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 THE FANZINE THAT TALKS ABOUT FANS
 

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is written and published every month on the second Friday of that month by Ted White, 1014 N. Tuckahoe St., Falls Church, VA 22046, and can be had for The Usual, or donations of 20¢ stamps, but not for any amount of cash money, which means No Subscriptions, doesn't it? Yes, and of course this issue was run off on the Giant DWRTYUICPress on April 14, 1984. Did you send in your PONG Poll Ballot? The deadline is tomorrow....

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LUNACON --- NOT A CONREPORT: The last Lunacon I went to was in 1976. The fact that I was twice "pied" by the chief agent of Pie Kill had nothing to do with the fact that I did not go back the next year, nor, indeed, any year after 1976 until 1984. The reason I didn't attend subsequent Lunacons is much simpler: in 1977 the Lunacon was moved out of New York City (specifically, Manhattan) and into New Jersey. I can think of almost no reasons to attend a con in New Jersey.

I decided to make an exception to that rule this year, which is why I wrote "almost no reasons" rather than "no reasons" in the preceding sentence. I decided to attend because a) Terry Carr was the Guest of Honor, and b) the Gang of Four (Chu, Carmody, Mueller & Minambres) were running it -- and had been coercing me to attend. This despite the fact that the con would be held in Hasbrouck Heights in New Jersey.

Let me tell you something about New Jersey. It's not a bad state. Parts of it -- the Piney Woods area in south Jersey, the northern tristate area, the beaches on the Atlantic -- are rather nice. After all, New Jersey does call itself "The Garden State." But the parts of it with which most people are familiar -- the parts through which the New Jersey Turnpike runs -- are the armpit of the state. Here one finds at best grotty little towns and cities which lack all but the most basic amenities for living and are usually located next door to chemical plants or oil refineries. The closer one gets to New York City the worse this gets, since to the mix previously described must be added miles of swamps (breeders of the prize New Jersey mosquito) and flatlands consisting of drained swamps. Here are the remnants of the Secaucus pig farms, acres of warehouses, and yet more tacky towns, some of them entirely made up of slums. Ridges rise out of the swamps, and every ridge holds a town. Hasbrouck Heights is one such town: half of it is built on a ridge (the residential part) and half (on the flat) is a maze of roads and highways, diners and borax art galleries. None of the streets run straight in any direction; they all twist like a tangled mass of spaghetti, and to try to negotiate them with one's eye on the distant highrise of a hotel like the Sheraton Heights is total folly, since you can't get there by taking the apparently logical turns -- which lead you away from your goal once you've taken them.

When the reservations person at the Sheraton (Marilyn) told me the hotel was full, she offered to book me at the Quality Inn "just across the street." Subsequently she gave me excellent directions for getting to the Sheraton. Thus, when Dan, Lynn and I arrived at the Sheraton we looked everywhere for the Quality Inn "just across the street." Eventually we got directions: it was a mile and a half down nearby Rt. 17. Okay, we found it and checked in, and then spent an increasingly frustrating half hour trying to find our way back to the Sheraton, whose brightly-lit name adorned the skyline. Eventually we found ourselves back on I80, on which we'd arrived, returning

to the exit we'd originally taken, and that got us back at last to the Sheraton. By then I was seriously wondering why we'd bothered in the first place.

We drove up Friday evening, arriving well after dark. In the dark Hasbrouck Heights was dingy, delapidated, and confusing. By the light of day it turned out to be no better, its predominant color (of buildings, roads and landscape) being a flat and dismal gray. To put it all in one word: ugly. I cannot imagine why any human being would chose to live there, and that leads me to the suspicion that the whole area is in reality a giant, covert prison in which people are trapped -- like a vast roach motel that, once entered, is never left. Truly an armpit. (Did I mention the smell? Yeah, an armpit.)

Well, you can imagine my mood when at last we were in the Sheraton, looking for our friends and some sort of official registration area. It was 11:00 pm, the hotel was teeming with dorkish-looking people, most of them in costumes of one sort or another, and one of them provided the information that the consuite was on the 11th floor.

I am not proud of the incident I am about to relate, but best I tell it before a garbled version makes the rounds.

