

HYPHEN

No 37

AUTUMN

1987



"Lost what innocence?"

FORTY YEARS OF IRISH FANDOM

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Artwork: ATOM, Dave Wood, Stu Shiffman

Inside Coverage



This is where the editor apologises for the issue being late. Well, it was like this. First we moved house, and then I crashed the car and wrote a book and then I survived a small civil war, got ill and retired from work. (That was a summary of pages 55 to 58, which you don't have to read now.) All this took time (22 years to be exact), and my correcting fluid dried up.

Why now? Well Amstrad solved the corflu problem with the PCW Word Processor, Eric Mayer wrote a story I thought you'd like, and a Worldcon was arranged in Britain on a date which I realised was the 40th Anniversary of the first meeting of Irish Fandom.

It seemed as if Fate was trying to tell me something. Namely, pub your ish.

Obviously the first thing to do was to try and reproduce the illegibility which had done so much to preserve the reputation of Hyphen down through the ages. So I phoned the Gestetner shop in downtown Belfast and enquired about spare parts for the Gestetner 26. There was a long silence and then a man came on claiming to be the Manager. "What," he enquired, "is a Gestetner 26?"

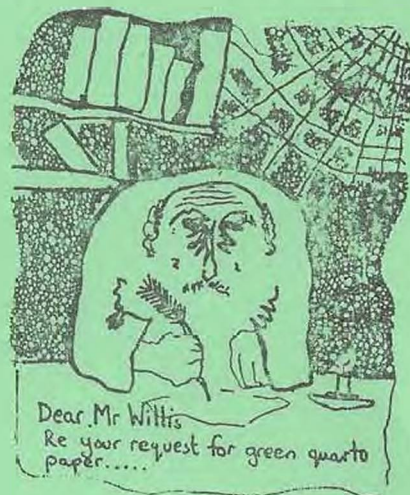
"I will have you know, my good fellow," I said, or words to that effect, "That it is the vintage machine on which I published a literary magazine for which connoisseurs in the New World are vying with one another to pay \$50 a copy." He was impressed, but still could not supply a vintage silk screen. Nor did he even have a modern version of the homely 26; even his 2nd hand dupers were now electric. Handle turning had become something for cranks..

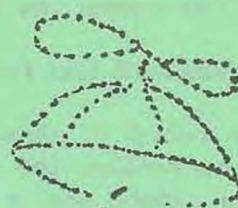
That seemed to be that, but Roscoe works in mysterious ways his wonders to perform. Our central heating system (bought with advice from Dean Grennell and money from Terry Carr and therefore the second most fannish thing in the house) had to be converted to another kind of gas. The technician who came to do it was a congenial chap (and was being paid by the Government) so we had an interesting conversation; in the course of which he suddenly asked me if I would be interested in a Gestetner duplicator his neighbour was trying to get rid of from his garage. I enquired the price and was told it would be nothing: my new friend would even deliver it. It seemed a reasonable deal.

Next morning the machine turned out to be a 460S, identical to the reconditioned models in the shop at £400.

So you can see that you and I are fated to be here in this fanzine today. I hope you like it. It starts with five pieces of faanfction. Everyone might have different views as to what they have in common, but to me they represent the life of a fan group, from birth to myth. The first story, from Hyphen 3, is the one that I think began this whole genre. It conveys the feeling of persecuted brotherhood which was once our bond.

Hyphen #37, Autumn 1987. A special issue to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Irish Fandom. Free to all old friends and new. From Walt Willis, 32 Warren Road, Donaghadee, N.Ireland BT21 0PD. Art Editor Arthur Thomson. Electrostencilling and other help Vinç Clarke (Superfan). Associates Chuck Harris, Bob Shaw, James White, Madeleine Willis. Other credits page 6. Typed on an Amstrad PCW8256 using Digita. International Supertype. Published on the Pricerite Gestetner with assistance from passing time travellers Art Widner and Jeanne Gomoll.





Bob

Shaw

The fan ran until his mouth was filled with thick salt saliva, ran until he felt that to run on was to die. But he knew only too well that to stop was surely to die.

Somewhere in the darkness behind him a rifle cracked, but the angry slug came nowhere near him. Nonetheless, a feeling of dread settled on the fan---they were really determined to get him if they were using one of the earth's few remaining firearms.

Panting heavily he sped through the narrow alleys that separated the square one-storey buildings of New London. He slowed down to pass a lighted doorway, straining his ears for the sound of enemies.....

Creak---click---swish---creak---click---swish.

Good Ghu, thought the fan, astounded; a duplicator! Somebody inside the yellow limned doorway was using a duper! He stood for a moment undecided. There was something wrong somewhere---nobody had followed fan pursuits so openly since the great massacre in '63. Again, the rifle cracked, and this time the fan heard the vicious whine of a speeding slug. He staggered through the door.

Strong arms caught him as he fell and a few seconds later with gentle firmness a cup of hot tea was applied to his lips. He drank deeply, noting as his vision cleared that someone had closed the door and drawn a curtain over it. There were three men and two women in the smallish room, in the centre of which stood a table carrying a duplicator and untidy heaps of paper.

"Are...are you fans?" he gasped, feeling the strength return to his body.

"Yes, of course we are," answered one of the men. "What on earth has happened to you?"

SFAN: Bob Shaw

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"The World Stability Corps caught me spelling 'quandary' without the second 'a'. I did it without thinking," he added. The lean man who had first spoken looked puzzled.

"But why would they hunt you for that?"

"Have you never heard of Quandry?" asked the fan, fighting down a surge of pure panic. Too late he noticed the prints depicting trolley-cars that were hung here and there on the wall. There was a subtle change in the expressions of the five listeners. The fan stood up to move to the door.

"Get him," somebody whispered. "He's not a trolley-car fan. I think he's a science fiction fan!"

As they closed in on him the fan made a desperate attempt to break away, but the hard chase had sapped his strength and they held him with ease. A crushing blow landed on his skull. As the mists of oblivion closed around him the fan just had time to see that he had been struck with a chromium-plated trolleyhead.

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Even before the fan opened his eyes he knew he was in the arena.

The bestial screaming of the death-hungry crowd, the smell of blood and sand, and the despairing cries of those unlucky enough to lose their battle were things he would like to have forgotten, but never had. Too often he had had to watch his friends---fans that had been discovered---torn to pieces in brutal organised combat.

When the third world war had finally come it had been the last straw as far as the man in the street was concerned. In spite of the fact that scientific defences had reduced the toll to one fifth of the world's population, science was taboo. To invent had become a crime punishable by death. The world turned its back on science and its pot of gold that lay at the end of a rainbow coloured by atomic fires and human blood. The human race was only too glad to sink down into semi-savagery....all except the fans.

They too had no desire to be blown to tiny pieces but, being fans, they were unable to conceive of a world that was not working its way, however precariously, towards the stars. So they rallied and began to campaign against the burning of the books, not to say the scientists.

They fanned harder than ever, inspired by the fact that for the first time fandom really had a purpose. So intense did their efforts become that the aggrieved populace rallied in return. Their action was more decisive than that of the fans.

In 1962 they killed every fan on whom they could lay their hands.

A few fans remained, however. These fans carried on their activities in secret, but every now and again one was caught---just as Edgar had been.

He lay very still for a moment knowing full well that his days of secret mimeo cranking were over. Then he sat up. He was alone in a bare concrete cell except for a huge guard in heavy armour who stood near the door. Through the rough opening he could see a section of the arena floor. He didn't get time to look at it closely for, as soon as he had perceived that Edgar was awake, the guard caught his arm and propelled him out into the open.

A deafening roar went up from the crowded tiers of spectators. Dazed and still weak and sick Edgar was pushed out to the centre of the sunlit circle of yellow sand. His lips moved in silent prayer as he was made to kneel before the box containing the chiefs of the World Stability Corps.

"Ghu help me, and may the spirits of Ackerman and Tucker, Willis and Hoffman, Slater and Clarke lend strength to my slip-sheeting arm." With the time-honoured words on his lips the fan turned to face his opponent, whose entry had been announced by yet another roar from the crowd.

He knew from his first glance that his defeat was certain, for his opponent was easily six feet three as compared to Edgar's five six. Furthermore, the giant was armed and clad in the bright armour of the Free American Peace Army. The letters FAPA emblazoned on his chest seemed to strike a responsive chord in Edgar's mind, but this was no time for futile brain searching. With blind courage he tightened his grip on the short sword that had been thrust into his hand and advanced on the giant.

With contemptuous ease the other brushed aside his feeble sword thrust and in a second had Edgar disarmed and helpless on the ground. As the giant knelt on his chest with his sword raised, he tensed for the final agony that would be his exit from fandom.

"When I bring this sword down give a scream," a soft voice said. Edgar opened his eyes, numb with surprise. He saw with wonderment that atop the other's golden helmet a small propellor shivered and spun.

"My name is James White...yes, the James White. I have come to rescue you, the last fan in England, and transport you to New Fandom."

"But the fans are all dead," stammered Edgar.

"Nonsense, Willis and Hoffman and the others fan on yet---every fan you thought was killed in this arena is with them."

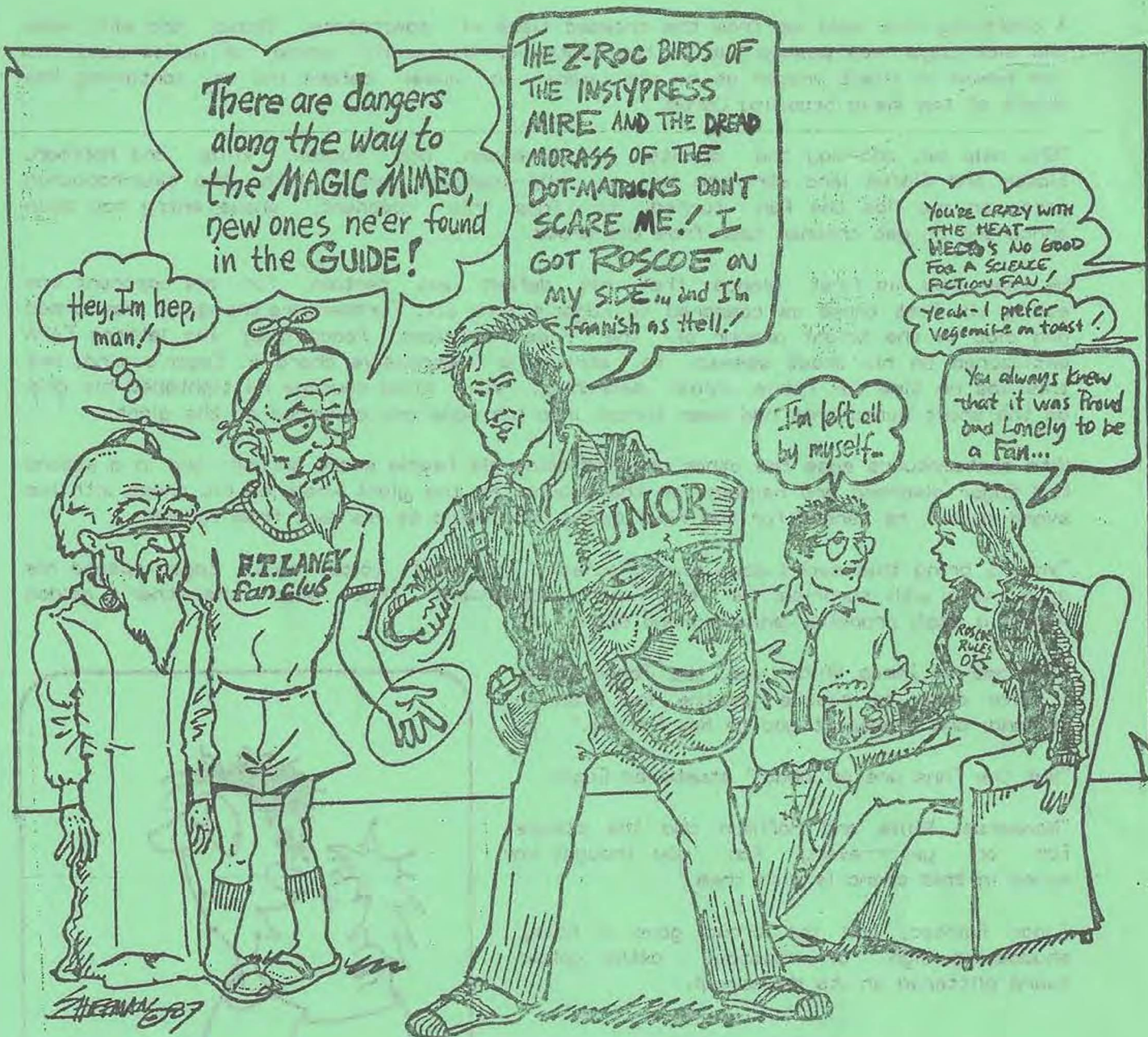
Edgar fainted, and the crowd gave a noisy, shuddering sigh of ecstasy as the golden sword glittered on its downsweep.

A few seconds later the last fan in England, bathed in red mimeo ink, was on his way to New Fandom, hidden deep in the Okefenokee Swamp.



It is a proud and lonely thing to be a fan.

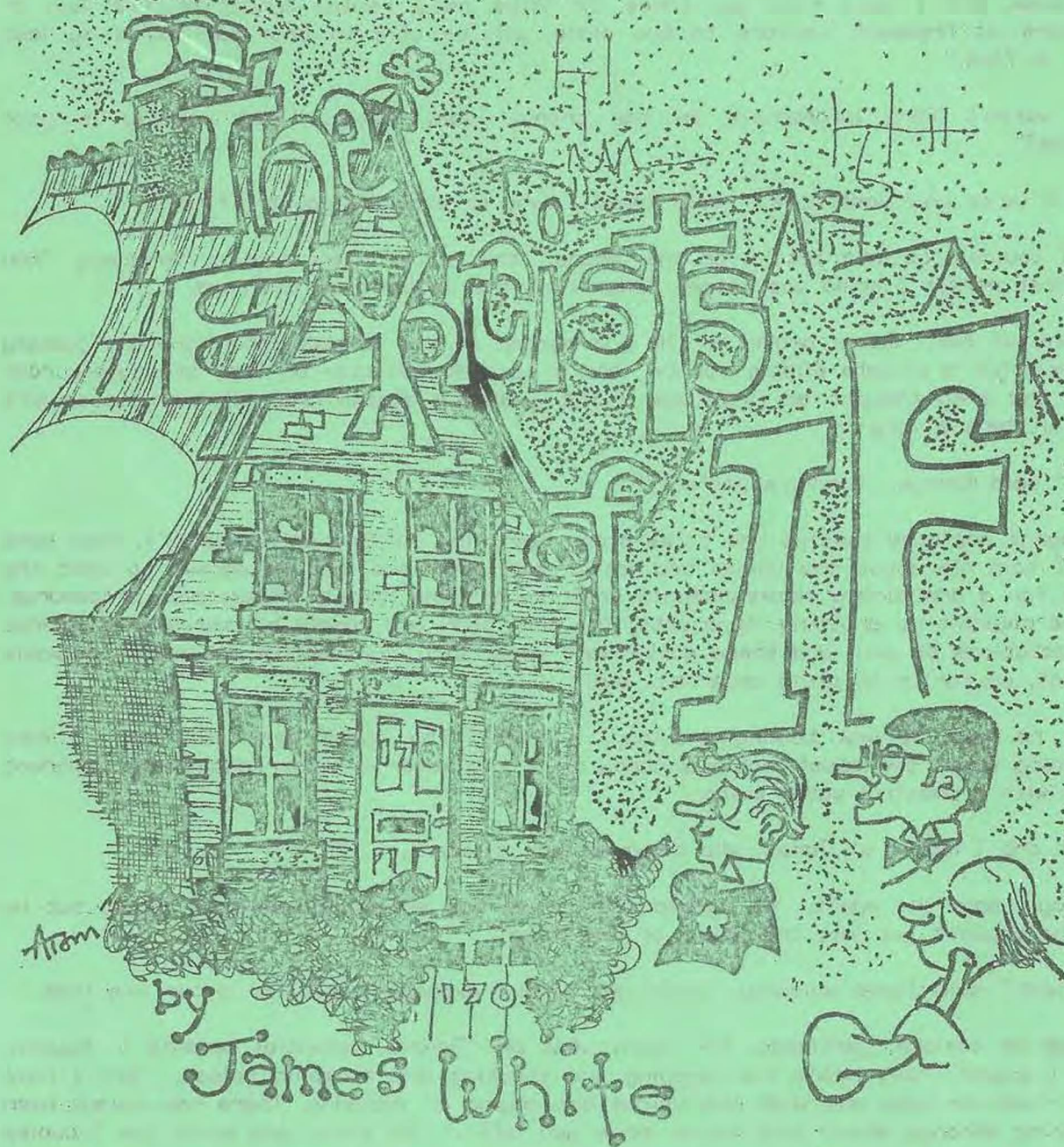
--Ken BeAle: Hyphen 2



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A large and vulgarly ostentatious station wagon with the name of a local estate agent emblazoned on its flanks pulled in and parked outside the garden gate of 170 Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast. Within a few minutes the Willis MG, the Charters Morris Minor and the White Fiat, which happened to be red, pulled in behind him. The estate agent introduced himself to the three drivers, then paused while four Saracen armoured cars whined past in low gear.

"It was very good of you to come," he went on quickly, when they could hear themselves think again. "I know there should be five of you, but Mr Shaw has moved with his family to England and Mr Berry recently retired from the police fingerprint department to do the same. But I hope that you three, Mr Willis as a former tenant of 170, and Mr Charters as frequent visitors to the place, will be able to help me. You're my last hope, in fact."

"You weren't very informative on the phone," said Walter. "What exactly is your problem?"

"And if we're your last hope," said James, "who or what did you try first?"

"I....I couldn't go into details on the 'phone," the estate agent replied nervously. "And the first person I tried was Father Mallon from the chapel down the road."

"I know of him!" James broke in. "He's a member of the British Interplanetary Society and he's got a private pilot's licence and a 12-inch reflector on the presbytery roof which the Army thought at first was a SAM 7 missile system and, although he doesn't read sf, he's a very---"

"Well," said George, "nobody's perfect."

The agent gestured towards the three-story red-brick building which was 170, then went on, "I told him about the voices and...other manifestations, and he agreed to visit the house for a preliminary reconnaissance prior to briefing himself on exorcism procedures. But he couldn't do anything. Apparently the bell, book and candle bit works only against manifestations of evil, and these particulars were noisy, hyperactive and almost palpable but not, so far as he could ascertain, evil."

"When he left he was talking theology, I think," the agent went on, "and he said something about the questionable efficacy of a Holy Water sprinkler against an Opponent armed with a spectral water pistol."

Walter and I looked at James, who tried to look innocent.

"Anyway," said the agent, "he agreed that there was something there all right, but he said he couldn't get into the spirit of the thing."

"A priest," said James solemnly, "could get himself excommunicated for a pun like that."

"Please be serious, gentlemen, the agent went on. "People, potential tenants or buyers, even I myself, have heard the laughing and shouting and thumping noises. But I have never been to make out what the voices are saying or shouting. There has always been something strange about that house since you left it, Mr Willis, and since the Troubles started it has become steadily worse. It's a good, well-built house, but nobody will live in it for more than a week. That is why I contacted you, gentlemen. I hoped that you could do or suggest something that will rid me of these awful ghosts."

Walter inclined his head, but he was looking at the well remembered house as he said, "We'll do what we can, of course. May I have the keys?"

They left the agent pacing the pavement alongside their cars, where he would be able to reassure the Army patrols who might otherwise decide that their vehicles were possible car bombs and blow them up, and went through the garden gate and up three steps to the lawn. The gate still creaked and the lawn was covered with the same irregular

patches of clover and/or shamrock, and the distant clattering of an observation helicopter merged with the buzzing of insects both actual and spectral.

"It all comes back, doesn't it?" said Walter.

The voices from the past were saying things like "Let's not collate today---we can discuss broad matters of policy and get sunburned" and "I'd rather lie on shamrock than real rock, which is why I like champagne too" and "Nonsense, George, shamrock only grows on Catholic lawns" and "Well, I'm not one to worry over trefoils."

Walter said, "Let's go round the back."

It was much quieter in the back yard. A ghostly Bonestell-type spaceship towered all of 8½ inches above the tiles while the misty figures of an impossibly young Walter, Bob and James and a slightly less elderly George Charters crouched over it, discussing a technical problem.



According to the youthful ghostly James, who even then had been a lapsed member of the British Interplanetary Society, the trouble lay in the fact that his balsa wood spaceship weighed ¾ ounce while its motor developed a maximum pre-Brennschluss thrust of only half an ounce, which caused the thing to just sit there hissing and straining upwards. The answer which had been worked out was one of breathtaking simplicity. A length of thread had been attached to the vehicle's nose cone, and passed over the Willis clothesline; a small bunch of keys---weighing just under ¾ ounce---was tied to the other end. Phrases like "It's an old trick but it might just work" and "It beats the Dean Drive" hung in the air.

"Pity," said the contemporary James, "there weren't more clotheslines in the lunar insertion orbit."

They passed through the oblivious figures and into the kitchen before the phantom spaceship took off and set fire to the spectral clothesline.

"Surely," said Walter, "you were never that skinny, James. But you, George, haven't changed a bit. You must have been born old and venerable."

"Not true," said George. "I got like this in primary school, from carrying little girls' tablets of stone home for them. That's why I had to give up work on the pyramids."

The remembered smell as they entered the kitchen was a culinary effluvium describable only by Ray Bradbury in his homespun period, and the air was made even thicker by conversation like..."I hate to see you slaving over hot dishes, Madeleine, can I give you a hand?" and "Go sit in the front room, Harris, you're not going to



slaver over my dish." and "Farmhouse soup clogs water pistols" and "It happens to be a diabetic apple tart riddled with visually loathsome masses of undissolved Saccharin" and "Sorry, we're fresh out of eyes of newt" and "No newts are good newts."

