

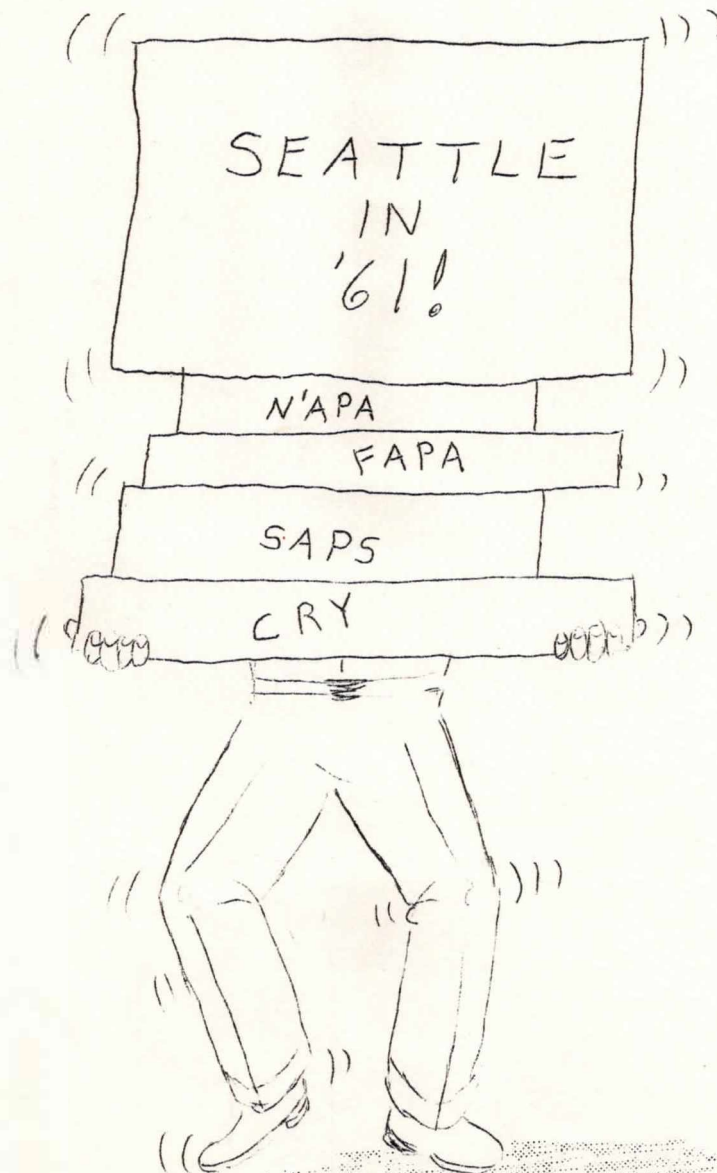
(Nov '60)

SERCON'S BANE

4

(FAPulous 13)

(FAPA 93)



(-Buz)

"Just point me in the right direction... and hold the door open."

It's SerCon's Bane #4, FAPulous Pub #13, published for the (Nov '60) 93rd Hlg of ~~1961~~ FAPA, by F. M. Busby, 2852 14th Ave West, Seattle 99, Washington, USA.

It's the PittConFidential Issue, perforce and with all due apologies to Buck Coulson who does not like ConReports, and I'm going to take the chance of killing my punchlines like unto a John W Campbell, jr, blurb, by throwing in a few words of explanation as a sort of preface.

Through some strange turn^{of} events which I do not entirely understand, I find myself a member of the "Seattle in '61" Con Committee. You know, I remember back in 1950 at Portland, looking with compassion at the harrassed expressions of Don Day and his cohorts. And then I look at the present situation, and somehow I am reminded of "Nightmare Alley" and wonder how long it will be before I end up on the platform biting the heads off our parakeet and cockatiel, poor li'l fellas.

But kidding (echh!) aside, the 19th WorldCon's scheduling for Seattle over the Labor Day weekend of Sept 2-3-4, 1961, is going to make some changes around here for the next few months. The 2 weeks we've been home has shown that, already; letters pertaining to Con-business have to be answered pronto, to the detriment of other activity such as CRY, 3 apas, and personal correspondence which has been sadly behind on a chronic basis ever since the Solacon. CRY isn't much of a problem, since I actually contribute very few pages of my own guff any more, and that usually at the last minute when I couldn't be doing anything else anyhow, what with the gang milling around here and all. I'm on the Elinorially-imposed 6-page quota in N'APA already, so no sweat there, either. But SAPS & FAPA are another story; in these groups I have a small tailed anthropoid on my back and his name is Mailing Comments. I like going thru with full ECs, and I feel obligated to do 'em; obviously, during this next year, there just won't be the spare time for indulging this fetish of mine.

I don't know just how I'm going to cope with the break, in SAPS. Here in FAPA, though, I'm going to chop the continuity by contributing to this mailing the PittCon writeup that would never be done at all, otherwise-- and little else, if anything. It seems the Thing To Do, somehow.

"FAPAns I've met": is it as difficult for you as it is for me, to read down the roster and pick out the members you've met in person, from those you just feel as if you know? At any rate, PittCon added 9 individuals (7½ memberships) to the "FAPAns I've met" list, for a total (according to FA#92) of 41-out-of-64 memberships I've now met, including 5 duos besides ourselves. This, mostly on 2 WorldCons and a couple of regionals-- what was that about fanzine- versus Convention-fans? (Hmm, I see that 28 of the 50 Wlers have also survived face-to-face contact with yourHOS...) On this particular trip (this is the cowardly way to avoid trying to peg down times and places in the main body of whatever this report turns out to be like), we met for the first time: Phyllis Economou, Rich Eney, Sally Kidd, Sam Moskowitz, Larry Shaw, Larry Stark, Jim Taurasi, and Andy&Jean Young. Previously-met FAPAns present (besides ourselves, whom we see quite a bit in daily life) were Buck & Juanita Coulson, Ron Ellik, Jack Harness, Lynn Hickman, Bob Pavlat, Boyd Raeburn, Ray Schaffer, Noreen Shaw, Bob Silverberg, Ger Steward, Bjo Trimble, Ted & Sylvia White-- 14 persons, 11½ memberships. Total of 25 persons (19½ memberships) representing the FAPate at PittCon. (So now the good friend whose name I've blindly overlooked here can rise and smite me in the next mailing; it was inadvertent, I assure you.) (Not you, Wrai: I intend to give the full buildup to the origins of the Deringer-Shooters of America, in good time.)

