
 THE FANZINE THAT TALKS ABOUT FANS

is written and published on the second Friday of every month by Ted White, 1014 N. Tuckahoe St., Falls Church, VA 22046, and can be obtained for The Usual, or donations of 20¢ stamps, but is not otherwise for sale (either as single copies or by subscription, for any price. Special Thanks go to Linda Blanchard, who collated and stapled the last issue, bless her! You know, the dates in the colophons of the last three issues are all off by one day, falling on Saturdays as they do. I have no idea why, but I'll try to get it right this time: QWERTYUIOPress, May 11, 1984. There!

CONVERSATIONS WITH WALLY: Wally ("The Snake") Mind was pissed at me. "I wasn't in either of the last two issues of that fanzine you put out," he told me when I asked why he was pissed at me. "'The Fanzine That Talks About Fans,' hah!" he said.

"I mentioned you last issue," I said. "Or, rather, Joy Hibbert mentioned you and I replied to what she said."

"Yeah," Wally said, "I saw that. She said I was a female symbol, on account of how I throw off my skin and I'm reborn, or somesuch. And you -- you repeated your usual base and meritless claim that 'to the average robin redbreast he's only a morning meal -- if he ever lets himself get caught.' Who're you kidding, fella? 'If he ever lets himself get caught!'" Sarcasm dripped from his mouth. "You know I'm never up before noon."

"Yeah," I riposted, unable to resist the temptation, "I've heard you're quite a nightcrawler...."

For a moment I thought Wally was going to attack me. His normal pink color turned bright red, then purple, and he inflated himself to his full length and thickness, aroused and angry. "You -- you -- !" he sputtered, "you -- Sixth Fandom Fan!" he ejaculated.

Later, Wally remarked, "You know, I saw something really strange last night." He paused for a drag on his cigarette. "It was a nice night. Spring was awfully late coming this year, but last night the air was balmy and it carried the scent of flowers...."

"I was just sort of enjoying it, not really doing anything...listening to the spring peepers, smelling the breeze...and I saw this light."

"What kind of a light?" I asked. There are streetlights spaced along the block, and half the houses -- including mine -- have porchlights on all night.

"Well, the first thing I noticed about it was the way it bobbed about -- like someone was carrying it. And it wasn't a very strong light, either. Dim and yellow, kinda flickering. Get the picture? And it seemed to be coming in my direction.

"So I waited to see what it was. It didn't seem threatening or anything. And sure enough, when it got closer I could see it was some kind of a lantern being carried by a man.

"The man was thin, scrawny almost. He was wearing a kind of toga -- or maybe just a sheet wrapped around him -- and in one hand he had a staff that he leaned on as he walked. In the other hand he was holding this lantern up high -- over his head. Or trying to. His arm would very slowly fall until the lantern was at his shoulder level. Then he'd jerk it back up. Like falling asleep in church, and waking up with a start -- know what I mean? Combined with his hobbling gait this really make the lantern move around

strangely. And when he got close enough I could see that this lantern was just a candle inside a glass thing. Every time it joggled around, the flame flickered. The man had a very intense expression.

"So, anyway, when it looked like he hadn't seen me and might step on me, I said something. Probably 'Hey, look out!' or maybe 'Who the hell are you?' No, I think I remember just saying 'Hello.'

"Anyway, he stopped in time, and he told me he was looking for someone.

"'I'm looking for an honest fan,' he told me. ...And, hey, how about those interior quotes? Pretty neat, huh? How come I can't have parentheses, too?"

I told him that I didn't allow actual parenthesis-marks in dialogue. "I don't allow colons or semi-colons, either," I said. "People do not speak in visible punctuation-marks." I also told him that people digress all the time in real conversation and that this was one such digression.

"Yeah, you're right," Wally said, stooping to pick up the thread of his narrative. "It developed that he is a Spirit of Fandom, a wandering saint, doomed always to search for an unobtainable ideal. His name, he told me, was Eric.

"So who's this 'honest fan' you're searching for? I asked him. ...Ooh, I blew my interior quotes that time, didn't I? Well, pretend I'm Charles Burbee and I do dialogue without quotes, or maybe I'm just paraphrasing what I said. Sure. I like that. So anyway, I asked him that, and he said he was searching for an unobtainable ideal. 'I am searching for an unobtainable ideal,' is the way he put it. You know, Ted, I love doing Burbee.

