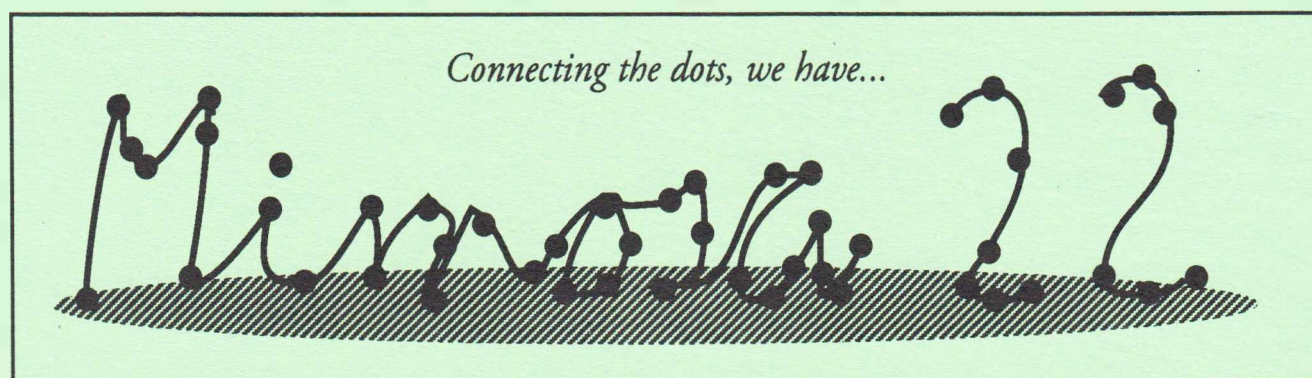


# MIMOSA

22







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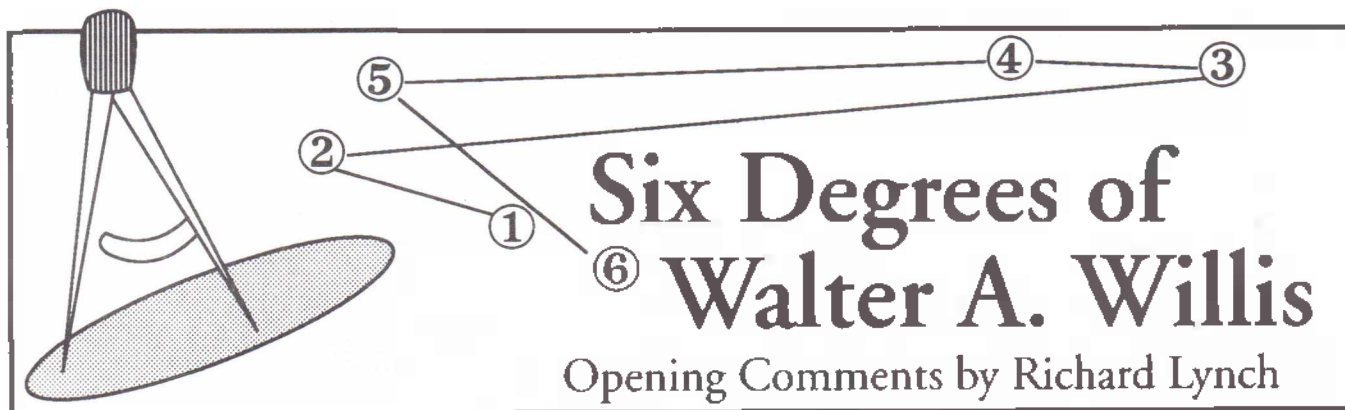
This twenty-second issue of *Mimosa* was published in June 1998, and is available for the amazingly affordable price of just four dollars (U.S. currency or equivalent), which includes cost of postage. We welcome letters and e-mails of comment; one of those, or a fanzine in trade, will get you a copy of *M23* later this year. (We'll assume all correspondence we receive is intended for publication unless otherwise indicated.) We also have a continuing need for first-person articles & essays 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 make you a permanent fixture on our mailing list. Copies of most back issues are available; please write us for more info on price and availability. This entire issue is ©1998 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, a letter of comment or e-mail of comment from you is truly appropriate in order to stay on our mailing list.

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A couple years back there was a fad that was sweeping through some of the 'Usenet' news groups on the Internet. You may have heard of it: "The Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon" game. The premise is based on 'six degrees of separation', that anybody in the world is, at most, six people away from anybody else. I'll demonstrate this with a simple example: I am only three people away from the President of the United States — I work in the organization of the Assistant Secretary for Fossil Energy at the U.S. Department of Energy, and she works for the Secretary of Energy who is a Cabinet Officer for President Clinton.

The Kevin Bacon game extends this to the movies, and there have been contests to determine the shortest 'route' for any given actor to Kevin through movie 'connections'. An example: Bela Lugosi has a 'Bacon Number' of three — in 1948, Lugosi appeared in *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* with Vincent Price; in 1963, Price was in *The Raven* along with Jack Nicholson, and in 1992, Nicholson co-starred in *A Few Good Men* with...Kevin Bacon. It's possible to trace a path to Kevin Bacon for almost any actor who has ever appeared on the silver screen. Forry Ackerman, for instance, has a 'Bacon Number' of two (in 1987, he was in the movie *Amazon Women on the Moon* along with Steve Guttenberg, and in 1982, Guttenberg co-starred with Bacon in the movie *Diner*).

This leads to the obvious question of how many other science fiction fans have 'Bacon Numbers'. I don't know of any, though there is one other 'connection' that comes to mind. A few weeks ago, partway through a showing of Quentin Tarantino's new movie *Jackie Brown*, there was a scene where Jackie and her bail bondsman, Max Cherry, are looking for a place for a drink and some conversation. An upscale hotel

restaurant is dismissed, as is a noisy sports bar. Finally, they settle on a quiet bar in the run-down hotel she's staying at, which turns out to be the Cockatoo Inn in Hawthorne, California ...at which point I nearly jumped out of my seat, because the Cockatoo Inn was also the site of the 1992 Corflu fanzine fans convention. (This gives the Cockatoo Inn, as well as fanzine fandom, a 'Bacon Number' of two, via Robert De Niro, who co-starred with Kevin Bacon in *Sleepers*.)

It's easy to see how this game could be extended to fandom. For instance, we could figure out our shortest 'connection' to the legendary Bob Tucker via 'Tucker Numbers', based the conventions we've attended. These probably wouldn't be very meaningful, though; Bob Tucker has been to so many conventions that most everyone who has ever been to a convention would have a 'Tucker Number' of one, and *nobody* would have one greater than two.

Here's a different idea: trace our 'connections' to the equally legendary Walt Willis via 'Willis Numbers' for fan writers. Everyone who has an article in this issue of *Mimosa*, for instance, has a 'Willis Number' of one. My 'Willis Number' is two; I'm embarrassed to admit I don't think I've ever had an article published in a fanzine that has also featured an article by Walt Willis (my opening comments here don't count).

At any rate, this issue of *Mimosa* is intended to explore some of the connections that exist in fandom. In it there we've got stories about lots of fannish connections — to worldcons old and recent...to entertainment shows amateur and Hollywood...to authors, fans, and fanzines renown. In short, we hope we've got something for everyone this issue, and that you'll get some enjoyment from *M22*. We think it's filled with entertaining things to read. We hope you think so, too. ✧

Our 'connection' to Dave Kyle goes back almost two decades to the NorthAmerican of 1979. We met Dave for the first time there, and learned to our amazement that he lived in the northern New York State village of Potsdam, where we both attended college! Our 'connection' to Dave goes further than just that, though; in 1979 the first issue of this fanzine was still two years away, but at that NorthAmerican he put the seed in our minds by mentioning that he "...didn't think there was enough fan history in fanzines." We're pleased that he's personally taken a hand in correcting that, with articles like the following one.



Nycon in 1939, the first world science fiction convention, began the new era. Reports, speculations, controversies, nostalgia have revolved around it for sixty years. Back in 1989, Greg Thokar, the Hugo-nominated editor for the *Noreascon Three Program Book*, took on a wonderful fan history project to commemorate a half century of world science fiction conventions. A section of that book consisted of reminiscences about all the worldcons to date, each as experienced by one of its attendees. The lone exception was for the inaugural Nycon, where there were ten different contributors: Forrest J Ackerman (who originated the name 'Nycon' for the convention), Milton A. Rothman, Julius Schwartz, Lloyd Arthur Eshbach, Robert A. Madle, Harry Harrison, John Baltadonis, Charles D. Hornig, Sam Moskowitz, and myself.

From the many thousands of words, a fascinating picture emerges of the events of that very first worldcon. Additional material about the first Nycon can be found in a wealth of other sources. Fred Pohl's memoir, *The Way the Future Was*, for instance, explains the personal background which brought about Nycon's reputation for antagonistic behavior. Sam Moskowitz, in his *The Immortal Storm*, has voluminous comments and historical references about the event, while Damon Knight provides a fascinating down-and-dirty behind the scenes examination of the Nycon in *The Futurians*.

So, given all of this, I see a difficulty — what am I to do for this *Mimosa* article not to be merely repetitious, going over again what has already been said? What follows is my attempt to resolve the predicament. It is Nycon from a personal viewpoint.

\* \* \*

July 1, 1939 — The cardboard box on my lap contained 200 yellow pamphlets. On the cover of each was the bold black line: A WARNING! To me, they were 200 firecrackers whose noise could reverberate forever in the chronicles of fandom. Each pamphlet was an eight page booklet formed from a single 9x12 pulp sheet, rather more brightly orange than yellow. Above the arresting warning was the printed instruction: "Important! Read This Immediately!"

The box rested on my lap as I rode The Short Line bus out of the mountains. It was Friday afternoon and I was making the hundred mile trip from Monticello, New York, to Gotham for the holiday weekend. The destination was my mecca, Caravan Hall, in Baghdad on the Hudson — the ultimate goal at last, the World's Science Fiction Convention.

My secret "subversive" action was to have a permanent effect on the lives of six famous fans: Frederik Pohl, Donald A. Wollheim, Cyril Kornbluth, John B. Michel, Robert A.W. Lowndes, and Jack Gillespie — Futurians all. Through the confusion, other Futurians, me included, escaped such ignominy.



ous fate, among them Isaac Asimov, Richard Wilson, and Dirk Wylie.

What happened?

In a previously published article {{sed. note: "The Great Exclusion Act of 1939" in *Mimosa* 6}}, I explained the situation and reported completely and exactly my printed exhortation in the Yellow Pamphlet. I described it as "a quaint bit of fannish history" and explained the rather bitter rivalry which prompted it. Before and since that article, much has been written about the affair and needs not to be re-hashed. Instead, I'll reveal my moment of inspiration and swift action — how and why it happened.

In June 1939, I was back from my Freshman year in college and working at my family's local weekly newspaper and job shop. Far away downstate, the newly-formed Futurians fan group was my news source about the gathering to coincide with the New York World's Fair. Three outsiders had taken over as leaders, the 'Triumphant Trio'. I've previously written {{sed. note, "Farewell, Teens, Farewell" in *Mimosa* 20}} how a new counter force called New Fandom had been formed by the teaming up of the dynamic young Sam Moskowitz, fanzine publisher James V. Taurasi, and the older, former ISA fan club leader William S. Sykora whose unrecognized paranoia was at the root of so much trouble.

Obviously, my fannish friends weren't in charge. Nor was I playing any role, having been away from the scene, inactive for nearly a year. Ironically, the person who had originated the worldcon idea and who was initially its organizer and leader, Don Wollheim, was out in the cold. With his power lost by mistakes, inattention and abrasiveness, he had surrendered the struggle and had become an unofficial, non-welcomed participant. Ignored and now a mere observer, he led the dispirited Futurians.

So what role could I play?

I was concerned about the trend by usurpers to dominate clubs and conventions, so I decided I could use the print shop to manufacture some kind of follow-up about my long and intense interests in creating conventions. I planned a handbill for distribution to con-goers. A mimeographed or hectographed product, too commonplace, would be easy to ignore. Photocopying was not yet available, but a printed handbill, by my own labor, was within my means.

As I fumbled at type-setting on the Innertype (Linotype) machine in the shop basement, Tony Palumbo, the regular operator, took interest in my pro-

ject, luckily for me. He was a dedicated union man and was delighted to help confront the authoritarianism I depicted. He set the type while I laid out the lead slugs, locked up the chases, and, by work-and-turn, hand-fed the small Chandler press. By Friday night, with my undisclosed propaganda, I was in the home of my friend Dick Wilson in Richmond Hill in the borough of Queens. I may have confided in him about my plan for distribution — I certainly didn't tell any other Futurian. The glory or the blame would be, in due time, all mine.

By early Saturday morning, box in hand, I had arrived at Caravan Hall in mid-town Manhattan, on East 59th Street. Avoiding the elevator, I climbed the three flights of stairs and hid my secret papers behind the cold, old-fashioned heating radiator.

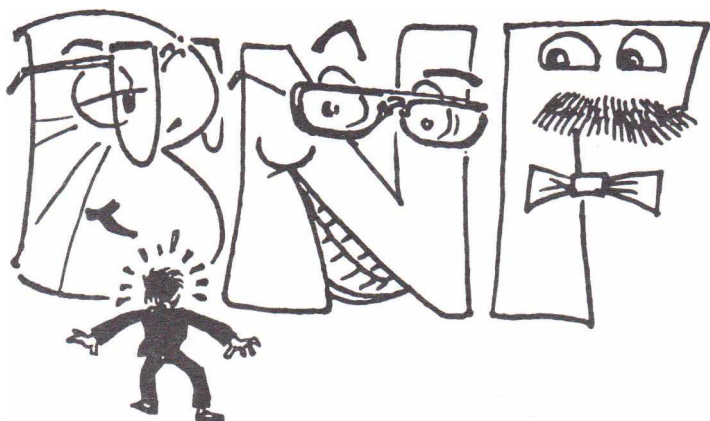
I went back downstairs and joined Dick Wilson outside on the sidewalk. It was a beautifully clear and sunny day, and the pavement had not yet grown hot in the morning sunshine. Almost everyone around wore white shirts with ties; some had fedora hats. For all our liberal ideas, we the young were extremely conservative and conformist in our clothing. Don Wollheim's 'uniform' was a dark suit with dark hat and, in inclement weather, an ubiquitous umbrella. Unfailingly, we very much conformed to the culture of the day in the height of the Great Depression.



Of the few fans milling around, some I knew personally and some I knew by reputation. I was awe-struck to see so many celebrities. There were several strata represented. At the bottom were the young fans, like me and Dick, known in fandom by the printed word. Just above our level were the Big Name Fans, and then the BNFs who were turning into pros. Finally, there were the pros themselves.

One of the BNFs present was actually THE Big

Name Fan. Forrest J Ackerman, unmistakable, what with "4SJ" emblazoned on his shirt-front, was there all the way from California, wearing his eye-catching street costume with green cape and baggy breeches derived from magazine illustrations drawn by artist Frank R. Paul. He was to me, even then, Mr. Science Fiction Fan, the guy who brought me into active fandom through the letter columns of *Wonder Stories*. And nearby was his neophyte fellow Californian, Ray Douglas Bradbury, only just starting on his way up the celebrity ladder and bucking the stereotypical dress code by an open shirt collar. (I remember later his colorfully striped T-shirt — West Coast garb seemed strange in our big city.) On the other side of Forry was the other great BNF of the day, Jack Darrow. What a sight I saw: the two Biggest Name Fans in the world, standing next to each other — the original young directors of the Science Fiction League!



And over there was Julius Schwartz, one of the very first of our breed, famous for his fanzine editorship, a BNF who was also a professional! Standing next to him was his closest friend, Mort Weisinger, now a genuine professional editor taking up where Hugo Gernsback had left off (secretly resented by me for debasing *Wonder Stories* into *Thrilling Wonder Stories*). Why, they were no more than Don Wollheim's age, still in their twenties! Julius had a face as distinctive as Don's, both with angular features and large noses supporting eyeglasses. Schwartz's speech was forceful and all the time his face was lit up with enthusiasm and good humor. To those around him, he was simply 'Julie', but I dared not break into the conversation. As for Weisinger, to me he was like a smiling Buddha, burly and confident. They were so different from the much younger, esthetic looking Charles D. Hornig, editor of the defunct *Wonder*

*Stories* who had accepted my very first short story.

The brightest star of all was John W. Campbell, Jr., peering owlishly through his steel-rimmed glasses. Isaac Asimov was present as a lukewarm Futurian and not yet blossomed out into an extrovert with his distinctive flamboyant, loquacious style. Published that spring, he had a head start on Bradbury and was about to become one of Campbell's many famous prodigies. Isaac wore the typical brown, horn-rimmed glasses which made him look older and wiser than his nineteen years.

Quite remarkable to me was seeing so many females — young and old. The Guest of Honor, artist Frank R. Paul, had brought one of his three lovely daughters, and the legendary Ray Cummings, so distinctive with his magnificent, thick crown of pure white hair, had brought his 12-year-old daughter. The traveling companion of Forry Ackerman, Morajo (the Esperanto acronym for Myrtle R. Douglas), was present in costume, though hers was rather more subdued than his. Doris Baumgardt, a.k.a. Leslie Perri, darkly stunning, would be the future Mrs. Fred Pohl. Author Malcolm Jameson's daughter, Vida, in later years would be a frequent visitor to the Hydra Club. Robert D. Swisher and John W. Campbell, Jr., had their wives, Frances and Dona, with them. And then there was the attractive Connecticut fan, Trudy Kuslan, whom I tried to impress by surreptitiously slipping her a copy of my yellow pamphlet with a casual comment, "You're the first to know," or some similarly stupid remark. It was a big mistake.

The confrontation began around noon.

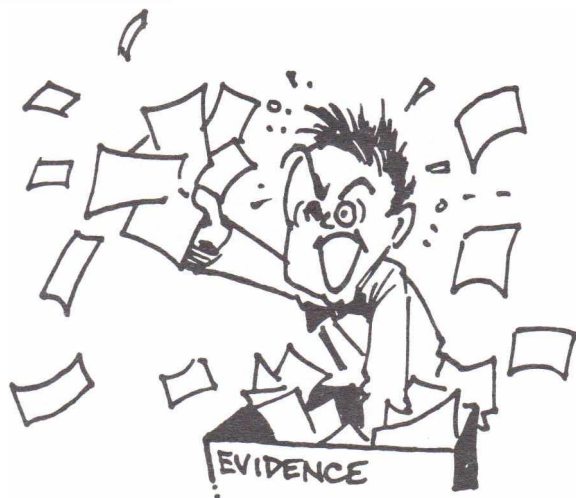
Five of the six doomed Futurians stepped out of the elevator and were immediately confronted by Jimmy Taurasi who barred their way into the hall. They had not known then that the three leaders of Nycon had discussed barring them from the convention. Naturally, an argument ensued. Stocky Taurasi was ready for physical battle against those Futurians who were strong of mind but not of body. Even so, Jimmy called for police help and waited for his two comrades. When Sam Moskowitz appeared, the argument continued, but he dismissed the police. Moskowitz had confidence in his muscle, having claimed "my greatest enthusiasm is boxing."

Oh-oh! Just as some good-behavior compromise seemed to be winning the day, the yellow pamphlet appeared, thrust into the hand of Moskowitz by Louis Kuslan. Evidently, Trudy had passed my gift on to her brother. Moskowitz scanned it and was vilified.



John Michel, the remaining sixth candidate for ostracism, then appeared and became an on-looker as Wollheim denied absolutely any knowledge of the pamphlet or that the Futurians were responsible for its publication or distribution. I had stirred up a hornet's nest. But my tirade, with its purple prose about "ruthless scoundrels," had ended optimistically with peace and harmony by stating: "Who are we that have published this? We are science fiction fans, young men who believe that science fiction is a new type of literature which must not have its future destroyed by any selfish interests. Despite anyone, or anything, the 1939 World's Science Fiction Convention is bound to be a success! And should the Convention Committee decide that democratic methods are best we will be the first to admit that they deserve full credit and praise for this gathering for the three days. May science fiction prosper!" I had attributed the pamphlet to a special 'committee', in effect, anonymously, and was actually rather proud of my contribution toward democracy. I was startled later by Moskowitz's misrepresentation that I branded New Fandom as a puppet in the hands of the professionals. And I had never dreamed that such famous and important fans could ever be banned. So, I just watched the dispute and kept silent.

"Ah, ha!" Poking around the radiator, Moskowitz discovered my cache of yellow booklets. And then, a further, louder, "Ah, ha!" — he also brought to light a plethora of other 'subversive' material just waiting for the Futurians to place on the table with the approved fanzines and books, most to be auctioned off at the day's close. To Moskowitz, the Nycon was obviously on the verge of disastrous contamination from some serious radical propaganda which spoke of a world in turmoil.



There was to be no propaganda from the Futurians, no speeches, no disruptions of any kind, and a pledge of "orderly" conduct — these were Moskowitz's conditions for admittance. But this gag order was not acceptable to Wollheim and the other five Futurians, as it had not been imposed on anyone else. When Sykora, the unofficial co-chairman, arrived, he agreed that the official chairman was making the right decision. The banning became official policy. How did other Futurians make it in? Moskowitz has written that they were admitted because they agreed to his required promise to behave, but none of them ever did make any such promise. It was inconceivable that any of them would. I most certainly didn't.

Before the meeting opened on Saturday (with more than 200 people present), frantic efforts were made by some to correct the injustice. While the banned Futurians retired to a nearby cafeteria — for decades the favorite kind of place for socializing, arguing and conspiring about science fiction — action swirled around the blissfully unaware Olympian gods who took little notice. Frances Swisher and Morajo appealed to the leaders for reason, to no avail. Milton A. Rothman, the respected East Coast BNF, was the self-appointed liaison/courier running back and forth between the hall and the cafeteria. During intermissions I had no confiscated yellow pamphlets to hand out, but I did pass out a quickly prepared notice of a Futurian meeting, a "Free Convention for all of fandom", to be held someplace at some set time.

All during the meeting there was the undercurrent of repressed feelings, with only brief flashes from some sympathizers. Several attempts were made to make the general audience aware of the drama that was still in progress. The tight control of the leadership prevented airing the issue. Asimov, raised to the level of a pro, was too star-struck to comprehend. Leslie Perri several times did her best to raise the issue, as did others, such as me. Not a chance.

