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Askance

edited and published by: John Purcell
3744 Marielene Circle
College Station, TX 77845

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contact information// e-mail: j_purcell54@yahoo.com

homepage: fuggheadaboutit

This is yet another Post-Modernist Production, meaning just that, and nothing more. Maybe.

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Bemused Natterings

Where *do* the years go?

It has been said that one of the joys and heartaches of being a parent is watching your children grow up. I can now add my personal experience to back up that statement. Our older daughter, Penny (age 22), recently received a diamond promise ring from her boyfriend Eric. He is such a nice boy – man, I sound like a yiddisher momma there, don't I? – and I am happy for Penny that the young man who is my potential son-in-law has a bright future as an architect and will be able to provide and protect her and their eventual children. It helps that Val and I both like him – yes, we approve – and that he's a hockey player (at 6 feet, 2 inches and 230 pounds, he's a good-

sized goalie). You can probably tell why I like Eric, but that's not important right now.

How well I remember when I first met Valerie when Penny had just turned four years old. She was a cute, blonde-haired little girl, very active and very smart. Not yet in Kindergarten, Penny was a regular imp full of fun and promise. Now here it is, 18 years later, and marriage is now a serious possibility for her near future. I get a bit misty-eyed thinking about this, too, a combination of happy and sad that makes me think of what is really happening in my life:

Son of a bitch, but I'm getting *old!*

CHRIS FOR TAFF! Redux

Suzanne Tompkins and Jerry Kaufman have announced that the 2008 North America to England TAFF race (Trans-Atlantic Fan Fun) is now open for candidates. Once again, I feel compelled at the tip of a well-aimed broadsword to nominate my Corflu 24 roommate, Christopher J. Garcia, for making this trip. At the present time, according to *Vegas Fandom Weekly* #97 and other sources, Curt Phillips may also be in the running for this honor. I don't know if Curt has made this official yet, but I certainly hope he does; I know that Curt has for years been active in apas, zines, and conventions, plus he is also a very nice fellow. In the meanwhile, here's the whole poop and nothing but the poop straight from the source (In this case, the 97th issue of

Vegas Fandom Weekly, which doesn't sound very good, does it? Oh, well.):

To become a candidate for this race you must provide:

Five nominations from known fans, three of whom must be North American and two European (nominators should send a signed nomination via postal mail OR if sending the nomination by e-mail, include a phone number for verification);

- *A written platform, not to exceed 100 words*
- *A \$20 bond*
- *A pledge that you will take the trip if you win.*
- *(make checks payable to "Suzanne Tompkins.")*

All nominations, platforms, pledges, and \$20 bonds must reach me at the address(es) below by midnight, July 16, 2007. So long as at least two prospective candidates have satisfied these requirements by that date, distribution of ballots, in both electronic and

paper form, will begin immediately thereafter. If you have any questions, or plan to run, please alert me as soon as possible.

— Suzanne Tompkins
address your nominations, platforms, money, and pledges to -
Suzanne Tompkins
PO Box 25075
Seattle WA 98165 USA
E-mail: SuzleT@aol.com

WHAT IS TAFF? The Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund was created in 1953 for the purpose of providing funds to bring well-known and popular fans familiar to those on both sides of the ocean across the Atlantic. Since that time, TAFF has regularly brought North American fans to European conventions and European fans to North American

conventions. TAFF exists solely through the support of fandom. The candidates are voted on by interested fans from all over the world, and each vote is accompanied by a donation of not less than US \$3 or UK L2. These votes, and the continued generosity of fandom, are what make TAFF possible.

At this point, allow me to put in my two cents worth.

Yes, I am one of Chris Garcia's nominators for next year's TAFF race. So therefore, even though I am a bit biased in this regard, I want everyone to know that contributing to not only TAFF, but to DUFF, GUFF, and even the John Hertz to Japan Fan Fund (HANA, I believe this one is called), is a worthy cause. Fans deserving of such an honor appreciate the support they get from the rest of us who contribute money to these efforts. For this reason, I encourage people to not only get out and vote for TAFF, but to become actively involved with it and make whatever contributions you can. Small amounts can add up very quickly. On behalf of Suzle, Chris, and whoever else is going to be running for TAFF '08, I thank you.

What's in this issue

There is a lot of variety herein this time around. In my mind, the main article is an interview/article with James Halperin, the author of *The Truth Machine* and *The First Immortal*, two science fiction novels that received decent reviews when released back in the 1990s, but who is now the new owner of Harry Warner, Jr.'s fanzine collection. I hooked up with Jim in Dallas, Texas, where he lives and is co-owner of Heritage Auctions, for this interview. Then again, there is another large arkle vying for top dog honors in this issue. Youngish Brit-fan James Bacon makes his debut in these pages with a rather interesting recounting of a night out in London. Not only that, but long-time fan and editor of *Vegas Fandom* Whenever Arnie Katz brings his column "The Thin Veneer" to *Askance*, and I am



honored and humbled by Arnie's presence. Plus this issue offers the Usual Suspects and then some in the lettercolumn, and our favorite lab assistant, Figby, continues his exploits. I had a lot of fun putting this issue together, and I hope y'all enjoy reading it.

Who's in this issue

Some familiar names, but a couple newbies debut this time around. Here's the rundown:

James Bacon

This gentleman makes his debut with a rather interesting retelling of a night out with a couple of his friends. James has been writing for fanzines and attending conventions for many years now, and it is a treat to welcome him to *Askance*. "Club Egg" is written in an interesting manner, sort of as if Ernest Hemingway, strung out on crack, was writing a Mike Hammer narrative in the style of Philip K. Dick. Make of it what you will. I liked it, so there.

Sheryl Birkhead

Maybe it's just me, but I have long felt that Sheryl's fan art has been underrated by the fannish community, which is a shame. The two-time Fan Artist Hugo nominee (2000, 2001) has been producing illoes and covers for fanzines for as long as I can remember, and has developed a distinctive style throughout the years. Her cover for this issue is yet another kind of take on the word "askance," and I am happy to feature her work. Plus, Sheryl has graciously inundated me with a pile of filloes. What more could a faned ask?



Bill Fischer

He's back. Again. More "Figby" from one of the silliest minds I have ever had the pleasure to know. Bill promises to return with more pages from "Wikiphilia" in the near future, but that will be after he spends the first couple weeks of August in Hungary on a business trip. Lucky dog. I expect a fully illustrated trip report, Bill, Real Soon Now upon your return.

Arnie Katz

It is not often when a long-time, well-traveled fan offers to write a column for another fan's zine. Usually a faned has to beg, grovel, and threaten extortion to get material for his or her zine. Fortunately for me, a few months ago Arnie Katz, editor and main ~~conspirator~~ writer of *Vegas Fandom Whenever* and numerous other fanzines over the decades, proposed the possibility of writing a column for *Askance*. Once I regained my composure and slapped my lower jaw back into place, I humbly accepted. Thus, Arnie's column "The Thin Veneer" will appear here on a semi-regular basis. Heck of a deal!

Lloyd Penney

Still more fanzine reviews from the 2006 FAAn Award winning Best Letterhack. At Mike Glicksohn's urging at a Toronto fandom pub night in May, Lloyd drunkenly promised – over a pint of Toronto's finest bock rhoot bbeer – to be a bit more critical in his review column, so our loveable Canadian letterhack has been sharpening his pencil ever since. Not only that, I finally had the pleasure to meet Lloyd and his wife Yvonne in Dallas at the end of May. There will probably be an article forthcoming about that momentous occasion. There *are* photos, I might add...





Club Egg on Friday was really some sort of embodiment of what I have always visualized as a science fictional music sub-culture, with so much about it being a derivative of science fictional imagery and themes. The sensation on the brain must be some pseudo Dick-ian meta-experience: the pumping music, gyrating view of girls gripping poles, all topsy-turvy as they gymnasticate in black shiny PVC and long black shiny leather trench coats.

I get off the Tube, it was crowded but not really like the sardine system that goes for commuting to work; it was more like a lot of people taking up too much room, more than they deserve. I step into Kings Cross Underground station. Deep underground -I know it well so very well - I have watched it repeatedly, watched it again and again, watching the dispatches explaining the horror and death that occurred here in 1987. Now it's all sub-surface station section 12 fire regulations nineteen eighty-nine. Mistakes are so often made, but behavioural changes are required to show that learning has actually occurred. London Underground's Grey suits had smouldering's for years and years. Smouldering's are not fires. Those burn, and there are flames and smoke. People may worry, flesh may fall off bone, but it's not a

fire, it's a smouldering, and if the men in grey suits say so, then it must be true, so it's a smouldering, not a fire. We only learn from our mistakes, but learning actually needs to occur.

The London Underground at least had fires, but not many any more.

I pace myself slowly up the metal escalator. A dwelling is where someone lives, so I just head up the stairs with my butterfly brain already flittering off on some other electrical thought. I am on a night out and I am in good spirits, but history has a place in the firing of particles.

Kings Cross, London, at twenty past eleven on a Friday night, is a train station, a terminus: grandiose, but functional. I have passed through here before for real and in pages. It is here that platform nine and three-quarters doesn't even exist in reality, as the

fiction is really fiction. Did Rowling mean Euston, I imagine, or Paddington, I muse; there is a trolley attached to a pillar here, and the platform number adorns the wall next to it, though there is no platform, just a boring walkway between two bits of a train station a bit bolted on just like the trolley. It needs the application of a level of imagination to bring it to life like the mind does from the pages, just like it should be: pure imagination. Reality isn't important; they used The Midland Railways Hotel for the celluloid version anyhow, and she got it wrong either which way you look at it.

You come to Kings Cross this late for two things: Sex and Drugs. Not to look at trains. As I wait a moment to look at the bullish class 225 HST, idle, stabled maybe, its power subdued, I hear something familiar a few platforms down as the guttural diesels the same age as my younger brother ignite in the heart of an IC 125 Class 43, and fires out two huge horns of black exhaust with a mechanical roar. As the driver preps the unit, he revs it, harder and harder, pushing hard. The Paxman Valenta engines scream 2250 horsepower's worth of defiance. Definitely unnecessary, but the engineer knows it, and shortly the throat-cutting smell of diesel hits as the plumes rise, descend, and fail to disperse at all. This is a good smell that serves as a reminder of the bear's home. The engines subside and the driver goes to start the twin at the other end; the blue air hangs, and the noise abates a little. I suck it in.

I phone Stef. Where the fuck is he at this stage? He said they were leaving his home in Uxbridge ages ago. I call him. A cheeky-wide boy voice answers. it's Dom. We abuse one another down the fone and I learn he is a bit of a distance still away; the convoyed posse that is making up the gang for the night has left late due to the applications of War Paint upon the ladies. Great. So where is this place then? I'll walk meself.

After some unsatisfactory directions, I walk into the cold of night. It is bright and busy, heaving with people, fast fooderies, clubs, bookshops with no

windows or under 18's, The Fantasy Cinema with no *Lord of the Rings*, or perhaps there is. The whole area is bustling with activity, but not like the west end, where there is more of a desperation in the desire to enjoy life and a lot less tourists and more beer for your pound.

I walk up York way, towards the club I am going to, and realise that the club is in Camden really, and not King's Cross, lying Bastards. I walk past historic buildings and places where goods yards and shunting was the norm, all replaced by diesels of another kind, past the canal and the CTRL, two transportation links juxtaposed by time and cost and speed and efficiency, which is better at what, is somehow undeterminable, depending on how you see it.

At last I find Club Egg, a square looking building, with many a bouncer at the door, a system to gain entry, and mini cabs hawking their businesses. There are not many people about. I stand at the corner of the windowless building. It looks like some sort of unused old sixties office or perhaps warehouse; it is definitely normal enough looking. I await on the corner and ponder what I shall say if I am approached.

I wait; my exposed legs are cold, as am I. I realise I should have brought a Jacket. I could go in and wait or I can wait outside. I have never been inside, so I worry I might get lost in what-ever Pan's Labyrinth there is inside, and never see my friends again. It would be warm, though. I think about the pros and cons of the situation, and people arrive and go into the club. Black is *de rigueur* of the evening, and a lot or little of it, as the case may be.

As I stand there. a girl approaches, asks me what I am doing and would I like to entertain her as I wait for my friends. She continues to hand Flyers out to the people gaining entrance as we chat briefly. I know damaged goods when I see it, and despite politeness and some chatty chatyness, I don't get too friendly, and ponder that this was not the sort of approach I had in mind at all.

The bouncers deter normalised-looking people by explaining it's a Goth

night, and that it may not be the music that they are looking for, move along, move along. People pour in, groups of youths with varying calibres of facial growth, and ladies in skirts like belts and boots built like Panzers, ready for blitzkrieging by the looks of it. Ladies, ladies, boys, ladies, ladies, men. It's 3 to 2, I reckon, unusual for such a place.



A car slows down, sleek and Swedish, not a Grippen, but its smooth lines are slightly ruined by the swivelling head looking to see what's what, and right past a car parking space they go; someone points out to the driver that I am stood nearby. A blast of high-pitched horn and the car is gone.

Then they are here. Stef, who has wanted to come here for a while, is currently single and it's good to get out and party a bit. We have run conventions together, but he has been taken by live role-playing and attends events with thousands, but we still do cons and stuff. He is normally near to any mayhem I am helping out with. He is no Goth, but loves the industrial and new metal scenes, goes snow boarding a lot, had trained himself to balance on a Skate board, and knows who Slayer are and dresses accordingly.

Dom has the vouchers, cleverly printed off, which allow us cheaper entry before twelve; we are in time. As I enter, I greet Dom warmly. He is known in some circles as 'I am Sparticus'. In others, he is just Sparticus. Such is the way when you go to a science fiction convention, find that you are enjoying it, and get involved and decide you'll be Sparticus all weekend and not just for the dancey dressy up bit, and that's you then. Dom is another computing guru, but at the end of the business, which is more business-like, and not just an extension of college: suits, fast cars, and not this type of music. Dom is with us because he wants to be, and that's how I met him: he likes to be with friends doing something a bit different than usual.

We walk in, and have to empty our pockets. Efficient security goons wave us through the metal detectors. The girls are searched quite thoroughly, and we get our discounted entrance. The girls are frisked by a frisky-looking eastern European lady and come through. This is unusual, even for London: metal detectors are not that common. Anyhow, Glocks aren't ceramic or plastic, so the detector would work.

I am greeted by Tamar with a hug. This Israeli chick knows her Tannhauser gate, and is a tall and powerful woman, my own age, and with hair that would make any Irish girl proud. I met Tamar at LACon IV; she approached me along with Naomi after a panel and helped out with Chaos Pirates. When she and her husband moved to Maidenhead, it was inevitable that she would somehow just fall in with the SF crowd, which she has done, and has now been to Croydon quite a few times. Her clothes belie the fact that she doesn't do rock clubs a huge amount, but 'tis mitigated by her stunning good looks and impressive stature, which in its own right is more in tune with the venue's ethos than some fashion attempt.

We walk down a wide, blood red, carpeted hallway; it's nice, nice as in expensive and well designed, and has had some investment spent on it. No wonder it's only a Metal and industrial venue one night

a month. I can imagine that it's a drug-fuelled DJ dance venue with much dancing going on most other times.

