



LES SPINCE 33

LES SPINGE 33 comes from Darroll Pardoe, 38 Sandown Lane, Liverpool L15 4HU, England. May 1979. Available to those people I think would enjoy reading it.

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It's been five years since I put old Leslie into temporary storage. Long enough, I think. Although I suppose the mixture is as usual, the change of name implying merely a modestly increased circulation and a reversion to litho reproduction. Expect no Black Spinges in the near future.

Last weekend we travelled to Leeds for the Eastercon, which turned out to be a very enjoyable one, and in contrast to last year I haven't a word to say in criticism of the hotel (apart from the Continental Breakfast ripoff, but they're hardly unique in that). Two things stand out in my mind from this year's programme. One of them was the final talk on the Monday, a fascinating account of whales and dolphins and their intellectual powers, which was not only good to listen to in its own right but generated a long audience-participation session afterwards. The other thing was Ian Maule, lucky person, buying a big bundle of issues of FANAC at the TAFF auction for £4.75. I think they were Ella Parker's copies, and the tale of how they came to the auction might be an interesting story if we did but know it. Ian got a bargain there.

As usual the main pleasure of Yorcon was sitting around with my friends late into the night, talking and drinking. Following the long session at the last Novacon, which went on for something like eight hours altogether, starting in the main bar by the pool, continuing in the deserted 'round' bar beyond the restaurant and finishing up in the small hours in someone's room; virtually the complete same group of us found ourselves on Sunday night together again (except for Kevin and Jean, who weren't at Yorcon) for five hours or so. Of such pleasures are conventions made.

Sometime after the bar closed (at the early hour of 2 o'clock) the GoH, Richard Cowper, briefly joined our group. He'd obviously not found the convention anything at all like he'd anticipated it would be, and was fascinated by the social characteristics displayed by fans, with little groups of friends just having a good time and not necessarily engaging in the serious and constructive discussion of science fiction. I think he felt a bit of an outsider, especially as his GoH persona was Richard Cowper the well-known science fiction writer and not the John Murry who was actually doing the talking. The ambivalence he displayed in conversation with us has some relevance to the discussion which has been going on in various fanzines recently about the supposed 'elitism' of fans: here was the GoH himself looking on almost wistfully at a small group of fans who were obviously enjoying being together and talking amongst themselves, and feeling very much on the outside. If the GoH can feel that way how much worse must it be for the solitary neofan at their first convention?

But in truth there is no elitism involved, only (as Ken Cheslin said to me a long time ago, when I was new to the game myself) a matter of being around for long enough and becoming a familiar face. When I go

to a convention, one of the things I most look forward to is to seek out these fans whose company I find most congenial and spend a fair amount of the weekend talking to them. Since they're mostly people I've known for a few years it is probably a daunting prospect for someone who doesn't know any of us to come up and join in: but if they did we would probably make them welcome and anyone who found us interesting enough to want to seek out the same people at the next convention would find themselves a part of the circle in no time at all. It just looks like an exclusive in-group to the outsider, but fandom in general, and conventions in particular, are really a series of interlocking, and fluid, groups of friends, and any newcomer ought to be able to find a niche readily enough, if they only make the effort. After all, if this is 'elitism' it is not confined to SF fandom. It's a natural characteristic of any group of human beings.

There was some discussion going on at Yorcon about the possibility of organising a small convention over next Easter something along the lines of Silicon (and therefore referred to in conversation as 'Silicon South' though it could hardly be called that in practice) in the southern part of England somewhere. The important thing to note is that it wouldn't be intended to be an alternative Eastercon, but a small informal Silicon-style convention for, well, the sort of fans (faans if you like) who go to that sort of con.

I can see arguments on both sides in regard to this idea. Pro, there is the feeling that Eastercons have grown beyond the means of fans to relate to them, and that fans would be just as happy socialising at a small convention without hordes of non-fan SF readers swamping them out. Related to this is the fact that large conventions mean a limited choice of high-priced large hotels to hold them in, while a small fan convention could be held in a smaller, cheaper place where the owner might live on the premises and keep the bar open all night if necessary. SF Monthly resulted in Tynecon being the first of the big conventions of recent years, and if the publicity attendant on Seacon pushes the numbers at Eastercons much higher (into four figures perhaps) it's going to become rather hard to find hotels to hold them in.

