

— "Falling down, to slip out of place"



INSIDE: "There's something wrong with the engines"; Brum Group Tall Tales; and, Footloose in Glasgow (or, Falling Down at Albacon). Plus Dynamic Lettercolumn!

PROLAPSE

This is Prolapse-1, intended for the first mailing of APA-B, the Brum Group Amateur Press Association, scheduled for distribution on 17 June 1983. "I" am Peter Weston, emerging from a long period of 'resting', but still resident, as ever, at the old address: 72 Beeches Drive, Erdington, Birmingham B24 ODT.

And contrary to Wife Eileen's disapproval, Prolapse is a perfectly good title for a fanzine. Look up the dictionary definition - "falling down" (that's fannish), and "to slip out of place" (which is exactly what's happened to me, as the microcosm has moved on during my absence). Of course, there is another meaning; after all, in my previous incarnation I aspired to a sort of third-rate "pro" status, and now I've lapsed back into fandom. Illos this time by Steve Green.

- You remember, Vernon's friend.

Er... Hello again!

When I stepped out for air, a while back, I didn't realise that TEN YEARS would go by before I Pubbed another Ish. Now I suppose I'm a sort of Rip Van Winkle figure, emerging from prehistory along with really old men like Vince Clarke and Mal Ashworth.

Of course, I wasn't entirely idle (not all the time); somewhere in there was a Worldcon, an anthology series, and sundry other projects which seemed important at the time. But looking back, I think the one thing which gave me the most fun was a column I wrote for a few issues of Rob Jackson's fanzine, Maya, a column which I'd almost forgotten about until I started poking around my study again, earlier this year.

What brought on the relapse? Well, working backwards, Kev Easthope and Chris Suslowicz came around one night in February, supposedly to help Chris get his own fanzine off the ground. In the course of the evening we took the cover off my trusty Gestetner (for the first time in seven years), half-expecting to find a heap of rust, and ended-up by putting out a composite one-shot, of which we were all inordinately proud.

But that's an effect, not a cause. What really started me going again has been my renewed involvement with the good old Brum Group, and in turn, the person responsible for that was, as ever, Rog Peyton.

This year had looked like being crisis-point for the BSFG, since no-one particularly wanted to stand as Chairman. In desperation, they asked me, several times from October onwards, but I wasn't interested — last year there were plenty of other things happening in my life. But, at Eileen's New Year party Rog saw his chance and while I was slightly under the influence, signed me up, irrevocably in front of witnesses, to take on the job.

And, you know, I genuinely didn't want to do it, until I was committed, but then immediately I began to get more and more interested in the idea. So OK, I've done it before, and it's usually not a good idea to repeat yourself. But still, that was 1973, and a lot has changed since then. Maybe local fanac was just what I needed after the dizzy heights of SEACON '79, a return to my roots, if you like, a chance to recapture a sense of purpose through concentration on small-scale, limited objectives (but no less important for that).

In fact I was intrigued by the possibilities inherent in the Brum Group, became re-motivated by the original, long-forgotten idea of building a local fandom on the doorstep (see Paul Vincent's letter, this issue). It seemed, the more I looked, that quite a number of new and talented people had joined the Group while I'd been away, fans-in-the-making, just looking for the right door to step through. This would be my mission; to pass on the spark (like the Sistine Chapel ceiling; or, if you boggle at that analogy, like the Fairy in T.E.D.)

"Poor old Pete, life's going to be downhill all the way from now on"

- Brian Aldiss at SEACON '79

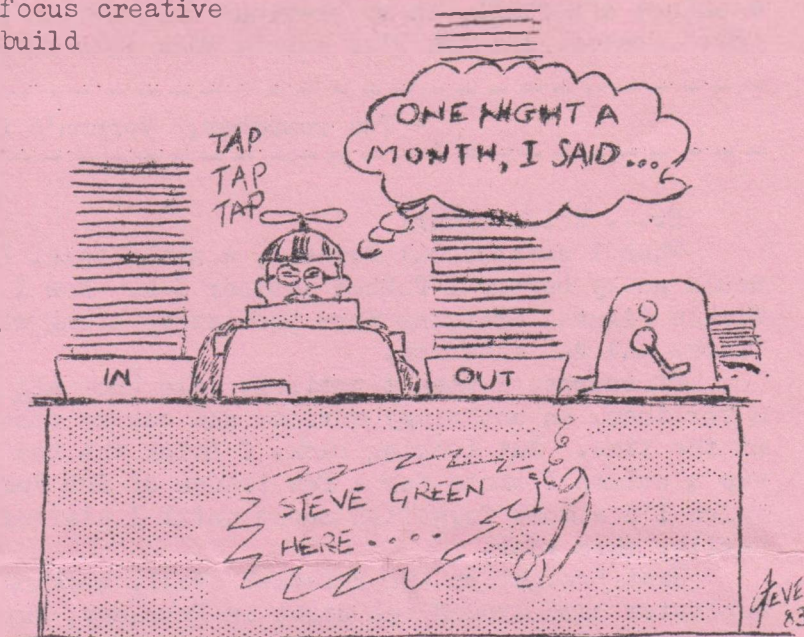
Eileen was a bit concerned at the possible workload involved, but I reassured her that it would "only take up one night per month" for committee meetings and so on. But of course, that was never realistic, and within weeks I was in the thick of it, from a long-winded (and unsatisfactory) AGM in January, to an equally long-winded but action-packed EGM in March. There was, frankly, a lot of accumulated tension around, for which the EGM seemed to act as a sort of catharsis (life has been sweetness and light since then).

