

Alif 18



K463

Westercon

This day is called the feast of Westercon.
He that today calls Hyatt House his home
Will stand a-tiptoe when this con is named
And rouse him at the name of Westercon.
Until he gaffiates, he that is here
Will yearly on the vigil feast his fanclub
And say "Tomorrow is a Westercon."
Then will he show around his con-report
And say "Thus did I at the Westercon."
Old fans forget; yet all shall be forgot
But he'll remember with advantages
How much he drank that day. Then shall our names --
Chairman haLevy, Neville and the Busbys,
Boucher and Leiber, Ellik, Bjo, John --
Be in their flowing cups freshly rememb'red.
This story shall the good fan teach the neos
And never Westercon shall e'er go by
From this day to the ending of the world
But we in it shall be remembered --
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers.
For he today that pours his drink with me
Shall be my brother. Be he ne'er such neo,
This Con shall make a BNF of him,
And West Coast BNF's who stayed at home
Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here
And hold their fanhoods cheap while any speaks
That drank among us at the Westercon.



Mystery Writers of America ** Northern
California Chapter

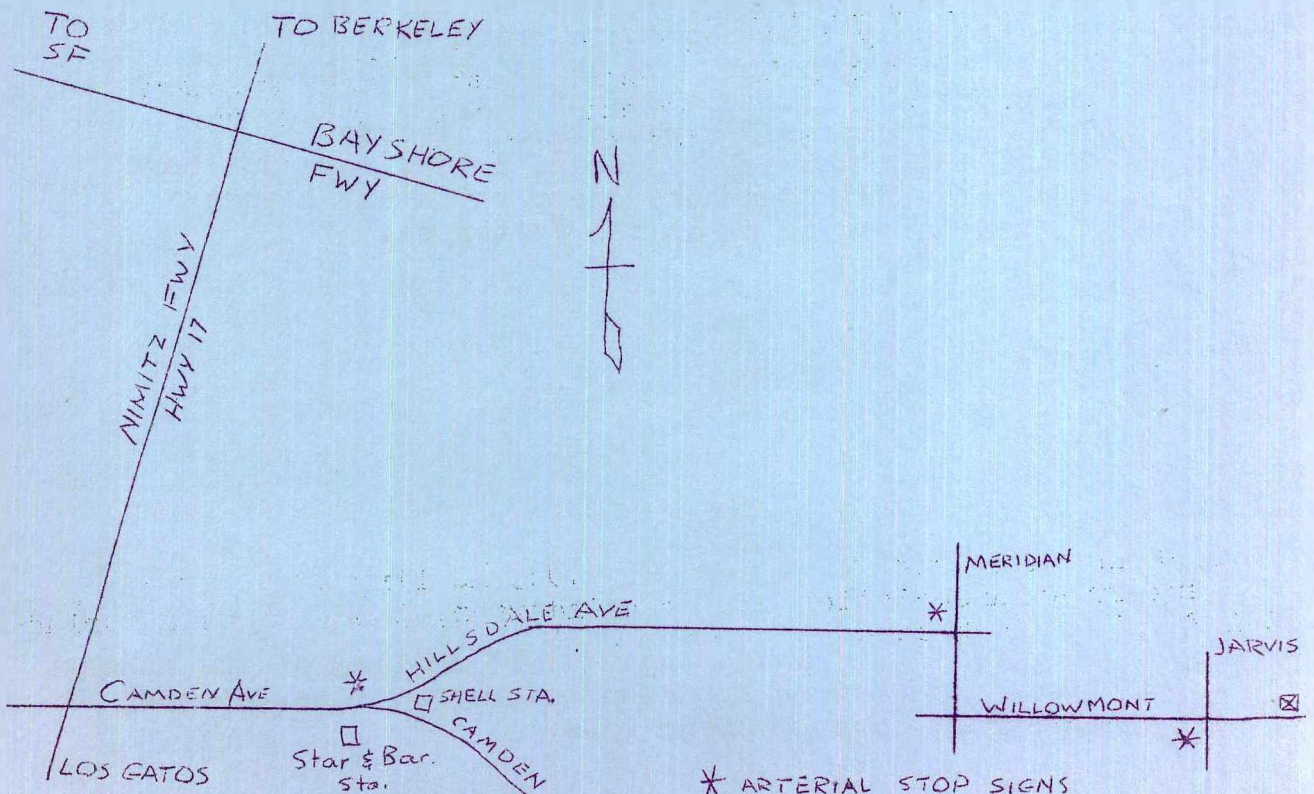
MWA will have an informal social get-together on
Sunday 30 June
from about 2 p.m. on, with dinner served around 5:30
at the home of
Jay & Lorrie Fox
1459 Willowmont Avenue
San Jose 24
Phone: AN 4-2444.

