

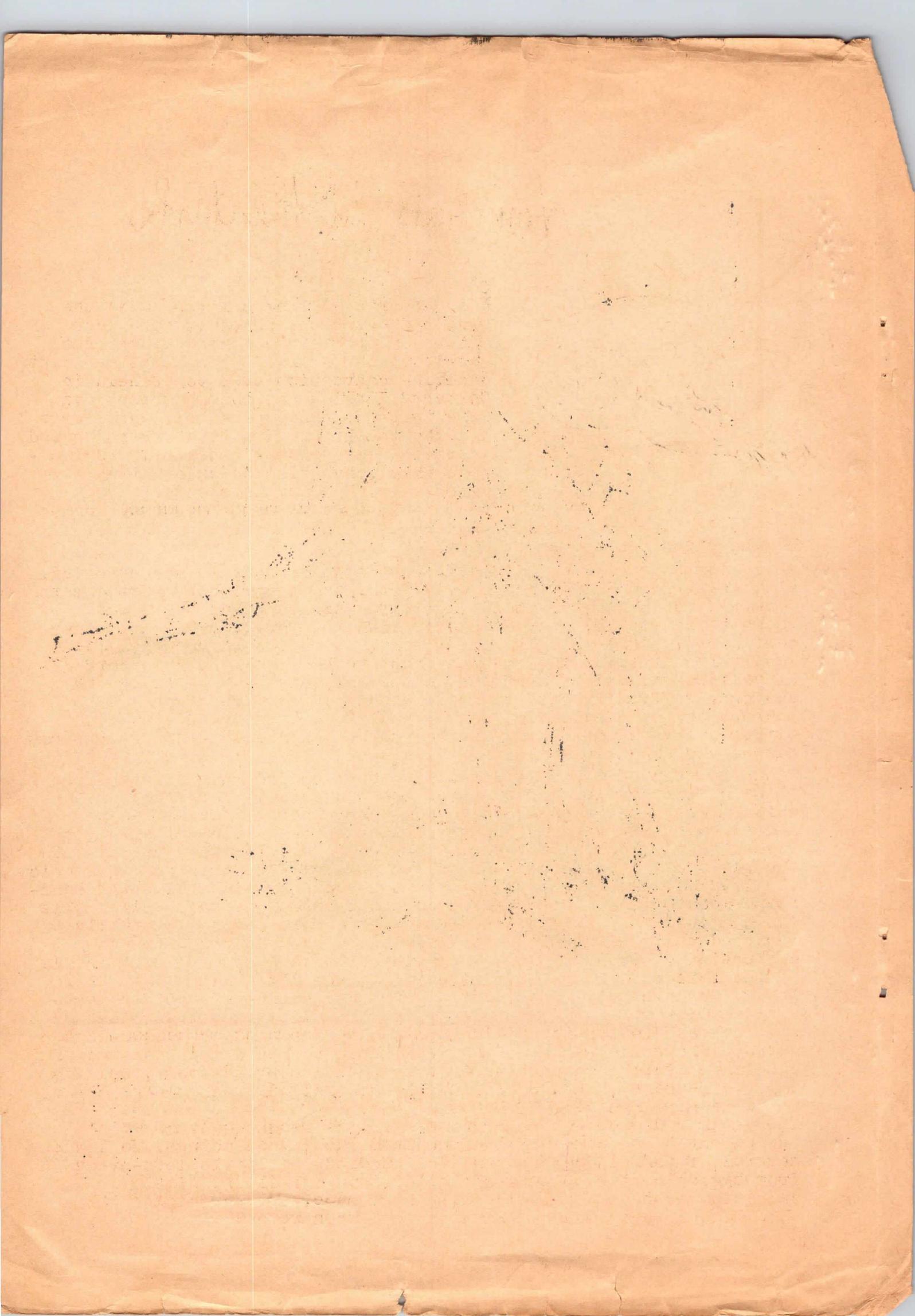


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tomchats in the dark

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fomchats in the dark



CC

Many reports will be written about the Castle Convention, probably more than about any other German con before. But wasn't it the weirdest, funniest and most exciting convention ever to be held in Germany? I think so, though these days were the most exhausting holidays I ever had. My thanks are due to our British and American guests who - especially for me - made this convention an unforgettable experience. To them this report is dedicated, to all those fans whose names

are so familiar to you and with whom I felt so very much at home during those aah too short days.

