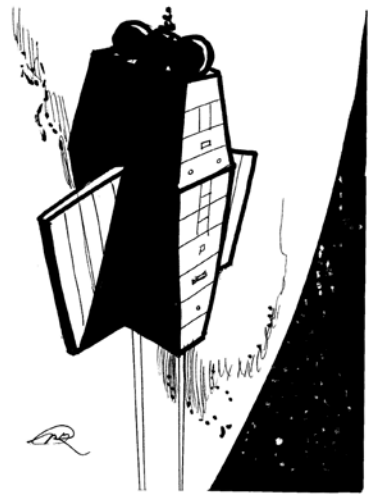
Much the same could, one supposes, be said for Skel; don't remember the last time I saw his name in a British zine. The name of Brian Robinson, or Bi-Ro as he used to style himself, is not unknown to this fanhistorian, and I'll agree that it's a worth name to commemorate even though Brian never quite scaled the heights that Skel his early co-editor did.

Well, two and a half pages may or may not be too many, but it's all I can come up with so it's all you're getting. I'll lay odds that the number of LoCs you get urging you to publish more quickly next time does not remain in the single figures, and to ensure this prophecy is fulfilled I'm going to end by being the first to tell you that so good a fanzine as Idea deserves to come out annually at least if there's any chance of you managing it. Aw, g'wan, g'wan.



I'm glad that you and Henry Hamilton made that cross-country trip in the decades between when you wrote this LoC and its publication! I loved hearing about various stops and discoveries on the trip when you visited during your 2023 TAFF trip.

Speaking of loccers' addresses, I struggled with conflicting sensibilities when putting this lettercol together. Fanzines help fans connect and stay connected to each other, and Idea traditionally included mailing addresses. But fandom as well as the rest of the world has changed considerably in



the last 23 years, and, especially with fanzines regularly being shared online with a public, undefined audience, dropping mailing addresses is very much the current practice. In the end, I followed my #1 rule of editing: when there's a problematic or troublesome bit, the first question to ask before spending a lot of time working to fix it is whether you can simply drop it. I decided that was the easiest course this time around. Going forward, I ask loccers to include the info they're happy to have shared – street address, email address, whatever, or nothing – and will figure out my new practice from there.

I can't help but wonder if any LoCs to this issue of Idea will be composed on an actual typewriter. I know James Bacon favors them, and treasure a letter he typed and sent me in 2016. But the world, and our ways of communicating, they keep on a changing....

As for publishing frequency, now that I've managed to revive Idea after all this time, I do hope to publish #14 in 2024, and to continue on at least annually for the foreseeable future. I've missed it, and, from the welcome enthusiasm expressed by so many fans when I announced this issue, it seems I'm not the only one. Fingers crossed! – gfs

Peter Hentges

07 February 2001

OK, that's it. I'm not going to let another Idea come out without sending you a LoC. Granted, I'll likely have plenty of time to get this off, given the new publishing schedule, but it'd be Just Like You to sneak one in before New Year's and then, there I'd be....

I'm stricken, as I often am after reading Idea or a zine of similar quality, that it would be awfully nice to do one of these things myself. If nothing else, that fannish spirit bobbles around the head in ways that make me think it would be Good For Me, or at the very least a Good Thing, to do more writing.

I'm fairly certain that I've always thought Jeff was Really Nifty. He's got all those bits of things that make someone cool to hang out with. He knows Arcane Mysteries. He has Artistic Sensibility. He'll fill in the quiet when you don't have much to say and is OK just sipping beer in silence and drinking in the zen of it all. After reading installment eight of "Adventures in the Wimpy Zone," I am convinced he would be an absolute delight to accompany on a cross-country road trip.

I'm reminded of the various trips my family took during my childhood. Five of us in a Buick LeSabre with the family dachshund, trekking from my dad's latest Navy stationing to northern Minnesota for holidays or reunions with family. I always half-dreaded those trips; being locked in the back seat with my siblings, motion-sickness exacerbated by dad's Pall Mall smoke as we barreled across the countryside to Get There. Only the prospect of dinner at Grandma's

and the chance to partake of my favorite childhood occupation, listening to grown-ups talk, made struggling through them worth it. Much better to cruise around with Jeff.

I had a bit of misconnecting synapse as I started reading Ulrika's article and thought she was Sue Mason there for a moment. I think it was the cover that threw me. Or perhaps the fudge was still affecting me. Nevertheless, I now know far more about standing and running for TAFF than I'm ever likely to need. And if I should need, I'll know who to thank. (Though I'll still not know how to correctly pronounce her name resulting in terminal embarrassment during the acceptance speech. Probably all for the best if I just stay home.)

How very surreal to read Dave Langford's diary of a Minicon now so removed by time and texture from those most recent. Full to the brim of lovely turns of phrase. "... and – with a certain quiet majesty – Teresa fell over." "Do you play poker?" "No," I said with caution. Good!" More than I can do justice with proper praise. Also full of great ties to mine own heartstrings. The remembrances of the Radisson South and our many Minicons there still have me nearly taking the Hwy 100 exit from 494 when I should happen by that way. Many's a late night the dog has woken me up during a thunderstorm and I've mused "I bet the view from the Con Suite is really great, right about now."

