





## P L E N U M

For the  
FANTASY AMATEUR PRESS ASSOCIATION  
Number 7

By Milton A. Rothman  
2113 N. Franklin St.  
Philadelphia 22, Pa.

////////////////////////////////////

AS I SAW IT ---

Or; How to run a convention in ten easy nervous breakdowns.

I am contemplating taking a job with the State Department, now that this Fifth World Science Fiction Convention is over. Surely no diplomatic task can seem difficult after the delicacy of protocol, the tight-rope walking, the hair-splitting decisions, and the catering to the temperaments of temperamental people which goes into the job of putting on a science fiction convention.

The purpose of this is to give a candid account of the Philcon as seen through the eyes of the chairman, indicating the problems that came up, and especially noting the mistakes that were made, hoping that this will serve as a guide to some future convention chairman.

I shall not spare my own mistakes, and shall not defend myself against any accusation of error. All I say is that I did the best I could, considering my inexperience in such a line, and while I shall probably never again undertake such a task, I believe the experience will be useful in other situations.

.....

It really began when I was still in Paris. The war was over, and I was waiting to go home, and planning the things that I would do when I got home. The insidious thought entered my mind: why shouldn't Philadelphia get the convention for 1947?

When I got back to the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society, it seemed that the same thought had penetrated that sanctum, and so when I attended the Pacificon, it was with the intention of getting the next convention for Philadelphia.

That turned out to be an absurdly easy task, since nobody else seemed to want the convention. Immediately, a heavy weight seemed to settle on my shoulders. Also immediately, E.E. Evans and Walt Daugherty handed me a pair of dollar bills, and the Philcon Society was formed. The Philcon Society as yet had no shape or character, no charter or officers. But it had two dollars in the treasury, and two members. I wasn't even a member of it myself, yet. Due to some oversight, I didn't put myself down on the membership list until I was number 14.

This situation has some obscure bearing on the question which came up later entitled: "Button, button, who's giving the convention?"

Getting back to Philadelphia after the Pacificon, I gave a report upon that convention, and announced that in another 14 months, Philadelphia was expected to put on a similar clambake. At that there was a slight lull, after which people in the PSFS began to realize that it would be necessary to form some sort of an organization to handle the thing, and of course that organization would be composed of PSFS members.

Whereupon Jim Williams, a politician of the first water, proposed that I be elected chairman of the affair, with full powers to choose assistants and make decisions. Nobody objected, so I was it.

Not wishing to be a dictator, and especially not wishing to do all of the work of the convention myself, my first task was to choose a staff and to devise a schedule which would show just what each person was expected to have done by a certain date. By spreading the work out over a period of months, I expected that it would reduce the amount of work to be done at any given instant.

Sending out a few enthusiastic communiques, and bustling about with a great show of getting great works under way, we bounded ahead in the drive to put across the Philcon.

I think that getting the convention staff organized at such an early date was my first mistake. There was no need for such haste, and lengthier consideration might have resulted in an organization whose members fitted their jobs better. On the other hand, there were these dollars that had to be solicited, and we had to make it appear to fandom as a whole that we were on the job, and I felt that I had to produce an indication that I was not planning to run the whole show single-handed.

So for better or for worse, the staff was picked and jobs assigned a year before the convention date. We got membership cards printed, began to roll off the first Philcon News, and things were getting under way.

A most peculiar organization was the Philcon Society when you get right down to it. Possessing two members even before the chairman was chosen, it seemed to blossom full-grown out of the tradition that a convention carried with it a national society whose members contributed to the cost of putting on the convention. It had no charter, and in no way was there any written or oral agreement defining its function or areas of interest. It just existed.

It was natural that the idea should enter my mind that this Philcon Society had something to do with giving the convention. There was the list of members in front of me, and there were the dollars they had sent in. The Philcon Society was paying for the convention;



why couldn't we say that the Philcon Society was giving the convention? After all, this was a national affair, and I didn't want to be narrow about the thing.

