

# You're Still on My Mind

from Rich Lynch \* rw\_lynch (at) yahoo (dot) com \* February 2023

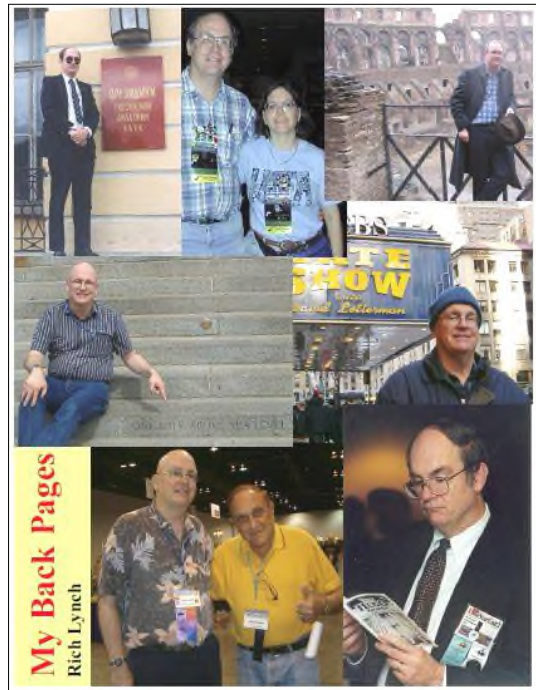
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Hello to all my friends!

It was back in 2010 when I decided that I wanted to do a new fan publication. I'd been thinking about it for a few years but things being as they were back then, what with a lot of work-related travel and other stuff happening in my life, it took much longer than it should have before I finally got off the dime.

The result was *My Back Pages*. You'll recognize it as the title of a Bob Dylan song (my favorite version is by The Byrds) but it also seemed an apt title for what I was trying to do. *MBP* has all the look and feel of a personalzine (and is usually categorized as such) but I'm doing it for a totally different purpose: it's my personal time capsule.

It was my sister Beth who had convinced me that I should do it. She's a cancer survivor, and during the months of her radiation and chemotherapy treatments following the surgery, I had sent her postcards, photos, and travel essays from some of my job-related trips to help her keep a positive outlook. She liked them a lot, and eventually asked me why I hadn't collected them all in one place.



And so I have – I'm now up to 27 issues and expect to publish two more this year. I think I've hit the mark I was shooting for in terms of overall content and appearance, but it came at a price: there's been almost no interactivenss with readers. That's my fault, of course – I did receive a few letters of comment for most issues but it just didn't seem appropriate to include them as part of a personal time capsule. So now, it's time to fix that.

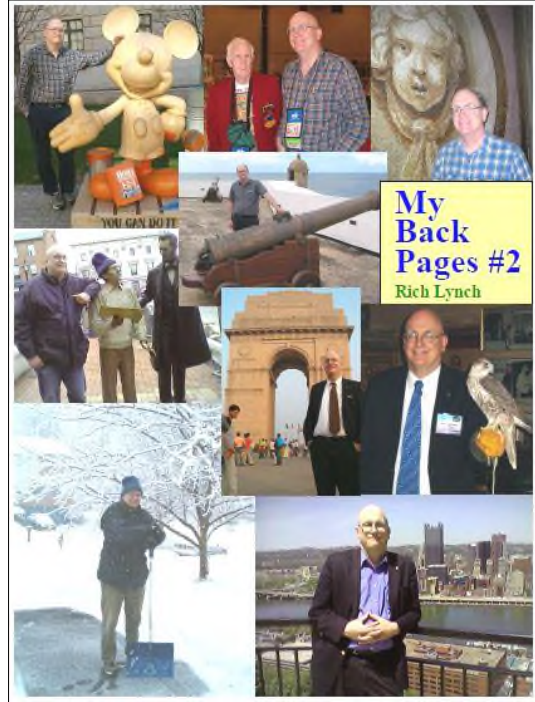
And here we are: *You're Still on My Mind*. It's the title of another Byrds cover (this time of a Luke McDaniel song) and it also seems to more-or-less fit what I'm

trying to do – have (belated) conversations with people who wrote me letters. For now it'll be only for loccers of *MBP* (and also this zine) but we'll see where this goes. Hey, sorry that I took so long to get back to you all. And thanks for writing!

