

MIMOSA

17





from Nicki and Richard Lynch, P.O. Box 1350, Germantown, Maryland 20875, U.S.A.

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This seventeenth issue of *Mimosa* was published in October 1995, and is available for the really, really inexpensive price of three dollars (U.S. currency or equivalent). Please note, however, that we'd much rather receive your fanzine in trade, instead. Or better yet, send us a first-person article of an anecdotal nature about science fiction fandom and/or things fans do, especially if they are of fan historical interest; publication of same here will keep you on our mailing list permanently. We also welcome Letters of Comment; for the frugal, a letter or e-mail of comment on this issue (addressed to both of us, please) will bring you a copy of *M18* next year. Also, we do have some back issues available; write us for more info. This entire issue is ©1995 by Nicki and Richard Lynch, with individual rights reverting back to contributors after this one-time use. All opinions and versions of events expressed by contributors are their own.

☐ If this box is checked, we really need to receive a letter of comment or e-mail of comment from you to keep you on our mailing list for next issue.

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January 3rd

(a date that will live in infamy)

Opening Comments
by Richard and Nicki Lynch

Fire Sale
Fan Central-Gaithersburg
Soggy Books and Fanzines... Cheap!



Richard:

I remember the day only too well. It was one of those crisp afternoons that early January brings to this part of Maryland. I had just arrived home from work for the day, trying to spend some use-or-lose annual leave that would run out at the end of the week. Nicki and I were just getting ready to go shopping at the grocery store; we were on our way toward the front door when she stopped, looked around inquiringly, and asked me. "Do you smell anything burning?" I opened the front door, and just across the courtyard black smoke was pouring out from around the next-door neighbor's front door.

Date: Tue, 3 Jan 1995 21:15:06 -0500 (EST)
E-mail to: FanFriends Distribution List
From: Richard Lynch <lynch@access.digex.net>
Subject: Fire

Not sure if this is the best way of passing on some news, but it's probably one of the quickest. About six hours ago, today (Jan. 3rd), there was a fire in the townhome next door to us. We smelled the smoke before we saw it billowing out from under the front door of the neighbor's place (10 feet across the small courtyard, facing our front door). The fire departments (several of them) arrived pretty quickly, but the neighbor's place was a total loss.

In the process of putting out the fire, our home was severely damaged. The fire brigades had to chop open roofs, break down firewalls, etc. to make sure the fire did not spread.

I guess I should say that nobody was hurt. I was on annual leave today, and Nicki, I, and the two cats got out without any harm at all. Apparently nobody in any of the townhouses damaged was hurt, either. The guy and his girlfriend who lived in the one that burned out had just left for shopping, and returned about ten minutes after the fire brigades arrived.

The fire marshal let me back in our home, briefly. It was pretty discouraging. Ceilings and walls were down in all rooms. Don't know if the computers are damaged. I couldn't find the Hugo Awards at first, but they had apparently been moved (by the firemen) away from the fireplace mantle where they had resided. I saw where they were before I left, and I think they are

ok. Don't know if any of the back issues of MIMOSA we have left survived, including the extras from M16 that we mailed only 2 weeks ago.

We're staying in a hotel now (the Holiday Inn in Gaithersburg). We are down to the clothes on our back for tonight, at least. I reek of wood smoke, and have two meetings I can't cancel out of tomorrow *sigh*. It will be several weeks, perhaps months, before we can return home to live. Insurance will probably handle everything, but I expect there might be some things that we won't be able to replace, fanzines and the like among them.

Oh well, life goes on...

Best regards for the new year for everyone,
from Richard and Nicki Lynch.....

Nicki:

It was a terrible fire. Three fire companies were called in, and it took over four hours to put it out. The townhouse where the fire started was totally destroyed, and the next day, a large crane and oversized dumpsters were brought in to remove all the debris. It turned out that there had been one casualty in the fire. A large, friendly black Labrador Retriever named 'Bear' who lived in the neighbors' townhouse had no escape when the fire started. His remains were never found.

We were allowed in our home the next day, and it was pretty discouraging. There was fire damage in the attic, on the deck, and in an upstairs bedroom. Everything in the house had smoke and/or water damage. Amazingly, relatively little had actually burned, but every window had been smashed, many of the walls had been chopped opened to look for fire, and wood char and assorted debris from the ceiling and walls were everywhere.

Interestingly enough, many things that you would think might be damaged in a fire were not. The fireplace mantle, directly on the other side of the firewall from where the fire next door started, was mostly cleared off by the firefighters, but the glass unicorn we got in 1986 while being Fan Guests at Rivercon was still there untouched. Likewise, the framed Hugo Award nomination certificates and artwork over and near the fireplace (in-

cluding the original watercolor cover of KAPA 61, by Naomi Fisher, that celebrated the 1992 Hugo Award) were unharmed.

On the other hand, just about everything in the second bedroom, including dozens of books, was heavily damaged or destroyed. We found most of my stuffed animal collection, which was formerly on a shelf that now no longer exists; they were all wet and very dirty, and the clothes restoration expert wouldn't take them. So I retrieved them, dried them out, and washed their surfaces. They now look somewhat better, but the Coca-Cola polar bear will never be white again.

Date: Wed, 4 Jan 1995 15:36:05 -0500 (EST)
From: Richard Lynch <lynch@access.digex.net>
Subject: Fire update

Well, it was worse than what I had thought. By light of day (this morning, when I was able to enter our home again) I saw that the fire had indeed gotten in. The spare upstairs bedroom was partially destroyed, as was the outside deck. Where the firemen had cut through the roof and ceiling upstairs, I could see that the fire had been active in the attic area, and had been there (5 feet above my head) while we were busily trying to corral the two cats and get them into their animal carriers. One of the fire investigators told me that the fire had probably been active in the attic even before we had first smelled the wood smoke.

On the other hand, many things I had thought might be destroyed came through it just fine, including the three Hugos (soiled and need of cleaning, but otherwise looking ok), all the back issues of MIMOSA (they were on shelving in the basement, on the side of the room away from where the fire was), most of the clothes (they all need cleaning and dry cleaning), and the computer (at least, I hope so — the firemen moved it to the interior bathroom — from some quirk of fate, only the bathrooms came through it all undamaged).

Insurance is covering the entire loss, and is also covering expenses we have with temporary housing and the like. It will be at least two months before we can return there.

Best regards,

...from Richard (& Nicki) Lynch

Richard:

We stayed in a hotel for about a week, then moved into a two-bedroom apartment, a fourth-floor walk-up. A contractor that specializes in restoration of fire damaged homes, hired through the insurance company, was put in charge of everything that needed to be done — rebuilding the house, cleaning the clothes, restoring the computers, etc. It turned out that the cause of the fire was a faulty fireplace in the

townhome that was destroyed. However, the people living there had not had a fire in the fireplace that day. That, in itself, is a bit scary, since all other townhomes in the subdivision have that same fireplace, installed exactly the same way.

It will be a while yet before we can recover from this. What was originally expected to be a two month disruption has become well over half a year. Reconstruction on our townhouse has been very slow, due in part because, until very recently, no construction had started on the next-door townhouse that was destroyed. Much of its structure had to be rebuilt before the firewall between the two homes can be replaced. This is just now happening as of this writing.

Meanwhile, normalcy has returned, to a certain extent. Things have settled pretty much into a routine, and we hope that the worst is behind us. Looking back at events, from some nine months distance, it seems like a bad dream. It's still hard to believe that it really happened...

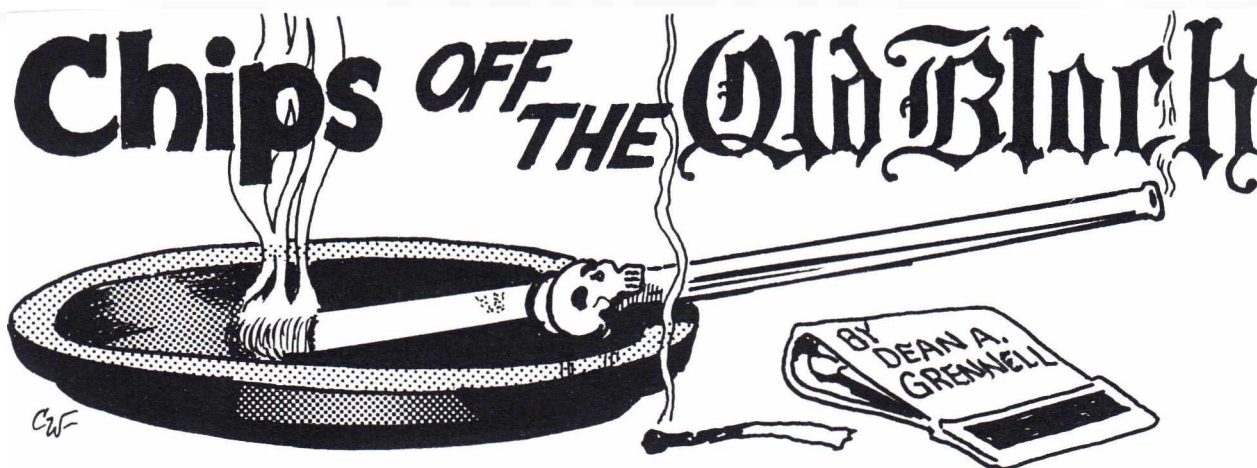
Date: Sun, 8 Jan 1995 17:38:48 -0500 (EST)
From: Richard Lynch <lynch@access.digex.net>
Subject: Fire update no. 2

It's been only five days, now, since the fire, but it seems like it happened a lifetime ago. Since my last e-mail update on the 4th, everything that was worth saving has been packed and removed from our home. All that remains needs to be documented (by me and Nicki) for insurance purposes. There are lots of books, including software manuals, that can't be saved. A TV and VCR are goners. There will be some things that can't be replaced, including souvenirs from various trips and photographs.

There was TV news coverage of the fire, by the way. Both Nicki and I were interviewed, though I can't say we were very coherent (thank goodness for good videotape editors!). Part of the tape footage showed firemen standing on a wooden deck, fighting the fire as the flames worked their way up the back of a townhouse. Turns out it was our deck they were on, and they were fighting (successfully!) to save our home. (They had given up on the other home.) It was a near thing. I'd previously written that the roof timbers in the attic were burned the entire length of the attic. The floor joists between our downstairs and upstairs had caught fire, too. I figure that we were within about 10 minutes of losing everything.

Anyway, since my first e-mail report of this mishap, Nicki and I have received *much* support, in terms of e-mailed messages, phone calls, and other acts of friendship. We are truly grateful. We will not forget.

▷ As you can see, 1995 has been pretty much a year of upheaval for us. We're looking for a little more normalcy during the remaining months, and publishing this issue of **Mimosa** is, hopefully, a step toward that. But one of the things we'll miss in this and future issues of **Mimosa** is the short but entertaining postcards-of-comment we often received from Robert Bloch. It brightened our day whenever we received one. Our leadoff article this issue is a remembrance of Robert Bloch, by one of his many friends.



I wandered into science-fiction fandom late in 1952, apparently having confused it with a gent's washroom. In those days, I resided in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin and made my rather precarious living as a traveling salesman in sheet metal and heating supplies. The annual sheet metal convention was held in Milwaukee toward the latter part of a given January. By the time the SM con came along, I'd received enough fanzines to become aware that one Robert Bloch resided in Milwaukee and I was able to make arrangement to get together with him some evening when nothing demanding was on my schedule for the convention.

Thus it came to pass that Bloch was the first s-f fan I ever met. It's true he was also an s-f pro, at the same time, but he was as much a fan as anyone who ever donned a helicopter beanie.

In those days, Bloch didn't drive automobiles although I understand he learned to do so after moving to the Los Angeles area, several years later. If he wanted to go from point A to point B, he usually took a Greyhound bus, seeming to prefer them over trains.

It was some time after that initial encounter in January of 1953 that the Blochs decided to move to Weyauwega, Wisconsin. I'm not certain but believe it was because he had relatives there. It was a tiny hamlet and I'd assume it still is; an unlikely spot to serve as home base for an author.

I made my tours of duty during the first four days of the week, calling on my local dealers on Fridays. I covered the lower eastern portion of

Wisconsin and other salesmen covered the rest of our territory, on a three-week schedule. I didn't get into Milwaukee but I did make what I thought of as the Clintonville trip and that took me through the general vicinity of Weyauwega so it was a simple matter to stop at the Bloch house on the way back home. As you faced the house from the street, his office was in an upstairs room at the right front corner and it was furnished with a straight-backed chair, a desk supporting a typewriter, and some manner of chaise lounge or daybed over between the corner windows, plus several well-filled bookcases.

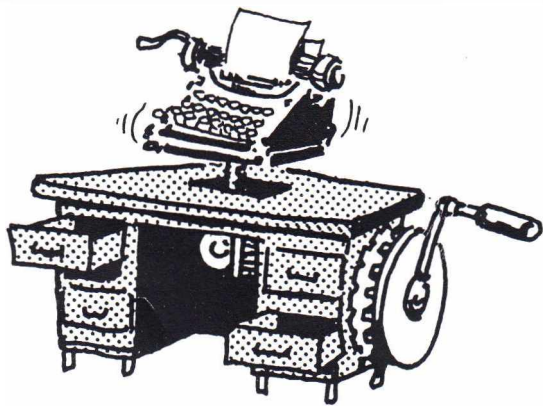
The right-hand end of the typewriter carriage was heavily encrusted with tars and injurious resins because Bloch kept an ashtray where the smoke would curl up past the end of the carriage. As a usual rule, he used a cigarette holder and I can't recall having ever seen him smoke without the holder.

Either the desk was short on the right rear corner or perhaps the floor sagged a bit at about that point; maybe it was a little of both. At any rate, the desk was prone to teeter back and forth in a manner Bloch found painfully distracting. Then, as now, I was into home shop woodworking — which Bloch most assuredly was not — so I volunteered to see about constructing a replacement for the nervous desk.

I made my rounds in a large Oldsmobile station wagon in those days and it was no great challenge to make up a few component pieces that could be hauled along on the trip and assembled on the

site. At the right rear of the new desk, I included a little rotary cam with a lever to adjust it, and a locking bolt to make it stay put. It worked, as do most of my brainstorms and, as with few exceptions, it wasn't at all pretty. But it did support the typewriter at a comfortable working height and it did not rock nor teeter by so much as a fraction of an Angstrom unit. Bloch professed himself well pleased with the artifact and continued to use it during his stay in Weyauwega.

Which means, if I can claim no other distinction, I built the desk on which the manuscript for *Psycho* was written.



I used to flake out on the lounge while Bloch remained at his desk, and recall once noting a spider spinning a network across the ceiling. I pointed and said, "I suppose you call him Jack Webb?"

"No, it's a female and I'm surprised you spied her," was his rapid riposte.

It was somewhere about that time that he and I got off on our 'Paper Moon' kick. I no longer recall the authorship of any particular PM and I'm certain I can't call all of them to mind. However, some samples will convey the idea:

It was only a pepper moon, sailing over a piquancy.

It was only a pauper moon, sailing over a bankruptcy.

It was only a papal moon, sailing over a holy see.

It was only a piper moon, failing to reach the last high C.

It was only a Packer moon, sailing over a green bay tree.

I believe Bloch started working the television show while they still lived in Milwaukee. The show was called *It's a Draw!* and featured a rapid cartoonist whose name — if memory serves — was Sid

Snow. At the start, by way of an example, Sid would sketch a man in armor next to an apparatus for distillation and you were supposed to interpret that as, "In the still of the (k)night." The gimmick was that Sid would dash off a cartoon as Bloch and his co-panelists strove to come up with the correct title.

The year came to be 1956 and one of the hot news items of the day was the upcoming nuptials of Grace Kelly and Prince Ranier of Monaco. The Blochs were in Weyauwega by that time and Bloch would travel to Milwaukee via Greyhound to do his stint on the show. There was a short layover in Fond du Lac before he caught the bus that took him to Milwaukee, and I'd stop down at the Greyhound depot to visit for a bit as he passed through.

On this particular occasion, I asked him if he'd heard la Kelly's honeymoon plans. Ever the perfect straight man, he cocked an inquiring eyebrow.

"She's going to Mount Ranier [...beat...] or, perhaps, vice versa."

Bloch proceeded to generate more raucous mirth than I though justified by the modest jape but that was one of his more admirable traits. The Milwaukee bus came fuming in, Bloch climbed aboard, and I went back home. Later in the evening, we tuned in his TV show and, rather early in the proceedings, the master of ceremonies made some passing reference to Grace Kelly...

Whereupon, Bloch and the other three panelists absolutely dissolved in madcap mirth and dribbled off the edge of the table onto the floor. The face of the master of ceremonies was a classic study in total befuddlement and it must have puzzled most viewers considerably. We, however, could tell Bloch's fellow panelists had gotten word on Grace's honeymoon plans, but the emcee remained in the dark about the matter.

Another time, Canadian friend Bill Stavdal was visiting and we'd tuned in *It's A Draw!* for his benefit. Bloch managed to work in a throwaway line: "I think it looks like Bill Stavdal!" Stavdal was totally, utterly mindblown.

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A lot of years have passed since that time. We both eventually moved from Wisconsin to California, but for one reason or another, never seemed to see much of each other after that. I think I'll always remember Robert Bloch as I knew him back in Wisconsin — he was an inveterate humorist, a great writer, an even better friend.

And yes, I'll miss him a lot. ☼

▷ The friendly and charismatic personality of Robert Bloch made him very popular as a toastmaster at convention banquets, for both worldcons and smaller conventions. Unfortunately, the banquet is no longer as common a convention event as it once was, possibly because of the size conventions have grown to and the ever-growing cost of hotel food. However, banquets were once the social events of conventions and the highlights of convention weekends, a point brought out in the following article.

I Miss the Banquets



“Don’t miss the banquet! Buy your tickets early!” Those of us from First Fandom remember that old warning cry for worldcons. In many cases, when plans were ambitious, it was as much a plaintive cry — a plea designed to keep a convention out of the red and even out of the courts. Con organizers knew trouble often hovered overhead — and sometimes struck.

Unquestionably the banquet was the heart and soul of worldcons, before the costume parade or masquerade ball became dominant. It wasn’t the meal that was the magnet, it was the recognition that the event was the program and social high point of the weekend.

If you chose not to be a diner at a worldcon banquet, you could still be an observer of the formal festivities. All con attendees were invited to the banquet halls as the plates were being cleared away, to sit at the empty seats, or pull up chairs, or even just to stand around against the walls. Like the surging crowds at a Hollywood premiere, there was that last-minute scuffling when the doors were opened or the velvet cord let down.

A few interesting chronological facts about worldcons and their banquets should be mentioned at this point — in the first decade of their existence, patterns were still being formed. Convention dates alternated for convenience between the July 4th and Labor Day holidays. The banquets were unclaborate, erratically scheduled, and sometimes sparsely attended. Con attendees were for the most part very young men and spending money was very scarce, so

banquet food tended to be meager and simple.

So why did the banquet come about right from the very first worldcon? Obviously, it was the best way of getting everyone together in a relaxed situation. It also was a way of honoring the main guest in an informal setting. In those days, everyone pretty much knew everyone else by reputation and correspondence, if not personally. The pros and the fans were very compatible and happy to mingle.

Banquets quickly became the single most important event of the weekend. It was there that the Guest of Honor made his speech, and all the lesser lights of the moment were acknowledged. This gastronomic highlight became the time-honored, accepted routine through a decade of worldcons.

Then, fifteen years later, in Philadelphia at the 1953 Worldcon, the second major ingredient was created, which raised the status of the worldcon banquet to even greater heights. This was the inception of the science fiction “Achievement Awards” that in subsequent years became known as the Hugos. That Eleventh World Science Fiction Convention banquet table was the launch pad for the very first rocket trophies. They were based on a Willy Ley design and machined out of steel by Jack McKnight, who missed most of the convention until he showed up at the zero hour with the gleaming rockets.

History was made! Another tradition was in the process of being established. However, the following year had a different variety of awards. The Achievement Awards were not continued then, be-

cause 'The Little Men' of the 1954 SF Con had their own awards, which were already a west coast fannish item, scheduled for their program.