They shuddered in unison and moved into the dining room where a ghostly double-dished light fixture---which Peggy White had once called a candle-bra---shed a warm effulgence (light having already been used in this sentence) on a dining table groaning with good things and bad puns provided, respectively, by Madeleine and all the fans who had visited Oblique House over the years---Lee Hoffman, Vince Clarke, Ken Bulmer, Chuck Harris, Mal Ashworth, both Ian McAulays and dozens of others.



The noisiest spectre of the lot was Chuck, who at that time had recently gone completely deaf and had not yet learned to modulate his voice properly. He kept shouting for everyone to write it down because he couldn't lipread Irish accents, then surreptitiously pocketing the scraps of paper for use in his monumental fan work Through Darkest Ireland With Knife, Fork and Spoon. The leanest and hungriest ghost was that of Bob Shaw, who complained of having hollow bones and a fifth-dimensional gut.

"Yes, I did try the gingerbread; and found it not guilty" they were saying, and "Nobody asked me if I wanted a seventh cup of tea" and "Why do English people speak English with that terrible English accent?" and "White lions running down the middle of the road mean it's a mane road" and "We're using grief-proof paper next issue" and "We'll assemble the mag on the dining room table and invite people to a small collation" and "People laugh at the funniest things."



In the front room a ghostly John Berry, on tiptoe and with his arms flapping up and down like a pterodactyl, was describing the preliminaries to lovemaking in his house. The idea was to display one's ardour, physical fitness and aerodynamic control by launching oneself off the top of the wardrobe to make a semi-crash landing into the eager arms of one's mate. All that was required was a flat-topped wardrobe, a solidly sprung bed and a steady diet of water-cress.

In a series of temporal overlays the other fannish conversations and incidents proceeded over and around the flapping figure of John, including one involving George surrounded by exploding fireworks, a box of which he had inadvertently ignited with the ash from his cigarette. The other occupants of the room had hurriedly evacuated the area and were watching from the lawn, but George had been trapped by the Willis settee, whose upholstery was as soft and yielding as quicksand....

"Surrounded by all those sparks and glowing balls," said Walter, "You looked like a Virgil Finlay illo, George."

"And if it happened now," George replied, "we would probably be interned for running a bomb factory."

A slow, clanking sound---which mundane folk might well have mistaken for the rattling of chains---grew louder as they mounted the stairs towards the box-room. Apart from the noise made by the Manly Banister printing press turning out one of the later editions of *Slant* the room was quiet; except when one of the fan composers accidentally dropped a stick of type on the floor and felt the need to relieve his feelings verbally; or when Bob and James were trying to decide whether an illos was crude or stark; or when Madeleine arrived with the tea tray; or when a ghostly Walter dashed into the room, immaculate in tennis whites, to set a few lines of type before the next match in his club's tournament, to dash out again looking like a less immaculate Dalmatian.

Respectfully and almost ashamedly they backed out of that tiny room and its ghosts, the scene of so much energy and enthusiasm, to climb slowly and thoughtfully to the front attic.

There, the ghosts of people and things were almost palpable.

Ranged around the bare plaster walls were the spectral shapes of bookshelves bulging with promags and fanzines; the Bannister press which had been moved up when the box-room became a nursery; the big wall mirror with the transverse crack which Bob had painted over with a rocket-ship trailing a long tail of fire; the Marilyn Monroe Calendar; the ATom illos, in colour; the St.Fantony statuette; the Berrycade, which was a strong wooden frame covering the inside of the window to prevent John from pushing his posterior through it, as had been his wont during games of ghoomdinton. And across the table and the net in the centre of the room raged the game of Ghoomdinton itself: a game which was part badminton, part all-in wrestling and part commando assault course.

"Face! Face! You hit my face, our point!" the players were shouting, and "Take the shuttlecock out of your mouth then---you'll warp the feathers", and "It went into the bookcase, out, our point!" and "It's not in the bookcase. It must have gone into hyperspace" and the attempted promulgation of a new rule, "Hyperspace is out".

But it was the other voices which sounded stronger and more insistent. There was the southern brogue of Ian McAulay, who often motorbiked the hundred-plus miles from Dublin on Thursday nights, to play ghoomdinton and talk before leaving early across the border before, as Bob put it, the Irish Republic was closed for the night. And there were the ghostly faces and voices of Big Name and small name fans from the US and the UK who had come and been so affected by the ghoomdinton or Madeleine's cooking or the unique fannish atmosphere of the place that they, too, had left something of themselves behind to take part in the haunting.

"We can remember," said Walter quietly, as the three of them stood in the middle of the attic with the conversation and the laughter beating insistently at them from all sides. "But why should it affect ordinary non-fannish people who don't even---"

Suddenly a savage crashing detonation rattled the windows and a misshapen finger of smoke poked slowly into the night sky. Very faintly came the chatter of automatic weapons, the snap of a high-velocity rifle and the distant braying of an ambulance. But the voices from the past were there too, and louder than ever.

"Sounds like your side of town, James," said Walter in a worried voice. "It will be dark in an hour, and you would be safer back across the Peace Line before--".

"The fuggheads", said George, still watching the ascending column of smoke.

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"Yes," said James absently. He gestured, the jerky movement of his hand taking in the room, the house around them and the scene outside, then went on quietly. "I think I know what is going on here. Think for a minute about a haunted house. It is a place where something so terrible and evil has happened in the past that the very structure is imbued with it, and it lingers and frightens the ordinary people who come into contact with it."

"But now," he went on, pointing towards the window, "It is the city and the country that has become so terrible and evil that they frighten the ordinary people, with bombings, ambushes, sectarian murders, widespread intimidation. It is the outside that is haunted, and in here...well, remember the people and the kind of place this used to be. It wasn't just the fan group or the awful puns or the fanzines we put out. No, we were fanatics too, in a quiet way, about other things too. Like toleration, racial equality, lots of things. But now we are scattered. Even we three can't meet very often, things being as they are, and the people we used to be are reacting to this present ghastly situation all around us by haunting the place."

"I think you're right," said Walter. Very seriously, he went on, "But remember, James, despite our religious and other differences and everything that has happened, we three haven't changed."

"No," said George, "we haven't changed."

"That's right," said James, "we haven't."

They stood together for a long moment looking out over the city, then they left the bare and utterly silent attic and walked slowly downstairs past the boxroom, where the ghostly clanking of the Banister press was stilled, past the kitchen, dining room and lounge which were likewise silent, and across the lawn which buzzed only with this evening's insects.

The estate agent hurried forward to meet them, then he saw the expressions on their faces and went past without speaking. For several minutes they could hear his feet clumping about on the floorboards and stairs of the now empty house; then he returned.

"You've done it!" he said excitedly. "It, they, whatever it was, has gone. Thank you gentlemen, very much..." He paused, studying their faces for a moment, trying to analyse the expressions; they were not sad, exactly, and not exactly triumphant, but seemed to reflect a peculiar mixture of both those feelings. Hesitantly he went on, "If you can tell me, how...how did you get rid of those ghosts?"

The three old-time fans looked at one another, and nodded. James cleared his throat. "We were able to convince them," he said quietly. "that they weren't dead yet."





The card from Walt Willis, bearing a Donaghadee postmark, informed me that on Sunday night, 1st February 1987, between 8pm and 9pm, a meeting would be held at 170 Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast, to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the founding of Irish Fandom, and I was cordially invited. RSVP?

I wrote by return, confirming that I would be pleased to attend. The last meeting of Irish Fandom at Oblique House had been on 26th April 1965...22 years since we had trod the scuffed linoleum, worn out by years of ghoddminton...I wondered who lived there now, and how Walt Willis had managed to persuade them to permit this brief commemoration?

My daughter Kathleen lives in Bangor, Co.Down, half a dozen miles from Donaghadee. I telephoned her, because I knew she was a member of The Bangor Players. I had this wonderfully nostalgic idea, you see. Dear old George Charters, who used to live in Bangor, had expired in the interim, and I felt it would be a magnificent idea to hire a professional actor to impersonate him at the meeting. Yes, Kathleen thought that Percy Delaney, an experienced character actor in the troupe, would probably be delighted to attend 170 and pretend to be George. She returned my call almost at once. Yes, for a fee of £20 Delaney would accept the job: he would call at her house at noon on 1st February for a briefing.

I smiled to myself in triumph...I knew that Walt, James White and Bob Shaw would be impressed with my forethought and initiative.

* * * * *

The Boeing 757 of British Airways swooped silently onto the runway at Aldergrove Airport. We were disgorged: I collected my suitcase and was greeted by Kathleen and my two grandchildren, Steven and Peter.

We reached Kathleen's home. I apologised for the literally flying visit, explaining that I had to return to London on Monday morning: she said she would drive me to Aldergrove in time to catch the 10.30am Shuttle flight.

Percy Delaney proved to be over 50 years old. I sensed he was gay, by his mannerisms and speech. I whispered to Kathleen to tell the two boys to go outside and play football.

I explained his commission. "Disguise yourself as a middle-aged man, grey hair, somewhat sparse; spectacles; a cheerful teeth-filled smile; pullover; jacket with leather patches on the sleeves. baggy trousers, boots....and talk all the time about being in hard covers and about Max Brand...make a few puns." I handed him a photograph taken many years ago. He smiled: he refused the proffered fee..."Give it me tonight," he leered.

* * * * *

Kathleen drove me to 170 in her Talbot Horizon. She said she would collect me at 9pm sharp.

I walked up the path, as I had done so many times before since the very first time in 1954. My heart thumped wildly. How would the other members of Irish Fandom look after all these years? And what would they think of my George Charters idea?

I knocked. Walt Willis opened the door; we shook hands, muttering conventionalities. Our minds accepted the visages confronting us, searched in dormant recesses for our mental photofit kits to absorb the new data, make allowances, confirm the sightings....He looked much the same...some grey hair, a little more worried looking ... might have something to do with the absence of the familiar handful of prozines for sale.

I followed him into the lounge at the front of the house, once blasted by an unpremeditated display of fireworks by George Charters. Bob Shaw and James White were instantly recognizable, though James's intellectual forehead was possibly even higher than before. He was still thin, blinking benevolently behind thick-lensed spectacles, various expressions flitting across his face as if each succeeding speed-of-light thought was more exciting and stimulating than the one it replaced. The colourful stories about Bob having put on weight were obviously pigments of the imagination, and the voice which now convulsed conventions all over the world was the same hesitant and diffident one which had for so long done the same for us privileged few. The youthful *joie de vivre* of the Fifties ghoddminton days was now mixed with the confident smile of the successful author, and a slight twitch of the left corner of the lips indicated constant contemplation of a new letter of the alphabet for the names of his heroines.

The room was thickly carpeted, furnished with Victorian exaggeration...inlaid furniture, highly polished to camouflage surface cracks; water colours of flowers, turning brown at the edges of the frames; an imposing acoustic gramophone of incredible antiquity; thick purple curtains, mothholes anxiously repaired with red embroidery silk which now looked like little rosebuds...the scenery exactly suited the melancholy aspect of the re-union. We were so much older, wiser, matured by the ravages of life and weighed down by the burden of its responsibilities. I was glad I had not brought my grandson's water pistol.

We had a mere hour to encompass the thoughts of forty years. I began to ask a question. "Why--?" As so often before, we knew each other's thoughts. "The Over-Seventies Ballyhackamore Classical Evening," explained Walt, "starts at 9pm. I am not a member, I hasten to add, though I do like the Beach Boys, but Mrs Finlay has kindly allowed us this precious single hour to meet and talk and philosophise. But only an hour."

I sneaked a look at my watch. Delaney...er, George Charters...was due at 8.15. I decided to attempt one of the lightning pun exchanges of our old days.

"Presumably," I offered in quiet triumph, "our chorister hostess was fearful of her recital being ruined?"

"Yes," said Walt, "it was a clear case of Pre-Minstral Tension."

James White and Bob Shaw nodded sagely at this, but whereas thirty years ago word play would have continued like sparks from a busy anvil, we all sat quietly as if holding our breaths, waiting.... Waiting for what?

"I heard," I gabbled, losing my composure, "from Jean Linard that since he moved to Provence he has had to construct a reinforced wing to his house to keep out the wind blowing down the Rhone Valley."

"I have heard of such things," agreed Walt, "I think they are called Pre Mistral Extensions." But again the conversation expired. Desperately, I went on. Would Willis make the hat trick?

"Previously," I said, "his wife used often to writhe in agony with sinus trouble, which could be relieved only by an inhalant."

"Ah yes, pre-menthol torsion," said Willis after some delay, his face showing the strain of unaccustomed mental effort.

Fortunately there was then a knock at the front door. I hastened to open it.

Great Ghu, Delaney was absolutely superb. He looked exactly as I remembered George Charters the last time I had seen him when he used to call at Mon Debris, where I lived in Belfast, for material for SCARR.

"Good evening," he said, "George Charters to see Mr. Willis and company."

"Brilliant, Percy," I hissed, "Here's your fee."

I pressed the £20 note into his right hand. Shakespeare appeared to wink at me from the bank note as he disappeared into a trouser pocket.

I felt magnificent as I opened the lounge door. "Gentlemen, George Charters."

He stumbled in, face wreathed in a huge smile.

"I am George Charters, fan, known as George All The Way. My best pun was 'Earwig Oh. Again!'"



which I sold to Berry in '66, and I have appeared in hard covers..." He continued his delivery, exactly as I had instructed him.

The effect on the other three stalwarts of Irish Fandom was incredible to behold. In each instance, pairs of hands clutched like claws the ends of the chair arms. Their bodies half rose from their chairs, their lower jaws hitting their sternums in utter bewilderment. I was terribly pleased. I had made their evening complete, if only in a symbolic way.

Unexpectedly there was another knock at the front door. Oh crikey, Kathleen was half an hour early.

I opened the door to remonstrate, and there was George Charters.

"Mr Berry. I'll take my £20 first and then I'm all yours." It was Percy Delaney; I could tell by the lisp, the moue, the overall camp approach as he gripped my arm. I gave him a £20 note.

This was definitely my George Charters. Could it be...of course it couldn't...was the other George some kind of mass mind-controlled phenomenon.

"Hurry up, it's cold out here, Ducky," he said.

I held the lounge door open again: inside, the other George Charters was lecturing on his experiences in the Short and Harland aircraft factory in the Sixties.

"Gentlemen," I said, "er, permit me to present the real pseudo George Charters."

Delaney swept in, and quickly handed each of us a card:-

Percy 'Limpwrist' Delaney
Impersonator and Artiste
Bachelor Parties a Specialty

"I am George L for Leather Charters," he commenced, "famed in fandom for my vast store of local knowledge and my impromptu fireworks displays. My best pun was 'I am a Bangorlore Torpedo'.

I was in a parlous mental state with the speed of the action, and the members of Irish Fandom appeared more amazed than I had seen them in 33 years. Save perhaps for James White, who permitted a smirk to cross his face when I heard the other George Charters whisper to him, "No, the man with the moustache paid me."

"I'm really George Charters."

"No, I'm George Charters: see my cowboy shirt with the coloured pockets."

"Bitch." (That remark was made by my George Charters.)

I thought the situation had eased a little as far as I was concerned, but I welcomed another knock on the front door. Kathleen had arrived to save me from further humiliation. I dashed to open the door.

Another George Charters.

"Come in," I panted. I pushed open the lounge door.

"A third George Charters, cnaps." Walt, Bob, James and I eased our chairs backwards as the three George Charters took the centre of the stage.

"I'm a better George Charters than you any day."

"You don't look a bit like him. He wore boots, not suede shoes."

"But I'm wearing spurs on them. And where's your ear trumpet?"

"That's all you know. The ear trumpet was a myth."

"You're both butch". That last comment was made by my George Charters

"I thought I heard the front door being knocked again. John," breathed Bob Shaw. "You're nearest, would you see who it is?"

By now I had a helluva good idea who it was...

Bingo. I grabbed him by the front of his shawl and pushed him into the lounge.

"Bloody hell," swore Willis, "Yet another George."

The fourth George Charters commenced, "I lived for many years at 3 Lancaster Avenue, Bangor, inhabiting half the houses on that side of the street---"

"Oh no you didn't. I lived there, with my fabulous collection of brown paper parcels."

"You're nothing like George. You're just a poof."

"It takes all sorts." (That observation was made by my George Charters.)

"I'm the only one with a Buntline Special."

"Max Brand used a Colt."

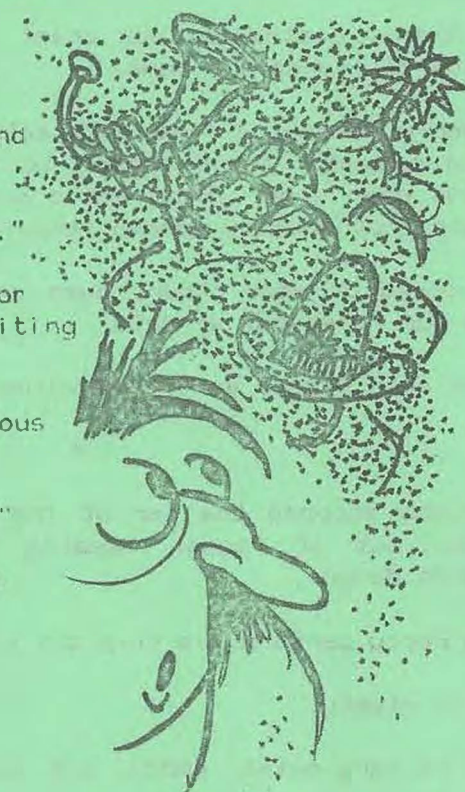
"ENOUGH IS ENOUGH," roared Willis.

The silence cut through the atmosphere like a pneumatic drill. The four George Charters looked open-mouthed at Willis. The scene was utterly bizarre, incredible, dreamlike.

"Please leave, gentlemen," said Walt. "You've all performed admirably, but it has all been a terrible mistake. Mr Berry will see you out and pay you."

It was all so confusing. It was 3 minutes to 9pm. I could hear Kathleen's car drawing up outside and her pipping the horn...Hell, easy come easy go. I could easily work another 50 hours overtime to make up the £120. I mean, I didn't know who was who and I had no time to question them.

I waved to Kathleen to indicate she should wait, and returned to the lounge.



"Members of Irish Fandom," said Walt. "What can I say? It seems we all had the inspirational notion---a facsimile of George Charters to complete the gathering. If only we had discussed it beforehand...but then, we are famed for our spontaneity, aren't we. How much did it cost you, John?"

I saw a spark in his eyes---the flash of pure genius I'd seen so often in the old days....what did it mean.

"Er, um, it's a worry. I'm beginning to feel a mite feverish. I'm not really solvent, you know."

Villis leaped up, his right hand formed into a fist as he punched the ceiling.

"*Pre menstruum tertian,*" he screamed.

And then...a strange look crept across those firm features. He sat down, waved for us all to do the same.

Suddenly something like an electric shock ran up my legs, up my spine. My hair stood rampant; tears sprang to my eyes. The other three also sat transfixed, mouths open wide. There was a sudden chill in the air, followed instantly by a warmth that somehow seemed relaxing...happy...familiar?

We looked at each other, eyes blinking in astonishment. The sudden realisation made our foreheads wrinkle.

"Gentlemen," said Walt, his voice firmly under control, "we are complete."

* * * * *

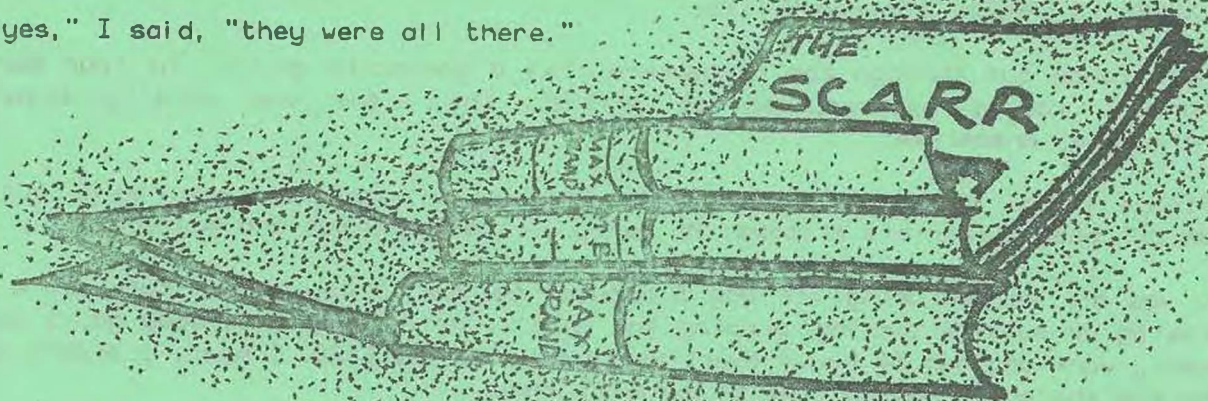
Kathleen stopped the car at the Ballyhackamore traffic lights. Red... amber... green...out of focus...seeming to fill the windscreen. She turned the car towards Bangor.

