

CONFAB

January 31, 1955



Bob Featrowsky - Box 634 - Norfolk, Nebr.

BOB TUCKER, Box 702, Bloomington, Illinois

Having absolutely no inspiration tonight and therefore being unable to write deathless prose for the enjoyment of your gifted readers, I shall content myself to correcting some misimpressions found in your pages.

Page 4, Norman Browne: There were far more than 50 active fans in 1937, at the time FAPA was organized, although Moskowitz may have given such an impression in his STORM. True, fanzine circulations were very low, but then they hang around 100 to 200 today, and certainly there are more than 200 active fans. The organizers of FAPA bypassed many, many fans, some of whom drifted in later as the organization gained notice.

The same may be said of the number of fanzines at that time. I'm certain there were more than about 20, although I cannot now quote names and dates. I alone published 4 in the period 1932-1937, and I was small potatoes.

Page 6, Eric Bentcliffe: From the projectionist's point of view, "Vista-Vision" is here to stay and to hell with Cinemascope and 3-D. Our theater was equipped for all three mediums but they ripped out the 3-D business and sold it; the headache involved simply wasn't worth the time and money. Cinemascope, involving the use of a "squeezed" picture and an extra-heavy, extra-tricky lens-train to "un-squeeze" it again for projection, is too damned much bother. It is impossible to focus, and so we have given up trying. The customers just sit there and rub their eyes, and moan. But Vista-Vision is the answer to a maiden's prayer. It calls for just one lens, an extremely short-focal-length lens of very fast ... uh, fast speed. That doesn't make much sense, does it? Oh well, it is a fast lens. Nothing has been squeezed at the studio and so we unsqueeze nothing. We simply take a frame of film which has an awful lot of picture packed into it, and spread it all over the screen. In our theater, Cinemascope pictures are just two feet wider than Vista-Vision ditto. And the focus is pin-point sharp. So, I repeat, to hell with Cinemascope.

By the way, "Cinerama" is here to stay awhile. Although the first picture is being withdrawn in New York and elsewhere, a second one is ready to open there within a few weeks, and a third one is now being filmed. That third one will be a regular story, a western about Lewis & Clark, I believe. The first two are travelogues. In addition to all this, the people running the

show have perfected (?) a portable, motorized Cinema unit and soon it will be showing in the hinterlands via truck.

Those theaters advertising "wide-screen" pictures have merely stolen a trick from the Vista-Vision process. They simply use a wide-angle lens on ordinary pictures and crop the top and bottom. It fills the screen from side to side, but you lose an awful lot of picture at the top and bottom.

Page 11, George Wetzel: E.E. Evans is quite a bit older, both fannishly and chronologically, than George believes. Evans should be 62 this year, unless he is coyly lying about his age, and he's been in fandom at least fifteen years. I first met him at the 1940 Chicago convention.

To close off, I'm indebted to you, Calkins and Bentcliffe this issue for helping me with "The Neo-Fan's Guide." The Guide, now stencilled and enroute to Grennell for mimeographing, is a nine-page miniature Fancyclopedia of useful words and phrases to aid the struggling neo in his groping through the jungle. Included in it, because CONFAB arrived just in time, are "lino" and "convacation." Thank you, gentlemen.

((Thanks for the projectionist's point of view on the various movie "scopes" and "visions". # Your description of the "wide-screen" business advertised by some theaters sounds like what the local theaters are using, as all their pictures are shown "wide". I haven't seen the genuine article as yet. # One of the locals used to show some 3-D, but not anymore, so possibly they've sold their equipment too. # Will be looking forward to the publication of the "Neo-Fan's Guide". Should be mighty helpful to me. And a humble bow for any help CONFAB might have furnished.))

REDD BOGGS, 2215 Benjamin Street N.E., Minneapolis 18, Minn.

This would give F. Towner Laney a laugh if he ever looked up from his stamp collection, but I must say a few words on behalf of E. E. Evans. George Wetzel may be right about Evans' attitude toward the Detroit fans of today, but since he doesn't know what he's talking about when he talks about Evans' background, I suspect he may be wrong in other regards, too.

Evans "is a comparative newcomer to fandom," says Wetzel. That is interesting. Right here on my desk at the moment I have fragments of a 1941 FAPA mailing, just rescued from the gafia retreat of Rich Elsberry. And in that mailing of 14 years ago is a fapazine called A Tale of the Evans edited by E. Everett Evans of Battle Creek, Michigan. Along about the same time Evans was associated with Tucker in the publication of Le Zombie and with Al Ashley in the production of Nova, two of the leading fanzines of those days.