At that stage of the game, all of this must have been more or less in my subconscious mind. It didn't come to the surface until Sam Moskowitz and Will Sykora made an eventful visit to the PSFS. Their purpose was to propose an Eastern club federation, to be composed, at the start, of the ESFA, the Queens SFL, and the PSFS. Its function, they said, was to form a stronger group of eastern fans so that they could put over some of their ideas for better magazines, and incidentally this federation would be able to assist the PSFS financially and otherwise in putting on the Philcon.

Now it may have been the glass of sherry I'd had previously doing its evil work, but I found myself getting up and saying something like this: "It's really the Philcon Society, and not the PSFS which is putting on the convention. The Philcon Society has its own treasury, and since all the people here are members of the Philcon Society, it seems superfluous to require another organization to assist the convention."

There the matter rested, and I forgot about it for the time being.

Then, two weeks later, I made a really stupendous mistake. It is a mistake of such unimaginable magnitude that I don't see how one person could have done it. .... I must be pretty good.

What I did was to get up at a PSFS meeting and make a motion to turn down the idea of an interclub federation.

Now this didn't come out of a clear blue sky. I'd talked with other members about it, and I'd shown a copy of my resolution to Oswald Train (the PSFS president), who happened to be in the hospital at the time of the meeting. Nearly every PSFS member was opposed to the federation idea -- the main reason being that they simply couldn't be bothered. So you see that the federation would have been turned down in any case, whether I had said anything or not.

But my leading the opposition wasn't diplomatic, and I expected Moskowitz and Sykora to get mad at me.

Trying to patch things up, I offered them the job of New York representative of the Philcon. Altho Moskowitz declined, he seemed friendly about it. On the other hand, while Sykora accepted the job, he wanted an election in the PSFS to confirm him. When I said that was not necessary, I did not hear from him again -- a condition which left me in considerable suspense concerning his attitude.

This, I am sure, was connected with the tempest in a teapot which had arisen at that time.



Imagine my consternation in receiving a copy of Fantasy Times, to read in its pages a headline screaming that Rothman had said the PSFS was not giving the Philcon! It appears that my innocent statement at the PSFS meeting had resulted in a bit of discussion in the halls of the ESFA, finally culminating in this news story.

Now it became my task to combine two divergent philosophies: (1) the opinion which said the PSFS was giving the convention, and (2) the one which said the Philcon Society was giving the convention. I tried to explain that this was semantically meaningless -- that whatever you called it, the same physical situation existed. But being loyal to labels, the boys were not satisfied. Then I explained that (1) and (2) were not mutually exclusive, and that the PSFS and the Philcon Society could both give the convention. This was summed up in a resolution which stated that "The PSFS created the Philcon Society for the purpose of giving the convention."

Tactfully, I refrained from pointing out that there had been two Philcon Society members before the PSFS had ever thought of it, and let the matter remain as it was.

The tempest died down, and the work went on as if nothing had ever happened. And, of course, nothing had really happened, except that I'd been required to write about twenty thousand words of letters explaining my viewpoint.

From then on I resolved to be more diplomatic in whatever I said or did, but even so I was burned a few more times before acquiring the technique of speaking for publication. For, friends, whatever you say, as soon as somebody puts it into a newspaper with a headline over it, it is going to sound different from the way you intended it to sound.

Aside from the shading of meanings which headlines apart to a statement, there was at least one case where I was definitely misquoted. And, strangely enough, this was a case where my statement had been in writing. In the Philcon News I had said that the PSFS members were proposing that the PSFS receive a portion of the convention profits. In both Dunkelberger's Fanews and Taurasi's Fantasy Times it was reported as if it were I who was proposing that the PSFS get all the profits.

I had two objections to this, aside from general considerations of journalistic accuracy. First, as chairman it wasn't my job to make such propositions. Secondly, the PSFS was not asking for all of the profits. No need to make the thing sound any worse than it is.

During this period, events were occurring in other fields. A letter came from Forrest J. Ackerman, enthusiastic with the idea that we should raise a fund to bring a British fan over here. Um, I thought. This is going to be complicated.