Like to say right here in one burst that it was G*R*E*A*T seeing all you folks who made it to Pitt. And if in this following account I omit you from gatherings at which you were present, or include you where you actually were not-- bear with me and correct me gently if at all-- please keep my delicate condition im mind at all times. And if a ConCommittee member isn't in a delicate condition-- WHO IS??

(So now, like, just read right along) --Buz...

P I T T C O N F I D E N T I A L a sort of Report on recent events on the Eastern Seaboard, by F. M. Busby...

It is traditional that Con-attendees should blather on at great lengths about their journeys to and from the Conventions as well as about the Cons themselves, and that purists should bitch mightily at all these digressions. Not being one to set tradition aside lightly, nor yet one to go out of the way to create turmoil-- well, it's like this:

Flying is for feathered entities, and I don't care to drive long distances, so we take the trains. This time we tried a deal known as the SlumberCoach, which provides a tiny but adequate bunk in a private compartment with washbasin-&-toilet, for a price about midway between that of the first-class "bedroom" and the torture of sitting up in coaches. It's not a bad deal at all, this Slumbercoach, and I recommend it to people who are fed up with flying or driving or riding busses.

That was the Northern Pacific, from Seattle into Chicago, slightly less than 2 days. East of Chicago, the railroads undergo a strange and evil metamorphosis much like that encountered in going from West Berlin to East Berlin: the food-prices double, the service and courtesy vanish, and Big Brother frowns at you.

I had thought that for once in my life I would go through Chicago without going from one station to another, but Michael Quill (may he rot in unsavory surroundings) heard about this idea of mine, so we took the B&O east of Chicago and changed stations after all, as might have been expected if you look at the Big Picture. The B&O is a series of rabbit-hutches on wheels and its flunkies all get A for Arrogance, which is natural, I suppose, for people who have to work in a rabbit-hutch on wheels.

But at least we did not have to embark on the B&O cold-stony-sober. Earl Kemp and Jim O'Meara cheered our short stopover in Chicago by meeting us and steering the gathering to the station bar, which served Michelob beer. Which I recommend, also.

I was staggering along the usual mile from debarkation to the depot door at Pittsburgh about 1:30am on Friday morning of Sept 2nd, suitcases and tongue dragging the ground, when a threatening-looking mob of bystanders resolved itself into Wally Weber, Fred Prophet, Jim Broderick, and Sidney Coleman. I quickly passed out the suitcases (but nobody would carry me), and we all ended up in an incredibly-cheap taxi/over what passes for paved streets in Pittsburgh, to the Penn-Sheraton hotel. After we checked in at the hotel, we really wanted (though the hour was late) to sit down somewhere and yak awhile with our volunteer greeters. But the clerk kept saying "the bellman will show you to your rooms", and so he did, in spite of hell and good intentions. Once immured, it was too much work to go back downstairs, so we sacked out.

Next morning (Friday) we were just getting up and around when Boyd called. We met and started out for breakfast, met Forrie Ackerman at the street-corner, and we four wound up across the street at a small all-night restaurant. Even if I could remember what we had for breakfast, I would not outrage the trivia-haters by telling about it; I'll leave it that Forrie passed around a gang of nekkid pitchas, and that after he left, we-and-Boyd (who had been two years anticipating another real good get-together) couldn't seem to get off the subject of socialism, which we all abhor and which bores us all to tears. So much for broad mental horizons. Back at our room, we-and-Boyd were branching out more into good general fannish chatter. Earl Kemp showed up with the hooch he'd kindly purchased for us in good old low-tax Illinois, and the discussion rambled on. Hal Shapiro called up. I went out to lunch with Hal, Lee Anne Tremper, and (oops-- I give up on this historical-accuracy pitch) maybe someone else and maybe not. At any rate, we walked about 3 miles on the search for some place Hal insisted was right in the next block, and after a while I punctuated everyblock with a statement that I didn't give a damn how costly the hotel coffee-shop was: this was the last time anybody got me outside the hotel until the Con was over and done with. However, I never did eat in the hotel coffee-shop; people tell me that it was open at times, but it was closed every time I found

it. And "found" is the word, too-- I have it on good authority that the lobby floors of the Penn-Sheraton were originally laid out for the testing of white rats. Further, Harlan Ellison claims that he met a Minotaur in the Lower Lobby, and I tend to believe him: one morning I spent fifteen minutes looking for the street door, and only found it by latching onto an incoming fan and demanding that he backtrack us out.

At any rate, my vow to eat in the coffee-shop was never fulfilled, because I never found the damn place open on the rare occasions when I could find it at all.

Meanwhile, back at the hotel: after lunch (still Friday) I set out to look for my lost bride Elinor, up on the 17th floor where all the actual Con-doings were held. By this time the LA gang had the Fan-Art Show pretty well set up, and the nearby H3F Room was going at a good clip, also. So I located Elinor OK, and she and I and we met quite a few folk in the next hour or two, in the prelude-period before the Con itself got on the march.

But Wally Weber and Elinor and I were the only Seattle characters available to push the "Seattle in '61" idea, and we needed some mixer and beer and ice to go with all that high-proof stuff that Earl had agent-purchased for us.

Wally, Phil Castora, and I: we ended-up riding a cab out and up into the bumpy boondocks looking for the necessities. "This street" (a dirt detour) "has been torn up for 18 months".// "Some hill, huh? But I guess you have worse ones in Seattle." "Yes, but we pave ours."// "Don't they pay any attention at all to stop-signs around here?" "Sure, they take a deep breath before they charge right on through them." I guess we all came out just about even.

We came to the place where Pennsylvania citizens can buy beer. Alighting in the unpaved alley, we dodged past the unloading-chute of a truck into a dust-laden warehouse, and eventually came out with a few cases of beer. Well, let's face it: no state in this union is fully to blame for the idiocy of its politicians.