The Achievement Awards next appeared at the banquet of the 1955 Worldcon, in Cleveland. The Clevention's Progress Report #1 called them 'The Second Annual Achievement Awards', and Progress Report #4 mentioned the name "Hugo — as some people have already dubbed the trophy." The rocket design soon became traditional, along with the affectionate and appropriate nickname in honor of Hugo Gernsback.

So banquets became the big event, and in their heyday, they generated real pleasure and excitement. The fun was much more personal because we were a big family then, and everyone knew everyone else. Where were the diners sitting? What favorable position did you have, or did we have? Were our places at the table for eight (or perhaps ten that year), up front close to the head table with all the committee members and chosen notables? Or were we at the back of the huge room by choice of assumed modesty, or perhaps by ineffectual jockeying, or by the huddling of a clique? All of us were having, in varying degrees, our brief moments of reflected glory.

When the Awards were started in 1953, I was one of the top five on that worldcon's Executive Committee. As editor of the Program Booklet, I attempted a publication that was 'something different' from the past. I wrote that... "Never before has an attempt been made to set down in some official way the records or customs from the past. Once everyone knew them. But as we say, times change, and today many of us attending conventions know nothing of the heritage we have nor realize that we are actually shaping events for the future." I explained that the idea of Achievement Awards had been talked about for many years and that convention members had cast their ballots. "It is our hope, of course," I wrote, "that this year's event will be successful enough to merit it becoming an annual affair." It was obvious that the appropriate time for the awards ceremony was after dinner with the principal speakers. [There's a coincidence here, which is very meaningful to me. The 1953 innovation of the Awards was very much a product of Hal Lynch, who was Chairman of the Achievement Awards Committee. In the late fifties, Hal, with the departed fellow Philadelphia fan Will Jenkins, visited Ruth and me in Potsdam, New York. Over three decades later, Dick Lynch (with Nicki) visited us in Potsdam.

They are not, so far as I know, related, and Hal, is still around going to PSFS meetings!]

The Hugo Awards eventually grew so popular that the results and their celebration became the prime interest for the convention at the banquet. So why, then, did the banquets go out of existence? As Harry Harrison might well have warned, we had to 'Make Room, Make Room!'. Tradition fell before the onslaught of just too many people. So, the dinner disappeared and the awards ceremony became a stage show, elaborate and dramatic. It eventually took over an evening for itself alone. Only the night of the Masquerade or Costume Parade came to rival it. And except for rare occasions such as cabarets, special luncheons, and publishers' parties, the food and drink disappeared from the scene.

Those banquet moments are immortalized by the panoramic photographs which sweep across the banquet halls of the past, freezing everyone into static poses. Today, in the exhibits of fannish history at worldcons, we can still see them. Like something from the final scene in Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*, they exude the mysterious aura of the ghostly past. I can see the faces captured by the cameras of so many friends who have departed our fannish world either by faded interest or the permanence of death.

The first worldcon, in 1939 in New York City, was held over the July 4th holidays (2, 3, and 4) of Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. The banquet was held Monday afternoon in a private dining room of the Wyndham Hotel. In 1989, fifty years later, the *Noreascon Three Souvenir Book* printed a series of fiftieth anniversary articles which were "...a look at the Worldcons from their inception by those who attended." In his contribution, Sam Moskowitz, who chaired the 1939 Nycon, mentioned a few details concerning food: "There was no admission charge [to the con], since the idea was to popularize science fiction. Sandwiches were free and later so were pies. Soda was five cents a bottle. The banquet was \$1.00 per person and out of 200 attendees, only 32 (including the Guest of Honor, Frank R. Paul) felt they could afford it." The banquet tradition had begun, along with the precedent that the Guest of Honor should make his primary speech at it.

The second worldcon, in 1940 in Chicago, was over the Labor Day weekend with the banquet Sunday evening. Once again, the inexpensive meal couldn't be afforded by many — and that included me and most of the New York contingent who had motored there with deficit financing.

The third worldcon, in Denver the following year, was back again to Independence Day, three days over July 4, 5, and 6, with the banquet on Saturday (as I recall). The fourth worldcon, in Los Angeles in 1946, also took place on a July 4th weekend (July 4th-7th). Then the permanent shift to Labor Day weekend began in Philadelphia with the Philcon of 1947. Although I attended with Fred Pohl, we left early and I don't remember a banquet. After four years of wartime service and my re-entry into fannish activities, I spent only one day at that first Philcon. Since then, I have never missed another worldcon banquet whether or not I thought I could afford it.

When I was very young, I never dreamed that reading science fiction and becoming an active fan would lead to my organizing a worldcon banquet — and ultimately to my best and worst experiences around such an event. It came in 1956, when I was chairman of the 14th Worldcon, at the Biltmore Hotel in New York City. That Newyorcon banquet featured Guest of Honor Arthur C. Clarke, speakers Isaac Asimov and Al Capp, and Robert Bloch as toastmaster. It is the highlight of all my banqueting days. (The nadir was facing the reality that my optimistic estimate of the number of diners had put the convention finances into the red.)

The most embarrassing moment of my banqueting days was the time in England when Judy Merrill, Guest of Honour at Galactic Fair 1969, spoke at the con banquet. Disenchanted with the political scene in America, she made a bitter denunciation of America while expressing her delight with things English. As I was a well-known confirmed American Anglophile, my British friends expressed their bewilderment, concern, and regrets to me. I explained the best I could about liberals and their politics. (Judy subsequently, true to her convictions, moved to Canada and has been there for decades.) But the food? It was very good because a banquet in England is not just a fancy-named meal — it is indeed a banquet.

The banquet used to be the only time I ever had a regular meal at worldcons. Perhaps someone will remember the special paper matchbooks I distributed at many banquets (Nycon '67, Baycon '68, Thirddancon '68, and Noreascon '71). It was a cute and colorful advertisement for a holiday on Mars ("A Truly Out-of-this-World Vacation Spot"), and I had it personalized with a stamped "I have a good con!" greeting on the inside cover. I wonder if anyone still has one. (If you do, I'd like to know!)

Attempts have been made in the eighties and nineties to recapture the banqueting event. Constellation, the Baltimore worldcon of 1983 (where I was Fan Guest of Honor), held what was described as 'The first Hugo banquet in years'. It was called 'The Hugo Crab Feast', the Maryland crab being one of the symbols of the con. There was a feeding from five to six o'clock (with everyone supplied with bib and souvenir crab mallet). Then, after an hour of relaxation, talk, and walking-around time, there was a renewed hour of 'pig out', after which the hall was expanded for general seating to view the Hugo presentations.

A joyful revival of the banquet came at Noreascon Three, in 1989, with a luncheon honoring Guest of Honor Andre Norton. She sat in her wheel chair between my wife Ruth and me, and received a standing applause of appreciation as she rolled out of the room in the glare of the spotlight. It was an excellent reminder of the tradition that had once been. With Isaac Asimov as toastmaster, the dozen brief speeches on the theme of what science fiction and fandom meant to each speaker was a powerful moment for a memorable convention.

Never again, I must regretfully believe, will those grand days of the worldcon banquet be revived to thrill those of us who remember. Somehow, in one way or another, we will be fed at worldcons. But it's not the banquet food I'll miss — it will be the elegance of the occasion, the wit of the toastmaster, the serious words of the Guest of Honor, the excitement of the Hugo presentations... And I'll also miss the scattered tables of my friends, in a glittering room filled with mighty pros and lowly fans, all part of that strange fraternity of science fiction fandom gathered for the highlight of the convention, the worldcon banquet. ☉



▷ While the 1970s saw the gradual decline of the tradition of the convention banquet, that decade also saw the growth of a new tradition that has lasted to this very day — the science fiction writers conferences. Several now exist, and many writers active in the field today were past attendees of one or more of them. The writer of the following article attended the best known of these, the Clarion conference, and reports that he has subsequently sold several stories to *Analog* magazine.



I never thought of Clarion as something that would be for me.

I'm a long time science fiction fan, having read the stuff for as far back as I remember. I was never really a 'fan' in the active sense of the word, but I had a perfunctory knowledge of things like cons, fanzines, and the Hugos. In fact, I attended one or two cons about ten years ago, but it wasn't until recently that I started attending conventions regularly.

It was at Philcon '93 that I got the idea — or, rather, was given the idea — to attend Clarion. For the past two years I had been seriously writing science fiction with the intent of become a professional writer, and my stories still seemed far too weak to show any promise. I had heard that Nancy Kress taught a week-long writing workshop in upstate New York over the summers, and when I realized she was at Philcon I knew I had to ask her about it. Perhaps it could help me.

I approached her, stuttering and stammering and trying not to come across as a slobbering fan boy. I explained to her that I was trying to write, and that I had some free time over the summer and wanted to take her course.

She interrupted me to ask how much time I had over the summer.

"I teach high school Physics," I replied. "I'm free all summer."

"Have you considered Clarion?"

Clarion? Me? Oh, I was well aware of what Clarion was. Every summer since 1968, about twenty or so aspiring science fiction writers would gather for six weeks to do the most intensive writing workshop the genre has to offer. Each week, a different writer-instructor would work with the group, paying forward by teaching the newcomers what they had learned in their own careers. Founded by Robin Scott Wilson, Damon Knight and Kate Wilhelm, the so-called science fiction boot camp had produced a remarkable number of significant writers in the field, many of whom became winners of major awards. If anything could turn someone into a professional, this was it.

But for me? I couldn't possibly be good enough to get into Clarion, could I? I continued to stutter and stammer as Nancy practically took me by the hand and led me to the panel about Clarion, where recent alumni discussed the workshop and how it functioned. Over the next few months, I filled out an application, submitted the best two stories I could produce, and waited. Finally, I was accepted. The joy filled me from head to toe when I heard the news; I was excited, thrilled, jubilant.

I was also scared spitless.

Like many things in science fiction, Clarion has its own set of myths and legends that are associated with it. When one editor friend of mine heard I was going to Clarion, he smiled and winked and told me I'd end up engaged. When I told him that I

was already engaged, he told me to watch out, as Clarion had a reputation of making and breaking relationships. (He made a few other comments in the same vein, but as they were a bit more salacious, I shall omit them.)

Another friend told me that Clarion made all writers come out sounding the same, since it was like putting your stories through a meat grinder. Someone else told me that Clarionites often undergo personality changes (temporary, he assured me) while at the workshop.

Despite my fear, I knew what I was doing — locking myself up for six weeks with seventeen other people who were as crazy as I was, who had the same passion for writing as I do. In the words of one 1992 graduate, I would have a chance to “drop out of life and play writer for six weeks.” But I wondered about those stories — would Clarion really be filled with lots of sex and wild parties, like a six week science fiction convention? Why did the list of things to bring include waterguns and Halloween costumes? Was it true that we would be housed all on one floor in Owen Hall, a graduate student dormitory, because the university wanted to keep us away from impressionable undergraduates? Most important of all, would this experience finally teach me what I needed to get published?

On June 19, 1994, I arrived at Michigan State University in East Lansing for the 27th Clarion Science Fiction and Fantasy Writer’s Workshop, and shortly found out the answers to all those questions.

#

For those of you who don’t know, a writing workshop generally works as follows. A group of people meet twice a month to critique each others’ stories. They go around the room in a circle, making comments on the latest works that they’ve had a chance to peruse over the past two weeks. At the end of it all, the author has a chance to rebut, and finally, everyone passes the author copies of the story with their comments.

At Clarion, we generally had four or more stories a night to critique the next morning at 9 AM. In the afternoon, manuscripts for the next day’s session would arrive, and you’d spend the night reading those and making comments on the story.

Oh, yeah — those manuscripts had to come from somewhere. You’d also spend a lot of time writing. And writing. And writing. No wonder we needed to blow off steam; we ended up critiquing a

total of 93 stories over the six weeks.

Now, I will make a confession early on, so you don’t get the wrong idea — from what I’ve heard, our Clarion was actually tame compared to ones from previous years. We didn’t push anyone around on a cart who was naked except for a mermaid’s tail and strategically placed jello and whipped cream. We didn’t hook up a firehose to soak the rooms of other Clarionites when we got bored. We didn’t sacrifice any virgins (well, maybe one, but you can ask me about that if you see me at a con). And frankly, unless I was completely out of the loop, very little sex took place at the 1994 Workshop.

But what we lacked in wildlife (plug for Jim Kelly’s novel here) we made up for in originality. Many of our instructors had been to Clarion before, and some of them noted that the weird things we did had never been done before at Clarion. We contributed our own legends to the overall Clarion mythos.

The first contribution has to be the hardship story. Doing Clarion is a big commitment, and everyone there has a story of how they managed to find the time and money. Invariably, one person can top the rest of us, and sure enough, one of us did. Jeremy Lyon, a Californian in his twenties, was so committed to the workshop that he quit his job to do it. We found that out the first day, when the group of us and John Kessel went around the room introducing each other in pairs.

John made the first week go smoothly, and in our gratitude, we had a T-shirt made up for him with a full face picture of him and one of his quotes about things we could do with our characters — “Why not just turn everybody into giant cabbages?” This started a weekly tradition, and if you happen to talk to any of the instructors they may tell you that they remember this as the T-shirt Clarion. Every instructor got a T-shirt from us with an appropriate picture and quote, autographed on the back by all of the students.

When Jim Kelly arrived, though, we had a little something extra for him. Jim attended Clarion twice and has taught there a few times, but by a happy coincidence his first summer at Clarion was in 1974. We got a cake made with his picture digitally applied to celebrate his twentieth anniversary, which we devoured shortly after a barbecue and the first of many watergun fights.

Food did seem to play an important role in Clarion, along with the unrelenting mosquitoes, the

storms, and the tornadoes. One thing I recall early on was the search for a specific Thai restaurant. The day after John Kessel had been succeeded by Jim Kelly, ten of us piled into three cars in a search for non-Owen Hall food. We headed to a nearby Thai restaurant, not realizing until we got there that they were closed Sunday. So the caravan reformed and we went in search of another one, but as we drove, the cars got separated, and we ended up at three different restaurants.

My car, however, ended up at the best Thai restaurant for miles around — Lamai's Thai Eggroll Kitchen, one of the most difficult places in Lansing to find. How did we end up there? Our driver spotted Camille LaGuire, an '82 graduate and author of the Clarion student restaurant guide, walking down the street as it began to rain. We called to her loudly, kidnapped her, and made her take us to Lamai's, since she knew how to get there. For this and for all her work in making sure that Clarionites know that there is real food outside Owen Hall, I named Camille the patron saint of the hungry Clarionite.

I mentioned tornadoes before, but although there were plenty of tornado watches only once was there an actual tornado warning. That was the Thursday of the third week, when Ellen Kushner and Delia Sherman were our instructors. Since they were leaving early on Friday to get to Readercon, we had our end-of-week party Thursday night. For about half an hour, we moved the party to the basement of Owen Hall, while three tornadoes passed through the town. A few of us whiled away the time singing ballads and other songs in the laundry room, to the amusement of the non-Clarionites taking shelter.



Claire Eddy, editor at Tor Books, came that weekend, with the joyous news that being Clarionites was enough of a credit to pull us out of the slush pile. Oh how we cheered at her news!

Her stay was all too brief, and then Howard Waldrop showed up for the fourth week. Now you gotta know one thing before you understand why Howard hit us like a major shock: H'ard has one of the strongest Texas accents I've ever heard, and comes off as a backwoods kind of a guy. From what we had heard of Howard, and from the spirited conversation we had with him on the 7th floor balcony the night before our first session with him, we really didn't know what to expect from him in class.

In nervousness and with a touch of fear, we decided to bring offerings that Monday morning. Almost every one of us walked in and put a piece of fruit at his feet. I was first, and Howard didn't seem to think it was odd, but by the time Dave Woomer, the tallest one of us all, placed a pineapple on the table in front of him, Howard realized that this had been planned. We had a good, nervous laugh, and then began the session.

One of the stories critiqued that day was by Sandy Hutchinson, who happened to be the first classmate I met — she and I got together a few weeks before the workshop began, as she only lived two hundred miles away. Her story was about a devout Christian in 4th century Egypt who encounters a robot from the 21st century due to a time warp. We went around the circle, making the usual comments on plot, character, scene structure, etc.

Then we got to Howard. Practically the first thing he says is that if this story is gonna work right, the author's gotta let us know what the character's beliefs are. For example, which sect of Christianity is he in? Does he live east or west of the Nile, 'cause y'all see that the sects were different depending on where you lived. You had your blanks, and your other blanks, and your third blanks...

Sandy, who is an expert on this stuff, was smiling and nodding her head as she took notes, as Howard was right on the mark. The rest of us were dumbfounded. Knowledge of ancient Christian sects in Egypt is rather esoteric, and one would not expect someone like Howard to know about such things. But okay, so what, everyone knows something you wouldn't expect.

Next, we got to John Wenger's comic piece about a human forced to watch old TV sitcoms with

aliens who worship our broadcasts. (John has an off-beat sense of humor which goes quite nicely with the far-away look in his eyes.) The idea behind his story was that due to the speed of light lag, the aliens get our TV shows many years in the future, and when a human crash-lands on their planet it is a stroke of incredible luck for them. They finally have someone who can explain to them the significance of the two Darrins, and the parable of *My Mother, the Car*.

Again, everyone had a chance to critique. (I pointed out that John had never stated explicitly that we now had FTL technology; otherwise, his main character couldn't have outrun the television signals.) Then we come to Howard.



Well, he says, the problem here is that the time frame is wrong. You see, *My Mother the Car* was on in such-and-such year, the switch between Darrins took place in that other year, Lucy's baby was on this night, not that night, this other show was pre-empted on that particular Tuesday for this reason...

Up until that point, I had been developing a reputation of being a know-it-all since I was the closest thing we had at the workshop to a hard science fiction writer (what with two Physics degrees) and since I had the most comprehensive knowledge of the history of science fiction — at least, of those of us there. But when it comes to knowing everything — and I mean, *everything* — Howard wins hands down. We were totally blown away. After all, it wasn't just that Howard showed his encyclopedic knowledge of early Christianity or of 1960's sitcoms, but that he showed his knowledge of *both* esoteric subjects, in one morning.

Howard's colorful metaphors entertained us all week, and he ended up getting the highest number of quotes onto the T-shirt, with such pearls of wisdom as "Either you're gonna die or it's gonna sell," or "Oedipal stuff is like family stuff, but different." My personal favorite — "You can make a reader go 'Huh?' anywhere in a story but not on page nine. And you can never make a reader go 'Huh? What?' A 'What?' is a non-realization of the preceding 'Huh?'" Believe me, it makes sense if you think about it.

Part of our nervousness the week Howard was there was probably due to the fact that we were getting ready for Damon Knight and Kate Wilhelm. Kate and Damon had taught at every single Clarion from the beginning, almost always for the last two weeks, and we truly had no idea what to expect from them. We absorbed stories of their previous Clarion appearances like thirsty travelers drinking deeply from an oasis in the Sahara. One year, we were told. Kate and Damon had been absolute sweethearts; another year, it was as if their evil twins had shown up instead. In order to defuse our nervousness, a few of us had sent a brief note to them during the first week, saying that we were learning to "write more better," and asking questions like how many pairs of underwear they owned, or if they could deal with spiders the size of cafeteria trays. The fact that they never wrote back to acknowledge the joke only served to heighten the suspense.

The first week of Kate and Damon had us all feeling like squeezed lemons, to the point where we hardly had any time or energy for letting off steam. We finally understood where the other stories about them had come from. They were the harshest instructors we had all summer. As one Clarionite put it, the previous four weeks were merely a prelude for Kate and Damon. But the harshness, at least to me, did not seem overly gratuitous. You learn a hell of a lot when a writer goes through a story with you "sentence by bloody sentence," as Juliann Medina put it.

We finally did let off a little steam on the Friday of their first week. Or rather, some of us let off a little steam. You see, among the group of us were two incorrigible punsters, David Greer Smith (who reminds me of a clean-cut Groucho Marx) and myself. Unbeknownst to the two of us, a group of classmates had planned something special for which-

ever one of us made the next pun in class.