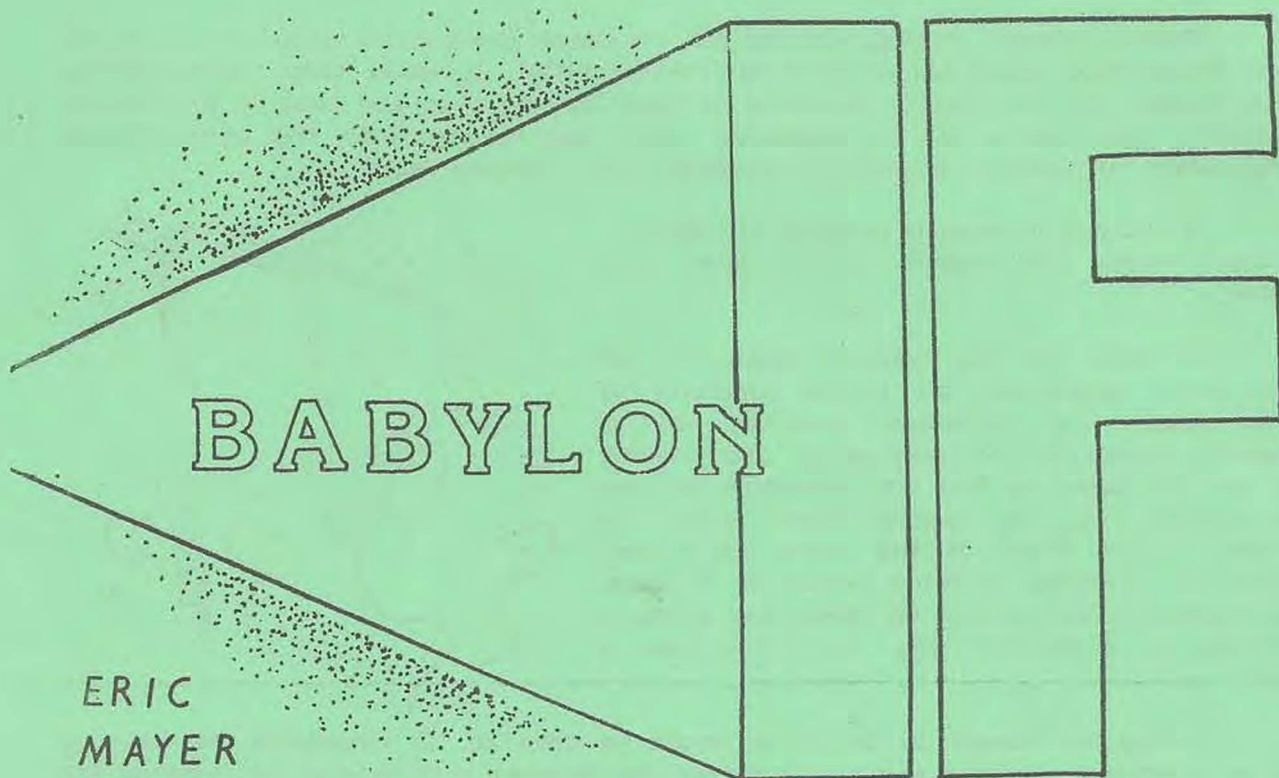
"Did Percy perform his role all right?" she queried.

"Quite nicely."

"You're very quiet, daddy, was everyone there?"

"Oh yes," I said, "they were all there."





It took a neofan and a couple of sticky quarters to make the discovery that split fandom like a HUSTLER centrefold. The neo had been staying at Curly Thompson's famous Brooklyn apartment for barely a week when the quarters showed up in a dogeared envelope, addressed in a looping, childish scrawl to "Frederick Foster, Editor." Freddy had never edited anything in his life.

It must be an omen," Curly told him. "Buy a couple of stencils. I started with a two-pager myself."

Freddy had pulled the tape off the coins and stuck them in the pocket of his jeans. They were still there that evening, gummy and gathering lint, as the roar of the departing subway train dwindled to a ringing in his slightly protuberant ears. As soon as he realized he'd gotten off at the wrong stop his suddenly trembling hands went to the coins, as if to a talisman.

He wished desperately that he'd listened to Curly, stayed to the end of the Spacehounds meeting and come home with him and Sid. The unfamiliar station was deserted. Naked bulbs, dangling overhead, sent shadows knifing away from the graffiti-covered I-beams supporting the unnaturally low ceiling. Freddy began to move down the platform in an awkward walk that was really a frantic dash trying to pass for a nonchalant stroll.

Later, Freddy wouldn't explain how, terrified by the dank subterranean tunnels, he had chosen to reach the Port Authority and the Brooklyn bound IRT by an aboveground route. He had not planned on finding himself on one of those disreputable blocks near Times Square. He was horrified to see the black flocks of "X"s that had come to roost on the theatre marquees, thrusting out over the congested sidewalks. Everywhere neon buzzed about "Topless Dancers" and "Live Sex" so shamelessly that it might have been hawking "Bud" or "Miller". It looked like it would be possible to commit all Seven Deadly Sins, as well as several others, undiscovered by mediaeval man, before reaching the end of the block.

Steeling himself, Freddy started off. He never dreamed he would end up in one of the innumerable peepshows advertising "Movies---25¢". It would never have occurred to him, except for the fateful quarters he kept turning over and over in his pocket. The sign in the window of the peepshow, which was covered with the stained glass contact paper favoured by storefront churches, said "Babylon West."

"A fan has to keep broadening his mental horizons," Freddy told himself, as he pushed open the door.

He made his way through racks full of glossy porno magazines, all sealed carefully in plastic bags like priceless fanzines on a huckster's table. As he approached the viewing booth in the back, he had the sensation he was being stared at. He glanced back over his shoulder. In the front of the place was a tall counter with a raised platform behind it. A moon-faced black man was sitting up there and grinning at Freddy in a peculiar way, as if he knew a secret.

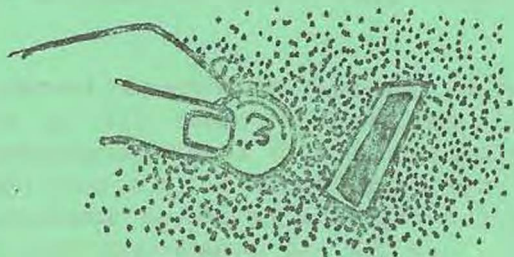


Freddy hid himself in the first booth he came to. It resembled the changing booth in department stores and as he pulled the squeaky curtain shut he recalled the mortification he'd suffered as a child when forced to try on new clothes. He'd been certain that the other customers could look over or under the curtains and see him, with his skinny legs, in his underpants. As he rushed to get his trousers back on, the zipper invariably stuck.

Freddy flushed. He fumbled one of the quarters out of his pocket. It stuck to his sweaty thumb before he managed to shove it into the slot underneath the screen. It fell into the coin box with a loud thunk and he heard the projector behind the wall of the booth whir into life.

"Up in the Attic". The title flashed on then to be replaced by a grainy, unsteady picture of a nude woman stretched out on her side. As the camera pulled back Freddy realized, with disappointment, that it was the famous poster of Marilyn Monroe. Intellectually speaking, he had hoped for something more exotic than the picture that had adorned the backs of the playing cards he and the neighbourhood kids used to steal out of his father's desk for their poker games.

The camera continued to move back jerkily until it became apparent that the poster was hanging on the wall of the long cluttered attic of the title. The picture was dim, as if the projector bulb was nearly burnt out and Freddy strained to make out four shadowy figures, moving about vigorously. Before he could figure out what they were up to, the screen went black. Muttering, he pushed his second quarter into the slot.



He gasped so loud that the moonfaced man must have heard him: his sensitive fannish face was contorted into an expression of disbelief. The picture was brighter now---and it was quite obvious what the four figures were doing.

There was the rattling of chains being unlatched and bolts being slid back that Freddy's week in the city had not accustomed him to. Then the heavy apartment door swung open and Sid goggled up at him through his thick lens. "Thank goodness, you're OK," he said. It was late. Brooklyn stretching out away from the fifth floor window was dark. Curly lumbered up off the couch, a big, indistinct silhouette against the twin arcs of red and green marking the Verrazanno Bridge.

"So you finally made it," he said, knuckling his eyes. "You should have stayed for the rest of the meeting. Vispl proclaimed Sid 'The New Burbee' on the basis of that PLTH article. Isn't that a laugh?"

"You got lost didn't you," said Sid. "I knew we shouldn't have let you leave by yourself. You could have been mugged."

"At least that would have made an article," Curly said. "Maybe Vispl would've proclaimed Freddy The New Willis." He chuckled. "I'm off to bed, myself." For a man of his bulk he made his way with remarkable grace through the cartons of paper, stencils and fanzines piled like ancient cairns around the dark living room.

"Wait," said Freddy suddenly. "I did get an article out of it. I went into this peepshow and ---"



"Peepshow. Great Ghu. Rotsler's on my mailing list. You think he'd be impressed by a juvenile account of some silly peepshow?"

"Well, what I saw---"

"My dear boy, I've attended 441 conventions. I know what you saw." Curly shook his head. A smile began to form. "Imagine though: Freddy Foster, well known young neo, not a week in the Big Apple and already succumbing to the illicit pleasures of city life. Now there's something I'll have to write up."

Freddy flushed. His mouth moved but for a moment nothing came out. "I---I saw Walt Willis in the peepshow," he finally blurted.

* * *

An hour later, Curly, Sid and Freddy stood in front of the sputtering sign in the window of the Babylon West. Curly had grumbled but had broken down when Sid threatened to go with Freddy alone. On the way, over the numbing clatter of the subway, Freddy described what he'd seen.

"As soon as the picture brightened I could see it was a goodminton match. A mustachioed character in a trenchcoat whacked the shuttlecock towards the camera and when one of the opposing players whirled to retrieve it, I recognized him as Willis."

Curly led the way into the peepshow. As they passed the front counter, the moon face man accosted them in a mellifluous voice. "Only one at a time in the viewing booth, gentlemen."

Sid dashed eagerly through the racks of shrinkwrapped genitalia and vanished behind the curtain of the booth Freddy had indicated. Curly came to a halt beside the booth, stopping slowly like an ocean liner coming into dock. He waited, glowering, with arms folded.

Half a minute after the whir of the projector stopped for the second time, the curtains squeaked and Sid emerged, looking sheepish. He pulled a red bandanna out of his shirt pocket and began cleaning his glasses. He looked straight at Freddy with his myopic, unfocussed eyes. "There were just some--uh--girls. You know."

"Let's make it official," Curly said. He wedged himself into the booth.

"Freddy," Sid whispered, "I'm sorry." He put his glasses back on but wouldn't look up from the linoleum floor.

Curly yanked the curtain open and glared icily at Freddy. Freddy found himself glaring back. How much condescension were you supposed to put up with in return for a place to crash. "I know what I saw." His voice quavered.

Curly looked thoughtful. "I don't think you do know," he said in a surprisingly mild voice. "For instance, you didn't even realize that the character in the trenchcoat is John Berry."

* * *

On the downtown IRT Curly and Freddy sat apart from Sid, as if he had metamorphosed into a giant slug. As soon as they got back to the apartment Curly fetched Sid's travel bag from the bedroom and dropped it at Sid's sneakers.

"Any real fan would have seen Willis in that film," he said. "I'm not harbouring any mundanes under my roof."

The horror of being banished from Curly's famous apartment was too much for Sid. "Maybe I'm not a trufan," he blubbered. "Maybe I'm just a jerk. But think of the articles. Where would Burbee be without Al Ashley. Let me stay, Curly. I'll be your Al Ashley."





From the 5th floor window they watched his foreshortened figure trudge off. He looked like one of those cartoon characters that waddles away after being squashed up into his hat

"Pathetic," Curly said. "He didn't even think to call ~~us~~ bastards."

* * *

"We won't be attending Spacehounds anymore," Curly announced the next morning. "We'll form our own club, exclusively for Trufen. We can call ourselves the Wheels of Babylon."

He had it all figured out. Discreet invitations were mailed. Small groups of would-be initiates began to arrive each week and Freddy and Curly escorted them to the Babylon theatre. Some saw the light. Most did not. It surprised Freddy that he could never predict which fans would see Willis in the booth, although it seemed to him that the rankest neos failed most consistently, probably because many of them were not long for fandom anyway. Those who saw heaving breasts rather than spiralling shuttlecocks reacted in various ways. Many gafiated in humiliation. Some denounced the whole thing as a hoax. One prominent editor merely reasserted his fannishness by adding a couple of "h"s to his name and went on pubbing as if nothing had happened.

In the evening Curly bent over his vast mailing list, eradicating the names of the frauds who had been revealed. "Many are called but few are chosen," he liked to say. Above his desk hung a pen and ink drawing done by a fanartist after his revelation in the peepshow. It showed Mae West wearing a beanie. "Is that a stylus in your pocket, or are you just a mundane," she was saying.

The Wheels of Babylon promised great things indeed.

It seemed to Freddy that club membership was increasing with agonizing slowness, so it surprised him when after two months Curly remarked that too many fans were entering the fold. "Some of them must be faking it," he concluded.

He didn't pursue the subject and the next pilgrimage started off normally. The dozen uneasy fans made their way down the seedy street to the Babylon West, trailed by the panhandlers who'd come to anticipate the weekly appearance of these easy marks. Inside the peepshow the moonfaced clerk was at his accustomed spot, smiling his enigmatic smile but not acknowledging the fans otherwise. He was remarkably tolerant of the commotion the fans caused---the whoops of glee from the chosen, the teeth gnashing and howls from the less fortunate. It was as noisy as if Jesus Christ himself were to materialize at a revival meeting, save half the congregation on the spot and open up the floor under everybody else. The clerk's only response, if it was a response, was to play a jazz station on the radio he kept behind the counter.

In the group was a longtime fan with whom Curly had once feuded. "We fought the good fight and I've come to respect the man," Curly confided to Freddy. The longtime fan emerged from the booth exuding neofannish enthusiasm.

"What a sight," he exclaimed.

"What color were the stripes on Shaw's sweater," Curly asked him.

The man was taken aback. No one else had been subjected to questioning. "I think they were blue," he said hesitantly. "I wasn't studying the---"

"If you'd really seen the attic you'd know the sweater wasn't striped at all," Curly said. And Freddy could hardly disagree.

Testing soon became part of the ritual. Not everyone who claimed to see the attic was questioned but whoever Curly chose to test was invariably revealed as a fraud.

"When you've been in fandom as long as myself you learn to spot them," Curly explained.

Gradually fandom was culled and the remaining Trufans were able to turn their attention to the great task before them. There was much to be done for, as Freddy described it, the film did not end after the first two segments. A third appeared a week after Freddy's initial discovery and was followed, at sporadic intervals, by others. Each new segment opened new universes of information.

Curly organized projects. Neofans were assigned to count the cartons of paper and stencils. The attic was mapped. Artists kept busy drawing Willis and his colleagues from life and coming up with new treatments of the bits of Upper Newtownards Road sometimes visible through the attic windows. The length of Berry's mustache was calculated to the millimetre. One enterprising fan deduced the date from the angle of the sunlight hitting the wall to the left of the ghoddminton net.

"To my knowledge not a single issue of HYPHEN appeared within months of that date," Curly observed. "And yet, the amount of supplies suggests Willis was ready to print something. Freddy tells me he has verified the existence of crumpled stencils in the wastebasket which appears for a second behind Paper Stack 4 during the fifth segment. If all this is true it can only mean one thing. A lost HYPHEN."

By remarkable coincidence, it was the following day that Freddy reported the appearance of a new, sixth segment, in which a manuscript was clearly visible on the work table that sat beside the heretofore unglimped attic doorway.

* * *

The Wheels of Babylon set out to reconstruct the Great Lost Hyphen and all might have gone smoothly if Freddy had not met Ann Olicher. Without Curly's knowing, Freddy had been visiting Sid at Vispi's westside apartment. Freddy had been surprised that Sid, although a mundane, was still publishing frequently and receiving numerous fanzines from other mundanes. It was at Vispi's that Freddy met Ann. She reminded him of one of Heinlein's heroines. He was smitten.

Curly was horrified when Freddy proposed her for the Wheels of Babylon. There were no women in the club. "It wouldn't be gentlemanly to take a woman into a peepshow," Curly explained. "And what if she was a mundane and rather than seeing Willis...well...it couldn't be done."

Freddy insisted however. Ann was the most beautiful femmefan he had ever seen. When he and Curly finally took her to the Babylon she had to pull a baseball cap down over her head so she could pass for a boy.

"What color are White's socks?" Curly asked her.

"White, of course."

Curly shook his head sadly. "I'm sorry, Ann. They're obviously a charcoal gray."

Freddy's mouth went dry. Curly was avoiding his gaze but Ann flashed her eyes at him. "Curly," Freddy said. "You must have been wrong. Those socks are white."

* * *

Something seemed to go wrong with Curly once Ann was in the club. He proposed that the Wheels start work immediately on a fanzine, BABYLON IF, in which they would make public their findings, including a reconstruction of the lost HYPHEN. He suggested they use magnifying glasses to enable them to make out the words on the manuscript page that was visible in the film.

"Why not take a camera into the booth?" Ann suggested.

"The clerk would never allow it," said Curly. "Besides, it wouldn't work. The Effect can only be seen by a Trufan."

Ann took a drag on her cigarillo. "Hasn't anyone written to Willis and asked him about all this, about the lost issue, about whether he ever had a ghoddminton game filmed?"

Curly leaned forward in his seat. From beyond the window came the sound of distant sirens. "I know there's still a Walter Willis in Northern Ireland," he said, "But, you see, he's not our Willis. He's not the fanWillis. Not any more."



The next day Freddy found a net stretched across the middle of the living room. Curly was wheezing as he shifted cartons of paper from place to place.

"We will create an exact replica of the attic," Curly wheezed. "Every box of paper will be in its place. We'll re-create the scene. If we put ourselves in the minds of the Wheels of IF we'll be able to fill in the gaps in the lost HYPHEN. We'll need to dress appropriately. Does Ann sew?"

Freddy started to worry about Curly. It was with a sense of relief that he was able, shortly afterwards, to report that he had finally discovered the final segment of the film.

"There's no more. Willis's side wins the game, naturally. Then the trailer comes on."

With the completion of the project suddenly in sight the Wheels worked feverishly. Evenings, after the others had left, Curly would stand before the window, between the replicas of "Paper Stack 48" and "Dropped Stencil 2", gazing glassily out over the rooftops of Brooklyn, muttering about pods and mundanes who walked like fans, wringing his big, soft hands.

"Sometimes I think there's just the two of us, Freddy. There are no more fans left anymore but us."

* * *

The day came when Babylon IF was finished. It was a magnificent fanzine, with gorgeous lino-cut covers. It was absolutely authentic. Every word, every picture had either come directly from or been inspired by the film of the attic.

Freddy gazed upon the hundreds of zines choking the living room and quailed.

"Don't worry," Curly told him. "I'll see they're mailed rightaway."

And indeed when Freddy returned from visiting Ann that afternoon, the issues were gone.

* * *

For a week Freddy haunted the tiny, cold foyer where the apartment mailboxes were located. At last the first loc arrived and he raced up the five flights of stairs calling for Curly.

"Dear Curly," the loc began, "Thank you for sending SWEDISH METERMAIDS IN BONDAGE."

The locs were all like that, although some writers did not thank them. Even the Wheels themselves accused Curly and Freddy of sending them glossy pages of exploitation rather than the twiltone revelations they'd labored at.

"Did you expect that the Effect would remain, even after we transferred what we'd seen onto paper?"

"They were all mundanes," intoned Curly. "Not a single Trufan among them. They all deceived us."

Freddy had to agree. There was no other explanation.

* * *

Freddy and Curly returned one last time to the Babylon West. Winter had arrived. Soiled snow lay sprawled in sullen piles along the curb. As they approached the peepshow they saw an ambulance pulling away. Two police cars, red lights flashing, were parked in the street. The neon sign in the stain glass papered window was dead.

Curly strode through the doorway and confronted the policeman inside. "I want to see the manager," he said.

"You're too late," one of the cops told him. "The fellow's an escaped mental patient. Someone recognized him and tipped us off. He's on his way back upstate now."

Curly headed towards the booths.

"Don't waste your time, buddy," the cop called after him. "No films left. As a matter of fact, the whole place was cleaned out weeks ago."

Freddy noticed for the first time that the racks were empty. There wasn't a magazine to be seen. The place might have been deserted for years.

He and Curly trudged back out, into the cold. The shock had been too much for Curly. "Now what?" he moaned. "What's left for me?"

"I'm moving out of the apartment," Freddy told him. "I'm gafiating. Ann is going to school. We have plans."

Curly said nothing. His eyes were dull. Except for the movement of his legs and the fact that his breath continued to steam out into the icy air, he might have been dead.

"Before I leave, though, I wanted to tell you, since you're the last one now, that there was another segment. I wanted it to be a surprise, for a second issue of Babylon IF." Curly turned his head dully in Freddy's direction.

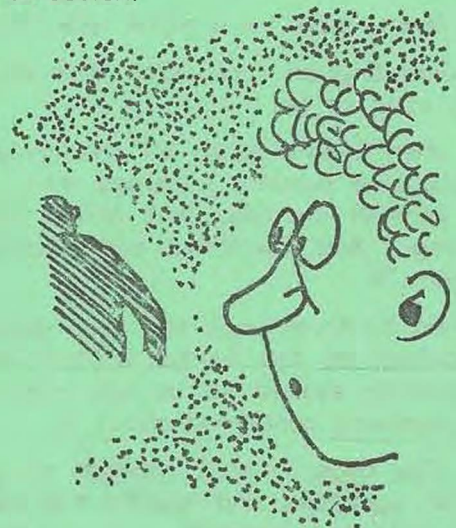
"Willis left a message. He wrote it on a sheet of paper and held it up to the camera so I could read it."

Curly's hand clamped round Freddy's thin wrist, but there was no strength in his grip. It was as if he were holding Freddy for support.

"What did it say?"

"I'm sorry, Curly. I can't tell you that. It would plunge all fandom into war"

Freddy pulled away from Curly. He started walking to the subway.



THE GLASS BUSHEL

TRANCE WITH A STRANGER

BOB SHAW

I was driving in the north-east with a non-fan friend, and suddenly noticed an arrow-shaped sign which read: TYNE.

"Oh look," I exclaimed. "There must be a fork in the road."

The friend gave me a blank look. "How do you know?"

An Olde English fork, with Olde English spelling, I thought of saying. Tines aren't what they used to be.

But when I considered all the sheer hard work involved in explaining a simple pun to an unreceptive person, I lapsed into gloomy silence and wished I was with a couple of my old fannish buddies. Walt Willis might have responded with, "Are you planning a short cutlery?" And Jim White might have said, "I hope we don't get any wheel-spoon on the corners."*

I tried to think what the dear departed George Charters might have said, but---again---I balked at the mental effort. That had become a problem with me in recent months. *Everything* seemed to be too much trouble. My productivity had been getting low and I was becoming concerned about it.

A few days later I chanced on an article by Jim Barker in which he described having similar symptoms and how he had reversed the situation. Jim had got himself hypnotised by a talented workmate, and a single session had turned him into a human dynamo which was producing more revs than a theological college. He was blasting through so much work that he actually had to go back to the hypnotist friend and get himself tuned down a bit. The notion of being instantly turned into a bundle of energy had had a strong appeal, so I grabbed the yellow pages and tore them out of the phone book---those coffee stains had been annoying me for ages. Then I grabbed the classified section and made an appointment with the nearest hypnotist.

