



A publication intended for SFPA, prepared by Lon Atkins of 9942 Voyager Circle, Huntington Beach, CA 92646. A Zugzwang Publication of Indeterminate Number in the merry month of September, 1977. South Coast Con in 1981!!!!

A REAFFIRMATION OF THE TRUTH: Merely to confirm my standing as The Best, I participated in the Hearts Championship of the Known Universe, held in Birmingham in conjunction with the DeepSouthCon this August. Rumors of Heresy had come my way in recent years. Claims to the Throne were being strutted about by young sprouts like Stven Carlberg and middle-aged grumps like Don Markstein. Not to mention the perenial pretender, Hank Reinfisch.

Give such rabble time and they'll begin to believe themselves. It suited my purposes to Reeducate these foolish ones.

The tournament got off to a slow start. I had won my first two "official" games with ease, but this character named Pat Gibbs appeared to spout about something called "organization." It seemed my efforts would be cancelled. Alas.

The organization turned out to be an elimination system. Five tables started. The five winners and three best second places would reach the semifinals. Then the top two on each semifinal table would meet in a marathon two-game playoff.

I took first on my opening table. George Inzer was a stout second, but missed the semifinals by a point or two. Mike Weber and a fellow named Andy P. followed. On other tables, many notables fell in the first round. Count Stven among them.

As I sat down for the semifinals I noticed that Hank Reinhardt was at the table. What accident had allowed him to advance, I don't know. Hank claimed to have won his table, but I know how he lies. He probably bribed the other players. (Those left alive...)

Others at the table were Gene Reed, better known to old SFPAs as Dwerd Gremlin, and a gentleman named Morris. Mr. Morris was an SCA type with great cool. This table proved a real battle. It ended with drama.

Hank's uncommon luck and the tenacious skill of the other two led to a tight game. Reinhardt was low by 22 points. Unfortunately for me, Gene the Reed was also low by 22 points. It looked rough for the Atkins, who had to seize one of the two low positions to survive.

Gene made a comment to Hank about their mutual strong position. Hank gave a wry grin. "I don't feel comfortable until I've got at least a 40 point lead on Lon."

On the next hand I shot the moon. It took some psychology, as Morris could have stopped me at some cost to himself. The result was an actinic finish. I chose addition, pushing Morris (who'd had 96) over the top and winning the game unconditionally, mere points ahead of the former co-leaders.

This necessitated another hand to determine the second place. I was dealt a "perfect" hand -- the Bitch well protected and a surplus of exit cards. In order to allow perfect fairness, I

determined that the Queen of Spades would fall on the last trick. I didn't want to be accused of manipulating the finals by deliberately putting a known fish like Hank into the last round. (Me and the Oakland Raiders...)

The play of the hand was an ever-heightening tension. Finally, Hank scrambled under the last trick and Gene was eliminated. Gene's play was top-notch, however. He has earned the right to be mentioned as a Promising Talent in the Hearts Slanders of SFGA.

On the other table, valiant Dave Hulan crashed to defeat in a wild game that saw three of the four hanging in the 90's for several hands. The second place went to Sam Gastfriend. First was a person named Rembert Something. This Rembert had two smashing wins now. He was a newcomer to Championship Hearts and very taken with his achievement.

We paused for the Banquet. (My congratulations to Cliff and Susan Biggers on a well-deserved Rebel Award and to Michael Bishop for his Phoenix -- and his GoH reading.) Afterwards, we gathered again in disorderly fashion. I heard hearsay of Rembert's comments on Southern Hearts players. I doubted if we were truly as poorly endowed with wits and card-sense as he was reputed to have claimed.

The final two games were convened late enough in the evening to feel like a proper Hearts game. The booze had been flowing quite freely and Sam and Hank and I were relaxed, gabbing about the games to come. Finally, Rembert arrived.

"Shall we make it interesting? Nickle a point?" I was encouraged by Hank's presence in the game. This suggestion was quite acceptable to Sam and Hank, but Rembert declined. He also declined penny a point.