"'Why not settle for something obtainable?' I asked him. 'Wouldn't that be a lot simpler?'

"'Don't tell me about "simpler",' he said. 'I've used a hectograph, you know. That's how I came to understand the meaning of an unobtainable goal.'

"At this point, Ted, your name came up. I think I'd asked him if he knew you. 'He's one of the more puzzling fans, to me,' Eric said. 'It seems you can't criticize Ted without antagonizing his friends -- people like rich brown and Dan Steffan and Terry Carr who I have no bones to pick with at all.' I told him I thought he was exaggerating, but he shook his head. 'He doesn't have a good word for anyone but his contemporaries or people who agree with everything he says.'

"Well, I had to disagree with him there. But, you know, Ted, it is true that I've smoked dope with you -- well, I've sniffed it when you blew some my way -- and I've partied with all you guys, even Terry Carr that time he came to Balticon. So I guess he pretty much discounted what I said when I told him you weren't really like that.

"'I suspect he may be different in person,' he admitted, 'but then I'm not likely to meet him in person.'

"'So how about the stuff he writes?' I asked.

"'He's so contradictory, in print,' Eric said. 'He will write you a letter, or do a fan history piece and he seems a perfectly decent sort, very aware of the feelings of others. Then he puts on his critic's hat and becomes nasty old Thirty Years A Fan White. And it isn't because he's acting in a critical manner that I feel this change -- it's because of the way he goes about criticising people -- searching for vulnerable spots, hurting. His reviews are very hurtful. He denigrates people. He is condescending, sets himself up as a long time fan, a pro, someone who knows, a better, then proceeds to demolish the work of "journeyman" fanwriters and the like. I suspect fans all have somewhat fragile egos and it seems to me Ted delights in bruising them.'"

"Sheesh!" I said, breaking into Wally's narrative. "Was he serious?"

"Serious?" Wally said, "I'll tell you how serious he was. He compared you with Arnie Katz!"

"No shit?"

"No shit. He said he'd met Arnie. 'He helped me out when I arrived in New York,' he said. And he said 'Arnie can be a great friend. Trouble is, he demands a kind of obeisance. To be his friend you have to acknowledge him as your superior in all matters.' Then he added, 'In his written fanac, Ted strikes me like that.'" Wally grinned. "Got you pegged, he has."

I shook my head. "Is this one of your tall tales, Wally? You don't really expect me to believe all that really happened, do you? A skinny guy named 'Eric,' who is carrying a cheap lantern and looking for the honest fan? And all that stuff he said -- you just made that up to needle me, didn't you?"

Wally smiled a quiet smile. "It was a balmy spring night, Ted. On a night like that the spirits come alive -- even the fannish spirits. Could I make something like that up?" He winked. "It's okay, Ted," he said. "I'm still your friend. You're my superior in most matters, and I'm first to acknowledge it."

He was still laughing as he slid out of sight down his hole. Of course he'd made the whole thing up.

MODERN MATURITY: So I get this big envelope in the mail from Henry Morrison Inc. Henry was my agent for many years, and still sends me the odd royalty statement or check. I slit open the envelope, and there inside of it is another envelope, addressed to "Mr. Theodore White, c/o Henry Morrison Inc," which is unopened and which Henry has forwarded to me. Inside this envelope is a copy of the April-May 1984 issue (the 25th Anniversary Issue, in fact) of MODERN MATURITY magazine, a publication of The American Association of Retired Persons. I recognize the name of that organization: they recently solicited my 13^{1/2}-year-old daughter for membership and even sent her a plastic card that looked superficially like a credit card.

Clipped to the magazine is a two-sheet letter from MODERN MATURITY's Senior Editor, Linda Hubbard, and I bet you have already guessed what she wants. Yes, "We are very much interested in having you write a 2,000 word article for our October-November issue on this year's election, its potential effect on people 50 plus and this group's potential effect on the election. We can pay \$4,000. Copy would be due July 2, 1984." Another letter intended for the other, nonfannish, Teddy White. What is this. Am I on some sort of list somewhere? I've lived here for fourteen years and this year for the first time people are writing to me to ask me to speak, or write something for them, under the mistaken impression that I'm the Other Theodore White. Where will it end?