* Provided they were in peak form, that is. On off-days their jokes would have been considerably worse.

Two days later, on the way to Dr Cook's* place, I found my enthusiasm had waned somewhat. I have never liked the idea of being "put under"; and on that dank misty morning the phrase suddenly had a sinister ring to it. Also, I have always been convinced that nobody could hypnotise me, so I was about to squander a hard-earned £20.

The first glimpse of Dr Cook's establishment did not improve my frame of mind. It was a large, gloomy house surrounded by dripping trees, the sort of place in which Ralph Bates and even his mummy would have felt uneasy. The doorbell was answered by Dr Cook himself---a pale, plumpish individual with beady eyes. He brought me upstairs to his office and installed me in an armchair which had plastic foam erupting from one arm, just where my right hand naturally came to rest. Somehow that piece of stuffing immediately got on my nerves.

Bugger me, I thought, I know this isn't Harley Street, but he could at least have patched the bloody thing!

"Well now, Bob," Dr Cook said, "What do you do for a living?"

I decided to level with him. "I'm a science fiction writer."

His jaw sagged. "That's incredible! So am I!"

My jaw sagged. *Bugger me, I thought. What can a science fiction writer possibly do for anyone that's worth £20? If I had any sense, I'd get out of here right now.* I mustered a smile and said, "Really? Have you had anything published?" That, as every sf author knows, is a way of telling a writer you have never heard of him.

He nodded importantly. "I had some short stories published under the pseudonym of Cal Cookson, but mainly I was part of a syndicate which used the name Milo Pratt."

Bugger me, I thought, reflexively clutching my piece of stuffing. am I going to pay £20 to be hypnotised by the author of THE PURPLE TENTACLE?

"But nobody can actually make a living out of writing science fiction," Dr Cook said, "What's your main job?"

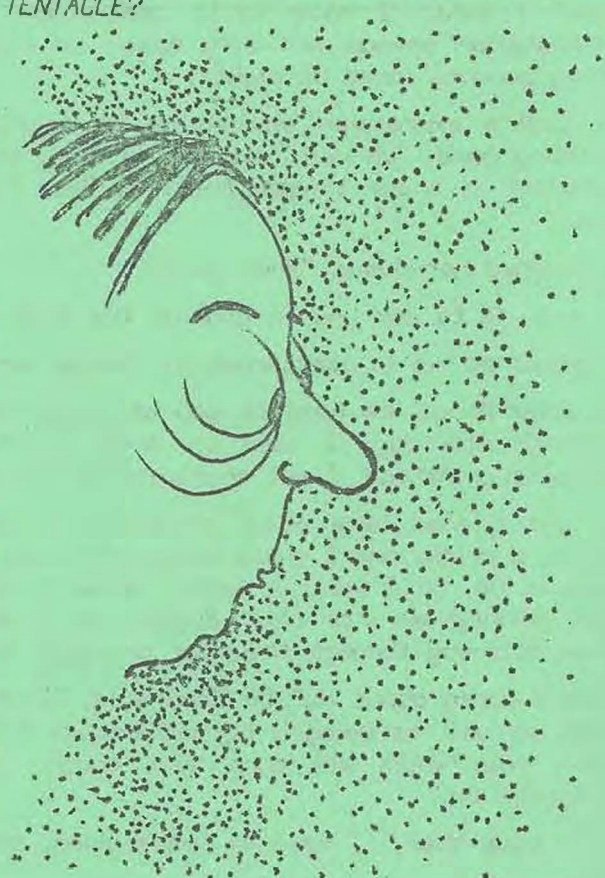
"Writing science fiction," I reaffirmed. "I make a living out of it."

His jaws sagged again and he began a lengthy session of close questioning about markets, multiple submissions and word rates, ending with his noting my agent's name and address. We were now about fifteen minutes into my allotted hour of hypnotherapy and Dr Cook hadn't so much as dangled a watch fob in front of me.

"I've never been hypnotised before," I said, hoping to spur him into action and get it over with, "and I'm a bit nervous about it."

He smiled reassuringly. "There's absolutely no need to worry. People have an exaggerated idea of what hypnotism is all about. I'm going to put you into a suggestive state, but you will be fully conscious all the time---and afterwards you may not even believe you were in a trance."

**I have changed the man's name, his pen names and the name of the story mentioned.*



Oh yes, I thought. I've heard that kind of line before---the king's new clothes line. Now I think of it, I've never noticed a clothes line in a palace backyard.

"But," Dr Cook announced, breaking my train of thought, "you will be in a trance, and there's a way in which I will be able to prove it to you."

God, I thought, now nearing a state of panic. Pins! He's going to stick a pin in me! I'm paying £20 to have the perpetrator of THE PURPLE TENTACLE stick a pin in me!

We talked for a while about my problematic lack of drive, then Dr Cook got another idea. "Did you know," he said, "that I am an authority on UFOs and related phenomena?"

Bugger me, I thought, clawing up a large handful of the stuffing. "UFOs," I said, attempting a smile, "That's very interesting."

"Yes," he said, producing a large scrapbook. It proved to be full of clippings in which Dr Cook had achieved fame by testifying that some local people who had claimed they were spirited away for a while in flying saucers were telling the truth. He had proved it by putting them into trances.

"I believe there is definitely something in it," he concluded. "Don't you?"

"No," I said. "I have never understood why interstellar envoys will only speak to elderly simpletons who are driving Morris Minors along country lanes at night."

Dr Cook's expression altered as he realised he had made a blunder in the confidence-building game. "Oh well," he said briskly, slamming the book shut. "I only take an academic interest in these things. And now, Bob, I'm going to ask you to do something you won't like."

I coughed nervously. "What is it?"

"I'm going to ask you to give up the drink altogether."

I gaped at him in consternation. Things were getting worse.

"I know it will be hard on you at first," he said, "but you don't need booze to get you through the day. I used to drink a lot, but I never touch it now. I've become a chocoholic instead. I eat chocolate all the time."

"I didn't come here about drinking," I protested. "I enjoy a drink, and all my friends enjoy a drink, and I enjoy being with them enjoying a drink. I have absolutely no wish to give it up. All I want is extra drive in my work." Barker, I thought grimly, *I'll kill you for getting me into this.* Bugger me, I added, glancing at my watch. We were now more than half-way through the hour and still there was no sign of the fob.

"Don't worry about it," Dr Cook said. "I notice you have a nervous cough, and it happens that as well as being a hypnotherapist I am a qualified homeopathist, and I can let you have pills which will cure your cough. Only £2 for a hundred---cheaper than a NHS prescription."

"I'll take them," I said in desperation, gripping the armchair stuffing for comfort. "I'll



take them."

"Very wise," he said, turning down the lights. "And now, Bob, I'm going to put you into a trance which you may not believe was a trance until I have proved it to you. I want you to close your eyes and relax all your muscles."



I complied with the first part of the request, but the relaxation bit was impossible---I was as tense as a fanzine editor opening a letter from Joseph Nicholas.

"You are relaxed, you are totally relaxed, and you will remember everything I say to you." He then started to speak in assertive hypnotist's tones, obviously implanting suggestions, but unfortunately when his larynx shifted gear he began to sound exactly like Frankie Howard using his declamatory voice. The sudden ludicrous contrast almost gave me an attack of nervous giggles; then in the darkness came a regular clacking sound which baffled and frightened me until I realised it was Dr Cook counting a hundred pills into a plastic box.

"You do not need the drink," he intoned, clack, clack, clack. "You can get through the day without resorting to the bottle..."

Double bugger me, I thought, the man is determined to ruin my fannish reputation. I've got to escape!

I heard Dr Cook get out of his chair---clack, clack, clack---and cross the room.

Oh buggery, I thought in pure terror, trying to take cover behind my mound of stuffing. The pin! Here comes the bloody pin! I'm about to become a kebab!

But there was no pin, only Dr Cook's repetitious commands to lay off the booze. That went on for a while; then he said, "You are now wide awake."

You don't know how right you are, chum, I bleated inwardly as the lights came on.

"Now," he said, smirking. "I'll bet you still believe you were not under a trance. Am I right?"

I nodded.

"There you are," he cried triumphantly. "That proves what I was saying."

"But here is extra, incontrovertible proof. You came into my office at eleven o'clock and it is now almost noon, which means you have

been sitting with your eyes closed and without moving a muscle for practically an hour---and that would be humanly impossible unless you were in a trance."

Having been keeping a close eye on the time, I knew the torment had not lasted longer than ten minutes, but---cravenly---I said, "That's very impressive."

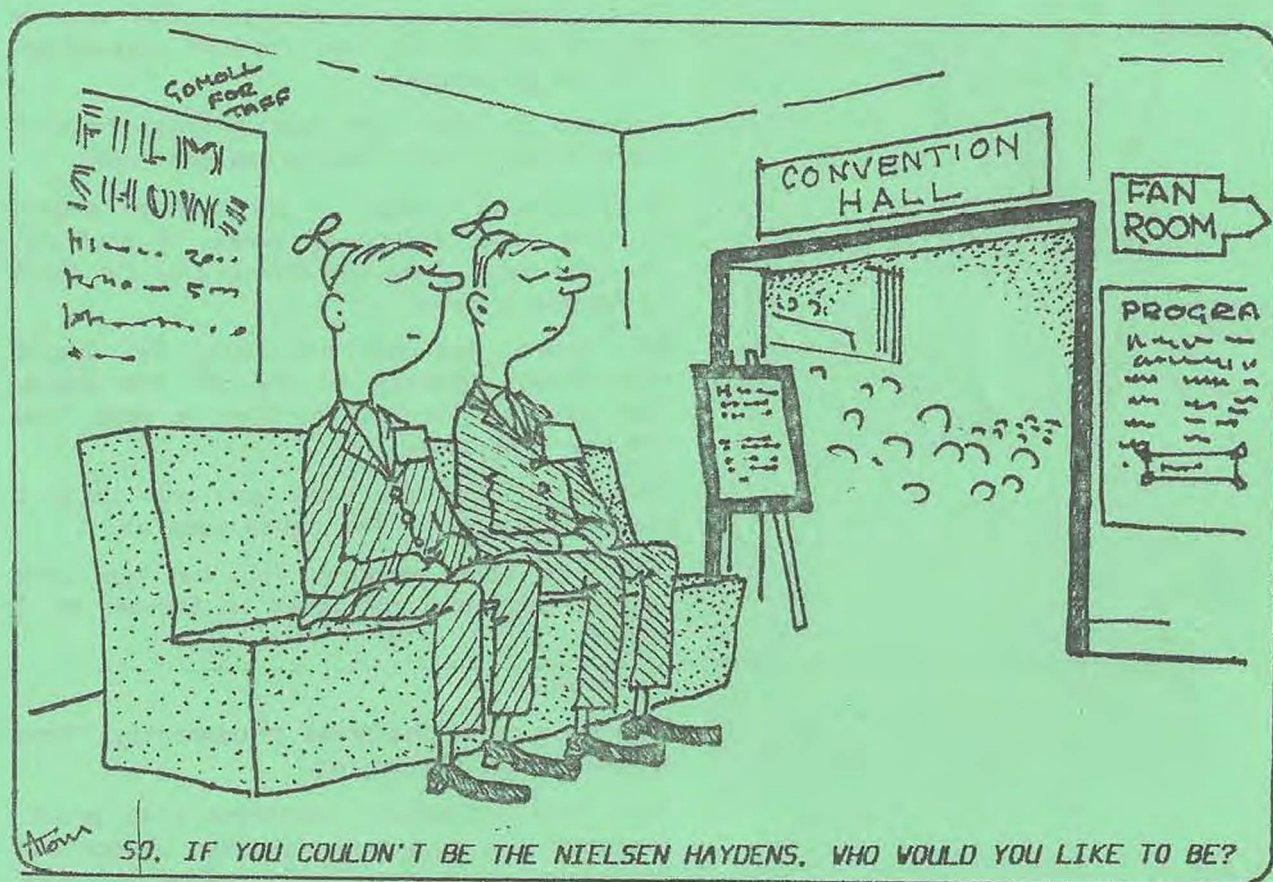
"Yes," Dr Cook agreed. "In fact I wouldn't be at all surprised if your right arm suddenly felt very light, so light that you are unable to keep it from floating up into the air. It is very light, isn't it?"

We both transferred our attention to my right forearm. It lay there like a slab of soft putty, like a tube of sausage meat, like a dead mackerel. A look of disappointment appeared on Dr Cook's face, followed by one of concern as he suddenly noticed that I had virtually eviscerated half his armchair.. I tried to cram the plastic foam back into the L-shaped tear in the Rexine, but it refused to go. I jumped up, hastily wrote a cheque for £22, grabbed my box of pills, and got of the place as fast as I could.

On the way home a terrifying new thought occurred: *What if there IS something in all this hypnotic suggestion stuff? What if I can never take another drink?*

Anxious to put the matter to the test, I stopped at the next pub and knocked back three pints of Beddingtons in rapid succession. Beer had rarely tasted so good.

Bugger me, I thought, deeply relieved. *It was almost worth it.*



GO CDA FOR YOUR GOON



— art — thomson —

The phone rang. *The phone rang?* It couldn't have; there it was sitting facing me and there wasn't a quiver coming from it. It rang again. This was crazy. The only other phone was the one away down in the unused GDA office at the other end of Brockham House. Nothing had rung down there for twenty years. The bloody thing rang again. It was the GDA phone, faint but definite.

I walked down the hallway and stared at the cobwebbed door. The faint lettering on the dusty frosted window still read GOON DEFECTIVE AGENCY. LONDON OFFICE. ART THOMPSON. I noticed again that the sign writer had misspelled my name. I remembered telling him the 'p' was silent, as in Bath. Nobody ever listens.

From behind the door the phone rang again. I cleared away the cobwebs, forced the door open, crossed the dusty room and picked up the phone.

"Duh," I said. (I've put 'said' because Chuch Harris has always castigated Berry and myself for forever 'growling' or 'grunting' or 'hissing' when typing dialogue. Once he even phoned to tell me to stop hissing in public...it was a bad line and by the time I'd explained I'd never pissed in public, not even on anyone's shoes, fannish though it may be, it had got too complicated to sort out.)

"Duh," I said.

"Is that you, Art?" a voice said.

"Yeah," I said.

"Art, it's Valt," the voice said.

"Valt," I said, "Your handwriting is atrocious."

"Art, I'm speaking on the phone."

"I know," I said, "but I've always wanted to tell you about your handwriting."



Valt Willis never swears. A mild 'bloody hell' when he goes into the rough maybe. It must have been a crossed line with some foulmouth on it. I nearly put the phone down,

"Listen, Arthur," Walter said calmly, "I've got a job for the GDA".

"The Goon has retired," I said. "He's living in seclusion in Hertfordshire on the proceeds of that last Belfast caper...forget I said that, Valt."

"Never mind the Goon, you're still around and I've got a case for you," he said.

"For me?" I said, my voice rising. The irate crossed line gent came on again.

"Art," said Valt, "we're worried. Chuch, BoSh, James and myself have had letters come in purporting to be from Vince Clarke. Now you know that Vince stopped fanning over twenty years ago, so they can't be from him. We think it's a play from some fan called Terry Hill who lives in Kent, not far from Vince. We think he's up to something connected with Vince, like getting hold of his fanzine collection and all those prozines he has from right back in the thirties. We're sure he has an ulterior motive. Something like that."

I made a mental note to look up 'ulterior motive' in the dictionary as soon as I could....did it mean that Terry Hill had some sort of foreign car?

Valt was still speaking.

"We want to put the GDA on the case and find out just what's going on. I don't want to lose the chance of finally getting hold of the April 1943 ASF from Vince to complete my collection."

"But Valt," I said, "the GDA hasn't had a case in twenty years...I dunno...."

Valt put on his Walter Alexander Willis editor of Hyphan voice.

"Arthur," he said, "AS OF NOW YOU AND THE GDA HAVE BEEN REACTIVATED. CAPISCHE?"

(I do wish he wouldn't use the Gaelic.)

The phone clicked, and I was left staring at the silent receiver. I sat down in the chair, automatically putting my feet on the desk in the classic Goon pose. I even started to hiss and grunt, just like the old days.

"Cor," I hissed.

"Reactivated," I grunted.

I got up and went over to the coatstand and tried on the old trenchcoat and battered fedora. I swung round and in one easy movement pulled the plonker gun from the coat pocket and fired at a spider on the opposite wall. The plonker went straight through the window. Bloody hell.

* * * * *

It was eight hours later. I'd kissed Olive goodbye and tried to calm her down...she'd been hysterical when I came up the hallway with my GDA gear on. I was now parked across the street from 16 Wendover Way, Welling, Kent. The Clarke domicile. There had been a light in a downstairs window since dark, but only one shadow had shown up, so far. I knew something should be happening soon: I'd phoned the Hill house from a nearby phonebox an hour earlier and got no reply. Sure enough, a battered 'P' registered car coasted silently up and stopped at No.16. A figure left the car, climbed over a wrecked Morris Minor parked across the path leading up to the door and vanished inside the house.

I felt that old thrill run up my back and into my neck hairs. The game was on. The caper was running.

I could now see two shadows on the curtains of the downstairs room. A peculiar yet somehow familiar sound came from the house. Clunk, clunk. Was Hill beating Clarke to death, torturing him to obtain his collections? I slid quietly out of the car (the horn only sounding for a moment as I brushed the button with my arm), across the road, under
=====

the wrecked Morris and up to the front window. I felt a shiver go through me as I looked for a chink in the curtains. Was I going yellow? I shrugged it off. But remembering Walt's stern injunction to get the facts, and not being able to see anything but vague movement inside the room, I decided it had to be the classic Goon showdown....it was the only way.

The noise had stopped: all I could hear now was the sound of people walking to and fro. I slid along the wall and up to the front door. I was sure they hadn't heard the dustbin fall over and roll against the Morris; a minor matter. The door opened easily to the old GDA lockpick, a cunningly bent stylus. Inside the darkened hallway I crouched behind what appeared to be a large litho machine. Whatever was happening in that room, I had to get in and clear up the case; that was the GDA code.

I eased the plonker gun from my coat. Gripping it in both hands, I dropped into the shootout crouch. Three hyperventilating breaths, a couple of puffs at my cigarette and I was ready.

I screamed the 'Hiaki' cry and threw myself at the door. Just as it opened.

I went right past a burly geezer with a beard who was holding the door open. I skidded across the room, over one mimeo and into two others parked on the floor. I noticed one of them was set up for green ink. We're trained that way, to notice things. I finished up nose deep in a pile of duplicating paper and inky slipsheets.

"Hello, Atom," said Vince, "We're just collating the Microwave Annish. Have you come to give a hand?"

"Uh, yeah, that's exactly what I've come for," I said. Rule 3 in the GDA Handbook... don't rock the boat.

"You're just in time," said Terry, "there's only sixty pages to go."

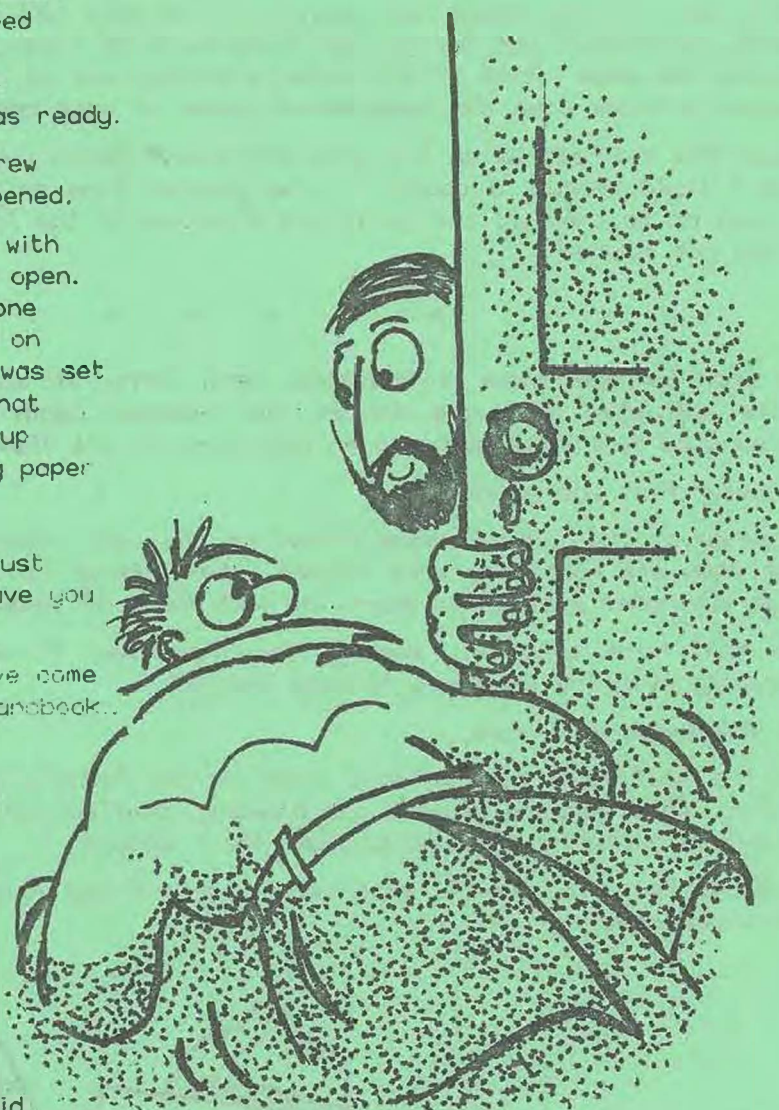
He pulled me to my feet, though why he only used one hand and my coat collar had me thinking. He pushed me into line and the three of us started trudging round the stacks of paper, collating.

"Back fanning, then, Vince?" I said.

"Yes," he said, "Terry contacted me, got me interested again, and I'm back in the game."

"Still got all your prozines upstairs?" I hissed, as Terry trudded round the green ink Gestetner.

"Sure," he said, "I'd have been fanning a bit more these past years, but I've spent most of the time sorting through them looking for an April 1943 ASF for Walt. I'm sure to find it one day."