But in there I was busily publishing manifestos, conceiving projects, lobbying for support, bleeding and dying for my beliefs. And one of those projects was APA-B.

The idea came from dim recollections of APA-L, the weekly APA run by the Los Angeles Group (which I understand is still going after about 15 years), and partly from my own half-forgotten memories of the joys of pubbing. This was just what we needed, I thought, something to focus creative effort and energy, something to build involvement between BSFG members and help bring them closer to 'mainstream' fandom.

And just what I needed, as it seems to be turning out, for here I am after all these years, typing stencils and cranking out copies as if my life still depended on it. There's nothing like a target, a date by which something simply must be done, an obligation to deliver what you've promised.

So here I am, with or without anyone else, pubbing my ish, and I hope it won't be another ten years before the next one!



PROLAPSE (or, falling down) AT ALBACON

"That's not much of a costume, is it?"

"Why don't you have a sword with that shield?"

"Or a dragon on your shoulder?"

I felt a bit of an idiot at Albacorn, standing in a curtained-off alcove with the other fancy-dress contestants, they in glittering costumes, false heads, and so on, and me standing there with my trousers tucked into my socks, Chris's rucksack on my back, fanzines sticking out of the pockets of my faithful, battered old leather jacket, and my Shield of Umor on my arm.

One of the committee tried to move me on, "Only contestants allowed in here".

Somebody else was photographing the costumes, looked at me doubtfully, and decided not to bother.

Then the compere asked me what I was supposed to be, frowned at my card and spelled it out slowly, "J-O-P-H-A-N in search of the Perfect Fanzine". She looked at my shield and frowned again. I could almost hear her thinking, "What story is that from?"

Actually, I was rather proud of that shield, and it had taken a considerable expenditure of energy and effort to get it to Glasgow.

The idea came to me just before the BSFG EGM, when the juices of fandom were bubbling away strongly. I remembered that I had a large sheet of aluminium in the garage, and a strip of brass, and like a flash I disappeared into my little workshop with a small hammer and a lot of determination.

I drew a large, grinning face on the metal, placed it onto a slab of foam rubber to act as a buffer, and started tapping away at the outline. Aluminium is malleable stuff, but it was a slow job - each 'tap' produced a dent about $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch long and $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch deep. But by the end of the day I was well pleased by the result. A quick trip to Woolworth's collected an aerosol of silver paint and a small pot of black laquer, and those were the finishing touches.

"It has a sensitive fannish face," said Eileen, inspecting my masterpiece, a huge curved shield about 40 inches by 30 inches.

Have you ever tried to get something like that onto a standard British Railways carriage? It won't go on the luggage rack, behind, or under the seats. I sat there until Carlisle, clutching this great stupid parcel wrapped in brown paper. Only then did Steve Green suggest I put it into the guards' van, an idea which had never even occurred to me (Cosmic Minds, we fans!)

And, apart from a brief moment of panic at Glasgow Central, when we discovered the rear half of the train had gone to Edinburgh, that was that. I stored the shield in Rog's room (I was staying at an overflow hotel) until the Saturday night, when I went public for all fandom to see.

There must have been at least a dozen people in the ballroom (out of 500) who understood the joke. But what the heck, I've read THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR, I know the secret of the Tower of Trufandom; do you? (And it has nothing to do with bloody dragons!)

JUST LIKE OLD TIMES AGAIN!

Actually, I'd been in two minds about going to the convention, right up to the night before. It would mean leaving Eileen and the children for the weekend; I couldn't afford it, and it was a long way to go — all the mundane, sensible reasons to stay at home. And what if I didn't enjoy it? This, I think, was my biggest reservation; I missed Eastercon in 1980, left Leeds early in 1981 because of terminal boredom, and didn't go to Channelcon. After 4 years, I wasn't sure I could fit in, anymore.

But, hoist by my own petard! For the previous month I'd been chivvying the Group to take part in a collective expedition to Glasgow, and Steve Green had arranged for the party to meet at New Street Station. Thus committed, I couldn't back out, and so met the others at 7.45 on the Easter Friday morning. There were 8 of us — Steve, Rog, Martin Tudor, Kevin Clarke, Dave Haden, Chris Suslowicz and myself. It was the first time in years that I'd gone to a con in company, and it made the journey pass very quickly, as well as being an excellent way to psych ourselves up, so that we tumbled eagerly off the train at the other end!

