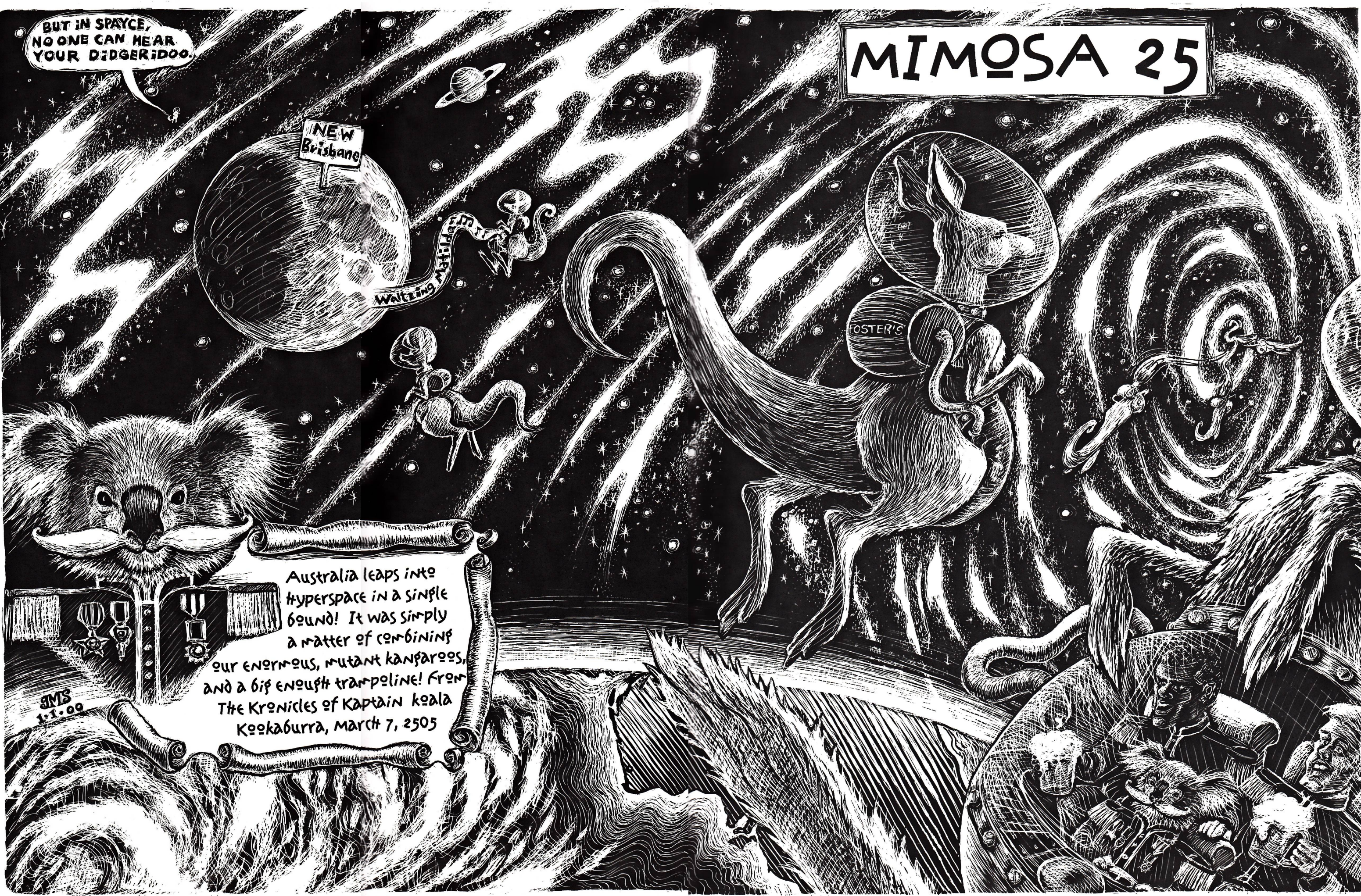


BUT IN SPACE,
NO ONE CAN HEAR
YOUR DIDGERIDOO.

MIMOSA 25



Australia leaps into
hyperspace in a single
bound! It was simply
a matter of combining
our enormous, mutant kangaroos,
and a big enough trampoline! From
The Kronicles of Kaptain Koala
Kookaburra, March 7, 2505

SMS
1-1-00

MIMOSA 25





from Nicki and Richard Lynch, P.O. Box 3120, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20885, U.S.A.

new e-mail address: fiawol@cpcug.org

new web site: <http://www.jophan.org/mimosa>

Mimosa is a fanzine very much devoted to the preservation of the history of science fiction fandom. This 25th issue was published in April 2000, and is available for four dollars (U.S. currency or equivalent), which includes cost of postage. We will definitely publish a 26th issue, and it will appear before the end of this year. Your letters and e-mails of comment on this issue are very welcome (we'll assume all correspondence we receive is intended for publication unless otherwise indicated); a letter or e-mail of comment, or a printed fanzine in trade, will get you a copy of the printed version of *M26*. Copies of most back issues are available; please write us for more info on price and availability. Our web site also has many of our back issues, converted to HTML format and available online. This entire issue is ©2000 by Nicki and Richard Lynch, with individual rights reverting back to contributors after this one-time use. 'Worldcon', 'NASFiC' and 'Hugo Award' are service marks of the World Science Fiction Society. All opinions and versions of events expressed by contributors are their own.

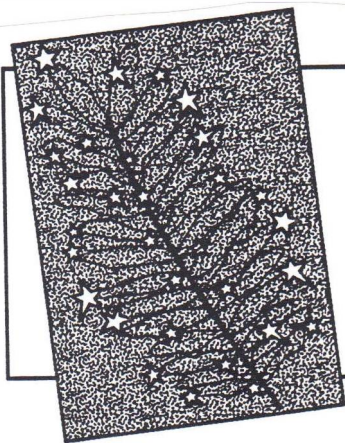
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CONTENTS

PAGE

Cover: The Kronicles of Kaptain Koala by Julia Morgan-Scott	1
Opening Comments: South by Southwest, An Antipodean Adventure by Richard & Nicki Lynch	3
I Remember Him – A Tribute to Walt Willis by John Berry	10
Worldcon Memories (Part 4) by Mike Resnick	13
Through Time and Space with Forry Ackerman (Part 10) by Forrest J Ackerman	21
Artist Credits	22
The Greatest Show On by Ron Bennett	23
How I Spent My Summer (Actually Their Winter) Vacation by Eve Ackerman	26
At the Movies by Nicki Lynch	29
Contributors	30
My Own Personal First Fandom by Joe Mayhew	31
Scraps from an Album by John Foyster	34
The Legendary Hydra Club by Dave Kyle	37
The Summer of '39 by Harry Warner, Jr.	42
Bob and Walt, A Remembrance by Joyce Scrivner	44
The Harp at Chicon by Walt Willis	47
Mimosa Letters	48
Closing Comments: Other Places, Other Fandoms by Richard Lynch	58



South by Southwest, An Antipodean Adventure

Opening Comments by Rich and Nicki

Somewhere over the South Pacific, on the Qantas flight to Melbourne, Australia:

Nicki: "How long have we been traveling?"

Rich (misunderstanding): "About two weeks."

Nicki: "No, not how long are we going to be in Australia; how long have we been on this flight?"

Rich: "Oh! About two weeks."

It takes a long, long time, even by air, to travel from North America to Australia. Well, maybe not two weeks, but it sure *seems* like it. It was the farthest from home either of us had ever been, to the most southerly Worldcon ever. Like many of our trips, this was a voyage of discovery; by the end of the trip, we felt we knew our way around a part of the world that had previously been as remote to us, subjectively, as the surface of Mars.

The trip actually began two years earlier, in San Antonio, at the 1997 Worldcon. It was there that the Los Angeles fan group, SCIFI, won the bid to host the 1999 North American Science Fiction Convention, which was to be held in Anaheim the week before Aussiecon Three, the 1999 Worldcon. NASFiCs don't happen too often, only when the Worldcon is across an ocean from here. We'd only been to one previous NASFiC (the 1979 NorthAmericon in Louisville) and, indeed, had no plans to attend the 1999 one either (Australia and Aussiecon were on our minds even then). But a telephone call from Bruce Pelz a few days before the 1997 LoneStarCon changed all that; he informed us that SCIFI wanted us to be their Fan Guests if they won their bid. It was a surprise; we haven't attended all that many conventions in the past few years, and there are certainly many other fans who are deserving of the honor. Nevertheless, it didn't take us long to accept. The bigger challenge was to figure out how we were going to pack the NASFiC, Aussiecon Three, and other parts of Australia all into one trip.

With the 1999 NASFiC, ConuCopia, we've now been fan guests five times. At 2,000+ attendees, ConuCopia was by far the largest convention of the five, and we were treated quite lavishly – a two room suite at the Anaheim Marriott and a special liaison, Genny Dazzo, who went way out of her way to make sure everything we wanted was there. We're not sure they got equal value in return; we were only asked to be on a handful of program items and the ice cream social that opened the convention. That was a fun event; instead of the usual 'Meet the Guest' cattle call, ConuCopia set it up as a High School Reunion of George Orwell High, Class of 1984. There was even a small Photo Remembrance Book showing various pro guests and attending authors as 'teachers' and us as the Homecoming King and Queen. There were also pictures of the various scholastic organizations such as the 'Light Saber Fencing Club', actually made up of local fans and members of the concomm. A few times during the event we were even asked to sign the book under our photo. It was a pleasant way to start the convention.

We elected not to do speeches or be interviewed for our Guest of Honor event. Instead, we did a 'live fanzine', *A Mimosa Fanthology*. We felt the successes of *Mimosa* were probably the reason we'd been invited to be guests in the first place, so it seemed only right to let the fanzine (and thereby, our contributors) have much of the honor. So we brought a complete run of *Mimosa* to the convention with us, and picked out articles throughout the run that we would probably want to publish in a *Best of Mimosa* some day – one or two articles from each issue. It turned out to be a *lot* of material, way too much for even the three-hour slot of time we had available (we'd have needed double that to get through them all). The audience was a bit small, only about ten people – another sign that fanzine fandom has become

just a small segment of science fiction fandom. Still, there were some avid fanzine readers there, and even one pro writer (Larry Niven); to keep as many around for as long as possible we enlisted some of them as readers; Mike Glycer, for instance, ‘channeled’ Ron Lee when he read Ron’s article “The Wrath of Khat” from *Mimosa* 3, while David Bratman pretended he was Mike Glycer when he read Mike’s “A Child’s Garden of Hugos” from *Mimosa* 14. Mike Glycer later wrote in *File 770* that by using other fans as readers, we had “hit on a clever way to draw an audience to the marathon readaloud.” Thinking all the time, we are!

Being in the film center of the world, it would have been unusual if the convention committee had not taken advantage of the available resources and people who work in the industry. Media-oriented panels and events abounded, and there was even a Hong Kong movie festival, featuring some strange but yet pretty entertaining films of reasonable fantasy content (some featuring Sammo Hung and Jackie Chan when they were much younger). The strangest and maybe most entertaining of them all was *The Bride With White Hair*, which was described in the *ConuCopia Pocket Guide* as “the best sword and sorcery movie ever made by anyone anywhere.” It might very well be! How best to describe it? How about: a ‘Magic Realism’ fairy tale where Chinese martial arts meet up with sorcery, with an heroic fantasy leading man, a mysterious beautiful witch who could ensnare victims in her long hair, and a fantastic yin-yang male-female villain who was leader of an Evil Cult. And on top of this, it was also a love story!

Besides the movies, there were also some television-related items, including a *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* panel (that Nicki was on) which had the misfortune of being scheduled the same time as Harlan Ellison’s one man show. It resulted in a smaller audience than expected, though they made up for it in exuberance which carried through the divider walls – some of the attendees at the Ellison hour wondered if an even bigger event was being held next door. J. Michael Straczynski was there, too, and his one panel item, expounding about the success of *Babylon 5* and his new series *Crusade*, filled the large meeting room where it was held. Most of the cast of *Crusade* actually came to ConuCopia, supposedly to publicize an upcoming media convention being chaired by the chairman of ConuCopia. Their appearance seemed to be mostly sitting behind a table and signing photographs for fans at five dollars a pop. They were the

consummate ensemble cast; they stayed as a group when they weren’t in the convention area, even eating breakfast together at the hotel restaurant that morning, one table over from where we were sitting. That resulted in an amusing moment when Rich accidentally stole two slices of toast at the buffet bar from Marjean Holden (who plays the ship’s doctor). It might have been a good time to get introduced to them, but it was early in the morning and we really didn’t seem to have much in common – other than a yen for buttered toast!

ConuCopia was a good convention, very competently run, and we had a good time. It was also an essential convention for us – there wasn’t much overlap with people who attended ConuCopia and those at Aussiecon Three the next week, and if we hadn’t gone to ConuCopia, we wouldn’t have seen them. Our friends Lowell Cunningham and Dorothy Tompkins from Knoxville, Tennessee, were there; we were pleased to learn that the success of the movie made from Lowell’s *Men In Black* series for Dark Horse Comics is still bringing income for them. Once and future fanzine publishers Dick and Leah Smith were there, too, and we had an interesting dinner expedition with them one evening that also turned into an informal tour of downtown Anaheim. Elliott and Carole Weinstein brought a boysenberry pie with them for a late night snack with us and some other friends in our hotel suite. And then there was Bruce Pelz, who spent much of the convention sitting behind the Guest Sales table where he sold more than 100 copies of *Mimosa* over the weekend, not to mention the hundreds of dollars worth of books by the other Guests. It was a good place to sit down, rest, and watch the convention roll by, while talking with him about a far range of topics such as fan history projects, worldcon politics, and vacation cruises. Much to our surprise, Bruce didn’t go on to Aussiecon, breaking a worldcon attendance string much longer than ours (which now stands at a relatively puny twelve years in a row). But an even longer string than that was broken for someone we had hoped to see at both ConuCopia and Aussiecon – Forry Ackerman had other commitments, in Europe, and so broke his worldcon attendance string that dated back to 1952.

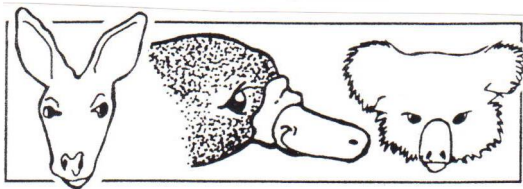
But we’re getting ahead of ourselves. All too soon it was Monday night and we were at Los Angeles International Airport, where outside the departure lounge window there was a huge airplane with a kangaroo on its tail...

* * *

"Tonight we will be flying fully one-third of the way around the world." – the Pilot of Qantas flight 100, Monday, August 30, 1999

The world is a big place, especially the Pacific Ocean. It took seventeen hours to go from Los Angeles to Melbourne, just about all of it over water. You 'lose' a day in transit when you cross the International Date Line, and so Tuesday, August 31, 1999 for us will always be 'The Day That Never Was'. We were seated smack in the middle of the plane, in the center of an interior row, right over the wing; we were also smack in the middle of a group of about twenty science fiction fans who were also going to Australia for the worldcon. Before the flight even got off the ground, there was a mini-convention of sorts in the Qantas departure lounge at LAX airport. It might have been bigger yet, but another large group of fans had instead booked on the United flight, which left about an hour after the Qantas one. There was one intermediate stop, in Auckland, New Zealand, which has a very nice airport. Some day we'd like to see more of the city and country than just that. And at a time other than 4:30 in the morning!

It turned out that we didn't get to see much more than that of Australia – just Melbourne and Sydney; there wasn't enough vacation time left, after five days in California, to take an extended tour of the country like some other fans were able to do. We had to content ourselves instead with a vicarious tour, listening to descriptions of various friends' travels, from Ayers Rock to the Great Barrier Reef, from Darwin to Tasmania, from the Blue Mountains to the Indian Ocean. But on the other hand, it turned out there was enough to do in Melbourne and Sydney that we never really felt pressed to take extended day trips. The only one we took our entire stay in Australia was a bus tour to the Healesville Animal Sanctuary north of Melbourne. There, we saw examples of just about all the indigenous wildlife of the continent, up close and personal. We found that echidnas and platypuses were a lot smaller than we'd imagined, kangaroos and wallabies a lot lazier, wombats and koalas a lot more gregarious, and lorikeets a lot more ubiquitous. Gift shops, though, seemed to be just about the same – the tourist dollar rules, no matter where you are.



Aussiecon was in Melbourne, so that's where we were for most of our stay Down Under. And the first thing we learned about Melbourne was to watch out for the traffic when crossing streets! Motorists drive on the left side of the road in Australia, and it wasn't five minutes into our first walk outside the hotel that Rich was almost run down by an automobile because he looked the wrong way for oncoming traffic. A much better, and safer, way to see the city was by riding the Melbourne city trams. They go practically everywhere, even out to some of the nearby suburbs. There's even a special nightly dinner tram – a restaurant on rails which travels a random path around the city as the night falls and the lights come on. (According to two of our friends who tried it, the meal is a bit pricy, but the experience is unique.) A free City Circle Tram line loops around the rectangular-shaped business district of the city, and it's a good place to learn more about Melbourne – at each stop, a recorded message tells you a bit of history about one or two of the notable places nearby. It's a haven on chilly September days there, and not just for us tourists. We boarded the tram one afternoon for a 'circle tour' and sat down next to a much older man who seemed to welcome the opportunity to tell us even more about some of the buildings along the route. He was a pleasant traveling companion, and proved to be a veritable font of knowledge about the city. But he never got off the tram; he was still there when we disembarked after about 45 minutes. We decided that riding the tram was probably a cure for loneliness for him. Meeting and talking to people on the City Circle Tram was his life after retirement, and he was happy. We only hope we can find that much contentment in whatever we decide to do after *our* working days are over.

As far as sightseeing went, we had mixed luck. The tram tour worked out fine, but the day we reserved for visiting museums was a bit less successful. The Immigration Museum was fascinating from a cultural and historical perspective, but it was small enough that it didn't take very long to go through it. The Victoria State Museum, which is supposed to be a wonderful art museum, was closed for renovation while we were there; all of it we got to see were a couple of interesting fountain sculptures outside. Not far from the Victoria Museum is a large park that featured something unusual – a flower clock on the side of a hill. It was in full bloom, but, being early spring, nothing else in the park was. We eventually walked as far as the Melbourne Observatory grounds,

passing through a large War Memorial along the way. The Observatory's snack bar, where we had lunch, set a new personal record for us – it was not only the most southerly point in our exploration of Melbourne, it became the most southerly place either of us have been in our lives!

The major things to do in downtown Melbourne are shopping and eating. *Especially* eating – there must be a restaurant in every other store front there, and there are many wonderful cafés and ethnic restaurants. Not so pleasing, though, were all the American fast food places, including 7-11 and McDonalds. As usual, we didn't bother with those, but it was clear from the advertisements we saw that their usual fare had acquired an Australian essence. For instance, the Big Mac (a.k.a. the 'Big Oz') had all the usual fixings – as well as a slice of beetroot!

While we enjoy eating, it seemed that much of our free time was spent shopping. The U.S. dollar is robust compared to the Australian dollar, so once we did the conversions, we found that the prices for just about everything were very affordable. There are several multi-story walk-through shopping malls in downtown Melbourne, but the best place to shop is the Victoria Market. Located on several acres of valuable land just outside the center rectangle of downtown, the mostly open-air Market had just about anything you could ever need, all in one place – there was everything from farm produce to tourist souvenirs. It's where we bought most of our souvenirs and holiday gifts, and even the skirt Nicki wore at the Hugo Award Ceremonies. There's a guided 'foodie' tour of the Market that Nicki and several other fans took on the Friday morning of Aussiecon, which included a plastic fork and napkin for tasting some of the foods available from the food vendors. It was the one tour of the trip where stomachs got tired before legs did!

The Centra Hotel and the adjacent convention center that hosted Aussiecon was located on the north bank of the Yarra River, just outside the circuit of the City Circle Tram. The view from the foyer lounge of ninth floor of the hotel, near where our room was, looked out across the river to the large gambling casino complex on the south bank. One of the features of the promenade between the casino and the river was a series of eight tall rectangular towers, situated like monoliths about every fifty meters along the terrace. These we came to know as the 'Pillars of Fire' because they had one other distinct feature – starting in the early evening until midnight, every

hour on the hour they lit up the night sky with an orchestrated display of pyrotechnics as natural gas was discharged from their tops and ignited into large fireballs. When you viewed the display from the hotel across the river, you could see that the fireballs were shot off according to a programmed sequence – individually from left to right, then two at a time, then four at a time, and finally all of them at once. Then, to conclude each five minute show, they shot off some really *big* fireballs; from across the river, these looked to be about three stories tall. If you were standing near the base of one of the towers when one of these went off you might have thought the end of the world had arrived. You'd think that all this commotion every evening would serve to keep all the seagulls out of the area, but it doesn't – between 'performances' we could see gulls using the tops of the towers as convenient lookout perches. We concluded that they must have some kind of warning when one of the fireball shows is about to begin – either that, or some of the restaurants in the casino complex have found a ready source of instant-cooked poultry!

The worldcon itself was pleasant and friendly. There were far fewer people attending Aussiecon than who go to a North American worldcon, so there weren't many instances of overflowing crowds at program events. One exception was the *Buffy* panel, which had a larger attendance than even the one at ConuCopia had! Nicki was once again on that panel (she was a last-minute addition); it was the only program event, other than the Hugo Award Ceremony, that either of us was on the entire convention.

As for the Hugo Awards, we were pleased and honored to be a nominee, but it was no surprise to us that *Mimosa* was not voted the Best Fanzine; we thought it unlikely *Mimosa* would be more popular with the voters than the local Melbourne-based fanzine, *Thyme*. It was a surprise, then, when Dave Langford's newszine, *Ansible*, was announced as the winner. Dave, who was at the convention, may have felt the same way, too – his acceptance speech mostly expressed condolences to *Thyme*'s editor, Alan Stewart, who is also *Ansible*'s Australian agent. It was one of the few times we'd ever known Dave to be somewhat at a loss for words!

Not being on many program items does have its advantages, actually – you have a lot more time to do other things such as seeing what's going on outside the convention center, or seeing other parts of the convention, or our favorite, meeting and talking to people. We did a lot of that during Aussiecon, with

people we already knew and some we didn't. We're beginning to think that Charlie Brown is starting to like us; he invited us over to his table one morning for breakfast, and the Aussiecon issue of *Locus* had a reasonably nice photo of us. And Greg Benford, the Guest of Honor, gave us some nice egoboo about *Mimosa* – he asked us to reconsider our decision to end publication, and even said he'd write another article for us for a future issue. One new acquaintance for us was Justine Larbalestier, from the University of Sydney, who is researching a new book about the New York Futurians fan club of the 1930s and '40s. There was a memorable dinner expedition with Mark and Vanessa Loney (and about a dozen other fans); we had met Mark and Vanessa during Mark's three-year job-related assignment to the Washington, D.C., area earlier in the decade. Mark was in charge of Aussiecon Publications (we were his 'Maryland Branch Office', in charge of production and distribution of the last three Progress Reports). That dinner featured good food and excellent conversation – when we could hear it! (We had been seated next to a very good, but very loud, folk music group.) Our friend Adrienne Losin was at Aussiecon, usually camped out behind her table in the Dealers Room; we've known her since 1980 when she was traveling in North America and came to Tennessee (where we were then living) for one of the Chattacons. And finally there were John Blum and Kate Orman, who live in Sydney and write *Doctor Who* books. We hadn't met them before, but were on the lookout for them and finally ran into them the next-to-last day of the convention. The reason we wanted to meet them? John's father, here in Maryland, asked us to. He's our dentist.

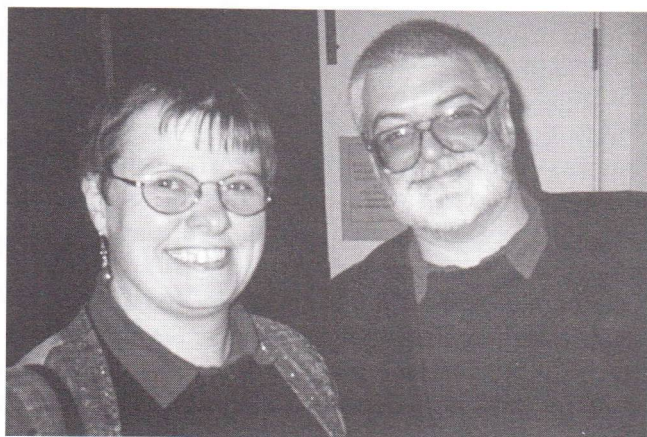


Rich, Kate, John, and Nicki

There were fewer parties at Aussiecon than at any other worldcon we've been to, no doubt partly due to

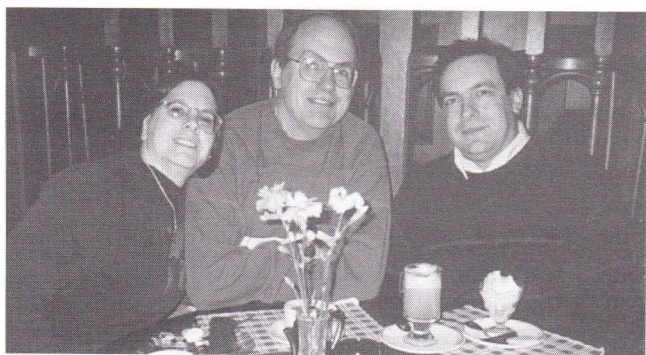
its smaller attendance. The ones that did happen, though, became focal points for the convention after the program events were over each day. The ConJosé bid party was originally scheduled to go two nights, but was cut back to one when it became apparent that the bid was going to win handily (against a semi-hoax Roswell, New Mexico bid) and that the party budget wouldn't be sufficient for two nights at the exorbitant catering rates the Centra Hotel had forced on them. Maybe it's just as well; with the large crowd of people there, it wasn't all that enjoyable an event. There was almost a competition to grab food while it was still available; a constant feeding frenzy developed as people jostled for position around the food bar, as if they were in an aquarium instead of a multipurpose meeting room. A much more laid-back affair was held in the same space the next evening by the Con-Cancun-in-2003 bidders, who actually *did* dress up the meeting room to look like an aquarium. A better use of resources for light snacks instead of dinner fare actually provided more to eat at a lower overall cost. And because it wasn't a substitute for dinner, the party was less crowded as people cycled in and out more frequently. The best party of all, though, was the one hosted by Japanese fans the last night of the convention. Upon entering, you were met by one of the hosts who gave you a cloth headband and helped to tie it around your head. Their secondary party, upstairs, even served saki in an ornamental ceramic cup that they then presented to you as a souvenir! Most of the Japanese fans who come to worldcons speak English, but not all. The young lady dressed in traditional costume who greeted us at the door was having a nice time meeting people, but it was obvious she was having trouble with the language barrier. When Nicki commented to her on how wonderful her dress was, she was so anxious to understand what Nicki had said that she rushed across the room and dragged one of the other Japanese fans back with her to act as translator. Rich, accidentally standing in the way of all this, had to step lively to avoid becoming part of the carpet!

Even though Sydney is the largest population center in Australia, all three Antipodean worldcons have been held in Melbourne. That's where most of the fans are. The local fan club, the Melbourne Science Fiction Club, meets every Friday night, and the number of people who attend is about the same for that of a typical Washington Science Fiction Association meeting. One of the reasons we spent an extra few days in Melbourne following the worldcon was



Maureen and Paul

so we could go to a MSFC meeting, and we weren't the only ones who had that idea. The meeting we attended, on September 10th, also had several other out-of-towners. Kevin Standlee and Cheryl Thompson from California were there, trying to interest local fans in buying memberships to the 2002 Worldcon, ConJosé. Janice Gelb, the DUFF delegate, had completed her month-long stay in Australia and had gone back to the United States by then, but the current GUFF and TAFF delegates, Paul Kincaid and Maureen Kincaid Speller, were at the meeting, like us with cameras primed. (We'd taken several photos of each other during the convention – so many, actually, that we came to call them 'drive-by shootings'.) The MSFC meeting and the group dinner that preceded it turned out to be our best opportunity to meet local fans, even more so than Aussiecon. It was the only time we really had a chance to talk with the 1998 DUFF delegate, Terry Frost, and Aussiecon's Fan Guest, Bruce Gillespie (whose fine fanzine, *SF Commentary*, was surprisingly not a Hugo finalist). We didn't stay with fan friends during our additional time in Melbourne, but we did have meals with some of them – Alan Stewart and Donna Heenan one evening and Irwin Hirsh another. We'd been looking forward



Nicki, Rich, and Irwin

to meeting Irwin, whom we'd just missed several times during the convention. After our meal with him, he led us to the site of the previous two Melbourne worldcons, the former Southern Cross Hotel – now a moribund site, fenced-off from the street and undergoing either a massive renovation or outright demolition (we're not sure which). If we'd stayed in Melbourne one more day, Irwin was going to get us into an Aussie Rules football game, which would have been fun, but by then we were in Sydney.