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Something I immediately noticed, after publishing my first issue of *MBP*, was the lack of response. (And maybe that's not so surprising – blogs are now the focal point fan publications.) I didn't get any comments at all until the second issue (which had been published in August 2010), and the ones I did were from fans whose activity date back before there were blogs. The very first was from [Robin Johnson](#) who wrote:

Thank you very much for this. I enjoyed it very much, and it'd be sad if understandable that you two cannot be here this year. Have a great time wherever your travels take you, and good luck with the sequestration projects.



What Robin was referring to was that I had stated in the intro to the issue that my wife Nicki and I wouldn't be traveling to Australia to attend the 2010 Worldcon. Back then, I was part of a multilateral Ministerial-level initiative to advance carbon capture and storage as a means of addressing climate change. Back then I couldn't get more than two weeks leave at a time and that was just not enough for an Australia convention trip, not with any reasonable expectation to see parts of the country that were beyond the walls of the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre. Robin was Aussiecon's Fan Guest of Honor, which made it even more disappointing that we wouldn't be there.

One of my essays in the issue was a lengthy description of a business trip to Australia, in 2008, where I had mentioned that prior to leaving I'd had a mental image that I'd see literally swarms of Australian wildlife during my travels, but it didn't work out that way. This had led Robin to comment:

Even here in Tasmania wildlife has become more elusive than I remember, but there is some luck about. My sister was over from England a year or two ago, and on the same day we twice saw platypuses in daylight here near Hobart, and while driving late at night in rural South Australia, again on two occasions

saw koalas on the ground – in the road actually, presumably looking for new trees for a feed.

During the week I was in Australia the best I could do was a half-glimpse of kangaroo in Canberra one evening, when a friend I had met for dinner had taken me on a drive through one of the more rural areas of the city. I've been to Australia five times as of this writing, and I still have yet to see a koala in the wild. I think I need to spend some time with Robin if I'm ever back there again.

Another letter of comment on issue #2 was from [Fred Lerner](#), who wrote:

It's always fun reading the experiences of another fannish traveller, and your compilation reminded me of an idea I had several years ago. How about an anthology of fannish travel writing, to be sold as a fundraiser for TAFF, DUFF, and GUFF?

I don't think I ever responded to Fred, but I do remember thinking that this seemed like a good idea. And still is. International fan funds usually need all the financial help they can get, and this kind of project would have the secondary benefit of preserving memories of science fiction fans who have traveled the world. One of the other articles in the issue was my review of an Allen Steele novel, *Coyote Frontier*, which included my opinion that Steele might be the closest thing that the science fiction world (then) had to Robert A. Heinlein. This led Fred to agree with that assessment and to add:

There's one aspect of Allen's writing that I've often remarked: he seems to be about the only SF writer who considers the blue-collar worker as part of the colonisation of space. (This of course manifests itself in his Near Space stories rather than in the Coyote series.)

That was true then but it's not the case anymore, what with the publication of *The Expanse* series of novels and stories by the pseudonymous James S.A. Corey. Nevertheless, the novels and stories of Allen Steele have never failed to give me that science fictional sense-of-wonder. And that's because he's really good!

Before he ended his letter, Fred touched on another topic, this time one that concerned me personally. I'd made passing mention of fan history projects a couple of times in *MBP 2*, so Fred took the opportunity to inquire about a fan history project I'd been working on that from all appearances had become dormant:

And you made mention of your proposed history of Fandom in the 1960s. I hadn't heard anything of this project in some time, and I thought you had abandoned it. Or are you saving it for after you retire?