Somehow, though, the first day didn't quite jell for me. I developed a headache during the afternoon which steadily grew worse. Finally, in the early evening, in the middle of a conversation with (the real) Bob Shaw, I had to flee back to the overflow hotel, take some aspirins, and lie down for a few minutes.

Awaking at 1.30a.m., I realised it was too late to go back, and lay listening to the drunks in the square outside, singing and smashing bottles. They seemed to be having a fine time! I read the programme book, a couple of fanzines, and went back to sleep around 4.00.

It wasn't until the next morning I discovered a similar thing had happened to Chris. "We were train-lagged", he quipped.

And it wasn't until the following evening, wandering back to the overflow in a happy daze at 3.30 a.m., that I realised how much I was enjoying myself. This was the way conventions used to be. No responsibilities, no aggravation; a comfortable, rambling hotel, cheap food and plenty of beer!

I met more people at Albacon II than I'd done for years, and for me, it was the best convention since 1975. Well done, Bob Jowett and the committee, — and particular thanks for helping me to slip back into place!

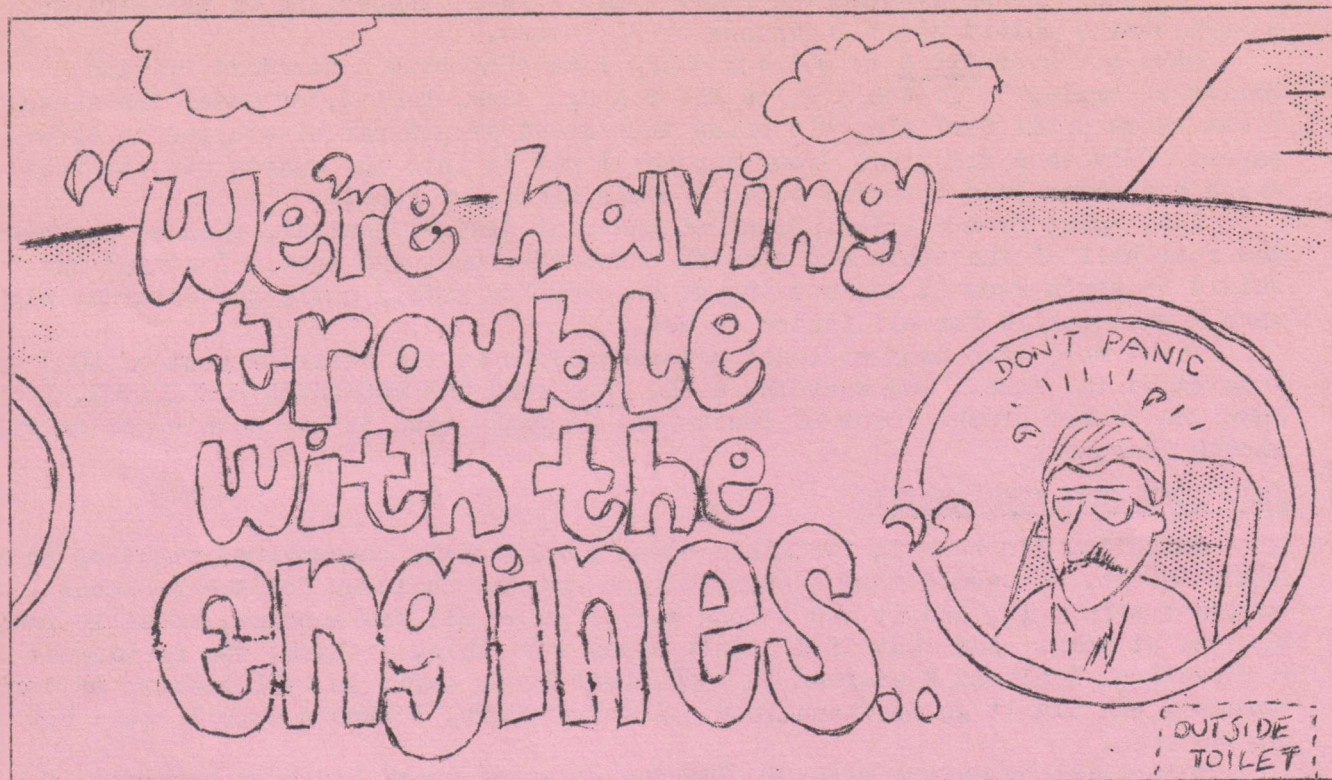
28/5/83

Dr. Jack Cohen: "Give one consequence of the disappearance of the great white whale"

Student: "The sea level will go down". — Univ. of B'ham Tall Tales Dept.