So you're welcome, Dave Langford, it was a pleasure having you. Do come again soon. (Oh dear. I'm sure to be quoted out of context on that one....) And thank you, Dave Langford, for brightening our

convention and sparking loving memories of it. Here's hoping you'll have occasion to visit again and help us build new ones.

There's Elise and Mike being silly again.... Good to hear he and new kidney are doing well. Anyone knit him a pair of booties for it yet?

The juxtaposition of Rob and Jack's pieces was a nice touch. A very sensawonder bit of eclipse watching turned into a memorial for a departed father and then the transition to the reminder of your touching piece in the previous issue. I think I told you and Jack in person what a lovely thing that was, it bears repeating. Like so many LoCers, I've remembered it well even so long between publishings.

It's interesting to me to look over the LoCCol and notice the various textures of reader's responses. From the brief email note from Mike Scott to the multiple-page offerings of Robert Lichtman and Harry Warner. You must get great joy from mixing and matching, editing and adorning, building this lovely pieced quilt to cap off another issue. (And, I suppose, a hefty dose of melancholy from printing these LoCs from James, and Chuch and Vinç....) I can only say that Chuch was certainly not thinking of you when he wrote "so pure, refined, and wary of sin that she eats bananas sideways." And I mean that in a *nice* way.

Peter [no signature on file]



Hey, consider yourself encouraged to pub your own ish, and to do more fanwriting, too. My plans and intentions for Idea 14 don't include another 23-year gap. Just sayin'....

I'm thankful I continue to enjoy long road trips as I age, and hope to adopt my father's attitude if and when I no longer do. He loved road trips... until he didn't. And when that time came, he said, "I loved driving on long trips when I was younger, but I don't any more.

So I don't take them. I'm grateful for the good memories from when I did."

As a child, our most epic road trip was from Battle Creek, Michigan, to Olympia, Washington, the summer I turned five. I can't imagine doing that with three kids in the back seat (of our 1956 Buick Special), towing a tent trailer. We were mostly on US 2; this was before the interstate road system was finished and one had the choice of I-94 or I-90. I have several treasured memories from that trip. Two favorites: my first time on horseback (Daddy led "Old Paint" around a pasture; I discovered footage when I had his 8mm movies digitized about 10 years ago!) and sitting on Mom's lap for hours upon hours on the trip back east as she taught me how to tie my shoelaces. It was one of the requirements for entering kindergarten that fall.)

You're spot on about the joy of assembling the lettercol, and the melancholy, too (viz: Mike and his new kidney, and, oh, how I miss those letters from too many long gone). That said, I thank you bunches for adding to the joy of the revived Idea's lettercol! – gfs

Joseph Nicholas

5 January 2001

You may be amused to know that Idea 12, containing my letter urging you to rid yourself of clutter like PEZ dispensers, broken duplicators and posters you'll never display, arrived (today) at the end of a Christmas/New Year holiday break in which I have had another blitz on old papers, clearing out yet more superseded files and many, many back issues of magazines kept for no other reason than I could. I had such a huge pile when I'd finished that I had to make two trips to the paper recycling bins around the corner.



After too many years of ever more clutter accumulating following a significant purge associated with my 2004 move to Massachusetts, I sorted and recycled a few carloads of paper over this past summer. It's barely a start, but a good one. I still have all the PEZ dispensers, though. – gfs

Alexis A. Gilliland

13 December 2000

Thank you for Idea #12, a unique and wonderful fanzine. The long pause between issues is not a total loss; in "Park & Loc It" there are substantial contributions from Chuch Harris, James White, and Vincent Clarke all of whom have shuffled off this mortal coil. Not to mention a postcard from my old friend Dick Geis, who hasn't been up to much since his back operation. I sent him a Christmas card, not in the expectation of getting a reply, but by way of keep-

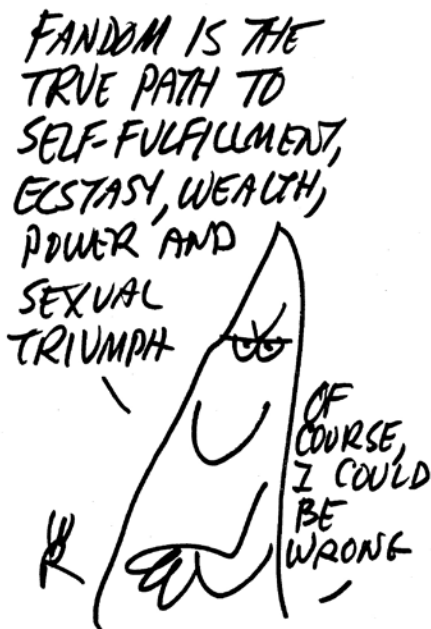
ing in touch. If my card doesn't come back marked "Addressee Deceased" he gets another next year.