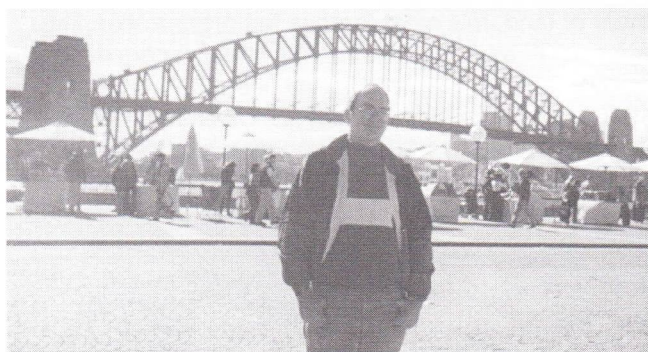
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"Sydney is a glittering, lively city with a fabulously beautiful harbour at its centre." – Lonely Planet's *New South Wales* guidebook

Sydney is a city that more than lives up to its reputation. We spent only three days there together – a severe miscalculation, as there's a lot more to see and do in Sydney than can be fit into a long weekend. We tried to maximize our remaining time, so we did some of the most obvious, touristy things, such as a tour of the Opera House and a Harbour Cruise, at first opportunity. In fact, we might have done the Harbour Cruise a bit *too* soon – our first night in the city we reserved for an evening cruise, but the recorded commentary that pointed out all the notable things to see on the shore was the same one used for daylight cruises. So when we were told that some of the mansions on the shore of Double Bay were owned by movie stars such as Kevin Costner and Tom Cruise, what we saw out there was mostly darkness. And when the recorded commentary described how you could get to the Sydney Zoo by taking an inclined railway from the ferry terminus at the harbour, all we saw up there was a black hole. Still, both the Opera House and the Harbour Bridge are spectacular at night, and the best view of each is from the middle of the harbour. So was it worth the fare? We thought so, but ours wasn't the only opinion. One of the other passengers on the cruise, a teenager with a backpack, must have been disappointed by the view, or else he'd seen it all before. Not two minutes after the ferryboat left Circular Quay he was sound asleep, and didn't awaken until the tour was almost over. We left the pier wondering if he had found that a gently-rolling boat was a personal cure for insomnia!

The more time we spent at the Circular Quay waterfront, the more certain we were that the *real* 'signature image' of Sydney, the one you remember best about the city, is the Harbour Bridge, not the Opera House. It's one of the largest steel arch bridges in existence and dominates the harbour skyline.

though not everybody in Sydney likes it very well (some refer to it as 'The Big Coathanger'). You can

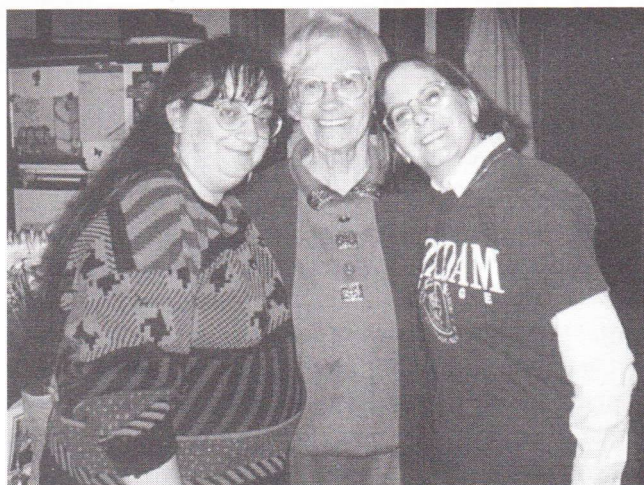


But it's too big to be a coathanger!

see the bridge from almost every point of interest in the city, and we found that it crept into many of our photos of Sydney, even the ones where we weren't trying to include it. About the only way avoid it was to actually *be* on the bridge when taking photographs! There's a pedestrian footway that crosses the bridge on its east side, the side the Opera House is on, and there are several places midway that are ideal for photographers. The only problem is the brisk winds, but there's a high mesh fence that will capture a hat on even the breeziest day. For the more adventure-some, there's the Bridge Climb, where it's possible to actually walk up the arch of the bridge to its very top, about 150 meters above the harbor, with only a waist-high railing between you and the abyss (though you're tethered to the railings for safety). The view up there is said to be spectacular, but the price is, too – about one hundred Australian dollars per person for the experience. We decided to take a pass on that. Something we found a little more accessible (as well as affordable) was the Sydney Observatory, located on a hill not far from the bridge. There was more to see there than we thought; besides the usual complement of telescopes there were also some interactive video games that served to educate schoolchildren (and us oldsters too!) about the nature of the cosmos and some of the deep sky wonders it contains. But best of all, it was located in a picturesque park, on the site of an old fort, right there in downtown Sydney; it's not only a good place for astronomy, it's also a good place for events like wedding receptions, and there was one going on the day we were there. We might have joined the festivities, but we were dressed a bit too much like fans. Besides, our accents would have given us away!

Time passes too quickly. After our three days in

Sydney, Nicki's vacation time had just about expired; as much as she wanted to extend the stay, it was time to return to North America. Rich's stay was actually a bit longer than that; he had a technical conference to attend in Singapore before he came home, so he remained in Sydney an additional five days, talking walkabouts in the scenic headlands that separate Sydney Harbour from the Pacific Ocean, trailwalking Pacific vistas near Bondi and Manly Beaches, and even spending a day touring and shopping with two North American fan friends (Jeanne Mealy and John Stanley, from Minneapolis) who were still in the country. Our trip to Australia was a true voyage of discovery for us, and what we'll take away from it are the myriad images and memories of people, things, events, and sights encountered along the way. One of them happened the second night of our stay in Sydney. Susan Bellenger, a fan we'd met on the day trip to Healesville, invited us for dinner out to her home in



Susan, Susan's mother, and Nicki

Merrylands, where the skies are much darker than in Sydney or Melbourne. It was there that we finally got to view something we'd been wanting to see for decades – Alpha and Beta Centauri and the stars of the Southern Cross. The total unfamiliarity of the southern sky served to remind us how far we were from home, and how exotic the southern hemisphere was to us; the Southern Cross, like Australia had become for us after two weeks there, was the only part we felt we really knew anything about. There's a lot more to see and do Down Under; someday we hope we'll get another chance. But as for finally seeing the Southern Cross, it turned out there was a hidden connection for us that we hadn't known about: the second brightest star in the constellation, Beta Crucis, also has a more formal name. It's known as 'Mimosa'. ☼

☛ We're going to begin this issue with a remembrance of a friend and a longtime contributor to *Mimosa*. On October 20th of last year, about a month after we returned home from Australia, Walter Willis died. He'd been ill for about a year, following a stroke, and spent much of that time hospitalized. There's not much to say about Walt Willis that isn't a superlative. He was the most prominent member of fandom's most famous fan organization, the legendary Irish Fandom of the 1950s. Bob Shaw, another member of IF and one of fandom's finest writers and humorists, once described Willis as "the best writer he'd ever known." Harry Warner, Jr., in his book, *A Wealth of Fable*, describes Walt as the "best and most gifted fan of the 1950s, who also might qualify as the Number One Fan of any and all decades." Here's a tribute to Walt by another member of IF, who tells us that the following "is not really an account of Walt's fannish career, but rather my remembrance of him during the whirlwind days of Irish Fandom."

I Remember Him – A Tribute to Walt Willis

by John Berry



I met Walt Willis for the first time in 1954. I worked at the local constabulary HQ, in Belfast, and during the hour's lunch time I toured bookshops selling science fiction magazines, and oft noted in them that Walt Willis, of 170 Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast, was the publisher of the mysterious 'fanzine' *Hyphen*, which was always favourably reviewed. I wrote to him, asking for an appointment, and in due course I hied to Oblique House on a trolley bus, thinking that arriving there on a rusty pedal cycle would not create a good impression.

We met at the portals of Oblique House, albeit complete strangers, although, shrewdly, we already knew a great deal about each other. In his "I Remember Me" column in *Mimosa* 20, Walt revealed that as he was a senior Civil Servant at the Northern Ireland Parliament Building in Stormont (to the south of Belfast), he was thus able to 'pull' my personal file and study the contents – an Englishman in the police seeking contact with Irish Fandom? I also made discreet enquiries about Mr. Willis in the Ministry, and discovered he was quite an important person in the Civil Service.

Walt told me all about fandom and lent me the *Slant* and *Hyphen* files, and the following Tuesday I arrived for a meeting of Irish Fandom – James White, Bob Shaw, George Charters and Walt and Madeleine Willis – and was given a demonstration of 'ghoodminton'. Simply, it was hitting a shuttlecock across a

net, attempting to hit the opposing floor, for a point. It was quite interesting; I was offered a game, and partnered Bob Shaw against Walt and James. At this juncture I must point out that I was an athlete, physically very strong, and most certainly always played to win, whatever the sport may be. I had been in the army for almost five years, and was a serving police officer. None of the Irish Fandom members had ever encountered violence, but I was a veteran of fighting and rioting, although my most serious injuries were obtained playing soccer for police teams. (Once, I recall being carried away after a soccer injury, with my arms dangling limply on either side of a stretcher, and I heard someone comment, "He isn't a very good player, but you've got to admire his tenacity.") So I played ghoodminton in this diehard fashion, thumping my heavily-soled boots on the floorboards and vigorously attacking the shuttlecock.

Walt Willis wrote to Chuck Harris regarding my initiation into ghoodminton, "Much blood was spilled during the encounter; fortunately most of it was John Berry's."

And so, for a number of years, I played ghoodminton in a vicious manner, always striving to win, leaping about in my hobnail boots. Circa 1960, I visited Oblique House for a meeting of Irish Fandom, and Walt met me, looking rather pale. He asked me to accompany him to the lounge, which was directly underneath the fanac room, threw the doors open and

invited me to enter. It looked as though a blizzard had struck.

"Madeleine was having tea here this afternoon with the Curate, and suddenly the ceiling shattered and covered them with plaster." He looked down at my hobnail boots with furrowed brows, and I got the message.

"The ceiling probably shattered because of the continuous heavy hammering on the floorboards during our games of ghoddminton." His eyes suddenly twinkled humorously, crow's feet creases at their corners almost reaching his ears. "But don't worry, John. It will be very expensive to get the ceiling replastered, but insurance will cover the cost. Pray continue playing in your usual manner."

This kindness and consideration was typical of him, always being tactful, never raising his voice. But I don't recollect ever playing ghoddminton again so aggressively...



* * *

WAW was without doubt one of fandom's greatest punsters, primarily because of the lightning speed of his repartee. We can all think of witticisms we *should* have proffered in conversations moments, hours, even days after the prompting, but Walt's riposte was always razor sharp.

Here are four masterly variations on a theme. The Willises had moved from Oblique House in 1965, and many years later we returned there for a meeting. Walt had persuaded the incumbent occupant to permit us me hour in the house before she returned from choir practice:

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

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

James White and Bob Shaw nodded sagely at this, but whereas thirty years ago word-play would have continued like sparks from an anvil, we all sat quietly holding our breaths.

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

"I have heard such things," agreed Walt. "I think it is called a Pre-Mistral Extension."

But again the conversation expired. Desperately I went on; would Willis hit the hat trick?

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

"Ah yes, Pre-Menthol Tortion," said Willis, his face showing the strain of unaccustomed activity.

Later, a question of finances was introduced:

I saw a spark suddenly appear in Walt's eyes, the portent of a flash of sheer genius I'd seen so often in the past. What had inspired him; what train of thought had caused his high, noble forehead to wrinkle?

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

Willis leapt to his feet, his right hand formed into a fist as he tried to punch the ceiling. "PRE-MEN-STRUM TERTION!" he screamed at the top of his voice.

* * *

Walt was always telling me how good he was at playing golf, and gave me a dirty look when I asked, "was the golf club his handicap?"...

"Not worthy of you, Berry," he observed. "And I don't want you to write exaggerated articles for an American fanzine about my golfing prowess. You can write all you wish about my prozine kiosk, my tennis strokes, my jumping from the wardrobe onto the marital bed, my puns, and my driving skills, but to me, golf is deadly serious. I will permit you to come to Carnalea Golf Club [in County Down] provided I have your Word of Honour that you will not demean my golfing skills to the Americans."

Naturally I lied and said I wouldn't.

Walt and Madeleine went into the changing rooms. Walt proudly emerged wearing a thick knitted jumper bearing colourful and ostentatious designs, and his trousers were tucked into tartan socks just below his knees. Madeleine was delightfully kitted out in a thin jumper and brown shortie trousers. Walt explained to me rather kindly that he was well-known at the course, and would regard it as a personal favour if I didn't drive off until I was well away from the applauding crowd which had gathered around them.

I asked him what 'driving off' meant?

He gave a nervous laugh and dragged me away.

It was wonderful to see this proud and noble figure, this paragon of Fandom, addressing the ball. He

placed it on a tee as if he intended to smash it back into its primordial atomic state. He stood menacingly over it, and raised his club (one of those things with a big lump of hard wood at the end of it), posed nonchalantly to show us sheer elegance, then swished the club downwards in a descending arc of sheer slashing power. The force used was such that I swear the club coiled itself like a scarf around Walt's neck as he finished the shot.

"Half a sec, Walt," I breathed, and to save him the trouble of bending down, I picked up his golf ball and put it back on his tee. Red of face, Walt frightened the golf ball several times before he finally sent it skimming over the horizon...

* * *

One afternoon, circa 1956, I received a telephone call in my office from WAW. I sensed excitement in his voice:

"Have you got three pounds to spare?" he hissed.

A quick search of my pockets revealed three shillings and seven pence.

"Nunno," I confessed.

"Well, call at 170 at noon tomorrow with three pounds, and I will present to you something to your distinct fannish advantage."

My wife lent me the requisite amount from the housekeeping cache, and next day I raced along the Belfast roads on my pedal cycle to 170. The front door was ajar. "Walt!" I shouted, and I could hear him pounding down the three flights of stairs, and he rushed down the hallway, a huge teeth-filled smile creased his face.

"Give," he panted.

I gave him the three pound notes. He opened the door to the lounge. "John," he said excitedly, "this is for you."

I peered round the door. How absolutely tremendous! Preening itself on the table top was a black metal Gestetner case! I trembled as I crossed the worn carpet, hefted the handle, and the removed casing revealed a pulsating Gestetner mimeograph. I cranked it, and the machine seemed to function perfectly. I looked at Walt, at the trace of tears of supreme self-satisfaction in his eyes.

"Magnificent, Walt," I said. "Surely it's worth about a hundred pounds.?"

"Got two of them at an Auction Sale for six pounds. No one else made a bid for them. Please arrange to take it away as soon as possible."

"Surely" I said. I shook his hand warmly. "Think of all the fanzines I can publish now, with stories about the members of Irish Fandom." And with that his air of bonhomie disappeared and was replaced by a frown. He and the other members of IF were somewhat

miffed at the many stories I wrote about them in other fanzines, but he realised he had taken an irrevocable step. (I'm reminded of a pertinent quote from a contemporary article by a member of Irish Fandom: "Berry writes up *everything*. I did have the idea of shouting 'copyright' in a loud voice if anything of interest took place at an Irish Fandom meeting. But John, sensing that his supply of material was being imperilled only shook his head and retired to a corner to decide his countermove ... It was devastatingly simple. He now writes everything *before* it happens.")

Back in my fanac den, I examined the duper. Naturally, for merely three pounds it obviously had to be flawed, but I soon discovered the requisite deft manipulations to make it function properly, enabling me to eventually produce ninety fannish publications in the next few years, all due to Walt Willis's extreme thoughtfulness.

* * *

I used to attend Irish Fandom meetings early, before anyone else arrived, so that I could really get to know Walt Willis, and bask in his wit and fannish knowledge. He had discovered me, and I told him that I had used, as a basis for my exaggerated humour, the style he had used in his early works. We talked about the many BNFs who had visited 170, and also the other members of IF. Not once did he say anything critical or detrimental about any of them, but always praised their diverse skills and personalities. He was of course particularly fond of James and Peggy White, Bob and Sadie Shaw and George Charters, and he was really delighted when Bob and Sadie stayed at 170 for a few weeks before emigrating to Canada.

I cannot state too highly that he was a particularly nice man. He was, as the secular cliché goes, "slow to chide and swift to bless." Actually, he was always quite modest about his prolific career in fandom: his famous fanzines *Slant* and *Hyphen*, his many-times reprinted *The Enchanted Duplicator* (co-written with Bob Shaw), and other notable fannish publications. He also appeared in lettercols for almost fifty years, always making salient points, working on the premise that if a fan sent a fanzine to him, he was duty bound to respond. It is so terribly sad that he was very seriously ill for such a long time. He had never caused anyone any pain or suffering, and yet he suffered himself.

He was a Great Man, a Great Fan, the ultimate BNF. I feel privileged to have known him, and to say that he counted me as a friend. ✧

☛ We mentioned in our Opening Comments that we saw and met many people at ConuCopia and Aussiecon. One of our friends who *wasn't* there (and who we missed) was Mike Resnick, who, surprisingly, still has yet to attend an Australian worldcon. In this newest installment of his "Worldcon Memories" series, Mike educates us on the most efficient way for party-hopping, why you shouldn't follow driving instructions too literally, and what kind of costume *not* to wear at a masquerade.



1963: DISCON I (Washington, D.C.)

This was our very first worldcon. I was a mature 21 years old; Carol, my child-bride, was only 20. You could fill a book with what we didn't know about science fiction conventions. Several books. In fact, I'm sure someone already has.

We had no money to speak of. We left Laura, who had just turned a year old, with some grandparents, and prepared to spend five days in Washington, D.C., on my \$93.17 income tax refund. (The wild part is that we did it, and came home with a few dollars left over.)

We had discovered Burroughs fandom the year before, and it was through our ERB friends that we learned about the worldcon. We couldn't afford to fly to it, and our car couldn't be trusted to go 50 miles without suffering from cardiac arrest, so we took the train – a back-breaking 24-hour journey from Chicago.

What we didn't know – one of the many things – was that when we were told worldcon was on Labor Day weekend, the weekend for all practical purposes started on a Thursday. We got there Saturday morning, just in time to find out that the con was about half over.

We were met in the basement – the train actually let us off inside the hotel – by Camille Cazedessus, Jr., the editor and publisher of *ERB-dom*, for which I was the assistant editor. He waited until we got our

room – an outrageous \$7.00 a night despite the convention rate – and then took us down to the huckster room. I thought I had died and gone to heaven: there were 30 or 40 tables of books and magazines. No jewelry. No games. No toys. No light sabres. No clothing. No media junk. Just literature. (If it happened today, I'd *know* I had died.)

There was a sweet old guy in a white suit who saw that we were new to all this, and moseyed over and spent half an hour with us, making us feel at home and telling us about how we were all one big family and inviting us to come to all the parties at night. Then he wandered off to accept the first-ever Hall of Fame Award from First Fandom. When they asked if he was working on anything at present, he replied that he had just delivered the manuscript to *Skylark DuQuesne*, and only then did we realize that he was the fabled E. E. "Doc" Smith.

There were panels with all the writers we'd worshipped for years. And then there was the auction. Stan Vinson, a Burroughs collector, paid the highest price of the weekend for a Frazetta cover – \$70, for a painting that would probably bring \$40,000 or more today – but even broke kids like me were able to participate. I bought a black-and-white Virgil Finlay drawing for \$2.00 and an autographed Ted Sturgeon manuscript for \$3.50.

They held the masquerade Saturday night. Back then it was a masquerade ball, with a live band, and

the costumes were secondary to the dancing and partying.

About that partying: Doc had told us there were parties, but he hadn't told us *where*, so we wandered up and down the various corridors of the hotel, and were finally invited into a suite by two bearded men who turned out to be Lester del Rey and L. Sprague de Camp. I don't know what they saw in a pair of kids from Chicago, but they, and every pro and fan in the suite, treated us like part of the family – and they've been our family ever since.

The next afternoon we went to the banquet, where I got my first-ever look at a Hugo. At the time it seemed like the Holy Grail: if I lived a good and pure life and kept learning my craft and wrote to the best of my ability every day, maybe someday, 50 or 60 years up the road, I might even be allowed to touch one.

1969: ST. LOUISCON (St. Louis)

By now we'd been to a few worldcons, and knew enough to get there a day early. We ran into Martha Beck in the lobby, and went to the bar with her to have some coffee and visit a bit.

Now, neither Martha nor I are drinkers, and I can't remember exactly how it came about, but somehow or other we got involved in a drinking contest. I knew enough to order Brandy Alexanders, which are like chocolate malts with just enough alcohol to kill the germs; Martha kept ordering one Planter's Punch after another. Well-named drink; after six or seven rounds it punched her but good. We had to help her to her room, where her husband, Hank, was not amused. With either of us. (I probably had more alcohol that afternoon than I've had in the 30 years since.)

The elevators didn't work very well, and the elevator operators were surly as hell. The air-conditioning didn't work very well either, so I put on a swimsuit and thought I'd cool off in the pool. Bad idea. It was over 100 degrees out, the sun had been shining on the pool all summer, and about three seconds into my swim I realized that the pool was hotter than the water I shave with.

(We went to an Archon at the same hotel – the Chase Park Plaza – eleven years later, in 1980. The same elevators didn't work, the same surly help ignored the guests, the same air conditioners spit warm water into the rooms, and the same swimming pool was close to boiling.)

We were the only people who were satisfied with

our room. In fact, 'satisfied' is an understatement. I registered as a publishing company that I owned, rather than as an individual. For \$14 a night, they gave us a room with a fireplace, a bathroom that could have held a relaxacon all by itself, a few couches, and enough room so that the late Bob Greenberg was able to set up a screen, a projector, and about twenty chairs and show some movies he'd been working on to some of our friends.

(I registered as publishing companies the next 15 years, some real, some imaginary. Never got another room like that. For *any* price.)

Sometime during the weekend David Gerrold and Anne McCaffery found out that I had sold three science fiction novels, cornered me before I could get away, and wouldn't leave me alone until I joined SFWA. I've been a member for 30 years now, and I still haven't decided whether to forgive them for it.



The masquerade had what most old-timers think is the greatest costume ever done, Karen and Astrid Anderson's "The Bat and the Bitten." It also had Rick Norwood, who would later work for Freeman Dyson but was just a student back then, dressed as Charlie Brown (the comic book character, not the *Locus* publisher). Rick came out with a kite, did a Charlie Brown pratfall, and inadvertently tore the huge movie screen that hung down at the back of the presidium stage.

Harlan Ellison immediately climbed onto the stage, explained that it was our duty as members of the convention to help the committee pay for the damage, and collected a quick \$800, mostly in dollar bills.

Well, the next day, at the banquet, it was announced that the damage had looked worse than it was, and that the total cost of repairing the screen was only thirty dollars. Harlan, who was the Toastmaster, announced that he was donating the rest of the money to Clarion.

Instantly, Elliot Shorter, who would make an NFL linebacker look small and puny, was on his feet, shouting that Harlan wasn't giving *his* money to Harlan's pet charity. Lester del Rey, on the other side of the room, stood up on his chair and echoed those sentiments. And in a matter of no more than a minute or two, hundreds of fans were screaming in protest. The results? First, the money was promised to a (never held) beer blast; and second, Harlan gafiated from fandom.



1972: LACON I (Los Angeles)

We showed up a few days early to hit a bunch of second-hand book stores with John Guidry, and also to see the first performance ever given at the new, state-of-the-art theater at Century City (Stephen Sondheim's brilliant and bittersweet *Follies*, with the Broadway cast; it folded after leaving Los Angeles).

A girl from Chicago – her first name was Helen, and I regret to say I've forgotten her last name – had just gotten her driver's license, and rented a car once she arrived. One night she offered to drive a bunch of Chicago-area fans to a restaurant that had been recommended, so Joni Stopa, Carol and me, Martha Beck, and a couple of others piled into the car (cars were much bigger then), and off we went. As we were driving by a playground, we saw the street we were looking for about 50 yards ahead, and one of us said, "Turn left here" – so Helen turned left *here*, right into the playground's chain link fence.

There was skinny-dipping every night. The only thing I really remember about it was seeing Frank Robinson remove all his clothes but keep on his trademark leather hat as he plunged into the pool.

The con was at the International Hotel, right by the airport. We had arrived early enough to get a room on the second floor – non-functioning elevators have always gone hand-in-glove with worldcons, and

we always try to get a low room – but Martha had done even better, securing a ground-level poolside cabana for herself.

Martha likes her friends to like each other. I had sold a bunch of books ("the kind men like") to Earl Kemp, who had chaired the 1962 Chicon before moving west to edit Greenleaf Classics for Bill Hamling. I was a dear friend of Martha's, but I hardly knew Earl at all; I just sold him books. Earl was a dear friend of Martha's, but he hardly knew me at all. Martha decided all we had to do to like each other as much as she liked both of us was get to know each other, so she invited us to her cabana on some pretext or other and then left and locked us in for a few hours. We each wanted to go out and party, and do some business, and we resented being locked in there with each other. Under other circumstances we might well have become close friends; but neither of us has had much use for each other since those hours of enforced togetherness.

Bob Bloch was the toastmaster – and I persist in thinking he was our best/funniest public speaker ever, even including Isaac Asimov. Fred Pohl was the Guest of Honor, and it was the first time in my memory that both the Toastmaster *and* the Guest of Honor gave witty speeches at the Hugo banquet. I also got to meet one of my heroes – well, heroines – for the only time: Catherine L. Moore. To this day, whenever my sensawonder needs a shot of adrenaline, I pick up one of her Northwest Smith stories and I'm fine thirty minutes later.

The masquerade was memorable for a number of reasons. There were some gorgeous costumes. There were more naked ladies than ever appeared before or since, and their costumes – from grandmother Marji Ellers' "The Black Queen from Barbarella" to teenage Astrid Anderson's "Dejah Thoris" – were truly memorable.

But the most memorable of all was a fellow who came as an underground comic strip hero called 'The Turd'. His costume consisted of about five gallons of peanut butter smeared all over his pudgy body. But he forgot that he'd be under hot lights all evening. The peanut butter turned rancid, ruined every costume that he brushed against, and did some serious damage to the carpet and to some draperies he happened to lean against.

From that day forward, there has been an arcane rule that outlaws the use of peanut butter in worldcon masquerades. Now you know why.

1976: MIDAMERICON (Kansas City)

Their biggest fear was that people might try to sneak into the con without paying, and they decided upon one final innovation to make sure it couldn't happen. They announced that they had a foolproof method of making sure only members were admitted. Most people thought it would be some kind of unduplicatable badge, perhaps with a hologram on it, but when we arrived it turned out that in addition to the regular ID badge, each member was given a hospital bracelet that could not be removed, or, once removed, could not be put back on.

Still, there *were* innovations galore. There was the first – and, to this day, the only – hardcover program book. There was closed-circuit television of the better panels, all the speeches, and the masquerade, piped into every room of the hotel.

To counter that, there was a humor group, just getting started, called Duck's Breath Theatre, that entertained us with their hilarious rendition of "Gonad the Barbarian" – and they were still going strong, on Public Radio and elsewhere, two decades later.

There was, for the first time, a banquet with no Hugo Ceremony or Guest of Honor speech, and a Hugo Ceremony/Guest of Honor speech with no banquet.

Wrong again. It turns out that Ed was heartbroken because he had looked forward to ripping it to shreds and had found only two mistakes – both typos – in the whole book. He later gave it a rave review. (If you didn't know Ed...well, now you do.)

A black and white cartoon illustration. On the left, a woman with a very large, dark afro hairstyle is shown from the chest up. She is wearing a dark, low-cut top with a large, ornate diamond-shaped pendant hanging from a chain around her neck. On the right, a man in a tuxedo with a bow tie is standing and looking at her. He has a speech bubble coming from him that says, "Where's your better half, Miz R...?". Below this, another speech bubble contains the text "NNRRGHHH". The artist's signature "C25" is in the bottom left corner.

Robert A. Heinlein was the Guest of Honor. This was right before he had surgery to cure a blockage to his brain. He was, by his own later admission, mentally impaired at the time, and his speech was embarrassing. Even more embarrassing were some ill-mannered fans who heckled him from the balcony.