According to Moskowitz, "The only potential source of further trouble came while Sykora was introducing the notables present. At that time David Kyle rose and attempted to make a motion that the six barred fans be allowed to enter the hall. Sykora, however, declined to recognize the motion. ... Later, after nearly everyone had left that hall, a telegram signed 'Exiles' arrived for David Kyle, requesting him to announce the 'Futurian Meeting' and offering regards 'to the tyrannous trio'. The committee regarded this as a delayed signal for Kyle to create a

disturbance at the gathering.” The committee of three had pulled it off for the moment — the repercussions came whistling in later.

And so the convention went on. For the entire day there was much hubbub which kept me from examining the wealth of items on display around the rooms, though I did get a copy of the Souvenir Book, with its gorgeous (for us) shining, gold cover — it was a production by Conrad H. Ruppert which Julie Schwartz had made possible by the solicitation of advertisements. There might have been a membership fee, but if so it would have been nominal, such as a dime. The convention had arranged for a refreshment stand, but I didn’t even have five cents to squander on something to drink — any money I had would have gone to one of the auctions.

Lack of funds also kept me out of the ‘banquet’ on Sunday evening. Much as I revered Frank R. Paul, a man perhaps more venerated than his old boss Hugo Gernsback, I couldn’t afford the one dollar ticket. But I wasn’t the only one — there were a total of only thirty-two diners. I think it was a great loss that the country couldn’t hear Frank R. Paul’s marvelous speech, “Science Fiction, the Spirit of Youth.” He was undoubtedly the most popular person in our sf world — a sweet, warm person with a quiet, gentle manner. He talked of this “meeting” of “rebellious, adventurous young minds” eager to discuss freely subjects unlimited. How ironic!



On Sunday, the attendance was down to less than a half. The reason was not disenchantment; I believe, it was because the day was restricted to science programs, the science fiction phase being concluded. There was great satisfaction when the Futurians met that day and the next, with many interested fans. The cafeteria was their initial assembly place, and Brook-

lyn was the site of the ‘free’ convention. I was very pleased by Ackerman’s later comments about a critique session held afterwards: “I personally was very impressed by the very fair way in which the Nycon was analyzed. ‘If the reason for the convention,’ said the speaker, ‘was for fans to meet the pros, to exchange autographs, to see movies, etc., then we would have to say that the convention was a success. If this first meeting of readers and authors should have produced some discussions, some resolutions, then we would have to say it was not.’ The Futurians, as they were called (or, later, Michelists) were politically oriented fans who felt that science fiction had a mission, was more than just fun and games, should have gone on record on this historic occasion as being opposed to war or in favor of interplanetary exploration or *something* of a substantial nature.”

Some misinformation and misinterpretations can be mentioned and corrected here. The golden “Nycon Souvenir Booklet” was never called the Program Book. In it, the full page of names identified as ‘Scientifictionists’ was not the ‘attendance list’ — actually most names were of non-attendees and all represented solicited supporters. Many names were fictitious or of the creative whimsy of Forry Ackerman for himself and friends. Fred Pohl in his book identifies Caravan Hall as Bahai Hall. The Hall oft-times shifts back and forth between 57th and 59th streets. Joe Siclari’s online Nycon page on the World Wide Web (<http://fanac.org>) is in error about the six being “ejected.” Actually, they were never allowed to enter. They could not have distributed the ‘Warning’ brochure and the Futurians certainly didn’t; only I did with the few copies not confiscated. It was Moskowitz, not Michel, who found them. And as for “Kyle blissfully attending the proceedings,” there was nothing blissful for me that afternoon.

My evaluation of Nycon, by hindsight after 60 years, is simple: For all of fandom, not just the professional aspect, it was a big success. Sykora, Moskowitz and Taurasi did as good a job as could have been expected — the Futurians might not have done it as well. But for fledgling New Fandom, ostensibly the world-wide sponsoring organization — and in particular, for Sykora, Moskowitz and Taurasi — the result of Nycon controversies and official actions was very close to an absolute disaster.

And I was there, both as spectator and unexpected participant — I *really* was there, *really there*! Wow! ♀



Since that very first worldcon there have been fifty-four others, the most recent being last year's LoneStarCon 2. That one and five others, including the previous Baltimore worldcon, are remembered in this first part of a new multi-part series of articles by Mike Resnick about his...



# WorldCon Memories

(PART I) BY  
MIKE  
RESNICK

## 1971: NOREASCON (Boston)

Hank and Martha Beck had a room on the 23rd floor of the Sheraton. And on Saturday night, I wandered up there, toting a ton of books I'd bought in the huckster room, and hoping to find a nice, comfortable chair where I could sit and browse through what I'd bought.

Well, Martha had her share of comfortable chairs — but being Martha, she had more than her share of friends sitting in them. And Martha, Pat and Roger Sims, and Banks Mebane were using all the uncomfortable chairs while playing bridge. And five or six people were sitting on the bed, talking about who the hell knows what.

So I walk around the room once, hoping someone will get up or die, whichever comes first, and no one does. And then I remember: there's an outdoor swimming pool on the fifth floor. I walk to a window, make sure it's visible, and then turn to the room and exclaim that there are naked people in the pool. Lots of 'em!

I never saw a room empty out so fast. Martha led the charge down the stairs — no one was willing to wait for the elevator — followed by maybe 20 other people, and I sat down to look at my books.

Must have been good books, too, because I hardly noticed the passage of time, or that the room *stayed* empty.

About two hours later, Roger Sims, red of face and short of breath, comes back to the 23rd floor and enters the room. "I thought you were kidding," he says.

"You mean I wasn't?" I say.

So he takes me down to the pool, and sure enough, there are about 200 naked bodies in and around the water. I have about three minutes to appreciate the prettier ones of the female persuasion, and then — so help me — the cops raid the joint.

John Guidry grabs Carol and me by our arms and tells us that he's got a room on the fifth floor, and we can wait there until the fuzz leave, which is precisely what we do.

Now, you can't keep a little thing like 200 naked bodies a secret for long at a Worldcon, and on Sunday night, some two thousand potential voyeurs show up to gape again — but it is 50 degrees and drizzling, and all the skinny-dippers know enough to stay inside, where it is warm and dry.

Other memories of Noreascon...

...Meeting Marvin Minsky, and realizing that I'd found what was said to be impossible — a man who was both smarter and wittier than Isaac Asimov (and a dear friend of Isaac's, as well).

...Finally getting to meet Cliff Simak, the GoH, and quite possibly the sweetest, most decent man I've ever known.

...Listening to Cliff's GoH speech. This was during the most bitter part of the feud between the Old and New Waves, and rather than speak about his career, Cliff spent most of the speech trying to make peace. It was too reasonable to have much effect.

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## 1978: IGUANACON 2 (Phoenix)

What I mostly remember is that Satan would have

found Phoenix on Labor Day weekend *much* too hot for his taste.

We stayed in the headquarters hotel, the Hyatt. It was maybe 40 stories tall, and had a nine-story atrium. The atrium was cool and comfortable...but it took every bit of the building's air-conditioning power to cool it. Everything above the 9th floor felt like the anteroom to hell. CFG (the Cincinnati Fantasy Group) had a suite on the 21st floor; we got rid of it after a day. You couldn't open the windows — they didn't want anyone jumping or falling out — and you couldn't get cool air, or indeed *any* air circulation.

The Adams Hotel across the street wasn't much better, but at least it had *some* air-conditioning. I remember that we waited until Stu and Amy Brownstein, who were staying at the Adams, went out to party each night, and then we'd borrow their room for a nap, before we had to go back to the hell of the Hyatt.

Stu and I were going to wear our tuxes for some function or other. I remembered the tux, but forgot the bow tie. Carol had seen a formal-wear store two blocks from the Hyatt, so Friday morning we decided to walk to it and buy a black tie. Got almost halfway before we decided we'd never make it before we melted. On the way back, we passed five or six wrinkled old ladies trudging toward us, each wearing a sweater. I think that was when I decided that I didn't want to be immortal after all.

Then there was the Sun's Anvil — the square block of concrete (and no shade) that you had to walk across to get to the huckster room, the art show, or the programming. I *live* in the huckster room at a Worldcon...but I made the trip only twice in five days. Not a lot of people made it more often.

David Gerrold and I were two of the five masquerade judges on Saturday night. And it turned out that the one truly cool room in the whole damned city was the room where the judges went to deliberate. For those of you who have been wondering for two decades why there was a record number of run-throughs, I might as well lay it on you: David couldn't bear to go back to the Hyatt, and that 68-degree deliberating room kept beckoning to him. Not that the rest of us tried to argue him out of it.

One night we went out for dinner with Lou Tabakow, stately old God Emperor of Cincinnati fandom. He'd heard of this very nice rooftop restaurant. We assumed he meant 'penthouse'; nope, he meant 'roof-

top'.

We get there, take an elevator to the roof, and step out into the rays of the late afternoon sun. Lou and I immediately take off our jackets and ties. By the time the salads arrive, Lou has unbuttoned his shirt; it is gone before we hit the main course. Then, as the sun continues to beat down on us while we wait for dessert, stately, dignified, white-haired Legendary Lou looks around, sees that all the other diners except Carol are males, announces that Carol is a member of the family, and removes his pants, finishing the meal in his shorts. He was unquestionably the most comfortable diner there.



I remember being dragged off to an 'authentic' Japanese restaurant by Carol, Joni Stopa, Jo Ann Wood, and other sophisticated gourmets. And while they ordered a bunch of stuff that looked like uncooked rubber, Ben Jason and I studied the menu — which was entirely in Japanese — and tried to figure out which of those words looked like meat, or at least plain broth. Guessed wrong, too.

I also remember that the entire registration on Thursday was being worked by one teenaged girl until Lynne Aronson rolled up her sleeves, recruited some workers, and saved the day.

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### 1983: CONSTELLATION (Baltimore)

By now I was an established pro, and I found, to my unhappiness, that Worldcons were becoming more business and less pleasure.

I had just fired my former agent, and this was the convention where I'd made up my mind to find a new one. Found her, too. I hit it off with Eleanor Wood and hired her before the weekend was over. She quintupled my income the next year, and we've been together for fifteen happy and lucrative years now.

We stayed in the Hyatt, since it was attached to



the convention center. Officially, no parties were allowed; I imagine we attended somewhere between 15 and 20 within the hotel.

The Hilton was six or seven uphill blocks away. I went there one night with John Guidry, got stranded on the 27th floor, walked down to ground level, and never went back.

I never did make it to the Holiday Inn, where the CFG had its annual hospitality suite. Carol did, a couple of times — and both times was almost dragged forcibly into a burlesque theater by an exceptionally motivated ticket seller.

It had been a few years since we'd had a Hugo banquet, and I was really pleased that the grand old custom was back. That lasted about 10 seconds. Observation: crab feast or no crab feast, NEVER GIVE A THOUSAND FANS WOODEN MALLETS.

As we were sitting there waiting for Jack Chalker to announce the Hugo winners, a notebook somehow materialized at our table. Barry Malzberg, who was up for a Hugo, was sitting next to me. He pulled a pen out and wrote a title on the first page of the notebook: "Fear and Loathing in Baltimore." I took it away and wrote an appropriate opening sentence, then passed it on to Jack Dann, who wrote a second sentence and gave it back to Barry. The three of us wrote a four-page round-robin, one sentence at a time. Then Sheila Gilbert pulled out a blue pencil and edited it, and her husband Mike illustrated it. I'm sure they've all forgotten it many years ago — but in 1985 I donated it to some fannish charity or other, and was told that it sold for \$125.

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### 1987: CONSPIRACY 87 (Brighton, England)

Not a lot of memories of this one. We were just passing through on the way to Africa. We got there on Thursday afternoon and were gone by Saturday night.

I delivered "Kirinyaga" to Scott Card. Didn't mean a thing at the time; I had no way of foreseeing the effect it would have on my career. I did just one panel, and no autograph session. Met most of my European editors and some of my foreign agents.

What I most remember was trying to find the Corn Exchange. It was a large building that housed the Bantam party, the biggest shindig of the con. And it was all but impossible to locate. It was half a dozen twisty, angular blocks from the con, and "clearly marked" meant that the words 'Corn Exchange' were there in big, bold, 2-inch-high letters about 20 feet

above ground level. I'll swear that there are pros and fans who are *still* wandering the streets of Brighton, trying to find their way to or from it.



We stayed in the "pros" hotel (i.e., the expensive one, where they put all the pros, regardless of what we'd requested). The Metropole was the headquarters hotel, and CFG had its suite there, hosted (in Bill Cavin's absence) by Scott and Jane Dennis. Pat and Roger Sims were a few blocks away. We had dinner with them in their hotel. Then, with a sly smile, Roger invited us to see their room. I discovered the reason for the smile a moment later: the elevator was so small that the four of us couldn't fit in it — and it was the only elevator in the building.

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### 1993: CONFRANCISCO (San Francisco)

This is the con that picked up the nickname "ConFiasco" very early on, and will never lose it. (The fact that some committee members have spent years on the computer networks arguing with unhappy attendees that they did so have a good time no matter what they think hasn't done much to eradicate the label or the taste.)

It began with the voting. The committee knew it had lost the Marriott, a huge, modern hotel across the street from the Moscone Center, but it kept that fact a secret. Then, after it won, there came the announcement that the Marriott was unavailable, and that the headquarters hotel was quite a few uphill blocks away.

CFG decided that we had voted for the hotel and we were damned well going to have the hotel, so using just our initials, we blocked 60 rooms and a hospitality suite, then passed the word to a bunch of

old-time fans and pros, and sold them out instantly. The con committee was pissed because we cost them 300 room nights; but we were just as pissed that they were trying to stick us almost a mile away from the facility we'd voted for.

The CFG suite was like Rick's in Casablanca. You remember: "Everyone comes to Rick's." Well, if you wanted to meet every fan and pro with more than a couple of Worldcons under his or her belt, all you had to do was sit in the suite, and sooner or later they'd make an appearance. We opened it every night at about nine o'clock and closed it every morning about four; it was probably the best hospitality suite I've experienced in a more than a third of a century of Worldcons.

(In fact, it was in this suite that *Alternate Worldcons* was conceived, sold, and assigned to its writers. The story of how and why is in the book's introduction.)

I think the beggars — they preferred to call themselves "the homeless" — had one hell of an efficient grapevine. We arrived on Tuesday and walked to the Moscone Center...and passed one solitary beggar. By the weekend, there were thousands of them...and by the next Tuesday, there was only one again.

I remember the endless lines for registration. There was one to register. Then you had to stand in a second one if you were on the program, a third if you wanted a program book (for which you'd paid), and a fourth if you were a Hugo nominee. Bob Silverberg stopped by on his way out and offered to get me in. Since I was standing next to Mike Glycer, and I didn't want to be the star of a con report in *File 770* about former fans suddenly becoming snobbish pros, I regretfully refused and spent another couple of hours waiting to register.

I remember going out to dinner just prior to the masquerade, and seeing an enormous line of fans waiting to get in. And I remember walking by on the way back, and finding that hundreds of them had been turned away.

I was up for a Hugo, and as usual there was a very nice spread of food laid out for the nominees. But no one had remembered to set out any chairs, and a number of nominees with physical ailments — I remember Beth Meacham's arthritis was extremely painful that night — were very uncomfortable until we were finally allowed to take our seats in the audience.

I lost the Hugo...but that was okay, because I got to accept the Campbell for my daughter (who was

being charged by an enraged elephant in South Africa at that very moment). On my way back to my seat, someone — it might have been Mike Glycer — asked me for a quote. I still remember it: "My stud fee just tripled!"

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### 1997: LONESTARCON 2 (San Antonio)

So it's late on Sunday afternoon, and I've just finished doing my sixth or seventh panel or reading or something, and I'm beat. And I'm standing on the corner, waiting for the light to change so I can cross from the convention center to the Marriott and take a shower. And there's a young man standing next to me, saying how tired he is.

"Me, too," I agree. Then I see Kris Rusch standing at the opposite corner, waiting to cross to the con center. "In fact," I say, "I think what I need is a hug from a pretty woman. Like *that* one," I continue, nodding toward Kris.

The light changes, and the kid goes into a panic. "That... that's Kristine Kathryn Rusch!" he says in awed tones. "She's a writer and an editor and a Hugo winner and..."

"I don't care," I say. "She's a pretty lady and I need a hug."

"But she's married! You can't just walk up to her and..." The kid is actually sputtering now. I realize that I've taken off my badge, and he has no idea who I am.

We meet halfway across the street. I throw my arms around Kris. She smiles, hugs me back, and gives me a kiss.

I get to the opposite sidewalk, and I see the kid is staring at me, jaw agape.

"Sexual magnetism," I explain, and vanish into the Marriott.

I hope he remembered to shut his mouth before he went to sleep.

Other memories...

...A female pedestrian was killed by a bus just a few feet from Jack Chalker.

...Linda Dunn was the first person to do a Worldcon costume from one of my books — she was 'Suma', from Kevin Johnson's cover painting to *Eros Ascending* — and she won a pair of prizes.

...I had the first kaffeeklatsch of the con, on Thursday afternoon. I was annoyed at the timing — later in the con figured to draw better — but I managed to fill the room. More to the point, the hotel didn't quite understand that the kaffeeklatsch wasn't



the Hugo pre-ceremony, and they laid out a spread that must have contained, at a conservative estimate, 20 million calories and cost a few thousand dollars. (They figured out their mistake within the hour, and all future kaffeeklatsches had to settle for wet coffee and dry donuts.)



...Carol and I found a 'tea room' a couple of blocks from the con center. At one point, she asked where the ladies' room was. "We ain't got none," was the answer. "You're kidding, right?" she says. The waiter fixes her with a steely eye: "This is Texas, ma'am."

...Neal Barrett was an hilarious toastmaster. I know some people have criticized him for being too vulgar or too long-winded, but I was there, and the audience laughed non-stop.

...An audio publisher brought out my very first audio recording, a couple of Kirinyaga stories read by a New York actor.

And speaking of *Kirinyaga*, I had sold the book to del Rey, which proceeded to treat me like a king. This is the company that used to send writers into shock if they popped for a corned beef sandwich. Well, they took Carol and me out to four different meals, and Fed Ex'd a copy of the cover painting to my hotel when I asked for it.

Had lunch with Gardner Dozois, who was as sick of business meals as I was. I promised not to try to sell him anything if he promised not to ask me to send him anything. Most enjoyable business lunch of the con.

Bantam announced a month before the Worldcon that they'd be taking a select list of invitees (five huge buses' worth; so much for 'select') to a nightclub on Sunday night. It was so hot that we didn't dress formally — but a lot of writers and editors did. And then found out, after driving well out of town, that the San Antonio definition of a nightclub is almost identical to everyone else's definition of a Texas honkey

tonk. I spent most of the night playing horseshoes with Andy Porter; Dean Smith lorded it over a shuffleboard game. If you didn't like barbeque sauce, you were in deep trouble.

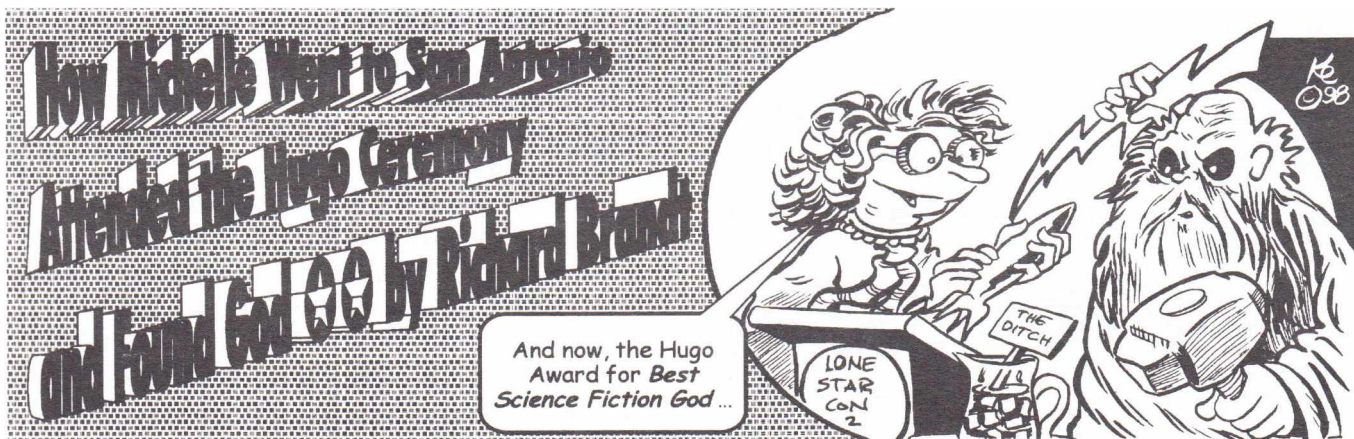
My daughter Laura, who has a major fantasy novel coming from Tor in 1998, roomed as usual with Peggy Ranson. We met in the Marriott's bar Sunday night to exchange gossip — and I was flabbergasted to find out that she knew about five times as much as I did. The kid really gets around.

I was up for a Hugo for the 16th time in nine years, and managed to lose it. I was also scheduled to pick up Hugos for Maureen McHugh and John Clute if they had won; they lost, too. I did pick up chocolate rocket ships for all of us at the Hugo Losers Party (including one for Michael Burstein, who won the Campbell). Maureen was on a diet, so was I, and I hated to think of the condition John's would arrive in (he lives in England), so I gave Michael's to Tony Lewis to deliver, and hid the other three behind the television in the CFG suite, where I assume they are still rotting.

After about fifteen business meals in a row, it was a pleasure to just relax and eat with friends on Monday. Had breakfast with Rick Katze, lunch with Tony and Suford Lewis, dinner with Dean Smith and Kris Rusch, and a late snack with some CFG members. Helped me to remember what Worldcons were like before I started writing this stuff for a living.

One other thing. At LACon III the previous year, Dimensions — the science fiction branch of Miramax — had an offer on the table for *The Widowmaker*, which included Carol and me writing the script. One of the Dimensions execs flew out from New York just to have dinner with us at the Anaheim Hilton. We'd agreed on a pick-up fee for the books, a price for the screenplay, keyline art, everything but the price of the 3-book option, and he felt we were probably one phone call away from agreeing on that, too. And when we got home from LACon III, the offer was off the table. Seems that in intervening three days, Dimensions' first science fiction (as opposed to horror) film had come out and was bombing, and Miramax wasn't sure they wanted to keep Dimensions in business. But in the year following LACon III, *Mimic* came out and made a bundle, and *Scream 2* began looking like it would even outearn *Scream 1*, and suddenly, at LoneStarCon, the offer for *The Widowmaker* was back on the table. This time we didn't give them a chance to reconsider. ☼

Contrary to its numerical designation, LoneStarCon 2 was actually the first worldcon ever held in Texas (the first LoneStarCon was a NorthAmerican). We mentioned in our previous issue that the LoneStarCon was one of the more entertaining worldcons for us. Two of the many Texas fans we encountered there were our friends Richard Brandt and Michelle Lyons, from El Paso, who had charge of the fanzine room/fan lounge area. Or rather, Michelle had charge of it — Richard, as we'll see, had a somewhat *different* responsibility.