Evans was an early president of the NFFF, met many fans at the Michicons of the 1940s, and even travelled to the east coast

around 1945, where he visited the Strangers of Boston and other fans. In 1945 he and the rest of the Michifen in "Slan Shack" moved to Los Angeles, and since that time Evans has been a prominent member of the LASFS. I don't believe he attended the prewar national cons, but he has made most of them since 1946. It seems incredible that any fan would have failed to remember Evans from his part in the well-publicized feuds in LA from 1947 onward when he was the main target of the Insurgents in scores of fanzine articles, cartoons, etc.

Whether or not Evans thinks that "overall fandom is nothing but juveniles," his attitude cannot be dismissed as the product of ignorance about fans.

Interlineations. I suppose people should guess that your interlineations are quotes from letters, or at least quotes, on account of the quotemarks around them. But I know I've put quotemarks around original interlines, if I imagine them to be said by somebody rather than myself. I wish I could hit upon a system of indicating which of Skyhook's interlineations are originals, which originals that I put in somebody's else's mouth, and which are quotes.

As far as Confab's interlineations go, I'll admit that I don't care too much for most of them, though when I made this remark to McCain once, he quoted one from your magazine that was pretty good. I feel about interlineations that run more than one line the same way as I feel about limericks that run six lines. And the content of Confab's interlineations is too often a rather conscious attempt at a wisecrack without the incisive quality that marks the ones in Hyphen. The nearest I can explain it is that Confab's seem to be isolated jibes calculated to reduce everybody to helpless laughter, while Hyphen's come from an entire context in which the writer has seen the world in a special cockeyed way and depicted the whole scene so that the humor surrounds and uplifts the entire subject.

Of course this is a generalization and not true in every instance when applied to Confab or to Hyphen.

It's amazing the way interlineations have suddenly become a recognized and popular art form after leading a quiet existence for many years in the fanzines of Speer, Widner, and others. It's as if Sunday painters like I and Sir Winston took up dadaism; the interlineation was just as avant garde and esoteric till recent times. Gregg Calkins mentions some classifications of interlineations; there are a few more.

Lee Hoffman pioneered in the interlineation that was in essence a private communique between two or three people. One I remember was "I didn't know Ackerman could hit so hard!" Such interlineations are fannish variations on the "family joke", the punchline of which may be inserted in a conversation with strangers or even close friends without provoking to merriment anybody but one's wife, who remembers the background of "Just down the road a piece!" or whatever.

A fertile field for interlineations is that of epigrams, but this is a seldom-harvested expanse for present day fans. "I love each and every woman but I hate women" and "The perfect woman is not the perfect lady" are a couple I used in Skyhook.

Still another variation which I seldom see is an interlineation pair or series. In one issue of Art Widner's Yhos, the inter-

lineations were all connected, being quotes from the Hope-Crosby film, "Road to Morocco". Or one interlineation can answer or comment on another, as in these: "It is a proud and lonely Thing", followed on the same page with, " I am no Thing". Even subtler is the interlineation that refers to an interlineation in another fan's magazine. For instance, once Jack Speer interlined a whole series of dollar signs, broken only by the cryptic comment, "So do I". This meant nothing except to fapans who remembered the interlineation in Al Ashley's En Garde!:

filthy stuff we collect 'em\$\$\$nasty aren't we?\$\$\$filthy stuff

(I reconstruct this from memory, since I can't find the magazine referred to.) A more recent example of the same thing are the variations on the Courtney's boat theme. The use of "pairs" often enhances the interlineation. For instance, in this Confab you make one run-on interlineation out of "Could it be that you are a telepathic receptor or something? If something, don't answer." If you'd made the second sentence into a separate interline, the cryptic quality of the whole would have been increased, and everybody would have had fun discovering that the second was a continuation of the first.

I disagree with Calkins about the line regarding the eggplant, which he says is "overdone" and "poor". I think it's lovely, although I think it came into the fannish language through an article on acidism, not through an interline. As Lee Hoffman explained it, "I had one grunch but the eggplant over there".

((We seem to be in opposite corners on this interlineation question...on some points, at least. For one thing, I don't see anything wrong with interlineations that run over one line in length. I try to make all mine one-liners, but if they won't fit, I just naturally use two lines. # I don't make any claims about CONFAB's interlineations comparing with those in HYPHEN. And I will admit that I don't think the interlineations in the last few CONFABS will average out quite as good as the first few issues. But, with all due modesty, I will point out that HYPHEN has reprinted a couple of CONFAB's interlineations. # Nor do I particularly care for the "family joke" type of thing. I have used them a time or three but usually prefer something, the humor (if any) of which is fairly apparent to most every fan reading it. # An apazine presents a slightly different picture though, as there your readers are members of a smaller, more closely-knit group than with a general circulation magazine, and the esoteric and cryptic would be more in style.))