Well, let's fake it - the Castle wasn't quite what we had expected. When we arrived on Saturday, July 25th, the proprietor, furthermore referred to as 'Castle Ghost', grimly announced that there were no rooms ready at all, that he didn't like the world, and that 'money must roll'. This was his life theory, 'I must earn money', and he fought for it even if he happened not to be drunk. He knew nothing of politeness, and he startled guests and fans by his strange behaviour. We finally came to smile about him, and when we learned how to handle him, we got what we wanted. He was an old bitter man with some money, who had to be taken as he was. Apart from him we had the Castle all for ourselves.

With the help of Franz we got a big three-bedded room in the first floor of the castle, a room which was luxuriously furnished with spider webs, dust everywhere, and a water heater. But we had a marvellous view over the country, being in the valley of the Ache river and the mountains towering on two sides. The view was open to the plain of the Chiemsee and to the town of Marquartstein well below the level of the Castle yard, and at any day or night time the landscape looked like a wonderful postcard from our windows. Signs like 'Do not lean out' or 'Do not open before train stops' eventually reminded us of the 400 feet abyss below the windows - (which collection of train signs was completed by an 'Express' hint in one of the toilets). Using Rolf Gindorf's words 'The Castle looks like the WC building of a real castle', the difference of the Marquartstein building to the common image of castles and strongholds with bastions and towers is sufficiently, though roughly characterized. Anyway, the solid structure was well able to stand the shakings of a science fiction convention (better than its proprietor), and its inner appearance, though effectively modernized, was able to create the necessary romantic background mood.

The Ghost had promised to prepare a lot of rooms, most of which turned out to be caves full of mud and rubble and things. No lamps, several of the windows broken, but hundreds of little left-overs from bygone centuries were littered about the floor, nicely decorated rotten lamps, clocks, books, maps, treasure boxes full of old newspapers and menœuvre plans. When we enthusiastically

reported to John Roles what he was able to find up in the second floor, you should have seen his face announcing that he'd flipped through the files long ago. Ah, this nose...

The first days we spent preparing these rooms. We cleaned the dust away, unfolded camp-beds, fixed lamps and toilets, carried up tables, banks and wardrobes, and we were dirty! These were to be the cheap quarters for those young and daring fans who wanted to stay for a few days only. A pretty dusty way of lodging, anyway.

The big hall and three smaller rooms were very nice to hold a convention in. The wooden gallery in the hall was a nice background for coming fannish events, as was a 'Caesaris Est' painting on the wall for convenient Rolf Gindorf photographs. A huge rotten kitchen room adjoining the hall provided the scene for a set of truly fannish photos, the Ghost readily pretending to boil two German fans in the great rusty kettles. (This kitchen had been used for a school home, which the Castle was until about ten years ago). The rest of the Castle consisted of narrow dark corridors, circular staircases, a vast homely courtyard, a Weinstube, a wonderful large chimney room, in which some idiot broke the teeth out of a real bear's head lying on the floor (with adjoining fur, of course). Someone else eventually tried to put fire into the chimney, but only succeeded in queuing up a lot of coughing red-eyed fans in front of the doors. There was a wooden (shaky) bridge leading to the gate of the Castle (still is, silly), and the well contains flowers. That was the scene for the Castle Con.

But before the earth and police shaking event took place we had a bit of holidaying to do. We discovered a nice place in an Ache bank meadow. The water of the river was exquisitely cold, but extremely clear. The current was very fast, and sitting down you were quickly carried away. You had to take care of your knees and arms, since the river was very shallow. Even Archie Mercer, who was the first to arrive, joined us in trudging down this river for several hundred yards. We enjoyed the people gazing at us daring swimmers from the security of a bridge, and like having performed something utterly dangerous left the floods of the Ache under admiring gazes.