To my great relief, that turned out to be David. Damon had drawn a Venn diagram to show that every story needed Background, Situation, and Character, and had labeled each circle with the first letter of each word, respectively. David gleefully pointed out that these three things were absolutely necessary, because if, for example, you didn't include Character, you'd be left with B.S.

At the next break, about eight of our classmates got their water weaponry, marched David up to a nearby brick wall, and fired. All that was left when they finished soaking him was his outline on the wall. According to Kate, it was the first water-gun pun execution in all of Clarion's history.

We had one other 'first', the Monday night following. The pressure had become so intense that Juliann Medina, a short blonde with a midwestern accent and a sharp sense of humor, decided to organize a manuscript sacrifice. That night, in full costume and regalia, all eighteen of us marched into the courtyard while chants were played on a portable stereo. We surrounded a bonfire, and going around in a circle, we drank from a cup of wine and offered our manuscripts as sacrifices to the gods. As the flames fed on our stories, we ran around and around, chanting and screaming. Kate and Damon witnessed the sacrifice and again Kate commented that such a thing had never been done at Clarion before.



On the other hand, for me this catharsis came a day too early. You see, for critique the next day I had submitted a piece of space opera.

Bad space opera. And I didn't realize how bad it really was.

I guess I should have seen it coming when people smiled at me and gave me funny looks dur-

ing the break. But the real tip-off was at the beginning of the critique, when the classmates to my immediate right and left started arguing over who got to go first. Everyone trashed this piece so much that by the time we got to Kate and Damon they really had nothing to say. I have to admit, although I found myself laughing at the stupidities in this story as they were pointed out to me, the fact is that this critique hurt my feelings a *lot*. I needed to spend the afternoon and evening all by myself to recover.

There were two consolations, though. First of all, as one of my classmates said, part of the reason they were so harsh on me was that they expected better from me because of my other stories. They knew that this couldn't possibly represent my best work. The other consolation, which I revealed to them after the critique ended, was that this particular story was written by me the week *before* Clarion. I had been worried about my ability to produce a story a week, so I wanted to see if I could do it at least once. Therefore, being told that this story was awful compared to all my other stories told me that I was learning *something* at Clarion.

On the last day, at the end of the session, Kate dropped the biggest bombshell of all. Although we were a Clarion of 'firsts', we would also be a Clarion of 'lasts'. After 27 years of teaching at Clarion, Kate Wilhelm and Damon Knight had finally decided to retire. The news hit us all like a balloon deflating. Our emotions were mixed — joy at having had the chance to work with them, but sorrow at the thought of wondering how Clarion would possibly survive without them. For myself, I was also proud in having been allowed to share in a part of science fiction history. No matter what else happens in my life, I can say that I was a student at the last Kate & Damon Clarion.

Looking back on my experience, I have to agree with something that Steve Samenski '93 said at that Philcon panel that got me into all this — he commented that he did not feel fundamentally changed by Clarion. While this is true, I do feel that I have learned more than I ever did before about what makes a story work, and even if I still find it hard to apply this knowledge to my own work, I feel much more confident now when dissecting other people's stories. Most important of all, though, I made seventeen good friendships that will last me a lifetime. ☼

▷ While conferences like Clarion have helped bring many new writers into the field, even for many successful authors writing remains only a part-time vocation, usually not even the primary source of income. One case in point is the writer of the following article, Sharon Farber, who is a Neurologist when she is not writing fiction. Sharon's newest article in her "Medical Life" series looks back at her medical school days, and her Clinical Year there.



Tales of Adventure and Medical Life by Sharon Farber

The unofficial motto of my medical school class was "Life is tough and People are weird." This was stated by our long-haired class philosopher, and considered quite profound. Others opted for "We're like mushrooms, kept in the dark and fed shit." Sometimes I'd talk to doctors who trained in the dark ages before penicillin, and who looked upon medical school and internship as the high points of their lives. I figured they must be demented.

My clinical year didn't start too badly, with neurology and psychiatry and "country club" — ophthalmology and otolaryngology. The last two were rotations so quick you never learned your residents' names. My main memory of ENT is of a surgeon who liked an audience, so we'd have to stand there in the operating room. Since he was operating inside the nose, which even in Jimmy Durante or W. C. Fields must be considered a rather small area, I never saw anything more educational than the back of the surgeon's neck.

One day he was doing something or other to the nose of an awake woman who felt nervous. He began the surgery by taking an entire shot glass of gleaming white pharmaceutical grade cocaine and stuffing it up her nostrils until she was about as hyper as you can get without leaving earth orbit.

"Talk to me," she demanded. "Tell me a joke."

He, being a surgeon, had no jokes to his possession. My classmates had even fewer. So by default I found myself doing an hour of standup

comedy punctuated by the commands "suck" and "bovey" and "clamp." It was surreal. (A bovey is a device that electronically coagulates tissue. You can tell when a surgeon is using a bovey. The place smells like barbecue.)

It was also the only time I required anything remotely resembling thought in an operating room.

#

Next I went to general surgery. Unfortunately this was at an affiliated hospital where the rotation was under the direction of a tyrannical chinless man who seemed to hate women. When he didn't have any female students he would celebrate the end of the rotation by taking the boys out for pizza and beer, and would tell them "Women shouldn't be doctors." He didn't bother covering up his opinion.

The medical school dealt with this blatant sexism in a typically idiotic way — they made sure they never sent more than one woman at a time for him to teach. That way you were not only alternately abused and ignored, you were also alone. However, since he also made life miserable for anyone who seemed effeminate, I had an equally miserable classmate with whom to commiserate. (He also invariably chose the handsomest student as teacher's pet. This was generally agreed to be one weird assignment.)

The first day he took us to learn how to scrub and gown. The acquisition of surgical cleanliness is a ritual as intricate and exacting as the Japanese tea ceremony.

The first step was to get into scrubs. At this

hospital, it seemed that the nurses (there were no women doctors' locker rooms then, even though a third of my class was female) had not even the usual geeky women's scrubs, but worse — they were made with a pattern of flowers. Great. Try to look professional and dignified and powerful covered with lilacs. (Later I got a friend to sneak real scrubs to me.)

I exited, humiliated by this idiotic garb, and looked around. The others had not emerged yet from the male locker room. "Amazing," I thought. "Aren't women supposed to be the slow dressers?"

So I waited. And waited. For forty-five minutes, while the professor and the boys exchanged crucial information, or male-bonded, or whatever. Several times I thought about going in and asking if they needed mommy to tie their shoes, or if they were being naughty — but at that moment I still foolishly harbored the notion of getting good grades. But I had a sinking feeling that the next six weeks were going to suck. And I was right.

It wasn't just this guy. Our chief resident — we called him "Frank Psychosis" (a psychiatric term meaning, well, frank psychosis) — was losing it. We'd start rounding around six a.m., then work the evening. But some days he'd make us stay and round again at night. Rumor was he couldn't go home.

One day we were restraining a completed demented old woman who needed an amputation. The anesthesiologist was trying to get a spinal needle into the squirming babbling patient.

"Hold still, ma'am," I said. "It's just acupuncture."

Frank stopped what he was doing and spun on me. "What did you say?"

So I repeated it.

"You have a surgeon's sense of humor!" he cried happily.

"Wonderful. Can I have it removed?"

Yes, under the force of constant harassment by the head of the rotation I had gradually lost all sense of tact. I was scrubbed with a colorectal surgeon one day when he looked up from a bowel anastomosis, caught my eye and said, "You know, I don't think women should be doctors." This was getting monotonous.

I just looked him back and said, "Yeah, I really wanted to just marry a doctor, but I was too smart and too ugly so I had to be one instead."

Somehow though I got out of surgery alive, and went on to internal medicine. This was just as

bad, even though I had intended to be an internist. I got a resident who was so nasty and vicious that every single one of his students wound up complaining to the chief resident. Not that the chief did anything about it. Like maybe tell the attendings that the guy was a liar. Whenever anything went vaguely wrong, this resident would claim it was my fault!

The attending wasn't much to speak of either. He seemed to resent teaching for keeping him out of his laboratory. One day I had a patient with congestive heart failure and a rare form of cancer called 'mycosis fungoides' which, as the name implies, makes the victim resemble extras from that classic movie *Attack of the Mushroom People*.

I had spend most of the night preparing to answer any question about heart failure or cutaneous leukemia. I presented the case, and sat back waiting to show my stuff.

"Well," the attending said. "What's going to kill her, the rare disease or the common one?"

"The common one," I replied, and he moved on to another topic, namely his research.

I was certain things would get better when the residents changed, right before Christmas break. The new one was a tiny, quiet woman. We third year students were required to follow our supervisors at heel like obedient puppydogs, and I trailed her down to the emergency room. She wanted to talk to the guy who would be starting soon as our new intern.

It was a Friday night, and he was charting on a teenage girl who had been in the front row of a concert. The lead singer had singled her out for a kiss, at which point she had fainted.

"Darn," said the intern. "I should be able to call this something instead of just syncope."

"How about Disco Fever?" I suggested.

He grinned and started writing — "Friday Night Fever," but it was close.



This was a hopeful sign. A sense of humor. This would be a good team. Then I left for Christmas vacation.

I got back two weeks later, bright and early and ready to work. "Hi," I said.

My resident ignored me completely. She looked up at the intern. "Hello," she said wistfully.

"You're looking very nice today," he squeaked in reply.

Yes, they had fallen in love (and eventually married). But if there's one thing young lovers don't need, it's a medical student tagging along. They ditched me constantly — and rather than feel bad about the fact that they were not educating me, translated it into hostility. They avoided me like the plague, and then would yell that I wasn't available to do their scut.

A few days before my Professor's Rounds — my case presentation to the Chief of Service — the resident remembered I existed. Perhaps it was the fact that when the student totally screws up Professor Rounds it looks bad for the resident, who is suppose to help with the write-up and the research and even do a practice run. "Better let me see your work-up," she said.

I gave it to her. When I asked for it back, she looked blank. She'd lost my Professor's Rounds! When I got a bit upset — less than twenty-four hours to reconstitute a magnum opus — she said, "Well, you should have made a copy. It probably wasn't any good anyway."

At the end of the rotation the resident and intern took me for lunch, the most consecutive minutes I'd seen of them since I'd returned. "We discussed your grade with the chief and it was between a pass and a high pass," she said, "so we went with the lower grade."

All in a bland voice like I should be thanking her. I refrained from tossing my iced tea in her face.

Surprisingly, my next resident and attending weren't complete assholes. They even expressed wonder at my low grade for the prior six weeks. I got honors, honors on the exam, all of which evened out to a high pass for the course.

That above average grade meant that I could get a letter of recommendation from the Chairman of Internal Medicine himself, so a year later I sat in his office while the noted endocrinologist looked at my records. "You got a pass first rotation," He stared at me angrily. He had an Italian Renaissance face, resembling a Botticelli painting of a Medici. A

scowling Medici.

I had long since learned not to try to complain about residents. And I had somehow deluded myself into thinking that, when one goes from a C to an A, with an A on the exam as well, then people would either say "Gee, what went wrong the first part?" Or "Nice work, you improved." Yeah sure. Not in medical school. My letter of recommendation sucked.

But that was later. I'd done well. Once my resident sent me in to see a confused patient with instructions to find out what had gone wrong. The man had asterixis, an inability to hold the outstretched hands still (known also as 'liver flap', or flippantly as 'waving goodbye to the liver'). I emerged from his room, caught my resident's eye way down the hall, held up my hands and flapped them. He grinned and was proud — unlike my prior residents, who had either claimed personal responsibility for my few intelligent acts, or decided that I'd stolen the information.

Another time I found a treatable cancer in a patient in for something totally unrelated, and the patient and my resident both bragged about my accomplishment. So I'd been appreciated, encouraged. I was finally stoked. I'd gone from beaten down to gung ho, the proper med student attitude.

#

I couldn't wait. Pediatrics was next. I'd decided to go into neurology, and I hoped to make an impression on peds neuro. I did. It was such an unpopular rotation, dealing as it did with brain damaged kids, that they were just pleased to have someone who wanted to be there, rather than the usual last picks.

I went at it gung ho. When I had a patient with Sturge-Weber (a rare disease with seizures, brain damage, and a strawberry birthmark on the forehead) without skin manifestations, I checked the literature back to the 1890's. On my call nights I'd work up not one, but two patients. I became pals with the chief resident and the adult neuro rotator — not by sucking up, but by my enthusiasm and sheer love for the subject.

The rotation wasn't all beer and skittles. I got the crud — I always got sick on pediatrics, everyone did — and was leaning against the wall trying to stay alive while they discussed a new admission.

"What virus does he have?" the pediatric resident asked the subintern, an unhappy fourth year medical student required to take this rotation and loathing every minute of it.

"Wait," the chief said. "Let's ask Sharon. After all, she's got it too."



I thought that was unnecessary cruelty. I didn't know the name of the damn bug. I just hoped that if it was fatal, it would kill me immediately.

#

My next rotation was pediatric infectious disease. There were three students, the other two being a woman who admitted to smoking (all the other smokers lied), and a huge guy who'd been one of the first people I'd met on arriving at med school. He'd been in the dorm lobby, reading a newspaper.

"I'm going to be a plastic surgeon and help little deformed children," he'd told me.

It would have been a lot more convincing if he hadn't been reading the Wall Street Journal at the time.

He was a consummate ass-kisser, spending most of his time trying to impress the attending by borrowing articles. Neither of my colleagues wanted to work very hard. We were supposed to spend one evening a week in the emergency room. They decided to arrange our schedules so our assigned ER times coincided with ward call, which would take precedence. When my protests were of no avail, I let them handle the schedule, then switched with my friend Carol so I could do the ER work after all.

One afternoon my resident ran up to me in a state of frenzy. "You have to help. We're getting bombed."

They had too many patients and the big guy, who was supposed to be the student on call that day, was not to be found — "as usual" my resident said. The other student had disappeared also.

"But I'm due in the ER at six."

"Look," said my resident. "We've got this five-year-old with a septic hip. It's a great case, you can do a great presentation. Work her up, take care of things, and when you have to be in the ER, just stop whatever point you're at, tell the intern, and we'll take it from there."

That sounded fair. At six I wheeled the kid to the OR for the hip to be aspirated, found the intern and signed out, did my shift in the ER, got home at midnight and read til the wee hours about pediatric joint infections.

The next morning we went over the cases with the attending. I presented the case, ending with a well-organized differential diagnosis.

Out of the corner of my eye I could see the intern and resident give me thumbs up. I was smoking. I was their helpful little star. Things couldn't have been better.

I finished and looked at the attending. I was tuned. I was ready for any and all questions.

I thought.

She stared at me, an expression of fury and hatred coming over her face. "Last night at seven o'clock," she said, "my husband was not home for dinner. My husband was in an operating room with a syringe full of pus..and he had no one to hand it to!"

No questions. No "why weren't you there?"

No helpful residents or interns saying "Look, this was extra work she did just to help us out because your teacher's pet is a total sleaze. We dropped the ball, not her."

Nothing but silence. And the distant sounds of the clock ticking and my grade plunging.

Our grades also featured written evaluations. When I went to read mine in the pediatrics office, I ran into the Big Guy looking like the cat who swallowed the canary. I'd expected as much.

I also expected only the worst from Infectious Disease. But I'd had hopes for Peds Neuro.

The grade wasn't great. And the commentary: "Did a lackluster presentation on febrile seizures."

I read it over three times. Then I started laughing hysterically. I couldn't stop. When I noticed the department secretary looking like she was about to call security, I gave her back the grade — never to see light of day again — and left.

In the end, it hadn't really mattered that I'd worked my ass off, that I'd done well. It didn't seem to matter what I did. I just couldn't win.

They'd given me the subintern's grade.

I met the subintern again a few years later, now a pediatrics resident. I never asked if she'd got my evaluation. I wanted to think that someone had benefitted from the experience. ☺

NEXT: It shouldn't be possible — but out of the frying pan and into the fire. ☺

▷ For those of you who haven't seen too many previous issues of *Mimosa*, you may be wondering if we deliberately go out of our way to find and publish essays about past fan eras. The answer to that is yes, we do. There are still far too many stories about fandoms past and their folklore that are still preserved only in the memories of the people who were active back then. But not only that, fan history articles often make for entertaining reading, as the following illustrates.



The Canadian, the Myth and the Chambanacon Bar by Ben Zuhl

The propeller beanie, 'poetsareds', Room 770, ghoomdinton, "smooooth", the tower of bheercans to the moon, the secret handgrip of fandom, "Yngvi is a Louise", blog, Foo-Foo, Ghu, Roscoe, Carl Brandon... Fannish myths and legends fascinate me. The creation and spread of fannish folklore along with the brisk intercourse in ideas not only helps define fandom but are the fuel that keeps it alive. The food of the ghods...

If this be so, then I have a couple of morsels, and what better time for them to be cooked up than when I am writing this — Thanksgiving. Nearly twenty years ago it was my pleasure to be at Chambanacon, a convention held in Champaign, Illinois, on Thanksgiving weekend. As is fitting for a weekend after a feast, it was about as relaxed as a convention could be without being a relaxacon.

In 1976 one of the panels was 'The andy and Joe Hour', an irreverent forum for andy offutt and Joe Haldeman. I was in the audience heckling the pros on the stage. Actually I was assisting Mike Glicksohn heckle. I am, after all, merely a neo when compared to the heckling abilities of the hairy hazer from Canada. I was feeding him Scotch and he was hazing his mind.

Sometime around the middle of the panel andy mentioned that at the Nebula awards he and some other filthy pros had decided that the proper pronunciation of 'Sci-Fi' would forever more be 'Skiffy' (like 'Skippy' with a harelip). He added that they had gone so far as to invent a mascot for Skiffy: the Spayed Gerbil. The proclamation passed without

anyone realizing the repercussions of this seemingly simple statement.

Champaign is fairly centrally located for many of the attendees, and such a good time was being had that departing for the mundane world was put off until the last possible minute. So Sunday dawned early in the afternoon. Since we knew we wouldn't be heading home until late in the evening we immediately headed for the hotel bar. To our horror it didn't open until 4pm. Being intrepid fans, and wanting a bit of hair of the dog that bit us, we left the hotel for a bar about 10 blocks away. The story of that expedition in sub-zero weather with Mike Glicksohn, Joe Haldeman, and Eric Lindsay is a long one. I'll not go into it here except to say that all of us were bundled up, due to the arctic-like conditions — all of us that is, except for the Canadian. Mike claimed that the cold this far south wouldn't bother him, and if it did there would be enough anti-freeze in his system to sustain him. We stayed there just long enough to be sure the hotel bar would be open and that Mike wouldn't freeze.

Upon returning to the hotel, the three of us and the hairy icecube were joined by several other fans on the way to the bar. Soon we were safely ensconced at a long table in that hospitable place. And soon, I was in a heated conversation with Eric and an even more heated observation of the cleavage of the scantily clad barmaid clearing the table next to ours. Mike was thawing quickly.

The concepts being tossed about by Eric and I had nearly managed to drag my eyes off the wait-

ress, when a short hairy voice asked the fateful question: "Want to order a Spayed Gerbil?" I muttered a distracted, "Sure." Joe Haldeman put his conversation with andy on hold long enough to throw in with us and "make it three." He then picked up his dangling conversation in mid-thought.

Mike, ever the classy one, showed no surprise at being taken up on his rather absurd suggestion. He stood up (to be sure that he could be seen) and beckoned our waitress over. She didn't seem at all bothered by Canada's version of the abominable LoCman asking her for three altered female rodents. I guess she was inured to shock by the previous three days of the convention. She undulated her way to the bar, shook her head, pointed at our table, undulated her way back and asked, "What goes into a Spayed Gerbil?" When no answer was forthcoming she looked at me. While I was mentally forming images, from the absurd to the ticklish, she shifted her gaze downward to Mike. Mike winked and looked at Joe. Joe, in a rather tired and bored voice, as if everyone should know this, said, "It's 1/3 Campari, 2/3 Gin, stirred over ice and served straight up." They soon were.



Presently, blood-red drinks adorned the tables of all the fans in the bar causing the greatest run on Campari the bar had ever encountered. As we were leaving Joe attempted to set the bartender right. He told him that he had been making bogus Spayed Gerbils. After all, "a real Spayed Gerbil is made with a blender and a hamster..." That was as far as he got before the bartender threw him out.