The only time I've ever seen Joe furious was

when he pulled himself out of the pool. Over the years there have been a number of apocryphal stories explaining his anger – the most common was that he was carrying a large check from a publisher in his wallet and he was sure the water had ruined it – but Gay Haldeman told me just a few months ago that the real reason was simply that it was his first \$100 suit.

1986: CONFEDERATION (Atlanta)

We flew in from Cincinnati, met Pat and Roger Sims at the airport (they'd flown in from Detroit), and shared a cab to the hotel. We were in the Marriott, a large hotel which boasted a nifty 44-story atrium.

The tenth floor was the most interesting of all, because it was the party floor. Nothing but party suites all the way around. (CFG had its own suite on the eleventh.)

We had our usual problems with the elevators, and one unusual problem as well. Thanks to overloading, somewhere near the top floor one of the elevators went off its track. It didn't fall all the way down to the ground, thankfully – it just kind of got stuck there – but that, if I'm not mistaken, was the origin of what has become known as the Elevator Nazis, worldcon committee members who make sure the elevators aren't overloaded during prime party times.

Worlds of If, a three-time Hugo winner in the late 1960s, which had long been out of business, made a comeback for one single issue, which was given away free to all members of the convention. It contained Orson Scott Card's long, glowing review of *Santiago*, the best review I'd ever gotten up to that moment, so from my point of view it couldn't have made its reappearance at a better time, or with a better reviewer.

We'd been told for years that the best restaurant in Atlanta was Nikolai's, on the rooftop of the Hilton, which was next door and hosted most of the panels and the huckster room. We had three dinners there. I think our table was next to Bob Silverberg's all three times; he knows a good restaurant when he sees one.

Had a dinner in the Marriott with Beth Meacham and her husband, Tappan King. For my money, Beth is the best book editor the science fiction field has ever had, and is long overdue for a few Hugos – and not because she is my editor. I've had a *lot* of editors; she's the only one I've ever said this about.

Anyway, I'd brought along the first hundred pages, plus an outline, of *Ivory*, the novel I was working on. I gave Beth the envelope containing the pages

as we were waiting to be seated. Then, while Tappan proceeded to talk with us for the next hour, Beth looked up from the manuscript just long enough to find a few pieces of food and bring them to her mouth. This is a lady who *never* stops working. Still, when your editor would rather read your latest effort than eat an elegant meal, you can't help but be flattered.

There was an autographing at a local science fiction store, and meals with a few other editors, and panels, and a reading, and I realized halfway through the convention that this was the first worldcon at which I spent more time being a pro than a fan. I didn't like that aspect of it then; I don't like it now. But I don't enjoy World Fantasy Con – there's an invisible sign on the door that says 'Fans not wanted', and *I'm* a fan – and I rarely go to the Nebula banquet, so I find, of necessity, that I line up my next year's work at each worldcon, and that means I find them a lot more lucrative and a lot less fun than I used to. It's an ongoing trend that seems to have started with this one.

Bob Shaw was the Toastmaster. It was the only less-than-stellar performance I ever saw him give. He told me later that he was fine until he walked out on stage. He hadn't been expecting the five-minute light show, and it rattled him.

The late George "Lan" Laskowski won the first of his two Hugos for *Lan's Lantern*, thereby beginning a tradition he would tease me about for the next decade, that of winning Hugos only in years in which I didn't write for his fanzine.

1991: CHICON V (Chicago)

We showed up a few days early, since Chicago is the town we grew up in and we wanted to hit a bunch of our favorite places. We spent a day at Brookfield Zoo, another with Rick Katze at Lincoln Park Zoo, a third with Barbara Delaplace at the Field Museum of Natural History, and a fourth hitting a couple of dozen second-hand bookstores with Joan Bledig.

Ross Pavlac had negotiated unbelievably low room rates at the Hyatt – so low, in fact, that for the first and only time in our lives, we paid for a suite at a worldcon (and it was still less than we had expected to spend on a room).

Louisville and Winnipeg were battling for the 1994 worldcon. I was rooting for Louisville. They had asked me to be their Toastmaster if they won, and I already had my suite picked out atop the venerable

Galt House. They had parties every night, but so did Winnipeg – and Winnipeg imported a chef and gave out some really fine food, which nothing will endear you more to fans. Came the night of the ballot counting, and Winnipeg edged Louisville in the closest election of the modern era...and my beautiful free suite and perks went down the drain.

The committee forgot to schedule me for an autograph session. I was pretty popular by this time, and it seemed that every time I sat down, or stood still, or even walked slowly, half a dozen people were shoving books under my nose and asking me to sign them. Flattering and annoying, all at once; at least I remembered to be annoyed with the committee and not the fans.

We've never had so many fine meals at so many excellent restaurants. Beth Meacham and Tor took us to the Everest Room; Brian Thomsen and Warner's took us to Mareva's; Ginjer Buchanan and Ace took us to the Ritz Carlton Dining Room; Eleanor Wood, my agent, took us to Truffles. And the day before the con started, Carol and I went to Le Francais, rated by Michelin as the best restaurant in America. After all those 10,000-calorie meals, it was a pleasure to have a corned beef sandwich with Gardner Dozois and *Asimov's*, and a ham-and-egg breakfast with Dean Smith and Kris Rusch of Pulpouse.

I'd agreed to emcee the masquerade on Saturday night, so I spent about an hour and a half backstage with the costumers, making sure I could pronounce all the names and read all the descriptions.

I was told that I had a 'plant' in the first row of the audience. He had a set of earphones, and was in contact with the backstage gophers. They would tell him when each costume was ready to go on, and he would relay the information to me via hand signals.

Great idea. Didn't work. I've been on a lot of stages, but this one had the single brightest spotlight I've ever seen. It was so blinding that every time I looked up from the costumer's notes, which I'd laid out on the podium, I couldn't see a damned thing – including my guy in the first row. (It was a problem all the Hugo winners would have the next night when they went up on stage to pick up their awards.)

So I figured, what the hell, I'll just read what I've been given to read and not worry about it. That worked until the third or fourth costume. Then, as I was prepared to read the name and title of the next entrant, a hand shot out from under the curtains and grabbed my ankle in a deathgrip. I explained to the

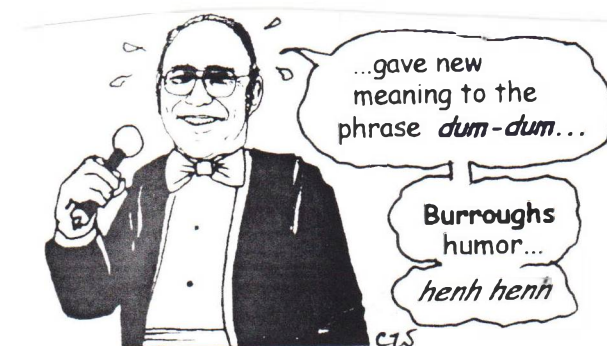
audience what had happened, and that I assumed this meant I was to slow down. A moment later the hand gently began stroking my leg, and I explained that this either meant I was to go faster or else that I was engaged, or maybe both.

Anyway, it took about two hours to run through maybe a hundred costumes, and then the judges went off to deliberate, and the audience was entertained for the next half hour by a very funny professional comedian. Then someone hunted me up, explained that the judges weren't back yet, and asked if I could go out onstage and tell a joke or two until they arrived.

What do you need, I asked, as I walked out from the wings – about five minutes?

About 45, came the answer, as the light hit me in the eyes.

So I went out and did everything except a striptease for the next three-quarters of an hour. We got through it – barely – and I have never consented to emcee another masquerade.



I was back in the same place again the next night, for the Hugo Awards. I lost two Seiun Sho's (Japanese Hugos) before I even took my seat – the winners were announced informally at the pre-ceremony party, as well as formally on stage. I was up for a pair of Hugos, and when Ed Bryant, who was presenting the Best Novelette Hugo, opened the envelope, paused for a moment, and told the audience he wanted to make sure he pronounced it properly, I knew "The Manamouki" had won, as indeed it did. I thought I might have a chance for Best Novella with "Bully!", since it had beaten Joe Haldeman's "The Hemingway Hoax" in the *Science Fiction Chronicle* poll, but I ran second to him for the Hugo. (Just as well. We realized after posing for Hugo Winners' photos again in 1995 and 1998 that each time one of us had won a Hugo during the 1990s, so had the other – so now I vote for Joe any time he's not in my category, just for luck, and I assume he does the same for me.)

Then it was the nightly round of parties. The Hyatt is unusually convenient for party-hopping. All the large suites are by the fire exit door, so all you do is take the elevator up to the 32nd floor, walk to the end of the corridor, hit whatever party is going on there, then walk down a flight, repeat the process, and keep doing it all the way down to the 7th or 6th floor. Then, if it's before three in the morning, you take the elevator back up and do the whole thing all over again.

1995: INTERSECTION (Scotland)

This one was a pain to get to. Ever since Delta chose to make Cincinnati a hub, and subsequently took control of 90% of the gates at the airport, we have been the single most expensive American city to fly out of. There's no competition, and Delta has never offered a cut rate from Cincinnati to anywhere. As a result, most Cincinnatians fly from Dayton, Columbus, or Lexington; most of the people you see at the Cincinnati airport began traveling from somewhere else and are just changing planes here.

Anyway, Delta wanted something like \$900 to fly each of us, round trip, to London. We picked up a Sunday *New York Times*, found a bucket shop that had New York-to-London tickets on United for \$350 apiece, and decided to buy them. Delta wanted \$300 apiece for Cincinnati to New York round trip tickets, so we flew round trip from Dayton – the airport's 10 minutes farther from our house than the Cincinnati airport – for \$103 apiece.

So far so good. But like an idiot, I didn't check my bucket tickets when they arrived. I went to my local travel agent, bought round trip tickets from London to Edinburgh, and then found out that the flight times from New York to London had changed and we didn't have time to make the connection. I went back to my agent, but the tickets were nonrefundable, so I had to buy a second set. By the time we were done, I think the aggravation had just about offset any savings.

We had chosen to stay at the Moat House because when we looked at the map it was next door to the convention center, and the other hotels were all a mile or more away. (They weren't even close to each other. The Progress Report said the Hilton and the Sheraton were 80 yards apart – and indeed they were. What it didn't say was that they were separated by an eight-lane highway, and you actually had to walk better than half a mile to get from one to the other.)

We arrived at the Moat House, checked into our room, and stopped by the restaurant for lunch. It wasn't especially good or especially memorable, but it was 50 pounds (about \$80 at that time), and we realized that this could be a *very* expensive vacation if we didn't watch our step.

Fortunately Jack Nimersheim came to our rescue. He found a pizza restaurant about a quarter of a mile away, and except for dining with editors, we ate just about all of our lunches and dinners there.

During our first night at the Moat House, the fire alarm went off. Now, we've been to enough conventions to know it was just fans being less amusing than they thought they were, but the hotel absolutely insisted that everyone evacuate it at maybe 3:30 in the morning. When it happened again an hour later, I think about 80% of us stayed in bed.

A few months prior to the convention I had been asked by the program committee if I could put together an hour videotape about our travels in Africa, and maybe narrate it as well. No problem, I said; do you need it in Beta, VHS, or PAL (the standard British format)?

Oh, VHS is fine, they said.

Are you *sure*, I asked, because every Brit I trade tapes with wants them in PAL format.

Trust us, they said; we know our convention center's video system.

I was to give the presentation in the huge auditorium – the one that hosted the Hugos and the masquerade – from 8:30 to 9:30 on Thursday night, so I stopped by at about eleven Thursday morning to deliver the tape to the tech crew. They put it in their machine and hit the 'play' switch. No picture.

This isn't PAL, they said accusingly.

I don't know which of us got more annoyed at the other, but the gist of the matter was that they took the tape downtown to have it transferred to PAL format. The committee told me it would be back around 3:00 in the afternoon.

So I show up at 3:00. No tape. I check in at 4:30. No tape. I stop by on my way out to dinner and my way back. No tape.

Okay, I say; cancel the program and we'll do it some other year.

Too late, they say; you're giving a video presentation at 8:30.

But I don't have any video, I explain.

Nobody had an answer to that.

I show up at the auditorium at 8:00. There are

four or five video technicians in the back, ready to project my African tape onto an enormous screen. Only one problem: still no tape.

At 8:25 I get onto the stage and check the microphone. I figure I'll spend 30 minutes excoriating the committee, and 30 talking about Africa.

At 8:27 a young man comes racing into the auditorium, waving a tape in his hand. It works, and nobody in the audience knows how close the committee and I came to killing each other.



Until the next day. Then I wake up to find out that the bastards are actually billing me 20 pounds for converting the tape from VHS to PAL. I explain my position and offer my opinion of this decision on the first three or four panels I'm on, as well as my kaffee-katsch, and sometime on Sunday I am told that the worldcon has graciously decided to absorb the cost itself.

While this little battle of wills was going on all weekend, there was also a con to be attended. I got to meet many of my European agents and editors, and to sign foreign editions I'd never seen before. (Foreign publishers aren't too bad on paying what they owe. They're just terrible at sending out author's copies of the books.)

There were no parties in the Moat House. We hit the other hotels one night, but it was more effort to get to them than it was worth, so we spent most of the nights just visiting in the Moat House lobby.

On Friday John Brunner, Hugo winner and former worldcon Guest of Honor, became the first pro – for all I know, the first person – ever to die at a worldcon. It cast a pall of gloom over the rest of the weekend.

The masquerade was pretty small – 23 costumes total. Most costumers are American, and it's just too much hassle (and too expensive) for them to ship their costumes to overseas worldcons.

I was only person ever to be nominated for four Hugos. Carol and I went in with Eleanor Wood, my

agent, waited patiently for Diane Duane and Peter Morwood to finish their Toastmaster routines, and got ready for the Hugos. The Campbell went to Jeff Noon, a Brit who'd written a very nice first novel. Then Dave Langford won his umpteenth Hugo as Best Fan Writer. Nothing extraordinary.

But then Dave's *Ansible* beat *Mimosa* for Best Fanzine. That was surprising. And then David Pringle's *Interzone* beat *Locus* and *Science Fiction Chronicle* for Best Semi-Prozine. That was shocking. Then Jim Burns knocked off Michael Whelan and Bob Eggleton for Best Artist, and we began wondering if an American would ever win again. (I covered the Hugos for Andy Porter and titled my article "The Empire Strikes Back.")

I lost my first Hugo of the evening – Best Editor – to Gardner Dozois. Hardly a surprise. About five minutes later, my "Barnaby in Exile" lost Best Short Story to Joe Haldeman's "None So Blind." Okay, good story, no problem with that. Two minutes after that, I lost my third Hugo of the night when David Gerrold's "The Martian Child" knocked off my "A Little Knowledge" for Best Novelette. Not unexpected; David had won the Nebula, too.

But now we were coming up to Best Novella, and I thought I had that one in the bag with "Seven Views of Olduvai Gorge." After all, it had beaten novellas by Harlan Ellison and Ursula Le Guin for the Nebula, and Harlan wasn't even on the Hugo ballot. Piece of cake.

Then, as Chip Delany was reading off the nominees, he came to Brian Stableford's name.

"Isn't Brian a Brit?" asked Carol.

I had forgotten. I groaned so loud that I almost didn't hear Chip read off my name as the winner.

In my 'thank you' speech, I seem to remember explaining that I'd be proud and happy and elated later in the evening, but at that moment I was just relieved not to have become first guy in history to *lose* four Hugos in one night.

Later, I stopped by the men's room. The huge facility was almost deserted. I think the only two other guys in it were Bob Silverberg and Joe Haldeman. Then one of them – I believe it was Bob – said, "Quick, lock the door!"

I asked why.

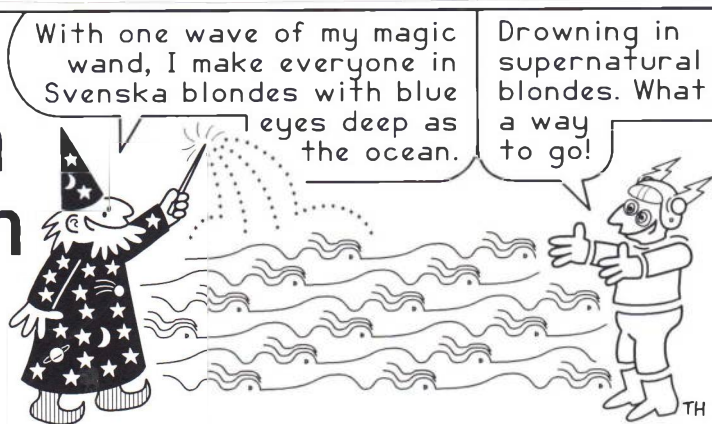
"We wouldn't want the fans to learn that *we* do it the same way *they* do."

I locked the door. ☆

☞ Another person we missed at both ConuCopia and Aussiecon was Forry Ackerman who, as we mentioned our Opening Comments, broke what was the all-time longest consecutive worldcon attendance string. It turns out that Forry had another commitment that took him almost as far from Los Angeles as Melbourne is, but in the opposite direction. In his previous article, Forry gave us a window onto the “evil empire” Soviet Union of the 1970s and China of the 1990s. This time we go back across the ocean with him to a slightly more tourist-friendly place.

Through Time and Space with Forry Ackerman

PART TEN: FORRY'S
ADVENTURES IN STOCKHOLM
by Forrest J Ackerman



I wish it had been in Stockholm, it would have made such an ideal headline for this article, but it was instead the little town of Lund, Sweden, where I spent the week of September 22-26, 1999, at the 5th Fantastisk Film Festival. I was head of the Festival's Jury that week, and had expected to see half a dozen films a day from various countries, but it seemed like half the films scheduled never showed up. One was held by customs in Finland, and another never reached us in time because it was delayed (are you ready for this?) by a *bomb scare*!

The very first film on opening night was a bomb all by itself: *Komodo*, with giant digital dragon lizards on the loose. No one cared for it. But *Night Time*, *Beowulf*, and *Fear/Faith/Revenge* made up for it, as did the remarkable shorts *Billy's Balloon*, *Devil Doll/Ring Pull* (a U.S. entry that captivated festival fans in Cannes) and *The Wedding Night*, a 12-minute tour-de-farce of loveable Astaire/Rogers-like zombies with a vocal assist from Ol' Blue Eyes Sinatra singing “Fly Me to the Moon.” Most eagerly anticipated by the Swedes was *Rock 'n Roll Frankenstein*, which a U.S. festival had earlier refused to show on the grounds of being too gross. I agree. If *Reanimator* was your cup of glee, you're welcome to gorge your gorge on this phallic Frankfurter that revives Elvis, Liberace, and various R&R personalities into one bawdy body. The film probably belongs in the Guinness Book of World Records for the greatest number of uses of the ‘F’ word in a motion picture.

The film festival sponsors threw me a curve by

announcing in the souvenir book that I would be giving a two-hour seminar each evening from six to eight o'clock! *Splrfsk!* (That's a fan-language expletive coined by the late Phil Bronson meaning “Yoicks!”) A ‘seminar’ to me promises a teaching session. I was not prepared to teach anyone how to write scripts, direct pictures, or anything of that sort, so I had to valiantly fill in with anecdotes about Karloff, Lugosi, Lorre, Price, Lang, Carradine, *Metropolis*, and some of my sixty-two movie cameos. Whew!

I went to Sweden thinking I would be drowned in blue-eyed blondes (what a way to die!). Tilt! Everywhere were brunettes and redheads! It seems 55% of the country is now populated by immigrants from Turkey, Yugoslavia, Indonesia, and Africa. A Swedish fan was driving me around one day when suddenly he pointed: “Look! A blonde!” One genuine blue-eyed blonde *Svenska flicka* I met while I was in Sweden was an avid fantafilm fan who spoke Swedish, English, French, Indonesian, and I think a couple of other languages, and who also understood when I spoke to her in Esperanto. She made an indelible impression on me when she said, “I am very impressed of you.” *Tak se mycket, Svenska flicka!* (Thanks a million, Swedish girl!) Maybe I should start a fan club in Sweden!

Anyway, we stopped during our drive at about half a dozen second-hand book and magazine shops, where at one of them I found a copy of the Swedish science fiction magazine *Hapna!* with a photo of myself on the cover! (Talk about hitting the ‘Ack-

pot') But a few days later, an even more extraordinary thing happened. I was out in the countryside being treated to a real Swedish smorgasbord by a Swedish fan, Kristina Hallind (with her husband) when Kristina's husband began telling me about the Swedish sci-fi mags of the past. He mentioned one I was unfamiliar with: *DAS Magazine*. If I'd been in Germany I would have assumed it simply meant 'The Magazine'. But he explained it stood for 'Detective Action Scientifiction', kind of a combination fiction periodical like *Argosy* in the days of Stanley Gardner, Murray Leinster, Ray Cummings, et. al. in the 1920s and '30s. He had just finished telling me he didn't know if it was still being published when a gentleman at a table next to us said, "Pardon me, I couldn't help overhearing you. Yes, it's still being published – *I am the publisher!*" Well, he had me pose with him for a picture for his next issue and even volunteered to send me a number of back issues. What a lucky coincidence!

To conclude my Swedish saga, while I had a captive audience at one of my two-hour 'seminars', I told them a tale which I don't believe I've ever put into print before. Years ago, I picked up the phone and an accented mannish voice in a lilting singsong said, "My name is Karl Gustav Chindberg. I yoost flew in from Schvaiden. I vunder cood I meet chu?"

"Why, yes," I said, "where are you?"

"Noo Yourk."

"Well, I guess you aren't going to be here in the next ten minutes then!"

When he eventually arrived at the Los Angeles airport, my wife Wendy and I picked him up there and

immediately warmed up to him. We kept him in our home for two or three days and on our last night together we were driving down what is known as Restaurant Row, a mile-long stretch with about a hundred different eating establishments on it, Karl said, "I vunder, vood chu like a midnight snake?"

"Huh?!"

"You know, a little something to eat – a midnight snake."

Well, we didn't let on he was mispronouncing 'snack' and accepted his offer. The next day we were wrapping gifts of some duplicate books and magazines from my collection to mail home to him when he noticed my return address (at that time): 915 S. Sherbourne Dr. He looked puzzled. "Who vas Doktor Sherbourne?" he asked.

I realized he was confusing the abbreviation for 'Drive' with the medical profession, and so with a straight face, explained, "Oh, he was the man who drove all the midnight snakes out of this territory!"

Several years later, Wendy and I were in Sweden and visited Karl in his baronial manor. There was a lake and a forest on his land and a private cemetery where for 200 years servants had been buried. After a sumptuous dinner and a chat, I was waiting out in the auto when Wendy came running to me and cried, "Come! You have to see this!" Karl, with a quixotic sense of humor, had had a wall painted like a mural with a knight on a horse chasing midnight snakes!

This is not a shaggy dog story, it's absolutely true! But with that, I say *Hej då, Adjö*, or Farewell, to Sweden, with happy memories of Sci-Fi Forry Fans who are real Swedenhearts! ✧



Sheryl Birkhead – pages 2, 3, 5, 22, 48, 58

Kurt Erichsen – pages 26, 27, 28

Alexis Gilliland & William Rotsler – pages 49, 57

Teddy Harvia – pages 21, 33

Joe Mayhew – pages 23, 24, 25, 31, 32, 37, 39, 40, 41, 51, 52, 55, 56

William Rotsler – page 54

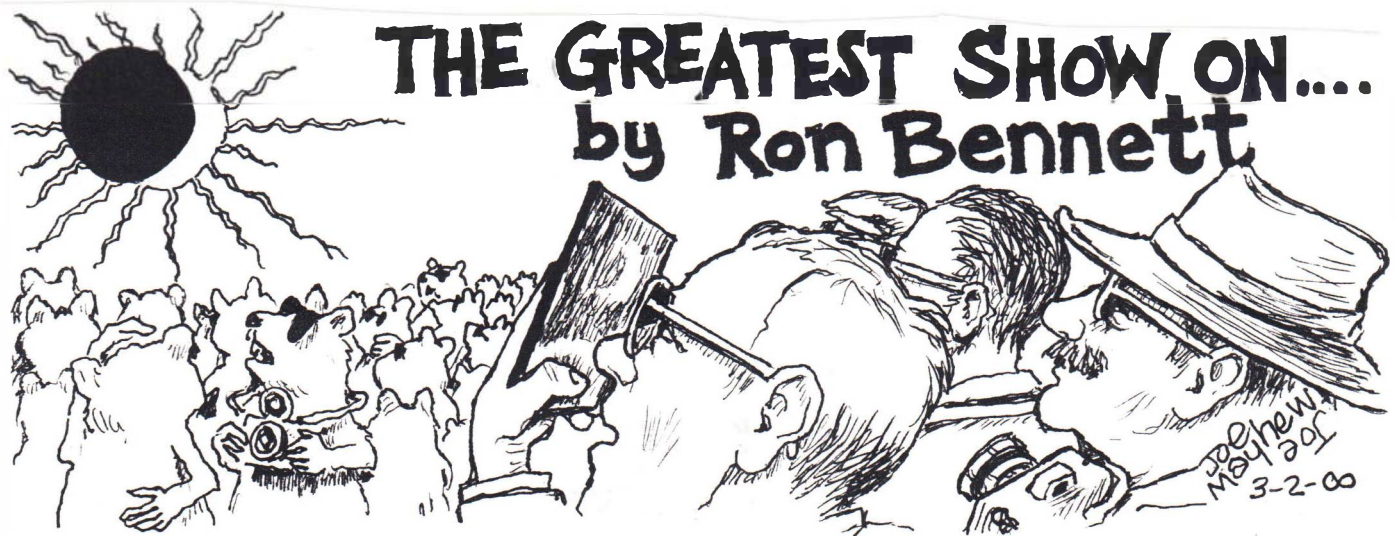
Julia Morgan-Scott – covers; pages 29, 39, 40,

Diana Harlan Stein – pages 10, 11, 47

Charlie Williams – pages 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 20, 44, 45, 46

Kip Williams – page 34

☞ We stay in Europe for this next article, about an event that occurred not long before ConuCopia. 'The Final Solar Eclipse of the Millenium', as it was billed, put on a spectacular show along some parts of its path through northern and central Europe. But actually seeing the eclipse, for some, might have been less of an event than just getting to where the show was going on.



Brian Aldiss called me a lemming ...

I wasn't around to see the 1927 Giggleswick show, but apparently it was quite a sight. In a negative sort of way, with nothing to be seen at all for a minute or two.

That was the previous total eclipse of the sun to grace the skies above the British Isles, with thousands of interested parties gathering in Giggleswick.

"Giggleswick? Where the devil is Giggleswick?" I hear you ask. And it's a darn good question. I even suspect that the inhabitants of the place ask it, too, from time to time.

About three times a day.

Giggleswick is actually a small Yorkshire village about fifteen miles from Skipton. And don't ask where Skipton is. Every map shows Skipton. Simply follow the River Aire back west from Leeds and lo! There's Skipton.

Giggleswick, with virtually all the houses built with smart grey Yorkshire stone, is best known for its public (i.e. private) school, founded way back in 1507, though many British parties will doubtlessly associate the place with Russell Harty, a television interviewer and personality of some fifteen or so years ago.

The village was the best place from which to view that 1927 eclipse. Over the intervening years I've read many of the accounts and seen several of the filmed interviews recorded by locals who witnessed the event. They all impressed on me how completely

dark it became, how eerie it was and how the birds stopped singing.

Well, as I write this, it's a rare summer afternoon in Yorkshire. Which means that it's not actually raining and that the temperature has risen into double figures. You know the old one about seeing the Pennines? If you can see the mountains of the Pennine range it's going to rain, and if you can't see them it's already raining. Yes, it's a fine summer's afternoon and whilst the local birds were thrashing their little lungs out at 5.30 this morning, there's not been a twitter from them since. Perhaps they've fallen into the habit of a daily feathery siesta. All I know is that they stop singing for reasons other than a total eclipse.

Still, those old reports, churned out *ad nauseum* this year, stirred something within me, perhaps a latent dreg of a sense of wonder which lurked wherever these things lurk. When would be the next total eclipse visible from these shores? I just had to be there to see it.

And a couple of years ago there began to be little references in the media. Wednesday, 11th August 1999. In Cornwall.

Yeh, okay, back to the map. Cornwall is a triangular county stuck on to the south west corner of Britain. It's full of cliffs and sandy coves which have given rise to all sorts of stories concerned with smuggling. Start with Daphne Du Maurier. It's also full of old abandoned tin mines and old abandoned legends concerning pixies (or maybe even legends concerning

abandoned pixies. Who can tell these days?) and it has its own language akin to ancient Bretton over in France.

