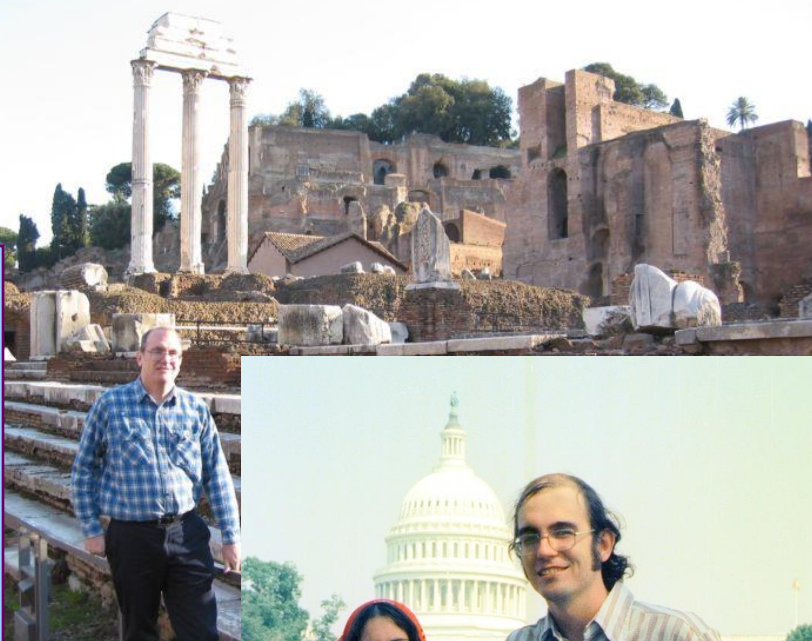




# My Back Pages #14

Rich Lynch





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articles and essays by Rich Lynch

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I've got to tell you – getting ready for retirement is supposed to be easier than this. I'm eligible now, but I've been putting it off because some of the things going on at work have been interesting enough that I want to keep involved. At least for now. But the other side of that coin is that the amount of work that gets pushed in my direction is ever increasing, in particular anything that involves writing. I seem to be the go-to person for that, especially all the complicated stuff. The way I describe my work to others, if the division I work in was a television production I would be the head writer.

But there's more to my job than writing. I'm also the equivalent of a wedding planner. I am project manager for two very large multinational meetings this year, and also two high-profile bilateral meetings. It falls to me to organize these meetings, work with the hosts to secure sponsorships, develop the agendas, invite the speakers, write and edit some of the documents for the meetings... There's a lot to do. And it's all happening at once, for all four meetings, so for one final comparison I'm also the equivalent of the guy from the old *Ed Sullivan Show* who spins dishes on thin wooden dowels. You can't relax, and there's always something that urgently needs attention. Everything has to keep moving or else something crashes.

The bilateral I look forward to the most is with the Norwegians. Meetings with them are entertaining as well as informative and as you will read in the opening essay of this fanzine, last year's extended meeting was not without some adventures.

*Rich Lynch*  
*Gaithersburg, Maryland*  
*June 2015*

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'Worldcon', 'NASFiC', and 'Hugo Award' are service marks of the World Science Fiction Society.  
(Thanks to Joel Zakem for use of his photo of the Michigan fanhistory panel at Detcon 1)

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# Norway Revisited

## Prolog: An Ole and Svein Joke

Norwegians are stoic folk. At least, that's what their reputation is. If you had to pick a single word to describe a Norwegian, 'quiet' or 'introspective' might come immediately to mind. They're not, of course. The people I know from Norway like to party and have a good time just as much as the rest of us, but they are well aware they're often caricatured as not having much to say. One of them, the Chairman of the multinational carbon sequestration organization for which I am Secretariat, told me an 'Ole and Svein' joke that really captures the essence of a True Norwegian. It goes like this:

Two friends, Ole and Svein, go in a bar. The bartender, who knows them well, provides them both their usual: akvavit. They sit there for a few moments, staring at their drinks. Finally, Ole picks up his glass, turns to Svein and says, "Skol!"

And Svein replies, "We come here to talk or to drink?"

## A Gulf Coast Mini-Adventure

Besides my work on the multinational carbon sequestration initiative, I am also the project manager for United States-Norway bilateral activities in the area of fossil energy. This year's annual meeting was in Norway (my second-ever visit there), but a few weeks before that a delegation of about a dozen Norwegians representing government and industry came over to the States to visit three large-scale carbon sequestration projects.

It was a real adventure. The first one was located in Port Arthur, Texas, and to get there we had to fly into Houston where the next morning a chartered bus brought us the 100 miles to the plant site. We were greeted and given a presentation and a tour of the facilities by the Site Manager, and if you were able only to listen to his voice you'd swear you were being briefed by the famous film director Martin Scorsese.

After that it was back to the Houston airport where we caught a commuter flight to Jackson, Mississippi, and it was one of the more entertaining airline flights I've ever had. It was a very small aircraft with only a single flight attendant for the flight, a boisterous bearded Cajun from Louisiana. The first thing he did, as the plane was taxiing toward takeoff, was to introduce himself: "Can you say BOUDREAU?"

Us (loudly): "BOUDREAU!"

Him: "Say BOUDREAU!"

Us (even louder): "BOUDREAU!!"



during the plant tour in Port Arthur



And so it went. It almost seemed more of a room party than an airline flight. I was sitting near the back of the plane, and I knew I was missing out on some of it when I saw Boudreau and the head of Norway's delegation, up at the front of the passenger cabin, laughing and having a good time. I found out later they'd been telling each other off-color jokes.

There was a lot more ground travel once we reached Jackson. Another chartered bus was waiting for us and took us 90 miles east to Meridian, where the next day we visited a very large power plant, still under construction, that is scaling up a new type of coal gasification technology. And once that visit was over, it was back on the bus for a three hour ride south to Mobile, Alabama, prior to the next day's visit to yet another power plant.

It had been nearly 40 years since my only previous visit to Mobile. The city didn't leave much of an impression, and my one recollection of that time, so long ago, is of driving around after dark, taking a wrong turn onto a short dead-end street and being startled by the sight of a big cargo ship right in front of me.

There are still plenty of ships that come into Mobile, as it's the 12<sup>th</sup> largest port in the United States, but this trip didn't bring me close to any of them. I did have a chance to walk around the city center and was surprised at how laid back the place is. Bienville Square, a large park in the middle of downtown, is certainly a pleasant place to stroll, but it was almost deserted on a weekday afternoon. The most active place seemed to be the downtown post office. *Plenty* of people there, and its parking lot gave me my best view of the city.



Mobile from the post office parking lot

There was nearly as nice a view, of the sun setting over Mobile, from the seafood restaurant where we were taken for dinner that evening. The place was located on the causeway along the northern shore of Mobile Bay, and I had made the mistake of dressing for the warm and pleasant conditions I had experienced in downtown Mobile instead of what felt like gale force winds coming in off the water. I was damn cold, but all the Norwegians paid it no attention. They were treating it as if it were a normal mid-Spring day. Which maybe for them it was!



a very breezy dinner on the bay



## Bergen through the Ages

In early May the weather in southwestern Norway is really not all that different from where I live in Maryland. Except for the rain. The coast of Norway gets *a lot* of rain. Bergen, where the annual bilateral meeting was held, gets more than 200 days of rain every year and sure enough, several of those days were during the week of the meeting.



12<sup>th</sup> century remains cover the bottom level of the Bryggens Museum

communities which had banded together to protect their mutual trading interests. The Hansas built a row of wooden warehouses along Bergen's inner harbor waterfront, which today have become a series of shops, restaurants, and artist studios. Some of these buildings are now not in very good condition and the ongoing restoration activities are a part of what makes Bergen an interesting place.

## Fish Food

Another thing that makes Bergen an interesting place is the food there, more specifically the seafood. Bergen is located on a fjord about 10 miles in from the coast of the Atlantic Ocean, and there is a large and very active fish market at the head end of the inner harbor. Many of the vendors have hot grills going, and it's a great place to get a meal. They have salmon in many variations, of course, and it took me less than an hour from my hotel check-in to settle back with a couple of slabs of baked Norwegian salmon, some side fixings, and a beer. A finer way to decompress from a long overnight airplane trip may not exist.

Nevertheless, it didn't really inhibit me much from being on the street, when I was able. And there were also things to do and see that were not out in the rain. Bergen is a historic place and right next door to my hotel was the Bryggens Museum, which was built over the remains of buildings that had been constructed in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. About 200 years after that, Bergen became an important northern outpost for the Hanseatic League, a Germany-based organization of merchant



workman hand-hewing wooden beams for the restoration of one of the old Hanseatic League waterfront buildings



I had anticipated that I'd be eating baked salmon every day, but that's not what happened. All the hosted dinners were at places where other types of seafood, or even fresh water fish, were featured. The main course at one of them was a thick moist slab of a white-colored fish that I was told was catfish. Other times there were shrimp and scallops, and on my last evening in town I had a really good dinner of steamed mussels in a creamy garlic sauce. The meal in the fish market was the only time that I had salmon during the entire trip!



I enjoyed the seafood of Bergen!

### Mossy Trees and Coastal Waters

The bilateral meeting was part of a broader program that included a technology workshop on carbon sequestration, a half-day conference, and a field trip to Mongstad to see Norway's large-scale pilot plant to test CO<sub>2</sub> capture technologies. Mongstad is about an hour's bus ride north of Bergen, and along the way there are some spectacular vistas. That part of the Norway



a view from the bus on the way to Mongstad

coastline is serrated with fjords and channels, and the roadway takes a circuitous route, over bridges and along hillsides. I was idly looking out the bus window at one of those hillsides when I saw something that made me a believer in that ages-old aphorism – moss really *does* grow on the north side of trees!

Norway is an exceedingly mossy country. There were some trees that looked not only to have thick amounts of moss growing up their trunks but also heavy layers around their bases. The field trip returned to Bergen in the early afternoon, which left enough of the day to check out even more of the moss, up on top of Mount Fløyen where the ground was so soft and spongy that it didn't seem a good idea to stray very far from the pathways.