I wrote "The Weird Tale of Spayed Gerbil Fandom" in *Ben'Zine 1* but the story didn't end there. In *Ben'Zine 2*, Mike related how he got the hotel off his back (they were unfairly billing him twice for a room) by taking the offensive and then

ending on a conciliatory note. The bartender in the sixth floor bar, he wrote, "Made the best damn Spayed Gerbil I'd found anywhere in the Midwest!" *Ben'Zine 3* had further evidence that Spayed Gerbil Fandom still lived. In between two superb pieces of joan hanks woods artwork, andy offutt wrote what he called "The Real Tale of Spayed Gerbil Fandom." He claimed that the SG drink was invented by those same filthy pros who came up with the infamous rodent. It was, he blurbbed, made with vodka, root beer, and a cocktail onion. And, andy added, since we were drinking not the 'true' Spayed Gerbil, but Joe's invention, we should call it by name — a 'Spayed Haldeperson'.

Chambanacoon '77 added another page to fandom's book of folklore. We went there anticipating a wonderful con since we would be celebrating the first anniversary of Spayed Gerbil Fandom. We found it to be a ghould omen when the bartender in the bar produced Spayed Gerbils (the real ones, andy, not your spurious species — we were in print first, after all) without having to remind him of the recipe. But the SG, while present, was not to be the focus of that year's festivities.

Early in the convention, Mike said he wanted to introduce me to Sam and Mary Long (no longer together but still fans). "They are ghould people," he said, "but I'll introduce you, anyway." And he did, shortly and hairily. They were and we hit it off quite well.

On Saturday, a couple of hours before the banquet, Sam, Mary, and I went up to the magical bar on the sixth floor. We sat down at a table with an empty seat and waited to see who would have the good taste and judgment to join us. We called it 'trolling'. Sure enough, in a few minutes, Mike Glicksohn walked in, saw us, and sat down. Sam, and I had a quick argument over whether Mike was too small and should be thrown back, but we ended up keeping him.

Mike and I ordered Spayed Gerbils and took turns relating *The Weird Tale Of Spayed Gerbil Fandom*. About midway through the story I observed Mike stroking Mary's left knee. This seemed an eminently worthwhile endeavor, and since she was sitting between us, I joined in. After all, there was a knee just as ghould as the one Mike was caressing at hand. About an hour later (Mike and I, by unspoken agreement, padded the story to about twice its length), the saga and our ministrations came to an end. I think it stopped there because Sam's incessant questioning about what we were

doing to his wife's knees threw our timing off.

There followed many atrocious puns that none of us kneced. Just as the punkneeng got to be as bad as the one in this sentence, Mike noticed that it was time for him to go to the banquet. Since our friend from the north was the only one of us masochistic enough to want to eat banquet food, the three of us adjourned to the convention registration area. This was the gathering spot for the convention since it was located such that one had to pass by in order to get to any of the events or the doors to the mundane world. It was here that Knee Fandom was born, about 90 minutes after its conception in the bar.

Mary, Sam, and I sat down on a couch and trolled again. We found quite a few people with taste had decided to forgo the banquet. Figures, doesn't it? When the crowd had grown to about eight people, Mary asked the fateful question: "You and Mike have been playing with my knees; what's so special about them? Lets see what the fascination is. Show me your knees, Ben!" So I rolled up my pants legs to bare my knees for her observation and stroking. My example was soon followed by the other fans in our little group. Then, whenever anyone passed by, they too showed us their knees. Soon our group had grown to about thirty fans, all of whom had flashed their knees. But, happiness was not possible for our little band until a small matter was taken care of. We had to see Glicksohn's knees! But the banquet was still inflicting itself on its attendees.

To pass the time we sat and talked and groaned (every time someone came up with a new and outrageous pun), and posed for Jim Odbert to sketch us, knees and all. Some of the lines that still disturb my sleep today are worth mentioning if only because misery loves company.

"We must be the knights who say knee."

"Alms for the kneedy."

"Knee fen abound in MinKneesota and Indian-Knee."

"I suppose the headquarters would be in Kneesdon, London."

Or, as Mary asked Brian Earl Brown, "Do you know that Cockney song, 'Knees Up Mother Brown?'"

And to make a long story longer, I will add my favorite, from Sam: "Women have an advantage in Kneec Fandom because they are born 'Nee' such-and-such. Mary has a larger advantage by being Mary Long Knee Legg."

A couple of hours of this was enough to cause the departure of Sam and Mary. They wanted to beat the bad weather and worse puns forecast for that evening. They left with the request that we check out Glicksohn's knees for them.

And, we did, much to the dismay of the hirsute letterhack.

He was totally unsuspecting, imagining that the strange feeling in the pit of his stomach was from the banquet chicken, not a premonition of things to come. As he left the banquet hall and tried to pass through the registration area he was confronted by a small mob of fans chanting, "**Knees, knees, show us your knees!**"



Now, Mike is not a coward and he proved this by attempting to ignore us. This failed as we surrounded him. I, as leader of the pack, moved in and confronted him.

"Mike, you are required to show us your knees. It's no big thing, Mike. You're not ashamed of them," I kneedled him.

"I can't do that," he responded.

It was then that the mob got out of control and knocked him to his fanKnee. His pants legs were rolled up and the space where ordinary mortals have knees was exposed. He was correct, we couldn't see his knees, they were completely covered by hair. We did designate a couple of intrepid fans to explore the thick black jungle in the area where his knees should be, and they reported (after borrowing a machete from a SCA member) that there was indeed evidence of knees. So he was passed and our obligation to the Longs discharged.

Shortly after this took place I apologized to Mike, "Sorry, but we had to finish off the story of Kneec Fandom with it's originator, you know. Let's go up to the bar and I'll buy you a whiskey Kneat. So, arm in arm we headed up to the bar, where the puns and whiskey flowed until we were both inkneebriated. ☼

▷ From midwest U.S. fandom, it's on to Sweden for more fannish folklore. Ahrvid Engholm, the writer of the following, has previously written for *Mimosa* about Swedish fan publications, fan feuds, and fan hoaxes. He has been active in fandom since the 1970s, when most of the games he describes originated.



For some reason, people don't think that fandom is silly enough as it is, with grown-up people walking around in propeller beanies. At least where I come from, the fans have tended to make fannish life even more silly by introducing Silly Games.

The term 'silly games' often refers to quiz shows, word games, and similar games at conventions. In Swedish fandom such things have occurred, like the 'Fantasy Jeopardy' done at this year's big fantasy con. It so happens that the referee as well as the people writing the questions to Swedish TV's version of *Jeopardy* are fans, so we had a 'Fan Jeopardy' with parts of the original staff.

But more often the Silly Games are social things, done on club meetings, fan gatherings or parties. Here are some of the Silly Games of Swedish and Scandinavian Fandom:

Yngve Is A Louse

Or rather, Yngve Holmberg was the leader of the Swedish conservative party for some years during the 70's — to some that is equivalent of being a louse. Anyway, 'Yngve Holmberg' was the name of a rather strange dialogue game popular around 1978.

The game consisted of saying the names of famous Swedish politicians. A certain name triggered a certain response, but the rules were rather obscure — so obscure that I'm in fact not sure that I ever understood the game. The rules were presented in a dialogue in the fanzine *Torkade Människor* ('Dried People'), published by the fan couple KG Johansson & Gunilla Dahlblom. (KG & Gunilla live quite far north. Some years ago a fan planned a fan gathering on a train, to have a party while on the train and then to visit KG & Gunilla. The plan moved along fine for some time until the organizer got a letter from them: "It sounds swell! We're all for it! But there is a problem. There's no train

service to our town...")

I'm certain that this game later led to the popularity of the dialogue game 'Stora Mossen' (which I have mentioned in other articles), since the rules of both games were obscure. You say things, pretend it has a meaning, and get a response that also pretends to have a meaning. Thinking of it, it sounds like fanzine publishing!

Stora Mossen

'Stora Mossen' was inspired by the game 'Finchley Central' of British fandom, but with one subtle difference: the London underground has no station called 'Finchley Central', but there *is* a station called 'Stora Mossen' in the Stockholm underground.

The game only has one rule: You take turns saying metro stations in Stockholm, and the person who first says the name 'Stora Mossen' wins. This nonsense game at times managed to engage Stockholm fans for hours and hours at fan gatherings in late 1979 and 1980.

In those days, we had lots of fan gatherings, especially in Stockholm fandom. There were one-evening parties, fan weeks, and fannish weekends. A 'fan week' was an open house for a week (when the parents of the hosting fan unsuspectingly went for a vacation), when all fans could come anytime, day or night, drink beer, write one-shots, listen to music at high volume, sleep over — and play silly games. The fannish weekends were similar, but only for two days.

I remember a fannish weekend once, when I woke up rolled into a carpet. I stood up, looked around and saw the editor of the review fanzine *Fanzine-Press*, famous for being late. "When will next issue of *Fanzine-Press* come?" I asked, as if it

was the most natural thing in the world to say the day after the Mother of All Parties.

Pirate Island

Games were also popular at meetings of the Scandinavian SF Association. Most popular in those days was 'Sjörövarön' (or 'Pirate Island'). This was a board game where you let small metal figures move over a pirate island in search of treasure. You moved by throwing dice, and you could also shoot on opponents if they were in the line of fire.

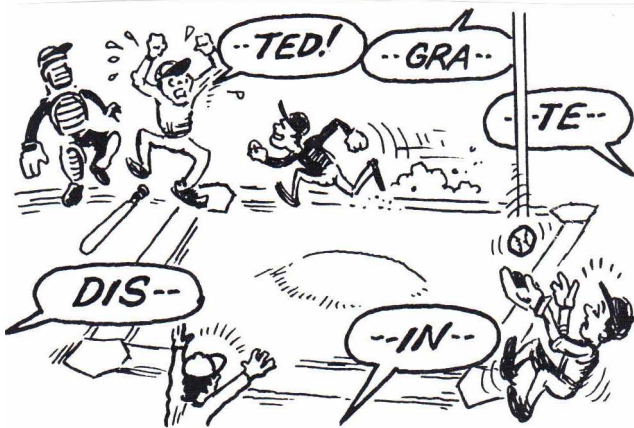
The figures had names, like 'Fatty' or 'The Rat from Marseille', and you always had 'your' figure that you kept from game to game. After a time, we began to develop special phrases that we said in certain situations in the game, things like "The Rat from Marseille is always fearless!"

Pirate Island was played with such intensity that the board of the Scandinavian SF Association complained about us screaming and running around. The question was brought up to a board meeting and the players were asked to try to stay more calm. We eventually quit playing it after the fan who owned the game set, Leif Euren, gaffiated and took the game with him. An attempt was made to revive the game in fandom around 1981, but failed after we began to get on to other, more exciting games.

Meteorball

Two popular games were invented at the regional Stockholm convention Nasacon, that was held ten times between 1980 and 1989.

'Meteorball' started at the 1981 Nasacon. This game is a version of softball. It is identical to Swedish softball, except for one thing: instead of shouting "Out!" you have to shout "Disintegrated!"



As you can see, shouting "dis-in-te-gra-ted" gives the running player a definite advantage, since he has a much longer word during which he can run

and reach a base.

Nonetheless, Meteorball became a regular event at every Nasacon, and occasionally it was tried outside the convention. There was always one team from the club arranging Nasacon, Sigma Terra Corps, and a team of 'The Rest'. Sigma TC won most of the matches, but it didn't matter — everybody had great fun.

Around 1989, I invented a variation of Meteorball called 'Meteoriteball'. This was a game for few players, where everybody took individual points and took turns hitting the ball. Meteoriteball actually worked fine!

The Great Peanut Race

Another invention of Nasacon was 'The Great Peanut Race'. At Seacon, the 1979 Worldcon, I had witnessed The Great Pork Pie Race, popular in British fandom for a few years because of the pork pies that Brian Burgess (I think his name is) frequently would offer fans at parties.

The aim of that game was to transport a pork pie approximately 20 meters. We didn't have 20 meters of indoor space, so we changed it to 2 meters. And we used a peanut instead, an unpiled peanut of the type that was popular on the meetings of the Scandinavian SF Association in the 60's when Lars-Olov Strandberg hosted them.

I think The Great Peanut Race started at the 1982 Nasacon. A variety of methods was used for peanut transportation: slingshots, frisbees, trained animals, water pipes, mechanical cars, fireworks, gravitational force, and even mimeographs, to name just a few. (The mimeograph transportation was simply a string attached to the rolls of an electrical mimeograph. On the other end of the string was the peanut, and you just turned on the machine.)

But around 1986, a superb team of peanut fans calling themselves the Peanut Defence Initiative (from Reagan's Strategic Defence Initiative), emerged on the scene and took all the first prizes.

The first year, with PDI/I, they presented the 'Electroshock Red Button Peanut'. A mad scientist appeared on the stage and presented the set-up that involved computers, a console, wires back and forth, and an electric device. The process was computer driven. You entered the correct codes, as when firing nuclear weapons, and a red warning light began to flash. Then you pressed the big red button, and:

"At this point," as the scientist explained with a heavy German accent, "the process is irreversible. The peanut will be fired, whatever you do. Retalia-

tion is on its way and can't be stopped."

After the ten second countdown, the electric machine went "poff!" and flipped the peanut about two meters.

The construction work in The Peanut Defence Initiative was usually made by Thord Nilson, sometimes with assistance by Nils Segerdahl, and Jorgen Stådje stood for the Mad Scientist presentations. (Thord is the kind of tech wiz that, if you leave him alone on a deserted island with a paper clip and chewing gum, will have built a radio transmitter before you come back.)

The second year, PDI/2 presented a microprocessor-controlled precision motor, which directed a metal spoon that flipped the peanut. This was, in fact, a rather sophisticated device. With detailed assembler programming of the small microprocessor connected to the device, it could do almost anything possible with a peanut and a spoon, including juggling the peanut. The machine could also flip the peanut with the backside of the spoon, which of course was called 'a backhand'.



The third and last year for PDI, we saw the most complex machinery in the series, the PDI/3 Maglev Peanut Train. They had actually built a short magnetic levitation train track, on which a small cargo holder floated on a magnetic field. This was also the year when Swedish TV came to Nasacon and made a story from the convention — a full minute on the national news program *Rapport*, seen by close to half the Swedish population. And of course, they choose to focus the story on The Great Peanut Race. PDI/3 was shown on TV, together with other entries like the Gunpowder Peanut invented by Engineer Lindberg.

The success of PDI and the level of technical complexity they reached was probably what killed The Great Peanut Race. It became harder and harder

to invent more spectacular transportation methods than the year before.

Card Games

Some games were short-lived in popularity and flourished at particular conventions. 'Fia med knuff' (which means 'Fia with a bump'; Fia is a female surname) is a simple boardgame, where you move markers over a square board by throwing dice. When you come to the same spot as an opponent, you can try to 'bump' his marker back to the start. There were several tournaments of Fia med knuff at conventions in Gothenburg in the mid-80s. The game was also played at fan gatherings in Gothenburg.

Poker has always been a popular game in Swedish fandom, since it can be played on long train rides to conventions. It can also be played for long, long nights when the program is over and you can't sleep. But it is always played in a friendly way, and people don't lose too much money. I remember a Göcon night in Gothenburg, where I and half a dozen people played poker for five hours and I lost heavily. I think I lost around two dollars... Stakes were never higher than a few cents per game.

In Norwegian fandom, playing cards without rules was quite popular a few years ago. I think it was invented by either Johan Schimanski or Egil Stenseth, and I've seen the game being played a few times. The idea is to confuse bystanders. The game works exactly the way it sounds. You shuffle cards, deal, play out cards, etc. — but without rules. You must make it seem important and structured, and anyone watching will no doubt try to figure out what you are playing — and how.

Bheer Drinking

Naturally, bheer hewing has also been very popular. This is not a fannish game, but since fans like bheer it has become popular in fannish circles.

The tradition comes from the students of higher education, especially those at the technical institutes. Bheer hewing is very popular at student parties.

Usually you follow the Chalmers Rules, i.e., the rules of the Chalmers Institute of Technology in Gothenburg. They are:

1. You drink directly from 33 centiliter bottles.
2. Hands on your back when you start. The bottle on a table.
3. The referee says "Drink!" and you start drinking as fast as you can (a good bheer hewer can

do a bottle in 4-5 seconds!)

4. The clock is stopped when you bang the bottle to the table when it is empty.

5. There is always foam left in the bottle. This foam is collected in a measuring tube, and gives you plus time on a certain scale, depending on the amount of foam left.

At some conventions, they have even started to take bets on who will win the bheer hewing competition. At one con, contestants met each other two and two, like in a tennis tournament, and it all ended in a final. (I think I reached the semi-final of that tournament.)

The best thing is that the bheer is usually paid for by the con!

Frozen Methane Hockey

And naturally, we shouldn't forget 'Frozen Methane Hockey'. In Sweden you can get a special sort of tabletop ice hockey game, which is quite popular. Ice hockey itself is also quite popular here.



In tabletop hockey you control five players plus a goal keeper with metal bars that run under the 'ice'. It's a very fast and entertaining game, once you get the hang of it. Tabletop hockey is played both in Stockholm and Gothenburg fandom. In Stockholm we had a tournament, called the Interplanetary Hockey League, where half a dozen members of the club Sigma TC participated with their own teams. Each participant invented a name for his team and names for the players, and even painted the figures of the table top set. The founder of the Sigma TC, Wolf von Witting, was so enthusiastic about it that he even published a few issues of a newsletter for the tournament, *The Interplanetary Hockey News*.

We called it 'Frozen Methane Hockey', since the idea was that it took place on the moons around Jupiter — and not on water ice. My team was called the Ganymede Heinleiners (from Robert Hein-

lein and the novel *Farmer in the Sky* that took place on Ganymede) and the players were all famous fans. I, for instance, had Walt Willis as center forward and Bob Tucker as defensive player — he was called Bob "Tough" Tucker and was a really tough player that could shoot very hard and do 'smooth' goals. He would often score with shots from his own defence zone. The Ganymede Heinleiners had bronze shirts and dark blue trousers, and played rather well — I think it ended second in the league.

Other Games

Of course, there have been more games. I remember I once invented a card game called 'Harry Warner's Fanzine Collection'. We tried it, but the rules were so complicated that the game never took off. I no longer remember the rules, in fact. It had something to do with collecting different suits of cards to get a complete fanzine collection.

At a Tolkien gathering I go to every year (that's about the only Tolkien thing I go to, though) they have several games, of which 'Eat the Banana' is among the most popular late at nights. It involves people trying to eat a banana in the most sexy way.

In the secret apa Cucumber (which I have written about previously) we had a short lived play-by-mail game, 'The Battle of the Milky Way'. Also, the fans in the city of Jönköping some years ago declared their intention to develop a fandom role playing game, but I didn't hear more of it after a while.

I haven't heard of any computer game that has reached certain status in fandom. I once did a map of The Great Fannish War of the early 60's for Broderbund's 'The Ancient Art of War', however, and I suppose other games could be adapted to fan-nish circumstances.

Despite all these games in fandom, Swedish fans usually don't take part in the mainstream game movement that has become extremely popular. The National Board and Role-Playing Game Association of Sweden now has 22,000 members, and many of their games are of sf or fantasy nature. But the fans aren't interested.

There is a difference, I believe, between inventing your own game and buying a commercial game. Inventing your own game and having fun with it is creative, and fans like to be creative. Commercial games are incredibly complex, expensive, and boring — that's only for suckers, and fans don't like being suckers. ☺

▷ From Sweden, it's just a short trip across the North Sea over to the United Kingdom for a visit with John Berry. John is perhaps best known for his fan activities of the 1950s: member of fabled Irish Fandom, publisher of the acclaimed fanzine **Retribution**, and inventor of the Goon Defective Agency (more on that another time, perhaps). He has also been one of the best, most entertaining fan writers, not only of the 1950s but subsequent decades as well, as the following article shows.