WATCH THIS SPACE:

A few lines to fill, so I'll talk about APA-B. We hope the idea will catch on, though it's something of an experiment in our non-fnz-reading Group! Indications are that the first 'mailing' could have as many as a dozen zines, with 17-18 people expressing interest in the idea. Obviously, Prolps also goes to others, to friends at home and abroad, and next time I hope it will have rather less about me, and a little more by you. Still, they say "write about what you know best..." — PW



I had a really interesting flight into the United States, this time. I mean, it can be a bit boring if things go according to plan; that ~~was~~ you never get to experience those penetrating flashes of insight into the true nature of reality, the ways in which things actually work behind-the-scenes.

One hour out from London the captain of our 747 announced, "We're having trouble with the engines. No way are we going on out across the Atlantic. I'm turning back."

Stunned silence, followed by a chorus of groans throughout the plane.

Almost immediately, he came on again to make placatory noises. I imagine someone running into the cockpit and saying, "Do you want to start a panic in there!"

"I'm only taking precautions," he said. "It's not anything serious". "Have a drink on us."

It could have been just like Airport; you know, everyone cringing in their seats, engines falling off, mad grannies in the toilet, battling those last few miles; will we make it? Instead, there was almost no drama save for a spontaneous burst of applause when the plane touched down - hard - at Heathrow again. We'd been out over the West Coast of Ireland and back; we'd left at 3.00pm and it was now 5.10.

We sat around for an hour, while those in authority decided what to do next. Suddenly, the needle had jumped off the track; a routine batch of passengers had become a Nuisance.

"You can't get off the plane", they said.

Then,

"You can get off the plane but you can't go beyond the gate-lounge".

Seeing a trickle become a mass-exodus, they got nasty:

"We're serving dinner on the ground. Passengers who get out of their seats don't get any".

But 300 people had become united in a common objective - to let the outside world know what had happened to them. Everyone down the same hole - relatives to meet, connections missed, urgent appointments. No 'phone in the gate-lounge, no-one knew what time we'd eventually arrive.

"If you want to send a message, write it on a piece of paper and give it to the purser," they announced.

Immediately, everyone started to scribble notes and thrust them at the purser, who pretended he was going to do something with them. I wonder how many such messages were ever delivered? Certainly not mine.

Then,

"We have another 'plane. We're going to change over the baggage, and then embark, twenty at a time."

So down the back-stairs we went, into a bus, across the windy tarmac into another TWA 'Jumbo' in red and silver. Another wait - and then off again. The time was 6.45, nearly four hours after original departure. I'd been travelling since 10.30 that morning, had covered nearly 1000 miles, and it had been pretty pointless so far - and I just knew I'd missed any connecting flight that night.

The new 'plane smelled bad - probably it had come in that same afternoon and had been due for a good clean-out before the emergency blew up. A steward came round with aerosols of air-freshener after a while, but I missed the film scheduled, 'Firefox', and we had something called 'Snowy Mountain Man', which was deadly boring. And no food, except a scone with jam! By the time we landed I was absolutely starving!

And there we were at JFK Airport, New York, waiting to go through the solemn formality of Immigration, then baggage reclaim, Customs, and a final rush across to the TWA Information Desk, along with the rest of the occupants of the aircraft, to see if there was any chance of making my connection to Cleveland that night.

No chance!

The next flight would leave LaGuardia at 7.00 the next morning. A cheerful girl at the desk, named Jackie, issued vouchers for the Kennedy Inn Motel, for an overnight stop-over at the airline's expense. "There's a bus outside", she cheerfully advised. It was now 10.00 local time, 4.00a.m. my time.

The Kennedy Inn was just at the end of the ~~flight~~ Van Wyck Expressway, and it is one of those 'basic' hotels which provide a very minimum of service for people who really don't want to be there at all. It is probably 10-15 years old, in that peculiarly American style I call "Space Age Tatty". At the desk, I made my arrangements for the following day.

"You need to check-in at LaGuardia by 6.30, latest, and it will take about 45 minutes to get there in our shuttle-bus. They run hourly. That means you'll have to catch the 5.00a.m. service. What time would you like to be called, sir?"

And no, we're sorry, but the restaurant is closed and the cook has gone home.

I went to my room, which was very hot and stuffy, and threw open the windows; in the middle distance the lights of Kennedy Airport were glowing brightly, and I thought back to my first visit to the USA, on my TAFF trip in 1974. There again, I'd arrived late in the evening, but that time there'd been a welcoming party and it had been August, not April. The weather was hot and sticky, I recall, with a really horrible smell in the air which no-one else seemed to notice. I still remember those welcoming words from my host, "Hi, I'm Andy Porter; what did you think of the layout of the last Algol?"

I sat on the bed and considered my conflicting bodily needs; I was hungry, hot, and very tired. I debated going out to find a restaurant - but that would mean calling a cab, spending an hour or more. It was nearly 5.00am by my time, and I might get five hours sleep if I started now; so, no food, I decided to have a hot bath and to go to bed.

