

SWAN SONG

NO. 1.

EVERY ISSUE FINAL

SWAN SONG, which now constitutes the sole fannish activity of Chuck Harris, emanates from "Carolyn" Lake Ave Rainham Essex. Opinions expressed herein are, curiously enough, my own, and should not be attributed to anyone else whatsoever. So there.

ONCE, long ago, when I was a jolly Jack Tar complete with sailor suit and bucket and spade, a very wonderful thing happened to me. We were marching back to the mess after the usual morning parade, and this staunch defender of democracy was ambling along in the rear rank, hopelessly out of step, speculating vaguely as to whether it would be egg and bacon or sausage and tomato for breakfast. Petty Officer Morgan, a bull-voiced Cardiffman, who had already made me pick up the step three times in the last half-hour and was, I imagine, getting a little tired of it, opened his mouth and bellowed a command unprecedented in the glorious annals of the Royal Navy: a command ranking with the one flown by Lord Nelson off of Cape Trafalger.

"Probationary S.B.A. Harris as you are," he screamed, "remainder of Class One Thousand and One, Change Step."

And, obedient as always, 59 other men and P.O. Morgan himself, skittered and shuffled until they were all in step with me.

Now, that's the sort of thing that happens only once in a lifetime, and I don't really cherish any secret hopes that the serried ranks of fandom will suddenly See The Light, and decide to march in step with me. After all, I've been in fandom for quite some time and I know the apathy and the unremitting search for a bit of peace and quiet that surpasses even the hunger for egoboo.

For why then, you may well ask, do you continue flogging this near-dead TAFF horse? Why do you break with your nearest and dearest friends in fandom, why do you throw any personal popularity you may have built up in the last ten years into the discard, and continue to shriek Woe! Woe! Woe! in the wilderness? And, even if you are right, why continue to batter your head against the brick wall that now surrounds the administration of the Fund? Why not ignore it, wait until Madle is through with TAFF in 1960 or '61, and then try to get it altered? Why not be patient?

Believe me, I have considered all those arguments. I don't really enjoy all this verbal cut-and-thrust stuff and I'd drop it like a shot if there was any feasible way of doing so. But, I've spent far more time than you'd ever credit weighing up every possibility I can think of, and trying hard to be impartial about all of them, and yet I still can't see anything else that I could do except stand up and holler. It may not win many recruits, -- but at least it gets the charges into print and gives the opposition a chance to refute them, -- if they can. I know quite well that you'd all be lots, lots happier if we buried the TAFF hatchet, the Kyle hatchet, and G.M. Carr, -- but it isn't as easy as that. This is more than a personal vendetta with me versus Madle and Bennett: it's something that goes lots deeper than that.

You see, I had a sort of personal trinity in fandom. I had a hand in founding three things: HYPHEN, OM⁴A, and TAFF, and I had a sort of weird parental affection for all of them. They all seemed worthwhile projects and I was very proud of them.

And I was especially proud of TAFF. "Sharley, I vos dere." I was at the 1953 Loncon at the Bonnington. I worked there along with Brunner and Clarke and Shorrocks and Willis and Slater and Jeeves and Bentcliffe and Brown and after hours of discussion and scheming we gave birth to TAFF. This wasn't a racket or a raffle or a charity: TAFF was a reward. People who had done something for international fandom were to be rewarded and encouraged by a trip across the Atlantic. None of the founders got anything out of it. All we had was the privilege, -- and it is a privilege, -- of contributing to the kitty and helping the thing to start rolling.

Now, the decisions reached by these founding members were recorded by Ken Slater and published soon after the convention in a printed report called "CONsomme" that was distributed throughout fandom. It is from this report that I quoted the first rule of TAFF: "You can nominate anyone you like, but it should be someone fairly well-known to both British and American fandom."

This is what I was arguing about previously when Madle quoted his impressive record and called me a liar, a pervert and a power-mad fugghead or whatever it was for daring to suggest that he wasn't well-known to both fandoms, but that's only by-the-way and isn't the point of this hunk of deathless prose.

Now, after KFS had announced the birth of TAFF in CONsomme, the next step was to institute an election. So, in the October '53 HYPHEN nominations were invited and certain qualifications were stipulated for voters too: "they should contribute 2/6d or 50¢ and should have been active in fandom to the extent of having subscribed to or contributed to at least one fanzine or joined a fan-club or organisation."

