

CRANK

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CRANK - The Trufanzine - is a monthly fanzine produced, and edited alternately, by Rob Hansen (9A Greenleaf Rd., East Ham, London E6 1DX, GREAT BRITAIN) and Ted White (1014 N. Tuckahoe St., Falls Church, VA 22046) and is available for the usual: LoCs, whim, or fanzines in trade (copies to both publishers, please). Letters of comment should be sent to the editor of the issue being LoCced. Editor this issue: ROB HANSEN.



LANGFORD WINS HUGO! I was standing at the bar of Newcastle's Grosvenor Hotel, venue for SILICON 9, when Hazel Langford took the transglobal phone call from Malcolm Edwards who, at that very instant, was living it up half a world away at the Worldcon in Melbourne, Australia. After revealing that the British bid had won the 1987 Worldcon (to no-one's very great surprise), he imparted the *real* news.

"Dave's won the Best Fanwriter Hugo!" said Hazel, breathlessly.

"Hey, Langford's won the Hugo!" I shouted across the bar, and at my table Avedon, Mike Glicksohn, and the rest clapped and cheered. I thought Avedon was going to wet herself but instead she wet Jim Barker. As she leapt to her feet, yelling and waving her arms in jubilation, she knocked a pint of beer over him. *My* pint of beer.

Avedon wasted no time in getting on the phone to New York and telling the Nielsen Haydens the good news. It was around 9am local time but judging by the whoops of delight on the Manhattan end of the line this was one piece of news Patrick and Teresa didn't at all mind Avedon getting them out of bed to hear. Such is the pace of modern fandom that within minutes the news had flashed across the globe from Australia to Britain to the Eastern United States, but one person it hadn't yet reached was Dave himself. This being one of the quieter moments of the convention - due to yet another of Linda Pickersgill's many attempts to introduce the heathen Brits to the dubious joys of baseball having been aborted by the bad weather that's blighted summer over here - Dave had gone off with Martin Hoare to sample the delights of a number of local hostelries, so in the brief period til his return there was time to set up a proper welcome.

As the unsuspecting Langford stepped through the doors of the Grosvenor and into the bar all present rose to their feet and clapped and cheered. Dave's usual look of faint bafflement turned to one of total bemusement until Hazel went over and broke the news to him. Then bemusement gave way to wide-eyed astonishment as he threw his head back and emitted one of those famous laughs. (Those who've never heard one before often react with great alarm to a Dave Langford laugh as they scan the room trying to discover who could be in such terrible pain.) It was a happy circumstance that caused SILICON and the Worldcon to be on the same weekend (they're usually a week apart - a state of affairs that allowed me to attend both last year). How appropriate that Dave should hear he'd won a fan Hugo while at Britain's premier fannish convention, where he was surrounded by his peers and able to commence celebrating immediately. It must have been the next best thing to actually being in Melbourne when the result was announced - and since CRANK, ever with its finger on the fannish pulse, had a member of its crack editorial team covering the convention next issue will carry an on-the-spot report of the reactions of those at the ceremony. So now Dave is the proud possessor of a long overdue Hugo, and for a change one of those phallic rocketships has gone to the most deserving candidate.

As for the convention itself, the SILICON 9 programme was the usual collection of silly games, semi-serious talks, offbeat items and other fun things, this time with the addition of writers Chris Evans and Asisdair Grey as 'special guests'. New faces at the convention included the Skeltons and Canadian fans Mike Glicksohn and Catherine Crockett, while the surprise donation of three carrier bags full of books and fanzines mid-way led to an impromptu auction. Conducted by Greg Pickersgill, with assistance from me, the auction raised £47 for TAFF - about three times as much as I thought we'd make and perhaps some measure of how entertaining and/or persuasive Greg and I were.