Rembert's boasts looked good after the first four hands. Then he began to go aloft with undeniable buoyance. Sam hurried after him. Again I ended the game with a moon shot -- the victor. Hank was a close second.

This condition was remedied in the second and last game. A bit of skillful card placement by myself sent the Reinfisch swimming upward to the high position at game's end. I was winner again.

PL led me around to the room parties and announced my confirmed status as Hearts Champion. The brief taste of fame was satisfying, as the next day I listened to Toastmaster Hank Reinhardt announce that his dear recently-deceased friend, Lon Atkins, had won the Hearts Title. Hank elaborated on the method of death. But like I said -- Hank lies a lot.

In fairness to Hank, I should mention that he finished a solid second, a mere 70 points behind me. (Rembert was last.) This has been a recurring pattern. Hank usually finishes second to me. Those rare games that I don't win, Hank does.

This is a scathing indictment of the current state of Southern Hearts playing. We all know what a fish Hank is. If there's no Southern fan to surpass him, how bad the local crop must be.

It almost makes me feel ashamed to continually, resoundingly walk off with the overwhelming Championship in every Hearts contest I engage in. Almost.....

LOTS OF PARAGRAPHS: I won't attempt a proper con report, being not disposed in that direction. Con reports are too often dull, and in the end being meant for Egoboo, concentrating on details (with the single exception of Hearts games that I win) are best done as an embroidery of details that involve others.

Here's a free-form first-draft recollection of BHAMACON. I'll miss people I didn't mean too. For these people I offer my sincere apologies. For the people that I do treat in this fragmentary exposition, my most abject apologies. All I can say is, "You deserve it."

Penny Frierson gets a huge vote of thanks. She has to share this with Meade Frierson and Wade Gilbreath, of course. This convention was a marvelously enjoyable successor to that '65 DSC in Birmingham. Even the hotel couldn't destroy such a fine con. I appreciate.

First face at the airport -- and a new fannish face to me -- was Charlotte Proctor. She was waving a Confederate flag and staring at me. Had I been so long in California that I was marked as a Yankee? But, no! Charlotte shouted out my name and offered a ride to the con. Unfortunately, Guy Lillian and another fan had to come along.

(Sorry, Guy.) Guy met me at the airport too. His camera has captured innumerable fannish moments. It captured more the whole con. But Guy had his own orbit and I hardly saw him after the airport.

Hank had dinner with Jerry Page and Don Wolheim the first night. Hank was an hour late to introduce the Notables. This meant he had to trim the list. No true Notables were introduced -- only pros. And Jerry Page.

Dave and Marcia Hulan passed me in an elevator. (A difficult task in those tiny elevators.) Later they formed a dinner team with PL Caruthers and me. We went to the same restaurant Hank had. It took 34 minutes to bring the menu. I left after two cognacs. The Hulans and PL stuck it out. I saw them again three hours later.

Kevin Smith refused to do his impression of Alonzo Atkins. He said it was because he was out of practice, not because it was insulting. I believe Kevin implicitly and wish him well in his recovery from the broken arm, sprained neck, stab wounds and multiple contusions.

Quick-thinking Don Markstein saved me when Penny zapped me at the Banquet. She asked where the South Coast Con bidding party was. She asked in public, even. Don offered the Stven&Don's Con suite. This might even have worked, had there been a Stven&Don's Con suite....

Charlotte, PL and another fox did Tarot readings. This was the first time I'd paid much attention to Tarot, which may be attributed to the environment or the Altered State of Consciousness. I was amazed at the accurate reading of myself as a warm, charming dynamic man and of Stven as a Big Mac.

To prove what a hamburger he really is, the Carlberg then allowed himself to be dragged downstairs to the piano where he played thirty minutes of excellent music. He did a number of his own that is first rate -- deeply emotional and insightful with overtones of Beatles, rag, church music, progressive. Any true artiste would have played for an hour.....