We came to San Antonio, Michelle and I, to run the Fanzine Lounge at LoneStarCon 2. Once we got on site, and Michelle had a taste of fiduciary power, she decided she'd brook no interference from me in the operation of things.

"Leave me alone," she snarled whenever I tried to help with the fanzine sales, "I've got this all under control."

Since I suddenly found myself with time on my hands, I decided I'd check out the Green Room and see if the rumors of its undernourished state were true. Once I made it through the maze from the Fanzine Lounge through the exhibit hall and up the escalators and over to yonder Green Room, I was waylaid by Lori Wolf, who was running the Hugo Awards ceremony.

"Richard," she says, "could you do me a big favor?"

"What's that?"

"We need someone to be Voice of God."

"I beg your pardon?"

"We just need someone to make a few announcements at the beginning and end of the ceremony. You know, no smoking, no flash photography, that kind of thing."

"So you need a voice that'll put the fear of God into them."

"Precisely."

"So what do I have to do?"

"Well, I need you to show up at a rehearsal at two o'clock Saturday afternoon. Then just show up at the ballroom an hour or so before the show."

"Well," I said, "that rehearsal will conflict with the TAFF/DUFF auction... but since I don't have any money on me this time it's probably just as well."

So the bargain was struck. I showed up at the appointed time, and found my pal Chris Barkley, who was helping with the show as he'd helped me with the post-awards press reception at Noreascon 3. "I hear you're God," he said.

"Voice o' God Comics," I said.

Lori was trying frantically to organize the rehearsal. Turns out it would be the Tech rehearsal, too, since no one from Tech had showed up for the rehearsal the previous evening. Lori spotted me, came over and said, "Can you do me another favor?"

"I guess, what's that?"

"Do you think you could also do the voice of an armadillo?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"There's an armadillo in a space helmet that's been making an appearance at events throughout the con. He comes onstage at the beginning of the ceremonies and has a couple of lines. Do you think you could do a kind of cartooney voice?"

"Have no fear," I said, "God is here."

After I'd had a few looks at the script she asked if she could borrow it back from me — she was a little short of copies. I assured her I'd committed my part to memory, and she sent me to the sound crew to get acquainted with the wireless mike I'd be using.

"Hi there," I boomed into the microphone.

The tech crew was impressed.

"Damn," one said, "you've got the deepest voice



of any God since Covert Beach.”

I went back and found Lori contemplating the stage with a bemused expression.

“Where are my center stairs?” she asked a techie. For verily, her plan for the show called for presenters and winners to ascend a flight of stairs to center stage and accept their award.

“Oh,” said the techie, “your safety officer condemned them.”

“I see,” Lori said slowly. “When was this?”

“Oh, three days ago.”

Whereas I would have made some smartass suggestion such as informing Lori a little earlier than the afternoon of the show might be more helpful, or perhaps pitched someone down those nonexistent steps, Lori reacted with commendable equanimity and set about arranging how to do the show in their absence. Since she had a steep and narrow set of backstage steps to work with, she would have the presenters show up backstage a little before their moment in the spotlight, and have extra helpers along the steps to help them — as well as the winners — up to the stage.

This left another problem, however. In addition to the center stairs, the tech crew had failed to obtain a wheelchair ramp for one of the presenters, Fan Guest Roy Tackett, who was scheduled to present the Fan Writer award. Lori resigned herself to the fact that Roy would just have to announce the award from the floor in front of the stage. At least he, like the rest of the cast, would be picked up on the large video screens flanking the stage.

I left Lori and her equally frazzled crew and returned to the Fanzine Lounge, where I made myself insufferable for the rest of the day, concluding my every remark with the words “I have spoken!” Until Michelle started hitting me.

I hadn’t planned on being part of any formal event at this Worldcon, so I put together my best duds — a black Hawaiian shirt, black jeans, and silver bolo tie — and headed to the ballroom with plenty of time to spare. Lori had been given yet another scare when no one could find Clayburn Moore, the designer of the Hugo base, who was supposed to show off and describe his design in the middle of the ceremonies. I was standing by to fill in, but Clayburn showed up at close to the last minute and all was saved.

The nominees and presenters were being treated to a pre-show reception in a nearby function room, so when the door guard had to leave, I filled in.

I noticed a young guy hanging around in the corridor, and nodded to him, and he introduced himself and told me his story. He was a local college student who had just found out about the convention in that week’s newspaper, and decided to check it out. He figured that outside the Hugos would be a great place to spot all his favorite writers. The problem was, he didn’t know what any of them looked like.

With nothing better to do, I decided to extend to this young fellow the benefits of my Godlike omniscience.

“See that fellow there?” I said. “Bruce Sterling.”

“No way!” he said.

“Yep. And let’s see, there’s Lillian Stewart Carl, so that would be Lois McMaster Bujold walking in with her.”

“Wow,” he said.

And lo, I pointed out Fred Pohl, and Kim Stanley Robinson, and Kris Rusch, and many another star in the science fictional constellation, to my young companion’s growing awe and wonder.

He was really tripping out.

“I mean,” he said, “this afternoon I saw Larry Niven, in the restaurant, eating onion rings. And I said to myself, Wow — here’s the creator of *Ringworld* — and he’s *eating onion rings!*”



It was charming, to be sure. As the jaded SMOFs we have surely become, we can lose sight of how it was — or would have been — if, in the first flush of our affair with science fiction, we suddenly were presented with the chance to meet our idols in the flesh for the first time. So I explained to this star-struck youth how he could in fact approach his favorite writers: Saying a few words as you got them to autograph your book was one way, but heck, failing that, just walk up to them and say how much you enjoyed a particular story of theirs. I doubt they tire of that as a conversational gambit.

(In fact, I ran into our hero the following day, or rather heard his voice shouting "You are the man!" I turned around and found him excitedly telling his girlfriend how I had pointed out various pros to him, and then he told me that he had taken his advice, and gone right up to Larry Niven and spoken with him. And so another young life set on the road to ruin, but as God we must be resigned to this.)

Eventually we filed into the ballroom and took our positions backstage. Cathy Beckwith, who had a headset, would be feeding cues to me, who did not. I sat next to my homegirl, Nina Siros, who had taken on the job of counting the ballots, and was feeling pretty smug since her work was all done for the year.

The lights were dimmed, and I got my first cue, to intone into the wireless mike, "Ladies and gentlemen, will you please take your seats, and may I remind you that there is absolutely no smoking and no flash photography. Thank yew."

A dazzling display of pyrotechnics lit up the stage — decked out to represent a Wild West saloon with a flying saucer parked out front — following which the helmet-clad armadillo trotted onstage and remarked, in an eerily familiar voice, "If this is gonna turn into one o' them alien bars, I'm outta here."

The Master of Ceremonies, Neal Barrett, Jr. opened with some raucous remarks about science fiction and English literature, which brought howls from the audience and knowing smirks from committee members who detected odd similarities to Neal's Guest-of-Honor speech from Armadillocon...

And so to the awards. Sadly, although Takumi Shibano had pretty much recovered from a recent illness his doctors thought it was too soon for him to take such an exhausting journey, and so a stand-in presented the Seiun Awards (for best science fiction translated into Japanese). With Greg Bear not on hand to accept his prize, neither Lori nor any of the rest of us could think of someone near Greg to accept in his place; afterwards Amy Thomson noted correctly that we might at least have remembered she was in town... Meanwhile, in the absence of Campbell Award winner Michael A. Burstein, Stan Schmidt made an elaborate show of presenting the award to himself.

After the presentation of the Big Heart Award, and an allusion to the convoluted series of events which prevented the First Fandom Award from being presented in San Antonio, it was time for the Hugos proper. Teddy Harvia presented the Fan Art Hugo,

which went for the second straight year to Bill Rotsler. Once he saw the award base — pink granite carved in the shape of Texas — Teddy expressed some sincere-sounding regrets about having taken himself out of contention.

Roy wheeled up to the front of the hall to present the Fan Writer award, and did a splendid job. At least, as I told him afterward, "You were doing fine until you said Langford won it."

Bradley Denton announced the Best Fanzine winner — which, to its editors' mild astonishment, was a fourth win for *Mimosa*, squeaking past *Tangent* with a narrow last-ballot victory. Backstage, Brad shared how cool he thought it was once he realized that Voice of God booming throughout the auditorium earlier was... Hey...wait a minute...that's *Richard!*"

Tres cool, I'm sure.

The Semiprozine award went to *Locus* with no more than the expected number of boos and hisses from the crowd. Pat Cadigan and Ellen Datlow presented the Professional Editor award to Gardner Dozois, who admired the award base and declared, "Pennsylvania will be jealous!"

Presenter Mitchell Bentley took a look inside his envelope and announced, "Why this award isn't for Best Artist, it's for Best Hair!" — a sign for Bob Eggleton to make another of his patented goshwow leaps to the stage.



As it turned out the highlight of the show — and who would have guessed — was Don Maitz's absolutely hilarious introduction of the nominees for Best Dramatic Presentation. Don noted he was supposed to be getting a feed of the video display at the podium, but instead he seemed to be receiving an old Ed Sullivan episode. We returned from one clip to find him giggling, "Oh look, Eddie's taking to Topo Gigio now." On a grimmer note, he announced the winner



— in a landslide — was the *Babylon 5* episode, “Broken Dreams.”

At this point the only wrench was thrown into the smoothly functioning gearwork of the production by the enthusiastic and athletic J. Michael Straczynski, who did an end run around his handlers, ran around the entire backstage area, and came up the stairs on the opposite side of the stage, to Neal’s befuddlement but to the obvious delight of his fans in the crowd.

Michael Moorcock majestically ascended the stairs to present the short fiction awards, and explained why he’d moved to Texas: “Isn’t that where all the washed-up writers go?” The short story went to Connie Willis for “The Soul Selects Her Own Society,” and the novelette to “Bicycle Repairman” by Bruce Sterling, who as a local boy received even more profuse congratulations from the crew backstage.

Algis Budrys presented the Novella award to George R.R. Martin, who noted on picking up his first rocket in *quite* a few years that he could now assure Lady Parris that she was *not* a Hugo jinx for him. Then Algis gave Kim Stanley Robinson another Hugo for *Blue Mars* and we were fresh out of statuettes.

We then had a little bit that wasn’t on Lori’s script: Neal called her onstage to receive a bouquet of roses, and asked her if she had any words for us.

Knowing what had been going on all day, we can appreciate her response a little better:

“It’s almost over?”

Then it was time for God to roust himself from his long silence and ask for a big hand for our Master of Ceremonies, and in the interests of controlling the masses note that the Best Dramatic Award winner would be screened in the ballroom in about twenty minutes. Then, as God says, I’m outta there.

Meanwhile, where was Michelle while all this was going on? Well, she didn’t want to have to show up an hour early and wait around with nothing to do, so she was going to get dressed and meet me at the show — or afterwards, as it turned out. The trouble was, as she realized when she asked one of the tech crew where I was, that just as I hadn’t learned the names of many of the tech crew, most of them knew me only by my function.

She quickly determined exactly how she should phrase her request.

“Have you seen God?” she said. ☆

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From LoneStarCon, it's on to this year's worldcon, Bucconeer. The writer of the following article may not be a familiar name to many science fiction fans, but he was the creator of a comicbook adventure series that was made into 1997's top grossing movie (and a 1998 Hugo Award nominee for Dramatic Presentation). That said, we'll let Lowell complete this introduction: "The title of this article was inspired by a discussion between your editors and myself. While discussing my experience with the *Men In Black* film, Rich said that my good fortune was a 'real rags to riches story.' 'Maybe rags to off the rack,' I replied."

# FROM RAGS TO Off the Rack

by Lowell Cunningham



I owe it all to a chance comment. That's right — if not for one sentence from my friend Dennis Matheson, the top-grossing motion picture of 1997 would never have been made. Here's the story. (Several stories, actually.)

One early evening about eleven years ago, Dennis and I were passing through the Fort Sanders neighborhood of Knoxville, Tennessee. Suddenly, a large black car drove past. "Looks like a car the *Men In Black* would drive," Dennis said, referring to the ominous figures of UFO legend which, up to that very minute, had been completely unknown to me.

Since I had very little knowledge about the intricacies of UFO investigation, I prodded Dennis for more information. He told me the basics — that 'Men In Black' appeared after UFO sightings and covered up the occurrence. My first thought was, "This would make a great TV series." It was easy enough to mix the legends with my own ideas to come up with a viable series concept, but finding the approach which would get MIB before the masses was a problem.

I tried prose. I'm not very good at it (as you can probably tell as you read this). I couldn't get to Los Angeles, so I had to eliminate the television and motion picture media as options. I'd just about given up on my MIB idea when I got a hint from another friend. Greg Lane, a former co-worker of mine, had begun doing pencilling and inking for a small comics

company called Malibu. "Hey, if they buy my art, maybe they'll buy your writing," he said.

Once again, I knew a good idea when I heard it. I've read comics as long as I can remember and felt comfortable with the format. As quickly as I could, I sent sample pages to Malibu, and within a week I had a response. Tom Mason, the man who would become my editor, called with an offer to publish a comic book called *The Men In Black*.

In 1990 and 1991 we produced six issues of *The Men In Black*. There was also some other work for me with Malibu, but soon the company changed their publishing policy to concentrate on superheroes. After having little contact with Malibu for over a year I was about to give up on MIB — and my fledgling writing career — until I got another phone call. Guess what it was about...

The call from Malibu informing me of the possible movie deal came just moments before the first inquiries from reporters. I'd barely gotten the news when the E! cable television network rang up hoping to verify the details and find out how to spell my name. I wish *Variety* had done the same thing — Hollywood's top daily paper somehow got the idea that *The Men In Black* comic had been written by "Lawrence Cunningham."

There was some negotiation with Columbia Pictures and soon I had quite a contract to sign. I've lived in towns with phone books that were smaller



than this contract. Certain clauses even resembled works of science fiction, as when Columbia claimed the right to reproduce the upcoming movie in any format "currently existing or yet to be devised" throughout the universe. Fortunately the dotted lines I was expected to sign on had been conveniently marked with red 'x's.

Not long after signing the contract Columbia treated me to a weekend trip to Los Angeles so I could meet Walter Parkes, who would be producing the *MIB* film. For my trip into L.A. the in-flight movie was *Sneakers* (a Walter Parkes film, by the way). The chauffeur who drove me to my hotel was an actor who'd actually had a small part in *Sneakers*. (There was some confusion when I tried to explain to a friend that my chauffeur was the black FBI agent at the end of *Sneakers*. He looked at me incredulously. "Your chauffeur was James Earl Jones!?" Of course not, my chauffeur was the *other* black FBI agent.) And I was a little surprised to discover I was staying at the Peninsula. It's one of Los Angeles' best hotels, but where I live 'The Peninsula' is a counseling center.

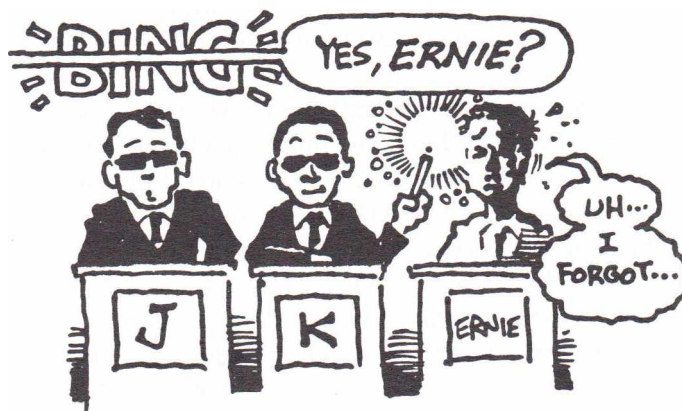
Things went well in LA, but I didn't realize that it would take five years for *MIB* to actually go before the cameras. During those years, it seemed as if every company involved with *MIB* changed hands, changed its name, or did both. Columbia was bought by Sony. Malibu was bought by Marvel. Walter Parkes and Laurie MacDonald's production company was subsumed when Parkes became president of Amblin Entertainment — and Amblin in turn became part of Dreamworks. If all that wasn't confusing enough I also discovered that Hollywood executives come and go more frequently than most people eat.

The four years it took to get *MIB* through pre-production were a bit disconcerting for me. Still living in Knoxville, I was thousands of miles away from where major choices and decisions were being made. I had to get information through phone calls, mail, and news reports concerning actors who'd been hired and directors who'd come and gone from the project. It was a relief when filming began in March 1996.

I decided to visit the Sony studios during the first few weeks of filming. Thanks to the kindness of director Barry Sonnenfeld, I was welcome to watch virtually every aspect of the actual production. One thing I learned quickly was that filmmaking is very tedious work. It seemed as if I spent most of my time

in LA watching people wait for other people to do things.

There are three advantages to being a guest on a movie lot. The first was having access to the craft services truck (which holds the catering supplies to feed the crew and extras). Another was getting to watch the "dailies" which show the various takes of each scene in their raw form. This is a rare chance to see footage before special effects, music, or sound effects have been added, and possibly the only chance to see the flubs and bloopers which wind up on the cutting room floor. Finally, by being on the lot you get to do some starwatching as various celebrities made their way through the studio lot. Besides the cast of *Men In Black* there were quite a few well known personalities who passed by at one time or another. John "Q" Delancie and John Kapelos (of *Forever Knight*) actually exchanged a few words with me, but speaking with those two was the exception. Generally I stayed out of the way of people like Kevin Spacey as they went about their work. It was interesting, though, to see *Jeopardy* host Alex Trebek drop by the *MIB* set — the day before he appeared on *The X-Files* as a "man in black."



My most embarrassing run in with a "big name" occurred as I was looking for a mail box on the Sony lot. Walking along the sidewalk I looked about until I heard a voice say "Excuse me." I looked down and there was Danny Devito, and I was a half-step away from stepping on him. "Pardon me." I said, to which Mr. Devito responded simply, "Good Morning," and headed on his way.

There were other things to see on the lot, too. One day I watched for quite some time while a poor actor apparently waited patiently on a gurney for his scene to be shot. Then Rick Baker walked over and activated a control and the man's face opened — it was the prop that Baker had designed to house the

film's little green man. On another day I watched a man I assumed to be a stage hand walk freely about the *MIB* HQ set as he introduced his son to the director and stars of the movie. I was starting to wonder how this person rated such treatment when he turned around — and I saw that he was Steven Spielberg.

The aforementioned *MIB* HQ set was where I got to experience an odd combination of tedium and excitement. Walter Parkes and Barry Sonnenfeld decided to put me into a shot as an extra. It sounded like fun... at first. I soon realized, however, that extras are the unsung heroes of filmmaking. Not only do extras have the most mundane roles to fill, they have to perform their actions over and over again whenever anyone shouts, "Back to one!" On top of that, extras spend the day in clothes which may or may not fit them and shoes which may or may not fit anyone.

Even though my appearance on the silver screen lasts less than 30 seconds in the final cut of the film, I had to spend about 12 hours as an extra. Except for the hours of tedium (and the aforementioned ill-fitting shoes) it was a fun, interesting experience. Most of the extras were aspiring actors just looking for the chance to impress the right person, though one or two seemed to be relating to reality on a different level than the rest of us.

My day as an extra began with make-up. The female extras got full facial make-up and hair styling while the males got only the hair styling. When it was my turn I hopped into a chair and waited for the make-up man to comb my hair into the same '60s style he'd given all the other guys. As he combed my hair all the way back he looked at me and said, "That's some forehead you've got there." He then proceeded to spray my hair so thoroughly that it would later take two shampoos for me to wash everything back to normal.

For the cameo, I just ambled up behind Will Smith and Tommy Lee Jones as they looked up at a computer monitor. I had my little walk-on without ever really meeting the two stars. I doubt they'd even noticed my presence — they even had their backs to me the entire time we were on screen together. I would have to wait almost a year for introductions, at the film's press junket. (Yes, this is a segue.)

In June of 1997 it was time for the news media to see the film and to interview the participants. Some reporters were guests of Sony while others had to pay their own way (the latter were known as POWs).

Everything took place in the remarkable Four Seasons Hotel, where the studio took over an entire floor just for interview space. Everyone seemed pleased with the movie and several interviewers even commented (with obvious surprise) that they'd seen Tommy Lee Jones smile. During the weekend of the junket, Saturday was set aside for the television media and Sunday for radio and print media. The more photogenic people were interviewed the first day and the rest of us the second. As it turned out, two of the interviewers were former college classmates of mine — we'd only had to travel across the continent for a reunion.

The main thing I remember about the junket is the people I got to meet. Of course Walter Parkes and Laurie MacDonald (the film's producers) were there; I'd met them on my first L.A. trip. Unexpectedly I got a chance to meet Spielberg and was quite gratified when he told me, "Without your work we'd have none of this." I even took the initiative to introduce myself to Tommy Lee Jones, congratulating him on his performance. "Yep. I did pretty much look like Kay up there," Jones replied.

Not surprisingly, the funniest at the junket was Will Smith. He'd just been a recipient at the MTV movie awards when I met him. Everyone was congratulating him for winning the "Best Kiss" award. He found it quite amusing that the news reports hadn't mentioned his partner Vivica Fox. "What'd they think, I kissed myself?" he asked, adding, "Let me tell you, Vivica locks on!"