Besides, we made a few trips in the surrounding valleys, paid München a day's visit (spending the morning looking for a place to park our car), we even climbed half a mountain, but returned without having seen the summit, because of one certain Thomas Schlück panting like mad. We watched the gliders being launched from the only landing field in the Alpes, and we followed them with our eyes.

We were, however, not courageous enough to book a passenger flight for ourselves, and just made sure that George Locke got his chance to fly himself. He spent a lot of money there, but he said the experience of gliding in the mountains to be grand...

On Wednesday before the con we paid Königsee a visit (we = Wolfgang Thadewald, Horst Evermann, Rolf Gindorf, Burkhard Blüm, and I). This was the place where the Liverpool group and a few other British fans spent their holidays. After having travelled through the huge Königsee hotel for some hours, we finally met them in the street, buying souvenirs. It was a very shy and silent hallo, but finally we came into talking in the only hotel lounge. But here already began what ended up in Salzburg as the big 'Split, Lose, and Wait' party - it was just impossible to keep all those people together, quite naturally. We had a wonderful day, however. It was probably the strangest fannish party ever to be celebrated: Imagine the Königsee, surrounded by more or less high mountains, a beautiful picture. Imagine little



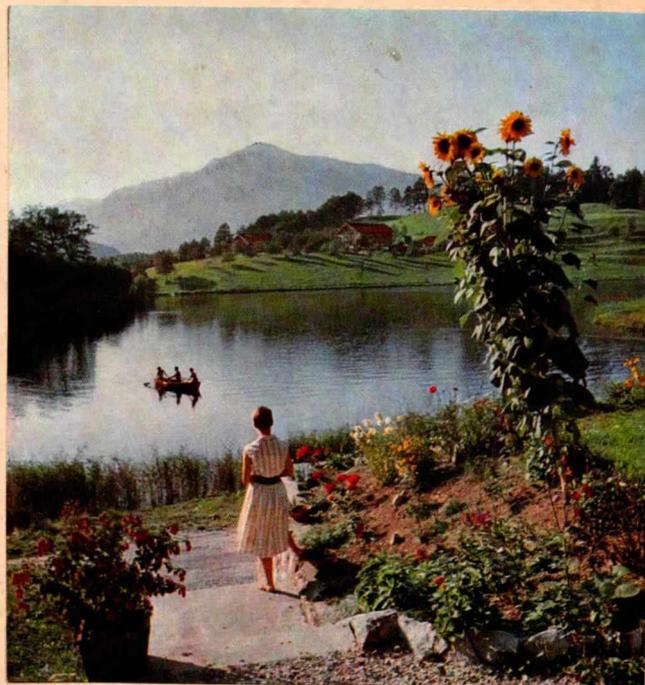
boats on it, for 100 persons or so, which circle this sea in about two hours. Imagine the lower front part of one of these ships filled with fans, with shouting, laughing, photographing, filming fans. Champaign corks are shot out into the air, chasing the ducks away. The bottles are circling. Even some of the Shorrocks children join in, but comparing the stuff with their father's home-made wines, don't find any strongness in it, while I took home a pretty hang-over, caused by a lot of beer, a bit of champaign and other ingredients. All this summed up to a nice bad feeling. A wonderful day. A lot of others were to follow.

The Convention itself started on Friday afternoon, July 31st. Though having produced the programme booklet I didn't participate very much in the official proceedings of the convention. I'll concentrate on the social part of it all and on a few oddities.

The first night - a public dance evening in the courtyard - saw me dancing Hully-Gully in a row with lots of other people on the stage. I remember laughing terribly, I remember discussing business with Dave Barber and a Bavarian beer official, and Dave getting rather excited. I remember Janet Shorrocks always saying 'no' when I asked her for a dance. I remember dancing twist with Linda Shorrocks somewhere - oh, there are so many details.

There was only a single bulb high up in the sky to light the courtyard, and the shadows were dancing on the walls. The appearance of a ghost via taperecorder failed in the cries of the ladies when all lights were switched out at midnight. A Bavarian folk dance group performed Schuhplattler, an original experience to me.

