Boskone 27
A convention report by Evelyn C. Leeper and Mark R. Leeper
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[This con report is a joint effort. Most of the general information has been written by Evelyn; the panels on which Mark is reporting are so labeled.]

Boskone was at last able to move back to Presidents' Day weekend, though with fewer people getting this "holiday" off work than in the past, the programming was limited to Friday evening through Sunday night. Just as last year, traffic was wretched between Hartford and Springfield, leading me to believe it is now a permanent traffic jam, at least in winter. (I suspect skiers heading north on Friday make the situation worse, since our summertime trips don't seem to meet these delays.)

Mark's and my registration materials were both in the Green Room as planned. (Since Boskone doesn't pre-stuff envelopes but hands out the loose items, all this meant was that the badges had to be in the right place.) Upon reading my schedule I discovered that they had scheduled me for an autograph session! On the participant's form, they had asked "Should we schedule you for an autograph session?" and I had jokingly answered, "Yes, but I have no books." I had also added that it was a joke, but the person scheduling didn't see that, so there I was. (I eventually found the person and un-scheduled myself; apparently no horde of fans were waiting for my autograph anyway!)

Hotels

They had finished the construction that made travel between the Tara and the Marriott so difficult last year, so the easiest way was out the door and across the street. The only problem with this was that it was very cold and windy and unless you carted your coat around with you it was not inviting. The seating space in the hotel areas near the meeting rooms was less than last year, but still sufficient, and fans when necessary will sit on the floor anyway.

Whereas last year there was a shortage of hotel rooms, this year Boskone didn't make its block, but

did turn back the sixty extra rooms in time for the hotels to re-sell them (at higher rates!) to the general public, probably skiers.

Dealers' Rooms

The setup of having a dealers' room in each hotel continued, and will for the forseeable future. There just isn't enough space in any one room to put all the dealers there without seriously impacting the programming.

Some people said there were too many books in the dealers' rooms. Impossible! Well, it is true that some of the dealers feel that there may be more book dealers than a 1000-person Boskone (which this was) can support, but no one seems to want to be the one cut out, so they'll just have to live with it, I suppose. They could always pull themselves out if they were losing money. I found out later that the dealers' room is mostly books because a certain percentage of the space is reserved for book dealers, and that in addition, they pay a cheaper rate for the space.

In any case, I had a chance to talk to several of the regulars. I discussed the Readercon Small Press Awards with Greg Ketter, owner of Dreamhaven Books in Minneapolis and another judge on the panel. I also stopped by Mary Southworth's table. She has just opened a mystery and science fiction shop in Saratoga Springs in upstate New York. Her table used to be a bastion of used books; now it seems to be mostly new, and in addition they are all filed together, so you can't look through just the used books (for example). And, of course, this also means that there are far fewer used books, since her table space hasn't increased. Dick Spelman was there, with all new books--and right across from Mary. I can't help but feel that her new sales were lower because of the competition.

(I also managed to accumulate a lot of old issues of *Amazing* and *Fantastic* from the freebie table where someone got rid of a couple of hundred old magazines.)

Art Show

I got to the Art Show only once, and found it again of little interest. They seem to have turned into a combination of bad art for sale and good art marked NFS ("Not For Sale"), which someone has pointed out seem to be mostly large advertisements for the print shop. It is nice that the print shop has some affordable art, but it used to be that the originals were affordable.

Film Program

The film program consisted of science fiction films without special effects. Films included *Charly*, *Alphaville*, *Around the World in Eighty Days*, *The Man in the White Suit*, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, *Quintet*, and *Seconds*. Good choices, but since I have already seen them all (and have several of them on videotape) I had no great desire to spend my convention time watching them.

Programming

The science track seems to have vanished, though there were a couple of items that might qualify--such as a panel on lab accidents. Somehow this is not the same as a real scientist talking about what's happening.

The First Night

When we arrived Laurie Mann asked if we wanted to join her at Champions (the hotel bar) for a quick snack. This sounded good until we got there and discovered the decibel level was such that no conversation would be possible. So she went off to grab something in the staff lounge, and we made a quick pass through both dealers' rooms and, sure enough, found Dave, Kate, and Barbara just outside the Tara one. (I also grabbed up three books for a friend in one as I was whipping through.)

Since they wanted to try the Student Prince's "game festival," we went there. I had bear stew; Mark had pheasant. The bear was not strong-tasting and very tender. Mark's pheasant, on the other hand, had a very strong flavor.

We returned too late for the "Meet the VIPs" party, so went directly to the Noreascon 3 party. First we had a long discussion with Laurie, culminating in our decision that she was really a neo, since she hadn't attended Noreascon *1*. Then we got into an extended discussion with Eric Van about Readercon and Gene Wolfe. I complained that given that Readercon has rock-'n'-roll panels, and was thinking about having an art show next year, it was getting just too media-oriented. Eric defended the rock-'n'-roll panels by saying that rock-'n'-roll has lyrics; I countered by pointing out that movies have dialogue. I think I was awarded the point.

Then Dave started in baiting Eric about Gene Wolfe, saying that he thought Wolfe a boring writer. (He does think this, but admitted to us later that he was perhaps more argumentative than he might have otherwise been.) Much of the argument was about semantics: Eric said that Wolfe was provably the best respected writer in the field, which Dave chose to interpret as saying that Wolfe was provably the best writer in the field. (And yes, I mean "provably," not "probably.") The former claim can be tested: just count up reviewers' opinions. The latter is, however, not "provable" in any objective fashion. In spite of all this, we spent more than a half-hour arguing about this topic, which led Mark to label Dave as "the goy who fried Wolfe."

We also discussed the Kirk Poland Bad Prose Contest, which in spite of previous assurances will be held this year at Readercon. Eric says after this year they will give it a rest, but I've heard this before. Luckily, it is being held separately from the awards ceremony so I will not be forced to attend.

We finally left about 1 AM. On the way out we passed a stuck elevator--containing Robert Colby and Eric Van. Well, at least they had a chance to do some more planning for Readercon!

When we finally got back to Dave's house and got out of the car, we heard the most amazing noises. After a couple of seconds, I realized what it was. It was the ice that covered the trees creaking, clacking, melting, and falling. For a normally quiet area, it was extremely noisy!

SF Specialty Houses
Saturday, 11 AM
David Hartwell (mod), Darrell Schweitzer, Brian Thomsen, Gordon Van Gelder

Apparently one of the great advantages of being a specialty house (a.k.a. "small press") is that you can get away with a lot more without being sued. David Hartwell gave the example of Paul O. Williams's upcoming book on the "100 Best Rock 'n' Roll Songs." Normally, one must pay royalties when one quotes a song. However, this would have run into somewhere between $50,000 and $100,000 for royalties alone, so Williams went to a small press to have the book published sans royalty payments on the theory that the Beatles et al would not think it worthwhile to sue someone with hardly any money. (Apparently the idea that being in such a book would be good publicity is not likely to occur to the Beatles et al, and as one panelist pointed out, the Beatles do not really need this publicity anyway.)