Stuff. Clearly "stuff" is associated with memory, and over a considerable range of intensity. I have a box full of chess scores, from the time when I played serious chess, roughly from 1950 until my father died in 1971. They are fairly ordinary games played at an unremarkable level (USCF Class A, about the median level of all tournament chess players) but they have this remarkable property: When I replay a score, I am transported in memory to the place, and the time, visualizing my opponent and the circumstances with the utmost clarity. I don't play any more, but the scores don't take up much space, filling a stationery box that once held 40 sheets and 30 envelopes, and I am not inclined to throw it out. The photo album from my first marriage is similarly evocative. It doesn't matter that most of the people are dead, marrying Dolly was a watershed event in my life, and the beautiful marriage certificate in the front of the album remains cherished. On top of the album sits Dolly's funeral book, a record of the people who came to bury her, together with a copy of her death certificate. This is not something to cherish – indeed, for a long time I could hardly bear to look at it – but it can't be thrown away, either.

Other stuff is perhaps disposable. Dead checks and old income tax returns are surely trash after five years, and maybe one of these days I'll treat them as such. My texts from college, including graduate school, were mostly packed in boxes and sent off to a little college that lost its library to the floods generated by Hurricane Agnes. Most magazine get tossed, eventually, although fanzines

get put in boxes and stored in the attic. Books, now, are for keeping. When we moved to Virginia in 1974 we got a call from Art Samarra, who was moving, and wished to find a good home for his collection of sci-fi, several boxes, taking up maybe 10-shelf feet. I shelved them in my study, and never read them, and have never got rid of them, either. Other boxes of books have since materialized (26 years is a long time), with an equally valid claim to my limited shelf space, and in theory I might reshelve them by merit. So far it hasn't happened, but I am by no means the most tenacious hoarder in my family.

When my father died in 1971, [...] my brother Paul (who had trained as a librarian) cleared out his house (it sat near a railroad track, and there was a seismograph in the basement) and moved it out to another house in Harrington, WA. [...] Of course, Paul didn't move ALL of my father's stuff. In Lafayette, my father had a laboratory, a converted garage, in which he stored stuff he wasn't comfortable keeping in his house. Such as a large Amana freezer that held most of a 55-gallon drum of red fuming nitric acid. My dad had a lifelong fascination with explosive, corrosive, and dangerous chemicals, and he stored them in the laboratory. Eventually Paul paid the taxes on the building and let it sit because moving the stuff inside would have required a serious, concentrated effort. About the nitric acid: immediately after WWII, the US Navy became interested in tetranitromethane – TNM $C(NO_2)_4$ – a dense, oily liquid with great potential as an oxygen source in liquid fueled rockets. In 1946, the Navy was paying a dollar a gram for the stuff, almost



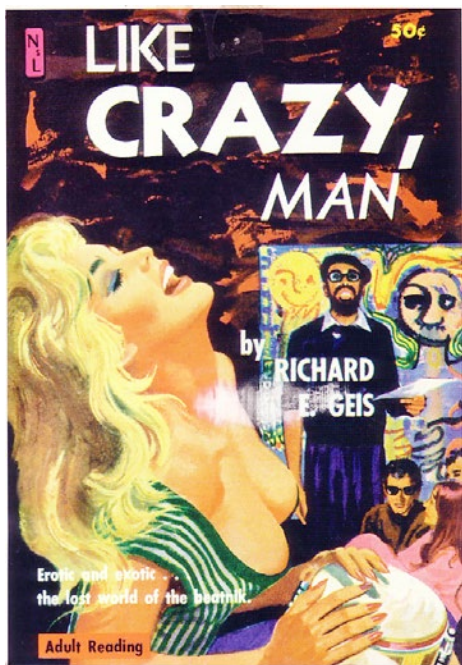
\$500 a pound in the days when a penny postcard cost a penny, and first class mail went for a three cent stamp. You make the stuff by adding the red fuming nitric acid to acetic anhydride, with constant stirring, at ice temperature; when the reaction is complete, add the acid mix to water, and the TNM separates out. We (I was helping my father) had gone up the scale, to the largest available glass three neck flask, maybe 50 litres, and we had bought the drum of nitric acid with the idea of going into pilot plant production in the laboratory. There was a group in Chicago that was about three months ahead of us, and they had a stainless steel reactor about ten times as big as ours. Now the reaction mixture of nitric acid and acetic anhydride is what is called a Sprengel-type explosive, not a compound but a solution containing oxygen and fuel balanced so it will explode. The Chicago group had an accident in their garage, which produced a crater 50 feet deep and 100 feet across. My father dropped

the project immediately, but never told me why. As time went by, I eventually figured it out.

Cut to 1981. My dad is ten years dead, and the lab, now Paul's storage building, was in downtown Lafayette, not far from the County Court House, and the local fire department was interested in what was inside. Paul declined their offers to inspect. One day, the lab was broken into by a transient who spent the night and departed, leaving the door open, an invitation to the fire department, which sent someone in to take a look. They panicked. Bomb disposal experts came in from as far away as Hawaii and the next morning my father and his "bomb lab" were on the front page of the Washington Post. The bomb experts were a lot cooler; most of the stuff was taken out and burned. My brother Walter helped flush the red fuming nitric acid down the drain, slowly, with lots of water. Paul got the bomb models (my dad had taught in the War Department Civilian Protection school) back. I don't know what happened to the glass tube of liquid phosgene.