I felt great. I could put in a completed report to Walt, and even tell him he might get his ASF from Vince.

Later that night I arrived back at Brockham House.

"There's been some phonecalls for you," said Olive. "I made notes and left them on the GDA desk for you."

I went down the hall and into the office. I threw my hat at the hatrack. It missed, just like always.

I read the phone memoes. It was obvious word had gone out that the Goon Defective Agency was back in business. The first call had been from Joe Nicholas. He wanted me to find out who was sneaking into his house and playing with his typewriter: every time he went to use it, the ribbon was worn out. The next call had been from Greg Pickersgill. Someone had stolen the Gorilla Outfit he wore to Cons. He wanted it found: he wasn't going to let some little f*****r make a monkey out of him. Dave Langford required my services to track down the remaindered copies of some book....

I stuck the old feet up on the desk and blew a smoke ring at a cobweb on the desk lamp. Maybe I could recruit a couple of the younger fans to do the tedious legwork for me, and pass on to them all the skills and know-how of the Agency. It was good to be an old fan and not retired.

* * * * *

In a small terrace house in Maidstone, Kent, Terry Hill smiled in satisfaction as he gazed at the completed Microwave Annish, and listened again to the tape on which he had impersonated Walt Willis speaking on the phone to Art Thomson.

His Master Plan was working.

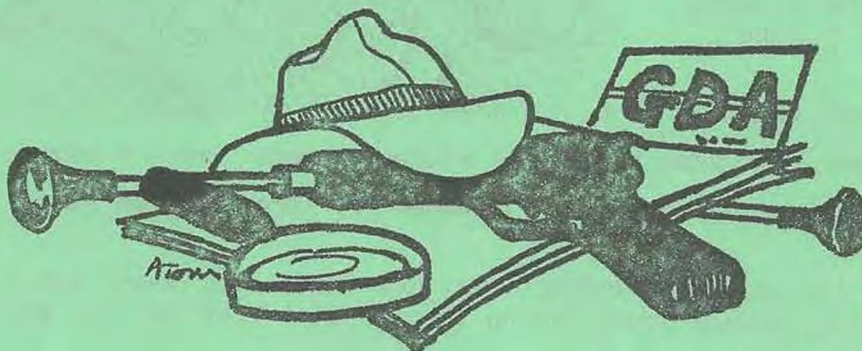
He peered at the list of names pinned to the wall....Vince Clarke, Art Thomson...he could cross them off now; they were hooked. Next Harry Turner, Bob Shaw, Ted Tubb...a host of fannish names past and present, all with loads of talent and experience in fandom.

Soon he'd have them all. Working for Microwave. It would be the ultimate fanzine, surpassing even the legendary Nirvana and VOM.

Kent Trufandom would rule.

From the next room came piteous cries as his faithful and attentive females, Margaret and Elda, their fingers bruised and bleeding, stuffed copies of Microwave into envelopes, with only a guttering crudzine to light their labours.

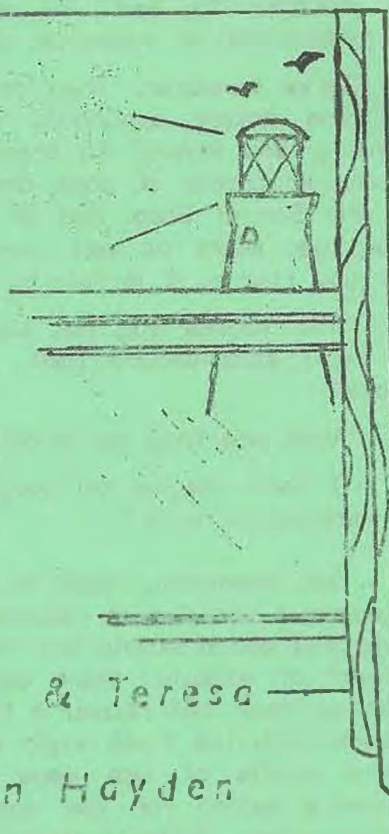
Who could he collar next?. What were Langford and Priest susceptible to? Where were their weaknesses?



ASPECTS

and

INCLINATIONS



"Tell all the truth--but tell it Slant--"
(Emily Dickinson)

One. "Yours is the right to the action for its own sake; the fruits of the action are not yours," as the *Bhagavad-Gita* says---by which Krishna doubtless meant that it's all very well to invent fannish myths to play around with, but you can't anticipate the uses to which they'll be put.

Patrick & Teresa

Nielsen Hayden

Oddly enough, this very point came up late one night at the 1995 Eastercon as we sat around a table decorated with the exuberantly drunk Langford and Harris, and tried to explain Swedish fandom to Walter A. Willis. Then we had to explain it all over again, several days later in Donaghadee, because Walter wanted to make sure we'd actually said what he remembered us saying.

"They take their fanhistory very seriously--" Patrick began...

"--or rather, other people's fan history--" Teresa amended...

"--they worship the collected works of John Berry, which they all seem to have memorized--"

"--they have ghoddminton tournaments on their convention programs--"

"--they actually wear propellor beanies, real ones, actually and truly--"

--their fanzines are so full of fanspeak you almost can't read them; every other word has the intrusive fannish 'h', like in 'bheer'--"

"--and those are the ones supposedly in English--"

"--the fanzines in Swedish are worse, you almost *can* make sense of them, seeing as how every third word is something like "Lhord Roscoe" or "mimeografensvals"--"

"--there was one illustrated heading on an article--looked like it was drawn on-stencil with a paperclip--showing two Hugo-shaped rockets shooting at each other, and one of them was labelled 'Fandom' and the other 'Menden'--"

"--as though you fifties fans really were gods to them, no kidding around--I can't pick up any whiff of humor or irony in it at all. They have long-winded arguments about the precise and specific attributes of correct fannishness, sounding for all the world like they absolutely mean every bit of it--"

"--by now I imagine they know the internal layout of Oblique House better than you do."

Walter listened with widening eyes, leaning far forward. When we'd finished falling over the ends of each others' sentences he sat back to scratch his head, and let out a deep breath. "My God," he said. "What. Have. We. Done. ...I think that's the appropriate kind of response, don't you?"

We've wondered. They do it in a foreign language; maybe that's all it takes to shift the entire apparatus of myth-making from deliberate silliness into apparent absurdity. Who knows? In translation anyone's fanwriting might come out weirdly askew, like the protocols of some crackpot religion. Perhaps Sverifandom is into some kind of high art: Son of Dada. And on the other hand, as Terry Carr once solemnly explained to Teresa, you might as well laugh. The world is a very funny place, whether or not the humor you find in it is fair to its subjects...

"The Swedes may not be doing that any more," Teresa pointed out. "We read all that stuff back around 1981, and most of it was the work of Anders Bellis and Ahrvid Engholm."

"What are they up to now?" Walter asked, very bravely we thought.

"I hear they've all bought copies of *Fanzines in Theory and in Practice* and are busy reading up on it."

Two. Meanwhile, back in Donaghadee, Walter and Madeleine Willis are kind, gentle, funny people who live in realtime and show no signs of imminent apotheosis. It would be a discourtesy and a stupid one to boot, we thought, to obsess on fannish mythology to the exclusion of enjoying their actual company during our visit. Still, there were Hyphen-ghosts all over the house: a twenty-cup capacity teapot, Walter's lovingly preserved old notebook from his first visit to the States, out of which he wrote *The Harp Stateside* (in the middle of one page, a single sentence: "I hope the hotel doesn't sue"); Madeleine's recipe for the mysterious "coffee kisses" that turn out to be a sort of sandwich cookie. Walter's offhanded innocence when he said he hoped the untried electric blanket in the guest room wouldn't malfunction and cook us overnight *should* have been familiar enough to tip us off. This thought occurred to us only after he'd added, "It'd give a whole new meaning to the concept of 'joint candidacy'..."

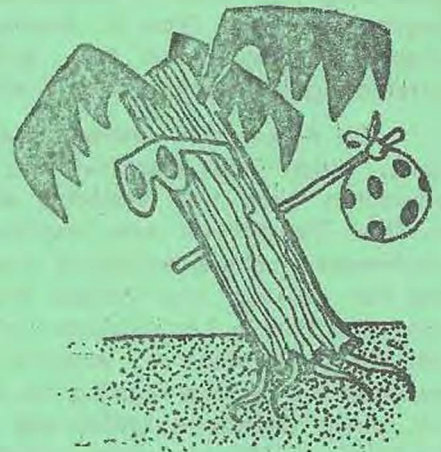
"Aaaargh," replied Patrick in his usual sprightly manner. Or, as Teresa later said with her mouth, "It is an act of virtue to treat one's fannish elders with respectful sobriety. You give them lots more straight lines that way."

Should it have been obvious that on the nightstand in the guest room there'd be a copy of *The Enchanted Duplicator* with "Gideon" written on the cover, or that the postcard view out the window would be of a startlingly familiar lighthouse? And next, Walter's assuring us that a little-known feature of fabulous fannish memory is its tendency to run counter to time, as witness the lighthouse: when ATom started drawing the things on the back covers of Hyphen, Walter and Madeleine hadn't yet moved to Donaghadee. Believe and be saved. Newtownards Road is a major arterial leading into Belfast; the former Oblique House is a big brick row-house in a street full of same. You wouldn't notice it on your own. Our route one day taking us past this historical site, we duly appreciate it while Madeleine tells a long funny story about the travails of selling the house, Walter adding as we drive away that when the woman who finally bought the place moved in she installed a huge harp in the front room where you could see it quite clearly through the window.

Earlier, just in off our flight, we'd marveled at the suburban tidiness of the airport, with its modern-looking branches of "Ulsterbank" and "Ulsterbus". It wasn't what we had imagined while being frisked three separate times boarding the plane back in Manchester (Teresa nervously joking that whatever it was they were looking for, she was glad there wouldn't be one of it on our flight) and nothing at all like the alternate-world mythic dystopian Northern Ireland we'd read about in the New York Times. Driving

out along the airport access road Walter told us we'd just passed our last checkpoint. As we rounded a curve we saw a small car stopped dead in the middle of the oncoming lane, with a middle-aged couple sitting frozen in the front seat. Soldiers in fatigues conversed with them through the windows on either side; another soldier crouched in the road in front of them, levelling a bazooka at their windshield. Walter didn't even blink, just drove on, conversing amiably. We swallowed hard, remembering Shelby Vick's giant cockroach and the politeness of not screaming hysterically at things your host affects not to notice. Besides, do we break pace for people sleeping in doorways in freezing weather, or ranting schizophrenics in the subways? Travel reminds you of what you take for granted.

Three. On examination our notebooks turn up the usual collection of unhelpful random jottings, too many of which go in for botany. We were disconcerted by Northern Ireland's aggressive vegetation, all of it a deep dayglo green and sprouting in every available thimbleful of soil. One large public building had its bas-relief frieze covered in wire mesh to prevent the planting of bombs, and between pigeons and windblown dust the whole pediment was coming up in flowers. (A sign on the highway: "Heavy Plant Crossing", which we found alarmingly suggestive.) Surprised, we tried to explain to Walter that those tall decorative plants in Donaghadee's front yards were yucca, a very long way from home and flourishing in entirely the wrong climate.



Fascinating fannish conversation? Of course, but mostly what remains are a few potsherd one-liners: "He said, 'Fuck knows'--which might not be elegant but which lip-reads easily." Or (pertinently?), "It's like the professor of ichthyology who complained that every time he recalled the name of a student, he lost the name of a fish." In fairness to IF's reputation for verbal brilliance, be it noted that we arrived in Belfast in a post-convention fog, with only a few scintilla and change left in our own pockets.

Himself is tall (as ever; nothing new to report there), deliberate, and catches jokes in mid-trajectory. His voice is extraordinarily soft and---a strange thing in a fan---he's in the habit of letting the other person start talking first. (Teresa claims that after all these years, she's forgotten what one does under those circumstances.) The conversations we remember best were slow and broad, and like all good conversations cannot be wholly recapitulated. On one occasion we discussed *The Enchanted Duplicator* and the durability of its insights, how we keep returning to it as one of the touchstones of our fannish universe. Walter said that co-writing it with Bob Shaw was one of those strange infrequent experiences where the words fall straight off your fingers and onto the page---"Writing it was like reading it, only slower". Onwards to his observation that "no egoboo is ever wasted"; that everything you put into fandom returns to you eventually, if sometimes belatedly and by circuitous means. We agree, and compare notes, offering in trade our pleasure at getting writing-egoboo from Walter or layout-egoboo from Redd Boggs after years of lovingly pillaging their work; jointly we ratify the proposition that it's never too late for a letter of comment. And Walter talked quietly about a dream he had had in the wake of George Charters's snowed-in and underattended funeral; of walking sadly down a Bangor street near George's home, and coming upon an open door to a large and brilliantly lit room where all the friends whose lives George Charters had touched were having a party to celebrate their good fortune in having known him: a true memorial. And when he awoke he realised, why yes, that's the way it was.

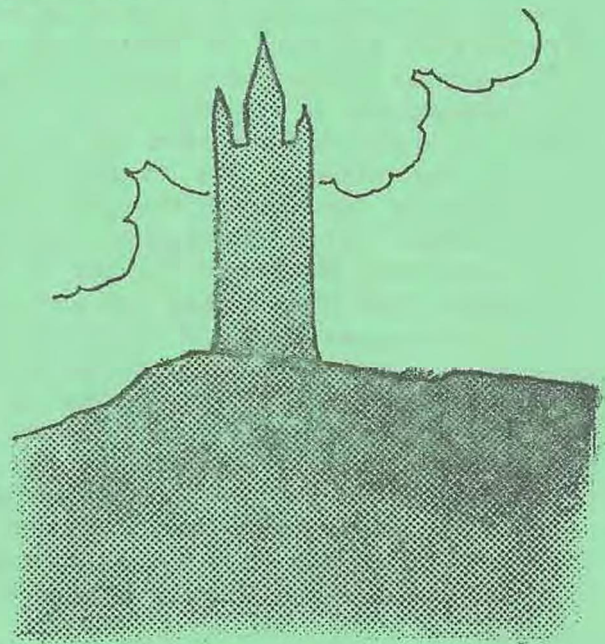
...And more, and further, matters little and big, much of it exchanged en route on various excursions. Which is not to say you should have been there (there wouldn't have

been room in the car); only that we wish we'd been there longer.

A digression, on digressiveness: Once we got back to London we compared notes with Greg Pickersgill. We'd watched him Saturday afternoon at the Eastercon working his courage up--a process involving an hour spent bouncing up and down in place while muttering "Hup. Hup hup hup" under his breath---before going up and introducing himself to Valter by saying, "What can you say to someone who changed your life?" (Which is true. It were that half-run of old Hyphens Greg found in his neohood as done it to him. But as Valter later commented, "What can you say to someone who comes up to you and says, "What can you say to someone who...?"") Of the long conversation that followed Greg would only say that it comprehended many points and could not be summarised. The sole fragment we have from it, beyond the introductions, is as inscrutable as anything in our notebooks: God knows how, but- they wandered into a discussion of what it's like periodically to realise, with a start, that you're married to a Very Short Woman.

So focus this uneasy stereopticon on the *true* Secret Master of IF. Madeleine is short, quick and sharp-witted, possessed of fiercely blue eyes and an overwhelming conviction that her visitors are perpetually in danger of death by starvation (they aren't). Though--as she explained while unloading a succession of goodies from her deepfreeze---she's switched over to storeboughten baked goods in order to have more time for golfing; and indeed, there's a framed photograph in the upstairs hallway of her being the Heroic Lady Captain of the Donaghadee Golf Club. She followed this with a brief oration in praise of Women's Liberation (Teresa hoping meanwhile that this wasn't prompted by her confessing to a fondness for needlework--a hope rewarded, as it turned out, since Madeleine knits and before we left bestowed upon Teresa a bagful of handy odd bits of leftover yarn); conducted a rapid survey of our eating habits and telephoned the Whites to say "It's wonderful, they'll eat anything"; and altogether struck us as the only person we've ever met who's shorter, faster-talking, and more prone to Useful Remarks than the women in Patrick's family, and she doesn't constantly exhort you to take lots of vitamins the way they do. It may be that she's religious about food instead. The one time we saw her at a loss was when Patrick, in good American fashion, topped his serving of apple tart with cheese. This has mutated in memory into a Walt Kellyesque cartoon in which Madeleine says WOWF!, eyes bugging out, while her hat (she wasn't actually wearing one) flies straight up into the air.

Four. Linear narrative is the least of what happened, but we *did* actually Do Things in our 48 hours there: driving down through Down, for instance, in a great southerly loop whose furthest point was (how not?) a visit to Scrabo Tower, the original model for the Tower of Trufandom. It sits on an isolated rocky height at the head of Strangford Lough (the lough on first sight shimmering in the sun, the biggest set of mudflats we'd ever seen; the tide was out and the shorebirds were very happy about it). In theory Scrabo was built to honor somebody-or-other last century, but one suspects that sooner or later an excuse would have been found to build a tower there anyway, the site being irresistible.



For the record, The Enchanted Duplicator is unreliable on this one point--the way you get to the Tower is by following the signs for Scrabo Country Club. Got that? Okay, you're now a True Fan. (Though when Walter looked around the country club's parking lot and said he wasn't quite sure--they'd changed things since he was last there--and Madeleine replied, "Don't worry, I think I know the way," we found ourselves simultaneously biting our tongues to avoid quoting in unison, "if you are a True Fan, you will know the way." We have *some* self-restraint). Madeleine struck out through the underbrush at the edge of the parking lot and, sure enough, turned up what was clearly the path to the tower.

Halfway up the hill we came upon the Scrabo Golf Course, which we stared at quite stupidly while bracing ourselves against a wind off the lough that would have served to lift a kite braced with two-by-fours. "My God," Teresa said, almost shouting over the roar in our ears, "do people - actually - golf - up - here?"

"Oh, yes," Madeleine said imperturbably. "It's a good day when we can beat the Scrabo golfers."

The tower itself is tall and square, built of rough brown stone blocks, and pretty much looks like everybody's idea of what a generic tower should be, which is a virtue in allegorical objects. That aside, the view alone is worth the trip. We watched the Mountains of Mourne do a fan-dance with the assistance of some erratic cloud-cover, and Walter pointed out the site of the famous battle wherein the Men of Ulster were temporarily felled by the traditional Weakness of the Men of Ulster, an odd knack they had for suddenly falling asleep. Teresa fell over in their memory.

Another day we drove from Donaghadee up to Portstewart, to have tea with the Whites, give James his Doc Weir Award, and commit a silly oneshot on the impressive new White word processor by way of christening it. The official presentation of the Doc Weir Award was thorough, taking place six times so that James could be photographed trying to Look Naughty with Teresa while she presented the cup and certificate. Our own snapshots reveal that neither party has the least talent for visible wickedness; the photo of James demonstrating Psneeronics is much more striking. Meanwhile Peggy White laid out lavish quantities of food and conversation, including a lively reenactment of the time she got stuck on a program item debating male vs. female superiority. At a loss for points of feminist theory to argue, she improvised by marching over to a short member of the opposing team (she's not far shy of six foot), putting her hand on the top of his head, and announcing, "I, for one, object to being referred to as The Little Woman!" To her great relief the point carried the day, which she thought was a great piece of luck but which we viewed as Ideologically Sound.



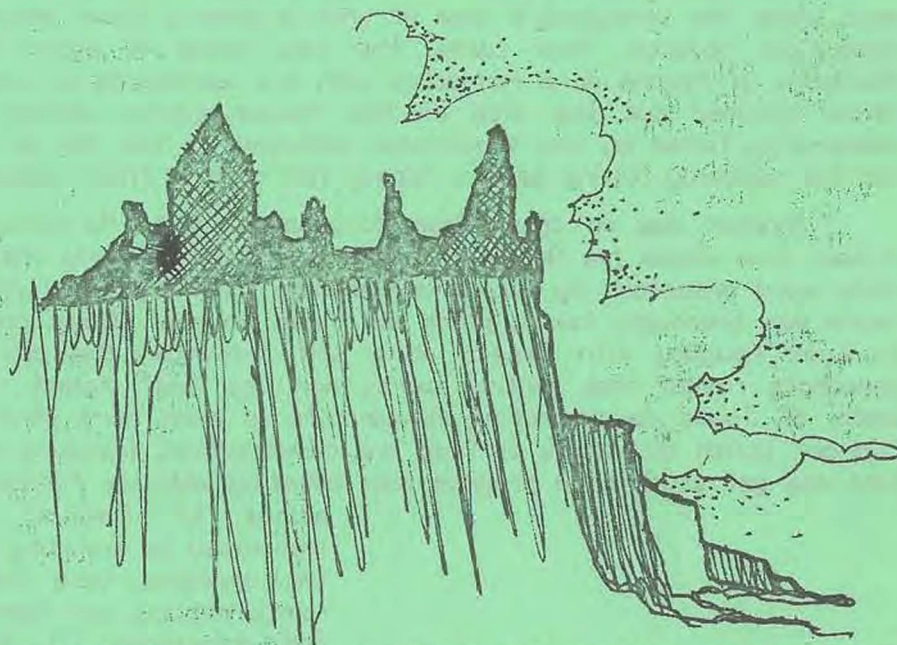
Five. Driving about with Walter and Madeleine we saw a hallucinogenic great lot of Ireland on the move and selected portions of it standing more or less still, and God knows the whole visit was buried in conversation: histories general and personal and fannish, notes and queries, stray bits of gossip, and what's *that* thing over there? As a result orderly recollection here loses out completely, though it's been behind on the scoreboard all along. From the many delusions available we cherished the one that seemed most useful at the time: that James Joyce was a mimetic realist, trying only to

describe the place accurately. Not true, impossible in fact, but...