It took two more stops for ice and (an inadequate supply of) mixer; we ended up with all this baggage at the foot of the Penn-Sheraton freight elevator with a solid refusal for elevation of our booty; better we should have braved the lobby elevators, from the reception we got on the working-side.

Since I am a Nut-with-a-beard and also a low boiling-point, and Wally Weber is a clean-cut American youth whose implacability is not apparent at first glance, it was elementary tactics to sic Wally onto the management. So a couple of years later we finally had all this ill-gotten and illegitimate loot on ice upstairs.

Elinor and Phyllis and I found "Sofi's", a place that featured shish-kabob and Michelob, among other things. We enjoyed the interlude.

The Seattle Contingent was originally supposed to be five of us. When it dwindled down to 3, we chickened out on renting a good party-throwing suite. So the great big Seattle Party, when it got under way, began in Wally's room. Later it moved down to Les Nirenberg's, where for a time or two the joint was actually so packed with standees that movement was impossible or nearly so.

There was this bit about singing. Nick Palasca had a mandolin or something of the sort, and he did a little under-the-breath singing and bothered no one at all. Harlan Ellison got with LesNi's bongo-drums and did some impromptu Calypso that was all good and true and beautiful and possibly even shaped like a semi-colon like Sidney Coleman. And still it was not impossible to talk one to the other in the fashion for which we had each come all this way to do. Yes. It was the misfortune of Les Gerber to add his guitar-and-voice to the existing setup-- "misfortune", because the addition put the singers in the position of drowning-out the talkers.

And then people down at the end of the room began singing old familiar songs and coercing the instrumentalists to go along. Now I will be gahdamn if I will travel from Seattle to Pittsburgh to listen to a gaggle of songs I've heard before, when I want to talk with people I hardly ever see. So, on the thin excuse that Harlan should not beat on the teevy so hard, the bongoes were lifted by Les Nirenberg. Then, Les Gerber's guitar was amputated. Nick still plinked on that ol' mandolin, but he wasn't bothering anyone, same as before. I think it was about at this stage when all the people entered and filled the room to bursting for a few minutes. Like, ooog.

Back there a way, I was razzing the hotel about its layout, etc. I want to make it clear that those are my only gripes at the hotel, and minor ones they are. For instance... This party, Friday night, reached noise-levels which I would not have believed possible to achieve without mechanical aid. The hotel did not complain. In the early stages of it, I emerged from the centrally-located elevators to go to its far-corner location, and heard the festivities plainly, though the thing was not even halfway to peak volume at that time. At the peak, conversation could only be conducted by mouth-to-ear shouting. The hotel did not complain, nor did it pass on complaints from other guests. Mind you, I am not proud of all that noise; personally I prefer the quieter sort of party-- I cite it only as an example of the cooperation given to PittCon by the Penn-Sheraton.

There were various interludes. Elinor and I looking over several pages of fannish rebuses (rebi?) with Jim Harmon (who has looked better), Lee Anne, and Hal. Eney and I wandering the halls looking for Elinor, Phyllis, JeanY and others who had gone off somewhere and forgotten to leave directions (when we finally met up again at Les Nirenberg's "Seattle Party", it turned out they's been with the Cincy Mob). We, Eney, Pavlat, JeanY(?)-- migosh, who else?-- Sarah Jane Futile (which is a 1948 local joke here, and no reflection on Sara Lee Tharp who is here the victim of an obvious bit of alliteration)-- and maybe one or two more whom I just cannot visualize at this point-- all trooping in on Nancy Share about 3 or 4 in the morning for an hour's chat. Which takes a lot of fannish crust, for a first meeting, I'd say. And getting to bed at or about 5, pleased that although I realized I was a little more gassed than I'd've preferred, the situation was still within the bounds of the one and only Elinorial Seal of Approval. Like, why should she lie?

Saturday morning, Phyllis & Elinor & I were breakfasting across-the-street-and-to-the-left when a fella entered who could only be Art Rapp, and was. Considerable waving and beckoning brought him over to our table to wait for two-to-go for him and Nancy. A nice guy; it took maybe 4-5 minutes to cure the coolness I'd had toward him over the past few months for reasons this assemblage can likely deduce with the least of effort. Art apparently doesn't say much without a good load on (and this time he stayed unloaded); nevertheless it was intuitively obvious why Art and I would never agree on some things, and why it would be very silly for me to hold this against him, even in a passive sort of way. Like I said-- a nice guy.

Elinor and I got to the Con-hall too late to hear ourselves introduced to a Con-audience for the first time in history. (Wally was sitting up front, and relates of Dirce Archer telling SaMosk "Be sure to introduce the Busbys; they're bidding for Seattle", and SaM whispering(!) back, "Yes, but what do they do?" Which just goes to show who doesn't read the mailings, I guess. Anyhow, the major goof was that Wally Weber was the one who should have been introduced; he was to make the Con-bid. But at any rate, we missed our Moment of Glory.)

Sam carried on with the Auction Bloch, but I found it difficult to keep up with his "thinly-veiled sexual promises" on behalf of the Auction-Blochees-- there was a sort of general greeting-session going on in the hall as various folks paused in passing-by on the way to seats-- Howard Devore comes to mind-- hadn't seen him since '57, and I'm afraid we were not as attentive as we should have been, to the platform.

Saturday afternoon was a real ramble, and various. This was when I was hit by a touch of SouthGate Syndrome, as reported in POL#3 but much milder this time; I hit for the room, gulped a couple B-1 tablets, and lay down for about 20 minutes, thus alleviating the over-excitement and disorientation that gets me if I don't watch it. Elinor tizzied-out for a short time also; Les Nirenberg tipped me off that she had departed into the nether regions in poor fettle, so I followed, and will always be glad-- Cons put a lot of pressure on people, and truths can pop up like mad, if only there is a quiet situation for mutual listening. Elinor did not have a Big Problem such as the one she pulled my head out of at SouthGate, but still and all it was not a bad deal that I could be around as a cheering-section.

