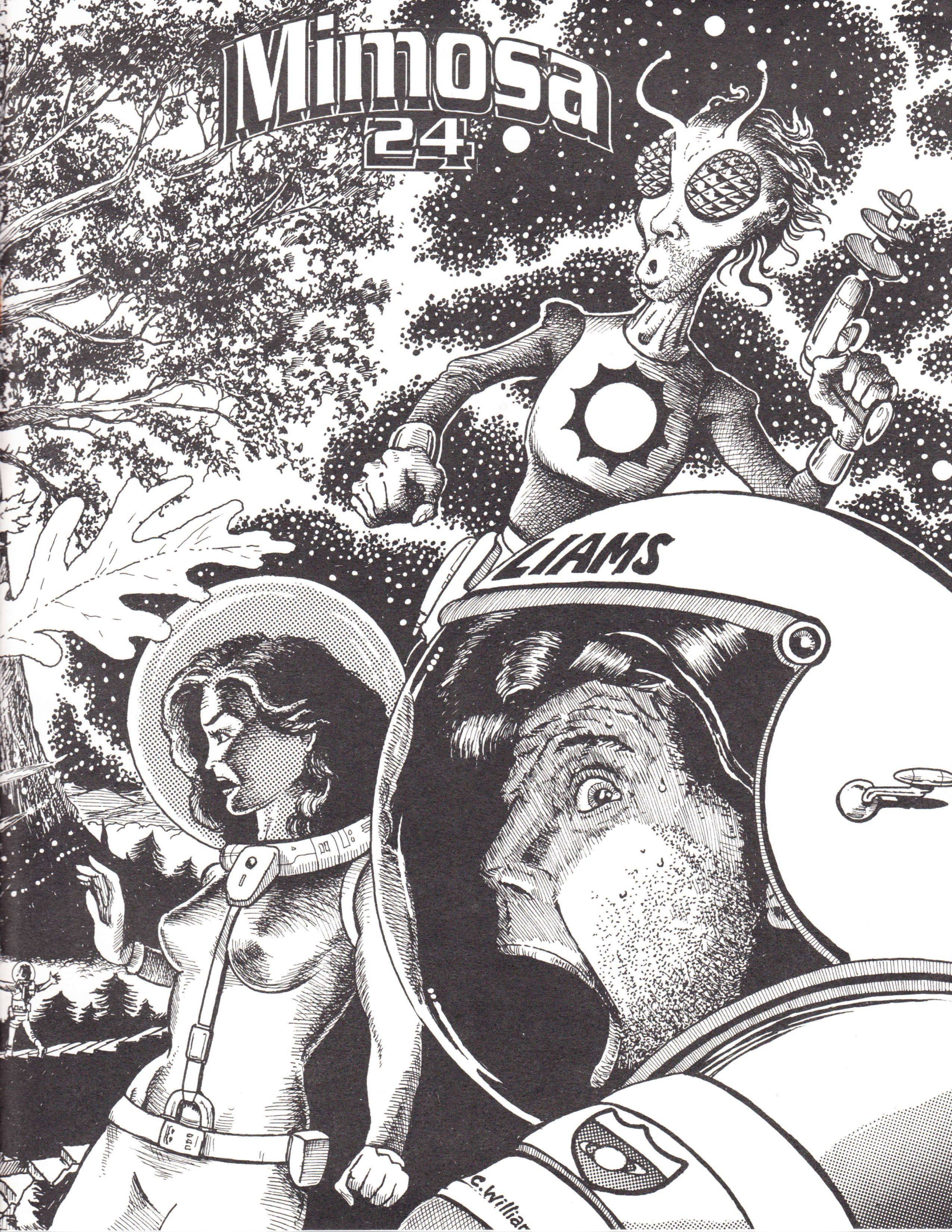


Mimosa

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from Nicki and Richard Lynch, P.O. Box 3120, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20885, U.S.A.
 e-mail address: fiawol@cpcug.org web site: <http://www.smithway.org/mimosa>

Mimosa is a fanzine very much devoted to the preservation of the history of science fiction fandom. We publish *Mimosa* approximately twice a year; this twenty-fourth issue was published in August 1999, and is available for 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 *M25* early next 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 keep you on our mailing list for as long as we continue to publish. Copies of most back issues are available; please write us for more info on price and availability. This entire issue is ©1999 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 Night at the Ball Park

Opening Comments by Nicki Lynch

Here we are in mid summer, we're in a heat wave and drought, and the thought of getting away for something like Worldcon is very much on our minds. But we still have more of the summer yet to enjoy. The County Fair is coming up before Worldcon and I'd like to enter some quilts, as I did last year. Employee Appreciation Week is coming up at my job the same week as the Fair. The division of my company I work for is in the process of being sold, so everyone is wondering if the usual events will be taking place, such as the ice cream social and an evening at the Frederick Keys game.

It's a pleasure to see a minor league baseball game. The minor leagues are the fun part of baseball, with special events at almost every game and lots of fan involvement. The Keys are the local minor league 'Single-A' team of the Baltimore Orioles. We try to attend a game each season; recently, we had the chance to see a game featuring fireworks afterwards. It was a lively game and not all of the action was on the field.

By the end of the second inning, the Wilmington Blue Rocks had ten runs to the Keys' none. To say the Keys were playing badly would be stating the obvious. They had trouble making double plays and kept missing the cutoff man. Both team's pitchers threw high fastballs that the batters kept popping up or fouling back into the seats.

We were sitting behind home plate, well behind the screen, so I thought we were safe. However, I was wrong; it was almost like being shelled, the baseballs came into our section so often. Baseballs also flew over the roof of the stadium and into the parking lot (to the sound of glass crashing over the loudspeaker) or bounced off the roof and back into the surging crowd. When someone caught the ball in the stands, everyone would cheer.

One baseball came straight down on a woman sitting about three rows in front of us. It bounced off the top of her head and into the hands of the man two rows ahead of her. There was a flurry of activity as a paramedic and what looked to be the team's general manager rapidly descended on her. Another baseball

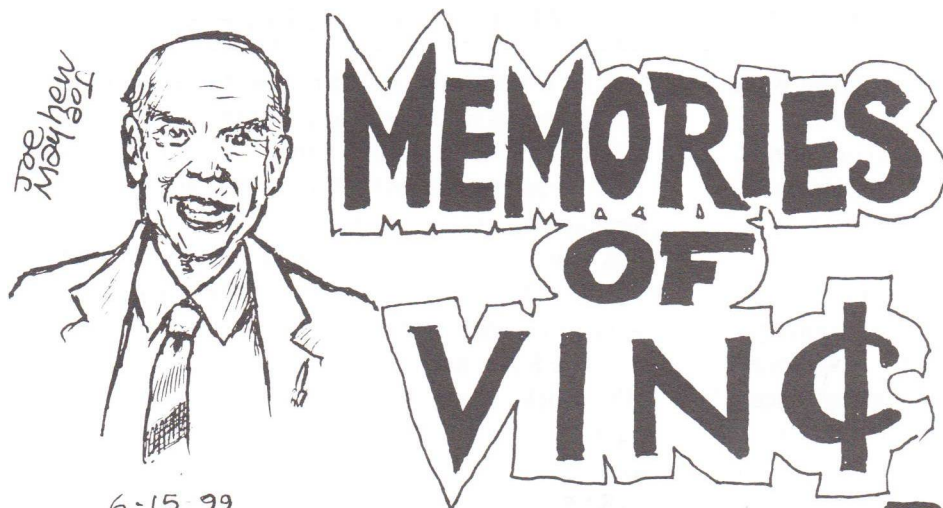
was hit off the edge of the roof and headed straight back towards where we were sitting. A boy was standing in the aisle not far from us and tried to catch the baseball; it glanced off his hands and then knocked him square in the head. With a swiftness that must come from practice, the paramedic reappeared with his kit and the whole ritual with the woman was repeated.

The Keys managed to score two runs while the Blue Rocks scored two more, making it a 14 to 2 game. The game obviously wouldn't go into extra innings, so we didn't have a long wait to see the fireworks display before the long wait to get out of the parking lot. During the wait, we talked about what an unusual game that had been, with all the foul balls, seeing two people sitting near us get hit, and how badly the Keys played. The Keys seemed to lack the communication to make the good plays.

We've decided to make "Communications, Past and Present" the theme in this issue of *Mimosa*: I can talk to anyone, real-time, on this planet. But there is more to communications than real-time talk. Communications is also about transcending time and space. By transporting us to other times and places, we experience the 'sensawonder' we fans like to talk about. This issue of *Mimosa* features communication with other times and places, notably, the ninth in Forry Ackerman's series of autobiographical memoirs, where Forry travels to Russia and China. There's also Part 3 of Mike Resnick's "Worldcon Memories," from 1967 to 1996. And besides these, we also have two remembrances of fans who've passed away recently (sadly, an all too familiar theme in the past two years), "Memories of Vinç" by Ron Bennett and "A Cartoonist Remembers Ian Gunn" by Teddy Harvia. No one who is remembered ever is truly gone. Also noted as a 'passing' of sorts is "Science Fiction Under Martial Law" by Polish fan Małgorzata Wilk, who rightly points out that even in the worst of times, it can also be the best of times.

There's also a lot more I'll let you discover for yourself. We hope you enjoy this 'Communications' issue, and communicate that to us! ✧

☛ We begin this 'Communication' theme issue with a remembrance of a lost friend. Aubrey Vincent Clarke was a frequent contributor to *Mimosa*; he was also one of the most important British fans of the legendary decade of the 1950s, which some people consider to be fandom's 'Golden Age'. Every time we heard from Vince, in every letter we ever received from him, there was always a little nugget of information that added to our knowledge about that decade. We were enriched by his friendship, as we are immensely saddened by his passing.



by
Ron Bennett

Like everyone else in fandom, I mourn the passing of Vinç Clarke. A man without enemies. A dear man altogether. A quiet man, yet one with a burning enthusiasm for science fiction and an especial energy for all things fannish.

When I first saw Vince's name on the contents table of the fanzine I was being shown I was quite disappointed. I was new to the world of fanzines and, as a devotee of Arthur C. Clarke, easily misread the name of the article's author. A.V. Clarke? Why, I even had the slight suspicion that this upstart was trading on the good name of the great Arthur C.

I read the article anyway and a forty year long admiration for Aubrey Vincent was born.

I don't remember meeting Vinç at the 1954 British Convention, the Whit weekend SuperManCon at Manchester's Grosvenor Hotel. The small group of Leeds fans who attended gaped from afar at John Russell Fearn and revelled only in the coincidence that Mike Rosenblum, our own BNF and mentor lived in Grosvenor Park. We stuck together as neos did. And do. Not for us the wild distribution of quote cards to passers-by outside the hotel.

But by the following convention at Kettering, Vinç was firmly established in my mind as the compiler of *The Directory of Anglo-fandom*, every fan's bible, *Duplicating Without Tears* (and there's a neat pun for you, one which would escape a fair percent-

age of modern fanzine editors), and the voted delegate of British fandom in the first TAFF campaign. He had not only contributed a couple of pieces to my fanzine, *PLOY*, but he and I were corresponding on a regular basis. Still, Vinç corresponded with *everyone* on a regular basis. And that was in addition to producing *Science Fantasy News*, contributing to what appeared to be every other issue of every fanzine being published *and* being instrumental in the formation of the highly successful apa, OMPA (The Off-Trails Magazine Publishers' Association).

I wonder what he would have achieved had he been prolific.

And later that same year I had the honour and pleasure of staying overnight at Vince's home in Wel-ling. I'd very recently left college and was hitchhiking my way to the small convention being put on in Antwerp. Vinç very kindly invited me to break my journey and I called for him after work at the wholesale iron merchants, Spencer, Bonecourt and Clarkson.

We walked through to London Bridge station with Vinç pointing out the various landmarks to a provincial lad on his first visit to the metropolis, the house where Dickens had lived, Southwark Cathedral, The Tabard Inn, Ted Carnell's office...

"I should have arranged to meet you here at the station," Vinç told me in his slow, languid drawl. He

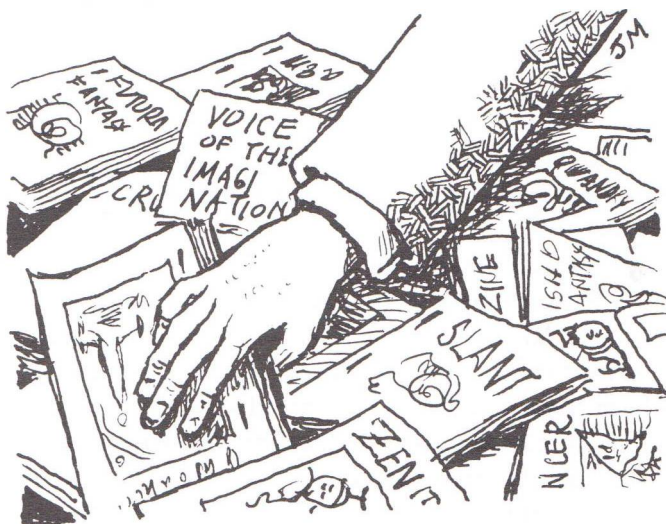
was the master of under-emphasis. "On platform five."

Naturally, it transpired that at that time there was no platform five at London Bridge Station. One, two, three, four, six and so on. This possibly accounts for some of the math pupils I came across in subsequent years.

Once at Wendover Way we sat surrounded by bookcases full of science fiction and fantasy... what was labelled fantasy in those days... books and magazines as well as peripheral items which had taken Vince's fancy. Here, for example, Vinç introduced me to *Scoops* and to E.S. Turner's *Boys Will Be Boys*, the excellent survey of boys' story magazines, the "Old Boys' Papers."

And, as though this wonderland were not enough, there were the shelves of pulps. And the treasure trove of fanzines. Hundreds and hundreds of them. And what fanzines! *Voice of the Imagi-Nation*, *Futura Fantasia*, *The Necromancer*, *Zenith*, *Slant*, *Quandry*... they were all there.

Sadly, I can't remember the item in question, but when a certain scarce title came up in conversation, Vinç reached up over his head without rising from his chair and pulled the very issue of the magazine from a shelf. "Just an odd copy I happened to have lying around," he said casually and with a neatly judged tone of modesty. Needless to say, I cracked up. And the sentence became a catchphrase between us in subsequent years.



We talked, as fans do, late into the night, discussing among other topics the deeper metaphysical implications of such items as eggplants and crottled greeps. I think I rather disappointed Vinç by laugh-

ing at his frequent puns. The fannish tradition seemed to be to react to them only with a straight face. And then possibly... an ability far outside my ken... to cap them two or three sentences later. These puns, in themselves, opened doors for me. I'd grown up in a divided world. Humour was always present in family life, but puns were an unknown beast. And in my academic studies, puns were considered the lowest form of wit. Sad.

The following year I was lucky enough to have a piece of mine published in *Eye*, the London fanzine Vinç was editing. The magazine had had a fairly turbulent history as far as editors were concerned and Vince's sheer *niceness* could be gathered from the name "Irene Boothroyd" emblazoned under the title on the printed cover. Printed covers were rare in those days of hecto and mimeo. Each was an event in itself. Irene was a fairly isolated northern fan who had professed to Vinç her ambition to see her name in print. And of course Vinç was just the Kindly Soul to make one's dream come true.

In the summer of 1957, by which time Vinç was married, I decided to seek temporary work down on the south coast, but without success (in later years it amused me to recall that one of the hotels which turned me down was the Brighton Metropole, the venue for two WorldCons) and I found myself in London.

Joy Clarke made two highly acceptable suggestions, firstly that I stay with her and Vinç as a rent paying boarder at their home in Inchmery Road, Catford, and secondly that I try to find work in London. "You can type," she pointed out. "Why not try an agency? They're always looking for temps."

I presented myself at an agency on The Strand, directly opposite the Law Courts and, though my typing speed is normally calculated in minutes per word, managed to con my way on to the agency's books. (The typewriter they set me to work on for my test was identical to that I which I owned. You think I told them?).

And so followed a glorious month (apart from a week in the sweatshop of Butterfly Brand papers), working during the days for architects, shipping offices ("So *that's* a Bill of Lading! I always thought it was something in a kitchen.") and a market research firm (Marplan) and spending the evenings in the company of fans, and Big Name Fans, too. I became a regular visitor to Ted Carnell's offices and also, with the aid of Vince's bike, to Tresco, the not *too* far

away home of Ken and Pamela Bulmer on Wellmeadow Road.

I was also taken along to meetings of the World-Con committee, for this was approximately a month before the Big Event, the 1957 Loncon. I remember chipping in with a couple of suggestions which were heartily accepted and it was only years later that it occurred to me that because of rivalries between factions on the committee, my suggestions were considered feasible because they were those of a neutral.

On my following birthday I received a large parcel from Inchmery Road, full of all sorts of useless goodies, a pencil stub, a spent match, a bottle of solidified correction fluid, a broken stylus, a bank of rusty staples, flaking brown margins from the oxidised pages of some moribund prozine, a small sachet of potato chip salt, a quadruple-folded SuperManCon quotecard which read, "If you didn't want Crottled Greeps why did you order them?" and some duplicator slip sheets, spoiled pages from an issue of *Eye*... that sort of thing... plus a small yellow balloon, covered in writing which, when I'd blown up the balloon in order to read what was written there, turned out to be a selection of *Hyphen* bacover quotes. Plus one sentence, penned in Vince's recognizable writing: "And the mouthpiece was smeared with a deadly poison."

I was back in London, temping, a couple of years later, by which time Vinç and Joy had moved from Catford to Queen's Road in the New Cross district of London where they named their apartment 'Inchmery'. And with them went their permanent boarder, Sandy Sanderson. Sandy had been a leading figure in British fandom for almost ten years, primarily being involved with the SF club in his home town, Manchester. He was a regular soldier, a sergeant in the army, and when he had been posted in the early fifties first to Egypt and then to Cyprus, had formulated the most detailed and effective hoax ever perpetrated in fandom, the invention of femmefan Joan W. Carr.

At the time of the move to Queen's Road, however, the hoax had been revealed some three years earlier and Sandy had been living with the Clarkes for well over a year.

I can't say that I enjoyed moving into Inchmery. Enjoyed doesn't even come close to what I was experiencing. This was the zenith of my year, every evening being a paradise of fannish conversation and with Sandy beaver away, working on his fanzine, *Aporrheta*.

I went down to London a few days early for the 1960 Easter Convention and naturally called in at Inchmery. No one there had known that I was already in town, but it was Vince's birthday and I'd bought him a giant lollipop. When Vinç came home from work, I hid in the back room with the idea of springing out and surprising him. This I did while he was talking to his father who happened to have dropped in. Vinç merely took the lollipop, said, "Thanks, Ron," and carried on with the conversation.

A couple of months after the London Convention, in June 1960, Vinç produced a small oneshot fanzine which was an open letter to fandom, quite the most extraordinary publication I've ever had the misfortune to receive.

In it he announced that he and Joy were splitting up, that she and Sandy would continue to live at Inchmery for the time being, but that he was taking his and Joy's baby daughter, Nicki, with him to live in an apartment in Pepys Road, about a half mile away. As soon as the arrangements could be finalised, Sandy would leave the army and with Joy would emigrate to the States where they would be sponsored by a well-known New York fan of the day.

Vinç thanked the fans who had written to him for their kind messages of support. The future seemed pretty black, he wrote, but he would try and keep some time open for fandom.

Several fans suggested to me that I must have known or at least guessed what was happening. After all, hadn't I spent more time at Inchmery than any other outsider? But no, whatever the reason, I was as surprised and as devastated as every other fan of the day.

Later that year I was in London again for my summer break and took the opportunity to call on Vinç.

It was a sad meeting.

By this time Vince's attitude had crystallized.

He did not invite me indoors but stood with me on the top step of the fairly sizeable house which had been converted into apartments. He was bitter, understandably so of course, and told me that fandom was no longer for him. Henceforth, he said, he would watch television. And to anyone who knew Vinç watching television on a regular, non-selective basis was, to him, the absolute worst waste of time to which one could lower oneself.

He also told me, in a straightforward fashion that he did not want to have anything to do with "someone

who has had social intercourse with the people who have ruined my life.”

The words stung, as they were so designed to do. What could I say? I mumbled something about wishing him luck, anyway, and stuck out my hand as he turned to step indoors.

He took the hand limply. “Well, if it means something to you,” he said, clearly implying that the gesture meant nothing to him. He went inside and closed the door behind him.

Ten years later I enjoyed a three-year stint working in Belgium. For various reasons I’d drive to or through London perhaps ten times a year. The road from London to Dover and the cross-Channel car ferries is the A2, along the Old Kent Road and past the end of Pepys Road.

Out of the corner of my eye I could see the apartment house where I’d last met Vinç. I’d wonder about him, and, if the traffic was sufficiently light and I wasn’t making a mad dash for a particular sailing, I’d contemplate stopping and seeing whether Vinç was still there, with Nicki who by then would have been eleven... twelve... thirteen.

But, guilty as I felt for driving straight past, that’s exactly what I continued to do.

Perhaps one rebuff, as intense as that handed out to me in 1960, was enough. Vinç deserved better than my continually driving past, but I was a coward.

Then, some years later, out of the blue, Vinç returned to fandom. A fan who was researching into the life and career of Wally Gillings came across Vince’s Welling address, tried his luck to see whether Vinç still lived there and lo! The old fannish flame in Vince’s bosom was rekindled.

We sat together in the lounge at NovaCon and talked as though nothing untoward had ever happened between us. To my amazement he was surprisingly sympathetic with my own position, which by that time had to some degree mirrored his own, that of a single parent having to raise, in my case with the aid of a teenage son, a young daughter suffering from some ghastly side effects of radio- and chemotherapy.

It was a mark of the man that at no time did he point out that he’d been through it himself.

We kept in touch after that, via occasional letters, Christmas cards and, of course, at a dozen succeeding conventions, including the Glasgow WorldCon of 1995 when Vinç was the worthy Fan Guest of Honor. Neither of us ever mentioned Inchmery, Joy, or

Sandy.

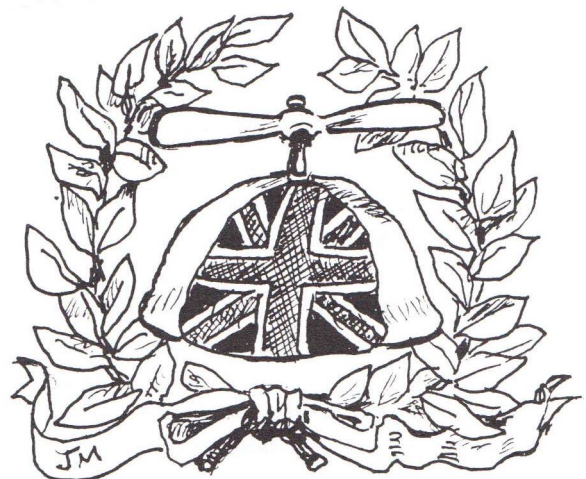
He wrote to me full of excitement and enthusiasm for having discovered computers, modems and e-mail. I suspect that everyone in the world, the world of fandom *and* the world of mundanity, received e-mails from Vinç. Possibly even those without a computer. On one occasion during a discussion we were having about old British comics I mentioned a particular comic collector by name. “Yes,” came the reply, “a fine person. Very intelligent.” Someone with whom Vinç was, much to my surprise, in regular contact.

In May 1998, Vinç wrote to me when he was taken into hospital. He was obviously finding it difficult to fill the days away from his new-found toy. In one exchange I explained some medical procedure to him, gleaned from personal experience and mentioned that he probably already knew of this and that I was undoubtedly teaching my grandmother, as it were, to suck eggs. His reply mentioned that he liked to make sure about such things. I thought he meant the medical procedure. But there followed a lengthy and detailed description of exactly how to prepare an egg for sucking.

And so, for a while, we once again began to exchange letters on a more than weekly basis.

Until November, when my letter to Vinç was answered by a phone call from Nicki.

One fan has mentioned to me that Vince’s leaving us is very much a *deja-vu* experience, that he’d left us before. But, of course, it isn’t. Even if I did drive past the end of Pepys Road, feeling as guilty as hell, there was always the chance that one day Vinç would return to the fold and that we’d once again enjoy his soft-spoken dry wit and wealth of fannish and literary knowledge. ✧



It's a bit paradoxical, but science fiction fandom is both old and young. As of next year, fandom will have existed in "nine" different decades. And yet the activity is new enough that there are still many active fans whose presence in fandom spans the range from the present all the way back to its very earliest days. The writer of the next article is one of them. In his previous article, Forry wrote about some of those early days. This time he takes us on a trip to some far-off lands in Europe and Asia, replete with visual wonders, cultural challenges, and even some communication difficulties.