Like congress, when you don't know what to do, you call an investigation. So I suggested that Ackerman find out whether this



idea was approved by the Britishers, and whether any of them would be able to make such a trip. In a short time the reply came that they were all for it. So there was nothing left for me to do but appoint Ackerman a committee of one to handle the job.

It was about time for the first Philcon News to appear. Bob Madle and Jack Agnew were supposed to run the thing off. We decided to use my mimeo, since it had automatic feed. The boys were supposed to come around here about 1 PM. Agnew showed up about 3 with the stencils, and Madle popped in about 5, after we'd run the whole thing off. It was a pretty sloppy issue.

The second Philcon News was actually run off by the Agnew-Madle combo, rest their souls, without a delay of more than three or four weeks.

During all this time I was advertising frantically for suggestions for the convention program. Speer sent in a few, and a couple of others said a few things which we found useful, but for the most part, a vast pall of silence seemed to hang over fandom.

This resulted, as it turned out, in a program which leaned heavily on the scientific side. Which was to be expected, since my own mind runs in that direction, and if I am forced to think up the entire program, then that's the kind of program it's going to be. This is one matter on which I'll accept no complaints.

Sometime in the course of events I had made arrangements with the Penn Sheraton Hotel for the convention hall, a matter which gave my brain much reason to ache, as I had made an estimate of 200-300 for attendance, and circa 100 for the banquet. I kept hoping that not more than 300 would show up. In this, it turned out that I was optimistic, as about 175 registered, and another 25 or so wandered in without signing up, so that the hall fitted our meetings very snugly. As for the banquet -- we finally paid for 102 places!

Suddenly it was May, 1947, and it was getting to be time that we began getting the program booklet under way.

I called an emergency meeting of the editorial staff -- meaning Agnew and Madle. They were to come to my house of a certain Monday evening so as to run off the final Philcon News and plan how the booklet was to be done. At the last minute we invited Sol Levin, since he could help us in the art department.

Then Madle told Ossie Train to come along, and some way or another Bud Waldo and Jay Klein showed up. Then appeared Jim Williams out of nowhere.

The mob milled around in my room for awhile, upon which I gave up the idea of getting any work done, and we all went downstairs and talked.



The program booklet turned out to be more of a headache than the rest of the convention put together. First thing we went over to see Jack McCandless, who was engaged in printing "Venus Equilateral." We told him we were thinking of charging \$5 per page for advertisements. He told us we were crazy. So we decided to charge more for professional ads, and we would have the thing offset. That meant that somebody had to paste up pages, do hand lettering, and in general perform a job that none of us had ever done before.

It was quite obvious that our booklet couldn't be as good-looking as the Pacificon's, but we determined to do what we could.

First thing was to print up letterheads and send out letters soliciting advertisements -- at whatever rate the advertiser cared to pay. We figured that was the fairest system, since we had no idea how much to ask. This scheme turned out to be not so hot. But even now I do not know how else we could have done it.

The results were two-fold: (1) Our advertisers either wrote back asking for a specific price, or (2) their contributions were somewhat less than we'd expected. When we replied to (1), asking for a specific amount, it was generally too high.

I guess we were just greedy.

In the end, we actually did come out a few dollars ahead on the program. One big trouble was that we had been going on the basis of advice which had been given us concerning how much money we should expect. The advice was not too good.

And then the deadline! We made a deadline of August 1. This gave the advertisers a solid month to prepare their copy. On August 2 we got together to put the book together, and found that we were still waiting for some of our largest ads to come in. So we put together what we had, and I will say that on that night of August 2, the boys did a good piece of work. That was Agnew, Sol Levin, and Madle. The book looked like it was going to be a pretty sloppy job, but at least we had something.

I wanted to take the thing to the printer, but there were those promised ads to come in yet. I called up Madle every couple of days. Have you heard from Merwin or Campbell yet? Nope.