There! What else is there to know about Cornwall? It can't be really important; it hasn't even a cricket team which plays in the county championship.

Stories had abounded about how the county would be vastly overcrowded with tourists and weirdos gathering to see the eclipse. Some six million were expected to descend on the county. The roads would be jammed, they said, facilities would be overstretched to breaking point, food and water would run out, there would be no accommodation available... the hotels had been booked up for over a year now... and other tales of doom and gloom. What little accommodation still remained would be at all sorts of premium prices. Holiday apartments normally rented out for £300 a week were being offered at four times that normal going rate.



When I told people I was going down to Cornwall, traveling eleven hours each way from the north of England, in order to see this two-minute event, they questioned my sanity. "You're mad!" they said. Every one of them. "You'll be able to watch it on TV," they said. One relative insisted that everyone down there in Cornwall is a crook. "They'll take your money on any pretext," I was told. "They'll rip you off. They have to make what they can during the season."

This meant the summer, when the weather is at its best and when tourists visit Cornwall. The county depends on its tourist season. People don't holiday in Cornwall during winter. I didn't like to point out to this relative that the Yorkshire coastal resorts depend upon tourism, too, and that their 'season', lasting approximately from June to September, is somewhat shorter than Cornwall's, which starts around May and goes on until... Well, I've visited Cornwall a couple of times over the years during the last week in Octo-

ber and have each time experienced a mini heat wave.

I asked Directory Enquiries to let me have the number of the Cornwall Tourist Board. The upshot was that I received a glossy promotional brochure from Newquay, the large, popular resort on the north Cornwall coast. It listed several million hotels, guest houses, holiday apartments, villas for rent and camping sites in and around the town. Phone calls to half a dozen of the larger hotels confirmed earlier fears. They'd been booked solid, many of the reservations having been made before Christmas. I moved down the list. The first hotel I tried had vacancies, yes, but would prefer not to accept my booking. I hadn't realised that my reputation had spread so far. Ah... yes... they normally depended on a weekly trade. Their tariff was for seven night bookings which included not only a full English (i.e. cooked) breakfast but also dinner. This didn't fit into my plans to see the eclipse and then return home as soon as possible afterwards. Other hotels confirmed the trend. One kindly manager suggested that I phoned nearer the date of the eclipse; if there were still vacancies a week or so before the event, there would be sufficient desperation for the hotel to take a short term booking.

Everyone to whom I spoke was hardly brimming with enthusiasm for their little show. "This damn eclipse!" I was told over and over again. "Why couldn't it have occurred during November, when we need the trade?" It appeared that there was a genuine suspicion that the well-circulated reports of overcrowding were deterring people from coming to the county. A week before the eclipse, I again phoned the hotel which had offered some hope of accommodation. Sorry, I was told, everything has gone.

It would probably be the same everywhere, I was happily informed. I rang the Newquay Tourist Board. Several times. The line was engaged, engaged, engaged. Eventually... success. "Thank you for calling the Newquay Tourist Board. Please hold. We are trying to connect you to one of our operators," was the message relayed every forty seconds. I held. I figured that now I'd got so far... After a minute or so over the half hour there was a different voice. A real voice. A real human, non-recorded voice. Offering help. Ha! Did he have a list of hotels still offering accommodation? No, all the hotels were full. There was no accommodation anywhere. I wondered whether this guy was on some sort of commission dependent upon how many calls he could rush through in the shortest possible time. He certainly earned his money with me. So it was back to the list of hotels in the

tourist brochure. And back to hotels offering accommodation only on weekly terms. But at the third try... or was it the eighty-third? ... pay dirt. Yes, this sea-front hotel could offer a room for only three nights. And at well, *well, well* below the price I had been prepared to pay.

I decided to let someone else take the strain and traveled by National Express coach, Britain's answer to Greyhound. The coach left Leeds at 9.00am and was due to arrive in Bristol at 2.40pm where I would catch the 3.30pm coach to Newquay arriving there at 8.10pm. However, I was warned, those are the normal times; there are likely to be delays because of the build up of traffic. The coach departed Leeds on time and whipped south, arriving in Bristol at 1.05. And the coach operators had kindly decided, because of the expected heavy demand, to run an extra coach leaving Bristol at 2pm. I was in Newquay for 5 o'clock.

During my stay in Newquay in the days leading up to the eclipse, I had to wonder about the local birds falling to silence during the expected artificial night. There do not appear to be any songbirds in Newquay. If there are, their melodies are drowned by the constant yammering of the gulls. Day and night their raucous screeching pervaded the air, herring gulls, black headed gulls, grey headed gulls, and, for all I knew, red crested gulls, terns, gannets, guillemots, puffins and crayfish, tended to drive everyone mad. Perhaps those would-be visitors who were frightened off had not been deterred by the possible overcrowding but by these damn squawking demons. In virtually every store I visited I was asked in a friendly tone, "Are you down here for the eclipse?" and in an equally friendly tone I replied as deadpan as I could muster, "Eclipse? What eclipse?" The store assistant usually laughed, but a couple of times he or she began to explain and one dear lady went so far as to tell me how Venus was passing across the path of the moon and that it was in conjunction with Aquarius. I'm sure she was right.



The scene in Cornwall was somewhat chaotic. There was plenty of accommodation available in the smaller hotels and boarding houses. Newscasts covered the lack of visitors to the county. Newquay, being one of the largest resorts, was featured constantly, with hoteliers bemoaning the fact that the earlier estimates of influx was certainly deterring visitors, especially families. Many regular bookings, made by families who visited Newquay year after year, had been canceled. There were, of course, fears that some of these families would never return.

Traffic coming into the county was reported to be light, though there was a heavier than normal amount entering the county during the night, obviously drivers hoping to avoid the forecast daytime rush which never materialised. In pastures and meadows bordering the road to Newquay were piles of plastic crates of bottled water, stockpiled by farmers who had been hoping to utilise their fields as unofficial campsites. Several special events, including firework displays, music festivals and rock concerts were cancelled because of the lack of advance bookings. One organised event did take place, the acrobatic display put on over Newquay Bay by the RAF formation team, the Red Arrows, this followed by a fly-past to commemorate the start of the Second World War sixty years earlier on 3rd September 1939. What's four weeks, give or take a few days? The fly-past featured a Spitfire, a Lancaster bomber and a Tornado jet. "Which is which?" I asked innocently.

Television review programmes continued to forecast the overwhelming number of expected visitors to the county. On the evening *Newsnight* programme, Brian Aldiss called us lemmings and declared that people were travelling to Cornwall for "a group experience," which remark was likened by the programme's coordinator to the hysteria surrounding the death of Princess Diana two years earlier. Personally, whilst I might have been a lemming, I couldn't have cared less about the 'group experience'. The fewer people around to distract me from the enjoyment and wonder of the eclipse, would have been certainly welcomed.

The build-up of traffic finally arrived in the early hours of the eleventh, eclipse day itself, but during the week the daily estimates of the influx were constantly being revised. Downward. Six, three, two, one and a half million visitors would be arriving. The final, post-event, estimate of those who had come to the show was 600,000.

And the Big Event itself, the eclipse? The sky clouded over. It began to rain. Didn't see a thing. ☼

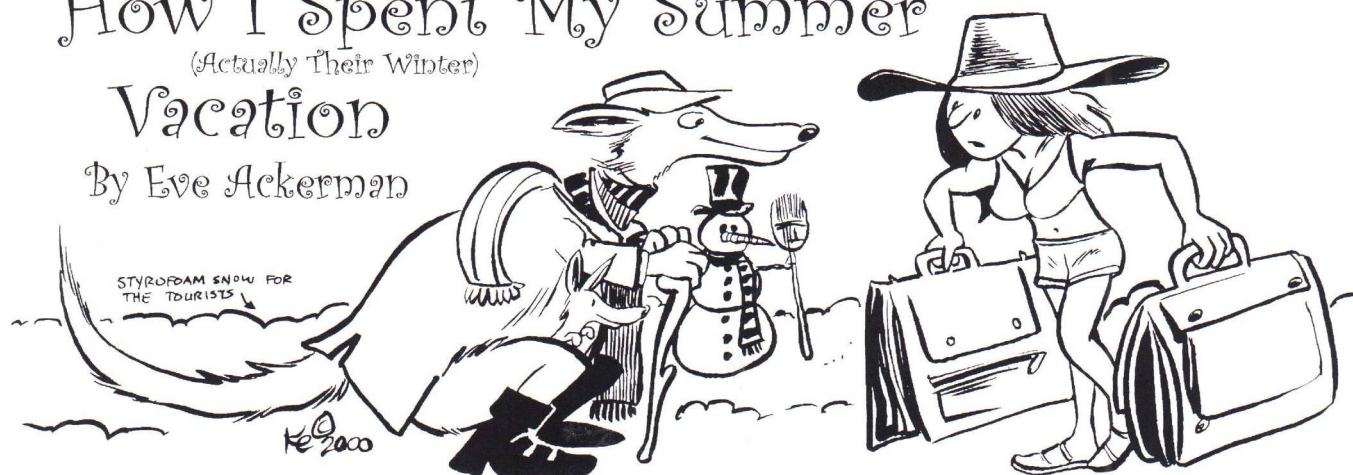
✍ We regret we didn't have the time to see more of Australia than mostly just a couple of cities, but as we mentioned, listening to other fans tell their tales, as well as looking at all the photos they brought back, kept us entertained for hours. The person who had the best time of all was probably the Down Under Fan Fund delegate, Janice Gelb, whose stamina for adventure (from what we've heard) goes far beyond ours. Her traveling companion for part of her trip is the writer of this next article, who also had her share of adventures, as we will read.

How I Spent My Summer

(Actually Their Winter)

Vacation

By Eve Ackerman



***Author's note:** Some Mimosa readers may be aware that the anonymous 'travel companion' mentioned in this piece is in fact, DUFF winner Janice Gelb. Ms. Gelb's recollection of events may be a bit different than the author's, and she's not responsible for any statements made in the following literary work. For instance, she might deny all knowledge of a post-game event where we tried to see how many of the Magpies footy team members we could jam into a hotel room bathroom...*

* * *

There are no squirrels in Australia. Strange, I know, but there it is. You can travel across the world and what do you notice? An absence of bushy tailed rodents. I envision Australian tourists coming to the U.S. and snapping photos of squirrels in the park.

"My word, Matilda, there goes another one!"

"Quick, Clyde, before it gets away!"

Certainly it's no more strange than an American tourist walking through Hyde Park in Sydney snapping photos of black-billed ibises. They may be as common as red dirt there, but it's startling to those of us not from Down Under. You'd be walking through the park, feeling like you could have been in any major North American city and suddenly what would qualify as an *avis rara* round these parts crosses in front of you and you realize you're not in Kansas anymore.

To say "I toured Australia in two weeks" is a bit like saying, "I'm going to North America and I'm

going to see everything in 14 days." Clearly, one could spend much longer and not see everything. But there were things about Australia both noteworthy and praiseworthy, so here are some tourist notes you're not likely to find in your standard tour book:

The toilets are very cool. All the buildings we frequented, with the exception of the very oldest, featured two flush options: light load and heavy load. Now, if you're a woman with a bladder the size of an acorn who drinks water all day this is a neat thing. Instead of wasting ten gallons of water every time you take a trip down the hall, you only use the minimal amount necessary for the moment. Sometimes it took a bit of guesswork to figure out which flush button was which, but it was worth the effort. You'd exit the bathroom feeling like you'd done just one more thing to help out the environment and save our precious natural resources.

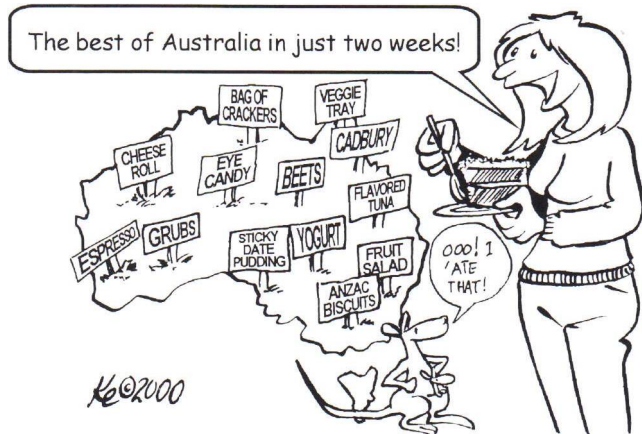
How come we can't get good dairy products like the Aussies get? The milk, cheese and butter all had more flavor than what's found in most American supermarkets and the variety was outstanding. The yogurt in particular tasted like more than flavored library paste. Oh yeah, and how come we can't get flavored tuna in individual little cans in the States? Or at least *I* can't get it. They get grubs and little tins of tuna. We get Cheez Whiz and Wonder Bread.

Aussie Rules Football, or 'Footy'. I'm not a sports fan. Definitely not a football fan. But my traveling companion sat me down in front of a televi-

sion in our hotel room with instructions to just watch. Twenty minutes later I turned to her and said “if American women saw this it could change Sundays in the States forever.” It was fast. It was easy to follow. But best of all, instead of 250 pounds of overfed, overpaid, overpadded beef hurtling down the field you had hunky young guys in shorts and sleeveless jerseys playing in the mud. Real looking men, not caricatures. Eye candy for the ladies. You get the idea.

Flying foxes in the Sydney Botanical Gardens. They look like refugees from a Dracula movie, hanging up there and waiting to swoop down on unsuspecting tourists. Or at least that’s how they looked looming over us.

More food: Sticky date pudding. It’s a moist cake with chopped dates and sauce on top. Good stuff but it helps to have a well-seasoned sweet tooth, able to handle something a bit cloying. But cutting through the sweetness is helped by the coffee. Most of the time, when I ordered a cup of coffee what I got was an eye-poppingly strong espresso. That would cut through anything, including the fog of jet lag. Oh, and the Anzac biscuits! A modest little oatmeal and coconut cookie with a history dating back to the Great War, the Anzac biscuit is a delightful taste of Australia. Within three days of my return home I began to experience withdrawal symptoms and did a web search for Anzac biscuit recipes. Not surprisingly, there were as many variations as you would find for a standard American chocolate chip cookie, but with a little adjustment and a hunt for the proper ingredients (it’s hard to find wattle seeds around here) I was able to bake a batch and got rave reviews from family and neighborhood kiddies.



Blue lights in the public restrooms. Took me a while to figure out what was up with this. Was it to sanitize? Was it to make you look like a corpse while

putting on makeup? Finally, I saw a sign explaining the lights. Blue lighting discouraged drug use. Sure enough, the next time I looked at my arms under blue lights it was harder to see the veins. There were also convenient and discreet needle drop boxes for those who needed them.

Public transportation. I’m sure it’s not great everywhere you go, but in the cities we were in it was fast, convenient, reasonably priced and perfect for tourists like us staying out burbs. The Melbourne trams were especially convenient, though the Sydney bus system was also very good. And the trains running to the outlying areas were a big improvement over driving.

The money. It’s slick, it’s plastic, it’s colorful. I imagine Aussies coming to the States must find our money very boring. I know I do. The coins decreased in size as their value decreased with the five cent piece the smallest. Paper money too varied in size as well as color making it much easier to handle. And, since the Aussie dollar was worth about $\frac{2}{3}$ of the American dollar, you could get lulled into thinking you were getting a bargain – if the price looked good in American dollars, you knew it was a deal!

The airlines! Oh man, I’ll never feel the same way flying domestic US airlines again. On a 90-minute Qantas flight, passengers got two snacks. First, a bag of crackers and juice. Then, a meat and cheese roll, fruit salad, cheese, crackers, and Anzac biscuits and a Cadbury chocolate bar! The vegetarian tray that we got had a fruit plate in place of the sandwich. Ah, airline travel the way it was *meant* to be.

The Sydney Aquarium. A great way to get up close to the aquatic wildlife of Oz without having *too* close an encounter. An Australian saltwater crocodile made me feel just a bit inadequate as a Floridian. Size *does* matter. Our bull gators don’t quite measure up.

Uluru (Ayers Rock) and Kata-Tjuta (The Olgas) National Park. Everyone’s seen pictures of Uluru, but the pictures can’t compare with the reality. It looks very sfnal, rising out of the red ground, a huge red monolith surrounded by kilometer after kilometer of desert. And the ground itself! Georgia has red colored clay but this dirt is *red*, a really deep, rich, lush scarlet. Uluru itself changes color as the day changes. In the morning and at sunset you see purples, blues, greys, all melding and blending as the light moves. During the heat of the day the rock is a majestic ochre, catching and reflecting the sun’s light back to

the desert. It's offset by a sky of a deep cerulean hue, clear and absolutely cloud free during the dry season when the humidity is at about one percent. Visiting the Rocks is one of those special experiences that make you appreciate the variety and wonder of life on this planet, and how fortunate we are in this day and age to be able to travel to these sites.

The Floriana hotel in Cairns. "Charmingly rustic" doesn't do it justice. The Floriana is a family owned inn, a somewhat run down Art Deco treasure oozing faded style, rather like a retired chorus girl dripping with Bakelite and rhinestone jewelry from her youth. The Floriana had Deco furniture in the lobby, plank floors, and an eye popping pink, blue, yellow and turquoise color scheme. The outside was draped with strings of colored lights. We had a suite, a bedroom and sitting room with a second bed. The sitting room had bay windows opening onto the east and the Bay and I was thrilled to think of sleeping with the fresh sea breezes coming in, the birds awakening me with their gentle morningsong.

So after a stroll down the Esplanade, the funky, tacky, backpacker-filled main drag of Cairns we returned to our little treasure, the Floriana, and settled in for a good night's sleep. I drifted off to the night sounds of returning guests and the rustle of the breeze through the palms. All was calm, all was quiet.

And then came the black helicopters.

Turns out our charmingly rustic digs were next door to a regional hospital that serves Cairns and surrounding environs and many of the patients are flown in by helicopter. In the middle of the night. To a helipad next to my room.

Now, I'm not a light sleeper but I guarantee something right outside your window going WHUP WHUP WHUP and making enough noise to wake the fish in the Great Barrier Reef at two o'clock in the morning will roust anyone out of bed. And at three o'clock. And at four o'clock. And my travel companion, who'd taken the interior room after I insisted I *wanted* to sleep near the open windows slept like a baby. But really, the Floriana is a great place to stay. Once.

The Great Barrier Reef was, as promised, spectacular. Even if you're not a scuba diver the tour companies offer many options for seeing the reef from Green Island. My favorite was the Yellow Submarine. It took you below the surface and around the reef where you could look out portholes and admire the fish. Kind of a real life version of Captain Nemo's Submarine.

In the Melbourne area there's Healesville Sanctuary, the largest collection of Australian wildlife available for viewing in one spot. And yes, Virginia, there were koalas and they were adorable, but so were the echidnas, penguins, wombats, Tasmanian devils and the variety of birds. The only disappointment were the roos, who were clearly on the dole. There they sat, lounging, scratching their butts, smoking cigarettes, ignoring us, barely moving. Their attitude couldn't have been plainer. "Tourists? We don't need no stinkin' tourists!" I found out afterwards that kangaroos are most active around sunrise and sunset when they're feeding. Otherwise their attitude is "bugger off, mate!"



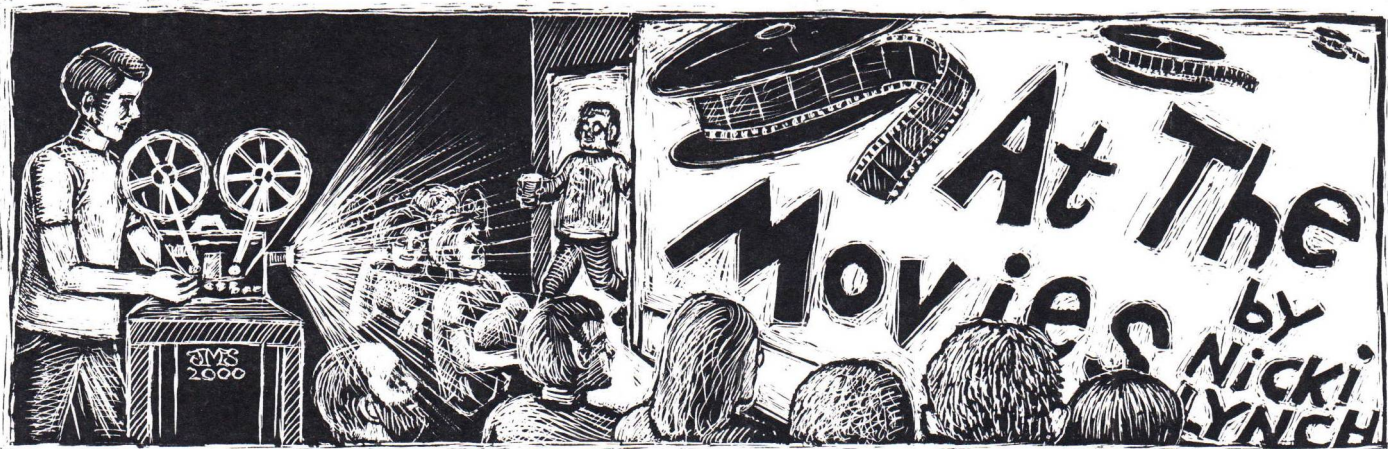
And the Royal Melbourne Zoo with its butterfly room is also a delight. Lonely Planet travel guide says the Zoo is "one of the oldest in the world but it is continually upgrading the standard of the prisoners' accommodations." The 'prisoners' seemed content when we were there and included a platypus in a nocturnal environment and some friendly penguins.

Were there negatives? Sure. The graffiti was widespread, annoying and pervasive. Canned beets are considered a basic food group. I never imagined I'd be ordering fast food and saying "hold the beets."

But other than graffiti and beets, I'd recommend Australia as a vacation spot for any Yank looking to go someplace with friendly natives, interesting sights and people who almost speak the same language. I hope to return someday to see many of the things I wasn't able to cram into this trip and spend more time learning about the people and places of the Land Down Under.

Oh yeah, and they had a nice SF convention in Melbourne too. ☆

There was one other mild surprise in the Hugo Awards balloting besides the win by Dave Langford's *Ansible*. The movie *The Truman Show* won as Best Dramatic Presentation, beating out the episode of *Babylon 5* that had been nominated, much to the disappointment of *B5* creator J. Michael Straczynski, who attended Aussiecon as their 'Special Guest'. We're mostly known as fanzine publishers, but we've always enjoyed the media part of science fiction. And as you can see from the following article (which originally appeared in Tracy Benton's fanzine *Cazbah*), some entertaining things can happen...



I don't want to sound like I'm ancient, but I remember a time when film programming at conventions was not an all-three-days, 24-hours-a-day event. Cons showed actual movies, either 16mm or 35mm, and video tapes were limited to professional productions.

Rich and I began our fannish life in the South. While much of the country had been giving cons for a while, the South started its convention circuit in the '60s. In the early '70s, Southern cons were still very small, and a movie was a special event that most people attended, if they could either stay up that late or if there were few parties.

The con that usually had the best movie event was Kubla Khan, given by Ken Moore and the Nashville crowd. Ken had a movie projector and, through his connections, could usually come up with a good SF film that had seen life on the airlines. The movie room was the banquet/main hall converted into a theater by adding a standalone screen. Late Saturday night, we would assemble and the movie would begin. And then about half way through the film, the snoring would start. At the end, the lights would come on and there would be Ken sound asleep on the floor.

The Kubla Khan film that sticks in my mind was the silent, black and white, Lon Chaney version of *The Phantom of the Opera*. It was on small reels and had the special addition of red coloring in the masked ball sequence. The first reel had only the clack-clack of the projector as accompaniment. While reels were

changed (there was only one projector), people commented on the film so far. During the second reel, people suddenly realized there was no dialogue and began whispering to each other. The buzz slowly built up. Suddenly, someone piped up and said, "Hey, keep it down! I can't hear the projector clacking!" That broke the dam. From then on, people filled in the dialogue out loud and had a great time in general. It wasn't quite on the level of *Mystery Science Theater 3000*, but it was fun.

With the advent of videotapes, showing of actual films at conventions has lessened in favor of TV shows and videotapes of movies. While this is a great way to see shows that you haven't seen before (I'm still waiting to see *Sapphire and Steel* played at a decent hour at a con), seeing a movie at a con is less of an event. I've been pleased to see that at recent worldcons and some regional conventions, actual theater-like places are being used to show movies.

So that leaves actual movie theaters for fannish movie memories. While seeing *Star Wars* the first time stands out in my mind as a truly sensawonder experience, it was a lesser movie – *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* – that made a fannish impression on me.

I loved *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and saw it a number of times at the theater. Rich even bought the video tape for my birthday. So, when the next installment of the series came out, I was ready to enjoy. Unfortunately, it wasn't as good as the first and I was disappointed. However, this didn't stop me from

suggesting to see it when a group of fans descended on our house a few weeks after it opened.

Our friend Guy Lillian, from New Orleans, had come to Chattanooga (where we then lived) with the masters for the current issue of the *Southern Fandom Confederation Newsletter*. Since we had both an electrostenciler and a mimeo, Guy had persuaded us to run off the issue. But when an out-of-town fan visits, the local fans of course gather. Our little house was soon filled with people and Rich found getting any work done difficult. To cut down on the congestion, I suggested we all go out to a movie. While this would mean fewer people to help, there wasn't much for them to do at the moment. Collating would take place in a few hours. So, stuffing as many people as possible into the available cars, we headed off for the theater, to see *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*. I think that of the ten or so people going, I was the only one who had previously seen it.

We arrived and got in the long Saturday night line. When we got in the theater, we managed to find seats together in a row near the front. Quickly the room packed to capacity and the movie started. Being a full house and a Saturday night, the crowd was a bit noisy – crunching popcorn, slurping drinks and whispering in general – but not so bad that one couldn't hear the film.

As the movie played, it became apparent that the crowd was restless with this not-as-good-as-the-last-

one production. I was sitting next to Guy and we exchanged a few words to that effect. And then it happened...

Part way through the film, Indy and friends are in an airplane without a pilot, and are trying to figure out how to fly it. Indy was sitting at the wheel and said something to the effect that it probably wasn't too hard to fly, when the plane suddenly goes into a nose-dive. At that point, the movie obviously became too much for Guy. He got to his feet and yelled, "Pull back on the wheel!" as if he were a pilot instead of an avid moviegoer. There was a long moment of silence in the theater, and I was sure we were going to be tossed out of there.

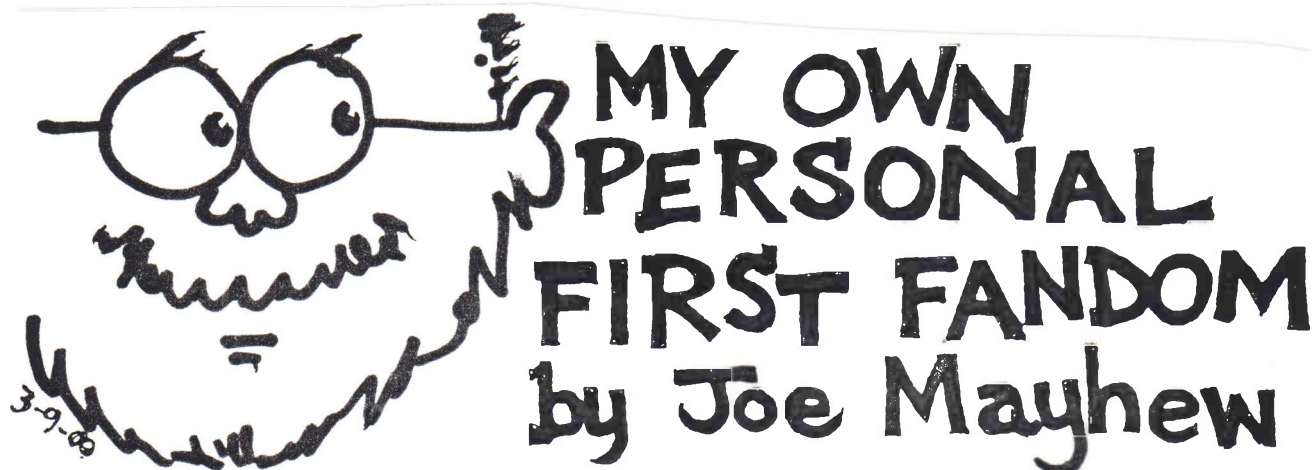
However, like the earlier *Phantom of the Opera* film, this lapse in theater etiquette seemed to break the dam, and people loved it. The theater was then filled with comments on the action, with probably better dialogue than had been written. The fun continued until the end credits began to roll. As we left, I wondered if we had started something. After all, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show's* fame started with a humble fan shouting out a response to a line of movie dialogue. But, it was not to be...