There will be lawn-type games for them as wishes,
socializing, possibly a short program on tape. Re-
freshments at cost. Casual clothes recommended.

IMPORTANT: Because space is limited, members are asked
to bring no guests outside of their immediate families.

If you plan to come, please notify Jay and Lorrie as
soon as possible so they can stock the larder. Be
seeing you!

CLUES TO LOCATION:



IT WAS A LO-O-ONG CONVENTION

I spent most of the four days before the official opening of Westerncon XVI doing nothing but get costumes ready. I'd been delayed by an injured hand that had kept me out of action for the preceding week; on Saturday I got to work. Sunday we went to a meeting of the Mystery Writers of America. Poul is secretary of this chapter, hence my possession of the stencil used to run the page facing this one. I spent a couple of hours working on the trimmings of my Phoenix Guard costume while chatting with Tony Boucher, Rog and Honey Graham, Mick McComas, and Miriam Allen de Ford. When I'd done the work I'd brought with me, I played pool with Mick, Rog, and Tony.

Monday and Tuesday I worked on all three costumes: mine, Astrid's, and Miri Knight's. Astrid was Merry Brandybuck, dressed as a Rider of Rohan, and Miri was Lilith, Queen of Air and Darkness. I was an imaginary character based on a reference in one of the Time Patrol stories to the Third Matriarchy. Tuesday evening I went to Miri's to fit the gown and, while I was there, I added a lot of decoration to a crown I'd been saving in case I needed it.

Wednesday I finished a few details and packed a hasty choice of clothes to wear during the con -- a subject I'd hardly had time to think of before. We had to leave a little after two, because the car had just been re-bored and had to be broken in again, driving at forty miles an hour. We left Astrid in Palo Alto with the woman who was going to take care of the Rolfe and Clinton children as well, and then finally arrived at the Hyatt House about six. I seem to recall eating with the Vances or possibly Stuart Palmer, but I'm not really sure. I know I had several drinks afterward with the Kujawas, who were waiting for the sun to set so it would feel like dinner-time. Later I went to the convention suite, where Sid Rogers was very unhappy that she was supposed to be having open house when (a) two of those present were under age, and (b) there wasn't enough liquor to go around anyway. On the pretext of showing me around, she helped me to her private stock. Later more liquor and more people arrived. At one point I was momentarily quite puzzled when a tall blonde came in: I was positive I knew her, but who on earth was she? -- and then she was followed in by her husband, Fred Pohl. Jim Blish was with them. The party eventually thinned and ran dry, but Tony Boucher invited Fred and Carol Pohl, Jim Blish, and Poul and me to his room, where he had supplies. Eventually I decided I'd better go to bed; I don't know how long they kept it up, but Poul said later that he and Jim had wandered around in the dawn trying to locate their rooms. (No wonder Poul couldn't find ours; it was too easy. Upstairs on the other side of the hall from Tony's.)

Thursday I woke without quite as much sleep as I'd like to have had, but there's really no time to sleep at a convention. After breakfast and a swim I still felt dragged-out, so I went to see how good the Bloody Marys were. A couple of those made me much better. I spent most of the day around the pool, though I didn't go in again, and burnt my nose and forehead. Poul can't remember anything

about dinner that evening, and neither can I. Afterward, of course, came the movie DIE FRAU IM MOND. It was delightful. A few jokers in the audience felt they had to call out captions for the scenes, some funny but most not. I had to ask someone just behind me to stop; I hope I wasn't offensive about it.