If stuff doesn't define what we are, it reminds of what we used to be, of people we used to know. As stuff, Idea #12 is unusually evocative, even if it does wind up in the attic.

Love,



Dick Geis lasted through a dozen more Christmas cards, though not long enough to read your appreciation of his postcard finally being published here. Here's the image of the postcard itself, which didn't make it into Idea #12.

Wow, wow, and triple wow for the tales of your father's lab. Back when my sister and I emptied our childhood home following Daddy's death in 2011, I filled the back of the Original Cardis with materials for the toxic waste drop-off site in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and an item or two of interest came east with me, but nothing like the chemicals in your father's garage laboratory! That was some stuff! – gfs



Proof we're living in the future: there's a romance/anime film named "I Want to Eat Your Pancreas"



Erik V. Olson

21 December 2000

Busy making holiday foods. Since the limpa is rising and the butter dough is chilling before another fold and roll (only 3 more to go!), it's obviously time to sit down and write the letter I promised a week or so ago.

A thoroughly wonderful read, although, after Chicon, I expected Idea-on-a-stick. Ulrika's adventures were a hoot, and her "accidental tourist" entry into the TAFF races somewhat mirrors my accidental entry into convention running. Sometime you just have to learn to say n-, n-, n-, oh damn.

Jeff's travelogue was wonderful, esp. the discovery that sometimes, on rare occasions, the land yachts of old are still a wonderful thing. The overall production of the zine was first rate, though I still have a love-hate relationship with the Twiltone. Enjoyed, as well, Langford's look at a Minicon I never saw.

The LoCs were a strange example of time travel. Ghosts and shades, of those living and dead, speaking from a few years back, looking as fresh as always. A marvelous, strange, and disturbing effect, but please do not wait three more years to pull it off. Names I know are gone, and never had the chance to meet, stand proud in twilled phrases.

My only gripe is a Rotsler 'toon. Damn it, I just got back in! I can't afford to be gafiated again. I've too much to see, too much to do, too, too much to read.

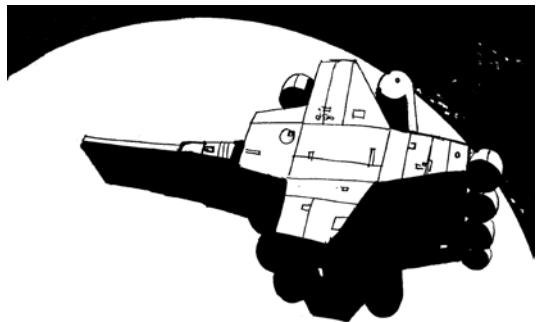
So, do I get a penguin sticker for this LoC?



Mmmm. Limpa. Love limpa.

Much as I love running Fibertone through my color laser printer (and much as the printer hates it), Amazon's Kindle Direct Publishing offers far too enticing a value for me to blow a couple thousand dollars on the toner it would have taken to print Idea 13 in house. So I'm off exploring the limitations and possibilities of today's most affordable reproductive technology, just as fanzine editors have done ever since ever since they started pubbing their ish nine decades ago.

I didn't mean to stretch the lettercol time travel experiment three years again, let alone three years and twenty. Sorry about that! The part that I find most interesting is just how timeless so many of the letters are. Sheryl Birkhead's computer woes are with different equipment and software these days, but otherwise feel utterly contemporary. Comments on Rob Hansen's article about a total solar eclipse bring next April's eclipse immediately to mind. There have been two Chicago Worldcons since the one remembered in the Idea 12 LoCs, but Chicon remains "just last year" in our memories. A different Chicon, not even the next Chicon, but still Chicon. The more things change, the more they stay the same. Yet the world is different, nonetheless.... - gfs



Harry Warner, Jr.

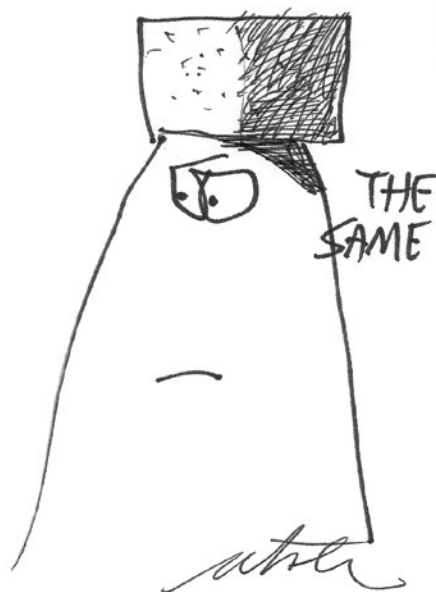
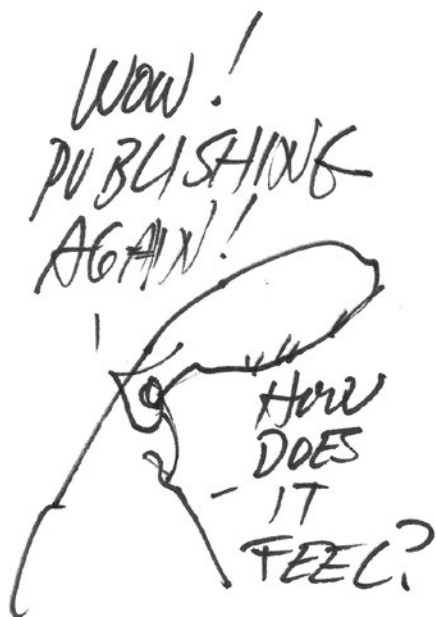
19 February 2001