Ireland itself, the physical geography, is misrepresented in all those lush travel posters. They don't do it justice; they merely reproduce what's capable of being photographed, the way a snapshot of a person with changeable facial expressions catches an arbitrary fractional second of a sequence in mid-transformation. Pictures make it look as though the country stands still (it doesn't, ever); as though the Mountains of Mourne spend whole afternoons in sunlight, or half-seen through fog, or with cloud-shadows running over their slopes, when in truth they can do all of those things inside of five minutes and then disappear altogether for the next three hours. We drove through Antrim, up and down large rolling hills which are doubtless known as mountains locally: sun and shadow, fog and clarity, mists that re-texture the view depending on whether they're seen from a distance or up close, from inside their boundaries (a cool blue-gray, with only the nearest trees achieving full probability as we passed) or from the outside (with the sun at our backs the fog briefly turned bright gold: a beautiful thing). A lot of variety's gotten out of little weather and less mileage. Likewise the soil itself, here plentiful (farms, villages, tidy dense cultivation), suddenly sparse (forests, uplands, sheep strange to eyes used to the cotton-ball variety--these appeared to have body-beards, long straight thatches of wool that looked to be a foot deep.)

There are ruins everywhere.

"Very convenient, this," said Teresa as we drove to Grayabbey en route to Strabo. "At home I've travelled hundreds of miles to see ruins, but here they're on practically every corner, like grocery stores." But back in Arizona ruins sit inside a single frame (old, Indian: Hohokam, Anasazi), and even in Reading where we'd visited the Langfords the ruins were of finite species. (The



Langford taxonomy: old bits, ecclesiastical bits, mediaeval bits, Roman bits, and Huntley & Palmer biscuit tins). Irish ruins are a constant quick-change half-seen slide show illustrating the whole (maybe?) of Irish history, recent industrial ruins in Belfast, sad tiny roofless stone cottages set in miniscule stone-wall-bordered plots of land (and in the midst of this pleasant day a whisper in your ear says "potato blight, intensive cultivation, famine, three million dead," while up ahead in the distance you can see a steep-sided mesa with planted fields extending up its sides as far as they can go, at an impossibly steep angle). The grand old Gothic ruin of Greyabbey, lost in God-knows-but-we-forget-which set of troubles. Dunluce Castle, stacked up and tumbling down at the northernmost coast of Antrim, looking down from cliffs far higher than its walls to where the sea chews away at the land it sits on so that every so often another chunk of castle collapses into the sea.

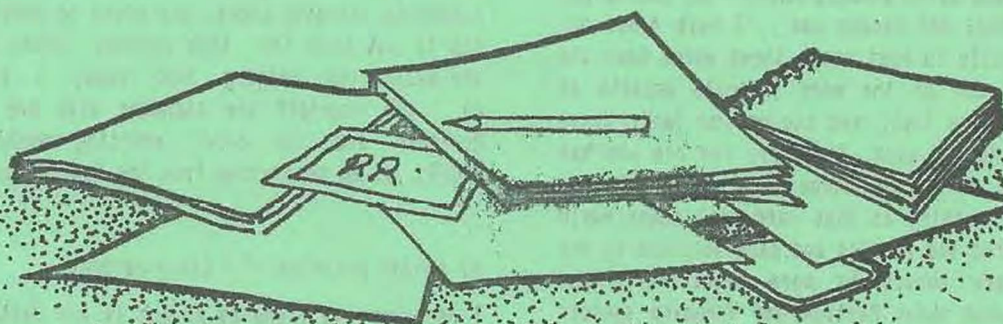
Dunluce is hard to see. You have to squint past all the pictures in your head--old engravings, the covers of innumerable Gothic novels--trying to focus on the thing itself; a crumbling castle on the shores of a wild sea, vast lost antiquity and ruins that haven't seen the end of their own ruination. It is precisely and technically the Romantic

Sublime, but then the light shifts again and Dunluce is its tangible prosaic self as well, a large wet pile of stones in a fenced-off field next to a parking lot. Meanwhile you're most unromantically lying flat on your stomach with your toes dug into the turf, trying to photograph the Antrim cliffs with your head hanging over their edge, and hoping not to tumble over yourself to become one with the castle's kitchens in the surf below. Meanwhile behind you Madeleine is suggesting that maybe we should all get back into the car?--because (1) we're already behind schedule for tea with the Whites, and (2) it's *cold* out here. Older than Dunluce, there are occasional reminders that this was once St Patrick's own neighbourhood, and there are standing stones not *quite* as old as the hills that have seen all the rest come and go in succession. Then you drive over another hill and you're in a small unlovely town. On one wall are lines of graffiti, in utterly modern spray paint just like the subways of New York, except that these say WILLIAM OF ORANGE, 1689, NO SURRENDER, and FAITH, HOPE AND CHARITY.

Stacks of sliding transparencies: change and re-combination, made even more indeterminate (improbable?) by the added layers of fannish myth. A sense of certainty grows on us, that our understanding is absolutely imperfect. Of course everybody's is, all the time; but like God, the abstract idea and direct personal experience of it are two different things.

On the long midnight drive back from Portstewart we asked Walter and Madeleine various questions about Ireland's more recent Troubles. We knew more coming out than we did going in, and got to hear Madeleine's descriptions of her work with the peace party, Alliance (when she mentioned a position paper that she'd have to draft in the next few days and Walter observed that he'd probably get roped into the writing too, their ensuing discussion sounded oddly familiar), but on the whole Irish politics is probably best filed with Basque, ballet and quantum physics, subjects we cannot hope to master at our advanced age. No matter. There are other continua to navigate. We talked fandom back and forth, finally (perhaps) getting the measure of each other's accents; listening to them on their own time, their lives and journeys, trying to convey in turn what it's like in our own noisy, crowded fannish universe; binding up time in good fashion, all things coming together in imagination and the word. And it may have been that we were all very well pleased.

For sure, the next day we were sorry to leave.



TOTO

A letter From William F Temple

Italian Front,
Halloween, 1944.

Dear 4e,

I've just re-read the April Vom. My first reading was a hasty skim-through in the press of other business, one dealing with bangs of various intensities but now, I'll comment on this business of making a final break with fandom.

I guess most fans who have kept it up for ten years or more must have come to the point where fandom is felt to be an incubus. Consider; the average fan has many other interests...and the time he can give them is limited, first by his job and then by fandom; and the greater of these is fandom. Oh the big big bundle of long long letters to answer; the articles demanded by far-off editors; the stacks of not-so-good fanmags to decode from near illegibility; the vapourings about the New World by children who don't even understand the character of the Old; the feuds and bickerings of "he said that I said that they said"...And cartoon jokes about robots.

My old flat-mate Ego Clarke, once the most enthusiastic fan I knew, has finally stepped from under. But a break with fandom is not just a break with those wearisome things I have listed above. It is a break with a whole world, a whole structure of romantic associations, inhabited by known old friends of affinitive outlook.

And they are a rare group, these friends. I have travelled over 12000 miles recently and met hundreds of new people, but I've met no one who had that outlook or would not be lost and bewildered, if put amid the group. These people call it reality, the place we are supposed to be hiding from with our heads in the sand of stf. When we come up against the "hard realities" of life, our stf nonsense is supposed to be knocked out of us, and we put away childish things and become men..."I have grown out of fandom." Actually in most cases these words mean the fellow has grown out of the more juvenile aspects of fandom; all the above list, and badges and fancy dress caps at conventions and sich. I'm sorry for him who has really grown out of--which means away from--the fan outlook. There is nothing in that hard real outer world that is not enhanced and roselit and made wondrous by the cosmic view; every sunset is more significant when thoughts are aroused about Martian and Venusian sunsets or the "further vision" in Wells's TIME MACHINE; every new discovery of science means so much more when the practised eye sees the possibilities arising from it; the Moon is not just a lantern in the sky---it is a challenge; the stars are not pinpricks on paintings; they are parts of the whole universe; the great novels like JAR AND PEACE are not something apart---they are attempts to see mankind whole, to classify it, to relate

it to time past and time to come. Even our little family groups by the fireside are fellow travellers and explorers through time and space.

Do I sound out of touch with reality? I have known reality. Once I lived on bread and jam alone, because I could afford nothing else, and walked miles to save carfares. I worked for ten years in the Stock Exchange and saw the ways of wealth. I have been in the richest and the poorest houses. In the Army I have grown intimate with all types of people; miners, labourers, professional soldiers, musicians, college men, boxers. I have watched these men in peril of death, and I have seen them die, not always easily. I have been near enough to death myself more times than I can remember. I have known life at its greatest discomfort in waterlogged foxholes, for many months at Anzio, soaked in unceasing rain with no hope of drying, hungry, freezing, constantly shelled, machine-gunned, bombed, mortared. In these conditions I have striven to write books and lost them. And rewritten them painfully and lost them again. I have known utter loneliness, and also the heartwarming comfort of a gathering of my friends. I know what love and marriage and parenthood are like, and what it is to be separated from them year after year, and what it is to lose a son.

All this sounds a bit melodramatic. I only want to prove that stf is not just a bolthole for people escaping from life. I have lived a fair amount and stf has lost none of its essential meaning through that experience. To me the imagination is nearer the heart of things than 'reality'.

"Where there is no vision, the people perish". The fan outlook is my idea of vision. I want to keep in contact with fans. Without 4e's puns, Bob Tucker's inspired lunacy, the keen analysis of Speer, the good nature of Morojo, the humour of Les Crutch, the immensely readable efforts of the Daughertys and Widners...lord, how ordinary life would become.

As one who several times nearly went with last, lingering, longing looks; and would no doubt have done so had it not been for this evening alone with VOM, and the meditation arising from same, I swear to you, 4e, who yourself are standing with one foot in Fort McArthur and the other pointing roughly towards the LASFS....I am separating from the Separatist Movement.

Al Ashley gaffiates; F T Laney records

I remember the scene as though it was yesterday, when Al Ashley decided to renounce fandom, and how we all begged him to reconsider, and how he just sat there and stared off into sub-space, just like he always had. And how Burbee said, "But Al, you need FAPA"; and he shrugged his little shrug and said, "I'm quitting FAPA too." And then Speer's eyes filled with tears and he turned to Ackerman and said in a hushed reverent voice, "Now he belongs to the ages." ---Fandango #16

RANDOM



Unaccustomed As I Am...

Chuck Harris

"Dear Chuck," said M.Tudor, High Honcho of the Conspiracy Fan Programme, "we've had this Great Idea. BoSh has agreed, Vincent has agreed. Atom. Avedon and Teresa have agreed. Just as soon as you and Walt agree we will feature TEAM HYPHEN---The Wheels and Hubcaps of IF---the HYPHEN PANEL."

Free drink....No less...No shit...Get the show on the road. Zowie...Free drink...Wow.

Now, it is one of the cornerstones of our universe, (so okay, your universe lacks cornerstones) that neither Walter nor I appear on platforms. Never. Not ever. We don't do it. No double exposures; blush unseen and all that. Walter is the world's most hopeless introvert and I'm the runner-up because I'm far too deaf to be able to follow any conversations or take part in any panel.

Trouble is Tudor is a Mate, and happy to offer his bottle to a fan in need. What to do? What to do?

"Dear Martin, "It's certainly a Great Idea. I am desolate I can't take part. I am so deaf I just couldn't keep track of what the other panellists were talking about., I'm sure you will be even better without me..."

"Dear Chuch. No problem. Teresa will sit next to you with an Amstrad and will type the conversation onto the screen as it's spoken. Terrific, eh?"

"Dear Martin, No. I have this liver thing too. I must avoid stress. I must cut down on gin, women or breathing. When faced with reality like this there didn't seem to be much choice at all. I found it almost impossible to drink while holding my breath, let alone achieve orgasmic ecstasy. I have had to choose between bliss and booze and of course bliss won hands down as you might say. I had to make the ultimate sacrifice and transferred allegiance from Gardons to Highland Spring Water. I'm fairly sure it's rotting my innards--my heart's in the Hielands, my heart is not here---and although I am allowed the odd medicinal gin and tonic, I have given up chain-drinking for ever. How on earth could I get through a panel on one drink? Disconsolately, Chuch.

"Dear Chuch, No problem. For one drink we take a pint beer glass, add one ice cube, one lemon slice, a tablespoon of tonic and top up with gin. Perhaps two lemon slices if you want to be really prudent."

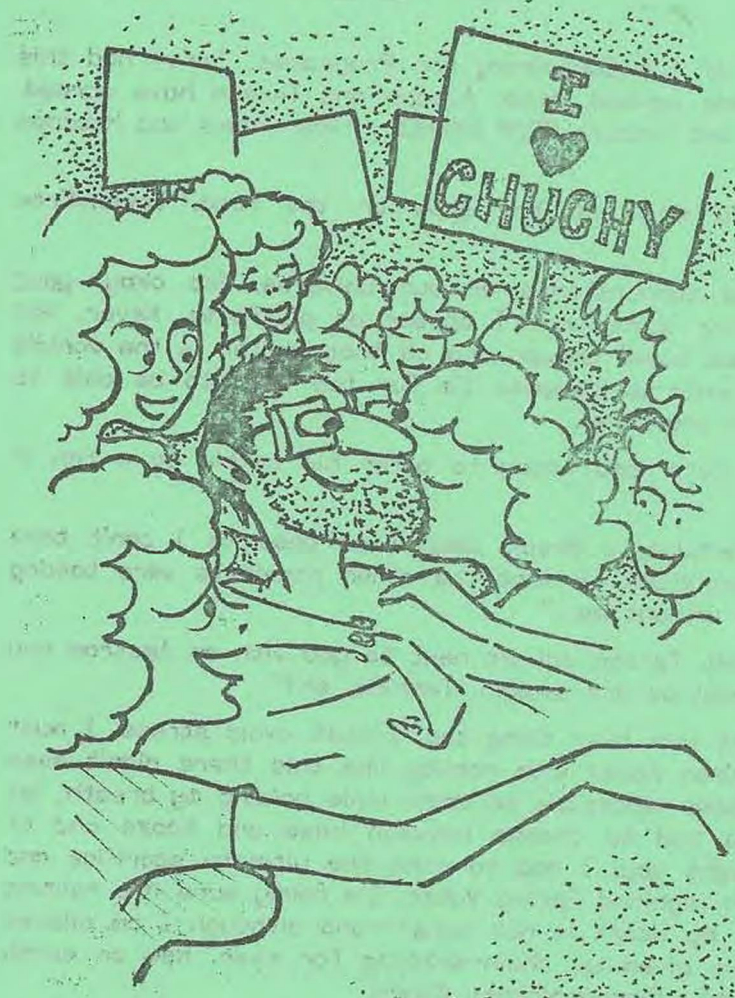
I know when I'm beaten. "Dear Martin, Well all right, --but two ice cubes.. Avedon, who will orchestrate my appearance, points out that the rest of my entourage will feel slighted if they don't take part. To begin with, I will definitely need support from Linda and Pam. They will stand directly behind me, running their fingers through my hair,

whilst making low moaning sounds of desire."

"Dear Chuch, Fab. Terrific. Yeah."

"Dear Martin, I will definitely need my cheer-leader group---Hazel Ashworth, Hazel Langford, Sherry Francis, Judith Hanna and Kate Solomon as end pivot. The girls will do their little dance routine, shake their big blue pompom things and generally distract attention from the boring old farts sitting at the table with me. Whenever James White attempts to speak they will adulate like crazy, working up to a crescendo "England's Winner. Chuck. Chuck. Chuck." On the last "Chuck" they will high-kick, pirouette and then bend over to display large letters spelling "Chuck" on their pants. (This is all very tasteful, decorous and inoffensive; nothing sordid or nasty. Avedon choreographed it and based it on a Rockettes routine from Radio City. You have nothing to fear from the Watch Committee.)

Kate, at the end of the line, will display either H or K depending on whether I am Him Ancient or Modern, on the day."



"Dear Chuch, Fantastic. You will be the toast of fandom."

"Dear Martin, Yes. From time to time during The Spectacle frenzied groups of female fandom will no doubt invade the stage, trying to embrace me or tear off articles of clothing for souvenirs. I shall accept this with my usual resigned tolerance--the price of fame and all that--and I really love my fans Martin (though not so often as in the past), but you will have to provide a Heavy Mob in case things get out of hand again. It was a damned close-run thing last time. Big Joy got right down to my Heavy Metal designer shorts, read the logo..."Grand Pull Out Surprise Inside"...and almost made the exposure of the century before Arthur, quicker than the flash, knocked her cold with a Dave Bridges fanzine he happened to be holding.

You'd think the sexual harassment would grow less over the years, but it doesn't Martin, it certainly doesn't. Perhaps it's my enormous charisma..."

"Dear Chuch, Yes, yes, yes. Terrif. Hyper Fantastical. Let's do it.

Comes the dawn. Comes the rude awakening. Comes the card from Vince showing the Brighton Centre--acres and acres of red plush sets stretching away to infinity. "Relax," he says, "all you have to do is fill this. And make 'em laugh."

Seek reassurance. Find Master Orator D Longford having a quiet drink, and lie down beside him. "Never worry," said the Master. "You are held in awe and reverence. Give them your blessing and they will fall to their knees rejoicing."

It seemed unlikely. Make fifth visit to Jakes, wash the cold sweat from my face and search for Teresa.... "Now," she says, all bright, shiny and newly minted for the morning, "let's look at your notes."

"NOTES!!!" I said. "This is a panel!...extempore...off the cuff...stream of consciousness. Notes, woman? This is the Real Thing...a conversation piece...repatee, no less, a group of old friends talking up a storm, taking leave of their reminiscences."

"You really believe that?" she said doubtfully. Every friend you've got in fandom will be out there in the front row and all everyone else crushed into the 35 rows behind. I shall type out all the dialogue on the screen. All you have to do is stay reasonably coherent, and try not to look a nessie. A couple of anecdotes and one-liners might be a help if you get stuck."

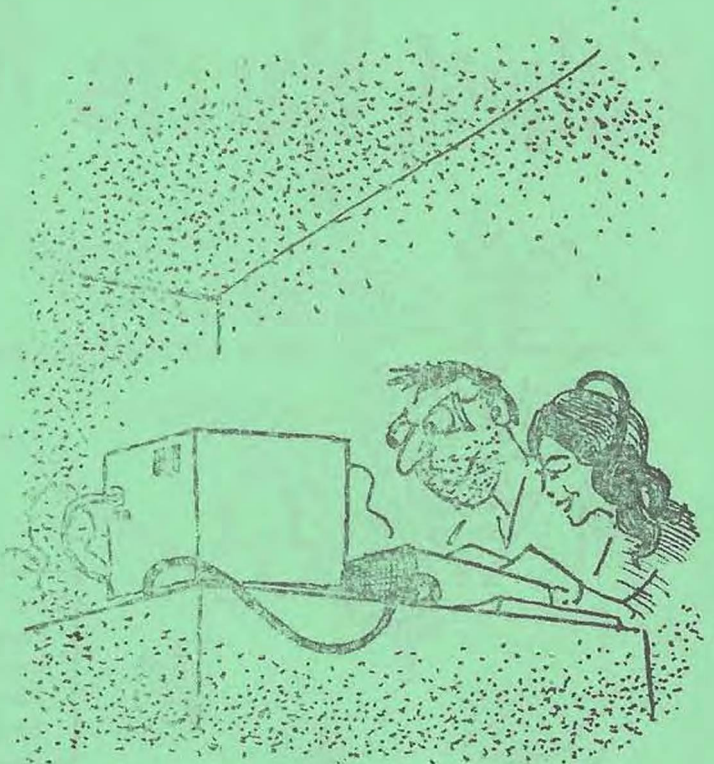
"You mean like Walt going up to Bertie McAvoy and her wild harp and saying "Hey, wanna pluck?"

"No...forget it...no time left...they are all going in now."

Too late to run and hide. I am truly petrified. In all my time in fandom I have never done anything like this before. I'm about to lose my fannish virginity and it's too late to back out. I get reassurance and encouragement from just about everyone in the world. I despise myself for such foolishness but I'm still shaking. Teresa and Avedon, hardened old platform pros, who've done all this dozens of times before, gentle me towards the platform as if I were a horse. If I'd had withers they'd have patted them. Linda arrives with drink to top up my tankard. Resolve not to touch it after huge absent-minded gulp to lubricate my dry mouth. If I'm about to make a bloody idiot of myself I'd rather be sober whilst I do it.

Teresa almost disappears behind huge headphones, and the screen in front of us lights up in glorious technicolour.

Avedon picks up her mike and begins to introduce the panellists, and as fast as she talks the dialogue appears on the screen. Fantastic! A different colour for each panellist and no timelog because of slow lip-reading or hastily written notes. I forgot the stagefright. I forgot the panel. This was so engrossing, so captivating that I missed my first cue. Not that it mattered---James and BoSh scooped up the loose end and away we went into ghoddinton stories.



Easy, easy. I wondered what I'd been silly and panicky about. I watched the screen for my next cue and I said something. It seemed a bit lame and contrived, but I could see people laughing out front and suddenly I was loving it. After all those worries I wasn't going to faint or fart or wat myself, and the audience were clearly understanding and rooting for me...big sigh of relief and share a conspiratorial grin with Teresa. Another easy cue from Avedon about werewolf stories and I'm so startled at the way the audience react to my answers that I laugh back in delight, forget what I was talking about and dry up in mid-sentence. Arthur moves in to save me with the daftest werewolf story I ever wrote...The family were changing for dinner...and suddenly time ran out just as we were starting into old "-" bacover quotes.

And everybody clapped like crazy and I loved it. Teresa climbed out of the earphones and we hugged each other in mutual esteem and relief. Jon Singer came up to say "Boy, that was some panel" and I thought "you can say that again squire" and Avedon asks if I was okay and would I do it again---Yes yes yes---now if you like---and Arthur in that affectionate mocking way says "Wow! A star is born again...."

* * * *

We are now taking bookings for the next convention. Just clip the coupon...

Chuck Harris

MULTI-MEDIA MEGASTAR

AND

CAST OF THOUSANDS

FRESH & REDHOT FROM THEIR STAGE SMASH AT THE BRIGHTON METROPOLE

DOWNWARDLY MOBILE

EVERY ACT AN ANIMAL ACT.