So you see, we started off quite reasonably with a qualification for voters and another qualification for candidates, -- and to me they both seem as eminently sensible as they did when they were first suggested at the Bonnington in 1953. If you don't have qualifications there will always be the risk of, say, the Head Oualtiney standing and being promptly elected by his hordes of followers all sending in half a dollar and a boxtop.

2 I know that other people don't agree about this, but the facts are that these

rules worked quite well for years until the 1957 election which was won by Bob Madle. After the results were announced by Don Ford I got all indignant because I did not consider that Madle was fairly well-known over here, and because there seemed far too many unfannish families appearing on the list of voters.

It was quite obvious that the voting list in this election had been heavily padded by candidates' friends and neighbours in the macrocosm. People like Robert Troetschel, Olive Troetschel, Bruce Troetschel, and Mary Hartnett, Frank Hartnett Jnr, Harvey Hartnett, and Frank W Hartnett Snr., had never previously been heard of in any goddamned fandom and it was patently unfair that they should be allowed to vote in a TAFF election. If they weren't barred, any unscrupulous candidate with a large enough family or a sufficiency of friends would be able to buy the TAFF election for an expenditure of around £30. (A total of 257 votes were cast for all the candidates in this election: at the 2/6d a vote minimum that would have been about £30.)

This dragged on until the summer of '58 when Ken Bulmer settled all the fights by publishing in STEAM a brand new set of rules which, unannounced, had replaced those of the founders, and which were being used by the current TAFF Administrators, Madle and Bulmer.

I had not always seen eye-to-eye with Ken over TAFF, but these rules that he published were good, fair, and would have stopped the abuses of TAFF which had been so evident in the previous election and they resounded to the credit of Administrators Bulmer and Madle.

Unfortunately Madle must have had second thoughts about them, and Ron Bennett didn't seem to care for them either. Ken published these rules on the 16th of August whilst he was still a TAFF Administrator along with Madle. On the 9th of September, Ken's term of office had expired and there had been a new "meeting at the summit" (Madle's phrase, not mine) in Indianapolis between Madle and Bennett. Now, neither of these two Administrators seem to have shown the slightest interest in TAFF prior to Madle's election. I've searched through the voters and contributors lists published over the years, but can find no mention of their names prior to the Madle election in which they both voted, ---but neither of them would let a minor point like that deter them. Just three weeks after they had been published the STEAM rules were given the old heave-ho onto the garbage heap to join the rules of the original founders. The trufan minds of Bennett and Madle laboured together and, Surprise! Surprise! Surprise! gave birth to yet another set of rules.

I found these in Ted E White's GAMBIT 23, and I have received assurance from elsewhere that they are published in all seriousness and that it isn't some fannish hoax, but I can still hardly credit that Ron would have signed them unless he had been mentally ill or violently drunk. I want to quote them here along with the rules published three weeks earlier so that they can be compared. Note especially how the STEAM Rule 10 compares with the GAMBIT Rule 5.

Quote from page 25 of TAFF STEAM dated 16th August 1958, published by
H Ken Bulmer

".....the following rules that are currently in use by all TAFF administrators are presented in the fannish way of freedom, coupled with a certain restraint. They are not listed in any particular order of merit.

1. A permanent Two-Way Transatlantic Fan Fund shall be set up to help both British and American fen to attend each other's conventions. (This category includes Irish, Canadian and Continental fans, also.)
2. The ballot shall be secret. Each fan must sign his own paper and no proxy votes are allowed. No block votes are allowed. Each fan may vote once only.
3. Each voter is to be allowed a first, a second and a third choice. If he wishes he may leave blank any place, 1st 2nd or 3rd on the voting paper. He may not vote for one fan more than once. The first choice shall receive 3 points, the second 2 and the third 1. Highest total of points elects.
4. Should the elected candidate prove unable to travel, the second shall be offered the opportunity and also the third, provided that they both received more than a quarter of the total votes cast.
5. Each candidate must sign a declaration that they are willing to go, come what may, save an impossible situation such as an act of God etc.
6. Each candidate must be nominated by a panel of five well known fen, three from his side of the Atlantic and two from the other.
7. The leading nominator must provide an election platform of about one hundred words, detailing why it is considered their candidate should be elected to go on taff.
8. Fen on both sides of the Atlantic shall be allowed to vote in all elections, irrespective of which way the fund is operating this year.
9. A minimum sum shall be donated to the fund -- at the present it is 2/6d or 50¢ - to entitle any one fan to vote. More donations over and above this are both welcome and requested.
10. In order to be entitled to vote, a person shall be a science fiction fan and shall to show this be active in fandom to the extent of having subscribed to or contributed to or published at least one fanzine or have joined a reputable fanclub or organisation prior to six months before the closing date for nominations (in both cases). This is a matter for the conscience of the fan; the decision on any point is the administrator's and that is final."