With one exception I've attended every SILICON since the first back in 1976. They've all been thoroughly enjoyable, the sort of inventive and finely-tuned productions we've come to expect from the Gannetfandom convention-running machine, and SILICON 9 was no exception. It may, however, be the last. On Sunday afternoon, during the slot usually reserved for the traditional debate, Kev Williams announced that the Gannets had grown tired of running the con every year, felt they had grown stale, and didn't want to do it any more. During the discussion that followed Kev did allow that the Gannets might be prepared to provide some of the programming if others provided a venue. Later, small groups from Newport, London, and elsewhere were overheard exploring that very possibility. Personally I'm not convinced that a SILICON put on by others could be SILICON in anything other than name, but I'm prepared to be proved wrong. SILICON has always been my favourite convention and I for one would be sorry to see it die. Time will tell, I suppose.

-Rob Hansen / Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

A LETTER TO ROB HANSEN The past few months have been largely gaffiated ones for me - I've yet to actually mail out copies of the last EGOSCAN, for instance - since I've been spending a lot more time making money and music. And now my 'retirement' is over, since I've been offered the job as Editorial Director of a new prozine.

It's a mixed blessing; I hate to take time off from more immediately pleasurable (and financially rewarding) pursuits, but the idea of creating a new kind of prozine is appealing. And so is the budget: 10¢ a word for SF, and \$150 a page for b&w comics/art. The prozine is called STAFDATE and, as you may infer from that title, it's a mixed-genre zine with Star Trek, Dr. Who, gaming, and comics all cheek-by-jowl with first-class SF. It's my job to conceptualise this disparate mix of elements into a coherent magazine and to package it effectively: I'm designing the magazine and

creating its format. Dave Bischoff is the editor, thank ghod; I won't have to read manuscripts. The publisher is local (Washington D.C.), and once I get STARDATE running smoothly on its tracks, I'll start another magazine - probably several more.

Into the middle of which comes your offer to do a monthly fanzine! My first impulse was to shrug wearily and say, "I couldn't possibly." My second impulse was to accept with the thought that it might recharge me, fannishly. My third impulse was to shudder at the thought of all that monthly work - collating, mailing, etc. - with the one person who could help me through all that stuff no longer available because she's marrying this British sod who is selfishly abducting her from this country rather than sensibly joining her here...and my fourth impulse, which came only moments before I began writing this letter, was to check with rich brown and see if he'd help me with the scutwork, since he'll be supplying the labels anyway.

I think the idea will be workable...if we find that our stencils are compatible with each others machines. (I assume you're going for quarto rather than A4: this is in better proportion for US letter-size, although it will mean large margins on all sides of the US copies.)

As it happens, I just laid in 100 reams of gold twiltone paper.....

....Ted White / Falls Church, April 1985.

WHY CRANK?

Some time back, both wanting a change and feeling a need in British fandom for such a publication, I planned to co-edit a monthly fanzine with Harry Bell. For various reasons Harry pulled out of the project before it could get off the launch-pad, but the idea stayed with me.

One of the problems we hadn't really resolved in doing a monthly zine concerned the North American copies. Since by its very nature a monthly fanzine is going to be topical, and such topicality is lost unless the fanzine is in the hands of its readers soon after publication, North American copies would have to be airmailed and the cost might well prove more than was economically feasible. It occurred to me that one way around this would be to merely airmail the stencils and have someone over there both run off an American edition of the fanzine and send out those copies at domestic rates. Having had this thought the next was inevitable: What if I were to co-produce the fanzine with someone in the US? That way we could take it in turns to edit issues and to put them on stencil. Each of us would be solely responsible for the mailing list on his own side of the Atlantic and the production arrangements would reduce the workload imposed by a monthly schedule to levels we could both handle. It seemed an ideal set-up, a means by which to produce the first truly transatlantic fanzine. Now all I needed was a co-editor...