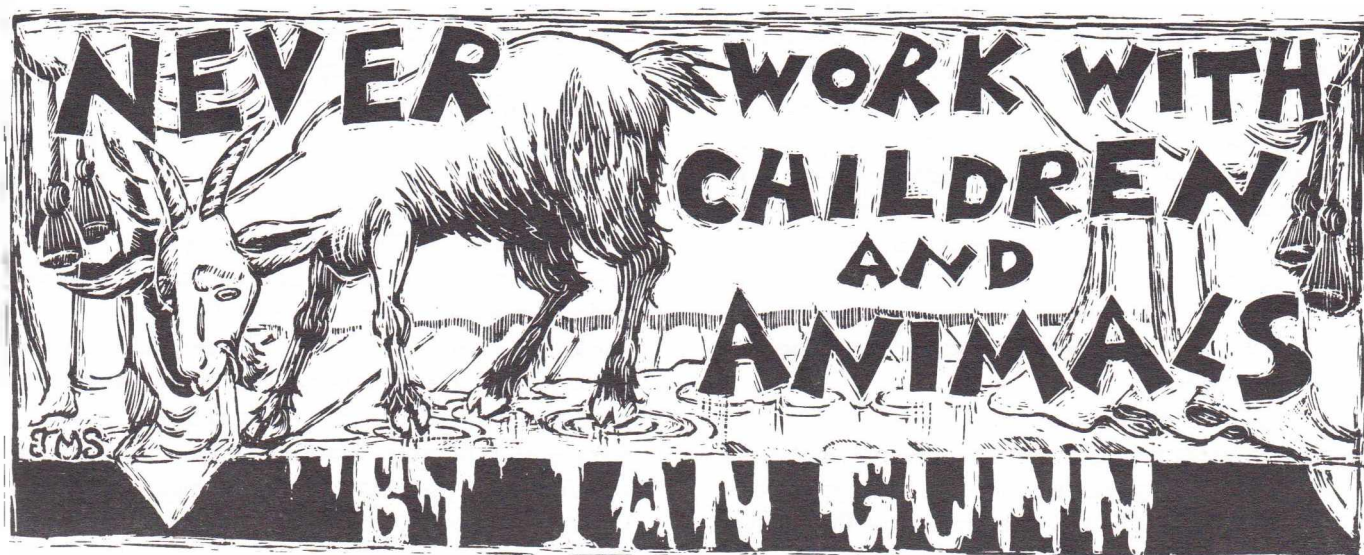
Just weeks after the junket came the big premiere. So many stars and executives wanted to attend the opening that the studio had to rent two theaters to fit everyone. It was on my way to the premier, in a studio rented limo, that I first met Sandy Carruthers who'd been the artist on the *Men In Black* comic.

Of course there was a party after the screening and big names were in attendance — too many big names to drop here. Two people stand out in my memory, however. I finally got a chance to meet Rip Torn. When I mentioned how out of place I felt coming to L.A. from Tennessee, Mr. Torn smiled. "I'm from Texas," he said. "You get used to it." The caper of the evening (at least for a long time SF movie fan such as myself) was getting to meet Mark Hamill and actually speak to him as a fellow creator.

And now you've gotten the high points of my experience with the *Men In Black* film. Ten years condensed to about two thousand words. That's all it takes to go from rags to off the rack. ♀



There are many connections between science fiction fandom and professional writers, but comparatively fewer between fandom and show business. One example of the latter is Con Pederson, who was active in Los Angeles fandom during the 1950s, and later worked on the special effects for the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey*. The previous article was an example of another type of fan/show business connection, but there are other varieties that don't involve Hollywood. The following article is a case in point; the writer is a notable fan artist who, before he became involved in science fiction fandom, discovered a different type of activity in some ways not unlike fandom.



I discovered fandom in the early 1980s. Or rather, I invented it, and then it found me.

Oh, I'd read about it in SF encyclopaedias and such, but I thought it was something that only had happened in America back in the '50s. I didn't know it existed in Australia. When I discovered that friends of mine were also interested in a particular aspect of science fiction, I formed the *Hitch-Hikers Guide to the Galaxy Fan Club* and people began joining — and bringing word about other clubs. It was all downhill from there.

But this isn't that story. This is about where I was *before* fandom. I was part of a youth Gang. A rather large Gang, The Scouts. (Not the Boy Scouts, because at the time Australian Scouts were already going co-ed.) It was the mid '70s, and I was a teenage Venture Scout when a friend took me backstage at the annual Scout's *Gang Show* — the hustle and bustle immediately overwhelmed me. I was hooked. The next year I joined the Publicity and Publications Department as a cartoonist and general roustabout. My first fanzine, *Scraggy's Scandal Sheet*, cranked out on mimeo during every performance and rehearsal, featured scratchy illos drawn direct to stencil by yours truly. I wasn't on stage, but I was part of the Gang, and I've got my Red Neckchief to prove it.

*The Gang Show* has been running for decades in various cities around the world — a motley collection

of corny sketches, songs, dances, and big production numbers. *Melbourne Gang Show* was, and is, one of the oldest and biggest. It usually had a cast and crew of 360 people ranging in age from eight to sixty. Only the set designer ever got paid — the rest were volunteer amateurs — so it was often said that putting on a show anywhere near this size would otherwise cost millions.

The only theatre in Melbourne big enough to hold us was the slightly rundown Palais in St. Kilda, a beachside suburb known for its Jewish cake shops and Luna Park (which was across the road — you could hear the rollercoaster screams during scene changes). Nowadays it's a popular resort with backpacker hotels and yuppie cafes, but in those days, prior to the legalisation — and clean-up — of brothels, it was a notorious hang-out for prostitutes, pimps, street kids, and drug dealers. After the matinee performances we were always told to go out in twos and threes to grab a meal. We had to wear the full Scout uniform because of a clause in our insurance, but there was always one dire warning: "For God's sake, make sure you've removed all your make-up!"

Having such a large show, the Production Team often got grandiose ideas for spectacular production numbers. Each year there was always one big number, just after the interval, that saluted some foreign country or other. The Production Team always had a

penchant for having live animals on stage. They started small with the odd cute sheepdog and such, but gradually they got more and more ambitious, oblivious to the inevitable result that something would Always Go Wrong.

The year they did the Norwegian Market Scene, one of the three goats got stage fright and released the contents of its bladder. There was a slight slope on the stage, so the audience couldn't help but giggle as a thin river of goat's piss slowly meandered towards the orchestra pit. The next two items, involving kids sitting around a storyteller and dancing trolls, featured some unique stage placements and innovative dance steps as cast members avoided getting their costumes wet. The following item, a sketch about Norse Gods, saw Thor and Odin with mops and buckets. The audience cheered.

The first night they did Zanzibar, the monkey panicked when the lights went out and ran up the nearest kid, who screamed and leapt offstage. The two-week run was almost over before the Publications typing pool realised that the carton stored in their office — the warmest place in the theatre — and picked up by someone from Props each night during interval, in fact contained an enormous boa constrictor. They refused to work in the same room after they found out.



The year the show featured an Israel number, they naturally included a full-grown donkey for the occasion. A stubborn beast, it frequently required half a dozen husky cast members to get it on stage, hold it still, and then load it back into its trailer. On one occasion, the pushing from behind must have got the

beast a tad excited and it developed a huge erection. The animal was — how can I put it? — hung like a donkey. One cast member, Bradley Miles, should have received a medal for nonchalantly leaning on an aroused donkey in order to obscure the view from an audience of several thousand Brownie Guides, parents, and grandmothers, while *still* managing to sing in key without cracking up.

The Hillbilly sketch was an old favourite. It started with Paw sitting in a tin bathtub on wheels ("Gawsh, Clem, yuh took me unawares!" "No, ah never, ah saw 'em hangin' on the clothesline, but ah never touched 'em!"). The guy who played Paw always complained that the bath was too cold — he had to leave stage before the end of a Prehistoric Rock dance number, tear off his caveman costume while running through the backstage corridors, grab his floppy hat and leap into the bath and be pushed on stage to start the skit. One night they pushed too hard and knocked a poor caveman into the orchestra pit. On the closing night of the run, the Props boys filled the tub with ice cubes. Paw — and the Director — were not amused.

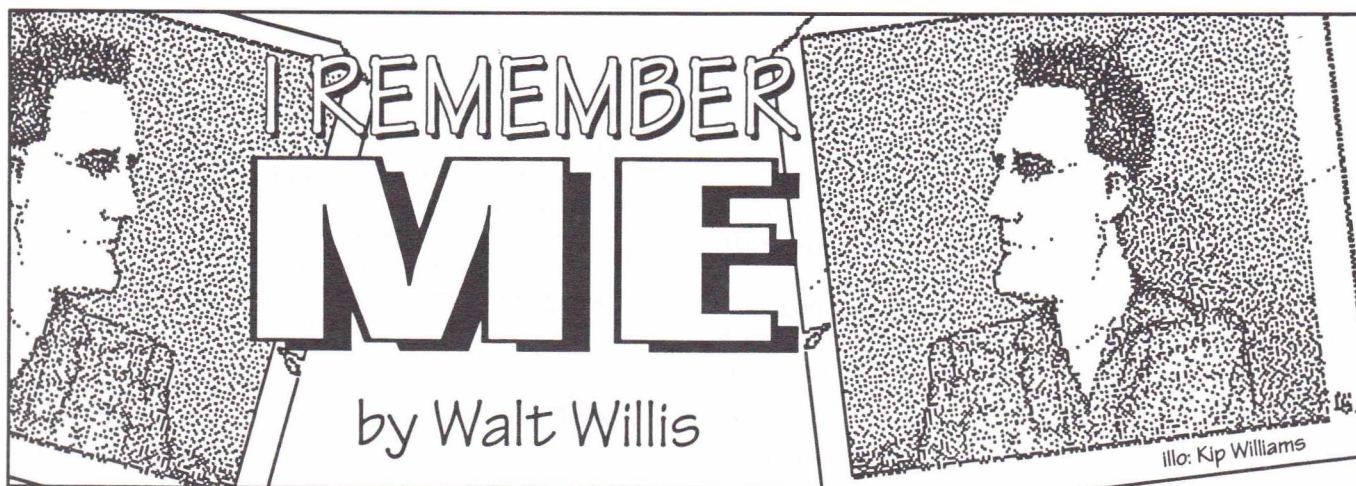
Other practical jokes occurred. The spiking of stage drinks... Hilarious signs in places only cast members could see... When one prima donna bawled out his dance partner for upstaging him he failed to take into account that her husband worked in Lighting. The ham had a green spotlight on his face in every finale that week.

There were technical difficulties, too. On one occasion, a new and enthusiastic fog machine made it impossible to see anything on stage. And then there was "I Like Walking in the Rain." A full cast first act finale with day-glow raincoats and umbrellas and actual, live rain on stage (with just a hint of washing powder so it would show under UV light). The rain was achieved by gravity — a water tank would be raised into the flies and rain would flow out of a series of shower heads. All very well until someone left a stage door open on a windy day and some ropes got tangled. The curtain went up on the Opening Number and the tank went with it. The dance team were rapidly drenched and their thin, cotton overalls suddenly became translucent.

But by then, I had seen cast members exchanging pirate copies of *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* radio episodes backstage, and it gave me the idea of inventing fandom. Soon, I had been found by a much safer, saner group of people. ☆



It's back to the early 1950s, now, with more from Walt Willis's correspondence files. This installment of "I Remember Me" centers around one of Sixth Fandom's luminaries, Lee Hoffman (also a notable fan artist), whose fanzine *Quandry* was perhaps the very center of fandom the first two years of that decade. We'll also learn of a fearless prediction by another of Sixth Fandom's notables, Shelby ("ShelVy") Vick, an example of how *not* to construct a science fiction story by Mal Ashworth, a correspondence exchange with *Galaxy* editor Horace Gold, and more...



### Horace Gold's *Galaxy*

When I was in the States in 1952, I made the acquaintance of Horace Gold, and I have here a long letter from him dated June 28, 1954.

...You didn't have to explain why *Galaxy* has the same kind but not the same degree of pleasure that sf used to have when it was truly scarce. I went through those days too, remember. To find a Wells or a Verne on a library shelf made everything inside me that wasn't nailed down give a giant lurch of discovery and excitement. Naturally I can't possibly ever again recapture that great joy and ecstatic gulping of the stories...

As for running letters, Isaac Asimov and a few others can tell you how clear the mandate was from our readers. They went through thousands and were astonished at the vehemence and the almost unbelievable preponderance of 'antis'. In any case, the formula is successful, so we're not rocking the boat. I don't know if I've mentioned this, but we have a clear lead in U.S. and Canada circulation — so far past *Astounding* that there seems no chance whatever of its catching us up. And of course, our five foreign editions. You blame us for not wanting to tamper?

I replied to this letter on 8th July:

Interested, and pleased to hear about your outstripping *Astounding* in circulation. I wish you would say about items of information like this whether I may quote you or not.

Your own rating of stories was fascinating. The reader normally assumes that the editor likes equally

well all the stories he prints, whereas it's obvious that he must print many of them as a *faute de mieux*, or for some other odd reason, like encouraging a new author or because he needs a story of exactly that length. I often wonder if some editors deliberately print bad stories to make the other ones look better (like the restaurant in the old vaudeville joke that employed midget waiters to make the steaks look bigger) or even to encourage potential authors. As Bob Shaw once wrote, "I always like reading *Planet Stories* because it gives me the pleasant feeling that I could make money writing science fiction."

[F.L. Wallace's] "*The Impossible Voyage Home*" [in the August issue] had a nice idea, but the human interest angle didn't come off with me for some reason. I found myself not giving a damn whether the old folks got to Earth, especially after they played that dirty trick on the sentry who trusted them. But then maybe I take too much to heart the interests of the subsidiary characters. It infuriates me in movies, for instance, when the hero tears a page out of a phone book or knocks over a fruit barrow in a chase. I know the gesticulating barrow owner is a stock figure, of course, but I still feel I'd like to see a movie, just one, where the hero stops and picks up some of the fruit he has knocked over, or replaces the page in the phone book.

### A Regretful Rejection

Now, here is a letter to Mal Ashworth in which I turn down regretfully a submission to *Hyphen*. This may be the last occasion in which a fanzine mentions the word 'mimeoscope'. Or indeed, the term 'wavy scramgravy'. I've lost all memory of the origin of

this expression. Are there even older fans who remember it? 'Mimeoscope' is easier; it was basically a box with a lamp inside and a glass lid on which you spread out a stencil which you could then read and check for typos. This story was attributed to Algis Budrys:

*There was this keen fanned, you see, who couldn't bear to give up his fmz to get married, and yet couldn't work happily on his fmz for the love of this girl. His two loves seemed to be incompatible. Then one day while he was driving his girl home from a convention they had a bad smash and she was taken to the hospital with grave internal injuries. Her whole stomach was damaged beyond repair. Ordinarily her life would have been despaired of, but just recently this famous scientist had invented a mechanical stomach and took this opportunity to try it out. So they fitted in the mechanical stomach. Being more efficient than the crude natural one there was plenty of room and since they wanted to be able to observe the working of this untried invention they let a glass plate into her abdomen and installed a light inside, working off the same little atomic power pack as her stomach. Everything seemed to be OK so after she regained consciousness they let her boy friend in. He dashed in anxiously, beanie whirring, and they explain to him exactly what had happened. They draw the blanket aside and show him the illumanated frontage. His face is suddenly suffused with joy and relief. "Darling!" he cries, all his problems now at an end, "Darling, will you be my mimeoscope?"*

Miss Monroe has asked me to apologise for the delay in answering your letter to the FORT MUDGE STEAM CALLIOPE COMPANY but she has been getting rid of a pitcher who didn't go often enough to the well.

Yours for wavier scamgravy,

### The Short Unhappy Life of *Escape*

In July 1954 I got an eight-page letter from Fred Woroch of Toronto announcing the impending publication of *Escape*, a professionally printed fanzine. It was to be produced on the equipment he was in charge of, at no cost except that of the paper and plates used. This seemed to me a wonderful opportunity to pass on some of the material I had been holding for *Slant*, so I sent it all to him, including the first part of Forry Ackerman's autobiography. This was all about his childhood, first prozines, etc., and while interesting enough would have been a chore to set up in type. What I had been really hoping for was Forry's rebuttal to Laney's *Ah, Sweet Idiocy*.

Of course I got no response at all, and there was never any sign of *Escape*. Nor was there ever any

complaint from Forry, a lack of reaction for which I am eternally grateful.

### Lee Hoffman and Her Horse

Everyone knows that Lee Hoffman left fandom for a horse, but few fans have been introduced to the horse in question, as I was in this letter, undated but followed by another dated May 11th, 1953...

Dear Walt,

Do you remember the night we sat on the front steps and I told you that of all the really *big* things I wanted, like attending the Nolacon, going to college, etc., I'd gotten all but one?

I've gotten my horse.

I will tell you the whole wonderful story as soon as I have gotten over it enough to be coherent.

\* \* \*

Dear Walt,

Gosh, I didn't know you were sick. I supposed maybe you were gafiating like me. For a long while, there I was a negative fan. I hated the sight of mail except for letters from a few special people. I let them lie around unopened. I actively avoided any sign of fan activity. I rode my hoss, painted pictures furiously with my oil paints, drew pics with ink, took art lessons with watercolors, read non-stf books, and saw 3-dimensional movies. But I avoided the taint of a *Galaxy* or *Startling*. I felt anti-fan.

Then one day a *confusion* came in which ShelVy predicted that I would return to fandom this summer with a bang. The next thing I knew, a *Quandry* was in the works, laden with material by Speer, Tucker, Silverberg, and others, and featuring a letter from Bloch. A stencil was in the mails to ShelVy for *confusion*, and a few measly bucks were deposited in my account toward a trip to the Philcon. I am happy old self, once again a fan.

I will tell you about the horse. He is a gelding. He's ten years old, and bay. He was once five-gaited but has been misused until he is thoroughly confused, and off his gaits to the extent that he paces instead of trotting. But otherwise he is a dream of a horse. He's sixteen hands, and has beautiful conformation. When one rides him, he holds his head and tail up and steps along like a really high-class animal. He looks expensive, well-bred and high-spirited, but he is as gentle as a dog, and almost as friendly. And he's a dream to handle. He doesn't shy at anything. Cars to him are a common sort of thing, dogs just another nuisance to be ignored. Nothing flusters him except other horses. They get him excited, because he is alone in the field all the time and misses the companionship or his own kind.

I would say that when he was on his gaits he would have sold for around \$500. I got him for \$125. I think he was a gift of the gods. ✧



The decade of the 1950s was arguably fandom's Golden Age, especially for British and Irish fandom; Walt Willis was just one of the major fan talents on the loose then. Another was Ron Bennett, who returns to our pages with another new fanzine article about an old fanzine. In his previous article, Ron exPLOYned the origins of his 1950s fanzine, *PLOY*. This time we learn the Secret Origins and history of his focal point 1960s newszine, *Skyrack*.

# When the SKY was the LIMIT

by Ron Bennett

Belgian Big Name Fan, Jan Jansen, first came up with the idea that the fandom of the day needed a newszine and in the mid-fifties turned out the qualitative but short-lived *Contact*.

A year or two later, Terry Carr and Ron Ellik came out with their superb and award-winning *Fanac* but as far as British fandom was concerned *Fanac* didn't quite fill a need, so in 1959 I decided to try putting out a small newszine which would cater primarily for the British fan.

Initially, the name was a problem. I had hoped, in homage to the *Bloomington Newsletter*, to have the name of the Yorkshire town in which I lived in the title, but 'The Harrogate Newsletter' didn't sound quite right. Even if the town was the birthplace of Michael Rennie!

As well as being split into the famous three Ridings, the county of Yorkshire, where I've spent most of my life, is divided into various administrative districts, Harrogate being in the Claro Division. 'The Claro Newsletter' was given brief consideration, but was soon discarded.

But wait! Fifteen miles south of Harrogate is the reasonably sized city of Leeds, famous for the growth of the wool trade, for ready-made clothing, for Joseph Priestley's experiments with oxygen and, of course (he adds mischievously), the world's first science-fiction convention.

Leeds is in the administrative district of Skyrack.

As a title, *The Skyrack Newsletter* had more of a ring to it. It neatly echoed *Fanac* and there was a nice SF *cachet* about the first syllable, Sky.

Except, of course, that such an interpretation of

the name is a complete misnomer.

Way back in the days of the Anglo-Saxons... Vince will remember... disputes between various villages were sorted out at regular meetings of village elders. They'd vote by holding up their swords or staffs, and a poll of these weapons would be taken. The meetings became known as 'Wappontakes', and so did the areas they covered. Leeds was in the Wappontake of Skyrack, for it was at the Skyr-Ack, the Shire Oak, that the meeting took place.

The old tree, then but a gnarled stump — you know the feeling, too, eh? — was finally pulled down in the early forties when it was deemed to be a threat to traffic. Presumably, it had the tendency to leap out at passing trolley cars. There's now only a plaque in the wall and two neighboring public houses, The Original Oak and The Skyrack. And I know that you can't wait to learn that they're just up the road from the Headingley cricket ground where England plays its test matches.

The first issue of *The Skyrack Newsletter*, appeared in April 1959. Its four mimeoed, quarto sides carried a short report of the British EasterCon in Birmingham. It cost six pre-decimal pence (two and a half decimal) and a six issue subscription could be obtained for half-a-crown (2/6d) or 35 cents from my Stateside rep, the now greatly-missed Bob Pavlat of Hyattsville, Maryland. I copied *Fanac*'s practice of a masthead cartoon, this initial offering being a John Owen captioned Rotsler illo.

My own favorite from *Skyrack*'s lengthy run of cartoons was one by Eddie Jones which was based on the famous Charles Addams picture of the pair of

unicorns watching Noah's ark sailing away without them. Eddie's version showed a couple of Atom's typical BEMs watching Arthur leave on his 1964 TAFF trip to PacifiCon II in Oakland.

My intention was to maintain a monthly roll-over schedule, that is to say an issue would appear a month after the previous issue unless some newsworthy item came to hand which would really necessitate an issue prior to that monthly deadline. In which case the following issue would be scheduled for a month after that 'interim' issue. This system worked well (for me, anyway) and was adhered to until the newsletter's declining years.

For the second issue (1st May 1959), Eddie Jones produced a masthead 'SKYRACK' lettering which I kept throughout the newsletter's life and then slid it into commercial mundania by adopting it for my later book, magazine, and comic selling business.

Issue number 6 was the first of the pre-monthlies, appearing a fortnight after number 5 when I was working temporarily in London, meeting different fans nightly and of course 'news' was flooding in from every quarter. Shortly after this there appeared a couple of scurrilous sheets called *Skyhack* and *Skyreck*, hilarious parodies which I suspect were the brain children of Archie Mercer and George Locke, both leading fans and notable humorists of the day. George was at this time appearing regularly in *Amazing* and *Fantastic* under the pseudonym Gordon Walters.

Despite thus having been overshadowed in the humor stakes by these scandalous sheets, I continued to produce the Real McCoy and number 7 warned, naturally enough, "Beware of Imitations."