I've written Ms. Hubbard the following letter:

"L. Hubbard, Senior Editor

"MODERN MATURITY

"215 Long Beach Blvd.

"Long Beach, CA 90801

"Dear L:

"You could have knocked me over with a stick. When did you quit Scientology and get into this Retired Persons scam? It's been years since I've played with an E-meter, but I'll always look back fondly on those early years in the Founding Church of Scientology here in D.C. and the many happy hours I spent listening to your tapes.

"Heard a rumor you were back in publishing, but, silly me, I'd assumed you'd returned to writing. This editorial gig is new, eh?

"Well, listen, the four thousand bucks sounds good to me, and if I don't mess up my fanwriting schedule, July 2 looks good too.

"All best....

"P.S.: How about half in advance?"

BALTICON -- NOT A CONREPORT: Parke Godwin, author of Firelord, the best Arthurian novel I've ever read, and an underrated major fantasy writer, was the Guest of Honor at this year's Balticon. So naturally I never saw him there.

I saw the Fan Guest of Honor, though. The FGoH was Mark Owings. No Curtis Clemmer, he. Pat Kelly, in his Program Book appreciation of Mark, was able to boast that Mark had been a mainstay in Baltimore fandom for years. In the D.C.-Balto area Mark Owings is known as Mr. Conviviality. I ran into him in Alexis Gilliland's room, which served as a WSFA party room Friday night.

The party was a rather small one when we arrived. "We" in this case were Dan and Lynn Steffan, Matthew Moore, and myself. I think we doubled the party's size when we entered Alexis's room.

We made for the cooler filled with Cokes and beer and engaged Alexis in conversation. Mark Owings sat quietly on a small sofa between his wife, Jul, and another woman. Occasionally he would lean over and say something to the other woman. He was being very restrained; it was too early yet for the lampshade, which I observed was still at this point firmly attached to the hotel lamp.

It was not a large room. I say this in order to make it clear that I was not intentionally eavesdropping. Indeed, I was all the way across the room from the group on the sofa when a sudden lull in other conversations suddenly opened a clear channel to Mark Owings' latest observation to the woman at his side.

"They're the Falls Church drug addicts," I heard him distinctly say.

A newcomer in the room turned to me with a sudden light in his eyes. "Say..." he said, and I knew that Mr. Conviviality had Done His Trick again with another ice-breaker. Thanks, Mark. Yer one naff guy.

WELCOME TO FALLS CHURCH, LINDA BLANCHARD! I was polishing up (read: correcting some of the typos) the last issue of this fanzine when Linda Blanchard drove up. She was driving her red van, Molly, actually. Molly is a big Ford Supervan, and it was loaded with all Linda's worldly belongings, including a telescope, a personal computer, and two dogs.

Rich brown had called me a day earlier to say that Linda was on her way -- he'd driven much of the journey across country with her, but had to fly back from Cleveland to get back to his job on time -- and to ask if she could park her van in my drive. "We'll have to live in it until we can get a place together," rich said (his own one-room apartment wouldn't do for a variety of reasons we need not go into here). And I'd said, "Well, hell, you can stay in the Green Room. It has a real bed, after all."

Which is how it is that for much of April rich and Linda lived in my upstairs library/guest room -- the very room in which rich had lived in 1979, 1980, and 1981.

Linda has a lot of fannish energy. As I mentioned in my colophon, she collated and stapled the last issue of this fanzine, while I was at my Wednesday night writers group meeting. I was impressed, to say nothing about pleased.

Linda also plays cards. We play a lot of cards around here, whenever we can get a group of us together. Hearts (not the wimpy kind they play in Southern Fandom, but the cutthroat variety, with the Jack of Diamonds Convention), Spades, and once in a while Diamonds (a game rich and I invented). A week before Linda arrived, Avedon Carol and Susan Applegate sat me down for an evening's instruction in Bridge. They'd taught me Spades, and were eager to get me into something heavier. (But I like to get Really Sercon and play intuitively -- counting cards only occasionally -- and Bridge is too much like Chess for me: it requires the Ideal Player to be a computer

with all the moves figured out in advance. That is not my style, and consequently I can't say I really enjoyed Bridge all that much -- despite the fact that I was the biggest winner of the evening, a fact I ascribe to "Beginner's Luck.")