Through Time and Space with Forry Ackerman

PART IX

by Forrest J Ackerman

Comrade, are
you now or have
you ever been a
member of science
fiction fandom?



Knock, knock. Who's there? Soviet. Soviet who? Ve vere hungry, so ve et.

Back in 1978, in the days when Russia was still the Eeee-veal Empire, a couple dozen of us sci-fi folk decided we would all go there en masse. The group included Cylvia Margulies, who was associated with a magazine called *Fantastic Universe*. There was Joe Haldeman and his wife Gay, and Lil Neville, the widow of Kris Neville and who had collaborated with him on at least one science fiction story. There was the long-time science fiction fan Art Widner, and Tom & Terri Pinckard, who were creators of the Pinckard Science Fiction Writers Salon. There was Charles Brown of *Locus*, the French fan and writer Georges Gallet, eofan Clifton Amsbury, and, of course, me and my wife Wendayne.

We were told in advance, when we were planning the trip, that since we expected to meet a number of science fiction authors and fans, to bring along any books or fanzines or things we would like to make gifts of. So I went out and spent about a hundred dollars for copies of a book I had published called *Science Fiction Movie Gold*.

Well, when I got to the customs inspection in Moscow, there was a young kid there looking very officious, somebody I wouldn't have given the time of day, necessarily, in L.A., but I wasn't about to fool around with Russian customs inspectors. He immediately wanted me to open the package of *Science Fic-*

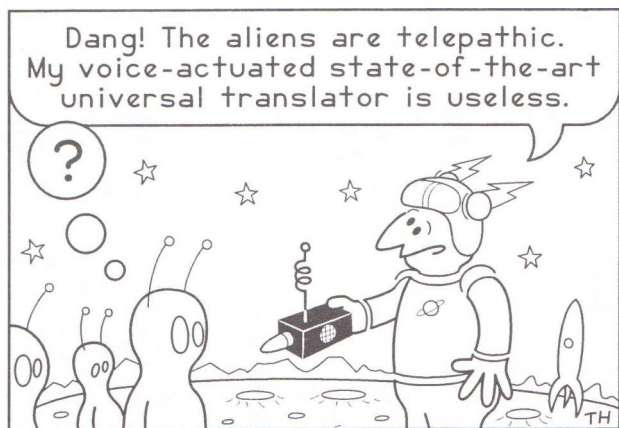
tion Movie Gold. Immediately, a frown appeared upon his face; he looked very unhappy and pressed a red button. A very dignified-looking soldier with all kinds of medals and ribbons on his uniform came over; as he paged through one of the books it was obvious he didn't know or even think much of science fiction, so in desperation I began throwing out names I thought he might recognize ("Movies? *Solaris*? Stanislaw Lem?"). But this didn't seem to impress him at all; he kept looking through the package and frowning: "Monsters, monsters – *Nyet! Nyet! Confiscata!!*" Now, I don't know any Russian at all, but I could understand what *that* meant!

So that was the end of my hundred dollars worth of movie magazines. I imagine they immediately went on the black market – or maybe the *red* market. Cylvia Margulies was infuriated. "Why don't they realize you are Mr. Science Fiction? You go right over there and demand your books back!" But I was only expecting to visit Moscow, Leningrad, and Kiev – I didn't want to get a free trip to Siberia!

* * *

Despite of that rather rude greeting we actually did manage to have a memorable time of it while we were there. I came back with my share of adventures and even some misadventures. In Kiev, I thought I would look up an old Sci-Fi Esperantist friend and surprise him by greeting him over the phone in Esperanto. But unfortunately, there were no telephone

books! (Sorry, Dmetrio Viktorov Chekovitch!) And while we were watching the armored might of the May Day parade in Moscow, I was spotted by a radio interviewer who told me just that morning from Washington he had heard Ray Bradbury!



I've had many international science fiction experiences besides that one, of course. I've already mentioned the first one {{ed. note: in *Mimosa* 19}}, my trip to England for the International Science Fiction Convention in 1951. And just recently I got back from a ten-day visit to China. We had learned that China was going to jump the gun on the year 2000 and celebrate it in advance. This appealed to science fiction people, of course, and it was arranged where we could go there for ten days to exchange ideas. And it was more than just Americans. There were a couple of Japanese there, one Australian, and some Russians, besides the half a dozen of us from the States. And it was more than just the science fiction genre represented – there was an American astronaut, Shannon Lucid, and three Russian cosmonauts.

It turned out that nobody there was familiar with Frankenstein or Dracula. I was also surprised they didn't know of Ray Bradbury or Isaac Asimov or H.G. Wells. I was given a gift of about twenty science fiction books, and can you imagine what one of them was? It was Hugo Gernsback's *Ralph 124C41+*. Of course, the book's title is a pun – 'one to foresee for one plus' but I don't know how that came across in Chinese. It must have appealed to them because there was so much about simple science.

There are one billion two hundred million potential readers of science fiction in China. The first science fiction magazine had been created there by a woman. The first time her science fiction magazine

went on sale it sold 600 copies. But she has kept right with it – I think it's called *World Science Fiction* – and she's had me interviewed in it along with my picture so I was rather well known to a number of Chinese. We went to her office – we couldn't believe our ears, that she'd only sold 600 copies of the first issue. Nowadays she's up to 250,000, and we thought, well, she must be living quite high on the hog. But she didn't get a penny more – it wouldn't matter if she sold a million or even ten million. She would make the same salary. There was absolutely no financial incentive for her to make the magazine better and more successful from a marketing perspective – it must have been her love of the subject matter. I was really astonished to see that's the way their society works.

It may be that they are attempting via their science fiction magazine to do as Hugo Gernsback tried to do back in the 1920s – sugar-coat science and get a generation interested in becoming chemists and physicists and astronomers and so on. They may be trying to get children interested in science via science fiction. At one point, at an pre-arranged event in a giant auditorium in the city of Chung-Du, I was literally deluged by little children. And after two-and-a-half hours of signing autographs one of them said, "How many times have you been in space, Mr. Ackerman?" And I realized they had thought I was an astronaut!

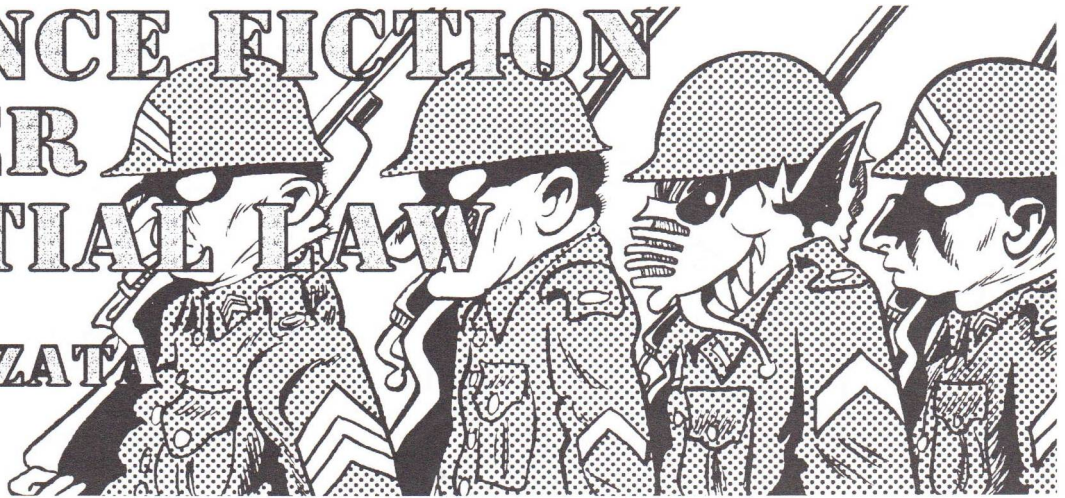


I had a good time in China. There are one billion two hundred million people there, and I think there were eight or ten who didn't get my autograph. They practically chased me up the Great Wall of China. Now I had not counted the number of steps going up, but going back down I had nothing better to do, so just to amuse myself, I did count, and how many steps had I climbed? Not 450, not 452... Thank you Ray Bradbury – 451! ☆

And now another article about faraway lands (at least for us). It was a form of communication, the Internet, that introduced us to the writer of the next article. We met Małgorzata in 1993, on a vacation (Nicki) / business (Richard) trip to Poland, after first enquiring in a Polish-language newsgroup if there were any fans in Warsaw. She's been our friend ever since. Poland is now a great place to visit, but it's not always been that way.

SCIENCE FICTION UNDER MARTIAL LAW

BY
MALGORZATA
WILK



It was in the night of December 12th, 1981, when my father returned from a business trip to Germany. There was a lot of joy, many questions and unpacking and the like. When we finally went to sleep it was probably after midnight so we slept long the next day, a Sunday. I don't remember much from that day, only that shortly after we woke up our neighbor trundled down the stairs wearing only his pants and crying "War! War!" That was the beginning of the Martial Law in Poland as I remember it. I was 13 years old at that time and actually I remember it rather dimly. But to think that the people who reach adulthood now weren't even born then or were just babies makes me feel somehow very old.

The Martial Law was suspended on 31st December 1982 and finally withdrawn on 22nd July 1983. Some of you may remember the famous picture Chris Niedenthal took of big tanks right in front of the Cinema Moskwa (Moscow) with a big poster advertising the movie *Apocalypse Now*. Somehow he managed to smuggle the negatives out of Poland and the picture was published in *Newsweek*. For some people the Martial Law really *was* an Apocalypse. We children were rather glad because it meant we would have longer Christmas vacations instead of the ordinary one and a half weeks. But ten thousands of people were arrested and brought to internment camps. Many actors weren't allowed to perform anymore, professors were discharged from universities. The borders were closed, even the cities were surrounded by the military and one had to have a special permission to leave town. Telephone connections were cut off (not that I

was bothered overly by it, us not having a telephone at that time), letters opened and censored. And we didn't know what happened to our family outside of Warsaw.

It was a very sad Christmas that year, one spent only among us three, not counting the dog. It was the first one in Poland after our five-year stay in Germany, the first one in a country struck by a very bad economic condition. I still remember what my Christmas present was: a Polish language dictionary, the only sensible book that my parents could buy. It must have cost them much trouble to get it but at that time I couldn't appreciate it. You see, in those difficult days you had to hunt down everything in the shops, irrespective of their kind, be it food, clothing, paper, books etc. The most desired things were sold from under the counter. It paid to know people in various shops and to be nice to them.

But the Martial Law didn't changed my life very much besides not being able to visit my grandmother for Christmas. It was in general very difficult for me to get used to Poland at all after living in Germany for five years. When we left Poland in 1976 it was a comfortable country to live in, even if you had to go hunting for certain things like refrigerators, washing machines, and televisions. But how great one felt, how proud one was after weeks spent in a queue to finally own one. And everyone had work, was reasonably safe, could travel abroad – and the food was cheap. When we returned in September 1981 to Poland, the Solidarność was already a big power. Since 1980 there had been strikes (not that this has changed

very much now – in January this year the anesthetists went on strike) and food and other items on tickets. I really don't know how I managed to survive on only one chocolate bar a month! And mostly it wasn't even chocolate but a chocolate-like product. Oh, and there was also 100 grams of candies every month.



I remember particularly well the fat milk sold in groceries only for children and on special marks. I was too old so we had to wait till the evening before the shops closed and sold the remains of the milk (it wasn't pasteurized nor heat treated, so after one day, or even that same evening, it was sour) to ordinary people. A colleague of my father returned in 1982 from England and he had a boy of about four years. The boy liked milk very much and he took a big swallow from his first glass of milk in Poland. Immediately he put the glass down and asked his older sister with a whiny voice: "Anieszka, why d'you put water in my milk?!"

Paper was scarce, too. But paradoxically those were good times for young science fiction writers. Socialism cherished young writers. Socialism cherished Science Fiction (I've got some obscure Eastern German SF novels that are even more socialist than Russian ones). Publishing houses had a special plan that they had to fulfill and they sought new writers and new forms of expression. Science Fiction that showed a glorious socialist future was highly valued. The production cycle was very long back in those

years, even up to three or four years. But despite of that there were always many new writers published. And there were newspapers that published stories, too. Especially prominent here was *Młody Technik* (Young Technician), a scientific monthly aimed at teenagers that always featured one SF story. Even such famous writers as Stanisław Lem or Janusz Zajdel were published there.

Poland has a founded tradition in writing SF; through the 19th century writers wrote supernatural and technical SF, during the interbellum (between WWI and WWII) Aleksander Smolarski wrote his *City of Light*, one year before Aldous Huxley wrote his *Brave New World* and a trial of plagiarism followed. The first decade after the WWII was difficult but after that SF was being published. I don't have the publication history of all the publishing houses but Iskry (sparks) was probably the first to start with SF (and the only one where I have all the titles from the beginning till 1985). In 1953 they published two Russian books, a novel and a short story collection.

The following years brought other Russian books and some Polish science fiction, mainly Stanisław Lem. And there was a final breakthrough – *The Caves of Steel* by Isaac Asimov in 1960 (and one novel by Aleksandr Belajev). Then, in 1963, *Islands in the Sky* by Arthur C. Clarke was published and a collection of American stories followed in 1966. It was not very much but at least it was chosen literature and one knew what was on the market and could buy all the books that were published (providing one could hunt down the book in the store, which wasn't easy). Every year approximately 10 to 15 SF books were published, or so I seem to remember. An invaluable source of books were second hand book stores.

This May issue of our oldest SF magazine *Nowa Fantastyka* (New SF) proudly announced that they are 200 issues old! The first issue was published in October 1982, in the middle of the Martial Law, and it was only there that people could say what they had in mind without much censorship, of course disguising it as Science Fiction. In the beginning *Nowa Fantastyka* was called simply *Fantastyka* and published by the only official publisher of magazines and newspapers. RSW Prasa Książka Ruch (Publishing Cooperative Press & Books) had a gigantic network of small newsstands with magazines, bus tickets, batteries, pencils and the like. *Fantastyka* had an enormous circulation of 150,000 copies and it was simply impossible to find a free copy in one of the newsstands –

'free copy' meaning one not subscribed through the post office (there was a limit of subscriptions for every post office) or semi-subscribed at a local newsstand in the so-called folder. The folders were very popular; you had a folder with your name and address at his newsstand and the keeper knew what kind of magazines and newspapers you always wanted and put them into your folder. But the number of folders in the newsstands was also limited. I never managed to buy a number of *Fantastyka* until August 1984 when a folder became free in the newsstand at my mother's working place. From that time I received *Fantastyka* regularly, but five years later everything changed.

In June 1989 the first semi-free elections for the Polish Parliament, the Sejm, were held. The election was only 'Semi-free' because 30% of the seats had to go to the Communist Party. And in July 1990 *Fantastyka* was taken over by a private publisher which changed its name into *Nowa* (New) *Fantastyka*. Today, Pruszyński & Spółka (Pruszyński & Company) is the biggest Polish magazine publisher – a publishing house for books as well as a book club and Internet book shop. During those years I managed to buy all those missing copies of *Fantastyka* in second hand book stores. I still buy it. Only I don't have the time now to read it!

The first contact I had with Polish fandom was in 1987 when the Seventh National Polish Convention, the Polcon, was organized in Warsaw. Organized fandom has existed in Poland for more than 25 years. I know from hearsay what the fan's life looked like in those days. The first real big convention was in 1985 (after a small and closed con in 1983). Because of the police, our meeting times were restricted till early evening. Warsaw didn't have much luck with clubs, no continuity here. There was an All-Polish SF & F Lovers Club founded in 1976, which was relieved by the Polish SF Lovers Association after five years. This centralistic association didn't last long as well. Other cities like Gdańsk or Katowice can look upon almost 20 years of club tradition, but Warsaw clubs are like a Phoenix rising from the ashes, and this year, after 12 years, there will again be a national convention in Warsaw.

There is only one club in Poland, in Olsztyn, that keeps minutes from all the meetings and events from the beginning. It makes fascinating reading. I wish I knew more about those days. I think I missed everything interesting; I wasn't in the underground, I didn't

spread underground papers. I didn't even suspect that there was something like an organized fandom. But the stories people have to tell are hilarious. Does anyone remember the space program Reagan launched? A ring of satellites that would destroy any incoming missiles, called the Star Wars Program, as opposed to George Lucas' *Star Wars* (believe me, in Polish there is a slight difference, *Wojny Gwiezdne* and *Gwiezdne Wojny*). Shortly after the Martial Law, when an association or society wanted to organize a meeting or a lecture, they had to apply for permission. The Silesian club organized a one-day con/meeting on the *Star Wars* saga. It's unbelievable, but they were visited by the police and asked why the police hadn't been informed that there was a conference held about Reagan's Star Wars Program!



There are stories about video movies showings organized by clubs where people were reading the dialogues live and funny translations happened. It's difficult to translate them into English, Polish being so different. In the *Return of the Jedi* there is I believe a scene where Luke tells Leia: "You've got that power too!" The lector listened very intently to the English original and translated: "Ty też masz tą pałę!" where this word *pałę* sounds just like power but in Polish it means that Luke implied Leia has also a male sexual organ. Now imagine this happening in a room full of young men! I wish I had been there!

My memories from club meetings from 1987 on

seem like ancient history now so much has changed. We were meeting every week in a small community club in the outskirts of Warsaw. A friend told me that they stayed after such a meeting for a small party at their friends and tried to find their way back home in the middle of the night. And Ursynów, where all this happened, is a big blocks suburb of Warsaw. They were wandering around deserted streets for what seemed like hours without finding a bus stop. Finally they saw a lonely bus driving down the street; they stopped it, climbed into it, grabbed the driver by his collar and asked with desperation in their voice: "Mister, are you going to Warsaw!?"



I liked our weekly meetings very much; we were talking about books we've read, especially bitching about the bad translations, watching video movies, and commenting on the show. The climax of those meetings was when Kryisia and Sławek came, dragging big heavy parcels of books with them. Kryisia worked in a bookstore and was naturally very well informed of forthcoming books. She took orders from all our members for specific titles and as soon as they were finally published she brought them to the club. And so every club meeting was like an unexpected present; you never knew what books she would have with her. Publishers always lagged behind their publishing schedule.

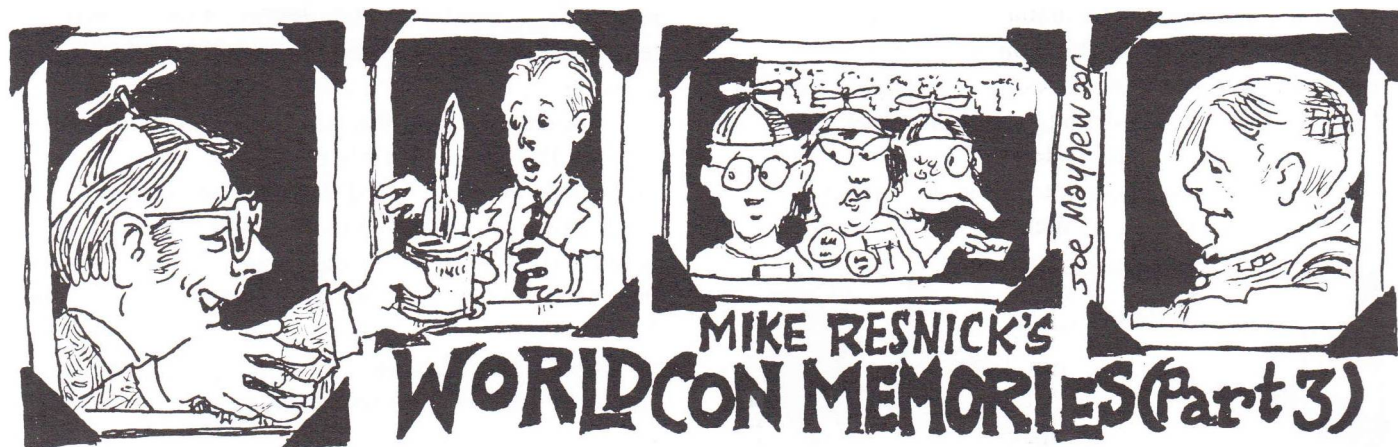
Another prominent figure of that time (and of this time as well) was Lech Olczak. In real life the chief of an obstetrics ward, he was mainly known because of his good contacts with the underground press. Mind you, only that branch of it that printed translations of American SF in gigantic print runs of a 100

copies! I remember reading these versions of McCaffrey's *Dragonsinger*, Dickson's *The Dragon and the George*, and Sheckley's *Cemetery World*, and numerous other books that I don't remember the titles of anymore. The print quality of them was horrible, with lots of typos, mimeographed, on paper slightly resembling (in color and texture) toilet paper, from a text written on a typewriter (who would think of computers then, when all you could do with them was play Pac-man or paint fractals) and simply stapled together. They were horribly expensive compared to the official books. I heard that someone has gone to jail because of publishing these books illegally – not because they violated any copyrights, but because they were publishing something not authorized by the Party.

After a special issue of *Mimosa* {{ed. note: issue 15}} with articles about food only, I sent a Letter of Comment that was published in the next issue. I remembered how those early cons looked like what we did about eating. The majority of Polish fandom is students or pupils. Me, being 30, means that I'm a dinosaur. But the age structure in Polish fandom hasn't changed very much. As students or pupils, we had not much money to spare for conventions. We slept in youth hostels and brought as much food with us as we could – bread, butter, cheese, Chinese instant soups, etc. My first two conventions, in 1987 and 1988, consisted mostly of watching video movies and occasionally meeting people. I've just looked through my con booklets and I really can't find any other meetings with writers or critical panels about translations or history, or any other topics connected (or not) with Science Fiction. This is something, which must have changed after the fall of communism. People aren't interested anymore in watching video movies. They want to meet other people, they want to meet their favorite authors, they want to have some background information.

Times have changed, the Martial Law is only a dim memory to most people. The Cinema Moskwa isn't there any longer, it was torn down to make room for a modern multiplex theatre with lots of little show rooms for a maximum of 60 people, and shopping galleries. I miss the Moskwa Cinema, the feeling of excitement when I rushed into the big auditorium for over 1000 people, just as I miss those communist days when life was easy, with no rat race, a safe (small) income and job from 8 till 4, when everybody still had time for reading SF. ☼

One of our readers, Gary Deindorfer, once described *Mimosa* as both a 'horizontal' and a 'vertical' fanzine, the 'vertical' parts having to do with fan history and the 'horizontal' about fandoms in other countries and regions. Time now for one of the 'vertical' pieces, the third in Mike Resnick's series of remembrances of past worldcons. In this installment we learn such pearls of wisdom as where *not* to sit at a Broadway play, how *not* to restrain rampant filksingers, and how *not* to lose your balls.



1967: NYCON III (New York)

We arrived a few days early so I could visit my editors (who were not, in those days, science fiction editors) and see some plays. Walter Zacharias of *Lancer* (now of *Zebra*) told me that he had reprinted some Conan stories and for reasons he absolutely could not fathom they were catching on, and actually assigned me a science fiction novel rather than the usual Gothic or doctor/nurse book.

I had been to a charming Italian restaurant called Barbetta's the summer before I met Carol, and I decided to celebrate the science fiction book contract by taking her to it. You'd be amazed what a change seven years can make. Oh, it was still charming, and the food was still good – but the prices had gone up from about \$6.00 a plate to about \$50.00. Which is a lot now, and which was absolutely eye-popping (and budget-busting) back then.

The first night there we saw *Cabaret*, a far better play than Bob Fosse's movie would lead you to believe. Then we saw *I Do! I Do!*, the two-person Tom Jones/Harvey Schmidt musical, starring Mary Martin and Robert Preston. Saw it very clearly. From the center of the first row. Robert Preston sweated non-stop for two hours. On me. When the play was over, it was hard to say which of us was more drenched in Preston sweat, but my money's on me.

The con was held in the Statler Hilton, which was not exactly in the most elegant of midtown Manhattan venues. The food was abominable. No one felt like walking 20 blocks north to the better midtown restau-

rants, and Jon Stopa finally discovered a working-class bar around the corner that served sandwiches in the back room. Thereafter, most of the Chicago-area contingent ate most of their meals there.

This was the last year that the Worldcon shared its hotel with another convention. And since it was the last time, it was probably only fitting that the convention we shared it with was hosted by the Scientologists. I remember that an escalator ran up from the main floor to the mezzanine; if you turned to your right, you found yourself at the sf registration desk; left, and you were lined up to register for the Scientologists.

It was instant hatred – and more to the point, it was instant competition. I don't know who converted more of which to what, but it kept up for the entire weekend.