Brides & Groomesport by John Berry



I joined the army fifty years ago, and the night before I entered the grim portals of the Army Training Center at Worcester, my father gave me shrewd advice he had previously garnered in similar circumstances, and his priority warning was... "Do not volunteer for anything!"

So, approaching my seventieth year, my wife and I were staying at our daughter's house in Bangor, Co. Down; remember, dear old George Charters used to reside in Bangor. We were there nominally to supervise the activities of our three grandsons whilst she and her husband enjoyed a long sojourn in the Canary Islands. She is a florist, and just before they departed, she suddenly clicked her fingers.

"Oh, I've just remembered. I have contracted to attend a Bridal Weekend at a hotel in Groomesport. I must employ someone to supervise my floral display and take orders for weddings."

"Er, Kate," I prompted, "who do you expect to attend?"

"Mostly hordes of young girls preparing for their weddings...some of them will have their mothers with them, although father and boyfriends are normally scarce, as they probably have to pay for everything, and they cannot stand the strain and stress of the severe financial drain on their bank accounts."

"How long does it last?" I breathed. Close to seventy I might be, but still fully red-corpuscle and functional, and I panted at the thought of ogling young and innocent Co. Down girls who would actually be approaching me.

"Only twelve hours," she said, "12 noon to 8 pm on Sunday, and 4 pm to 8 pm on Monday evening."

"I'll do it!" I shouted.

She handed me a thick book full of coloured photographs of floral displays, and stating that she knew I was a 'very experienced writer', suggested that I should prepare a hand-out to be presented to each visitor to the display.

Actually, I do somewhat pride myself on my literary style, laced, as it always is, with humor and slight exaggeration. Her husband gave me a crash-course on computer technique, including instructions for using the printer. I carefully wrote everything down.

"But don't worry," he beamed, "if you become bemused and lose control of the computer, Philip will speedily put you back on course."

This was rather a blow to my prestige, as, on that very day, it was Philip's seventh birthday.

First of all, I wrote a rough draft of the article, using the stock phrases in the book, but incorporating my own little story lines. For example, regarding the HAND-TIED SHEAF...the book stated that the bouquet consisted of flowers not arranged in display, as if the bride had quickly garnered them.

I wrote...

"This bouquet is a new innovation for the nineties, designed to portray a young, innocent blushing bride, arising on the morning of her forthcoming nuptials, and gazing wistfully through her bedroom window at a flower-decked meadow. With passionate abandon, realizing that her yearning for chaste surrender was nigh, she rushes out of the house in her night attire, bare of feet, and gathers an armful of dew-dappled blooms, roughly ties them with

twine, breaking off each bloom stalk to a constant length. Cradling her spontaneous floral adornment, she returns to her room, her gentle tears adding a poignancy to the fresh flowers, the brutality of the snapped stalks symbolic of her forthcoming night of passion.'

Quite frankly, I was on fire. Eloquent phrases scorched from my pen — my imagination ranged far and wide over the whole marriage ceremony. I penned each item so that the bride, however experienced in wordly terms (you know what I mean), when reading my ~~one shot~~ epistle, would wish that she had retained her innocence, so that FIONA'S FLOWERS would carry her into an *ecstasy* of nuptial bliss.

I warily approached the computer, and eventually designed the heading: the words FIONA'S FLOWERS composed of small hearts, and on the left, a beautiful rose, and on the right a more graphic portrayal of Aphrodite. Unfortunately, whether or not this was a design feature, I knew that Aphrodite was devoid of pubic hair (this knowledge based solely on my vast study of ancient Greek statuary) and yet the computer portrayal was rather graphic in this respect. I carefully processed the computer window, selected a rampant eraser design from the display, moved the mouse cross to this square, and attempted to cunningly de-pube Aphrodite.

After my seventh attempt, I was rather pleased with the result, except perhaps for the suggestion that Aphrodite had undergone an appendix operation.

"You're obsessed!" I heard my wife shout. She had been standing behind me, and of course, my attention had been totally concentrated on Aphrodite, and I had not heard her enter the room.

I finished typing the publication, and with the assistance of grandson Philip, adept at using the computer printer, I had nine pages of unadulterated passion in my sweating hands, including other carefully selected illos from the computer display.

I walked towards Bangor along the main road, until I reached a shop where copying was done. Ten pence per A4 sheet...hmm...ninety pence per booklet... I concluded a deal which cost my daughter £25.00, but that included stapling..."ready tomorrow at twelve noon."

I collected them next day. The girl working the copier blinked her eyes, long lashes fluttering like butterfly's wings.

"I hope you don't mind," she confessed, "but I couldn't help reading the pages whilst I copied them. Who wrote it?"

"I did," I preened. "Why do you ask?"

She flipped through the pages of stacked copies, and tapped a paragraph on page 6...

'As I stated on page 1, I cannot be present at this Bridal Weekend, but my representative, John, is in attendance, and is very experienced in preparing brides for their weddings. He will be delighted to demonstrate the floral displays, and advise on all matters relating to the bridal party. As an extra service, John, who has wide experience in the field, will be thrilled to give confidential advice and comfort to young and innocent brides who are apprehensive regarding the physical side of the nuptials...a whole 'hands-on' service guaranteeing discretion and satisfaction.'

"Are you John?" she asked.

"Yes, my dear," I smirked.

"Oh," she frowned. "I thought maybe John was a much younger man. Oh, well...I've retained one copy for my sister, who is getting married shortly — she'll probably come to the Bridal Weekend."

* * *

The taxi stopped at the hotel entrance, and I took out the boxes of flowers and accessories from the boot and stacked them in the foyer.

I felt rather pleased with my appearance. I mean, it was necessary for me to cut a dashing man-about-town figure in order to represent my daughter and obtain some orders for her.

My son-in-law was a professional 'country and western' singer, and before he left for vacation with my daughter, he gave me permission to use any items from his wardrobe. Obviously, I rejected the stetson as being ostentatious, but the long yellow jacket, green trousers and floral jacket fitted me perfectly.

I could tell the taxi-driver was impressed, although his comment suggested he was touting for a large tip: "You look like an absolute Count," he observed, pocketing the twenty pence tip and grinding the gears as his vehicle kangaroo'd down the road.

I was supplied with two long trestle tables with clean white tablecloths on them. I arranged my displays in quite an attractive manner, placed my hand-outs where they would be immediately noticed, and looked round at my competitors. Actually, no one else was marketing flowers; the other dozen business catered for wedding dresses, invitations cards, balloons, luxury automobiles, wedding cakes, etc.

At the entrance of the large room was a uniformed minion, who greeted the guests; a very pretty

young girl gave each visitor a glass of white or red wine, and they duly explored the proffered marital requisites.

The young brides and their mothers seemed to approach my display rather warily, but I greeted them with a bow, kissed the potential bride's perspiring fingers, and gave them my hand-out, and they retired to a corner of the room, and read it, sipping their wine, but one or two downed the liquid in one long swallow.

During a break in the visitations, I caught the eye of the young girl dispensing glasses of wine; I opened my shirt collar and waved a hand in front of my face, tongue somewhere down by the third button.

Her eyes brightened up, and she brought a glass of white wine over to me, brimming to the top, spilling nary a drop.

After the initial interest there was a lull in attendance, and I willed the wine girl to look in my direction. Our eyeballs clicked, and she gave me another glass of wine, then yet another ten minutes later.

Then a most beautiful Co. Down girl entered with a young man. Her hair was jet black, she had brown eyes, and red pouting lips like Michelle Pfeiffer. She dragged her boy friend directly across to my tables.

I gave her the hand-out, but she declined it with a white-toothed smile.

"I've read it already," she cooed. "My sister printed it for you."

"Well, done, my dear," I smiled. "Can I help you at all?"

She nodded... She looked at my floral display, said she would get FIONA'S FLOWERS to cater for the wedding.

"Tell me something, John," she said confidentially. "Do you think my boy friend looks effeminate?"

Honestly, it was a stupid question — the boy couldn't take his eyes off her heaving bosom. He was obviously hetero. Nevertheless, his long fair hair hung over his shoulders, and, weeeelllll, his soft blue eyes *did* combine with his delicate facial structure, and the *slightest* suggestion of a moue played peek-a-boo with his lips.

Before my wine-sozzled mind was in gear, my lips had already delivered the thoughtless reposte: "It is not incumbent upon myself to comment on your friends physical appearance, save to ask if he is free on Tuesday night?"

The young man's sweat-covered upper lip and

clutching fingers left me no doubt that FIONA'S FLOWERS had lost a £200.00 order.

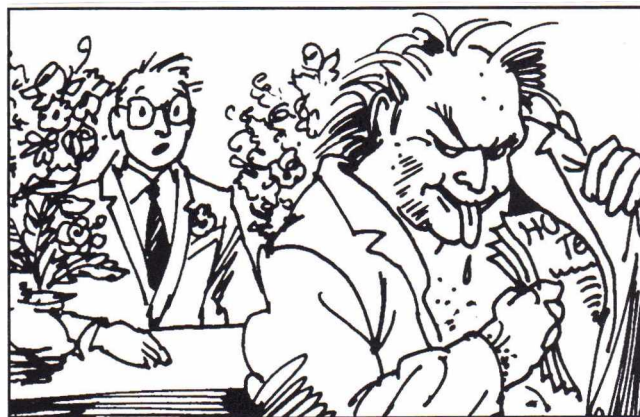
Well before the allotted termination of the display, the wine-girl called a taxi at the organizer's request, and I had a vague recollection of being levered into it...

* * *

The Bridal Weekend was also open for trade on Monday evening, between 4 pm and 8 pm, and I reluctantly arrived, hoping the time would quickly pass.

Unfortunately it didn't, because we vendors in the room agreed that one could not expect potential bridal parties to visit the hotel on Monday night. The fathers of the bride, who would have to finance the ceremony, had probably returned home after a hard day's work, and did not wish to dispose of their savings quite so arbitrarily.

I noticed my pile of hand-outs was down to merely one copy, but my colleagues admitted that they had all taken copies to read, and all admitted it was nicely-written. The condom salesman asked if he could paraphrase it for his one hand-out.



Only one more person entered the room before we packed up and went home.

He was bare-headed, unshaven, and wore a long dirty brown raincoat buttoned down the front. He muttered something to the wide-eyed wine-girl, who pointed to me.

The woman at the wedding dress display next to my table whispered, "he's the local flasher."

He crossed to me, a leathery tongue rasped over his cracked lips. He scanned the table and picked up the remaining hand-out.

"Yuk, yuk!" he chortled as he crossed to the exit.

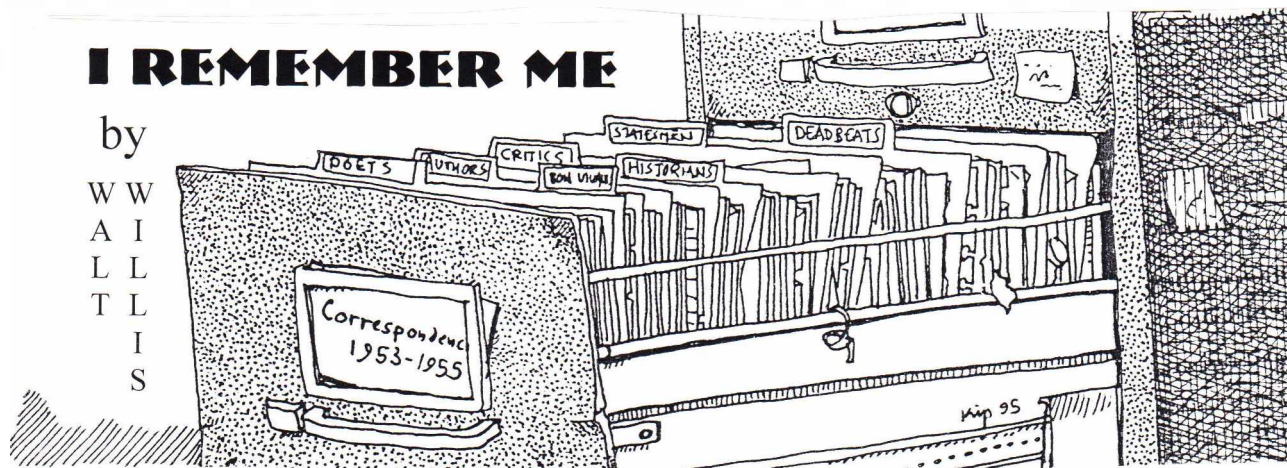
I couldn't help wondering — had I added an aura of sophistication to this rural Co. Down village? ☼

▷ For those not familiar with Irish Fandom of the 1950s, it consisted of a relatively small group of hyper-active and very talented fans. John Berry was one. Another was George Charters, perhaps the least well known of the group on this side of the Atlantic, who was the subject of an article in *Mimosa* 13. There was also James White, Bob and Sadie Shaw, and the Willises — Walt and Madeleine. This next article continues Walt's look back at that fan era, this time describing the fan career of a real-world notable.

I REMEMBER ME

by

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Bob Leman and other cognoscenti (and it's pleasant to see just how many there were) have drawn my attention to the fact that in *Selected Letters of Phillip Larkin. 1950 to 1955*, Larkin in a letter to Robert Conquest dated 19th April 1954 says:

"I never came across Willis, though several times I have heard *Slant* mentioned. The editor of these letters, Anthony Thwaite, has, by and large, done a commendable job in annotating such references, but he has failed to furnish a footnote for this one. The letter is dated a few weeks after Larkin left Belfast, after four years as Librarian of Queens University, and the context of Conquest's question is made clear by Larkin's reply here. Of course, it has to be about you. I confess I felt a flash of reflected glory in being able to claim the acquaintance of a fellow who was a topic in the correspondence of such admirable luminaries as Larkin and Conquest."

The name of Philip Larkin will be well known to readers of modern English poetry. That of Robert Conquest is even more famous, first as a poet, but more recently as an expert on Soviet Russia. His scholarly analysis of the Stalinist regime, in particular his account of the massacre of the peasantry by starvation, as part of the imposition of collective farming, did much to equate in the public mind the regime in Russia with that in Nazi Germany. It is true that Conquest was a subscriber to *Slant*. I have

kept my old card index and it reveals that he subscribed in time to get *Slant* No. 6, and his subscription was continued by *Hyphens* Nos. 1 to 11, when it was renewed by a ten shilling note, until he was finally dropped for lack of response after *Hyphen* 27.

Two items survive of my correspondence with Conquest. The first was hand-written, dated 23rd June 1954:

Dear Walter,

I don't suppose you saw any of my recent attempts to defend SF to the intellectuals of the *New Statesman*. There was a bloody article by a dopey professor of radio astronomy attacking it in the March 13 issue. They published a pretty rude letter of mine countering this on March 20th.

The Moscow *Literaturnaya Gazeta* has now taken this up; I attach a copy of an article in their issue of June 3rd. (I have sent a copy to *Astounding Science Fiction*.) Very good fun. (You will remember their attack some years ago, reprinted in *ASF* of June 1949.)

Meanwhile, the *New Statesman* asked me to do a review, which was published in their June 12th number (and in which I have a crack at *Lit.Gaz* for their earlier article. I don't know where all this will end, as I was purposely provocative and hope for some more fuss from the intellectuals.)

I am greatly enjoying this. A friend of

mine, the novelist and poet Kingsley Amis, is promising to back me up. It all proves that the top levels haven't yet been stormed adequately — did you hear the abysmal nonsense talked by the Radio Critics about *Childhood's End*?

Further news from my side is that I am now a vile pro, having received an advance for an SF novel from Ward Lock and Company. I've only written the synopsis so far — a bloody long thing — so still have the creation to perform, but I take it that one becomes a pro by accepting the money, not on writing the order?

It shows how dopey I am in the pun-deciphering, which is the mark of a true Willis-fan, that I have only just realised that your interim sheet is *Hi! Fen!*

This letter was hand-written, and so must have been my reply because there is no carbon of it on file. However, Conquest's reply (a portion of which is reproduced below) was mostly typed.

Dear Walter,

Delighted to hear from you. Yes, I think it was worth having a bash at the *Statesman*, because it is almost the last little circle of people who feel themselves superior to science fiction — but really it is only a mopping-up operation after you and your colleagues have borne the main brunt of years of campaigning.

There is certainly some SF in Eastern Europe — I have read some of it myself. And it is inaccurate if fans take the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* article as proving the opposite. Still, Communist SF is extremely limited in type — owing to the obvious directions in which the imagination cannot be allowed to stray; and SF as we know it is indeed banned, together with most of the rest of modern Western literature. So I do not think that the fan is really being unreasonable in concluding that the Russians are hostile to what he himself is reading. It is quite legitimate for fans to feel disgusted by the misrepresentations and bullying of the article. It is perfectly true that there is a lot of unpleasant SF, but *Lit. Gaz.*'s attack was not a legitimate criticism of this. What is really objectionable is that it was intended to show, in a dishonest fashion, to a public

which has no opportunity for forming a judgement of its own, that Western literature is poisonous sadism. In fact, it was more hate-mongering of the sort you rightly deplore in another context. *Lit. Gaz.*, incidentally, is a great purveyor of articles saying that war stories should glorify battle.

On the issue of sadism in SF, incidentally, my own feeling is that one needn't worry too much. Many educated people who like to think of themselves as humane are addicts of suitably disguised sadistic attitudes. Orwell says somewhere:

"An adolescent in a Glasgow slum worships Al Capone. A *New Statesman* reader worships Stalin. There is a difference in intellectual maturity, but none in moral outlook." (*Critical Essays*, page 154)

I think there is something *more* corrupting in the sadism which is obscured and justified by intellectual finagling. Indeed, I think the main attraction of Communism (in the Western world, that is) is that it enables someone to satisfy his sadistic inclinations while at the same time being provided with the luxury that it is all being done for 'humane' and 'liberal' reasons. It is comparable to the satisfactions of the hanging judge and the 'strict but fair' schoolmaster.

The only query one has is not whether people derive pleasure from fantasies, but whether this has a generally bad and demoralising effect. I expect you have seen the researches in America carried out in the cities in which lurid comics are forbidden, to discover whether there was any appreciable effect on juvenile delinquency compared with cities where they were freely sold. There was none.

Other things being equal, my own bias has always been in favour of permitting pornography, or any other sort of objectionable writing, rather than suppressing it. It is an unfortunate result of modern society that there is so much of this low mass culture. But stopping it has always been the corollary of censorship methods which have been a bloody sight worse for literature, common decency, and everything else one values.

Personally, I think it is clear that the Soviet system is, in all essential matters, as bad as the Nazi one, and that its theory that this system is suitable for imposition on the rest of the world is the greatest danger there is. On the other hand, I fancy that if we can solve our own problems and keep the Communist states from breaking out, while at the same time pointing out to them the advantages that would accrue if they ceased to exclude themselves from the world community, their internal tensions would finally force these states to evolve or perish.

As you'll probably have noticed, I didn't really appreciate Conquest's importance. At the time, he was mainly known to me as an anti-Soviet polemicist, and my politics then were more pro-Soviet than anything, based on the assumption that whatever was wrong in the Soviet Union, at least their hearts were in the right place. I don't have any recollection of further correspondence with Conquest, though I can't say what might not turn up in the files, but as far as I know, my last reference to him was in my report of the visit of Madeleine and myself to the World Fair in Seattle in 1962:

"Even now there is such a cloud of fatigue in that corridor of my memory that I cannot believe there would be much of interest in it to you. Except possibly the still vivid recollection of seeing at the exit from the U.S. Science Pavilion, in great gold letters on the wall, a quotation from a *Hyphen* subscriber. Unaccountably they failed to mention this fact, mentioning just the name, Robert Conquest — presuming, no doubt, that his chief claim to immortality lies in his poetry and not in his letters of comment on *Hyphen*. Admittedly, he hasn't written many of the latter recently, his subscription having lapsed, but let that be a warning to you. Let your *Hyphen* subscription lapse, and you may find yourself reduced to writing on walls in Washington."

I see that at the same time I was writing to Conquest, I was also writing to Robert Bloch, trying to persuade him to move to Ireland:

Having just been defeated in the semifinals of our club tournament, I have now written a volume of scurrilous memoirs of the tennis club and retired into fandom...