We walk out onto an open area, with many umbrellas, nice coverings and selections of very fine gardens, where covering allows interior furniture way too tremendously tasteful compared to the metal venues I am used to. There are many people around, enjoying ciggie's or buying a beer from the bar in the corner of this grassless garden, although if the astro turf is good enough for semi pros, it's fine for me. This ultra-modern style is a bit of a jar in a strange direction; I suddenly feel rather out of place. All that is lacking is some sort of dome around us keeping the vacuous vacuum out and keeping this pleasant world intact.

We walk into the unknown.

The unknown is at first a long, luscious, sheer-clad, black, shiny leg at an unusual angle at head height; untouchable, but you can taste the flavour from this close. The pole is not greasy; it's some sort of electromagnet and this girl's gusset is clinging to the pole like there is no escaping. She is no pro, and that makes it all the better, for she is just like many of the girls here, but fitter, more flexible and supple, and a death-metal gymnast. I have to avert mine eyes and take in the rest of the scene. It is good and dark. Smoky-busy enough, the bar is long and well tended, trendy, out of place and unusual, as if a strange glimpse at a different world exists over the counter. A lot of noise emanates from the dance floor that would put the intercity diesel to shame. This noise has rhythm. To those who know the language, it's melodic; to others, it sounds like the venting of some anger, much anger.

Everywhere there is long hair and leather; Black T-shirts are worn like football colours indicating interests like badges of honour. Elvis' honour is a group of Care Bears and Care Friends, and a sickly scene of death amongst the strong bright colours. He puts the cute into execute, apparently. I think his lady Lara would disagree, but then

it's only a T-shirt, not a statement of life choices.

Emo, this isn't.

I have entered the sub-culture that is Metal and Industrial music. Attachments are the norm, and there is much in the way of flesh and stockings, garter belts and not too many Corsets; now they remind me of science fiction conventions, whereas I suddenly feel that I have entered some sort of weird science fictional universe; not very different than the norm of skirts and suits, but out of kilter enough to be from the pages of some sort of word wizard.

I drink. It is good to drink, and the cider quenches thirsts and refreshes the places that it shouldn't refresh. We go



upstairs to see what it's like on the first floor.

Here it is all smoke and lasers as I walk into some sort of embodiment of a science fictional cyberpunk scene. People are moving at great speed on the dance floor, fluorescent lights flying to the music that Marylyn screams out. There's Geiger images on the screen, and the PVC and Kaiser boots are in abundance, Black painted lips and finger nails, bare-chested virility, and Betty Page beautiful fringes and red gloss; the styles clash like some sort of car crash of under-culture, and it's moving furiously fast. Laser shots fly through the ice smoke, lights sickly green arcing as the noise pumps to its own heavy and frenzied assault. .

The noise is too much, too much by far. It is a separation of perhaps taste or age, but although some tracks from celluloid sources are pleasing, I consider my sensitive ears and the view was better downstairs anyhow. I leave the fast-paced angle grinding and head down back down to the mixture of forgotten music cultures. I am assaulted at first. Nuclear, perhaps, and then I feel alive. I am joined by Ian, a giant of a man who shoots at people for a hobby and who stands next to me. We are next to a pole looking at the dance floor, across at the writhing bodies bashing up and down in a rythemless orgy of energy, pumping necks rising and falling like heavy-duty machinery banging away at an invisible anvil. The muscles are evident, strength and youth are in abundance on the dance floor. Then like the changing of records, there comes the changing of the guard, and girls step up to dance. Eyes are caught by a black leather trench coat. No wipers trench here, though; underneath there are no Flanders graves. No, just a sleek black bra and spray on pants that are hellishly hot pants - petiteness is sweetness. Despite the turning heads, the



clumsyness is all too evident, and appearances of fitness appear to be a figment of the extended imagination only. The guard changes, and an obvious semi-pro climbs on board and makes love to the pole, immediately declaring a dominance over the erect steel and proving her mastery. The movement is electric. From floor to pole, the whole place is a heaving, living organ of

muscular effort and concentration lost in the moment.

The music becomes memorable, and I am joined on the dance floor. I start to jump around and move my feet to my own insane rhythm, calling out the words I know as I bend double and grip onto an imagined instrument that I couldn't play for all the blue pills in the world.

As the night slides onwards and downwards, the erotic beauty of some of the girls at the club oozes out between their hot pants and body armour. Metal braids fly through the darkness. The music changes again, more recognisable, popular maybe, but we all know what it is, and everyone is up, and the movement is good as people jump up and down to the recognised peaks and troughs.

I rest. I am older, but even so, I am not quite up to the scrap heap challenge that a few stalwarts appear to be. I admire their love for the music and the scene, and appreciate the tolerance that such a place takes as the norm. The burly blokes don't fight here; the ugliest of the ugly just want a good night. Like some sort of leftover homage to the hippy long hairs, there is always a nod of respect towards live-and-let-live and humour circuit breakers rather than bones.

I note the disaffected youth, angry and angstful. I recognise myself. They would all have no problem with me whipping out a Heinlein of Miller. Here, the sub-culture extends further than the music, and I know these are my brethren who will have read pages of the fantastic.

There is an affinity that comes from not fitting in as one should do. Many people here have made life choices, and permanent face and body artistry attest to the truth that the geeks have inherited the earth, but even so, standing out makes one a target, and here we are amongst comrades who hate jocks and the pretentious balsollogy that goes with

everything normal and mundane. Manners are welcomed and are received with smiles.

I travel upstairs. The pace has quickened. The bastard world is slowly separating from its drunken, benign, ground floor parent. There is the slide in style and rhythm. The music has transcended a number of styles now, and would be equally at home at some DJ dance venue just as here in the pleasant surrounding of heavy industry, the visual's belying the speeded up nature of the music.

I miss the music I know and head down, deeper down, and go straight to the dance floor, I am welcomed, and so I move my body faster now, knowing the strains will bring on aches and pains. tone scours through my veins as I move to my own beat and enjoy the pleasure of Punk, Rock, Death, Speed, and Metal.

I take a moment to survey. The report back states there is a considerable amount of ladies on their own, which such an unusual state of affairs, compared to my beloved McGonagle's in Dublin, where you had to fight and talk hard and fast to have any chance with a girl in striped tights.

There is no innocence here. No, these girls know what they want. I see the scars that they wear proudly. They don't care really; they have the burn tissue of girls who don't really think they will meet anything of true worth, I know they are wrong, and my friend who is single looks about, but decides that the night has been good and that any further extensions of chance may be a step too far. Shame for him. More shame for them, for here is true salvation, for he is a good bloke and a hard worker, and would make any Bitch Mom pleased for their daughter.

More music, more dancing, more drinking, more pole clinging, more shouting

"With their diseases and orgasm drugs and their sexless parasite life forms—Heavy Metal People of Uranus wrapped in cool blue mist of vaporized bank notes—And The Insect People of Minraud with metal music." **William S. Burroughs**, the *Nova Express*

words to one another, and the dance floor becomes the focus of energy venting. I record something on my phone to preserve the feeling I have of emersment in a science fictional sub-reality.

The night turns to morning and we are leaving. Sobriety has infected two people who were not drinking all night, and we are driven back towards the west and to the Bridge of Oxen. The journey is windy as there is no roof, only stars on the vehicle I am in, and as they speed increases, the windage batters those of us who want to continue the rock movement, and I fear I will be a flu-struck idiot shortly. The car travels at take-off speed, and we fly through the night with music blearing, on our way to the hills of Cydonia. at one hundred miles an hour. I sit down, for the airflow is not conducive to the banging.

I am put to bed by true friends, to dream of railway stations built between buildings and no drivers at the front.

-- JAMES BACON

Track Listing:

Metallica
Slayer
Nuclear Assault
Rammstein
the Prodigy
KMFDM(KillMotherFuckingDepecheMode)
Front 242
FrontLine Assembly
Skinny Puppy
Megadeath
Metallica
linkin park
Goth EBM
korn
Him
Lost Prophets



A Conversation with James Halperin

by John Parcell

{Editorial note: What follows is not the full transcription of the entire interview. Instead, excerpted sections will be included as part of the broader narrative. This will substantially shorten the text; however, within the next month I will probably be sending a copy of the tape to Bill Mills for the original interview to be archived on the Voices of Fandom Website (<http://thevoicesoffandom.com>) . Editorial commentary will be in italicized brown text, obviously. Also, all fanzine covers are captured images from eBay or scanned from my personal collection.}

Over the course of the past year, there has been a fair amount of talk on the fannish listservs regarding the fate of Harry Warner, Jr's fanzine collection. After Harry's death in 2003, many fans openly wondered about what would happen to the fabled accumulation of fanzines stored at the Hermitage (the Hagerstown, Maryland one, not that stuffy, old, boring one in St. Petersburg, Russia). When the word got out that a mystery buyer in Texas had purchased Harry's fanzine collection, there was a lot of speculation as to who that person might be. To make a long story short, I made some inquiries to Hal Hall, the curator of the Science Fiction and Fanzines Collection at the Cushing Library at Texas A&M University, along this line, and after a few weeks of effort, Hal reported to me that James Halperin was the buyer. At my request, Hal gave me Mr. Halperin's e-mail address, so I began corresponding back and forth with Jim, who agreed to meet with me on the afternoon of May 25, 2007, when I would be up in Dallas, Texas, to connect

with Lloyd and Yvonne Penney. (This is another story in itself, which I may yet write about later in this issue. Or maybe not, depending on space considerations.)

What follows is a slightly different approach in presenting the interview that I had with James Halperin. With his permission, I recorded our conversation, and he allowed me to take a few pictures of him with the Harry Warner, Jr. fanzine collection. No close-ups of particular issues were allowed, which was fine by me. Besides, the collection was still boxed and unopened. My main interest was not in getting a firsthand look at the collection, but in getting some background about Mr. Halperin, to learn who he is and why he acquired the collection. How he acquired it is easy: he bought it.

But first, a little primary information about James Halperin. Born in Boston in 1952, he began attending Harvard at the age of 17, but took a "permanent leave of absence" at the end of 1971 to "pursue a full-time numismatic career." This is where

he made his mark on the world. He eventually became one of the world's foremost authorities on the grading of rare coins, and in 1985, wrote a book, *How to Grade U.S. Coins*, that became a benchmark text in the numismatic field. A few years earlier, in 1982, he had merged his coin business with Steve Ivy's, and the two men formed Heritage Auction Galleries in Dallas, Texas, the world's largest and most successful numismatic company. Going by sales volume, Heritage Auction Galleries is also the third largest auction house in America, offering a variety of collectibles and rare items.

A self-described futurist, Halperin has written two science fiction novels: *The Truth Machine* (1996) and then *The First Immortal* (1998). Interestingly, he had never tried his hand at writing any kind of fiction before these books. Both novels were well-received – again, a surprise considering his lack of experience in writing fiction – and sold a few hundred thousand copies, and, like the philanthropist that he is, all royalties from the sale of these books are donated to charity. *(All information gathered here is from the websites of Random House and Heritage Auctions, with a wee bit of help from Wikipedia.)*

His assistant brought me in from the waiting area of Heritage Auctions down to his office and introduced me. A warm handshake later, we sat down, and I let my eyes wander around the large office. The desk was suitably cluttered with all sorts of papers, books, and other items semi-organized around his computer, and the bookshelves were crammed with hundreds of books. Large, framed original paintings and pencil drawings hung on two of the walls, light from the window-wall illuminating the room despite the gloomy, rainy weather outside. Thanking his assistant for a glass of water, I turned on my pocket tape recorder and began the interview.

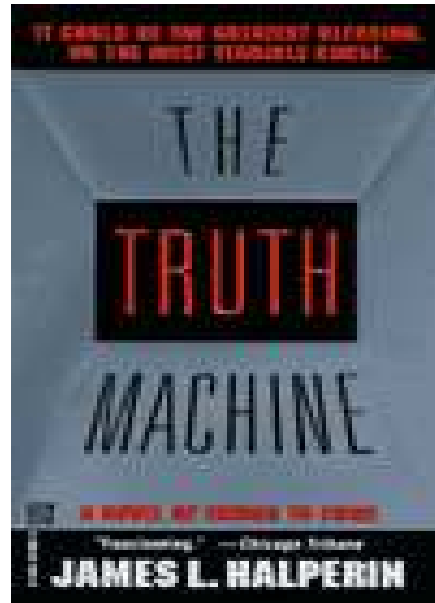
ASKANCE: I feel rather under-dressed, or I feel like I don't belong here.

JAMES HALPERIN: What? You're under-dressed for Alfred E. Neuman and Robert Crumb on the walls?

ASK: I know. You've got *Mad Magazine* covers, and comic book covers, uncolored masters mounted...

JH: Those are all. . . did you notice anything about those four *{points at back wall}*? They all have to do with either collecting or numismatics or auctioneering.

ASK: Yeah, I can see the nickel on the one.



JH: Yeah, the plug nickel, and the dollar bill, and the Collector, and, um, Robert Crumb trading a record of his with Harvey Pekar.

This went on for a minute or so more while I admired the artwork on his office walls, and we exchanged additional pleasantries before I got down to the business at hand.

ASK: What I am really curious about is, first off, tell me about your background. Everyone was wondering, when they found out Harry Warner's collection had been purchased, everyone was going like, "We don't know who it is, all we know is that it's some buyer in Texas, and unless it's Pat Virzi or John Purcell, we'll never see it

again.” . . . Everyone was like, “who is this mystery buyer?”, and stuff like that.

JH: Uh, huh.

ASK: When I asked Hal Hall, down at Texas A&M, “Do you know about this? Did A&M buy it, and you’re just not saying anything?” And he said, “No, but I wish we had.” And so, I would like to know a little bit about you because people want to know “who is this guy?”

JH: Yes. Well, I was a comics fan. I basically learned how to read from comics and *Mad Magazine*. I probably had a little bit of dyslexia or some kind of reading difficulty that I overcame by becoming obsessed with comic books. And uh, I remember buying *Fantastic Four #1* at the newsstand and collecting comics with all my friends, who were mostly quite a bit older than I was, and publishing fanzines ever since I was I guess, 11, when I started publishing fanzines on the duplicator machine that belonged to the principal of my junior high school.

ASK: Ah, yes - “spirit duplicator.” My first fanzines were done on ditto, as they were called.

JH: Actually I might have only been 10, because I’m pretty sure I did my first one in 1963.

ASK: Yes; you were born in October of 1952; you’re a year and a half older than I am.

JH: There you go. I remember I stopped publishing them after my Bar Mitzvah. So that would have been when I turned thirteen. I used to go to Bar Mitzvah lessons in Natick *{Massachusetts}* and the Herring brothers – Dave and Steve Herring, who published *Odd* – were about four doors down from my tutor, and so I would have my mother drop me off there about an hour before the lessons started. I would visit with them every week, and they were very nice to

me. You know, they probably couldn’t wait for me to leave, but they were quite tolerant. I actually talked to Dave Herring about a year ago – found his website and rang him up *{laughs}*.

ASK: How’s he doing?

JH: Ah, I think he’s a pretty successful commercial artist. You know, sounded the same. *{laughs again}*

ASK: So you started off with comic books. Did you have, when you said you overcame this reading thing through comic books, did you start reading any science fiction or fantasy books at the same time or shortly thereafter?

JH: No, not really. I was always – English was always my worst subject in school. I was a math guy. And, uh, I was interested in science fiction mainly from reading EC Comics. I loved EC Comics, they were far above the rest. And you could buy EC comics back then for maybe a quarter, if that.

ASK: I know; that would have to be the mid-Sixties? Cause they *{EC Comics}* were done by then.