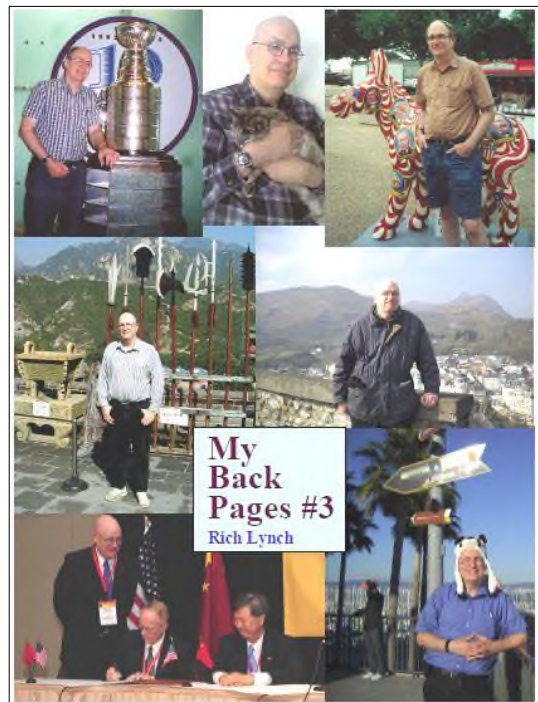
As of about a year ago I *am* retired, so I guess this is a good time to finally and formally close the book on that project. Long story short, I've decided to abandon it. My friend Bruce Pelz had also been involved, and he was a big reason we were able to produce a knowledge base of sorts that now resides on the Internet in the form of a very extensive outline. The project eventually proved to be undoable because 1960s fandom was so large that a lot more research was needed than either of us had time or resources for. But for a few years, just before and after the turn of the millennium, we both had a lot of fun (if that's the right word) discovering and sometimes re-discovering various nuggets of information about that era. I hope that someday a detailed and entertaining history of 1960s fandom will be written, but I won't be the one doing it. Meanwhile, I *am* still doing fan history stuff! I've been working with the **fanac.org** people to digitally preserve decades-old fanzines, convention publications, and photographs – it's time well spent.

There was one other letter of comment I received on *MBP 2*. Back in 2010, [Lloyd Penney](#) was feeling good about his first-ever time as a Hugo Award finalist (for Best Fan Writer) and wrote me that:

You've mentioned Hugo nominations...the first one must have been a thrill for you. I have tried to discuss this without looking too much like a fanboy, but I am enjoying my first nomination, and I hope there will be more. Doesn't mean to say I wouldn't like to actually win the silver rocket, but...

The Best Fan Writer winner for that year was Fred Pohl, who had started a blog so that he could preserve memories of his life in fandom from many decades ago. It was so popular with Hugo voters that he basically blew away the competition. But, from first hand experience (and no matter the outcome), I know that the real honor is just to *be* a finalist. And yeah, the first time that happened for Nicki and me it really *was* a thrill.

Lloyd also wrote a letter of comment on *MBP 3* (which had been published in December 2010). Much of that third issue was taken up by my "New York Trilogy" – three essays about mini-vacations for Nicki and me in The Big Apple – and that had resulted in Lloyd doing some remembering about his own times in the city:



New York City? I think the last time I was there was close to 30 years ago. Money usually stops us from traveling, and soon, it will also be health that will prevent it, but the memories are good ones. I will admit that 30 years ago, Yvonne and I attended a few of the Strektaculars held in Manhattan...I remember meeting DeForest Kelley, and I definitely remember meeting Dr. Isaac Asimov.

I've also been a fan of *Star Trek*, ever since it was first broadcast back in 1966. But I guess I never was a big enough fan to want to attend a Trek convention. I did get to meet Asimov, very briefly, at the 1980 Boston Worldcon – as we were passing each other in a hallway I told him that I very much liked his writings, we shook hands, and then he went off to his next program event. On the other hand, I got to know one of Asimov's contemporaries, Forry Ackerman, fairly well – Nicki and I published a series of fan history articles by him in our fanzine *Mimosa* and once even visited him at his fabled Ackermansion – and my remembrance of Forry in *MBP 3* induced Lloyd to share some of his own Ackerman memories:

I was honoured to meet Forry Ackerman several times, from the '83 Worldcon to the 2006 Worldcon, and several conventions in between, but I did want to go to the Ackermansion to see The Collection, and it was not to be. May we never forget him.