I looked in on the New York party suite (also on the 11th floor), saw no one I knew, poured myself a plastic cupfull of Coke, and headed down to the consuite.

Its door was open and I was about to enter when a fellow sitting in the corridor next to the door (one of a small clot of people) stopped me. He was large, probably even fat. He had an officious tone: "Do you have a badge? You can't go in there without a badge."

"I just got here," I explained. "I'm going to get a badge." I gestured at the consuite. "In there," I said.

"You can't go in there without a badge," he said.

"Look," I said. "I have to go in there to get my badge -- "

"Hey," he said. "I don't care. You gotta have a badge to go in there!"

Something snapped. I felt cool, distant, and completely above my anger of a moment before. This was the final straw. I smiled at the jerk and said, "Oh. You want a badge." As I watched myself and the scene from an incredible distance I heard my voice say, "Here you go," and I saw my hand holding the cup of Coke move until it was over the seated doorguard's head. Then, with slow deliberation -- almost as though in slow-motion, in fact -- I turned the plastic cup upside down and poured its full contents into the doorguard's hair. As the Coke flowed down over his ears and face I tossed the empty cup into his lap and walked past him and into the consuite.

I have never done that before. As I did it I watched with detachment, observing the effects of emptying a cup of Coke over someone's head almost as though viewing it on television. And I felt a release, almost a serenity. It never occurred to me that my victim might react violently -- although he was big enough, weighing at least a hundred pounds more than I, to do me considerable violence if he chose -- and, fortunately for me, he didn't.

A few moments later Mary Mueller found me talking with Art Saha and asked me in the most sober voice she could manage to apologize to the poor fellow, who was worried about the possibility of his shirt staining. This I did, with minimal sincerity: "Sorry, fella. You were just in the wrong place at the wrong time."

Well, fortunately that was the low point of the con; from that point on things got better -- we put together a party in Terry Carr's room where we could get sercon and Talk Fandom with Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden, Avedon Carol, Steve and Elaine Stiles (who are Expecting), various of the Gang of Four and many more. It was an enjoyable weekend.

Since this is Not A Conreport, I won't attempt to describe the con ex-



to say that within a modern bloated regional con was a small fannish con struggling to get out. There were many hundreds of attendees at Lunacon, but no where nearly as many people I enjoyed spending time with as there had been at the much smaller Corflu.

I did experience a kind of satori at Lunacon, though. It occurred on Saturday as I was walking through a function area with Marvin Kaye. "What are you doing these days, Ted?" Marvin asked me. He was not the first to ask that question of me, but he was the first to receive the answer which had suddenly occurred to me after many prior attempts with answers that had been, at the very least, unsatisfactory.

"I'm retired," I told Marvin. "I spend my days puttering about with my hobbies."

Those who know me well would find it hard to distinguish my retirement, when described in those terms, from my previous mode of existence. I have always spent my time puttering about with my hobbies, and in the best of times someone has paid me for doing it, while the rest of the time I've done it solely for my own pleasure. Well, I exaggerate slightly, but it is true that I always regarded my ten years editing AMAZING and FANTASTIC as a (poorly) subsidized hobby, and while my year at HEAVY METAL was far better paid, it was also even more fun (the closest to my Ideal of editing professionally as I've ever come, inasmuch as others did all the scutwork, leaving me to play the role of Editor in a manner which satisfied virtually all my fantasies....). And while I used to refuse to write a book "on spec" (or without a contract), now I refuse to have contractual deadlines hanging over my head and I write purely "on spec," taking whatever time I feel like taking on the several books I have in progress.

When a writer asks another writer what he's doing now, the usual answer includes a description of the latest writing project and perhaps a list of books nearing publication -- an answer which the first writer waits through with the expectation of replying with a description of his latest project, books in the publication pipeline, etc. (If the writers are friends rather than just acquaintances, once these preliminaries are through they will proceed to the latest gossip and scandal, preferably including whatever atrocities were editorially visited upon them. Jim Frankel's name may come up at this point.) I get bored with this routine, especially when I suspect that the questioner doesn't really care what my answer is. I do not include Marvin Kaye in that category, but he was the first to ask the question after I'd come up with the answer, so I tried it out first on him.