About my proposal that you should pull up your skates and come and live out here, I have an item of information which will gladden your heart. You know the National Insurance Scheme we have over here? Of which the National Health Service is part. Well, Ted Tubb is now a full-time writer and as such is insured as 'self-employed' and stamps his own cards, etc. The other day he had a bad cold and didn't feel up to writing. So he went along to his NHS doctor and got a certificate that he was unable to follow his employment. He then claimed — and received — sick pay from the Government! Doesn't this open up a wonderful vista for authors? Couldn't you also claim for lack of inspiration, shortage of ideas, and from being burnt out? All as much occupational hazards of the writer as silicosis is of miners. I tell you, socialism is the answer writers have been seeking for years!

I must have written in similar terms to Damon Knight, because he commented as follows:

God heavens! This Tubb thing is apocalyptic! Will you kindly find out for me if he was able to live on what he got from the government, and if so, what the requirements are for immigration to the British Isles? I'm 99% serious about this. Damn, your butcher shops don't refrigerate their eats, though, do they? All those flies and maggots...

I couldn't tell if it was puke or a butterfly...And here's room for your name, address, and solar system...Gophers are turtles in Florida...We're running into some unstable isotopes...Zeitgeist indeed

Must tell you about the 'unstable isotopes' thing. We were watching a mess called *Unknown World*, a Lippert Picture, on television. These people had what they called an 'ovular bathysphere', otherwise called the 'cyclotram'; it was a rocket-shaped thing on treads, with rock-chewing blades at the nose. Well, they were in this thing, climbing up the side of Mount Mele to get to the crater, and the machine began to rock. One fellow consulted an oscilloscope, and that's when they said it...

Next: The discovery of Arthur Thomson, and more letters from Robert Bloch and Damon Knight. ✨

► Time now for the second in a series of mini-autobiographical essays from Forrest J Ackerman. Last issue, Forry told us about his early years in fandom, which culminated in his trip to the 1939 World Science Fiction Convention, in New York. This issue, his focus is on the 1940s — time travelers from the future at the 1940 Worldcon in Chicago, timebinding with Robert Heinlein at the 1941 Worldcon in Denver, and bringing science fiction into World War Two.

Through Time and Space with Forry Ackerman

PART 2

by Forrest J. Ackerman



The second World Science Fiction Convention was in Chicago in 1940. My futuristic *Things to Come* costume had gained a certain amount of renown at the first Worldcon the year before, in New York City. So by the Chicon, the notion had caught on, and we now had about 25 fans in costume. Doc Smith, who was the Guest of Honor, was a big fan of Catherine Moore's interplanetary character, Northwest Smith, so he came as Northwest Smith. Morojo — Myrtle R. Douglas, who used an Esperanto name, and who was my girlfriend for about eight years — and I actually put on a little dialog from *Things to Come*. After it was all over, at about 8 o'clock at night, I had a quixotic notion — I realized that about five blocks away was the major newspaper of Chicago. So I said, "Hey, gang, come with me." I got everybody who was in costume and we went through the streets of Chicago to see the night editor. I became the spokesman: I went up to him with a straight face — he was looking at these Martians and other futuristic people, and wondered what in the world had hit him — so with a straight face, I said, "Well, sir, we are time travelers. Tomorrow, we picked up your paper and we found this photograph of ourselves and this interview. So we realized that we'd have to come back in our time machine to be interviewed!"

At that convention, three or four young fellows — Olen Wiggins being the leader from Denver — volunteered for the next world convention, never *dreaming* they would get it. Once they did, they didn't know exactly what to do with it, and one of the burning issues was who would be the Guest of Honor. At that time, and it was just third time around, we could have invited Edgar Rice Burroughs or H.G. Wells or Olaf Stapledon or any of the great names in science fiction. But I was in the enviable

position of sort of time traveling six months to a year in advance because I had been invited to Robert Heinlein's home. He was living in Hollywood at the time. I was able to read all his classic manuscripts before they were published — "The Roads Must Roll", "Coventry", and others. And so I put Heinlein's name in nomination, and indeed, he became the Guest of Honor.

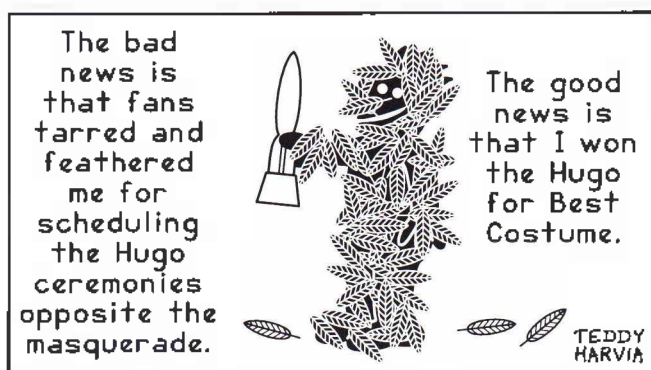
By the way, I want to mention that I named the very first convention, the Nycon, and the second one, the Chicon. And I probably would have called the third one the "Dencon". I have to credit Don Wollheim, who came up with the notion of the Denvention, which I thought was an excellent idea.

The 1941 Denvention was a truly interesting convention. I've been to 51 of the 52 World Science Fiction Conventions, and to this day I feel that the talk that Heinlein gave in Denver was really the most extraordinary — even when looked at from many years later. His Guest of Honor speech was called "The Discovery of the Future", it was the first any of us had ever heard of 'timebinding'. At the time, Walt Daugherty was the first one to record a convention, on actual phonograph records, and he successfully recorded Heinlein's talk. Afterwards, I took the Daugherty phonograph records home to transcribe them. I sat with one hand on a record and one on the typewriter — I'd listen a little bit and type in a little bit. Then I stenciled it, mimeographed it, collated it, stapled it, addressed it, stamped it, and mailed it for ten cents a copy. One hundred of them! Four or five years ago, in San Francisco, at an auction, one of these surfaced — it sold to a dealer for thirteen hundred dollars!

Heinlein made quite an impression on us in other ways, too. He did something that I can't say I approve of in this day and age, but at the time it

seemed incredibly cool. He was a very suave individual then, and in the middle of his talk, he stopped for a moment, took out a cigarette, and lit it. It's a wonder that the whole convention didn't start smoking!

Anyway, the word went around that it was Heinlein's birthday in a couple of days, so we all chipped in, and there was enough to buy eight books that his wife told us that he was fond of. He nearly lost control: he nearly broke down and wept at the banquet when he was given the gift. There was a costume contest at the Denvention, and even Heinlein participated. There was a character in a story in *Amazing Stories* by Eando Binder called "Adam Link", the humanoid robot, and Heinlein came as "Adam Stink" — walking kind of stiffly across the floor. E. Everett Evans won a contest in the masquerade as the Birdman from Rhea. He had personally pasted about one thousand colored feathers on a costume, but it took him so long to do that he never finished the rest of the costume. He had to be content just wearing the head...



One further thing about that masquerade — I got a prize as the 'Hunchbackerman of Notre Dame'. A mask had been created for me by Ray Harryhausen, but in order to make it, he had me come out to Pacific Palisades where he was living. I remember that it was a hellishly hot day; I just lay there and he put this goop all over my face, which in those days took about a half hour to an hour to solidify. Ray left for a while to do some other things while the goop hardened; there was really no reason for him to stick around while I was just lying there baking. It was so hellishly hot that day that the soles of my feet were perspiring, so I took my shoes and stockings off. Well, Ray's great Mastiff dog named Kong came over and got interested in the saline solution. He had a big red raspy tongue — he would go up and down on the soles of my feet! It was awful! But nobody was around, so nobody came to my rescue...

Before there could be a fourth Worldcon,

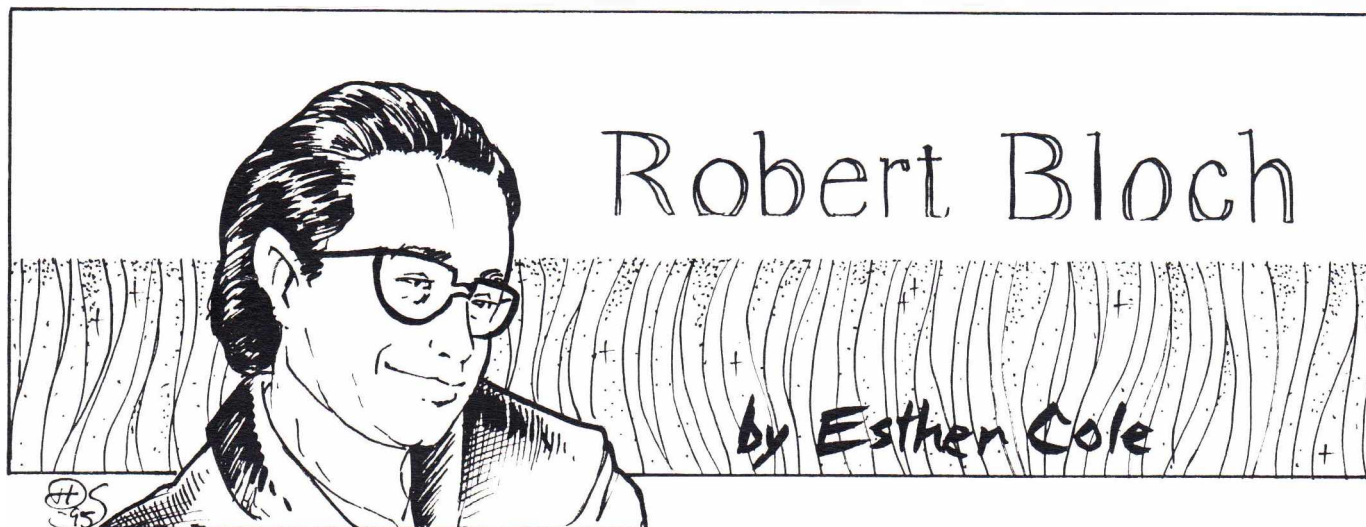
World War Two intervened. I remember how we fans at LASFS learned about the war. It was on Sunday, the 7th of December, and a now-deceased fan named Arthur Louis Joquel II — we all called him 'the twoth' — came into the LASFS club room white-faced, and said, 'My God, the Japanese have just bombed Pearl Harbor!' But we didn't know exactly what he meant: 'Pearl Harbor? Who was she?' That very night L.A. was in black-out. We didn't know but what the Japanese planes wouldn't come over and bomb us that very night. But a number of us daring fans went down to the center of Los Angeles, and when we looked up, there were thousands of stars! We were never aware of them otherwise...

I was involved for 3 years, 4 months, and 29 days in World War Two. I wound up being a staff sergeant, and editing the second most popular of the two thousand wartime newspapers. It came to be called the 'Army Science Fiction Newspaper that Forry Edits', or something like that. At first, I was just a cub reporter; I would run my legs down to the kneecaps to find somebody and interview them, and bring back a genuine story. The editor would then look it over, and throw away the facts and dictate some kind of phony story. So, after a while, I got the notion, what's the use in knocking myself out? So I'd just pick interesting names off the roster and make up stories to fit the names. Then I even went beyond that — I even made up names like they do in most of the TV shows nowadays. I would have things like: "Sergeant Ray Bradbury was seen in the company of Captain A. E. van Vogt the other evening..." I even managed to get a science fiction movie still into the newspaper — it was from a film called *Gold* — a 1934 German science fiction film about the artificial transmutation of elements. The photo showed a great, gigantic cathode ray machine; I published it in the newspaper, and said that Sergeant Ray Harryhausen in Germany had uncovered this! Then, once when I was asked to make up an appeal to support the war cause, to buy bonds, I took the same futuristic sans-serif typewriter I had for *Voice of the Imagi-Nation* and Science Fiction League stationery. I dated it ten years in the future, and said, "Dear Sgt. Ackerman, I am happy to write you from the year 1952 to tell you that because everybody bought bonds, we have satisfactorily concluded the war with Hitler and Japan."

It was one time, I'm embarrassed to say, that my vision of the future was a little too conservative! ☼

NEXT: The post war years — Worldcons, Fan Funds, Asimov, Heinlein, and more... ☼

▷ It's time to close out this issue in the way that we started, back in southern California for a remembrance of Robert Bloch by a fan friend. By the time this issue of *Mimosa* is published, it will be just about a year since the science fiction world said its good-byes to Robert Bloch. Unfortunately, many of us didn't know him very well — although Robert Bloch was a fairly active fan in the 1950s, his fan activities had pretty much wound down before many of today's generation of fans became active. The following article provides some insights into his unique character.



In 1951, Robert Bloch, author of *Psycho*, served as master of ceremonies at the New Orleans World Science Fiction Convention. We met then.

On September 4, 1994, I visited Bloch in his home atop Lookout Mountain. We parted there. He died three weeks later of cancer.

More than thirty years ago, and shortly after Hitchcock's movie version of *Psycho*, I had interviewed Bloch on that same hilltop, and offer the following as a small glimpse into the life, philosophy, humor, and wonder of this gentle man.

Bloch claimed to be an overcompensated writer. "The things I've written and done are just strong overcompensations for weaknesses. I am lazy, introverted, insecure, and self-centered. I fight these weaknesses by going to the other extreme." (Sound familiar? Most writers escape through their work.)

"I'm scared of people" — I never could tell if Bob were being serious in his conversation! — "so I deal indirectly with them through fiction or separated by footlights. I compensate for my laziness by a disciplined work schedule. I fight my introversion by speaking before groups."

Were these all the motivations and rationalizations that made up this writer? No, Bloch was a delightful enigma, a puzzlement, maybe even a split personality. He wrote horror-fantasy, but in person, he was the antithesis of the characters he created. He was long and slim with a kind face and a benevolent smile. He was warm toward animals and small

children, but his stories could include heinous acts against them.

Does writing one thing and being another make a person into a psychological case history? Does it merely indicate a vivid imagination? Or was Robert Bloch a unique combination of all these factors?

Bloch was a prolific writer of horror/fantasy, short stories, articles, and screenplays. He wrote twenty books, 400-plus short stories and articles, screenplays for Hitchcock and other TV shows and movies, and never failed to answer a letter or respond to a request for help. All this output on a manual typewriter, going sixty words a minute, with two fingers.

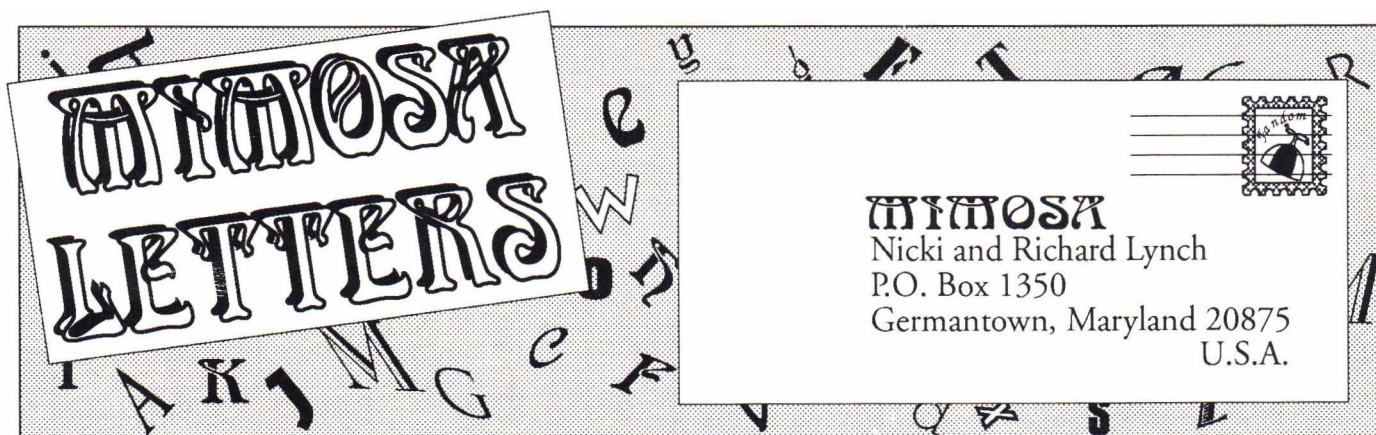
He offered pointers for aspiring writers:

1. *Read voraciously. It's food for your imagination.*
2. *Live vicariously. You can't do and write simultaneously.*
3. *Keep a disciplined writing schedule.*

Bloch gave of himself constantly to friends, fans, fellow writers, and to his adored wife, Elly.

At the end of that long-ago interview, when asked what animal he'd rather be, he twinkled and said, "A Galapagos tortoise. They live slothful, long lives, have no natural enemies, and can mate for up to sixty-four hours at a time."

It has been almost a year since Bob died. I still expect to see a tall, skinny Galapagos tortoise in our local bookstore! ☼



{{ ▷ With the addition of our e-mail account, we've been asked if we prefer receiving letters of comment via the Internet, as opposed to the traditional way, on paper. Actually, we do. Electronic letters of comment do not require the transcribing that a written letter requires (not to mention the handwriting analysis that some letters need). But we've also seen that e-mail letters of comment take less effort (and cost) for the sender; you can just compose the letter and send it, cutting out the middle steps of getting the words on paper, addressing the envelope, and attaching postage.

We find we're doing more and more of our correspondence via the Internet. It's what we used to get the word out about the fire, and we even used it earlier this year to publish our first e-zine, (*Tide Goes Here*), which was mostly a *Mimosa* 17 progress report and fire update. However, even though some of the letters of comment that follow were received as e-mail, we'll continue to publish the surface mail addresses for the benefit of other fanzine publishers.

Anyway, whether or not you use e-mail, we welcome your letters of comment. We're continually gratified by the number of letters we receive, and we will pass along all your comments to the contributors, whether or not they see print here in the Letters Column. We'll begin this time with some comments on Dan Steffan's cover set for *M16*. Several people asked if we were, in effect, models for the satyr and nymph. Answer: not even close. Richard is much less out-of-shape than the winded satyr appears to be (and doesn't have a gap between his front teeth), while Nicki has not

worn her hair that long in well over a decade. Comments we received about the cover set ran the gamut, from **Gary Brown**, who wrote: "Wonderful cover! And even more wonderful back cover!" to the following comment... }}

Ned Brooks, 713 Paul Street, Newport News, Virginia 23605

I was horrified to hear about your fire. Must be divine retribution for running that silly satyr on the cover of *Mimosa*.

In Mike Resnick's article {{ ▷ "Roots and a Few Vines" }}. I enjoyed learning that the 1963 Discon was also Mike's first worldcon — but I don't remember everyone wearing a tie. I certainly didn't — in fact, I probably thought all those guys in ties were comics fans, because they all called each other "Mr." in their fanzines back then.

Rodney Leighton, RR #3, Pugwash, Nova Scotia, B0K 1L0, Canada

Great covers! I think this Dan Steffan guy should drop the 'tef' and sign his excellent pictures 'Dan SFan'. Beautiful, very well done. It's kind of a shame to put a face like that on such a babe. At first I thought she should have been on the front cover but late realized that they were in their proper places. I liked all the art in this issue. Teddy Harvia's little ...what do you call these things? Mini-toons?... are delightful. Well done and amusing. My favorite of all was Rotsler's profound statement on page 41, followed by Peggy Ranson's depiction of Sharon Farber and her victims. It must be a lot of work to put all these illos where they fit best, huh?

{{ ▷ The pay isn't too great, either, but the benefits have been pretty good. }}

Sam Long, P.O. Box 7423, Springfield, Illinois 62791

Interesting cover. The fellow on the front looks quite pannish — and not a little out of shape (though look who's talking!), but mythologically speaking, the maenad he's chasing shouldn't have horns or pointed ears.

I enjoyed the Willis article {{ > "I Remember Me" }}. The hat he received sounds very fannish. A few years ago, I won a beer-drinker's hat, a plastic baseball-cap-type headgear with two beverage holders, one on each side, and plastic tubing to put in the cans or cups to conduct the potable to your mouth. (The tubing had a small clamp near the mouth end to prevent the drink from siphoning out when you weren't actively drinking.) The hat works as advertised (I tried it) and it occurred to me that, with the addition of a propeller at the top, it could make an exceedingly fannish head-dress. Not long after the hat came into my possession, Ethel Lindsay wrote and said, "My village is having its annual fête on 4 July this year, and so it has an American theme. Could you send me something 'typically American' to wear to it?" So I sent her the beer-drinker's hat — and a Chicago Cubs (natch) baseball cap. The beer-drinker's hat was, I understand, rather a hit during the fête, but the baseball cap proved more useful to Ethel in the long run. As it was, she gave the beer-drinker's hat to a fannish auction, and it eventually sold for about £5. Ethel later told me that Ken Bulmer, acting as auctioneer, modeled it for prospective buyers. Maybe *that's* why it didn't bring more than £5.