I don't think there's any risk of that happening. His friend Dave Kyle once referred to Forry as "The Fan for All Seasons" and that's true – Forry wasn't just a famous fan, he *lived* fandom, all the time, for the last 82 years of his life. There was one other letter of comment I received about *MBP 3*, and it was from another eminent fan, [Jerry Kaufman](#), who had this to say about my "New York Trilogy" and its description of a brief visit to the famous Chelsea Hotel:

I enjoyed reading about your various trips to New York, among other places. I haven't been back there for about a decade, or possibly more. About the Chelsea Hotel, I can mention that Andy Warhol did at least one film about the people who stayed there in the 1960s, *Chelsea Girls*. I'm pretty sure it was one of his "slice of terrible life" plotless films. Joni Mitchell wrote a song, "Chelsea Morning" – probably not about the hotel, but about the beauties of big city life.

A big reason that I had wanted to see the Chelsea Hotel was because of all the famous people – one of them Arthur C. Clarke – who had resided there. Nicki and I were never tempted to stay there ourselves – Tripadvisor reviews had not been kind to it – but it was still a place embedded in history, and buildings like that are of interest to me. *MBP 3* also had an essay about the semi-obscure composer

Richard Addinsell, which I had written on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth, and Jerry had a comment about that:

I will have to look up the “Warsaw Concerto”, because I don’t think I’ve ever listened to it. I would be interested to read your short essays on composers, if you should ever feel like reprinting any others.

And I have – thirteen of them as of *MBP 27*. I’ve always been a fan of classical – for several years it was the musical genre that I listened to the most. I’d written those appreciations of classical music composers for my now discontinued LiveJournal blog, partly for my own entertainment and partly because back then it wasn’t easy to find short biographies of composers on the Internet. Nowadays, of course, we have Wikipedia.

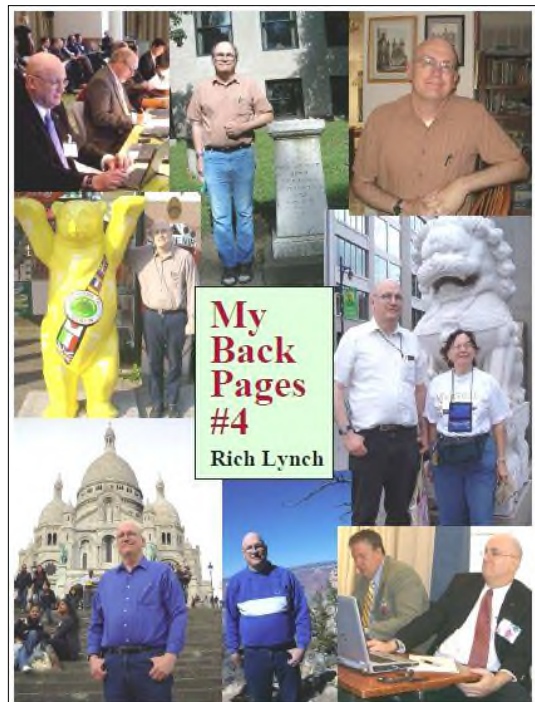
Jerry wrote me again in response to *MBP 4* (published in April 2011), and once again commented on an appreciation of another somewhat-obscure classical music composer that I’d included in the issue – Louis Moreau Gottschalk. Gottschalk is one of my favorites, and from Jerry’s comment I’m led to believe LMG might have become one of his as well:

I have one CD of his piano pieces, played and produced by Frank French. I probably only played it once, when I first bought it, so I’ve listened again and added it to my Walkman (Sony named their MP3 player after their original cassette player).

Enjoyable light pieces with a strong flavor of Cuban rhythms. I will have to download or buy his orchestral stuff. So thanks for profiling him.