JH: Yeah, and I think that was before the reprints. But maybe not, maybe the reprints were out by then. But I read the original ones, and I thought, these were actually better than the comics that they are doing *now*. You know, cause the stories were really great – the artists, the writers - and even as a little kid I could tell that they were *really* good.

ASK: Many of those EC writers became successful professional authors: science fiction and fantasy writers, and stuff.

JH: Yeah, or they stole stuff from current ones, like Bradbury.

After a bit of nattering – mostly on my part – I sort-of deftly steered our conversation

towards his writing of two science fiction novels in the 1990s. We pick up the story at this point:

JH: Then I became kind of a futurist, like an amateur futurist. In the early 90s I started reading *The Futurist* magazine and joined the World Future Society, but really just as an observer and to try and think about what would happen, you know, to civilization. I have always been fascinated with technology, and would try to imagine what the world would look like, that kind of thing. And soon the mid-90s when the coin business got kinda slow for a while, I wrote a couple science fiction novels.



ASK: I was going to ask you, because on your website, it indicated that you never had even written science fiction...

JH: Never even a short story.

ASK: ...but you *had* written a numismatic guide. It was like the only writing you had done.

JH: It was a textbook.

ASK: Right, but now you were writing fiction. What possessed you to do that? Were you just bored?

JH: Well, I had what I considered a really good idea, because after I had read that article in *Omni* about cloning dinosaurs from mosquito blood in amber, you know I had the same idea that Crichton had about *Jurassic Park*. I mean, I had almost the exact same story line in my mind, and I never wrote it.

ASK: He got it out.

JH (laughs): Yeah, well, so I thought maybe the next time I get a really good idea I'll try to get it done. *{phone rings very loudly}* And it happened to be at a time when I wasn't as busy as I am, say, now, and the idea was about what would happen if somebody had invented a fool-proof lie detector.

ASK: That was how *The Truth Machine* came out.

JH: Basically. I got couple years of researching in and then sort of forced myself to write a novel, had to rewrite it 20, 22 times. It's hard, at least for me.

ASK: So you had to force yourself to write it?

JH: Yeah. I just forced myself write a few pages a day. Um, actually, the rewriting wasn't as hard for me as the first draft, but it was altogether probably one of the hardest things I've ever done.

ASK: It takes a lot of self-discipline to do this sort of thing. And apparently, it was well-received: a couple hundred thousand copies sold. Did that surprise you?

JH: Yeah, because I could barely get my family to read it when I was writing it. *{laughs}* But, yeah, it kinda caught on.

ASK: Then, because of the futuristic, your interest in the future and technology, cryogenics obviously was kind of interesting to you as well.

JH: Well, during part of my research for *The Truth Machine* I had stumbled on this article – I think it was in *Details* magazine, but I'm not sure, about cryonics – and so I decided to research that some more. And I kind of mentioned cryonics a bit in *The Truth Machine*, more or less as background to the story. But then I kind of had this idea rattling around in my mind as I was finishing up *The Truth Machine* and decided to keep going with it and I wrote *The First Immortal* in the same universe, but with different characters.

ASK: Different characters, same universe. That's kind of interesting. ***{I checked over my notes, then continue on with the interrogation questioning.}*** So right now you said you are pretty busy. Do you have any more plans for doing any more writing?

JH: Not in the foreseeable future. Maybe when my kids are in college.

This was when we started making small talk about our kids. It turns out that we have children of the same ages, which gave me the idea, in the grand tradition of arranged marriages, of introducing my 16 year old daughter to the 16 year old son of this multi-millionaire, thereby assuring my wife and I a retirement of luxury and wealthy grandchildren. My brief lack of focus at this point might be apparent on the tape. But with hardly any effort at all, I then got right back on track with a line of thought that popped into my head:

ASK: Since you're a futurist, is there any particular aspect of the future that really gets you interested? You mentioned technology. How about medical technology?

JH: Well, that's what *First Immortal* is about.

ASK: And so would you pursue that even more? Like, cloning now is a big topic, or recombinant DNA, and so on and so forth.

JH: Well, you know, I used to know a lot more about than I know now. Cause when I immersed myself in it I was pretty well versed. But recently I just haven't had the time to really keep up with it.

ASK: Would you like to do it again? Write another novel?

JH: Ah, I might.

ASK: What happened to your third one?

JH: The one that... what was it called? *Beginner's Luck*?

ASK: *Beginner's Luck: The Assassination of Adolf Hitler*.

JH: Um, it was just never rewritten well enough to be readable, never published.

ASK: Random House said that it was forthcoming.

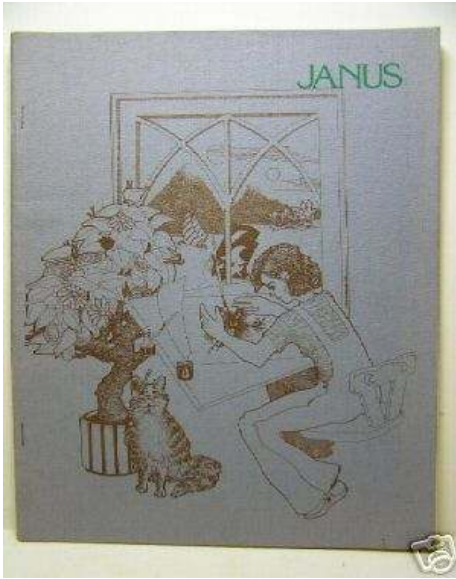
JH: I was just never happy with it.

ASK: That happens.



Science Fiction Newsletter (Dec., 1969)

Once again, I blathered a bit while my mind figured out how to get back to what I really wanted to talk about with James Halperin. Observe how I calmly and unobtrusively did this:



Janus #15, Spring, 1979

ASK: So your connection with fandom is more or less...

JH: Nostalgic.

ASK: Nostalgic?

JH: I'd say so, yeah.

ASK: Comic book fandom.

JH: Yeah, but I'm interested in science fiction because...

ASK: So much of the comic books of the 60s were science fiction...

JH: Yeah, and because I was for a brief shining moment a science fiction writer.

ASK: Pretty cool. What was that like? Did you go to any science fiction conventions?

JH: No.

ASK: Did anybody ask you to be like a Guest of Honor?

JH: Oh, yeah.

ASK: You did? Which conventions? Because I used to go to lots of conventions.

JH: Well, I don't know if it was conventions, but I used to get a lot of speaking invitations. And that sort of thing.

ASK: That's cool.

JH: And, uh, I just never really had time to...

ASK: You were pretty busy with your day job.

JH: Yeah.

ASK: On your website it says that you're just a frustrated science fiction writer with a really good day job.

JH: That's right.

At this point I started blathering on about my writing goals and feeble attempts at it, trying to make a colleague-type connection with my subject. If it worked, fine, but I think he probably felt more sorry for me than anything else. During this stretch of the interview, we talked about how a person's job and/or career can be more conducive to writing or not – boring crap, really - and Jim talked about how he and Dan Brown, author of The Da Vinci Code, had corresponded with each other back in the latter half of the 1990s. The conversation then veered off a wee bit towards nowhere in particular. Once again, however, I eased us back on course:

ASK: I think what a lot of... what I really wanted to know, was that with a glancing interest in science fiction and fanzines, why acquire the Harry Warner, Jr. collection?

JH: Well, first of all, it fit with my comic fanzine collection; I'm trying to put together a really complete selection of comic fanzines from 1969 and back.

ASK: Wow!

JH: Uh, you know, I'm not anywhere close yet, but I've got a lot of the more...I shouldn't say the more easy to obtain, but the more well-known ones: you know, like all *The Rocket's Blast* and all the *Alter Egos*. And some of the EC's, the *Hoo-Hah*, and that sort of thing from the 50s, so those are all pretty good ones.

ASK: I have a little bit of a background in that; my main thing is science fiction.

JH: I'm pretty sure I have all four issues of *Foo*. And believe it or not, I have two of the original covers.

ASK: Wow. Interesting. I forget who drew it; so who was the artist?

JH: That was Robert Crumb.

ASK: Oh. Robert Crumb. Ah! I should have known that!

JH: Actually, Robert and Charles Crumb, but...

ASK: "Robert and Charles"... Um, can you tell me the story of how you acquired the collection? I don't want to know how much. I was just kind of curious...

JH: Well, Jerry Weist called me up and said, "Do you want to buy this collection?" And he named a price and I said, "Yes!"

ASK: That was it?

JH: Yeah! *(laughs)*

ASK: Everyone... Well, he's *{Jerry Weist}* very famous for *{pause}* selling collections and things like that. You said he called you?

JH: Yes. Well, yeah, we were... we had been talking about writing a book on fanzines.

ASK: Oh, okay; so you were thinking about this.

JH: Yeah. And, uh, y'know, he sells me a lot of deals. Comics related deals.

ASK: Gotcha. And Harry Warner, I mean, he was like in science fiction fandom from like the mid to early Thirties, so when he passed away in 2003, he had like eight decades, literally like 70 years of science fiction fanzines.

JH: Yeah. Saved me a lot of time on eBay buying.

ASK: I bet. Um, any idea how big numbers-wise this thing is? I mean, the Bruce Pelz collection, when that went to UC-Riverside, was like 300,000 items.

JH: Oh, nowhere near that.

ASK: Not that big?

JH: No. Nowhere near that.



VOM #42 (1945)

ASK: Do you think it's like a couple hundred thousand?

JH: Oh, no. I want to say *(pauses while he thinks it over)* I mean, definitely in the mid-five figures.

ASK: Okay. Mid-five figures. That's interesting. I would have thought it would have been a lot larger. I mean, I corresponded with Harry myself when I published my fanzines...

JH: Oh, I just bought the fanzines. I didn't buy the pulps or the books, or any of that.

ASK: Oh, okay. Gotcha. So just the fanzines alone are like in the mid-five figures. That's still a lot. Now what are your plans for it? I know you mentioned that Jerry Weist was...that you and he were taking about writing...

JH: Yeah. He'll probably do most of the work, but I hope that he'll let me contribute a *little* bit. Um, you know, and it will be about science fiction and comics fanzines. Sort of a catalog *raisonné* of fanzines.

ASK: I was wondering if you were going to be cataloging the whole collection and index it and stuff like that.

JH: I think that may be part of it, yeah. As best we can.

ASK: Do you look at the collection, your collections of not only the Warner collection, but the comic book collection as like a cross-section of looking at the society that read these things?

JH: Sure. But...*(laughs)* Or the sub-society...

ASK: True – the sub-culture.

JH: The sub-culture as branded.

ASK: Do you ever think about why people do these things, while thinking about your own experiences?

JH: Well, I think because, um, I think we're kind of explorers by nature, you know, and it's a form of mental exploration.

ASK: Huh, *(A pause to let that soak in)* Interesting. Yeah, I wrote down that you're going to be researching, and stuff like that. *(Another pause and a hem to shifting gears a bit)* So, Jerry Weist simply called and said, "You interested?"

JH: Well, he... We talked about it for a while. He kinda kept me informed about his negotiations to buy it.

ASK: Yeah, apparently from what I heard...

JH: At first they were going to try, I think they were trying to get some institution to take it. I'm not sure if they were able to find somebody to do it under the terms they were interested in.

ASK: I know that UC-Riverside, the Eaton Collection, basically had said, "No."

JH: Yeah. So I think it was more a matter of, I was sort of the last resort. You know, I think they would have preferred to have it go to a museum that would take care of it, and so forth, but nobody could afford the expense of taking care of it.

ASK: Yeah, because I was just thinking about some of the fanzines going back to the 1930s. I mean, what a cross-cultural reference!

JH: Yeah, and if they made it like a library and people could check them out, I mean, what condition would they be in by the time, you know, twenty years from now? So, what I would like to do, as the technology improves and as we figure out how to preserve them while imaging them, is I'd like to put them all on-line. But it would be way too expensive to do that now.

ASK: That would take a lot of time.

JH: Yeah. Expensive in terms of the number of hours of people's time.

ASK: Right now there are people, if you went to efanzines.com, and people have been archiving, scanning like, say, the complete run of *Energumen*, which is like 13 issues, and getting them on-line.

JH: And so on and so forth.



Cry of the Wild Moose #3 (1961)

ASK: That's kind of a neat thing, to go back and see stuff. But this would be a massive undertaking.

JH: It would. You know, I would really like to have it be digitized, too, so you could search it. But that, again, is something we really don't have technology yet that would read like a faded, you know, duplicator machine copy and be able to put it into actual MS Word format, or something like that.

ASK: Some of those things are hectographed or carbon copied: you didn't have the sharpness of the Xerox, or offset. No-one could afford them.

JH: Yeah.

{There is a pause here as I contemplated my next move.}

ASK: So... *(BIG pause here, since I was afraid to ask this simple question:)* Is it here?

JH: Yeah. It's not in this room, but it's in this building.

ASK: Um, I almost hate to ask you, can I, just like, *see* it?

JH: Well, I store... let me see if...

ASK: I mean, you can say "No," after all, this is *yours*.

JH: I know. Well, actually...

ASK: Well, I was just kind of curious because...

JH: Well, if the room is open and if there is somebody there, I will take you down there on the way downstairs.

ASK: That's fine.

(Lots of static while I fumble excitedly with my pocket tape player trying to turn it off without dropping the stupid thing.)

Jim then took me down a floor through a maze of hallways and a series of coded door locks, ending our journey at a sealed room where Harry's boxes of zines are stored. As we walked in, my eyes took in as much as they could. Here, in the documents processing lab, was one of his assistants who, I had to admit, looked vaguely familiar. As it turned out, this fellow – hunched over a back-lighted easel and poring over some document – was likewise about my age and used to attend science fiction and comics conventions back in the day. His name was Jeff Smith, which did ring a vague bell; we may very well have met at some Midwestern convention in the past.

That was when I noticed a section of shelving with stacks of neatly ordered fanzines. These were not part of the Harry



A section of the fabled Warner collection, still in its boxes, awaiting proper archiving.

Warner collection, but a segment of the various fanzines that Jim Halperin had acquired in the last year or so. He then directed me to another rack packed full of boxes, proclaiming, "This is it!"

Jim hadn't even opened any of them yet, so he took one box off the shelf, carefully opened it, and together we flipped through the first layer of zines still in their mailing envelopes. This was beyond cool; other than Jim and only one of his workers, I was the first person to see the Warner fanzine collection in its new, secure home in Texas. It was like cautiously peering through fannish history. Now I think I know how Howard Carter and his group must have felt discovering King Tut's tomb. There is fortunately no death curse hanging over Harry's fanzines. At least, none that I am aware of.

On return addresses, I recognized names like Gary Mattingly, Steve George, the Chattanooga SF club, and saw many others whose names didn't ring a bell. Harry had kept the zines in their original mailing envelopes, which meant they were flat and protected, and each envelope was dated when it had been received at the Hermitage in Hagerstown, Maryland. The sizeable collection was boxed in no particular order, or so it appeared to me, although the boxes were labeled as to their general contents. To

briefly recap part of our conversation, Jim Halperin's goal is to eventually get the zines all sorted, catalogued, and cross-indexed, and he plans to help Jerry Weist write a comprehensive history of fanzines (including comic zines). I took a picture of the boxes of Harry's fanzine collection, which Jim estimates at being somewhere in the neighborhood of 40,000 to 50,000 fanzines. He once again pointed out that the Pelz and Horvat collections at, respectively, UC-Riverside and U of Iowa were so large because those schools acquired *everything*: besides the zines, UC-R and Iowa got the pulps, books, magazines, correspondence - the works. As he said during our conversation in his office, Jim only bought Harry's fanzines. Some year (as in a long time from now, he hopes) the Harry Warner, Jr. fanzine collection will be donated to a university library.

