

HOW WE WON
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HOW WE WON

I've received so many queries as to just how the BAYCON Committee pulled it off--how we managed to win the '68 Worldcon against the heavy favorite, the Pan-Pacificcon Committee, that I thought I'd shorten my letter-writing chores by running off a small zine on the matter. I'm also sending it through Lilapa and FAPA; Alva is sending it through the Cult, and I'm mailing it to others I think might be interested.

I'm speaking only for myself here, not for either Ben or Alva--though we all see more or less eye to eye on things. But I was the most optimistic. In fact, by the week before the con I expected us to win and would have been pretty surprised if we hadn't. By that time I had managed to infect Ben with some of my optimism, but Alva was still pessimistic, though not completely so.

First of all, let me admit that I think the argument "It's L.A.'s turn," is not only a powerful one, it's a legitimate one. It's not the only point to consider, but it's a valid one. If L.A. had played it up properly, both in the pre-NYCON campaign and at the NYCON, it would have been damn hard for us to beat them--possible, but very difficult. I think that by the bid itself it was too late, considering our bid, but if anyone had gotten us and said, "Sure, they can put on a good con. But we can too. And it's our turn," even if we still won--and I think we would have--the results would not have been nearly so overwhelming.

But there are other points to consider. And one of this is: who can put on the best con? I think we can. And we won because we persuaded enough other fans of this too.

L.A. has been heading towards this bid ever since '64 and, since the TRICON especially, has spent a lot of time and effort on the campaign. We announced our bid late in '66 and had some ads in the NYCON Progress Reports, but we didn't bear down until July after the Westercon.

I always thought we could win though. I remember the DETENTION in '59 where Washington arrived the heavy favorite and Pittsburgh steam-rollered them with the best con and bid presentation I've ever seen. (And the DETENTION didn't have very many neos, so it wasn't possible to blame it on them.) I was sure it could be done again.

But at the DETENTION the argument "It's Our Turn" didn't enter in. Also, quite frankly, I was somewhat nervous about Fallout from the Events of '64. I wrote various fans throughout the Mid-West and East, asking them to assess our chances. I did not ask for their support. I asked for their opinions.

And the estimates were very encouraging. Various fans estimated that from 60% to 75% of fanzine fans were supporting the Pan-Pacificcon, but that about the same majority of convention fans favored us. This time, even more than usual, the vote was going to depend upon the presentation at the convention and/or influencing the neos. One fan said, "If you go by the fanzines, L.A.'s winning is so taken for granted that it isn't even discussed any more. But you know as well as I do, Bill, that that doesn't mean a thing."

And the consensus was that '64 was a dead issue and that anyone who tried to bring it up would have it backfire on him. As for residue of feelings, this was actually helpful to us. The people for us were still for us and many fans who had been strongly against us were quite ready to demonstrate that they had ever confidence in us on things apart from the one issue.

Another thing going in our favor is that throughout fandom we have the image of being beer-and-circuses fanz while the most active members of the Pan-Pacificcon have the image of tea-and-cookies fans. These images are somewhat oversimplified of course, but they tend to be true. We have a common ground with them of course on many things,

particularly when it comes to the intellectual or thoughtful things, but when it comes to the Fun Things, we tend to plan things in terms of beer and circuses. And the Pan-Pacificcon Committee tends to plan things in terms of tea and cookies. There is, of course, nothing whatever wrong with either ground or in belonging to either group. But like tends to gravitate to like, and I think that there are far more beer-and-circuses fans than there are tea-and-cookies fans.

And it was pointed out that L.A. was making two big mistakes. (1) The great bulk of their campaign was directed towards fanzine fans. Even at cons their activities and propaganda seemed directed at fanzine interests. It was almost as if they didn't realize that such a thing as convention fandom exists. This is of course an easy mistake for a Californian to make. In California, as I understand is the case in England, we have active fans and inactive fans, and even fringe fans, but we are all more or less in the same bag: club fans, fanzine fans and convention fans are pretty much the same group. It is difficult for a Californian to realize that such is not the case back east, that the groups are often quite separate and widely different, though individual fans may belong to both groups.