Which was just as well. There's a reason why it's been a third of a century since there's been a Worldcon in New York. A reason above and beyond Manhattan's notion of affordability, that is. And the reason is that each of the NyCons was, each in its own way, a bit of a disaster.

By Thursday night only one elevator in the Hilton was running. By early Saturday morning, there was a lengthy period when *none* of them were running. The rooms were tiny, and the beds, even the doubles (mockingly called 'king-size') were shoved against the wall to provide a little extra floor space. I remember the first morning we were there: I rolled out of bed, prepared to get to my feet – and put a serious

dent in the plaster wall. Damned near broke my nose in the process.

The programming was overwhelmingly fannish. Very few panels with or about pros, and for those of us who'd come halfway across the country to here our idols speak and were confronted with one fannish panel after another, it was a major disappointment. (Fred Pohl was editing three magazines at the time, and I remember one of the few pro panels was: "Should one man be editing three prozines?" The only logical answer was, "Hell, if they're making money, he should be editing four!", but that seems to have escaped the programmers.)

I got a real kick out of one of the costumes in the masquerade. (This was back in the days when a little creativity could go a long way, and no one spent four and five digits on a costume.) Lynne Aronson, a hopeful writer at the time (she later founded Windycon), came as a rejection slip, covered with all the rejection slips she had received – including one of mine. Later Isaac Asimov put a pipe in his mouth and walked across the stage, claiming to be Harlan Ellison, who responded by pinching some girls on stage and claiming he was Isaac.

Carol had seen some earrings she liked in the hotel's jewelry store, but they were quite expensive, and after our experience at Barbetta's, she didn't want to shell out the money for them. We were due to stay until Tuesday, but we weren't enjoying the con very much, so as soon as Lester del Rey finished his speech at the Monday afternoon banquet, I bought her the earrings; we paid for them by checking out and flying home a day early.

1974: DISCON II (Washington, D.C.)

Jon and Joni Stopa, who had attended a Disclave at the Sheraton Park Hotel, told us to ask for the new wing when we sent in our reservation. The old wing was a bit of a Chinese maze, but the new wing rambled down a hill behind the hotel, with large, airy, new rooms. We did as they suggested, and wound up on the sixth of eight floors, which was actually two floors *below* the ground level of the main hotel.

So why am I telling you this?

Because the huckster room was in the basement of the main hotel – two floors below ground level. It had guards posted all around the front doors – but no one guarded the single unlocked back door, and we began using it as a shortcut. Could have stolen thousands of books and magazines if we'd felt like it.

Matter of fact, I felt like a bit of a thief anyway, because while I (and probably you, too) have heard of people selling fanzines by the pound, I'd never actually encountered it – until Discon II, where I bought five pounds of two-time Hugo winner *Amra* (a complete run of 70-some issues) for \$2.00 a pound.

Martha Beck was just recovering from abdominal surgery, and we agreed to fly out with her and room next to her, just in case she found herself in need of a friend in a hurry. It was our own fault for forgetting that Martha can make 20 friends just by walking from one end of a room to the other. Martha and her friends gathered in her room every night at about 3:00 AM to filksing until sunrise. One night I staggered in at about 4:30, and couldn't sleep because of the singing, so at maybe five o'clock I walked over and began pounding the wall. Someone on the other side pounded back in rhythm, and soon 15 or 20 of Martha's friends were turning the walls into bongo drums. I knew when I was licked, and I never tried that again.



Jo Ann Wood and Carol love to go afield for lunch. Jo Ann had some kind of 4-wheel drive vehicle, and a guide book, and she found some fish joint in Annapolis that was supposed to be fair to middling. So she gathered up Carol, me, Martha, and John Guidry, and off we went. We didn't know any short cuts, so we spent the first 20 minutes driving through the worst of Washington's slums. Almost two hours later we pulled into this unprepossessing building at the Annapolis waterfront. I don't remember the name of the restaurant, but I *do* remember the waiter bringing over a dish none of us had ordered. We explained that he'd made a mistake, and he in turn explained that yes, it was an error, some other waiter had written down the wrong order for a party across the room – but since our table seemed willing to eat anything smaller than ourselves with enormous gusto, the restaurant had decided to make us a gift of it.

The program item I remember best is the second (and final) Isaac/Harlan Insult Contest (the first had been at Tricon in 1966). Some local reporter wandered in, took it seriously, and reported in his newspaper that two of our most famous writers started yelling at each other and almost had to be restrained. Harlan and Isaac decided it was not the kind of publicity the field needed, and reluctantly agreed not to have a third contest.

Carol had been working most of the summer on our masquerade costumes – ‘The White Sybil and The Ice Demon’, from Clark Ashton Smith’s Hyperborean story-cycle – and it took us a couple of hours to get into them, since we were covered with body paint and Carol in particular had lots of make-up and had to be glued into her enormous headpiece. I think we started preparing at five o’clock in the afternoon, and the masquerade started (theoretically) at eight o’clock, though as always it ran an hour or so late.

This was the biggest, longest masquerade in history. This was before the 60-second limitation (and may well have been the catalyst for it). It seemed like every folksinger in the world went in costume and that each sang his or her entire repertoire. There was a Wizard of Oz group that was not content to sing *one* song from the film; they had to sing the entire score. There were endless skits, which I guarantee the participants enjoyed a hell of a lot more than the audience. There were green belly dancers, and blue belly dancers, and red belly dancers, and each felt compelled to dance her entire elaborate routine. I remember wishing about midnight that we’d lose so we could go back to our room, shower, and have some dinner.

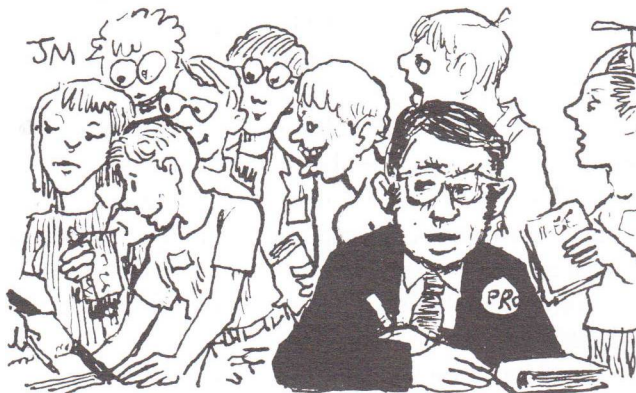
But we didn’t lose. We were voted Most Beautiful, Judges’ Choice, and Best in Show – and the next morning our photo became the first to knock Richard Nixon and/or Gerald Ford off the front page of the *Washington Post* in this final month of the Watergate scandal.

1980: NOREASCON TWO (Boston)

Having experienced the Sheraton’s elevators in 1971, we decided to spend the extra money and take a room in the Tower, solely to have access to the express elevator. We never once felt it wasn’t money well spent, especially after hitting some parties in the main body of the hotel.

This was the first Worldcon where I participated in an autograph session. There were two of us at the

table, myself and Tanith Lee. Tanith was (and is) a lovely and very busty woman, and she was wearing a low-cut dress or blouse, and her line was *enormous*. Hundreds of young men were racing around the huckster room, buying Tanith Lee books so they could stand at the table and look down at her while she looked down at the books and signed them. After awhile a buzzing commenced, to the effect that you shouldn’t bring her all three books (the limit) at once, but should stand in line three times and get three eye-fuls. I signed two books during the entire hour; Tanith was still signing when I left. I must confess to having had more ego-gratifying experiences.



We had won Best in Show at the NASFiC masquerade in Louisville the previous year with our ‘Avengers of Space’ costume/skit (which included Carol, Joan Bledig, Michael Jordan, and me), and Carol had announced her retirement from costuming. But Jo Ann Wood, who was running the masquerade, twisted her arm all summer, and finally she agreed to bring the ‘Avengers’ out of mothballs, but only if we could do so out of competition, since the costume had already won at a major convention. So Jo Ann agreed, and we got to do our space opera burlesque skit all over again. It was still fun.

This was legendary Lou Tabakow’s last Worldcon. Lou had become our closest fannish friend since we had moved to Cincinnati four years earlier, and we knew he was dying of ALS (Lou Gehrig’s Disease). He didn’t want any sympathy, he just wanted to have a good time at what he guessed would be his last major con. Ray Beam bought him a cane, and he agreed to use it, but that was his only concession to his disease.

But one of its manifestations was that he slurred his speech, and another was that he had a pronounced limp (hence the cane). In fact, at first we assumed

he'd had a mild stroke, until he underwent a barrage of tests and got the bad news.

Anyway, he was given First Fandom's Hall of Fame Award at the Hugo ceremonies. He lost his balance climbing up to the stage and almost fell, then slurred his thanks into the microphone. And poor Bob Silverberg, the Toastmaster, who had known Lou for close to thirty years but hadn't been told of his illness, jumped to the understandable conclusion that Lou was a little tipsy, and made a joke about it. And received a lot of undeserved hell for it that night and for months (and for all I know years) to come.

CFG had two suites, facing each other, across a corridor: one was for smokers, one for non-smokers. As was usually the case when Lou was presiding, sooner or later just about every pro and BNF wandered through and visited for awhile. Lou was there every night until three or four in the morning, and I remember thinking that if he were to die right then and there, it wouldn't be such a terrible thing, for he was never happier than when he was holding forth in the CFG suite.

It's been close to 20 years, and I still miss him. On the other hand, given how many times each week we'd meet for coffee at 1:00 AM, I'm probably ten to twelve books ahead of where I'd be if he was still around.

Personally, I'd rather have had Lou's company than the books.

1984: L.A.CON II (Anaheim)

L.A.Con II didn't get off to a promising start. When we ordered our plane tickets, we were told that the Cincinnati-to-Los Angeles flight was sold out, and that we'd have to take a flight from Dayton. Between the day I ordered them and the day I picked them up, things changed, and we were booked on the Cincinnati flight after all. But our travel agent didn't tell me, and like an idiot I never looked at the tickets (a mistake I've never made again).

So we drive to Dayton and hand over our tickets, and get the news: our flight is leaving from Cincinnati in 90 minutes. Could they get us to Cincinnati in an hour? Yes, but they couldn't guarantee our luggage would make it through. So we paid a couple of hundred dollars for tickets to Cincinnati (the Cincinnati airport is only half an hour from our house), we raced through the gate to catch the plane just before they locked the doors, we got off in Cincinnati, raced to make our connecting flight, and didn't know until half

an hour after we landed in Los Angeles that our luggage did in fact make it on the same flight.

But things began getting better right away. The Anaheim Hilton, which was less than a month old at the time, was – and remains – the best party hotel ever to host a Worldcon. (I might argue that Chicago's Hyatt is the best overall convention hotel, since everything is contained in one building, but for parties, nothing equals the 5th floor of the Anaheim Hilton, with hundreds of rooms leading out to the various lanais, the huge astroturfed roof areas of the enormous 4-story garage.)

My father, who had never been to a Worldcon before, drove up from San Diego. He stayed with his sister, who lived in the area, but spent ten or twelve hours at the con every day, and when it was over, he'd become a fan who would attend another 25 cons in the next decade.

It had been a long time since I'd found more than four or five books I needed at any Worldcon, but L.A.Con II was a throwback to the Good Old Days. I must have bought 30 books, including one of the rarest: a copy of *The Ship That Sailed To Mars*. I beat my dear friend Frank Robinson to it by maybe ten seconds, and he didn't speak to me for the next two days.

The con had some special deal with Disneyland, and one day a bunch of us took advantage of it: Tony and Suford Lewis, Pat and Roger Sims, Carol and me, Fred Prophet, my Dad, and (I seem to remember) Banks Mebane. We had a great time, came back after dark, and played poker until dawn. Just like a real old-time Worldcon, so Roger assured us.

I remember that one of the restaurants Carol and I went to, a few miles away, was called the Hobbit. Despite the fact that I'm not a Tolkein fan, I became a Hobbit fan that night. We were also wine and dined by Tor, which had just become my new publisher, and New American Library, to whom I still owed some books; it was the first time I'd ever had so much attention from publishers at a con, and it quite turned my head while filling my stomach.

Carol would get up to swim and exercise every morning. She later told me that the only pro or fan she ever saw by the pool before noon was Ed Bryant.

I wrote up the masquerade for *Science Fiction Chronicle*, and to thank my aunt for having us out for dinner one night, I brought her along. This was one of the last masquerades to feature nudity. My aunt turned red as a beet at the sight of the first couple of

topless girls, and never viewed either science fiction or conventions in quite the same innocent way again. (The kicker: her daughter – my cousin – is a con-going fan.)

We had an Indian dinner with a bunch of NES-FAns the next night, then walked back to catch the Hugo ceremony. When we got there the line was literally around the block. I couldn't understand why the Hugos had suddenly grown so popular, but I was pleased nonetheless. Then Tony Lewis pointed out that it was the line for the *Star Wars* Triple Feature, and that there was absolutely no line at the Hugo door. We walked in, and sure enough, the auditorium was perhaps 20% filled. Bob Bloch did his usual splendid job in what was to be the last time he would ever hand out Hugos at a Worldcon. I know there are those who think Isaac Asimov was our greatest toast-master/public speaker, and some think it was Harlan Ellison, and a few lean toward Tony Boucher, but my vote goes to Bob Bloch. He was not only the best friend fandom ever had – and my personal role model in that respect – but he was also the wittiest entertainer we will probably ever encounter at a convention.

That night I went out onto the lanai with John Guidry. After awhile we found a couple of empty chairs and sat down to visit with Neil Rest, who was busy fantasizing about making a Worldcon bid for a cruise ship. Before long he had attracted a hell of a crowd, and by daylight hundreds of people were urging him to make it a *real* bid. John walked away thinking if there was so little serious support for any Central Zone cities that people actually would support a cruise ship, maybe it was time to put together a New Orleans bid. So that evening saw the birth of two bids: Nolacon II, which won the 1988 Worldcon; and the Boat, which came in second in a field of four.

1989: NOREASCON THREE (Boston)

This Worldcon was too big even for Boston's Sheraton, which had hosted two prior ones. We spilled over into the Back Bay Hilton, the Marriott, and a couple of other hotels, which meant that every night we'd walk the circuit from one hotel to the next, trying to hit all the parties and make all the connections (and probably missing more than we made).

We were in the Back Bay Hilton, a delightfully quiet hotel, right across the street from the Sheraton. Every night a bunch of the Back Bay Hilton residents – Dean Wesley Smith, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, Barbara Delaplace, Carol, me, maybe ten or twelve others

– would gather a bunch of chairs in a circle and spend a few hours visiting/partying right there in the hotel's lobby.

I had lunch one day with Marty Greenberg (who is fast closing in on his one thousandth anthology). He asked what I was working on. I described *Bully!*, an alternate history novella featuring Teddy Roosevelt. Sometime during dessert he asked me if I had any ideas for selling our anthology. *What* anthology, I asked? Why, *Alternate Presidents*, he replied; you know, Teddy Roosevelt and all that. I didn't know we *had* an anthology, I said. If I sell it, he said, will you edit it? Secure in the knowledge that no one would be breaking down Marty's door to buy it, I agreed.



Marty ran into me less than three hours later, as I was coming off a panel. It's due in three months, he said. What is, I asked? *Alternate Presidents*, he replied. And sure enough, he had not only sold *Alternate Presidents*, but four other brands of Alternates, and about fifteen other anthologies, and lo and behold, I was in the anthology business for the next few years, like it or not.

This was the first year I was nominated for a Hugo, and – as the cliché goes – I truly was honored just to be nominated, because I knew that being nominated was as close as I was going to come to the Hugo. I was up against a tough field that included David Brin, and David Brin was as hard to beat on Labor Day in the 1980s as Harlan Ellison had been in the late 1960s and 1970s. So I was totally relaxed when we seated ourselves and waited for Fred Pohl to start reading off the winners.

I was speaking to George Alec Effinger, who was seated just in front of me, when Carol let out a scream and poked me and told me to go up on stage and pick up my Hugo. I calmly explained to her that she must

have heard wrong, that everyone knew David Brin was going to win the Hugo. Tell him, George, said Carol – but George, who is deaf in one ear and had his good ear turned to me, hadn't heard a thing. Carol kept jabbing me in the ribs and telling me I really and truly had won, and finally a bunch of pros who were seated nearby began telling me to go pick up my Hugo so Fred could get on to the next award.

So I walked up on stage, and took my Hugo, and stared at the microphone – and for the first time in my life, I was speechless. I was still trying to adjust to the fact that I'd actually won. I hope you all saw that, because it'll be a cold day in hell before I'm ever speechless again. (The fact that I've always found something to say while winning more Hugos does not mean I've grown smug or complacent; it merely means I now know that it's possible for me to win, which was something I absolutely did not know at Noreascon Three.)

(Postscript: George heard well enough to run up on stage and pick up his Hugo for Best Novelette ...and later that night, Jack Chalker and I cornered him and wouldn't let him get away until he'd agreed to become the third author in our round-robin novel, *The Red Tape War*, which came out a couple of years later.)

I had promised Barry Malzberg to call him with the Hugo results, so went to my room the moment the ceremony was over and phoned him – and left the Hugo on my dresser. The rocket ship is the same every year, but the base is different, and this base had a number of metal spheres on it. I think that simply because I didn't carry it around to the parties, mine was the only Hugo to make it home intact. The spheres fell off all the others. (I still remember Gardner Dozois going from party to party complaining that he'd lost his balls.)

The CFG suite was in the Marriott, where you had to fight your way through a huge Armenian reunion every night to reach the elevators. Nice suite, but a pain to get to.

The next day, at noon, the Worldcon had a 50th Anniversary Banquet. Isaac Asimov was the emcee, and about twenty of us had been selected ahead of time to describe our first Worldcon. I'd written a short speech, but when it was my turn the lights were so blinding that I literally could not see my hand in front of my face, so I spoke off the cuff and gave the written speech to Mike Glyer, who later published it in *File 770*.

The gist of it, a sentiment I've voiced many times, is that whoever said you can choose your friends but you can't choose your family was dead wrong. I've chosen my family, and I go to its reunion just about every Labor Day.

1994: CONADIAN (Winnipeg, Canada)

This was not a convention I was looking forward to. The opposing bid, Louisville, had asked me to be their Toastmaster, and I had my suite atop the Galt House all picked out. Then Winnipeg won the closest election in recent years.

We chose to stay at the Holiday Inn, which was attached to the convention center. It might not have been the brightest idea we ever had, because while it made the days convenient, the nights were incredibly inconvenient. There was only one suite in the whole hotel – the SFWA suite – which meant we had to walk blocks away to hit any of the parties and visit any of our fannish friends. And it rained a lot. I usually spend 20 minutes in the SFWA suite during the course of an entire Worldcon; I found myself spending a few hours there almost every evening during Conadian.

Two good friends had had open-heart surgery during the same week that summer, and both were at Worldcon. Dick Spelman, who'd felt some chest pains when hurrying through an airport, went to his cardiologist, took a stress test, and found himself getting a quintuple bypass a week later. Jay Kay Klein had had a heart attack, and got *his* bypass after the fact.

The difference between the two was like night and day. Jay Kay is fine these days, but that summer he couldn't climb a short flight of stairs without terrible pain, and he appeared uncomfortable all weekend, while Dick was his old self, zipping around here and there with an abundance of energy. Moral: get the bypass *before* you damage the heart muscle, not *after*.

Bantam/Doubleday/Dell invited all its writers to a banquet on a boat Friday night. We found ourselves sitting with Gene and Rosemary Wolfe, who offered us a ride back to their hotel in their rented car. We walked into the lobby with them, prepared to hit some parties. Gene and Rosemary just wanted to go to their room and rest. Now, Rosemary has serious problems with her legs – but the elevator Nazis had declared that everyone in the lobby would be expressed to the 21st (and top) floor, and could walk down to the party of their choice while the elevators zipped right back

down for the next load. Gene explained Rosemary's problem. No one seemed to care, and the poor woman had to walk all the way down from the 21st floor to her room on the 6th. Suddenly the Holiday Inn didn't look so bad after all.

Strange thing happened with the Hugos. Only three short stories got enough nominations to make the ballot. One of them was mine. Then David Bratman, the Hugo administrator, declared that for the evening of September 4 only, Connie Willis' novelette was a short story. It won. My story came in second, beating all the other short stories. I still don't understand exactly what happened, or why her short story was a novelette again on September 5. (I don't blame Connie, who deserves all her awards and more.)

I was also up for Best Editor. So was Kris Rusch, who was unable to attend and asked me to accept for her if she won. Bob Silverberg read off the five nominees, and then announced that Kris had won. I ran up to the stage to accept, and I could tell from the shocked look on Bob's face that he thought one of the losers had gone berserk and we were about to have a "situation." I wrestled the trophy away from him and began thanking people. My first thanks went to Kris' employer, Ed Ferman, and Bob relaxed noticeably. My pal Jack Nimersheim was up for the Campbell and lost, so except for Kris it wasn't an exceptionally successful night.

(I spent the next two days telling anyone who asked that I had no intention of sending Kris her Hugo, but that she could visit it whenever she wanted, providing she called first and left her clothes at the door. Then I ruined everything by sending it back to Oregon with Alan Newcomer.)

This was also the Worldcon where *Alternate Worldcons* first appeared. Dean Wesley Smith had shipped a couple of hundred copies to Winnipeg. They were sold out by Saturday, and by Sunday people were offering two and three times the cover price for it, despite the fact that they knew there'd be more available by the next weekend. It made a boy editor quietly proud.

1996: L.A.CON III (Anaheim)

We flew in with Pat and Roger Sims on Monday, rented a car that was fine for four people and totally inadequate for four people and their luggage, and drove to the Anaheim Hilton. Along the way I broke my glasses frames, and had to get some new ones that

afternoon. Then I ripped my canvas shoe, and had to go shoe-shopping in the evening. Just graceful, I guess.

On a previous trip, Carol and I had discovered the Gene Autry Museum of Western Americana. We had expected it to be a little storefront with some movie posters, which didn't deter Carol (who can name the horse of every cowboy and cowgirl ever to appear in a B movie). You can imagine our surprise when we found it was housed in a beautiful, brand-new \$50 million building, and that it was truly a museum, perhaps the most fascinating one in the Los Angeles area – at least to a couple of overgrown kids who grew up on John Wayne movies and still think *Maverick* was probably the best TV show of all time. We were dying to see it again, and Pat and Roger caught a little of our enthusiasm and joined us when we drove there on Tuesday. Debbie Oakes and Bill and Cokie Cavin followed us in another rental car, and Bill, who collects old guns, went back again the next day to finish looking at all the Colts and Winchesters and the like. Fabulous place.

Dick Spelman had found a Norwegian buffet two blocks away from the hotel, and we ate there with fannish friends the first couple of nights, since we knew we wouldn't be able to eat with them again until the con was over. My father, who was sharing a room with Fred Prophet, showed up Wednesday morning, and Laura, who had recently signed for her first fantasy novel with Tor, arrived Wednesday afternoon. We didn't see either of them until the evening, for Carol wanted to visit this incredibly upscale shopping mall – I can't remember where it was; maybe half an hour from the hotel – and we spent the afternoon there, she shopping, me gasping at the price-tags. (Want a pair of \$400 slippers, or a \$1,750 sports shirt? That's the place to go.)

James White, the Guest of Honor, had been one of my favorite writers since his first book more than three decades ago, and I was thrilled and honored when NESFA, which was publishing his Guest of Honor book, *The White Papers*, asked me to write the introduction to it. I'd met him very briefly – for less than a minute, I'd guess – at Magicon; I ran into him in the lobby late Wednesday afternoon, spent an hour or so talking with him...and kept running into him all weekend long. By Labor Day we'd become fast friends, and we've been corresponding ever since. A fine writer, and an even finer person.

We had dinner in the Hilton's upscale restaurant

with Dean Smith and Kris Rusch – we always have at least one meal with them at Worldcons – and then we helped open up the CFG suite. Bill Cavin, who is the God-Emperor of CFG, hadn't been to the 1984 Worldcon, so he didn't realize that the fifth floor was the party floor. We had a beautiful suite on the sixth floor, and all the regulars came by, but a lot of people who never left the fifth floor and the lanais never knew we were there.

Meals were wonderful, calorie-laden, and filled with business. Amy Stout, who was bidding for *Kirinyaga* for del Rey (and eventually she got it) took us to breakfast. Anne Groell, who was editing the *Widowmaker* books, took us to lunch. Beth Meacham, my long-time editor at Tor, took us to lunch. Gardner Dozois took us to lunch. Marty Greenberg took us to breakfast. (I seem to think we sneaked in one breakfast with Laura and my father, but I could be mistaken.)

