



Vignettes from SilverCon 3

"Thank you for carrying my bag, Ken."

People scurried through McCarren Airport as I escorted Bill Donoho and his plaid suitcase from the baggage claim area.

"Not a problem, Bill. Look . . . Arnie always told me that 'The main reason to recruit neos into fanzine fandom was to get sodas for the BNF's and to carry their bags.' I'm still a neo so I have to carry your bag."

I watched him chuckle, as if this wasn't the first time some neo got duped by fandom's sense o'wonder.

"I knew you were here. I could smell you in the hallway."

Things were going well at the pre-convention party at the Katz'. Ted White was in the middle of a wonderful story when he stopped and asked, "I wonder, what do you call those things that you blow into on New Year's Eve and at parties? You know, those paper things that are rolled up and you blow into them and they go ptptptptp in someone's face.?" He included much hand waving and cheek puffing to demonstrate his point.

Since Ted's story had nothing to do with New Year's Eve, parties, blowing anything or anything else that might be described as 'going ptptptptp in someone's face,' one of the alert audience members asked, "What?"

"You know, those *things*," he pronounced *things* as the word ment something other than things, "those *things* that you blow on."

"Party favors?" someone suggested helpfully.

"No, party favors is a generic name, they are party favors but they also must have a name. What do you order if you're buying them through a mail-order catalog? If you ordered 'party favors' you might get something totally different."

"Those are called, um, no that's not it, hmmm," someone else said.

We never did get back to the original conversation.

[Whispered] "Here Su, give him another plate."

Later on that night, in the back yard.

Greg Benford and I were having one of those rolling conversations that go from one subject to the next without obvious segues. I think it started when I showed him the Katz' natural spring, the Cry-Me-A River. Then the converse moved rapidly into Vegas' water supply, eco-terrorism, global warming, over-population, science fiction writing, predicting the future, ecology, extra terrestrials, exo-biology, exo-geology, the Earth, and then into deserts.

"And don't forget acid rain," someone else in the crowd suggested. "It's a really bad problem around here."

Actually we don't have that bugaboo here. I pointed out to the helpful bystander that the soil around here was very alkaline. I suggested that acid rain would neutralize the soil's pH and improve the growing conditions. Greg agreed with me and then asked, "Are all desert's soils alkaline?" *[Try reading that sentence out loud. Greg had to say it a couple of times to get it right.]*

"Yes," I responded confidently.

"Wait," I responded a little less confidently.

"No, I'm pretty sure they're all alkaline," I reassured myself.

"Well, I hope it's true. I just wrote a book," commented SilverCon 3's GoH, "that assumes that all desert soils are alkaline."

"Well Greg, I think you're right."

"But why?" he wanted to know. "Why are they alkaline?"

"The pH is 8 or so . . . oxygen . . . minerals . . . mumble . . . hydroxides . . ."

that started a list running through my mind of all of the minerals and other stuff [*highly technical term 'other stuff'*]. My momentum ran out when I realized Greg had reasked his question, "Why are they alkaline?"

"I don't know," I admitted, "let me think about it."

And while I was sitting there, trying like mad to answer the riddle, a small part of my mind noticed what a wonderful time I was having. What a great convention this is going to be.

←-----→
If fandom is a tribe, at what stage do we get to wear face paint?
←-----→

"Wow! That was great!"

"See, Tom, I told you fandom was cool."

"You weren't kidding."

We talked as we walked down the corridor away from Arnie and Joyce's room on our way back into SilverCon 3.

"Ted White had me mesmerized. What a great story teller," he said.

"You should read some of his stuff," I advised, "he writes like he talks."

"But Ted kept on telling story after story. I loved it!"

"Look, Tom, here's my plan," I whispered into his ear, "You send Robert Lichtman a copy of Apa-V and let him know you want to join FAPA."

"But Apa-V is just for locals, for us Vegnants," he whined.

"Doesn't matter."

By this time, we were walking quickly through the great hall. Our quickened pace reflected our excitement.

"Fantastic," Tom muttered as he shook his head.

←-----→
"Wow, Bob Stupak must have the smallest dick in the world!"
←-----→

Apa-tizer #4 is come and gone. Anyone who took the time to look at last issue's colophon might have noticed that the first letter of every line read "April Fools Aileen wrote this." The entire issue (except the colophon) was written by my lovely wife. Good by for now.

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←-----→
"Feed the voices of the dead,' what does that mean, anyway?"
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