Finally, on August 14, Merwin's ad came in. I'd obtained Williams' ad at the last moment by the expediency of writing it up myself. I went around to Madle's place to pick up the last pieces of work for the booklet, and there was Agnew making with the Speedball pen. Agnew and Madle, the editors of the booklet, did not yet have their own advertisement ready!

If at any time I came close to having a nervous breakdown it was during these two days. At 10 AM on August 15 I sat, waiting for Madle and Agnew to arrive with their last advertisement, so that I could take the works to the printer. These were some

of the thoughts that ran through my head at that time:

Would more than 300 people come to the convention? Was Sykora going to take care of the illustrations for the auction? What was I going to say in my introductory speech? Where would we get a car to use on the morning of the convention? What were we going to do about the Big Pond Fund? How should I handle things if somebody brought up the subject of deros on the floor? When the hell was Madle going to show up so that we could get this program thing off our hands? How was the program going to look? What kind of miracle did the offset process perform to remove all the corrections and paste-overs which filled the copy?

Finally, Madle and Agnew, not more than a half hour late, arrived in time to save my last remaining fingernail, and we hied ourselves down to the printer.

McCandless looked through our copy and knocked us silly by complimenting us upon a neat job.

Well, that was that.

Next stop was the hotel, to plan the banquet, arrange details, and in general case the joint. Things there were eminently satisfactory, except that the price they asked for the use of the public address system whittled down the profits another notch.

The path from then on seemed clear. Bud Waldo had been doing a wonderful job on the hotel reservations, leaving my mind completely free of that problem. Also, L. Jerome Stanton, in volunteering to emcee the entertainment program, had relieved me of a tremendous burden. When people take over a piece of work and do it without prodding and coaxing, it's really a wonderful help.

So the way was clear for the next two weeks -- or so it seemed. But those last-minute details -- I had to write a press release for the hotel's press agent. The printer called up and asked me to come down to clarify a point which meant a lot of money. John Bois called up and said I should go see so and so at the Inquirer office to get an ad in the Sunday paper. That meant writing another press release.

Midst all this, you understand, I was going to school, teaching physics to the freshmen, and taking a course in thermodynamics myself. A week before the convention I took my exam -- and only ghu knows how I did it, I managed to pull down an A in the course.

As for the teaching, that was a definite benefit. When the convention came around, the experience in thinking on my feet was most valuable, and at no time did I feel nervousness or mike fright, as a couple of others did.



In and among all of this I was sending out Philcon membership cards, trying to pacify Ackerman, keeping tabs on the Blitzkrieg going on in Los Angeles to get out the FAPA mailing -- and now it was time to sit down and plan the scenario of the convention -- minute by minute.

While this took form, the business of the auction illustrations came to a head. All along I had been completely in the dark about what our New York Representative had been doing. Reports came to me through the grapevine; some said that Sykora was going to get the illustrations immediately -- others said that I should not depend upon Sykora. One such report came about a week before the convention. I made a sudden decision, and the Monday before the convention, Bud Waldo and I took the train for New York.

It was the hottest day of the year, but fortunately the three editors we called up were in their offices, and so we made the grand circuit of the editors. Mary Gnaedinger treated us handsomely, and we carried off several Lawrence and Finlay drawings, plus a Finlay cover.

Up in the lobby of Standard Publications we found Gus (The Beard) Willmorth, Gerry de la Ree, and Ron Christense, with whom we exchanged a few words. Then into the Merwin office. It was the first time I'd met Merwin, and I found him a very affable fellow. He refused to go down into the stock room for the illustrations because of the heat, but promised to either mail us some or carry them down himself on Saturday.

Then over to Street and Smith where L. Jerome Stanton conversed with us for a time until Campbell walked in with a pile of drawings. Campbell was in a good mood that day and we spent a pleasant time in his office. He teased us a bit by offering us the choice of one of two cover paintings. The first one he showed us was the rather sickly one for "With Folded Hands." Then he unveiled a larger one which I'd never seen before. Waldo was the first one to guess that it belonged to "Children of the Lens."