Anyway, that left the evenings for the Rich Folks. Andrew Rona, a vice president of Miramax, which had just made an offer for *The Widowmaker*, took us to dinner at the same upscale Italian restaurant that Kris and Dean had taken us to. The next night, Jean-Louis Rubin, president of Capella, which was producing *Santiago*, took us to the same restaurant. The next night Eleanor Wood, my agent, took us to the same restaurant. When Kia Jam and Tim Douglas, a producer and a special effects master who had done some preliminary work on *Santiago* and had optioned the *Oracle* trilogy, showed up Sunday and wanted to know the best restaurant in the hotel, we begged them to just get us a hamburger in the coffee shop; we simply couldn't face another \$50-a-plate 8,000 calorie meal.

I did my usual share of panels, readings, kaffee-klotsches, and so on, and finally got around to the autograph session. I sat next to Joe Haldeman, and at the next table were Melanie Rawn and Jennifer Roberson. The most unbelievable event of the year then transpired: I was still signing when the three of them were done. I'm sure it was a fluke – I'd trade my royalty statements for any of theirs in a New York minute – but it made my Worldcon.

Just as well, because I was up for two Hugos – a novelette by myself, and a novella in collaboration with Susan Schwartz – and lost both of them, despite having won lesser awards already with each. Our closest Hollywood associate, Ed Elbert – he's got his fingers in five different Resnick projects and is the

guy who secured our initial screenwriting assignments for Carol and me – showed up for the Hugo ceremonies. When they were over, he took us all – Carol, me, my Dad, and fellow loser Susan – to the bar for brandy and condolences. Carol and I have known Ed for years, so we were still feeling a little disappointed over losing two more Hugos (yes, I've won a lot; but on the other hand, I've lost a lot more), but Susan had never sat in a bar drinking Remy Martin with a real Hollywood producer, and she got over losing in less time that it takes me to tell about it. (As I write these words, Ed just got back from Malaysia, where he was producing Fox's 1999 Christmas movie – *Anna and the King of Siam*, starring Jodie Foster. He tells me that ever since he signed Foster, everyone in town is answering his calls – which is how you tell whether you're up or down in Tinseltown.)

Bantam has this habit of taking its writers off the premises for a banquet once each Worldcon. This year we were given a private tour of the museum at the La Brea Tar Pits, and then caterers came in, set up tables, and served us an excellent meal right on the premises. David Gerrold later wrote a story for one of my anthologies explaining why he pushed me into a tar pit during the festivities.

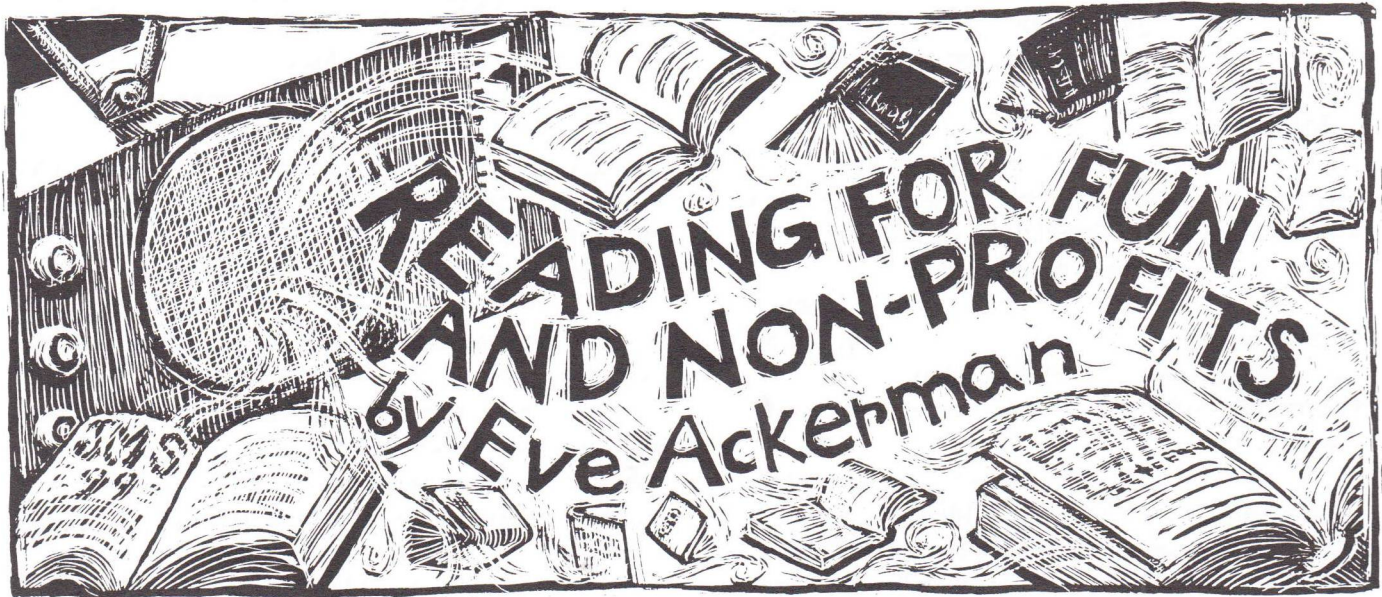
Laura and I spent some time at a private Japanese party – or at least, one that had written invitations – and I renewed some old friendships there. Dick and Leah Smith presided at a nightly Australian party, and Boston and Philadelphia also gave very pleasant bid parties. Somewhere along the way Rich Lynch cornered me and got me to promise to write an article, which appeared as "The Literature of Fandom" in *Mimosa* 21.

On closing night, we went to a party at Scott and Jane Dennis' suite across the street at the Marriott, which was very fannish, and after all those editors and all those Hollywood moguls, it was the most enjoyable time we had at the entire con.

I guess you just can't take the fan out of the boy... ✧



Anyone who attended the 1986 Worldcon, ConFederation, may recognize the writer of this next article as the host of that convention's innovative nightly closed circuit television production, *WorldCon Tonight*. Eve has been our friend for almost twenty years, ever since the 1980 Worldcon where we shared a room with her (and also the current DUFF representative, Janice Gelb). Eve has had much experience in communicating via the spoken word; she's the retired owner of radio station WNDT and has spent more than ten years in professional broadcasting. She also knows a good book when she reads one, and as we'll see, how to communicate that to an audience.



I'm involved in various charitable and volunteer activities. It's my husband's fault. He's big on public service and used to badger me to death to give back to the community my time as well as money. As usual, my marital moral compass was right and now I'm involved in everything from washing and laying out the dead to chairing our local Library Foundation (Our unofficial motto: "We want your money." Simple, no?).

But my favorite volunteer activity is the one I do every week when I sit down in front of a microphone at the Radio Reading Service.

The RRS is a national group of radio stations that broadcast to the 'print disabled'. The Library of Congress estimates that 1.5 million Americans are print disabled (blind, visually impaired, learning disabled or physically disabled) and these are the people eligible to become RRS listeners. The reason you probably haven't heard a RRS program is because the RRS broadcasts on a subcarrier, or sideband channel of an FM radio station. Listeners must have a special pre-tuned receiver to pick up the broadcast. There are other methods of transmission, via television or telephone dial-in, but the radio method is the most common. We have a limited number of receivers which are issued free of charge and we're a non-profit.

The RRS motto is, "We read when you can't,"

and includes local and regional newspapers, books, magazines and special interest programs like Veterans Update. My RRS is through WUFT/WJUF FM, the public radio stations of the University of Florida in Gainesville. For over five years, since the first week they went on the air, I've spent my Tuesday mornings in front of a mike for about 90 minutes recording novels. Right now I'm reading *Young Miles*, the Lois McMaster Bujold collection that includes *Warrior's Apprentice*, "The Mountains of Mourning" and *The Vor Game*.

The books are read in one hour segments, verbatim, recorded on reel-to-reel tapes. Every word is included and if you make a mistake you have to stop, re-record and then go on. Illustrations are described. Before a book is aired a checker listens to it while reading the novel to make sure I didn't make mistakes and that there are no technical glitches. It can take months to do a single novel.

I have a lot of leeway over the books I record, hence the slant towards SF and Fantasy. I've been asked to do specific books in the past, primarily Florida-based work. For that particular assignment I chose *Batfishing in the Rainforest*, essays by outdoors writer Randy Wayne White. The director of the RRS is a black woman from Mississippi who had wanted me to read *Florida Cracker Tales*.

"If I do that, Gloria, I'm going to sound like exactly what I am – a Minnesota girl trying to talk 'Southron' and failing miserably. I'm terrible on dialect."

So I did the White book 'cause it didn't have dialect and agreed to record a collection of Shalom Aleichem stories after. *That* dialect I can do. Gloria said if I thought I'd sound bad reading *Florida Cracker Tales*, imagine how *she'd* sound reading Shalom Aleichem.

I've recorded the four book Merlin saga by Mary Stewart, *Shards of Honor*, also by Bujold, *Snow White and Rose Red* by Patricia C. Wrede, a collection of Asimov stories, and some romance novels. For a while I was recording so many romances that when they did my nameplate on the shelf that holds my tapes, it was done in a script made up of flowers and curlicues. Most of the romances I record are 'sweets' or Regencies. A 'sweet' is a novel without overt sexual activity. I once recorded *Perfect Partners* by Jayne Anne Krentz, a personal favorite, definitely not a 'sweet', and I heard afterwards the scenes of oral sex and extended descriptions of other sexual activity alarmed the powers that be. Especially since they keep the RRS on the intercom system at the radio station so anyone walking around the halls would have heard the novels. But our novels are on early in the evening, and you shouldn't think the service is run by a bunch of blue noses. An effort is made to give everybody what they want – those who stay up late on Friday nights get to hear *Playboy* read aloud, with descriptions of pictures.



I try to keep the audience in mind when I'm choosing books to record. We have mixed demographics, but not surprisingly many of our listeners are older, quite a few are rural and for some of them this is their main link to the outside world. I recorded the romance novel *Staying Cool* by Catherine Todd and chose it for its entertainment value and for the protagonist in her mid '40s. Thought our audience might appreciate an older gal getting the guy.

Sometimes I fill in for our newspaper readers, most of whom are students. From 8 to 10 o'clock in the morning our readers go through *The Gainesville Sun* and the *Ocala Star Banner*, picking out articles from all the sections. Trying to describe the comics to an audience that can't see the pictures isn't easy, but they appreciate the effort. After we're done with the news, another reader comes on with grocery ads. We also do the weeklies and supplement with programming from the Minnesota Talking Book Network.

Some books, I've found, just don't do well read aloud. For instance, C.J. Cherryh's *Cuckoo's Egg* is a favorite of mine, but when I tried to read it aloud to my sons I found Cherryh's writing style didn't work as well as I'd hoped. Too many point of view shifts and introspection. Bujold's writing style, though, reads aloud very well.

Reading a book aloud gives me new insight into the story and the characters because I have to modify my voice to portray the different people. For Miles Naismith Vorkosigan I use my regular speaking voice. For Elena Bothari, it's pitched slightly higher and sentences tend to end on an interrogatory note – if you listen to a young woman speaking, it can sound like she's ending every sentence as a question, a habit I had to break when I first started broadcasting. For Sgt. Bothari, I use a lower voice and deadpan tones. A scene with four or five characters can be draining, trying to remember what pitch I've used for which character. But reading, say, Sgt. Bothari's dialogue aloud makes the character come alive for me in a much more concrete manner than when I was silently reading the novel for pleasure.

The other thing that's draining is hitting emotional lows in the novel. I'm the kind of person who gets choked up over Hallmark card commercials. Trying to read a particular scene in *Warrior's Apprentice* where the death of a major character is foreshadowed took a lot longer than it should have because I'd have to stop the tape, blow my nose, clear

my throat and start again. I know it's going to be worse when I get to the part where the character actually bites the big one, and I don't even want to think about what I went through recording Randy White's essay on having to put his elderly dog to sleep!

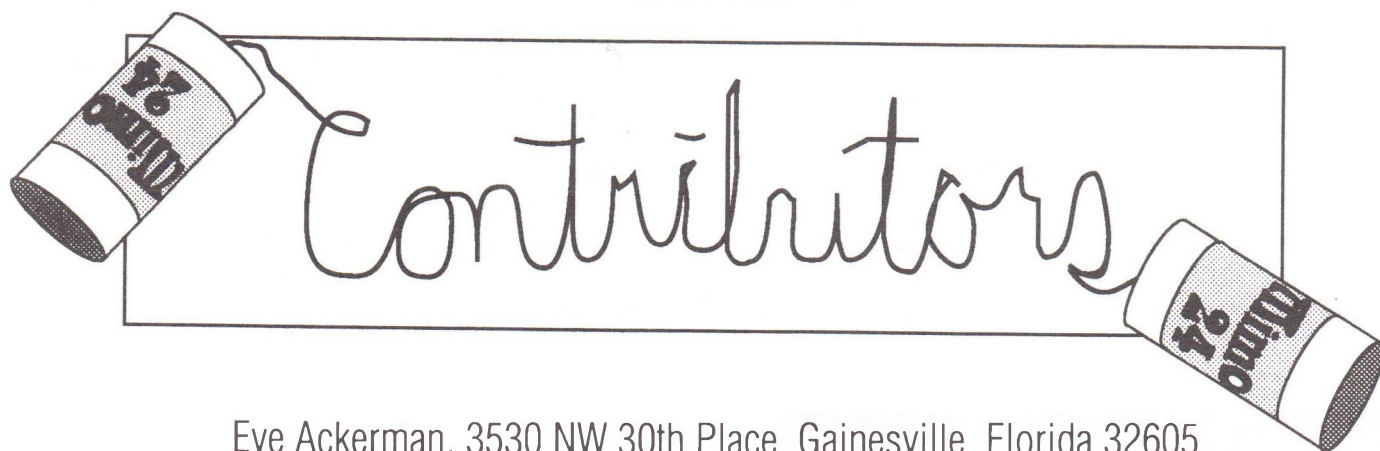
We have a bulletin board where letters from listeners and their families are posted. The most common note reads like this: "I'm returning to you the receiver issued to my father, James Doe. Daddy died recently but for the past two years he'd listen every day to your broadcasts and it made his life a whole lot better."

I may never meet our listeners. I hear we've gotten calls from a few guys wondering what I look like (probably after I read the sex scenes in *Perfect Partners*). But I know the service is valuable and appreciated. When I have to juggle my schedule to try and fit my shift in, I keep a picture in my mind of an older man, a WWII vet, who may have gone blind

from diabetes or a stroke. Everyday he listens to the RRS to find out what's going on in his community. He looks forward to the next installment of *The Crystal Cave* or *Shards of Honor* or a Regency Romance, though he'd never admit to enjoying that!

My own father, a WWII vet, went blind due to complications from diabetes and a stroke. I was looking into getting him a RRS receiver in his hometown when he died. He wasn't a science fiction fan, but I like to think that he would have enjoyed hearing me read aloud and so I keep at it for all the other people out there whose radios are their window to the world. ✧

{{ ed. (and author's) note: If you're interested in more information on the RRS, contact The National Association of Radio Reading Services at 800-280-5325, or call your local public radio station to see if they have a RRS channel. }}



Eve Ackerman, 3530 NW 30th Place, Gainesville, Florida 32605

Forrest J Ackerman, 2495 Glendower Avenue, Hollywood, California 90027

Ron Bennett, 36 Harlow Park Crescent, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG2 0AW, U.K.

Sheryl Birkhead, 23629 Woodfield Road, Gaithersburg, Florida 20882

Kurt Erichsen, 2539 Scottwood Avenue, Toledo, Ohio 43610

Teddy Harvia, 701 Regency Drive, Hurst, Texas 76054

Dave Kyle, 289 Ashton Road, Potsdam, New York 13676

Joe Mayhew, 7-S Research Road, Greenbelt, Maryland 20770

Curt Phillips, 23800 Green Springs Road, Abingdon, Virginia 24211

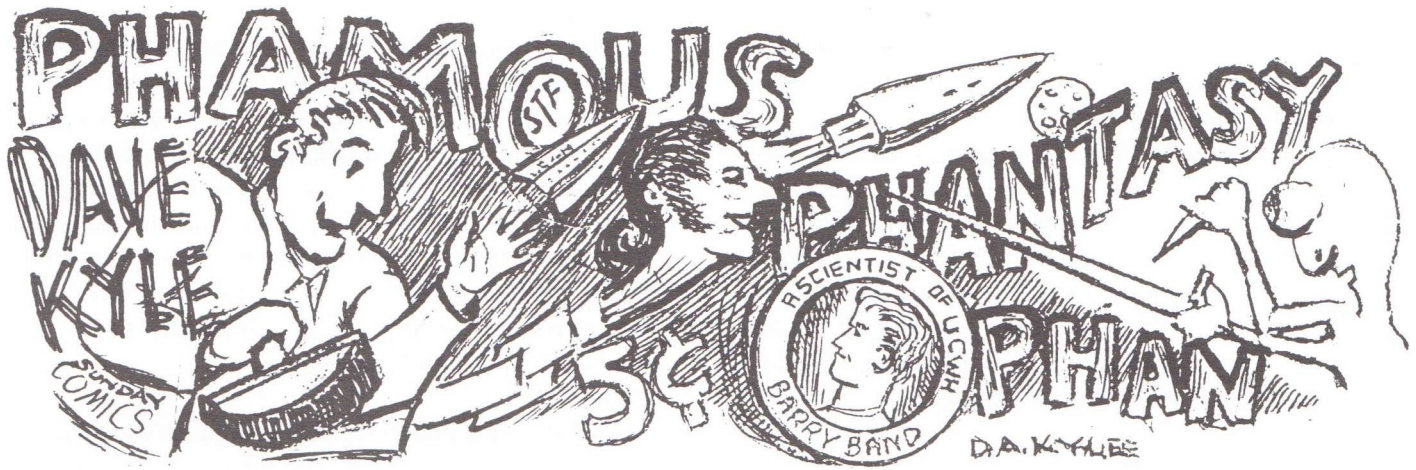
Mike Resnick, 10547 Tanager Hills Drive, Cincinnati, Ohio 45249

Julia Morgan-Scott, 108 Woodlawn Drive, Chattanooga, Tennessee 37411

Małgorzata Wilk, ulica Locci 7, 02-928 Warszawa, Poland

Charlie Williams, 1200 Woodcrest Drive, Knoxville, Tennessee 37918

Dave Kyle returns now with another autobiographical remembrance from the earliest days of science fiction fandom. Back then, when there were relatively few fans, the written word (in letters and fanzines) was probably the primary way they kept in touch with each other. It was a time when there was really only one fandom; subfandoms, such as comics fandom, did not yet exist. When you trace the beginnings of comics fandom, to find first known amateur magazine devoted to comics, it turns out you're inexorably led to Dave himself, who can claim to be a...



Purple flesh! The colorful stains on my fingers (the 'branding mark' of the hectograph) inspired me to sign my letter as 'The Purple Bat'. My 'Bat' letter was a juvenile, presumptuous one of comment to Charlie Hornig, the editor of *Wonder Stories* in 1935. He printed it, all unknowingly, in the same issue as another letter over my own name. Thus did I continue my early playful days in fandom. I wasn't the only fan in fandom then who had the badge of the purple ink on his skin. Or the black smudge of duplicator ink, either.

Machines, usually trademarked 'Mimeograph', abounded then in all sizes and shapes and in all conditions. The lucky fan was the one who had the top of the line with automatic feed and self-inking, better than 'Speed-O-Print'. The almost impoverished fan, not an unusual condition during the depths of the Great Depression, had a simple hand-cranked drum. I had less than that.

My first fanzine, in black ink before my hectograph days, was the result of a peculiar instrument of reproduction called a 'Multi-Print' that I found in my father's law offices. It was a weird, curved stamping implement, with an inking pad and a reservoir inside. Slide the metal cover off by its large, wooden knob handle and brush in the ink. A half of standard sheet could be printed with a sweep of arm and hand.

Imagine hand-stamping a single fanzine page. Cut the stencil. Wrap it around a half-drum. Lay down the paper, line up the stamper, push down, pressing from left to right. Fifty copies. Not a chance for

many more than that, as the fragile wax stencil would soon tear apart. And this was just for one page. Take off the stencil, re-ink the interior pad and begin again for the second page, printing the flip side of the sheet. Sheet by sheet, your amateur magazine takes shape. Work and turn, work and turn.

That was the way I produced fanzines in the 1930s. My first fanzine, *Fantasy World*, was published in February 1936. It consisted of eight single pages, printed on both sides, roughly half of a legal size sheet, plus an illustrated front cover. The cheap pulp paper I had used had been cut by me from newspaper stock. The issue's contents page, subtitled "Cartoons of the Imagination," listed two serial comic strips and two illustrated humorous departments. The second issue had a name change to *Phantasy World*, following the spelling lead of BNF Donald A. Wollheim. It's initial distribution was at the Second Eastern science fiction convention on February 21, 1937, when the fanzine featured my 'Phantasy Legion' national fan club and attributed its publication to 'Phantasy Legion Guild'.

Those were the days of the truly hard-working, dedicated fan. For many, fanzine production was tedious work and only the enthusiast could more-or-less successfully manufacture his product. Stencil and ink on a decent machine could produce copies in the hundreds (rarely needed), but hectograph was limited to a half a hundred. With hectograph, however, fanzines could be a colorful art form.

Forry Ackerman describes very well the myster-

ies of hectograph: "You took a pan like you were going to bake a cake, poured in a solution which, when it jelled, you then typed out your text and drew your pictures on a sheet of paper, using a special typing ribbon and ink. Then you laid this paper on top of this gelatinous material, took it off and now you could lay sheets of paper on this and pull them off. You got about 50 legible reproductions this way. And you'd get purple fingers!"

In the spring of 1999 an amazing, not to say personally dumbfounding, event took place. I received, unannounced, a package containing a large publication with an eye-popping colorful cover, *The Golden Age of Comics Fandom* by Bill Schelly (Hamster Press, Seattle 1999). In it I found, leading off the first chapter, numerous illustrations from *Fantasy World* and *Phantasy World*. What a hard to believe but pleasant shock!

Then I read the following:

As early as February 1936, a mimeographed fanzine devoted entirely to comics was published by prominent sf fan, artist and photographer David A. Kyle. *Fantasy World* featured original sf-themed comic strips by Kyle, whose early art was crude yet gave evidence of nascent talent. With subsequent issues the title was modified to *Phantasy World*. By the third issue (dated April 1937), the contents included not only the nicely-drawn "One Mercutian Night" strip, but a story by Eando Binder titled "The Sign of the Scarlet Cross" with illustrations by Kyle.

Phantasy World did not contain articles about comics, or super-heroes – which, in any case, hadn't made it into the new comic book medium yet. (Superman's first appearance in *Action Comics* was a year away.) Still, there is no doubt that Kyle's humble publication qualifies as the first known amateur magazine devoted to comics.

Comics fandom, ubiquitous as it is today, was totally non-existent in the mid 1930s. It always seemed to me that Jerome Siegel and Joseph Shuster would have had the honor of doing "the first known amateur magazine devoted to comics" with their 1932 mimeo-ed *Science Fiction*. However, the five issues had only a few illustrations. Interestingly, the second-ever fanzine, *The Time Traveller* (the very first was *The Comet* in 1930), was the effort of Julius Schwartz with his best friend Mort Weisinger (among others) in 1932 – and Julie's legendary fame grew as the result of his years with DC Comics as *Superman's* editor. By fortunate circumstances, Siegel, Shuster, and Schwartz came together to enormously shape the

comics world of the comics hero. Even Weisinger, who steered Julie into the comics business, became part of the comics scene as editor of *Thrilling Wonder Stories* by featuring a comics strip in his magazine.

And how did it come about that I did this pioneering comics fanzine?

Blame it on Alex Raymond, creator of *Flash Gordon*. As I previously mentioned in my "Science Fiction League" article {{ed. note: in *Mimosa* 14}}, his work enthralled me. *Buck Rogers* had been around for four years, but I wasn't exposed to the strip regularly, it not being in our newspaper. Raymond and Flash nudged me into experimenting with my father's hand-operated machine and doing *Fantasy World*. My interest led directly into art school after high school (1936-37) and professional illustrating in the 1940s.

All this fascination with fantastic comics, however I must confess, was before my conversion into a science fiction fan. Before my teen-age years, exotic (for the time) books about Tarzan and John Carter and Tom Swift had been at work on me. There had also been *The American Boy* magazine with stories by Carl H. Claudy and Thomson Burtis. And most significantly, I had become an aviation enthusiast. The Great War was barely a dozen years earlier and Charles A. Lindbergh had captured the imagination of not just me but the entire world by his solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean. I lived and breathed airplanes, built models of Fokkers and Spads, and flew the flimsy lightweight balsa stick-and-rubberband planes.