But I hadn't gone up there to inspect the vegetation. It was for the scenery. The brow of the mountain overlooks Bergen's inner harbor from a thousand feet up. For about three hours the rain clouds cleared away, and the view from the top of the rock was glorious, all the way out to the Atlantic Ocean. I stayed way longer than I had intended, and if it were not for more rain clouds moving in I might be there yet.



enjoying the afternoon on Mount Fløyen

### Epilog: Another Ole and Svein Joke

So Ole and Svein are standing at the brink of the cliff near Pulpit Rock, admiring the view of the Lysefjord about two thousand feet straight down, when a big gust of wind blows them over the edge. Luckily they both manage to grab hold of a small bush just below the rim and they frantically hang on, but sense that their combined weight is causing the bush to become uprooted from the face of the cliff. In desperation, Ole calls out, "Is anybody up there?"

There is a crack of thunder and a deep sonorous voice rings out over the fjord, "I am here, Ole and Svein. I am God. Have faith! Let go of the bush and I will save you!"

Ole and Svein look at each other, wide-eyed, and they look down to the fjord far, far below. Then Svein looks upward toward the cliff edge and calls out, "Is anybody else up there?"

\* \* \*

My trip home from Norway was uneventful but I had almost needed some divine intervention of my own to make it back from Alabama. The flight out of Mobile wasn't until about 7:00pm, and all the Norwegians were long gone by then – most took an earlier connection through Atlanta but two of them rented a car and drove over to New Orleans for the weekend. My flight out went to Charlotte where I had to dash across several concourses to barely avoid missing a 38-minute connection to Washington. As it was, I didn't get home until after midnight.

The thing is, if I had done the Internet version of asking, "Is anybody else up there?" I would have discovered that there was an earlier and direct flight back to Washington, on the same airline that arcane Federal travel rules had forced me to fly. True, it left from the Pensacola airport, 70 miles to the east of Mobile, but that's why God created airport shuttles.

I suppose that I had no right to expect my suitcase to make that same 38-minute connection. But you know what, I just *knew* it would be riding around on the luggage carousel by the time I got there, and I was right.

That's what happens when you have a little faith. ☀

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### Afterword:

This was only the second time I'd ever been to Norway. It might also have been the final time but with all the ramping up of my work responsibilities I'm not quite ready to make that statement. At any rate, there was much more to do in Bergen than I had spare time for, such as making a visit to home of the great Norwegian composer, Edvard Grieg. I like his music a lot.



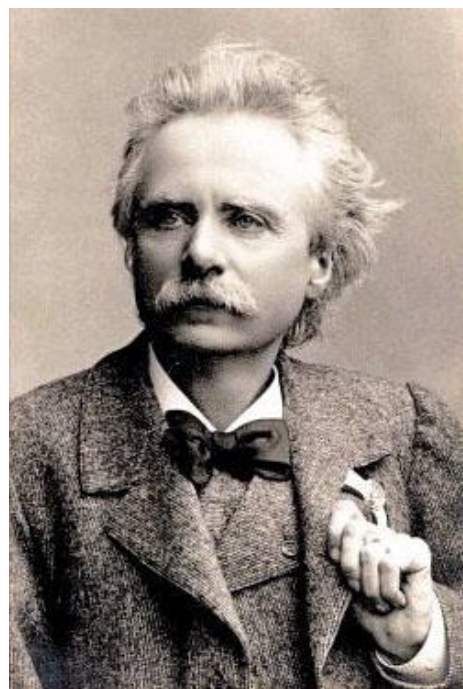
# The Chopin of the North

Today, June 15<sup>th</sup>, is the birthday of the great Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg (1843-1907). Like so many other great composers, Grieg was born to parents who themselves were musicians; in this case, Grieg's mother was a very talented pianist, and from her instruction, he became one too. By the time he was in his mid-teens, he had progressed far enough where he was accepted at the prestigious Leipzig Conservatory, and by the time he was 20, he had graduated from the Conservatory with honors and had moved to Copenhagen where he hoped to make his fame and fortune as a pianist and composer.

It was during Grieg's four year stay in Copenhagen that two important influences entered his life. The first was the Danish composer Niels Gade, who provided a necessary prodding to Grieg's slowly-developing career as a composer by convincing him to write a symphony. Grieg did, but disliked the result so much that he wrote on the score, "Never to be performed!" (His instructions were not followed, though.) While in Copenhagen, Grieg also happened to meet Rikard Nordraak (the composer of the music for Norway's national anthem) who instilled in Grieg a desire to write music of Norway and about Norway.

Back then, Norway did not really exist as an independent entity. Perhaps because of that, it did not then have any great tradition of classical music. That was to change. Before he came to Copenhagen, Grieg's compositional style was mostly German-influenced, based on his years at the Leipzig Conservatory. But Grieg had experienced enlightenment during his Copenhagen years. Norwegian influences, in particular the folk music of his homeland, would affect his music from then on. This was the first step on the pathway that would result in one of the most famous classical works of all time.

By the mid 1860s Grieg had returned to Norway and settled in what is now the city of Oslo where he attempted to make a living by performing and music instruction. As it turned out, he had hardly any time available for composing but nevertheless, in 1868, he produced what has become one of the most-performed and recorded classical compositions of all time, the grand Piano Concerto in A-Minor. The concerto became so popular that within a few years Grieg was presented with a lifetime annual annuity that allowed him the luxury of devoting as much of his time as he wanted to composing. Grieg



Edvard Grieg, ca 1890





eventually became a national figure within Norway, but it wasn't because of the concerto. It was a work of a different sort – incidental music for a play by another of Norway's national figures, Henrik Ibsen. The results were the two suites of music from *Peer Gynt*.

In the mid 1880s, Grieg's home 'Trolldhaugen' was built outside his city of birth, Bergen, and Grieg resided there rest of his life; the house overlooked a lake, and Grieg often composed in a little garden along the shore. The last two decades years of his life was spent mostly on concert tours of Europe and in composing and in both areas he was so superb that he became known as 'The Chopin of the North'. His admirers most likely expected that one of the fruits of his labors in those last decades would have been a second piano concerto, but it never happened. For some reason, Grieg was apparently never



Edvard Grieg's home 'Trolldhaugen'



statue of Grieg in downtown Bergen

quite satisfied with the A-Minor concerto and instead of spending creative efforts on a new composition, he kept revising the A-Minor concerto. On six different occasions he revisited the work, the final time not long before he died.

Every biography of Edvard Grieg emphasizes the influence of Norwegian folk melodies on his compositions; one, for instance, stated that Grieg "painted with notes. He painted the people, the scenery, and the moods of Norway." Another described Grieg's music as "highly individual and with a nationalist flavour, [with] almost universal appeal." That seems correct to me; Grieg was a master of the melody and his compositions are all so very pleasant to listen to. Nearly a century has now passed since Grieg's death, and the universal appeal of his music has not at all decreased. Indeed, it's become even stronger. ☀

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### Afterword:

This was one of a series of classical composer appreciations I wrote during the first half of the year 2000 decade. I feel a closer connection to Grieg than I do for most of the other composers I profiled because on my first trip to Norway, in 2012, I did have enough free time to see Trolldhaugen.

I absolutely feel blessed that I have been able to travel to different parts of the world over the past quarter century and go to fascinating cities like Bergen. But in all my travels, there are many cities in the United States that I have yet to see. Last July, for a trip to the 2014 North American Science Fiction Convention, I was finally able to check one of them off the list.



# Of Stargates and Superheroes: Detroit and Detcon 1 in Words and Pictures

## Prolog: But I *haven't* been everywhere!

Several years ago there was a television ad for the Choice Hotels chain that used the Johnny Cash cover of an iconic country music song titled “I’ve Been Everywhere”. The lyrics are mostly toponyms – names of cities, towns, and states visited in an open-ended, everlasting road trip. I’ve also, in my travels, been to many different places...but not *everywhere*. In keeping with the cadence of the song: I’ve been to Cape Town, Moscow, Bangkok, Singapore. Montreal, Paris, Glasgow, and Baltimore... (Maybe I should write a few new verses!)

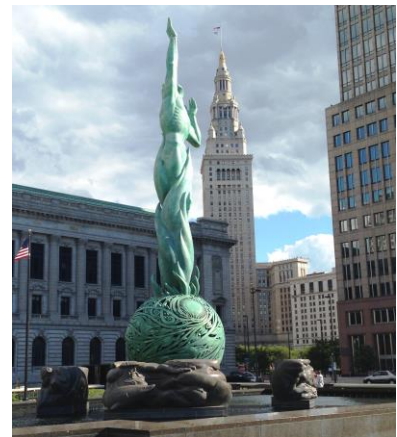
Anyway, I can really identify with that song because although I *haven't* been everywhere, sometimes it almost seems so, especially here in the United States. At one time or another I’ve visited just about all of the large cities, from Boston to San Diego, from Minneapolis to San Antonio, from Orlando to Seattle, from Washington to San Francisco.

But until this year, I had *never* been to Detroit.

## The Road to Detroit Passes through Cleveland

It was Detcon 1, the 2014 North American Science Fiction Convention (or NASFiC), which brought about my first-ever visit to the Motor City and it seemed appropriate to travel there by automobile. The driving distance to Detroit is just about 500 miles, which for Nicki and me is easily do-able. But that makes for a very long day. Instead, we decided to break the drive west into two days and stop in Cleveland. Yes, Cleveland!