I definitely came away with the knowledge that Harry's zines will be well-preserved and cared for, which should please those of us in fanzine fandom. At least, Robert Lichtman should now be able to sleep better at night.

The funny thing is that when I made the comment, "Man, I would love to help you catalog these," Jim looked at me and said, "That would be helpful. You've got the knowledge base. But you don't live close by," which is sadly true. College Station is 188 miles southeast of Dallas. *sigh* How cool would **THAT** have been?



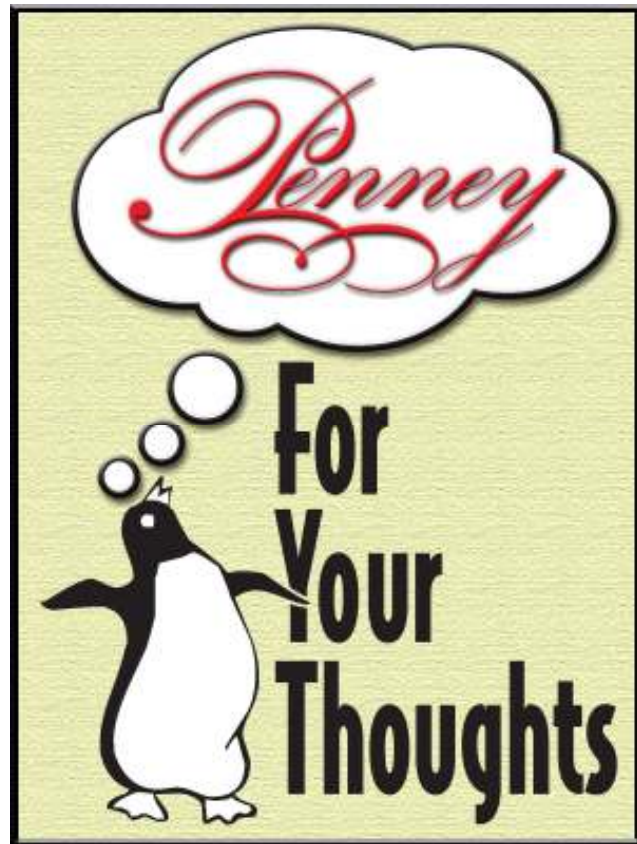
James Halperin proudly stands in front of some of the fanzines he has acquired in recent years.

fanzone reviews by Lloyd Penney

Issues #131 and #132 of *Probe* arrived recently. You've probably read about my receiving this zine in the past. *Probe* is the clubzine for Science Fiction South Africa in Johannesburg. It got here in good shape for its long trip. I get this zine in exchange for letters of comment; I've been getting it for close to 20 years, and a former editor, Tony Davis, now lives about an hour away from me, just north of Toronto.

The club is isolated from the rest of fandom, probably being the only SF club on the entire African continent, and sometimes it shows. I got to meet some of the SFSA membership at Torcon 3, and they are all great folks, and were so pleased to finally be joining the rest of us. Outside of Worldcon, they reach out to the rest of the world with *Probe*, and they seem to get little response. Perhaps I can figure out why, at least in their own zine. It is a pleasure to know that even the club from fandom's furthest outpost publishes and trades.

I'll concentrate on the most recent issue, #132. Now, the club has had some outside contact with the rest of fandom, but sometimes the clubzine belies that fact. The usual contents of the zine are short stories from the SF writing contests the club sponsors, plus book reviews and sometimes an interview with an SF pro. The covers are usually by Roberto Schima, a Brazilian fan and illustrator, and sometimes the cover is the gem of the issue. (A true international effort, which is to be applauded.) Besides a few bits of clip art, there are no illustrations inside, at least, not the way members used to



draw in the 80s and 90s. Someone get these people a fan artist or two! There are pages and pages of type that needs to be broken up. I believe the fact there's so much amateur SF in the magazine reflects the demands of the club members, and I also believe that given their quality and productivity, South African SF writers can make a huge impact on science fiction, much in the way Canadian writers did over the past 15 to 20 years; but articles about anything, including South African fan history (same as the history of SFSA, I suspect), would be a welcome read, at least for this outsider. Then again, this clubzine is for the club, not just me.

Next up is *The Knarley Knews*, edited by Henry Welch. This zine's always got good art, and the newest issue, #123, has lots from one of my own favorite artists, Marc Schirmeister. Add in Brad Foster, Terry Jeeves, and even Scott Patri and the late Joe Mayhew, the mix is both eye-pleasing and

nostalgic. Henry's also been able to build a good stable of columnists, like Sue Welch, Gene Stewart, Jim Sullivan, Alex Slate, Terry Jeeves, and even Rodney Leighton from Nova Scotia. All interesting reads, and all worthy of comment, and I try my best. We get the usual news about Henry's home, university life, sports for him and his kids, and his law studies.

The best thing about *TKK* is the letter column. (Why, yes, I AM biased.) It makes up more than half of the zine, and shows that as the editor, Henry, has his readers engaged. As the editor and publisher, he's doing his part. I just wish he had more presence in the zine itself in the form of some articles. But then, he's got a busy life on the go, and I seem to recall lots of Knarley articles in earlier issues. Henry, write an article yourself from time to time and I think you'll have the balance just about right. Or, reprint something from an earlier issue. I'm trying to give you an out here...

Finally, not to dwell on clubzines, but my choice here is *Warp*, the zine produced by the Montreal SF Association. The latest issue is number 67, and this is another clubzine I like, with a few caveats. Editor Cathy Palmer-Lister puts a lot of effort into this zine, and I hate to kvetch. There is always good artwork on the cover, and I wish this could carry on into the zine itself. There are some good fan artists in Montreal, and I wish they could contribute, but I think life is getting in the way, as it usually does.

I think part of the problem here is the fanzine equivalent of donor fatigue. You can only nag the productive types for so long. Berny Reischl is an excellent artist, and while his work is on the cover, many artists I can think of need to learn to do fillos to get more of their work in print. The creative well can run dry for anyone, and this might be another zine that could benefit from some outside fan artists.

The contents include a loccol that has been expanding over the last few years as people learn that if you want a decent zine,

you have to contribute to it. Also, there's an English translation of a century-old French-language book, Sylvain St-Pierre on getting ready to attend the Japanese Worldcon, the fifth chapter of some fan-written SF, and movie and book reviews. The translation and fan fiction are a little dry and perhaps too lengthy for me, and they form double-page spreads of type. Again, more fillos are needed for something both pleasing to see and read.

More zines next time.

- **LLOYD PENNEY**

* * * * *

Probe (Gail Jamieson, ed. – clubzine of Science Fiction South Africa)
(GailJ@dpcrsa.co.za)

The Knarley Knews (Henry Welch, ed.)
(welch@msoe.edu)

Warp (Cathy Palmer-Lister, ed.)
(cathyp1@sympatico.ca)

Other zines received/reviewed:

Alexiad #33
Ansible #239-240
Banana Wings #30
Bits of My Boring Life #1
Cargo Cult Books & Notions (May/June 07)
Challenger #26
Drink Tank #126-133
eI #32
Einblatt! (July, 2007)
Fangle # 1- 3
From Aliens Shores #1
Motorway Dreamer #4
MT Void #1441-1448
The Orphan Scrivener #45
Phlizz #1
Pixel #14-15
Poorly Conceived Awkward Silence
Prolapse #6
Taboo Opinions #101
Vanamonde #683-687
Vegas Fandom Weekly #97
Visions of Paradise #116: *Halcyon Days*

The Thin Veneer

The Thin Veneer

a column by Arnie Katz

{Editorial note: This article first appeared in SNAPS #25 (June, 2007) in Arnie's apazine, Softcore Fantasy Adventures #25. Fanzine images are either from e-Bay or my collection.}

The Truth About Fanzine Publishing

A fine old fannish adage says, "All truth is contained in fanzines." I believe it was Mike McInerney who first passed along this kernel of wisdom or it might've been rich brown. I definitely recall that it was rich who observed that there's so damn much in fanzines that they not only contain all truth, but all falsehood as well.

Without debating the maxim's shades of meaning, evidence is mounting for an updated version: "All hasty thought is contained in listservs."

The fannish listservs are great for keeping in touch with fan friends, spreading

timely information and, occasionally, hashing over topics in a tenth the time it would take in a conventional, quarterly apa.

Even if they didn't have all those significant plusses, it wouldn't prompt me to campaign against them. Fandom Is Just A Goddamn Hobby, and those who want to spend their time writing innumerable notes to listservs have the same right to do so as John Purcell has to publish *Askance*. I'd prefer to see a number of highly active listserv fans put some of that energy into types of fanac I consider more interesting and entertaining, but I wouldn't dream of ragging them about actually doing so.

Yet as I indicated, listservs have a treacherous side that cannot be ignored. The ease of response leads to things like the same person posting five times in a row on the same subject thread or coming to hasty opinions and firing them off before there's a moment for reflection.

Ted White once said that a fugghead is someone who never has second thoughts. In essence, listservs are so efficient that they put everyone into fugghead mode. The listserv operator who introduces a system with a half-hour posting delay and take-back option is going to become extremely popular. I doubt there are many fans who haven't written at least one listserv post they'd like to have aborted.

I hate to see fans, especially those I like and respect, make foolish comments on listservs, so I tend to restrict my reading, and also try not to take indelicacies too seriously.

A continuing source of distress for me



Hobgoblin #1 (November, 1959)

personally and as an active fan has been the tendency of some fans to dismiss the validity of my favorite form of fanac, writing and publishing in the digital fannish environment. Even though the last few FAAn Achievement Award polls demonstrate the huge importance of electronic fanac on Core Fandom, there seem to be a lot of nice folks who want to at all costs hold back the clock and pretend that print fanzines are what they were even 190 years ago.

I'll tell you this: It's a good thing we don't depend on such fans to produce our fanzines because we'd be out of luck. I don't see a single notable regular fanzine coming from that direction; it's the electronic publishers who show enthusiasm and produce most of today's top fanzines.

Editors of electronic fanzines have mostly borne the digs and denigrations in silence. We figured fans would learn, but time is passing and there are some slow learners among us. Eventually, though, you have to draw a line and insist on respect for our favorite form of fanzine fanac. "I stood all I can stand an' I can't stand no more!" as that great sage Popeye sometimes says.

I reached my limit when a reasonably well-known British fan, someone I like and respect, made a recent pronouncement, and I fought off the overwhelming urge to stab the "reply" and "send" keys in rebuttal. Just as I was rolling up my sleeves to tear him a new one, I instead decided to take my own advice and think about the subject before writing, and a column in an electronic fanzine seems the most appropriate possible place to deal with the subject.

The thing that hurt, depressed, and angered me was the blithe assertion that there is less creativity in doing an electronic fanzine than in doing a paper fanzine. I was hurt, because it was a more-or-less direct slap at my favorite form of contemporary fanac. I was depressed at the thought that this fan, and perhaps others who I also esteem, put such a low value on my fanac. And I was angry, because this fine fannish gentleman was talking out of his asshole.

The fan who made the statements did

some fine fanzines — about 30 years ago. By contrast, I published many, many hard copy fanzines, some as recent as the early years of this decade. I have also published a couple of hundred electronic fanzines. If anyone has perspective on the similarities and differences of print and digital fanzines, it ought to be me. (If I didn't have a good grasp of the picture after all that experience, I'd hate to think what it would say about me.)



I've got plenty to say about this, but something Joyce said to me made the absurdity of the assertion obvious: If a print fanzine is more "creative" than an electronic fanzine, then what happens when the editor of an electronic fanzine takes the file to a copy shop and has them run off a paper version? What increment of creativity is there? The answer is that there is no difference in the amount of creativity, though cost and scut labor are both higher with the paper edition.

It's logical and it makes sense, but it actually doesn't go far enough. I think electronic fanzines often demand more, not less, than a paper one. That difference is nothing that should worry fans, but it probably does exist.

First, let's Define Our Terms. Painful, true, but at least we'll all be talking about

more or else the same thing.

A “traditional paper fanzine” is typed on stencils, run off on a mimeograph and snail mailed to fans. This was the fannish paradigm from about 1940 to about 1980.

A “transitional fanzine” is prepared using desktop publishing software and then published at a copy shop and sent out snail mail. Computer influenced zines oozed into Fandom at less-than-light speed, but transitional fanzines were the primary fanzine form from 1985 to 2004.

An “electronic fanzine” is prepared using desktop publishing software and emailed to its recipients who either print it out or read it onscreen. Electronic fanzines have existed since the turn of the century, but it’s only in the last few years that they have actually accounted for the majority of fanzine publishing.

Transitional fanzines muddy the issue, because they are... transitional, a hybrid form. Traditional fanzines are prepared in more or less the same way as electronic fanzines. The difference is that the editor of a transitional fanzine goes to the copy shop and comes home with a stack of collated printed copies. Since the recipient of an electronic fanzine can print out a hard copy, too, the main difference is in who pays for the copy. Fanzine publishers have paid the cost of printing for Fandom’s first 70 years or so; now recipients must foot the bill *if they want a hard copy of something they can read in its delivered format*.

The significant comparison is between traditional and electronic fanzines. If one or the other takes more creativity, that would go far to prove or disprove the idea that a traditional fanzine takes more than an electronic fanzine.

The first question is: Does one form use more content than the other? I thought I knew the answer to that one, but a little research yielded an unexpected outcome.

I picked a couple of traditional fanzines out of my collection and did some counting. Although my randomly chosen zines *look* fairly different from each other, both *The Adversaries* by Kent Moomaw (published by Ted White) and *Quip #8* had about the

same amount of text per page. 60 lines, each of 15 words. That’s 900 words per page for a solid page of copy.

I was a little surprised, when I counted a page of 10-pt. DTP text set up in two columns. It came out to only slightly more. There are, of course, ways to increase that word count. A switch to 8 pt. text boosts the per-page total to nearly 1,500 words and image reduction can shrink a standard 8-1/2” x 11” page to digest size, like *Trap Door*.

The general case, though, is that a traditional fanzine and an electronic fanzine of equal size will have about the same amount of textual content.

Solid data on comparative issue size and frequency is hard to figure. Print fanzines went through periods when fanzines tended to be small and others when they were mammoth. Electronic fanzines tend to be a little smaller and there are almost none with more than 24 pages.

On the other hand, electronic fanzines appear much more frequently. An issue of *Quip* ran 40-60 pages and the average *VFW* is about 20 pages. There were never more than four issues of *Quip* in a single year and two or three per year was more usual. I’ve done 100 issues of *VFW* in less than three years. That’s 33 or so a year, a total of approximately 600 pages annually (versus no more than 200 for four quarterly *Quip*’s).

And I can tell you with some authority that you really *feel* that pace. I’ve done about 80 installments of my editorial column “Katzenjammer,” up to seven pages each, during that three-year span. That has got to be the most writing I’ve ever done for Fandom. I hope you’ll all still love me if I have to take a little sabbatical after *VFW* runs its course.

If you don’t stop chanting, “Do it now!” I’m going to lose the thread of my argument.

I’ve observed that other electronic publishers like Earl Kemp, Chris Garcia, and David Burton all publish a much greater quantity than any contemporary print fanzine publisher. So it’s probably fair to say that publishing an electronic fanzine

requires a heavier commitment to writing (or obtaining) content. That sounds like it takes more creativity to do a regular electronic fanzine than a hard copy zine.