So with jubilation and joy we went down for a beer or six with Stanton. We wondered for a while whether we should charge the beer to the convention account, but decided against it.

The day after the above blitzkrieg, a telegram arrived from Will Sykora giving his address and phone number. Previously I had known only his PO box number, which had prevented me from getting directly in touch with him. But now I had nothing to say to Will.

We were now in the clear. Up to the very last day Philcon memberships kept coming in. Our write-ups appeared in two Sunday papers, and elicited at least one request for information from local people.

Finally it was Thursday, and the first person arrived -- Bob Tucker. No -- sorry -- Tucker was not quite the first person. We must not forget John C. Chrisman, who had come in July, thinking the convention was to be on July 4, and who had remained



since then.

L'Affair Chrisman turned out to be a most odd one. When he first came to Philadelphia and said that his home had been in Richmond, Indiana, this struck a familiar chord, and I thought to myself -- could he have anything to do with Claude Degler? I didn't like to ask embarrassing questions, and secondly Chrisman seemed too sensible, too well-behaved, and too well-read to have been Degler.

Bob Tucker's arrival was the crucial point. For Tucker recognized Chrisman as being Degler. However, Chrisman refused to admit to being Degler, and, indeed, claimed not to know Tucker at all. The upshot was that we let Chrisman-Degler continue in his game, realizing that some fundamental change had taken place in his person. However, it seems to me at this time that if Chrisman continues in his preoccupation with flying discs as evidenced in his "Weird Unsolved Mysteries" and carries out his program of fan publications as shown in his Philcon program advertisement, he is going to revert right back to the old Claude Degler.

Thursday night we hied ourselves over to Jim Williams place, which was sort of a focal point for things, and got our first glimpse of the Program Booklet. What a pleasure it was to see how all the sloppiness had disappeared in the magical process of photo-offsetting, and how we had emerged with what was possibly the best-looking program booklet of all the conventions. At the least we were right in there with the Pacificon book.

Friday morning I met Ackerman at the station, and in the afternoon greeted Lester del Rey and Harry B. Moore. From then on the stream of incoming characters was a steady one.

At about that time a telegram arrived reading thusly:

DAUGHERTY HAS SEIZED CLUBROOM FOR DANCE STUDIO IMPOUNDED  
CONTENTS DECLARES CLUB FORFEITED ALL RIGHTS HAVE ANGELENO DELEGATES  
WIRE INSTRUCTIONS.

BURBEE & LANEY

Nice try, boys.

The open house at the clubroom Friday night was a warm and soggy affair, ending up in a local pub as had been expected.

Next morning it was our painful task to arise and get the convention hall fixed up. According to del Rey (who was bedding at my place) we shoulda stayed in bed.

So this was the day.

It was about an hours work, with the help of Harry Buck and Ralph Cash, to get the illustrations hung on the walls, and when 1 PM came along there was nothing to do but dash madly back and forth trying to drag people away from the bar, trying to find the man to turn on the public address system, trying to get people



to take their seats, and trying to shut them up. Finally, after a few minutes of screaming and pounding, the task was done, and the convention had begun.

Upon performing the introductions it became apparent that a great many people were absent who might have come -- particularly from the New York area. I can say nothing about their motives for not attending, but I will say that those who stayed away because they thought the convention would be a dull affair may certainly kick themselves in the pants for missing a rip-roaring clambake.

John Campbell set the pace with his discussion of atomic energy, devoted mainly to indicating the possible uses of atomic energy in its various forms. A vigorous discussion ensued, in the course of which the talk naturally went over to the political angle. At this time Campbell did something for which I was quite grateful.

Previously, in the course of the introductions, Ralph Milne Farley had gotten up and mentioned how he had introduced at the American Legion Convention a resolution to disallow freedom of speech as a defense for "subversive individuals." This is the sort of thing typical of the American Legion and of Ralph Milne Farley.

During the Campbell discussion, when the topic had wandered around to this same territory, Campbell had the guts to say that he disagreed with Farley's resolution, and listing his reasons.