Cleveland has acquired a less-than-sterling reputation over the past half century as a city in decline with large amounts of pollution, epitomized by the Cuyahoga River catching fire back in 1969. But it’s not that way now. Nicki and I found it to be a clean and intriguing place to spend a day, with parks and open spaces in the city center and a thriving theatre district. We had been there only once previously, in 2000, as a stopover on the way to a Chicago Worldcon, but



Cleveland city center



ongoing restoration of Caravaggio's  
“The Crucifixion of St. Andrew”

all we had time for then was a morning visit to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. This time we were able to spend several pleasant hours at the Cleveland Museum of Art, which has been ranked as one of the top art museums in the country. The collection is eclectic, including a large amount of Asian and Egyptian art, but what we came to see were works by Renaissance artists such as Rembrandt and Hals, and more modern paintings from famous artists such as Dali, Picasso, and Warhol. The most interesting exhibit, though, wasn’t really an exhibit at all. It was the ongoing restoration of Caravaggio’s 1607 masterwork “The Crucifixion of St. Andrew”. It wasn’t being done in some closed-off basement workshop – the museum had



set up a studio in a glass-walled gallery adjacent to the main entrance atrium where visitors could view the conservator as he painstakingly removed layers of brittle, cracked varnish from the painting, square millimeter by square millimeter.

### The City of the Giant Fist

Nicki and I also made sure to visit the Detroit Institute of Arts, another of America's top art museums, on our first full day in Detroit. It also has a large collection of Renaissance and 19<sup>th</sup> century European art, including van Gogh's superb "Self-Portrait with Straw Hat", but for me the signature pieces in the collection were also the largest – five fresco murals by Diego Rivera collectively known as "Man and Machine" that surround the inside entrance court of the museum.

We had wanted to visit the DIA, as the museum is known to locals, because it had been described in news reports as on the verge of being D.O.A. – Detroit filed for bankruptcy in 2013 and had been looking for ways to pay off creditors. An audit had shown that the holdings of the museum were worth more than \$1 billion, making the DIA the city's single most valuable asset. There had been a very real possibility that some of the most important works would be deaccessioned, to use the museum-speak euphemism, in order to raise money. But then Michigan's Attorney General came to the rescue and issued an opinion that the holdings of the DIA are actually held in charitable trust for the people of Michigan, and therefore no piece could be sold to satisfy debts or obligations. However, it might turn out that this opinion is not legally binding, and that would be tragic. Nicki and I found the DIA to be a treasure. But treasures sometimes get plundered.



inside the Detroit Institute of Arts,  
in front of the Diego Rivera mural



"Monument to Joe Louis" in downtown Detroit

There was more artwork out on the streets of the city, down near the Renaissance Center complex. That's where the headquarters of General Motors is located, so you might think that the any street sculptures there would have an automotive theme. Instead, we were greeted by a giant fist. Detroit was the home of the famed heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis, and there is a monument to him, a 24-foot long fistied arm, in the median of one of downtown Detroit's boulevards. There have been reports that a statue is nearly ready in homage to another of Detroit's famous fighters – Robocop. Unveiling it during



the NASFiC would have been a nice touch but unlike its cinematic counterpart, it wasn't yet fully functional. That, and the city hadn't figured out where to put it.

### **`Til it rang twenty-nine times...**

There was more street art to see than just the big fist. Detcon 1 was held at the Marriott in the Renaissance Center, and not far from there is a large paved plaza that now occupies the site where, in 1701, the French explorer Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac founded the settlement that became Detroit. There are several large pieces of public art there, including the obligatory statue of Cadillac himself. But the one that stood out from the rest was the large monument to the unionized labor movement titled "Transcending". Its shape, a large circular arc with a break at the top, was perhaps meant to symbolize both the greatness to which the labor movement has aspired over the past century and its yet uncompleted destiny, whatever that may be. However, to all the science fiction fans who were present for the NASFiC, that huge metal sculpture emulated an alien artifact we all had seen many times in a popular television show. Nicki described it best: "Who knew Detroit had a Stargate?"



the "Transcending" monument

A bit more sublime were the stained glass windows in an Anglican church bordering the north end of the plaza. Some of them, such as the big rose window facing the plaza, have a nautical theme and for good reason. This place of worship is the Mariners' Church, made famous as



the Mariners' Church

"...The Maritime Sailors' Cathedral..." in the Gordon Lightfoot song "The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald", about a 1975 Lake Superior ship sinking. One of the lyrics relates that "...the church bell chimed, 'til it rang twenty-nine times for each man on the Edmund Fitzgerald", which is what actually happened when the church's Rector, Richard Ingalls, learned of the loss of the big ship earlier in the day.

This was picked up in an article in *Newsweek* about the sinking and its aftermath, which brought it to the attention of Lightfoot. And the rest, as they say, is history.



## Anecdotal Stories and Draconian Choices

History was one of the reasons I had been looking forward to Detcon 1. I was on four panels, two of them themed on fanhistory. One was fairly easy – all I had to do was to sit back and supply some prompts to the other panel participants, Roger Sims and Fred Prophet (who had co-chaired the 1959 Detroit Worldcon), for them to tell some anecdotal and amusing stories about what Detroit fandom was like back in the 1950s. But the other one, which chronicled the history of science fiction fandom within Michigan from the 1930s to the present, was maybe the most complex panel in

which I've ever participated. The event was two hours in duration and divided into several segments (corresponding to different decades), with different panelists for each segment. I had been asked to be co-moderator because



one segment of the Michigan fanhistory panel

of my previous activities as a fanhistorian, such as creation of an online collection of information about science fiction fandom in the 1960s. It served me well in preparing for the panel, and I was pleased that the entirety of the panel was recorded for use as a future fanhistory resource.

Nicki was also on four panels and as has been the case lately, hers had larger audiences than mine. The most successful one appeared to be the “Fanzines and Professional Writing” panel, which featured two science fiction authors (John Scalzi and Jim Hines) and three fanzine editors (including Nicki).

The panel was inspired by something that happened 65 years ago, at the 1959



“Fanzines and Professional Writing” panelists: John Scalzi, Jim Hines, Steven Silver, Roger Sims, and Nicki Lynch

Detroit Worldcon, when during a panel on amateur magazines, a question on “Why weren’t fanzines as good as they once were and why were their writers no longer becoming top quality pros very often?” turned the panel into an extended discussion that lasted for five-and-a-half hours. It was the longest-duration discussion panel in Worldcon history. This 2014 panel managed to stay within its 50 minute time window, but still came up with some succinct observations and conclusions on the current state of fanzines (thriving, though most are now e-zines) and their role in the career of professional writers (fanzines are good outlets for non-fiction essays that are not immediately saleable, and serve to give writers added visibility). One wonders what other revelations might have emerged if the panelists had had another four hours.



In total, Detcon 1 consisted of more than 400 program items, about par for the course for a convention its size, and there was no way to attend more than a relatively small number of them. And, as usual, there were draconian choices to make on which ones to attend. An example of that happened on the second day of the convention, when Nicki and I watched our friend Kurt Erichsen, who is an excellent fanartist, present an overview of the cartoons and other artwork he has created over past four decades (some of which we had published in our fanzine *Mimosa*). But that meant that we had to miss the panel about the life and works of science fiction grandmaster Robert A. Heinlein and also the panel where the convention's fan guests, Arthur Hlavaty, Bernadette Bosky and Kevin Maroney, talked about their lives in science fiction fandom. Later on there was a demonstration on making high-performance paper airplanes, and I'll concede it would have been fun to revert to childhood for an hour to participate in that. But it was opposite one of the panels I was moderating. Ah, the sacrifices one makes for the sake of fanhistory...

### The View from the 69<sup>th</sup> Floor

Just about all of Detcon's program was held at the function room level of the hotel, only a few floors up from street level. But the suites where all the evening room parties were held were way up there, on the 68<sup>th</sup> and 69<sup>th</sup> floors. That made it very convenient for Nicki and me, as our room was on the 67<sup>th</sup> floor and we could just ramble up a flight or two of stairs instead of waiting on overcrowded elevators to arrive. It was, by far, the highest hotel room I've ever stayed in and I'll admit it took me a while to get over being intimidated by the view from the window. The Marriott, which occupies the central and loftiest tower of the Renaissance Center, is the tallest all-hotel skyscraper in the Western Hemisphere and from the uppermost floors it was possible to see north to where the Detroit River emerges from Lake St. Clair and south all the way to Lake Erie. Far below, big ships were a common sight and room parties often fell silent for a few moments as people crowded toward windows, cameras in hand, to capture the moment whenever one cruised past.



the Renaissance Center



the view from a room party on the 69<sup>th</sup> floor

There were plenty of room parties every evening to keep convention attendees occupied, many of them in support of various Worldcon bids. The one of most interest for Nicki and me was for the D.C.-in-2017 bid, which would result in a *much* shorter road trip for us if it wins. We are not part of the bid committee, but we were happy to help out at the party as best as we could. It was an easy choice, as many of the people representing the D.C. bid are friends we've known for years. That, and the party featured some *killer* desserts.



## Twenty-Four and Counting

Besides all the big ships, there was something of else of interest to me that was visible from way up on the 69<sup>th</sup> floor. The view to the west looked out over downtown Detroit and off in the distance was Comerica Park, the home of the Detroit Tigers baseball team who were in town and playing a weekend series against Cleveland. I've been a baseball fan for way more than half a century, and in that time had attended baseball games in twenty-three different major league ballparks. I'd been really looking forward



Comerica Park as seen from the Marriott



at the game

to adding Comerica Park to that total, but the only day I had available for doing that was the Saturday of the convention and I was at first dismayed that I had a scheduled panel that would prevent me from going to the game that afternoon. But then I discovered that due to a rainout earlier in the year, the Saturday game was actually a doubleheader and the second game would conveniently start in the early evening. My friend John Novak came with me to the game sporting a cap and t-shirt of his home town St. Louis Cardinals. This brought him some scowls from Tigers fans who were still in denial about Detroit being thrashed by the Cardinals in the 2006 World Series. We had to sit in different sections of the stadium because the game was nearly a sellout and single seats were all that were available. I bought my ticket at the stadium

box office and ended up in the mezzanine. But John was a bit more adventurous and negotiated with a scalper. *He* ended up with a much nicer seat down in the lower deck, and for about \$10 less than what I had paid. I just know there's some karma in there somewhere.