Bob Bloch had some things to say in response to POL#3; let's go to a new page--

--he mentioned that he personally knew of 9 persons who had "serious psychological disturbances" at SouthGate. (At one time I figured that I knew who 7 or 8 of these folks would have to be, but that's a long time ago and I forget by now.) At any rate, it came up that personal psychological crises were not unusual at these WorldCons, at all. All sorts of reasons for this: sheer Personality Pressure where you must needs recognize-and-relate-to ^{any one of} one or two hundred people, snapwise, is the major item, perhaps. Related overexcitement is very apt to get into the act, also. Then add in loss-of-sleep, over-boozing in self-defense against self-consciousness, and the disorientation arising from being in a strange place in a fantasy atmosphere, and it's no wonder that our WorldCons are occasionally hard on a few of us. But it is worth it, at that, I think we'll all agree. It is just a case where we (like the proverbial children at the circus) can get carried away and be sick if we don't watch it. (I had been worried about PittCon, but it came out all great.)

Late Saturday afternoon, Elinor was stuck helping judge the Fan-Art Show (she purely enjoyed this task, so "stuck" is certainly not the right word, either).

But anyhow, thus isolated from my bride, I wandered into the Con-floor bar and planted a beer on the table occupied by Earl Kemp, Jim O'Meara, Phyllis, and others. This table began as a foursome or so and ended up as a dozen-or-more, and not too easy to break back into, as folks filled in. (I was periodically dodging-out to see whether or not Elinor was done with the Art Show and ready to go for dinner; this made for a spotty appearance at the bar.)

There were a couple fellas at the bar yelling "Banzai!" at 30-second intervals; each shout announcing the simultaneous emptying of a pair of shot-glasses of bar whiskey. One of them turned out to be H Beam Piper. The other was a well-dressed man of late middle-age; his name is Paul Smith. It is my theory that once Paul Smith got sidetracked enroute to an American Legion convention, to one of our WorldCons, and unfortunately no one has been able to get him back on the right track, to date. I got involved with the Banzai Boys while stopping by for a beer, and ended up in a chat with Piper (who was pretty well crooked to begin with, but who straightened-out amazingly over a half-hour period during which he drank only about half the shot-glass he was holding; I can see how it would drive a man to heavy drinking, being stuck with Paul Smith; I mean, besides "Banzai!", what can you say?) while Smith mumbled to himself in the background. It turned out that Piper's and my favorite Piper story was "Last Enemy" (the paratime job in which reincarnation was a proven fact), and I enjoyed hearing how the ideas in that tale originated and developed.

Elinor finally turned up, was introduced, and led me away; she, Sid Coleman, & I headed out for a quiet chat-session over dinner at Sofi's. Sidney and Elinor, both Art Show judges, discussed the judging-session (they had both enjoyed it hugely; Sid said that "it was the best conversation he had had in a long time"). Aside from that, I don't recall the conversation in detail, but it was fun. I like Sidney.

This year, Elinor and I did not go in for costumes: we wanted to travel light, and Elinor has just plain been too busy to contrive them. And overall, both the number and the proportion of costumed types were less than at Southgate (comparison to Detention, anyone?), though the costumes that did appear at Pitt were top-rate. Bjo (who took Top Honors), Earl Kemp (whose "Most Beautiful Costume" award was fully deserved), and Sylvia White (whose ittybittyredBikini looked so damn cute on her) were outstanding; I regret that memory takes me no further along the list just now. (Or do I? Surely these are pleasant pictures for dwelling-upon purposes.)

After the costume-judging, the LASFS movies were announced to be shown in the Fort Duquesne Room. So we missed part of the Variety Show in order to go latch onto good seats. Like, we wanted to see the "Musquite Kid". Well, it must have been well over an hour before the movies actually came on; Harlan Ellison saved the day by getting up front and delivering a running monologue filled with "schticks" (which means "pieces"). I had never met or seen Harlan before, though I'm familiar with the mythology of his early days in fandom. I can see how he may (nay, must) have been pretty rough to take a few years ago before he developed some control on all that drive, but Ellison-1960 is a real Talent and a helluva nice guy. OK, so he needs a

bit more limelight than most (though by no means all) of us, he knows what to do with the spotlight when he gets it, and gives fair value in good entertainment. From the fannish picture of Harlan, I expected him to be seeking targets and sniping at them, but migosh even in putting down hecklers he wasn't what I'd call mean about it.

Then Asimov decided that Harlan was running down and needed some help, & Garrett joined the group. Well, let's just say that generally I like Ike's stuff; it's a lot rougher than I'd feel at ease in peddling, but it's fun. And that Garrett is a bad influence on Asimov-- Why, you'd think that Garrett had discovered the anus to the Western world, the way he carries on about it. (Sue him, Burb.)

Somebody down there in faroff exotic LA: try to convince good ol' Tyrannical Al Lewis that the way to introduce a film is not to apologize in detail for each and every flaw which the audience probably wouldn't even notice, otherwise. A little background-discussion is OK, but he should ease off. Especially when the audience has been waiting for maybe an hour and a half, already.

Neither Elinor nor I dug the "invasion" movie much; I enjoyed the technical virtuosity, but it is just not the sort of thing we go for, plotwise. But "The Musquite Kid", now-- that was a real gas, technical difficulties and all. It was tremendous to see Gregg and Joanne Calkins turn up unheralded in first an interlude and then the mob-scene, for instance. The funny part of it is that the audience (mainly non-apans) roared over some of the lines you'd think would be all ingroup-otseric, etc. These passifans are smarter than you'd expect.

We had the use of the LA suite for Saturday night's "Seattle party" (when I said "good ol'" Al Lewis, up there, I meant it). For awhile I was wondering if it would be worthwhile to have a party that night, the way things were dragging, but eventually it got under way. That is, suddenly a roomful of people turned up and had to wait for maybe 20 minutes before room service showed up with the mixer, glasses, and ice.