This issue also featured a masthead cartoon by dear ol' Arthur Thomson, the first of many fine cartoons Atom drew, several, for special occasions, straight on to stencil.

So, over the next six years *Skyrack* went on its merry way, appearing on its monthly roll-over schedule, recording British conventions, fan meetings like the London Symposium and, of course, informal meetings and parties. Fanzines were reviewed and changes of address noted. There were fan feuds, too, of course, but at all times I tried to keep the reportage light and entertaining. Mostly, of course, I didn't have to try; the fans who sent in news accounts and snippets of information were well ahead of me there.

Typical headlines were: 'Berry Fund Successful', 'PittCon Push by Pondfund Planners' (Terrible! Definitely my favorite!), 'London Circle Disrupts',

'Ford by a Landslide', 'Bentcliffe for Pittsburgh', 'Amis for LXIcon', 'Ella Parker for Seacon', 'Scithers in Town', 'TAFF Doubles Voting Fee', 'Brian for Yugoslavia', 'Welcome Back Wally', 'Nova Bows Out', 'Tom All the Way', 'Atom Goes TAFF', 'Death of Don Ford', 'Oblique House Gets Mundane Slant' and 'LonCon Programme Takes Shape'.

Of course, it was fun playing news editor and trying to scoop the rest of fandom with some pieces of news, primarily Hugo winners and TAFF results.

From Stateside WorldCons Bob Pavlat used to send me Western Union cablegrams made up of the names of the Hugo winners, so that, for example, I was able to have ready the last three pages of an issue, printed, addressed and stamped and with the front page awaiting only Bob's cable from the 1960 Pitt-Con which read "HEINLEIN KEYES SERLING FSF ESMH CRY 380 STANDOV HEINLEIN." From this I was able to concoct a page-long item announcing the Hugo winners that year as being Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*, Daniel Keyes' "Flowers for Algernon", Serling's *The Twilight Zone*, *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, Ed Emshwiller for his artwork, and the Seattle fanzine *Cry of the Nameless*. Heinlein received a standing ovation and there were 380 attendees, nowadays the number of fans who attend a room party. The issue was in the mails within hours and, sent airmail to the States, was awaiting PittCon attendees when they returned home.

I was also grateful to various TAFF officers who helped me in similar circumstances. The British officer would let me know the European count at the deadline and the American officer would send me a similar cable. I'd add together the two sets of figures and again an issue awaiting only the front page would be in the mails as soon as possible after the voting deadline. On a couple of occasions, Atom conjured up mastheads to cover any contingency, so that the issue which finally appeared would have a personalized and highly pertinent cartoon.

Of course, it wouldn't have been me if I'd not taken advantage of the possibilities offered by this situation. The 1962 TAFF race was a straight fight between Ethel Lindsay and Eddie Jones. Atom had provided me with cartoons for either outcome. When the Western Union cablegram rolled in and the combined US and European figures showed Ethel to be the victor, I did what any red-blooded fan editor would have done. I ran off a special one-copy front page especially for the lady. Yes, a special front page

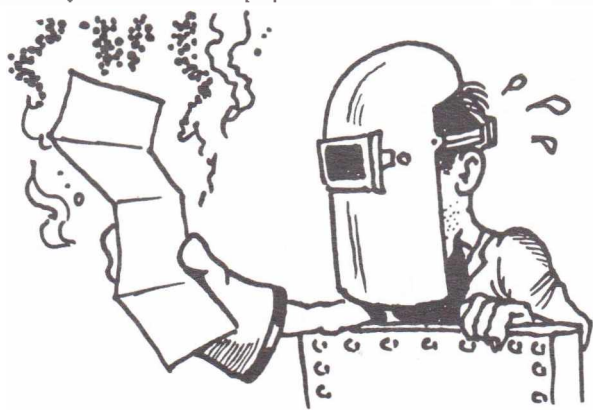


announcing that Eddie had been elected TAFF delegate that year. Just for Ethel.

Naturally, the correct version was sent along by the following mail. Ethel and Eddie were on the phone to each other immediately they'd received their copies, each happily and sincerely congratulating the other. Of course Ethel was not left to suffer for very long. Dozens of fans phoned her the same morning offering their congratulations. One of the first had been her close friend, Ella Parker. "Oh!" Ella said. "One of Bennett's jokes."

She had had reason to know. In February 1961 Ella had told me in confidence that she intended attending the Seattle WorldCon later that year. She'd been saving for the trip and with a loan from her brother Fred could just about manage the trip. On no account, Ethel told me, should I breath a word of her intentions nor mention her plans in *Skyrack*. It should be explained that at that time Ella was undoubtedly British fandom's focal point, not only for her bulky and qualitative fanzine, *Orion*. Ella invariably had out of town fans lodging at her apartment (I spent several school vacations with her and Fred) and Friday evening was open house. The majority of fans who took advantage of Ella's continuous hospitality were on the whole a pretty young bunch. Ella was of the opinion — and I for one didn't disagree — that if it became known that she intended going to Seattle someone was certain to set up a fund to ensure that she visited Seattle and had a fine time there. An Ella for SeaCon Fund was the last thing Ella wanted.

So, sworn to secrecy, *Skyrack* #29 duly made no mention of Ella's intentions. Except, of course, for the copy Ella received. Its headline read "Ella Parker for SeaCon." Ella missed the dateline on her special copy, 29th February 1961 and dashed off a lengthy letter to me which she sent express special delivery and which must have burnt the mailman's fingers. It certainly scorched the paper on which it was written.



After Ella had mailed the letter, she phoned Ethel Lindsay who, naturally enough had no idea about what Ella was complaining. After all, *her* copy's headline read "AMIS FOR LXICON." Ella sent me a cable which read simply, "BENNETT YOU BAS-TARD." She didn't hold the gag against me and referred to me in similar vein, albeit affectionately, for the remainder of our association.

After mid-1965, the newsletter lost its impetus a little, perhaps because I was struggling with a new mortgage, a new son, teaching evening classes, taking a crack at pro-writing and attempting to run a mail-order second hand book and magazine business, all in addition, of course, to teaching at a local primary school where out-of-school hours were devoted to coaching a successful schoolboy soccer team. *Skyrack* had become a low priority item. And something of a chore. Publication slipped to a bi-monthly and even a quarterly schedule and even with three(!) issues in April 1966, the writing was on the wall. For example, *Skyrack* #93 appeared in November 1966 and #94, with a helpful, "Oh, come on now — you remember *Skyrack*," didn't show up until August 1967 four weeks before I moved to take up a post in Singapore.

The following issue therefore holds the undisputed distinguished record of being the only fan publication to appear from the island republic. So far, anyway.

There was one more issue to come, a meager offering comprising mostly advertisements, but produced in July 1971 to cover the deaths of John W. Campbell, Jr. and August Derleth. A sad ending to the run.

I don't think that the newsletter very often bubbled to the surface of my thoughts during the next couple of decades until fan historians like Rob Hansen and Richard Lynch began to ask questions about certain documented events. Heavens! Had I had even the slightest intimation that *Skyrack* was to be viewed as some sort of record of the times, I think that I'd have taken more care with that documentation. There always was a tendency to assume that the reader was *au fait* with the background of reported events. I'm certain that today's newszines fall into the same trap, and I don't really think that it could be otherwise.

For myself, I'm fortunate in possessing a personal memory book of the period, full of incidents and events worth savoring and overflowing with the names of hundreds of people who influenced my outlook and who enriched my life. ☆

Another thing that gave 1950s British and Irish fandom its legendry were its fan dwellings, which became almost as famous as the fans who lived in them. Ella Parker, mentioned in the previous article, lived in a London apartment that became known (for obscure reasons) as 'The Penitentiary'. Other famous dwellings of the era were Walt Willis's home, 'Oblique House', and the apartment shared by Ken Bulmer and Vincent Clarke, 'The Epicentre'. The most famous fan dwelling of all time, however, was neither in the United Kingdom nor the decade of the 1950s. It existed for only a short time in the early 1940s, in the wilds of central Michigan. Here's more about...



It all happened in the 1940s. In the spring of 1943, perhaps in February, Neil de Jack of Chicago was about to report for military service. I had met Neil when I visited Frank Robinson in Chicago, so when Neil wanted to sell his science fiction collection before he was drafted, I bought it. By arrangement Neil came to Jackson, Michigan, where I was living, on a Friday evening, spent the night on our sofa, and the following day the two of us went by bus the forty-odd miles to Battle Creek for a two-day session with the Galactic Roamers of that city.

The Galactic Roamers was a fan organization, the centerpiece of which was Dr. Edward Elmer Smith. "Doc" Smith was an industrial chemist at Dawn Donut in Jackson, Michigan, until the war came along, at which time he took a position with the government at the LaPorte, Indiana, ordnance plant where he worked with explosives. He still came back to Michigan on occasion, for example for Michicon II in the fall of 1942, which was my first science fiction convention. He also came up for an occasional Roamers meeting. The club was split between Jackson and Battle Creek, and the more dedicated fans were in the latter: 'fracas river' Walt Liebscher termed it. The location of the meetings alternated between the two cities, usually in the home of some member.

It was this group, which was centered on the household of Al and Abby Lou Ashley, that Neil and I went to visit. Joining the party that weekend at the

Ashley apartment was Jack Wiedenbeck, a promising fan artist. We had a ball, talking — 'fan gabbing' — and discussing books we had read or comparing notes on writers. I had, for example, chased down in *Book Review Digest* the real name of Anthony Boucher, a.k.a. H.H. Holmes, which was William Anthony Parker White.

We all reveled in fan talk and someone came up with the idea, "Hey, wouldn't it be great if we could get fans together and have our own apartment house." A.E. Van Vogt's *Slan* had been published a year or so earlier as a serial in *Astounding* and someone had almost immediately asked, "Do you suppose fans are Slans?" (Meaning, were we a mutation from the mundane variety of humans? No one took the idea seriously, of course.) But our idea of closer association was promptly named Slan Center.

Our planning included a fanzine room where all occupants would share access to a mimeo, and apartments with northern light for the artists (Jack W.'s idea). What was behind this was the feeling of closeness, of being able to be open in our ideas, that we as fans could express most easily in each other's company. Everyone had experienced the raised eyebrows of mundanes when you tried to discuss science fictional ideas with them. Slan Center would make it possible to be openly fannish any time we were away from work. Before that afternoon at the Ashley's apartment was over, we were all excited about our



brainstorm. Not long afterwards, in an issue of his FAPazine, *En Garde*, Al Ashley wrote up the plan for discussion.

Fans were then overwhelmingly lower middle-class or working class. Al Ashley drove a taxi; Abby Lou had for a time been a cashier in a meat market. E. E. Evans was part of lower management in a shop in Battle Creek, and among other things did time and motion studies. Jack Wiedenbeck worked at the Coca Cola bottling company, and I worked making depth charge bombs for the U.S. Navy. It is some indication of the state of society there at the end of the Great Depression that fans, whose IQs ran from high to very high, were not in the professions. Part of the reason was the difficulty in getting tertiary education. It simply was not easily available. Ashley, who was only a high school graduate, took a standard achievement test for college graduates and scored at, as I recall, the 97th percentile.

In June 1943, my number came up, and I reported to my draft board. It was my good fortune to be stationed in California, where I could visit the Los Angeles fan gang any time I could get a weekend pass, which was about one Saturday out of three. Twice before going overseas I got two week leaves and on both occasions went back to Michigan to spend as much time as possible with the Battle Creek fans. About the time I was drafted the Ashleys had bought an old house in Battle Creek, and Walt Liebscher, a fan from Joliet, Illinois, who had taken a job with Civil Service at Fort Custer, just outside of Battle Creek, moved in with them. E.E. Smith soon joined them, as did Jack Wiedenbeck. There was also a friend of Abby's, Thelma Morgan, a dark, quiet woman, who loved to read and enjoyed fans, without being one herself.

Slan Center had become Slan Shack and fans from far and wide came by to enjoy the Ashley's hospitality. Frequent visitors were Bob Tucker and his girl friend, Mary Beth Wheeler, and an older fan from Cincinnati, Charles Tanner. Other guests included Oliver Saari of Flint, Michigan, a mechanical engineer working for GM, and the young office boy at Ziff Davis, Frankie Robinson. I was immensely unhappy that I couldn't share in this. In the fall of 1944, when I came home on my last leave before shipping overseas, we all went to Buffalo to visit another fan, Ken Kruger, who hadn't mentioned to his mother that he had invited us. We were joined there by Don

Wollheim and Elsie Balter (later Mrs. Wollheim), Damon Knight, and Larry Shaw. Ollie Saari was there, as was Frank Robinson, all the way from Chicago. We promptly called it 'BuffaloCon', and I do believe it was over Labor Day. I promptly fell head over heels in love with Ken's sister, Gladys. Ah, sweet idiocy of youth.

The Los Angeles gang, for the eight or nine months that I could see them, went a long way in making up for the much-missed Roamers. In L.A. at this time were Fran Laney, with whom I had corresponded and whose fanzine, *The Acolyte*, I had subscribed to, Sam Russell and Phil Bronson, both of whom had attended Michicon II in 1942, and of course 4SJ and Morojo, whose *Voice of the Imagination* I had also received. In addition, I met and became good friends with James Kepner and Mel Brown. Jim Kepner later became archivist of the Gay and Lesbian Archives in L.A., but in those days he was just coming to terms with his homosexuality and was looking for an anchor in his life. Later, he became a Marxist and even later, a spokesman for the gay community. One of the things about fandom in those days was that it was ready to accept the occasional gay fan without making a big deal of it. On the other hand, one of the things I find, in retrospect, to criticize about that early fandom was that there was too much Bohemianism, too much faddishness — last week it was Esperanto, this week it is Korzybski and General Semantics, and next week it will be Sartre and Existentialism.



Fran Laney was a good friend while I was there, and showed no signs as yet of the homophobia that is said to have later characterized his behavior. He was from the northwest, up near Lewiston, Idaho (I believe), and his dad was a college professor (a geologist). Fran and I talked on one occasion about the concept of a Slan Center and he said, "Only if part of the complex is a bar, where people from off the street can wander in. Fans are so introverted they need non-fans around." Morajo contributed the idea of a limited corporation for Slan Center, with condos.

Laney was right, of course. We all seem, in retrospect, to have been a bunch of misfits looking for a niche in society.

Laney was atypical of those fans. Slim, a born dancer, extroverted and very happy with booze, babes and tobacco, he loved jazz and had a large collection of records. He had a job working in plastics and saw it as having a big future. Fans of that time tended to be either so introverted they were tongue-tied in the presence of girls, or were puritanical. Not Laney, but on the other hand he never bragged about his conquests. I remember Mel Brown publishing a fanzine in which he said that "Laney came to town a few weeks ago and is busy chasing everything in skirts." Laney read it over Mel's shoulder as he was typing it

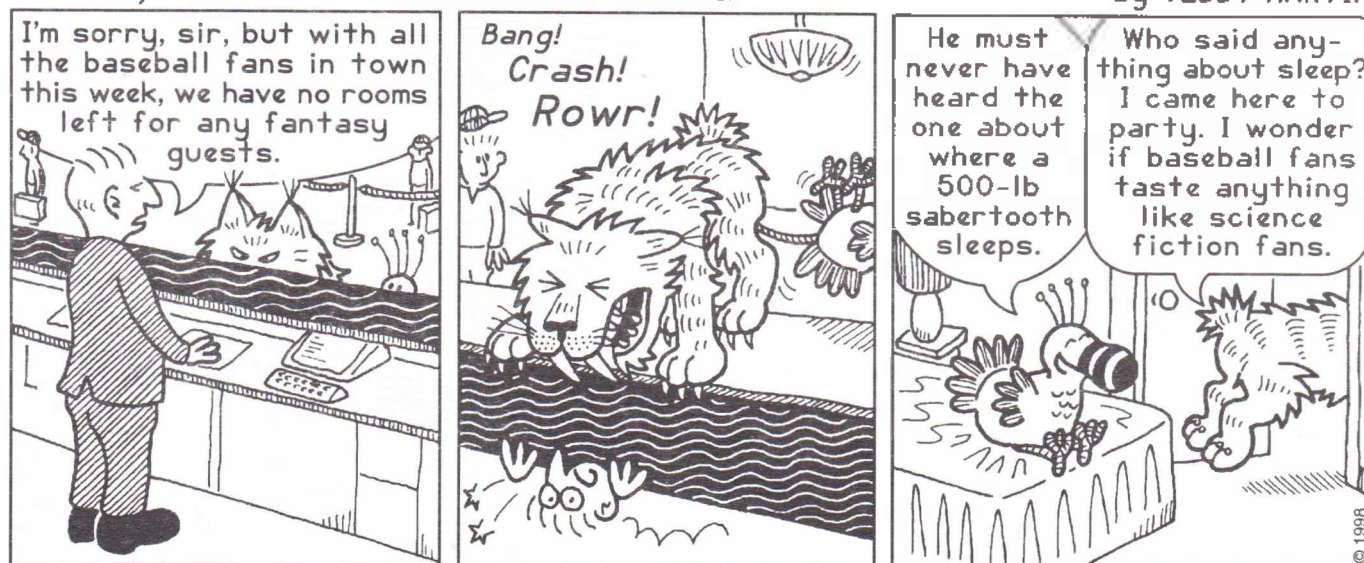
and complained that he (Laney) and his wife were on the verge of a divorce — such a statement could end up in court and cost him custody of his two daughters. Upon hearing that, Brown added to his manuscript: "But since the women can run faster with their pants up than Laney can with his down, he has had no luck."

Of the people who made up the Slan Shack, Al and E.E. Evans are gone; Jack Wiedenbeck disappeared in L.A. after the war, and Mary Beth told me once that she was sure he had gone blind, a terrible fate for an artist. Mary Beth is now gone, too, and so is Walt Liebscher. I have been trying in vain for years to locate Abby Lou. Ollie Saari retired, I believe, from Minneapolis Honeywell. Frank Robinson, Tucker, and I are about all that remains of that old group, and none of us were permanent residents of the Shack.

As for me, I stayed on in the military after the war, in Europe. I had found my niche in society. This spring I will turn 75, having soldiered twenty years and taught history for thirty-one. About twenty-five years ago I got back in science fiction fandom, having gafiated for nearly twenty years, a record of sorts I suppose. ✧

## CHAT, the 4th Fannish Ghod

By TEDDY HARVIA





The previous article gave us a brief glimpse of some of the things fans in the 1940s did in the 'real' world. Truth be told, there are probably as many interesting stories about things that fans do in their everyday lives outside of fandom as there are stories of fandom itself, the following article being a good example. The writer has been active in fandom almost as long as we have (his fanzine collection has even been perused by writer Sharyn McCrumb to learn about fandom for her novel *Bimbos of the Death Sun*, but that's another story). As we'll see, however, some of his 'real' world adventures are a bit more exciting than most fan activities.



It was only my third night on duty at the Washington County, Virginia, Fire/Rescue Dept. and I and the five other firefighters present were sitting in the TV room watching a Jackie Chan movie that one of them had rented. I, as the most junior firefighter present that night, had spent the first few hours of my shift washing the oldest and dirtiest of our three fire trucks, a 1975 International that I suspected had not previously been washed since disco was popular — the *first* time. There's a lot to wash on a fire truck and I was ready to goof off for a little while. As I flopped down on a couch the old hands were enjoying one of their favorite indoor sports: predicting the future.

"Well Marty," drawled our Assistant Chief, Kyle, "we gonna burn one down tonight or not?" I was starting to get used to the guys referring to answering a fire alarm as 'burning one down'.

"I think we will," answered Marty. I'd been told that he was the best in the department at predicting fires. "I'd say we'll get it about 12:30 this morning." Marty likes to make his predictions fairly specific. From reading the stack of old fire reports in the office I knew that we'd not had anything bigger than a dumpster fire in six or seven weeks and I figured the odds were that I'd be spending another quiet evening watching TV there at the station. Jackie Chan was smacking some generic bad guy around and I was starting to think about ordering out for pizza when the

distinctive electronic tones of our alarm began whooping in the garage bay.

*"Attention Washington County Fire/Rescue, 10-70 Structure; repeat, 10-70 Structure fire at 11857 Industrial Park Road."*

The TV had been clicked off at the first tone and we all sat still while the announcement repeated. No one leaps to action when the alarm sounds like they do in the movies. We all listened carefully to the full announcement and memorized the address. Then we all quickly got up and went out to the garage bay to get ready. We each had a specific job to do. First, everyone gets into their turnout gear. That's the boots, heavy coat, pants and helmet that firefighters wear at a fire scene. Kyle then went to the office to call Central Dispatch to ask for a second alert. On any structure fire we roll out a maximum response and with only six firefighters present our first need was for more manpower. My job was to raise the doors. Later we'd get garage door openers that we operated from the trucks, but that night we still had to do it by hand. I'd just gotten the third one up when the alarm sounded again for our second alert.

*"Attention all members Washington County Fire Rescue, your department is requesting additional manpower at the station."*

Marty and Kyle climbed into the cab of Engine 101, our newest and biggest pumper. Laura, Jason and I jumped into Medic 107, one of our two ambu-

lances. Laura is an EMT-I, a Shock Trauma technician (the next step above EMT-Basic), Jason is a Paramedic, while I was still in the first few weeks of my EMT class. As far as medical help on this trip was concerned, I was just an extra pair of hands, but sometimes that's what you need.

*"Fire/Rescue 101 to dispatch. Engine 101 and Medic 107 are 10-8."*

The radio '10-code' was still very new to me, but I knew that '10-8' meant 'in service', or that we were leaving the station in route to the location of the fire. My first big fire.

When you're the newest member of an ambulance crew you don't get to drive, or talk on the radio, or even run the siren. You *particularly* don't get to run the siren. You get to sit in back in what's called the "Captain's chair" (although I can't imagine why — we have a Captain on our department and he never sits there) and hang on for dear life. On our ambulance this does give you a pretty good view forward and you get to see that most of the other drivers on the road in front of you haven't got the slightest idea of what to do when an ambulance comes up behind them with lights and sirens going. What the law of Virginia says they *should* do is pull over to the right side of the road and stop until we pass by, and in fact about one driver in twenty actually does exactly that, bless their hearts. Most simply slow down — possibly to give themselves more time to think about their next move. Some then speed up again and some actually try to outrun us. Some pull over, let us pass, then whip out right behind us, tailgating us for miles as though they were going to go help out at the fire too. Cops love it when they catch some idiot doing that. You want to make a Virginia State Trooper happy? Just tailgate a fire truck or an ambulance on its way to a fire when he's around. They can charge you with enough violations to make you do time.