Suddenly my horizons widened, and I found a whole new, exciting dimension of life. It was the siren call of the pulps and the enchanting world of the magazine stand. Ah! Those wonderful pulps – *Argosy* and *The Shadow* – and most particularly *Bill Barnes*, *Air Adventurer* and *Wings* and a host of World War One aerial war stories. My enthusiasm was unbounded for those dashing war planes and the hair-raising dogfights. And about this time, in 1930, most excitingly, the adventures of Buck Rogers in the newspaper comics section began, followed by a radio dramatic show. Soon thereafter, of much greater impact on me, was Alex Raymond's daring and sensual adventures of Flash and Dale. For a number of years I considered myself an expert in the flashy world of the Sunday comics. I still have dozens of full-page tear sheets saved from those intriguing days of the 1930s, including the first ones of *Flash* and *Terry and the Pirates*.



This germination process leading me into the world of sf was underway as my teen-age years began. Before that exhilarating moment when I first read a Gernsback publication, the first issue of *Science Wonder Stories*, the insidious lure of fantasy fiction had been at work within me for years. Now airplanes, everything to me up to then, were about to give way to rocket ships as my primary passion.

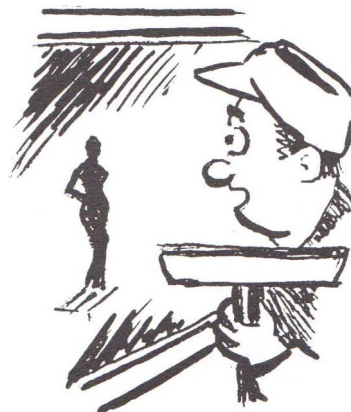
We've come to accept the pioneering Gernsback as 'The Father of Modern Science Fiction'. What we have not recognized is another incredible aspect of his innovative entrepreneurship – perhaps he should be considered the seminal start of the comic

book industry and comics fandom, which is now as pervasive, widespread and popular as sf fandom.

Many people are not aware that Hugo Gernsback's *Amazing* produced Tony Rogers, "Buck" to us all and the world. The so-called "Buck Rogers" cover for *Amazing Stories* of August 1928 isn't what it appears to be. The Frank R. Paul magazine cover for that issue was actually painted to illustrate the first part of Doc Smith's *Skylark of Space* – the fellow in the anti-gravity belt is the hero Richard Seaton. So how did this confusion come about? When the John F. Dille syndicate chose Dick Calkins to be the artist for the new *Buck Rogers* strip, they gave him a copy of Philip Francis Nowlan's story, "Armageddon, 2419 A.D." which was the story that actually introduced Buck. That inspirational yarn was in the copy of *Amazing* with Paul's Seaton cover. "Perfect!" Calkins must have thought. "That's what Buck ought to look like!" And so, on January 7, 1929, the same day as the famous *Tarzan* strip drawn by Hal Foster began its life, *Buck Rogers* the comic strip appeared for the first time.

The fascinating background on the creation of Buck Rogers might also explain the genesis of science fiction in the comics. Could it be? Could it really be? Did Hugo Gernsback remarkably light the spark that blazed into our pervasive comics scene of science fiction and fantasy?

I've previously mentioned {{ed. note: in *Mimosa* 20 }} having gone to art school in New York after high school and making a very close friend of John R. Forte Jr. of Long Island who, like me, was an Alex Raymond admirer. We were irrepressibly young, discovering new experiences, such as cigarette smoking and stark nude life classes on Wednesday mornings. (We were amused to observe that the outside window cleaners always came on Wednesday morn-



ings.) My year there was forever marked by the tragedy on May 6, 1937. That afternoon on the open-air balcony of the Flatiron Building we watched the zeppelin Hindenburg sail majestically over Manhattan. It seemed remarkably near to us. It was, to me, like an illustration out of science fiction, a futuristic liner of the air. That evening in my little room in the McBurney YMCA, I heard the horrifying radio report of the explosion and blazing destruction of that magnificent machine as it was landing at Lakehurst, New Jersey. It was the last of its kind – another dinosaur for our memories.

John came to share my apartment on the Manhattan West Side after the war in 1948. By a remarkable but understandable coincidence he also became an artist for DC Comics. I introduced him to Doc Lowndes, sf editor, for whom he did illustrations and covers for *Science Fiction* and *Future Fiction*. John's specialty at DC was as a pencil man. He would bring work back to the apartment many evenings and I found the temptation to fiddle with his drawings irresistible.



On one occasion he had a particularly dramatic scene for *Sheena, Queen of the Jungle*. Her jungle hero, definitely related to Tarzan but whose name I can't recall, was manacled to two savages, stereotypically bad guys. To free himself, he knocked their heads together, stretching them out senseless. He was, however, still attached to them by the steel chains. What to do? Simple. He lopped off their hands. The gruesome panel that John had drawn was much too tempting for me to ignore and not hoke up. When the machete blow was struck, I visualized blood splattering in great gobs, so I penciled in plenty of drops flying through the air. Then I altered the next panel. He had a severed hand or two lying in pools of blood. In close up, the viewer saw the dead, still clawing fingers thrusting toward him. We can do better than that, I told John. I erase the hands, reversed their direction, and had the bloody meat and bone now pointing at the reader. This emphasis of the carnage represented my dislike of the brutal violence of the contemporaneous adventure comic strips.

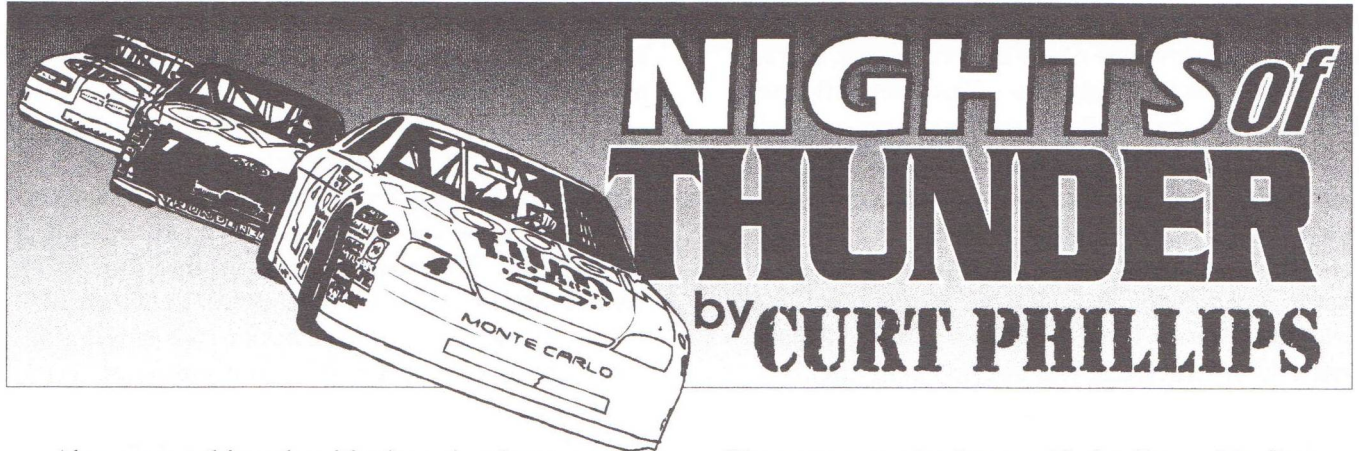
John, quite naturally, laughed at my exaggerations – and re-drew them much less graphically. I am sure, however, that those flying blobs of blood were more numerous in the actual publication than John had originally drawn. It's more than a coincidence that this was the time that fierce protests began to rain down on the comics industry for all its excessive, explicit violence, and it brought about the self-censorship and self-imposed Comics Code Authority in 1954 for the industry. Perhaps, my few extra pencil marks contributed to the shake-up in the comics world.

I made a half-hearted stab at doing some comic scripts, but my heart wasn't in it. Although I thought I had actually done a script for *Green Lantern*, Julie Schwartz tells me I never did. At a convention, many years after I fell out of touch with John Forte, I asked Julie how John was. "Oh, he's dead," Julie told me. When my face registered my shock, Julie was immediately sorry he'd given me the news so bluntly. I remember John as a gentle, non-muscular, overgrown kid who was, unbelievably, an infantryman wounded in the war. His humor was ever present, his laugh was loud and raucous, bags hung under his eyes, and because of his slightly sallowness he loved my sun lamp under which he on one occasion almost cooked his face. Back in our art school days, just out of high school, unfettered at last and poking around the real world, John and I were thoroughly comics oriented and drew fantastic cartoons on our wooden drawing boards. I still have my original board with such drawings.

A few copies of my *Fantasy/Phantasy World* still exist. One is partially hand-colored, something I did for special friends. 'Zacton of the Red Planet', my featured cartoon character, a combination of John Carter and Tarzan, still lives in my memory. And my imitation of Buck Rogers, 'Barry Band in the Future' shares my nostalgia of the past. Barry Band later was drawn as a cartoon strip but I didn't do a sufficient number and he was never marketed. Then, too, there's my imaginary world of Tramlus Tum – but that's another story.

Let Bill Schelly from the last paragraph of his book sum up for me my reminiscences of the dual worlds of science fiction and comics: "The particular innocence of the ...Golden Age of ... fandom is gone forever, as our own. There's no passage back to the simpler time. Except, perhaps, through the pages of the classic fanzines." ✧

One of the more enjoyable forms of communication is the 'vicarious experience'. For instance, we may never get a chance to set foot upon the moon, but it's still possible to 'experience' it, almost to the point of actually being there, if the writer or film producer is skilled enough. In *Mimosa 22*, the writer of the next article allowed us to vicariously experience being a paramedic/firefighter in southwestern Virginia. He now takes us back to that same area, where hazy summer evenings can turn into...



Above everything else, it's the noise that overwhelms you. The noise of 43 perfectly-tuned NASCAR engines roaring and screaming their way around the half-mile, high-banked oval track while 130,000 highly charged race fans scream their approval. It not only fills all five of your normal senses, it takes hold of your body and shakes every muscle and every nerve until you come to feel that you and the cars and the 130,000 fans and the lights and the track are all welded together into one supercharged life form that might achieve escape velocity at any moment and hurl itself right off the planet. This is NASCAR racing at the Bristol Motor Speedway and at this track it's all flat out, all the way. I wasn't a race fan before I worked the ambulance crew there at the race last fall, but now? Let me tell you about how I came to be quite literally in the middle of that night of thunder...

I had joined the local volunteer Fire Department in the winter of 1996 and after several months the pace of activity there had settled into something of a routine for me. My Department serves a largely rural part of the county and the more widely distributed population base means that we usually answer one or two emergency calls each night. In between times we stay at the fire hall training and maintaining equipment, and I get to hear a *lot* of stories about the calls my more experienced comrades have worked in the past. Many of them have previously worked with rescue squads in larger cities and often describe running eight or ten, even twelve EMS calls per shift. Thinking that it might be good for me to get some big-city experience too, I went to the Bristol Life Saving Crew last fall and signed up as a volunteer.

The pace was a lot faster with the Crew. My first night with them I ran seven calls and the second night we ran nine calls – a couple of them rather messy ones – and didn't get a chance to come back to the station until the end of our shift twelve hours later. I'll have to tell you about some of those calls sometime.

Bristol happens to be the home of the Bristol Motor Speedway. It's one of the oldest racetracks on the NASCAR circuit and is unique for its half-mile oval track with curves so steeply banked you can't walk up the surface of them without stooping over in a half crawl. It's just like a giant Hot Wheels race track. The drivers love it because it's so different from the bigger tracks like Daytona or Charlotte. The fans love it because unlike the bigger tracks, there's not a seat in the house where you can't see Everything that goes on, and with 43 cars crowding onto that track there's a lot going on. Wrecks happen fast and often, and the drivers that race on the NASCAR circuit aren't the least bit afraid to risk scraping the paint off their cars. All 43 of them will gladly tell you they each came there to win.

Forth-three drivers and 130,000 fans means a lot of work for EMS workers, and about 200 EMTs, Paramedics, and firefighters were recruited from area agencies to work this race. It just so happened that my Crew had the assignment to work inside the track itself thus serving the drivers, their crews, and the relatively few fans able to acquire pit passes. This seemed to me to be a lot more fun than dealing with the 130,000 fans up in the bleachers all day so I signed up to work the race with the Crew.

Our day started at five o'clock that morning when we reported to the crew hall to get our assignments. As I arrived a medivac helicopter was just landing in the parking lot next door. It turned out that the race track had leased the copter to be dedicated to the race track so as to cut down transport time in the event of an emergency with one of the drivers or fans, and we were to provide the flight crew. Watching it fly out to the track a bit later I reflected that with our own helicopter we must have every base covered. Since I had a certification to drive the largest emergency vehicles (most of the Crew didn't have that, but as a firefighter I did) my assignment was to drive the Disaster Truck. That sounded pretty exciting until I got my first look at it – the Disaster Truck is actually a retired Pepsi-Cola delivery truck that was donated to us after it became too expensive for the local Pepsi plant to maintain. It now contained three complete army-style field triage hospitals all carefully stuffed into its cavernous rear end. It drove like a lump of mud, and as I rocketed down the highway at a blazing 25 miles per hour, I wondered if it had been christened 'Disaster Truck' before or after Pepsi gave it away.



I did arrive in time for the safety lecture, and after parking the truck under the grandstands I joined it in time to hear some of the basics about dealing with wrecked race cars. The first thing to keep in mind is that they get hot. Real hot. Their motors produce a lot more heat than a regular car and much of it is dispersed into the frame and body of the car itself. The flame retardant suits that the drivers wear is as much to protect them from the normal heat of racing as from the possibility of fire in a crash. In the event of a wreck the crash truck and our ambulance would be the first on the track to respond and we were warned not to touch the cars with our bare hands (I later found out the hard way that they were indeed that hot). Then we were shown the ways to reach in and quickly release an unconscious driver from the safety harness, how to unhook the radio and air condi-

tioning lines from their helmets, and how to pull the driver out through the window while keeping the neck and spine supported – all this assuming that the fires that often accompany a wreck would let us get close enough. The fuel used in NASCAR is of a higher octane than you or I run in our cars and when it burns it's a bit harder to extinguish (I was to see this for myself later that night).

Another responsibility for the crash crews is to make sure that the master switch in each car is turned off. When there's a wreck, the drivers are going to bail out as quickly as they possibly can and run for the pit walls. The master switch cuts the power to the vehicle, and turning it off reduces the possibility of fire as the car is being towed back to the garage area.

I mentioned earlier that I'm not a race fan; one illustration of this happened a bit later that day. I'd been told that those switches were located in different places in different cars and I thought it might be a good idea to take a look at a few of them. Spotting a car and crew that didn't seem to be too busy, I walked over and asked one of the fellows standing around it if he'd show me where the switch was on that car. He was a tall lanky fellow in his '60s with a big mustache and wrap around sunglasses. He looked at me kind of funny and asked why I wanted to know. Maybe he thought I was thinking of jumping in and trying to take a few laps, but I explained that I was on the crash team and I might have to go out on the track and help rescue a driver in the event of a bad wreck. He grinned at that and said, "Well, we sure want you to know how to do that! Come on with me," and he then gave me a complete tour of the car and showed me all the controls and safety harnesses. He showed me how to quickly remove the steering wheel to allow more room to work on a driver and gave me some tips about helping a hurt driver out of a car – which was mostly to let him do it himself as much as possible. This guy seemed to know a lot about racing.

"Are you a driver too?" I asked.

He gave me a long look and a slow grin and said, "I been around the track a time or two. I just own this team now." I thanked him and shook his hand and he walked off, still grinning.

I walked over and had a look at the side of the huge car carrier that housed that particular race team. The carriers are usually decorated with the names of all the sponsors as well as the name of the driver and owner. Turned out that I'd just met Richard Petty, the single most famous driver in NASCAR history. I

think I'd have recognized him if he'd been wearing his hat.

Those car carriers are fascinating vehicles in themselves, containing all the tools, spare motors and parts, plus a full kitchen, bath and shower, bunks, all the pit crew equipment, and everything else that the full race team needs during the two or three days they stay at a track for a race. The back wall of the carrier folds down to become an elevator that lifts the car up to its storage space overhead of the crew section. They usually carry two cars up there to each race – the extra is for when the primary car wrecks during practice or qualifying, but can't be used as a replacement if a crash occurs during the actual race.

They pack the carriers into the infield pretty tightly and those fans lucky enough or with enough pull to get inside the infield spend all day trying to catch a glimpse of their favorite drivers and maybe get an autograph. I'm surprised that they allow fans in there at all since NASCAR fans seem pretty dogged about getting all their various souvenirs autographed.

Like I've said, I'm not a race fan. I was there to do a job and I have to tell you, the drivers just seemed like regular guys to me. I talked to several of them that day and I suppose that because I was wearing the crash team uniform and not hounding them to sign something for me they treated me more like one of their associates. The only driver that I wasn't able to approach freely was Jeff Gordon – one of the hottest names in NASCAR today, but that may not have been his fault. Though wildly successful he seems to be highly unpopular with many fans – when he hit the wall during this race thousands of them stood up and cheered. Gordon actually seemed to have bodyguards with him, and he was whisked out of sight whenever he wasn't needed on track. The only time I saw him that day was at the infield church service held for the drivers and crews Sunday morning. He and his wife sat near the front. I noticed that several other drivers attended as well. Since these same folks travel around to the same races weekend after weekend I imagine they start to feel like a fairly close community after a while. Some of the teams had their children with them and they all played together in the infield.

After the church service I reported in to the field hospital where I'd be working out of most of the day. I was assigned to the lead ambulance when the race started and was to be available in the crew area until then. Even though there were over 1200 people

working or roaming the infield, we only had one non-race related call that day, a woman with one of the teams who got a bit too much sun on that hot August day. It was a different story out in the grandstands. The race started at 7:30 PM but by noon the stands seemed full of hot, sunburned race fans. It was quite a sight to stand in the middle of all that and just watch them. The stands were constantly glittering with the reflected sunlight off the bottoms of soft drink and beer cans. There were several accidents: cuts, bee stings, heat exhaustion, and so forth. A few people fell on the stadium stairs and got bruised up a bit. There were a couple of fistfights among drunk race fans, but these were quickly broken up by the Sullivan County Sheriff's deputies who were out in force. There wasn't as much of that sort of disturbance as I would have expected given the circumstances. I later learned that pretty much all the fans understood that any fight for whatever reason would automatically mean arrest and immediate transport out of the track – and so they kept quite well behaved for the most part.

I listened to all this on the track headset radio that all the EMS workers were wearing. Later in the afternoon I listened in to one incident that happened in the stands: a woman approached one of the EMTs out in the grandstands and reported having chest pains. He took her to the grandstand aid station where she was checked out with a heart monitor, and what they saw made them advise her to allow them to take her to the hospital in town immediately and be seen in the ER. She refused. Then they had an ER doctor come out and talk to her and tried for about 30 minutes to get her to change her mind. All she kept saying was, "I paid too much for these tickets and traveled too far to leave here before the race is over," and she still refused to leave. All a doctor or an EMT can do is give advice and offer to help a patient. Any unimpaired adult has the right to refuse any medical treatment, and so the lady went back to her seat and watched the race, even though she had been advised that she seemed to be having a heart attack. Moments after the race ended she was brought back to that same ambulance by those who had been sitting with her. By then she was in severe pain and gasping for breath. Unfortunately at that point the medivac helicopter had just left to transport another patient, and the roads were so congested with outgoing race traffic that it took nearly 45 minutes to get her to the hospital by ambulance. She got to see her race, but she died in

the ambulance on the way out of the track.

I knew nothing about that until much later. Out on the track practice had started and we got into positions to respond if one of the cars should happen to crash. Stock car racing evolved from an amateur sport that started back after World War II. Regular production, or 'stock', cars were souped up and raced on dirt tracks on weekends by the people who then drove them to work on Monday morning. Today, stock cars still look like regular cars on the outside, but the only real resemblance is in the body style. Inside, everything has been hand-built and fine-tuned to give top performance with minimum weight. There is a seat only for the driver and it's custom-designed for him like the seat for an astronaut. The motors are far more powerful and far louder. When one car starts, it fills the entire stadium with an uncomfortably loud noise. When all 43 are running, you have to have hearing protection or you'll go deaf. I tried slipping my headset off during the race just to see if I could stand it, but the noise was so loud that I honestly thought I'd ruptured my eardrums – they rang for days afterwards. All the race crews were wearing headsets of course; communication was impossible without them.

Race time was getting near. ESPN was broadcasting the race and they had several crews at the track; they even had their own helicopter hovering overhead during the race. There were also three small aircraft flying around towing advertising banners all day long. They'd change them every hour or so, and I was surprised at the ads. (Why would race fans be a good target audience for prefabricated homes, a local video store, and a particular brand of soap?) There were pre-race ceremonies – a parade of NASCAR dignitaries and drivers around the track in convertibles, followed by fifty Harley Davidson motorcycles roaring around the track, each with an American flag flapping from the back. The crowd loved it. Then it was time for the drivers to enter their cars. Our ambulance moved to our position just inside the first turn (where a lot of wrecks usually happened) and the pace car moved out followed by the tightly bunched race cars.

They went around the track at maybe 70 miles per hour while the cars sorted themselves out into their assigned positions. One lap, two laps, three – then suddenly the pace car darted into the pit area and over the radio we heard the race controller shout "Green, green, green!" as the cars leap forward at top speed. I

thought I'd seen them go fast in practice, but that was nothing compared to this.

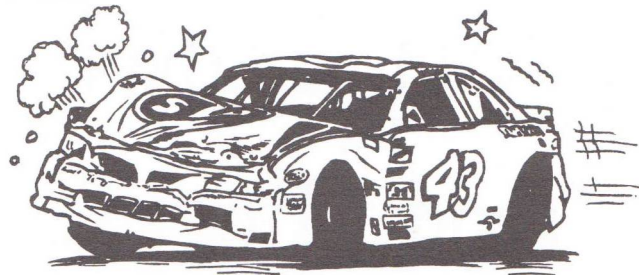
I'm standing just behind the pit wall not thirty feet from the cars with nothing but air between us, and the pack shoots past me so quickly that I can't turn my head fast enough to watch them go by. The wind pulls at my clothing, and as they pour into the curve I'm showered with bits of hot rubber from the tires as they bite into the rough concrete surface. Momentum pushes the cars up against banked curves so steep that earlier in the day I'd been unable to stand up straight on them. Forty-three cars all pour into a path two lanes wide, all thinking only of getting there first. Blue flame shoots from their exhausts like roaring, thunderous monsters belching fire. The roar as the pack shoots by resonates within my body – it absolutely shakes every part of me inside and out. This is a Hot Wheels fantasy made real.

The first car to drop out is #74 – Randy Lajoie. In spite of months of constant work and testing on that car, some mechanical problem has knocked him out early. The pit crew pushes his car behind the pit wall. Atop his car hauler their friends and family sit and watch the rest of the race but there's no excitement in their faces now. To either side of them other teams watch their cars. Their race is still alive.

There's a wreck at the far end of the track. I can't see it from where I am, but the crowd is on its feet. The yellow caution flag is out and damaged cars begin darting into the pits. Furious work with torn sheet metal, tires changed, gas shot into the tanks, and the cars drop off their jacks and shoot back into the pack. I see a heavily damaged #18 car being pushed behind the wall by its angry, disgusted crew. There are dozens of photographers everywhere, darting about like hawks and shooting hundreds of photos. The pack roars on. The pace is fast and unrelenting. Everything happens so fast and everyone of the race teams has to stay focused on their particular jobs. Used tires from the previous pit stops get carefully labeled in chalk and stacked aside. They'll be loaded in trucks after the race and hauled back to the manufacturer, Goodyear, for analysis.

The miles roll by. Or rather they roar by – these drivers are intent on what they're doing. Five hundred miles of unrelenting high speed tension. Five hundred laps. Two thousand left hand turns. A crash right in front of me – it happened so fast I didn't see it! Sheet metal is flying through the air, and a large piece skids to a stop at my feet. The wrecked cars

slide on around the curve and stop out of my sight – just banged up, no one hurt. Most of the cars are banged up pretty good now, with tire marks from other cars burned into their sides. Swappin' paint, they call it. A few still look pristine, but they're running at the back of the pack. The #88 car – damaged in the last wreck – shoots by with the entire front end missing, but it charges just as hard as any of them. One of my favorites is the #00 car of "Buckshot" Jones. He's already been in two major wrecks and his car is badly chewed up, but he's still right in there racing hard.