A viable response is that fans only read one issue at a time, so the long-range drain is not entirely relevant. I think that case, too, can be made.



Outworlds #27 (1976)

An appropriate analogy involves video gaming, a subject I know pretty well. When I started writing about video games in 1978, 2K was the limit for an Atari VCS cartridge. Coupled with the machine's rudimentary audio and video capabilities, this meant that one person could easily program the whole thing. A music composer/performer wasn't needed because the VCS was hard-pressed to equal the tonal quality and range of a push-button phone. Artists were superfluous, too, because everything was thick lines and chunky rectangles. A spaceship might be two parallel lines with a circle between them.

Today, no professional video game

software company would consider going to market without specialist in sound and graphics. The reason is simple: heightened capabilities and a larger "canvas" require more creativity and expertise to fill it. Even I could figure out a one-voice, eight-tone burst of beeps and boops; it takes a composer to write a song that will be heard in CD-quality audio.

The situation with fanzines is very similar. The introduction of electronics has made many previously impossible things possible and many previously impractical things practical.

Here are a few, of many possible, examples:

* In 1972, I had an IBM Selectric Typewriter with Currier, Currier Ital and maybe two other fonts. My machine allowed me to switch between 10 and 12 pt. In 2007, I can select from about a zillion type fonts, many of them readable. And everyone can make like Alfred Bester with point sizes that run from too small to see to too large to fit on a page.

* In 1972, fanzines mostly came in one page size, 8-1/2 x 11 (or the UK equivalent). *Minac* used legal-length paper, *Inside* was digest-sized and there were others that veered from the normal, but at least 95% of traditional fanzines were 8-1/2 x 11. In 2007, odd-size electronic fanzines are becoming more plentiful as fans like Earl Kemp experiment with page dimensions. Even I've done a page-size experiment: *The Fannish Worry Book* (21st Century Edition) I published in 2006 has wide pages with less vertical space, more in the spirit of my inspiration, *The Worry Book*. The version of *The Worry Book* I did in the late 1960's was 8-1/2 x 11. What's important is that page-size has become mutable, a variable. Using that capability will certainly call forth the editor's creativity.

* In 1972, fanzine headings were either done with lettering guides, drawn by a fan artist or, at somewhat higher cost, with Lettraset and an electronic stencil. Now the ordinary capabilities of Microsoft *Publisher* (or *Word* or equivalent) can generate a

greater variety of headings than even a lavish set of lettering guides — and *WordArt* is a quantum leap ahead of those old “rub-off” lettering pages.

* In 1972, art was whatever size the artist drew and photos were either on one special page in the fanzine, or else it was a special offset publication with tons of photos and little else. In 2007, all layout elements, including art and photos, can be resized, cropped, twisted, and otherwise changed for a layout.

* In 1972, traditional fanzines were basically black and white. Shelby Vick, Ted White, Lee Hoffman did some impressive color work (in light of the technology), those were notable occurrences, not something you’d expect in the typical fanzine. In 2007, every page can use a multiple number of color elements, if desired.

And so on and so on and...

Expanded capabilities mean a wider range of choices and more choices equals a need for more creativity to implement them artistically and effectively.

That’s not to say that every electronic fanzine explores all possibilities to the fullest extent. A combination of inexperience and technological limitations has left quite a bit of uncharted territory for the future. Yet even at this early stage of the Electronic Fanzine Era, the fanzine editor must grapple with many elements that simply weren’t part of the picture in the Traditional Fanzine era.

One reason why electronic fanzines are often more frequent is that they are less work. Most fanzine publishers can afford to “spend” the additional creativity implied by greater issue frequency more than faneds back in the day could invest the non-intellectual, hard labor.

It takes a lot more physical effort to print, collate, address and mail a Traditional fanzine. Transitional fanzines just cost more; the copy shop does most of the work. (I did my own copying and collating on my 1990’s Transitional fanzines (like *Folly* and *Xtreme*), a rarity among editors of



traditional fanzines.)

So, am I saying that it takes less creativity to produce a Traditional fanzine than an Electronic one?

No.

I don’t think creativity is like soda pop. You don’t order up the Big Gulp of creativity for one kind of fanzine and the Mega Big Gulp for the other. It takes a lot of creativity to produce *any* kind of enjoyable and entertaining fanzine. Maybe that’s why such a small percentage of those who call themselves fans are capable of doing one.

The larger point, though, is that it is ridiculous to cast Traditional and Electronic fanzines as adversaries or even as an either/or choice. More, much more, than half of all current fanzines are electronic. The rise of electronic fanzines reflects the soaring expense of a frequent and large hard copy fanzine and the growing difficulty associated with printing and collating it yourself rather than turning to an expensive copy shop.

It makes no more sense to disparage electronic fanzines than it would for editors of hectographed fanzines to denigrate publishers of mimeographed fanzines.

There are some fans who are too inflexible to make the adjustment and I feel bad for them. In some cases, I will even miss them. But things will go better for everyone if we all understand that electronic

fanzines take as much creativity as any other kind, even if they do cost less and involve less physical labor than Tradition and Transitional) ones.

They're *all* fanzines.

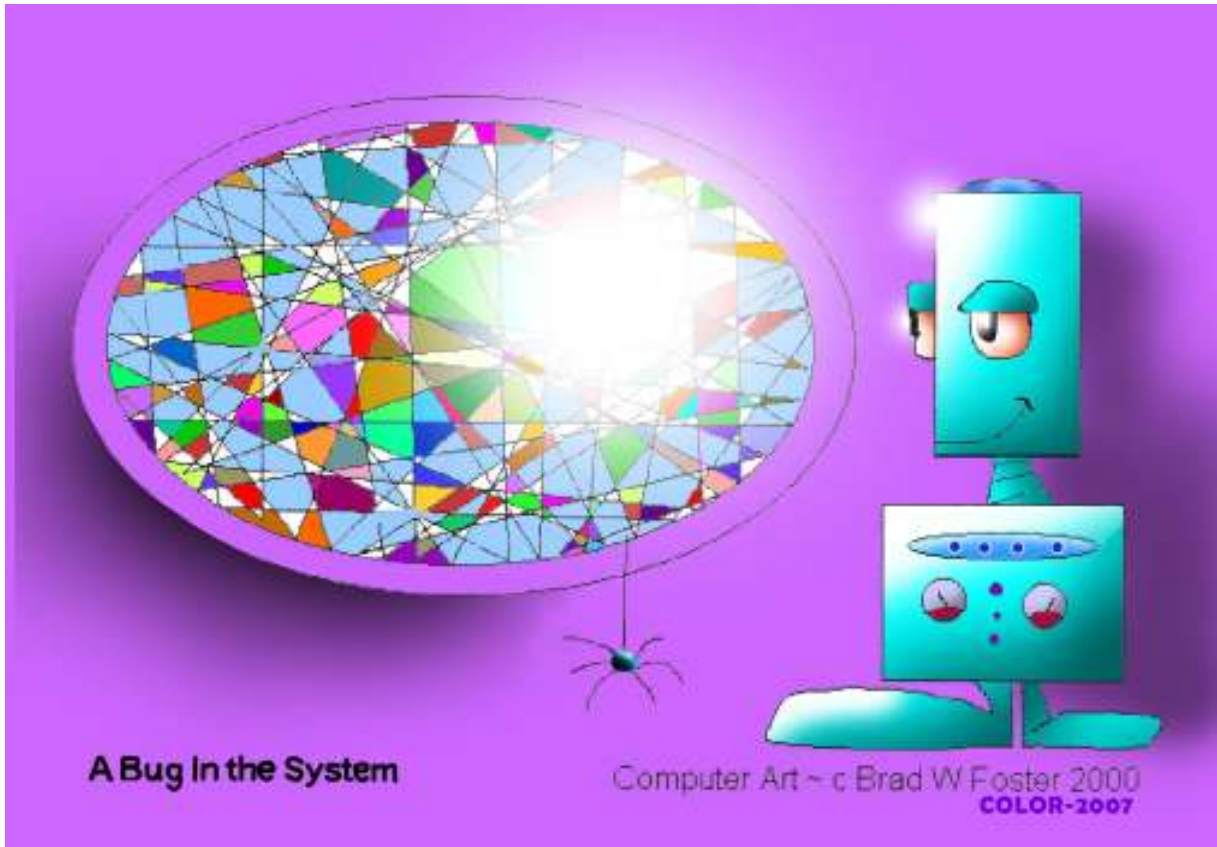
They *all* take creativity – and the character of that creativity is essentially the same.

The good ones, whether print or

electronic, are still entertaining, involving, and delightful.

I don't know about the rest of you, but I think Fandom is a lot more enjoyable when fans show what *they* can do rather than undercutting others' efforts.

-- ARNIE KATZ



“We are amongst comrades who hate jocks and the pretentious balsollogy that goes with everything normal and mundane.”



Letters from this fanzine's readers who know the drill: read, enjoy, or get perturbed, then write loc, get pubbed – or at least get wahfed. This last one all depends on good, old-fashioned editorial whim. Oh, the power...!

Well, once again, guess who was the first person to send in a loc? Why, how did you people know? Y'all must be psychic or something...

Sun, 13 May 2007

"Chris Garcia"

<garcia@computerhistory.org>

Askance 2 arrives like a thief in the night...or in this case, on a Sunday when I'm well-rested after a night of fannish partying. I love Alan White's stuff and we're given one of his fine covers. I'm thinking there's a guy who is a few years away from the Rotsler Award (along with Ross Chamberlain, who is also due) and when he does get it, and he will, I'll buy him a thing of good scotch to celebrate. *{Hey! If you're buying, I'll be there.}*

I have a very strange concept of what fan writing is: it's writing. No different from anything else, only done by fans. If a fan writes it, then it's fan writing. I know that may sound a little simplistic, but I like it.

Good fan writing is just good writing. It's one of the reasons I don't like pros in the Best Fan Writer Hugo category. To me, the same is true of Fan Art. Any art, no matter type or what use, if it's done by a fan, is Fan Art.

Good con report. It sounds like AggieCon was a good attend. I always read con reports from Far Off Places and I always wanna go and attend, completely knowing that it's almost impossible for me to afford it. The NASFA Shuttle is the worst on me. It makes me wanna attend every con in and around Alabama.

I've never been able to watch the new BSG. I love the old series. We had videos tapes of about 10 old episodes until I taped over them with World Championship Wrestling episodes in 1989. I found them recently, with the original *Battlestar: Galactica* crossed out and "Wrestling" written next to that. I love watching the episodes off eMule or BitTorrent now because the computers are

awesome. We have a few of them at the museum.

I wish more cons had a good film festival. I might try to make it out to Conestoga this year, two years after my film, "The Chick Magnet," won Best Science Fiction film and a year after Frank Wu's "Guidolon" took it by storm. I've heard of the Schlock Film Festival, too, but the timing isn't good (I've got campaigning to do at that point!).

Ghoultown is one of my favourite bands. "Killer in Texas" is one of those fantastic songs, and the album, *Give 'em Enough Rope* is one of the best purchases I've made in the last year. My buddy Jeremy gave me a bunch of Gothabilly stuff like Ghoultown, The Coffinshakers (from Norway), Nekromantics, and DeadGrass Revival. I really wanna see those guys live. I'm only sad that they kicked Queeno deVamps out of the band because she was smokin' Hawt! *{I may have to check out the Ghoultown website to see what Queeno deVamps looked like, or at least Google her name and see the results. Now I am interested.}*

Ah, 'plosives! I like things that go boom! I went to a place off of I-5 in Washington where they mixed fireworks to your exact specifications. I didn't have enough money to buy one of the big boomers, they ran 60 something and up, nor did I have a way to launch it. I do know Long Beach Drive-In very well. I spent a fair amount of time there in my younger, more Southern Californian days.

I like *Way*. It's one of those fun reads that I got on the place from Austin to San Jose. I like the Southern Fan Confederation zine as well, along with the *NASFA Shuttle*. Club-zines are entertaining, it seems. I thought the concept behind the latest PLOKTA was great. I almost filed it with the 1970s BritZines I happen to have, like *Seamonster*. Then again, I need to show it as a part of my Best Fanzine nominated Zines section for the BayCon fanzine lounge. Did you notice the guy in the Sue Mason illo that looked exactly like me? I've only ever gotten one issue of *Tortoise*. I enjoyed it,

though it's a fairly different zine from what I normally go for.

I'm not much of a reader of far future stories. There are a few books that I've enjoyed, including a few from Phil Farmer. I'm not a big fan of Fantasy, though there are folks that say SteamPunk, the subgenre of my favorite tastes, is a fantasy genre. It is interesting to note the change in Hugo voting tastes. I'd say we'll see it change more, and possibly in the next five to ten year where it'll be more even. There are a lot of authors coming up who might swing it back towards Far Future stuff.

I love Figby!

You've got a positively Alexiadian LetterCol! It's freakin' huge! I love that CrudZine cartoon. It pretty much explains my complete Fan Publishing career! I'm still slowly dying of laughter over the Pre-Cameron stuff at the end of the issue. It's just so damn funny!

Chris

{Well, I don't know about this being an "Alexiadian LetterCol", but I thank you for the comparison. And you do realize, don't know, that by my pubbing some of Lloyd's fan art that this now makes him eligible for next year's Best Fan Artist Hugo and FAAn Awards. Somehow I don't think he'd mind being a FAAn Award or Hugo Award loser in that category either. By the way, congratulations on your Fan Hugo nominations!}

It was quite different receiving a two-part loc from Eric Mayer spread out over two days, and all of it very interesting. Here's part one:

Mon, 14 May 2007

Eric Mayer <maywrite2@epix.net>

John,

Funny you start off mentioning letters to zines. I just finished reading the loccol in *Prolapse 6* wherein Mark Plummer criticises me for John Hall's impression of something I wrote in a LoC to one of your zines. Did I

actually say I didn't feel *obligated* to LoC ezines I read? Does that ring a bell? *{I'd have to look that up.}*

I fear I don't keep very good track of my correspondence. I recall pondering why e-zines seemed to receive fewer letters of comment than the print zines I remember and thinking it might have something to do with the rather different ethos of the internet where stuff is given away online for free with no expectation of return or acknowledgment, but I don't recall taking the position, as Mark said, (or as he thought John Hall paraphrased me as saying) that I felt I wasn't obligated to LoC. In fact, the only reason I'm involved in Fandom right now is that a couple years ago I downloaded a few zines from efanazines (including *IAPL*), enjoyed them, and was surprised that hardly anyone had written (mainly Lloyd Penney). That seemed a shame (Wait, I don't mean it seemed a shame Lloyd had written - - only that there were so few LoCs.) and I figured even though I couldn't see myself doing a lot of fanac, the least I could do was write a few letters. However, I point out that I am not quoting Mark. What he said is what's in *Prolapse 6*. So maybe this should've been a LoC to *Prolapse*, but Mark was talking about something I supposedly wrote to you, according to John Hall. Sheesh.

Well, ingrate that I am, I sometimes don't manage to LoC every zine I read. Some zines appear so fast I simply don't have time to get to one issue before the next one is out. Also, as you point out, a zine can be excellent without necessarily having comment hooks. A typical issue of *Pixel* comes to mind as an example. Or sometimes a reader might just have nothing useful to contribute about any of the topics and so decide not to LoC. There seems to be a feeling that if we write a letter of comment it should have some value in itself. I certainly tend to feel this way, although I'm not sure it makes much sense. Reading zines from the fifties I've seen loccols full of notes saying nothing more

than "I enjoyed your last issue" and certainly it must have been heartening to receive such acknowledgments rather than silence. Some zines I have trouble loccing because I don't feel I can do them justice.