Smoke from the fire was visible about six miles away and as we pulled into the drive we could see flames starting to break through the roof. That's bad. Usually when we see that on arrival, we can't save much of anything. Even worse was that we saw immediately that this wasn't just a structure fire, it was a double wide trailer fire. *Much* worse. The difference between a wooden frame house (a structure) fire and a trailer fire is about like the difference between burning a piece of heavy cardboard and a piece of notebook paper. The paper will be cold ashes long before the cardboard is halfway burned.

*"Fire/Rescue 101 to central; we're on-scene. This is a double wide trailer fire, well involved, with multiple exposures. Flames are through the roof. Request a third alarm for backup, and please alert Goodson-Kinderhook to stand by with their tanker."*

Notifying Central Dispatch of what we saw on arrival does a couple of things for us. Dispatch records all radio traffic and notes the time of every transmission and so regular reports to dispatch gives us a legal record of the progress of the fire incident. That comes in handy when it's time to write the reports. Also, every other firefighter in the county listens in to these radio calls so now they all knew what we were seeing and that we had a serious fire on our hands. There are ten volunteer fire departments in Washington County, Virginia, and each one of us sometimes find ourselves called to a fire that's too big or too complicated to handle by ourselves. Thus, we have a formal mutual aid agreement with those closest to us. Goodson-Kinderhook VFD is the one next to us, and they have a tanker. That's a fire truck whose only mission is to load, transport, and discharge water. That job is absolutely vital when the fire is out in areas of the county where there are no fire hydrants. In our case, that's a bit less than half of the county. Our fire was out in a remote area so the Assistant Chief called for the tanker that he knew he'd need right away. Our pumper only carries one thousand gallons of water on board. Without another water source we could use that up in less than ten minutes.

The first priority on arrival at a fire scene is rescue. Was there anyone in that trailer? If there was, from the looks of the fire, they were already dead, but we'd have to try. The owner was waiting in the yard when we pulled up and told us the story. It was an older woman who lived there with her husband, and small dog. (And yes, we'll try to rescue pets when we can do so without risking human life. Imagine if it was your pet in a fire. You'd certainly want us to try to save it.) Only she and the dog were at home. She had been canning beans in the kitchen and had gone to the garage to get some supplies. Apparently she'd been delayed because when she returned to the house she saw smoke coming out the open door. She had the presence of mind to shut the door and run for help. (Shutting the door seems like a good idea, but because it was a trailer and the fire had already gotten a good start by that point, it didn't help. In fact, it caused a lot of trouble for us as will be seen.) Running to a



neighbor's house to call for help had used up valuable time; by the time we arrived the fire was about twenty minutes old. Since no one was inside, we put the ambulance on standby and I went to join the fire crew. Three other firefighters had arrived; Kyle and one of them put on air packs, pulled a trash line (That's a 1¾-inch line carried on each side of Engine 101 for fast assaults. It's often used on trash dumpster fires, hence the name.), took it to the back porch where the kitchen door was and started in.

That was a mistake.

The way to mount an interior attack on a house fire is to enter where the fire isn't and push the fire back on itself. This prevents forcing the fire into unburned areas of the house and deprives it of fuel. Kyle said later that he thought the fire might be contained to the porch area — which seemed to be like a small utility building added on to the trailer. If that had been the case he might have been able to knock the fire down quickly and save more of the property.

The thing is, the fire had been burning in a closed building for some time now and Kyle was about to open the door directly into it. The textbook says *never, ever* to try this, but sometimes firefighters do anyway. Here's why you shouldn't: ever see the movie *Backdraft*? Kurt Russell plays a firefighter who never seems to use an airpack or to even fasten up his turnout coat, but never mind that... the film *does* realistically show the effects of a backdraft.

A fire in a closed building will quickly use up all available oxygen and die down, but *not* die out. It'll smolder, filling the room with superhot smoke until it gets a fresh supply of oxygen — like when an unwary firefighter opens a door on it. That's what Kyle did. That superhot air in the room suddenly saw a huge supply of nice fresh oxygen outside and immediately tried to set it all on fire. Kyle and the other guy happened to be standing right in the way. "Well," says the fire, "let's see how well they'll burn." A cloud of fire shot out of the open door and slammed into the two firefighters, knocking them off the porch and twelve feet out into the yard. Kyle later claimed that he was already jumping when the flames hit him and that helped, but the end result was that they suddenly had to swim through fire. They did have full turnout gear on with Nomex hoods and airpacks, and this saved them. But they both had heat burns on the face and neck from where the heat cut through the hoods. They weren't seriously hurt, but they both climbed into the ambulance and were taken to the hospital. I

was needed at the fire scene and stayed there.

Now the fire was more serious and was fully involved in the rear of the trailer. Our chief arrived and set the eight of us who were present to setting up two attack lines in the front with another to start wetting down the exposures. An exposure is any other house or structure near the fire that might catch fire from the original fire. At that time — only about eight minutes into the fire attack — he called for additional backup.

*"Fire/Rescue 101 to Central — this structure is fully involved. We request additional manpower from our backup departments and also the cascade unit from Glade Springs VFD."*

By this time all the members of our fire department who could respond were either at the fire scene or on their way. Additionally, four members of Goodson-Kinderhook VFD who happened to be in the area arrived in their own cars. They'd wind up running our pump controls, keeping track of airpack use, and other jobs that free up our members to go into the fire. Our second fire truck — normally used on car wrecks — arrived, followed by our second ambulance. County deputies also arrived and took over traffic control on the road in front of the fire, freeing another two firefighters to join the fire attack. The tanker from Goodson-Kinderhook arrived, laying a relay hoseline to our truck and began pumping water to us from a creek about 200 yards away. Later the Glade Springs Volunteer Fire Department arrived with their cascade truck. This is a special vehicle that has the equipment needed to refill the air bottles on our airpacks. The bottles only last twenty minutes on a charge. We had four attack teams of two firefighters each committed inside the building. We worked in about twelve-minute shifts, with fresh firefighters going in to take over the hoses and the tired firefighters immediately coming out for rest, drinking water, and fresh air bottles.

After the backdraft I was assigned to help hold a hose on the safety line — that is, I was the second man on a two man crew that held a pressurized hose as backup for the team that made the initial fire attack on the front door. Had there been further trouble when that crew went in, we'd go in after them and cover their retreat. The second man helps hold the fire hose and makes sure that the nozzle man has enough slack at all times to go where ever he has to. A charged line is heavy and cumbersome, and each man has his hands full. If the nozzle man has to shoot

goo. The albums near the floor seemed OK, and may possibly have been playable, but they were all soaked from our hoses now. I noticed some stacks of 78s that seemed totally undamaged, which surprised me. I saw others on the floor which had survived the fire but had fallen victim to our fire boots.

Our search for that dog had brought us to the last part of the house, the bedroom on the end. Fire hadn't touched this room, but smoke and heat had. This room had a wall covered with those wall mounted cassette tape racks, filled with maybe 2,000 cassette tapes. Down near the floor the tapes seemed undamaged. I pulled one out and it looked perfectly OK. As I looked up the wall the tape cases started showing more and more heat damage and at the top of the wall, the cases were almost entirely melted away and the tape shriveled and blackened — dramatic evidence of how the heat from a fire builds up in a room. Had we not knocked out the fire as early as we did, the heat build up alone would eventually have caused that room to burst into flames. I've seen that happen on training films.

We tossed that room thoroughly and found no small furry body hiding anywhere. That left us with two possibilities: either the dog had gotten out somehow and was hiding in the darkness, or it was part of the thoroughly burned piles of smoldering junk in the burned-out living room. We spent the next hour sifting through the room with pike poles and searchlights, stopping only when the floor suddenly gave way and my partner fell through it up to his waist. I helped him out and we retreated. I notified the Chief that the floor was now unsafe and met the lady of the house who was being helped to the front door to get a look at what was left.

"Ma'am," I said, "we've searched all over the house for your dog and haven't found him, so I think he might have gotten out somehow. We'll keep looking, but he might be scared of all the noise and lights and might not turn up till morning."

She listened to me patiently and then said, "Oh that dog's down at my neighbor's house. She caught him a while back, and I forgot to tell you all."

We spent about four hours on scene with a total of 32 firefighters present, gradually releasing the extra units as we no longer needed them. In the months since that fire I've gotten to know a lot of those folks better. Good people, all of them. They made a tough job a lot easier for us; we'll return the favor someday.

Eventually the Chief declared the scene secure. We all assembled for a head count, packed up all our gear, and headed back to the station. *"Fire/Rescue 101 to Central dispatch. This fire is secured. We are clear at the 10-70 and in route back to station 100."*

At that point we were back on duty for another call, so as soon as we got back to the station we all jumped in to clean the truck and tools. The fire hose — all 700 yards of it — had to be unrolled, scrubbed thoroughly, and rolled back and stowed on the truck. Supplies had to be restored, soot and grime had to be cleaned off the tools, fuel for the generators and saws had to be topped off, paperwork had to be completed, turnout gear had to be roughly cleaned off and hung up to dry, and several families had to be called to be told that we were on our way home.

But first, we all crowded into the TV room — dirty, smelling of smoke and sweat as we were — to catch the eleven o'clock news. The TV crews had been all over the place, not that we were able to pay any attention to them at the time, but now we were ready to see ourselves on the news fighting our first major fire in two months. Since I was the new kid on the block and this was my first fire, I was allowed the seat of honor right in front of the TV. The station news logo flashed on and the local news anchor started his spiel. "Good evening. Firefighters battled a major blaze this evening in Washington County that sent two people to the hospital..." He looks off screen, obviously at his floor director. "But first we join the network for a breaking story." Cut to the network logo...

*"This is an NBC News Special Report! A short time ago, Princess Diana was seriously injured in an automobile crash in Paris! ..."*

You know, they never did show our fire on TV that night.

Eventually, everyone went home except for me and the others who had the station duty that night. We cleaned ourselves up, found some snacks, and settled back down in the TV room. After a while, I looked at my partner. "Well Marty, when's the next alarm gonna come in?"

Marty looked thoughtful. "Well," he mused, "I'd say it'll be about 3:30 in the morning. But it'll be a rescue call. It'll be a really good-looking redhead with her toe caught in a bathtub drain."

"Well," I said, "I checked the last bathtub, so you can have this one."

"Fair enough," he said. ✧

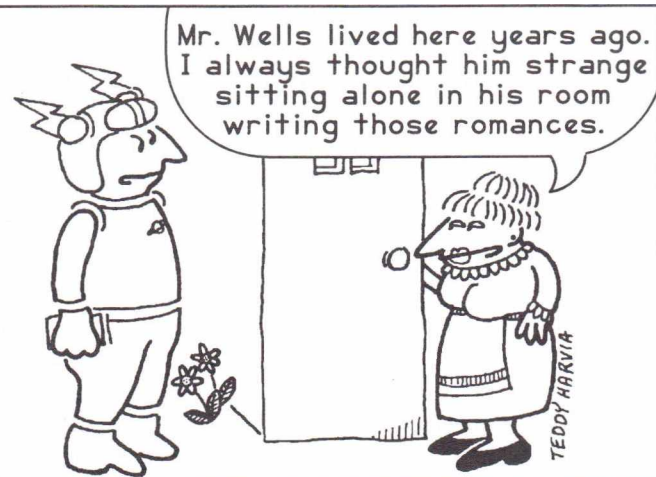


On Saturday, August 30, 1998, at just about the same time that Curt Phillips was involved in a fire/rescue situation in southwestern Virginia, we were in San Antonio, Texas, at the nominees' reception just before LoneStarCon's Hugo Award event was set to begin. And earlier that same day, we presided over a two-hour interview with Forrest J Ackerman. In *Mimosa 21*, Forry described his connections to two of the most revered cinematic legends of the science fiction genre. This latest installment of Forry's series of autobiographical essays remembers some of science fiction's literary giants.

# Through Time and Space with Forry Ackerman

PART VII

by Forrest J Ackerman



As of 1998, I've been involved with science fiction for 72 years. I wasted the first nine years of my life, but in October 1926, I got going in the world of science fiction. I never dreamed, as a boy of nine, one day I would meet the author of *The War of the Worlds* and *The Island of Dr. Moreau* and *The Time Machine*. But one day in 1939 — before the first World Science Fiction Convention was held later that year — Mr. Wells came to Los Angeles for a lecture, and you may be sure that I was one of the first people into the auditorium. I noticed that nobody seemed to be recording him; it was the short-lived period of the wire recorder rather than tape that we have today. I was reminded that when I was a youngster in school, a man whose grandfather heard Abraham Lincoln give the Gettysburg Address had been so impressed by it that he'd gone home and stood in front of a mirror, tried to take the Lincoln stance and speak like him, and now this was being passed on to us. So I thought, well, I had better be like the 'Lincoln' boy and capture H.G. Wells in my mind.

Well, because he was this incredible literary giant in the science fiction field, I guess I was expecting kind of an Orson Welles — a deep, booming *impressive* voice. So I was quite surprised by this squeaky voice that came out of this small roly-poly ruddy-complexioned gentleman with thin graying hair. He said, "I am going to towk to you for about an 'owah. Today east is west and west is east, and they are com-

ing togethuh with a *bang*." And indeed he was unfortunately quite prophetic because before long we were off and running into our war with Japan.

Well, I went up on the stage afterwards, took my copy of one of my favorite H.G. Wells novels, *Star Begotten*, and he signed it for me. Some years later, when I was visiting William F. Temple in England, and he took me to a home that H.G. Wells had lived in which was now turned into a bed-and-breakfast affair. Each room was interesting. They would have the title on the room of one of Wells' works like *The Sea Lady* or *The War of the Worlds*. I believe my wife and I stayed in the *Sea Lady* Room, and we slept in a bed in which H. G. Wells's two sons had been born. On another occasion, in London, I went outside to the city where he had written *The Time Machine* and just as in years before, when I went to Tarzana and asked where Edgar Rice Burroughs lived, I met many people who raised their eyebrows and said, "Edgar Rice who?" I could not believe that, where H.G. Wells wrote *The Time Machine*, I couldn't just stop anybody on the street and they would immediately direct me to it. I had to go to a library and even there it took some doing. All they could say was, "Well, he's on that certain street, we don't know just what number." Finally, I rang a doorbell and the gentleman said, "Yes, this is where he had written *The Time Machine*." And I guess that is about the sum of the substance of my connections to H.G.

Wells!

Anyway, speaking of Edgar Rice Burroughs, as I said, I had tried to look him up in Tarzana where he lived, and I was flabbergasted to find that the average citizen there didn't seem to have heard of him. I knew that in 1912 his first work had appeared titled "Under the Moons of Mars" which nowadays we think of as *A Princess of Mars*. Back then he felt such a garish tale might embarrass his family, so he came up with the pen name of 'Normal Bean'. In 1912, 'bean' referred to your head, so this was his way of telling his readers that his head was on straight. But unfortunately, one of his editors must not have thought that 'Normal' was a "normal" name, and it got changed to 'Norman', and the whole point of the pun was lost.

When I visited him, I took along "Under the Moons of Mars," the first magazine publication of *Tarzan of the Apes*, and a rarity of the time, "Beyond Thirty." I had wanted him to sign them with his pen name: "Mr. Burroughs, just this once would you sign this as 'Normal Bean'?" He was agreeable: "Why, yes, certainly, young man." But he was about 70 years old at the time; there were other fans present, and he got distracted. His mind kind of wandered and before I knew it his hand had written 'Edgar Rice Burroughs', just as it had done thousands of times before.

One down and two to go. "Mr. Burroughs, could you sign this one as your pen name?"

He replied, "Oh, yes, of course, young man!" But somebody distracted him again, and there was 'Edgar Rice Burroughs' again. One more chance...

I turned around and hand-signaled the other fans to be quiet this time. I gave the magazine to Mr. Burroughs, and as I watched intently, he wrote: 'to F.J. Bean...', and then seeing his mistake, said, "Oh, no, what have I *done*!!"

It was clear that the fates had conspired against me. So I said, "All right, Mr. Burroughs, for you I will change my name." And that eventually became one of my fifty or so pseudonyms: 'F.J. Bean'.

Burroughs was not the first author I had become acquainted with who used a pseudonym, however. Many years earlier, before I had moved from San Francisco to Hollywood, I had read a series by an author named Aladra Septama, in *Amazing Stories Quarterly*, about an alien called 'Tani of Ekkis'. After some investigation, I found that 'Aladra Septama' was actually a lawyer named Judson W. Reeves who lived right there in San Francisco! So, as a kid

going to high school, I got enough nerve one Saturday morning to meet him. I had earlier phoned him and he had invited me over. When I walked in the door, my eyes bugged out; the first issue of *Amazing Stories* I had ever seen had been dated October 1926, but here was a May, and a July, and a June, and an April! I couldn't believe it; I was really in Wonderland! And to top things off, he very graciously gave me my choice of a couple copies of those first year *Amazings*.

I should also mention something about one other writer who was very friendly with fans. That would be Dr. David H. Keller, who really was a pioneering science fiction author. His claim to fame was that he had in his stories more babies per square paragraph than any other author. In reading his work it always seemed to me like it was a translation, but not from French or German or Russian or anything... I didn't know from *what*. Well, when I met him I found it may have indeed been a translation. When he was born, his mother lavished all her love and attention on his little sister and paid virtually no attention to little David. So, as a result, he closed his ears and wouldn't pay any attention to anything she said; he wouldn't even learn English.

Instead, he *created* a language all his own, which he taught to his sister. And if anybody wanted to communicate with little David, they had to talk to the sister and she would translate it into their personal language. When he was five or six, he was sent home from school because they thought he was the village idiot. People would talk to him and he obviously didn't understand them, so he paid no attention. There's no telling how long this could have gone on, but when his sister was about seven or eight years old she suddenly died. After that, he was forced to learn English. He told me although he could not recall his personal language in his waking hours he often dreamed in it. So I suppose you could say, in a way, in his fiction he was translating from his private language.






Anyway, as an adult, he became the superintendent of the insane asylum in Pennsylvania. He said there was one woman who could have lived out in society, but every once in a while, like Whistler's Mother, she would go off her rocker, so she decided it would be best if she lived in the asylum where when she had a spell they could take care of her. Well, Dr. Keller said he realized one time when she was going to have a spell because, he said, in real life there were very few women who found him very attractive. But when she was crazy she was crazy about *him*! So one night she began winking at him, being very flirty, so he warned his staff, "You better keep an eye on her, she's going to have one of her spells." Well, sure enough, about midnight he got an S.O.S. on the telephone from one of his staff; when he went to the asylum he found a semi-circle of the staff at the front of the building. She was up on the roof. During the day some repairmen had left a lot of bricks up there, and she was hurling bricks at everyone down there. Dr. Keller realized that anybody who climbed up

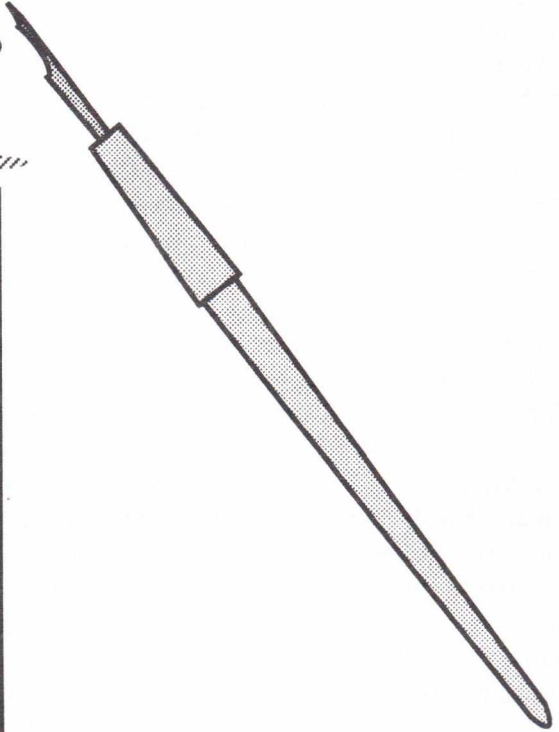
there to try to talk her down might be risking their life. But after all, he was the superintendent, so he decided to go up there.

When he put his head up above roof level, he saw her standing there, brick in hand. One wrong word and he'd have had it! He said basically, he never lied to insane individuals, because they could always see right through you. But knowing how she felt about him when she was crazy, he threw his arms wide and cried out, "*Come* to me, my darling!" She dropped the brick and like an express train she ran across the roof and threw herself on him. The roof was sloped, and they began sliding down it. One of the members of the asylum staff finally had to come up there with a rope and lasso them to rescue them!

Dr. Keller, with a straight face, once told me, "I have such an ego, I pay people fifty cents an hour to let me brag about myself." As I mentioned, he liked science fiction fans a lot. I do believe he gave away more fiction for fanzines than he ever sold to paying publications! ✧



*Dotting our i's and crossing our t's...  
we have...*



**Sheryl Birkhead** — pages 2, 3, 38, 50, 51  
**Sheryl Birkhead & William Rotsler** — page 41  
**Kurt Erichsen** — pages 14, 15, 16  
**Brad Foster** — page 48  
**Brad Foster & William Rotsler** — page 46  
**Alexis Gilliland & William Rotsler** — page 43  
**Ian Gunn & William Rotsler** — page 40  
**Teddy Harvia** — pages 30, 36, 37  
**Teddy Harvia & Peggy Ranson** — front & back covers  
**Teddy Harvia & William Rotsler** — page 47  
**Joe Mayhew** — pages 9, 10, 11, 13, 28, 29, 45  
**Joe Mayhew & William Rotsler** — page 42  
**William Rotsler** — page 49 (both illos)  
**Julia Morgan-Scott** — pages 21, 22, 31, 34  
**Diana Harlan Stein** — page 39  
**Steve Stiles & William Rotsler** — page 44  
**Charlie Williams** — pages 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 18, 19, 25, 27  
**Kip Williams** — page 23

There were some people who were missed at LoneStarCon. The normally irrepressible Julie Schwartz, unable to attend due to ill health, has *promised* he'll be at Bucconeer this August. Someone else who was suffering from ill health was Bill Rotsler; unfortunately he was much more seriously ill than most fans had imagined, and his death not all that long after LoneStarCon was a shock to us all. We're closing this issue with a remembrance of Rotsler by one of his many friends.