Linda plays something I'd never encountered before: partnership double-deck Pinochle. (I mentioned this to Steve Brown the next time I saw him -- at our Friday evening poker game -- and he said, "Really? That's my favorite game! And I haven't played it in years!" Naturally we played it with him most of that weekend.) I like it; it has many of the virtues of Spades, some of the strategy of Diamonds, hints of the bidding in Bridge, and can be played (as we all were) Very Sercon.

So Linda Blanchard has already Made Her Mark on local fandom, and she's been here for less than a month.

Last Friday she and rich bought a house, into which they moved over the weekend. (Boy, I'll bet those dogs were glad to be out of that van for a while.) For those of you who note CoAs, here is their new address: 13404 Forest Glen, Woodbridge, VA 22191.

TONY NEWCOMB: When I was three years old I knew without question that when I grew up I'd marry Sarah Newcomb. Sarah, also three, fully agreed. Ours was a love that was true -- until we were five or six and got sent to different schools.

Sarah had an older brother, Tony. He was a Big Kid -- two years older than we were. He was clever. He not only invented neat games to be played, he built elaborate tunnel systems to explore, organized us, and watched over us. He gave me my first ride on a farm tractor, then taught me how to drive it myself -- when I was eight or ten.

By my mid-teens I'd drifted out of contact with the Newcombs, but it came as no real surprise to me that one of my fan friends knew Tony. John Magnus met Tony at Oberlin College, where Tony was a well-known eccentric. John told me stories about Tony: about how he'd built an airplane for himself, gotten FAA certification for it, and had all sorts of hair-breadth escapes from death in it. One time John and I drove out to the Newcombs' farm to pick up John's trunk. Tony had brought it back from Oberlin for him on a flatbed truck he'd turned up somewhere. Tony had his usual grin when he met us.

While I was living in New York City becoming a pro*, Tony was doing things like building a career for himself in the State Department, marrying a Hawaiian woman by whom he had several daughters (who all, years later, reminded me in a heartstopping way of Sarah), and buying and building up local farms.

We had a tradition here, in Northern Virginia, earlier this century, of gentlemen farmers who were also career men in the federal government. It was easy then to commute from D.C. to rural Virginia by high-speed trolleys. My grandfather was a mathematician and statistician for the Bureau of Standards by day, but came home each evening to a fifty-acre farm. Tony's father did the same thing, but I think Tony was the last of the gentlemen farmers in this area. Growing suburban development kept encroaching on his farmland. Nonetheless, his Potomac Farms produce was -- and is -- the freshest and the best in the area.

Last week Tony Newcomb died of cancer.

REACTIONS: While I was visiting Jerry Jacks in January he showed me a letter he'd gotten from ConStellation. It was better than mine. It was a "Dear Program Participant" letter, explaining why nobody's member-

*This gratuitous reference to my Professional Career in Skiffy is here, of course, solely as an indulgence to my obsession with my professionalism (although I'll deny it). But then, as everyone knows, I only Set Myself Up As A Pro in order to visit greater destruction upon the hordes of lurking "journeyman fanwriters."

ship fee would be refunded, and then begging for more money. I find it interesting that he got one of those letters and I (merely a participant in the fan-track programming) did not. Gives you an idea of the ConStellation committee's sense of priorities, doesn't it? (Not that they'd ever planned on fully refunding the membership fees of even the pro-track programming participants, you understand. They thought half was generous, and refused to believe that in previous years the practice had been to make a full refund.)

And that leads me directly to Harry Warner's query: "I wouldn't pretend to know why ConStellation suffered such a big financial loss. But I wonder why I haven't read anything so far about an attempt to persuade the pros to help reduce the deficit. Everything up to now seems to be directed at convention members in general and at fan clubs. The pros admit to using the worldcon to make contacts and discuss writing and editing deals, some of those pros are getting advances that make the current deficit seem smaller than it looks to us fans, and I assume much of that deficit wouldn't exist if the pros had paid for their own accommodations and memberships." But, Harry, they did. Pros don't get free rooms at Worldcons -- unless they're guests of honor or something similar (like Toastperson) -- and the practice has been to require them to pay normal membership fees as well, with the promise of a refund later if they are program participants. So I don't believe the pros in attendance at ConStellation can be held responsible for much, if any, of ConStellation's deficit.