The question of what is fanwriting should certainly elicit comment. I think fanwriting can be identified in any of three ways. Something is fanwriting if it is about those things with which fandom concerns itself. Fans engaging in faanish activities like going to conventions or reviews of fanzines, for instance. That is to say, the subject matter is faanish. Also, fanwriting can be identified by the fact that it contains faanish references, jargon, in-jokes. That's more to do with the style being faannish. But a lot of writing is fanwriting simply because it appears in a fanzine.

Is an otherwise "mundane" article fanwriting because it appears in a fanzine? Well, would anyone argue that reviews of sf books in a fanzine aren't fanwriting? Yet sf books are reviewed outside of fanzines so they aren't inherently faanish.

Someone might want to point out that maybe an sf review by a fan, or a mundane article by a fan, is fanwriting, and has some faanish interest, by virtue of being the thoughts of a fellow fan, but I think it unnecessary to add such a caveat because isn't anyone who contributes to a fanzine a fan?



In that dialog I did with Dave Locke in *Pixel*, I got a little sloppy talking about fanwriting and was saying how I didn't think fanwriting was good practice for other sorts

of writing, but in that regard I was primarily thinking about the sort of fanwriting that uses jargon or aims at faanish interests in particular.



Most of my writing in my zine *Groggy* was about my mundane family life. It did sometimes mention fans and faanish topics. Tim Marion starred in one issue. But mostly it was about my job travails, kids, neighbors. But it had to be fanwriting. It was dittoed! Some was hectoed. It was in a fanzine with often colorful, pulp style covers sent to sf fans and had a loccol with letters from sf fans. The askance view I took of things was largely inspired by writers like Robert Benchley, James Thurber and E.B.White, but in such a faanish context, it passed for fanwriting.

In the mid-eighties when I decided to try, seriously, to sell some writing, I first recycled fan articles. My first sale on a national level was an article I wrote for Brian Earl Brown's *Sticky Quarters* -- a humorous piece about feeding my kids (who were in high chairs at the time). That appeared in *Baby Talk*. Exactly as written for *SQ*.

I can't recall all the fanzine articles that were reprinted in magazines here and there. I'm not much of a pack rat. A whole bunch of articles from *Groggy* and other zines came out in the Rochester, New York newspaper (which had a circulation 50,000 times larger than *Groggy*). Those were sometimes cut to fit space requirements, but otherwise untouched. They were all "fanwriting." At the time I wrote them I had absolutely no thought of selling them

anywhere and the possibility only occurred to me much later. Yet, they were all written with enough care to be acceptable "professionally" without significant changes. So, yes, fanwriting does not need to be inferior in any sense to professional writing. But neither does it need to offer a different sensibility. Much of what we call fanwriting is only fanwriting because of its context in my opinion.

In fact, my favorite "fanwriting" that appeared in a mundane publication never appeared in a fanzine. I had been doing some articles for *Running Times* which is kind of the poor man's *Runner's World*, and the editor decided he would like a first person account of a new 10K race which was being started up as an annual affair to bring some activity to the area, by a Vermont Ski Lodge. The magazine would pay me to cover the race. They wanted a first person account. What was the event like for a middle of the pack runner? A light touch was fine.

Hmmm. A first person, humorous account of a minor little adventure. Yeah, I might be able to manage that. I went to Vermont and hung out with the other runners and then I "ran" 6.2 miles, mostly up the mountain, and wrote it up exactly as I would've done for *Groggy*. Funny thing was, everyone involved loved it. So I guess fanwriting has some merit. And fanwriting is...uh...I dunno...maybe it doesn't exist at all...

OK, now having got hooked by the hook I'm going to slight the rest of the zine! I enjoyed it all, but I'm kind of pressed for anything useful to contribute. Charles E. Fuller's account of his Motion Potion was particularly good. I was never good at chemistry. I mixed Kool Aid with sugar and sold that. I also caught minnows and crayfish at the lake where my family lived in the summer and sold them to fishermen. My use for bottles was to collect them for the return fee. My parents' ran a picnic grove so there were an uncommonly large number of empties left lying about.

Charles sounds like just the man you need to mix up some hectograph inks!

Maybe I'll get my second wind later in the week and comment some more but for now, another fine issue!

Best, Eric

{At the risk of sounding pedantic, fan writing is something different for just about everybody. The best fanwriting always exhibits the care that was extended to them by their writers; like you say, Eric, some of your fanwriting was "written with enough care to be acceptable 'professionally' without significant changes", which I believe is a good thing, and why I have always enjoyed your writing. When someone writes a lot, whether professionally or not, the effort shows. Practice really does make perfect, or at least helps one become better at doing something.}

Well, Eric took a day off to catch his breath, then fired off another e-loc the next day:

Tue, 15 May 2007

From: Eric Mayer <maywrite2@epix.net>

John,

Still without attempting to comment on everything in *Askance 2*, there were a few comments I wanted to make. I haven't read sf for years, so Robert Sabella's list of award nominees, categorized as near future or far future, didn't mean much to me. But I was interested in his conclusion that the trend seems to be toward SF that takes place in the near future. First, I am a little wary of talking about trends in a particular genre of fiction because genres like SF are nothing more than marketing categories created by publishers, so you're really just talking about marketing trends. How well the way in which publishers decide to market their product reflects what readers want, let alone what writers want to write, is debatable. Having said that, the trend Robert sees in SF is similar to what Mary and I have been advised about historical fiction. As you know, we write historical mysteries set in 6th century Constantinople. While there are

mystery series set in various Roman eras, there aren't too many. The common wisdom is that historicals, of all sorts, have a potentially larger audience, the closer they are to our own era. Hence the proliferation of Victorian era historicals as compared to ones from the ancient world. People prefer eras that seem more familiar. Although I can understand this, generally, I would have thought that readers who sought out historicals would've done so to read about differences between eras. Publishers at least think otherwise. Apparently the same is true of SF, with readers (or publishers) preferring an era closer in time to their own.

Then too, a couple notes on letters. Your exchange with Brad Foster reveals why I never wanted to do a genzine (well, I did a kind of non-fan genzine, but that's another story) I simply didn't want to be responsible for presenting the work of others. If I screwed up my own stuff -- printed it badly, left our paragraphs, provided lousy illos -- well, it was just my own stuff!

Also Hope Leibowitz's complaint about her black and white cover reminded me of why I have embraced electronic fanning exclusively this go-round. When I did hecto covers for *Groggy* I couldn't print more than 50 or 60, and only 15 or 20 (or less sometimes) were really bright. How do you determine who to send the best prints too? I hated that. I pretty much distributed the first prints to those who wrote most regularly. (The brightest set has got to be in the Harry Warner collection if he kept them because he wrote a LoC, near as I recall, on every issue, with Harry and Buck Coulson competing to see whose loc arrived first.) But I hated that some readers got "better" copies.

Best, Eric

{I don't like the idea that some readers get "better" copies than others, but I'm trying to set a democratic standard with Askance: if you're a main contributor (writer or artist), you will receive an issue that has a color cover. If I have more fundage in the future, I would love to print all of the covers in full color.}

{Trends in science fiction are tough to pin down, I think. I really don't have any particular favorite type of SF so long as it is well-written. Far-flung future stories are enjoyable, and I do have a soft spot for Space Opera style novels. Your comment that "people prefer eras that seem more familiar" makes sense regarding historical and romance novels, but flies in the face of the popularity of SF & F, which is, for the most part, pure escapism. However, it is apparent that reading tastes run in cycles, and right now cyberpunk seems to be drifting out of favor with more "hard" science fiction becoming more popular. Witness the rise of writers like Alastair Reynolds, David Brin, Greg Bear, and the continued popularity of Clarke, Asimov, Benford, Niven, Pournelle, and others. It is a tough call, but I thought Bob Sabella's brief article was interesting. It could have been more in-depth, discussion-wise, but it was still comment-provoking.}

Joe Major – yes, that Hugo-nominated fellow - also joins the fray this time around with an old joke about writing locs to me (as if I've never heard them before, yeah, right...), and then actually covers lots of territory in the rest of his loc.

Wed, 16 May 2007

From: <jtmajor@iglou.com>

1409 Christy Avenue

Louisville, KY 40204-2040 USA

jtmajor@iglou.com

Dear John:

I can't go on living this lie . . .oops, wrong "Dear John". Since you have seen fit to actually dispatch a physical copy of *Askance* to our humble home, the roof sheltering Lisa, Grant, the five cats, and maybe an unwelcome visitor in the shape of an opossum, I can do no less than to write a physical, or perhaps metaphysical, loc thereunto.

It is your fanzine, yes. I have seen a number of fanzines which are entirely about what the editor's buddies are doing now, or

did back in the heady sixties when all the world was young and change was in the air. How these are distinct from, say, similar reminiscences by members of the Commune for Holistic Dentistry is an exercise to be left for the reader.

Hence your point about life in a pig packing plant. (Then there was the Ralph Bakshi cartoon about the drummer, his hands, and the pig packing plant . . .) *{I don't think I really want to hear any more than that!}*

"Chaotic Motion": Ah, fiery bottles. At least in the sixties, though, we could do things that might possibly injure us. (I still recall throwing the firecracker that blew off the end of my thumbnail, cutting it to the quick — which may give you an example of how short the fuse was.)

"Penney for Your Thoughts": Randy Cleary does fanzine art. However, increasingly, fan artist nominees are chosen from those who appear in con art shows.

"Has Science Fiction Lost Its Future?": One wonders if any of the sercon zines of the late thirties wondered if scientifiction would lose its future now that Orlin Tremaine was no longer editor of *Astounding*. I would say, however, that there was a general "loss of nerve" in society, not just SF, in that era. The thirtieth anniversary of the first manned flight was marked by a memorial built there, hailing this as a great event in human history. The thirtieth anniversary of the first moon landing was marked by a new MTV logo using a picture from the landing.

SF is if anything a little behind the trends. Sometimes this is not undesirable — these trends, for example. But it also leads to a certain "dating" of the work, a future that is past. I wrote a satire of cyberpunk for Guy Lillian's [Hugo nominated] *Challenger*, with the story supposedly written in the fifties but set in the nineties and having the characters talk about Elvis and Buddy Holly.

"From the Hinterlands": So Chris Garcia finally comes clean on how it is that I send him *Alexiad* on Monday evening and when I get up Tuesday morning, there is his loc. However, Lisa beat him. We were at

MillenniumPhilCon, you know, in 2001, with Knarley Welch, who was saving on postage by handing out copies of *The Knarley Knews*. He handed us ours at a panel. Lisa handed him a loc at the end of the panel.

Eric Mayer is only normally sensitive to the THUMP THUMP THUMP of a neighbor's stereo. These people always play music with a heavy bass line, or rap, have powerful subwoofers, and are usually drunk. Drunkenness causes deafness, I've noted. Yes, I used to live in apartments below drunken guys with powerful stereo systems, who needed to indulge usually at 2 in the morning. *{Drunkenness causes a lot of afflictions; deficiency in sanity is probably the worst of the lot.}*

Brad Foster discusses deadlines. The problem I've noted with getting the zine out only every so often with the best material the editor could get is that there's always something better coming along. Thus, the zine is always about to come out.

The International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts has the usual feature of literary analysis of works; the analyses become works of fiction in their own right. If they would only quit insisting that there is any connection.

"Wikiphilia": How exactly is this different from "Wikipedia"?

Namarie, **Joseph T Major**

{Not very, I am afraid. Bill Fischer has sent in another "Wikiphilia" entry, which will be in the next issue.}

Here is a loc from a gentleman who has a few comments to make about the comments about his cover for issue #1:

Fri, 1 June 2007

From: "Brad Foster"

<bwfoster@juno.com>

Greetings John~

Sorry I missed out on getting together with you and the Penney's here in Dallas last

week. We were up in Oklahoma City, hoping we wouldn't get washed off the street at the Paseo Arts Festival. In the end, we lucked out, with rain only really happening in the evenings after we had closed, and just a few brief showers during the day. Ah, the nerve-wracking joys of outdoor art fests.

All the nice comments here about my cover for the previous issue is now making me a bit nervous. One of those "How do I top that?!" kind of things. I think I was more amazed than anyone else at how well that particularly piece turned out. Only time will tell if it was just a fluke, or I can manage to actually figure out, on a consistent basis, what I am doing with this new digital art medium. Still, a big "thanks" to everyone who took the time to comment on that.



Lloyd's comment in regards to his *Plokta* review that "The newest issue sure doesn't look like a *Plokta*..." actually hits the nail directly on the head: the amazingly, constantly different and inventive *Plokta*

covers are **exactly** what a *Plokta* cover looks like!

Got another one for your regional conventions list, a new little relax-a-con here in the Dallas area later this summer. Check out the website for Lazy Dragon Con, August 3-5 over at www.lazydragon.com/con

stay happy~ **Brad**

{Thank you for the link to Lazy Dragon Con. The necessary info has been included in the Regional Convention Calendar in this issue.

{Sometimes I get that "how'd I do that?" feeling about songs I've written, especially with lyrics (images and metaphors) and chord changes that, on paper, should not work together, but do work together when you hear them against the melody line. Creativity knows no boundaries when you have those "accidental discoveries" that turn out really awesome. Feel free to experiment some more with your artwork and to send it on in. I promise: no more smushing

{As all can see on the preceding page, I included the "Daryl" illo that Brad sent me last year, only this time it is un-smushed so that everyone can see just how wonderful it is. Some issue in the future I would love to do a portfolio spread of Brad's work.}



Speaking of art, Jerry Kaufman has some anatomical considerations about Alan White's cover on lastish:

Sun, 10 June 2007

From: Jerry Kaufman

JAKaufman@aol.com

Thanks for the second issue of *Askance*. I enjoyed it, and even found a few things I'd like to comment on.

I didn't think the Alan White cover was one of his more successful ones – the woman depicted looked like she'd been assembled oddly. The left leg, the upper torso's connection to the lower torso, the placement of the right arm - none of these looked right to me. In fact, they looked rather painfully joined. But the colors were pretty and the placement of the moons looked good. (I don't know nearly enough about art, but I often know what I like.)

Your discussion of Fannish Sensibility in your editorial goes nicely with Mark and Claire's recent discussions in *Banana Wings* of what makes good fan writing, and with a heated discussion in Ulrika O'Brien's Live Journal blog of whether John Scalzi can be considered a fan writer. I've always figured that if something appears in a fanzine, it's fan writing, but this leaves on-line writing in blogs and so forth out in the cold. Trying to pin down what makes writing "fannish" continues to elude me - and I believe no one, including Mark, Claire and you, has successfully defined it, because all such attempts end up being either too vague or circular. ***{Unfortunately, this is very true. Defining fan writing is up to each individual, which I can accept. Fandom is, after all, very much an individualist hobby interest.}***

Robert Sabella's statistics are suggestive, but I couldn't help wondering if they would have been even more suggestive if they'd included Hugo nominees as well as winners, or how a similar analysis of Nebula winners would have compared. I realize that tracking down descriptions or copies of all the nominees would have been very time

consuming, and Robert probably has better things to do with his time.

