

INDIAN LAKE....

THERE I WENT

BY  
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## INDIAN LAKE . . . there i went

The story proper begins a month or two before the affair at Indian Lake, when a neofan from Milwaukee wrote me asking if he could journey to Ohio in my car. His own planned transportation, he said, had begged off at the last moment-- well, the last month. Before blindly agreeing to such a request, I first looked up the fellow in WHO'S WHO IN FANDOM, to ascertain his rating; I wanted no common peasants in my automobile. WHO'S WHO informed me that he was barely in the acceptable bracket-- it seems that he had collaborated with Edgar Allan Poe on a little story and thus made the grade.

Thus reassured, I made arrangements to meet Mr. Bloch, in the little town of Joliet, Illinois, on a Friday before the brawl. I would pick him up at the Joliet railroad station about ten a.m. Fine. The arrangements were made. Everything was in order. We would await the glad day.

On Thursday evening (the evening before the glad day, Harlan) I got the itch to be moving, and besat myself behind the wheel and bestarted out. Joliet at night isn't much on the surface but there is plenty under the surface and I intended to seek a spot of it to while away a summer evening. Just for a lark and to make conversation with a hotel clerk, I phoned one hotel and asked for Robert Bloch. Not there, of course. Then I phoned another. Well-- yes, they had a Mr. Bloch up in 221. Mr. Bloch answered his phone and I asked him what in the devil he was doing in, a day early? Oh, he said with fine presence of mind, he had actually arrived the day before, Wednesday, and now he was passing the time in his room until I would arrive on Friday morning. With that, I quietly hung up the receiver and tip-toed out of the booth. It was quite some time later as I was watching a "Cherokee Indian maiden perform the strange and fascinating fertility dance of the Seven Nations" that I begin to feel a twitch of conscience. Poor Bloch was nobly suffering up there in his room while I sat here enjoying myself with wild abandon. It simply wasn't proper. And besides, she was no Cherokee; she was an Ojibway if I ever saw one. I quit the place and slunk back to Mr. Bloch's hotel.

This time the phone brought no answer, but the

desk clerk had a message for me. Frenziedly I ripped it open and read Bloch's scrawl. He had grown tired of sitting in his room, and after a long bus ride about the city he planned to visit a night spot where an Indian maiden was said to be dancing.

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The glad day. Ten o'clock Friday morning and we were at the rail station, watching the trains go by. Mr. Bloch confessed that was a secret passion of his; to sit on a small-town fence and watch the trains. Once, as the Santa Fe Superchief paused a moment, he dashed over to a drawing room window and thrust his autograph book in to someone who looked like a movie star. Later we examined the autograph and found a scrawled "Trigger". One train after another passed, and finally Bloch asked me who we were waiting for ?? I stared at him aghast. We had been waiting for him.

Dashing madly thru the station to where the car was parked, we belted up short at the scene which met our eyes. Frank Robinson stood there, with luggage. Ted Dikty stood there, with luggage. Judy May Dikty stood there, with luggage. Bloch and I eyed each other. This meant someone had to walk-- the car was only a five-passenger job. Kicking and shoving and cursing and poking, we managed to stuff half the bags into the trunk and force the lid down; the rest was stowed in the car under the feet, between the legs, on the laps and atop the shoulders of the passengers. The Studebaker springs sagged badly, but we pulled triumphantly out of Joliet only an hour late. We had gone perhaps five miles before disaster struck -- the noise sounded like an electric fan trying to tear its way out of a wooden box. "Mr. Bloch," I said, "stop scuffling your feet." He denied being the cause, and the horrible noise continued. My passengers became alarmed although I drove nonchalantly on. What the hell-- I had a brand new car with only six hundred miles on it. There couldn't be anything wrong. At noon we limped into the nearest Studebaker garage.

It wasn't anything. Five people and a mountain of luggage had only pushed the body so far down on the underframe that the universal joint was striking the bottom, trying to eat its way up thru the floorboards. It was repaired in a "jiffy" and two hours later we set sail for beautiful Indian Lake. Enroute, Bloch discovered a meteor on a courthouse lawn.

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Last year, under different circumstances, I'd been one of the first to reach the Lake and glory in its untainted air, its peaceful surroundings. Bea Mahaffey and I had arrived there on Friday evening, to find only Doc Smith and his wife ahead of us. It had been a restful evening and now I looked forward to another of the same. My mistake. One hundred other raving fans had also decided to arrive on Friday evening this year, and there they were, galloping madly about the place, shooting firecrackers and sky-rockets into the rainy night, marching up and down the front sidewalk chanting "We are Seventh Fandom!", waving bottled and glasses as though they knew how to drink, and otherwise disporting themselves. In the lobby, someone came up behind my back and ruffled a hand through my hair. Another character ran up to me and mumbled a sinister message. I didn't catch it, and asked him to repeat. He did, but I still couldn't understand him and requested a third repetition. It sounded like "You got a bone to pick with me?" Not knowing what he was talking about --or who he was-- I took the easy way out and smiled, "No."