(2) L.A. was confusing the TOFF campaign with the worldcon bid. TOFF is A Good Thing. We support it. All my consultants supported it, but they pointed out that a casual reader, particularly a neofan whose only contact with their bid was the ads in the PR's, might even miss any reference to the Pan-Pacificcon and than even an old fan who read every word could easily get the impression that the "sponsors" were much more interested in bringing the guy over from Japan than they were in putting on the con. And the space devoted to TOFF didn't leave much room to tell the average fan what the hell he would get out of the proposed Pan-Pacificcon, what the con was offering him in the way of a good time and entertainment. "I know a lot about TOFF, but nothing about the Pan-Pacificcon except who's on the committee and that it's at the Hilton Hotel."

So, we concentrated on giving fans the specifics on what we were offering them. Our flier with P.R. #3 had a great impact. Several fans have told me that they were won over to our side or at least inclined to us by it.

For the con presentation we decided to distribute a Progress Report in advance, again spelling out the specifics of what we and our hotel were offering the fans in the way of entertainment and facilities. We even printed our Tentative Program, showing exactly what kind of a con we would have. This was the first time anything like this has ever been done and it went over extremely well. It was one of the main reasons we won the bid.

We also had a bit of luck. We have picked an extraordinarily good convention hotel and played up its advantages. The NYCON took place in an extraordinarily bad convention hotel. It's disadvantages were only too obvious. And it was a Hilton Hotel. Unfortunately for them the Pan-Pacificcon Committee had also picked a Hilton Hotel. This could not but work in our favor.

We tried to make the most effective bid presentation possible. I called Ted White to find out just exactly what the bidding arrangements would be. He told me that each side would be given 15 minutes to do with as it pleased. This sounded fair. So, all three of us worked on Ben's speech, writing and rewriting it to fit into as little time as possible, yet to say well what needed to be said.

For seconds first and foremost we wanted Harlan. I phoned him and asked him. He thought we was committed to L.A., but said he would if he could get a release, Bjo gave it to him.

Jean Winsor, the Claremont Convention Manager, is almost as good as Harlan at this sort of thing. And Jean is a sexy doll too. She planned to fly to New York to help us with the bid. We were delighted to have her. And planned to use her as a second.

I also wrote and asked Roger Zelazny and Bob Tucker to second us. Roger is a hell of a nice guy and is well liked. He is also the Hottest New Talent to hit science fiction in years and has rapidly become one of the biggest names of all--particularly with the young fans.

And we chose Bob to balance Roger. We knew that Bob had been an effective speaker at the Midwestcon and we wanted him to appeal to the old-time fans as Roger was appealing to the younger ones. We were of course aware, and pleased that Bob was Fan Guest of Honor this year, but we didn't chose him for that reason. We would have chosen Bob even if someone else had had the honor this year. But his being FGofH was added frosting on the cake.

Naturally we thought of Lester Del Rey, but primarily because he is an extremely effective speaker--not because he was GofH, though frosting entered here too of course. But we figured we couldn't fit Lester into the time limit. But when Jean couldn't make it at the last moment, we phoned Ben and told him to get Lester.

There has been a lot of bleating about the ethics of asking the Guests of Honor at a con to second a bid. This strikes me as a lot of nonsense. Or poor sportsmanship. Or perhaps clutching at straws in order to justify. This last is pretty naive too. If Lester and Bob had refused us, well, they were our first choices, but there are other powerhouses available... But on the question of GofH seconds.

(1) Guests of Honor have seconded bids before and no one has said a damn word. The last time I recall this happening was at the San Diego Westcon in '66 when Guest of Honor Harlan Ellison and Fan Guest of Honor John Trimble (!!!) both seconded bids. There was not one little peep from anyone about it. And many of the L.A. fans now whining the loudest were right there on the spot.

(2) Both Bob and Lester are well-known throughout fandom. Both are not only noted for their fair-dealing but for their inability to be intimidated or pushed around. We asked them politely to second us. We did not twist their arms or pressure them. They were perfectly at liberty to refuse us if they thought it was unethical for them to second our bid. And I would take both Bob's and Lester's opinions on ethics far sooner than I would those of any of the fans now shrieking.