JoAnn Montalbano is ~~ditky~~ charming, exotic, mysterious, ravishing, dark-eyed dynamite, intriguing as the depths of a tropical sea, sweet as the summer winds through honeysuckle vine. JoAnn is also a critic of the descriptive prose in my con reports. (Better?)

I met Andy Whitehead in the first Hearts game. Andy played well, but of course lost. (I won with Minus Eleven.) Andy was part of the Friday night (or rather, Saturday morning) team that roamed the halls and parties until 5AM. Ironfen still exist.

Alan Hutchinson

came up with a fabulously witty quip after being arrested for riding a motorcycle the wrong way while skinny-dipping in the hotel pool after midnight. Looking the arresting officer straight in the eye, Alan said, "Oh, shit!" The assembled fannish skinny-dippers clapped. "I couldn't have said it better myself," pronounced the dean of skinny-dipping cyclists, George Wells.

I met Cliff Amos, cultured gentleman. (I promised I'd destroy reputations in this report.) Welcome to SFPA, Cliff! I don't really hold it against you that you usurped my #1 spot on the roster, you b*st*rd.

Lane Lambert and I had a good long discussion about life and Alabama fandom, past. It was a pleasure meeting Lane after enjoying the infrequent appearances of his material. May he climb the waitlist rapidly.

"I know Birmingham like the back of my hand," I boasted to PL Caruthers. "You drive and I'll navigate to the nearest liquor store." Thirty minutes later we were still cruising along the streets of Birmingham. "They've moved all the liquor stores since I was here last," I said. "The liquor stores are on wheels and they push them around corners when they see me coming." PL just grinned and inquired at the nearest gas station.

George Inzer was looking trimmer and peppier. I asked George how he was able to make up his mind to diet. He replied that being overweight was equivalent to taking a firm stand on an issue. George is aiming for the point where no one can tell whether he's overweight or healthy.

"I know Hank like the back of my hand," I boasted to PL Caruthers. "Watch me con him into fixing the flat tire on your car."

Funny thing about Ned Brooks. He looks shorter every time I see him at a con. But what do you expect of somebody who shaves the soles of his feet....

The chapbook of Michael Bishop's poetry that Joe Moudry produced as a labor of love was a magnificent edition. This will be a collector's item. I told Joe and Phyllis what a beauty it was when I saw them at the con. This just reaffirms.

I hereby announce that the banquet food was good -- tasty and reasonably priced. Congratulations to the concom. They may have scored a fannish first...

FRAGMENTS IN MOTION: The DAILY RALLY!..... Meeting Beth Schwarzin and finding that she liked the Go book I recommended.... Seeing the fannish response to Cecil Hutto's trouble (theft of funds from room).... Dodging Don Markstein's attempts to make me type a DAILY RALLY!.... Showing off the Alonzo P. Neofan shirt that Marcia made for me.... Seeing Janet Reinhardt and the Elven Princesses again.... Watching the expression on Don Markstein's face when he got onto the elevator with Dave Locke and Dean Grennell.... Watching the expression on Gary Brown's face as Dave Hulan and I pushed him down an elevator shaft for not picking up our SFPA zines as he'd promised.... Winning the Egoboo Contest and executing Hank with a reading from Lin Carter.... Missing mirrors.... The Sangria well that we discovered.... Hotel substitutes for towels: 10 washclothes in my room and three bathmats in the Hulan's.... The rain storms.... Shaking hands with Hank -- and then telling him that I still had the grime from changing PL's tire on it... Bidding for the DSC with all the nostalgia of the occasion.... Meeting R.A. Lafferty at last... A Five Fap note... Guy Lillian's camera... The fanzine room that was never explained... The last ten minutes of Dark Star... Steven playing at the banquet... A super convention full of good people, good parties, good fun -- and I wasn't sober for more than ten minutes after I arrived. A vacation...