Right off the bat we had problems; two guys showed up carrying guitars. After the Friday night episode, we had decided "NO folk-singing"; I told Jock Root and the other unsuspecting innocent that deadly weapons were to be checked at the door. He said "But this is Juanita Coulson's guitar", and I felt all apologetic and backing-down like, since I did want to hear Juanita's renditions. But then I thought of the situation-- 20 or 30 people blocked from conversation by 2 or 3 singers-- and came to the painful conclusion that something had to give. Luckily, a compromise was easily possible: the guitars went right on through the main parlor into another room; I made a note (mental) to get in there later in the evening, but only managed it for a very few minutes once, when nothing much was going on there, at that.

I was dropping in and out of the party on successive urgent errands whose nature escapes me at the moment. Upon one return the room seemed to be excessively filled with strangers, and it came out that we were being taken over by delegates to some other convention. It just was not my night to settle down into comfortable amiability, I guess. I barged over to the door where a gaggle of utter aliens were lining up for drinks, and hit up the easily-recognizable Born Leader in the bunch.

"Pardon me, but which group are you with?" // "Well, we came in with this fellow who invited us" (vague wave toward the most crowded section of the room). // "Yes, but what group are you representing?" // "A fella invited us; he's over there some place." // "And you are affiliated with which group?" // Two or three more exchanges of this sort, and he mumbled that he and his were of the Grey Knights. I pointed out that this was fine, but that this party was for members of the 18th World Science-Fiction Convention, and that we had insufficient space for our own people, and that while we hated to be inhospitable, still-- "...take your drinks along, and welcome." // "But we--" // "Sorry." // "But--" // "Sorry, and thanks; see you again some time." // And, man, was I ever relieved when those jokers all trooped on out, without turmoil.

Betimes, I took refuge at a regular old closed-door party, presided-over by the most ruthless of guardians. I deplore the necessity for such ruthlessness, but the PittCon situation (as contrasted to Southgate, say) was such that it definitely existed. The necessity, I mean. What other defense is there, against Paul Smith? This particular party was a quiet affair and veritable haven to which to repair for psychic regeneration and for reassurance that all is not unmitigated NOISE.

So back and forth it (or rather, I) went. The Seattle Party alternately waxed and waned; the other one maintained its quiet level, punctuated by crises-at-the-door. Meanwhile I was running-off about five pounds of excess flab, and a good thing, too.

I was not yet done with the Conflict Bit. Around 3-4am the Seattle Party was beset with plonker-shooting, which was OK for a while, but a little of it goes a long way with me, in a crowded room. I made both polite and sneaky (like, hide the darts when I found one) attempts to taper-off this routine. No soap; Andy Main wanted to play plonkers and he was damn well going to continue the game. Now, I like Andy and I figure him for a fine upcoming fan. But about the sixth time (after repeated protests) I found myself looking down the very axis of his carelessly-waved plonker, --well, it sort of hit the fan, like. I blew my stack, on the subject of the care and handling of any missile-throwing device, with special attention to the idea that I have an emotional attachment to bilateral vision. There was a sort of hush that lasted a lot longer than I would have preferred. Andy slunk over and sat down off in some corner or possibly even in the next room. Ted and Sylvia left. It was only slowly and with pauses that the party finally got under way again. Sorry, folks, but I'm afraid that in a repetition of the same situation, I'd react at least as strongly. Plonkers are all well and good, but not where no one has time or space to duck.

The renewed party, though, was a lovely quiet affair, winding up with an excursion for breakfast when the sun came up. J&Young (oops, should be Je&Young), Jack Harness, Ed Cox, Sara Tharp, Nick Falasca-- who else? that's eight; Elinor and I both think there might have been more of us. Anyhow, the breakfast session ran to a torn-with-laughter milieu, much fun, and my head hit the pillow at 8am.

Sunday I had to face up to appearing onstage in "Purple Pastures" as adapted from the original. So I skipped some more program to attend some of the least-organized rehearsal sessions I've ever seen. ("The next time you have a play that lists 'Neofen' in the cast", I said to Earl Kemp, "for CRYsakes don't cast it with real neofen!") And I doubt if he ever will again, either. Les Gerber stuck around pretty well, mostly, but he was the only one of the lot, who did. Not that the elder fon were much better; from sheer wandering-off, the group got two 20-minute rehearsals out of two hours of waiting-around on the parts of the most of us. Like, arrggghhh!

I had all of three lines, as The Blog-Brewer. Tried to learn them on the spot but it was too noisy and distracting, so just to play it safe, I carried the blog on a tray and had the script on it, too. Worked fine.

The play did not go over too well with the audience, since it was by no means slanted for Con-attendees: quite the opposite, in fact, and no reflection on the work itself, which was highly appreciated by the cognoscenti. Only trouble was, most of those were onstage. And it was all, essentially, a Bob Newhart button-down scene.

There is a sort of blank between the play and the banquet; we must have been somewhere, but we are personally baffled.

At any rate, Phyllis and Elinor and I wandered down to the banquet too late to find any table-invitations that would seat three, so ended up at one end of the hall and in the front-center of the banquet-pics proofs (and what the hell ever happened to that pic I ordered and paid for?). Ron Ellik was sitting even further back to the end. At some point in the proceedings ahead of the main event, Ron was all jittering-around and I went over to see what gave. "How can you sit there so calmly and all?" he asked. "Do you have ice-water in your veins?" Ron was referring to the Hugo-award uncertainty. The answer was that we simply gave no house room to the idea that CRY had too much chance of taking that Hugo, so we didn't tense up. Of course this routine was impossible for Ron, because he had stood up and accepted the award a year earlier, at Detention-- he couldn't help but nerve-up for a possible repeat.

Meanwhile Don Ford, Eric Bentcliffe, toastmaster (the good witch-doctor) Asimov, and Guest-of-Honor James Blish, carried on well and entertainingly. Then Asimov stoned me by tagging CRY, so that Wally Weber had to be dragged up for the presentation. Then, the next few awards went appreciatively as expected, with adequate applause but little upheaval, until the "Novel" award went to Heinlein and biGhod there he was, specially flown-in for the occasion. Everyone rose for a standing

ovation; it was the damnedest thing I'd seen in years-- very moving. Heinlein himself was not only shaken but was so breathless from immediate-arrival and fast transport to the Penn-Sheraton that his voice was tremulous and cracking throughout his acceptance-speech (later, surrounded by a ten-foot-deep crowd that I didn't even try to penetrate, he spoke in healthier and more normal tones). Terrific deal.