Marvin chuckled appreciatively. "You, Ted? Retired?"

"Sure," I said. "Why not? Can you think of anyone more deserving?" And we laughed.

But I like it. And from now on, when asked what I'm doing now, that will be my answer: I'm retired. "Now," I will say, "I can do anything I want to do."

OTHER PEOPLE'S MAIL: The letter was correctly addressed to me at my home address here in Falls Church. (Falls Church, I might add for the benefit of foreign readers who have asked, is located in northern Virginia, about six miles west of Washington, D.C., and since I-66 was opened a little over a year ago downtown D.C. is only ten minutes away by car. In 1986, if they don't put it off yet again, a subway station is due to open a pleasant half-mile walk from here...but I digress....) Written on Briar Cliff College (Sioux City, Iowa) stationery by Phil Hay of the English Department, it is as follows:

"Dear Mr. White:

"Would you be available for a speaking engagement one day in the first week of October?

"Each year Briar Cliff presents a symposium on a topic of current inter-

est, and this year we are planning one on political awareness. Our present format is to have a nonpartisan speaker on discerning the critical issues, followed the next day by representatives and booths of the major parties. We are seeking to have Iowa Senator Roger Jenson and his opponent Representative Tom Harkin for that day, and to help students become involved and registered.

"Happily, your name was mentioned as an excellent prospect and one of the foremost watchers of history in the making. This election strikes me as having so many odd angles that beginners will need an experienced guide indeed, and we would deeply appreciate having you for just that purpose. We have, unfortunately, only a modest budget at present; if you could give us a figure for your honorarium, perhaps it would help us in seeking funding outside the committee. (Founded by Franciscans, Briar Cliff has always made valiant attempts to substitute ingenuity for money, sometimes with great results.)

"In any event, thanks for your contributions to the nation's political awareness, and for your consideration here.

"For the symposium committee,

/signed/

"Phil Hey"

For perhaps several nanomments I took the letter seriously. I mean, I do get speaking requests, having most recently put together a seminar for the Smithsonian Institute, and on one occasion when a Secondary Universe Conference was held in Iowa I was asked to be a speaker, my expenses paid. (It was at that Conference that I first heard the German group, Can. That was 1972....) But I've never before been asked to speak on politics (I can hear Joseph snickering already), and while I'd love to quote Phil Hey a "ballpark figure" for my honorarium (and, say, do you think those canny Franciscans could help ConStellation through its financial difficulties, substituting ingenuity for money?), I suspect that what this letter represents is a case of mistaken identity. It is, after all, addressed to "Theodore White." That happens to be my name, but I've never used it professionally. Maybe I should start. I could write The Making of a Science Fiction Magazine: 1968-78. I could follow that up with The Making of a Worldcon: 1967. And from there it might really take off, with a new title every four years, fame, bestsellerdom, and, who knows? Maybe even genuine invitations to speak at Briar Cliff College some day.

HARRY J. N. ANDRUSCHAK: Periodically it turns out that a fan who has produced material which is ridiculed had serious problems. Raleigh Multog, whom Willis once derided, was retarded. Rich Koogle, who gave fandom the immortal phrase, "I was fantisted by its scoop and power," was emotionally disturbed. And Harry Andruschak, whose contributions to fanzines in the recent past I criticised in scathing terms, is an alcoholic. He has in the last month written several fans to tell them that he is undergoing treatment for alcoholism.

Under the circumstances, I shall not further criticise his works.

CELEBRATING CURTIS CLIMMER: Fandom has changed. That's a tired cliché, isn't it? But fresh evidence keeps turning up. At last year's Westercon the site was picked for the 1985 Westercon and the winner of the bidding announced its guests of honor. The choice for Fan Guest of Honor was a woman whom none of us had ever heard of, and when we asked around all we could turn up was scuttlebutt to the effect that she was highly regarded by the committee, but apparently for her, um, nonfannish attributes.