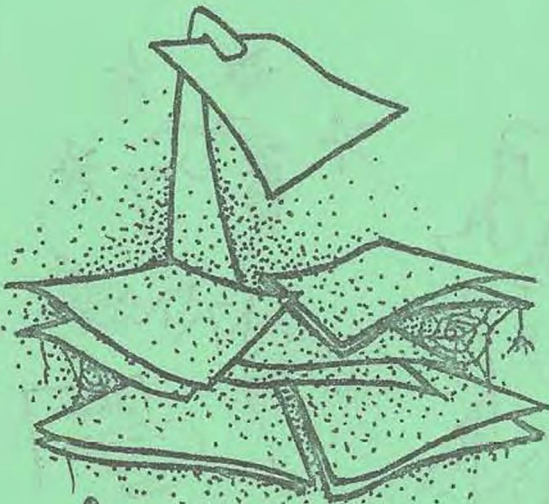
Yes! Yes! Enhance our Convention.
I enclose TWA and Hotel reservations for
the troupe. (All 25 of 'em.)
Name.....Address.....
Bankers.....

AND

ELECTRONIC WIZARDRY FROM TERESA NIELSEN HAYDEN AND HER RAINBOW-HUED APRICOT.

Send 5p for your "Wannabee Chuck Cult" badge to 32 Lake Crescent Doventry Northants

Postscripts



Walt Willis

I suppose there's no point in waiting any longer for letters of comment on the last issue. I'll just have to make do with what has come in so far. And a rum lot they are. Here for instance is somebody called BOB TUCKER. March 6, 1965

Dear Madeleine,

That man who is living in your house has vexed me. Another issue of Hyphen arrived a few days ago, and like an earlier issue which came several weeks ago, it had a horrid X in a little box on the last page. That man is attempting to bleed me of money. The man has a distressingly short memory. He appears to have forgotten the many little kindnesses I did him, when he visited my native state in 1952. He seems to have forgotten that I spent most of an afternoon waiting in a railroad station for his bus to arrive at the bus station, several blocks distant.

These X symbols in the box must stop. I will not tolerate them. If he does not cease immediately, I will never send him another copy of *le Zombi*. His name will be stricken from the circulation rolls.

I really do not want to believe that this is a deliberate campaign to make his American readers pay for his lost baggage, but you will forgive me for harboring such suspicions.

Charles Burbee had trouble with this same fellow when editing *SHANGRI-LA*. Tucker complained about his complimentary copy being late in arriving and threatened that if this continued he would have no alternative but to subscribe. Well, he didn't send me another *LE ZOMBIE* and I didn't send him another *HYPHEN*, so there. Fortunately other people were more forthcoming...

R J O'Connor, Vice President Marketing, Eastern Grayhound Lines, 26th March 1965,
I have just had the opportunity to read our file on the unfortunate loss of your baggage. I am sincerely sorry that you had this bad experience with our service and have enclosed our draft of \$225.00 in settlement. This represents the maximum liability on any single piece of baggage transported by the company. Please accept our sincere apologies.

So ended a saga which began in September, 1962. in Phoenix, Arizona, when we got off the coast-to-coast bus to visit the Grand Canyon leaving two of our suitcases consigned to New York. They didn't arrive, and Greyhound said their liability was limited to \$25 per case unless the contents had been declared and insured. So it said on their baggage receipts. Then in May 1963 they wrote again to say that one had been found and their New York Office would turn it over to Irish Airlines for shipment to us.

=====

"He wrote an article about shapes of female breasts called "Down Mammary Lane."

=====

It never arrived, and eventually turned out to have been stolen in New York. (The Whippet Line.) So we were back to square one again. Or were we? Madeleine (Not Just A Pretty Face) saw that the situation was now completely different. This time Greyhound had consigned the bag, not us; we had declared the contents, and had not been given the opportunity to insure them. We put this to Greyhound but they weren't moved: so, ruthlessly, we unleashed fandom on them, a spectacle comparable only to the onslaught of the Assyrians like a wolf on the fold; you know, cohorts gleaming in purple and gold and all, as described in Warhoon 28, p.418. (No no the Assyrians weren't in Wh28: that was Byron. (The Destruction of Sennacherib.) (I'm really insufferable since I got the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations from the Book of the Month club.)

VILLIAM F. TEMPLE, 11 February 1965

Dear Walt,

I wouldn't claim that the pattern is general, but probably it's frequent. The fan starts in his teens, feeling 'different' from his family and living partly, if not largely, in a fantasy world of his own. They wouldn't understand. This world is where he's an individual in his own right.

'Pocketa-pocketa-pocketa spat the Plutonian's zap-gun...'

'The time machine throbbed quietly on the lab floor: pocketa-pocketa-pocketa..'

'The red desert lay silent under the twin moons. Then, from the horizon a huge black thing came crawling and emitting a peculiar murmur: pocketa-pocketa-pocketa...'

Then Robinson Crusoe Mitty stumbles on Man Friday Mitty. And encounters other Mittys and, eventually, even Walter A. Mitty himself. So he's not alone in this world after all, nor misunderstood any longer. Fandom begins.

But here's where mine ends.

Old fen get mired down in their jobs, their children, grand-children, houses, gardens, their own creative activities...Then one day, neck deep in fanzines, they stop and take a hard look at fandom. What the hell has it got to do with sf? Old Fan is reminded of Wells's story, The Pearl of Love. The original purpose for which the edifice was built has become....irrelevant, a blot on the landscape. There's no central binding interest any more. Just a coral reef wandering blindly out into an empty sea.

Why keep sending Hyphen to old non-subscribers like me? Just habit. Please break it in my case anyhow...I'm writing around to various faneds to whom, like yourself, I owe much, explaining this act of disengagement. Rather confusingly, all the reasons are turning out to be different...

Thanks for everything. Goodbye Ackerman, Forrest J, Willis, Walter J, Shaw, Robert J'n' everyone.

It might almost be sufficient comment that I publish this letter after 22 years. It will be of general interest because so many people, some of them not even born then, remember with affection Bill's memoirs of the BIS in Slant and Hyphen and his speeches at British Conventions, as famous as Bob Shaw's are today.. There are some of us who remember another even earlier letter from him about fandom, a classic statement reprinted elsewhere in this issue, 43 years old now and reprinted every generation since. Thanks for everything, Bill. It was a privilege to know you.

~~~~~  
"Pleasant people are just as real as horrible people", --John Braine  
~~~~~



CHRIS PRIEST. 23 Feb 1965

Dear Walt,

Sincere thanks for the loan of "Enchanted Duplicator", returned herewith. I suppose it's a bit late in the day (11 years to be precise) to start writing a LoC on it. (No) But I'm sure you'd like to know my impressions of it, if only from the point of view that I am a member of the "New" Fandom. I'm not sure yet whether I am still a neofan...Yet, I have begun to find an accursed "new wave" of neos that are actually calling me fannish and set in my ways, etc etc. In this way, you could liken mundania unto a sea, whose tides lap onto the beach of fandom. Each flow brings its quota of bright, bubbling neos--still tainted with mundania. Each ebb leaves a hardcore of driftwood, stranded forever in fandom.

He liked THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR. But while I may no longer take his letter to bed with me, I still would be diffident about quoting that part of it. But thank you Chris, and for that simile of the successive waves of fans. Tennyson anyone?

Here about the beach I wandered,

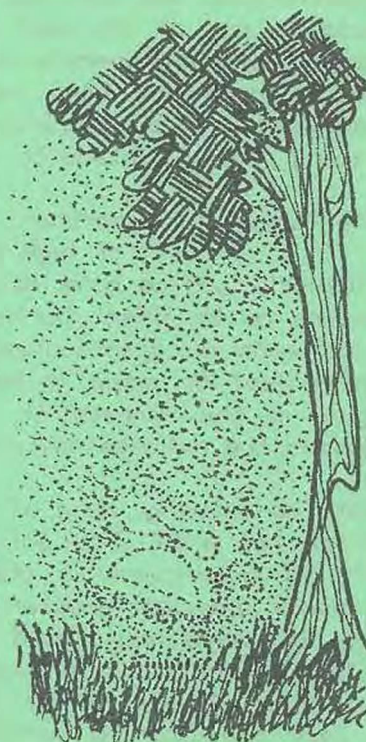
Nourishing a youth sublime,

With the fairy tales of science

And the long result of time.

---Locksley Hall

IF Press Release 7th May 1965: On 6th May 1965 the old red brick house at 170 Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast, which had been the headquarters of Irish Fandom for nearly 20 years, finally reverted to the mundane plane of existence. At a house-cooling party, the occasion was marked by a simple but moving ceremony...In the fan attic the last ghoominton service was solemnly performed by Bob Shaw. Symbolically, it was not returned. Instead, the last shuttlecock was picked up by John Berry and reverently removed to its final resting place, a time capsule donated by Sadie Shaw. Also in the glass cylindrical 2-lb capsule were deposited a copy of THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR (1st Edition), some hyphens in the printing font used for SLANT, a dollop of duplicating ink, James White's first bow tie (symbolising the professional element in Irish Fandom) and signatures of the great fans and good friends who had stayed at Oblique House during the years, including Forry Ackerman, Chuck Harris, Lee Hoffman, Mal Ashworth, Ron Ellik, Larry Shaw, Vince Clarke, Boyd Raeburn, Rog Ebert, Andy Young, John Roles, Bea Mahaffey, Rory Faulkner, Ken & Pamela Bulner, Ken & Irene Potter, Evelyn Smith, Sid Birchby, Harry Turner, Sid Coleman, Steve Schultheis and many others. The time capsule was then buried in the front lawn, underneath the cherry tree, in earth with which had been mingled the sacred soil of South Gate, donated by Rick Sneary. A fannish era had ended. Oblique House was at one with Nineveh, Tyre and 101 Wagner St., Savannah.



Fortunately it wasn't long before friends found their way to "Strathclyde", 32 Warren Road, Donaghadee. Visitors in 1965 included Carol Carr (I saw a pig. It was large and gray and looked somewhat like a boar except for the stickshift....Ireland is so beautiful and I'm so sad to be leaving...Thank you Madeleine for the tea and scones and buns and tarts, pastries, pancakes, muffins and sodabread, carrots, roast, peas, sausages, bacon, eggs, milk, butter and potatoes. Thank you both for Strathclyde....We hear foghorns in Brooklyn Heights too but they don't sound as pretty. We tried hanging lanterns out the window so the Staten Island Ferry would crash but all we got were moths.): Terry Carr (Strathclyde for TAFF. Have it transported, stone by stone.): Peter Graham, Ted White, Wally Weber (This is no place for a fan; first we'll have to board up some of these rooms....My own office is an old cotton warehouse and very depressing. (Well wouldn't you expect a cotton warehouse to be baleful?)) Ellie & Robert Bloch (Dear Madeleine, In the midst of a drunken stupor at the Convention Walter was so rash as to propose that Eleanor and I come for a visit.

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"Cold soup ready in five minutes!" ---Madeleine Willis
=====

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At least, I know that he invited her and I refuse to allow her to come alone. I have been thinking matters over, and in order to alleviate the dreadful impression Walter made, I think it only fair that Eleanor have an opportunity to meet you.

PETER GRAHAM I've been procrastinating terribly in writing this letter..What I think has really been the problem is that it will be an admission that the whole vacation is really over, I had a marvellous time while I was at your place. With a little perspective on the whole month in Britain I find that I hold the Donaghadee portion of the trip the closest to my memory. As I think about the trip as I approached Northern Ireland, my feelings shade into tremendous warmth; and the trip away from Donaghadee, the same shading off from fond memories into simply a good time. After I left Belfast I met Ian McAuley in Dublin. It's difficult to think how he could have been nicer. It was one of the best experiences in Dublin I had. I found it otherwise a rather wretched city, a poor town in a poor country. A begging girl my age asked me for money. She was not unattractive, but she was not pushing herself. I saw an old woman in a shawl collecting wood on one of the main streets: slums that were empty, with broken windows, next to vacant lots with people camping in them. My negative attitude towards nationalism as a social force has been reinforced...The weather here in the past few days has been reminiscent of British/Irish weather when we were there; clear, brilliant and cool. I keep telling people I intend to retire to Northern Ireland, in a year or two.

MAL ASHWORTH. A Northern Ireland Road Safety Congress in Blackpool? I fear the realms of high power politics will forever be beyond the grasp of a low-grade intellect such as mine. Are the hazards of road travel in Blackpool of such a disastrous nature as to affect Northern Ireland? Are careless motorists in Blackpool overshooting road ends so spectacularly as to damage life and property on the other side of the Irish Sea? Or could it be simply that the stench of rotting motor-mutilated carcasses lying in the streets of this madly murderous metropolis, carried by prevailing winds, assails the delicate nostrils of the inhabitants of your fair cities?

Well, no actually, none of those highly plausible theories was correct. The fact was that there was a UK Road Safety Congress in Blackpool and I nominated myself to represent the NI Government in the hope of arranging an hotel room for party at Government expense...possibly another first for Irish Fandom. The party did indeed take place, with the Ashworths and Ken & Irene Potter, and was fun.

Another thing that happened at the Congress is that I was impressed by a speaker who urged us to insure our cars for Third Party risks only, with results which were to affect the literary world and the lives of several American ladies whom I had never heard of; of that more later.

DEAN GRENNELL This will undoubtedly be the most overdue letter to turnip in your garden of Xmas cards, and it is with a radish face I write it. Lettuce face it, I am a slob and you are friends of a slob or I hope you still are. It would strain the truth (I herewith abandon the vegetable motif on the point of strained vegetables, with a side reference to the cannibal mother who fed her baby strained relations) to assert that at no time in the past 3 years have I had time to write you a letter. The thing is, I have felt that the letter would have to be a lengthy magnum opus. So much has happened since that wonderful, lighthearted, too-brief interlude when we hung Ford hubcaps in the backyard from strings to shoot fake flying saucers and abandoned Madeleine in the A&P supermarket to shop for S&K pie ingredients. I have taken a solemn vow that I shall, in this particular reincarnation, eat steak and kidney pie prepared by no hand save that of Madeleine Willis and I am building a fearful faunch for a second helping.

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"I refuse to have an emotional attachment to pieces of ground. At one end of the scale it's known as patriotism, and at the other as gardening." --Bob Shaw



When we last saw your beaming Hibernian faces in Fond du Lac, Wisc., we had been there for some 10 years, and felt certain we would be there for a long while to come. It had been a long and moderately pleasant rut; a treacherously soothing situation, really, for what is a grave but a rut with the ends filled in? At that time there was talk in The Office of taking Dean off the road and kicking him upstairs into some sort of sub-managerial status. This was a prospect I had dreaded: the furnace business had never held great fascination for me and an unadulterated diet of paperwork filled me with quease. So.... Here follows an account of his being invited into a stockbroking business, and his escape from it with vestiges of his sanity, which were then removed by The Mayflower Moving Company.... A name we came to curse as a Willis curses Greyhound. They have a policy that, once they load your stuff, they will not unload it until you pay the full tab. We had to withdraw the money from the children's savings accounts...You may wonder, as we did at the time, how an estimate of \$400, less 21 wellpacked Oldsmobile loads hauled by me, could escalate to \$680. The answer was packing charges...One summer the kids had been taken on a trip some place and brought some stones home. As we unpacked our "barrels" we found that 3 of them contained nothing whatsoever but hunks of Wisconsin, each tenderly cocooned in tissue. You will be relieved to hear that none was damaged in the slightest. There were other cherished heirlooms in the boxes. Like a wastebasket still filled with virtually irreplaceable waste paper---oddly, not individually wrapped.

So I began reading the want ads....During half a year as a lawman I had just set up the radar speed meter when a Greyhound bus roared past at 15mph above the limit. So I joyfully cut him off and gave him a ticket. With heroic self control I refrained from scrawling FANDOM STRIKES BACK on it, but wondered if there might be a sort of Wheels of If Willis aboard who would write up the episode in some undreamed of fanzine for some unknown fandom.

.... I was monstrously unthrilled at the prospect of becoming a salesman again because, frankly, I am an introvert born and bred. Like many another introvert I can simulate being an extrovert, but the strain takes a toll and unless I can get off by myself at regular intervals to lick my wounds and recharge my batteries, I'm not sure how long I could keep it up.

What I wound up doing was applying for a position as a writer and/or photographer with a technical publishing firm in Milwaukee, supplying some back issues of Gunsport. I never got any further than that. They hired me on the spot, starting on the salary I'd been getting in Fond du Lac after 17 years.

And so we say farewell for the time being to Dean Grennell in Germantown, Wisconsin. Still a long away from California, but already it's clear that if you shake the board long enough (17 years say) the round pins will tend to fall into the round holes.)

It's 1966 and, soddenly, it's...ROBERT BLOCH.

Southern California is currently doing its best to top Northern Ireland in terms of mean annual rainfall; some of the meanest we've ever seen. In nearby Pasadena a crew of plumbers is trying to flush the Rose Bowl in time for the traditional New Year's game. Elly is continuing her piano lessons and flying lessons...the next step I suppose will be to buy her a piano with wings.

=====  
 "Kennst du das Land, wo die Citroen vroom?" --Karen Anderson  
 =====

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AT LAST! MY LIFE'S WORK COMPLETE...  
 7th FANDOM GETS INTO HYPHEN.



*A piano with wings?...There must be a pun there....*

We both enjoyed the Annual Message, though we had quite a fright the other night; some damned fool was clattering about on our roof (*Ken Slater?*) and fell down the chimney into the fireplace where he burned himself severely. I got out the shotgun and we've been eating reindeer meat ever since. Tough and stringy. Hoping you are the same.

MAL ASHWORTH Some characters we were with at the weekend, from the 'Peace Research Centre in Lancaster, have been studying Northern Ireland it seems. They have decided you have got a 'polarised society' which surprised me because I had never heard of any large-scale migrations of Poles into Northern Ireland. And they have also been feeding all their results into a computer which has been chewing them over and telling them things. One of the things it told them, apparently, right before they decided it wasn't working on top form at the time, was that '4% of Catholics are Baptists'. This may help to explain some of the trouble you are having over there.

*Yes indeed, since they are Polish Baptists, the very worst kind. Blasting out Chopin on their winged pianos, they swoop down on the hapless Protestants, strafing them with jets of Holy Water (H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>6</sub>), contrary to the Geneva Convention on Chemical Warfare.)*

We were in Lancaster for a party to celebrate Ken Potter's completion (not necessarily successful completion, just completion) of his first year at the University. Irene was in bed with migraine and Sheila went up to talk to her. When I joined them later Irene told me 'Sheila and I have just been discussing what we're going to do in the event of atomic war.' 'Oh,' I said, 'And have you decided what you're going to do in the event of no atomic war?' 'Oh no,' said Irene, 'We'll cross that bridge when we come to it.'

FREDERICK J. HOLLANDER On July 7, 1966, the LASFS voted to grant a full membership to all East to West TAFF representatives who had visited the LASFS on their trip, and to Walt Willis whose 1952 trip to the States inspired the Transatlantic Fan Fund, "whether they like it or not". You are now a member of LASFS. Death will not release you.

*I like it, I like it.*

CAROL CARR Grania tells me you're going to dinner with the Duke of Edinburgh. (*It's not every day they get to meet an Honorary Member of the LASFS.*) I hope you won't mind a few suggestions concerning deportment.

1. Use your napkin only to dab at your lips after each course. If you must sneeze, use your jacket sleeve, or handkerchief, if you have one. After dinner, fold the napkin into the shape of an airplane, but do not fly it until everyone else has finished eating.

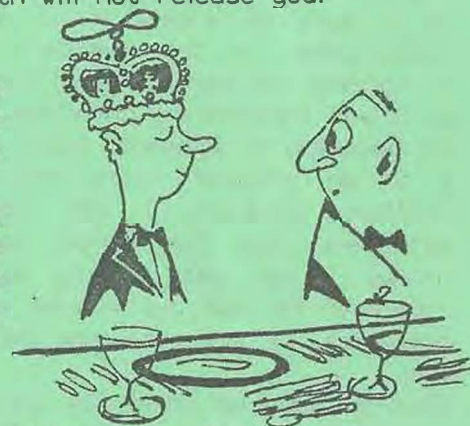
2. Do not tip the waiters.

3. Speak only on impersonal subjects like the weather.

Do not ask the host whether it's true he is playing around with Shirley Maclaine.

4. Do not call his wife "honey"---she is the queen. "Dear" or "sir" are ok.

5. If you spill something on the tablecloth do not remove it (the tablecloth, that is). Wipe it up with your coat sleeve or handkerchief. Above all, do not panic: the guards have instructions to delay with extreme prejudice anyone running from the palace.



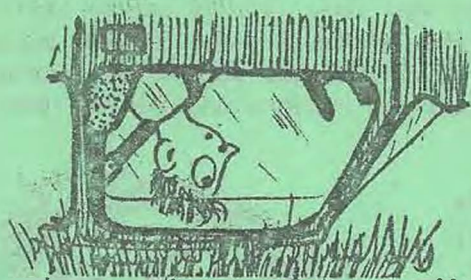
In 1967 Chuck wrote announcing his promotion at work. My reply mentioned my own promotion, with a room to myself and a fitted carpet and a swivel chair. There was also more money of course, and the work was more interesting, and I started meeting people I hadn't seen since they went to University and I went to work. I also told Chuck--Bob has finally started writing professionally; has sold two pbs and is working on a third, Terry Carr & Ted White accomplished this remarkable feat by paying him \$500 for two chapters and an outline, a cunning stratagem which had never occurred to us.

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*Shirley Maclaine for Queen!*

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Early in 1968 I crashed my car. I had changed my mind about overtaking a Morris Minor Countryman on a twisty rural road. Applying the brakes, I noted that the grass verge had grown out over this side of the road, but my brain immediately supplied a reassuring picture of driving without difficulty over grassland in the West of Ireland. It was about to supply a

more ominous diagram of how differential transmission allows the two back wheels to revolve at different speeds, when I found myself upside down in a field hanging from the safety belt. My beautiful old MG Midget went for scrap, and I had to fall back on the little Renault Dauphine I had bought Madeleine for Christmas, giving up all pretensions to being a two-car family. Because of course the Midget was not insured---under the influence of the Road Safety Congress.

But through this vale of tears there now rode to the rescue the US Cavalry, thinly disguised as Terry Carr, now of Ace Books....