I must admit that PittCon was somewhat over-programmed ^{that} and this was never more evident than in the scheduling of the business meeting directly after the (necessarily) open-ended banquet scene. So the business meeting, scheduled to start at 9:30 Sunday evening, actually got under way about 2 hours later. And what a drag that was. The meeting was forced to consider a number of proposals that were not so bad in themselves, but which speedily lent themselves to the distortive manipulations of Those Who Just Love To Stand Up In Front And Sound Off. It got pretty bad; Mr de Camp, who conducted the meeting, appeared to take a particular delight in allowing much time to the obfuscators while refusing to recognize anyone brandishing a blade with which to cut the red tape. (This is not a personal beef; I had only one piece to say, and was granted the privilege of standing up and speaking it, OK.) De Camp side-stepped all efforts to omit goofs from the records. Eventually he tired of playing the long-winded side of the fence and went to the other extreme. Jack Spoor, I hope you take up our offer to run the '61 business session.

There was nit-picking. It became routine to vote on amendments to amendments on original proposals (and I trust you know that these things have to be voted back step-by-step down to the original proposal, with each additional amendment-move needing a new vote and each vote allowed new discussion-time with the possibility of still more new amendments to screw the deal up just that much better.

Business meetings are not really my favorite pastime; I could kill... By the time that PittCon Business Meeting was over and done with, it was late late late and I was happy to settle for standing-space at a quiet party that included the Toronto Mob, several of the New York Contingent, and other nice folks. It was fun, and I eventually met bed earlier and soberer than might be expected-- these two criteria continually improved for me, throughout this Con-- and of course, that made it good in the mornings, too.

And now (next day) I see I forgot to put in the commercial: "Seattle in '61!" Also, while the fee is raised to \$3, membership is still \$2, with the 3rd buck due at the Registration Desk. When Ed Wood first proposed the raise, I put a blurb into CRY to the effect that Seattle would handle it in this fashion, regardless; our gang had been dickering with the hotels while keeping one eye on the Solacon & Detention financial reports, and figured we could make it on a flat \$2 and could afford to be neutral on the raise to attendees, but that we didn't want to hit the "support" memberships with a raise. Nevertheless there was this countermove to lower the absentee fee to \$1, and since this would chop our advance-moneys neatly in half, it scared us a little. So that's why I rose to speak at the business meeting-- to lay it on the line as to the Seattle attitude, just about as above: like, leave it alone or up it for attendees-only, but let's not soak the absentee or cut the income.

Funny thing, too: I haven't had jitters about speaking before a group, for years now, and when I did, it was pre-appearance stagefright. And doggone if I didn't get up and start yakking in full confidence, and then get nervous while I was talking! And so, forgot to specify that overseas memberships would remain at \$1, so that an opening was left for 20 minutes of nitpicking on that subject before it was finally included in the motion. In very awkward form, I might add; de Camp never did allow anyone to tell him that overseas dues/fees were being left at \$1 rather than being reduced to it. Coulda shot the man...

Advice to people submitting proposals to business meetings: try to avoid motions that would bind and restrict the judgment of future Con-committees, such as a rigid "standardization of categories" for the Hugo awards, for instance. The state of the field is too fluid for any given year's lineup (such as this year's, which was the basis of the proposal) to be definitive for next year or the year after. And the "No Award This Year" loophole should always be kept in reserve for specific slumps

in any given category-- Detroit used this wisely, I thought, on TV and Movies. But my main pitch is, to allow things to be kept flexible, while depending on common sense and the weight of fannish public opinion to keep things appropriate, as well.

Monday: the fanzine-editors' panel, originally scheduled to follow the business meeting, if you can imagine it (I really don't mean to ride the Committee's programming all that hard; these things are much clearer to hindsight than to foresight; just wait and see which particular way we guess wrong!), turned up Monday afternoon with considerable change from announced-personnel, and changed to a sort of debate "for" or "against" fanzines. Actually, the negative side was mostly against the complete divorcement of fanzines from S-F itself, which is a much more reasonable and two-sided question for discussion. Eric Bentcliffe did an outstanding job, as the moderator, of handling his group; it is seldom that we get the chance to see anyone so adept at keeping a panel "on track" without choking-off promising lines of thought. Buck Coulson and Ronel had the affirmative, and Bob Madle and Harlan Ellison the "vs".

Out for a snack with Phyllis and Eric (Elinor and I were, that is), we ran into Andy Main (who was not bugged at me, after all), Ted White, and Walter Breen. We heard a bit about Eric's work, and other sidelights on life in the UK (I really have the feeling of being "at home" over there; wonder how that feeling will stand up if and when we eventually make the trip?). Then Elinor had to cut out for the Fan Club panel: she, Howard Devore, Al (Tyrannical Harsh-eyed) Lewis, and Hal Lynch, moderated by Bob Pavlat. This one went well, too (and I was interested to see that all the clubs have the same kinds of problems). Unfortunately, it had to be chopped off just when audience-participation had the discussion into a false-premise blind alley on a false dilemma: "Should younger fans have their own separate groups more or less, or should they be controlled and guided by the older fans?" You started the line of questioning, Sam Moskowitz, though I don't hold you responsible for the turn it took. (Heck, the answer is just the same in fandom as in Mundane. You don't shut the kids out, nor do you breathe down their necks all the time. Just let things go the usual normal way: the newer fans will look up the older ones when they feel like it and will be welcome or not, depending on how busy life is at any given moment; doubtless the younger fans will receive more advice than they really care for, but by and large they're probably pretty good by now at shrugging off what they don't need, without being too obvious about it. Methinks the question is just a bit superfluous.)

It was a good panel. Elinor didn't speak up much, though; I think she was being careful not to razz the sillier aspects of our local club, and by the time it came clear that all clubs share these absurdities, the discussion had got out into the audience, more.