Later in the afternoon, when it came time for resolutions to be introduced at the Philcon, only one resolution showed up. This was a long one, composed by Jack Speer, placing the convention on record as being opposed to the Ziff-Davis Amazing Stories, giving detailed philosophic and practical reasons for such an attitude.

In the discussion which ensued, I was very disappointed in the spirit shown by the science fiction fans. As chairman, I had to be impartial, but my natural instincts are to be in favor of such a resolution. One sentence might have been omitted, as exposing us too strongly to legal action, but aside from that I would like to have seen fandom take a firm stand regarding the Palmer policy.

The arguments raised against the resolution seemed to me to be very weak-kneed and appeasing. They seemed to be the same sort of arguments advanced by people today to go easy on poor Germany. As for the argument that it is none of our business what Ziff-Davis does, I say nonsense. Just because a corporation is big and wealthy that does not mean it can go ahead and do whatever it pleases. If a large tobacco corporation began spiking its cigarettes with marihuana, the American Medical Association would be justified in passing a resolution about it -- and in taking stronger action.

On the first day of the convention the matter was temporarily settled by delegating Alexander M. Phillips to write up an alternate resolution in which the convention was to go on record



as approving certain magazines -- with Amazing and Fantastic Adventures conspicuously omitted. The two resolutions were to be voted on Monday. As it turned out, we got tangled up in the same old arguments on Monday, time became short, and the vote on the second resolution was so close that I wasn't able to count it. There wasn't time to take a written ballot, and finally the matter was tabled indefinitely.

The most deplorable angle of the affair is that all of these guys who went around making jokes about Amazing and singing insulting songs about Palmer didn't have the guts to take a stand on a resolution. I say that if you don't want to approve a resolution knocking Palmer, then let's not mention Palmer at all. Let's not make jokes; let's keep him out of our conversation altogether.

At the auction that evening, the spending was quite free, but not insane. A beautiful Allen St. John cover went unsold because a \$40 minimum was asked. The maximum sale was \$31 for a gorgeous Paul cover, by Tom Hadley. The biggest spenders were Hadley, Williams, and Dr. Barrett. The little people contented themselves with other less choice items.

Theodore Sturgeon wandered in about that time, and after a few visits to the bar became possessed of a feeling of great good-will and generosity. Twisting my arm vigorously, he forced me to accept a \$5 contribution to the convention, pouring forth a tearful line about how much money he'd made out of science fiction, and how he was having such a wonderful time at the Philcon.

Following the auction, the fun began. It seems that Tom Hadley had engaged a suite, and had installed himself therein with a couple cases of liquor. Likewise, Lloyd Eshbach and the other members of Fantasy Press had a large room with corresponding quantities of liquor. And also Jim Williams and George O. Smith, representing Prime Press, had themselves a room with hot and cold running chambermaids.

I'd known from beforehand that this was going to be the wettest convention in history, but I had no idea how goddam much fun people were going to have.

We had persuaded John Campbell, with some difficulty, to spend one day at the convention. The next thing I knew, Campbell was sitting on the floor of Hadley's room, higher than a kite, singing bawdy songs with Benson Dooling, Hubert Rogers, and a few others. It looked like Campbell was fixed for the remainder of the convention.

At some later moment, there was Buddie McNight on -----'s lap, while Mrs. ----- was ensconced on Larry Benedict's lap. Good, clean fun, y'know.



It must be mentioned that at the same time a fraternity known as Sigma Alpha Rho (or some such thing) was also holding a convention in the same hotel. This was fortunate for us, since these fraternity boys, apparently of high-school age, were quite riotous -- dashing up and down the halls pounding on people's doors at 4 AM, for example. Ultimately, anything untoward that went on in the hotel was blamed on the fraternity crowd, as a result of which we were commended by the management for having a very orderly convention, even though we probably had more drunks per capita than the fraternity mob.