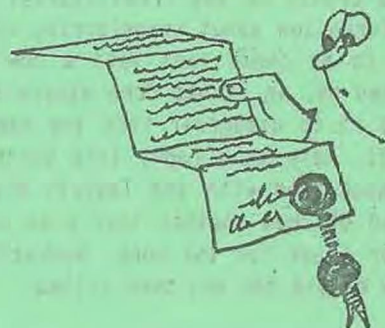
11 April 1968. ... the really crushing news of Ron Ellick's death. Also you'll have heard about the Silverberg's fire, and of Lee Jacobs' death. It's been an absolutely lousy year, already the Year of the Jackpot, before Martin Luther King was killed. King's death has hit everyone with staggering force... A Southern Democrat who changed his position to vote for the civil rights bill yesterday was quoted as saying "We've been forced to a crisis where we must choose between integration or... a police state."

...But this is in part a business letter. I want to ask you to write a book for me... a nonfictional study along the lines of Barzini's *The Italians*, very big over here. We'd expect material on Irish history, customs and foibles, some debunking of US stereotyped ideas... anecdotes, quips, asides etc... I'm authorised to offer you \$2000, contract on acceptance of an outline and one sample chapter.

...People are coming out of the woodwork. Geis has revived *Psychotic*, a really astonishing job of picking up where you left off 14 years ago... Ray (Duggie) Fisher came back with *Odd*... Dick Bergeron says he's reviving *Warhoon*... Tom Perry has been inveigled to write a fine fanish column for *Lighthouse*.

22 April 1968. ... If you get your book written by October we could have it on the stands by St. Patrick's Day 1969.

10 May 1968. ... As you'll see from the enclosed contracts, you've just sold a book.



With the aid of the advance I bought an Olivetti portable, a Morris 1100, a central heating system (gasfired, on the advice of Dean Grennell), and a holiday in the West of Ireland. In the next three months I read, or at least skimmed, an average of six books a day from three libraries. Amazingly, in the following 20 years I have not found another anecdote or fact I would like to have included, nor a statement I would like to correct. Terry again... 9th October 1968. ... I was surprised and enormously gladdened to see the completed ms so soon---couple of weeks ahead of schedule, when I'd expected it to be a week or so late... The book is lovely, lovely... Alexei Panshin came visiting us and spent the whole night reading through the book and saying how good he thought it was...

It's not for my own delectation I'm quoting this egoboo. (Well, would you believe, not entirely?). The Ace Books President and two other executives had thought the first chapter weak and unfunny and Terry had had to argue them into agreeing with the commission.

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*The Irish question is like peeling an onion; there's always another layer and it makes you cry.*

=====



And it seemed they were right. The book didn't sell well. Only 40,000 copies, and James White found one among the remainders in Woolworths, where I used to get copies of *Astounding* etc in the Thirties: appropriate since that was the way it all started. (I don't know how the Taplinger hard cover version sold.) But readers who did like the book, seemed to like it a lot. Perfect strangers wrote..

ALINE JOHN TRAINER, Oklahoma. I've just read *The Improbable Irish*. I found you digging a vein of language I know well, though more from hearing than reading. I never before came upon a writer who captured the spirit of Ireland on the first page, and let it sing as if improvising straight through to the last...I bought the only two copies in this bumpkin city and have ordered ten more for my husband's far-flung nieces and nephews---Smiths, Plauches, Getzendanners et al: and a few Treanors; one for Roger Traynor, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of California. My husband, Walter, the grandson of an immigrant, cherished his Irish heritage...kept that unexpected bubble of fun rising in the midst of serious conversation; some incongruous parallel, pert description, shrewd comment. "Oh, you know what's his name---always seems to be receding from you, even when approaching". He became professor of law, justice of the Supreme Court of Indiana, justice of the US Court of Appeals; and my years as his wife had never a dull moment. But he never got to Ireland.

DR & MRS SIGMUND L. FRIEDMAN, New York. Your book answers many questions I never thought to ask. Both my mother and father were half Irish, but were diluted by growing up in Western Michigan (Dutch country essentially) and had little knowledge of Irishness. Yet when I read your book I recognized much in them they might not have been aware of; above all in my mother a curious sense of the ridiculous which is peculiarly Irish but very similar to a Jewish perspective on events. From reading your book I know more about who I am, and that is passing strange and a small victory for any author.



BERTA SCHWARTZ, Philadelphia. It's me again, your devoted admirer. I'm enclosing a copy of my letter to Miss Crotty of the Irish Tourist Board. It may explain why my response to your book was asking for information about transferring my living arrangements to Ireland... "Dear Miss Crotty; ...Someone placed in my hands last year a now out-of-print book by an Irishman name Walter Bryan. The book bewitched me, as it has done others to whom I have lent it, and it seems a pity the publishers have allowed it to disappear from the market...Yesterday I found three copies in a bookstore and bought them all. Here is a copy. It's worth,, or was to me, hundreds of dollars of advertising, and if I were associated with the Tourist Board I'd get after Ace Books for being so shortsighted. I have enquired of them whether they plan to publish a new edition and the answer is no. In spite of this, whenever I ask for the book, booksellers tell me that it was a good seller and had been re-ordered, but the orders had not been filled.

*If you'll excuse me now, I'll change into something more comfortable.* Thanks---those italics were giving me a stiff neck. I had about 20 letters like that, but have lost most of them. I sent all the writers a duplicated appeal on behalf of the Alliance Party, which comprised both Ulster traditions and was dedicated to reconciliation.. Madeleine was very active in this, while I was working on the same lines within the Government. The climax came in early 1974. A partnership administration had been set up: one of the Ministers was the head of the Alliance Party and I was the administrative head of his Department. All was going well until a civil disobedience movement arose in the Protestant community, not so much against the partnership administration as the role of the Irish Republic. There were strikes, closures of shops and blocking of roads. The strike was enforced by the Protestant paramilitary group, the UDA, which had arisen in response to the IRA. Madeleine was in a shop in Donaghadee when two young men came in and told the owner she was to close down. One of them wore a balaclava helmet and the other a face mask. Madeleine advanced on the latter and pulled off his mask. "Who are you to tell this lady to close her shop?" she enquired. The one with the balaclava helmet

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 "Now is the time to sit down with a nice cup of tea and be counted." --Chris Priest
 ~~~~~



began to expostulate. "Take off your hat when you're talking to a lady," Madeleine advised him, ripping off his headgear and throwing it on the ground. Both men then retired from the scene.

Barricades soon went up everywhere, including one just in front of our house, blocking the coast road. ("There's nothing like a burned-out Jaguar for giving tone to a barricade.") Every night I would throw as much of it as I could over the sea wall, but every morning it was built up again. Then at last the British Army came. It was about four o'clock on Saturday afternoon. A truck load of soldiers drew up in front of the barricade. We stood watching on our front lawn, poised to flee for cover when the firing started. But all that happened was that the Army waited for the UDA to move enough of the barricade for the truck to get through; it was then replaced. Filled with foreboding, we went in to listen to the news. Sure enough, Harold Wilson had decided not to support the partnership government and it had resigned. All our hopes for the country had come to nothing, just because Harold Wilson hadn't a tenth of the courage of my wife.

Or so I thought bitterly at the time. To be fair, only a few nights ago, listening for sounds of a bomb being placed on our windowsill, I had wished she'd shown less courage. And really, the question posed to Harold Wilson was a simple one of logistics. On one side, 50,000 disciplined and dedicated volunteers, armed with sticks; on the other, 25000 professional soldiers, armed with machine guns. Which is the stronger?

It was a defeat for me and for the rest of the NI civil service. We had given Northern Ireland the most peaceful and prosperous half century it had known in 5000 years, but at the end of the day no amount of goodwill could transcend the realities of power. The other thought left with me, after watching history being made at first hand, was that only bad things happen quickly.

Anyway, there I was marooned at the head of a government department with nothing to do: at my command immense resources for typing and reproducing documents. It struck me that I could actually put my feet on the desk and say, "Take a fanzine." The fact that I thought of fandom now at all among the ruins of my work was because I had never completely lost touch with it. There was always James White, a good man to have around at the best of times, and the worst. We kept in touch by telephone, even when physically

confined by one or other lot of paramilitaries, and met when we could. This was the period James had in mind when he wrote *The Exorcists of IF* in this issue, and something Bob Shaw wrote in his introduction to its reprint in *Algol* in 1977 deserves quoting:

None of us would have gone so far as to claim that fandom is a way of life, but our criteria for judging our peers were... Did a person have a genuine, creative, unpredictable sense of humour? Did he have enough imagination to regard himself as a citizen of the world?

This sounds idealistic, but the unique entity which is science fiction fandom... was created around an ideal, a central belief, that people have to be a bit special if their minds encompass all that is expressed by the following set of black marks on paper----



30 years I've waited to get into  
Hyphen - and I suffer writer's block.

=====

Inside every nutcase is a colonel trying to get out.

=====



galaxy, fanzine, Bradbury, continuum, Galaxy, alternative universe, TAFF, Lensman, annish, slan, time machine, Finlay, esper, Quandry, quasar, Astounding and con. Certainly they have plenty to talk about, and that's what happened most at Irish Fandom meetings---we talked. We had long meetings *three times a week* for many years, and a number of fanzines emerged, but mainly we talked.

The second level on which The Exorcists of IF is written expresses his revulsion for intolerance and violence in the macrocosm outside sf fandom. He is a gentle person who sees as the human race's greatest achievement the invention of a system whereby power is transmitted by means of the ballot rather than the bullet. If Jim had his way, all differences of political opinion would be settled by the parties concerned getting together---three times a week if necessary---and talking. I'm not trying to trivialise the issue when I say that Jim regards war as unfannish.

There were also occasional letters from old friends and new, bringing tidings of comfort and joy...

ARNIE KATZ, Brooklyn. 1968. ....a fannish revival underway here.....fabulous sums are paid for Hyphens...

DICK BERGERON, New York. 1968. ...thinking about my idea of The Compleat Willis. I envision one of those fat books bursting with footnotes and chronology. But even before it is published it might become incomplete. Guess the idea is ahead of its time.



Thank you Annie and Dick; you lightened a dark time. Thanks too to others who wrote during in the early seventies and whose letters I have lost. I can't find anything else until an unforgettable letter in 1976 from one Greg Pickersgill.

The fact was that mere actuality was inexorably replacing the reality of fandom. In due course I was taken from my lonely pinnacle and integrated with the English civil service. I didn't like it much. The English people were highly intelligent, in such matters as using the hardship allowance they got for living in this terrible place to help buy homes here for their retirement, but they were different. An English Cabinet Minister confided in me that his experience of the difference had been that in Whitehall when you asked for something to be done, you got in due course a memorandum setting out the 17 different reasons why nothing of the kind could possibly be contemplated. If you asked the same question in Belfast you got a minute setting out two ways to do it, depending on whether you wanted it Monday or Tuesday..

Soon after I arrived with my new boss he invited me in for a cosy chat, in the course of which he went out of his way to mention that he believed the most valuable attribute of a civil servant was *caution*. Since in my own list of the twenty most desirable qualities of an ideal civil servant, caution would have been lucky to make twenty-first, I regarded this conversation as a kindly intimation that my meteoric career had burned out in the upper atmosphere.

My new situation was one of little power and much frustration. In November 1968 I had what my doctor described as a spasm and the consultant (I read his report by virtue of a lifetime's experience at reading documents upside down on other people's desks..."Mr Willis is a quiet, tense individual...") described as a cerebro-vascular incident. Whatever it was I didn't want it again. I stopped smoking but there didn't seem much else I could do about my way of life short of giving up my job. I thought about that. There was a Scheme for unemployment relief called Job Release under which if you were disabled from your job, like being unable to swing the pickaxe anymore, you could retire early with a taxfree allowance. My doctor was quite happy to certify I was disabled for my stressful job. I worked out that I could actually make money by retiring, so I did that, in March 1980. The Welfare State is a marvellous thing for the middle classes.

~~~~~  
"Death is Nature's way of telling us to slow down." --Steve Stiles
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Round about that time I opened my first correspondence file since 1966. You can see why from the first items on it, a letter from Dick Bergeron announcing the publication of Warhoon 28 and a photocopy of a review of it by one Patrick Nielsen Hayden, introduced to me by Dick disarmingly as "hugely talented, very young... reminds me of you.." (!) It all seemed... mythological: as if, all through the years I had been fighting the forces of darkness, my faithful friend Dick Bergeron had been preparing this great celebration for my return, borne on my shield, from the land of Ire. I must be Tolkien to my friends.

In the preceding years a few straws in the wind had already begun to lodge in my hair. Much impressed by Chris Priest's Inverted World, I actually went to the British Convention in 1976, found my old friend Tom Perry (who was then intrepid enough to visit me in Northern Ireland, the first fan to do so since 1965, like a bird from some Ark) and met the new British Fandom. It didn't seem much different from the old; perhaps more literate and... acerbic. And good heavens TAFF was still going, and here was Roy Tackett all the way from Albuquerque to prove it. There were some excellent fanzines, but the strains of work had made it almost impossible for me to write letters, a condition which was to last for many years, so I subscribed to the best of them. I got an astonishing letter from GREG PICKERSGILL returning my £1 note ("Be strong, Gregory") because he had had so much enjoyment from his half-set of Hyphen. I had never had a sub refused before and didn't realise it could be so pleasant. Apart from Warhoon 28 it was the nicest thing that ever happened to me until I heard that Gregory had given one of his halfset to Rob Hansen and Avedon Carol for a wedding present. That really impressed me. I thought, now if Ed Wood hadn't thrown away unread his exchange copies of Hyphen, think of the money he could have saved over the years in electric toasters.

Other Rip Fan Winkles seemed to be awakening, aroused by Ted White and Dan Steffan with Pong and in the UK by the reincarnation of Vince Clarke, and the scene was full of interest; but I was still unable to write. Fanzines were read with interest, but letters weren't written. In desperation I speculated that the resistance to letter-writing might due to the open-ended nature of the commitment. I bought a Canon T70 35mm camera and started to make my own picture postcards, on which I tried to comment on every fanzine I received, and renew some old acquaintances. Thus did I find, miraculously preserved for posterity like the traditional fly in ointment, none other than ROBERT BLOCH.



21 July 1984,...thirty-two years since I was toastmaster at the Chicon. Next month, out here, I'll be toastmaster again. This is called progress. Actually, I'm afraid little advancement has been made, and I've not much to show for it---a fact forcibly brought home during recent preparations for the Olympic Games here. As you may know, some genius came up with the notion of allowing people the honor of carrying the Olympic torch for a distance of one kilometre, for the sum of \$3000. Surprisingly, this swindle caught on and a great many considered this to be a social triumph. Quite a few of my writing colleagues paid \$3000 apiece for a chance to run that kilometre, torch in hand. Unfortunately for me, I couldn't afford it, even though I learned that in geriatric cases like myself, a surrogate runner would be provided. But \$3000 was still too much money. Still, I hated to be left out, I finally compromised and paid \$30; for this I got a midget running six feet and carrying a Zippo lighter. Arthur Clarke popped by in May: says he's going to have an audience with the Pope in October, lucky guy. (The Pope, that is.)

Knowing Bloch was going to be at the Olympic Games I watched the opening ceremony with particular interest. I thought it was ingenious of him to hold up his own notice reading "Yngvi is a louse" instead of the coloured placard left under his seat and I don't think he should be held responsible for the war in Africa that ensued. Who could have known that was the name of the President of Upper Volta?

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"Aren't you the co-author of Space Treason? --Dave Gibson

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But talking about the Pope, let's hear from the saintly figure who has recently been to Poland. I refer of course to James White who is responsible for us all being here today in this fanzine by replying to a certain letter, on 26th August 1947. To fill us in on the situation in Katowice, I had asked James to report on the Polish Convention held there this summer. Naturally I was expecting something on the lines of his first Convention report in 1951 which after 24 pages had not quite reached 8pm on the preceding Friday, and part of which was his first published work. However it seems Poland was pretty grotty (despite the huge pictures of Joe Nicholas on all the public buildings) and he didn't like to say so because they all tried so hard. (Note to all our Polish readers: 'grotty' is a slang derivative of 'grotto', meaning a quiet, holy place. Honest, General Jaruzelski-- please don't send any more winged pianos.) So he decided just to write a comparatively brief letter instead.

Dear Walter,

Silcon '87  
Fourth Silesian Science Fiction Convention  
Organised by SLASKI KLUB FANTASTYKA, Katowice  
Poland, 18-21 June, 1987

The start of the Polish trip was a bit disappointing in that His Holiness left the day before my arrival. But this, I was assured, should not be taken personally, or as any kind of implied criticism of my life-style or work; it was much more likely that the authorities had planned things this way because they were unable to cope with the presence of two VIPs in the country at the same time. I was also assured that the armed soldiers scattered about the airport concourse were there to make me feel at home.

Les Flood, who was also making his first visit to Poland, and I were met at the airport by Wiktor Bukato, who was to serve us so well as guide, translator and minder during the three-day con in Katowice and the sight-seeing, meetings with local fan groups, and interviews given to the International Press and Book Clubs in Warsaw and Cracow that preceded it. Frequently Les had to answer more questions than me because it was their first chance to question a foreign agent, and he did very well.

So much so that during the signing sessions which followed there were many who asked for the books to be autographed by Les, who had sold the story in Poland, and Wiktor who had done such a nice job of translating it. Over 70,000 copies of "Szpital Kosmiczny" (Hospital Station to you) had been sold, and by the end of the visit I'd signed at least 69,874 of them. Even the TV interviewer asked me to sign his copy, on camera. I tell you, Polish egoboo is great stuff.

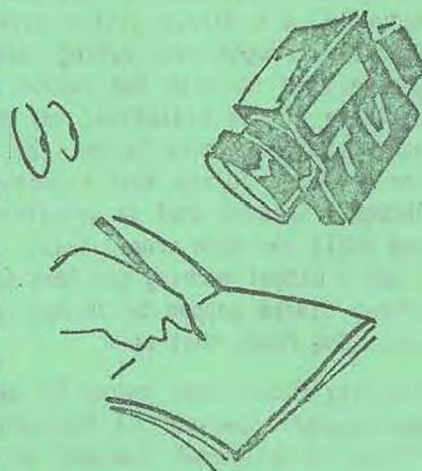
The con hotel was a large, rambling place varying between one and two storeys high with rather spartan accommodation, but set in a thickly-wooded park with lots of lakes and a medium-altitude (no on-board oxygen supply) chair lift for elderly guests and about 2,000 school-children, unable or unwilling to explore the area on foot. As well as Les and myself, the Guest List included the Polish authoress Marta Tomaszewska, a Japanese editor and publisher whose name I can't spell, and Fred Pohl and his wife who were unable to make it because of a LOT of Polish Airline red tape.

We missed most of the official programme except for the Guests' Panel, which had its own Polish-English and Japanese-Polish-English translators, and two films. One was "The Empire Strikes Back" with Polish sub-titles, and the other the early British epic "In the Heat of the Night," which I hadn't seen before. It was in English, but the sound was turned way down so that one of the fans could do a loud, running translation of the dialogue in Polish. This made it difficult to make out what the characters were saying, and

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"Harlan Ellison, our sawn-off Shogun."

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the problem was not helped by the fact that the audience kept making rude and even louder remarks about the quality of the film in Polish, English and even Japanese. During the prize-giving later it swept the boards, carrying off the imitation Golden Zloty awards for worst SF plot, worst acting in both the human and alien categories, worst misdirection and worst special effects. If it appears on UK TV, make a point of missing it.

Even though the con hotel did not serve booze, there was no problem about room parties. By happy coincidence, or meticulous planning on the part of the committee, there was a festival in the park that weekend, with dozens of stalls serving beer and sausages and stuff which stayed open most of the night, so unlimited supplies of working fluid were available only a few hundred yards away. It seemed that nobody, except me, ever wanted to go to bed, and the language barrier was not insurmountable. I learned the words in Polish for "Yes," "No," "Thank you" and "Good Health!" which worked fine during the room parties and, with one deletion, while going through customs.



I hope all this is ideologically sound.....

Altogether it was a most interesting trip and a fine, enjoyable, friendly convention even though I had a terrible time pronouncing the names of the friends we made.

At the check-in for our return flight we asked for non-smoking positions and were told by the air hostess to take any seat on the right of the central aisle. This seemed strange to me, but I reminded myself that we were flying in a Tupolev 128 and that the Russians liked to keep quiet about their advanced technology. Was there, I wondered, an invisible force-field vertically bisecting the aircraft, separating the two double rows of seats, and permeable to everything except cigarette smoke; or had the Con Committee arranged to send us off with a Polish-Irishman joke?

Thank you, James. Actually the air inside the plane is invisibly separated into tiny bubbles. What did you think Aeroflot meant?

Some other explanations might be helpful.

I didn't actually go to dinner with HM the Q, or even the Duke of Edinburgh. The origin of this myth is that I was invited to the annual dinner of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, of which the Duke was Patron. He didn't turn up, and what admirer of Shirley Maclaine could blame him.

I wish I had a similar reason for not having attended the room parties I was invited to on the Sunday night of the Brighton Worldcon, but the truth was that I was debarred from entering the Hotel. I understand that some people to whom this is not a normal occurrence have complained, and I admit to some annoyance myself, but when I got home I read a notice from our dearly beloved Martin Tudor published the preceding Friday in our very own Convention Bulletin: Throughout the convention Fire Inspectors will check on the numbers of people in the Metropole. If at any time...the maximum number is reached, the management might have to refuse entry to non-residents. Apologies to my hosts. Next time I'll bring my helmet and axe.

Finally, you'll notice that on the front cover Arthur has reproduced with his usual meticulous accuracy the cover of Hyphen #1. To save you the trouble of getting out your Amstrad Little Jim Dandy electron microscope, it showed a scruffy fan in his scruffy den reading Lilith Lorraine's poetry magazine Different, and the caption was:--

*"We are the the builders of brave tomorrows,  
We are the dreamers at last awake."*

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*"Not taking yourself seriously is the only serious way to deal with life." --Hesketh Pearson*

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## EAVESDROPPINGS

time-life books crh(10) avc(6) wav(9)  
unknown(5) godfrey smith sunday telegraph  
judy merrill dean grennell(2) greg  
pickersgill pnh(2) taral wayne tnh(2)  
kurt vonnegut egil stenstetn bertie mcavoy  
eric mayer aton bill danner