While all of this was going on, Nicki was enjoying herself at the evening's room parties. But she had asked me to bring her a souvenir from the ballpark, and it turned out to be a more difficult choice than I had expected. In the end I settled on a plush toy rhinoceros with a Detroit insignia on its chest and a confident smirk on its face. It wasn't until I showed it to her back at the hotel that we realized it was more than just a keepsake – it had both a mask and a cape, which meant it was (gasp!) a *superhero*!



Nicki and her little superhero



## Epilog: Here There Were Legends

Comerica Park has been the home of the Detroit Tigers only since the beginning of the 2000 season. Before that the Tigers played at an eponymously-named ballpark that no longer exists. Tiger Stadium was one of the most fan-friendly places to see a baseball game, with even the upper-level seats close to the playing field. But in the mid-1990s, the team ownership decided that they needed a more contemporary ballpark that had lucrative amenities such as luxury suites that could be rented out at elevated prices. There had been some hopes to save the old stadium, or at least parts of it, but ultimately none of those plans came to fruition and it was razed during the late summer of 2009.



at the corner of Michigan and Trumbull Avenues,  
where Tiger Stadium once stood



the centerfield flagpole still exists!

I didn't want to go home without paying a visit to where Tiger Stadium once stood, and I found that even though the structure is gone, the playing field in its original configuration is still there, as is the flagpole that once stood like a sentinel in deep centerfield. I later learned that following the ballpark's demise, a group known as "The Spirit of Tiger Stadium" has been maintaining the playing field and occasionally hosts informal baseball games at the site. In my mind's eye I could imagine what the place must have been like during its heyday. Many famous baseball players, legends of the game, once strode to home plate and ran the bases over the decades of the stadium's existence and I could not resist the temptation to do the same. It made my trip to Detroit complete.

I never did get to see a game at Tiger Stadium, though I had a chance during its final season, in 1999, when a friend who lived in the area told me he'd get tickets if I would haul my butt out there. That I did not is one of those "do over" decisions I would gladly

revisit if only someone would invent time travel. I regret that I am fifteen years too late for Tiger Stadium but I did not need temporal intervention to appreciate what I experienced in the rest of the city. I very much enjoyed my time in Detroit, and it will not take another NASFiC to bring me back to this fine city. ☀

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## Afterword:

There were many old friends at Detcon, some of whom I had not seen in a very long time. But the oldest of all, in the most literal sense of the word, was not there because of an advancing illness which claimed him several months later. Here's a remembrance.

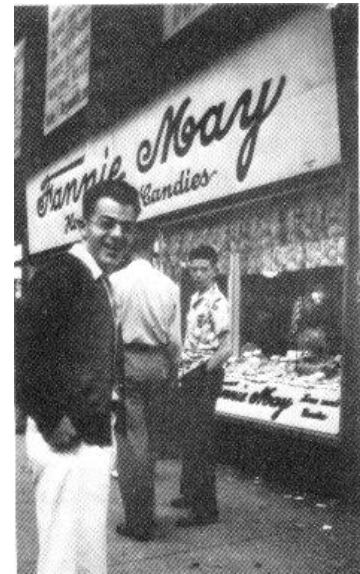


# Farewell to an Old Friend

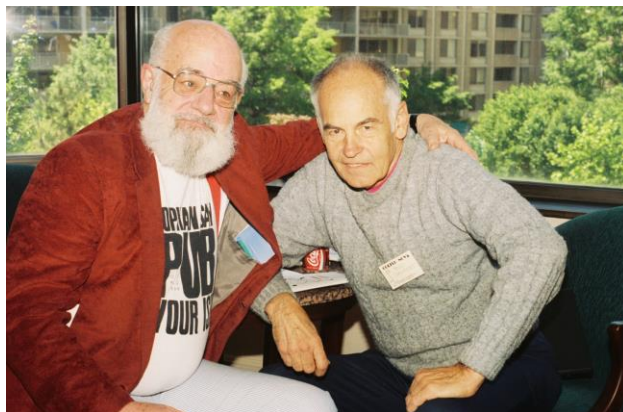
From behind me, in the middle of a crowd, came a familiar voice. “Hey, Rich! Ya gonna come to my slide show?”

It was the middle of August 2011, and I was at Renovation, the 69<sup>th</sup> World Science Fiction Convention. I didn’t need to look around to recognize who it was. It was an old friend, in both senses of the word ‘old’.

Arthur L. Widner was 97 years old when he passed away on April 15<sup>th</sup>, at the time the world’s oldest science fiction fan. His fandom activities date all the way back to the 1930s, when he was one of the *Weird Tales* letterhacks. At the time of his death he was one of just five remaining people who had attended the very first Worldcon, the 1939 NyCon. In 1940, Art was one of the organizers of Boston’s first science fiction organization, The Stranger Club. That group was comprised of many notable people: Chan Davis, who became a university professor but was fired from his position and jailed for refusing to cooperate with a congressional investigation into his political activities during the Cold War 1950s; Robert D. Swisher, who compiled the first index of science fiction fan publications; Louis Russell Chauvenet, who later in 1940 invented the term ‘fanzine’ (before that, fan publications were less-elegantly referred to as ‘fanmags’); Harry Stubbs, who in his alter ego of ‘Hal Clement’ later became one of the science fiction genre’s most respected authors; and Earl Singleton, who later (as Dr. Henry



Art Widner in Chicago during the 1940 Worldcon



Art Widner (at left) and Louis Russell Chauvenet at the 1994 Corflu convention

E. Singleton)

became one of the co-founders of Teledyne and at the time of his death in 1999 had amassed a personal fortune reportedly worth north of \$700 million. The Stranger Club, as a group, was honored by the 1989 Worldcon (held in Boston) as its collective fan guests, but there were some people (myself included) who thought that Art himself should have been singled out as the fan guest.

I first met Art back in the early 1980s, when I was out in the San Francisco area on a business trip. It extended over a weekend, so I took advantage of an invitation of a mutual

friend who was also (at that time) the Official Editor of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association to sit in on a FAPA collation. Art was helping out, as was Redd Boggs, another fan whose activities dated back to the First Fandom “dinosaur” era of the 1930s. But as it turned out, I didn’t provide any help at all – we had met for a Sunday late lunch which led to a couple hours of very enjoyable conversation afterward. By the time we all left the restaurant it was dusk and I needed to get back to my hotel to prepare for the next day’s meetings.



Our paths crossed many times after that, always at science fiction conventions. And quite often to break bread together. At the 1988 Worldcon, in New Orleans, we were part of a much larger crowd of fans who found a terrific and yet affordable restaurant after navigating a maze of alleys in the heart of the French Quarter. At the 1989 Worldcon, Art used some of his meal stipend to treat Nicki and me to a crab cake lunch at a restaurant at the top of a high rise building where we could sit back and enjoy the panoramic view of Boston. He also was a frequent attendee of Corflu, the fanzine fans' convention, and it was at the 1992 Corflu, in Los Angeles, where, on the way to a restaurant, one of my favorite stories involving Art Widner took place.

It started out innocuously enough, as a Saturday evening expedition on the way to a seafood restaurant in Manhattan Beach. My wife Nicki and I were passengers in a high-powered Acura being driven by our friend Elst Weinstein, while Art with his friend Dave Rike followed in Art's small pickup truck. Elst was trying to follow what turned out to be an oversimplified map from the convention's guide, but instead of getting us to the restaurant it led us first to a dead-end and then into a deserted warehouse district. We had to traverse a bunch of narrow little streets with stop signs at the end of every block to find our way back to a main thoroughfare. All the while, Elst was getting more and more annoyed at the map's author, Rick Foss, and just about every block on the way out he would roar up to a stop sign and utter some epithet, then take off again. It went like this:

Vrooooo! Screech! "Foss is going to have a lot of explaining to do about *this*!" Vrooooo! Screech! "Death to Foss!" Vrooooo! Screech! "I'll kill him!" It was all very entertaining to Art and Dave, desperately trying to keep up with us, who had figured out early on that we'd gotten lost.

I can well believe that Art only very rarely got lost. He always seemed to me to have a very accurate sense of direction, and was often the leader of dinner expeditions at conventions. But it was an epic expedition of a much larger scale, by automobile from Boston to Denver for the 1941 Worldcon, that has over the years become legendary and that journey was the topic of his presentation at Renovation. Art showed and described dozens of photos from the trip, and for fanhistory buffs like myself it was a very, very memorable and enjoyable hour. And it was also the last time I ever saw him.

Art received many other honors in addition to being a guest of the 1989 Worldcon. He was also a guest of at least eight other science fiction conventions, including the 1999 Corflu, and at the 2011 Corflu received a special lifetime achievement award. But it was at the 1989 Worldcon that he received an even bigger honor – the Big Heart Award, fandom's highest service award given out for "good work and great spirit long contributed". That pretty accurately described Art. He was as much a patriarchal figure as has ever existed in science fiction fandom, an avuncular calming presence who stayed above any feuds. Fans of all eras looked up to Art, and his passing has created a void that will not soon be filled. He was a friend to many people and we are all missing him. A lot. ☀

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### Afterword:

Art Widner was also a fan publisher, and was only too happy to swap issues of his fanzine *YHOS* with other fan publishers, Nicki and me included. It began back in the late 1970s when we received an issue of *YHOS* in exchange for a copy of our first fanzine, *Chat*. And that's a story in itself – without *Chat*, we never would have gone on to publish *Mimosa*. Read on...



# A Visit to a Small Fanzine – The Life and Times of *Chat*

We don't know what originally possessed us with the idea of doing a fanzine. It was early autumn in 1977, and we had just lost a bid to hold the 1978 DeepSouthCon in Chattanooga, which had left a bad taste in our mouths from the way the winning campaign had been conducted. All that is now water long ago gone under the bridge, but at the time we remember it was like being all dressed up with no place to go – creative energy was present, looking for an outlet now that chairing a convention was no longer in the cards. At any rate, the local SF club, the Chattanooga SF Association (or CSFA) was fairly new and growing. There was a need for some kind of central focus, and out of all that *Chat* was conceived.