Skel, 25 Bowland Close, Offerton, Stockport, Cheshire SK2 5NW, England

I thought Mike Resnick's piece was the best thing in the issue. Truly fine material, though I must say it surprises me. The only other fanwriting I can remember of Mike's was his pieces in *Lan's Lantern* on his trips to Africa, which simply weren't my cup of tea.

Most of the other articles weren't all that far behind and were pretty much on a par, but I guess my favourite among them would be Esther Cole's {{ > "I Married a Science Fiction" }}. I'd read of Les & Es of course, but I don't recall ever reading anything *by* either of them. Es writes well and with a refreshingly different 'voice'.

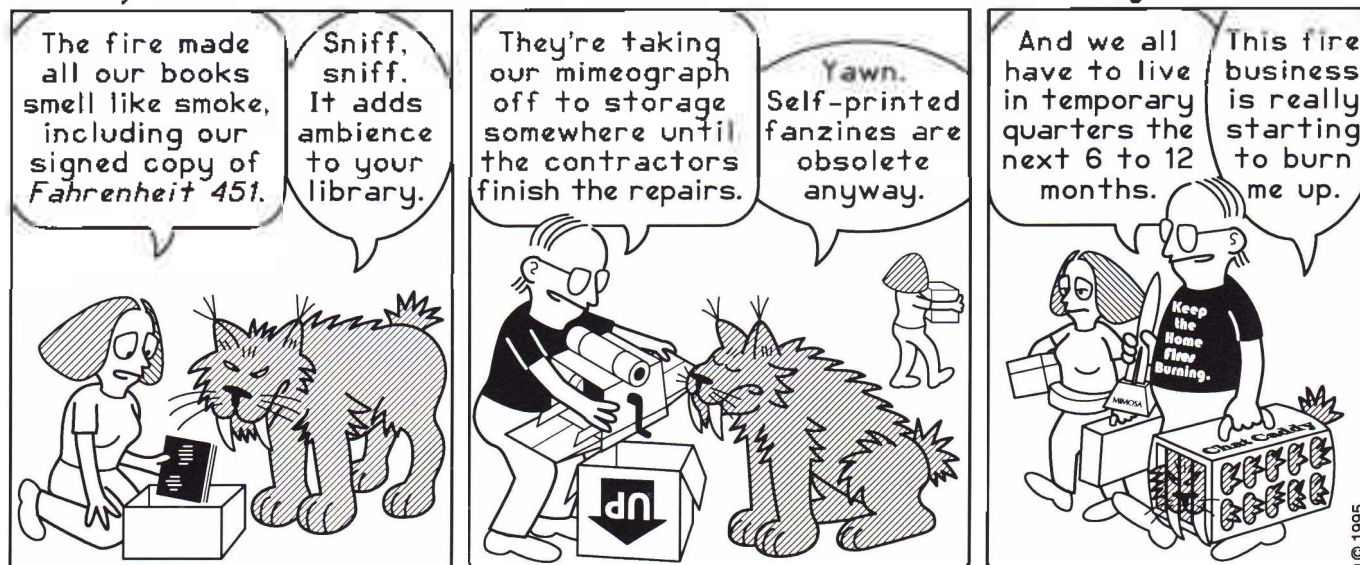
Ben Yalow, 3242 Tibbett Avenue, Bronx, New York 10463-3801

The Resnick article is wonderful. It's well written, as would be expected. But, even more important, it speaks to what fandom means to all of us who consider ourselves a part of it. And I'm honored to be recognized by name, and hope I've been able to help add to his fandom, as he has to mine.

The Sharon Farber article {{ > "Tales of Adventure and Medical Life, Part 11" }}. and the ER doctor's solution, reminded me very much of the Chicon IV post-masquerade incidents. I was running the Services Division there, and the evening was quite interesting/annoying/amusing. The story there was as follows:

CHAT, the 4th Fannish Ghod

By TEDDY HARVIA



Chicon, as with most cons, had to solve the problem of what to do as filler for the masquerade halftime. In their case, they chose to have a mentalist act (a fan, of course). It was pretty successful, including the mass hypnosis part. But later that evening, we started to get lots of calls in Ops for the convention medical volunteers.

It seemed that lots of young women had interesting reactions to the halftime act. In fact, lots of them seemed to be going into trances a few hours later. And we had to go ask our volunteers to go check these ~~idiots~~ people out. Of course, nothing real was going on, but it took lots of time with each person, and the staff was getting run ragged.

Finally, the head of the volunteer doctors came up with the solution. The doctor would go to the hotel room to check out the lady in a 'trance'. And he would take a quick look, and then go talk 'quietly' to the friend who called. And he would explain, loudly enough for the 'patient' to hear, that he would be administering a medicine that would cure the trance. Now, there might be some initial nausea, but don't worry — that's normal. And then the patient's fever might go up, and they might start sweating, but don't worry — that's normal. And then there might be these awful chills, but don't worry — that's normal. And maybe some pain in the extremities, but don't worry — that's normal.

And he would keep on making up increasingly awful symptoms until the patient spontaneously woke up out of the trance.

It's good to know how well modern medicine works.

**Ruth M. Shields, 1410 McDowell Road,
Jackson, Mississippi 39204**

Despite my appreciation for all of the fan-historical articles, I have to admit that every time a *Mimosa* arrives, the first thing I look for is one of Sharon Farber's "Tales of Medical Life." This issue's chapter was particularly interesting to me because I knew a girl in high school who tried to convince us all that she was epileptic — we might have believed her but she had already claimed to be an expert car mechanic, a witch, the victim of an inoperable brain tumor, and various other attention-getting devices which all lacked any evidence, so we were skeptical of anything she told us. (For all I know they might have all been true, but after seeing her try to put a bike chain back on I really doubted the car-mechanic claim.) She never had any seizures, real or faked, at school, which was a relief to

all her classmates, and she survived graduation. I've often wondered about how the rest of her life has developed, and whether she ever found something genuinely impressive to brag about.

**Brad W. Foster, P.O. Box 165246, Irving,
Texas 75016**

Sharon Farber's article this issue was wonderful! It's always fun to be in a position where you have knowledge that the person trying to put one over on you doesn't know you have, just for the pleasure of watching them try their best to get away with something, before you break the bad news to them.

I *desperately* want one of those bubble-blowing hats Willis described, if for now other reason than to be able to stand around, not saying anything but pumping out the bubbles, waiting for someone to come up and ask me about it, and I can go "Shh, can't you see I'm trying to think?" Well, I liked it! Surely some enterprising fan out there can take this idea and develop it back into product-status to sell at Worldcon?!!?!?

**Joseph T. Major, 3307 H River Chase
Court, Louisville, Kentucky 40218-1832**

The Dan Steffan front cover has a certain interest to me. I work with a man who could have been the model for the satyr. Now as for the back cover, no such luck...

And so to 4E {{ ▷ "Through Time and Space With Forry Ackerman, Part 1" }}, who fondly remembers the days when an associate editor could be so young that he had to ask his parents' permission (and when youngsters would ask for their parents' permission), and when legends merged with the common crowd instead of retreating into the SFWA Suite, the bar, the World Fantasy Con (oh, here I go getting ahead of myself), and other {fan} restricted zones.

Vine Clarke, in his article {{ ▷ "Nirvana — The Ultimate Fanzine" }}, has shown himself ahead of a trend. While *Wired* magazine is heralding the wonders of the Information Superhighway to come (it has been compared to an exquisitely hand-lettered codex trumpeting the wondrous days of printing to come) Vine and friends had been there and done that. The creation of *Nirvana*, the virtual fanzine, as recounted by the virtual co-editor himself, is a milestone in that progression. Soon enough we shall see the Net address so exclusive that no one is qualified

to access it.

In the letters column, Malgorzata Wilk has an interesting short chronicle of Polish fandom. In seven years they seem to have gone from the thirties to the nineties; from impoverished but dedicated fans cranking out unsophisticated but immensely dear publications to a vast horde of media fans, gamers, filkers, gardeners, and other such fringe fandoms grown so far as to obliterate the original. If this rate keeps up, by the millennium they will be well into the twenty-second century, and we can view with a sense of wonder our Times to Come — unless the Great Singularity (called the Rapture by fantasy fans) takes place and they ascend into the unknown, leaving us dazed westerners to look at the waste and puzzle our heads over why and where and who with.

**Josip C. Kovačić, Hrastina 17, 41430
Samobor, Croatia**

Regarding Vincent Clarke's article, *Nirvana* was also a magazine that my friends and I published in school back in 1992. It was about sex, cheap movies, and, of course, sex. No doubt that there was a bit of SF but that doesn't take too much publicity like other stuff. We published almost three numbers of it before they (the school council) caught us, and permanently closed the magazine. We had great fun publishing it.

**Vincent Clarke, 16 Wendover Way, Wel-
ling, Kent DA16 2BN, United Kingdom**

I've been reading bits of Ackerman's autobiography for years, including the marvelously titled *Gosh! Wow! (Sense of Wonder) Science Fiction* paperback, but it's nice to have it put together in *Mimosa*. I also have a fanzine by him called *What's Wrong With Science Fiction?* It is, of course, blank. It's a pity that he drifted (some time ago) rather into film fandom than kept to simon-pure fanzine fandom, but he has a spot in all our hearts. I remember when I met him a few years ago, all I could say was that I admired *VOM*. He took being congratulated for a 40-year old fanzine in his stride.

Also noted — Es Cole's mention of the early days when "...all our income went into paper and postage." Ah, those innocent years! And then, inevitably, we grew up. To paraphrase someone or other, "growing up is an awfully big non-adventure."

Finally, I guess Mike Resnick's article explains why I've been a fan for 50-odd years. I don't know about other folk but I *needed* the extended family — and got it.

**Walt Willis, 32 Warren Road, Donagha-
dee, Northern Ireland BT21 0PD**

The instalment of the Ackerman biography was fine, but instilled in me a great sense of guilt. Forry sent me a first instalment of his autobiography while I was publishing *Slant*, and I never used it. Partly because it was too long for *Slant*, which was handset letterpress, and partly because what I really wanted was the low down on his feud with Laney, so when a glowing prospectus arrived for a great new Canadian fanzine along with an appeal for material, I sent him my entire *Slant* backlog. Nothing further happened. The great new Canadian fanzine disappeared without trace, along with the *Slant* backlog. I never explained or apologised to Forry, and he never complained, which is one of the reasons I regard him as the most saintly person I know.

**Norm Metcalf, P.O. Box 1368, Boulder,
Colorado 80306**

"Through Time and Space with Forry Ackerman (Part 1)" contains some interesting recollections. On page 6, Forry says that Abraham Merritt was "...the Sunday section editor of *The American Weekly*." Actually, he was the editor of the entire *The American Weekly* which had no Sunday section. *The American Weekly* was a magazine which was distributed on Sundays as a bonus with newspapers, primarily or entirely with the Hearst papers. It competed with a similar Sunday supplement, *This Week*. Both of them carried fiction along with factual and not-so-factual articles.

In Mike Resnick's "Roots and a Few Vines", Donald A. Wollheim didn't "pirate" stories by Edgar R. Burroughs in 1962. He began reprinting ERB stories which were in the public domain, following Dover's lead. What Hulbert Burroughs told me was that he began noticing Ace paperbacks on the stands for which he'd received no royalty statements. So he went to Cyril Ralph Rothmund, business manager for Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc. and asked him. Rothmund didn't know anything about them, and upon investigating, Hulbert found that Rothmund had been content to collect a salary from whatever income arrived, while neglecting to renew copyrights, pursue reprints, further movies or other subsidiary rights. So Hulbert fired him and started inventorying the assets. That's when he found his father's notebook listing the 99 stories ERB had written, some of which were unpublished manuscripts. This gave him a bargaining chip with Wollheim. If Wollheim wished to reprint anything still

in copyright or the unpublished stories, he'd have to pay. Hulbert also negotiated the deal with Ballantine so that they'd have exclusive rights to the Tarzan and the Mars stories, while Ace could have the rest. This (and their cover art) made the Ace Tarzan and Mars stories into collectors' items.

On the other hand, the anecdote about Edward E. Smith modestly being fannish rings true. He really enjoyed being around fans and discussing science fiction without being pretentious.

Also, movies were shown at science fiction conventions prior to 1969. One was shown at the 1939 World Convention, for example.

Despite a few cavils, this is an entertaining appreciation of fandom.

Pär Nilsson, Guldringen 13, 302 59 Halmstad, Sweden

Thanks for *Mimosa* 16. The cover was one of the best ever, and inside was the usual, excellent selection of articles and illos. I tip my hat (I actually own one, but I'm usually wearing various knitted caps) to Farber, Clarke, Willis, Hutchinson, Harvia, Ranson, and (of course) Rotsler. And it seems like I've graduated from *Mimosa* reader to *Mimosa* contributor. Oh dear.

On one hand, it's good of Ahrvid Engholm to share some Swedish fan history with the rest of the world {{ ▷ "The Enemy and The Front" }}. But on the other hand, I feel that there are other, more interesting themes than Gurka and TDFF for such articles. On the third hand (the one growing out of my head), I suppose the same thing could be said about any fandom.

In the letters column, the second paragraph of Glicksohn's letter nicely summarized the pointlessness of heavy drinking, and Malgorzata Wilk provided an interesting glimpse of Polish fandom.



Mike Glicksohn, 508 Windermere Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M6S 3L6, Canada

It was a fine idea to get Forry to write for you. Certainly few fans have his breadth or depth of personal knowledge about fandom and even though I've talked to and listened to him for over a quarter of a century, there were things in this first instalment of his history that I hadn't been aware of (the tale of the world's shortest science fiction story is perhaps the best example). Say, he suddenly wondered suspiciously, this isn't a way to get another book for Dick to edit, is it?

{{ ▷ Interesting idea, but there's another project right now that's taking up most of Richard's spare time. Were you volunteering to be his agent?? }}

I've also known Mike Resnick for numerous lustrums and I've always enjoyed talking to him and listening to his anecdotes (and reading many of his professional works and much of his fan-writing) but I've never enjoyed or appreciated anything he's written as much as I enjoyed "Roots and A Few Vines." This is one superb piece of fan-writing: touching, tough, amusing, filled with historical nuggets, brilliantly crafted, as idiosyncratic as all of Mike's stuff and quintessential in its capturing of what makes 'our' fandom so worthwhile. If there is ever a *Fanthology '94* this article should be its centrepiece!

On the other hand, when I read about Swedish fandom I'm never quite sure of they ever really understood the point of the whole thing. There has been a great deal of personal animosity throughout all that I've known about fandom there, and much of the time they seem to have picked up on the trap-pings of fannish fandom while failing to understand that it was all supposed to be F*U*N. (Not that we haven't had our own difficulties, of course, but the major ones seem to run on about a twenty year cycle and in Sweden they seem to be far more frequent than that.)

Martin Morse Wooster, P.O. Box 8093, Silver Spring, MD 20907

I continue to be amazed by Swedish fandom. I wish Ahrvid Engholm or Anders Bellis or John-Henri Holmberg would explain why Sweden is the only non-English speaking country that has produced fannishness. The Germans, I have heard, go to conventions, hear serious, constructive talks about the inevitable historical development of science

fiction through the ages, and then retire early. The French have to move to America before they produce fanzines. But the Swedes keep right on feuding. Why?

I'd also like to see a Swedish-English fannish lexicon. What words do Swedish fans use when they insult each other? What is the Swedish for 'Yngvi is a louse', or 'egoboo', or 'fugghead'? Are there English fannish terms that Swedes use without translation? And what happened to Hans X's last name? Is he an incredibly famous Swede who would be mortally ashamed that he was ever in fandom?

{{ ▷ Perhaps the latter more than the former. According to Ahrvid, Hans now has a successful professional career as a chiropractor, and has so far managed to live down the actions attributed to him as a fannish spy. }}

Malgorzata Wilk's letter was a fascinating look at a fandom of which most people know little. But I hope she will explain who Polish fans would want to be drafted by the KGB! That's not the KGB, is it? Are Polish fans eager to be spies? (Will that help them in fan feuds?) If not, why would they name fannish organizations after intelligence agencies?

{{ ▷ But it was all in fun, Martin! 'KGB' stands for 'Cosmic Group of Safety' after being translated from the Polish. The teams in the fan game Malgorzata described all had acronyms that were meant to be send-ups of various spy groups. Even here in the U.S. this has been known to happen. Several years ago the super-secret National Security Agency had a league softball team called The Cagey Bees. Think about it! }}

Jeanne Mealy, 766 Laurel Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota 55104

Wow, what a set of covers! Looks like they would be best used in a fall zine, what with the bare, uh, trees and leaves flying wildly about.

Nice to see Kurt Erichsen's art illustrating "But, Again, That's Another Story" by Roger Sims; more, more! Whew, worldcons certainly have changed since Detention in 1959. It was great fun reading Roger's reminisces as well as those of the tag team of Rusty Hevelin, Bob Tucker, and Roy Lavender as they described the many capers of Cincinnati fandom {{ ▷ "Tales of Cincinnati Fandom" }}. I hadn't heard the story about Tucker's

mail before and giggled my way through it to the end. Tucker, speechless?

Like Patrick McGuire, I had a good time at the Winnipeg worldcon and would welcome a chance to return. Well, not in the winter. We get enough of that here. I was intrigued to hear that the word 'fandom' was apparently coined by a sports writer in 1910. I imagine an Oscar Madison-type with straw hat, suspenders, and food spilled down his front was desperately free-associating before a deadline: "A group of fans would be a... Kingdom, fiefdom... Fans...dom. Fandom, that's it!"

I agree with Steve Jeffery that many American restaurants serve too-large portions. I can't even finish a can of pop and would like to see an eight or a six-ounce size. Some places offer half-portions, which, while more expensive than half a meal would be, avoids the onus of trying to order from the children's menu.

Nicki's "Winnipeg Memories": I'm relieved there wasn't more damage after you hit the deer last November. Nicely-handled segue into talking about the worldcon as a quick experience rather than a damaging hit-and-run. My poor significant other might've done it differently: he broke a tooth at Tony Roma's and had to visit a dentist. I had a great time in Winnipeg thanks to the people (fans and non-fans), the food, the shopping, and the buses. I loved watching the storms from a distance, too. We used to do that as kids in southern Wisconsin, watching the wind sweeping the grass this way and that, the lightning and thunder getting synched as the storm got closer. Tremendous sheets of rain would swoosh across the fields as we gazed in wonder. If we were lucky we'd get to see ground-to-cloud lightning or a rainbow after the dark clouds had passed by.

Buck Coulson, 2677W - 500N, Hartford City, Indiana 47348

Concerning Richard's opening comments {{ ▷ "The Contraction of Time and Related Conundra" }}, I think time goes faster as one gets older because there are fewer new experiences. One's first few cons are remarkable, individual events, but they are, after all, much alike, and soon become hard to distinguish from one another, aside from, perhaps, certain events which make them unique in one's memory. The same goes for all other experiences in human life: there's only one 'first time', and only a limited number of new experiences. In time — you're not there yet but I'm beginning to be

Also, some information about the 'broken door' incident at Midwestern referred to in "Tales of Cincinnati Fandom." I can believe they collected enough money to replace the door; Harlan and Jim Harmon both were out canvassing. But the door was *not* replaced; the next year the broken panel had been replaced with a sheet of plywood, so either the collection was *very* short or the hotel used it to refurbish its meeting room, which had been completely redecorated when we arrived next year.