The Enchanted Convention

I believe I have just enough energy tonight to write a totally inadequate LoC on the 12th Idea. As you've undoubtedly been told by all the other beneficiaries of your fanzine-for-the-usual largesse, it fully maintains the stratospheric standard you've established over the years. And you can't imagine the impact that the totally unexpected color cover made when I opened the envelope. This is the one and only way in which I concede the superiority of computer publication over more traditional and obsolete methods: the ability to get better color reproduction than most professional magazines. But has anyone done studies on the permanence of color prints produced by this method? Will they be subject over the years to color shifts or fading like all prints that are produced by photo finishers using chemical procedures? Should fanzines that contain color

illustrations be wrapped in airtight and safe plastic to keep the air from them or should they be inserted into heavy paper envelopes to minimize the damage from light? Will the paper used for color prints turn some hue other than virginal white with the passing of time or will it get brittle?

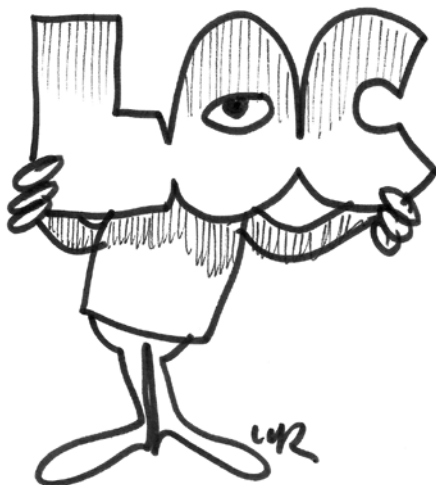
Has it occurred to anyone that the mimeograph-in-a-box ranks right up there with the dissolution of the USSR on the list of the most improbable events of recent years? I know this machine stands in relation to an A. B. Dick 1931 model as *The Lord of the Rings* does to Perry Rhodan, but I gather that the Gestetner marvel is superior to computerized publishing in the sense that it isn't likely to suffer a power surge or someone pushing the wrong key at the wrong time. I hope Jeff Schalles continues to have these traveling adventures for many years to come, that he continues to write them up for you, and that I survive long enough to read at least a few more of them, although the fact that



I forgot to start a new paragraph three lines up isn't a promising prognosis for my locking longevity. I'm still far behind on the avocation, accounting for that delay in this letter, but I'm just trying to take things one d/a/y/ century at a time, and as I was about to say, I took to heart all the motor vehicle troubles he narrated this time. I've been nursing along my 16-year-old car ever since it began misbehaving last July, time after time on the verge of replacing it and each time reconsidering because of the probability that I won't be fit to drive much longer and might get only months or a year or two of use out of another used car.

Ulrika O'Brien deserves much credit for her ability to write objectively about how she won the TAFF trip. I think she was treated unfairly by a great many fans when she became a candidate because she hasn't been prominent as a publisher or writer for genzines before she filed and it didn't occur to those fans that she might have been and indeed was active in apas for a considerable time and a con attendee, too.

I'm also aware that there has been some grumbling about the Hugos that Dave Langford has been winning, on the grounds that Ansible is his main fanac and it is mostly about professionals rather than fans. I think *Minicon Diary* all by itself would be sufficient to prove him qualified for Hugo nomination as either editor or writer. His style of writing is quite different from that of Walt Willis, but his report on the trip to Minicon nevertheless has much of the same general atmosphere as *The Harp Stateside* and other trip reports by Walter. Fans all over the United States should be standing in line soon



waiting for the right to host him the next time he comes to this continent.

I found a parallel to a decision in my life in Jack Targonski's LoC section introduction. Just like him, I needed to decide what to do with a Cadillac after my father's death. He had bought it from the estate of his sister a couple of years before his death. He didn't drive it often and he kept it in a garage he rented a block away from our home because it was too big to fit in the three-car garage behind our home. It must have been among the first Cadillac built for public sale after World War Two because it was rather old when my father died in 1960. I felt bad about not keeping it, but I couldn't drive it because I've never learned how to use a manual gear-shifting auto and it wouldn't be very safe to make frequent walks between that garage and home late at night. My uncle was a used car salesman so he offered to dispose of it for whatever price it would bring, and I no longer remember what that was but it wasn't very much and I suppose today it would be an expensive collectible for people who like big old cars.