VERNON L. McCAIN, Box 876, Kellogg, Idaho

Latest CONFAB calls for several comments.
Norman Browne's repeated use of the term "Old Guard" fans

intrigues me. Sure, I've heard it used in the fannish form before ...probably even used it myself, but only in the generic sense. I wasn't aware anyone considered there to be a specific measurable group as such. And the numbers he assigns them seem quite high. Just what are the characteristics of an "Old Guard" fan? And who are some typical examples? The only names I would consider as naturals are more likely to fall into Norm's list of 'superfans'. Enlightenment, please.

A couple of minor inaccuracies in Ed Cox's letter. "White Christmas" was produced by Paramount, MGM. And the latter company, far from inclining to VistaVision, is second only to Fox in their enthusiasm for CinemaScope and total number of films produced in it. Incidentally, in addition to C'Scope and V'Vision there is now a third process called SuperScope in which pictures are being released. But there is little basic difference in the processes so I think you can safely think of them all as just other trademarked versions of CinemaScope. The public, having been sold CinemaScope, is going to anyway. They already regard 'wide-screen' and CinemaScope as synonymous. I've been told by three different people in three different cities that they had seen the CinemaScope version of "Gone With the Wind", although that picture was filmed a year prior to Hollywood's first experimenting with the process. Anamirama and the as yet to be unveiled A-A process may establish themselves with the public as individual trademarked commodities since they feature more extreme differences in projection than exist between the various anamorphic processes. Significantly enough, these both are New York based, whereas the others have been sponsored and developed within the Hollywood industry.

I question the accuracy of Cox's statement that "often there is some cutting down before the second runs begin (on films)" and would like information as to his authority for this statement and a list of films which have been subjected to such tampering. It is true that "A Star is Born" which originally appeared in a version lasting almost three hours had around 25 minutes snipped from it for all showings after it had been in exhibition around a month. This was done as a favor to exhibitors who had been loudly complaining about its length and their inability to get as rapid a boxoffice turnover as they are used to, with this length film. Since the cut, however, it has developed into a major industry controversy which is still far from settled, at this writing. The cut has drawn blasts from a number of critics and the strongest protest of all is coming, oddly enough, from the exhibitors, many of whom are screaming because they are unable to obtain the original picture since one of the big selling points for second-run and small-town theaters for years has been the "Uncut! Exactly as shown in its world premiere at the _____ Theater in New York" line. With such adverse reaction it is questionable if this sort of cutting will be done again, soon, and if Cox knows of any other examples I'd like to hear of them.

What really makes me burn, though, are Wetzel's comments about E.E.Evans. I'm not particularly a partisan for or against Evans and am anything but an intimate of his. However Wetzel's comments strike me as some of the most outrageous mud-slinging I've seen in fandom in some time.

Wetzel 'judges' Evans to be about 45 or 50. I don't know Evans

exact age but I 'judge' him to be around 15 years short of the mark, both from having seen Evans in person at the NORWESCON and also from comments about his age made by himself and others in fanzines and in person by people who have known him many years. And Wetzel is just about as many years off in assessing Evans tenure as a fan. He calls Evans a 'comparative newcomer' to fandom. I don't know how Wetzel defines the term 'newcomer' but if Evans is a newcomer then I'm not in fandom yet and Wetzel hasn't even been born.

If Evans is a newcomer, just who are the veteran fans.... not to mention oldtimers? If Wetzel can name half a dozen currently active fans who predate Evans he is doing very good. Tucker, of course. Koskowitz, probably. Ackerman and Sykora, if you consider them still active. Anyone else?

Not having a copy of "The Immortal Storm" I can't date Evans' entry into fandom exactly but I have seen his name in at least one pre-World-War II fanzine and I know that, prior to this, he was the most well known of "The Galactic Roamers", E. E. Smith's private fanclub. Evans hit his peak of activity during World War II. That's fifteen years activity, at least. And fandom is currently celebrating its twenty-fifth birthday....although the first eight years pretty much qualify as a false start down a blind alley, until the Cro-Magnon man of fandom appeared in late 1937 with the appearance of Second Fandom.

This is a Newcomer!