Saturday night - the fancy dress night - I frequently dropped in at the Vurguzz bar. I was disguised as a London Bobby, as was Roy Shorrocks, and I had to control the alcohol percentage of the Vurguzz this night. The band was good. Especially good Archie as Olaf and the Liverpool fans in their LiG shirts. Afterwards night activities went on. Thanks to British experiences in this respect, our room parties were quite a success - at least for me. After two nights of talking in (Hello, girls!) and out of my bed I could hardly speak anymore, so Ina had to give me some of her anti-soar pills. I'll take a huge box of them to London next year! Anyway, these parties were the highlights of my convention, and I found opportunity to talk to many very nice people, to Norman Weedall, Eddie Jones, Tony Walsh (who only stayed for one day and a half, pity!), to George



One large complaint

in German - Luther's my page!

my joking. Don't marvel at me when I come to GB next year! However, besides talking most of the people were busy taking snapshots and filming all the rest of the time. Someone even caught me brushing my teeth, and if their films are really as fast as they said (hoped)...

Quite a few people got drunk in the convention nights (including me), and some of these started to haunt women. Brian Burgess joined this group and brought Sonja, a nice Vienna girl, to hide under my bed when he announced his coming with an alarm clock. Active Marquartstein nights, indeed.

But there were certain day activities, too. Eddie, driedly slunk, did a few sales; there were certain items of the programme that went by unnoticed by me. We had a nice time with the US author George O. Smith in the Castle Weinstube, talking quietly about this and that, and especially about fire crackers and neighbouring problems. (A 'few' of these crackers had alarmed the police on Saturday night. High life, as I said before!) John Humphries bought a three-litre-beer bumper for his collection, saying he would throw his suitcase away, in order to store his things in the bumper. There was an extremely interesting slide show, commented wittily by Eddie and Ethel, with slides from the last British conventions. Oh, there were so many things to be reported about, and it is really hard to find the best words for all those details that sum up to a highly enjoyed time with good people.

On Wednesday after the convention we all paid a visit to Salzburg, there meeting the LiG fans again. Salzburg, the world's most famous town of music, had its annual Festival at that time, and everywhere its connection to music was obvious. In each and every shop portraits of singers, conductors, soloists showed up amongst underwear, bottles, and food. Record jacket designs, large advertising posters of all of the most important record firms dominated the street scenes. The narrow streets, called 'Gassen' (Lanes) were full of tourist life, full of shops, and shadows, and tradition. (The house of birth of Mozart). We only spent a few hours there, and we had to restrict ourselves to the outer beauties of this town. We went up to the Hohensalz Castle, an impressing structure, towering over the town. The view is just marvellous. The atmosphere of this town is created by its buildings which - for the hurried visitor - promise extraordinary things. The dome, the churches, the great Festival House. I just walked and enjoyed the conscious feeling to actually be in another town, enjoyed the differences and likenesses.

We bid a final farewell to the LiG on the Residenzplatz in Salzburg. The driver hurried the people into his bus, so that we hadn't the time to feel sorry - this only came afterwards. These days passed far too quickly, but I won't forget them!

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LONDON IN 1965 ++ VIENNA IN 1966 ++ END OF THE WORLD CON SIXTY-NINE
IN MARQUARTSTEIN
=====

By the way, the convention got rather a good news coverage. The local press reported in a neutral way, even featuring a picture with Archie Mercer in the background, swinging his fancy dress axe. John Humphries just looks innocently downwards.

mailing comments

Off Trails/Ethel Too many US-members dropping out, right.

Suggestion: make it legal part of the constitution that overseas members (outside Europe, that is, and only they) can have their stencils run by one of the officers at a certain fee per page. This might attract a lot of people from all over the world, who are kept from OMPA by lack of time and enormous parcel expenses, and especially those without a duplicator of their own. This system worked very well with the German apa FAN, and sometimes even the stencils were cut by the AE -- but this would go too far here. An additional advance deposit should be asked for by these people, and their stencils might be deadlined a few days before the obligatory fifth. This is not intended to necessarily increase your work, Ethel; but your the one to mail out the mailings!