I screwed up. Train reservations from Pittsburgh back to Chicago were beyond the powers of American Express at the time we left Seattle; I was supposed to check these sometime during the weekend, and it completely slipped my mind from Friday evening to Monday morning. It made no difference, really; no space had been available on the train we really wanted, for a couple of weeks. But I could have been in line for possible cancellations. So we had to take off around 9pm instead of 11:30, and fight for seats instead of having reserved ones. A nerveracking situation, with the Pennsy still on strike.

Bob Pavlat (Hello! still have a few of those left from Southgate, Bob!) had quietly passed the word around that he was having a quiet last-evening party. But somehow, the message didn't get across; during a sort of lull in the howling of the mob standing on a bed peering at (they said) some undressed babe across the way, Bob turned to us and said rather wistfully, "This isn't exactly the sort of party I had in mind." I do hope it simmered down to a more enjoyable level later in the evening, Bob. And we did have a good time, though as you say, not exactly the sort of good time we had had in mind.

Now, before we get to all that gripping suspense-situation down at the depot, maybe I should pick up a few outstanding omissions in the threadbare continuity that seems to haunt this piece.

Such as: we've had all sorts of fine help and advice from folks who were wound up in the production of-- let's see-- the past five WorldCons. These fans have been through the mill and have good ideas based both on their own successes and their own boobos; without exception, the veterans we've talked to have been generous with their time and efforts.

Which leads into a couple of reportorial omissions. Coming out of the final Sunday night elevator ride, on the way to our room, we came upon Teddy and Mabel Bear. Rog came on to the room with us and we kicked Con problems around for an hour or more. Then on Monday morning we braved the Cafe d'Or (and I do mean braved; that hotel dining-room outpriced the New York Central for CRYsake) for breakfast with the Simses and Kyles (though Ruth and Mabel dined apart "so they can giggle", as Roger put it). And we (Elinor and Rog and Dave and I) put in another good skull-session on Con-stuff. So with all this highly-appreciated warning service, we hope to be able to produce a "Seattle in '61!" WorldCon that commits only brand-new errors never before beheld by fan or beast. I mean, tradition isn't all that important.

On with the rush of events. Monday night, down at the P. & L.E. depot which handles the B & O trains (there is also a B & O depot, and don't ask me what rail lines use that one), I broke or at least tied the world record for the standing. And yes, the previous sentence is complete. That station has a nice system for the guidance of persons hopeful of getting the hell of it by rail: everybody just lines up in front of the gate at which an employee was last seen. You may be right and you may be wrong, but there you stand, because otherwise you are back at the end of the line. Stu Hoffman (with a great awkward crate containing his "Most Monstrous" winning costume), and George & LouAnne Price were there also, on the same merry-go-round.

OK, so we finally got on the train. The kindly employees helpfully refrained from giving any clues as to which way there might be any vacant seats, so that we had the joy of plowing through crowded cars, batting fellow-sufferers with suitcases and exchanging cheerful damnations of each other's stinking rotten souls throughout all Eternity, until we found seats. As a further courtesy, the B & O closed the club car to safeguard me from the temptation of paying their exorbitant prices for a cooling beer for my parched tubes.

Now, don't get me wrong; I like trains. So let me know when the B & O puts some trains on the line to replace those rolling rabbit-hutches, and I'll try 'em again.

Next morning in Chicago, after transferring to the Union Station and taking care of all the routine necessities including a hearty breakfast, Elinor & I trekked over to the Art Museum for an hour or two of strolling-and-looking, until it was about time to head back for lunch and train-catching.

Ahh! Back on the good old Northern Pacific with its SlumberCoach handy little compartments and other conveniences, and its friendly attitude. And off the good ol' NP to a hotel in Fargo, North Dakota, about midnight (Tuesday, Sept 6).

Next morning the hotel coffee-shop was fouled-up by some testing in connection with its upcoming conversion to natural gas. This made us a little late in getting back to the depot to meet Wrai Ballard and his dad, who had driven down to give us a ride up to the Ballard holdings. Now, I had probably lost 6 or 8 pounds on this trip due to appetite-loss during travel, but I assure you that Wrai's mom put most of that right back onto me in five meals. Yeh, I ate too much, but-- aaahh!!

Elinor and Wrai and I soon got into fannish discussion upstairs in Wrai's fan-stronghold, interrupted only by an occasional marauding cricket from the horde that was overrunning that secotr of North Dakota this summer. Sighted cricket, clobbered same-- that's how it went, now and then.

Once before, we had visited Wrai-- on the way home from the '57 MidWestCon. So this time it was really just like Old Home Week and the best sort of family-reunion.

I had wanted to try out Wrai's Colt Model 4 Deringer, but Tuesday afternoon the weather was so rapidly variable that the sunny interludes were usually over before we could bring ourselves to knock off the discussion and go out to do some shooting. So no shooting Tuesday. Except for a few fannish bulls, of course.

Next day, though, the weather came nice, so Wrai and I prepared to go out and push pellets through the Deringer and his Hi-Standard. Elinor was somewhat on the chilly side of lukewarm about the whole idea, but we talked her into coming on out anyway. And I will kill the suspense here and now by letting it out that after we all had used up every .22-caliber cartridge Wrai had on the premises, Elinor was of the firm opinion that she and I needed a pair of Colt Model 4 Deringers. So two weeks later I went through all the purchase-permit rigamarole and we have the pair, and have christened them at the Police Range in company with Jim Webbert.

So now, the Deringer-Shooters of America (Wrai Ballard, president) are open for applications for membership-- no dues, no meetings, no committees, as yet-- just an idea for some fun, with some by-mail matches, etc.

The little rascals are much more accurate than you might think. I was hitting coffee-cans at 50 feet, at Wrai's, often enough to make it interesting. The Police Range shooting was at 75 feet with standard targets about a foot square, and I was getting 5-out-of-5 on the target, more often than not, with generally one or two in the higher-scoring rings. This, with a 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch barrel and a 3-inch radius between the front sight and the tip of the cocked hammer for a rear sight. And I hadn't shot a handgun more than once or twice in 13 years, before the session at Wrai's, and had not been able to hit much of anything, back then, except with rifles.