This is not to say that small presses are dishonest. True, some take a long time to pay the authors their royalties, but you also have people such as Lloyd Eshbach, who sold off his own collection to pay off Fantasy Press's debts when it went under.

One area in which small presses specialize is the limited edition. Here the opportunities for fraud, or at least something resembling fraud, abound. A publisher may, for example, claim that a book has been published in a limited, numbered edition of 500 copies. But s/he may also produce another 26 lettered copies as presentation copies. This is not unusual, and is frequently openly announced. But it may go further, and a hundred presentation copies be produced, or more. For a large print run an extra

hundred copies is insignificant; for a "limited edition" it can have a major impact on the scarcity, and hence the value.

The upshot of all this is that the panelists look very askance at the limited edition field. There are some genuine limited editions, but people looking for books as an investment would do better to buy ordinary first editions of future "mega-authors." Early Stephen King novels, for example, are quite valuable, as are 1950s hardcover editions of such authors as Heinlein and Farmer. The trick, of course, is in knowing who will become popular. If you can do that, you belong in the publishing industry to start with. A very small print run, or the accidental destruction of most of the print run, can increase the value of "large press" books as well; examples given included first editions of Jonathan Carroll's *Land of Laughs*, Gene Wolfe's *Shadow of the Torturer*, Roger Zelazny's *Nine Princes in Amber*, and R. A. Lafferty's *Fall of Rome*. (First editions of first books in series that later become enormously popular are good bets.) Something else that can make a book valuable is its poor construction--yes, *poor* construction. Giger's *Necronomicon* is valuable because it is so large and so poorly bound, that most copies have already fallen apart. So if yours is in one piece, you have something unusual. But I digress.

Even less honest than the "limited edition" ploy is the technique of choosing authors for an anthology such that the autograph plate is what is valuable. Hartwell cited Don Herron's *Reign of Fear* (published by Underwood-Miller) in which a couple of authors whose autographs were valuable seem to have been chosen solely for that reason. What you have then is the situation in which the book is little more than an extremely fancy ad for the autograph plate.

The nostalgia of older fans is something else that small presses have tried to cater to (or capitalize on, depending on your point of view), yet this is generally unsuccessful. There aren't enough older fans buying small press books to support a publication aimed just at them. An example of this that was given was an attempt to reprint Nelson Bond's books. I have to agree that this was not likely to reach the latest generation of fans, but I suspect something like the Donald Wandrei collection just issued may be more successful.

Another stumbling block is overprinting. A book that is a financial success in a print run of 500 copies, may lose money in a print run of 750. The margin may, in fact, be even tighter. This is not the same thing, by the way, as the deliberate overrun of a "limited edition." If anything, I suppose it is the reverse, and has the reverse effect. A deliberate overrun in limited editions often results in more profit for the publisher, while overestimating demand results in a loss.

One area in which the small press has been very successful is the collection/anthology field. According to Darrell Schweitzer, the small press has "taken this area away" from the larger press. This may be true of the critically acclaimed collections and anthologies in hardcover, but there are still a lot of good anthologies out there in the "large press."

Another aspect of the small press is that it can publish books cheaply. Robert Price was cited as someone who has published several books of bad poetry and *The Crypt of Cthulhu*. Since they cost only a few dollars apiece, he is able to sell enough of them to pay for the print run of a few hundred, whereas a large publisher could never sell enough to pay for their minimum print run in the thousands.

From a bookseller's point of view, the small press is a problem. To attract the buyers away from the mainstream bookstores, a specialty science fiction shop or mail order business has to offer them, yet unlike most books they are unreturnable to the publisher for credit. This means a bookseller has to have a very good idea of how many s/he can sell, or be willing to keep a large backlog. In addition, the discounts given by small presses to dealers are minimal.

At some point, the term "self-published" was mentioned. When I asked how this was different from a vanity press, Schweitzer replied that the difference was the profit motive. "Self-published" authors

plan on making a profit; authors using a vanity press usually do not. This led to a discussion of whether Bridge Publications is a vanity press; the panelists seemed to feel that its main function was to make L. Ron Hubbard respectable. (Schweitzer suggested a panel on "Great Science Fiction Frauds: L. Ron Hubbard, Whitley Streiber, and Beyond.")

I finally asked for a definition of "small press." Apparently Readercon has one ("a small press is one that supports fewer than two people full-time") but didn't bother to let the judges know. Someone on the panel pointed out that by this definition, *F&SF* was a small press. (I asked Robert Colby about this later; he said that there were some additional rules, and one was that any magazine ineligible for the semi-prozine or fanzine Hugos because of circulation was no longer considered "small press.")

When asked what they would like to see the small press do, the panelists seemed to like the idea of a horror series similar to Lin Carter's "Adult Fantasy Series." But they would prefer to see this more as reading copies than as collectibles. (That makes sense--they want people to have a chance to read the stuff!)

Writing About the Unthinkable
Saturday, 11:00 AM
James Morrow (mod), Bruce Coville, Kathryn Cramer, Patrick Nielsen Hayden
[written by Mark R. Leeper]

This panel was a sort of a counterpoint to the midnight panels where the panelists tend to be thinking about the unwritable. Here instead was a discussion of catastrophe and Armageddon in science fiction. James Morrow, who moderated, opened the panel with three discussion questions:

1. What is the morality of writing about a serious subject such as the Apocalypse "for fun and profit"?
2. Why is there an almost sexual fascination with Armageddon?
3. In the light of recent events in Eastern Europe, has nuclear war lost its place as a theme of science fiction?

It was these three interesting questions that the panelists proceeded to ignore in the discussion. Cramer made the observation that almost by definition there is something optimistic about Armageddon fiction. After all, these stories pretty much have to be told by survivors. She also discussed how each generation thinks about disasters differently. Two decades ago the common perception was that the major disasters threatened us all. The view in fiction was that the whole world would buy it. Today we have grown used to the threat of disaster and we think more in terms of how to protect ourselves individually. Rather than worrying about the dam breaking and what can be done to stop it, people now think more in terms of finding a plot of land on high ground. Back at the turn of the century the literature did not look so much at survival at all but at the effects and horror of the disaster. Their with descriptions of disasters were punctuated with images of screaming women carrying dead babies. There is far less of that in current fiction.

Coville picked up on the need to have a survivor, saying that no matter how bad things get in the catastrophe story, it should leave the reader with the impression that there is some hope so as to give the reader the strength to go on. I personally disagree here since the only hope that need be present is that the disasters have not yet happened. Probably the best apocalyptic novel I can point to is Philip Wylie's *End of the Dream*, and there is little doubt that that novel ends within minutes of the end of mankind. Coville sees us as what he called the "disempowered generation." Disasters before the 1950s dealt with either anarchist plots or Martians causing the disaster. There is more of a sense now that we are all part of a machine moving to its own destruction. (I am not sure that *The Poison Belt* or *The Purple Cloud* were really happening to a more "empowered" generation.) It is no longer aliens or anarchists at fault, but we all are in small part the people bringing about the end.