Almost from the beginning Ted White seemed the obvious person to do the zine with since we share many of the same views and opinions about fandom and we get along together in person just fine, but I wasn't at all sure he'd be interested. He was, after all, doing his own regular fanzine - EGOSCAN - and had not all that long since been involved in co-editing a fanzine not at all dissimilar to the one I was now proposing. I might never have actually got around to putting the idea to him had it not been for Patrick Nielsen Hayden. At one point during his and Teresa's recent TAFF trip we were having a heavy discussion on the meaning of life, the universe, and fandom, when the subject of CRANK came up. I explained what I had in mind and confided that I didn't think Ted would be interested. Patrick convinced me otherwise and urged me to write to Ted and put it to him. I did, and his response is printed above.

We hammered out the broad details of format and the like while Ted was over here in June, but some further tinkering with what you see in this issue will probably be inevitable since we've had no opportunity to discuss the fine points yet. What's also inevitable, given the way we produce it, is that CRANK won't always be out at the same time of the month. With those issues I edit I'll be aiming to have copies available by the One Tun on the first Thursday of the month. But we shall see.

And the title? Well let's just say that, contrary to what some might think, it was in no way inspired by a certain resident of Puerto Rico.

....*Rob Hansen / London.*

ERRATA Or: The Oh, Umm, Err Dept. EPSILON 13, the most recent issue (which some of you already have, some will be getting with this, and which those North Americans on my mailing list will get when the tramp steamers carrying them across the pond discharge their contents in the New World some weeks from now), contained one or two errors. The first occurred mid-way down page 4., and to make any sense at all the line that reads "...the five ring circus the modern Eastercon has become..." should read "...the five ring circus the modern Worldcon has become..." The other is on the back page where I tell Avedon that our quarterversary has arrived. Anyone with a better grasp of simple arithmetic than I will realise that I was a month out and that this doesn't actually occur until some weeks from now.... Oh well.

Something else that appeared in that EPSILON was a report by Ted on his trip over here in June. When we left him he was still at the party being hosted by Dave and Hazel Langford to celebrate the marriage of Avedon and I the previous day. Here, as promised, is the conclusion to that report:

FIVE DAYS II: THE FINAL DAY The party swirled, ebbed and flowed, and then it was one in the morning. I was using the toilet behind the kitchen when I heard Greg's voice, demanding of Dave and Hazel "What's all this about, then," while the Langfords explained that they'd be shutting the party down soon. For the hard core of the party who remained the night was yet young, and Greg's plaint was taken up. Then a local fan, Keith Oborn, volunteered his house for the party's continuation, which seemed an equitable solution. Those with cars ran a ferry service and only minutes later a dozen or so of us were exploring the Oborns' house.

The house was a former gate-house, or something like that, which had been added to and was now (the Oborns having only recently bought it) being remodelled and further modernised. Keith had a fancier stereo system than that of any other British fan I visited (as well as a good video system); he alone has a CD player, which he demonstrated at good volume. Naturally, it sounded stunning.

As the party continued various people gradually dropped away from it to find beds or unroll their sleeping bags on various floors until only Keith, John Jarrold and I were left and it was five in the morning and getting light outside. I unrolled my own sleeping bag and joined John and Alun Harries on the livingroom floor for a few hours sleep.

It's been a long time since I did anything like that. In 1957, a year or so out of high school, I visited friends in Cambridge (Mass.), who assured me there was plenty of sleeping space in their house. For one week I made use of a portion of that 'sleeping space' - the floor. I ached horribly and vowed a mighty oath never again to sleep on a floor anywhere.

In the intervening years I've made do under fairly desperate circumstances - mostly at conventions. In 1953 I shared a room at Solacon with sixteen other fans - I shared a single bed with two other fans, Ron Ellik and Jim Caughran, while George Metzger slept on the firescape outside the window - while at other cons I've slept on mattresses on the floor or on the naked box-springs from which the mattresses had been removed. But until that Saturday night - or Sunday morning - I'd not been on a floor in a sleeping bag again.