Anyway, the next time you sit down to watch the latest SF or fantasy movie, remember that at cons they used to be a big event. With a group of fans watching, they could still be. ✧

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There aren't many down-sides to having a worldcon in Australia, but its long distance from North America did limit the presence of First Fandom, relatively few of whom could afford to make the trip. First Fandom is comprised of science fiction fans who were active before 1938 – the so-called 'dinosaurs' of fandom. But there are many different eras in fandom and some of them have just as much legendry associated with them as the oldest one, as the following article illustrates.



Whether you found Science Fiction Fandom before 1940, or you recently stumbled into it as late as 1999, it is your own first fandom. Mine started back around 1960, when I became a member of The Washington Science Fiction Association (WSFA). By then, I had already been devouring the stuff for around ten years. My dad had been an avid SF reader since he was a boy, and so, our house was always chock-a-block with pulp magazines. I started to get interested in the stuff somewhere in the late 1940s. At first, I was mostly daydreaming at the covers and illustrations – which were astounding, amazing, fantastic, thrilling wonders, and even worlds beyond the daily life of a very small neofan. In time, I actually began to read the words, and got hooked on science fiction.

I have often heard fans complain that their parents didn't want them to read science fiction. My mother never complained about that. She was glad her sons were reading anything! My brother Bill and I were both reading whatever we could get our hands on, from comic books to encyclopedias. Dad had a wee problem with it, though – he didn't want us to read those pulp magazines until *he* had finished with them. Looking back, I'm not sure the poor man ever got to finish any issue because they all would wind up in the chaos of our bedroom, no matter where he hid them. It really wasn't safe for him to bring any SF home, as we would promptly spirit it away.

I don't think Dad ever wrote a single fan letter to any magazine, though when I was in grade school he submitted manuscripts to several. My favorite, "The

Purple Nightmare," was an SF-horror adventure tinged a bit with "The Colour of Outer Space." I thought they were great stories. Sadly, the hard-hearted editors he sent them to did not concur.

By the time I reached the 11th grade, I still had no idea that there was such a thing as a fannish community. While I was interviewing a Senior for our school newspaper, a friend of hers, who had graduated the previous year, joined us. His name was Don Studebaker (who now writes as 'Jon DeCles'). After the interview, Don told me he had met the author of the SF novel I had on top of my school books, and also told me about a group called 'WSFA' which had a lot of awesome members and, wouldn't it be neat for me to go to a meeting? We could use my dad's car!

So the following Friday I picked him up and went to my first WSFA meeting. I think there were all of 17 members at that time (the winter of 1959-60). George Scithers was President. Seated around the large parlor were Bob Madle, Bill Evans, Phil Bridges, Dick Eney, Bob Pavlat, Jack Chalker and many others whom I soon learned were mighty BNFs. They were very accepting people, and my being a pimply faced teenager with more opinions than experience, didn't seem to put them off. Best of all, they cared about books.

I started to go regularly and got to know these people as friends. Our hostess, Miss Elizabeth O. Cullen, had been the Railroad Association's librarian. One day, she showed me a letter Lawrence of Arabia had written, apologizing for creating extra work for her. It seemed she would have to re-do her Syrian

railroad maps, as he had just blown up several miles of the Ottoman Empire's tracks.

Miss Cullen often rode to the hounds with multi-billionaire J. Paul Getty, but always hunted the foxes from a western saddle – after all, she was a Texan. Her home held a fascinating assortment of curious things from the Southwest: ancient Mexican spurs, hand woven Indian rugs, and her fine Texas saddle as well as numerous bits of well worn tackle. The room didn't just have atmosphere, it had *personality*. As WSFA's Secretary, she did her best to record the daunting babble of smoffery, puns, obscure tangents, and personal notices which was (and still is!) the main business of a WSFA meeting.



In the early '60s, WSFA's annual Mother's Day weekend convention, Disclave, often had as few as 40 people attending. But some of those came from distant New York, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh. The program was whatever happened. Someone might bring a 16mm projector and show neat stuff the local library had available. Perhaps a whole flock would go out 'Great Walling', that is, descend upon some hapless Chinese restaurant for dinner. At the 1962 Disclave, I collaborated with Don Studebaker on a one-shot fanzine called *The Well-Tempered Dis-Clavier*. What it lacked in quality, it made up for in peculiarity (I do hope I have the only surviving copy).

At 16, Jack Chalker already could talk like a major SMOF. His fanzine *Mirage* was nominated for a Hugo in 1963. He had been coming down from Baltimore on Trailways buses to attend the meetings and gradually recruited others for the semi-monthly trip. In 1963 he founded a science fiction club which actually met in Baltimore (I was a charter member, but only went up there for it when I could borrow the car). This group, BSFS, eventually would sponsor of Balticon, and collaborate with WSFA to produce two WorldCons.

Sometime after a stint in the Army, Jack started selling short stories. When his first novel, *A Jungle of*

Stars came out, he dedicated it to WSFA. Jack also 'Tuckerized' most of WSFA in the seventies, including them as characters or even places in his later novels. If you want a deeper critical understanding of the works of Jack Lawrence Chalker, get out the old WSFA roster. He was twice nominated for the Campbell Award, and has published some very successful books with his Mirage Press. He has had several series of popular novels, yet he is still essentially a fan (a three-propeller grand SMOF). Jack is also a ferryboat fan. I performed his wedding to Eva Whitley aboard a small ferry in the middle of the Susquehanna River. I suspect that when I finally cross the River Styx, Charon will ask me, "Say, how's Jack doing?"

Don Studebaker's speech was charged with 'elder gods and elves'. He was sort of a one-man Society for Creative Anachronism, before there *was* such a group. He organized strangeness – for example, he made a 'Nazgul' crown for the President of WSFA, and actually got George Scithers to wear it during a meeting. Don could have jammed with the Pied Piper of Hamelin – to great rat applause. When the insensitive dolts at the local draft board invited him down for a physical, I helped him skip town.

Don was welcomed in Philadelphia by 'St. Neo', Harriet Kolchak, and lived with her for a couple years before moving to California and being more-or-less adopted by Marion Zimmer Bradley. He was living at her home 'Grey Havens' when the SCA was founded there. Don married another of Bradley's 'adopted kids', Diana Paxton, a fantasy writer. Don, or 'Jon' by then, had a couple stories in *Fantasy & Science Fiction* and eventually talked someone into publishing a novel. He is still in California, busking as Mark Twain. Diana has had a somewhat more successful writing career.

Phyllis and Bill Berg always came to WSFA meetings with their tiny daughter. The first time I ever saw her, she was peeping out between Jack Chalker's ankles. Betty Berg was usually there under the Victorian sofa, cuddled up with Miss Cullen's Scottie. There weren't a lot of woman in Fandom in those days, but those who were there made their presence felt. Phyllis Berg definitely had "had the keys to the tree house."

Bob Pavlat and George Scithers could actually entertain us with parliamentary procedure. For example, George proposed some action to the club, and called for the 'aye' votes. He thought he had enough, so he didn't call for the 'nays'. Pavlat objected elaborately, and called for a vote of censure. George thought about it briefly and agreed. He called for the

'ayes' to censure himself, and then didn't call for the 'nays'. Scithers eventually won Hugos for his fanzine *Amra* and as editor of the *Asimov's* prozine, and is presently editor of *Weird Tales*. Bob Pavlat married the belle of Philly fandom, Peggy Rae McKnight (who chaired the 1998 WorldCon, Bucconeer).

Discon, WSFA's 1963 WorldCon, was by today's standards rather a small affair. I think there may have been 700 memberships bought, but closer to 400 actually attended. The exact attendance would be hard to construe as several very bizarre series were involved so that everyone could have a low number.

Discon Chairman Scithers decided to have a live band for the Masquerade, so it was essentially a dance with a costume parade for anyone who cared to walk across the stage and explain their costume. My date and I went in costume. The problem for me was that I had to hitchhike from East Riverdale to downtown Washington, D.C., carrying my costume and a pair of swords for the opening ceremonies duel Don Studebaker had arranged between L. Sprague de Camp and Fritz Leiber. Most folks sped up when they saw me. My date's problem was that she was having increasing difficulty walking, due to her advancing Multiple Sclerosis, but she made it across the stage while her friends cheered.

The great SF artist Ed Emshwiller was kind enough to look at some of my SF art at Discon and let me in on one of the mysteries of the illustrator's pro-

fession. After shaking his head and suppressing a giggle, he said, "Don't do illustrations in blue ball-point pen, it doesn't reproduce well."

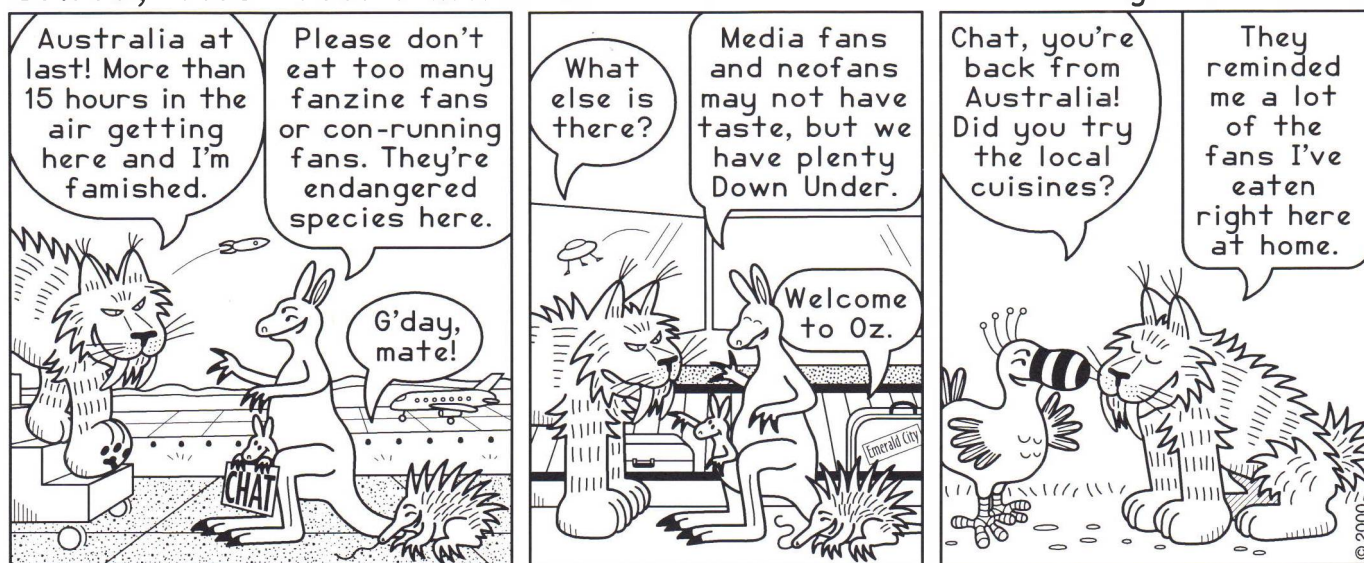
There was another guy from my high school in WSFA, Tom Haughey. Tom and I worked together on all sorts of hare-brained things for Discon. Scithers, noting our need for recognition, wrote that, like Bun Rabbit in Pogo's fire brigade, we "carried the hose." In 1963, Tom published a fanzine called *Mirth and Irony*. I did most of the illustrations, including some for a story by Jack Chalker called "Jungle of Stars," the original version of his first novel.

Tom was probably as much of an atheist then as I thought I was, but after his conversion to Republican, he became a Mennonite radio preacher down along the Rio Grande. Fundamentalist Bethany Press published a few of Tom's 'Christian Mystery' books. One had the classic 'locked-room' scenario, but with a difference: the murdered victim wasn't found dead inside the room. Instead, it was the murderer. The victim had been 'raptured', that is, swooped up into heaven.

Tom's surprising conversion rather shocked WSFA, and I suppose my own overnight conversion from the militant village atheist to Roman Catholic caused heads to wag (particularly as I came from a nominally Protestant family). In 1965 I gaffiated off to Canada to study for the priesthood, and would not find my way back to WSFA until February of 1974, just in time for Discon II – and my *second* fandom. ✧

CHAT, the 4th Fannish Ghod

By TEDDY HARVIA



☛ This is supposed to be an "Aussiecon" theme issue of *Mimosa*, but we haven't said much about Australian fandom yet. The two biggest fan centers in the country are, of course, Melbourne and Sydney, and each has active fan clubs that date back to the 1950s and '60s. This next article describes some of the more interesting personalities from that era.



Sleeping Beauty

Australian science fiction fandom in the 1960s was predominantly male, just as it was elsewhere in the world. So it was a surprise when Ros Hardy showed up at the Melbourne Science Fiction Club one December day. Not only was Ros female, she was also the girlfriend of Alan South, secretary (from time to time) of the Futurian Society of Sydney, and relations between the MSFC and the FSS were somewhat strained, to put the best light on it.

As it turned out, Ros maintained some association with sf fandom for another twenty years, attending the 1972 Sydney convention (as I recall) and throwing room parties (during the day, as an alternative to the 'programming') which required those partying to watch a cricket test match on television since Ros had a thing about one of the members of the Australian cricket team (Dennis Lillee). That was, of course, ANJ (After Nose Job) but one of the main things which strained and strengthened relations between Sydney and Melbourne fandoms occurred BNJ, about ten years before when she and I and John Baxter (a.k.a. the Leading Film Biographer) went to a party in Sydney.

I visited Sydney very occasionally in the early 1960s and as well as the fans, one of the people I used occasionally to see was Ron Polson, a friend of Mervyn Barrett's who was also a jazz singer (and dope smoker – in 1965 Ron was arrested and tried for smoking marijuana and as a result lost his most lucrative singing jobs, on national TV variety shows). On one of these visits Ron invited me out to his house on Sydney's north shore, overlooking the harbour, for a big party to celebrate the visit to Sydney of an American jazz group.

In self-defense, as it were, I invited Ros and John

along with me, and that was going to be fine with Ron. John and I took a taxi from the city across to Ros's place on South Dowling Street, and then across the Harbour Bridge to Ron's house in Neutral Bay. There was no problem finding the house (though I had been there previously) as the party was already in full swing. Most of the people there were musicians, and most of them wanted to play their instruments most of the time. It got pretty noisy, and escaping out to the garden was really no relief. Of course, all that energy used in playing meant that fuel was required, and a lot of people drank a lot of booze. As well as that, John Baxter complained to me that he couldn't get into the toilet, which was always occupied by people who seemed to be in there a long time. (It was one of those occasions when a cast-iron bladder is a useful thing.) As John and I eventually discovered when we returned from one of our frequent journeys outside for air and a slightly lower decibel count, one of the people drinking a lot of booze was Ros, and not long after midnight she passed out. It seemed like a good opportunity to exit the party. But there were ramifications.

There was no point in trying to ring a taxi from Ron's – no chance of anyone hearing what we were saying – but I 'remembered' seeing a telephone box nearby on the way down, so John agreed that we should set off on foot, and call from the box when we reached it. We managed to get Ros sufficiently conscious to explain to her what we were doing, and slung her between us in a fireman's lift.

So much for human memory! The 'telephone box' proved to be completely illusory – or else we were walking in a different direction. Ros didn't stay conscious for very long, and then one of us had to carry her alone – me, with her over one shoulder.

God, I must have been strong in those days! I guess all those years of playing rugby did have a Higher Purpose after all.

Even those not familiar with the geography of Sydney will understand from words like 'harbour', 'north shore', and 'Neutral Bay' that Ron's house was down near water level. To this must be added the fact that the main road in the area ran along the top of the ridge. Thus we had a recipe for fatigue. Even though Ros did wake occasionally (and thus make it possible for John and me to share the load), carrying someone for over half a mile, Up Hill All The Way, is not a lot of fun, and we were all relieved when we got to the main road and hailed a taxi (well, John and I were relieved; no one, least of all Ros, would know about her state of mind at the time). Taxi across the bridge, then back to North Sydney where I was staying with John, at the end of which John remarked that he didn't *ever* want to be invited to a party with me again. I couldn't understand him; after all, it had been a fun party!

The Politician

Tony Sander was an engineer in the Royal Australian Air Force. He was also a prominent member of the Melbourne Science Fiction Club in the early 1960s. Tony liked to party – I think he still does – but in the mid 1960s a different kind of party attracted his attention.

Tony was not happy in the RAAF or, more precisely, he thought he would be happier *out* of the RAAF. Unfortunately, however, he had signed on for the long haul. His attendance at functions of the MSFC, and at loosely-associated parties, was sometimes circumscribed by his obligations in defence of our sunburnt country (although there were occasional cross-fertilisation benefits, as when he described in some detail the performance characteristics of the U2s then based in Australia). But he wanted out.

I have no idea where he picked up the idea which was ultimately to liberate him from the RAAF, but it hardly seemed to fit in with his normal line of work. Whatever the origin, his approach was based upon a particular legal consideration, namely that in Australia at that time one was not permitted to be both a serving member of the armed forces *and* a member of parliament (or more particularly, in the case in hand, a person with an intent to become a member of parliament). So Tony would have to nominate to

stand for election to the federal parliament, a modest enough ambition for someone with no political associations or even interest, and one which would, much to his regret, lead to an enforced resignation from the RAAF, something about which his superiors might possibly harbour suspicions. But he did have one ace he could play – his home address. By chance, Tony lived in the electorate represented by a conservative politician (the Honourable Peter Howson) who was a minister in the federal government, and his ministerial responsibility included (and I am sure you are ahead of me at this point) the RAAF.

So some superficial rationale could be dreamed up for Tony, as a citizen who knew how the RAAF actually ran, to stand against Peter Howson. Tony did have to spend Real Money to do it – to lodge the nomination fee, for example – but he went further, and actually spent money having printed up a how-to-vote card for distribution on election day. As Tony told it at the time, this was where he learned about the real world of politics – he had his cards printed by a printer who actually was a supporter of a 'real' political party, and as a consequence Tony's cards, delivered late, didn't look exactly the way he had planned them.

On election day the mighty forces of the MSFC, or at least some of the rabble associated with the MSFC, rallied in support of their fellow member (who had no intention, of course, of becoming a Member). We handed out the how-to-vote cards to intending voters (to the best of our abilities) but alas the forces of reaction and habit proved to be too strong, and Tony was not elected. But he *was* out of the RAAF. (I collected sets of how-to-vote cards for all the candidates, and they formed part of a contemporary Spectator Amateur Press Society mailing.)

Afterwards, representatives of both the major political parties approached Tony to ask if he would like to be a candidate for them at a future election, given that he had done relatively well without party backing. But his major objective had been achieved, and he declined the offers.

The Driver

In a recent edition of his fanzine *The Rubbish Bin(n)s*, Mervyn Binns recalls some of the Melbourne fans who have 'been around' for a long time. I was pleased to see Roman Mazurak's name there.

Fans like Roman Mazurak rarely find their names

in fanzines, though I imagine that there are many 'Roman Mazurak's around in fandom because there were so many of them in Melbourne fandom from the 1960s onwards. Roman was at the 1999 Worldcon and we managed to have a couple of conversations which reminded me of what the old times were like.

Roman's contributions towards fandom in Melbourne have been of the necessary but usually invisible kind. Although the Melbourne Science Fiction Club in the 1960s was probably the most successful SF club Australia ever saw, it still needed the vital twin ingredients of money and volunteers, and Roman was one of the moderately large group of science fiction readers who contributed on both fronts. Every so often at the club Mervyn Binns would call for volunteers for a working bee, and Roman would usually be found amongst the volunteers. Later in the 1960s and into the 1970s, as sf conventions became more popular in Australia, Roman and other fans like him made life a little easier for struggling convention organisers by contributing money early – and of course effort at the conventions, but always behind the scenes.

In the real world Roman has been a train driver. Being a train driver does not bar one from becoming an active fan, as witness the sometimes-remembered-in-Melbourne James Styles – although I feel Roman was more serious about his work than James was, just as James was more serious about 'active fandom' than Roman was. As Roman pointed out to me at the Worldcon, an old train driver (though he isn't *that* old) still has to work his shifts, and for Roman that meant he could only attend parts of the Worldcon.

In the 1960s, as now, the active fans were far outnumbered by those whose interest in fandom seemed slight and even peripheral. Roman Mazurak is representative of all those quiet contributors who have stayed around for the long haul while so many of the active fans of his early days have vanished.

Sydney's Terrible Twins

Science fiction fandom in Sydney in the early 1960s was a thing more or less unknown to those of us in Melbourne. It wasn't until late in the 1960s that there were enough fans in Sydney who were willing to have anything to do with the infidel in Melbourne, and one of the first of the New Faces was that of Alf van der Poorten.

Alf van der Poorten! In the middle 1960s, one of the most aggressive student politicians at the

University of Sydney was a young mathematician named Alf van der Poorten. Even today the name strikes fear (or possibly terror) into the heart of Damian Warman, the laid-back Adelaide fan – a natural for organizing a relaxacon – who typesets for the Australian Mathematical Society. For a decade from the late 1960s, Alf was also actively involved in science fiction fandom in Sydney, and for that matter was a member of the 1999 Worldcon (I imagine that if he attended the business session he would have given Jack Herman hell, but I missed seeing him there at all, only discovering later that he sat at the *Locus* table in the Dealers Room).

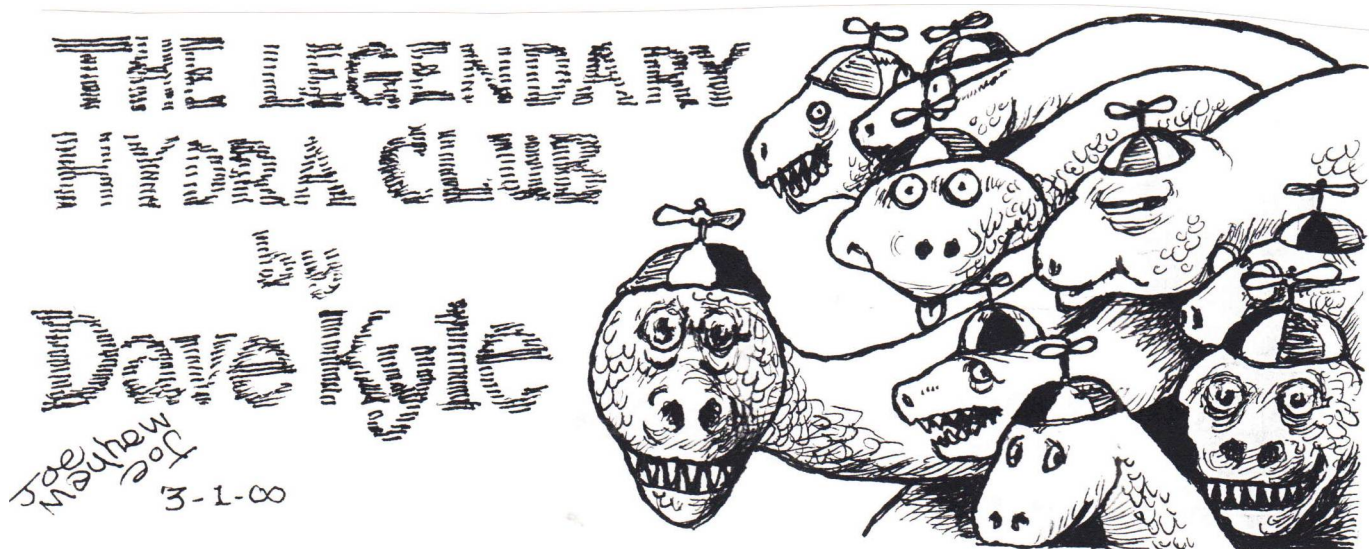
To those outside Sydney fandom it was only natural to see Alf as one of a pair of twins – the twin Doctors, as it were – with the role of Alf's partner in crime being played by Tom Newlyn. Alf's pure mathematical status was balanced by Tom's working life as a Shrink; but what they specialised in fandom was needling everyone else. Alf and Tom were twins in size and hair-colour, as well as age and attitude, being shortish and with reddish-hair.

When the Sydney Science Fiction Foundation was established in the late 1960s, Alf and Tom were relatively early joiners. I don't remember them being at the New Year's convention held in Sydney in a scout hall in January 1970, and the photos I have from that convention suggest that they both had better things to do at the time. But from that time on until after the first Aussiecon in 1975 they were steadfast attendees at conventions in Australia.

They added spice to the gatherings they attended – Alf by his pedantry, and Tom by his deliberate wickedness – but by the late 1970s they appear to have decided to skip science fiction fandom. One reason may have been the rise of the younger generation of fans in Sydney, largely through the university clubs of the time, whom Alf and Tom may have thought too juvenile. That part of Sydney fandom certainly changed the atmosphere, and Alf and Tom were no longer heard from – at least until the 1999 Worldcon.

I missed their influence then, and seeing Alf's name on the list of 1999 Worldcon members reminded me of part of what Sydney fandom has lost. Australian science fiction fandom – at least in the old-fashioned sense – passed through its peak (in terms of fan activity) in the days of fans like Alf and Tom (and the others whose names appear above). It may be that their departure from fandom was a symptom of that malaise which we call middle-age. ✧

☛ We mentioned in our Opening Comments that one of the fans we met at Aussiecon, Justine Larbalestier, was doing research for a new book on the New York Futurians fan group of the 1930s and '40s. New York City fandom has a very long and complex history, and the Futurians is one its most famous organizations. Many of its members went on, in later decades, to become famous as professional writers. This leads us more or less directly to the next article, another in Dave Kyle's series of autobiographical remembrances. The time of the late 1940s and early 1950s, when this article takes place, was when perhaps the most exclusive of all the dozens of New York fan clubs existed...



From time to time I've been asked to tell about my life around the famous Hydra Club of New York. But recalling events comprehensively from a half century ago requires much more than a good memory. There are two essential ingredients needed to accurately shape my recollections – written records and an old fellow participant from those days of yore to chat with, preferably one who is still of sound mind. As a former Chairman of the club, I do have quite a few records. Unfortunately, in my search for them, I find many (maybe most?) are buried in my boxes of papers, accumulated in my years as a human jackdaw. Someday I will sort them out, but not soon enough for this article. As for former Hydrites (not my term), there are so few of us left. Would that I could sit with one or more and feed on our awakened reminiscences. I hope to do so in this new millennium.

A brief backward glance before World War Two will be helpful to explain the genesis of the extraordinary science fiction social group which existed in Manhattan for almost a decade from the late 1940s. The Hydra Club had as a member virtually every luminary in the professional sf world within the greater metropolitan area of New York City. One must understand that the newly named 'science fiction' was, pre-war, just becoming popular – and fandom was even newer. I know, I was there. Scattered around America there grew science fiction clubs and

gatherings. Then, in 1939, two historic events occurred that had a major effect on fandom – the first World Science Fiction Convention and shortly thereafter, the beginning of the second World War. As war raged in Europe, worldcons moved through the American time zones, Eastern, Central, and Mountain. But in 1941, that progression was temporarily halted by Pearl Harbor. Sf and I lost each other for four long years.

My new era in fandom began in peaceful 1946, where chaotic 1941 left off – the fourth Worldcon was held on the U.S. west coast. I overlooked it and didn't go. War veterans were straggling back into active fandom. But it took me more than a year to pick up my sf strings. Just as Forry Ackerman was the one who in the 1930s introduced me to the mysterious inside of fandom, it was Fred Pohl who, while I happened to be in New York city in the summer of 1947, enticed me back into the stream of things.

"There's a science fiction convention in Philadelphia this weekend," he said. "Feel like going?" Great Ghu! I suddenly thought, that's right, it's time for a World Convention! My reply, of course, was an enthusiastic "Yes!" It was the first Philcon and it was a glorious reunion of 'old' friends and an awakening and reawakening also of so many others as lifelong friends, pros and fans alike.

At the Philcon I saw that cons had become an sf

nursery, recognizing the practitioners, encouraging talent, creating an honored elite. The remarkable fact was that all the pros in those days were truly active fans and most of the fans aspired to be pros. The honored elite were ripe for banding together.

It was that exciting Philcon weekend that led directly to the birth of The Hydra Club.

My train ride back to New York with Fred was the time in which we savored the weekend. As Fred wrote in his *The Way the Future Was*, the con “left a delicious aftertaste” and we resolved to continue our contacts. Some kind of club was called for, an idea with which our mutual friend Lester del Rey wholeheartedly agreed. Thus, a gathering soon took place at the Pohls’ apartment on Grove Street in Greenwich Village. Nine persons were present or accounted for. We had to begin with some kind of name. There were nine of us. Nine heads... Hydra... The Hydra Club! And so the club came formally into existence on October 25, 1947.