On the other side, there is the danger of splitting fandom. Two conventions at the same time could bring about a fatal polarisation between fans proper and the sf readers from whom we all sprang in the first place. It raises all the old spectres of 'where are the new fans to come from' and there is certainly substance in the thought that if no actual fans are in evidence at Eastercon no new people will be enticed into fandom. I'm using fandom in this sense to mean the maybe 100-150 people in Britain who are centred around fanzines and the social life that revolves around them.

So I'm a bit ambivalent at present. Given the choice I'd probably go to a small fannish convention rather than an Eastercon (and please note that the fact of the Eastercon being in Glasgow next year is completely irrelevant to my feelings on this matter) but I'd not stay away from the Eastercon if it was the only con going on that weekend.

Sitting on the platform at Leeds station waiting for the train back to Liverpool I whiled away the time by totting up the number of conventions I've attended in my time as a fan. It was rather a higher

number than I'd thought: I think the total comes to forty including Yorcon. I can't vouch for the absolute accuracy of the list (after a while they tend to merge into one happy memory) but this seems to be it: 1961 LXIcon; 1962 Ronvention; 1963 Petercon; 1965 Brumcon 2 and the Worldcon; 1966 Yarcon; 1967 Briscon and Octocon; 1968 Marcon, Midwestcon, Ozarcon and Baycon; 1970 Scicon and the Worldcon; 1971 Eastercon 22; 1972 Chessmancon and Novacon 2; 1973 OMPAcon and Novacon 3; 1974 Tynecon, SFANcon and Novacon 4; 1975 Seacon, Novacon 5 and Fantasycon 1; 1976 Fantasycon 2, World Fantasy Convention, Windycon and Novacon 6; 1977 Faancon 2, Fantasycon 3, Silicon 2, Novacon 7; 1978 Fantasycon 4, Skycon, Silicon 3, Octocon, Novacon 8; 1979 Fantasycon 5, Yorcon. The interesting thing about this list is that the half-way point, the 20th convention, is Tynecon, as recent as 1974. In other words, in the five years 1974-1979 I've attended as many conventions as in 1961-1974. In the old days we only had the Eastercon: now the circuit includes five conventions in a normal year.

One very noticeable result of the larger frequency of conventions is that although British fandom is a lot larger than it used to be, it is still a single entity, with the core of active fans all keeping more or less in touch with each others' doings. Contrast this with the vastness and fragmentation of American fandom: we all see one another three or four times a year but they find it harder, and the social cohesion manifest in British fanzines (which are flourishing, especially the personalzines) is absent on the other side of the Atlantic. It'll be interesting to see what visiting Americans this summer make of our set-up.

## Letters

### Victoria Wayne

I assume 'vegan' means the avoidance of all animal-derived foodstuffs, and not just the avoidance of meat or fish. I am curious as to why people would go to such an extreme, even though I understand the rationale of plain vegetarianism. To eat meat means animals are raised and killed for the express purpose of supplying it: to obtain milk from a cow does not involve hurting it in any way, in fact I've been led to believe for a long time now that not milking a cow is a torment. If the primary objection is the slaughter of animals for food, then taking a vegan position, with its dangers of bad dietary balance, seems an unnecessary extreme to me.

Why is it insensitive for the British publisher of 'The Female Man' to list the GOR books in the back of the volume? I can see where the same publisher could have Darwin's DESCENT OF MAN and a book extolling the wonders of born-again christianity in the same catalogue or a book about Einstein listed on the same page as Von Daniken. Or MEIN KAMPF alongside with something like Nozick's 'Anarchy State and Utopia'. I see no real difference in kind or tackiness here, and I can't say I'd be terribly bothered either. Neither can I say I liked 'The Female Man' any better than the sole GOR book I read.

(++ Cows don't give milk without getting pregnant and producing calves, and in the usual way of things half of those calves will be male, so inevitably slaughtered and sold for meat. As for 'The Female Man' I'm content to let the juxtaposition with GOR speak for itself. Some people, I'm sure, will see the point. ++)

### Peter Roberts

As for living in the past, I've always wished I could whip back to the ninth century and help clobber the Saxons, thereby preserving the Cornish nation for all eternity so that Cornwall might live and thrive and one day come into its inheritance as universally acclaimed ruler of the Galactic Federation. However why on earth my feeble presence amongst a throng of ill-smelling Vikings and Celts would alter the outcome of the Battle of Hinxton Down I don't know. When it comes down to it, I suppose it's pretty much of a suicide wish. I was reading a fascinating article by some thorough-going aristocrat recently in which he claimed that he'd like to die, when the time came, on the steps of Buckingham Palace, sword in hand. Each to his own. I'd like to be in at the last hurrah of the Cornish, the final doomed charge into certain defeat and oblivion. Heigh, ho - the old Celtic twilight again.