*A fanzine in the mailbox at
423 Summit Avenue
6 May 2019.*



The real quality of fanzines published in mid-century is questioned several times in the LoC section. I'm inclined to think their reputation for excellence is justified. That belief can't be blamed on the tendency to recall with special fondness the things one first encounters in any field of endeavor because I've been reading fanzines since 1938. By the 1950s, the average level of reproduction had reached a peak never surpassed (it's just as well I couldn't know at that time what the future would bring like dot matrix prose and miniaturization of type-faces), many fans became prosperous enough to publish big issues, artists had stopped imitating prozine illustrations and developed their own style and subject matter, brilliant writers were bobbing up everywhere, and I think there was also a benefit

from the fact that for the first time in the history of fandom, there was much visiting back and forth and a grown number of conventions so fans got to know one another better.

All the discussion about keeping everything or disposing of everything caused me to think suddenly that my tendency to the former might be responsible for the fact that I'm still living independently and my own master. If it weren't for the stacks and stacks of fanzines, recordings, books, and music in this house, I suspect that I would have retreated to a retirement home or some such place many years ago, perhaps on the occasions of the accidents and illness that subjected me to three long hospital stays and left me uncertain if I could continue to live alone in a big house. I think I would be very unhappy today if I'd suffered through year after year of a way of life very much like that in jail: confinement to one or two small

rooms, little or no choice of when to eat meals or what is served in them, all sorts of rules about letting the maid in and curfews and so on. I don't know how much longer I'll continue to live this way but I have nightmares all the time about how I will react to a belated introduction to that sort of life because of feebleness or physical problems. And if I need to dispose of everything while I'm still alive, it will be even harder on me than it would have been several decades ago.

I've whined in several recent LoCs about the fact that I'm the oldest fan who still writes frequent and rather long LoCs and how I shouldn't even try to adhere to such a strenuous regimen. But Terry Jeeves' letter in this issue makes me realize I might not be the eldest loccer after all. He says he was 75 "last October," which may mean he and I are within a few months of the same age and conceivably he may be two months older than me, who am 78 $\frac{1}{6}$ years old today.

There is much more I could write if I were still only 77 $\frac{1}{6}$ years old, but I hope you'll forgive me cutting off at the end of two pages. The unlocked fanzines are still numerous enough to require two stacks and I won't feel I've made any real progress on them until I can make them all hold still in one stack without falling over. Until then I'm trying to be unfairly brief.

Yrs., &c.,

Harry Warner, Jr.

Harry made it just two days under two more years after he wrote that LoC. Still living at home, if I remember correctly. Re-reading his letter 22+ years after he

wrote it, I'm mostly grateful that my own personality tends to find things to enjoy and appreciate in pretty much any situation I find myself in. I hate to think of Harry having "nightmares all the time" about something that never came to pass.

I wonder if I'll be the last person to publish a letter of comment from Harry. I think I was probably the last person to leave a fanzine in the mailbox at 423 Summit Ave. The house was on the market when Andy Hooper led a group of fans there and to Antietam after Corflu in 2019. I couldn't resist the opportunity to tuck a copy of A TAFF Guide to Beer in the mailbox. – gfs

Janine Stinson

11 December 2000

The TAFF-on-a-Stick cover was most adventurous and clever, and came out very nice I think. But my copy came with two covers – which leads me to think that I was the serendipitous recipient of an oops during the collating party. Of course, if you want the extra back, I'd be happy to carefully detach and return it – those color copies are pricey.

I've been seeing the Fan Writers of America mentioned a lot in various places lately – is this a membership-application group or is one designated as a member by others?

It's a thrill to know now that Bill Rotsler's work will, like lucky pennies, keep showing up as unexpected treasures in various places. The more fms I receive, the more this becomes apparent. And I must mention here, since it fits, that I kept missing the Clue Bus on what "Enchanted Convention" meant until I got to James White's LoC, even though I knew that Chuch Harris and

Vinc Clarke were gone. Even though I'd already read your editorial! My denseness is astounding to me. Thank you very much for including their letters; I'm thankful to all faneds who continue to publish the last LoCs they've received from fans who died before the next ish came out. If I ever get around to Pubbing My Own Ish, I will certainly be on the hunt for Rotslers from whoever is willing to supply them.

Despite the fact that a lot certainly happened between Ideas 11 and 12, your readers may not want to wait quite so long for Idea 13. <grin> Lots has already been said about the tactile pleasure of the paper Idea is printed on, so I'll send a suggestion for the pile of Rose you were thinking of tossing (if it's still about). One can use an old blender and make handmade paper with junk mail, and I believe it could also be done with this Twiltone. All that's required besides the blender and paper is some water and a device similar to one used at archaeological digs. Leftover window screening and ¾-by-3-inch slats of inexpensive wood would do nicely.

I've never done this, though, and have no compunction to sacrifice my copies of Idea to test it, so I can't say if it would work with Twiltone paper. It might turn into mush, or something resembling felt. But it could be A Fun Thing, if one has the time and energy, though it's a very simple process and doesn't take much of either.