It was Nicki who came up with the name, a double-entendre from the zine's purpose (club news) and place of origin (Chattanooga). There was some opposition to the idea from a couple of CSFA members who claimed that it couldn't possibly help the club and would be a drain on its meager resources. But most members embraced the idea, and in October 1977 the first issue appeared.

The first few issues of *Chat* were pretty scrawny, being only two or four pages long and limited pretty much to local fan happenings with maybe a review or two thrown in. We didn't get a letter of comment for several months, and the first verbal comment we received was sort of a backhanded slap – a club member told us he already knew all the news in the issue. The first continuing feature, a monthly column co-written by two local fans, didn't begin until *Chat* 7 (April 1978). During that six-month start-up period we did most of the writing, all of the production work, and assumed all of the production costs. Later on, quite a bit of the material published each month came from other fans, both local and out-of-region; however, the club never really did take to the idea that the monthly newszine could in fact be a unifying club activity.

*Chat* might well have remained at that level of effort indefinitely, except for a spur-of-the-moment decision in February 1978 to attend a small convention in Little Rock, Arkansas, where we met Bob Tucker.

It's no secret that Bob Tucker has been a big influence and encouragement to us over the years. He was a frequent guest at our house when we lived in Chattanooga, and has been the source of several articles that have appeared in *Chat* and *Mimosa*. The result of that first meeting was a four-page interview which appeared in the sixth issue of *Chat* (March 1978), and boosted that issue's page count to eight pages, a seemingly astronomical level of activity for us at that time. But it turned out that after that, we would never do another issue of less than eight pages again.

That Tucker interview, in retrospect, isn't as interesting as later things involving him we've published. We asked him what his favorite novels were and he told us; we asked him how he came to be a writer and he told us; we asked him what he was working on and he told us. It is to Tucker's credit (and his wit) that the interview came out as well as it did; we didn't ask him a single question about any of the fannish hijinks he's been involved in over the years like the Staples war or the Tucker Hotel. The nearest thing of fan historical interest was his account of



his airplane trip to Australia for the 1975 Worldcon. He must have thought we were just a couple of neos, and who knows – he may have been mostly right.

We eventually conducted and published much more interesting interviews with Don Wollheim, Hal Clement, Jack Chalker, Vincent DiFate, and Jack Williamson; there were also a couple of three-way interviews, involving us, Bob Tucker, and other writers; one of them was with Frank Robinson and one with Robert Bloch. The Bloch interview, from *Chat* 12 (September 1978), was particularly memorable, and even today it still reads well. See for yourself...

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## The Two Bobs

### an interview with Bob Bloch and Bob Tucker

On Friday, July 28 at Rivercon, *Chat* had the opportunity of meeting Robert Bloch and, with longtime friend and fellow author Bob Tucker, discussing various remembrances. Following is a portion of that dialogue.

**Chat:** Let's talk about old-time fandom.

**Tucker:** All right.

**Chat:** When did you meet Bob Bloch?

**Tucker:** In 1946. The 4<sup>th</sup> World Convention was in Los Angeles in 1946. 'Pacificon' it was called. And one day I was out on this lake; it was in a little park across the street from the convention hall, and I was out there boating, taking a break from the convention. So I was out there in a little electric boat, and lo and behold, here comes Bob in *his* little electric boat. When I tell this story, I exaggerate for effect; he really didn't ram into me, he didn't capsize me and knock me over, but I *tell* that he did.

That's how we met. We went back and he told a story on the program about his typewriter, which introduced me to the humor of Robert Bloch. He underwent a harrowing experience not too much before then, and he was a poor struggling writer at the time. And if you remember the story, Robert, you did something with your typewriter that you talked about in 1946.

**Bloch:** No. I don't even *remember* 1946.

**Tucker:** (Laughs) Well, he hocked his typewriter to buy groceries, and then when he had the idea for a story he no longer had the typewriter. He couldn't get it out of hock because he'd consumed the groceries and they wouldn't take the wrappers.

**Chat:** Were you living in California at the time?

**Bloch:** No. I went to California for the first time in 1937; I stayed with Hank Kuttner five weeks. It was at that occasion I met Fritz Leiber, Forry Ackerman, and C.L. Moore. I fell in





love with California; it was a different world, an ideal place to be. So when 1946 came around with Pacificon, I went out there again. Tucker and I *did* meet on the lake, we *were* in boats, and we *did* bump into one another. We switched chicks or something of that sort and we spent the rest of the weekend together, and from that time on it's been downhill all the way. I went back again in '47; I didn't move out there until the end of 1959.

**Chat:** When did you become a professional writer?

**Bloch:** I was a professional in 1934, I'm afraid to say, but it's true. I've known this gentleman, and I use the term ill-advisedly, for 32 years. It's been quite an experience.

**Chat:** What was your first published story?

**Bloch:** "The Feast in the Abbey," in *Weird Tales*, in the January, 1935 issue which actually came out the first of November in 1934. They always issued them two months in advance in those days.

**Tucker:** Robert has seniority on me. He sold that story, although it appeared in the January '35 issue, about June or July in 1934 as I recall. Magazines have a long lead time. So he became a dirty old pro, underline the word dirty, in June or July of '34 and he has a terrific seniority on me because I did not sell my first story until about January of '41, something like that. It was called...

**Bloch:** "Slan".

**Tucker:** (Laughs) "Slan"! I used the pen name A.E. Van Vogt! No, it was called "Interstellar Way Station". Fred Pohl bought it and published it in *Super Science Novels*. So anyway, Bob has seven years seniority on me, and believe me, on him it shows!

**Bloch:** (Laughs) I've always wondered about Bob's first story, you know. I wonder why he didn't quit when he was ahead.

**Tucker:** (Laughs) Robert and I discovered something at Pacificon; we discovered that we could have more fun milking an audience by pretending to stab one another, heckle one another, than we could by playing buddy-buddy. We get up on stage together and play buddy-buddy and they doze, they nod, they fall asleep. We heckle one another and they're wide awake and alert awaiting the next sharply pointed knife.



**Chat:** Bob, how did you get involved with Hollywood?

**Bloch:** I got involved with Hollywood when I was about 3 years old, by going to silent movies. I'll never forget it. There was one silent film where a train would rush toward the audience and everyone would cower in their seats. I went *under* my seat, and when I lifted my head again there was a picture on with a very funny comedian in it; it was a two-reel comedy with Buster Keaton. And it took me until 1960 to meet Bus, when I went out to Hollywood and I found



myself on a baseball team with Buster. He was the pitcher and the late Dan Blocker was the catcher. That was quite a game!

**Tucker:** What position did you play?

**Bloch:** I was, um, *way* out in left field! From that moment we became fast friends. But the point, if any, was that I became a movie fan, a real movie buff. And I was very, very enamored of screen work. I never thought I'd get into it. But finally in 1959, I got an opportunity to do a television show. I went out and did it, and at the same time my novel *Psycho* was bought, which was then screened and released in 1960. So I've been involved more or less ever since.

**Chat:** What are your thoughts on *Psycho*? It's made you famous, if nothing else, but has it made you famous in a way you desire?

**Bloch:** Believe me, I have nothing but gratitude for all the things that have happened to me in my life. Look at the wonderful things that science fiction has done. By picking up a magazine when I was 10 years old, I didn't realize I was opening the door to a world that was going to give me a whole lifetime of pleasure and enable me to meet hundreds of people that I would not otherwise have met. I'm very grateful to all it has given me, in spite of Tucker.

**Chat:** You won your Hugo in 1959 for the short story, "That Hell-Bound Train". How many times have you been nominated?

**Bloch:** That's the only time. You know, I didn't even know I was up for it. I really didn't know that the story had been nominated. In 1959, I was at the Detroit Worldcon; Isaac Asimov was the Toastmaster and he asked me to help him out because, you know, he's pretty inarticulate. (Tucker laughs at this.) I was to hand out the Hugos. I was opening the envelope and I saw my name on the list of nominations. I didn't even know of it. When the story won, I was flabbergasted.

**Chat:** Bob, you won your Hugo for Best Fan Writer, I believe. When was that?

**Tucker:** The award was granted in 1970 for the year 1969. But do not accept that at face value. I've been writing for fanzines since my first fanzine appearance in 1932. When they got around to nominating me in 1969 for the 1970 award, it was for those 30 or 40 years of fan writing rather than the previous year. They were simply giving me a grandfather award, and it was understood as such.

**Chat:** Have you felt disappointment never having won for fiction?

**Tucker:** I've had two books nominated. The first Hugo awards were given out in 1953 in Philadelphia. They weren't called Hugos then; they were merely Achievement Awards. My book *The Long Loud Silence*, published in 1952, was one of the nominees for that year, but lost to Alfred Bester's *The Demolished Man*, which truly deserved to win. In 1970, *The Year of the Quiet Sun* was nominated along with Silverberg's *Tower of Glass* and Niven's *Ringworld*. And *Ringworld* won. My book came in number four of the five finalists. So I've been nominated twice, and quite honestly, I've been beaten by better books both times.

**Chat:** Thinking back over your years as a writer and a fan, can you think of anything especially significant or noteworthy?

**Tucker:** Go back to 1943, the first time you were Guest of Honor.



**Bloch:** Oh, yes, Toronto! I was Guest of Honor at the Worldcon in Toronto because this character over here made that suggestion. He's the guy who said "Make him Guest of Honor", so they did. We went up there; things were a little bit different. There were about 200 people at this affair and they had a small banquet. We paid for our own banquet tickets; I mean, the Guests of Honor and Toastmaster paid for their own banquet tickets!

**Tucker:** No freebies in those days. The cons were too small and too poor. They couldn't afford to pay for it. At that Worldcon he was Pro Guest of Honor and I was Fan Guest of Honor. This was the first time we appeared on a program together. That's how we discovered we could play straight man or jab at each other.