But there was no bath plug. Honest, no bath plug! Cursing, I remembered something Willis had once written, that Americans share with Russians a passion for washing in running water (Americans use showers, Russians have no bath plugs). It seemed Socialism had arrived in the United States ahead of time, I thought. And yes, Bobbie, I know you don't have separate plugs, as such, and there's usually a sort of stopper arrangement built-in to the plumbing; I swear that I pushed, pulled, twisted and rattled the fixtures, and while a little metal rod wiggled helpfully in the drainpipe, there was no plug.

So I showered, and went to bed. Hungry.

Next morning, bright and early at 4.15, I woke, dressed, re-packed and rushed down to the lobby to get something to eat. Guess what - it was too early for breakfast, the cook hadn't come in yet!

While hanging around the lobby, waiting for the bus, yawning, I noticed a mild commotion at the reception desk. A well-dressed little old lady was complaining to the clerk that she couldn't make the telephone work in her room. Helpfully, I intervened, because he was Spanish and didn't seem to understand what she was saying.

"Is it a long-distance call?" I asked, (having sussed-out the system for getting past the hotel switchboard by dialling 0-8).

"I don't know," she said, "I want Watts".

"Er.. is that Los Angeles?" I asked, to which she nodded her head.

I marvelled again at the helplessness of little old American ladies. (When I was in Detroit, at the waterfront, looking across the river at Windsor, Ontario, a similar little old lady asked me, "Which direction is Canada?".)

The bus arrived, and we all climbed board, "we" being an assortment of people from the same ill-fated flight, all grumbling and complaining. Then the hotel clerk came out and climbed aboard. He button-holed a girl, about 25 I'd guess, and told her, very loudly, that she owed \$5.00 for telephone calls she'd taken in here room.

"Send the bill to TWA", she replied loftily, in a way that Simon Norburn would have admired.

"This bus isn't leaving until you pay your bill," announced the clerk.

Impasse. We sat there for ten minutes while they argued until finally, maybe shamed by the dirty looks and mutterings from other passengers, she paid up.

We arrived at LaGuardia at about 5.30a.m., and we were all annoyed to realise that we could have had an hour's extra sleep, after all. Have you ever seen a busy airport before it actually opens? It's an interesting experience, rather like that Sturgeon story, 'Yesterday was Monday'; everything is quiet and still, except for the occasional little man messing around in odd corners. A gaggle of passengers formed an erratic line in front of the (closed) counter which had the 'United' label and 'Cleveland' destination board. The family in front of me sent a girl to see if she could find a restaurant; she came back with the news that "there's a coffee shop through there. But it's closed".

At 6.00 a.m. the airport was switched on. The desk staff arrived in close formation, smart, all in maroon blazers, carrying a sort of wooden box in front of them, which I suppose was a cash float, or maybe credit-card forms. And now at last, I was able to get rid of those two heavy cases which I'd been dragging around. At last, I could get something to eat!

I almost ran around the corner in search of that coffee-shop. It had now been nearly a day since I'd had anything at all to eat, and I was looking forward to a blow-out, an American breakfast. "Corned beef hash and scrambled eggs," I thought, "with Canadian bacon, and maybe waffles."

Unfortunately, the coffee-shop was only serving coffee. "There are no hot meals until 6.30," they said.

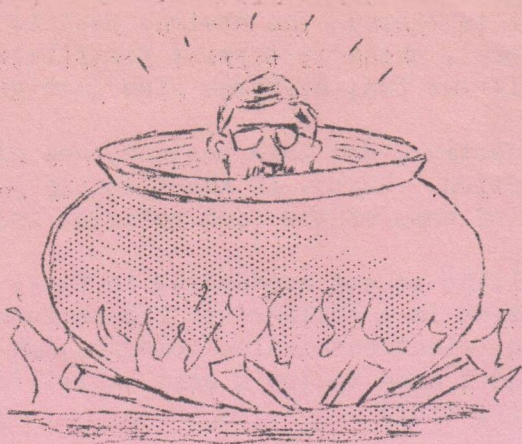
I cursed. I muttered. I skulked around, and at 6.30 I was first in the queue, I had a large (though not very good) breakfast, then I ran to my terminal gate, which was at the other end of the airport, seemingly. I just caught the plane before they closed up, and settled back with the sleek, well-looked-after business commuters to Cleveland.

I'd arrived in America!

- 12 April 1983

(The above slightly-disorganised account was written during intervals while waiting for buses to start, check-in desks and restaurants to open, and was found in the bottom of a suitcase under a pile of dirty socks. It concerns my recent trip to the USA, when I was fortunate enough to wangle enough excuses to take me right across the Continent, stopping variously at Cleveland, Chicago, Waterloo (Iowa), Los Angeles, and Houston. The trip started in a bungle, but afterwards went pretty smoothly, and I enjoyed it immensely. Further thrilling details in the next issue of Prolis, including, 'What ice-cream flavours I tried this time', and, 'What I really think about Americans'. Don't miss it if you can!)