Several of us -- Poul, Tony, Jim Blish, I think the Pohls-- adjourned to the bar afterward. There were too many of us already for any but the extra-big table right over by the piano and we felt that the music was too obtrusive. Since we outnumbered the other patrons of the bar, I thought we might reasonably ask to have it stopped, and circulated a petition around our table. Joe Gibson took it to the piano player when everybody had signed. It was no use; he was paid to play the piano and he was going to play it.

Miri came and told us that there was a party for everybody who wasn't at the First Fandom party. (I still don't know who gave it; thanks, whoever you were.) Most of us moved there from the bar. It was quite a party, especially when everybody tried to sit on the bed. I had a fairly good position, leaning back against the wall, with Jim on the edge next to me; Miri then tried to sit on his lap but had to get on mine too. I don't remember who else was there; I know Ted Johnstone was, because I remember his girl taking a picture of him kissing me. Sometime around dawn the party broke up and I went for some breakfast before bed. Jack Harness came too, and over the sausage and hash browns I challenged him to a round of Botticelli. I wasn't in specially good form, and he had a lot of people I never heard of, but he still didn't solve my pet G. No one ever gets it. Then I started toward my room, but the con suite was on the way and I thought I'd just look in (I could see people from outside as I passed). There was a poker game going on, and I decided to sit in. I won 65%. After the game broke up I sat around talking to Tony until it was far too late to think of getting any useful amount of sleep; he supplied me with Dexedrine spanules and I started all over again.

Friday is rather vague in my memory. I probably had another breakfast, and I know I had a couple more of those fine Bloody Marys. I spent the afternoon talking to various people; it must have been then that Jane Ellern gave me the enameled earrings she'd done to one of my star-tree designs. Her earlobes are much stronger than mine; the earrings are so heavy I'll have to wear them as pendants. Jerry Knight, bless him, drove me to Palo Alto to get Astrid; I didn't feel at all happy about making the round trip at 40 miles an hour, especially as tired as I was. We got back during the wine-tasting. The Vances were by the pool, with Johnny playing around the shallow end; they adopted Astrid temporarily so she could have a splash (parent required at hand) while I tasted wine (no minors allowed). I'm afraid Christian Brothers wines aren't really very good, even if they have varietal labels. I only tried two of the six they were serving. Then I got Astrid dressed again and we had some dinner. The coffee shop was too crowded and time before the masquerade was short, so we went across the freeway to a hamburger place, picking up Jack Newkom in the parking lot and taking him along: a very good thing for us, it turned out, as I'd forgotten I'd run out of cash. I had to borrow from Jack to pay for my food.

Then came a wild rush, with me, Miri, and Astrid all dressing in my room, getting on top of each other's feet, trying to do six things at once. I had to get Astrid's costume on her in the proper order, pin Miri's so that it wouldn't slide around, help Astrid put color film in her camera, braid my hair in a knot low enough not to interfere with my helmet -- and so on. We finally made it, in plenty of time.

In a way, the most successful costume of all was that of a man whose correct name I never got. He's called Chif Redfeather. At first glance I thought, "Why, how very like an Indian that Chinese looks in his costume." The costume was that of a Sioux chief. I suppose nobody thought he might be something besides a Sioux; Poul never thought of dissociating the face from the war-bonnet, because they went together so well. The man is a Sioux, all right, but only by adoption; he's pure Chinese. In general, it was a fine masquerade. I won't even try to remember what the costumes were. The winners had lots of competition. In the order awarded, the prizes (small metal cups) went to Bruce Pelz, Heavy Trooper, The Dragon Masters; Bjo Trimble, Ozma; Bill Roberts, the Mummy; me, Commanding Officer of the Phoenix Guard, Third Martiarchy, Time Patrol background. Al haLevy assured me several times that all prizes were equal.