(End of STEAM quote.)

Quote from GAMBIT 23 published by Ted E White.

"SPEAKING OF TAFF, the following notice comes from Bob Madle: "A 'meeting at the summit' was held here, September 9, 1958 with Ron Bennett, who was this year's TAFF candidate. As most everyone knows, this year's winner becomes the European Administrator, replacing Ken Bulmer, who held the post since September 1955. Madle stays on as American Administrator until the next winner goes to England.

In 1959 the British convention will be held during the Easter weekend in Kettering. This makes it practically impossible to obtain a slate of candidates, and solicit between \$400 - \$500. The cut-off date would have to be no later than January 31 to allow time for the winner to obtain his passport, shots, et cetera. Therefore, because of the timing of the British convention and because of the current state of TAFF's finances (practically zero), there will be no TAFF delegate sent to England in 1959. The next U.S. fan to travel to England under the auspices of the Fund will do so at Easter or Whitsuntide (May) 1960, depending on the time chosen for the British convention that year.

Nominations are now being solicited and must satisfy the following conditions:

1. Each candidate's nomination must be signed by five nominators, three from North America and two from European countries. In fact, two from any foreign country.
2. The nominators must enclose \$5.00 with their nomination. (Not \$5.00 from each nominator, but a total of \$5.00) This is considered a bond of good faith and will serve to keep jokesters and characters who merely want to see their names in print off the ballot.
3. The chief nominator should provide a hundred word platform on the worthiness of his candidate. This platform will be printed on the official ballot.
4. The candidate must sign a declaration showing willingness, barring illness, to travel to the 1960 convention.
- * 5. Anyone who is considered to be a science fiction fan is eligible to nominate, be a candidate, and to vote. In brief, if you are reading this, you are eligible.
6. Nominations must be received by either Madle or Bennett by Midnight December 31, 1958. No late nominations will be considered."

Ronald M Bennett
7 Southway, Arthurs Avenue
Harrogate, Yorkshire
ENGLAND

Robert A, Madle
3608 Caroline Avenue
Indianapolis 18
Indiana USA.

End of GAMBIT quote.

* * *

Well, which set do YOU prefer?

Evidently neither Madle nor Bennett want any truck with qualifications or consciences from either candidates or voters. From here on down only literacy itself is needed. You need only flash your copy of GAMBIT, -- or, indeed, of SWAN SONG -- in front of Old Frank Hartnett Snr, or Mrs Olive Troetschel, or Mr Shorty Rogers, and their votes become as good and as eligible as anyone else's around here. Their wives, their children, and their aged grandmother

can nominate and vote like crazy and, for all you know, -- or care -- the next trufan TAFF delegate may well turn out to be Mr John Foster Dulles complete with helicopter beanie.

The altruistic Madle, fighting for a really democratic set-up, has carefully ensured that all those unknown names who swamped the fannish voters in the election that he won will be perfectly entitled to vote again this time. No, I wouldn't dream of trying to guess who the unknown herd will vote for this time, or even who Madle would like them to vote for, but I'll reassure you on one point. I consider this to be the biggest fiddle since Nero did for Rome and none of them will be needed to nullify my vote this time. I was fond of TAFF and proud of the fine international friendship that it stood for, but under these new rules I wouldn't touch it with a barge-pole. The money I usually contribute will be sent to Arthur Thomson as a donation to this fund that's being raised for the Berry trip instead.

But what do you think of it? Do you feel that Madle and Bennett are truly trying to serve the best interests of TAFF? Do you think that these new rules are better, -- or even as good -- as those that they replaced?

And one last question.....were you drunk, Ron?

