

Tricon - 1966 WorldCon Recollections

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Just prior to my 17th birthday, I attended the 24th World Science-Fiction Convention with my friend Bill Shrock. We were co-editors of a fanzine, *The Animation Journal*, about stop-motion effects. David Massaro was our host and guide for the long Labor Day weekend, as he was a contributing writer to the magazine.

I spent a lot of time in the dark watching the screenings at this Con, so my reconstruction herewith comes from limited memories and surviving documents, including the Con flyer, letterhead, and some correspondence.

Quoting from 1/7/66 letter to me from Con Chairman Ben Jason:

"...Frankly, I was rather surprised by the large influx of mail in response to Bill Obaggy's announcement in MONSTER WORLD... I've been a photographer for more years than I care to remember and you can always see me toting around either a 35mm or 4.5 Speed Graphic to photograph Costume Balls, the Annual Banquet, and the fans and pros of the convention....Forrest J. Ackerman has been present at all these conventions and is a member and panelist of the present one...David Massaro, a local fan, has volunteered his services to project practically-all-night showings of various films...Excuse the incoherence of this letter, but my duties are many and time is somewhat limited..."

Quoting from a 5/18/66 letter from Bill Thailing, Con Secretary:

"Since four months ago we have been heavily over-programmed and we had to make some cuts."

In no particular order, here are some recollections:

The most memorable thing, in retrospect, is that the STAR TREK TV pilot was previewed at this Con with Gene Roddenberry speaking and taking questions. For the life of me I can't recall whether it was the version before or after Bill Shatner was added to it -- of course the Captain of the Enterprise wasn't an American icon yet, so this may be forgiven. The TIME TUNNEL pilot was also introduced in a similar format. FANTASTIC VOYAGE was privately previewed for conventioners at a nearby movie theater. I met FV's publicity field rep, Rik Newman; he traded me a complete set of full-color glossy FANTASTIC VOYAGE lobby photos for my (apparently rare) publicity photo of two characters in JACK THE GIANT KILLER and the promise of some ONE MILLION YEARS B.C. material, which he sent later after the film came out.

There were movies from 9:00 pm to 2:00 am on Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday nights. David Massaro, Cleveland-based stop-motion animation scholar, sci-fi buff and volunteer Con projectionist, ran selected films in 16mm. The Ray Harryhausen animated short subject KING MIDAS was presented to a packed room. In addition, I believe Massaro screened Willis O'Brien's early work GHOST OF SLUMBER MOUNTAIN, as he had just got his hands on the print. I believe he screened his own stunningly sharp Kodascope print of THE LOST WORLD (1925) -- this was STILL the 60-minute condensed version of the movie, which was all collectors had for a long time. He also offered up THINGS TO COME and perhaps 20 MILLION MILES TO EARTH. Some scheduled retrospective films at this Con were squeezed out for lack of time.

These marathon screenings also included three serials of about 5 hours apiece. THE CLUTCHING HAND was one of the "chapter plays" shown, with two 16mm projectors switching off to eliminate pauses between episodes. Attendee Don Glut, who had not yet written *The Dinosaur Dictionary*, was in fact known at this time primarily for his serial-based amateur films in the super hero genre, samples of which he brought with him. He went to the masked ball as Spiderman.

Bill Shrock reminded me that the very funny Canadian "live action" stop-motion film FRIENDS was one of those screened. You'll recall in this film that people appear to be floating around in mid-air, though they're actually jumping up each time a frame was exposed. The crowd loved it.

I remember bumping into panelist Isaac Asimov and I believe Harlan Ellison, who had a connection to STAR TREK, and I met Forry Ackerman for the first time. L. Sprague de Camp was the Guest of Honor. I cannot list other luminaries present or other panel topics as my memory is not that complete. I spent some time selling our fanzine on a half-table in the exhibit room; sales were brisk.

The following are the 1966 Convention's vital statistics as presented in the official flyer and letterhead:

TITLE:

24th World Science-Fiction Convention

LOCATION:

Sheraton-Cleveland Hotel, downtown Cleveland, Ohio

FEES:

\$3.00 for an attending membership; \$2.00 for a non-attending or supporting membership. \$5.00 for the Annual Banquet.

WHEN:

September 2, 3, 4, and 5, 1966 [Friday through Labor Day/Monday]

STAFF:

Chairman: Ben Jason (Cleveland, OH)

Associate Chairman: Howard DeVore (Dearborn Hts., MI)

Associate Chairman: Lou Tabakow (Deerpark, OH)

Parliamentarian & Costume Ball Arrangements: George H. Scithers

Treasurer: Frank Andrasovsky

Secretary-Treasurer: Bill Thailing

Publicity Director: Bill Obbagy

Publications & Publicity: Bill Mallardi

Editor, Progress Reports & Program Book: Dannie Plachta

Beer Party Arrangements: Fred Prophet, Roger & Pat Sims

Project Art Show Director: Bjo Trimble

Fashion Show Director: Luise Petti

Art Procurement Committee: Larry Shaw, Charlie & Marsha Brown, Frank Dietz

Publicity Aides: Duncan McFarland, Phred (Pete) Jackson

AIDES & ADVISORS:

~Cleveland: Don Thompson, Maggie Thompson

~Detroit: Dean McLaughlin, Dick Schultz, George & Mary Young, Jim Broderick, Elliott Broderick

~Cincinnati: Cincinnati Fantasy Group

~East Coast: Noreen Shaw, Larry Shaw, Charlie Brown, Marsha Brown, Sam Moskowitz, Christine Moskowitz, James V. Taurasi Sr., Frank R. Prieto Jr., Frank Dietz

~Middle West: Ed Wood, Stanleigh B. Vinson, Dr. C. L. Barrett

~West Coast: F. M. Busby, Elinor Busby, Earl Kemp, Bill Donaho, Al Halevy, J. Ben Stark

FLYER INFORMATION:

- WHEN:

September 2, 3, 4, and 5, 1966 (Fri-Mon)

Note: Although the convention officially opens on Friday 9/2, we will open the Registration Desk on Thursday 9/1 at 6:00 pm and follow with a Warm-up Party at 8:00 pm for the early arrivals.

- WHERE:

The Sheraton-Cleveland Hotel, located on the Public Square. Railroad Terminal in same building as hotel.

- ROOM RATES:

\$7.85 single, \$13.85 double, \$16.00 twin bedroom.

- BANQUET:

Banquet ticket price is \$5.00.

- GUEST OF HONOR:

L. Sprague de Camp, author of *Lest Darkness Fall*, *The Incomplete Enchanter*, *The Wheels of If*, *Genus Homo*, *None but Lucifer*, *The Stolen Dormouse*, *Rogue Queen*, *Tales from Gavagan's Bar*, *Lost Continents*, *The Science Fiction Handbook*, *The Ancient Engineers*, etc.

- DISPLAY TABLES:

First table FREE, additional tables \$5.00 each.

- PARTIES:

In addition to above-mentioned Warm-up Party, there are 4 additional parties. The 2nd, 3rd and 4th are bidder-sponsored parties on Fri., Sat. and Sun. The fifth Farewell Party is hosted by the Tricon committee for "those poor lost souls and die-hards on Labor Day". Tricon Committee donated free beer and a room to serve it in "for any recognized bidder who makes application".

- AD RATES FOR PROGRESS REPORTS & PROGRAM BOOK:

\$8.00 full page, \$5.00 half page, etc.

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