As for explanations of his results - assuming they mean something - I can arrive at a number of suggestions, none of which I'm presenting as the answer, just possibilities. One is that the results fairly represent the trends in the field generally and in the taste of the general sf/fantasy reading public. I noticed a few years ago that Patrick Nielsen Hayden's excellent anthology series, *Starlight*, included quite a few stories with historical settings. This datum said to me that sf writers were turning from the future to the past.

Another is that the results reflect only the tastes of the membership of the WorldCon, or at least that subset of membership that actually nominates and/or votes.

Behind both of these suggestions is the idea that either the public in general or the membership of the WorldCon has become disenchanted with our prospects for surviving to the deep future, or has become much more concerned with the problems we face in the near future. Or they want escapist literature. Or they find the deep future, as depicted in sf novels, to be too difficult to understand, what with the extreme changes most sf writers depict. Or some combination of the above.

So, Robert, what do you think it all means?

Teresa mentions that bat droppings make good fertilizer. I've know this forever, it seems, despite not being a farmer. I think I gleaned this factoid from some Ian Fleming book, maybe even *Doctor No* - whichever book it was, a villain ended up buried in a mountain of bat guano. I think there was also a character in *Doctor Strangelove* named "Bat" Guano.

Judging from Lloyd Penny's cartoon, he's dealing with some antique technology at home. That printer uses gatefold paper and the computer appears to have some odd ports. Still the point he makes remains: GIGO is true no matter the equipment.

I enjoyed the rest of the issue, too.

-- Jerry

{Admittedly, I don't think anybody has ever successfully defined "fanwriting," except for being able to point at something written in a fanzine and then saying, "that's fanwriting." I still believe, though, that there is a Fannish Sensibility that applies: a certain way of looking at and describing things that only fans seem to possess. It is very hard to pin down, since this is mainly a "feeling" that one approaches fanzines with. Does that make sense? If it does, let me know, okay, Jerry?}

This issue's cover artist, Sheryl Birkhead, checks in with a loc on the second issue, covering a wide range of topics near and dear to our fannish hearts.

25509 Jonnie Court
Gaithersburg, MD20882 USA

June 23, 2007

Dear JP,

I've been remiss in not responding to *Askance* #2- sorry. I have let the stack of zines that need some care get far too tall. Yeah, time to try to deal with that!

I just look at Alan White work in continuous wonder. Such "simple" things as the text eludes me and I really really want to figure out how to do that. Sigh. Seeing that cover in black and white (well, is that goldenrod?) makes me continue to wish for a color printer, but it is time I gave up on that for the foreseeable future and became more content with my black and white printer.

Remember that a firstish is just that- the first. From the first one will touching the readership come--sort of like priming the pump. If all else fails, fen will fill a void with a feud.. .given half a chance-- let's hope that doesn't happen!

You mention the type of fannish writing that we enjoy the most... There are two veterinarians who write a humorous column monthly and another one who has been cranking out veterinarian humor cartoons for decades. I enjoy the work of all three with something like the pleasure I get from reading a ghodd fanzine piece. In all these

cases it would appear that a shared history (the kind that makes it unnecessary to lay out ground rules since everyone reading/viewing the pieces already knows them. I grant you (pun intended) that the Canfield piece you mention doesn't quite require such a common history--but having one makes it all the more interesting.

Hmm, I think I made it to two Minicons - but I cannot even remember a likely date (and going to hunt out anything I have from the cons to check is far too much like work!). If I had to guess, I would have picked at least 1974 as a year I made the "trek"- and if that is true, gasp, we may actually have been at the same con at the same time! Because I specialize in plastic plant imitations, I might actually have been in the hotel lobby when you passed by! *{Well, now that's an interesting tidbit of historical news. Maybe we did indeed meet; back then I was brand new, and that Minicon would have been my second con.}*

Amazingly enough,, many faneds seem flummoxed when fanartists/fanwriters provide material-once asked. Gee, how about that--you ask and they comply! I hope the fanartists with whom you made contact (via the trade, business card, or email address route) contribute. It never hurts to send another ish. . .or at least jog their memories.. .when the time seems right.

The Fuller piece reminds me that, back in the teaching days, I worked up a presentation using various chemical principles-and would go through all the color and volume changes to demonstrate them.. .only to have the kids (who always enjoyed the show) ask for more magic. I only did these two years since it was apparent at that point that the kids just were not getting the scientific concepts being demonstrated, but since they were only in the seventh grade, maybe I was asking too much when I hoped they would see that it really was not magic at all.

Sue's *Tortoises* have had interesting formats-- that is how I got the particulars about it and have found Siberia to be an

interesting alter-ego, one that does not require much in the way of care and feeding.

Page 15 took me a minute to re-align--in black and white the title was not apparent (I am guessing that in the e-zone form it is more obvious) *{Yes.}* and thought that Lloyd had decided to continue to flatter - then realized we had launched into Mr Sabellas' lists. This reminds me that I actually have some sf books on tape to try to listen to as I drive. I tried this once before and felt it was a failure--waited a few years and am going to try again. This way all those driving hours are not a complete loss I (well, you know what I mean).

Is Cream Sherry dry? Just asking since you use it as a desert-style nightcap (sorry, couldn't pass that up). *{Good eye with resultant pun.}*

While I try to remember every year to donate to the fan funds, I, frequently, do not make a selection since I consider most of the slate of candidates to be worthy. Since I would be satisfied with almost anyone who wins, I leave it to others who have definite feelings to actually make a selection.

Have you ever seen Barlowe's books? Not being at home, I do not have the titles at hand--believe one is an alien guide and one is an expedition guide--if you have not (hmm- think one was a Hugo nominee "some time ago")--you ought to take a look-amazing. It sort of fits in with the last few pages, but you would have to see the books to understand (and the Barlowe stuff is "serious" extrapolation/interpolation for life forms). I think the paperback is usually available fairly reasonably.

I totally expect to see another set of thank you's for the wonderful cover in the nextish - showing that fen can appreciate, yet another, gorgeous piece of art. Ahem, then how come AW is not on the.. .but no one ever said fen were timely in their appreciation!

Thanks for thish--

Sheryl

{Fans have historically been appreciative and very supportive of fan art of all kinds. In my experience over the

years, fans consistently have made some of the most erudite observations about artwork, sometimes very critical, but rarely hurtful. Witness the comments made in this lettercolumn by Jerry Kaufman and Alexis Gilliland; they are excellent examples about what I mean here.}

{Artwork in fanzines can be quite varied and sometimes barely related – if at all - to the text it accompanies. Speaking for myself, I try to make illoes and either scanned or captured images relevant to the subject being discussed. This helps to improve the readability of the text. At least I think so.}

And now, hitting the trifecta once again this issue – column, artwork, loc – here is that letterhack we all know and love, Lloyd Penney!

1706-24 Eva Rd.

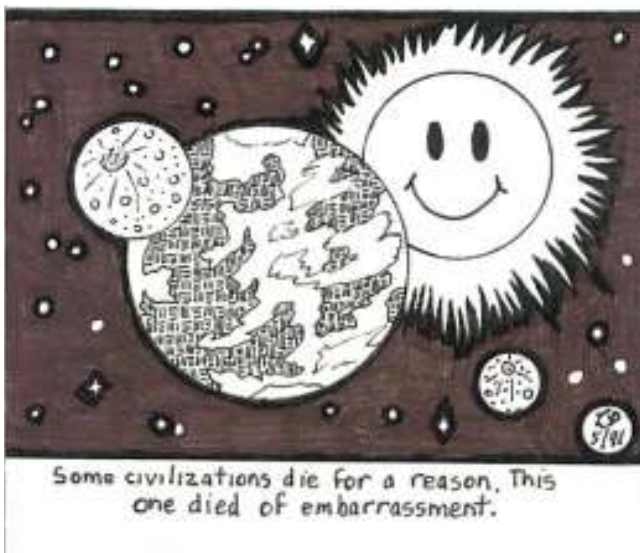
Etobicoke, ON
CANADA

M9C 2B2

June 22, 2007

Dear John:

I promised it to you, so here it comes. And, the best thing is, it's on time! Here's a loc on issue 2 of *Askance*.



Ah, so there's that Alan White cover you were crowing about. You weren't kidding, that is true art. Just beautiful. So, why isn't this guy on the Hugo ballot, hm? We've all enjoyed Alan's fine work for a long time now. *{Agreed.}*

I've been told by several people that I just need to find my footing for my fanzine review column, and I'm glad people are being patient with me. That consideration should also be extended to you and this fanzine. If anyone feels this fanzine is missing something, they should be encouraged to provide that something. No criticism is meant to Alexis at all; there have to be sources for all the contents, and it is a challenge to find all you want to put in it. In my column, I said that we might be suffering from the fanzine equivalent of donor fatigue. Hey, everyone, there's a discussion topic... let's talk about it. For faneds, it's a vital issue.

Good writing should make you think, smile, wonder, remember, reminisce or create; any of the preceding is good. If an article can make you do more than one of those, bonus. I like the old smack-upside-the-head idea. Different thinking is required, you bunch of subversives! Homeland Security is watching, so let's give them something to see. I've been in the letter column more than 25 years now, and I hope I've had the chance to improve. For all I know, my locs are published because faneds require a certain number of column inches for their local.

I eat fanzines, and my locs are the results of my digestion? John, if you think my locs are crap, just tell me! 🌐 *{Your locs are most certainly NOT crap. All I meant to say was that fanzines are a major portion of your literary diet, and that you consume them at an enormous rate. But this is good; it gives you a glut of zine variety upon which you can and will eventually pass judgment upon.}*

{That still didn't come out right, did it? Oh, never mind...}

If I remember from our discussions in Dallas...it's felgercarb. Such heavy discussions about a sci-fi swear word... I never did get into the latter-day *Battlestar*, and already I've heard that the coming season will be the last one. ***{It is, and I am NOT changing the spelling of that "word" in last issue's AggieCon report. So there.}***

The original was campy and cheesy, but perhaps it stood out in my mind because it was the first SF show I was able to watch with others. I have enjoyed SF shows in the past, but I've never felt I needed to meet the actors who portray the characters. Saying that, however, I can say I have met George Takei, Walter Koenig, De Kelley, Nichelle Nichols, Michael Dorn, and a few other Trek actors, and for the most part, they are nice folks. Unlike some in local fandom here, my life will not be incomplete if I never meet any of them again. A con is for enjoying time with your friends. Anything else is icing on the cake. ***{I agree with you here. Cons are "together times" for long-time fannish friends and for making new fannish friends. Group hug, everybody!}***

Ah, more reviews. I hope there's good feedback, and I am more confident about the column in this. I think it's got the edge people might like to see. With your help, I am learning... I am trying my best to bring an international flavour to my reviews, and I am also trying to bring clubzines back into the fanzine reader's PoV. I'm afraid I'm going against E.B. Frohvet's preferences, and writing longer reviews of fewer zines. There are only so many zines, and I don't want to run out. And, I do keep track of what I've reviewed so I don't duplicate my efforts. And, Bob Sabella is right, if I can lead current readers to new zines and fresh reads, my job will be done. Check with the fanned or the clubzine editor... paperzines may be in limited supply. Club treasuries can only go so far.

There's always the demand for factual science in our science fiction. I don't mind a little fictional science because I'm sure that even to this day, we haven't discovered

everything in our vision of science. Writers write what will sell, and to that end, it's probably easier to write fantasy. Besides, anything that is written far into the future may wind up sounding like pseudo-science, which might as well be fantasy to some. I prefer the far future style myself.

If you are planning to go to Apollocon in Houston, give Kim Kofmel a gigantic hug for us. She's originally from southern Ontario, she moved to Houston to get married, we last saw her at LAcon IV, and we miss her a lot. ***{Alas, I could not afford attending that weekend. Oh, well. There is always next year.}***

Just a few days ago, Yvonne and I had a little discussion about where we'd go for a convention in 2008. I think she's been a little disillusioned with the National Space Society, for they indulge in internal politics that would put to shame anything fandom can muster. The Dallas ISDC was fun, but she admitted that it was dull compared to the previous two ISDCs in Washington and Los Angeles.

It's in Washington in 2008, and it's a matter of been there, done that...we have decided to go to the 2008 Corflu Silver in Las Vegas. We were frugal in Dallas, so we still have some money left over, and we already have most of the cash we'll need. Vegas is a place she's wanted to go to, so we might go down a day or two early and see the sights, like Fremont St., and see if there's anything aerospacey for us both to see. Then, it'll be three or four days of fanzine fun. We're looking forward to it, and we are already planning our budget.

(A request to our eager fanartists...a cartoon of Chris Garcia with big pink bunny ears, beating a big drum that says CHRIS for TAFF! John, calling him the Eveready bunny of fandom got me conniving. Once again, I'm just the idea guy...) ***{What? No cheerleader skirt?}***

Coming up on the end of two pages, so I will hope out loud that this issue will not only have the Halperin interview, but

something on our common experiences in Dallas. I hope to hit the trifecta again...artwork, a column and a loc from me. Tie it up with a bow, and I am done. I am looking forward to this third issue, so lay it on me...

Yours, **Lloyd Penney**

{As you can see by now, you did indeed hit the fannish trifecta again. Put out your own zine and you'd be a quadruple threat. What a concept, eh??}



Once again, E.B. Frohvet checks in with a loc covering a bunch of territory, including books, artwork, and so on. What I really like about getting locs from Eeb is that they come the old-fashioned way: in the mailbox. What a breath of fresh air in this modern electronic era of fanac!

4716 Dorsey Hall Dr. #506

Ellicott City, MD 21042

June 8, 2007

Dear John,

I look forward to hearing about the gentleman who has done such a great service for fandom by preserving Harry Warner Jr's collection. For some reason it called to mind Simak's Cemetery World, where Cynthia discovers her family had loaned (not given) some papers to the university generations ago. Because they give her such an arrogant hard time about it, she revokes the loan and walks out with the papers.

Much as one admires the art of Alan White, the lady on the cover is rather too

generously endowed for my preference.

Editorial: I get Alexis Gilliland's point. That's one way to be a letterhack, or perhaps essayist. Or, one can just read the zine for what it is, rather than what one thinks it ought to be, and respond on those terms. By all means, enlighten us with your view of the Fan Hugos; my opinion is well known. Not sure I agree with you about "fannish sensibility", or what constitutes "fan writing" for that matter.

"Chaotic Motion": When I was about eight, I got a chemistry set for Christmas. If you followed the directions, you could get some quite interesting effects from it. (At the time I didn't know about either dry ice or thermite.) If memory serves, I set up a show for the neighborhood kids in someone's garage, and got some respectable oohs and aahs. Don't recall that I made any money off it. However, reading displaced chemistry in my affections, and I never pursued it any further.

Robert Sabella's article would have been more enlightening had he defined his distinction between "near-future" and "far-future" SF. Many works defy being easily classified that way.

Not that mine is the deciding vote, but I hate cream sherry. For an after-dinner *digestif*, I like brandy, or Benedictine.

I wish I had thought up Mark Plummer's simile of attending cons as being like "a parachute jump into enemy territory". Certainly a more evocative reason for not going than "I didn't feel like it."

Liked Alexis Gilliland's 'toon on page 32; but couldn't you just bake some hash into the wafer and save a step?