The thing is, with a rifle you all-too-soon run into your own limitations and the need for intensive practice-discipline and equipment refinements. And I think that now I have the handle on handgun-shooting, the same would be true of target pistols-- I'm a natural good second-rate shooter, and will never devote the time and money and effort that might or might not make a good shooter out of me. But these little Deringers are so much fun that I will probably practice as much with them as most will, and so can expect to be reasonably competitive in a sport that will ever be as much an art as a science.

Ahh, that was great, being at Wrai's again. (So now you come out here next year; y'hear?) Our departure was on the thrilling side. We pulled into the station at Hillsboro just in time to see the train moving out for Fargo (I was driving, and lacked the guts to wind up a strange power-steered car on a strange gravel road, at night, so that the timing got a li'l bit off, in there, somewhere).

As we started out, suitcases in hand, to chase the train all the way to Fargo, Wrai asked, "Did you leave the keys in the car?" I qualified my first snap-reassurance by "You'd better look" (my pockets are so full of junk that experimental evidence was out of the question), and sure enough I had the keys in my pocket by sheer reflex. Now wouldn't that have been a fine predicament? Anyhow, someone up front in the engine-cab of this Great Northern RR train had seen us pulling in, and stopped for us. Try that on the B & O sometime, hey? So we got back to Fargo OK, in time to meet the Seattle-bound NP train, and all aboard. I had even found a new Sturgeon pb in the Fargo station: "Venus Plus X", but did not find the will-power to turn out the lights until I had finished it, on the train.

I do enjoy going through the crest of the Rockies by daylight. We had this both ways, and I think it's the first times for me since I was about 7 years old; usually I hit that part at night, and have the duller parts of eastern Montana in the daylight hours. A welcome change, this was.

Another night, and the next morning saw us into King St Station, here. The routine is: breakfast at the station, grab a cab up to bail the car out of storage following necessary delayed-maintenance that only gets tered-to when we take trips, stop by the vet's and try to keep Nobby and Lisa from wriggling out of their skins in the throes of reunion, and thence on home to see if Tosk has kindly and faithfully fed the birds and brought in the mail (he has). Read the mail, skim the piled-up papers to (at least) get up-to-date on the better comics, unpack, breathlessly tell each other that gee isn't it great to be home again after all, & go get lunch.

And the amusing and joyous part of it is: I got home feeling much more relaxed and refreshed and vigorous than I did when we started out on this particular jaunt.

-- PittCon was a Good Thing. --

breathless report

Closing Thoughts-- I haven't reread very much of the preceding material, but from the way it's gone, writing it, I've come up with a theory: that a typical specimen of the genus Fan has only two or three ConReports naturally incubating within his system. He may or may not write them, and he may or may not continue to try to write ConReps after he has done his allotted quota. But it is neither the Con itself, nor the writer's experiences thereat, nor his writing skills, that make a memorable Report-- it is his reactions to that Con, and how they are expressed, that does it. And without any venture in search of wonder, it is fairly obvious that once a fanwriter has done any kind of good job of reporting his reactions to a Con, well, once-or-twice, he has pretty well said it for all subsequent Cons he'll attend. Details differ, but the spirit is the same, and therefore soon becomes repetitive. I make bold to judge that on the '57 Midwestcon, and at Southgate, I really had something to say that needed saying (from the subjective standpoint), because the writeups in POL 1 & 3 really rolled out and would not be stopped short of completion. But on the '59 & '60 Westcon-Cons, though I enjoyed them immensely, there was really very little to say. And here, on the PittCon (where I probably had more sheer undiluted fun and less kickback, than at any previous con), the writeup did not flow. It skipped, and backtracked, and got wound up in sidelights, and would not stick to the subject at all.

I wish I could take this typer back ten years and write Portland up-- from the standpoint of a pro-centered stf-reader to whom Tucker was a name of only vague familiarity-- a neo who saw all of the program, who only attended two room-parties and was on the wagon anyway, who at the last minute decided to hit the Costume Ball in costume and made-do with 3 bath towels, and who went to dinner with Claude Degler without knowing that it was a historic experience in any respect. Yeh....

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The 92nd Mailing: Looking thru the FA, I am painfully reminded of the comments I had looked forward to doing on the contents of this fine bundle. But it can't be done. Oh sure, this PittCon bit ran about 6 pages longer than I'd expected, and certainly some kind of comments could have jammed onto 13 stencils. But none of us would have been really gratified with the results. I'm especially sorry to miss commenting on such as NO! damned if I will get off onto that listing-kick, which can never be accurate, and will always omit one or two of the best in spite of everything.

It was a good mailing and I regret my failure to climb aboard and comment. Even worse, I regret passing up the chance to get off a few good punchlines that came to mind, but which are lost because there's not time to go through the mailing now to pick up the cues. Oh, well-- a year isn't so long, really, and actually I hope to satisfy my own responsive urges surreptitiously every now and then, meanwhile...

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That fella on the cover should be packing one more box (a big one) with the words "Unanswered Letters" written across it in big accusing red characters. My shamefaced regrets to all who have contributed to the contents of that box... and there will (I keep saying) Come A Day.

In their third debate (today, Oct 13), Nixon and Kennedy each seem to have entrapped themselves with too-hasty formulations of their stands on the Quemoy-Matsu problem. Nixon, in trying to take a Strong Position, left himself subject to being called willing to bring on Atomigeddon for those two rockpiles. Kennedy, in picking up that brick, has put himself in the position of seeming to have learned nothing from Munich or Korea; he does not seem to realize that whatever our plans for dealing with any particular bit of Communist aggression, we'd be utter damn fools to detail them over a national TV hookup-- and that every time, without exception, that we have been in a position to stand firm and have done so, the Soviets have growled a little and said they were only kidding, anyway. Firmness pays off; neither appeasement nor saber-rattling threats are either effective or safe. Nixon had the sense to choke off the asinine reporter who wanted detailed plans for Quemoy-Matsu trouble; Kennedy still needs to learn that you don't tell Khrushchev the right time of day without first researching to see how he might use it against you. One can only hope that the man is a quick study and will learn fast if he's elected. As of now, though, he strikes me as the Poker-Shark's Dream, in foreign affairs. But, we'll see how it goes.--Buz.