(++ Now that conjures up a picture: the barbaric hordes sweeping across the Tamar and advancing on the stronghold of the oppressors at Tavistock, led by a strange figure clad entirely in orange and waving a zap-gun... ++)

### Ned Brooks

Your factory sounds much worse than the place I work, from the standpoint of offensive MCPs. We even had a female technician for a while and she did well enough for a new hand. She was transferred to another facility on the Center before she had been around long enough for anyone to say whether she would be a top wind-tunnel technician. All our techs have to be trained on the job: every tunnel is different anyway. Our head mathematician did object to some of the language she heard when she went to program the on-line computer, so they rigged up a flag to be run up when she was around. It was mainly a matter of not knowing she was on the other side of the seven foot console. I never heard of anyone there pinching a woman or making offensive remarks, though what they may do at lunch I don't know. They would find few tits to count in the only local newspaper; it doesn't run to that except for the occasional movie ad or if some rock star is kidnapped maybe. They do tell 'dirty' jokes, some funnier than others. I can never remember jokes myself, except for an occasional particularly stupid one. One cannibal says to another 'I don't like my mother-in-law' and the other cannibal replies 'well, don't eat the crust'. I think I read that one somewhere.

(++ Maybe things are different in America. So far as I know the attitudes where I work are completely typical of British factories, unfortunately. ++)

### Dave Rowe

You shall go to the vegan ball. And I won't need a pumpkin and six



white mice to get you there, just 14 oz wholemeal flour,  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp sea salt,  $\frac{1}{2}$  pint warm water,  $\frac{1}{4}$  oz dried yeast, and 2 tbs oil (which you mix, cover and leave in a warm place for  $1\frac{1}{2}$  - 2 hours). For topping? As you please. The vegan 'What's Cooking?' suggests 12-14 oz tomatoes, 2 tbs cloves, 1 clove garlic, 1 tsp basil, 10 oz cooked textured vegetable protein or a tin of soybeans, 1 tsp marjoram,  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp sea salt. Heat oven to 425°F, cut up tomatoes, peel and finely chop garlic. Add herbs, oil and TVP or

beans. Stir down the dough and divide into four. Press into circles on oiled baking sheet. Brush with oil and cover with topping. Bake for 15 minutes. The vegans seem to have been going through a tough time of late, mainly because of newspaper sensationalism and the reporters who can't read reports and didn't bother to investigate properly. It turns out that starved babies report was based on just four babies horribly underfed on a macrobiotic weaning feed. Even that food is satisfactory as long as given in greater quantities than are recommended in macrobiotic regimens (see a report by the Dept. of Pediatrics, School of Public Health, University of Michigan, in The Lancet 9th June 1973: who said I wasn't informed?). A couple of points missed were that one mother was suffering from post-natal delusional psychosis which might explain how one of the four came to be so starved, also two of the babies were saved on vegetarian diets!

(++ the sea salt fad is quite unnecessary. All the trace elements and minerals you need can be picked up from a properly balanced diet without invoking sea salt++)

### Ken Cheslin

I'm afraid that things are still at sixes and sevens here, although we moved in at the end of August. I am supposed to have a little room to myself but it has served as a general store room for much of the time: my various belongings are all mixed up, and it's cold in there so with one thing and another I've done very little of anything fannish. I could do with a secretary, or one of those imaginary (?) voice typers as I find myself tired at the end of the day and my typing finger most reluctant to operate.

I've only recently heard of the death of Mike Rosenblum; what a pity. I visited him a few times when I was in college in Doncaster. He was always such a gentleman. A sad, sad loss.

(++ I think most of us would echo your thoughts on Mike, Ken. It was strange to hold an Eastercon at Leeds without him being there)



Ro assembled a few sexist quotes from fanzines recently, which she had intended to use in WARK. They were squeezed out from there, so I snaffled them for printing here. I ought to say that most of the quotes are from letters of comment to fanzines, so don't necessarily represent the editors' views.

(1) "Maureen James does a column which although short is brilliant (I'm a fan of hers and I've yet to read a duff piece by her. A woman who can think is rare indeed)."

(Dick Domar reviewing MAGUS in 'Graphic Sense', a comiczine)

(2) "As always she (Maureen James) raises some interesting points, no rude comments, Gez. on my unfortunate turn of phrase, and I'll cover them one by one, another bad turn of phrase."