**Bloch:** What happened was that Tucker had gotten together a very elaborate survey on fandom; an anthropological study complete with charts and diagrams. He'd done considerable serious and intensive research through correspondence, questionnaire, and documentation. He presented this thing as part of the formal program. As luck would have it, they had to have something to do at the banquet; it was a matter of whoever was there would contribute something. So, I turned up the next day at the banquet, and I, too, had a survey of fandom with some charts which I had done in my room the previous night. It was a deliberate contradiction of Tucker's findings.

**Tucker:** (Laughing) Bloch did the most beautiful job imaginable. Now, picture me with this solidly researched and backgrounded survey; I actually sent out hundreds of questionnaires, and my charts were accurate as of that day. Imagine Bloch getting up there with his fake charts and very neatly in a few words, a few quick slits of that knife, he cut the ground from under me and I fell through the stage. He sabotaged me wonderfully well.

**Bloch:** What was the situation when you laid down on the streetcar tracks?

**Tucker:** Ah! In 1948, the United States was abandoning streetcars in favor of buses. Canada, being more enlightened, kept their trains and trolley cars. And Toronto, on a Sunday in 1948, was the deadest thing next to Jacksonville, Illinois in 1978. I live in Jacksonville. {{ ed. note: at that time, anyway}} In Jacksonville now, during the week the good citizens go out in their backyards, sit on the patio and watch the grass grow. That's excitement! On that Saturday night in Toronto in 1948, the whole con goes down to the intersection and watches the red light blink. So the next day, Sunday, we left the hotel and went to the restaurant and it was closed, we got to the bar and it was closed; the only thing to do was go down the street to where the convention was in the process of closing. And it happened that we had to cross the street where there were tramway tracks in the middle. We looked up and down the street and there wasn't a damn thing to be seen, so to show these backward Canadians how forward-looking we Americans were, I laid down on the streetcar tracks and *dared* one to run over me! And nothing happened! All the streetcars were in the garage!

**Bloch:** But there *was* a streetcar on Sunday. That morning I took one to a park to see the elephants. I'm very big on elephants.

**Tucker:** Well, Robert has always followed the elephants. Usually with a shovel.





**Chat:** You two are amazing. Have either of you any last comments? Or rebuttals?

**Bloch:** I'm so glad you did this on Friday night while we're still alive.

**Tucker:** And reasonably sober.



That first year of *Chat* also produced another friendship that's lasted to this day, although we rarely see much of him anymore. In *Chat* 8 (May 1978) we were the first fanzine to publish work by fan artist Charlie Williams. We were introduced to Chuckles through a mutual friend; at the time he was co-owner of small comics store in Knoxville and teaching a University of Tennessee extension course in cartoon illustration. Dick's intro of him in *Chat* read:

*"In my opinion, Charlie is a damn fine illustrator, good enough to win some day (soon!) the Fan Artist Hugo. Remember you saw his work here first!"*

Well, it's turned out that Charlie has never been ultra-active enough to garner enough interest for a nomination, but he has over the years gained notice. Mike Glycer once even listed him in *File 770* as one of the five best fan artists of the year. From his slick style and sharp wit, it's easy to see why...

Charlie Williams was the bridge that took us from year one to year two of *Chat*. We had gone to our first Worldcon (IguanaCon in Phoenix) that August, and had brought a few issues with us for trade or giveaway. While in Phoenix, we went to a program item on fan publishing and met Brian Earl Brown, who was just starting his fanzine reviewzine, *Whole Fanzine Catalog*, about then. Not too long after, we started getting favorable reviews from Brian, and one of the things he often mentioned (and what undoubtedly caught his eye in the first place) was the Williams artwork. And soon after that, tradezines started appearing with regularity, and letters of comment on any particular issue started becoming commonplace instead of unusual. It was clear that we'd reached "critical mass".





#### FANNISH LEGEND



The origins of *Chat*, the fourth fannish ghod, should be obvious. Ah, but how many forget and pronounce the silent *h*.

New contributors started showing up that second year, too. SFWA members Sharon Webb, Ralph Roberts, and Perry Chapdelaine all provided material for publication; Chapdelaine's was a free-wheeling, opinionated monthly column on writing, small press publishing, and related things. About then, we also started getting noticed by other fan artists. Cartoons and spot illos by local area fan artists Cliff Biggers, Roger Caldwell, Jerry Collins, Rusty Burke, and Wade Gilbreath started adding variety to each issue, and we even received contributions from some well-known out-of-region fan artists, like Jeanne

Gomoll, Victoria Poyser, and Alexis Gilliland. The 18<sup>th</sup> issue (March 1979) had a full-page cover by Gilbreath; previous to that, we had just run a logo and colophon at the top of page one and jumped right into local fan news. The club members seemed to like it, and we never did publish another issue without full page cover art. Succeeding months featured covers by Williams, Taral Wayne, and Kurt Erichsen, as well as by local fan artists Julie Scott, Tom Walker, Bob Barger, Earl Cagle, and Rusty Burke. One other fan artist who responded to a request for artwork was Teddy Harvia, and his cartoon, that appeared in the 21<sup>st</sup> issue (June 1979) introduced the saber-toothed tiger mascot that became identified with *Chat* during the second half of its run.



*Chat* 21 cover by Earl Cagle

Cat cartoons were a common theme in *Chat* after that. Letters of Comment or their envelopes often had some kind of cat sticker or stamp. We even received a coffee cup in the mail from the Barnard-Columbia University SF Club (in lieu of a LoC, presumably) that depicted a contented-looking cat and the words "Le Chat". Harvia followed up his *Chat* cartoon in that same issue with an amusing commentary about how he came to draw it; here it is again...

## "A True Story"

*Teddy Harvia*

Saturday last, dhog brought me the mail. I hadn't even heard the postman at the box. I tossed dhog a bheer and he proceeded to pound on the tab with his teeth.

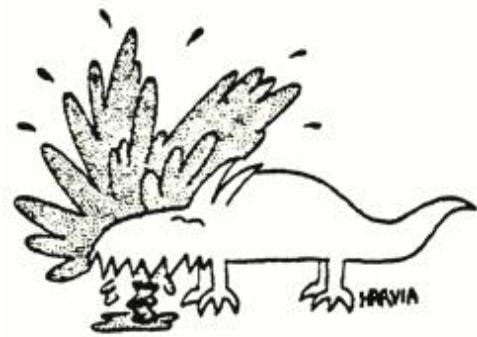
A "Mpls in 73" flyer, a love letter from my girlfriend in France, and a fanzine from Chattanooga – not much, I thought, as I glanced through the mail. But the last had me



wondering. I don't know anyone in Chattanooga except McPherson Strutts, and he doesn't count.

A hand-marked block on the inside page explained why I had received the fanzine. Its editors wanted art. No problem, I decided.

Suddenly, a shower of bheer suds descended on my head. Dhog had opened his bheer. I glared at him as he happily tried to catch the jet shooting from the can. You'll have to clean up this mess, I told him, but knew that he wouldn't. He never did. A creature as independent as dhog, who insists on opening his own bheers, has no master.



Dhog (*Bheercanus poundus*)

I set the fanzine aside to dry.

Later that day I relaxed with dhog on my feet to read *Chat* through the bheer stains and teeth marks. Words and comments here and there brought cartoon ideas to mind, but I dismissed them one by one. All in *Chat* seemed temporal, unlikely to recur in the next issue. I needed a cartoon idea which was outside time.

Why not just send a cartoon from your file, dhog suggested. They would know, I responded. They would think I hadn't even taken the time to read their fanzine.

For two hours I read and reread the issue. I went line by line, word by word, until my mind and body finally fell exhausted into a fitful sleep.

In a dream, the 'h' in the title of the fanzine faded away. It was so obvious, I suddenly realized, that the stuff of fannish legends had been staring me in the face all the time.

I leapt awake, rolling dhog off my feet and across the floor. The idea became a scrawled note. Dhog mumbled for another bheer.

The next day, with only slight changes, I inked the caption. But the accompanying sketch seemed inadequate. Dhog yawned with disinterest at the cat I had drawn.

The sketch lay for three days on my desk. The gulf between conception and execution seemed infinitely wide. I knew eventually I would send off the cartoon, whatever its final form. But I hesitated. The legend seemed to demand time.

Tuesday afternoon a vision from my past entered my mind. I remembered as a child wondering at the drawing of a saber-toothed tiger in the encyclopedia. Suddenly the beast was before me. His scream lifted the hair on the back of my neck. I was face-to-face with primal fantasy.

As quickly as it had appeared, it vanished back into prehistory. I hurriedly tried to sketch its essence.

At home that night I faithfully traced the creature in ink. When I showed the finished drawing to dhog, his ears shot straight up in the air. And I knew I had captured the legend on paper.