* * * * *

As some of you know, I have more or less finished with fandom in general. I have already quit "HYPHEN" and I shall be quitting my FAPA membership shortly. SWAN SONG is a sort of dying ember of the sacred stefnic flame, and I expect I shall do a couple more issues of it before I run out of material. This leaving business is all involved and complicated and nothing to do with you, Dear Reader, but I would like to make a couple of things clear about it. First, although I am still infatuated with the car, it had nothing whatsoever to do with my decision to quit. Secondly, Walter and Arthur and Vinç and the rest of my special friends have been as amiable and as understanding as they ever were about it.....

But, you know, it's not half as easy to get away from fandom as you might think....

Sue and I, -- Sue is my new dreamboat -- had just been to see CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF and were on our way through Leicester Square to The Corner House for supper. We got almost up to Wardour Street and there was Burgess, bestriding the pavement like a Colussus, -- if you can imagine a Colussus wearing a shaggy black fedora, --patiently queuing to see BLITZKRIEG or CALL GIRLS or some such thing.

Now, apart from diving into the traffic stream to cross the road, there was no way I could avoid him, but I didn't want Sue to meet him if I could help it. She has had a gentle sheltered upbringing, and there was no way of knowing how she would react to Burgess and his latest gladto meetcha routine which I had witnessed in The Globe during my last visit. The performance begins with a magnificent flourish which sweeps his hat from his head and which is guaranteed to upset any glass within two yards. He then rises on his toes and clicks his heels together. Then, simultaneously bringing over the hat-holding hand to his chest, he firmly grasps the unresisting hand of whoever is being introduced, (sex immaterial), and bows deeply from the waist. At the very nadir of this bow he places a light, chaste kiss upon the knuckles of his victim. Then, after a momentary pause, he lithely swings himself erect, flips his free hand into his

pocket, and, withdrawing it, proffers his calling card to his new acquaintance.

"My card," he says proudly. Brian J. Burgess 138A Kenley Road, Merton Park, London S.W.19. England LIBerty 3419 (After 6 p.m.)

This business is quite startling enough in the pub, and I had no intention of becoming the focal point of Leicester Square whilst Burgess ran through the act again. I grabbed Sue by the arm, steered her around a hot-chestnut vendor, and shot across the Burgess prow without slackening my pace. He looked up, wearing that mournful expression reminiscent of Nebuchadnezzar grazing, but by then I had dodged the hand automatically reaching for my shoulder. I waved cheerfully: "Hallo, Hallo, Hallo," I cried through my Judas smile, and then reached cover in the crowd behind him.

"Friend of yours?" says Sue.

"Not really -- just somebody I know."

"One of those science-fiction people?"

"Umm. You think it's going to rain?"

"Does he always wear that hat?"

"No, sometimes he wears a green job with an ostrich plume in it, and on special occasions he dons a deer-stalker."

"Like Sherlock Holmes?"

"Far worse."

"With ear flaps?"

"With ear-flaps."

"Honest and truly?"

"Honest and truly."

"Good God," says Sue reverently.

The Corner House is a favourite haunt of ours. We've tried all the speciality restaurants there, but usually settle for spit-roasted chicken downstairs. It's fairly fancy, but there's an orchestra, and that helps to soften the fact that--remember I'm deaf and have to lip-read -- we can't really talk and eat at the same time without letting the food get cold. Gipsy Pedro and his Hungarian Violins saw away in the background, I do my little party-piece of pretending to conduct with a bread-stick baton, and then the chit-chat waits until we've finished the food and are ready for the coffee.

This time was different though. Sue had been a little intrigued by Burgess and wanted to know more about him. It meant raising my voice to a half-shout so that she could hear me above the violins, but it was an easy subject so I gave her a few of the highlights from the Burgess Saga. It was just unfortunate that the band finished their piece just as I was telling her about the Mancon businessdead silence in the restaurant except for Harris half-bellowing "....ENTRAILS AND GUTS STREWN ALL OVER THE FLOOR." I stared fixedly at the chap at the next table, hoping that everyone would believe it was him, (a trick I learnt long ago from Bob Shaw), but it was more of a despairing hope rather than a real ploy, and I doubt if anyone at all was deceived by it. The maitre man came bustling over to enquire if everything was satisfactory, and, after a couple of hours, people sat down, stopped staring, and turned back to their plates again.

The rest of the meal was quiet, -- very, very quiet -- and uneventful, but Gipsy Pedro hadn't quite finished with me yet. By the time we reached the coffee and conversation stage, the orchestra had left their platform, and Pedro and a couple of other violinists were wandering around the tables, fiddling a little bit for each of the cash customers. This time though I was ready for him, and, sure enough, when they reached us, he fiddled just a couple of bars before reaching the end of the tune. I'd had this business before and knew just what to expect.....