Ray Nelson reflects: "Perhaps the ConStellation disaster reflects the continuing crisis generated by the sheer size of modern fandom. When cons are small, their mistakes can cause only small deficits, but when they are huge, even fairly small errors in judgment can cause monstrous deficits, and because of their size, more individuals are involved, increasing the chances of misunderstanding within the committee, increasing the chance of incompetent people being involved, increasing the chance that greedy people will buy things for the con which will later revert to private individuals or at least local clubs. I predict other similar disasters until someone makes convention-giving a profession and develops a smooth routine through trial and error."

I received a lot of comments that echoed what Mike Glicksohn had to say: "In case you raised up your head, bricked up your ears and wondered what that faint noise was you heard about 4:15 p.m. on Monday, January 23rd, 1984 it was me, cheering your words about the ConStellation fiasco. I'm sure there must be people out there who'll shake their heads, mutter a few consoling words about the fannish family and start reaching for their wallets to bail out the worldcon committee but I sure as hell don't know any of them and don't want to either. In fact, I can't believe their effrontery in even asking for our assistance. Your remarks are absolutely on target and deserve to be published widely throughout fandom as a warning to those kind-hearted (and soft-headed) enough to fall for this ridiculous request."

He's not soft-headed, but George Flynn may be kind-hearted, since he explains the thinking behind one gift to ConStellation: "As for 'the fruits of previous Worldcons /being/ eaten by ConStellation,' hey, one has to do something with them. As you will have seen in FILE 770, we voted to donate \$10,000 from the Noreascon II profits, in such a way that it'd be immune to any bankruptcy proceedings. The truth is, that money's been sitting around for three years collecting interest, basically because we couldn't agree on what was a proper use for it, given the constraints in the WSFS Constitution; we were overjoyed to have something come up that was incontrovertibly an appropriate use for Worldcon funds. Then there's that 'Worldcon Emergency Fund,' the basic problem with which is that it's too big to ignore but too small to be of much use in a real emergency." Let me interrupt you for a moment, George, to note that the cost of "a real emergency" has gone up

a lot since the fund was established in St. Louis in 1969...which underscores the point Ray Melson was making. George continues: "It passed from one Worldcon to another until Discon II /1974/, which finally sent it to Noreascon II in (I think) 1979; we sat on it some more, added a couple of hundred to make it a round \$1500, and turned it over to Denver; mostly it's just a nuisance. Anyway, you aren't altogether wrong that bailing out ConStellation will tell future concons 'you don't have to worry about fucking up' -- but let me argue that that's not necessarily a bad thing. If concons know they won't be bailed out, then if they have any sense they ~~won't~~ ~~be~~ ~~forced~~ ~~to~~ ~~budget~~ ~~ultra-conservatively~~, charge membership fees higher than strictly necessary, and 9 times out of 10 wind up with excessive profits. My favorite comment on this whole topic is still Alexis's 'Worldcon and Potlatch' (in SunCon PR 3): 'The thought that the con committee should make money is abhorrent to the fans. The thought that the con committee should lose money is abhorrent to the con committee. The obvious answer is to plan carefully, anticipate attendance precisely, and break exactly even. Which, I may say, is a neat trick. ...' Amen."

But not very hard. The "obvious answer" is to set membership limits, or at least to be realistic in membership projections rather than, as ConStellation did, assuming significantly higher attendance than that of any previous Worldcon. I think you err in assuming that "ultra-conservative budgetting" goes hand in hand with "membership fees higher than strictly necessary." A genuinely conservative approach would be to scale down both expenses and the convention itself. Offer fewer tracks of programming, and make the remaining programming hard-core sf/fandom. End 24-hour movies. Drop flashy (and often unsuccessful) gimmicks like the DiamondVision screen. And, it should go without saying, set up a viable committee with responsible leadership at the top. ConStellation was an object lesson in How Not To Run A Worldcon -- and the very least we can do is to learn from its mistakes rather than perpetuating them.

Mike Glycer also takes issue with me: "I am mainly writing to second your statement about the ConStellation Committee ('...I for one feel no generosity toward them.') while I strongly dissent from your declaration 'Let them bankrupt!' and Alexis Gilliland's view 'If the hotels were not aware that each Worldcon is separately incorporated, it is damn well time they found out.'"