A correction to Roger's article; Bjo wasn't traveling to Detention in '59 to set up the first Worldcon Art Show — because that occurred at Pittcon, in 1960. Before then, the only art at cons was in auctions (materials generally supplied by editors who'd bought all rights). I was a participant in the debate preceding Pittcon, when Bjo decided to bypass an endless N3F committee process and bighod do it; being all for that I volunteered to hold her coat and otherwise assist, and did. Remember it well...



Dave Kyle's piece had me a little worried in that most of the names he mentioned for British fandom have gaffiated long ago (some I regret to say are dead) so a fan's chance of meeting them at the Glasgow Worldcon are pretty slim. When was the last time anyone heard anything from Ron Buck-

master for instance.

Dave's memories (which were delightful) come from the British fandom of the 1950s through to mid 1970s, and I remember Gerald Lawrence who was active in mid '70s turning up at the British World-con in the late-1980s and hardly recognizing anybody!

I certainly hope some of the people Dave reminisced about are there, but if any fan thinks Glasgow is going to be choc-a-block with old-time British fen, that fan is in for a disappointment.

{{ > There were some 'old-time' (which we're defining as 'older than we are') British fans at Intersection, most notably the fan Guest of Honor, Vincent Clarke. Besides him, we remember seeing or talking with (at various times) Ethel Lindsay, Ron Bennett, Peter Weston, Chuck Harris, Ken Slater, Bob Shaw, and James White. Missing, unfortunately, were some other fans we'd dearly liked to have met, among them John Berry, Terry Jeeves, Ken Cheslin, Archie Mercer, Ken Bulmer, and yes, Ron Buckmaster. We look forward to meeting them (and others) next time! }}

Bernie Peek, 129 Colegrave Road, Stratford, London E15, United Kingdom

Thanks for sending *Mimosa* 16: it certainly deserves a response, just look at that list of contributors!

The piece that really inspires me to respond is Dave Kyle's. I came into fandom in 1969 but I remember Dave and Ruth well. I visited their house Two Rivers, and I remember that it was surrounded by elderberry bushes. Dave and Ruth offered the flowers and berries to anyone who wanted to use them to make home-made wines. All they asked in return was a tithe of the results. I wonder what happened to all that wine when they returned to the U.S.A.?

A friend of mine had a near miss earlier this year, something like Nicki's close encounter with a deer. She was driving along one afternoon with not a care in the world when a bull poked its head through a hedge just in front of her. The field on the other side of the hedge was at a much higher level. A second later a second bull came hurtling through the hedge at full speed, without stopping. It flew into the air a few feet ahead and then dropped like a stone immediately in front of her. She just managed to swerve in time to avoid it.

It's difficult to swerve a 45 foot long canal boat. Particularly when you know that there is something large in the water ahead of you, but it's below your sight line. You can't stop quickly either, even from the 4mph speed limit. Apparently the bulls had been kept inside and this was the first time that they had been let out. This one didn't know about hedges, or thought this one was a figment of its own deranged imagination. The bull survived, but they had to tow it along the canal to somewhere where it could climb out.

Cattle can swim quite well. On another canal there's a pub named after a cow that swam the full 1.5 miles of a canal tunnel after it had fallen in. It's a nice pub, the staff and customers are very friendly. They were all lined up on the banks to welcome us as we came out of the tunnel. They were lining both banks when we came out. I wonder whether they welcome all visitors like that, or is it only the ones that have a bagpiper on the prow?

Harry Warner, Jr., 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

Ahrvid Engholm missed an opportunity to revise his closing line to better effect. "Ah, Swede idiocy!" would be a better climax to his article than the phrase as Fran Laney wrote it originally.

I'm happy to find that Forry Ackerman is finally putting into words some of his memories of fandom past. I feel confident that he could write five hundred or more sections equalling or exceeding in length this first part without even approaching the end of his recollections.

Also, now that you've restored Es Cole to fanac, dare we hope Les will follow her good example in the next issue or two? Her article is splendid, perhaps the best in this issue. She seems to remember her years as an active fan with such relish that I can't imagine why she ever gaffiated.

There is an artistic error in connection with the Tucker-Lavender-Hevelin transcript. The illustration on page 39 shows a post office box bulging with the numeral 201 at its top. But Box 260 was Tucker's long-time address, as well known in fandom's first few decades as Room 770. Conceivably, he may have changed his address by the time the events described in his big mail martyrdom took place, but it seems heretical to associate a postal box with any other numerals with Tucker.

I remain unconvinced that misuse of 'fanzine' to refer to non-fanzines is evidence that the English language is changing. I think it's the result of stu-

pidity of people who can't distinguish a fanzine from other non-profit publications or aren't aware that the language already has a half-dozen or more words for things that aren't fanzines. In past centuries, they were called screeds or tracts or pamphleteering. In more recent decades, they've been referred to as amateur journalism or the underground press or alternative press. A fanzine is the outgrowth of interest in a hobby or an individual or a form of entertainment. It isn't a publication devoted to someone's obsession with the flat earth theory or his propaganda for communism or atheism or his outpouring of hatred of authority.

You should have asked Malgorzata Wilk to lengthen her letter a little so you could have published it as a formal article. It's fascinating, this inside look at what it was like to be a fan in Poland less than a decade ago, and compare it with what it was like to be a fan in the United States more than a half-century ago: a lot of similarities. I'm glad to know that capitalism has been good for her.

{{ > Yes, an extended article would have been nice. But she is a busy grad student who lives several time zones (and postal systems) from here, and we didn't know if she would have the time to do an article for issue 16 by the time that we needed it. Running her letter as-is was 'a bird in the hand' kind of decision. We'd still like an article from her on Polish fandom, especially since there seems to be an interest in one. }}

Steve Jeffery, 44 White Way, Kidlington, Oxon OX5 2XA, United Kingdom

I agree with Martin Morse Wooster and David Thayer here that the term 'fanzine' is not exclusive to SF fandom. In the UK the most well known examples of the best are football (soccer) fanzines. There are produced independently, often highly opinionated and partisan, and have — compared to SF fanzines — a much higher profile and distribution, even to the extent of being reviewed on some radio sports programs. Music fanzines go back at least as far as the mid 1970's, with seminal publications like *Sniffin' Glue* and *London's Burning*. Scrappy, cut-up/collage and photocopied, they could not be mistaken for the pro music press magazines like *Melody Maker* and *New Musical Express*. Now, with better production and circulation, the distinction is more blurred. But there are still publications, often in the indie/alternative field, where the term 'fanzine' is complete applicable.

George Flynn, P. O. Box 1069, Kendall Square Station, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02142

Patrick McGuire is right about the age of the word 'fandom': I think I've seen citations from sportswriters as early as 1892 or thereabouts. As for the responses to Harry Warner's assertion that non-SF-related zines are "incorrectly called fanzines," the *American Heritage Dictionary's* definition may be of interest:

fanzine *n.* An amateur-produced fan magazine distributed by mail to a subculture readership and devoted to the coverage of interests such as science fiction, rock music, or skateboarding.

Hey, at least we still get mentioned!

WE ALSO HEARD FROM:

Merf Adamson, Harry Andruschak, William Bains, John Berry, Pamela Boal, Richard Brandt, David Bratman, Charles Broerman, Gary Brown, Ken Bulmer, Dennis Caswell, Chester Cuthbert, Richard Dengrove, Carolyn Doyle, Leigh Edmonds, Ahrvid Engholm, Kurt Erichsen, Nola Frame-Gray, Keith Freeman, Meade Frierson III, Janice Gelb, Steve Green, Ian Gunn & Karen Pender-Gunn, Rob Hansen, Gay Haldeman, Craig Hilton, Irwin Hirsh, Kim Huett, Lucy Huntzinger, Ben Indick, Terry Jeeves, Ali Kayn, Robert Klein, Keith Kurek, Hope Leibowitz, Robert Lichtman, Ethel Lindsey, Mark Linne-man, Murray Moore, Lewis Morley, Richard New-some, Elizabeth Osborne, Lloyd Penney, Derek Pickles, Ron Salomon, Steve Sneyd, Alan Stewart, Alan J. Sullivan, Roy Tackett, Martyn Taylor, David Thayer, Kristin Thorrud, Ron Trout, R Lorraine Tutihasi, Shelby Vick, Roger Waddington, Toni Weisskoff, Henry Welch, Malgorzata Wilk, and Mike Whalen.

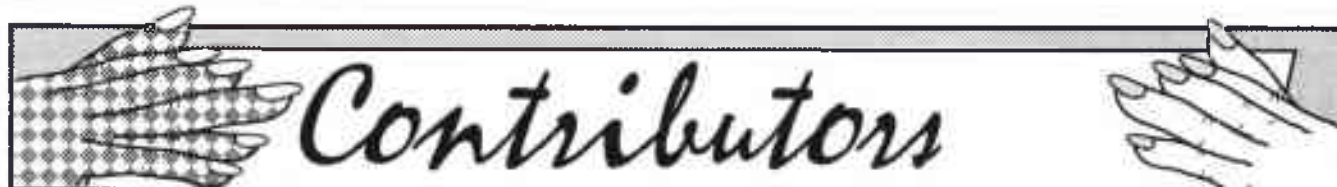
FANZINES WERE RECEIVED FROM:

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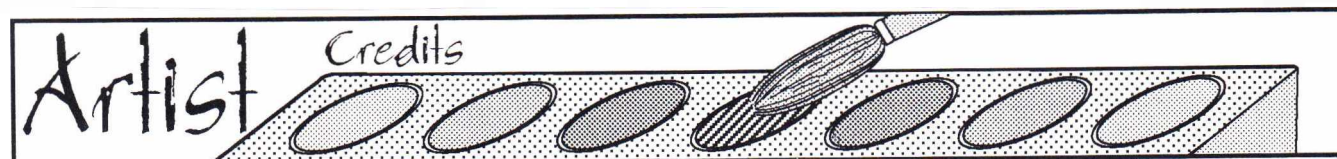
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Sheryl Birkhead — pages 2, 3, 35, 44(both), 45
 Sheryl Birkhead & Joe Mayhew — back cover
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Joe Mayhew — pages 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21
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 Charlie Williams — pages 5, 6, 22, 23, 24, 25
 Kip Williams — page 29

September 20th

Closing Comments by Nicki and Richard Lynch



Nicki: It's been nine months since the fire, and our townhouse is now rapidly being repaired. In fact, there is a flurry of activity going on at the job site — the neighbor's townhouse (that was burned down) is now being rebuilt, too. The work finally started in late June.

Richard: We had signed with a rebuilding contractor even before the fire was even out, one recommended by our insurance agent. The fire had attracted quite a gathering of onlookers, including our insurance agent, who had been alerted by his office manager; it turned out that her boy friend lived in the same townhouse subdivision that we did, and his home was near enough to the fire that there was smoke damage.

The contractor had originally told us that the job could be completed in about three months, but that was before the extent of the damage was determined. Boy, were they wrong!

Nicki: The day after the fire, an army of people descended on our home to pack up all our worldly belongings, which (we were told) would be cleaned and boxed away in storage until we were ready to move back in again. The clothes went with one subcontractor, and everything else went with another. It took several days, but finally all that was left was what the subcontractors felt could not be salvaged.

At that point, we spent a couple of very discouraging days picking through the remaining debris listing items we found for the insurance company. Among our losses were dozens of books, including several signed small press editions that will be hard to replace. They weren't damaged by the fire, but had been soaked completely through by the water or layered with wet wood char and plaster from what had formerly been ceilings and walls.

Richard: Our losses from just what we could find totalled several thousand dollars, and that's

not counting the hide-a-bed couch that we'll get reimbursement for later. But while we were sifting through all the debris, we found some very saveable things the packing subcontractors missed. One was the hand carved *matruska* set of nested wooden dolls I had bought on my trip to Russia last year. There were also quilting magazines (that Nicki wouldn't have been able to replace), notebooks containing our yearly financial records (that I wouldn't have been able to replace), various art prints (which still smell faintly of smoke), and assorted tools and components for both the computer and Nicki's Bernina sewing machine. And, at the bottom of a pile of debris, there was something *really* worth preserving — a \$100 savings bond we'd received earlier that same week.

Nicki: Once everything was out, our contractor began the task of renovating the place, starting with tearing out all the wall and floor coverings. They then removed what was left of the drywall and plaster, right down to the wood frame. Both the roof and floor timbers had caught fire by the time the fire fighters had arrived. In fact, the roof had been burned almost completely away and, outside, the deck was also a total loss. Upstairs, the second bedroom was badly damaged and needed to be rebuilt. And the entire wall that connected with the other townhouse needed to be replaced; this common firewall formed part of the second bedroom, computer room, living room, and the basement area where I had my quilting studio.

Richard: This is where our contractor's original three month estimate broke down. In order for the rebuilding of our home to proceed, reconstruction of the other townhouse had to get underway, because the common wall between the two houses was the firewall, which needed re-

placement. This would require the willing cooperation of the *other* building contractor. The problem was, there *wasn't* any other building contractor — it took the owner until the end of June to sign with one.

Nicki: So, once a week we would drop by this sorry place where you could walk in the front door and see all the way up to the emergency roof that was slapped on the day after the fire. And we would look through a crack in the boarded up area next door, where only a black hole was where a townhouse used to be. Then we would go away, even a bit more discouraged than before. Things continued like this, with no visible progress, for weeks that stretched into months. At the end of June, work on the missing townhouse finally started, and so work on ours did too.

Richard: Meanwhile, all our household belongings were in storage, somewhere. Nicki had gotten her sewing machine back by the end of January (though some of the attachments are still missing), and was able to resume quilting. The computer, however, was a much different story. Although it looked undamaged after the fire, it seemed pretty likely that all the smoke had caused some problems with it.

The first place we took it to, for cleaning, decided that the monitor, modem, keyboard, and the 16 megabytes of internal memory were completely cooked, and took it upon themselves to replace them all. But when we got the machine back again, not only was the system not cleaned properly (you could still smell wood smoke), the parts that were replaced had been changed out for inferior components. The \$100 keyboard got changed out for a cheap one one worth only about \$35; the high resolution color monitor was replaced by a cheaper one that had much lower resolution. The modem they wanted to give us was a cheap no-name knockoff, instead of an honest-to-goodness Hayes. The 16 megabytes of internal memory was replaced with only four megabytes. Parts that *did* need replacement — the power supply, hard disk, and system motherboard — had been left alone. I had to take the system back to where we'd originally bought it to get things done right. The insurance company had agreed to make sure we were satisfied, and I feel badly they are out a lot of money they paid for the first set of 'repairs'. But at least now, it **worked** again.

Nicki: There were also other problems to contend with. Our clothing restoration subcontractor has

been excellent and our clothes and linens seem to have come out of this ordeal OK, but I found out that the miniature quilts I make didn't fare so well. I had all my finished ones stacked on shelves in the basement, and the works-in-progress on several tables as well as upstairs in my sewing basket. The day after the fire, I collected my workbasket (well, it's a big cloth bag) and all the works-in-progress that I could find, and brought them back to the hotel room where we had moved to. The rest of my quilting materials were packed by the subcontractor.

When we talked to them later, we got a list of all the packed boxes and their contents. One box in the listing was marked as 'Wet Fabric', which could have been quilts. Upon seeing that, I got a sinking feeling, so I called them and asked what had been done with that box. I couldn't get a straight answer, so I went to our main contractor and complained that their subcontractor was not cooperating. This got some action. But when the box was finally delivered to me, I discovered what happened to the 'Wet Fabric' contents — nothing, absolutely nothing. All my finished quilts had been packed wet and left for over a month. They were all ruined by mildew, **EVERY** single one of them. If they'd been given over to the clothing restoration subcontractor at the outset, they all could have been saved. An insurance settlement is in the works, but it's not the same as having my quilts back.

Richard: It wasn't until the middle of August that we were finally able to find where all our belongings were being stored. It turned out that the warehouse was not conveniently located for us; it took about an hour's drive to get there. And we had to do it twice. The first time, about a month earlier, we'd made that long drive only to discover that the warehouse crew didn't have the key to the section where our things were stored. Our second trip there, just four days before our trip to Scotland for the worldcon, was more successful.

Nicki: After the long drive to the warehouse, it took us a while to find where the crew working on our belongings was. There were over 100 boxes in the listing, but many of them had generic descriptions, such as 'Items From Office'. I figured it was going to be a long shot to find things I really wanted, like some of my quilting supplies and sewing machine feet, and I was right — the boxes were stacked five or six high, almost completely filling the small room they were in. It was hopeless. There was no way we were going to locate anything

in there. But, as it happened, not all the boxes were in that small room. There were a few sitting opened in the work area; when we got there, the warehouse crew was busily taking things out of these boxes and wiping them down. The items they were cleaning were... fanzines!

Richard: By the wildest of coincidences, we had arrived just as the warehouse crew was starting to clean up our back issues inventory of *Mimosa*. We made their job easier, and gathered up all the issues we could find. It was only because of this lone piece of luck that we were able to bring fanzines with us to Glasgow. It might just as easily have been kitchenware!

In all, we were able to lay claim to three boxes of *Mimosa* back issues, about half of our pre-fire inventory. When we got them home, we saw that many of them had suffered varying degrees of smoke damage. The smoke from the fire had been so dense that it had forced its way into any exposed cover stock. There were dark patterns on some of the covers, where protruding corners and edges had been exposed to the smoke, but the rest had been shielded by other fanzines stacked on top. We took a number of these with us to Intersection for the fanzine sales table, and were surprised to see that most of them sold. Apparently, the smoke markings added a degree of uniqueness to the issues affected.

Nicki: We did attend Worldcon, despite our feeling back in January that would we be unable because of all the disruption. We had originally planned to make it a major trip, to see the British Isles as well as the convention, but wound up cutting it back to the bare week that Intersection was being held. We had a good time, but it was much too short to see all we would have liked. We want to "do it right" some time in the future when we're settled again, when I'm out of grad school and have a job again.

Richard: Actually, it wasn't until early August that I knew I'd be able to go to Scotland at all; until then, there was a business trip scheduled that very same week, but it fell through. This as much as anything contributed to the short duration of our stay; there was just no way to plan anything more than a trip to the convention. Besides the week in Glasgow, we did manage to visit Edinburgh for most of a day. It's a city rich in history and tradition, with a spectacular castle. We'll have to go there again one day.

Nicki: The convention itself was interesting. We

didn't win the Fanzine Hugo this year; that honor went to Dave Langford (for both Best Fanzine and Best Fan Writer). We *did* enjoy the international feel and flavor that only a European Worldcon has.

Richard: There didn't seem to be many program items that took advantage of all the different nationalities present, but the after-hours partying certainly did. Three of the best parties were thrown by Australians, Norwegians, and Russians. There were also many fans there from Eastern Europe, including large contingents from Romania and Poland.

Nicki: We partied with some of the Polish fans on the next-to-last night of the convention. It was a party-within-a-party, actually; Baltimore and the other worldcon bidders were throwing a huge combined 'get rid of the remaining party supplies' fest in the ballroom of one of the convention hotels, and the Polish fans had a smaller party going on in a corner of the room. They had a bottle of wonderful 'goldwasser' vodka and were doing shots. So I sat with them, talking about Poland and fandom. They had to leave at 1:30am, since the YMCA where they were staying closed its doors at 2:00am, but they left us the bottle to finish.

Their English was actually pretty good. One fan said he learned English in school and watched the BBC for several years to prepare for this worldcon. But when he got to Scotland, he found they didn't speak the English he had learned! I told him not to worry; they weren't speaking the English *I* knew, either!

Richard: It's now nearly the beginning of Autumn, and Intersection is rapidly disappearing into the past. We're still living in the two bedroom apartment we moved into back in mid January, but we're hoping to have all this disruption behind us soon. Our contractor is now moving rapidly to complete the repairs; new kitchen cabinets have recently gone in, the wallpaper is going up, and carpeting and new lighting fixtures will soon be installed. It won't be long before the place is habitable again.

Meanwhile, we still don't have access to our mimeograph, so this will be our first issue that's been totally commercially printed. (I have to admit, I won't miss the week of hard work at the mimeo and all the ink stains on my hands.) The new look might be a little different, but we hope you'll find the contents just as entertaining to read as our previous issues. Write and let us know! ✨



MERCIFUL GHU!
THE UNIVERSE IS
PEANUTIZING!