And who were the the original nine? The signatures on that initial constitution were Lester del Rey, David A. Kyle, Frederik Pohl, Judith Merril, and Martin Greenberg. Added later were Robert W. Lowndes, Philip Klass, Jack Gillespie, and David Reiner. Also at the beginning were L. Jerome Stanton, Fletcher Pratt, Willy Ley, George O. Smith, Basil Davenport, Sam Merwin and Harry Harrison. J. Harry Dockweiler (Dirk Wylie), part of the original group of friends, was fatally ill at this time.

Fred Pohl and Lester del Rey are the two people I consider the real founders and shapers. Fred, a teenage friend, was a most prominent fan in the 1930s and ‘40s during the days of ISA and Futurian fan clubs, and is now a world-renowned author. Lester del Rey was also the closest of friends. I found him a cheap flat in my building on West 67th Street, almost in the middle of the current Lincoln Center. It was there that I saw my first home television set; built by Lester, it had a three or five inch screen and displayed hazy, shadowy figures moving in a ghostly fashion across the glass. Lester became a successful entrepreneur and founder of Del Rey Books, but then he lived alone on the East Side near Grand Central Terminal. The last person with whom I traded remembrances about Hydra was Lester, still brilliant in mind in his final days, when we wallowed in reminiscences around those gold years.

Martin Greenberg was the original Gnome Press partner with me – not to be confused with the later, well-known Martin Harry Greenberg. Some people

said that with his mustache, if he put on heavy glasses he would look like Groucho Marx, always grinning and full of vim. Hydra brought us closer together to become book publishers. I put up the money (my Air Corps savings) and used my family’s printing shop while he supplied the contacts and the salesmanship. Hydra members gave us the necessary encouragement. We agreed that he should draw a very modest Gnome salary and that I should work for free because he had a family and I didn’t. Later Marty struggled alone for years with Gnome Press when I went north to build my radio station, and he eventually declared bankruptcy. Marty’s problems of non-payments with everyone, with the resulting bad feelings and lawsuits, caused him to drop out of fandom for four decades. We therefore lost touch, but I should locate him and get his Hydra perspective.

Robert W. Lowndes was another former Futurian, a close friend of us all from the 1930s, and like so many Futurians (that early sf intimate association of young men) became an sf professional. He was chief editor of many pulps for years at Columbia Publications. Everyone called him “Doc” – they said he once worked in a Connecticut Hospital and that was good enough reason. When he was editor of *Smashing Detective*, I regularly sold him stories. The day came at Hydra, an infamous merchandising place, when he asked for another and I told him I had none.

“Impossible!” he said. “Look in your files.”

“I did that the last time,” I said. “There are no more. I’ve sold you everything!”

“Look again,” he said. “I’m desperate for a story to close my current issue.”

“I only have one terrible one left,” I replied. “I should throw it away. It’s no good. Maybe someday I’ll re-write it. It’s entitled ‘Fourth Floor, Murder’.”

“Send it to me tomorrow,” he insisted. I did. And he published it unchanged.

Fletcher Pratt and Willy Ley are still familiar names today, as is George O. Smith. Fletcher was truly a literary figure of imposing standing. He genuinely loved science fiction and was a font of wisdom and advice. He once gave me a friendly lecture on why Tom Jones should be studied by me for an answer to a literary question I posed. Because his work appeared in the early Gernsback magazines, with a portrait sketch of him to introduce his story, I considered him an heroic sf legend which I was privileged to know. That was equally true for his collaborator, Laurence Manning.

Basil Davenport was an editor at Book-of-the-

Month Club. Sam Merwin, a popular editor for Leo Margulies' chain of pulps, later moved to Hollywood. Phil Klass was a short, black haired fellow with a huge sense of the ridiculous. One time he startled, even embarrassed, me with a tiny mechanical male doll which, when you pulled a string.... He used the nom-de-plume of William Tenn and became famous for his story, "Child's Play." Incidentally his younger brother, Mort, followed closely in Phil's artistic and animated wake.

Judy Merrill was one of the earliest of the woman sf authors. She was the premier female fan, talented and intellectual. No wonder that Fred Pohl made it a point to marry her. For years she was Chairman of Hydra's Permanent Membership Committee, which had the power of life and death over all members and wanna-bes. Judy had strong political feelings and eventually went to Toronto as a distinguished academician.

Charlie Dye, originally from California fandom, became very involved in the club and shared my West Side flat for some time. He replaced Doc Lowndes on the PMC in 1948. In 1955, when I was irregularly in New York City after I opened my radio station WPDM in Potsdam, New York, I had to resign as Chairman of Hydra. He took over the apartment as caretaker and Frank Belknap Long moved in. Charlie was the author of a futuristic novel, *Prisoner in the Skull*, which had a certain David Kyle as a Private Investigator, mustache and all, described as "distinguished, even dashing, in a washed-out sort of way." Ted Carnell, editor of the British *New Worlds*, published the novel convinced that I had written it, but I don't deserve much credit. Charlie was very gifted, although he was an alcoholic. He kept a jug of wine on the floor at the head of his couch bed there at West 67th Street. Tragically, he died later all alone, found slumped over his kitchen table, head in his hands, in his bachelor flat.

The Permanent Membership Committee had a strict set of written rules which guarded the group as if bestowing knighthood. All membership applications came up before it. Unanimous approval of the PMC was necessary, not only to be chosen but just to be considered. And under the no-nonsense provisions, just because you made it didn't mean you couldn't get booted out. One time Charlie Dye, love stricken, was accused of harassment. The PMC heard testimony and weighed the facts. It was a rough time for many members thinking this way and that, especially considering that Charlie was a valued officer.

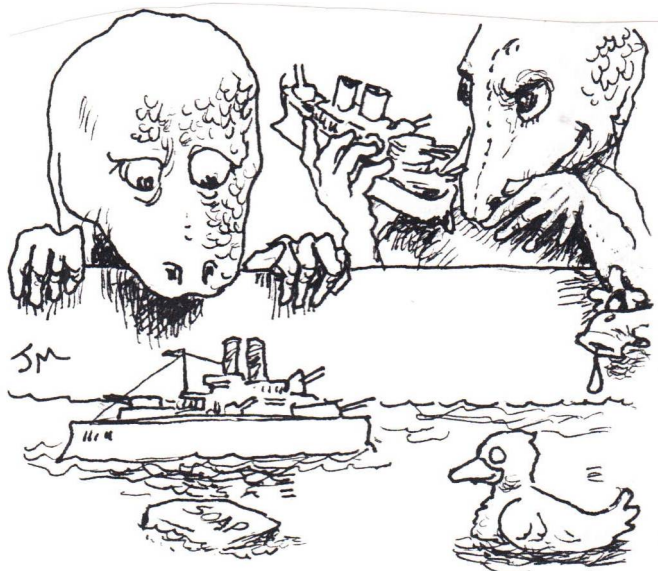
How it was resolved I don't know, but eventually things settled back down and Charlie stayed in. There was sometimes a strange behavioral inconsistency which understandably confused people. Yesterday's spouse was somebody else's tomorrow. Some critics considered Hydra a Matrimonial Bureau with the style of Musical Chairs. Who was married to whom shifted smoothly. And, as far as I could judge, everyone remained good friends.

Hydra was famous for its end of the year parties, where prominent guests and other non-members were specially invited. The first was a Christmas Party in 1948, then a Holiday Party just before the 1949-1950 New Year. Through the good graces of Fletcher Pratt, the December 1951 event was held in the Lotus Club on Park Avenue with Harry Harrison as chairman. Lester del Rey chaired the ones in 1953 and 1954. The Lotus Club, earlier in 1954, was used for a special meeting with a special invitation to the members of ESFA, the Eastern Science Fiction Association in Newark, New Jersey – Sam Moskowitz's fiefdom. SaM, not yet a recognized 'professional', was not a member of Hydra.

Fletcher Pratt was an extremely valuable member, not only for his importance, wit and intelligence, but for the marvelous apartment he and Inga Pratt made available to Hydra for meetings. It was just around the corner and down East 58th Street from the Plaza Hotel. (I investigated the Plaza as a site for the 14th Worldcon [NewYorkCon 1956], but decided it was a place far too posh, with its elaborate lobby/tea room and its glass elevators with gold-trimmed glass doors in an open shaft embraced by a winding, carpeted staircase.) The Pratt apartment was large, its main room extremely comfortable. Always on the coffee table were dishes of dried grasshoppers which guests were encouraged to eat as one would eat peanuts.



Fletcher had small cages of marmosets – tiny, cute, fluffy monkeys kept as pets. With his sharp, bespectacled eyes, slight body and wispy beard, he looked remarkably like them. Fletcher was more than just a sf/fantasy writer (*The Carnelian Cube* with de Camp, Gnome Press's first book in 1948) and translator, he was a famous Civil War historian and naval expert. L. Sprague de Camp, although actually Philadelphia-oriented, was a regular Hydra attendee and close friend and collaborator with Fletcher. Sprague was tall, immaculately dressed, aristocratically distinguished with his dark hair and spade beard. Together they were a formidable pair, dedicated to naval affairs. Fletcher kept glass cabinets full of miniature naval warships and he and Sprague played seriously at war games. Other out-of-townners were Cyril Kornbluth, Dick Wilson, H. Beam Piper, and Ozzie Train.



L. Jerome Stanton was sort of the Chief Operations Officer of Hydra. For years he kept things moving as club chairman. He was also Associate Editor for Street & Smith's *Astounding*. For all of our club's years of existence, I can recall John W. Campbell, Jr., attending only our special events. Jay Stanton was frequently sending out special communiques. An example:

"NOTICE NOTICE NOTICE The next meeting of the Hydra Club will take place in the Hayes Studio, at 40 East 9th Street, NYC, beginning at 8:00PM Saturday, February 25th. This is the second of two experimental meetings conducted to determine the desirability of meeting in such rooms as we engaged for the February 4th meeting, and the coming one. Members are urged to

attend the Saturday affair with open minds, and to bring such refreshments as they deem fit and desirable. Reinforcements to the stock of drinkables can doubtless be obtained in the neighborhood, but it will be well to arrive with at least a minimum stock of potables to start the evening. Just come in the hall, push the bell marked 'J. Hayes' with your elbow (your hands will be full, of course), and you will find yourself in the Hydran midst. – Undoubtedly, Jay Stanton, Chairman." (I seem to remember Jean Hayes a student at NYU and the 'studio' her apartment in the Village.)

Jay (along with Larry T. Shaw) was also co-editor of the *Hydra Club Bulletin*, which was projected to be published as a quarterly. Volume One, Number One, dated March 1950, was ten printed pages and gave information, news and Hydra gossip. I have that issue, and for all I can recall, it was the only one printed.

At first, meetings were held at the Pohls' Grove Street apartment, but the membership quickly became much too large for it. The Pratts became our salvation. Later meetings were held at Basil Davenport's place, which was even larger. The spectacular view of the Empire State Building, its tower brightly lit at night and easily glimpsed through one of his huge windows, always impressed me. Basil Davenport himself also always impressed me with his bear-like frame, round pink face and cheerful disposition. He completely fit the part of an editor of the Book-of-the-Month Club, erudite and with a booming voice when he spoke in his sort of English accent. We had great pride in him, as he himself also had, for his efforts to get science fiction into the Book Club – his first real triumph was getting an Arthur C. Clarke novel picked as an alternate selection.

Other meeting places, after the wonderful early evenings at the Pratts, depended on who was available with a large enough place. I came in one evening from upstate for a Hydra meeting at the apartment of Andy and Debi Crawford, also in the Village. Debi Crawford, then club secretary, was hostess, as she frequently was in the final years. Hans Stefan Santeson, magazine and book editor, was the self-appointed greeter and host for out-of-town visitors such as Arthur C. Clarke. I remember Olga and Willy Ley being there because I asked him if he would get to Potsdam, where Ruth and I came to live, for one of his lectures at State College. The day came that he did. The visit was extremely pleasant, for "Villy" was a

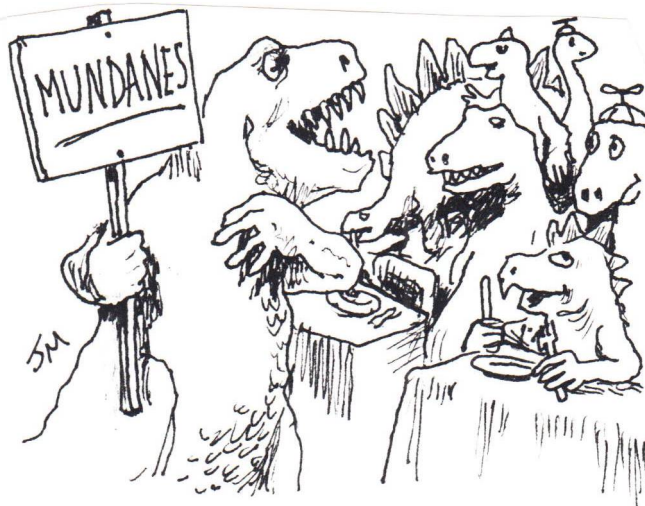
very pleasant, dynamic man – and not long afterwards we were shocked to learn of his death.

One Hydra evening that was especially dramatic was the night when Alfred Bester stalked out, greatly disturbed. The subject under discussion was the proposed Fantasy Writers Guild, which was to be formed by Hydra. Alfie was very supportive, because he envisioned the Guild as a union to fight for authors' rights. When he realized that was *not* the intent, and that it was meant to be a more instructional, educational, and technical co-operative organization, he emphatically objected to its undertaking for such simple, social goals. He was passionate about it: writers *needed* a union, he declared! So, if the FWG wouldn't be one, he was o-u-t, out. Goodbye, he said, and abruptly departed – he went to Europe and stayed there a long time. As for the FWG, it never solidified into anything. But perhaps it had, however, struck a spark. Much later, not part of Hydra, the Science Fiction Writers of America was formed. So, actually, Alfie did triumph in the end.

A Hydra Club meeting was always a party, but there were special ones, too, mostly around the Christmas Holiday Season. Harry Harrison or Lester del Rey were usually in charge of our year-end affairs. The biggest and best, I recall, was held (I believe) in 1949 in the ballroom of the Gramercy Park Hotel, an old line, sedate place. Jay Stanton was Commentator/Master of Ceremonies and the feature of the evening was a humorous one-act play written mostly by Judy Merrill. One detail sticks in my mind – big Sam Merwin acting as Hugo Gernsback. (I also remember E. E. "Doc" Smith as a picketer with a cardboard sign reading: UP URANUS, a whimsical grin on his face – but this memory could be from another time and another place.) There was plenty of theatrical talent in Hydra and that year; the performers included Ted Sturgeon and Jay on guitars, Mary Mair (Mrs. Ted) singing, Phil and Mort Klass, pianist Milton A. Rothman, and comments from Fletcher and Willy. I was in the play with many others but the parts have been forgotten by me. Well-known out-of-towners came, and fans from the Queens Science Fiction League chapter actually paid admission, so the club treasury might even have broken even.

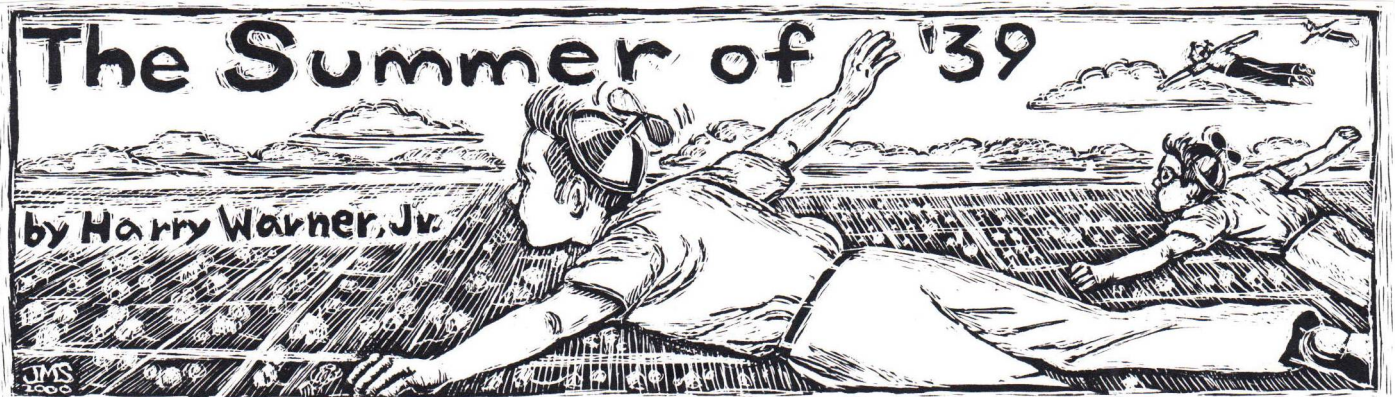
The most ambitious affair which the Hydra Club organized, later joined by members of ESFA, was the famous New York Science Fiction Conference of July 1-3, 1950, sometimes known as the 'Hydracon'. Hydra had thought of the idea, and in order not to offend, invited ESFA members to participate. As it was,

Hydra was criticized as attempting to undercut that year's Worldcon, which was being held during the Labor Day weekend on the west coast after a New York bid to host the 1950 Worldcon had failed. The purpose of the Hydracon was "to discuss the problems of literary and publishing aspects of science fiction." Its site was the Henry Hudson Hotel at Columbus Circle. Over "300 authors, publishers, scientists, and interested spectators" attended. Celebrities Willy, Fletcher, and L. Sprague de Camp were featured speakers and the Hayden Planetarium gave a special showing of *Trip to the Moon*. The program was loaded with Hydra members: Judy, Sam Merwin, Jerry Bixby, Isaac Asimov, Harrison Smith (Publisher of *The Saturday Review of Literature*), Bea Mahaffey, Walter Bradbury (Doubleday), Groff Conklin, Frederick Fell, Robert Arthur, Dr. Tom Gardner, Dr. David H. Keller, Will F. Jenkins (Murray Leinster), and Phil Klass. The final Monday afternoon was a discussion of the "Procedure for the First Annual Science Fiction Literary Awards." The most exciting moments were the disturbances made by William S. Sykora (early ISA fan and Futurian hater) who protested the event as some kind of betrayal of fannish traditions, charging despicable commercialism. *Life* magazine covered the event and the spectacular result for the glory of all of fandom was published in the magazine – a two-page spread of the panoramic picture of the assembled diners at the banquet.



I have that banquet picture somewhere. I also have that magazine in which it appeared. Now I must find them – I want to see those faces again. I want to remember all those fan/pro friends who are gone. I want to rejoice that some are still with us today – from the good old days of fifty years ago. ☆

More about some of the members of the New York Futurians appears in this next article. The writer of the following, who doesn't really need an introduction, has become known as perhaps the most famous stay-at-home fan of all time. If you're located in an area reasonably central to various fan communities, as Harry is, there's no real need to go anywhere to meet other fans – they will come to you!



In the late 1930s, Hagerstown had a remarkably stable population. Generation after generation of a family stayed in this city to such a great extent that the United States Public Health Service set up a local office to do research on how health problems in certain families persisted from one generation to another. So who were the young men, mostly thin and with a non-local appearance who showed up in this city from time to time? They weren't foreign agents or criminals on the lam. They were science fiction fans trying to find their way to my Bryan Place home.

I didn't realize it at the time, but many of my earliest visits from fans must have been partly impelled by uncertainty whether I actually existed. This was a time when you never could tell about fans. A famous fan in the early 1940s, Earl Singleton, lived for decades after his hoax 'suicide' had been publicized. 'Peggy Gillespie', an early FAPA member, turned out to be Jack Gillespie's cat. 'John B. Bristol' turned out to be an ingenious hoax created by Jack Speer. Neofans weren't absolutely sure that 'Hoy Ping Pong' was Bob Tucker's pen name because he might possibly be a Chinese fan using 'Bob Tucker' as a pseudonym. Forry Ackerman wrote under so many bylines like 'Weaver Wright', 'Fojak', and 'Dr. Acula' that any unfamiliar contributor to a fanzine might really be him. I had appeared in fanzine fandom rather abruptly; I had had several letters of no particular distinction in prozine readers' sections and had corresponded with various readers of science fiction who weren't otherwise active in fandom. When the first issue of *Spaceways* fluttered into fannish mailboxes in the fall of 1938, that was the first time some of its recipients had ever heard of me. So there was an excellent chance that I wasn't what I

seemed to be, a new fanzine publisher who had seen very few fanzine issues and had never contributed to one.

My first wave of visitors from fandom to Hagerstown came around the time of the first worldcon, in the summer of 1939. As far as I can remember, none of them had announced their imminent coming before they knocked at the door of the house where my parents and I lived. I'm pretty sure that the very first fans to see and talk with me were Fred Pohl and Jack Gillespie, just few days after the very first worldcon. They rode to Hagerstown on their thumbs and looked a bit bedraggled but otherwise chipper after a long day on the road. The thing I remember best about their visit was the moment when Jack dug into a pants pocket and pulled out a badly-rumpled little pamphlet. He presented it to me and thus I had my first knowledge of the celebrated Exclusion Act at the worldcon which resulted from the refusal of several New York Futurians to promise to behave themselves during the convention. This was the document that Dave Kyle had printed for the Futurians explaining their opinions of the way the worldcon had been organized. I imagine it's one of the rarest documents in the history of fannish publishing by now, and I should still have that copy somewhere in my attic. As you might expect, I also heard from Fred and Jack a detailed verbal account of their opinion of Sam Moskowitz, Jimmy Taurasi, and Will Sykora, the main adversaries of the Futurians.

Three days later, the fan visitor jackpot came up. No fewer than six individuals clambered out of an auto in front of 303 Bryan Place and introduced themselves. They were Dale Hart, Walter Sullivan, Julius Pohl, and three others whose names I seem never to

have chronicled. At that time, Dale was a good old country boy from the Southwest, although he became a very different sort of sophisticate a few years later in Los Angeles. Walter was a nice, quiet fan who was to die a few years later in the service of his nation. Julius never became a big name fan; I seem to remember he was a Texan and shared my interest in classical music.

These half dozen visitors were very tired after a long day of driving and threw me into complete consternation by asking if they could spend the night sleeping on my front porch. The Warners didn't have nearly enough square footage of bedding to offer them indoors overnight hospitality, but 303 Bryan Place was one side of a double house, in whose other side was the landlords, Mr. and Mrs. Fritz, resided. They were an ultra-conservative couple, extremely strict about proper decorum on their property; bedding down on a front porch just wasn't done in Hagerstown. My parents offered to attempt the impossible by requesting permission for such wild behavior on their property, and to our astonishment, Mrs. Fritz loved the idea and insisted that three of the visitors spend the night on her front porch, since all six on one porch would be quite crowded. The other thing I remember best about this visit was Dale improving his appearance the next morning by what he called a 'dry shave'. I had never heard of such a thing, but he got rid of most of his whiskers by using a safety razor without water or any other preliminaries.

Some time later that same summer, Jack Speer and Milt Rothman paid me a visit. They were the closest active fans because they lived at that time in Washington, D.C. They were more dignified in bearing and conversation than most of my fan visitors, but I had never heard anything like the way they challenged almost every opinion one or the other stated and indulged in non-emotional discussions of these matters.

I believe it was in the fall of that same year when Willis Conover stopped by on his way from his home on Maryland's Eastern Shore to begin work as a radio announcer in Cumberland, a city in far western Maryland. That was a memorable occasion because when I mentioned during our chatter that the local second-hand store had a large stock of back issues of *Argosy*, Willis insisted on going there immediately and buying them. Night was falling and huge stacks of *Argosy* were kept in an unelectrified shed behind the store. Willis and I sorted through them by the light of a kerosene lantern and would have burned to death

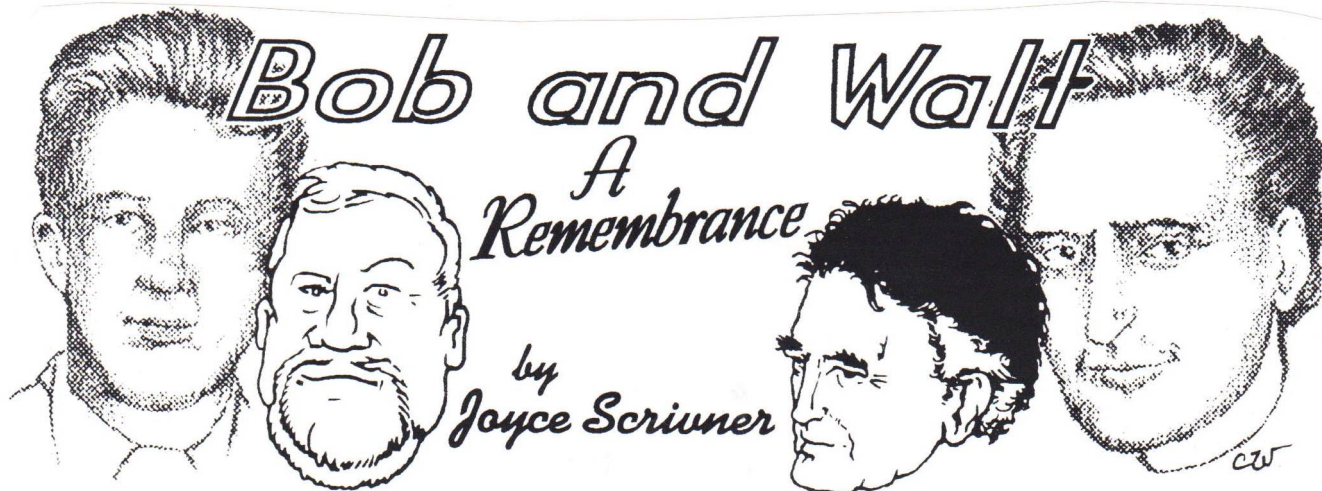
almost at once if it had toppled over amid the pulp magazines that consumed almost all the space in the wooden shed. He arranged to have hundreds of copies sent to his Cambridge, Maryland home and then left for Cumberland, the first step on what eventually became a career as a writer and broadcaster on jazz, eventually becoming internationally famous in this capacity.



I don't have the exact date when another impressive group of fans descended upon me, but it must have been in either late 1939 or 1940. On their way to Philadelphia came Bob Tucker (and his wife), Mark Reinsburg, Richard Meyer, and Walter E. Marconette. We did a lot of picture-taking and, for some reason, Bob insisted on keeping his own camera before one eye when anyone took a picture of him. Tucker, Reinsburg, and Meyer are all well remembered, but Walter Marconette is an unjustly-forgotten fan artist. He was one of the first in fandom to draw pictures that weren't imitations of prozine illustrations or comic strip panels. He did well-composed and uncluttered lovely pictures with hectograph inks and in pencil that have faded too badly to reveal their original splendor. Unlike almost all my early fannish visitors, Walter was not skinny. He wasn't fat, either, but he still looked strange compared to the emaciated appearance of the average fan. Not long after his visit, Walter grew interested in ancient armor and gave up fandom to collect it.

After that, I think fans in general were satisfied that I was what I had claimed to be – myself and not a conspirator in some sort of elaborate hoax. But lots of prominent fans continued to appear in Hagerstown during the next few years: Elmer Perdue, Art Widner, Bob Madle, Julius Unger, and Russell Chauvenet, to name a few. I also had a visit by a fan of whom I'd never heard – R.M. Brown, who surprised and gratified me by purchasing a substantial part of my stack of leftover back issues of *Spaceways*. It was only much later that I learned he was the hoax fan that I had once been thought to be. The real name of 'R.M. Brown' was Earl Singleton. ✧

The sorrow in fandom following the death of Walt Willis last October was somewhat muted, as he had been ill from the effects of a stroke for about a year with no real hope of recovery. With Walt's passing and the death of James White (also in 1999), the era of Irish Fandom is now over; all we have left are memories. There probably will be many fanzine articles written in the next year about various IF members, such as John Berry's remembrance of Walt that opened this issue. Here's another.



I had planned to attend Skycon – the British Eastercon – in 1978. During my attempt to buy a membership I developed a long running correspondence with Dave Langford, who was on Skycon's committee. I had no idea how to purchase an 'international money order' and neither did my post office, so I sent some money off to Washington, D.C., and in return I received an odd receipt with original saying how much money had been deposited. I sent the original to England and kept the receipt, but I don't think anyone at Skycon ever figured out how to turn it into cash, and I've long since lost the receipt. But the end result was a flurry of letters between Skycon and me – and my friendships with Dave Langford and Martin Hoare.

