

F L O R I M E L
N U M B E R
T H R E E

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Things as they are

an Editorial of sorts

It has become somewhat painfully apparent that collige and turning out reams and reams of inspired fanac are essentially incompatible. It would be hard making fannish deadlines and the like if I were engaged in some straight academic curriculum like History or English, but the Art curriculum places more than the usual demands on a dedicated young fan's time.

Art courses, you see, are of necessity mainly laboratory type things and classes are longer than the regular classes. And they require a preposterous amount of outside work. I have to scramble all over the local junk yards and construction sites scrounging for found objects for a collage, and I have to chain myself in my room and turn out such things as fifteen hours worth of my own nose. So when by all rights I should be typing happily on an INVADER to insure sweeping the Egoboo Poll this year, I am instead toning a sheet of Alexis or am writing a term paper. It is shameful.

As all serious students of Southern geography are aware, the road system and and glorious transportation network of these United States are not willing to admit the existence of Milan, Tennessee, industrial capital of Gibson County. Therefore, when I checked into possible arrangements to made in order to reach Huntspatch, Alabama, locale of the fabulous '66 Deep South Con, I found that I would be obliged to take a Greyhound bus to Nashville and there to transfer to Trailways for the final lap of the trip.

Fortunately, there was a massive breakdown in the central planning offices of these two giants of transportation and the busses made connections as announced, so I arrived in Huntspatch with nothing more terrible to report than being tired from a day's riding.

A phone call produced promptly at the Trailways station Lon Atkins, co-editor of RALLY!, timely and important Southern newszine, and Committee-in-Charge of the fabulous Deep South Con. No sooner had I reach Lon's apartment than he looped a heavy chain about me, fettering me to a table where he ruthlessly lashed me until I turned out cartoons for various SFPA productions.

The phone rang soon announcing the arrival of Ron Bounds of ill-famed Baltimore fandom. Lon and I drove out after him, Lon directing him in to Huntspatch. It turned out that Ron, in order to attend the Con, had been forced to find a ride with a dud fringe-fan by the name of Paul Schnobble or Schnaubel or

something of the sort. Ron seemed to a likable fellow, but the dud came on a bit pushy at first.

After that, my memory of precise chronology becomes a bit fuzzy. I remember shaking hands with a lot of my best friends for the first time, talking a lot about things fannish and otherwise, churning out cartoons, but I can't seem to figure out just when each happened.

I think instead of trying to relate my adventures in time sequence, I shall just try to give some indication of who I met and how they impressed me. All libel suits should be directed to my home address.

Lon Atkins: I had of course met Lon once before, when he had firmly convinced me that he was a fine fellow. He reaffirmed my opinion at the DSC, and furthermore showed himself to be a tireless if somewhat disorganized Con Committee.

Ron Bounds: Ron takes a couple of hours of adjustment before you can really appreciate him. But after you get used to him, Ron is a fine friendly fellow with a great sense of humor. He looks remarkably like Errol Flynn. I'm not quite sure just what that means, but it seems to be of some significance.

Ron Later turned in yeoman service in shepherding around a batch of assorted neos and mundanites so that they remained rooted to a Diplomacy game out of the way of the rest of the con. Len Bailes suggested that the Con award Ron a Purple Heart or Award of Merit or something along those lines for this sterling act of self-sacrifice.

The Dud: Although this fellow was probably well-intentioned, he irritated me by trying to come on buddy-buddy with a group of people who had no previous dealings with him. He also annoyed me by fawning all over Katya Hulan and attempting to fondle her under the guise of playfully choking her. Now there is no reason for me to feel protective toward Kattya Hulan, as I'm sure Dave is quite capable of taking care of her, but that didn't stop me from resenting the dud's doings.

Bill Bruce: Bill is an unpretentious, honestly friendly fan who makes a very good first impression. He was the only one at the Con who appeared to me to have a really Southern accent. I guess that's because if you went any further South than Bill, you'd be treading water.

Len Bailes: Len is absolutely unbelievable. Aside from being an ordained hobbit, Len has an absorbingly weird sense of humor, and a really humbling knowledge of science fiction, comics, and just things in general. I was surprised to find that my interests and those of Len ran almost identically, except he was something of an expert on almost everything that I wanted to be an expert on. I couldn't help to think that if I lived anywhere near him, this chattering imp of a fellow would probably be my best friend.

Len's devotion to lovable ol' Arnie Katz was almost poignant. ("You can't write what I said about Arnie in your Con report, Joe Staton, because I can tell him what you said about him!!") Much of the conversation at the Con centered about the various Weird and Perverted aspects of the personality of Arnie Katz, and at one point Len uttered a line which must certainly go down in history with Damon's words of loyalty to Pythias: "Yes, yes, it's all true, but I still like Arnie!!!"

Al Scott: Al--impossibly, unquestionably impossibly--looks like an oboe. That is, he is tall and thin with feet that sort of flare out, giving him an overall appearance rather like a wind instrument. Al looked pretty much as I'd expected--the tall, ectomorphic type with the dreamy eyes of the idealist and the visionary.

I liked Al immediately, even if he did insult me: "You know, Joe, of all the people in fandom, you're the one who thinks the most like I do."

The Hulans: Dave and Katya occupy very special places in my affections so I was very pleased to meet them again. Dave had added glasses and a beer-belly since the last time I had seen him, but he still had his quick, incisive mind and his seemingly limitless store of information. I was little short of stunned to listen to him supply on a moment's notice the technical definition of a decibel. Katya was still as pretty and as charming as I remembered her. Rachel Hulan was, as Lon put it, a doll. She was about the prettiest baby I've seen, what with her button nose and twinkly eyes.

The chance to go out to a little spaghetti place with just the Hulans and then to chat with them in their room for about an hour was pretty much the high point of the con for me.

Lee Jacobs: I was constantly irritated with myself for being unable to speak to Lee as anything but "Sir." There was something about Lee that compelled respect, and his expansive grin left no alternative but a returned smile. It would take a good deal of convincing to make me think ill of Lee Jacobs.

Hank Reinhardt: I firmly refuse to believe that Hank is a real person. I had formerly believed that the twisted imagination of Jerry Page had invented Hank. I still do.

I would give a good bit to be able to sit and listen to Hank discourse on his weapons and his strange adventures for hours on end. Hank's dry, straight-forward telling of the most outlandish things is fascinating. What was for me the most grating experience of the Con was Hank being interrupted by a stray neo. Interrupting Hank should carry a mandatory death penalty.

Jerry Page: Jerry was another who impressed me with his immediate command of an alarming volume of information. Besides this encyclopedic store of knowledge, Jerry possessed a very pleasant manner, and as with Hank, I could listen to him talk indefinitely.

Larry Montgomery: Now, I'll not mount my soap box, all covered with sack cloth and ashes and announce that in person, Larry M. is a veritable wonder, a genius of the genre, or something of the sort, as would seem to be the fashion after meeting Larry for the first time. No, friends, in contrast to the other attendees of the Con, Larry was virtually ignorant; and he was completely lacking in any understanding of the principles of design. But that's not what you notice upon meeting him. What you notice is the unabashed friendliness and the outgoing sincerity. I'll probably seldom agree with Larry, but I'll never again be guilty of accusing him of underhanded motives. Indeed, I can think of no one I would trust quicker than Larry.

And then there were such noteworthies as Billy Pettit, roly-poly beer-guzzler of great renown, Mike McQuoun, a strange acting fellow, Ned Brooks, of Virginia fame, perhaps a few more fans I've forgotten in this rush, and assorted likable and unlikable neos, but This Must Be It, if I'm to make the deadline. It was my first con and I loved it. # # #