The second morning I wandered into the convention hall to work out on the piano, and found that Chan Davis was ahead of me. This was the first chance we'd had to meet -- a moment fraught with significance. Chan is not easy to understand. I think that most of the boys found him a bit of a cold fish -- except for those who got into the terrific argument which Davis and Campbell had before the entertainment program. This was a political argument, naturally. Chan seems to be a bit of a Marxist, while Campbell is on the conservative side, except on topics regarding the utilization of science, whereupon he becomes a regular radical.

During this argument, a large group gathered around the pair, but it was a two-man job all the way through. It was like one of these space battles, where the other is charged with high potential, the very space warps, and sheets of energy crackle back and forth. (See any old E.E. Smith novel for further particulars.)

What I mean to say is that once they get started, both Chan Davis and John Campbell are high-powered personalities, and I'd hate to guess which of them has the most brain -- altho when it comes to detailed technical knowledge Davis probably is far advanced over anybody at the convention. The guy knows more physics than any mathematician has a right to.

Davis really snowed me under a bit later on when he got to talking theoretical physics to me. I was getting most of it -- stuff about separating the variables in the partial differential equations of quantum mechanics -- while those listening open-mouthed around us understood maybe one word out of ten. When Davis had finished, Gus Willmorth, about half crocked, began saying something very solemnly and ponderously about mathematics.

Very unkindly I said, "Gus, confess that you didn't understand a word that Chan said." Whereupon Gus shrivelled quietly.

(I is sorry, Gus, but it was an irresistable opportunity, and I was half crocked myself at the time.)

Another interesting moment came an hour or so later, up in Hadley's room, when Campbell and Davis were firing dirty limericks back and forth at each other with machine-gun rapidity, while ever so often Benson Dooling would rouse out of his stupor to sing one



in his inimitable style. All of this Trudy Kuslan took in with maidenly modesty.

The high spot of the convention occurred in the entertainment program when Phil Klass (better known as William Tenn) performed a monologue in which he read "fan mail" which he had received. (It said in the script.) The climax came when he began explaining the "internal combustion of the carbon atom." It was one of the funniest things I've seen anywhere, including the Folies Bergere and any Charlie Chaplin movie, and I was hysterical for 10 minutes.

L. Jerome Stanton was responsible for that whole program, and it was a swell job that he did.

I fear that I took unfair advantage of Chan Davis by playing music by Debussy and de Falla, while Davis was playing Davis and Blish. Leave us face it, the Ritual Fire Dance makes a better showing, in any amateur's hands, than does the more esoteric Song of Worlds Unseen, and Noise. (The latter written in the 12-tone scale.)

Just to satisfy my conscience, I must explain about that ill-fated encore of mine. It seems that my memorized repertoire is about five numbers altogether. In the rush of preparing the convention I'd had time to keep two of these numbers up to concert pitch -- and those I played. Then all these idiots screaming for encores caused me to sit down and attempt something I was unprepared for, a rather difficult Chopin Nocturne. Just at that moment I ran clear out of nervous energy. Wham.

The second night of the convention was probably the high spot as far as extra-curricular activities were concerned. The three big drinking parties were in full swing, while down in the convention hall the non-drinkers sat around gossiping until 2 AM, at which time I threw them out so that I could lock up the joint.

Unhappily, I had been drinking very lightly so as to keep my health unimpaired, and I intended to make the third night the big blowout. So it turned out that all the liquor was gone by Monday night, half the people went home right after the banquet, and everybody was too tired to have much fun, anyway. So there I was, mooching a drink here and there from various people at the bar.

I shouldn't brag about this, but I don't think I paid for a drink during the convention. It appears that after I paid the five hundred dollars for the hall and banquet immediately after the thing was finished, I had just about a dollar left in my pocket. Which was inconvenient.

It has often been noted that fandom is a collecting-place for enlarged egos, and that was certainly noticeable at the convention. I could be nasty and mention the names of those whose egos stuck right out at me, but I won't.