After managing not to go to Skycon, I was committed to the idea of attending Seacon, the 1979 Worldcon. And I was entranced by the idea of driving down to Brighton with Harry Bell (Seacon GoH and my host for the previous week) and then staying with Dave and Hazel Langford the week following the Worldcon. I enjoyed spending time with Harry in Newcastle, but I recall that I spent most of my time at pubs or in poorly lit apartments with loud music. I also found the drive down to Brighton as odd compared to driving around the U.S.; I still find the British roundabout (versus the traditional U.S. methods to limit access to freeways) strange and disconcerting. However, after we arrived at the convention, I seldom saw Harry – he was much too busy being honored – a

great deal of the honoring consisting of drinking with friends and going to parties. Dave Langford permitted me to follow him around, though. I met Hazel (his wife) early in the convention and then she disappeared into the film room with several balls of knitting wool and only briefly surfaced for meals and the Hugo Awards Ceremony. Dave, though, hauled me off to the fan room immediately. I was treated to beer and bitter and ale and introduced to Britfen like Joseph Nicholas, Greg Pickersgill and Leroy Kettle.

Dave and I didn't spend much time at programming. We briefly visited the opening ceremonies – until a small group of bagpipers started marching through the room and Dave jumped up cradling his head and dashed away. He whimpered to me in the fan room (where I managed to catch up with him) over a pint of bitter that bagpipers made his hearing aids squeal. I just shrugged and ordered another round.

I was part of another exodus later in the weekend, this one from the fan lounge. At the time, I wasn't sure what it was for, but if the people I was talking with were going somewhere I'd join them. We ended up in the main program hall, and it was fairly full – there were more people in it than for Opening Ceremonies, and most of the people appeared to be British fans. I certainly did not expect the program item to be a soft-spoken gentleman with an Irish lilt. It was Bob Shaw, and his "Serious Scientific Talk" merged science fiction and humor and fandom all in a delightful

way. Following his presentation, I was introduced to him in the fan room and he bought me a pint of bitter as well. After that I became a convert, joining the large enthusiastic group of people who would willingly leave the bar, anywhere and any time, to listen to him.

I didn't see any more of Bob – except at a distance – during the convention. When there weren't parties going on I was busy spending my time as part of the British/Australian cricket team – where I bowled badly at Kevin Smith. The next place I saw Bob Shaw was at Aussiecon Two in 1985, but we pretty much passed each other during the days and missed each other at night. I had stayed with Marc Ortlieb for a few days prior to the convention; Bob stayed with Marc the week following. The next year, Bob was Toastmaster at ConFederation in Atlanta, and it seemed to me an appropriate time to have him visit Minneapolis as well. I chaired the Fallcon (the local MinnStf relaxacon) that year, so I wrote Bob suggesting that he plan a side trip to Minneapolis following the Worldcon. He answered that he already had a side trip – to Birmingham, Alabama, for another small convention two weeks following ConFederation – but he'd be happy to come to Minneapolis between them.

I had bought my own condo a couple years earlier (it's still unfinished) and I had a lot of room, but only one double bed. So I gave Bob and his wife Sarah my bedroom and shifted enough clothes into the library to keep me well dressed, and I slept on the single bed there. Bob had caught a case of the 'convention crud' during ConFederation and he didn't really want to do much. So rather than take three days vacation from work I only took one. I showed Sarah the washing machine and explained the television to them, introduced them to the cats, and left them on their own. Bob asked about the handmade oatmeal soap – I buy in the local farmer's market – and wondered if he could get a recipe for it. On my one day of vacation, I loaded all our luggage into my car, and gave them a ten cent tour of the Twin Cites – we went around Lake Harriet and down Minnehaha Parkway to the falls and the Mississippi River. We crossed over to St. Paul and drove down the elegance of Summit Avenue to St. Paul Cathedral, and I barely avoided a blue car that aimed to bash Bob's door into his flesh. Eventually we arrived at the Sunwood Inn (a small hotel built into a historical train depot) just as one of my friends from work arrived with the beer kegs for the convention. The hotel wasn't filled with fans –

there were only a hundred or so at the convention – but the hot tub and jacuzzi area held that year's DUFF winners – Nick Stathopoulos, Marilyn Pride and Louis Morley – and the con suite had Nate Bucklin's filking.

Denny Lien had provided a wide selection of bottled beers for the next day, – Bob, Mark Digre, Erik Biever, and Denny conducted a 'tasting' to see if they could label them correctly. I've recently found the sheets they filled out and mostly they have short comments – very dark and heavy, too light and frothy.



Bob also did a short reprise of his latest Serious Scientific Talk for a small crowd of locals, but mostly we just sat around and talked. Before he left on Monday after the convention, back to Birmingham and then on to England and home, Bob presented me with a small stained glass panel called the Lonely Space-man. (He later sent a note asking if I'd found Sarah's hairdryer, which I eventually located under the bed.)

The next year, 1987, was Conspiracy, another British Worldcon in Brighton. Dave Langford was Special Fan Guest so I saw very little of him at the convention. I was busy part of the time, too – I co-hosted (with Joan Marie Verba) a Minneapolis in '73 party, where all the Brits came by until our beer had (rapidly) disappeared. Instead of attending the Hugo Awards Ceremony, which I'd decided would be too crowded, I walked into the Metropole Hotel thinking I'd look for people to talk with. I met an elderly gentleman in the lobby and we sat down to tea. It was Walt Willis. And I hadn't even realized he was attending the convention.

Walt had been spending much of his time at Conspiracy with old friends, people like Eric Bentcliffe and Ethel Lindsay who had been attending conventions since the 1950s. As I talked with him, I felt as if I'd entered a different British fan culture. Many of

the younger fans – D West for instance – apparently considered some of the older ‘Wheels of IF’ fanzines to be too placid for their taste. The younger fans’ writings were terse and sharp, and they wanted fanzines to be cohesive and literary. The jokes and general pleasant ambiance of the 1950s fandom was deemed too lightweight. However, I found myself enjoying the discussion of the St. Fantony celebration and other older British fan traditions with Walt over tea and crumpets. A couple hours later, we walked out to the cold pebble beach and saw the fireworks which had followed the Awards, but when we attempted to return to the hotel for the evening’s parties, the manager had decided the hotel was too full of people and was only letting hotel guests inside – and even then only as someone else left. The crowd was full of gossip – supposedly Iain Banks had climbed the balconies because he wanted to get to his party. There didn’t appear to be any point for Walt to stand around outside on a cold evening, so we said good-bye – Walt went off along the beach to the place he was staying and I waited until there was finally room to enter the hotel. As a postscript to the convention and our meeting, Walt sent me a copy of his newly published *Hyphen* 37 that autumn.



Fast forward to autumn 1995. Sarah Shaw had become ill and died a few years earlier, and Bob Shaw had become a much quieter, withdrawn person. But in 1995, Nancy Tucker, a long-time Detroit-area fan, had met Bob at that year’s Novacon and they’d fallen head over heels in love. From that point they were inseparable. Late in the autumn of 1995 I received a wedding invitation from them. I was unable to attend, so shortly after the wedding I sent them some hand made oatmeal soap and two sets of towels – one set had dinosaurs on them and the other was very ornate. I wondered if Nancy or Bob would claim to be a dino-

saur. I *did* hear a little about the wedding via the fannish grapevine, though. I heard how Mike Glicksohn had stood up as Bob’s best man. I heard how the hotel where the invited guests stayed had been a continuing party of conversation, and joy from the arrival of the first fans. I also heard how Bob had become more ill as the weekend continued.

A couple of weeks after the wedding, Nancy and Bob were planning to leave for England, but the day of their scheduled departure Bob’s heart briefly stopped and he was immediately hospitalized. There was some kind of problem with his liver, and the doctors wanted to keep Bob in the hospital. Bob refused. The stresses on Nancy caused her health to deteriorate as well, and she had problems walking due to back pain. A couple weeks after Bob left the hospital (in early 1996) they finally left Detroit for England. Both of them were in wheelchairs, with a mound of luggage. Misti Anslin, Nancy’s daughter-in-law, made the leave-taking sound much like a small exciting (though painful) parade. But a day later there was bad news – after landing in London, they had stopped to talk with one of Bob’s children, and then driven to stay with his son. Bob could not be awakened the next morning. He had died during the night.

When I think about Bob, I recall his soft-spoken kindness. He and Sarah had invited me to visit them in the South of England, but they apologized for it not being as scenic as their home in the Lake Country, saying I should have come to see them earlier and more often. Bob was a good writer; I enjoyed reading his short stories, but I had never considered that he might be an artist as well. His small stained glass panel hangs in my bedroom and greets the sun each morning. And when I think of Walt, I recall sitting with him laughing at silly stories – like we laughed about St. Fantony and the drafty robes they wore and the candlelight which made walking dangerous around the flame.

When I spent time in their company, their soft voices made a different style of fandom live. I was a visitor to a smaller group who didn’t rush frantically from computer to television. I belonged to a fandom which felt closer to each other. I miss their presence and the fanzines and writing. I loved resting in their company and listening to their soft voices and laughing thoughts. It was as if I was a welcome visitor to their lives and a slower paced country and fandom. I’ll miss them in my life and the words and fanzines they’ve left us – while still available – are not the essence. ✧

In *Mimosa* 22, we were privileged to publish Walt Willis' very last original fanzine article. With *Chicon* 2000 coming up later this year, it seems appropriate to close this issue with some classic Willis – a narrative from his visit to the 1952 *Chicon*, reprinted (slightly abridged) from *The Harp Stateside* and the 7th issue (Winter 1952-3) of *Slant*. We will very much miss him – he was a link to fandom's Golden Age; he was our friend.

The Harp at Chicon

by Walt Willis



As the night wore on, the party stayed very close to our ideal – not too many people and all of them conscious. The only noise seemed to come from the pros round the bar, where for a while I got caught up in a crowd which seemed to consist mainly of Mack Reynolds, though one caught glimpses of Tony Boucher, Poul Anderson, and Jerry Bixby roaming around his outskirts. I scored an almost fatal success with a couple of limericks they hadn't heard before. "This Willis is a *well*," announced Mack reverently. "A *well*, that's what he is!" It wasn't that I didn't enjoy the present company, but I wanted to get back to Max Keasler and Lee Hoffman; god knew when us three would ever meet again. But Mack would have none of it. "Willis is a *well*," he insisted to the crowd at the bar. "We can't let our *well* get away," he pleaded, pressing another drink on me to make sure I didn't run dry. Finally, I promised to mail him a complete list of all the limericks I knew and escaped, followed by resentful rumblings of "I tell you the man was a *well*! A positive *well*!"

I went back to the window ledge where I'd been sitting between Lee and Max. We spent the rest of the night there, holding court with various people who dropped by. Mack Reynolds made occasional sorties out of the bar to beg for more limericks. I would dredge the resources of my memory and he would retire again, shaking his head and muttering to no one in particular, "A *well*!" Poul Anderson came along wanting to be taught some Irish drinking songs. I sang him as much as I could remember of "The Cruis-keen Lawn" and promised to mail him the rest. Max was dispensing No-Doze tablets to everyone. He had been living on them himself for days and was beginning to feel very odd indeed.

Time went by and things got quieter and quieter until we seemed to be ones who were fully awake. As the dawn broke, the three of us were quietly very hap-

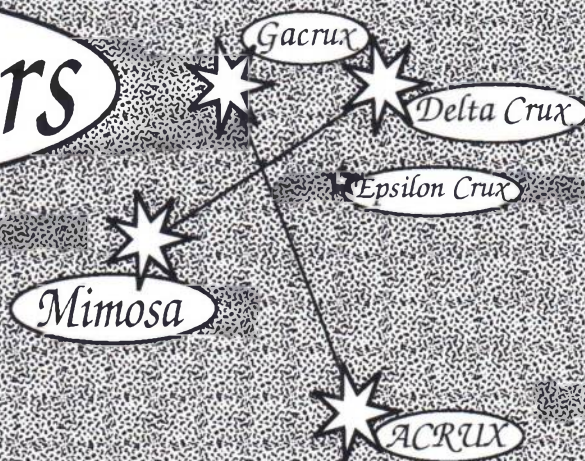
py and talked about how wonderful it had all been, and how much we were going to miss each other and how we must meet again some time. As for me, I was as happy as I'd ever been in my life. I had now been just seven days in America without even having had time to think about it, but now a feeling of utter exaltation swept over me to realize that here I was sitting between Lee Hoffman and Max Keasler at the top of a Chicago skyscraper, watching the sun rise over Lake Michigan. Life can be wonderful. It was one of those moments that has to be broken while it's still perfect, and when the sun was fully up we went down to have breakfast.

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I came home from my U.S. trip to find that half of you good people didn't know I'd been away, and the rest had written anyway. I'm sorry I haven't replied to your letter or appeared in answer to your writ, or whatever it was, but for the last six months I've either been getting ready to go over America, been over in America, or been getting over America. And believe me it's a hard place to get over. People keep asking me what I thought of it. Well, that's a good question: I wish someone would hurry up and tell me a good answer. There were some things I liked a lot. Malted milk, the Okefenokee Swamp, orange juice, the Gulf of Mexico, hamburgers, the Rocky Mountains, pas-trami, the Grand Canyon, fried chicken, the New York skyline – subtle nuances like that in the American scene which the less perceptive tourist might pass unnoticed. What really did impress me was the American small town, which seemed to me the nearest thing to the ideal place to live in that has appeared so far on this planet. Pleasant houses, tree-lined streets, young people in summer clothes, and warm evenings filled with the crepitation of crickets and of neon signs – symbolically indistinguishable in sound. ✧

Mimosa Letters

The postage
is going to be
how much????



{{ Perhaps not quite so many letters this time, but the ones we *did* receive had many good comments – our thanks to everybody who wrote! The two articles that received the most comments were the longest in the issue: the third installment of Mike Resnick's look back at the worldcons he's attended and Richard's closing comments remembrance of people and places. Here's a sampling of the M24's mail, starting with Nicki's Opening Comments about an evening we spent at a sporting event... }}

Milt Stevens, 6325 Keystone Street, Simi Valley, California 93063

Reading Nicki's "A Night at the Ball Park," made me realize I'd never thought much about the risks of attending a baseball game. Of course, I'd heard the hot dogs served at baseball games would be forbidden by the Geneva Convention if they were ever used in warfare. There are also those dark rumors about Dodger Dogs being made out of former Dodgers. However, I'd never envisioned medics with stretchers and red cross arm bands rushing into the stands to retrieve the bodies of wounded spectators. Maybe baseball fans should take up the practice of yelling some appropriate comment like "INCOMING!" Knowing the government's tendency to pass laws protecting everybody (and particularly insurance companies) from everything, it's a little surprising we haven't seen any baseball game helmet laws. Considering the amount of beer baseball fans are said to consume, maybe there should also be baseball game seatbelt laws to keep the fans from falling out of the stands altogether.

Mike Resnick's comments {{ in "Worldcon Memories (Part 3)" }} that each of the Nycons was a

bit of a disaster started me thinking. Fans would have had a hard time determining that the first Nycon, in 1939, was a disaster, since they had no other worldcons with which to compare it. Maybe suffering a lot was just part of the worldcon experience. From later conventions, we have learned that some convention attendees would even enjoy being beaten with whips. Since the first three worldcons had a constantly declining number of attendees, Nycon I may have been considered the pick of the litter. I've seen some comments in fanzines from after the third worldcon expressing grave doubts about the future of science fiction conventions. Without the development of commercial air travel, science fiction conventions would have at least remained very small and possibly ceased entirely.

Finally, reading accounts of using a hectograph such as Dave Kyle's {{ in "Phamous Phantasy Phan" }} are like reading an account of going over the top in World War One. I'm perfectly willing to read about either activity, but quite glad I never had to engage in them myself.

Roy Lavender, 2507 East 17th Street, Long Beach, California 90804-1508

Mike Resnick's article brought back memories of the 1977 Worldcon, at Miami Beach, though for me, the most vivid memory of all was of that convention's close. Picture, if you will, two huge marble lobbies at the Fontainebleu Hotel, filled with massive amounts of luggage that costume fans bring. The fans themselves, many still in remnants of costumes and looking very much like they attended most of the previous

night's parties. At the same time, members of the incoming convention began to arrive – Southern Black Baptists, each and every one dressed in their Sunday Go-to-Meeting best clothes. Talk about culture shock!

**Ted White, 1014 North Tuckahoe Street,
Falls Church, Virginia 22046**

I read through Mike Resnick's 'memory' of NyCon 3 (1967) with some interest, since I was co-chair of that con and I handled the programming. He says "the programming was overwhelmingly fannish. Very few panels with or about pros," but in simple fact, there was *less* fannish programming at NyCon 3 than at most previous worldcons, and all of it confined to the first day of the con. The remaining three days were nothing but pro programs. I gather Mike had no interest in the dialog between hot new writer Samuel Delaney and Roger Zelazny, for example, and that was only one of the half dozen Dialogues set up between two pro participants.

Also, no pro panel at NyCon 3 had "Should One Man Be Editing Three Proazines" as a topic, much less as its announced title. Mike wasn't selling SF to proazines in those days or he'd have appreciated more the fact that too few editors were running the remaining magazines. The fewer the editors, the narrower the chances for selling a story. (For what it's worth, Harry Harrison announced his new editorship of *Amazing* and *Fantastic* from the stage at NyCon 3.)

There's a strange arrogance behind Mike's memories, which perhaps would disturb me less if I weren't the unwitting object of his condescension and scorn. 1967 was a long time ago, and most of what he remembers is a meeting with an editor and spending too much money in a restaurant. But I will agree with him that the hotel situation in New York City was not – and still is not – on par with that of most other large American cities.



**Noreen Shaw, 5223 Corteen Place #7,
Valley Village, California 91607**

Mike Resnick's con-going memoir reminds me that, for some reason, there is long history of SF cons being thrown together with Scientology or the clergy. At Philly in 1953, for instance, there was a famous encounter in the elevator between Sprague de Camp and a Scientologist. The kid was gosh-wowling Hubbard to his friends and Sprague, tall, superbly dignified and self-possessed, was heard to say loudly, "I knew L. Ron Hubbard when he was just a *small* time crook."

Mike mentioned the long *Star Wars* movie line at LAcon II; it was supremely depressing to me, and I like *Star Wars*. I knew when I saw the contrast between the smaller Hugo Awards Ceremony audience and the film crowd that the game was over. Mike also mentioned the Autry museum in L.A. as a Good Thing. Let me also throw in the Miniature Museum and the Peterson Car Museum, both within walking distance from there. The Miniature museum is truly amazing – don't think doll houses; think instead of replicas of famous buildings and great houses. The Peterson is heaven for car buffs and also features a history of the auto. Which brings me to Curt Phillips and his day at NASCAR {{ "Nights of Thunder" }}. What a terrific article! Did you know that beneath this modest exterior beats the heart of a NASCAR junkie? I can't picture Curt not recognizing King Richard Petty at the track, but I forgive him because of the sheer enjoyment of reading the article.

Finally, in Dave Kyle's memoir he mentions Siegel and Schuster of *Superman* fame. Hidden in the back of my mind a memory leapt out. Sometime around 1940, one of the local (Cleveland) movie theaters had them in the lobby on a Saturday afternoon, drawing for the kids. They were both Cleveland guys and impossibly young at the time. Little did I know I was in the presence of greatness.

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

I enjoyed Ron Bennett's remembrance of Vincent Clarke {{ "Memories of Vinc" }} even though the memories were tinged with sadness. Alas, when I was a British fan in the 1970s, Vinc wasn't active so I didn't get to know him except as a fannish legend.

Mike Resnick's "Worldcon Memories" series continues to be enjoyable, and now I can comment by

telling a bit about the sole worldcon experience of my fannish life, viz., 1974's Discon II. My congoing experience had been at smaller British Eastercons and a few American regional conventions, and I found the sheer size of Discon (over 5,000 attendees) rather off-putting. I can attest to the maze of the Sheraton, but I heard no Martha Beck bongos, so my room must have been a ways away from Mike's. One of my favorite memories of that convention was sitting next to and chatting with Susan Wood at a room party, she in an electric blue dress and holding her Hugo, as happy as she could be. And I was happy for her. Ever since Discon I've limited my congoing to comparatively small local cons like Midwestcon and Chambanaccon, which have a few hundred attendees at most!

Finally, Curt Phillips' "Nights of Thunder" was easily the most unusual article in the issue, and a very well-written one, too. I found it fascinating, and I don't even care for car racing!

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

Vinç was one of those people I hoped to meet when I went to the Brighton Worldcon. I did converse with him at some length; of those of his generation of fans with whom I spent some time talking at that con, I spent more time talking to Walt Willis and ATom (who were staying at the same hotel where Robbie and I were domiciled). I seem to spend more time with 'younger' fans when I attend cons; so, at Brighton, I talked at greater length with many of the other contributors to and recipients of *Holier Than Thou* than I did with Vinç. My loss, indeed, as I never got back to England. He is a lost friend, as your lead-off to Ron Bennett's says. I thank you for printing this; even though I would have preferred Vinç being still alive (and out of hospital), writing his memoirs. This is the time-binding nature of our hobby – as long as we continue as some sort of extended family, our elders will still live in our memories and on paper when they pass to a different level of fanac. At least, I hope that they have still have access to computers/typers and drawing paper – otherwise, the place to which they have gone is no version of heaven in which I would like to abide.

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

I was impressed with Richard's closing comments {{☞ "Non-Stop Parking and Other Remembrances" }}

which combined his postcards from Eastern Europe with remembrances of those we have lost in recent times. It was an odd combination, but it worked.

The various other articles and essays were excellent. You guys have a talent for finding and encouraging writers who both inform and entertain, and the mix of humor and pathos is effective. Curt Phillips' "Nights of Thunder" was probably my favorite in this issue; I have never had any interest in auto racing, but I gained an insight from this piece. Not to mention the parts about EMT work. The story about the woman who had the heart attack was quite an object lesson in priorities!

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

I should express dismay over your semi-intention to fold *Mimosa* (as reported in Richard's closing comments). Couldn't you compromise with yourselves and reduce it to a more moderate size, perhaps 24 pages per issue? I prefer it the way it is, but half a loaf is better than none, as the cliché says, and this is probably the first time anyone has ever thought of a fanzine as a loaf. It is a particularly bad time for fandom to lose a large fanzine like *Mimosa* because we seem to be losing about half of the big general circulation fanzines. There will be no more *Lan's Lanterns*, *Mainstream* has apparently seen its final issue, and the length of time since the last *The Reluctant Famulus* is ominous. If Guy Lillian should get a Supreme Court appointment, what would be left other than *FOSFAX*?

{{☞ We were happy to find a new issue of *The Reluctant Famulus* in the mail recently, so we hope your fears of a drastic contraction in the number of general interest fanzines ultimately prove unfounded. As for us, we *will* be publishing a 26th issue but the statement we made last time is still in force: we do not plan on continuing publication past issue 30. We'd rather not decrease our page count as a compromise; a smaller page count reduces the amount of content, and we'd lose the mix of historical and contemporary articles that seems to work well for us. }}

As for the issue itself, again I found much pleasure in Mike Resnick's "Worldcon Memories" series. He does a bit too much name dropping toward the end of this installment, but that seems to be an occupational hazard of fans who have achieved big professional success. Terry Carr used to do the same thing in fanzine writing.

Eve Ackerman's article {{☞ "Reading for Fun and Non-Profits" }} left me wondering why this commendable project of reading via radio broadcasts for the blind should not be improved to permit the seeing to enjoy it, too. I'm sure there are lots of sighted people who would enjoy listening to something more than the rock and call-in shows that clutter up both the AM and FM dials today. Maybe there would be a fear of illegal taping and selling of these broadcasts, but I don't think the market for spoken word cassettes has inspired this sort of piracy so far.

{{☞ But there's more to radio than just that. National Public Radio, for instance, has two very good news and commentary shows: *Morning Edition*, during the morning commute, and *All Things Considered*, for the evening commute. At any rate, the big trend for people with long commutes is to listen to something very similar to the RRS broadcasts that Eve mentioned in her article: 'audio books', spoken-word editions of best-seller books often with Big Name Actors as the readers. We're surprised you haven't run across any of them; these have become a booming business. They cover a wide range of genres, including science fiction, and are sold in book stores (and are usually available from the public library). }}

Finally, I'm afraid I can't share Curt Phillips' involuntary fascination with auto racing. There is a dirt track six miles west of Hagerstown which I've never felt the least urge to visit. After all, Interstates 81 and 70 cross one another only three miles from my home and they offer all the speed, crashes, injuries, and noise that racing ovals imitate, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



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

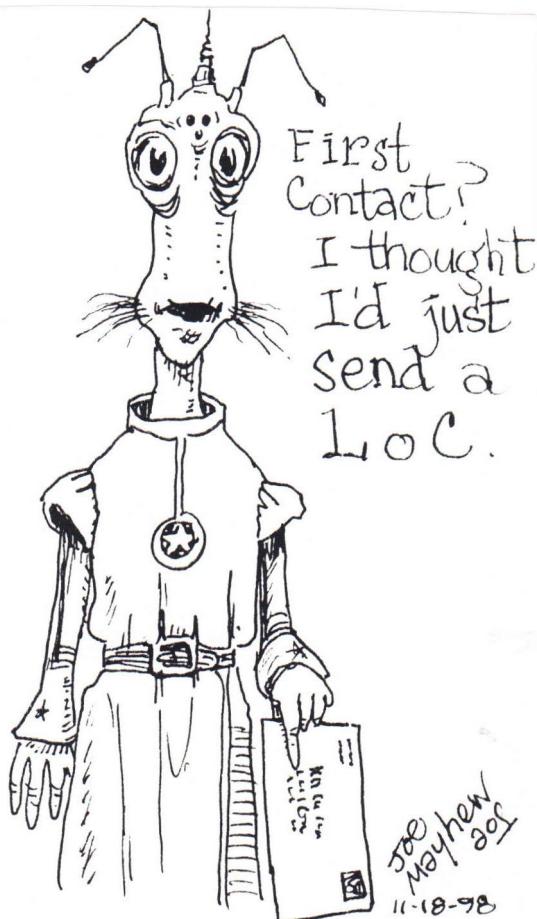
Like Richard (in his closing comments), I was sorry to learn that Lan Laskowski had died. It's true that his fanzine *Lan's Lantern* had its problems; it kept getting larger and larger, and Lan usually only had forty pages of good material in a 150-page zine. But there was always something worth reading in every issue. Lan was particularly good at getting travelogues from pros, such as Mike Resnick's many Africa stories. His special issues devoted to 50th anniversaries of pros' first appearance in print were a bit uneven (doing a special issue to William F. Temple was certainly quixotic) but usually had valuable reminiscences and criticism. Lan was a good editor, and *Lan's Lantern* deserved its Hugos.

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

An appallingly disappointing article on Russia and China by Forry Ackerman! {{☞ "Through Time and Space with Forry Ackerman (Part 9)" }} Disappointing of course because it was *far* too short. Just getting into his stride when...whoops, there it was... gone! Go over there and chain him to the *Mimosa* word processor!

Mike's Resnick's article was, as ever, most enjoyable. Lengthy, too. Heavens, a half-dozen articles in one! I do wish, though, he'd have been able to give some examples of the Ellison-Asimov slanderings contests or of the Bob Bloch witticisms when acting as convention toastmaster. And it was nice to see Mike mention James White so favourably. A lovely man, James, and his passing is a great loss. He was always a true *gentleman*, a *mensch*, so quietly spoken, with a great dry wit, fond of outrageous puns and with a marvelous sense of humour altogether. Last time we met was at the Blackpool convention about a half dozen years ago when we spent some little time at a party comparing our eyesight problems and, of all things, how they affected our driving!

Interesting piece on the Radio Reading Service by Eve Ackerman. Reminds me of my nastier side. When, some years ago, I was officially registered as partially sighted, a kind lady from the local Social Services came to visit. She brought me a white walking stick and a bulking looking tape recorder. "We have this Speaking Book Service," she told me. "We have some wonderful authors, like D*** F*****."



"Hell," I said, with some feeling, "I wouldn't read D*** F***** if I were paid!" She got up without a word, picked up the tape recorder and walked out. Never heard another word from Social Services after that. They must have thought me ungrateful and that I didn't appreciate what was, after all, a most kind offer. Far from it. I'd have loved to have the luxury of someone reading a worthwhile book to me. Still, it could have been worse. She might have said Jeffery Archer.

Anyway, it was interesting to see that a professional broadcaster found challenging the reading of a character's death and having to remember which voice to ascribe to which character – exactly the difficulties one encounters when reading a book to a class of children. That was a particular difficulty I kept encountering when taking over a class on a temporary basis and continuing the reading of a novel which had been begun by the regular teacher, and where certain characters cried out for an accent, like Jan in *The Silver Sword*.