And on the topic of music, another essay in *MBP 4* briefly described Nicki’s and my visit, in the summer of 2000, to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland. After reading that, Jerry told me about a music-related museum in his part of the country:

If you’re ever in Seattle for one of your conferences, or for some sf convention or other, or Just Because, I’ll recommend the Experience Music Project and Science Fiction Museum and Hall of Fame. (I’m suggesting it because of your visit to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland.) The EMP has permanent



exhibits on Jimi Hendrix (the core of Paul Allen's collection), Pacific Northwest popular music, guitars (a room with guitars displayed around the walls and a screen showing clips of great guitarists) and temporary exhibits – recently a display of props and artwork from *Battlestar Galactica* and, just about to open, an exhibit about the Seattle grunge band Nirvana.

It was a bit more than four years later when Nicki and I visited the museum, on our way to the 2015 Worldcon out in Spokane, and by then the name had been simplified to the EMP Museum (and it was changed to yet another name a few years after that). Jerry was absolutely right about the place, and the few hours we spent there were a highlight of the trip.

*MBP* 4 had been overtly themed about summer, with five of the nine essays directly related to the warm months of the year. Inevitably, a topic that frequently arose in some of those essays was baseball so after reading the issue, [Taral Wayne](#) was inspired to write me a letter of comment which included a lengthy polemic about the sport. (About sports in general, actually):

Each to his own sport, it seems. I was never able to get into baseball. While I could appreciate the history and the ritual, it remained a slow game of men in white work overalls who stand around in a field, waiting for something to happen. Then it does, all at once, and it's pretty much over in a few seconds. Then another wait...

But, I won't attempt to convince you of the appeal of hockey if you'll accept that I'm unmoved by baseball.

One of the things that I've noticed about all professional sports, though, is that the team owners often seem to have an appallingly insensitive grasp of the sport. In hockey, oil billionaires who just bought themselves a team from some impecunious minor city in Canada, immediately buys the contracts of a number of Russian or Finnish thugs who will put more "contact" in what is traditionally already a fairly violent sport. Next thing you know, some oaf with a name like Zyrghetsvetzhinskiyie has squashed Percy Crosby against the boards, or nearly knocked the head off of Mario Lemieux with high-sticking.

The quintessential act that most owners carry out against their fans is demolishing the beloved arena. No matter that the rink or field has stood for 90 years in that spot, or that Babe Ruth or Rocket Richard or Joe Namath got his big break there in the 1931 season. The owners only need to get the idea in their heads that another 10,000 seats would mean another \$10,000,000 in revenues and they break out the dynamite. Next thing you know, there's a

cool film on YouTube showing your hometown stadium imploding on itself. Somehow the taxpayer ends up paying to build the replacement – a huge, ugly post-modern structure that creates traffic jams backed up into in the next county.

But never mind if history is what makes fans of what is otherwise a tedious pursuit of bladders and balls of various kinds. Profit is profit. And we know that once a fan, always a fan. The Toronto Maple Leafs haven't won a Stanley Cup since 1967, yet it is still the most profitable franchise in the National Hockey League.

Still speaking of history, did you know that Babe Ruth hit his first professional home run in a stadium in Toronto. Long since torn down of course... or burned down. As were the next two or three.

I should mention that I'm also a fan of ice hockey so I don't need to be convinced of its appeal. But Taral is absolutely right about team owners with no sense of history, in their eternal quests to maximize profit, showing no respect for existing arenas and stadia. It's why a perfectly serviceable ballpark like Turner Field in Atlanta was abandoned, after a mere 19 years of use, in favor a new stadium out in the suburbs that was built with taxpayer financial support. But lest this devolves into a polemic of my own I'll turn to another fairly lengthy comment Taral made in his letter. One of the essays in *MBP* 4 described one of my business trips to San Francisco, which I book-ended with a description of my encounter with a large commercial wind turbine (this seems jarringly disparate, I know, but trust me it worked). So Taral described for me his own experiences in the city:

Marc Schirmeister and I once spent one afternoon in San Francisco. We had driven from LA up the Owens Valley to see something of Gold Rush country, spent a day in a Redwood Park, hiked in Yosemite, and then made a dash for the Golden Gate. I recall being impressed by the giant wind farms before skirting around the Bay. This was in 1984, I think. One wonders why, after such a good start, wind power didn't spread. But it didn't and we're still fighting over whether this is part of the answer to our energy needs or not.