At this year's Lunacon my program book and associated goodies included a registration form for the 1985 Lunacon -- a good idea, really. But the



form also included the Guests of Honor for next year's Lunacon. "Writer Guest of Honor" is Gordon Dickson (who has been so honored that he's probably lost count of the times -- his GoHship is a cliché in itself) and "Artist Guest of Honor" is Don Maitz (who is easily the best artist now working commercially in The Field). So far, so good. But the "Fan Guest of Honor" is Curtis Clemmer.

Who?

Let me ask you -- all nearly-250 of you who receive this fanzine -- if you have ever heard of Curtis Clemmer. Has he ever put out a fanzine? Has he ever even contributed to a fanzine? No? How about the major cons? Has he ever put one on? What has Curtis Clemmer done to deserve the honor (and the free hotel room, free travel expenses, etc.) of being a Fan Guest of Honor at the 1985 Lunacon? Why is this individual receiving this honor?

I asked this question at odd (some of them very odd) intervals during the Lunacon. I was told to ask Teresa Minambres, who is putting on the '85 Lunacon, but I never remembered to on the rare occasions when I saw her. Instead one of the people working the consuite told me that Curtis Clemmer was another nameless, faceless con-soldier like himself, a dedicated Gofer at the conventions in his region (wherever it may be -- my impression was somewhere in the midwest). My informant was indignant that I -- or any fan -- might not think Curtis worthy of the honor to be bestowed upon him.

What has happened is that an attitude has trickled through from Trekkiedom. In Trekkiedom, where con-attendance rates have always been higher than ours, poor Trekkies could get into the con and maybe cage a place to sleep in a conroom as well by volunteering to be a soldier: a worker. There is nothing objectionable in that practice, but as it has slipped into fandom it has brought with it a new breed of "fan": the con-soldier who knows virtually nothing about fandom, and probably very little about sf (typically, he or she calls it "sci-fi" and can't see why everyone doesn't), but is willing to do the convention scut-work, like manning the registration tables, and in this fashion builds up or becomes part of a new social circle. This circle is woefully ignorant of fandom. It sees the pros as Stars to be fawned upon. And most of the people in this circle are lacking those attributes we associate with fans -- they don't read, for instance, and writing is something the Stars do. Say "fanzine" to such people and they give you a blank look or tell you that fanzines are put out by an elitist group who have nothing to do with "fandom" as they know it.

The fat, loud-mouthed con-soldier who told me he knew who Curtis Clemmer was, was as stunned that I didn't know good ol' Curtis as I was that Curtis was being honored. But when I asked him what Clemmer had done, all he could do was to reel off the names of half a dozen no-account regional cons on which Curtis Clemmer had soldiered in some fashion. Implicit in his acceptance of Curtis as a valid FGoH was his belief that he too was worthy of the honor, and no doubt someday would receive it.

"But what has he done to deserve being honored?" I asked.

"More than you fanzine fans," said the soldier.

**LIFE IN RETIREMENT:** It's really pleasant to wake up to a new day without trepidations. When I was in school I would find myself siezed at random intervals with a sudden pang of guilt that accompanied the flash of sudden awareness that I'd failed to finish a paper, study for a test or something similarly impending for which it was too late to do anything. I got used to it. I was a "B" student only because I was quick-witted; there was always something to feel guilty about.

In my third year in fandom I failed for the first time to answer a letter I'd received. My awareness of this failure haunted me even while it formed an insurmountable barrier to doing anything about it. To this day,

more than thirty years later, I can still easily remember the correspondent, the letter, and my feeling of writhing guilt because I'd not answered a letter.

Life is full of people and situations laying guilt trips on one -- it's a major cause of stress. Recent events caused me to look back over the ten years I edited AMAZING and FANTASTIC, and one aspect of that period sticks out in my mind vividly: guilt. Bill-collectors sporadically pursued me to the point that I was afraid to answer my phone and when I did I used a deeper voice, answering anyone who asked for "Mr. White" with a "I'm sorry. He's not in now. May I take a message for him?" Ghod help me, I always did copy down their names, messages, and phone numbers despite the fact that I had no intention of returning their calls. (For a while I used an answering machine, which recorded many callers who hung up without leaving a message, but it broke. In 1982 I was forced to declare bankruptcy to stave off over half a dozen judgments against me by my creditors.)