Certainly fandom was a teenage activity in the 30's. There were one or two exceptions, men of mature years but still with young ideas who found it to their liking and were active in it. Evans is the most noticeable example. Is this the act of someone who sneers at everyone his junior?

And just what in hell have Evans' abilities as a writer to do with his activity as a fan? Or, for that matter, the question of whether he is a newcomer to fandom? Except, of course, that an old-timer like Evans who has attended most of the cons knows from past experience what it is well to avoid in the future. For instance, there are good reasons for not allowing a bunch of teenagers to have control of the WorldCon. Whether you approve or not (I don't) the Con is now big business and younger, inexperienced fans not only lack the judgment they will acquire with maturity but, more important, they are legally responsible in financial matters.

This sort of irresponsible, wildly inaccurate attack on some other fan is nothing new to fandom nor too rare, even today. However, usually it comes from some teenage fan who, as mentioned previously, may lack mature judgment (please note I said 'may'). There are plenty of exceptions in fandom's history) and, recognizing this, allowances are usually made. But from a person who admits to the age of 33 this blithe distortion of the truth is completely inexcusable.

And, just for the record, I don't give a damn where the con is to be held in 1955.....Cleveland, or Detroit.

((E.E.Evans may not be here to defend himself, but he seems to have a couple or three fair-to-middling champions just the same. # And just between the two of us, I don't too much care whether the convention is in Detroit or Cleveland

either, as I don't plan on being able to attend at either place.))

D. MASON, 14 Jones Street, New York, N. Y.

Esteemed Contemtuary;

Got Confab today. Uff.

Y'know, ohum, I'm not REALLY a fan. I'm being plooped about as a BNF in these here parts, by them as doesn't dare use those letters to my face, simply because of a sick, neurotic admiration for decent writing (decent in a craftsmanly sense, you dirty minded lil' _____), even is stf.

One thing that proves I'm no fan is a large yawn over letter zines. So Joe Schmork of North Pork thinks highly of Alvin Schmalvin's last letter, whatever it was that Alvin's opinion might have been and I don't know because I didn't read it. Yah. Well, keep up the exchange, noble lad, but frankly, you're getting the best end of it. But then, nearly everybody who gets COUP can say that.

About that reproduction--NEVER, sir, in my fanly life, have I resorted to the hekto, ditto, or any other stinking chemical imitations. Many years ago, while you, you mere, were proolly only a letterhack, I had a few ishes out of a thing called COUNT WAGULA. I used a mimeo that I got 934th hand for five bucks, but by ghod, suh, it was a mimeo. Leave us face it, the day of the hecto is long gone and it's a shame that a zine as well worked up as yours uses such a method.

COUP, quite incidentally, (ha) will be printed unless something goes horribly wrong between here and several dozen bandits who are currently fitting me out with the needful typefaces, cases, qucins, stones, yankahups and freebibbies at prices that would have sent Ben Franklin back to the baled bean business. I like offset well enough, having run that type of press myself once, but it's too damn expensive. It has only one advantage to a fan, and that's the ease of illustration. However, even that has its drawbacks from an artistic point of view, since sometimes a technique that's too easy loses something. Me, I intend to use wood and copper engravings in COUP, and not too many anyway because COUP is going strictly thick, closely set text.

GEIS says fandom needs more serious comment on the promags; I agree, and I agree that most fans aren't equipped. That's the fault of our Puritan heritage; our language just isn't well made for adequate comment on today's promags. It needs something along the lines of the vocabulary of a Swedish tugboat captain. But more seriously--the trouble with fans' commenting on modern stf is that most fans are lumpen intellektuals like dear Norm Browne. They don't think stf can be literature, never having had much to do with literature anyway; and they insist the stuff is intended to be "escape" just because most of the poop being published is escape. But that's because you have to sell trash if you're going to try to sell to everybody indiscriminately, and the mag distrib-

ution system ensures just that setup. No promag can be much more than that.

I believe that there is hardly anything but escapist crud, badly written and empty of any real flavor, in all the promags today without exception. I say "believe", because I only read the ones I get free, which is only about 90%. (Don't drool- I gotta work for it, too.)

Come to think of it, that Browne letter fascinates me. So much of it is sheer nonsense that it's difficult not to think that he must have done it that way on purpose. He says fandom is more mature, due (Eech!) to its age, etc. There were many fans who grew up, sure. Only most of them had the sense to get the hell out of fanning and into the pro end of things, or else take to other fields. A few perennial adolescents and congenital failures, who didn't have any talent for anything anyway, and showed it whenever a chance to do anything professionally came up--that's the "Old Guard" Norm's talking about. I should know--the descriptions I just gave apply to me. Maybe.