"Er, Pete, I've got something to tell you..." - Kevin Easthope



MELTING POT

This is the only bit I've carried over from my previous fanzine (the One With No Name). But I always thought 'Melting Pot' was a good title for a Letters Dept, lending itself quite well to visual decorations!

Obviously, these aren't letters on Prolapse itself, but general bits & pieces I've received, which seemed too good to let languish unpublished.

PAUL VINCENT, 25 Dovedale Avenue, Pelsall, Walsall WS3 4HG

(First, a word of explanation; Paul recently produced his own fnz, Abdump³, in which he made one or two mildly critical remarks about the Brum Group. I immediately jumped in, agreed in part about the lack of fannish activity, but explained that the BSFG did have its strengths, as well as weaknesses. After all, I said, we do have close to 100 paid-up members, we do have a long history of regular meetings, publications, and convention organising. Above all, we have permanence. I explained to Paul that the reason we were so much more formally organised than other groups was because the founders (essentially Rog, Vernon, Tim Stannard & myself) deliberately modelled the BSFG after mundane-type social organisations we were familiar with; a sort of cross between the Y.C.s and Tim's Car Club. The idea was that although we four would grow old and tired, the Group would carry on. Which it has. Now read on!)

"I'm grateful for your potted history of the murky origins of the Brum Group. After reading it, my impression is that the reason for any present apathy may be that you made such a good job of building the group to last that it now requires little original thought to keep it going. Hence the original reasons for starting may have been forgotten; rather like the hoary old cliché of the generation starship where the occupants, descendants of the original crew, no longer remember what the mission is, or even whether they have a mission!

"Anyway, a further reason for this letter is as a response to your request, in the Newsletter, for '6 things the BSFG could/should think about'. Having brained my strain (oops!) for a few days, the following is the list I came up with:-

"1. The proposed fanzine is an excellent idea, but I think it's vital that we get as many members as possible involved in contributing to it. For it to be a true groupzine, a large and varied set of writers is required. Also, it should be printed as cheaply as possible, to avoid the possibility of it being axed at a later date as "too expensive". This would presumably rule out litho, but so what? There are, as you know, cheaper ways. After all, the content is surely more important than a high-gloss presentation. Finally, it is essential that the zine gets circulated to fans outside the BSFG. It must be able to stand on its own feet amongst fnz-fandom at large. In other words, we produce it, but not purely for ourselves."

(20/2/83)

(And there I've cut Paul short, since I doubt if anyone else really wants his other five suggestions, good as they were. He was the ONLY one to respond to that plea of mine, by the way, which is why Paul won the *Grand Prize*. But lots of good points in the letter, above. "The Brum Group seen as a Generation Starship" — I like it, there could be a full-length article there. But where is our two-headed mutant? Come out of the closet, wherever you are!

(The Group-Fanzine is an idea which has been kicking around for a year or two, without ever happening, and to tell the truth I'm not overly keen on this as a project. That is, if anyone really wants to do it, fine, but I remember most past club-zines as being pretty bland, a sort of sterile showcase of potted bits and pieces written to impress. Why, start something like that and the next thing you

know, someone will be publishing poetry, or amateur science fiction. The trouble is, you see, there are two conflicting demands in there; the obvious need to produce a good, lively fanzine, and the 'purpose', which is to print contributions from members. And besides, the editor gets all the fun, everyone else just gets bullied into "writing something".

(I think the APA can achieve the same objective, and more besides, and give every participant a lot more personal satisfaction. Maybe, if APA-B really gets off the ground, we could publish a compendium of some of the best material in, say, a 6-month run?

(And as you've noticed, I do agree that litho is not necessary; in fact, my personal theory is that professional reproduction is a 'killer' as far as fannish projects are concerned. Me, I'm banning litho, electrostencils, coloured ink and power-assisted ~~stencil~~ duplicating. Next issue I hope to try a sort of Twiltone paper, with a hairy effect. Maybe a hair shirt, too?)