In the afternoon that Schirm and I were in San Francisco, we managed to climb the stairs up Telegraph Hill, take in the view from the top of the Coit Tower, drive through Haight-Asbury, climb among the ruins of the Palace of Fine Arts (that look so much like the background of a Maxfield Parrish painting), poke around on The Wharf, and walk halfway across the Golden Gate Bridge. But really, everything we did was rather half-assed and I can't really say I've seen the city.

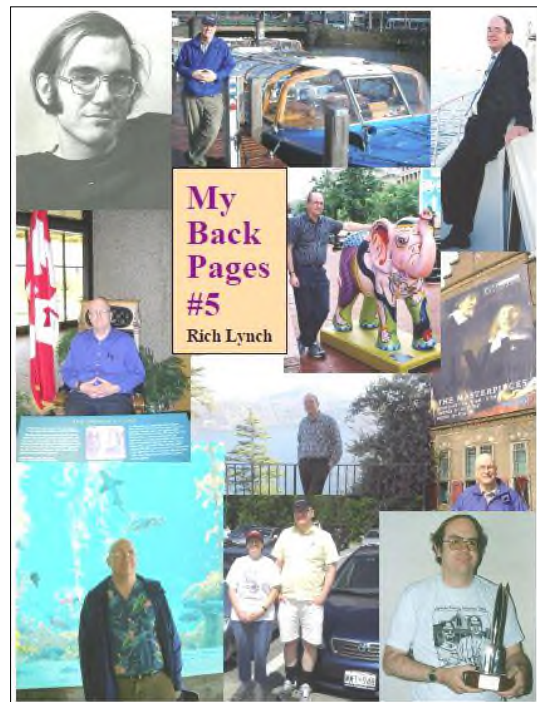


If Taral hasn't "seen" San Francisco then I probably haven't either – all the stuff I've done in the times I've been there isn't dramatically different from what he experienced. I'm pretty sure that San Francisco is similar to New York in that there are enough attractions within the city to fill up as many trips as you'd care to make. But it's just too far away for Nicki and me to go there very often.

One other letter of comment about *MBP* 4 was from [Lloyd Penney](#). He wrote a little about Toronto's baseball team, the Blue Jays, and of his desire (finances be willing) to attend what was then the upcoming 2011 Worldcon, out in Reno. And he also gave me this short comment about my remembrance of a departed friend:

We always had a good time at Worldcons when we saw Khen Moore. Always relaxed and having fun, running around in tee, shorts and barefoot. Yvonne used to chase him, and he always had a good time. He is still missed; I think of him when I think Worldcon.

Ken Moore was a collector of science fiction art and at the time of his death he owned dozens if not hundreds of paintings, many by famous artists. As it happened, there was a special exhibit of some of these paintings at the Reno Worldcon. *MBP* 5 (published in August 2011) didn't have an essay about Reno (which was still a few weeks in the future at that point), but it did include articles which described several other western Worldcons: Iguanacon in 1978, LoneStarCon 2 in 1997, ConJose in 2002, and Denvention 3 in 2008. Worldcons are memorable events, to be sure. But they're certainly not inexpensive to attend, a point that Lloyd made in his letter of comment to *MBP* 5:



We had wanted to go to Denvention 3, but as always, employment is unreliable, and money is sometimes in short supply at the worst of times. Same goes for LoneStarCon 2 in 1997 and ConJose, and with our plans to go to London in 2014, should they win, of course, those plans also include skipping Chicon 7 and LoneStarCon 3 so we can be sure we've got the cash to go. We figure at this time it'll be the only way we'll be able to go to the UK. Life still has lots of time to pitch us some curveballs, so we will see what happens.