If the chap who did that is reading this, and will step forward to identify himself and tell me what it was all about, I'll give him a good room number in Philadelphia and guarantee the girl will be over eighteen years old.

There wasn't much sense (and no peace) to Friday evening. A blonde ran up to me and kissed me. She hadn't been a blonde the last time I saw her. Six or eight people wanted to examine the new car, sit in it or drive it. Somebody asked me if I had found the ten of clubs. Somebody else said the restaurant across the way had strawberries. The state liquor rules in Ohio were carefully explained to me (a most useless explanation) and I was told the liquor store opened at ten the next morning (which I already knew). A man who had left me in tight anger the year before walked in and offered to buy a drink. Ned McKeown introduced me to his wife and explained that she had taught Trig in school. A famous writer's wife (let's mention no names for fear of lawsuits) stumbled up to me, grabbed me around the neck and demanded to know where her husband was hiding. I said, either in the bar across the way, or in so-and-so's room. She decided he was in the bar and asked me to help her over there. Like a gentleman, I did. Boorish fans and dirty pros sitting in the restaurant stared at me in horror as we entered together. I was ruined.

The only restful haven I found that Friday night was a quiet room I believe belonged to Roy and DeeDee Lavender. At least, they were sitting in the room when I walked by, and so I have assumed it was their own. Cordially, they invited me in for a nip, and we sat around discussing science fiction and life until the wee hours, while now and then a fan or a pro or two would drift in and stay a few minutes. A most worthless character whom I ordinarily avoid, an Andy Harris, happened by and offered me a taste of an imported something he had in a colored bottle.

Roy Lavender looked rather odd hanging there upside down. I asked him why he was doing it. His face disappeared and then I heard him telling his wife that "By God, there has been somebody under our bed all night!" A few seconds later, DeeDee's face appeared upside-down, staring at me with surprise.

Saturday it rained again.

It was still raining Sunday, when some bull-voiced oaf went along the corridor plunding on doors, advising everyone that the banquet would be held at noon sharp and they had better get the hell out of bed. (I know of my own knowledge that the sudden pounding on the door scared one fellow so badly he made a dash for the window, forgetting he was on the second floor. She caught him before he could jump.) We decided to break up the poker game and go down for coffee before the banquet. One or two of the players complained because we were cutting off their chances of recuperation, but McKeown pointed out that he had been dealing "Canadian roulette" since seven the previous evening, and his arm was mighty tired. We exchanged secret grins and went downstairs.

The most exciting event of the day was Ray Beam, who tried to commit suicide in the best fannish traditions right there in front of everybody. Even he was surprised when the Beatley table-knives proved sharper than they looked, and he nearly succeeded. Doc Barrett took two or three stitches in the young man's hand, revived him by sticking his head out into the rain, and everyone went back to their meal. All agreed it was a most successful publicity stunt and that Beam would undoubtedly bid for "Indianapolis in 1954." Jokes and puns regarding the incident made the rounds until the situation humor was bled dry. Afterwards, an Englishman named Clarke gave a little talk and did some huckstering for his ten forthcoming books, but it was anti-climatic.

I feel reasonably sure that much more than this happened at Indian Lake, 1953, but I'm afraid you'll have to read other accounts to find out. It rained a spell. Mr. Bloch complained about loss of sleep. You might ask Mr. Bloch about the disturbance in the room next to his early Saturday morning, just as Mr. Bloch was trying to get some much-needed rest. He gave me only a bare outline of what happened, but it went something like this:

An hotel employe (Mrs. Beatley's son, I believe) was discussing a matter with a churlish fan who had locked himself in a room which didn't belong to him. The employe suggested the fan come out of there and go to his own room. The fan suggested he go to hell. The two gentlemen discussed the matter for nearly half an hour, growing more impassioned by the minute, until at last the hotel man grew weary of the debate and battered in the door. There was a resounding crash, reported Mr. Bloch. But it wasn't the door. The hotel man had also battered down the reluctant fan. Doc Barrett was routed out of bed for medical assistance and a few stitches were taken above the blackened fannish eye. Amid peace and quiet, Bloch fell happily asleep, knowing all was well.

That's what I call a bang-up week end.

The editor can draw pictures in the remainder of this space, or the reader may scurry about collecting autographs.

-Bob Tucker

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