Around nine or ten o'clock the VCR a foot from my head clicked, buzzed, and began running. It shut itself off an hour later, but by then more sleep was impossible and people were stirring anyway, so I got up. In half an hour the room was filled with bleary-eyed people staring silently at each other, while Alun played a tape of hard-core rock and told me about Frank's Tape Loop, a cassette-tape apa.

After an hour or so of quiet conversation, during which we all woke up and became more or less human, Phil Palmer, Pam Wells, and I returned our bags and sleeping bags to Phil's car, and began the drive back to London. I chattered away, as is my wont, while Pam dozed in the back seat and Phil drove us skilfully through the small streets of Reading and back on to the motorway.

This was to be my last full day in Britain; a day in which to wind down, relax, and enjoy what remained. We dropped Pam off at her place, then returned to Phil's where we found his brother installing a new bathroom window. After we'd unloaded the car of our stuff we drove to East Ham.

We arrived there before Rob and Avedon, who'd taken the train and told us that they'd been the victims of bad timing right down the line, missing a bus and getting bad connections from then on. We unloaded the wedding presents we'd brought back for them and then Phil departed, leaving me to spend the afternoon and evening with The Newlyweds. It was our first chance, after all the hubbub and bustle of the wedding and reception, to just relax with each other, to visit with each other as friends. Avedon, after all, had become over the years a dear friend and Rob, once met, had become the kind of instant old friend that I value fandom for providing. We relaxed, chatted, eventually went out to a local Indian restaurant for dinner, and then chatted some more. We talked fandom, we talked comics, we talked everything.

At one point Rob pulled out a book, published less than a year earlier, called A HAUNT OF FEARS, 'The Strange History of the British Horror Comics Campaign', by Martin Barker. The cover was a neatly done parody of an EC horror comic (one EC title was HAUNT OF FEAR), complete with the pictures on the side of the Old Witch, the Vault Keeper, and the Crypt Keeper, retitled 'The Hate Monger', 'The Old Corruptor', and 'The Child Reaper', and Rob had gotten it out to show me Chapter Six - 'Frederic Wertham's Nightmare' - which dealt with the scourge of fifties comics.

I was fascinated with the book. Although I was quite familiar with the US side of the story - Wertham's rabble-rousing efforts in THE READER'S DIGEST and his best selling SEDUCTION OF THE INNOCENT, the Senate inquiry, the comics-burnings, and the creation of the Comics Code Authority, which was designed to put EC out of business (and which succeeded) - I was completely ignorant of the parallel uproar in Britain at the time. I had no idea that horror comics per se are illegal in Britain and have been since an Act of Parliament in the fifties. Skimming the chapter on Wertham convinced me that I wanted to read the rest of the book. At first Rob volunteered to get me a copy and post it on, but after I'd pulled out some money to pay for it he suggested I take his copy (still in mint condition) and he'd buy a replacement for

himself. I was glad to agree, and I started reading the book on the train back to Phil's and finished it on the plane the next day.

It's a good book. The author seems to have a firm understanding of both the social background of the fifties, and of comics themselves - something which could not be said for the comics' hysterical critics. He reprints examples of the anti-comics exhibits, and then reprints the full stories from which these examples were taken. In these reprints and in his commentary he pretty much demolishes the case against EC comics in particular, and horror comics in general.

In addition to Wertham, Barker deals with another American critic of comics, G. Legman. Legman, he admits, is the only critic of the comics who both knew whereof he spoke and had a philosophic viewpoint from which the comics could be legitimately criticised, albeit incorrectly. Legman is an oddball in American letters, best known among some as an encyclopedic collector of obscene limericks. In the late forties Frank Wilimczyk - a New York fan, book designer, and artist - gave Legman his fanzine collection. Years later Frank would entertain at Fanoclast meetings with descriptions of Legman's apartment in those days:

"You went into the bathroom to pee and it was a different world! The bathtub was filled with horseshit. Filled to the brim. He grew mushrooms in it! Whatta smell!"