I hadn't intended to give a full description of my three costumes, being afraid of going into too endless a play-by-play account of how and exactly why each bit was done. But I do want to get a summary of each into referable-back-to form in case the pictures don't come out. Astrid, dressed for the ride to Gondor, wore black trousers and white (rain-)boots; a much-too-big leather jacket, brown suede, with the sleeves tucked up inside to shorten them; a brown leather belt; a scabbard, jeweled in red, of black leather-grain oilcloth, with a wooden sword set with green jewels and "damasked" in a red-and-gold serpentine design; brown leatherette cap with cardboard bands painted black to represent iron; round shield, dark green with running white horse. Miriam's costume was improvised rather hastily on very short notice. It was nine feet of black-opal lamé, zipped at the side but left open below the hip*, with draped folds basted in, the extra length gathered on the left shoulder and swung in a half-cape effect, with (as I mentioned earlier) a crown having six tall points that I added sequins, glitter, and a tiny glass marble on each tip, all in deep rich colors, plus the sceptre I used in Detroit with the big rhinestone on the end replaced by a pearl-colored Christmas ball. Mine was black high-heeled rain boots, silver stretch pants with a black-edged orange neon stripe on the leg seam; black velvet tunic trimmed with a silver-edged orange neon stripe, silver leaves at wrist and throat, orange neon epaulets on silver-trimmed black shoulderboards, black-silver-and-neon Phoenix badge at the throat, and some medal-ribbons; black helmet with Grecian crest trimmed in orange neon plastic "feathers" (actually bamboo-leaves), "scrambled eggs" of the same silver leaves as the tunic, and another Phoenix badge like that at the throat; laser baton, and white gloves. Honest to Gernsback, that's a brief description.

Astrid and I went in costume to the Westercon Party; it seemed a shame to wear for so short a time something that had taken so much work. I went out of that one for a while to join the filk sing in

* over black tights

Ruth Berman's room. It grew extremely stuffy from so many people in such a small space, and the G&S addicts took over; they did patter songs so fast I could hardly hear the words, let alone join in. I returned to the big party for a while, finding that Poul had put Astrid to bed already; stayed there for a while, moved on to another party in the con suite, and found that I was much sleepier than I realized. After falling asleep a couple of times on Bruce Pelz' shoulder I went off to bed, finding that it really wasn't a big enough one for me and Astrid at the same time. We managed it, though.

On Saturday, the first thing I had to do was feed Astrid and myself and then drive her back to Palo Alto. This took so long that I missed the first half of Tony Boucher's editor-reviewer speech. He gave the speech once before, at Galileo Adult High, and I missed the first half that time too for much the same reason.

After that, I was on the hook, along with Ron Elik, Lee Sapiro, Dick Ellington, last-minute addition Jim Blish, and moderator F. M. Busby. Buz said he'd ask us to talk first about the actual relationship of sf to fandom, next the ideal relationship, and finally whether you could get there from here. Just about as he finished saying that, a large tray of beer was brought in and set on the table. Seems some member of the panel (Buz, I think) had said the committee ought to supply us with beer, and Donaho had it done. Ron, who was on my right, spoke first: describing how it was in the past, the influence of readers' letters on writers and editors, and so on. Called on next, I made a botch of trying to say what I saw in the current situation. What I wanted to say was that an interest in science fiction is a good indication of a person who is interested in a great many things. Pure Savoyards have little to say to Irregulars; neither would have much to say to a member of the AAAS, a railroad buff, an amateur circus performer, etc. And members of most special-interest groups have little to talk to their fellow members about except that interest. But any two fans are likely to share all the interests I've mentioned, plus a couple of dozen more. You can walk up to a strange fan and be sure that you will have a great deal to talk about, without ever mentioning the particular interest that characterizes us. I remember once in Seattle, just after meeting Charlie Brown for the first time, using this to explain the nature of fandom to a couple of strangers at the hotel. Charlie and I alternately named things we were interested in and found we could name thirty or forty we had in common. I knew we would. I don't recall what Blish said after I made my try. Sapiro gave us a long sermon, with extensive illustrative quotations, proving that modern fandom wasn't what it was in the Gernsback era. He took quite a while at it. Fandom, he said, ought to work to make science fiction what it hasn't been since David R. Daniels was writing.