Again I'm impressed by the excellent collection of articles you've given us readers. I'm not much for travel



stories usually, but Jeff Schalles isn't just another travel writer, thank Ghu. Ulrika O'Brien's TAFF tale was great fun, and a welcome explanation that one doesn't have to wait until retirement to stand for TAFF. Good on her, and on you for printing it. Langford's piece was very funny, and I did have the pleasure of meeting him at Tropicron in November, as well as attending a session of Thog's Master Class. His banquet speech was a corker too. I think he works hard for the humor, and despite contrary comments heard elsewhere, he deserves all those rockets. He's the last left of the five fanwriters Chuch Harris mentioned in his LoC.

Rob Hansen's eclipse-viewing account brought back to me how much I wished I'd been able to see it. However, now that the International Space Station has its solar panels deployed and is big enough to see at night, it and Jupiter (on its closest earth approach in decades) will be nice stand-ins for celestial phenomena and last longer to boot.

My interest was piqued by Cy Chauvin's LoC because I'm acquainted with Howard Devore, and knew that his wife had died this year, so news that he was cleaning out his garage made me wonder if he's moving. Time to get a letter off to him and find out.

Since you mentioned technical advances in your editorial, I thought I'd toss in that I've received copies of Arnie Katz's Jackpot!, Joyce Katz's Smokin Rockets, Marty Cantor's No Award and Bruce Gillespie's SF

Commentary all via PDF attachments to e-mail messages, and found them very nicely done indeed. One can still print them out on paper and have them look good, too, in general. If getting a zine in PDF means I'll see it more frequently (due to time and money saved by the fanned), then I'd rather that than nothing at all. Paper forms are, of course, humbly appreciated still.

Andrew Plotkin had best stick around fandom so I and others can read his future Evolutions; the one in #12 read like the feel of gossamer across the skin, and I loved it. More, please, and soon.

Janine [no signature on file]

From Fancyclopedia: "You join fwa the same way you join **fandom** or become a **trufan**: If you do fan writing and think you could be a member of the fwa, then you are a member. It's that simple." In 2022, the organization changed its name to Fan Writers Association; the acronym remains fwa. fancyclopedia.org/FWA

I sent your comment to Andrew Plotkin back when you wrote it and he responded, "Oo, thanks. Although I feel like Charles Dodgson being asked for a copy of his next book. I have no clue what might come out next." I've fallen out of touch with him since the heyday of rec.arts.sf.fandom on Usenet, and miss his writing. – gfs

John Hertz

5 December 2023

Thanks for confirming yet again that

WE CAN COUNT ON GERI FOR
ANOTHER GOOD IDEA

Also for confirming that Idea will still be remembered twenty years after Randy Byers' letter (p. 45).

My next thanks for labelling with names the TAFF-on-a-Stick photos on the front cover of I12. You've done fanhistory and can imagine how grateful someone you've never met, even farther in the future, will be. See Page 13.

The description of your toads (p. 24) recalls my father. His were frogs. I'm not sure whether he or I started it, but it had to do with MTA Records 114 by the Thorndike Pickledish Choir. Someone, maybe my sister and I, replaced his dark blue tie monogrammed "FJH" with one initialed "FROG." When he was made a judge – by then I had a handful of stepbrothers – we replaced the brass plate of his ceremonial gavel with a plate that said 'Frogerick.' Finally my stepmother, whom I loved, couldn't stand it anymore and got rid of all but the best two or three hundred.

Thanks too for calligraphy by Jae Leslie Adams, wondrous as ever.

Anchor Brewing company has closed after 127 years. I'll miss their one-of-a-kind ("we are all one-of-a-kind, really, but he was more one-of-a-kind than most," R. Silverberg on A. Davidson in *The Avram Davidson Treasury*) Steam Beer, also their Christmas Ale, different every year and part of the Macedonian New Year's Party I've co-hosted for the last quarter century.

When Harry Warner died, people unfortunately did have emotional qualms over what he left behind. All we could do was get through as well as we could. I wish I'd talked with his lawyer. If any.

Those two dots in e.g. Brontë (which reminds me, Tim Powers' *My Brother's Keeper* is swell, even if I wondered for a while if it should have been *My Keeper's Brother* – but

Powers worked it all out, as he does) are a diaeresis mark.

Mae Strelkovl Hurrah! If memory serves, the hecto by her I tried to run in Vananonde had Jeff Schalles in it. I couldn't do her justice.

There's still a few romantic visionaries left to be born!

Continue to do incredible new things!

Your fan
John A.