# Save the Last Masque for Me

by Greg Benford



It was sad duty indeed, helping Paul Turner and Bill Warren and others clear out the vast lode that was Bill Rotsler's estate. He was remarkably systematic, but his eroding health had led him to simply stack when before he had filed, and the house was crammed with the memorable and mysterious.

WmR had several rooms devoted to art, a vast back file of work no one had ever seen. Most impressive was a room I had never visited, holding hundreds of loose leaf binders, each neatly labeled on the spine, each holding hundreds of pages of quotations. I took the SCIENCE binder, and the Eaton collection at UC Riverside may well take the rest, as well as a literal car load of original Rotsler art.

Much space, including a back yard shed, was packed with models for fumetti, the craft of making cartoons by photographing arranged small objects. Bill had devoted years to stockpiling materials and trying techniques, but it proved cheaper to just have cartoonists draw panels, so nothing ever came of it. Odd artifacts turned up, including an entire bag of dildos. Rotsler was legendary for sending out Christmas cards with big photos of him surrounded by naked ladies. Even so, it seemed there were more dildos here than any conceivable need would require. It took

Bill Warren a while to figure out that they were to be painted and used as spaceships in fumetti.

Of fanzines there were few, many sined at the edges from his fire of fifteen years before. I took away old *Kteics* and *Masques* and have enjoyed visiting the WmR of that era. Poignant memories. When I was fifteen I had sent him an awkward early issue of *Void*, and he replied with a letter deftly ignoring the issue, except that I had sent it in trade. He noted that he ran off few copies of his own fmz, and they went only to people he found "irresistibly fascinating." The short note ended, "Become irresistibly fascinating and we'll see."

The letter was typed on the back of a mimeoed sheet of sentences in capitals (and justified!), apparently quotations from his friends. At fifteen I found those amusing lines suggested a bright, quick adult world I hungered to join. Sitting in damp postwar 1955 Germany, California was a golden beacon, where people said things like:

If you don't like it that way, I'll dry my tongue off. I just told the man selling poppies I had a silver plate in my head and he went away. Stop using those fancy dirty words! She described him as a sentimental sadist. That's no



way to practice for your urinalysis! She left his bed, bored. He made the 'v' sign but forgot one finger. I often think that the purest form of artist is one who laughs only at his own jests. He was invited to give a lecture at the child molesters annual banquet. Why, these are just interlineations laid end to end!

I reached that nirvana in 1963 and never left, meeting WmR at my first LASFS Thursday night in June, 1963. Going through his fanzines, I found that sheet of quotations: the quote-cover for *Masque* #2; and finally read the issue, a yellowing missive from a witty, bouncy world. Burbee's "How to Stop Writing for Fanzines, Part 2" was the feature.

WmR was one of the best people I ever knew. He loved concise wit. His many rules such as "Funny is better than serious. Short is better than long. Short and funny is best," is perhaps the more revealing of him.

Graceful, courteous, he made everyone a friend. His talents spanned sculpture, drawing, cartooning, writing, film-making, photography, and much else, but he was natural and even off-hand about his range.

At the 1997 Loscon we had a memorial panel with Paul Turner, Bill Warren, Marv Wolfman, and Len Wein. A side exhibit showed photos of WmR in

Army uniform, plus a photo album from the late 1940s when he was in art school. Bill Warren told how Bill had talked of writing a book titled *Listen Up, Kid* for his grandchild, to whom he left everything. But who should he get to illustrate it? When Bill Warren said, "Do it yourself!" WmR blinked; "I never thought of that." In his opinion, his serious sf art was his best work; most people favored the cartoons. Yet he never tried to become an sf illustrator.

Through all the erosions of health, he never lost the ability to surprise and amuse. In the last year I let all the money incoming from our collaborative novel, *Shiva Descending*, go to Bill, not taking my cut. He discovered this and when I saw him next he said very seriously, "I found out. Thanks. Don't do it again." And he meant it. He had his pride, and his illness wounded it profoundly. I ignored his wishes; he was broke.

Rescued from the house came forty pages of pure WmR in 1985, a diary of his many interests, with cartoons and photos. I assembled them and gave copies to his many friends. I titled it *Last Masque*, a warming glimpse of him at a better time, the way I want to remember him: always irresistibly fascinating, Rotsler the grand. ✧



# GHOSTS OF ISSUES PAST...



{{ We were very pleased by the number of letters we received in response to *Mimosa* 21. We've said it before: letters of comment are the energy source that keeps fan editors like us publishing. Even though we can't publish every letter we receive, we want to let you know that **all** your comments, whether or not they appear here in the Letters Column, are collected and sent on to the contributors. Our contributors value the feedback as much as we do, so please continue to send us your comments.

There were two items that received the much of our readers' comments this time — Mike Resnick's fine article about the fandom-related books in his personal library, and Julia Morgan-Scott's whimsical cover for *M21* that featured a runaway stagecoach, a western saloon, and jaywalking armadillo ladies. We'll get to Mike's article shortly, but first some comments on the cover. }}

**Pamela J. Boal, 4 Westfield Way, Wantage, Oxon OX12 7EW, United Kingdom**

Thank you so much for *Mimosa* 21, a number that would have had significance except that *Mimosa* came of age almost from its inception. What a marvellous cover! It has everything — humour, good design, excellent drawing and reproduction. Have I just been lacking observation or is this a first cover for Julia Morgan-Scott? Surely if she had produced such work before I would have remembered her name. I'd be interested in finding out a bit about her technique, it looks like scraperboard and yet I wonder because of the confident flow of the execution.

{{ You are correct; Julia did use scraperboard for the cover of *M21*. That was her first cover for us,

though she's been a contributor in many other issues (check out her Letters Column illustration on page 36 of *Mimosa* 19). We hope to have another cover from her soon. }}

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

Wow, what an absolutely amazing cover by Julia on *Mimosa* #21!! Scratchboard seems to be a dying art (with pen and ink running a close second), and to see such an incredibly well done piece that is also such a fun image with so much happening, well, it's like yet another in a long line of really knockout covers for *Mimosa*. How do you manage to keep getting these?

{{ That's really the least of our worries. There are so many good fan artists now that getting good cover art is not a problem. It's almost enough incentive to make us publish more often — until we remember what the publication costs are! }}

**William Breiding, P.O. Box 2322, Tucson, Arizona 85702-2322**

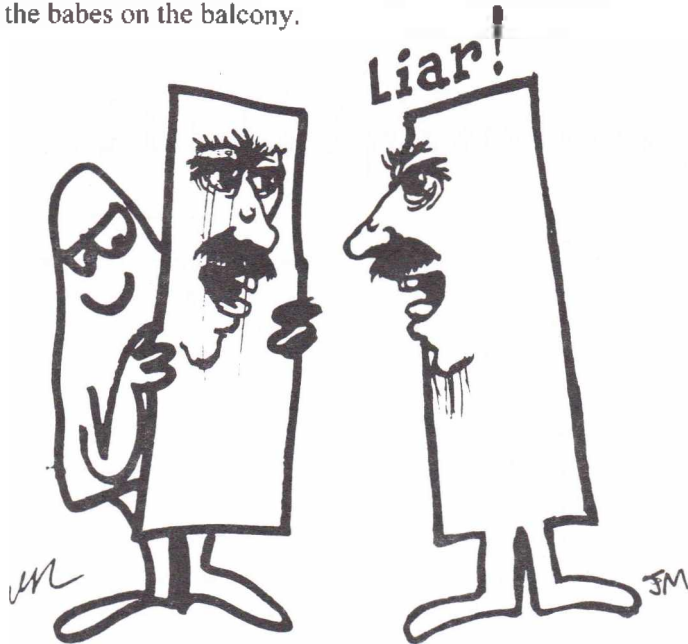
I think Bill Mallardi definitely ought to degafiate. His piece on Joni Stopa {{ "I Remember Joni" }} was fabulous (aside from a couple too many exclamation points there at the end!), and if there is any reality to the fandom-as-family thing, Bill got pretty close to proving it with this fine appreciation-cum-memoir. I think I met Joni just once at an Autoclave. She was sitting at a round table with Jackie Causgrove and Suzi Stefl and myself and I was being quizzed by



them all. I'm sorry I didn't know Joni.

{{ As we were preparing this issue's letters column, we received the news of the passing of Jackie Causgrove. She had been in ill health for quite some time, so it wasn't entirely unexpected; MidWestCons won't be the same without her presence. We hope to have a remembrance of Jackie in our next issue. }}

And I can't let Julia Morgan-Scott's wonderful cover go unmentioned. I studied it for a long, long time. Particularly the scratch work on grandpa and the babes on the balcony.



**Ruth M. Shields, 1410 McDowell Road,  
Jackson, Mississippi 39204-5147**

The cover of *Mimosa* 21 is great. It is nice to see somebody using scratchboard again! The use of it here is excellent, and I love the whimsy of the design. And I hope I'm forgiven if I wistfully assume the Armadilly wimmen made it to the doorway and avoided becoming stagecoach roadkill.

In your Opening Comments {{ "A Tale of Two Worldcons" }}, your convention reminiscences reminded me of my own first worldcon, the year before yours: SunCon, Miami Beach, 1977. I attended with an old friend who was not only at her first worldcon, but her first con of any sort. We were both a bit lost, but we had fun despite being unaware of any of the activities available. I don't feel quite the same sense of wonder at worldcons anymore, but I still do feel that I've crammed weeks of enjoyment into those four or five days and it is still hard to return to the real world each time.

**Robert Lichtman, P.O. Box 30, Glen Ellen,  
California 95442**

Your jointly-written account of LoneStarCon was enjoyable reading, and I have a couple of comments: "Were we really that way once?" Some of us were, not all. I was sometimes, actually rarely, but mostly I was a bookish type who loved to occasionally rock out. Despite my particular pleasure with this column, I have always wished that ya'll would have a stronger *individual* editorial presence in *Mimosa*. When you do have individual columns, they tend to be mostly brief and business-like. Your longer stuff is always jointly written. While it's generally good, I miss your individual voices on these subjects.

{{ Ah, the pressures of trying to write something both interesting and related to the issue's theme, in only a limited amount of space. Part of the terseness you perceive is a result of having to make things fit. This issue, for instance, will run 52 pages, and after space has been allotted for everything else, there are only three pages left over for Opening and Closing Comments. At any rate, we seem to have fallen into a pattern lately where we do a jointly-written Opening Comments for issues of *Mimosa* that immediately follow a convention trip (such as LoneStarCon, which we wrote about last time). These combined editorials are actually harder to write, but when we're on the same topic, it avoids redundancy. }}

It was interesting how, in Dave Kyle's memories of and comments on Sam Moskowitz {{ "SaM — Fan Forever" }}, he's more detailed with his criticisms of SaM than in his previous articles mentioning him, in Nos. 6 and 20. Elsewhere, Arnie Katz has also written about SaM's feuds and foibles. I concur with Dave in hoping that SaM's archive remain intact and becomes accessible for researchers.

But the real jewel of this issue is Mike Resnick's lengthy survey of "The Literature of Fandom." Of the items he lists that I *don't* have, I most faunch for the *Proceedings* volumes and for Jay Kay Klein's photo surveys. Aside from a number of photo covers on and photo sections in various fanzines over the years, the only thing I've got along those lines is the 1965 LASFS Album, published on the occasion of its 1,500th meeting. It was photos of LASFSers from the 1930s on.

There are some items Mike apparently does not have that are worth mentioning to supplement his article:

Another volume of SaM's fanhistorical writings,

*After All These Years*, appeared in 1991 from Niekas Publications. It's most noteworthy for a lot of autobiographical details going back to childhood.

Asimov's later autobiographical volume, *I, Asimov: A Memoir*, also deals extensively with the author's involvement in fandom.

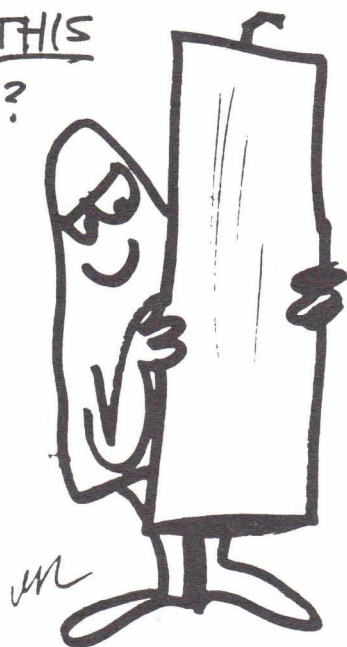
Lester del Rey wrote *The World of Science Fiction: The History of a Subculture* with a fair amount of mention of fandom.

There's also John Robert Colombo's *Years of Light: A Celebration of Leslie A. Crouth*, a 200-page trade paperback published in Hounslow Press. Although most of the focus is on Pioneering Canadian fan Crouth, there's a lot of general Canadian fan-history and it's worth a read.

Another Carl Brandon volume besides *Cacher of the Rye* might still be available: *The Portable Carl Brandon*, put out by Jerry Kaufman for the 1988 Corflu. That same year, he also reprinted *The Incomplete Terry Carr, Volume 1*, also possibly still in print. Jerry was also responsible for a couple of collections of individuals' writings: *Sweetmeats*, collecting the writing of Sandra Miesel, and *The Best of Susan Wood*.

And I'm perhaps most surprised that Mike doesn't have a copy of Anthony Boucher's 1942 *Rocket to the Morgue*, in which a thinly-disguised LASFS is part of the story.

IS THIS GAME  
WORTH THIS  
CANDLE ?



## David Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5AU, United Kingdom

I was overwhelmed by the egoboo of being mentioned in Mike Resnick's selection from the literature of fandom; in fact I put on an old propeller beanie and wandered around the house uttering profound apophthegms like "Goshwowohboyohboyohboy!" until Hazel asked me to stop.

Apparently one bit of evidence for Frederic Wertham's lack of in-depth study of fanzines is his logical deduction that a GoH is a convention's Guard of Honour...

A suggested addition to Mike's list of fannish Novels is Diana Wynne Jones's *Deep Secret*, published over here by Gollancz in November 1997. This is a funny and exciting science-fantasy, a large part of which is set at a British Eastercon in a barely disguised version of the Adelphi Hotel (Liverpool; site of many Eastercons), with elements borrowed from the Britannia International Hotel (London Docklands: Eastercon, Fantasycon, World Fantasy Con). It's somehow very characteristic of Diana that the final clash of forces from various parts of the multiverse should take place in the con hall while the harassed GoH is trying to deliver his speech.

Further novels whose action takes place at conventions (at least partly) are Vanna Bonta's 1995 'quantum fiction' novel *Flight*, which looks set to become a revered classic among turkeys, and Norman Spinrad's unpublished *He Walked Among Us*, an extract from which appears on his web site. But the only omission from Mike's list that I found slightly surprising was Anthony Boucher's murder mystery *Rocket to the Morgue* (1942), which lacks a convention scene but has plenty of fannish conversation and thinly concealed sf-writer characters.

Mike was expecting that *Rocket to the Morgue* and *He Walked Among Us* would be singled out as omissions. Here's what he had to say about them: "Please point out that the article stated it never meant to be all-encompassing, but simply listed what was in *my* collection! Norman's book is unsold and doesn't count, and *Rocket to the Morgue* is filled with Tuckerized pros, not fen." }

Other items from my own collection include a clutch of UK fanthologies like *Mood 70* (ed. Kevin Smith) and *By British* (ed. Ian Maule and Joseph Nicholas), both published for the 1979 Brighton worldcon; *Now Read On* (ed. Rob Hansen), published



for Conspiracy '87; and *Embryonic Journey* (ed. Graham James [1987]). Somewhere, mislaid, are copies of Eric Bentcliffe's *When Yngvi Was A Louse*, reprinting 1950s British fanwriting, and Linda Krawecka's *Tiger Tea*, with material from the all-female APA, *The Women's Periodical*.

Then there's Rob Hansen's *Then*, a conscientious if not very stylish history of British fandom whose four volumes (so far) cover the '30s and '40s, the '50s, the '60s and the '70s; and D. West's remarkable collections of his own articles, *Fanzines in Theory and in Practice* (1984) and *Deliverance* (1995). Also there are all those further fan memoirs — but not enough — in the form of fan fund trip reports....

Speaking of which, there's a tiny error in Bill Mallardi's memoir of Joni Stopa — trivial, but something which should have been spotted by the eagle-eyed historian of '60s fandom! Ella Parker didn't come to the U.S. as a TAFF winner; her journey was assisted by the one-off Parker Pond Fund which spontaneously formed after she'd announced her trip plans at the 1961 Eastercon.

{{☺ Many people who wrote us gave other suggestions (which we're forwarding to Mike) for inclusion in a 'dream list' of books about fandom. Among them were **Ed Meskys** and **John Boston** (and perhaps some others) who suggested Mack Reynolds' *The Case of the Little Green Men* (which is set at a convention), **Ahrvid Engholm** who suggested Colin Lester's *The International Science Fiction Yearbook* (from 1978), **Ron Bennett** who recommended Brian Aldiss' *The Shape of Further Things* (which includes a chapter on British conventions of the 1950s), and **Lloyd Penney** who mentioned T. Bruce Yerke's early LASFS remembrance *Memoirs of a Superfluous Fan*, Susan M. Garrett's media SF-oriented *The Fantastically Fundamentally Functional Guide to Fandom*, Arnie Katz's recent *The Trufan's Advisor: An Introductory Guide to Fanzine Fandom*, Donald Franson's *A Key to the Terminology of S-F Fandom*, and Robert Lichtman's *The Amateur Press Associations in S-F Fandom* (which Robert himself neglected to mention in his earlier letter). And there was more yet: }}

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

Resnick's article will certainly get people mad at him. British fans should rightly complain that Resnick does not mention Rob Hansen or D. West. Australian fans will also find their fanhistory slighted.

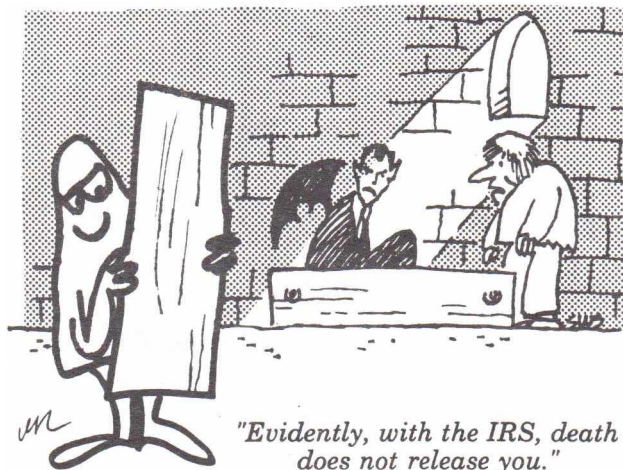
And Ahrvid Engholm will not doubt complain that Resnick does not mention the two highly peculiar 'fanthologies' he published (*Swede Ishes*).

By omitting foreign fandoms, Resnick doesn't put fanhistory in perspective. For example, he's certainly right that Robert Bloch's *Once Around the Bloch* would be a better book if it has more about fandom and less about the Milwaukee mayoral race of 1940. But George Turner's *In the Heart or in the Head* (Norstrillia Press, 1985) has as much or more about fandom — and Turner is a more important writer than Bloch.

Resnick also makes some errors. If Damon Knight's *The Futurians* appeared in paperback, I'd love to know about it. The second edition of David Hartwell's *Age of Wonders* is *not* a reprint, but is expanded about 100 pages from the first edition. And he omits the important two-volume reprint of the first 200 issues of *Locus* (which certainly *used* to be a fanzine) which Gregg Press came out with in the early 1980s.

There are also other important omissions. Nearly all of the articles in Fred Lerner's *A Bookman's Fantasy* (NESFA Press, 1995) are from fanzines. And about half of the articles in a Phillip K. Dick non-fiction collection published by Pantheon in 1993 (whose title I can't find) are from fanzines, including *Niekas* and *Lighthouse*!

{{☺ These are all good points, but once again we should mention that Mike's article dealt *only* with the books about fandom he has in his personal library. Actually, we're a bit envious of Mike for having all those resources at hand; it also show that he is as at least as much (if not more) a fan as a professional writer. }}



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

Jack Chalker's memories of Baltimore-Washington fandom {{ "A Short History of Baltimore Fandom (Part 2)" }} continued to enlighten me about individuals and events which I've known little or nothing about when they were active and happening. I didn't even realize that Baltimore's fan group has a building of its own. Technically, it is the fourth such club-owned headquarters. The Decker, Indiana fan club which shone brightly but briefly in the 1940s had a small clubhouse, the first in the world of its type.

Mike Resnick's article is a badly needed one. It would be a good idea to draw the basic list of books from this article and a few additions and keep the resulting leaflet available for newcomers to fandom, along with the Tucker guide to neo-fans.

However, there are several omissions and also one inaccuracy in Mike's essay. Advent did not reject the *A Wealth of Fable* manuscript. I was already upset over the fact that Advent had decided to withhold publication of my book until all three volumes of the Tuck Encyclopedia were in print. This appeared to create a two-year delay in publication of my manuscript, and as it turned out, it would have been even longer because there were so many delays before the Tuck work was completely published. At this point, Ed Wood submitted to me a list of things which he thought I should insert in my manuscript. Every one of these items had one thing in common: they concerned Ed Wood's activities in fandom or matters with which he had been closely associated. I asked the return of the manuscript because I wasn't in any mood to let a very minor fannish figure of the 1950s swing his weight around simply because of his status as an Advent publisher.

Meanwhile, I certainly hope that Walt Willis manages to find the missing correspondence files before someone offers him a small fortune for his big wardrobe and hauls away those precious fannish documents. Walter's column {{ "I Remember Me" }} is perhaps the most entertaining thing in this issue, as distinguished from the informative and eulogistic contributions.

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**Robert Coulson, 2677 W 500 N, Hartford  
City, Indiana 47348**

Good article by Resnick. Gene DeWeese's and my novel that he referred to {{ titled "Charles Fort Never Mentioned Wombats" }} , which was set at the

1975 Australia Worldcon, is a triumph(?) of the imagination. We were a bit appalled when the Doubleday editor asked for it, since neither of us planned to (or did) attend the convention. We threw in the names of Australian fans we knew, mentioned some typical convention items, and hastily got the protagonists off into the bush where nobody could tell us that "it didn't happen that way." We also used the names of fans for many of the characters in our two *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* books, despite a directive from editor Terry Carr that this wasn't permitted; we used names of Indiana club fans whom Terry had never heard of, and got away with it.