Blish did say at some point that he appreciated feedback from fan opinion. On the topic of what fandom ought to do, bibliographic work was mentioned -- checklists, magazine indexes, and so on -- that only fans have sufficient interest and time to do, but really ought to be done. I think it was in the discussion period that fan writing as apprenticeship for pro writing was mentioned; we never quite agreed whether it was of any use or not. It's my opinion

although (as Tony Boucher said) fanzine fiction doesn't really deserve any kind of publication, publishing a fanzine will at least teach you the simple mechanics of thinking through a typewriter.

I wish I'd been a little more coherent on the panel; I don't do so well when I'm told "Now it's your turn" as when I can speak up when something occurs to me, or when I can think as long as I like between sentences. There's no problem of "dead air" with a typewriter.

A batch of us adjourned to the bar, including Jim Blish and Tony Boucher; Fred and Carol Pohl joined us later. I stayed there until almost time to dress for dinner; on the way to do that, I spent a few minutes at the Authors' Social.

The banquet was certainly a surprise: breast of capon stuffed with wild rice, green beans with mushrooms, and positive encouragement to order wine! I recall sitting with Ted Johnstone and his girl; Poul thinks (and I'm inclined to agree) that Sue Sanderson was with us; neither of us can remember who else was at that table. Bjo's mother had provided orchid corsages for all the women at the speakers' table, plus some extras; Bjo gave me one of the extras and Ted's girl another.

The speeches were excellent and I wish I could remember more about them. I do remember a lump in my throat to match the one Forry was talking around when he gave us a memorial toast to Frank R. Paul.

The Mordor Victory Party (to celebrate not having to put on the 1964 Worldcon) was held after the banquet. It was marked for me by a peculiar incident. Buz came in, saying he'd been in the bar for a drink (the liquor supply for the party not having arrived yet) and he'd met someone claiming to be Shorty Powers of Project Mercury, who'd like to meet a good-looking ^{woman} science fiction writer. "You're putting me on," I said. Buz swore he wasn't, and after a while I went back to the bar with him so he could introduce me to whoever-it-was. Yes, there was a man there who said he was Shorty Powers; he didn't care about the science-fiction part, just wanted someone young, good-looking, and unmarried -- or at least available. "Buz didn't mention that part," I said, "but if you come over to the Flight Room you might find somebody at the party." And I went on back. I still have no idea whether he was the Powers, some other Powers, or just somebody putting us on.

After several hours at the Mordor party, I decided to try my hand at poker again. When I play for more than my usual limit, I'm over-cautions and lose a great deal. This time I managed to convince myself that it wasn't really money, got overconfident, and lost \$12. Now, drink-buying money isn't real -- I don't have to account for it -- but gambling money is. If I hadn't sold any Gestetnosaurus, I would have had \$54 to my name -- and I wanted something from Sunday's auction. I was pretty sure I'd sold some, and anyway I could manage a short loan from Poul -- but it was time to get out of the poker game and into bed. But first I'd stop by the door and talk to Buz...

Sunday began, therefore, with more of Tony's Dexedrine. I had a big breakfast with several people, haLevy for one, possibly Stu Palmer also. I was still there when Tony came back from church and

I think he joined us. At least, the members of the sf/detective panel were already grouped somewhere else just before time to go on, and I was with them.

The auction must have been before the panel. I had my purchases by then, and I think I took them back to the coffee shop . . . it comes back now: Poul was eating breakfast then, and I wanted to show him the present I had for him: an Orban original, illustrating a CAPTAIN FUTURE story. I listened to the panel, but was very tired and napped disgracefully in the middle.

Johnny Kan's restaurant in Chinatown has the best Cantonese food in San Francisco, and there is now a branch at the Burlingame Hyatt House. Tony had already had a meal there, and recommended it highly. We rounded up eight people and turned ourselves over to the waiter: wow squared! was that ever a meal! I'd noticed "thousand-year" eggs on the menu, and asked the waiter to add that to our appetizers; he thought we might not like them, but at least half of us were pretty sure we would. They're really about three months old, I believe, and are the oriental equivalent of cheese; I liked mine very much indeed. The flavor isn't even particularly exotic.