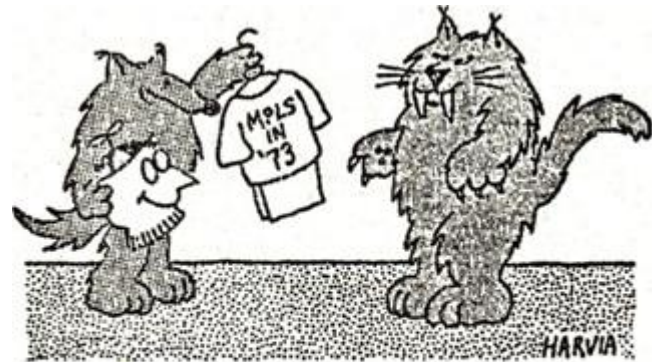
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It turned out that Teddy Harvia's "Fourth Fannish Ghod" article generated more mail than anything else that ever appeared in *Chat*. But what was more interesting was that it seemed to be the catalyst for a larger number of letters of comment. Where we were hard pressed to find two or three pages of letters to print, every issue after that we didn't have any problem filling five or more pages, even with the tiny reduced print and narrow margins we were using to keep the page count to a manageable number. The most amusing response to the "Chat" article was from Sharon Webb, who wrote:

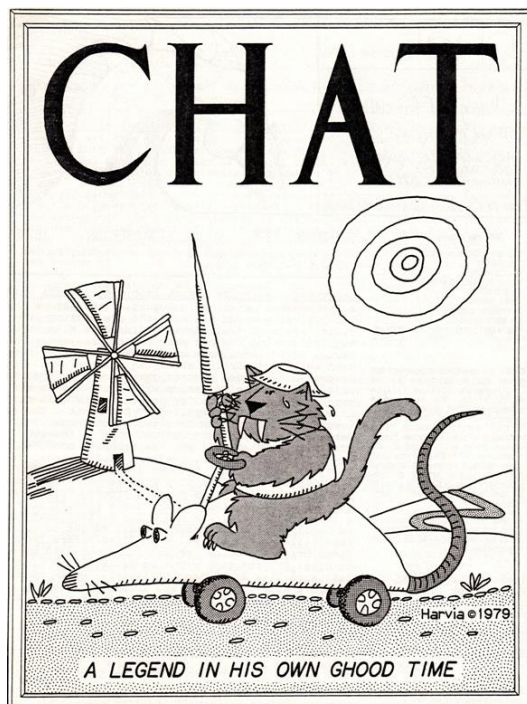
*"Loved Harvia's fourth fannish ghod, Chat. I was so impressed that I was driven to do some research on the subject: The ghod is, of course, a chatamount. His favorite food is chatfish, but chatbird is violently poisonous to him. Upon ingestion of chatbird the chat will exhibit the chatastrophic symptoms of chataplexy. If the remedy (Chatalpha Chaterpillar) is withheld, the chondition rapidly progresses to a state of chatalepsy.*

*"I would hope that the fourth fannish ghod Chat sees fit to reveal himself to us at Chattacon 5."*



But you can't go to the masquerade as yourself, Chat! How's about a nice neofan disguise instead?

Unfortunately, it was not to be. While Chattacon 5 (January 1980) indeed had a masquerade, nobody entered as "Chat". Back then, convention masquerading had not become the relatively big-time craft it is now, and apparently nobody who read *Chat* was very much into that aspect of fandom. A "Chat" costume would have been amusing.



Chat 24 cover by Teddy Harvia

By the time Chattacon 5 rolled around, most of the "Chat" puns had run their course; by then everyone in the club was thinking more about the upcoming convention than of mythical saber-toothed tigers. After more than two years, the club itself had grown quite a bit from its modest beginnings. No longer were meetings held at the home of one of the members; it wasn't unusual to have 25 or more people at a meeting by then, and the club treasury had grown to over a hundred dollars (those were big numbers back then for a small metro area like Chattanooga). It didn't go unnoticed by a certain few club members that even though the club was contributing less than half of the publishing costs, *Chat* was still siphoning off what was considered a significant share (usually between \$5 and \$15 a month) of club dues that could have gone into more down-to-earth endeavors, like throwing a big treasury-depleting party each month. And smaller, less costly issues of *Chat* would mean more money for bigger and better parties yet. Personality differences within the club were starting to



build that would affect the club as a whole and *Chat* in particular, even if we weren't fully aware of it at the time. We certainly wouldn't have believed it then if somebody had told us that we would cease publication after just one more year.

For that and other reasons, the Chattacon 5 issue of *Chat*, number 28 (January 1980), was another transitional issue. Gone was the photocopier method of repro; Dick had felt more and more uncomfortable about using his employer's Xerox machine to run off higher and higher copy counts of greater and greater page counts each month. It had become unmanageable, so we had acquired an honest-to-goodness Gestetner mimeo and electrostencil machine for future fanzine projects. *Chat* 28 was the first of them.

That issue was also memorable from the article by Bob Tucker in it. Every January since our first meeting with him in Arkansas, he'd been a guest at Chattacon, and had spent a few days with us before or after the convention. His visit in early 1980 was particularly memorable, because he drove down with Lou Tabakow from Cincinnati; Lou was already in the early stages of Lou Gehrig's Disease that would eventually claim him, but we remember the two days they spent with us before the convention were two of the most fun days we've ever had. Bob was Toastmaster of that Chattacon and was the subject of "The Last Whole Earth Bob Tucker Roast" at the Saturday night banquet, a truly funny and entertaining event of which sadly no documentation remains. He had also contributed an amusing article of fanhistory interest that was printed in the Program Book and also in *Chat*. Here it is again...

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## A Scholarly Report on an Almost-Lost Art Form

*Bob Tucker*

"Lez-ettes" was the name given to the very-short stories which appeared between 1940 and 1968 in a fanzine called *Le Zombie*. That was a time when fandom was very young and had not yet gained a social conscience, and refused to take itself seriously.

The appeal of the stories was that they each consisted of only three chapters, and each chapter contained but one word. (A very few stories contained more than one word per chapter, but they were not as popular and as pithy as the single-word chapters.)

Two examples follow:

Chapter One:  
Fan

Chapter Two:  
Fanne

Chapter Three:  
One-Shot

Chapter One:  
Jill

Chapter Two:  
Pill

Chapter Three:  
Nil

The Lez-ettes were the invention of the old Slan Shack gang in Battle Creek, Michigan, and were written by Walt Liebscher, Al Ashley, Jack Wiedenbeck, E.E. Evans, and myself. The rules for writing them were simple: each chapter was to contain only one word, if possible, and



the three chapters taken together should tell a coherent story, with the third and last chapter being reserved for the climax or culmination. The kind of story a Big Name Editor was likely to buy if he wasn't afraid of being fired.

The chapters were to be set out as illustrated in this report, and the desired goal was to be as terse and as clever as possible but to always tell a complete story.

That which follows is a reprinting of the "better" stories taken from the pages of *Le Zombie* during the years mentioned above, and you are invited to contribute to the art form and so prevent it from becoming entirely lost. Try your fine hand at this exciting kind of fiction. You may win fame and fortune, but, unfortunately, you won't become eligible for membership in the Science Fiction Writers of America.

Chapter One:  
Prison

Chapter Two:  
Nitrous Oxide

Chapter Three:  
Silicon



Chapter One:  
Sun

Chapter Two:  
None

Chapter Three:  
All Done

Chapter One:  
Constellation

Chapter Two:  
Constipation

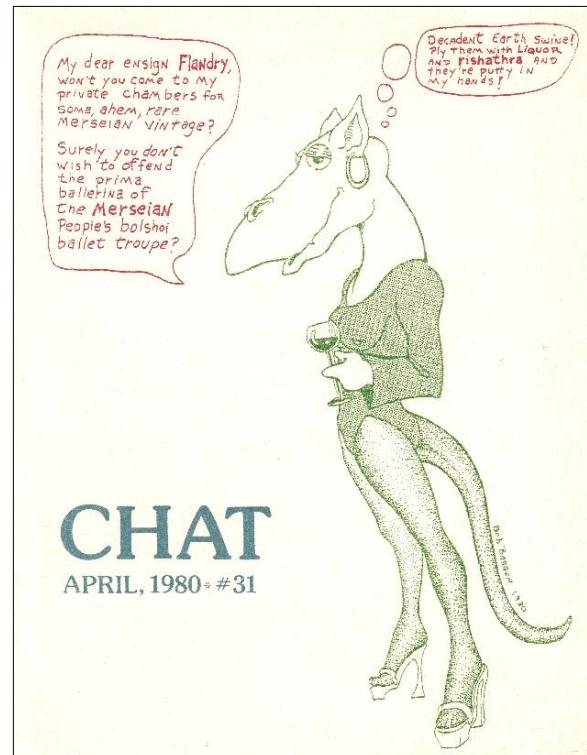
Chapter Three:  
Nova



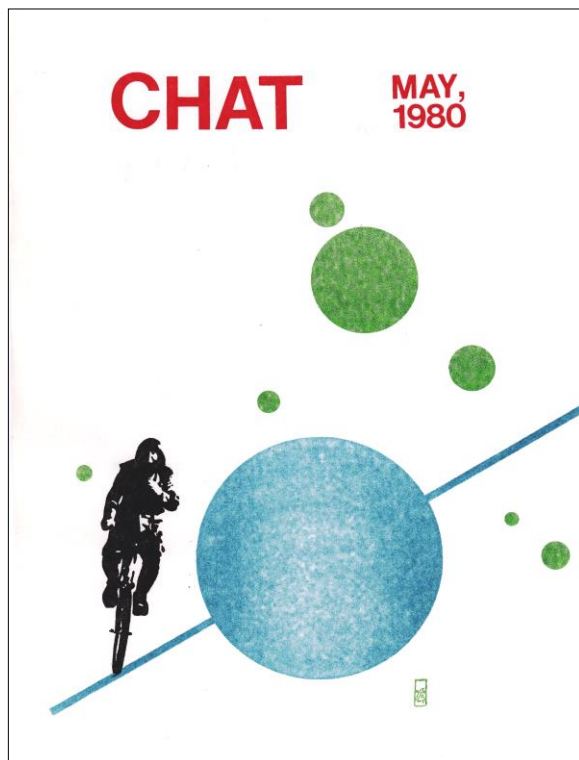


Switching over to mimeo had an additional side benefit – it allowed us to use color in *Chat*. Issue 31 (April 1980) was the first one where we used different colored mimeo inks; it had a three-color cover by local fan artist Bob Barger. There wasn't as much reader response as we thought there would be, although it did catch the attention of Taral, who was doing fanzine reviews for Mike Glyer's *File 770* at the time. Taral gave *Chat* a *somewhat* positive review – he praised it for use of color mimeo and appearance, but thought we were pretty well hemmed-in by the clubzine format and monthly deadlines. He suggested we might be better off doing a different kind of fanzine.

We were starting to think along those same lines ourselves, but frankly, we *liked* publishing *Chat* and the growing number of fannish contacts we were making because of it – it wasn't unusual to find letters from Canada, England, Australia, Italy, or even Minnesota in our mailbox. Besides, after three years, that little saber-toothed tiger was part of the family. So we pressed on.