And John wins the prize for latest LoC before the publication of the next issue! Unless Alison Scott sneaks one in under the wire, that is. – gfs

We Also Heard From:

Jae Leslie Adams (“I can’t tell you what a kick I got out of seeing *Idea* in the actuality. Still glad I was not the one to have to choose body type for all that stuff I sent you. Thanks again for the opportunity to try out such a range of styles & see how they might work with type, not to mention the pure egoboo of seeing my name listed so many times in the Contents!”), Ned Brooks, Gary Farber, Moshe Feder (“It’s really special to get a zine duplicated on Twiltone ((Or is it Fibretone? I know it’s not Topsham Colored Mimeo, wrong shade of yellow)) these days. As Tevye said in ‘Fiddler,’ “Tradition!”), George Flynn, Abi Frost, Bill Higgins, John Hill, Dwain Kaiser, Mary Kay Kare, Jay Kinney (“Maureen Kincaid Speller eating the fried pickle on the front cover wins the fannish pixie of the year award.”) Erika Lacey, Marilee Layman, Rodney Leighton, Pocketsarc from Guy Lillian, III (“Hallelujah!”), Eric Lindsay, Rachael Lininger, who

won the First LoC prize and included this bit of verse:

“The Queen of Minn-stf she
came by
And all her court did laugh
Minneapolis is a pleasant land
With beer for those what quaff
But at the end o seventy-three
They pay their teind to TAFF”

Lloyd Penney, Derek Pickles, David E Romm, Kate Schaefer, Steve Sneyd (“Car/duplicator technology obsession clearly link. The future doubtless promises a road vehicle with built-in printing facility – well, driving will be remote controlled via Internet to reduce crashes, just program in your destination, so you can concentrate on multimedia publishing powered by solar panels on the roof.” 3 January 2001), Joseph “Uncle Vlad” Stockman, Felix Strates, John Teehan, Bruce Townley, Sean Wallace (“*Idea* #12, Ghod I love Dave Langford’s fan-writing – keep pub’ing it as much as humanely possible!”), Moshe Yudkowsky, and Franz Zrilich.



Contacting contributors

In general, please send letters of comment to idea@toad-hall.com. I will share your comments with contributors before Idea 14 is published (ideally Spring 2024; please let me know if you'd like to contribute). If you wish to write to a contributor directly, you can use the address below. You're of course always welcome to copy idea@toad-hall.com for remarks about their contributions to this issue.

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As I mentioned in my response to Sandra Bond's LoC, the world and sensibilities both fannish and otherwise have changed since I published Idea 12. That led me to withhold mailing addresses for contributors and the LoC column. There's also the minor fact that after 23 years, most of the addresses are ill fit for their original purpose. People move. Heck, even I did!

Fanzine fans used to freely exchange our mailing addresses in fanzines so people could send us their fanzines, or otherwise be in touch. It helped build and maintain the fannish community. I admit, I struggled with leaving the addresses out and mourn the loss of that

long-standing aspect of fandom. After all, the first step of Vinç Clarke emerging from the glades of gafia came when Terry Hill tracked him down at 16 WWW through an address found in an old fanzine.

In future issues, I plan to include email addresses with LoCs and will probably include city/state/country or similar, generalized location information for the writers who include it. Anyone who would prefer their email address not be published, please ask me to use a toad-hall.com email address for you with your LoC and I'll forward email received (if any) to you. Making this up as I go along? Well, yes.— Geri



"Today, in this cozy nest, I am going to have unparalleled energy and focus. I am going to do all the things that are shamefully delayed for no real reason. I am not going to get distracted by reading or Christmas shopping. It's going to be a freaking miracle of productivity.

"You guys believe me."

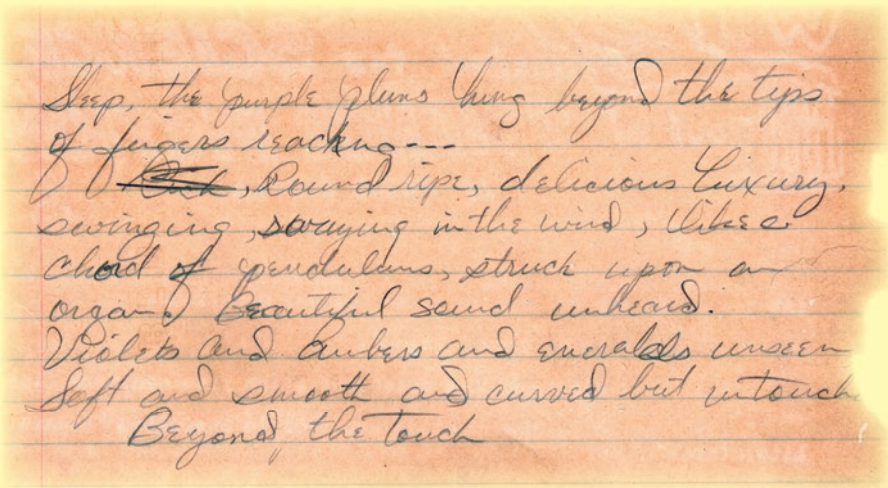
- Rebecca Wald, 27 November 2023



Inside back cover
This is a blank page on the printed edition

Sleep, the purple plums hung beyond
the tips of fingers reaching...
Round ripe, delicious luxury.
Swinging, swaying in the wind like a
chord of pendulums, struck upon an
organ. Beautiful sound unheard.
Violets and ambers and emeralds unseen.
Soft and smooth and curved but untouched.
Beyond the touch.

– by Lee Hoffman



Found in LeeH's papers by Joe Siclari, September 2023.
Handwriting confirmed by Edie Stern & Geri Sullivan.