Cognate/ Rosemary Hickey. I'd have liked to read your description of 'Old Town'. I love to get to know places by other people's 'involved description'. Actually I intend to do the same about some nice spots in Hannover. *Cognate HA mailed 10/25/67*

Amble/ Archie I liked the invention story. You are a little Schelm, Archie, in all your writings. But your reasoning about changing street names is somewhat leaky. 'Setting a precedent for a future change to Robinson Street.' Gee, you can continue on that: why built houses at all when - by building them - you set a 'precedent' for later removal? Why produce an OMPA-zine when after a few years only a few rotten copies will exist? Everything's done for a certain reason, for being of use for a certain time; and expressing one's feelings for the qualities of a statesman (in the case of Kennedy) by (re-)naming a place of street after him, has - in my eyes - a more lasting, a more public, a more determined effect, than, say the obituary in a newspaper. Anyway, I must admit that such things are done with a certain routine nowadays; to a certain degree façadious ceremonies are involved which so often degrade a step like that, but the spontaneity of, for instance, the Berlin people seemed to be born of a deep grief, out of the wish to show what Kennedy meant to them, not to hastily dispose of a duty. They didn't insure Kennedy's immortality by that, right; and to avoid re-naming at all we'd have to get rid of all of the millions of street names first.

Dolphin/ Elinor Busby turns out to be an expert in wines, which occupation seems to take a great part in American housewifery anyway. All we used to produce ourselves to a certain degree was apple juice, but living in town now makes buying in a shop much easier. An interesting sport anyway, and full of surprises. I agree with you on Judy Garland.

Compact/ Ella You have a straight way of telling what you think - which brings a unique freshness into your zines. -- I love to read plays; I'm stimulated to imagine what this and that scene will look like on stage, and especially upon reading plays shortly before seeing them in theatre, I'm often shocked how much the reality (if only the stage reality) differs from what I made up. Sometimes it's difficult to feel into the atmosphere of a play, but going into the second part, things mostly become fascinating. I'd have liked to stage a few of our annual school performanes, but there were better people... But we had a good training in play reading. We spoke at length about plays, read original Shakespeare pieces in the English lessons (comparing with them the German verses in the German lessons), we dealt with Sartre and Brecht plays, and especially with the latter's special type of theatre, the 'Verfremdungstheater' (estranging theatre), aiming not at presenting a second reality to the spectator, but at pushing him out of the stage world at every possible

occasion into a neutral, observing, and judging position. In order to make his spectators think about the background of his stories and persons, Brecht tells us in the beginning of each act what will happen next, who will die, who will marry, etc., so that by knowing all the major events (which are normally apt to attract our attention in the first place) we are able to concentrate upon what seems important to the author. Another typical Brecht trick: he likes to make his characters perform unexpected things, commit actions which simply don't fit into the 'scheme' of that certain person. He does not offer a rounded picture of each character, not a neatly prepared dish to be swallowed in two hours and to be forgotten three minutes after the performance, but he forces us to think about the people on stage, even if we don't want to. By comparing Brecht's school of theatre to even more modern aspects of play-writing, and by setting against all this the classical form of play, our teachers were able to wake our (especially my) interest for the vast field of theatre. But I digressed. So play reading can be fascinating to me.

Speaking of theatre crowds... I have experiences of my own. Well, I admit, I have often been joining those young people making nasty remarks about (and during) a film, but only when I thought the piece really deserved it. But I have never been drunk, as was one of my neighbors in MINNA VON BARNHELM. He must have been drinking for the last three hours before the performance at least, and all the time he was busy with nonsense. He tried to sing (not very loudly), rattled with his keys, hummed and swayed to and fro in his seat, and consumed more from his pocket flask. I managed to enjoy both, the play and him, somehow; but - to try a British understatement - his wasn't quite the proper condition. My mother reports about an old man uttering shrill coughing noises during an opera performance in Berlin. He had cropped up in a Berry-like checked shirt, a very nice green necktie, and after the first bars he introduced himself with the very loud remark, "Who is Aida now?" You can have fun.