*Chat* 31 cover by Bob Barger



*Chat* 32 cover by Tom Walker

There were other color covers after that. For very next issue, *Chat* 32 (May 1980), we managed to work in all four mimeo ink colors we had; fortunately it was a fairly simple cover with lots of white space as buffer between colors. And there were three issues after that, 34 through 38, that had two-color covers. However, we soon discovered to our dismay that although we now had the means to do multi-color mimeo, we still didn't necessarily have the time. Deadlines fell just too close together. And it added somewhat to the cost of the fanzine, which again was starting to be an issue with the club.

By the time that the third annish, *Chat* 37 (October 1980) came out, growing personality differences had polarized the club to the point where it was in effect two different and competing fan organizations. There wasn't any semblance of unity anymore, and meetings had started to become confrontational to the point where we no longer looked forward each month to attending. It was obvious that someone needed



to stir things up a bit, to at least *try* to regain some semblance of unity. So, in issue 37, someone did.

The article was titled “A Statement of Intent”, and was written by a club member known for his sharp sense of humor. We ran it as an editorial, although in retrospect it might have been better as a letter of comment. In any event, it succeeded in stirring things up, but probably not in the way that was intended. Here is the text:

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*“Some time ago at a meeting-after-the-meeting meeting, it was noted that the Chattanooga fandom had lost sight of itself. That is, that it is no longer concerned with science fiction and SF fandom, and that it had become chaotic, directionless, and was turning into a party club. Let’s face it; any bunch of half-drunk mundane idiots can get together and have a party. SF fandom is supposed to be better than the mundane world, not just like it.*

*“So it was decided that CSFA needed a leader, one who would provide a structure of continuity both within the meeting and from meeting so meeting, not just someone who just stands in front of everybody and lets everybody talk at once. The SMOFs conferred on this leader (as yet nameless) as unlimited an authority over meetings as his henchmen could secure for him. However, there seemed to be no one to entrust this power to due to either lack of time or fear of lack of experience in wielding power. No one that is, but myself.*

*“I did not want this position but I recognized that another candidate might not have my determination for reform and improvement for CSFA. The SMOFs understood this and assented to the inevitable.*

*“Therefore, at the October meeting there will be a short ceremony of investation wherein I will assume power and appoint my henchmen. Afterwards the meeting will begin along guidelines set forth by me.*

*“Wishing myself well and the CSFA renewed health and prosperity, this is your friend and servant...”*

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Unfortunately, the message that was presented, namely the obviousness that the club needed some revitalization, was misinterpreted as an attempt to wrest control of the club. The fact that there was never any control to wrest, the club having been organized as essentially an anarchy, wasn’t considered. An uproar ensued, with all kinds of accusations being tossed about, and what happened was that *Chat* itself became the focus of all the unpleasantness that was going on. The next three issues had a lively debate in the letters column about what does or doesn’t make for an interesting meeting, and we were both surprised



Chat 40 cover by Charlie Williams



and pleased to get correspondence from readers in other cities comparing similar situations in their local clubs with CSFA. The most interesting and gratifying was from a fan in Philadelphia, who wrote:

*“It is interesting to note the comments about a ‘power struggle’ and factionalizing within your club.*

*“This has been a problem which has plagued the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society for the last eight years (since I’ve been in). The people who do the work are inevitably accused of trying to grab power. What most people don’t realize is there is really almost no power to be obtained by running the typical regional SF club. And the positions of responsibility are generally available for those who are interested and dedicated enough to use them. Unfortunately, there are those who aren’t willing to take that approach, and instead seek titles for their own sakes. This leads to the downfall of the club, as the workers get disgusted with all the drones. This series of events has occurred countless times in PSFS and other clubs.”*

That letter appeared in *Chat* 40 (February 1981), which was the final issue. By early 1981 we had decided that Taral had been right after all; we *were* pretty well hemmed-in by the clubzine format and monthly deadlines, and had taken *Chat* about as far as we thought a clubzine could or should be taken. Twenty pages a month may not sound like much in these days of powerful personal computers and slick word processing software, but back then each page had to be laboriously pasted-up from hand-typed copy. We also had decided that things with the club were probably not going to get better any time soon (they didn’t), and we were tiring of all the bullshit. We longed to do a zine that didn’t have or need any affiliations or sources of co-funding. It was time to try something else – a different kind of fanzine with a more open publishing schedule. And so *Mimosa* was born, the name indicative of our southern fan background, but like ourselves, not necessarily or even originally from the south.

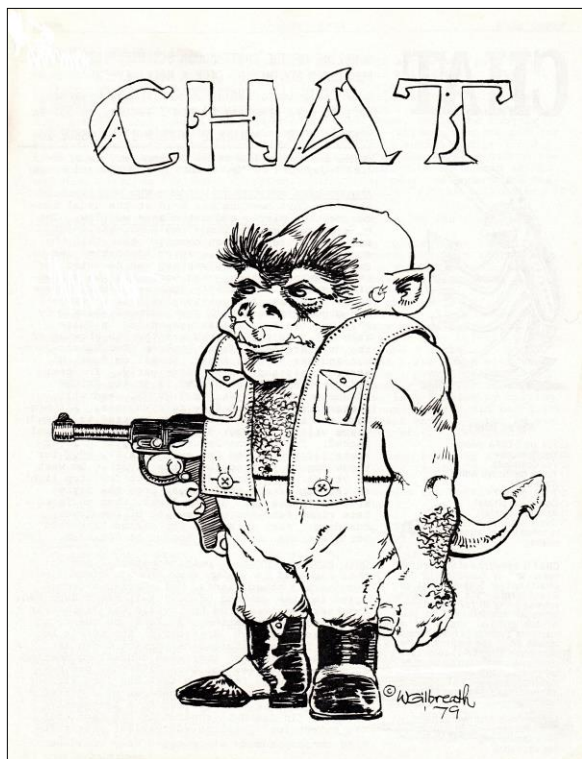
It’s been almost nine years now since the demise of *Chat*. In that time, CSFA split into two separate clubs. The original CSFA hung on for another couple of years before atrophying away; the rival club still exists, although it has undergone so many changes in its cast of characters that the differences that originally led to its formation are probably only dimly if at all remembered. There were other Chattanooga clubzines after *Chat*; however, none of them persisted as long, appeared as regularly, or had as wide a circulation or as varied and interesting a content. *Chat* was a product of that rarest of times in any new fan organization, the first few years when feuds hadn’t yet had time to develop.

And we admit there were times during the early and mid 1980s when we vaguely, but not really seriously, considered resuming publication in a more newszine-type format. We remember one of those times well; it was a breezy Tennessee autumn night with the wind singing through the branches of the big Sweet Gum tree in our backyard. We thought it sounded kind of like a big cat yowling... ❄

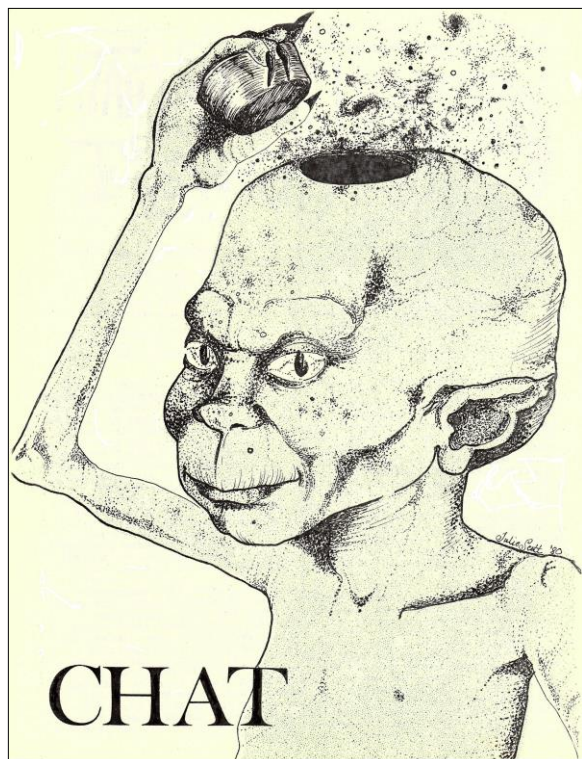


*Illustrations by Kurt Erichsen, Charlie Williams, and Teddy Harvia.*

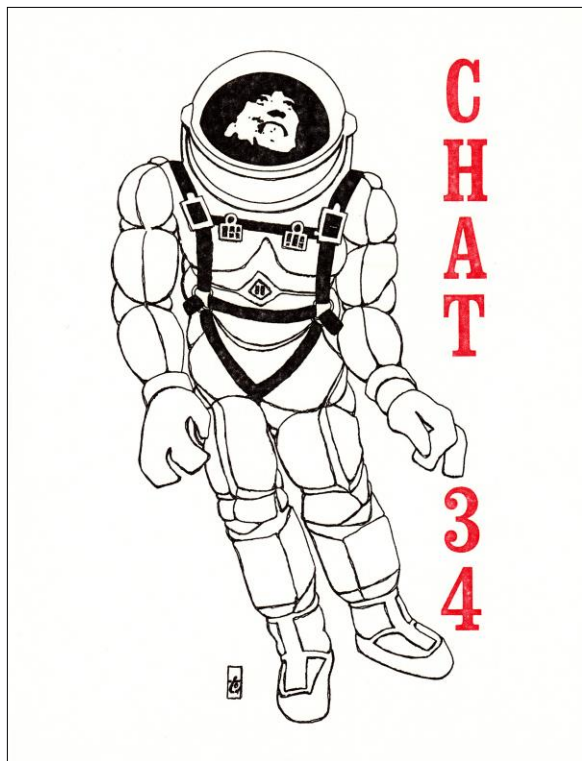




Chat 23 cover by Wade Gilbreath



Chat 36 cover by Julia Morgan Scott



Chat 34 cover by Tom Walker



Chat 33 cover by Teddy Harvia