Morrow, who now has children, saw that as a need for optimism in spite of the fact that even the

home, once the bastion of security, is now besieged by radon gas and electro-magnetic radiation. Still, there is some solace that the predictions of disaster are not all that accurate. In the 1970s Paul Ehrlich predicted the 1980s as being a decade of world-wide starvation. The truth was not nearly so bad.

Nielsen Hayden saw a fascinating deconstruction in apocalyptic stories. In *The War of the Worlds* Wells wanted to show that society is vulnerable and power is transient. Nielsen Hayden enjoys seeing boring, self-important Victorians meeting screaming death by heat rays. Nielsen Hayden enjoys a sort of lyrical beauty in the destruction of Earth at the end of *Forge of God*.

Morrow warned against writers making the reader identify too closely with the survivor since that breeds a sort of complacency. To me a prime example would be *When Worlds Collide*, but his example was *Alas, Babylon*, a novel that he found "immoral" for this reason. Cramer, carrying on with this idea, suggested that in the really classic disasters--the Biblical stories of Noah's Flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah--the people who were killed were evil and we are the descendants of the good people who were saved. While this attitude seems less appropriate in literature that is trying to get away from ethno-centricity, it did show up in real life after the recent San Francisco earthquake. The attitude was that there is availability of information on where the fault lines lie and what the effects of quakes are on cities. The people who ignored this information were stupid and that is why they died.

With the assistance of David Hartwell in the audience, the conversation turned to why there is not a great literature of disasters. There are no really good novels written about disasters with the possible exception of Brunner. (I am surprised there was no mention of Ballard.) When the literature shifted to man-made disasters in the 1950s, it became harder to do a dramatic story about responses to the disaster. With billions of people participating in the cause of the disaster you cannot do a good story about the man who saves the world by recycling.

Cramer expressed the opinion that in the last hundred years we have started living longer but, ironically, in more fear. It may actually be more tragic to be aware of so many threats, most of which are held at bay, and finally to be gotten by one, than simply to remain unaware of them and "to be squashed like a bug." She also feels that in some ways the apocalyptic story has to be stylistically similar to the utopian story. While they are basically opposite in their implications, one positive, one negative, they really are similar in that each must be told by someone actually in the society experiencing the fate of that society.

From the audience Hartwell suggested that we really have a need to feel that society will get either much better or much worse. He has gotten complaints for teaching and recommending *334* by Thomas Disch. It describes a future society neither much better nor much worse than our own.

The apocalyptic story is one in which the proceedings cannot be described objectively, Cramer suggested. In a real apocalypse there is no way for the main character to remain detached. Coville added that readers prefer that the narrator not remain detached anyway. Readers will want to know how things looked and felt during the Apocalypse. People want to see the effect on the individual. After the San Francisco quake, the first thing people wanted to know was what was being in the quake like. Someone in the audience said actually people first wanted to know how many were killed. After that, however, they wanted first-hand descriptions of the experience and pictures so they could better imagine it.

Finally, Morrow discussed the emotional impact of the apocalyptic novel. Real despair, he said, is in seeing no choices. For this reason he does not like *A Canticle for Leibowitz* which he thinks "does not have the pain."

Sherlock Holmes?
Saturday, 1 PM
Tony Lewis (mod), Ann Broomhead, Esther Friesner, Evelyn C. Leeper, Priscilla Olson, Joe

Siclari, Stu Shiffman

This started somewhat obscurely by panelists saying things like "Holmes is a Jungian archetype" and "Holmes is Faust moderated through King Arthur." This got everyone sufficiently off topic that the entire hour drifted more or less aimlessly.

Esther Friesner claimed that Brihtric Donne (in her novel *Druid's Blood*) is not Sherlock Holmes, and hence the novel should not be on Tony Lewis's list of "science fictional Sherlock Holmes." No one else was convinced; by her reasoning Poul Anderson's "Martian Crown Jewels" would not be included either, and no one was willing to throw that out.

The Holmes panel at Noreascon (or was it last year's Boskone?) had discussed Gandalf as Holmes: tall, thin, with grey eyes, supposedly killed in a fall from a cliff, but not really dead. So someone here claimed this made the Balrog the Moriarty figure. This led to a discussion (listing) of various books in which Moriarty is the main character, rather than Holmes.

Someone in the audience asked about the movie portrayals of Holmes and Watson, in particular about Rathbone. Someone (Friesner?) said that the problem was that the movies want the main character/hero to be Everyman. In the Holmes stories, Holmes is something above Everyman; Watson is Everyman. When Holmes is dropped to the Everyman level, Watson--who can't be his equal--must also be dropped, which results in Watson being a buffoon in most cases, and the Rathbone-Bruce films are the prime example of this. Some films avoid this: *The Seven Per Cent Solution*, and the Jeremy Brett television series (both Watsons).

Lewis pointed out that even such an esteemed authors as T. S. Eliot used Holmes. Moriarty showed up as Macavity in *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* (and Gus the Theater Cat supposedly had Sherlockian references as well), and the Musgrave Ritual was used in *Murder in the Cathedral*. John Lennon also did a Holmes pastiche in *A Spaniard in the Works* ("The Singularge Experience of Miss Anne Duffield").

Lewis quoted his daughter that Holmes was popular with adolescents because Holmes gets to eat when he wants, sleep when he wants, do what he wants, and be rude to grown-ups, and someone else added that he also has someone (Mrs. Hudson) pick up after him as well.

After this, the panel degenerated into a list of "who would you like to see Holmes meet?" The list included Frankenstein, Richard Burton (the explorer, not the actor), Fu Manchu (though this has been done once, and Solar Pons met him as well), and Captain Nemo (apparently also done by Philip Jose Farmer).

Since I was on this panel, my reporting of it is less thorough than of the other panels (it's hard to take notes and talk at the same time). My list of Sherlock Holmes related works is available on request.

Electronic Fandom--The First Wire-Heads
Saturday, 2 PM
Jim Turner (mod), Linda E. Bushyager, Bill Davidsen, Saul Jaffe, Myrrh Mist

Once upon a time, everyone on an electronic fandom panel was talking the same language. This is no longer the case.

Jim Turner, for example, is familiar with GEnie, Usenet, and the *SF-Lovers Digest*. Saul Jaffe works with the *SF-Lovers Digest* and Usenet. Myrrh Mist knows BIX. The issues raised by these various forms are all over the map.

I would divide electronic fandom into five major categories:

1. Single-site bulletin boards
2. Multi-site bulletin boards
3. Moderated bulletin boards
4. Electronic fanzines
5. Electronically distributed fanzines

Single-site bulletin boards are those in which the contributor throws his or her message up on a single machine that everyone reading the bulletin board accesses. This makes it extremely interactive (there is no propagation delay). Also, a user can easily retract a message. An example of this would be (I believe) GEnie, BIX, or CompuServe.

Multi-site bulletin boards are those in which a message is sent to many different machines, but still resides in a single location on each one of them. It is much less interactive; one can have propagation delays of hours or even days. A user may theoretically be able to retract a message, but will probably not be able to "catch" all the copies that have gone out. Usenet news groups are a prime example of this form.