"If ConStellation stiffed any part of the \$10,800 claimed by the Convention Center, the \$15,000 owed to the exhibit furnishers, or the \$5000 owed to the Hilton (figures in LOCUS from treasurer Shirley Avery), we would be naive to assume this will have no impact on another Worldcon -- and not just a Washington DC worldcon, as Alexis thought, but any Worldcon in North America. So what if they cannot collect those debts from anyone but the insolvent corporation which ran ConStellation? The hotels and convention centers do exchange information; anyone who's been in fandom a few years knows that any hotel manager can put the screws to a convention on a whim. They've happily screwed solvent conventions. Why would they overlook future things titled Worldcons -- and as a businessman, wouldn't you consider demanding cash-in-advance from an organization that stiffed one of your competitors in a past year?" Mike, I think you're being unrealistic. To begin with, the hotels -- and the city convention bureaus -- have known for more than thirty years exactly how well the Worldcons have done, and they have a realistic idea of how well a future Worldcon can be expected to do. While I'm sure ConStellation jarred them, they are aware of the separate and distinct nature of each year's concom, and will probably make note of ConStellation as an aberration -- especially if, as I expect it will, LACon does well. I think a number of the charges owed by ConStellation are due to the concom's ineptness in dealing with the hotels. Ted Mannekin reputedly never spoke directly to the hotels, dealing instead with and through the convention bur-

eau. Consequently, no contracts were negotiated until less than six months before the convention. It is likely that the Hilton would be owed nothing if the proper negotiations had taken place. (Is the Hilton charging for the use of some of its meeting space -- with every room booked by the con?) To be sure, hotels can put the screws to a con -- as the Baltimore hotels in fact did, raising their announced room rates by 50% or more -- but it can help a lot if the con holds a skilfully-negotiated contract. Then the con is in the position of being able to sue. But back to Mike:

"The other local businesses going unpaid by ConStellation such as printers, DiamondVision, catering services, etc., have less chance of affecting concons in other regions." (But the catering was by ARA, a nationwide company with ties to organized crime....) "Film rental companies already tend to be tight about advance payment, but it would be inconvenient for a con to have to commit cash-in-advance for all these expenses (film, hotels, convention centers, exhibit hall furnishers). Clearly ConStellation itself couldn't have taken place without credit, and Chicon IV might have had problems funding everything up front. Any con that wants to return to its members the maximum amount of benefits based on their registration fees needs credit and the good faith of its vendors.

"Precisely because of ConStellation, we are unlikely to see any future Worldcon trying to cut it that close in favor of the members. Sensibly they will go into the con in the black. Automatically they will generate tens of thousands of dollars in profits which look nice on the balance sheet but which really help no one, since fandom would hang any committee that split the take (or if the fans didn't, SFWA would), and there is also no established use to put such profits to that the IRS wouldn't term an improper distribution. (Basically, if you give those thousands to anything but another nonprofit entity, it's bad karma.)" Well, I dunno, Mike. It seems to me that, for one thing, you're drawing the wrong lesson from ConStellation -- you're overlooking the fact that it was a badly administered convention with no one really in charge (but nonetheless with a Secret Master), -- and you're assuming that more sensibly-run concons will also overlook that fact. For another, you're assuming that if some financial hanky-panky went on, fans would know about it. How do you know that it hasn't already occurred without our knowing about it? If a convention supports its major committee members, by paying their rent, buying them frequent meals, and perhaps flying them to distant conventions, can this be considered to the benefit of the membership -- and isn't it a subtle way of milking the convention before "profits" can materialize? Mike had more to say ("Blithely allowing ConStellation to go bankrupt will create a backlash against Worldcons among businesses that operate nationwide....") but we've run out of space this issue. I guess time will tell -- whether ConStellation bankrupts, and what, if anything, anyone does about it -- which makes argument rather pointless. I think the effects of a bankruptcy would be minor and insignificant; Mike Glycer thinks otherwise. But both he and George Flynn agree that future Worldcons will be run more carefully -- which is a positive result. If megaprofits accrue, let them be passed on to the next Worldcon and reflected in lower membership fees -- or just refund them to the members.

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