**George Flynn, P.O. Box 426069, Kendall  
Square Station, Cambridge, Massachusetts  
02142**

It's gratifying that Mike Resnick's review of "The Literature of Fandom" recommends so many books published by NESFA Press and MCFI (most of which I copyedited). However, shame on Mike for writing that "It's been well over a decade since the last



[Worldcon] photo memory book was produced"; I have sent him a copy of the Noreascon *Three Memory Book*. Even more puzzling, Mike's description of Barry Malzberg's two novels about fandom doesn't mention that both are in print in the NESFA Press collection *The Passage of the Light* — which Mike co-edited! And another NESFA Press book that should be mentioned is James White's *The White Papers* (produced for L.A.con III), half of which is a collection of White's fannish writing (the other half being his SF).

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**Evelyn Leeper, 80 Lakeridge Drive,  
 Matawan, New Jersey 07747-3839**

Thanks to Mike Resnick for his almost complete article on the literature of fandom, but he forgot to mention any of the many short stories about science fiction and fandom (including conventions). This may have been because it would have expanded the article unmanageably, or it may have been out of a false sense of modesty, as he actually edited several of the anthologies of these, including *Inside The Fun-house*; *Alternate Worldcons*; *Again, Alternate Worldcons*; and (most recently) *Alternate Skiffy*.

{{ Our thanks to everyone who gave suggestions! Perhaps this will be the beginning of a new fan bibliography project! That said, this seems like a good opportunity to segue into more comments about Sam Moskowitz — someone whose science fiction collection all by itself could be the subject of a bibliography... }}



**Leigh Kimmel, 408 South Wall Street Apt.  
 D-2, Carbondale, Illinois 62901-3252**

Dave Kyle's "SaM — Fan Forever" was a fascinating reflection upon the role of the late Sam Moskowitz in the early days of fandom. It was rather poig-

nant to read about how he would let past events rankle and jump upon every opportunity to present his views of them. Yet it is such a very human response, to desire to have one's own role look the best possible.

I also enjoyed the second installment of Jack Chalker's "A Short History of Baltimore Fandom." Alas, the fannish politics sound all too familiar, as I have come across some of the same behavior in other fan clubs I've been associated with.

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

There's probably nobody better qualified to write a reminiscence about Sam Moskowitz than Dave Kyle and I doubt anyone could have done a fairer job of discussing one of the great iconoclastic fans of all time. Dave's article about SaM was intensely personal, balanced and fair, all despite the fact that Dave has more reasons than most to denigrate SaM. SaM was only a bit player on the extreme sidelines of fandom when I was active and my own interactions with him were limited but extremely cordial. Dave does a fine job of placing SaM in the overall context of fannish history and by so doing tells us a lot about Sam Moskowitz. And not a little bit about Dave Kyle.

A fine piece of autobiographical writing by Michael Burstein {{ "Asimov and Me" }}. I was always ambivalent towards Asimov. Despite the fact that his novels drew me to science fiction I always found his convention persona distasteful, and since we had minimal personal contact (my introducing him at a Toronto convention being as close as we ever got), that was all I really had to go on. I'm told his dirty-old-man routine was only a schtick but it was tasteless schtick which a more sensitive individual would have retired years and years ago. Evidently Michael never saw such feet of clay on his idol, which makes him luckier than I.

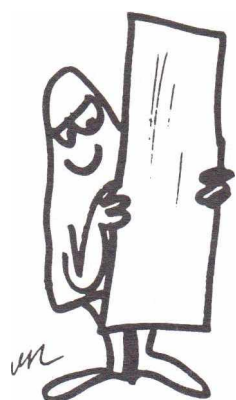
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**Robert Whitaker Sirignano, P.O. Box  
 11246, Wilmington, Delaware 19850**

I always liked Sam Moskowitz's research into older SF, though his opinions and literary judgements were quirky. Often he confused nostalgia with quality. Once or twice I'd read a salivating passage about a work of fiction by a Mr. Forgotten Writer and would seek out the story, only to find that SaM's value judgements about something he'd read at age twelve were still the value judgements of someone aged twelve. But in fairness, SaM's writing pointed

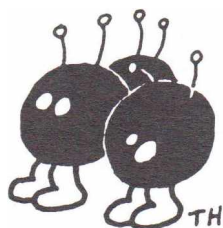
out "where to look" and would find the really good "gosh wow" stuff that kept me interested in SF.

As for Forry Ackerman's article {{☞ "Through Time and Space With Forry Ackerman (Part 6)," which described his friendship with the famous film director, Fritz Lang }} , I know about various variant prints of *Metropolis*. Some of the ones shown at conventions run 90 minutes and have a soundtrack. I have one (on video) that's approximately two hours, *sans* sound. Forry's statement of the excessive amount of footage shot for *Metropolis* was interesting; this means a 'definitive' version will be difficult to assemble.

But I'm surprised that Forry didn't mention *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* (1932) when discussing Fritz Lang. Dr. Mabuse was a madman who wanted to dominate the world. Lang had a copy of the film delivered to Hitler as he was on his way out of the country. Hitler had wanted Lang to head the German film industry.



We were  
expecting a  
more three-  
dimensional  
panel.



**Joseph T. Major, 1409 Christy Avenue,  
Louisville, Kentucky 40204-2040**

Forry Ackerman probably will not be surprised (but others may) to learn that Fritz Lang was not the only director to use different shots to make different versions of films for different markets. In his book on restoring Abel Gance's movie *Napoleon*, British film writer Kevin Brownlow discusses the different national versions of the movie. The film stock of those days, it seems, had its problems, so it was easier to make up a new negative for different distributions. This is why Brownlow's latest version of the movie is five and a half hours long while the most widely distributed version (the one on video, for example) is four hours long — he kept on finding more scenes.

So I can understand that the 'complete' version of *Metropolis* might be much longer.

In the letters column, interesting discussion of the 'First Convention' matter by Ahrvid Engholm, Ben Yalow, Harry Warner, and Steven Green. Alas, this seems to be one of those matters that is incapable of resolution because the debaters will not even accept a common definition of what they are discussing in the first place.

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**Gene Stewart, HQ USAFE/SCXP, PSC 2  
Box 6151, APO AE 09012**

Dave Kyle's take on SaM struck me as balanced and fair. Thanks for not suppressing some of the negative stuff. Too often, death seems to take away all the well-rounded accounts of the deceased, only to replace them with bland shiny eulogies of little use to anyone. Kyle's article, on the other hand, will be of use to fan historians from here on. Does anyone know what's become of SaM's collection?

{{☞ We've not heard anything very definite. Reports and rumors are floating around that part of his collection will be sold at auction, while other parts will remain intact as a resource for future researchers and historians. We certainly hope the latter is true. }}

"Asimov and Me" interested me because I met the Good Doctor once and managed to get an article about the meeting published in both *Cricket* and *Sirs/Discoverer* CD-ROM for Schools & Libraries, thus, I hope, inspiring children to check out that skiffy stuff with half an open mind. Great article, with trenchant observations, particularly on how tired Asimov became of spending time away from writing. And he was, indeed, a joyous man.

And I must comment on Harvia's cartoons, too. While I'm a fan of his work, and always find his stuff funny and pointed, that undead/undeaf 'toon really cracked me up. Also, the CHAT pun on 'near myth' was a good one, too. More.

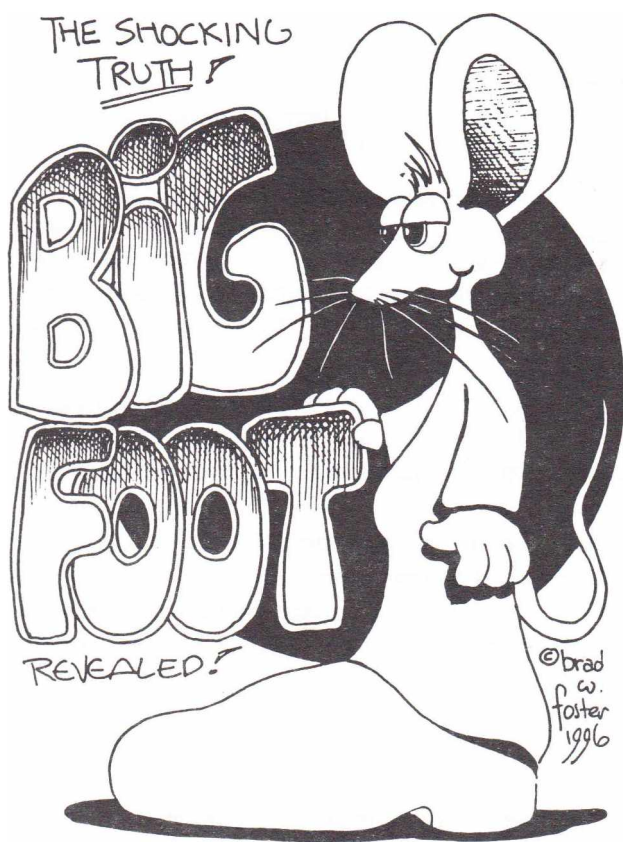
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**Ed Meskys, RR #2 Box 63, 322 Whittier  
Highway, Center Harbor, New Hampshire  
03226-9708**

In Michael Burstein's reminiscence of Asimov he mentioned that the last time he saw him was at a book signing shortly before his death, and speculated that Asimov was probably worrying about wasting time there and not writing. For much of his life Asimov



was a compulsive writer. In 1972, when I lost my sight, I went into a rehab center in Newton, Massachusetts, not far from Asimov's home. One of the teachers there knew his (by then ex) wife and heard from her about Asimov's compulsion. He had four selectrics scattered around the house, including one in the bathroom so he could continue to write while on the pot. He spent just about every waking moment writing.

{{ While we're on the topic, Michael asked us to correct a very minor error in his article: the date he first met Isaac Asimov was actually Sunday, November 4th, 1979, not three days later. (This has already been corrected in the 'electronic' version of M21 at our web site.) }}



**Terry Jeeves, 56 Red Scar Drive,  
Scarborough Y012 5RQ, United Kingdom**

Kyle on SaM was really timebinding and I recall that European trip they all took in 1957, and the snafu which arose. Eric Bentcliffe, Jan Jansen and I had arranged to meet them all off their plane at Schipol airport in Holland. We got there ... and waited ... and waited. No incoming flights which could have been

theirs. Jan tried the 'information' desk several times until finally they discovered, and told us that the Americans had arrived early and instead of waiting for us, had taken the bus into Amsterdam and were waiting for us at KLM offices. We finally found them all and took them to the hotel Jan had organised — and sampled the Kyles' wedding cake.

Forry's memoirs were as interesting as ever but the real time-binder was Ron Bennett's memory-stirring piece {{ "May I Have the P.L...?" }}. Ah happy days of *PLOY*, *Triode*, *BEM*, *Space Times* and many others. Fans and fanzines have changed greatly since those days. There were so few of us, it was quite possible to know everyone in British fandom. Conventions netted no more than fifty people to start with.

Finally, Michael A. Burstein's Asimov piece well brought out the fact that Asimov wasn't a pompous untouchable but, unlike many other 'names', an approachable human being not above helping a youngster along.

**Ron Bennett, 36 Harlow Park Crescent,  
North Yorkshire HG2 0AW, United  
Kingdom**

Forry's reminiscences are always a joy. Hell's teeth! Wandering around with Fritz Lang and Bela Lugosi as though they were merely *people*! Almost as mind-blowing as the life I live here in Harrogate in my little Shepherd's hut on the edge of the North Yorks Moors. Why, only yesterday I had a ten minute chat with the local milkman.

Also, I loved Howard Devore's piece about the Werewolf Bookshop {{ "Way Down in Verona" }}. Yes, I, too, was suckered in by the advert I read in *Weird Tales* and ordered a \$50 pair of books for \$12 (double rates for overseas customers). Now, at least, I know what happened to the copy I ordered of *How to Raise Pigs for Profit*. All I got were a couple of an Arkham House publications called *Skullface* and *The Outsider and Others*. Howard, by the way, was an early news contributor to *Skyrack*. Isn't it comforting to learn earth-shattering facts like this? Fandom always was educational.

**Marty Cantor, 11825 Gilmore Street #105,  
North Hollywood, California 91606**

Ron Bennett certainly 'exployned' things very well, concerning his fanzine *PLOY*. I do not know,



though, whether I fully accept the point which he made (or at least 'employed') that the contributors to a fanzine are much more important than the faned. Even though some faneds only put everything together, others have a presence in their zines at least as important as that of their contributors. As an example, think of what Terry Carr's zines would be like without the presence of Terry. Yes, they would be good zines (given their quality contributions/contributors), but Terry's presence is what always made his zines work at their top level.

In the letters column, Martin Morse Wooster's comment about how we tend to forget that the fan-legends who founded clubs and Worldcons were teenagers when they did those things stirs in me some strange feelings. It is not that I am envious of their deeds, it is just that, when I discovered fandom some 22+ years ago, it was just before my 40th birthday. I was sitting in my tobacco shop in Monrovia, reading a science fiction book (on a slow day), when I walked a person who turned out to be June Moffatt's son. He saw what I had been reading and told me about LASFS and fandom. I have never turned back. Maybe my experience of getting active in fandom during middle age can alleviate Alrvid Engholm's fear that fandom is dying because its older fans are dying.

In your comment on Roy Tackett's letter, you write, "It may be the increasingly high costs of producing fanzines that's resulting in fewer of the kind that interest you." I will agree that this is partly true; on getting back to genzine production after a gap of seven years, I am amazed at the increased costs 'twixt then and now — and costs were high back then!

**Teddy Harvia, 701 Regency Drive, Hurst, Texas 76054**

That there scratchy board dillo art by Julia Morgan-Scott is I reckon the best goll darn piece of fan art I've seen in ages. Chat liked her so well he liked near sank his teeth into the critters' pitcher afore I convinced him it twernt real. (Translation available upon request.)

As for Bill Rotsler's letter of comment, I may have gotten the details of his Marilyn Monroe story wrong (he told it to me in a small car with L.A. traffic noise in the background) but I stand behind the truth of what I said: Bill was **somebody**!

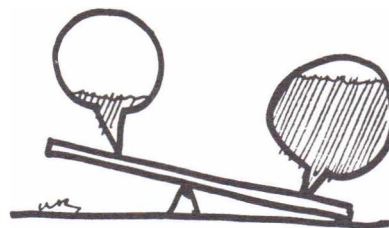
**Rodney Leighton, R.R.#3, Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia B0K 1V0, Canada**

Thanks very much for *Mimosa* 21. I admit to being a tad disheartened at being WAHFed two issues in a row but then I read over that list and felt much better. After all, I am in extremely illustrious company. If I can continue, next thing you know some fool will be calling me a BNF or something. I can see my fannish obituary: Rodney's greatest accomplishment was to appear in the *Mimosa* WAHF list for twenty-five straight issues.

(( We apologize for making you start counting all over again. ))

### **We Also Heard From:**

John Boston, Michael A. Burstein, Jack Chalker, Chester Cuthbert, Richard Dengrove, Howard DeVore, Alrvid Engholm, Richard Geis, Steve Green, Dean Grennell, Kim Huett, Ben Indick, Joyce Katz, Robert Kennedy, R'ykandar Korra'ti, Ken Lake, Cato Lindberg, Heidi Lyshol, Steve Michaluk, Franz H. Miklis, Catherine Mintz, Yuri A. Mironets, Murray Moore, Joseph Nicholas, Elizabeth Osborne, Lloyd Penney, Bob Perlono, Robert Peterson, Derek Pickles, Thomas Recktenwald, Mike Resnick, Yvonne Rousseau, David Rowe, Anthony Shepherd, Fred Smith, Steve Sneyd, Mae Strelkov, Alan J. Sullivan, David Truesdale, Roger Waddington, Michael Waite, Taral Wayne, Henry Welch, Malgorzata Wilk, Walter Willis, and Taras Wolansky. **Thanks to one and all!**



# SF

# Connectivity

## Closing Comments by Nicki Lynch

We plan on publishing this issue of *Mimosa* in June, so by the time you read this the 1998 Worldcon in Baltimore will be less than two months away. The Hugo Award nominations for *Bucconeer* have already happened, and when I received this year's final Hugo ballot, I was surprised to see that the nominees in the Best Dramatic Presentation category consisted only of movies. I had expected to see *Contact* and *Men In Black* to make the ballot, and even *Gattaca* wasn't a surprise. But, with the popularity of newer television series like *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys*, *Xena: Warrior Princess*, and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (good series you should be watching!) and proven series such as *Babylon 5*, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, *Highlander: the Series*, and *The X Files*, I had expected an episode from at least one of them to be there. It was disappointing to see the category filled out by two inferior movies.

But next year ought to be different. Next year I'm hoping that enough fans will have seen (and remembered) an excellent television series that is worthy of an award. Let me tell you about it.

Last weekend (as I'm writing this) the cable television network HBO aired the final two episodes of *From the Earth to the Moon*, a twelve part series about the Mercury/Gemini/Apollo years (1961 to 1972) of man's journey to the moon, told from various perspectives. Based mostly on fact, it was exciting and more than a bit nostalgic, especially for someone of that generation who dreamed of going to the moon. The twelve hours I invested in watching the series were well spent.

But it was in the very last episode, as the Apollo 17 astronauts were on their way home from the moon, that something reached out and grabbed me. As the astronauts were leaving lunar orbit, the flight controller

in Houston radioed them a message of congratulation for a successful mission, and included four lines of poetry which had nothing to do with the space program but everything to do with science fiction:

*"We pray for one last landing  
On the globe that gave us birth,  
Let us rest our eyes on fleecy skies,  
And the cool green hills of Earth..."*

The flight controller correctly identified the lines as from "Rhysling, the Blind Poet of the Spaceways." But as a science fiction reader, I already knew that — it was from a story by Robert A. Heinlein that originally appeared in the 1940s. So I had to wonder — how many people watching actually knew this the source of this (perhaps) obscure quote, and of the character that 'wrote' it?

The space program used to be something most children (and adults) knew about; how many children (or young adults) today can name any of the astronauts (other than the ones who died aboard the *Challenger*) or, indeed, even have an interest in space exploration? Man last set foot on the moon more than twenty-five years ago but today there seems to be no excitement or interest whatsoever in going back, or in exploring the planets other than by remote control.

This leads me back to the 'connectivity' theme of this issue — have we, the generation who dreamed of space travel and saw it happen, connected to the generation of today with our dreams of space travel and exploring the universe? Are there young(er) readers (proto-fans?) who are stimulated by the SF books of today and moved to connect with us?

American culture has changed since we were kids looking for kindred spirits who read SF and a place to belong. SF/fantasy (or at least sci-fi) has become



mainstream and common place. Classics of the genre are taught in schools and colleges as literature. Most Americans have not only heard of science fiction and fantasy but have even read it! Fans who come to Worldcon in Baltimore can visit a *Star Wars* exhibit at the National Air and Space Museum in nearby Washington, if they can get a ticket. (I can attest that the lines of people to get in can be pretty long.) Several years ago, the Smithsonian had a similar *Star Trek* exhibit in that venue. Twenty years ago such an exhibit of artifacts from an SF movie or TV series would have been considered *avant-garde* at best.

But my real question is on the future of fandom. Are new fans out there waiting to take up the mantle that First Fandom has passed on to us via all the subsequent numbered fandoms? And are they aware that SF fandom started in the 1930s and the Internet had no influence on it — that fandom was formed long before cyberspace and not the other way around?

There are some SF fanzines that exist only in cyberspace, i.e. on the World Wide Web, but the ones I've seen have been mostly media-oriented. The e-zine (as they are called) editors don't print paper copies and send them out via a traditional mailing list. Instead of showing up in your mail, there might be an announcement in one of the various SF related news groups or a possible e-mail notification if you're on the right list-serv. But by just having the e-zine out there with no paper mailing lists, the connection of the readers with the editor is not evident; in fact the editor has no real knowledge of who the readers are! This is a perturbing aspect, as SF fandom is built around fans communicating with each other either through the mail or at conventions.

I have no idea how substantial the letters of comment are for e-zines, but I do know that despite the number of people who have visited the *Mimosa* Web site, the vast majority of our LoCs are the result of the printed version of the fanzine. Some of the people who discover us via the Web do send e-mail, but to date they have not contributed substantially to our Letters Column.

I'm sure there are younger fans out there — they were in the audience at LoneStarCon in the neofans panels and we occasionally get a few dollars for an issue from a person we've never heard of. For the most part, fandom — *true* fandom — is a stable population slowly shrinking by attrition. Is true fandom doomed to die off with the last true fan? I'm not optimistic that the fandom we're involved in will continue due to lack of connections between us and the 'next'

generation. (Rich thinks this is a downer essay, but that is the way I feel.)

I don't dislike SF/fantasy becoming popular; I think it's great to see my favorite genre everywhere, even if it is mostly sci-fi. What bothers me is that I don't see true fandom gaining by this as it did in the past. We're still the "ugly step-sisters" when it comes to the sci-fi fans. Sure, many of today's sci-fi fans may come to Worldcons and some may even attend local and regional conventions, but they have their own 'SF cons' that often are professionally (rather than fan) run. The dealers rooms in these conventions are filled with TV and movie merchandise, and most of the books, from the few booksellers there, are tied in with the media.

SF has been shoved aside by sci-fi. Sci-fi has become the popularization and commercialization of science fiction and fantasy through the visual media and concentrates on the merchandise aspect of the genre rather than the science or introspection behind it.

While all this isn't necessarily bad, we aren't seeing the influx into fandom of eager new fans as we did when *Star Trek* was first on TV— very seldom, for instance, do sci-fi fans join amateur press associations or the local SF clubs. Despite the disdain some SF fans had for *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* fans when they were new, fandom benefited by the many, chiefly women fans who joined what had been until then a mostly male club. Fandom hasn't seen many fans from this decade of sci-fi joining it, and without new fans, it's hard to see how true fandom can continue.

So, like the HBO series *From the Earth to the Moon*, we may be the last generation to reach out to the unknown and find a common bond with those who are also reaching out. Like our past dreams of space travel, SF fandom is considered outmoded and can be replaced by a removed experience. In the years to come, I'm afraid our fandom will be looked on as nostalgia by the media fans and its history considered a footnote, if noticed at all, by popular culture. We've been usurped by sci-fi, which came from us, but rarely acknowledges us and is all the poorer for it. ☼