Moderated bulletin boards can be single- or multi-site, but only sys-ops (system administrators, moderators, what have you) can post or delete messages. This increases the signal-to-noise ratio considerably.

Electronic fanzines are those which are designed to be read on-line, but are delivered as mail to each individual subscriber, rather than stored in a common area. They are similar to moderated bulletin boards in that there is an editor, but they are different in that it is impossible to retract a message once it is sent out. ("The Moving Finger writes and, having writ,/Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit/Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,/Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.") *SF-Lovers Digest* is a good example of this category.

Electronically distributed fanzines are those which are designed to be read on paper, but are distributed to some or all subscribers electronically. The individual recipients can then print them out locally. They differs from electronic fanzines in that the layout, page breaks, etc., assume a hard-cover product eventually (though recipients can read it on-line if they prefer). I publish one of these (the *MT VOID*) and the reason for doing it this way is that I'd rather each person print and staple their own issue than I have to do 150.

So it seems to me that this panel, in discussing the issues, was often working from different assumptions. For example, one question was whether the faster turnaround time cut down on "flame wars." Those who worked mainly with single-site bulletin boards thought it did, but those who worked with multi-site boards or electronical(ly distributed) fanzines said quite the opposite. (On Usenet, "flame wars" are legendary!)

In terms of volume, Jaffe was the only one able to cite figures: about 300 messages a day are submitted to *SF-Lovers Digest* (mostly through Usenet) and about 80 messages a day are included in the *Digest*.

Many people seemed to "object" to electronic fandom because it is limited to the technologically literate. Perhaps there is truth in this claim, but books at one time were available only to the reading literate, and they were as rare as (or rarer than) the technologically literate today. And just as there were live readings for the illiterate (and even today, professional letter writers and readers in less literate cultures), electronic fandom has its equivalent in commercial and public-access systems which enable the fan to access sf-related bulletin boards with a bare minimum of expertise on the part of the fan. (In fact, many claim that the fan doesn't even need to know how to spell, punctuate, or be polite!)

I had to leave before the end of the panel, since I was appearing on another panel at 3 PM, but I am sure the last word has not been said on this subject. One panel worth considering for future

conventions might be "Producing a Dual-Media Fanzine: The Worst of Both Worlds." Chuq Von Rospach (*OtherRealms*) and I could certainly provide some insight.

Fanzine Writing: Mimeo? What the Hecto Is *That*?
Saturday, 1 PM
Mark Keller (mod), Janice Eisen, Evelyn C. Leeper, Laurie Mann, Ed Meskys, Teresa Nielsen Hayden

In spite of Mark Keller's attempt to stir things up by claiming electronic fandom was ruining fanzine writing, this was a fairly low-key panel. There was some argument about whether something like *SF-Lovers Digest* was a fanzine (more on this later). At one point, Mann claimed it was not eligible for the fanzine Hugo because of the general low quality of the submissions. I pointed out that nowhere in the rules did it say the nominees had to be good--that was supposedly what the voting process was for.

Once again, people said that fandom was getting too large. ("Ah, yes, I remember the good old days....") Someone quoted a hallway conversation in which a fan complained that "the bookworms have taken over Boskone." (To which I can only reply, "Thank Ghod!")

Ed Meskys seemed to have the largest supply of fannish anecdotes, though I must confess that many of them were about people I had never heard of. I suspect I am one of this new generation of fans, or at least fan writers, who came in through the electronic door and doesn't spend a lot of time discussing fannish rumors and doings, but rather concentrates on reviewing and discussing science fiction itself (and conventions, of course). The claim was made that the newszines (of the gossip variety) seemed to be dying out. In part, this is due to their place being taken by such professional magazines as *Locus* and *Science Fiction Chronicle*. (Don't tell me these are technically "semi-prozines"--I already know that, but they sure seem to waddle to me.) And what they don't cover is disseminated rapidly via electronic bulletin boards; authors' deaths are now known to almost all of fandom within a day or so. And I don't mean authors such as Heinlein, whose obituaries appear in daily newspapers, but also authors such as Tiptree whose deaths are less widely reported in the mundane press. *File 770* is the only major newszine left in the fanzine area.

Parties

For dinner, we went to our traditional Saturday night place, the Peking Duck House across the street from the hotels. Since we went at 5 PM instead of after 6 PM, and since Boskone was much smaller this year, the restaurant was practically empty when we arrived--a nice change from the usual half-hour wait for a table. We had planned to eat with Jerry Boyajian, but he was detained in Boston, so it was just Mark, Dave, and me--and of course, great Chinese food.

After dinner, we returned to the hotels. I walked through the Art Show, where I bought a print of an unpublished painting inspired by *Wandering Stars* (an anthology of Jewish science fiction). Then we mostly sat around talking until the banquet was over and events resumed. One problem with this was that there was a couple with not one, but two, crying babies who seemed to think that remaining in the common area while their babies squalled was acceptable behavior. (I discovered later that one of the babies was Glen Cook's son, being watched while the banquet went on.) Future Boskones and other conventions may want to consider setting aside a small room as a crying room, although in this case I would think the make-up room in the women's room would have been sufficient. (Yes, I know that means a woman has to take the baby in. I'm not the person who decreed women's rooms have extra space, and for that matter, I don't know that the men's room didn't have comparable space.)

Kate and I went in at 9 PM to hear the Guest of Honor speech. At 9:30 PM, when they were still going through the raffle winners, the Skylark winner, the this and the that, I decided to head on out to the parties. I presume eventually a speech was delivered. Were it prefaced only by "real" awards, I might have waited, but to make the attendees sit through the raffle drawing seemed a bit unfair.

So I headed up to the Readercon party, which was in full swing when I arrived. I picked up a copy of Progress Report 2, which I hadn't seen yet (mine had arrived in New Jersey after I left, it turned out). I'll have to pick out some books to bring for autographing--I wonder what Thomas Disch will say about autographing *Mankind Under the Leash*, or John Morressey of seeing a copy of *Starbrat*.

One attendee there was reading through the list of authors and we started talking about which authors we had read and which we had liked. She mentioned she found Gene Wolfe boring, and I tried to convince her to tell Eric Van that, but couldn't.

At 10 PM, I decided to move to the *Proper Boskonian* party. *The Proper Boskonian* is a quarterly fanzine put out by NESFA which last appeared about four years ago. (Think about it.) This party was to kick off the next issue, which should be issued some time this year. There was a cake-cutting, but if the attendance at the party is any indication, this will be a small issue. (The party was in the Tara, while all the other parties seemed to be in the Marriott, so that might explain it.)

I got into a further discussion with Saul Jaffe about whether *SF-Lovers Digest* was a fanzine. The definition of fanzine used for the Hugos is that they are "generally available non-professional publications (press run under 10,000) devoted to science fiction, fantasy or (for fanzines) related subjects, which have published 4 or more issues, at least one of which appeared in [the year for which the awards are being made]." There are further tests for whether a publication is a semi-prozine; for now, trust me that *SF-Lovers Digest* does not meet these.