After dinner we went to a final party in the con suite -- except for the two I've specified, all the parties I went to were either in the Flight Room or in the consuite. This one was the best of all, and I really hated for it to be over. It finally was, though, around sunrise, when the liquor finally ran out and nobody could stay awake any longer. (There's a scene in PRELUDE TO SPACE in which the protagonist is warned that at the party he's going to, he must ask for drinks by the names of rocket fuels, but he'd better lay off the hydrazine hydrate. We were pretty sure that was what was in the very last bottle; seems Donaho had got hold of some c. p. alcohol. We drank that, too.) And so we all said goodbye and rolled into bed.

Monday around two we checked out and ate, in that order, and went down to Palo Alto for Astrid. Stu Palmer was staying over for a B&I luncheon Tuesday and we'd invited him to put up at our place. He went straight there, since we'd be over an hour behind him, and we told him how to get in. He said later that Topsy had met him at the door as though he'd always lived there and took him straight to the refrigerator to be fed. The fat liar. She didn't eat much of what he put out, but demanded a great deal of attention. When we drove up she dashed out to the driveway and gave us a long chewing-out. It took a couple of days to convince her we'd come home to stay. That night we got to bed "early" -- half-past twelve.

Tuesday we went to a luncheon for Dr. Koki Naganuma, a prominent Japanese Sherlock Holmes fan; Tony was there, Stu having picked him up, besides the Dickensheets and a number of others. I'd received a copy of a Japanese publication -- I still don't know what it is, but the envelope had the return address of the Japanese s-f club Uchujin -- which contained a review of VORPAL GLASS. I took it along to get it translated. It was written either by one of the Japanese at the Seacon or someone who knows them. Stu had to leave for Oregon immediately after the luncheon, so we took Tony back on our way home and stopped for a drink with him. We got back to Orinda just in time to meet Joe Gibson and discuss a very interesting

Project/

he has going with Al Collins. Poul invited Joe and Robbie to stay to dinner, so I did the best I could with bacon and eggs; there wasn't enough of anything else to feed five people. I'd invited the Busbys around, and they came a little after the Gibsons left. We spent a quietly pleasant evening, which was about all I was up to, and invited them back for dinner next day.

Wednesday I'd recovered quite a bit of my energy; I watered the lawn, sorted and sent out the laundry, invented marketed food and cooked a thoroughly scrambled Oriental-Occidental menu (sample: chicken gumbo suey) and didn't even breathe hard. We had hot sake and ate on the patio with the fountain playing. Then we went to the Knights' for a final party that drew all Berkeley fandom and fringe-fandom. I never in all my life saw sixteen dollars' worth of beer go so fast.

Thursday I started writing this conreport. Friday evening Poul and I saw THE 5,000 FINGERS OF DR. T. and THE SAND CASTLE. Saturday I finished the paper version of my conreport, ending it -- that was nearly a week ago, as I stencil -- with the following:

"I think I'm back to normal life; but it's a little hard to tell. Normal life for me is very like a convention spread thin."

This coming Sunday I have to serve clam chowder to the Elves', Gnomes', and Little Men's Science-Fiction Chowder and Marching Society.

+ + + + +

The back cover of this ALIF is by Dian Dale, who sketched it on flimsy paper in ball-point pen at a party at the Vances*. I had it Gestafaxed and ran off a dozen copies on some water-color paper I had on hand. I found it made quite a difference in the appearance of the reproduction.

Next I decided to try this idea with ordinary stencil. The result was a drawing of a flying dragon that I called a "Gestetnosaur," for lack of a better name. I made twelve copies and destroyed the stencil, preserving its rarity value, and entered it in the art show at 50¢ a copy. I've sold eight.

The possibilities of this fascinate me. It becomes more like silk-screen as I find ways of producing large solid ink areas; after all, a Gestetner is a kind of silk screen, and doesn't have the holes in the drum to complicate matters. And, well, it just looks more like art when it's on thick cockled paper.

I wonder if, maybe, I can do a couple more and send them to the Discon?

That's if I can get a Vorpall done first -- and -- Who takes dictation? I have Tony Boucher's permission to publish what he's going to say about Fanny Hill and about pornography in general on KPFA next week, but it has to be gotten off tape and onto paper. If I have to play the tape a phrase at a time I'll never get to doing any pictures.