E.B. Frohvet

{Your comment about Mark Plummer reminds me that he is another one of my favorite fan writers nowadays. He always has something interesting to say and does so with a distinctive expressive style. He is

a good writer (and Banana Wings is a top-flight fanzine, too).}



Here is yet another person who uses regular mail for sending locs and artwork. It is always appreciated to get these from him, and some day I would like to meet Alexis Gilliland, the 2006 Rotsler Award winner:

4030 8th Street So.
Arlington, VA
22204

June 13, 2007

Thank you for Askance #2, which arrived about the time my computer (a four year old eMachine) stopped working. With due time and cash, it was revealed to me that I needed a new power supply and a new motherboard, the total cost to run about what I had paid for the computer new. So rather than try to adjust to a new computer, I said yes, yes, fix the little sucker. Fast forward a week or ten days, and the lady from the shop calls to tell me the motherboard they ordered didn't work, and did I want them to order from this other company which charged more? How much more? The new repair estimate was about twice what I'd paid for the old computer back in the day, so clearly the gods were telling me to get a new computer. I made arrangements to recover my files, and consulted with my wife and children, all of whom are more knowledgeable about tech stuff than I am. Given that all the new Microsoft machines come with Vista (Lee had a laptop with

Vista, which she traded back in after four days for the same model with Windows XP) the consensus of the cognoscenti was to get an Apple, which I went and did. My plan was to get the next to the cheapest model, but Lee is an enthusiast, so we went for the next one after that instead. A mini Mac, (2X2X6 inches) with 120 gigabytes of memory (my old machine had 0.080 gigabytes) and more bells and whistles than I know what to do with (my old machine ditto, but these b&w are bigger and fancier.) The new standard USP ports no longer fit the old connectors on my otherwise working equipment, so I had to buy a new printer, mouse and keyboard, but the mini Mac came with an adapter so I could use my old monitor. As may be seen, I am writing this loc on my new system. *{I am not very computer savvy on system capabilities. I love using them, but not very good on diagnosing and fixing system problems. Believe it or not, my wife, Valerie, is much better at that than I am.}*

Having been diagnosed with prostate cancer in the early stages, I went in to the Radiation Oncology Department of the Virginia Hospital Center, where they did a CAT scan of prostate and vicinity, so they could create a computer model to precisely guide the radiation machine as it zapped my malignant prostate. The nurse said, if you don't hear from us call back in two weeks, and when I didn't hear from them I called back to learn that their computer also had crashed, so they are a little behind in their work but expect them to be calling me next Monday. *{My best wishes are with you, Alexis, and I hope all is well. By the way, nice inadvertent pun there: "they are a little behind in their work" somehow applies nicely when talking about prostate glands, don't you think?}*

The printed copy of your fanzine is

nicely done, but we artists are sometimes picky about the reproduction they get, and all of the little black and white fillos (including but not limited to my cartoons) have a haze of black spots around what should be clean lines and/or lettering, giving your images (at least in the hard copy) a dirty gray appearance. This may well be an artifact of running the art in question through your computer, and the solution might be as simple as going slower to achieve higher resolution. Or whatever works. Talking to your own computer gurus about this minor annoyance would be appreciated. *{You have probably noticed the clarity of the filloes in this issue is greatly improved from lastish. As I keep experimenting and trying new things to make this zine more readable and eye-appealing, I appreciate feedback like yours. The haze around the illoes last issue bothered me quite a bit, and I think I've figured out how to avoid that happening again.}*

Alan White's cover is excellent, though the size of the boot suggests the girl's foot is bound. "Wikiphilia: The Fried Encyclopedia" is amusing, but Wikipedia has more citations on the web than the Encyclopedia Britannica. Which may have to do with web users preferring an in-house resource. The universal access feature also creates a problem with controversial subjects. Charles Pellegrino, for example, had a lot of people denouncing and defacing his article as a result of "The Jesus Family Tomb," to the point where the editors had to block off the universal access feature, which is

otherwise mostly available. Even one lonely sorehead could screw around with your article (if you have one) so you have to keep checking on what is being served up to posterity. George Orwell's "memory hole" comes to mind, and certainly it would be easier to rewrite history if the media were electronic rather than print books or cuneiform tablets.

Best Wishes, **Alexis**

{All of the comments about the proportions of the lady on last issue's cover have been very interesting. Looking it over more closely, I can see what Alexis and Jerry mean. Even so, as these gentlemen note, it is still a lovely cover, and I am honored that Alan sent it to me. Here is hoping that these comments do not deter him from sending more my way!}

I Also Heard From:

Matthew Appleton, Greg Benford, Sheryl Birkhead, Leslie David, Bill Fischer, John Nielsen-Hall, Warren Harris, Arnie Katz, Dave Langford, Lee Lavell, Mark Leeper, Guy H. Lillian III, Alison Scott, Janine Stinson, Henry Welch, Peter Weston.

Quite the cast of characters. Thank you, one and all.



BiBBY By Bill Fickham



regional convention calendar

San Japan: San Antonio, TX // [NOTE: POSTPONED. Originally scheduled for July 13-15, 2007. New date: August 2008] "Japanese Anime and Culture Convention." No contact info given. Due to be held at The Holiday Inn Select, 77 NE Loop 410, San Antonio, TX 78216. Stay tuned.

Conestoga 11: July 20-22, 2007. Tulsa, OK // "Oklahoma's largest literary science fiction and fantasy con." GoH: Laurell K. Hamilton; Artist GoH: John Picacio; Toastmaster: Elizabeth Moon; Fan GoHs: Richard & Michelle Zellich; Special 1632 GoH: Eric Flint. Write to – Conestoga, Inc., P.O. Box 700776, Tulsa, OK 74170-0776 <http://www.sftulsa.org/conestoga/>

AtsuiCon: August 3-5, 2007. Houston, TX // Another Anime con, this time at the Hotel Sofitel, 425 North Sam Houston Parkway East, Houston, TX 77060. For lots more information, here is their website: <http://www.atsuicon.com/>

Lazy Dragon Con: August 3-5, 2007. McKinney, TX // "A science fiction / fantasy themed relaxacon." Guests of Honor include Peter Mayhew, Bill Johnson, Monique DuPree, Brad W. Foster, Mari Atherton, and others. Held at the Holiday Inn McKinney, 1300 No. Central Expressway, McKinney, TX 75069. For more information: Lazy Dragon, 420 Twin Knoll Drive, McKinney, Texas 75071 (972) 948-3320 Also, go to the website: www.lazydragon.com/con

ArmadilloCon 29: August 10-12, 2007. Austin, TX // Austin's major annual convention, site of this year's Corflu. GoH: Louise Marley; Artist GoH: Gary Lippincott; Editor GoH: Sharyn November; Fan GoH: Patty Wells; Toastmaster: Howard Waldrop. Write to – ArmadilloCon 29, P.O. Box 27277, Austin, TX 78755. <http://www.armadillocon.org/>

Bubonicon 39: August 24-26, 2007. Albuquerque, NM // Perhaps the Southwest's longest running con. How I would love to attend! GoH: Vernor Vinge; Toastmaster: Jane Lindskold; Artist GoH: William Stout. write to – NMSF Conference, P.O. Box 37257, Albuquerque, NM 87176 <http://www.bubonicon.com/>

Realms Con: August 24-26, 2007 Omni Hotels Marina (Corpus Christi, TX area) // Anime Music Video Contest, Anime Karaoke Contest, Anime Bikini Cosplay Contest, Cosplay Contest, Lisa Furukawa Ray Concert, Scavenger Hunt, Lingerie, Swimwear, & Evening Gown Model Walk, Rave, Hall Cosplay, Vic Mignogna Presents FULLMETAL FANTASY (A Realms Con Exclusive), Dead Texas (A Realms Con Exclusive), 24 Hour Game Rooms (With Your Favorite Tabletop Games, Video Games, and Tournaments), 24 Hour Movie Rooms (Anime & Japanese Horror), Question And Answer Panels With Anime Celebrities. For more information, write: Realms Con, 4730 Sea Island Drive, Corpus Christi, TX 78413' Or call 361-658-7446 <http://www.realmscon.com/>

Re/Max Ballunar Lifftoff Festival: (Presumably August 2007) NASA Johnson Space Center, Houston, TX // Visit this exciting and educational family-oriented event at NASA/Johnson Space Center and enjoy hot air balloon competitions, evening balloon glows, skydiving exhibitions, commercial exhibits, concession booths, food from local restaurants, arts & crafts exhibits, entertainment and various aviation equipment displays. No contact information given, so check out the website: <http://www.ballunarfestival.com/index.html>

AnimeFest 2007: August 31-September 3, 2007 (downtown Dallas) // Convention and Association for fans of Anime, Music, Manga, and Japanese Pop Culture. Japanese Guests, Voice Actors, Manga/Comic Artists, Dealer Room, 24 hr Video Theaters, J-Pop, Gaming, Art Show & Auction, Panel Discussions, Autograph Sessions, Film/Video Premiers. For more information write: AnimeFest, 1631 Dorchester Dr., Suite 110, Plano, TX 75075-6332, Or call 972-596-3561, Or fax 972-692-5996. <http://www.animefest.org/>

ProtoCon 9: Gaming con (Presumably Sept. 2007) College Station, TX // Gaming con with a dealer's room. For more information, write: Gaming Club-959480, Texas A&M University, Student Organization Finance Center, P.O.Box 5688, Aggieland Station, College Station, TX 77844-9081. There is a discussion page to get more info from; go to this: <http://www.protocon.com/forum/>

FenCon IV: September 21-23, 2007, Dallas, TX // A Fan-Operated Science Fiction and Fantasy Literary and Filk Convention in the Dallas/Fort Worth Area, held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, North Dallas/Addison, 14315 Midway Road, Addison, TX 75001 (Dallas / Fort Worth Metroplex area). GOH: Connie Willis Music GOH: Tom Smith Fen GOH: Kathleen Sloan Artist GOH: David Mattingly Special Guest: Toni Weisskopf. Guests: Bedlam Bards, Maggie Bonham, Rachel Caine, Cat Conrad, P. N. Elrod, Rhonda Eudaly, Beverly A. Hale, Dusty Rainbolt, and John Steakley. (More guests to be announced later). Writers, Filk, Panels, Videos, Lots of fun stuff. Writers Workshop, a Short Story Contest, and an Art Show and Auction. "Of the fen, by the fen, and for the fen...again!" For more information, write: FenCon, P. O. Box 701448, Dallas, TX 75370-1448. <http://www.fencon.org/>

Oni-Con 2007: (Presumably October 2007) Houston, TX // George R. Brown Convention Center. 3 Anime Rooms, Anime Music Video Contest, Arcade Gaming Room, Art Show/Auction, Artist Alley, Banquet, Concert (Sat 9:00 PM to Sun 12:00 AM), Console Gaming Room, Cosplay, Dance, Dance Dance Revolution, Dealers' Room, Gaming Tournaments, Hentai Fest, Karaoke, Live Action Room, Masquerade Ball, Model Contest, Opening Ceremonies, Panels, Scavenger Hunt, The Brunch Club Premiere. For more information, here's the website: <http://www.oni-con.com/>

How about a couple quick reviews?

The 4400 (USA Network; Tuesdays, 8:00 PM CDT)

My wife and I really like the basic premise of this show: namely, that the approximately 4400 people who have disappeared since 1947 are suddenly returned to Seattle (it figures, I guess, considering that city is the home of the Science Fiction Museum), then subsequently wander back off around the world to where they believe they belong.

Or do they? Now they have “Special Powers” that can be replicated through the injection of this miracle drug called Promycin; through injections of it, so-called “normal” people can acquire these “Special Powers” and do miraculous things, too, thus there’s this huge illegal, underground organization that sells Promycin. Meanwhile, the government doesn’t trust the 4400 – which this season is attempting to re-open its doors to “do good thing” – and that right there shows why the government doesn’t trust the 4400! On the *other* meanwhile, there is this organization called Intec that acts as sort of some kind of mediator or investigative team that keeps tabs on *all* of the 4400 returnees. Plus – and this should come as no real surprise – there are love interests abounding within the 4400, Intec, between these outfits, and so on and so on. And I haven’t even mentioned anything about the pseudo-Christ-like figure of Jordan Collier who was predicted (in an “old” book published in the 1920s) to come and save the planet’s bacon.

The 4400 is a fun show, anyway, and we usually watch it. The stories are mostly well-written, the characters interplay nicely, and there are all sorts of morality plays abounding each week.

The Dead Zone (USA Network; Tuesdays, 9:00 PM CDT)

Based on a Stephen King novel that I have never read, mainly because I am not fond of most of King’s novels, this show actually is well-produced and enjoyable. My wife thinks that Anthony Michael Hall has grown up *very well*, but she does – honest, she really does! – like the story lines, which usually are interesting. In this show, the USA’s vice president is a real sleeze-ball (big surprise there) who is only interested in acquiring more power, and Hall’s character, John Smith, is a psychic who sees visions whenever he touches something or someone. These visions usually involve one of the main characters or guest stars and that they are going to die in some horrible manner. Smith works with the police – this is all, by the way, happening up in some small city in Maine (my guess is that Jessica Fletcher’s crime-ridden town is just down the road) – to avoid the grisly deaths of these people, or to thwart some violent crime that someone is trying to commit.

Remind me sometime to never move to Maine.

Even so, this is another fun show to watch.

CATS DO NOT ASSIMILATE
WITH THE BORG, BUT
IT IS USEFUL TO BE
ABLE TO OPEN MY OWN
CAN OF CATFOOD!



What's next?

Sometimes a fanzine takes on a life of its own, and this particular issue definitely did that. My goal was to keep it around 32 pages in length – which, as you might have noticed by now here on page 48, did not happen. See, I really wanted to give the interview with James Halperin a goodly amount of space to get across the information I wanted to share with y'all, so that article is an example of an article or story growing to its own length. I believe that's a statement that Robert Heinlein made – in *Challenger #26*, Guy Lillian wrote an interesting article about hearing Heinlein speak in New York, and that's where I read this saying –and it does make sense. Fanzine length can be seen as a product of both its content and the personality of the editor or editors. You know, there could be a fanzine article here...

In any event, looking ahead at the fourth issue, I have another “Wikiphilia: the Fried Encyclopedia” entry from Bill Fischer already on hand, plus some other ideas in mind. For example, I might contribute a brief write-up of my trip to Dallas when I not only met James



She's singing in the rain, he's loccing in the rain...

Halperin, but I also had the pleasure to meet Lloyd and Yvonne Penney. As a precursor to that potential article, here is a photo of the lovely couple, four days shy of celebrating their 24th wedding anniversary, in beautiful, downtown Addison, Texas, by enjoying a walk through a spring monsoon.

I am not kidding. Texas weather in May, June, and July is very much the monsoon season down here: every afternoon clouds form and sometimes they dump a lot of rain in a matter of minutes. It is the time of the year that contributes to this meteorological

phenomenon. In the late spring, cooler air drops down from the north, while warm, moist air rises from the Gulf, and they have a nasty habit of colliding directly over Texas. The result is a rapidly forming storm system that disgorges tremendous amounts of rain in as brief a time as possible. These systems then move off to the East-Northeast, and inundate Louisiana, Arkansas, and other states before they peter out somewhere over the eastern half of the Midwest.

All this rain – and uncomfortably high humidity – makes living in SouthCentralEastern Texas a real adventure sometimes. Then I have to give myself a gentle reminder: at least it is not snow.

So it's time to finish this issue and get back to cleaning out the garage. Don't forget to keep those cards and letters coming in, kiddies, and I look forward to seeing you in the next issue, hopefully to be completed just after the Labor Day Weekend in September.

John Purcell