(3) If any bidding committee asks a Guest of Honor to second their bid instead of Harlan Ellison, they're out of their ever-loving minds. Lester is almost as effective as Harlan, and both Bob and Roger are better than most GofH. And there are other names that might be put in there also. What a bid needs is first and foremost effective speakers who are fast on their feet. This is far more important than having the biggest of Big Names. Big Names help, but they are of secondary importance.

(4) Fans and neos may very well be swayed by someone with a very big name like Heinlein or Zelazny or Tucker. But the Guest of Honorship isn't going to make a Big Name Pro or Fan any bigger than he was before. (It makes him feel good of course.) And the Guest of Honorship isn't going to make a Big Name Fan or Pro out of a little one. Not even at that convention. It does little to enhance his reputation even amongst the neos. And a Big Name, like Roddenberry, who gives a bad speech does much more harm than good. And he would even if he were Guest of Honor.

(5) If you start passing rules that Guests of Honor can't second bids because it's unfair..... Well, it's manifestly unfair to let Harlan second anyone's bid: he's too good. We'll have to have a rule about that too. And to be absolutely fair about it,

maybe we'd better not let any pros second bids at all. They might swing too much weight. And of course some fans are better known than others, or more effective than others, so there's a problem there too. But if we just pass enough rules, no doubt we'll solve everything.

Well, we got our package fitted together. And even before presentation at the con I thought it was a damn good package. I didn't see how L.A. could possibly match it. I expected us to win even though I was a little nervous about the "It's Our Turn" argument.

At the NYCON itself we were also helped by the superior quality of our "Room Party Politicking." Ed and Jo Ann Wood and Ben are all highly skilled at this and did yeoman service. Al Lewis is also very good at it, but he was too busy with the Art Show to get much politicking done and no one else from L.A. can hold a candle to our team in this respect. "Although from what I hear about Fred Hollander at the NYCON, he shows promise of Some Sort.

And our package did go over well. We won.

We have been accused of putting on a circus. So we did. We're beer-and-circuses fans. And if you like circuses, it doesn't seem unreasonable to vote for the bidding group putting on the best circus. After all if they did it once, they can do it again: at the con where it really matters.

And the Pan-Pacificcon Committee did not put on a good bid. Neither Al nor Bjo was very effective, probably through lack of preparation, and Roddenberry was a disaster. Gene got enormous applause, but the consensus was that this was a tribute to Star Trek and that Gene gave a long, boring and inappropriate speech which cost the Pan Pacificcon many votes. "Gene's a nice guy, but he doesn't know much about fandom yet."

And at no point in their bid, or for that matter at any time in the campaign, did they say, "It's Our Turn." Their strongest point and they didn't even mention it!

From all accounts I'm sure that almost all the neos voted for us, most of the convention fans and pros did, and that the Pan-Pacificcon's vote was almost entirely fanzine fans. And I bet we cut deep into that 60% to 75% pre-convention majority too. Even though fanzine fans knew without being told that "It's L.A.'s turn."

We won because we put on a shrewd, hard-hitting campaign. We won Big because L.A. concentrated on the pre-convention campaign in the fanzines and did little or nothing at the NYCON itself. They were overconfident.

But after the initial shock and disappointment was over the Pan-Pacificcon Committee members themselves seem to have rallied and faced facts like the reasonable, san adults they are. The same cannot be said for some of their supporters. Various bleats, whines and whimpers are filling the air. "That dirty old BAYCON Committee didn't play fair. They sprung lots of Big Names on us. And the Guests of Honor too!" "That dirty old BAYCON Committee broke tradition and brung out the Progress Report before the bidding!" "That dirty old BAYCON Committee! They weren't supposed to win. L.A. had worked long and hard and deserved the con."

Tough. In every campaign someone wins and someone loses. If people aren't prepared to accept this, they'd better drop out of the game. This time we won. We played fair and we played smart and we won against the odds and against almost every expectation. I'm goddamn proud and happy--as pleased as punch.

And frankly I'll admit that the spectacle of large numbers of toilet bowls in L.A., and elsewhere, being stained in technicolor is not entirely a displeasing picture. But I'm more amused by the attitude of "You're nasty old bastards for taking the bid away from us. And we're not going to forgive you even if you go down on your knees and apologize." I've got news for them cats.

We're gonna have a ball at the BAYCON. Come join us.