Eight laps from the end of the race the inevitable happens. A wreck coming out of Turn 4 piles up at least six cars and damages several others. One car smashes into the outside wall and bursts into flame. The fans sitting on the other side of the fence scatter wildly up the bleachers. As it burns we leap into our ambulance and wait for the fire truck ahead of us to get through the opening in the pit wall. People from the pit area are in our way, photographers mostly, who scramble for a good shot while the car burns.

The red flag comes out – race stopped. Drivers jump out of the other five wrecked cars and scramble for the pit wall, but the driver of the burning car is still in there. We're sitting there with lights and siren going, but people are still running between us and the track. I hear the track announcer shout over the radio and the track PA system, "Get out of the goddamned way, people!" as track security arrives to shove the people blocking us out of our way. I notice that they weren't very gentle about it either, but they get the job done fast. We enter the track and the driver is finally helped out of the burning car by the firefighters. He's hurt. Another ambulance gets to him first and rushes him to the infield hospital.

Race control comes over the radio and asks us to check all the wrecked cars just to make sure that no one got overlooked in the excitement. Two of us jump out of the ambulance and run to check them. All are empty, but on the third one I notice that the master switch is still on. Leaning in, I learn the hard

way just how hot a race car can get. I turn the switch off (thank you Richard Petty) and the wreckers arrive to clear the track. Walking back to the ambulance I pass the car that burned. On an unscorched fender I see the decal of one of its main sponsors: Kingsford – the company that makes barbecue charcoal.

Eight laps to go, and the battered survivors line up for the restart. They've all worked hard just to get here and everyone is still determined to win. Four laps are run under caution and then the pace car shoots into the pits and the cars leap ahead just as hard as at the start. They slam into each other, pushing and shoving like angry snorting bulls trampling anything in their path. One car passes another on the last lap to win. It's over – I am almost numb with the noise and the excitement. I don't even register who actually won. It seems almost an anticlimax. There's another race in another state next weekend and the crews are already loading up to head back to the shops. Most of them have a lot of rebuilding to do.

Back at the infield hospital, the driver from that burned car has back injuries. He's strapped to a backboard and I help load him in the ambulance to be driven out of the track to the medivac helicopter waiting just outside. As it lifts off the spectator who had complained of chest pains earlier in the day arrives back at the aid station in the grandstands and says, "I'm ready to go to the hospital now." Then she collapses...

We remained on standby for hours while the track emptied and the crews packed up. Since the race ended well after midnight I had assumed that the crews would probably stay till morning, but they packed up and left quickly. The last one was gone within an hour, but the fans lingered far longer. I drove the disaster truck back to the station, glad that it hadn't been needed. The roar of the race still pounded in my ears.

It had been an extreme day, but I don't think it had turned me into a race fan. However, there was another race scheduled for Bristol next April, and I realized as I left the track that I intended to be back there in Turn 1, waiting for a crash that I hoped wouldn't happen. Why would I subject myself to such an ordeal again? I can't answer that question even now. The race was an experience that I'd never imagined for myself (and still don't fully understand) but I do know that I like being part of the racing action in the small way that I had been. There'll be more 'nights of thunder', and I'll be back. ✨

☛ We end this 'Communication' theme issue with another remembrance of a lost friend, Ian Gunn, who died last November of cancer. Like Vincent Clarke, Ian was also a frequent contributor to *Mimosa*, both in illustration and essay; his "Alien Spaceport" cover for *M18* is one of our favorite pieces of fan art. He had half-completed a sequel to that cover that we had planned to feature on this very issue, and we were looking forward to seeing him at the upcoming Aussiecon Three. His presence was irrepressible; the void his passing leaves in fandom is enormous.



A CARTOONIST REMEMBERS IAN GUNN By Teddy Harvia

I was introduced to Ian Gunn first through his cartoons. As artist liaison for ConFrancisco, the 1993 World SF Convention, I wrote him, and a number of other fan artists, to contribute to the convention publications. At MagiCon, the 1992 World SF Convention in Orlando, I met Aussie Roger Weddall, whom I asked about Ian. Roger told me that Ian was a decent bloke, mid-30s, shaggy head of hair, full beard, medium height, heavy set, and very funny.

Roger revealed a reverent sense of wonder in his description of Ian's significant other, Karen Pender-Gunn. Compared to Ian, he told me, Karen was very quiet and reserved, stoically tolerant of Ian's antics. If she was loud at all, she showed it in the bright colors she liked to wear.

I had no idea when I might ever meet Ian and Karen in person. Then I met and married Diana and jokingly told her I'd take her to Intersection, the 1995 World Science Fiction Convention in Glasgow, Scotland, for our honeymoon. She took me seriously. Then Ian and Karen won GUFF, the fan fund that exchanges fans between Australia/New Zealand and Europe.

At the convention, Diana and I found Ian's name listed on a programming item in the fan lounge. We walked into the partitioned area in the middle of the cavernous convention center and instantly recognized Ian and Karen, he big and fuzzy at the podium, Karen glowing and purple several rows back in the audience.

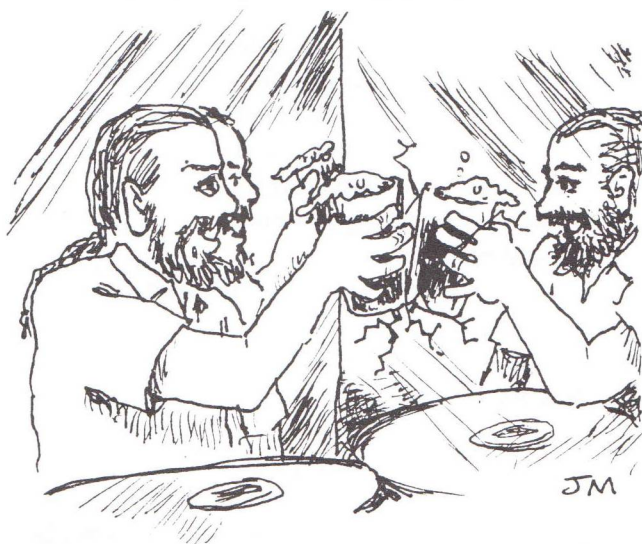
The two obviously recognized us, mostly likely because of my Texas cowboy hat; they smiled and waved back at us. The bad acoustics drowned out the speakers' voices with the rumble of the crowd scattered throughout the center so we sat close to Karen and chitchatted until the panel ended.

Ian and Karen took us over to the Australia-in-1999 WorldCon bid table in a corner of the convention center where Diana and I bought presupporting membership from them and they gave us black and white stickers of a space platypus for our badges. In return, we gave them fuzzy brown kangaroo stickers we were using to promote our intention to run for DUFF, the fan fund that exchanges fans between North America and Australia/New Zealand. The centerpiece of the bid table was a larger-than-life inflatable plastic platypus. Out of a large cloth travel bag Diana pulled the furry platypus hand puppet we'd brought all the way from Texas. Ian expressed mock jealousy that Texans had stuff with a more warm and fuzzy feeling for Australia than the Australians themselves.

We showed them the room in the ritzy Moat House attached to the convention center where we 'rich' Americans were staying (rich at least until we paid our hotel bill). We all took a cab to the more modest Central Hotel attached to the railway station in the center of Glasgow. We attended the bid parties thrown at the Central. Diana and I assisted at the

Australia in 1999 party by handing out our kangaroo stickers and lending Ian the platypus hand puppet. Ian brought the beast to life, working its mouth with one hand and wagging its tail with the other. His distinctive Australian accent and laugh only added to the magic. Women and children were petting the puppet as if it were real.

Twice during the run of the convention we went out to eat together, the first time to a cozy restaurant called The Attic in a converted shop basement, accessible by outside stairs. Here Karen introduced Diana to the sinfully rich and very British desert icky sticky toffee pudding and made a friend for life. Richard and Nicki Lynch joined us at the second restaurant, the more upscale Papingo, which means 'parrot' in old Scottish, but which I for some reason thought was Portuguese, perhaps because the colorful decorations reminded me of Lisbon. The mirrors on the wall made our party of six seem even bigger.



At the table the women discussed food, or something else of little immediate interest to us cartoonists. They commented on the haggis but no one had the nerve to order it. Ian and I shot puns and jokes back and forth at each other. We scored points virtually even until I remembered the perfect dinner conversation piece. I took from the table one of business cards advertising the restaurant and put two creases in the middle of it at right angles. I pulled on the edges and the card folded closed like wide mouth. The surprise and delight in his face told me that I had scored big points with the paper hand puppet. I gave him a note card and showed him how to create his own. We drew faces on the creations and distracted the women by trying to engage them in conversation with our 3D

cartoons. Richard Lynch, ever conscious of recording fan history, pulled out a camera to take pictures.

The night of the Hugo Awards, to my complete surprise, I ended up with a rocket after the ceremonies to carry around to the parties. At the Baltimore-in-1998 bid party we found hundreds of hard plastic party favors in the shapes of crabs, lobsters, sea horses, tuna scattered across one of the tables. Ian proceeded to entertain us by showing us how to play tiddlywinks with the red, blue, green and yellow toys, shooting them into his drink cup. When he filled his cup to overflowing and the room became overcrowded and stuffy, we decided to retire to the breezy hallway outside. On the way out I stopped at the LoneStarCon2 party, the next table over from Baltimore in the same room. There Texas fan Karen Meschke, desperate for a taste of home, traded me a fifth of Captain Morgan's Rum for a can of Dr. Pepper I'd brought with me across the Atlantic.

In the hall, we sat on the floor, I with my Hugo rocket in one hand, the bottle of Captain Morgan's in the other. Diana and Karen offered rum to everyone who passed by to keep me from getting totally wasted drinking it all myself. Several fan editors surrounded us, including Henry and Letha Welch and Benoit Girard. Feeling unqualified to draw at the moment, I suggested that Ian sketch them something. He pulled out a sketchpad and pen and immediately started inking. A caricature of Benoit produced an exclamation of delight and amazement from the recipient. Henry suggested that Ian draw a portrait of me. The whimsical picture of a gangly Texan under a cowboy hat looked just like me.

After the convention, Diana and I decided to sightsee in Edinburgh. Ian and Karen went to the train station to see us off. They had plans to travel to Edinburgh, too, to visit with fans there, only later. First they wanted to see the last working police box in the United Kingdom, a look-alike for Doctor Who's Tardis. Ian and Karen stood on the platform waving goodbye to us, and we sat at the window inside the train waving back. Diana mentioned regret that the travel plans of Ian and Karen did not correspond more closely to our own and I agreed. She and I briefly discussed delaying our departure to spend more time with them but because of Diana's interest in old buildings and our limited time in Britain, Edinburgh Castle won out over the Tardis. As if unwilling to prolong the goodbyes, the Aussies looked away. Exchanging a few words, they suddenly took off toward

the front of the train and out of sight. We wondered what caused them to run off before the train even started to leave. A moment later they plopped themselves down in the seats beside us.

They explained that they spontaneously decided that spending the day with their American friends appealed to them more than seeing a police box. Being *Doctor Who* fans ourselves, we understood the difficulty of the decision. We asked them about their luggage. They jumped on the train with nothing while we ourselves had numerous bulky cases. The Edinburgh fans were taking theirs ahead for them. Now they would actually beat their luggage there.

Diana and I remember little of the scenery between Glasgow and Edinburgh, catching only glimpses of it. We spent the trip conversing with our friends, away from the activities and demands of the convention. Ian told us outrageous stories and jokes while Karen groaned and pleaded with us gullible Americans not to believe a word of what he said. Having a new audience for his humor only encouraged Ian. I reciprocated by feeding Karen equally outrageous lines that she fell for and Diana told her she should know better than to believe everything a cartoonist said.

At the Edinburgh railway station, we momentarily parted ways, Diana and I to find our bed and breakfast and stow our luggage, Ian and Karen to inform their Scottish host that they had changed their plans slightly. We met again at the gates to Edinburgh Castle. Ian was dressed in conservative navy blue, Karen in immaculate white. Ian and I immediately ran ahead, eager to see what was around the next turn in the walls, behind the next door, around the next battlement. I told Ian we had nothing like the centuries-old castle back in Texas. He told me they had nothing like it back in Australia either. Over a metal plate covering a hole in the cobblestone castle walkway, Ian pointed out a sign with an exclamation point on it, saying that it was called a bang, indicating the use of explosives. I told him to stand beside it. He struck one of his many silly poses and I took a photo of a Gunn with a bang.

Karen and Diana, exhausted from the get-go from the climb up the steep hill atop which the castle sat, protested our pace, but in vain. We peered back at them with goofy grins through gun slits in the walls. The woman momentarily slowed us by insisting on lunch in the castle's public cafeteria. Later we all took turns taking photos of each other beside one of

the huge black cannons with the roofs of Edinburgh in the hazy background. We mused at the soldiers' pets' graveyard on a ledge outside the walls. On the way out, I chuckled at a sign that had the words "WAY OUT" and said, "Way out!" Ian, more familiar with the sign, was more amused by me.

Outside the castle we walked down the Royal Mile toward the main bus route. Along the way, we popped into the famous Camera Obscura. I took a photo of Ian and Karen from the rooftop with the Firth of Forth in the background, laughing at the alliterative place name and again amusing Ian. Farther down the street, Karen spotted a picture of a kangaroo in an ad outside a clothing shop. She insisted that we take her photo in front of it, explaining that she and Ian were making a record of all the Australian references they found on their trip that had nothing to do with Australia. Ian and I agreed to let the women enter at least one clothing shop to satisfy their lust for shopping, unfulfilled by the castle gift shop.

We reached the main bus route a little sad, knowing that our week together was finally coming to an end. We found a bus stop and checked the schedule. There was only a few minutes to say our goodbyes. Ian's and Karen's bus came and its door opened. We hugged each other, taking a moment too long. The doors closed without Ian and Karen inside and the bus took off. We enjoyed our additional twenty minutes together before the next bus came, and after quicker goodbyes, Diana and I watched our Australian friends disappear into the Edinburgh traffic.

* * *

I later contributed a cartoon to an Australian fan-nish calendar that Ian Gunn and Kerri Valkova published. Finishing it shortly before noon one Saturday, I immediately called Ian to tell him was on its way, miscalculating the time difference between Texas and Australia. A sleepy Ian answered the phone and informed me that it was three o'clock in the morning in Melbourne.

The next spring David Bratman, the Hugo administrator for LAcon 3, called me and asked if I had Ian Gunn's telephone number. I gave him the number but warned him to take into account the time difference when he called. I waited 24 hours to give David time to call and then, unable to contain my excitement, dialed Australia. I again miscalculated the time difference and again woke Ian at three o'clock in the morning. "Congratulations," I told him.

"For what?" he asked.

"Hasn't anyone called you?" I responded, slightly dismayed that I'd jumped the gun, "You've been nominated for the Best Fan Artist Hugo!"

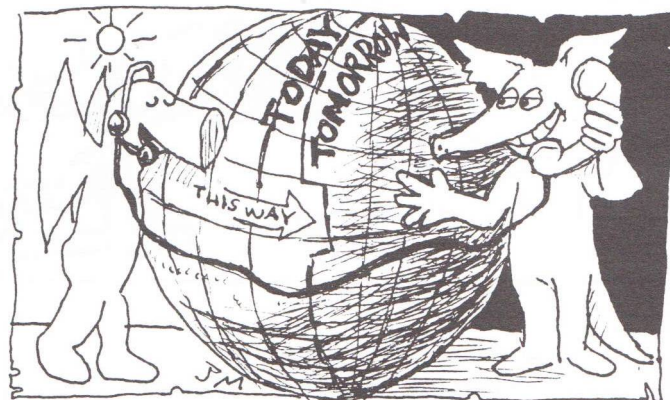
"Bloody Hell!" he exclaimed, sounding suddenly wide awake.

"When David Bratman does call you," I said, "act surprised."

We exchanged numerous packages with our friends, Ian and Karen sending Australian toys, postcards, maps, and trinkets to the U.S., Diana and I sending Texas memorabilia and science fiction kitsch Down Under. My favorites were the Yowies, assemble-yourself plastic models of Australian wildlife, that came in packages of chocolate candy. The amazing toy wombats, frilled lizards, fairy penguins, and bilbies more than compensated for our disappointment that Ian and Karen kept the candy for themselves.

Ian and Karen never woke us with a phone call in the middle of the night, but they did call. Once Ian told me that he had someone he wanted me to hear. A tinny voice came on the line and uttered a single sentence in an unintelligible drawl. "Who was that?" I asked Ian.

"Woody from *Toy Story*," Ian explained. "He sounds just like you." He rang me all the way from Australia to pull the string on a doll for me. I was speechless. One New Year's Eve, they called to wish us a happy new year. It was shortly before noon in Texas on December 31 but already three o'clock in the morning of the next year in Australia.



Ian Gunn drew wonderful critters, including armadillos. Diana, as a coeditor of the LoneStarCon2 progress reports, published several of his cartoons. Ian, when he became editor of the Melbourne SF Clubzine *Ethel the Aardvark*, reciprocated by asking me for filler art. Seeing his seemingly endless supply of creatures in print encouraged and inspired me to draw. In two of his densely populated fanzine covers, I discovered where he had hidden several of my own cartoon characters.

My frequent tendency to forget the time difference between us may have come from my feeling that we were closer than the 10,000 miles that separated us. It seemed that Ian and Karen ought to live right next door to us. Thinking back on Scotland, we were lucky to say goodbye to them three times. We never wanted to say goodbye at all. ✧

Artist Credits

Sheryl Birkhead – pages 2, 3, 24, 37 (bottom), 38

Kurt Erichsen – pages 10, 11, 12, 13

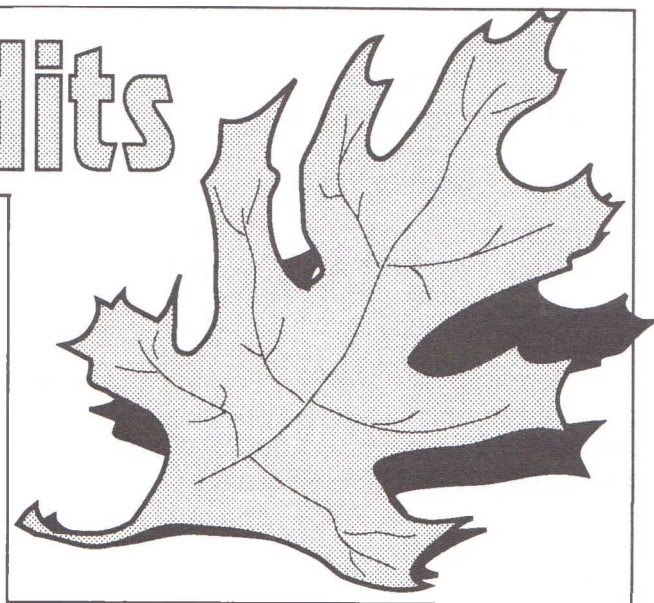
Teddy Harvia – pages 8, 9, 43 (*Chat* cartoon)

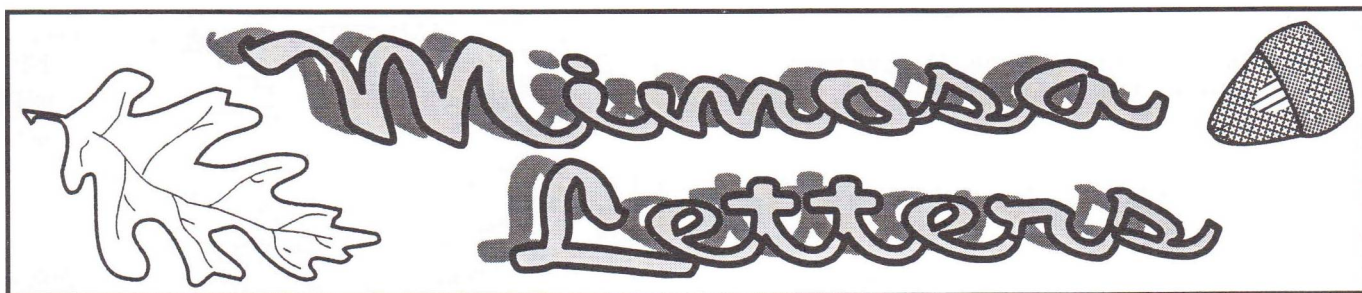
Dave Kyle – pages 25, 27 (bottom), 28

Joe Mayhew – pages 4, 5, 7, 14, 15, 16, 18, 21, 34, 35, 37 (top), 45, 47, 48, 49, 51

Julia Morgan-Scott – pages 22, 23, 26, 27 (top)

Charlie Williams – cover; pages 29, 30, 33





{{☞ Thanks once again to everyone who sent us a letter or e-mail of comment! We're gratified by the response; receiving your comments really does motivate us to keep publishing. Please be assured, too, that all comments received on the articles in *Mimosa* (whether or not they see print in the Letters Column) will find their way back to our contributors, which provides additional motivation to them, too.

The most popular article in *Mimosa* 23, if readers comments are the judge, was Mike Resnick's second installment of his "Worldcon Memories." We were somewhat surprised, though, that a close second was our opening comments. We'll begin there and also with some comments on Julia Morgan-Scott's amusing cover for *M23*, "The Pirates of Pendance." }}

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

Another absolutely amazing wraparound scratchboard cover from Julia, but then, you probably already knew that. {{☞ Yes, we did! }} I liked the theme continuation of having both a Worldcon connection and a musical number combined. And with famous fannish guest stars this time! My only question would be, who is the fair-haired maiden throwing herself to the sharks in response to the bagpipe playing of Richard? (I've heard 'good' bagpipe, I've heard 'bad' bagpipe, and when it's bad, it's just awful!)

{{☞ Several people asked who the damsel in distress was. The answer (according to Julia): no one in particular. She told us we both were the only 'real' people in that scene. }}

I thought Joe Mayhew's comments on accepting his 'Best Fan Artist' Hugo were perfect. I was split between hoping either he or Ian Gunn would win, and the way he brought Ian into it was pure class. Made me even prouder to even be a small part of that group of folks that night.

Gary Deindorfer, Trent Center West, 465 Greenwood Avenue #1104, Trenton, NJ 08609-2131

Mimosa's covers continue to be amazingly brilliant. This one, on *Mimosa* 23, is a fine take on what was apparently the theme of *Bucconeer* – fans as pirates on the body politic of society at large. Which is probably true in a way, though I'm not able to put it into words just *how* it would be true. Well, it's a lovely, amusing cover from Julia Morgan-Scott.

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

On your Opening Comments {{☞ "On the Road to *Bucconeer*" }} , I had long thought that the *USS Constellation*, undergoing restoration in Baltimore, was a frigate of approximately the same vintage as "Old Ironsides," the *USS Constitution*, now in Boston harbor. So I checked out www.constellation.org and found that the ship was indeed of 1850s vintage and was originally a sloop-of-war, but in a restoration about 40 years ago was configured to resemble its 1797 namesake, which was a frigate. "So I am right, and you are right, and all is right as right can be!" (if I'm quoting correctly from *Mikado*).

Anyway, I'm still getting used to the Internet and still marvel at it. A little while ago, curious, I put in a search query on 'propeller beanie' and came up with no fewer than 370 hits. Several were for places that sell them and a large number were for lists of 'emoicons' – those figures made from ascii characters, as 8-(!:-), a happy fan with a propeller beanie on his head. One hit was for *Mimosa* 17, specifically Ben Zuhl's article on knee fandom {{☞ "The Canadian, the Myth, and the Chambanac Bar" }} , which begins with a reference to beanies. I put in a search on my own name and came up with several references to *Mimosa* there, too. You're ubiquitous.

**Rodney Leighton, RR3, Tatamagouche,
Nova Scotia B0K 1Y0, Canada**

Another super wraparound cover by Julia Morgan-Scott. I think I liked the one on *Mimosa* 21 better but that may be due to being more a fan of Western stuff than pirates. Amazing the detail she puts in these. I hope she gets paid for doing this sort of thing; her work is certainly of extremely good quality.

Mike Resnick's hilarious recollection of various worldcons {{📖 "Worldcon Memories (Part 2)" }} was easily the written highlight of this issue. Excellent writing; excellent illustrations by Charlie Williams, and kudos for Peggy Ranson all in one article. What more could anyone wish for?

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

In her Opening Comments, Nicki wonders about the possibilities of James White's *Sector General* stories inspiring a television series. As a devoted fan of that series, I would be interested in watching at least one episode if it ever appeared. I am not sanguine, though, about the ability of special effects making the aliens believable. White's aliens are integral to the stories and he has used words to not only make them 'real' but his descriptions of them paint them vividly in the readers' minds. Such a series cannot even begin to work unless at least someone with clout in the production of the series is well-read with the work – and loves it.