"Ees zere anytheeng M'sieu et M'selle would care to hear?" asked Gipsy Pedro humbly in a French-Hungarian accent.

M'sieu' cannot distinguish between the Dead March from "Saul" and the "Cow-Cow Boogie" but he'd rather die than let on about that to the fiddlers three.

"Er, yes," I said, searching my mind for an appropriate fiddle song, "we would like "The Blue Danube," please."

"Mate," says Gipsy Pedro, indignant and accentless, "that was "The Blue Danube" that we have just finished."

"Tonight it bloody well would be," says M'sieu' elegantly.

* * * * *

I'm a bit doubtful about this next bit, but it seems I'm stuck with it. I'd intended to do six pages for this mailing, but I over-ran on the conversation piece...

I found a song lyric about ballet in a book by Herbert Farjeon, and I've more or less pinched it wholesale as a poem thing. I've kept lots of the original, but added bits here and there. It's lots less than a parody, -- it's more plagiarism than anything else, -- but it was awfully tempting. Anyway, here it is: the good bits are Farjeon's, the lousy bits are mine.

Scene-setting first:.... Try to imagine you're a neo on your first visit to "The Globe" on a night when the fannish dinosaurs are losing their reminiscences over The Good Old Days. You've met Frank Edward Arnold and heard about "The History of Science Fiction" project that he has been writing for the last nineteen years and three months, and just brushed off some aged Character who stencilled "The War of the Worlds" and published it in a very limited first edition. Ignoring the squeaks....."imported papyrii...." ".....fourteen carat staples...." you make your way to the corner where two relics of First Fandom are holding court before an enchanted teen-age audience.....

WHEN GILLINGS PUBLISHED STEFFNISCOPE

Of fandom fans we are the cream,

We never miss an ish.

Trufandom is our only theme,

Our Yankee accent is a dream,

As BNF's we reign supreme,

--Exactly what we'd wish.

Trufandom is our meat and drink,

It is our staff of life.

Our prop, our safety-valve, our link,

Our vice, our passion, foible, kink,

Trufandom is, we really think,

Our mistress and our wife.

It's true that many lesser clans,

For fandom also thirst,

But they are merely nouveau fans

It's us who loved it first,

And us who know it best, because,

Ask any connoisseur,

Trufandom isn't what it was

When we were what we were.

Oh! the glee!
Shared with Lee!
What a pill!
What a thrill!
Such a spree!

And when Gillings published STEFFNISCOPE in August 1910,
What a fine fannish 'zine that was, in the fan-Pleistocene that was!
We are positive that nobody has ever really wrote since then.
How pellucid, how light it was! like an angel ~~in~~ flight it was!
Written sweetly.
Nothing rotten.
Quite completely,
Starbeggotten.
Published quietly and discreetly,
And yet still not quite forgotten.

When Gillings published STEFFNISCOPE in August 1910,
How his rhyming elated us! how his timing prostrated us!
When Gillings published STEFFNISCOPE, as we keep on saying, when
He was just at the peak of it! oh, we can hardly speak of it!
The sort of prose you'll never, never, never, never see!
So don't talk about these others, but apply your mind to me.
And although we've told you so before, we must repeat again --
When Gillings published STEFFNISCOPE in August 1910!

Though today this APORRHETA does for Sandy and all those,
It's not good enough for us! it's rather too rough for us!
The thing is merely wonderful, it's never deathless prose.

When Gillings did a piece for SHAGGY, or for Grennell's early GRUE,
Each paragraph was gem-like, each phrase rang hard and true.
You understood The Message, felt the sacred stefnic fire,
And the Cosmic Mind pulsating in trufandom's own Messiah.

Oh, when Gillings published STEFFNISCOPE in August 1910,
How poetic! how lyrical! what a feat! what a miracle!
Oh, the sighing of the neo's and the swooning of the fen!
As he stencilled out each page for us, he created a new age for us,
How we shrieked and screamed and hooted, how we hollered, how we howled!
We were ravished and uprooted! we were frankly disembowelled!
You'll never know the throb, the glow, the bliss that we knew then,
When Gillings published STEFFNISCOPE in August 1910.