What did give considerable trouble to the chair was the long-windedness of some of the speakers. I'd tell them they had a certain number of minutes to speak, and before we were finished I'd have to go out there with a club and drag them off the platform. In most cases I was reluctant to do that, since the discussions were quite interesting. (Particularly true of Erle Korshak's dissertation.) But to leave them continue would have been unfair to those last on the program, who would be winding up at 6 PM, with the audience straining to dash out and find supper before starving to death. Especially me -- because invariably I didn't have time to eat anything until supper.

Curiously, the person who was most decent about watching his time was Dr. Keller, who normally is a speaker of great staying powers. But at the convention he kept a strict check on the time, and never exceeded his bounds. For that I love him.

Financially, the convention was a great success. There was enough money left over to give everybody a decent share, and it was very gratifying that there was practically no public argument over the disposition of the money. I am told that there was a bit of a battle in the committee which was appointed to divvy up the spoils, but that's what committees are for. I think the division was fair and square, and the only complaints I've heard are from some die-hards who had the quaint idea that the money belonged to the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society all along and that I had a hell of a nerve appointing outsiders to dispose of "our" money.

It was a strange quirk of fate that gave the Big Pond Prize to Abby Lu Ashley, when Ackerman doesn't even know how to get in touch with her. I guess the only thing to do would be to make a reasonable search for her, and if she can't be found, make another drawing. I hope Ackerman kept the names of the contributors.

In every way the Philcon was the best convention ever held in science fiction fandom. I'm not saying that just to be proud, because the things that turned out so good were the doings of everybody who came to the convention. By some magical process people were all set to have a good time, and I was just sort of a traffic cop keeping things moving along.

This was the first really commercial convention that we've had. It is the first time that publishers of fantasy books had a chance to put on a big show. It is the first time that a science fiction convention brought writers, publishers, and agents together, giving them a chance to do business. I know for a fact that the Prime Press got started on three big deals during the convention. What Eshbach and Hadley did, I don't know. Lester del Rey, who has been having a hard time getting back into the swing of writing, acquired one of the best agents in the business,



All of this I feel is very healthy, and I hope that it sets a pattern for future conventions.

As a matter of fact, in our newspaper publicity, I made it sound as if this were a writers convention, and in the hotel everybody was asking questions about the "writers' convention." I hope the fans will forgive me for building us up a little bit so as to make things sound good. It's so hard to explain to people what a science fiction fan is, and it's so easy to tell them that this is a convention of writers.

.....

I see that this is page sixteen (I've been composing the last couple of pages on the stencil) and it's about time to quit. I've not given any details about the convention program, for that you will already have read about in other accounts. This account has been mostly about what I saw and did, and upon looking the thing over I am appalled at seeing the number of times the first person singular appears.

The Philcon marks the climax of my fan career, and while I do not predict my future actions, I expect that I'll follow the path of Warner, Tucker, and other has-beens. It's been fun.

////////////////////////////////////

#### THE MEETING WILL PLEASE COME TO ORDER!

This is being published even before I have received the July mailing. I have seen Ackerman's copy of the mailing, and I have kept in close contact with events in Los Angeles. I believe that Burbee will publish a complete account of the great blitzkrieg, so I will omit that.

Two weeks ago I mailed Laney the sum of \$15 for the purpose of mailing the July mailing. This means that somebody now owes me fifteen dollars -- either Laney or the FAPA treasury. I don't care from where I get it, but I intend to get it. I can't afford this kind of contribution any more.

I am told that various FAPA members still possess sums of money which belong to the FAPA -- namely ~~Perdue~~ and Ashley. This situation must be remedied. The only people who are authorized to possess FAPA money are Art Widner, the treasurer, and Fran Laney, who was appointed a special committee to get out the mailing.

All others should return outstanding monies to the FAPA treasury as soon as possible. By the time this appears I will no longer be the FAPA president, but this won't stop me from keeping check on things, and if by the end of this year the FAPA finances are not straightened out, I shall initiate a resolution to throw out of the FAPA those who have had a hand in the present turmoil.