{{📖 That's true. There are currently several series that are written and/or produced by people who clearly know and love the genre – *Futurama* and some of the 'non-canon' episodes of *The X-Files* come immediately to mind. The technology is now mature enough to make 'believable' aliens, as we've seen in the new *Star Wars* movie, but CGI digital effects are probably not affordable outside big-budget movies. Maybe that's where we could expect to find *Sector General* someday. }}

Then we come to the topic mentioned by Rich, *Mimosa* winning the Best Fanzine Hugo five times. As you may remember, I was one of those who worked on getting the Best Semi-Prozine category inserted as a Hugo Award many years ago. At the time this came about I had no problem with *Locus* winning an award, even winning an award every year (if the voters so desired); my problem was that *Locus* was no longer a fanzine (in the amateur sense of the original definition) and its continual winning the Best Fanzine Hugo year

after year was keeping 'real' fanzines from getting their due. As long as it is the perception amongst the voters that a given fanzine is the 'best', I have no problem if it wins the award many times. In fact, were a perpetual Best Fanzine Hugo Award winner to withdraw from contention, such an action would taint the award because, in many minds, the award would then be going to the second best zine as the best zine was not in contention. Far better is it that the political abomination known as Term Limits not be imported into the Hugo Awards. I do not want anybody telling me that I cannot nominate or vote for the fanzine of my choice (provided that it qualifies).

{{📖 We provided our position on the topic in last issue's Opening Comments – we neither encourage nor discourage anyone to vote for *Mimosa*; we don't campaign for honors, but we don't turn them down, either. We'd rather the focus be on all the memories that are being preserved in *Mimosa*, not the number of rocketships received.}}

Mike Resnick wrote about attending his many Worldcons from a viewpoint which was unique. Not that many Guests of Honour of various stripes have not written about their GoHships before, but this is the first time that I can remember a person who has written about attending Worldcons and giving his impressions of them in the progression of starting as a 'lowly' fan, graduating to positions of honour at the con, and not only showing his fannish roots during the whole litany of various Worldcons, but also making what might seem to be a disjointed agglomeration of anecdotes into a seamless whole. On top of that, it was a fascinating article.

Howard DeVore's "Mystery Guest" article {{📖 "Who Was That Mystery Guest?" }} is just the thing which makes so much of fan history so fascinating to me. Howard's article recounted not just the fact that there was a 'Mystery Guest' at the 1955 Clevelation, but also something about how it actually came to pass – in effect, not just flesh of the history itself, but the bones which helped explain the happenings. Articles like this make an important contribution to our hobby.

In the Letters Column, Lloyd Penney mentions something that I find very important. After writing about e-zines, he says, "Still, a paperzine is physical, textual, and *sent to you because someone wanted you to have it.*" (Emphasis mine.) This is one reason why the fanzine media is different from all other mediums – we fanzine editors sent out our zines to *you*, our readers, by name, because we want you to have our zine.

Somewhere down the line our zines may be seen by others not chosen by us (family and friends at your home or being 'remaindered' [as it were] at cons and such). Still, faneds get to choose our audience, by name, and that is not the case for other mediums.

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

A few minor notes about the Resnick article. The 1977 Worldcon, Suncon, actually lost its Orlando hotel a few months after it won the bid at Aussiecon I. Just a few months after the vote, the decision was made to move the convention to Miami Beach, since the original Orlando hotel had gone into bankruptcy and we didn't want to be in a bankrupt hotel. Of course, we didn't expect to have the Fountainbleu financial problems.

Concerning the Suncon Program Book, the copyright that was missing was the one on the entire book, not one on a specific article. So the copyright notice appears in different places on the page, depending on who stamped it.

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

Mike Resnick's easy-going reminiscence of his worldcon experiences was pleasant and gave a taste of the various cons without going into great detail. Also, it was a good extension of your own editorial reminiscences.

While I had been at Newyorkcon in 1956, I was not deep enough into fandom to really understand what was going on. I had the impression of a number of specialized organizations meeting. I do know the Burroughs Bibliophiles did hold a Dumdum, and think the Conan fen held a meeting. The LASFen who were all raving about Tolkien held the formative meeting of their 'Fellowship of the Ring'. I am not sure whether there were any other special fandoms.

But speaking of worldcons, Howard DeVore's piece on the 'Mystery Guest' at the 1955 Clevention is the kind of important history which is being lost as old fen die or fade away. I am so glad that Howard put it into print.

**John Trimble, 601 E. Foothill Boulevard,
Monrovia, California 91016-2403**

Mike Resnick didn't fill in the details about how

Harlan Ellison came to take the microphone away from Isaac Asimov in order to give Ike his Best All-Time Series Hugo. Immediately before that Harlan had won a Hugo for his short story, "'Repent, Harlequin!' Said the Ticktockman." In the story, the clockwork, lock-step future society is thrown into chaos (and therefore rescued from its conformity) when the Harlequin character throws jellybeans into the works, causing people to cease their mindless actions in order to grab up their treats. There's more to it than that, of course, but fans, being the irreverent sorts we are, started asking Harlan how anyone in such a society would have any idea of what the blazes a jellybean was, let alone figuring out that they were a candy treat.

Segue back to the 1966 TriCon, where the taunting of Harlan about the jellybeans continued. At the Hugo Awards banquet, Ike was doing his usual superb job of toastmastering, with many puns flying. Just before the Best All-Time Series Hugo, Asimov had announced the Short Story Hugo for Harlan's story, which Ike titled "'Repent, Harlequin!' Said the Jellybeans!" That got a hearty laugh from the attendees, but Harlan stomped up to the microphone, told Ike he was way off-base and to sit down; he, Harlan, would take care of the rest of the awards. We were close enough to the head table to see Asimov's hurt and puzzled expression; he couldn't understand how Harlan could have taken his poking fun as an insult. He looked at the con committee members but they just shrugged and indicated that they were powerless in the face of Harlan the Terrible, so Ike sat down, looking crushed. And so when Harlan immediately announced that Asimov's *Foundation* series had won for Best All-Time Series, Ike whispered that he didn't think it was funny for Harlan to be so cruel. Harlan had to tell him he *wasn't* kidding, and that Isaac had really won!

It was all a put-up job, of course, and one of those wonderful moments in fannish history that I'll always treasure.

Anyway, I'm very sorry to hear of Walt Willis' stroke. I'll always remember Walt & Madeleine visiting in L.A. after Chicon III in 1962. We were house-sitting for a cousin that year, and had a swimming pool. The house was on a street named Parapet, so fans called it the Parapet Plunge. One Saturday, during their West Coast sojourn, the Willises were brought over to our place for a pool party. We'd just returned from the Worldcon ourselves, and hadn't turned the pool heater on until that morning. Most of the L.A. Fans who tested the water decided to wait until it'd had a chance to warm up before trusting their

tender bodies to the pool, but Madeleine changed into a cute yellow bikini-type suit and plunged in. When we asked how she could stand it, Walt merely observed that she swam in the Irish Sea in May!

Walt didn't drink much (if anything) in the way of alcohol, and apparently wasn't much for soft drinks, either, so he was holding a glass of milk, when Ron Ellik grabbed a plate of cookies to hand over to Walt and managed to dump them all over him. Walt smiled and remarked that this was wonderful hospitality; milk *and* cookies! Later on, Ron was waxing rhapsodic over California wines, and while passing a glass of white over to Walt, managed to slosh some over the edge onto Willis' arm, prompting Walt to observe that he'd been "chablis treated." What a delightful man!

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

I enjoyed this issue's focus on conventions and convention stories, past and present – from your experiences of Baltimore (and yes, I can believe I like *Buffy* – it's cute, sassy, silly and sends itself up with glee while actually managing to have some fun plots – rather like *The X-Files* when it started, before it wandered off track into a Mulder/Scully soap opera), Mike Resnick's Worldcon run-downs, and especially Ron Bennett's "Kingsley Capers." I think the alarming vision of a hotel manager in a hairnet and quilted dressing gown (which calls up all sorts of memories of 1970s UK TV sitcoms like *Man About the House* and *George and Mildred*), and so wonderfully caught by Joe Mayhew, will stick with me for some while.

Wonderful cover, by the way. Your wraparound covers are becoming very distinctive.

{{🐾 Thanks! We enjoy being surprised by what our cover artists create for us. }}

**Mike Resnick, 10547 Tanager Hills Drive,
Cincinnati, Ohio 45249**

There were some comments about my first "Worldcon Memories" column in your last lettercol. I wouldn't think the gist of future comments will vary all that much, so I'd like to cut 'em off at the pass by answering them right now.

Kevin Standlee regrets that I "didn't cover the entire story." Sorry, but I'm not in the business of covering the entire story. These are *my* Worldcon memories (clearly labeled as such). They are based on *my* experiences and *my* impressions, and I would

expect them to differ, in whole or in part, from those of every other attendee of every Worldcon I discuss; if they didn't, if everyone had identical experiences, there'd be no need to ever write them up.

Also, I object to being misquoted. I said CFG blocked the rooms and rented the suite at ConFrancisco's Marriott. Tom Becker's letter makes it seem like it was entirely and exclusively *my* idea: "...the clever stunt Resnick pulled with the Marriott..." Nope. Read the article. It was *CFG's* clever stunt. Resnick is just one of its many members. In point of fact, it was Scott and Jane Dennis who blocked the rooms and rented the suite. I've done enough dumb things in my life that I don't appreciate being blamed for something that was neither mine nor dumb.

So that's it, for that and all future columns. One, remember that they are *subjective*; and two, read what I wrote, not what you think or wish I'd written.

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

Your and Nicki's notes on the worldcon are appreciated. The event still hasn't received as much fanzine space as most recent worldcons, unless a vast liberal conspiracy has prevented me from receiving some long conreports in other fanzines. Mike Resnick's continuation of this memories of earlier worldcons continued to be very enjoyable. I don't doubt that he has put into print for the first time some anecdotes about those events.

Cato Lindberg {{🐾 in "When Fandom Came to Norway" }} is very helpful in filling in gaps that had previously existed in English language fandom about Norway's fans and their activities. For some reason they haven't been chronicled with nearly as much thoroughness as the Swedish fandom's past.

Bob Madle's essay on John Baltadonis {{🐾 "My Pal Johnnie" }} fills a gaping blank in existing fanzine material about this important early fan. Curiously, I can't remember corresponding with John and I'm not even sure I traded fanzines with him, even though my first couple of years in fanzine fandom coincided with his final period of publishing activity. Most of this information is new to me. It's a shame that no worldcon ever thought about making him the fan guest of honor during his long life. However, we still need similar descriptive articles about dozens of other important fans of the 1930s and 1940s who are almost never mentioned today while other fans who were no better are constantly bobbing up in nostalgia pieces.

Don Wilson, Andy Anderson, Bill Watson, Larry Shaw, Dick Wilson, and Bill Evans, for instance, are just a few of the dozens of neglected fans of this period.

**Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta
T2P 2E7, Canada**

Jeanne Mealy's comparison of fandom to the State Fair {{☞ "Fans and Fairs" }} is like the one I make comparing fandom to the Calgary Stampede, the world's largest rodeo. More than 1.1 million people, mostly accountants, oil company executives, and shopgirls, dress up each summer and pretend they are cowfolk. The Stampede is held each July, but in the middle of July, Calgary SF fans have their annual gencon, ConVersion. Usually ConVersion is held the weekend after Stampede is over, since every hotel in the city is booked solid for Stampede, but a few years ago, due to a quirk in the calendar, ConVersion was on the final weekend of the Stampede. I quite enjoyed people-watching from the hotel lobby as Klingons and cowboys stared at each other in the hallways. To make things even livelier, the hotel also had NATO troops from Britain and Germany (in town for maneuvers at CFB Calgary), and they were open-mouthed in amazement at both the Klingons and the cowboys.

Also, the Baltadonis article was of interest to me for its account of printing fanzines via hectography. I will be using it as a citation for my history on copying methods, portions of which are occasionally run in the fanzine *Opuntia*. Hectography has an amazing hidden history. I have determined that it originated from thin sheets of animal gelatine used as tracing paper in the early 1800s. Sometimes in the 1860s, some unsung inventor in Germany or Austria discovered the method of pouring slabs of gelatine for fresh plates each time. It was immediately taken up by revolutionaries, since the secret police could arrest you for possession of a printing press but the average policeman would think nothing of a cake pan, powdered Jell-O, and food colouring. Hectography is best spelt with a 'c'; the 'k' spelling was a trademark of the Heyer Corporation.

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

Like Jeanne Mealy, I have a passion for county fairs. I've even managed to combine my love for fairs with the Worldcon. In 1993, for example, I spent several enjoyable hours at the San Francisco County Fair, an event I thought was extremely fannish, since it

seemed to be organized along the lines of "What if a group of fans were given a lot of money and told to put on a county fair?" The fair, for example, had animals – but they were all made out of wood!

I had a more enjoyable time at Nolacon than Mike Resnick did, and I also enjoyed myself at ConFrancisco, once I got past registration. The reason is that both cities are weirder and more fannish than fans are, and I spent most of my time exploring. In contrast, at Bucconeer, held in a city I know well (Baltimore), I spent nearly all of my time, save for three hours at the Walters Art Gallery, at the con or with fans. I'm not sure a "Hold Worldcons in dull cities!" cry would sway those Cancun voters, but it's one key to an enjoyable Worldcon for me.

In your opening comments, concerning the need for sensible science fiction on television, I may be one of the few fans other than Nicki Lynch to see *Mercy Point*. (But then I saw three episodes of *The Burning Zone*, quite possibly the worst sf tv series ever made.) What struck me about *Mercy Point* was that the directors decided to put *E.R.* in space; the only thing sfnal about it was that some of the characters were aliens. It was a very mundane series. In contrast, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* has the horror and fantasy elements blended in with the plot. It's the 'teen' elements of the show – the awful principal, struggling with the chemistry exam – that seem in many ways extraneous to the underlying horror. Besides, how can fans not like a show where one character says, "I'm 1120 years old and I can't buy a drink!" and where a villain (the major) craves immortality *and* has a Day-Timer?

{{☞ Another series you should check out is *Charmed* (also on the WB Network), which also has horror and fantasy elements. It's not as dark as *Buffy*, and also features some humor (as well as good writing). }}

**Ahrvid Engholm, Renstiernas Gata 29,
S-116 31 Stockholm, Sweden**

Cato Lindberg's story on his early days was fascinating, and especially interesting for me since Norwegian fandom is neighbour to Swedish. I must say it is quite impressive to travel around the world at young age, working on a boat, to visit fellow fans in foreign countries and buy pulps! There was a lot of contacts between Swedish and Norwegian fandom at the time. Swedish fandom was much bigger, but I think the few Norwegian fans at the time found it comforting to know that they weren't alone.

Patrick McGuire, 7541-D Weather Worn Way, Columbia, Maryland 21046

I read with interest your Opening Comments about Bucconeer. Columbia is even closer to Baltimore than Gaithersburg, but like you, and for similar reasons, I decided to take a hotel room at the worldcon. Considering the hours I was keeping through the con, I think I acted rightly. It really felt strange, however, to leave the hotel garage on Sunday evening and be home half an hour later!

Modern worldcons are such multi-track, multi-group affairs that often 'my' convention has very little overlap with those of other fen. For that reason, con reports may be more important now than ever – at least they provide some indication of what was going on elsewhere. Some scheduling conflict made me miss attending the *Buffy* panel, which I regretted, and I was glad to see Nicki's brief discussion of what went on there. I recently read that the demographic appeal keeping the show on the air is to women between 18 and 28. It does, however, also seem to have a following among older fannish males. Perhaps this is because *Buffy* and companions are depictions as an out-group in high school, but one doing some important and worthwhile things than the in-group does. This is how a lot of us soon-to-be-fen thought of ourselves back in our own high school years.

{{☹ *Buffy* seems not only to appeal to femfannes, but even to non-fans. Several people where Nicki works also like *Buffy* (and also *The X-Files* and *Highlander*), but don't have any interest in media or other kinds of fandom. }}

I'm also glad to see Nicki mention *Mercy Point*, because I was beginning to think that I was the only person in non-media fandom who had even seen the thing. The episodes that made it onto the air were never, in my opinion, what you might call good, but the show still looked to me like it might have been artistically salvageable.

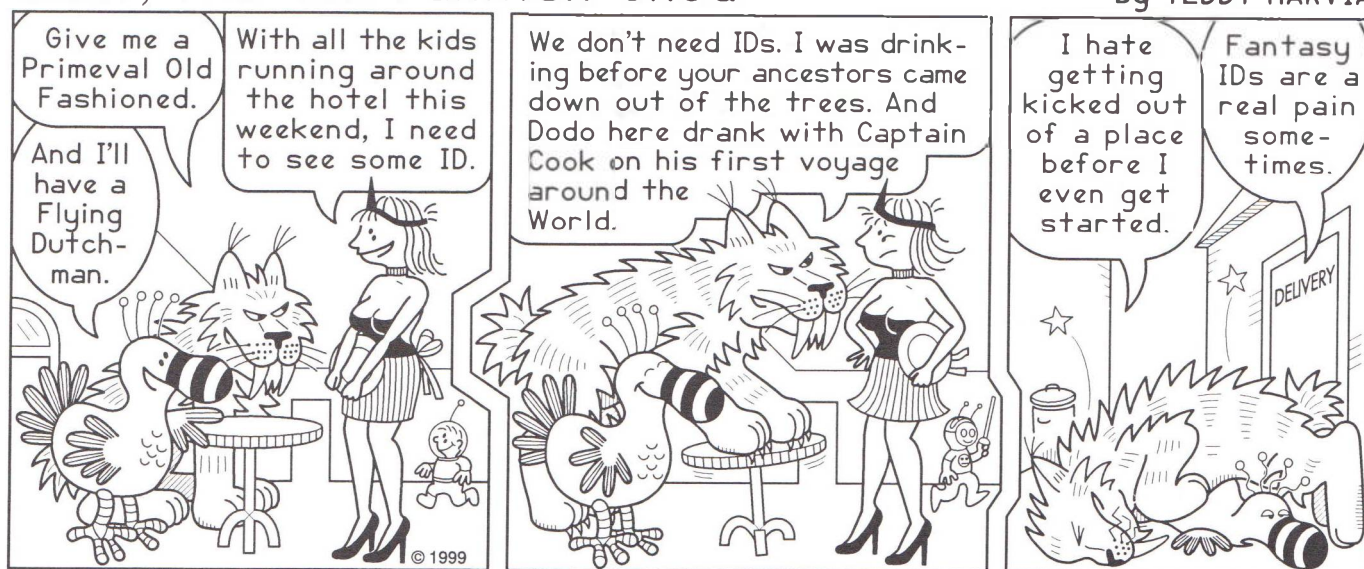
It's astonishing how much time literary fen spend discussing movies and TV shows. My theory is that now that the magazines have lost their importance, TV and films are the only SF that any given random sample of fen are likely to have consumed at roughly the same time, so that they can serve as a common basis of discussion. It can take months for everyone to have read even a 'must-read' book, especially if it first comes out in hardcover.

Yes, as you say at the end of your Opening Comments, *Mimosa* is performing a service to fan history, but then again, memory is notoriously fallible. I have been caught out on fannish matters I recalled from only twenty years back, while many of your contributors are trying to hark back fifty years or more with few written records to help them. Howard DeVore certainly gets points for trying to find confirmation for his 44 year old "Mystery Guest" tale, but he himself admits that he came up with not a whole lot, even from people who ought to have known. And I can imagine that in future decades, a *lot* of ink is going to be spilled over David Kyle's 60 year old belated account of events at the first worldcon.

Of course, in your remarks, what you actually say is that there are "so many stories that needed telling,

CHAT, the 4th Fannish Ghod

By TEDDY HARVIA



for future generations of fans to read and be entertained.” That could lend itself to the interpretation that you’re interested in the creation and propagation of fannish legends, without much caring if they’re true or not, so long as they are entertaining. I’d rather have late recollections than no recollections, but still better are recollections with records or other confirmation behind them. One of the more irritating things about Asimov’s autobiography was how little research (besides looking in his diary) he was willing to do to check his recollections or make them more concrete. I hope your contributors will put up at least as much effort as Howard DeVore did in trying to reinforce their own memories.

{{☞ Many of them already do. Dave Kyle, for instance, takes great pains in checking facts as much as possible with surviving records and fans. You can see that he often quotes from these sources in his articles, sometimes to the point where we ask him to put a little more of himself into them. At any rate, we think it’s inevitable that anyone who writes an historical article with a first person viewpoint will impart a certain amount of personal subjectivity into it – after all, it’s a view through his (or her) own eyes, and it’s not really meant to be a scholarly work. From an historical viewpoint, and especially for controversial, high-visibility events like the 1939 Worldcon, the more of these that are written, the better chance to gain an understanding of what really happened, and why. As for making fan history more interesting to read, the next letter has more to say about that. }}

I enjoyed Cato Lindberg’s article, partly because it shows that Scandinavian fandom had a less frivolous side to it that has seemed the case from other writers. Cato’s essay also gave me an idea for an article of my own, but given my miserable fanac record of late, I think I’ll keep quiet about the topic until such time as I actually write it.

In the Letters Column, Ahrvid Engholm remarks that he’s met Forry Ackerman, who has met everyone else. Robert Sirigano provides the illustration of Forry meeting Stan Freberg. About a year back I discovered that Forry had met the guy who then occupied the desk next to mine at work! (The person in question was not an SF fan but a movie buff, and Forry had shown up at some film festival! I certainly know Forry by sight from seeing him on panels and such, but I can’t recall having spoken to him, so I’m not sure of he counts as ‘met’ for me. He did send me a form letter once.)

Taral Wayne, 245 Dunn Avenue #2111, Toronto, Ontario M6K 1S6, Canada

So much of fanwriting these days is about the fannish past. Not fanhistory *per se*, but descriptions of old cons one is fond of, a friend who has died, favourite books you read when you started reading SF, and so on. It’s very much like small talk – you corner someone at a party and begin talking, you get interested in the person and his opinions, you trade likes and dislikes. I’m not sure the process is intrinsically interesting, though. Does it matter to me what Alva Rogers or Calvin Demmon or Les Crouch liked reading when they were eighteen? The justification, of course, is whether the writer can tell you these things in an entertaining way. All fannish writing is story-telling, really. Even though ‘fan fiction’ is a derogatory term in some quarters, even factual reminiscences of real events have to be presented the same way as fiction. It has to have characters to identify with, an evolving structure, vivid images and sensory details, literary devices such as irony and metaphors, climax and completion. The further from fictional style, the less satisfying the ‘real’ article.

Fred Smith, 15 Missionhouse Gardens, Glasgow G41 3DP, Scotland

Robert Madle’s tribute to John Baltadonis was engrossing. It’s funny, but when I was active in fandom in the 1950s, those guys, along with Ackerman, Moskowitz, DeVore, and Kyle, were already legendary. We even had nostalgia for the ‘old days’ back then!

We Also Heard From: Harry Andruschak, William Bains, Pat Baltadonis, Steve Baltadonis, John Berry, Pamela Boal, Ned Brooks, Chester Cuthbert, Richard Dengrove, Melanie Fletcher, Nick Grassel, Karen Pender-Gunn, Teddy Harvia, Ben Jason, Terry Jeeves, Bob Kennedy, Irv Koch, Ken Lake, Fred Liddle, Cato Lindberg, Eric Lindsay, Shinji Maki, Jeanne Mealy, Joseph Major, Yuri Mironets, Murray Moore, Janice Murray, Elizabeth Osborne, Lloyd Penney, Robert Peterson, Derek Pickles, Peggy Ranson, Dave Rowe, Julia Morgan-Scott, Agnieszka Sylwanowicz, Steve Sneyd, Gene Stewart, Ian Stockdale, Mark Strickert, Alan J. Sullivan, Ted Tubbs, R Lorraine Tutihasi, Lennart Uhlin, Debra Weddall, Henry Welch, Art Widner, and Dorota Żywno. **Thanks to one and all!**

NON-STOP PARKING AND OTHER REMEMBRANCES

Final Comments by Richard Lynch



8-7-93

October 31, 1997 (Warsaw, Poland). It's All Hallow's Eve here in Eastern Europe, but there's nary a witch nor goblin to be seen. About the scariest thing I've seen are all the closed money changer kiosks, as I was desperate to change some dollars into zloties so I could buy a train ticket to Gdańsk for early tomorrow morning. I thought I'd have a horrific time purchasing the ticket, late as it was on a Friday night, but it really wasn't a problem. I'd already written down the departure time I wanted, and when I got to the ticket window at the train station, I told the sales lady in my best Polish enunciation, "Jeden bileta Gdańsk, drugi klasa, prosze." ("One second-class ticket to Gdańsk, please.") It worked! In fact, it worked so well that the guy behind me said something to me (in English) that I would never have expected to hear: "Your Polish is pretty good!" Now hearing *that* was scary!