PAUL OLDROYD, 46 Colwyn Road, Beeston, Leeds LS11 9SG

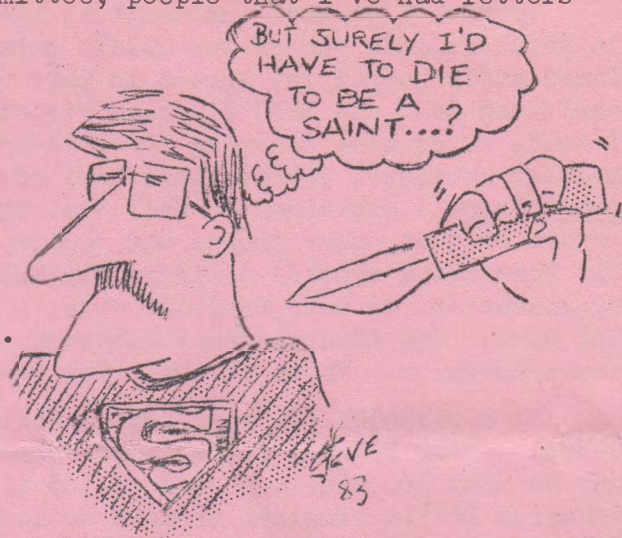
"Ever since I questioned the reasons for the Brum Group wanting what I saw to be, in effect, a mole on the Novacon committee, people that I've had letters from, 'phone conversations with, or met at Ra-Con have been singing your praises, and assuring me that Peter Weston was simply wanting the Brum Group to get more involved in fandom.

"I have this fantasy that when I next meet you, you're going to be wearing a white sheet and have this blazing circle of light above your head...! Anyway, my apologies for the suspicion of your motives. I'm not always this paranoid, but my work situation has led me to see conspiracies within conspiracies recently.

"Thanks for the flier, with proposals for Brum Group activities over the next year, to which I can only say Hurrah! It's refreshing to see a Chairman try to break the mould and to start channeling people towards the main body of fandom again. I remember going to my first con in Coventry, in 1975, wondering what it was all about, and coming away not much the wiser. I might be wrong, but even then the Brum Group seemed somehow different, and didn't really prepare a neo-fan for convention life. I suppose nothing really can, but at least if I'd gone to my first con after being a member of the Leeds Group, I'd have had much less difficulty fitting in. Anything which enables Birmingham fans to make the transition to being fannish fans easier can only be applauded.

"The idea of an APA is also excellent. I wrote my first article for Simone's Seamonsters; it was a report on my first three conventions and was utterly disastrous. Since then, I've never dared to attempt to write for a fanzine again, which is plainly ridiculous, since if you don't try... An Apa is an excellent way of getting out of this predicament. One doesn't have to produce a literary masterpiece to get into print, and internal criticism within the Apa should tend to bolster, rather than undermine, confidence in writing ability." (21/2/83)

(Paul's letter was written before our EGM, at which the NOVACON misunderstanding was, I hope, laid to rest for all time. Basically what worried me, on assuming Chairmanship, was to find that Birmingham's own convention, NOVACON, had a committee which seemed to regard the BSFG as its worst enemy. Amid rumours of 'secession' and 'exploitation', passions ran high for a while, but it was all a bit silly in retrospect, an argument about something which in practice doesn't make any difference. We've now re-established that the NOVACON committee, any year, is in effect a sub-committee of the BSFG, but within that framework has almost total freedom to be as ambitious as it likes. I'm very pleased to say that Paul Oldroyd and Phil Probert (plus the rest of their team) appear to be doing an excellent job, and that NOVACON-13 should be a really first-class affair.



TOM PERRY, P.O. Box 2134, Boca Raton, Florida 33427.

(A word of explanation; Tom is one of my longest-established correspondents, a relationship going back to 1964 and his superb fnz, Quark. We first met at the infamous MANCON in 1976, then I stayed with Tom briefly in 1977, before & after SUNCON. Since then, no word, so I recently wrote and asked his health...)

"Almost my sole connection with fandom now is writing a column for Warhoon, but since it has what we politely call a variable schedule that's hardly different from total gaffiation. Oh, did you know that Wrhn 28 -- the long-awaited Willis issue -- appeared at last, a year or two back? Some 600 pages, by and about Willis, including my own modest contribution.

"I am thinking of putting out an "ensmalled" fanzine (the current jargon for a personalzine) on this word processor, and I suppose that I will do that Real Soon Now. Wait for it.

But I am much more involved in an alternate fandom, namely small computers. The parallels are remarkable, though I have never heard anyone remark on them. I bought this one -- a Radio Shack machine -- back in 1978 and currently have five or six in the house, including an IBM Personal Computer. Happily enough, my assignment at work is also the IBM P.C.

"I hope you don't object to my writing you a personal letter on a word processor, by the way. To me it's just a fancier kind of typer, but at least one faned ignores LoCs sent here if they are too obviously printed out on a computer. I shall have to spend \$1,000-up on a printer that will look like atypewritten copy if I am going to get her zine, I guess."

(I can understand the reluctance to trade; after all, how does she know it's not the computer writing the LoC; some fans are just sneaky (and brilliant) enough to devise a letter-writing programme! Who wants to trade with a machine? Anyway, answer the important point, Perry; can your w.p. type stencils?

(As for the Willish, not only did I get it as a charter subscriber, but it has circulated all around the Brum Group by now! Incidentally, I was much moved by your own 'tribute' to Willis, but haven't I read somewhere, very recently, that someone has described this as the poorest thing in the volume? Someone remind me of the reference, please -- I found the judgment difficult to accept!)