(letter by Luke Rainford, also in 'Graphic Sense')

(3) "Of course it is possible that feminism will have been talked out of fandom by 1980. Subjects such as sex, drugs and nuclear war have been talked out in the fannish past."

(letter by Milt Stevens in 'Wild Fennel' 15)

(4) "Homosexuals are biologically flawed human beings and as such deserve our sympathy, but they are not normal and should not be treated as such. And I do wish people would stop using the word 'gay' in that context: gay means cheer not queer. As far as the 'lunatic libbers' are concerned Maureen was probably referring to those daft women who insist that they're the equal of men in every way. Women are certainly entitled to equal rights, equal pay and equal opportunities, but it must be recognized that they are not the same as men (thank God). For one thing they are weaker than men and have different instincts and desires. The laws of nature dictate that we live in a patriarchal society, and hopefully we will continue to live as nature intends in spite of the efforts of socialist weirdos, trendies and so-called progressives."

(letter by Les Chester in 'Bem' 22)

(5) "The title 'Ms'. This really infuriates me as (it said in my newspaper and I agree) most married women are happy to be known as 'Mrs' and the single ones are only too anxious to advertise their availability with 'Miss' so it seems the few who use 'Ms' are the more militant Womens Libbers who are shackled up with a bloke and don't want to admit it"

(letter from Brenda Tiller in 'The Once and Future Worm'. Archie Mercer replied as follows:)

"Apart from the uncertainty as to how 'Ms' should be pronounced it does occur to me that really dedicated Womens Libbers should surely plump for a title that's strictly epicene - or convert one. Why don't they simply call themselves 'Mr' for instance?"

Ro comments on number 4 that "I'm taking bets on whether that was serious or not. Personally I just can't tell but either way it isn't nice! There are other sexist remarks in that BEM as well as a slightly excessive letter by a gay insisting that stereotvpe gay characters be censored out from the strips in the zine."

101 BALLOONING ADVENTURES THAT THRILLED THE WORLD, though slim, displays two of the characteristics which can be seen in most of the better fanzines in Britain at the present time: a chatty but very readable style and a passionate concern with the current issues of fan politics. In this case it's the 'elitism' theme. John Collick makes some good points in his discussion, but I'd like to quote one piece of advice he gives to the aspiring neofan, probably the most sage I've heard anywhere. He says "latch on to a fanzine, a good one, LoC it well, become friendly with the editor and introduce yourself at a convention." Anyone following this scheme probably couldn't go wrong, always provided (a) they were a reasonably decent sort of person (most fans are, really); and (b) they chose the right fanzine editor. Especially (b).

Of course, that's not the way I did it. Actually I suspect most fans have their own individualistic tales of their discovery of fandom: would anyone like to write in with their accounts? In my own case, it was through of all things an ad in 'New Worlds' which Ken Cheslin inserted. Dave Hale saw it, wrote to Ken, and Dave and I met Ken and were initiated by him into the mysteries.

In spite of all the moaning, and soul-searching, sufficient people are in fact discovering fandom and becoming accepted nowadays that British fandom is a lively and interesting scene to be associated with: John Collick himself seems to be an example of someone who has rapidly found a niche and fitted in nicely. There have always been people on the fringes with the wrong attitudes but they rarely stay around long before fading away: the only trouble is there are so many more of them now, especially at conventions. But with fans like John Collick, Alan Dorey and Joseph Nicholas coming in in the last few years I don't think we need worry about the immediate future too much.

I must take issue with John Collick on one thing though. It always used to be a sort of unwritten rule that people invent new titles for their fanzines, and not use names that have already been put out by other fans. It made sense, in the avoidance of confusion if not anything else. Yet I see John plans a fanzine called 'Entropy' which was the title of Churl Legg's PaDs-zine in the late sixties. The most blatant example of pre-emption of a title recently has been the Newcastle "Psi-Phi" which was a well-known US fanzine of 1960 or so (Bob Lichtman, I think).

I went to a convention recently in which the roles were reversed and I was on the outside: it was a meeting of a railway fandom society (the Signalling Record Society), and of the thirty or so people in attendance it was obvious that about twenty were the hard-core active members who all knew each other well. The minority of us who weren't in this 'elite' group mostly sat around and were ignored by them. I think this is inevitable: SF fandom has no monopoly on the wish of people to talk to their friends at conventions. All it takes to 'break in' is a bit of familiarity.

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The front cover is by Florence Harrison and illustrates "The Gardener's Daughter" by Tennyson.

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