I hate the staple the wrong way up, Ella. By the way - you are president now and responsible for questions that cannot be solved from the constitution only. The c. says, no material is credited in OMPA that has been published before outside OMPA. What about material, say, by me, which appeared in German? I don't want to be lazy. I'll do my minimum at any rate, but as OMPA gets more and more international I'd like to put this question.

Erg Terry Gee, four persons, three nights, and 25 Pounds...? I wonder if I'll have to go to Cannes in order to win some money before I come to London

in 65?? I liked your verse very much. Wish I could do funny things like that. I tried my hand once and even translated a few songs from WEST SIDE STORY. But bad.

Bletherings Ethel Nice description that, of a con-morning together with Ella. You have a wonderful way of reporting about such episodes, and - as I told you - I found a lot of wonderful paragraphs in your TAFF-report, paragraphs which like in no TAFF report before were apt to bring close to the reader what TAFF really means to a winning candidate and to fandom as a whole. Must be female intuition or such.

Mein OMP-F Colin Freeman I had a loud laugh at the line 'You grunt while I lift.'

Evolution, progress, success has been born out of fear and need for protection, right. It was the greatest danger that favoured man's evolution - but you seem to think that our fellow beings are the most recent stimulation for evolution, the physical evolution having ended when man finished finding means against the most serious of nature's catastrophes. But remember all the wars that have been occupying mankind ever since man began leading the life of an intelligent being. Consider how much wars surpassed the dangers of nature. The spiritual evolution has ever had its difficulties of fitting the principles of war and killing into its theories. Ever since mankind turned away from the God-bound life and turned to the nature sciences (and thus began to ban the danger of nature finally), the scale of war was simply enlarged. ever more people were involved in warfare, ever more sufferings, ever more devastation. This evolution went in proportion to man's insight into nature, and if man's inner evolution will continue on that ground, and if we listen closely to what science fiction mostly tells us...

Brobdingnag Dick The title reminded me of cognac first... I seem to have missed the preliminary explanations, and I must be stupid. Anyway, from what I inferred, this is sort of a game with players and moves and such. 'Diplomacy Game'. If it is taken seriously, which I'm not so sure of at the moment, it's quite an unnecessary affair, like little boys playing war or so. And by the way, I wouldn't call moving armies 'diplomacy! anyway. Somebody explain?

Morph John You are a real book lover. That shines through all your texts. Reading your long-arm-of-coincidence department, I got quite excited at the first mention of Baroness Tautphoeus. Just a few days before I had been stencilling two pages about the history of Marquartstein and its Castle for the Castle Con programme booklet, and in it this lady was mentioned, former Lady of Eglington-Winton. Her husband took over the Castle in 1857, and their ancestors sold it to Mr. Castle Ghost in 1959. I was sort of disappointed that you discovered the coincidence yourself; but whence the title of your column?

SIZARS Bruce Burn Well, would you like to have an explanation of the German radio system as well? -- It's a pity that so much space had to do into such nasty matters. This is a subject which is important to a few people only, probably not even to Ella herself; so why begin and make OMPA the arena for just that which Elinor Busby is pondering to flee from in FAPA?

Whatsit Ken Cheslin Not a very original remark: gogh, what work to colour all those covers! And your Japanese columnist, however often he jumps from subject to subject, succeeds in creating a lively and lovely picture of today's Japan. And CUM TO BRUM! What ingenious campaign trailers you always find! I wonder if I ought to have made it SEE YOU, KAIN, IN MARQUARTSTEIN!, just for the rhyme of it!

Pantheon Burkhard The application of 'we' is a bit strange. Thought you'd drop it here. TAFF is a problem to be talked about very much. Your system of pre-election sounds a bit complicated. Why not just try to agree about one German candidate in time? And why did you forget yourself (or better yourselves), in the list of possible German TAFF-candidates...?

Souffle John Thirteen viewings of THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN, a record? Oh boy, you should see people who are really enthusiastic about a film (or a star)! I read about some James Dean fans having seen his REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE 32 times (thirty-two!!) - BIG COUNTRY is my favourite Western - but I agree it's hard to put up such a list.

Enjoyed the rest of the mailing No film comments this time. ciao.

Always