Ah, Dave Kyle. One of my favorite writers and certainly my favorite 'reminiscent' writer. I've had several copies of that August 1928 *Amazing Stories*

pass through my hands during my years as a comics dealer and had of course known that Phil Nowlan didn't call his hero 'Buck', but the story about the cover illustration is new to me. And Alex Raymond – were I a comic collector myself, it would be the *Flash Gordon* pages which would head my list. (Hal Foster's beautifully arranged pages for *Prince Valiant* would come a close second.) Interesting to see that Dave still had some of those full pages of the *Gordon* strip. I sold the second page, on its own, for £50 about fifteen years ago. Sadly, interest in the Sunday supplements had declined remarkably over here in recent years, a sad reflection on the appreciative qualities of the modern comics fan who is more interested in the latest empty-headed glitz put out by the profits-oriented comics industry of today. Those old Sunday supplements had a wonderful dramatic sweep, completely different from the insipid offerings of today.

I see that you're toying with the notion of (seems a more relaxed way of saying that you're contemplating... sorry, contemplating) ceasing publication of *Mimosa*. Because of more of your time being involved with "International and cultural communities." Aw, come on now! Get things into perspective! Where are your priorities? Saving the world is all very well in its place, but to put it above fan publishing, I ask you? Rethink, rethink! Seriously, having been in a fairly similar position, I can understand the conflict between different interests and the demands each place upon available time. The answer, of course, is to give up sleep!

**Todd Mason, 2801 Henry Avenue #L-12,
 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19128**

The thing about being a 'serious' or perhaps serious young reader of horror, mythology and folklore, and sf (other fantasy came later) is how many interesting alleys they'll lead you down; the similar thing about reading *Mimosa* is how often one can find oneself reintroduced to aspects of life that are dormant – Eve Ackerman's piece on working with the reading service for the visually-impaired reminded me of my own year or so recording with Washington Ear, the local radio/phone-in service in your (and my former) parts. I learned of it one day by tuning into Channel 32, the junior DC PBS station associated with Howard University, on Arlington Cable, only to find that the clever folks at AC had replaced the WHHM (now WHUT) soundtrack with the Ear's radio feed. While this mistake was rather blatant, they kept it that way

for the better part of a month. With evidence of the local agency's existence, I went down and volunteered, and was immediately asked if I would do the phone-in reading of the *Washington Post* (only the veterans did the radio magazine and book reading during the weekdays, and the range was rather restricted – *Time*, *Newsweek*, *New Yorker* if I recall, and a few other very non-obscure magazines predominated). On the Saturday shifts I could make, usually as the last volunteer in (I'm not a morning person), I was often the voice of Dave Barry and of other articles in the *Washington Post Magazine* and *Parade* from the early-delivery section of the Sunday paper, and would be the only one willing to tackle the Saturday Chess column most weeks (the first readings were utter disasters, because although I can play poorly, I didn't know the notations used to describe the games, and so dutifully and meaninglessly named every symbol used until I could find out what they meant). Reading *Doonesbury* was pretty easy, as it's so text-heavy ("the waffle which represents President Clinton levitates behind the podium, as he continues with his speech..."), and reading the more inane strips, with necessarily arch-sounding descriptions of the images, probably left those comics more amusing as read, but the better visually-oriented strips certainly suffered (I usually felt bad about a good *Tank McNamara*, for example). Reading scattered selections from the Sunday ad circulars was probably the worst of the duties.

As a dedicated Robert Bloch fan, the bit of Mike Resnick's reminisces that struck the loudest chord was his suggestion that Bloch was the best of toastmasters/MCs in SF. I wonder if anyone has any kind of concordance of available recordings, audio, video, or transcript, of such events? Have such items been collected with his papers in Colorado? The one time I spoke with Harlan Ellison, he knew of no one with plans to reissue Bloch's recordings on the Alternate Worlds label (which had some other interesting masters, with only Ellison's rerecordings of the stories available from AW now in press, as far as I know) – does anyone keep fannish multimedia items available?

Concerning the on-going discussion in the letters column about good and bad science fiction on television, I, too, have seen most if not all the episodes of the underachieving (in all senses) *Mercy Point*, and we who have confessed to doing so in *Mimosa* may have been the total audience for the show (ask your nearest moaning UPN executive). I hope James White's *Sector General* stories didn't involve doctors

who were so intimately familiar with a wide range of alien species' physiology, a feat that puts the most diverse veterinarian or even the most ridiculously knowledgeable *Star Trek* doctor to shame. Perhaps time has softened the pain for Martin Morse Wooster, who forgives if not forgets such ornaments as *Space: 1999* and *Land of the Giants* (to say nothing of the mercifully short-lived *E.A.R.T.H. Force* and the *Bionic People* shows) in his haste to nominate *The Burning Zone* as the worst skiffy tube we've endured – it's a strong candidate, but perhaps disqualifies itself with one rather good, almost null-sf episode involving an infectious disease breaking out on a jetliner which is, as a result, not allowed to land anywhere. Much more hyped, and much worse, similar made-for-tv movies followed on larger networks. Even a Tamlyn Tomita fan has little else good to say about this misbegotten series, which wasted its potential with a *Fantasy Island* level of abandon. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *The X-files* do an often excellent job of rummaging around among horror and sf tropes, usually carrying them a bit farther along than Rod Serling often chose to; some of the other speculative fiction shows have at least something to recommend them, even if originality is sparse.

Alan Sullivan, 30 Ash Road, Stratford, London E15 1HL, United Kingdom

Ma gorzata Wilk's article {{ "Science Fiction Under Martial Law" }} was a fascinating picture of fan life in Poland before the fall of communism. To me, the life sounds pretty grim, but with moments that brighten the whole thing up. Times have changed indeed. Going by her final paragraphs, Poland is starting to sound as if it has inherited several of the ills of Western Society (rat-race working conditions, multiplex cinemas, etc., etc.) Still, I suppose that is the price of progress (I'm not going to speculate on whether or not this is good progress, or bad). It does seem a shame to gain freedoms, whilst losing the time and peace to enjoy them.

As for Forry Ackerman's article, he does get around and about, doesn't he? It's just a shame that he doesn't always get a friendly reception. (That customs inspector might have been following the rules, but then again, he could have done what he did for personal gain. Corrupt officials are everywhere, especially in any country with a thriving black market.) It's also interesting to hear that the Chinese may be using science fiction to interest children in Real

Science. I hope it works out for them; after all, a fair few western-world scientists claim that SF influenced their choice of career. At least the Chinese seem to have gotten enthusiasm stirred up in the younger generation, which can't be all bad.

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

I have often thought, and mentioned to one or two people, that it is too bad David Thayer doesn't do more writing since he is very good at it. His article {{☞ "A Cartoonist Remembers Ian Gunn" }} epitomized this. This reader, at least, was totally captivated by the sheer joy that Teddy had in meeting Ian and their marvelous friendship. The fun they had at the first meeting and thereafter was evident; the humor was dominant throughout. Yet, there was an undercurrent of extreme sadness. I was laughing throughout while almost crying reading most of the article. Teddy expressed the joy of knowing Ian exceptionally well while also sublimely expressing his great sorrow at the loss of his friend.

**Henry Welch, 1525 16th Avenue, Grafton,
Wisconsin 53024-2017**

I fondly remember the last evening at Intersection with Teddy, Ian, and Benoit and our families. I let my children sleep on the floor right there in the hall and I firmly believe that if there were more than 24 hours on a day that the conversation may have gone on for much longer than it did. As it was, we managed a few hours of sleep before we had to check out of our hotel and then head south to catch a flight in London two days later. It's days like this that make fandom worth all the time, expense, and effort.

IS THAT THE SOUND
OF LOCS NOT



**Lloyd Penney, 1706-24 Eva Road,
Etobicoke, Ontario M9C 2B2, Canada**

Wonderful article by Ron Bennett on Vinç Clarke. Like BoSh, I never met him or even corresponded with him, and this usually brings back feelings of still being an outsider, looking in through the window at the fun happenings going on inside. Still, at least, I can take benefit from Vinç's later kind attitude towards fandom, even if he had gaffiated once, and I can learn more about what made him return to fandom after some harsh experiences. Our own experiences in fandom are often mixed, but even if experiences are bad, the people in fandom are for the most part good, and it's the people who are keeping me in fandom, I hope for a good long time.

As with Vinç, I never met Ian Gunn, but at least I was able to correspond with him through the pages of *Ethel the Aardvark*, the clubzine of the Melbourne SF Club, and through the pages of his own publications, including his perzine *Mind Wallaby*. Ian was that magical combination of silly and creative, a rare combination that is gone all too quickly. Ian's work was seen by many fans in the Toronto area, not only in fanzines but also on name badges for local conventions. If only fandom didn't suffer from a surfeit of geography, we'd all know one another, and there'd be no strangers.

**Irwin Hirsh, 26 Jessamine Avenue, East
Prahran, Victoria 3181, Australia**

The letter from Mike Resnick had me pulling out the previous two issues, to check both his original remarks about ConFrancisco and the response it generated from Kevin Standlee and Tom Becker. This led to me reviewing all three installments of Resnick's *Memories*. A few recurring themes stand out, the main one being that the most enjoyable Worldcon time Mike has is when he is a fan at the Worldcon and not a pro. Also, I couldn't find any mention of fan fund delegates; of the seven worldcons mentioned in this issue, five had DUFF and TAFF delegates in attendance, but none rate a Resnick mention. I know that the fan funds are an important part of my fannish experiences, and I'm wondering if this suggests that, were we to attend the same conventions, Mike and I would hardly ever interact?

{{☞ Our guess is that you probably would; Mike is by no means stand-offish, and has often mentioned that the purely professional aspects of

worldcons aren't nearly as fun as the other parts. At any rate, we expect that Mike probably *has* shared many conversations with fan fund delegates. That these didn't make it into his "Worldcon Memories" might be more of a factor of the oversimplification that usually occurs when condensing a five-day convention into three or four paragraphs. We are guilty of the same thing in some of our worldcon reports (such as the one in this issue, which makes scant mention of DUFF delegate, Janice Gelb, even though she was a very visible presence at Aussiecon Three). }}

In regard to Eve Ackerman's article: I assume that there are a lot of radio stations across the broadcast range, and to allow each to have open broadcast would diminish the transmission of each. Subsequently services like the RRS network are required to be heard via a special receiver. Down here in Melbourne we don't have such problems, so that every radio can pick up 3RPH 'Radio for the Print Handicapped'. This is good for me as I'm not part of 3RPH's primary target audience but I don't have to make any special effort to listen in. I have my car radio channels preset to 3RPH, as it is a favoured station. On the longer car trips or when stuck in slow-moving traffic it is nice to have the contents of a newspaper or magazine read to me.

Of the other articles, I appreciated Ron Bennett's and Teddy Harvia's memories of departed fans, particularly for their own specific, personal interactions with the friends described. And I liked Curt Phillips' article for its terrific word picture it gave of an event I'm otherwise not interested in. I know it is cruel to say this, but if ever I was forced to attend a motor race I'd be likely to fake a heart attack in order to get the hell outta there!



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

My favorite parts of this issue are Ron Bennett's memories of Vince Clarke, Teddy Harvia's recollections of Ian Gunn, and Richard's marathon closing editorial touching on everyone who's passed away recently. The intermixing of your postcards from Eastern Europe in the latter was an interesting touch; it would've seemed out of place except for the bridge you provided between the mangled use of English in parts of Europe and the 'language' of fandom, fan-zines.

Curt Phillips' article on his adventures at the Bristol Motor Speedway provided another side to the auto racetrack phenomenon that I wasn't aware of: his experiences as a paramedic in an activity where death or extreme injury lurks around every turn. I live near the Sears Point Raceway, which also hosts NASCAR events, and I have another perspective. The track is situated at the junction of two state highways wholly inadequate to handle the increased traffic the larger events generate. The noise from the track causes sound pollution that under some weather and wind conditions affects the city of Sonoma, ten miles away. And to me, in the context of having lived through the energy crisis of the 1970s, there's something unseemly about an activity that involves the heedless consumption of non-renewable fossil fuels.

Malgorzata Wilk's article is certainly a mixed bag. While it was interesting to read her recollections of childhood in Poland when it was still under Communist rule and one can sympathize with her personal sense of loss of those allegedly "good old days," her closing paean to "those communist days, when life was easy," is pretty weird. How can she be sentimental, I wonder, for the days of food shortages and rationing she describes elsewhere in her article?

{{☹ Probably in the same way people can fondly remember the Depression when they were growing up or why *Angela's Ashes* was a best seller. Growing up in 'the West', we were told how we had the best of everything and behind the Iron Curtain life was horrible beyond belief. Now, years later, we can't understand how anyone could be anything but terribly scared from living under the Soviet rule. The reality is that people live through hard times as children and look back at them fondly as they grow to adulthood and life changes. }}

You say at the end of your editorial that the next issue of *Mimosa* might be the last, or surely the 30th

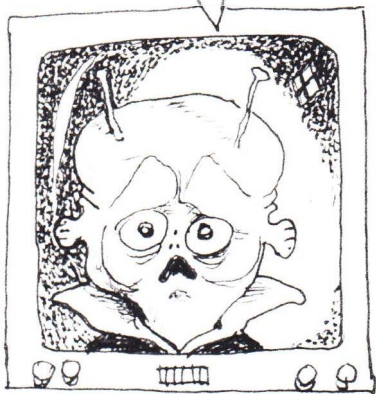
will be. Let me observe that thirty issues is something of a 'standard' for fanzines: that's how many issues *Quandry* and *Oopsla!* managed, to name two prominent examples. But I can understand your desire to Do Other Things, and wish you well whatever your decision.

Steve Sneyd, 4 Nowell Place, Almondbury, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire HD5 8BP, United Kingdom

The piece about Poland was particularly interesting, as I used to get sent the Gdańsk SF Society's publication *Red Dwarf*, an amazingly posh publication with beautiful illos – though I can't read Polish and only had a vague idea of its contents!

Also, the remembrance of Ian Gunn was well-written, but there is one small factual error. Glasgow doesn't have the last working Tardis-style police box in the U.K. – local patriotism forces me to point out that there's one here in Almondbury, and it's still in use! It's a 'listed building' (a small one) that can't be demolished, though a bit in need of repainting at the moment. Surprisingly, it doesn't seem to get Whovian pilgrims.

Er... Hello, People of Earth.
The comet deflected
from our planet was
inadvertently sent
hurtling toward yours.
If it hits Earth, it will
be destroyed; if it misses,
it will carom around and
destroy the universe...so,
have a nice day...a few nice...



Joe
Mawhew
2001

3-8-99

Ken Lake, 36 Barrington Road, Loughton, Essex IG10 2AY, United Kingdom

The BIG problem with people dying is that they don't give advance warning: you're always left feeling "If only I'd..." Here at least you give us fair warning of the imminent potential demise of *Mimosa*, so we can mourn and commiserate while it's still around. Frankly I've often felt out of my depth as a *Mimosa*-reader, and this was frequently exacerbated as my LoCs were always wahfed; I was going to write this time and say, "OK, cut me off your mailing-list, I'm not worth the cost," but I guess I'd like to be around for the Heat-Death of *Mimosa*.

{{ This seems a good place to mention that all comments on specific articles in the letters or emails we receive (even including the 'We Also Heard Froms') are copied and sent to the respective writers of those articles. So any comment on an article that you make, whether or not it sees print in our letters column, does make it back to the writer. In other words, we want to encourage you to keep writing us: your words are not wasted! }}

Roger Waddington, 4 Commercial Street, Norton, Malton North Yorkshire YO17 9ES, United Kingdom

Every picture tells a story? I think that's enough for a novel on your wraparound cover, maybe even a series of sequels as well, and I for one would cheerfully buy it. My congratulations to Charlie Williams.

Harking back to Marty Cantor's comments in the letters column, I too would like to see the James White's *Sector General* stories as a television series. There's one small snag; that most probably you, me, and Marty will all have a different idea on how the characters look in our mind's eye, and the director's eye will be just as different again. In fact, I might stick my neck out and suggest that there's no film or television series based on an sf novel, or series of novels, that's been entirely satisfactory to everybody. It must be far better to start from something original, such as *Star Trek* or *Dr. Who*, without any preconceived notions about the characters, and then see them grow.

On being transported to other times and places, my 'sensawunda' hasn't always been in the future, archaeology was a childhood passion, well before science fiction. Even now, half of my spare time is given over to local history, to exploring the lives and

the centuries of the country village where I was born and brought up. My interest isn't so much satisfied by history books, but by the contemporary accounts of the people and the events in letters and diaries. Of course, it mostly happens that those are written by the rich and famous – the only ones with enough time and with the interest of bequeathing their version to posterity. But just occasionally, I can come across one ordinary person, moved enough to leave an account of his life and surroundings which has survived the centuries. That, to me, brings the past more to life.

And exploring my own personal past as well, I can point to *Journey Into Space* as one of my introductions to sf; there was also that best-selling author of the Fifties, John Wyndham. I know he served his apprenticeship even earlier, but with *The Day of the Triffids* and *The Kraken Wakes* he was able to reach an audience that wouldn't even consider reading science fiction. My family included; along with the output of Nevil Shute (of *On The Beach* fame), we snapped up each new John Wyndham title as it was published.

However, the real start of my obsession with sf must have been the discovery that there were whole magazines devoted to science fiction, which printed nothing else and which came out every month. That came relatively late, round about 1964; it was sparked by a pile of *Worlds of If* in a secondhand bookshop in York, followed by finding the latest issues of *F&SF* and *Analog* on the railway station bookstall. And then it really took off the next year, when I went down to London to work and found all the magazines, American and British, in profusion. (Which is another story.) It's a time that I've been vainly trying to relive; I suppose, like my youth, it's gone for ever, but I still have some of those original magazines and taking them out, browsing through them, there's still a whisper, a very faint hint.

Although I can claim to have served my apprenticeship in science fiction, I've never been so certain about fandom; it's why I often feel I'm receiving *Mimosa* under false pretenses. There's all these people I've yet to meet outside the pages of fanzines, slices of life I've yet to experience and accounts of unattended conventions; but then, isn't that the primary purpose of fandom, to share all these experiences? Still, I can add my voice here to mourn the passing of Buck Coulson, someone else I never met but could still love dearly. He was there back in the mid-sixties, in one of Lin Carter's articles about fandom in *If*, where *Yandro* was one of the fanzines

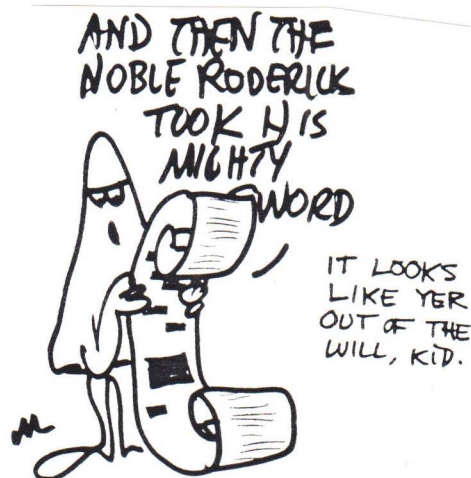
mentioned, and I decided to test the water. He encouraged me by printing my LoCs, which must have been pretty halting at the time; but then, even after *Yandro* was laid aside, we still carried on corresponding. He may have tried to give the impression of not suffering fools gladly, but I never came across that side. I suppose sharing some of the same interests helped; but even so, he was never anything less than kind.

{{ Maybe Buck was just good at judging who was a fool and who was a trufan who needed a little encouragement. }}

Have to say, there's going to be another gap in my life when *Mimosa* folds its tents and quietly steals away. False pretenses or no, it's a fanzine I've always enjoyed, not least for those glimpses into other times and places. Although I suppose like the rest of us, fanzines must have a natural lifespan; some are destined to die young, others (like *Yandro*) become old and respected, but there eventually comes an end to them all. Although two decades is a record to be proud of, isn't it? I might say, *a la* Bob Hope, "Thanks for the memories." But not yet – not till that ultimate issue!

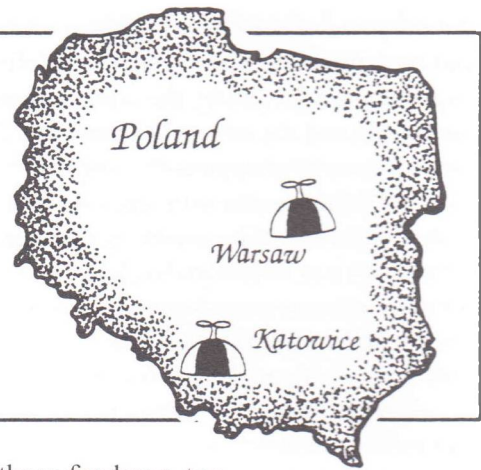
We Also Heard From:

William Breiding, Michael A. Burstein, Ray Capella, Chester Cuthbert, Gary Deindorfer, Rich Dengrove, Carolyn Doyle, Brad Foster, Nick Grassel, Jim Goldfrank, Simon Green, Ben Indick, Terry Jeeves, Bob Kennedy, Leigh Kimmel, Irv Koch, Hope Leibowitz, Joseph Major, Miguel Martínez, Mark Olson, Elizabeth Osborne, Spike Parsons, Scott Patri, Robert Peterson, Dave Rowe, Marc Schirmeister, David Shallcross, Steve Sneyd, Gene Stewart, Art Widner, Charlie Williams, and Małgorzata Wilk.



Other Places, Other Fandoms

Closing Comments by Richard Lynch



Friday, December 10, 1999 (Bratislava, Slovakia)

At last, an easy day in this trip. The one wrap-up meeting was scheduled late enough in the day that there was time for a drive out to the city of Piešťany and back. The main attractions of Piešťany are its spa and thermal springs, and much of the economy there seems to depend on them. I tried some of the supposedly curative mineral water, but it was so sulfurous that it tasted like eggs had been boiled in it. I guess I'm thankful there wasn't enough time to indulge in the supposedly equally curative mud baths – the stuff is mildly radioactive and I'm not ready to spend the rest of my life acting as my own night light!

* * *

Those of you who read my closing comments with its travel diary excerpts (like the one above) in *Mimosa* 24 know that my real-world job, as an international trade promotion specialist, usually takes me to Eastern Europe once or twice each year. Even though my hosts over there do take every opportunity to allow me to experience their countries, these trips are intense – there's often not time to do much after a long day of business meetings except write a few postcards to friends and collapse into bed.

It eventually dawned on me, with some insistent nudging from my friend Guy Lillian, that I was really missing out on something by not trying harder to find and meet some of the science fiction fans who live in the places that I visit. Even though I do know some fans in parts of Poland, Guy was mostly right; in all my many trips to Bratislava, for instance, I'd done nothing whatsoever to try to locate the local fan club there, much less try to attend one of their meetings.

So when the time came to prepare for my trip to Slovakia and Poland this past December, I decided that this time it would be different. I'd met and enjoyed the company of fans from Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, and Japan during Aussiecon; this trip to Eastern Europe would finally be the time I'd get to

meet some of those fandoms, too.

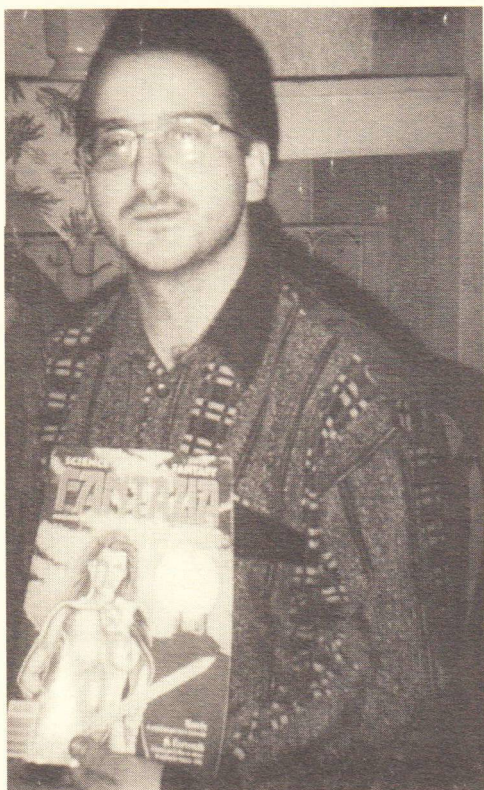
To my surprise, it turned out easier to do than I thought it would. The day before I left home, I was able to get the email address of Martina Pilcerová, a member of the Bratislava fan club. I didn't receive a response from my query to her about meeting dates and places before I arrived in Bratislava, but luckily there was an Internet café not far from where I was staying, and by the time I was able to access my email one evening, the response was there waiting – it turned out the meeting was going on that same evening in a bar/restaurant just a five minute walk!

It was a very pleasant meeting. I'd only intended to stay about a half-hour, but the conversation was excellent (as were several large glasses of Slovak beer) and we ended up closing the place around midnight. I was surprised that many of them had fairly specific knowledge of North American fandom, though not of many individual fans themselves. And I was even more surprised to find out that in spite of the disadvantageous exchange rate between the Slovak koruna and the U.S. dollar, some of them had previously been to the United States. Martina had even attended two previous North American worldcons, and was planning ahead for Chicago! By the time the evening had expired, so had most of my preconceptions.



Some members of Bratislava fandom

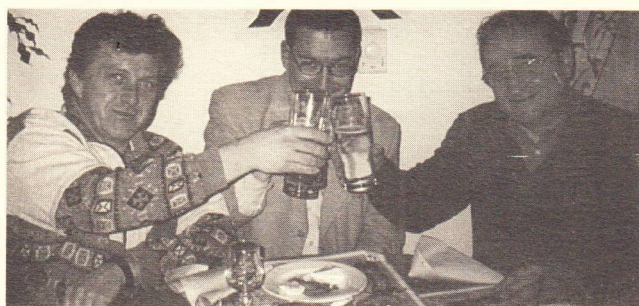
One other thing I should mention about Bratislava fandom is that they are very committed fan publishers! They have a very slick-looking Slovak-language magazine, *Fantazia*, edited by Ivan Aleksa, that seems a combination of *Locus*, *Starlog*, and *F&SF*... and maybe even a little bit of *Mimosa* as well. There were manuscripts of some of the articles they were considering for their next issue spread out on the restaurant table when I arrived for their next meeting two nights later. It was easy to see they were having a good time being trailbreakers; *Fantazia* is presently the world's only Slovak-language science fiction periodical.



Ivan Aleksa and Fantazia

Poland is a much larger country than Slovakia in terms of population, so you'd expect there are more fans and fan organizations there, too. And there are. There are so many, in fact, that even if I'd had several weeks there, I might not get to meet with all of them. My December trip took me to Poland for only four days, so I really had time for only two meetings, one in Warsaw and one in the southern Polish city of Katowice.

I'd previously met some of the Katowice fans. One of them, now the Director of a large design engineering institute, had been part of a delegation of Polish Energy experts I hosted in 1990. And we did-



Katowice fandom members Piotr Cholewa, Piotr Rak, and Andrzej Kowalski

n't discover that each of us was a science fiction fan until a chance remark in a breakfast restaurant in Owensboro, Kentucky, after more than a week had passed! (But that's another story.)

The Katowice club also publishes fanzines (including an English-language one!), and is a bit eclectic; their interests seem to include everything from Tolkien fandom to "Let's party!" And it's also one of the more well-known and visible fan groups in Poland; they have their own clubhouse (something that only a few SF clubs in the United States can boast) and one of their members (Piotr Cholewa) is the leading translator of Polish science fiction.

Warsaw is by far the largest city in Poland, and it also has the largest fan community in the country. I was told by Magda Zórawska, one of my fan friends in Warsaw, that there are several different fan clubs in the city. Unfortunately, I didn't have much of a chance to talk to very many of them the one night I thought I'd be free; that's one of the perils of a business trip. But they were a cheerful group, and insisted I stay at least to drink a beer with them; it was an offer I couldn't refuse.

When the time comes to go Eastern Europe again, I don't think I'll need any more reminders to locate other fans. It's an enriching experience that I can recommend for anyone. I know it was for me. ☼



Some members of Warsaw fandom

BUT IN SPACE,
NO ONE CAN HEAR
YOUR DIDGERIDOO.

NEW
Brisbane

Waltzing
Matilda

Australia leaps into
hyperspace in a single
bound! It was simply
a matter of combining
our enormous, mutant kangaroos,
and a big enough trampoline! From
The Kronicles of Kaptain Koala
Kookaburra, March 7, 2505

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