I contend that *SF-Lovers Digest* is indubitably non-professional, certainly has a press run of under 10,000 (in fact, it has nothing that could be defined as a press run unless it is the issue Saul prints up for himself), and is devoted to the appropriate topics. But is it "generally available," is it a "publication," and has it "published issues"? (If it has, it has certainly done "4 or more, etc.")

My dictionary (*Websters New Collegiate Dictionary*) defines "publish" as "to make generally known, to make public announcement, to place before the public, to disseminate." Printing is recognized in a subsidiary definition, but is not necessary for publishing to have deemed to taken place.

Now, Saul contends that *SF-Lovers Digest* is not generally available and has not "published issues." I would say that going by my dictionary, it has indeed published issues ("issue" defined as "the thing or whole quantity of things given out at one time"). But is it generally available?

Saul says (rightly) that one needs a modem and computer (or access to one) to get *SF-Lovers Digest*. He also says anyone can get a "hard-copy" fanzine if they pay the subscription price, since all it requires is a physical address to send it to. True or false?

Well, I suspect that fans in Albania, for example, cannot get copies of *Lan's Lantern* because the government won't allow them to be imported. Does that mean *Lan's Lantern* is not generally available? No, so I think we agree that "generally" does not have to mean that *everyone* can get it. So what proportion need to be able to get something before it is generally available? If a fanzine is available only to women, is it generally available? That *is* more than 50% of the population. What about only to men? Now we're talking about less than 50%. What about only to fans born after 1950? Over the age of 21?

Most fanzines cost a couple of dollars an issue. What about one that costs $10? $100? $1000? If the cost of a fanzine doesn't make it ineligible, then the fact that a fan has to purchase a modem and computer access shouldn't make a fanzine ineligible either.

If I look at the circulation figures for *SF-Lovers Digest* as compared with other fanzines, I see that upwards of 100,000 people get *SF-Lovers Digest* where only a few hundred get *Lan's Lantern*. One may claim that *Lan's Lantern* is generally available and *SF-Lovers Digest* is not, but the facts don't seem to support that contention.

Then again, I also think the San Diego Yacht Club's catamaran won the America's Cup.

Difference Betwixt Dark Fantasy and Horror
Saturday, 10 PM
Rick Hautala (mod), Aline B. Kaplan, Charles Lang
[written by Mark R. Leeper]

Rick Hautala opened the panel saying that he himself was not sure what the term "dark fantasy" meant. Both horror and dark fantasy attempt to scare and the term "dark fantasy" seems designed only to hide that goal. Hautala considers dark fantasy to be a "yuppie-ization" of horror. He quoted Craig Spector in saying that he tries to scare the reader to the point that he gets every gland secreting at once.

Just before the panel, Aline Kaplan had been talking to her son about the film *Children of the Corn*. (Kaplan's son looked nine and talked like someone twice that age.) He, however, enjoyed a scene in the film in which a child puts a man's hand in a bologna slicer. Kaplan said that slice-and-dice is not really horror. It is graphic, but not horror. Hautala said that he does not have "lunchmeat" characters. When he kills a character, he has put enough into that character so that the reader has "an investment" in that character. Apparently Hautala does have graphic horror but better done. Charles Lang took a crack at the difference, saying, "Horror is a serial killer; dark fantasy is the demon." As an example, he gave Thomas Harris's *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of Lambs*, both of which were horror enough to make his skin crawl, but were not dark fantasy. Dark fantasy is an effort to take supernatural fantasy and break out to a larger market.

Kaplan asked why the Stephen King sort of novel was so popular and, while Lang thought that it was just because King tells a good story that a broad market wants to read, Hautala quoted another panel as saying that science fiction is weird fiction for weird people, while horror fiction is weird fiction for normal people.

The discussion then turned, as it often seems to in these panel discussions, from the actual subject matter to the business of publishing. Lang said that the popularity of horror goes in cycles and currently it is falling. Also of falling popularity are Westerns and, surprisingly, romance novels. That all three fields are falling at the same time is surprising, but perhaps the popularity of reading in general is falling. Kaplan responded that horror brings the reader's attention to "other realities" and helps to explain them. While it is informational, it is popular; when it starts to scare, it loses popularity.

Hautala said horror is declining because there is too little of the *Haunting of Hill House* sort of thing being written. While horror "connects" with ordinary sorts of people it does well. Writing about heavy-metal satanists brings horror's popularity down. Lang thought King writes too much about ordinary people. How many times can he write about the same people who are really just his neighbors in Maine?

Hautala shifted the conversation to what books really are horror. Much that is written in the mainstream could really be considered horror. Particular examples were Kafka's *Metamorphosis* and Tolstoy's *Death of Ivan Ilych*. Once you specifically separate out horror it can be found or ignored as a whole. He feels that the "kiss of death" for the horror genre was the policy of putting horror on a separate shelf of its own.

Hautala claims that publishers make decisions of what they want to buy based on popular trends, on what length fiction pieces are, on all sorts of criteria that they can judge without ever reading the books they are buying. As with horror films, the commercial interests say to deliver something safe. Do not experiment. "Art," Hautala said, "does not succeed by appealing to the lowest common denominator, but commerce does." (I found it somewhat ironic that with the panelists' high regard for the art of horror writing and their low regard for the commerce of horror selling, they returned so

often to talk about the latter.) The panel concluded with how backward the publishing industry is. Soap companies put most of their publicity funds behind their new products and less behind their established products. Publishers put their promotion funds behind their established authors and very little behind their new authors. (I happen to feel that analogy is imperfect. Most soap companies feel relatively safe that they can make a soap popular and it will not quit and go to another soap company.)

The Horror Panel
Saturday, 11 PM
Rick Hautala (mod), Ginjer Buchanan, John R. Douglas, Christopher Fahy
[written by Mark R. Leeper]

If the midnight horror panel is supposed to in some sense frighten, this one succeeded. All night long I had nightmares of balance sheets, best-seller lists, and of not making the income I thought I deserved. Imagine going to a doctor and he says he has something to tell you and he takes you aside in his office. Then for an hour he tells you how bad his business is, how the prices of his equipment are up and the clinics are taking away business, and how his insurance rates are terrible. If this happened time and time again, you might find yourself another doctor. But time and time again these days you find panels at conventions filled with authors who seem incapable of getting their minds off of their financial state for an hour. At this point I know more about the business and financial problems of being an author than I ever imagined I ever wanted to know and I have lost a lot of respect for authors who can talk about little else.

The hour started innocently enough with Rick Hautala asking the other panelists what the future of horror would be and suggesting, rather unprofoundly, that it would be different from the past. Ginjer Buchanan, with equally few examples, said the future would be like the present. "The more things change, the more they remain the same." John Douglas said, "I have seen the future of horror and its name is Clive Barker," repeating the Stephen King quote that often appears on Barker's less and less popular books. There was general consent that Barker is no longer what people want. What they want is more *Friday the 13th* and more Stephen King. Now because King is as popular as he is, he can write just about anything. Buchanan suggested he could even write a romance novel. (She gave an example of a romance novel King wrote; I did not write it down but I think it was *Misery*.)