Fandom takes itself less seriously? Yah? It strikes me that it takes itself too damn seriously now--more so than it did when there were only a few hundred fans alive. If by "not taking itself seriously", Norm means a completely irresponsible attitude toward the things that should be taken seriously, and a stuffy and high minded attitude toward things that don't count, I'd agree. Most fans would agree with Norm--that stf doesn't have purpose and that its content is without ultimate meaning, in short, that it isn't literature. The idea that the only reason to write is to tell an entertaining fable, in other words. Most fans would agree that fandom, the largest group of readers of this literature, the people who read it with the most attention and who are best informed about it--that this group hasn't got a "purpose". In other words, that the only opinion a fan could possibly have about a story is "It entertained me--yes or no." Yet fans take their complicated group, clique, and club setups with passionate seriousness. This is mature?

In respect to Norm's remark anent the style of "Storm", I agree that it does lack opinion, motivation, background--all that and a good deal more. What it lacks is precisely what Norm was saying fandom lacked--what I would call breadth and depth, and what Norm would doubtless call a (snicker) purpose. It isn't a history. It's a collection of anecdotes. And I'm glad Norm warns us that he intends to use the same style in his own work.

As far as fandom and stf existing in symbiotic relationship--the correct word is parasitic. Prodom makes quite a lot of use of fandom, for publicity, for a solid core of sales, for personal egoboo, but of course it could get along without fans. It did, for a good many years.

And as for "rising into prodom", Browne seems to have the usual fans' eye view of the current stf publishing field as a vast and lucrative paradise. Most pros, whether editors, writers, artists, or what have you, do a bit of stf, and a good many other things; there just isn't that much stf any more. And there's less every day. In addition, few pros were fans, and many fans who were briefly pros made a large flop of it.

Hell, I could say a lot more--but is the Immoral Strum worth it?

ah, there, Wetzel, my put-upon one. I agree wholly and enthusiastically with every Wetzel Wail; politics, cliques, vote swapping, Aaaa, the dirty politicians, I hate 'em! Seriously, tho--the tactics at Philadelphia were to be expected by anyone familiar with the town itself and the nature of its inhabitants, including--especially--the fans thereof. The PSFSers were all born and raised in a town that was once described as a cess-pool and proud of it, and hasn't changed since. I know. I was raised there. The first honest faces I saw were when I went to an out-of-city reform school.

But anyway, Cleveland got it, and we trust and pray that New York will get it in '56. We don't intend to use any gerry-mandering methods though. We Fanarchists are old Wobbly school politicians. If you don't vote for New York, we don't try to bribe you--we'll just haul you out in the alley and stomp you. Argh!

One thing, tho. If Baltimore really wanted it so badly, and still wants it in '56, whyn'hell don't we hear more from Baltimore? Maybe I'm wrong, and I'll be glad if I am, but my most recent impression was that there weren't ANY fen in Md.

And those were just some scattered REMarks, which you may, if you like, publish in hole or in pfart. Or not at all. Switchasef. But PLEASE--just because I got the urge to expand my usual postcard into three pages--don't get corresponding ideas. I liked CONFAB, and it stirred up some loose thots, but I never carry on a series of letters. It'd bore me SAHick.

Toof toof.

D MASON
GRAND WAZZER OF THE
FANARCHIST UNDERGROUND

((Since you seem to have such an abhorance of hekto, it's really a shame that you can't recognize the process--- or the product thereof. # I hope you haven't been worrying too much that I'd get any corresponding ideas. As a matter of fact, I've received innumerable letters, that I considered more inspirational than yours, which have failed to inspire me to correspondence. You're completely safe.))

One of the points of comment of the last issue or two of CONFAB has been the interlineations I use. Some readers like one kind, some like another....some don't like any of them. So I've come to a conclusion in the matter; regardless of what kind of interlineations I'd use, I wouldn't be able to please everyone. So in this issue I feature --

Blank Interlineations!

No longer will you have to skim over interlineations that gag you. Instead, you can use the blank space to rest your eyes between letters. Or, if you're an interlineation writer yourself, you can fill in some interlineations to suit your particular tastes.

What other fanzine can make that claim?

Bob Pentecost

ROBERT PEATROWSKY
BOX 634
Norfolk, Nebraska

Printed Matter

Return Post. Gntd.



Rich Bergeron
RFD # 1
Newport, Vt.