And people were incessantly after me to read their story, answer their letter, provide information to them, etc., etc., the worst of the lot being my publisher, who had a habit of calling (long-distance) late in the evening. I'd answer the phone and hear his querulous voice going, "Ted.....?" and the next twenty minutes were shot.

I always owed somebody something. Money, magazines, letters, stories, books. There was always a deadline and I was always in danger of missing it, often paralyzed with guilt and the fear of missing that crucial deadline. I came to envy those who spent a certain number of hours in an office or factory somewhere and then could go home where their job would not follow them. Their regular paychecks also looked pretty good.

These days I owe nobody anything. My bills are paid and on some of the monthly statements a computer has thanked me for my "prompt payment". I have no outstanding contracts left for undelivered (unwritten) books, and I don't intend to seek any (I shall write my forthcoming books at whatever pace I choose, without the threat of a contracted deadline). My only commitments these days are fannish. (Come to think of it, I owe Mike Glycer a column. Whoops...there's a tinge of guilt...but I'll write it and dispell that twinge....)

These days I don't cringe when the phone rings. It's a much lower-stress life. And the lack of stress liberates a lot of energy that had been pinned down by guilt. It was one such burst of energy that rebuilt my office (as described last issue). Now it's spring and the garden beckons. Each day offers something new.

I think I'm really enjoying being retired.

EXCUSES: But I'm not enjoying the scut-work that goes into producing this fanzine. I'm talking about collating it, stapling it, folding it and stapling it again, attaching the address-labels, attaching stamps to the foreign copies, preparing the domestic copies for bulk-rate mailing -- that sort of thing. Mostly I have grown to hate collating and stapling. The last issue of this fanzine went out terribly late after I blew the colophon date (which I normally try, compulsively, to make the mailing date) -- it sat around half-collated for half a month. Am I bogging down? Is this fanzine running out of momentum? And howcome this issue isn't all letters like I promised last issue? What's happening here?

Serious questions, huh?

One answer is already obvious: last issue will accompany this issue. There's no point in mailing them out separately. You already know this, but I just figured it out.

BAD REACTIONS: I suppose it requires a fairly large ego to even consider doing this kind of fanzine, and it probably requires an



ego no smaller than that to finish an issue and thumb through the first collated copy with pleasure. (It takes a big ego to withstand the bruises that occur as all the previously-unnoticed typos and other errors suddenly leap from the pages of the printed copy and attack my senses, too.) And there is a danger that, left in a vacuum, my ego might swell to explosive proportions. Fortunately, there are fans around who are willing to devote their efforts to trimming my ego down at least a bit.

There is Michael Ashley, a British fan who should not be confused with the British fan named Mike Ashley (with whom I've also exchanged a few letters). It's not hard. Michael Ashley is the bad-tempered one. In SMALL FRIENDLY DOG #23 he characterizes me as the "world's worst imitation of a critic" and accuses me of "chucking out meaningless, baseless value judgments" (which I'm sure must lack the substance of his own solidly-based, meaningful value-judgment of me). With equal charm he writes, "EGOSCAN may talk about fans but you don't find much of interest to say about them. And there's no justification for all this bollocks about postage, mailing wrappers, address correction, etc. etc. This is talking about fans?" But he has it backwards. There is all the justification in the world for what I choose to put into this fanzine: it is my fanzine and exists for my pleasure and satisfaction. What is lacking in justification is Ashley's assumption that only those things which interest him belong in this fanzine. But that's fine: this is his last issue.

Then there's Joy Hibbert, who begins her letter on #2 with some postal nattering of exactly the sort which must drive Michael Ashley up the wall: "Thanks for 'Egoscan 2', which came the other day, by surface I assume, since it took 7 weeks... I mention this merely in case you intended it to go by air mail, to point out that it didn't in which case perhaps you should write 'airmail' on it in future. I find that most zines this size come by airmail, otherwise I wouldn't have mentioned it." I think, Joy, that the clue is to be found in the fact that I did not write "airmail" on the wrapper of this fanzine, and am not likely to "in future." Over 75 copies of this fanzine are mailed overseas. Dan and I mailed PONG airmail because it came out every two, and then every three, weeks and because we could split the expenses. This fanzine is monthly and can't afford airmail. But back to Joy:

"Interesting contradiction here: while complaining about mediafannish tendency to be adoring, you also complain because the committee at ConStellation didn't fawn over you and beg you to be on a lot of panels. I'd heard that many American authors believe conventions are run so their fans can gawp at them, but I hadn't realised it was this bad before." Actually, it's worse. I refuse to attend any major convention that won't give me a special meeting room in which to meet my many adoring fans. My close friend, Jackie, backs me up all the way on this. Just the other day she and I were getting stoned and she told me through a cloud of smoke, "Ted, screw those people if they won't fawn on you! Y'know what I mean? Fuck'em if they can't take a joke!" Words to live by, eh?

"I can't see," Joy Hibbert continues, "why you should want to be Fan CoH at AussieCon since you hold all Australian fanzine fans in such contempt, and have an extremely narrow view of what fanzines should be which excludes practically all Australian faneds. Very calm and easygoing, these Aussies, imagine the response if you'd stomped on British fanzines the same way. Interestingly, Paul Skelton has discovered an interesting quote from you which is about 20 years old to the effect that you never liked any Australian fanzine. I suppose thinking that about one of them is ok is a slight improvement on that, even if your knowledge of reality is extremely inaccurate (as shown in your stomp on WWV)." Well, my "knowledge of reality" may lack your extreme accuracy, Joy, but even I can read well enough to identify the author of that "interesting quote" in SFD as Walt Willis.

But you're right: I have made my Fan GoHship dependent upon Australian faneds cleaning up their acts and I am quite confident that by August, 1985 all Aussie fanzines will look exactly like this one, since they've all given me their solemn promises. Standards are so important, you know.

In an addendum to her letter, written the next day, Joy adds: "Yesterday, when I first read this, I thought of how much 'Rude Bitch' looks like my sort of fanzine. In the very next post (ie this morning) a copy arrived, with the latest 'Ansible'. How's that for coincidence. It is, however, true, that there is little satire in 'A Few Words About Tits' (though men and small breasted women may disagree) but the rest of it was hilarious. Besides, if it were serious, they would have had the courage of their convictions and named all the men under discussion. Interesting, though, that you choose a snake as your alter ego. The animal which has been seen as 'a symbol of both sexes: male, because of the shape, and female, because of its tendency to throw its skin and be reborn.'" Really? I'd not before noticed women throwing their skin and being reborn. I must ask Avedon about this. (And speaking of Avedon and RUDE BITCH, she tells me that she and Lucy Huntzinger will be putting out a RB#2, consisting of the more interesting letters they received. Should be fun....) But Wally ("The Snake") Mind is hardly my "alter ego" -- I think Martin Morse Wooster has dibs on that position hereabouts -- and I'm not even responsible for putting on paper all his exploits. And, as should be obvious from a closer reading of my bits about Wally here, while he may chose to think of himself as a snake, to the average robin redbreast he's only a morning meal -- if he ever lets himself get caught. For further details on Wally, I refer you to his photograph, which adorned the cover of the PONG Annish, some copies of which repose in various British fan archives. (As Freud is said to have remarked after reading an issue of this fanzine, "Symbol? Bah, humbug! Sometimes a snake is just a worm. And a cigar is a good smoke. Takes my mind off little boys...." Wotta character!)

Less expected and less welcome is this note from Avram Davidson: "Note CoA; sorry that you had P.O. or U.S.P.S. troubles. I have to tell you with a \*sigh\* that, much to my surprise, I found your fanzine not interesting. I am sorry." Me too. However, in the interests of passing Avram's correct current address along to those who do put out fanzines of interest to him, here it is: 1207 1/2 N. State, #22, Bellingham, WA 98225.

I received a number of comments on ConStellation's current financial situation and with luck you'll see them next issue. In the meantime, I recommend Mike Glycer's FILE 770 for the latest poop and accurate information on the subject, and more besides (LACon seems to be shaping up nicely). #46, in addition to pages of facts and figures, sports another really fine Brad Foster cover. (\$4/5 issues from Mike Glycer, 5828 Woodman Ave., #2, Van Nuys, CA 91401.)

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