Hautala said that he himself writes pretty much what he wants, though his publisher tries to get him to write the sort of thing he has written successfully before. The real danger in writing horror, he said, is that there is one writer who dominates the field and eclipses all the others. In science fiction there is no equivalent dominant writer. It influences new horror writers, who all want to be the next Stephen King.

Buchanan talked about best-selling authors and best-seller lists which she does not trust. She asked if anyone thinks P. D. James really is currently the best selling author. James is currently at the top of the *New York Times* best-seller list.

Still without mentioning the content of a single book, the conversation returned to Stephen King and the quote about Barker. As powerful a force as King is to reckon with, he could not name Barker as his own successor. Buchanan points to Dean R. Koontz as an author who did it the right way with twenty-five years of "busting his ass" before he really caught on as an author.

At this point a recently-arrived fan from the audience, one Evelyn Leeper, attempted to pull the conversation back to something a little more relevant by asking what out-of-print horror novel the panelists would like to see come back in print. Here at last was a chance to get the discussion on books rather than publishing. Hautala said he was going to pass because he is intensely jealous when another author makes it. Buchanan named John Coyne's *Hobgoblin* which she had published. Christopher Fahy suggested that his own *Nightflyer* should come back into print. Douglas gave the most selfless answer by saying he had no answer.

Hautala seemed to realize that everybody flogging their own books might not have been a response in the spirit the question was asked. He reframed the question, asking the other panelists if they could simply name solid examples of horror. Douglas, an editor at Avon, said he did *not* like Dan Simmons's *Song of Kali* and turned it down as did three other publishers. Fahy at first said he did not know what to say, but gave examples such as *Misery* and books by Pat McGraf and Clive Barker. Douglas asked if the point of the question was that they just plug other people's books, then settled on Katherine Dunn's *Geek Love* as a recommendation. Buchanan recommended Robert McCammon's *Bethany Sins* and Tom Tryon's books. Tryon is a name that has been recently forgotten, but who she says has been very influential on other writers, in specific Stephen King. Hautala added to the list McCammon's *They Thirst*. Describing it, he repeated his quote from Craig Spector, saying that the horror writer has achieved his goal if he can make every gland in the reader's body secrete at once. He also liked Elizabeth Massey's *Sin Eater*. Buchanan added Skipp and Spector's *Light at the End* and any of several books by Shirley Jackson. According to her Jackson was a very good horror writer ... also a loon.

In response to Evelyn's question on what is the most over-rated horror, Buchanan suggested *The Dark Tower* series by Stephen King.

.ce [the following addendum to this panel was written by Evelyn C. Leeper]

I arrived at this towards the end. Someone was talking about Whitley Streiber's latest works, *Communion* and its sequel, *Transformation*. S/he described a button he had seen with a smiley-face with the elongated eyes of Streiber's aliens, captioned, "They're here and they insist you have a nice day." They had apparently been saying negative things about Streiber, because someone said that not all horror authors had such a bad reputation, and cited Dean R. Koontz as someone who was very friendly and had a wonderful reputation.

As far as recommending horror novels, Ginjer Buchanan mentioned John Coyne's *Hobgoblin*, which she says is a departure from his usual "gerund horror" (*The Piercing* and *The Searing*, apparently, although he has also written *The Fury*, *Legacy*,, and *The Shroud*, so his non-gerunds outnumber his gerunds two-to-one). There were also several other recommendations that Mark has already related.

When I asked the panelists what out-of-print horror they would most like to see brought back into print, some panelists named other people's books, but Christopher Fahy named one of his own books. I will have to remember to disallow this the next time I ask the question. (Mark said most of the first part of the panel consisted in people promoting their own books.)

Screaming Queens: Gay Characters and Themes in Horror
Saturday, midnight
Franklin Hummel (mod), John Dumas, Christopher Fahy, Stephen Owens

The panel started by saying that there seemed to be a dearth of gay characters (and lesbian characters--in this article I will use the word gay as applying to both sexes) in horror fiction. However, there seemed to be a split between the 10%-ers and the 40%-ers, i.e., those who said that 10% of the population is gay, and those who said 40% is. The discrepancy is due to imprecise definitions: according to Kinsey 10% of the population are entirely gay (6 on the Kinsey scale), but 40% are gay or bisexual (4 through 6 on the scale, I think). At any rate, one doesn't find even 10% in horror fiction, so perhaps this is a moot point.

There was acknowledgement that there are a lot of characters in horror fiction whose sexual orientation is not known. (Quick, how many Jewish characters are there in horror fiction? Not many that you can name, yet how often can you tell *anything* about a character's religion?) From the audience, Kate Pott said that several recent horror novels seem to deal more with the annihilation of sexuality than of any particular orientation (Iain Banks's *Wasp Factory* and Dean R. Koontz's *Whispers*).

Some interesting problems arise if you do have gay characters in horror fiction. Sending a succubus to tempt a gay man seems as if it could have comic possibilities (I keep hearing *The Fearless Vampire Killers*' "Oy, do you have the wrong vampire!"), and an incubus might get an unexpected reaction from a lesbian. There was, in fact, discussion of whether succubi and incubi are merely manifestations of hermaphroditic beings and hence a succubi visiting a gay man would appear as an incubus. At any rate, there is certainly enough material for several stories here.

Of course, it was recognized that having gay characters in horror fiction has its own pitfalls. If you make the gay character the villain, you run the risk of being accused of being anti-gay (or homophobic, depending on the critic's word preference). On the other hand, making the gay character the victim could be construed as "gay-bashing," so the author must walk a fine line. The author is on much firmer ground, of course, if s/he makes the gayness of the victim irrelevant to his or her victimhood, rather than the reason for it. Another way out of this dilemma is to set the entire story in the gay community; then rather than have to decide which characters are gay, just make them all gay! (Oh, I suppose you could throw in a token heterosexual or two if you felt obliged.)

Several examples of horror fiction having gay characters were cited: Tom Reamy's "San Diego Lightfoot Sue," some of Stephen King's works, and Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (though the last is considerably subtler than the other two). Jeffrey McMahan's *Somewhere in the Night* is an entire anthology of gay horror fiction. In films, one finds several in which gender-switching is used: *Frankenstein Created Woman* and *Doctor Jekyll and Sister Hyde* are perhaps the best known.

Sunday Morning

On the way in, the conversation turned to Esotericon, a convention focused on religion and the occult in science fiction and fantasy. Barbara (or Kate, I forget which) said that Katherine Kurtz had founded a Michaelean order, which Mark heard has a "microwave" order. So the next thing we knew, Mark and Kate were chanting the new mantra of the order, "A-man-a" (or alternatively, "I-wan-na A-man-a"). This was followed by the singing (to the tune of the guards' song in *The Wizard of Oz*) "A ne-o is com-ing!" and the decision to found "Noreascon First Fandom," consisting of those people who attended Noreascon 1. (Well, it's limited to only about 2100 that way.)