PATRICK McGUIRE, 5764 Stevens Forest Road, No. 204, Columbia, Md. 21045.

(Another ole buddy, last seen in Lichfield Cathedral in 1974, and then for a brief fleeting moment in 1979 at SEACON; with a meeting-that-never-was in Miami.)

"Sorry I didn't make a point of seeking you out sooner at SEACON, but I was sucked in by the myth of the always-harrassed con Chairman. I did enjoy the convention and my subsequent brief travels in England and Wales, though.

"My fanac has been cut back considerably of late because of demands of time, but I do still manage to write maybe ten or twelve LoCs a year. I'm also doing brief reviews for SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY BOOK REVIEW, and I've done quite a few essays on SF topics, the most recent being one on the Strugatsky future history in CRITICAL ENCOUNTERS II. I've also been on a few con panels -- BALTICON and at NOREASCON II, and CHICON II. Every so often I'll plug away at some more fiction, but I haven't actually gotten anything to submission stage in several years now.

"I'm approaching the age at which even Bruce Gillespie got married, so who knows what the future holds, but so far I remain single. In one sense I find it astonishing to realise how your own family has grown in the meantime, in age and number, but on the other, I remember Alison on the cover of (the Fanzine With No Name), and that too seems a remarkably long time back."

(Pat had assumed that at SEACON I'd be too busy to talk to him; in reality, that convention was so well-run by everyone else on the committee that they left me nothing to do. I spent most of my time hanging around the Ops Room in the hope something would go wrong. My only utility was at the Friday night row with the Security People, which I felt rather proud about, the morning after.

(Come on, ladies; he's intelligent, has money, and isn't too bad-looking!)

"Excuse me, Mr Weston, but do you know anything about a 9-foot pile of
beercans that we've found in the Warwick Suite?" -Manager, Metropole Hotel

JOHN-HENRI HOLMBERG, Torsgatan 76, S-113 37 Stockholm, Sweden.

(Last Autumn I spent a few days in Sweden, in the company alternately of John Henri and Sam Lundwall, not realising before-hand that they were, well, deadly enemies is too strong; let's say, professional rivals. Both gentlemen were gentlemen, however, and no harm done! On my retreat, I borrowed the latest Asimov and the latest Haldeman, to read on a long train journey across Sweden to Malmo).

"Haldeman is writing a continuation of WORLDS, it seems, and claims to introduce a bit more plot to it in the second volume; I have slight hopes, but then according to most of the writers I have talked to recently, series books are the only kind now sought by publishers. Asimov, of course, has just disclosed that he has contracted for a third R. Daneel & Lije Bailey novel; after that, he will do a fifth FOUNDATION book. As you note, the fourth is dismal and I don't really plan on reading any of his future efforts; what few recollections of his works I still retain since childhood should, I feel, best stay untouched. (The next time you feel like boning up on what's new in SF, you could always try the new L Ron Hubbard series; after the 800-page BATTLEFIELD EARTH, Ackerman has announced that Hubbard has released for publication the continuation; a 9 million-word novel which will be issued in 12 volumes of 900 pages each. I guess this at least answers the question of what the man was doing all those years on his Scientology Flagship, cruising the Mediterranean.)

"Best of luck on your SF magazine. A further couple of issues of ours are enclosed as further inducement; comes April, we are launching a line of monthly, low-priced pocket SF novels intended for newsstand distribution in 11,000-copy print runs. During 1983 we'll be issuing the first eight titles; Poul Anderson's A PLAGUE OF MASTERS and THE NIGHT FACE; Sprague De Camp's LEST DARKNESS FALL; Philip Dick's GALACTIC POT-HEALER; Wilson Tucker's TO THE TOMBAUGH STATION; Keith Laumer's WORLDS OF THE IMPERIUM; Heinlein's STARSHIP TROOPERS; and Simak's A CHOICE OF GODS. It's an investment of roughly SEK 200,000, or around £18,000, but we'll break even if the books sell an average of 3,750 copies each, and be millionaires in two years if they sell out, so it could be worth the try. Magazine sales have picked up slightly and we hope to be selling an average of around 5,000 copies by the end of the year; that should enable us to go to 120 pages (roughly 100,000 words) per issue. If everything works out well, Per and I will probably both be full-time SF workers before the end of 1984. If it all works out badly, we're considering trying for the Orange Julius concession and giving up on this Buck Rogers stuff."

2/3/83

(There: Who says fans don't read SF! Just space to note that John-Henri attended Albacon II this year, and we spent a fair amount of time together. However, on one point our tastes diverged; he didn't appear to share my enthusiasm for our Sunday night Thrash at the Brum Group party, and preferred quiet conversation!)

"A solicitor is a lady barrister without her briefs" - Alan Cash

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