I don't think I've ever written much in *Mimosa* about what I do in the 'real' world. I'm employed by an agency of the United States Government, and for the past several years I've been working on an international trade promotion initiative. The goal is to find the project opportunities that all the multinational corporations consider too small and then match them up with smaller project developer companies who are thirsty for those kinds of opportunities, but don't have the resources to be all over the world finding them. It's a fairly proactive program without much in the way of resources to work with, and whenever there's a success, you get the feeling you can actually make a difference in the world.

Eastern Europe is where this initiative seems to work best (I won't bore you with the technical details

why that's so), and I've traveled there many times in the past decade. It's a fascinating part of the world to visit, and each time I've been there I've come away with a greater understanding of the region and the people who live there.

And, yes, I've had my share of misadventures, quite often involving a language barrier, on some of these trips. There are a lot of languages spoken in Europe, and learning more than just a few survival words and phrases in any of them is very difficult for me. Fortunately, even though language barriers can be a big problem in Eastern Europe, it was fairly easy enough to get along when I was alone, surviving on English. In fact, English-language words are rapidly invading the region – many signs and storefronts often use English-language words, such as 'stop', 'hot-dog', 'computer', 'druggist', and, inevitably, 'sale'. There are also some English-language phrases in use there we *don't* use in North America, a prime example being 'non-stop', which seems to be the preferred way of saying 'open 24 hours'. Examples of its use include 'Non-Stop Snack Bar', 'Non-Stop Gasoline', and, most amusing of all, 'Non-Stop Parking'.

November 3, 1997 (Sanok, Poland). The hotel situation in Eastern Europe seems to have improved considerably in the past year or so. There wasn't really even a single hotel I stayed in this trip that I'd object to returning to on a future trip. On the other hand, I didn't have to stay at a couple of the places I endured last year. The lowest of the low was probably the Hotel Warsaw, which had nothing wrong with it that a complete gutting wouldn't cure. My most lasting memory

of that place, however, was the calling cards I found under my door listing phone numbers I should dial if I was wanting a little female companionship. When I showed one of them to my Polish host, he laughed and said, "Ah, you are staying at a full service hotel!"

It probably wouldn't be incorrect to claim that for many decades, the 'language' of fandom, the primary form of fan communication, has been the written word, by letter or fanzine. This was especially true for Chuck Harris, who became famous in the 1950s both as a fan writer and a fan editor (he was probably as much responsible for the success of the legendary fanzine *Hyphen* as the equally legendary Walt Willis). That Chuck was also stone deaf and did not attend many fan gatherings perhaps emphasizes the importance of the written word to fandom back then.

Besides his work with Willis on *Hyphen*, Chuck also published his own fanzine, *Quinzy* (or just *Q*, as it became better known). Even though I'd heard about it, I had never run across a copy of *Q* before 1990; no real surprise, since the largest copy count for any issue previous to that one was only 25. That larger-circulation issue of *Q* was actually a trip report by Chuck of his visit to North America, the result of a special fan fund to bring him there. Here's how I reviewed the issue for another fanzine:

This is a voyage of discovery and along the way, Chuck shares his surprise about things like: strawberries being served as garnishes rather than only as a dessert; that you can travel on a train for a night and a day, and *still* be only half way between Minneapolis and Seattle; that tumbleweeds exist not only in the movies; that jalapeño peppers are *hot*! The skillful blending of sense-of-wonder into the events of the trip makes for fascinating reading.

In short, this is the type of trip report where you can't wait to turn the page to see what happens next. It's an enjoyable look at the American way of life from someone who's a good enough writer to point out the differences in an amusing manner. I hope reader response to the issue will convince Chuck to keep this issue's copy count next time he publishes, if for nothing else so we indigent fanzine fans in the States can see what *real* fanzine writing is.

It was my misfortune, surely, not to have crossed paths with Chuck Harris very often, either in person or in print. Looking through all our back issues, I see that we published only two pieces by him in *Mimosa* – a letter of comment and an article co-written with

Vince Clarke, both in issue 12. The first time I met him in person was at the Corflu fanzine fans convention of 1989, where he had the status of an unofficial Guest of Honor; it was his first trip to North America, and he had so many people surrounding him it was impossible to do more than just say hello. The only other time I really got to 'talk' to him (via a shared laptop computer) was at the 1992 Worldcon, Magicon, where there were enough other things going on that he was much more accessible.

Chuck passed away on July 5th, peacefully, reportedly while resting in his favorite chair. We sometimes learn more of a person from the eulogies and obituaries that are written after his passing, and I think that could be true for Chuck Harris. Jerry Kaufman described him as an "original voice in fannish writing: bawdy, roguish, impassioned and humane." Patrick Nielsen Hayden remembered him as much for his unique personality as his talent as a writer: "Chuck loved the things he loved – his family, his friends, fandom – and was so grounded in these things that he often seemed completely fearless about everything else. He would say anything, and frequently did. To be around Chuck in public was to constantly alternate between being mortified and nearly dying of laughter. He knew what was really important." And Rob Hansen remembered Chuck, along with Vince Clarke and Arthur Thomson, as one of the great influences on British fandom: "They were my personal trinity of fannish elders, those three, warm, witty, wonderful guys who epitomised what fandom can be and what it should be, and I feel privileged to have been their friend. Now, with Chuck's death, they're all gone, an era has passed, and I feel diminished." So do we all.

October 29, 1997 (Budapest, Hungary). It's been a trying day. Business meetings did not go all that well today, and this afternoon I almost had my briefcase stolen. It happened while I was looking over some artwork at an outdoor kiosk. The print I wanted seemed a bit overpriced at 3000 Florints (about \$16) so I offered 2400 instead. When the dealer seemed a bit stubborn, I set my briefcase on the pavement while I checked my wallet to see if I had enough money in case he wouldn't budge. It wasn't five seconds later that someone tried to snatch the briefcase; if I hadn't deliberately leaned it against my leg I would have lost it. When I felt it go, my reaction was automatic, fueled by adrenaline. I grabbed a handful of the jacket of the culprit (it was a woman), spun her around facing me, carefully removed the briefcase from her grasp, and gave her a hard shove that almost knocked her down.

She staggered away. One deep breath later, I turned back to see the art dealer staring at me, open-jawed. After about five seconds he found his voice: "OK. I think I can do 2400." Silver linings appear in unusual ways, I guess.

My friend George "Lan" Laskowski also died in July. He'd been ill for quite some time with pancreatic cancer so it wasn't really unexpected, but any loss of a friend is still a shock to the system. Unlike Chuck Harris, I crossed paths with George many times in the two decades plus that I'd known him. I have a pretty vivid memory, in fact, of the first time I met him. It was at a mid-south convention in the late 1970s, back before the time of *Mimosa* when we were still publishing the Chattanooga clubzine *Chat*. He stood out in a crowd because of the raccoon hat he wore, which I guess he considered as kind of a fan-nish trademark of sorts.

Like Nicki and me, George was a fanzine publisher, as most of you are no doubt aware. His general interest fanzine, *Lan's Lantern*, began publication not long before we first "pubbed our ish" and even though *LL* had much more visibility and diverse readership than *Chat*, he treated us as his equal. And several years later, at the 1986 Worldcon when we were disenchanted by all the nastiness endemic to our local fandom at that time and considering dropping out of fandom to get away from it all, he made a point of pleading with us not to, and to publish a second issue of *Mimosa* instead. (And we did, early the next year – five years after the first issue had appeared.) A couple years later we moved north to Maryland and didn't see him too often after that, usually only at Worldcons and Midwestcons. But we still kept in touch through the mail, and we kept on each others fanzine mailing lists.

George only had two contributions in *Mimosa*, a letter of comment in issue 12 and a short piece of fluffy fan fiction, in our very first issue. Even though he often wrote fanzine articles for other fan publishers, I really don't think George will be remembered as a fan writer. For many years he was so prolific as a fan publisher and *LL* so popular a forum for his readers, that may well be how he'll be recognized in future fan history books.

In his remembrance of George, Arthur Hlavaty remarked that *Lan's Lantern* was "a big, friendly place that encouraged maximum participation, rather than a unified, tightly organized display of editorial control." Laurie Mann agreed, adding that: "I felt he

was one of the people who was uniquely a fan. *Lan's Lantern* had the diary, the reviews, the trip reports, the loads of fan art, lengthy letters, and frequent nattering. He was almost always a joy to be around at cons, with his natural enthusiasm for life." Leah Zeldes Smith was one of the people who acquainted him with fanzines back in the 1970s, and one of her memories of George was a note from him, after he won his first 'Best Fanzine' Hugo, "thanking me for introducing him to fanzine fandom. We hadn't been in touch in a while, and George was older than I am, but I think, now, I have just a dim inkling of what a parent feels when a child dies." And Janice Gelb recalled, "I remember sitting at the Hugo Awards rehearsal with him at Intersection, giggling away at all the chaos. I think all of fandom remembers his graciousness after the snafu at Magicon where Spider Robinson mistakenly announced that his fanzine, *Lan's Lantern*, had won the Fanzine Hugo when it had actually been won by *Mimosa*."

Nicki and I will always be entangled in that surreal bit of fan history with him, at Magicon, the only time a Hugo Award has been mistakenly awarded. George did win two 'Best Fanzine' Hugos for *LL*, one at the 1986 Confederation (in spite of the campaign for 'No Award' that year) and the other at Chicon V in 1991. When he won at ConFederation, Nicki and I made a point of telling him how happy we were for him, and even how proud we felt for him. After what must have been a big disappointment at having to relinquish the 1992 Fanzine Hugo, he made a point of coming to us and apologizing for something that wasn't even his fault, and telling us how proud *he* was of *us*. His hat was a raccoon, but his memory was of an elephant.



April 8, 1998 (Prague, Czech Republic). Prague is an easy city to get around in, and perhaps the best way to do that is with the city's subway system (which seems to be the only "gift" of the communist era anyone there is thankful for). It goes almost everywhere, and it's easy to use – once you get past buying a ticket from the self-service machines. I thought it would be simple – just push the button for the type of pass you wanted, feed in the coins and wait for the ticket to pop out. But when I tried it, I couldn't get the machine accept the coins; they wouldn't go in the slot. So I had to wait, loitering near the machine and trying to act nonchalant, hoping someone would come and buy a ticket so I could see how it was done. Finally, a young lady on the way home from school showed me how it worked – you had to also push a second button to finalize the selection before the machine would accept any money. I'm glad nobody asked me what I did for a living – I would have been embarrassed to admit I was a trained engineer!

I don't know if it's possible to be 'trained' as a correspondent, but if it were, there's at least one fan who would qualify for an advanced degree. Robert "Buck" Coulson, who died in February, was probably fandom's most prolific letterhack this side of Harry Warner. He wrote interesting, somewhat rambling letters that blended together comments on the fanzine he had received and relevant things that were happening in real life, and it was usually pretty easy to find a paragraph or two to excerpt into the letters column. In *Mimosa* alone there are eighteen Buck Coulson LoCs in the 23 previous issues. He also wrote one article for *Mimosa*, about some of the early Midwest-cons, which appeared in the 13th issue: he had come into fandom in the early 1950s and was an excellent source of fanhistorica.

Buck Coulson and his wife Juanita became known in fandom back then from their own fanzine, *Yandro*, which they published monthly through much of the 1950s and 1960s. *Yandro* was a balance of fannish and sercon material that seemed to have something for everyone. It became popular enough that it was nominated for a Hugo Award ten years in a row, winning in 1965. However, the worldcon was in London that year, and Buck and Juanita couldn't attend. Buck later wrote (in a letter of comment to *Mimosa*) that by the time they received the actual, physical Hugo Award in the mail some nine months afterwards, "the rocket looked a bit like it had spent all that time knocking around the asteroid belt in the hands of an incompetent pilot. Pitted, in other words.

Nobody had blown a hole through the drive section or anything, but it did look like a hard-working ship. Well, the Hugo Awards had started having a primary and final ballot in 1959, and *Yandro* had been on it every year until we won in 1965, and for three more years afterwards. So we started calling *Yandro* 'the world's best second-rate fanzine'. Had to quit that after we won, but we decided that a second-rate Hugo for a second-rate fanzine was quite appropriate. We found it was very useful for holding 3-inch rolls of tape in our previous dwelling, but here it's on top of the piano with the other trophies and an inconvenient location for tape. Pity: there never used to be any cries of 'Where the hell's the masking tape?' It was right there in plain sight."



In the 1960s, Buck partially transitioned into prodom, coauthoring two *Man From U.N.C.L.E.* novels, and then in the 1970s, two short mystery novels, *Now You See It/Him/Them* and *Charles Fort Never Mentioned Wombats*, the latter two each set in the midst of a science fiction convention. Bob Tucker thought that those two books "revealed to some extent just what he thought of fans and fandom, what he saw as our assets and our foibles," and described the latter one as "an account of fans gathering for the Australian worldcon of 1975. Those fans foil an alien invasion and save the world by disbelieving in aliens and their UFOs. It was a splendid tongue-in-cheek tale filled with the recognizable fans and pros of 1975-77." They are indeed entertaining to read, and Nicki and I own a copy of each of them, but I was dismayed to see that I'd never gotten Buck to sign them for us. Way back then, when we bought the books, I was still little more than a neo, and I may have been too intimidated by Buck's reputation as a curmudgeon to ask.

Buck was often referred to as a ‘curmudgeon’, a description that he seemed to encourage. Gene DeWeese, who collaborated with him on all four novels, remembered that. “He long had the reputation – often purposely cultivated – of being the ultimate fannish curmudgeon. It started, I suspect, because he was simply the most honest person I’ve ever known and didn’t suffer fools easily. And he didn’t hesitate to let you know, as I found out on a couple of occasions when he thought, quite rightly, that I’d slipped into that category.” Bob Tucker recalled that, “More than once in print and in person he was described as a curmudgeon and he appeared to glory in that appellation, but he was not the dictionary description of a curmudgeon – not a grasping or churlish fellow. To many of us he was a kindly curmudgeon, a lovable iconoclast who would quickly disagree with one word used in this sentence. He was a Fredric Brown Character.” Dave Rowe agreed, adding, “His knowledge was gargantuan but he never pontificated. Forget the curmudgeon image, Buck was a great guy to just sit down and talk with.”

There were a lot of people who were close to Buck Coulson. Bob Tucker, for instance, related that, “Our friendship was so close that I put him into two of my books and he gloried in it. In *To the Tombaugh Station* (1960) he is the captain of a spaceship named *Yandro*, and he plays a part near the end in trying to save the dumb hero from crashing on Pluto. In *Resurrection Days* (1981) he is the pastor of the hero’s church (which was a double-barreled in-joke for fans in the know).” Buck also often went out of his way to do kindnesses for people; Sheryl Birkhead recalled that, “*Yandro* was one of the first fanzines to publish my artwork, and later on, when I needed a mimeograph, he made sure that I got one.” And Carolyn Doyle had this to offer about how entertaining Buck Coulson could be: “Getting letters from Buck was a trip. He had a wonderful variety of postage stamps that he might plaster the envelope with, and the stationery might be anything from watermarked paper with a letterhead for ‘Crusader Service’ (Armour Cleaned! Lances Sharpened!) to cut-up sections of old blueprints from work.”

As for me, unfortunately, I don’t think I ever really got to know Buck all that well, or at least as well as I might have. I never really did get many opportunities to sit down and talk with him. He didn’t go to many conventions the last few decades of his life, and the ones he that did attend were usually ones that I

didn’t. What’s left is all the correspondence from him we received in the mail; I’m going to miss all those thoughtful letters and insights into fan history. Nicki and I always looked forward to hearing from him. He was our friend.

May, 1991 (Helsinki, Finland). I was surprised that so many Finns (in Helsinki, at least) have a pretty good command of English. Turns out that English is the unofficial third language of Finland, right behind the two official ones, Finnish and Swedish. There’s been only one instance where I had trouble conversing with a Helsinkian – while boarding a tram, I accidentally stepped on the toe of a surly-looking old lady who was leaving it. I immediately apologized, but she either didn’t understand English or was having none of it, because she let loose an extended verbal barrage in Finnish that turned the air blue. I could hear her yelling at me until the tram turned the corner at the end of the block. I started hoping a hole would open in the tram floor that I could crawl into; people sitting near me seemed to be having trouble keeping a straight face. I guess you could say that even though that grouchy old lady wasn’t able to converse with me in my language, she sure didn’t have any trouble communicating with me in hers.



There’s an old saying that “deaths come in threes.” It’s been much worse than that lately. Gary Louie, a Los Angeles area fan, died in February of a heart attack. He was seven years younger than I am. Gary was very active in convention-running fandom; he helped put together the Exhibits area at the 1996 L.A.Con III, and I understand that he usually helped out in some way for practically every convention that he attended. I can’t say that I was a good friend of his, but we did know each other. Back in 1991, when

I was in the midst of editing a new hardcover edition of Harry Warner, Jr.'s 1950s fan history, *A Wealth of Fable*, Gary provided everything from useful advice to sympathetic words several times when the project had gotten bogged down. I remember that he even offered to help work on the book's rather comprehensive index, a mostly thankless but necessary part of the editing process. The only reason I didn't take him up on the offer was that it needed to be done by just one person for reasons of continuity and style. I imagine there will be a rather big hole to fill in many convention committees and operations staffs now that he's gone.

Los Angeles fandom has been hit hard this year. Marjii Ellers, who had been active in the 'Regency Dance' and costuming aspects of fandom, passed away just four days ago as I write this, on July 26th. One of the problems in being a continent-width away from Southern California is that it's hard to get to know many of the fans there very well, and I regret that I didn't cross paths with her very often. I think I originally met Marjii in the late 1970s or perhaps the early 1980s, when I was in Los Angeles on a business trip and stopped by a LASFS meeting while I was there. What made me talk to her at all was that she was wearing clothes that featured scenes from one of the *Star Wars* movies. They were really a marvel, and when I naively asked her where she'd purchased them and for how much, she told me that she'd designed and sewn them herself; the material had come from a child's bedsheet set. From the various remembrances I've read about her on the Internet since she died, the overwhelming theme is that she was competent in everything she ever did, and went out of her way to be helpful, especially to those who really needed the help. At one of the earlier worldcons in the 1990s, Forry Ackerman had recognized her as a recipient of the annual 'Big Heart' Award. It's obvious that it couldn't have gone to a nicer, more giving person.

December 9, 1998 (Bucharest, Romania). I've changed only about US\$50 into Romanian Lei since I arrived two days ago, and I'm not nearly going to spend it all. This is a very inexpensive country – I bought a soft pretzel from a street vendor this afternoon for the princely sum of 500 Lei, which works out to slightly less than five cents. Anyway, I saw there was a symphony performance tonight, and it looked like an opportunity to use up most of my remaining Lei. Or so I thought. When I arrived at the symphony hall, I was surprised to find that there wasn't a box office

there. I tried to explain to the person at the door that I needed to purchase a ticket for the performance, but he had even less English than I had Romanian, and pointed me toward the coat check area. I thought I was doing a little better with the lady there, especially when she motioned me toward a staircase up to the next level, but when I got to the top, a door opened into the back of the concert hall. One last try, with the lady usher there: "Excuse me, I need to purchase ticket for this performance. Can you help?" She pointed me toward a vacant seat at the back of the hall. At that point, I gave in, realizing that it was my karma not to be able to spend any money in Romania.

Here's a question for you – what *might* the following all have in common: Babe Ruth's 713th home run, the 30th day of December, the Apollo 16 mission to the moon, and this 24th issue of *Mimosa*? Answer: they are all next-to-last. It's been our karma (as well as our pleasure) to publish what we hope is an entertaining fanzine that's also educational from an historical perspective. But it's very possible that we won't be doing it for too much longer.

We don't mean to alarm or disappoint our readers. The decision isn't even final yet, and we're leaving open the possibility of changing our minds. The only reason I'm mentioning this at all is that we've heard some speculation (seen it in print, actually) that *Mimosa* will soon cease publication; not saying anything would only feed the rumor mills.

So why are we even thinking of stopping? Our interests aren't changing, but they are broadening and starting to impact on available spare time. I'm starting to become more and more involved in the international and cultural communities here in Washington, and there's been some times in the past couple of months when I've had to decide if I should go to some interesting evening event or stay home and work on a fanzine. Nicki, I know, would like to spend a bit more time with her quilting. Even within the boundaries of fandom there are things competing for available time and resources; my 1960s fan history project, for instance, has practically gone into hibernation for the past three years and I'd like to start making some progress on it. Even scheduling business trips and vacations around when we'd like to publish an issue is even starting to become a problem. In short, it's becoming harder and harder to publish two issues per year. When we began *Mimosa*, we thought that two issues each year seemed to be the acceptable compromise that wouldn't stress our resources while still maintaining continuity with our

readers. Anything very much less than that would not be fair to our contributors, our correspondents, or our readers.

So we wanted to be the ones to tell you this, that each 'next' issue of *Mimosa* could be the last. We're definitely doing a 25th issue. We might do a 30th issue. We probably won't do anything more than that. We've had a wondrous time these past two decades helping to preserve fan history, and we're pleased that other good fanzines, such as Tom Sadler's *The Reluctant Famulus* and Guy Lillian's *Challenger*, are now doing the same. It's time that they got some of the recognition we've enjoyed over the past decade. Thank you all for taking us to the top of the Tower of the Enchanted Duplicator – the view is very fine from up there.

November 30, 1998 (Bratislava, Slovakia). There's getting to be a tradition for each of my trips here that on my last night in Slovakia, my friends at the Power Research Institute take me out on a pub crawl. This year's hit list included a fine little restaurant in the middle of Bratislava's Old Town, a nondescript watering hole out on the northwest edge of town, and even a Harley Davidson biker bar (in theme, anyway) in the southern industrial area of the city. One other thing that happened as the night went on (and after our translator went home) was that the language barrier started to drop, especially for me – the more I drank, the easier it was to pick up on a few Slovak words and phrases. By the time the evening came to a close, we were all half-looped and understanding each other perfectly. Or so it seemed, anyway. Maybe I've discovered a new method of learning languages!



I should mention that the travel diary excerpts in this essay are mostly from a series of "Postcard Diaries of Eastern Europe" that I've written and are available online at the *Mimosa* web site. I decided to write them because of arcane Government rules and regulations about travel expense repayment that made it difficult to call home with any hope of getting reimbursed. It costs a *lot* to call North America from Europe, especially from hotels, and I just couldn't afford the cost of all those daily phone calls.

Instead, I decided to send out a postcard every day, one that was a stand-alone essay, a chapter of an overall larger diary of that trip that would provide a flavor of just what Eastern Europe is all about. The challenge was to be interesting, be entertaining, and above all, be brief! It wasn't easy. There were lots of evenings that I was so tired I just wanted to go to bed instead of finding where I could buy a postcard (not to mention the airmail postage), and then trying to compose something pithy about the day's activities that would fit into however many words I could cram onto the card. I don't think I always succeeded, but most every day I was able to find one or two things interesting enough to build a mini-essay around.

Even though I've been to Eastern Europe many times, each trip there is always a voyage of discovery as the region undergoes change from year to year. There still is a sense of wonder for me.

November 6, 1997. I'm on the overnight train from Warsaw to Prague, and tomorrow morning I catch the ground shuttle out to the airport for the flight home. Perhaps the single most unforgettable moment of the entire trip happened earlier today. I was walking back toward my hotel from the very last business meeting of the trip when I was accosted by an older Polish man who was looking for some directions. After about 30 seconds of him pointing this way and that, and talking to me rapidly in Polish, it dawned on him that I was silently standing there with a blank look on my face. He looked at me expectantly, and I seized the opportunity to point to myself and say, "Amerykanka." A great look of amusement came across his face: "Amerykanka?" I nodded and replied, slowly, "Washing-ton-dee-see." And with a great look of delight he yanked out his wallet, slipped a photograph of a young woman from it and pointed to it, saying "Air-ling-town-vair-gene-ee-yah." Apparently his daughter had come to America and was living right across the Potomac from where I worked. You know, looking at the map, I see that there are about 5,000 miles that separate Eastern Europe from Washington, DC. But in reality, they're a *lot* closer than that. ✧



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