Kaffee Klatch
Sunday, 11:00 AM

I was scheduled for a "Kaffee Klatch" Sunday morning at either 9:30 AM or 11:00 AM, depending on what newsletter you read. Since this event was not listed on the schedule of my events that I was handed, I was rather confused, especially since hardly anyone knew where it was supposed to be either. When I showed up at 11 AM the previous klatch was just breaking up, and no one new showed up for mine (the other two official participants had canceled out, and now that there were other things to do in terms of programming, no one had enough interest to drop in). I did spend about a half-hour talking to Bill Davidsen about electronic fandom, armor, weapons at conventions, Shakespearean plays, and a whole raft of other things I've forgotten.

The Spherical Cow: How SF Approaches Ideas
Sunday, noon
Katherine Kramer (mod), Lisa Barnett, John R. Douglas, Alex Jablokov
[written by Mark R. Leeper]

Katherine Kramer moderated this panel which took its name from an article she published in *The New York Review of Science Fiction*. In that, she tells the story of a physicist who finds himself out of work and has to turn to dairy farming. Eventually he feels he wants to share his discoveries with other dairy farmers and at the grange one day he gives a lecture which starts, "Consider a spherical cow of uniform density...." Kramer opened the discussion by saying that the science fiction writer must explain the foundations of his/her science to readers "who do not like equations."

Alex Jablokov said that science fiction is like having a laboratory. You can take a single idea and expand on it, building a whole world around it. The conversation shifted to how some writers are more careful than others. Kramer said that world-building is the most obvious application of scientific principles to a story and certainly some authors are more careful than others in their world-building. The physics of the world is usually what is best thought out. In some senses this is because the physics is comprehensible and not too difficult to explain. Biological systems are more complex than physical systems. The biology is much harder to get consistent and accurate than is the physics. Getting the physics right and then emphasizing that in the story is essentially like looking for your keys in the light. John Douglas said that emphasizing physics is the sort of thing Hal Clement does well. "Clement writes Clement stories." But there are other things to look for in science fiction. Lisa Barnett said that the full job of building the world, getting the science and the sociology right, is not easy and some people are much better at it than others.

Kramer said that at a world-building panel she attended, she found it interesting to ask writers what disciplines they are *not* interested in world-building. This is less obvious and more telling than asking what disciplines they *were* interested in. Some authors would say things like they tend to ignore the economics of the planet. Others would ignore the history. However, Kramer feels that dealing with a lot of data on broad subjects about her planets is what she calls "vulgar." Contemporary fiction tends to concentrate on small subtle things about human relationships. Earthquakes and nuclear wars are vulgar. If you focus in on the small subtle behavior of a few individuals, you lose a lot of data outside your field of view.

Jablokov went on to talk about how scientific imagery is hard for people to assimilate. Nonetheless, people do seem to use it, even in everyday life to explain things that are simpler. He talked about someone who in breaking up with someone else used the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle to explain his emotions. Jablokov said you don't use Heisenberg to explain something from life; you are supposed to use familiar situations from life to make things like physics more comprehensible.

Douglas suggested that people think that they understand physics and they perhaps know they do not understand society and emotions.

Jablokov told an anecdote where he himself used scientific imagery to explain something simple. A friend refused to open a piece of mail she knew would be containing a bill that she could not currently afford to pay. He told her that it had become Schroedinger's Bill [Bill the Cat? -ecl]. It was not currently a bill but would become one when she opened the envelope and the waveform collapsed. He then returned to the discussion. People use the metaphor of physics for things like emotion because they feel physics is comprehensible.

Kramer digressed on the subject of emotion and physics to talk about Asimov's "Nightfall," which she feels she has come to a new understanding about with the interpretation that craziness is something that happens at night, not in the light of day. "Nightfall" is about a world that has deferred its craziness for a very long time and is soon to release all that craziness in a very short time.

The discussion shifted to whether it was possible to have fully developed characters and to develop the ideas at the same time. Kramer repeated a quote that Robinson Crusoe is the most interesting boring man she had ever read about. It is the situation that is interesting, not the man. If all characters are rounded and expanded, they will not all "fit in the box."

From here a comment from the audience about the interconnection of the idea and the style led to a discussion of the various ways to express ideas with style. One style discussed was the "scientific log." The example given was *Flowers for Algernon* by Daniel Keyes, certainly a good choice. One very common example that was not mentioned but perhaps should have been is the two "Star Trek" television series, which was supposedly dramatizations of the Captain's Log. Kramer mentioned a story that packed all its scientific detail into terse little fact-filled sentences. "She took the lab mouse. She injected it with 33 cc's of [some poison]. She put the mouse in a plastic bag." Jablokov parodied

this style with "I have this idea. I am going to write it with my rolling-ball pen. ..." Kramer talked about a humorous story that she read called "Stop Evolution in Its Tracks." She used this as an example that the science does not even have to make sense. One scene has as a proof that evolution was wrong someone with a film of a man getting into a really realistic gorilla suit. We are not descended from apes because all apes are just men in suits.

From the audience David Hartwell suggested that your look at the future can be distorted by the present. What if the political rate of change continues at the rate it has gone over the past few months? Another part of the audience asked, what if they gave I.Q. tests for politicians? Jablokov suggested they would cheat to lower their scores so they would pass. Kramer said there is an active disdain for writers who write optimistic futures. Readers seem to think if you think things will work out, you are stupid.

One of the audience members asked how important internal consistency is to the panelists. With the hour running out, only Kramer had a chance to answer, saying that even in fantasy that the consistency was very important. In science fiction, you make a possible assertion and see the reasonable things that follow from it. Fantasy allows you to make an impossible assertion, but you still want to see reasonable things to follow from it.

BookStore Panel: How To Let Your Children Go
Sunday, noon
Glen Cook (mod), Brian Perry, Joe Siclari, Dick Spelman, Tyler Stuart

First the panelists introduced themselves and gave their credentials. Glen Cook sells paperback collectibles, Brian Perry runs a specialty store called Fat Cat Books, and Tyler Stuart has a specialty store called Pandemonium in Harvard Square (the same storefront where Science Fantasy Bookstore used to be). Dick Spelman and Joe Siclari sell new books, the former only at conventions, the latter in a speciality store in Boca Raton.

Those who dealt in new books felt that they would prefer a deeper discount with a no-returns policy (though the discount would have to be at least 60% to make it worthwhile, and they did say that they wouldn't be able to carry some authors without a full returns policy). Spelman said that two-thirds of his sales came from books released within the last three months, so keeping a large backlist of books rather than returning them might not be cost-effective.

Spelman says one reason that specialty dealers survive is that they are known to have all the books in a series when the last one arrives, and many buyers will go to them knowing they can buy the whole series, rather than picking up volume three in B. Dalton and hoping to find one and two elsewhere. Another feature of the specialty stores is that they sell knowledge and service--they can tell you what other books are in a given series and where on the shelf they are, not just, "Oh, back there somewhere there may be another Moorcock."