Given all of our advancing ages, Worldcon may be less and less for trying to revive our flagging sensawunda, but more for finding those old friends you might see but once a year. We need to know those old friends are still there. It's become an annual family reunion.

I feel pretty much the same way, and it equally applies to other fan get-togethers such as Midwestcons and (occasionally) DeepSouthCons. But in the end, time unfortunately will always win out. *MBP 5* included several remembrances of departed fan friends, a few of them celebrations of their lives, and Lloyd commented on these in his letter:

The two Bobs, Tucker and Shaw, were both people I met only once, both at different Worldcons, and I wish there'd been the chance to meet them some more. Same goes for Walt Willis. Lan Laskowski was a good friend, and I remember the challenge of responding to his fanzines. Buck Coulson is someone else I only met once, and got to talk to, not only about fanzines, but also about filking...we are not filkers, but we worked with friends on our local filkcon for many years. Joe Mayhew was a friend in many ways, through the fanzines, but also because he did some of his growing up in Toronto.

I can find only one other letter of comment about *MBP 5* but it's a good one, from fan-turned-mystery writer [Eric Mayer](#) who is notable for his own fanzines *Groggy*, which ran for 38 issues over a 16-year period starting in the late 1970s, and *E-Ditto*, which had an 11-issue run in 2011. His letter adds to the historical knowledge base about science fiction fandom. And from a personal standpoint, it was a very pleasurable read:

Congratulations. You have achieved what I would have thought impossible, faanish hermit that I am – you got me to read, with enjoyment, not one, but a whole collection of convention reports. Well, *My Back Pages* #5 did have other excellent material too. Ever since I complained about faanish archiving in *E-Ditto* I have been reading archived fanzines and even doing some of my own reprinting. Oh well. I still maintain I would be embarrassed to see most of my old stuff again and I do wish – not for less archiving – but for more young fans to be producing more current fanac. Not me. I am past great gobs of faanish creativity.

You mentioned in talking about bringing *Mimosa* to an end about needing to balance fanac with other interests and I have had that same problem. My solution, for better or worse, has been to confine myself strictly to efanazines. In my case, over the years I found myself not reading as many books as I

wanted to and during the past decade Mary and I have been writing our own books, and I need to keep fandom from swallowing up these activities. Oddly enough, though, you published *Mimosa* entirely during the period when I was almost totally gafiated, although, yes, I have read some issues online.

The highlight of the collection is your article about Chuch Harris, Lan Laskowski, Buck Coulson and other fans who had recently passed away, interspersed with your trip postcards, and your announcement of *Mimosa's* somewhat imminent demise. A real masterpiece that. Although I can't comment on cons I never attended I can offer a couple comments on this article.

For one thing Buck Coulson locced every issue of *Groggy* as far as I can tell. It was always a toss-up whether I would receive the loc from Harry Warner first, or the loc from Buck. We exchanged some letters between locs too. He was a big part of my disembodied fandom!

I did meet him once, just to say hello, in the dealers room at Chambanacon in the early nineties. I stopped in there briefly with Dave Rowe and Carolyn Doyle to meet Mary with whom I had been corresponding. So I met her for the first time in the lobby and the two of us went straight up to Lan Laskowski's room. Well, Lan had said we could leave our coats there while we went to eat. I did meet Lan once, when Mary and I attended Mike Glicksohn's wedding.

Well, I can practically fit the whole history of my in-person fanac on a postcard! Thanks for the collection.

Nah, it's I who should be thanking you, Eric, for this fine letter – the first time I read it my egoboo quotient was satisfied for several days afterward. And thanks also to the other loccers whose letters I've excerpted here. It took a long time, but I *finally* managed to do a *MBP* letterzine!

Anyway, this seems like a good place to stop, at least for now. The next issue, which I'll do maybe in late March or early April, will pick up where I left off, starting with *MBP* 6.

So until then, trust me on this: You're still on my mind.

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Please note that 'Worldcon' and 'Hugo Award' are service marks of the World Science Fiction Society.