The dealers in new books said that Greg Ketter seems to be the major specialty dealer/wholesaler who deals with all the various publishers and supplies the smaller dealers who want a single point of contact. Witter's F&SF Book Company is still around but much scaled back, and doesn't carry several of the major publishers. They mentioned several distributors they work with as well: Ingrams, Baker and Taylor, and the BookSource.

As far as used books, Cook says that his problem is that he pays too much for used books and sells them too cheaply (my kind of dealer!). He mentioned Bachman and Koontz as two authors whose older books have appreciated considerably in value. The panelists thought Lloyd Curry's catalogs were a good way to price used books, but one must buy from Curry to get them regularly.

Those who sold at conventions bemoaned the fact that the profit margin wasn't higher and that there was too much competition from too many other book dealers, but no one cited figures on just how

much they made in a weekend. Sales apparently vary more by region than by convention, with the Northeast being the strongest in hardcovers, the Midwest heavy in paperback sales, and the South fairly soft all over.

The dealers had some problems with advertising. Traditional media are expensive and not well-targeted. College newspapers are considered a good medium. Perry said that he uses local advertising, but that it's important to spread it out over the whole year, not just a one-time blitz.

Stuart was the newcomer to this group and impressed me the least. First of all, he called what he carried "sci-fi" and while one shouldn't condemn him for that alone, he seemed to have some other basic misunderstandings. He isn't sure that the Boston area can support a science fiction specialty shop--the San Francisco-Berkeley area supports four. He says his shop (at 500 square feet) is too small--the Science Fiction Shop in New York for years got by on much less (they have moved within the last two months to bigger quarters). And his whole attitude seemed to be more of someone who deals in items such as videotapes, posters, buttons, and mass-media stuff, than of a specialty science fiction dealer. (Forbidden Planet gives off some of this also, but the sheer volume of their book stock helps them overcome the mass of everything else they sell.)

Secrets of Noreascon III: You mean we have to wait *another* nine years?
Sunday, 1:30 PM
Priscilla Olson (mod), Rick Katze, Teresa Nielsen Hayden, Mark Olson, Joe Siclari

This was pretty much a glorified (and un-billed) collating session for the last issue of *The Mad 3 Party*, but there was some discussion of Noreascon 3. One of the things Mark Olson emphasized was the need for a staging area before and after the convention--and traditional storage rental places probably won't suffice, because they're often not open nights and weekends when most of the work is being done.

The whole question of facilities was raised. The three-year lead time is too long for convention planning itself, but too short in terms of getting good facility space. The decision to use as much space as possible for Noreascon 3, including the large ConCourse instead of a con suite, was brought about by the "Boskone from Hell" (Boskone 24), in which overcrowding and anonymity led to most of the problems. The anonymity part led to the decision to require people's real names to be on their badges, and for the badges to be readable from a distance. It turned out, of course, that many fans liked this for a totally different reason--it meant they could manage to figure out whom they were talking to without having to "peer" at the badge.

Regarding the Hugos, Mark Olson said that at least one-third of the WSFS business meeting is spent discussing how the Hugos need to be revised, without ever achieving a consensus on how to do it. (This is following the one-third time spent on the question of worldcon rotation--also equally undecided.)

While there was some interesting discussion, the constant noise of stapling and people moving large quantities of fanzines around was very distracting. In the future, collations should be billed as such and not disguised as panels.

Boskone: Changes of the Last Three Years
Sunday, 2:30 PM
Elisabeth Carey (mod), Jim Mann, Ben Yalow

Well, by now everyone in fandom (or at least everyone who cares) knows about the infamous "Boskone from Hell" (Boskone 24), which led to Boskone being thrown out of Boston. 4200 people jammed into the Sheraton Boston and half of them tried to have a science fiction convention while half of them wanted a wild party weekend. The result was that Boskone moved to Springfield, scaled down considerably (1400 two years ago, 1000 this year), and "focused" itself. This led to much

unhappiness among fans, since once you offer something (costuming, films, whatever) it's hard to take it away. But most of the Boskone planners realized that they were working to produce conventions that they didn't want to attend and decided to stop.

The panelists seemed very defensive (perhaps rightfully so) about charges that they didn't like media or costuming. Ben Yalow pointed out that he is the treasurer of one of the larger New York "Star Trek" conventions, which would seem to indicate he had some interest in media. (Given the reputation of "Star Trek" conventions, this may have been a poor choice on his part--many are run based more on the profit motive than for love of the subject.) Also, Boskone has not discontinued films, but tries to concentrate more on hard-to-find media. Of course, one man's hard-to-find is another man's glut, and one audience member suggested Mike Jittlov's "Wizard of Speed and Time" as "hard-to-find." (I figure I've seen it at conventions at least a dozen times, and could easily have seen it a hundred.)

Yalow also said that Suford Lewis was doing costumes thirty years ago. Someone from the audience said, "Yes, but will she thank you for saying that?" to which Yalow replied, "No, make that twenty."

The other part of Boskone that changed was the parties. It used to be that Boskone actively helped parties, providing soda and munchies. Now they don't do that, and they require all open parties be non-alcoholic.

There was some discussion about the art show, which Boskone did not scale down. Is the art show too small? Too expensive? Too spotty in quality? Well, the answer to all of these is probably yes, but what can you do? The room is as full as they can make it and still meet fire codes, etc., and there is no better room. The prices are set by the artists. As for the poor quality, the artists buy the hanging space--there is no judging to be allowed in. (And if the quality goes up, I'm sure the average price will go up also.) Another complaint was what I observed earlier: that the paintings are frequently marked "NFS" ("Not For Sale") and serve mostly as advertisements for the print shop.

Boskone 27 Feedback Session
Sunday, 3:30 PM
Mike DiGenio, Rick Katze

This was a continuation of the last panel, which as you could tell, had drifted into a gripe session by the end. (Calling this a feedback session is a clever ploy to attempt to get some favorable comments as well.) There were not many gripes. I had a small complaint about the poor signs in the mall area showing the path between hotels. The dealers said that the decreased attendance meant decreased sales. People thought the pocket program was very good, containing accurate panel descriptions as well as maps. Electronic addresses for the convention (or various committee members) was suggested. Arranging the rooms so that the doors were always at the back rather than at the front, even if this meant re-arranging chairs for the Guest of Honor Speech, was strongly suggested.

One interesting complaint was that there were not enough "stars" (big-name authors and artists). Given that most regional conventions are lucky if they get a dozen big-name authors and artists, and Boskone had easily five times that number, I'm not sure what this person wanted.

One notable point is that the audience offered as many solutions as they offered complaints. This made this a constructive session rather than a brick-throwing time.

Miscellaneous

One sign of the times was the availability on the freebie tables of literature on AIDS and free condoms.

Last year, I predicted this year's Boskone would be under 1000 people. That turned out to be just

about right.

Next year for Boskone 28 (February 15-17, 1991) the Guest of Honor is Mike Resnick.

Evelyn C. Leeper may be reached via e-mail or you may visit her Homepage.

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