Legman never did anything with the fanzines except, I suppose, to read some of them. Wertham, on the other hand, discovered fanzines in the late sixties - comics fans sent them to him - and wrote a book about them. Like his book about comics, it was filled with misunderstandings and misinformation, but unlike the earlier book it was friendly to its subject. Oddly enough, my editorial in the November 1974 AMAZING - which I'd reread at Forbidden Planet a few days earlier - dealt with Wertham's book on fanzines, along with other topics. It's a small world.

Back at Phil's, I packed my bags and made ready for my departure, then went to bed. In the morning I had only to dress and depart.

I hate goodbyes. I like to slip away when it's time to go. I was glad there was no-one to say goodbye to when I left Phil's house the next morning. I'd left Phil a note to express my thanks, along with the spare key he'd lent me.

Phil and I had gotten into this long-distance running-joke thing, after Avedon had shown me his picture (taken on her TAF² trip) and I'd made a passing remark about it which Avedon had blown up into "Ted thinks Phil is really good-looking" in ANSIBLE. Phil had sent me, via Malcolm Edwards when he and Chris Atkinson were here for Constellation, a photo of himself in a dress which I had placed upon my mantel, next to my Hugo. (He also sent me a pair of his socks, but the less said about them the better.) All of this was set against his fanzine reviews in NABU, to which I'd reacted somewhat hostilely: there was an undertone of jibing to our exchanges.

All that changed after Corflu, and then Phil stayed here in my house during his post-Corflu visit to Washington. "This visit has really ruined me," he said when I drove him to the airport at the end of his stay. "I'll never be able to say nasty things about you again."

Staying with Phil in London continued the process for me. I don't feel I know Phil very well - not, for instance, as well as I know Rob - simply because we have somewhat less in common in our attitudes about fandom and related subjects, and because we've not really discussed the bigger political issues well enough to firmly understand where we each stand. I think there's much about Phil that I don't know,

and possibly I'd be surprised at what I found if I knew him better. The Marxist patina of his vocabulary - typical of many Brits I've talked with - did not seem to overlie an unthoughtout dogma; that much at least was revealed through casual conversation. In any case, I like Phil, I enjoy his company, and I was grateful for his hospitality. He did much, in his quiet way, to improve the quality of my stay in London. I'll never be able to say nasty things about you either, Phil.

I could say a lot of nasty things about Pan Am, however. The flight over was 100% booked - on a 747 - but the flight crew acted like they only had a small fraction of the passengers to serve and otherwise deal with: those in First Class. The flight back - also fully booked - was worse.

It began - and nearly ended - at Heathrow, where we were herded into small buses and driven across the field to our plane, another 747, which we boarded from the ground. It was a wicked, nasty parody of the mobile lounges at Dulles, and few among us enjoyed standing in the rain on the field at Heathrow, inching our way up the rickety stairway onto the plane. However, that was not to be the last we'd see of Heathrow. We took off and about ten minutes later the PA system crackled. "La.." came a choked-off male voice. Then again, "La.." And then, finally, "Ladies and gentlemen. This is your captain speaking. We have an indication that the door on one of our landing gear hasn't closed. We're going to circle around, dump some fuel, and return to Heathrow so we can deal with this."

We then proceeded to do just that. I wonder how people like having the air over their heads and houses filled with kerosine. I wouldn't care for it much, myself.

When we landed - safely, of course - we actually taxied up to a gate and were able to walk off the plane directly into the airport lounge. There we went through a security system identical to the one we'd gone through before entering the original loading area. But this time there was a difference: a man in a uniform approached me just as I stepped through the metal-detector. "Excuse me, sir, but I'm going to give you a body-search," he said in the bored tones of a professional. He then patted me down and felt me up.

I was, for that instant, outraged. Did they think I was taking a bomb off the plane? Or something else illegal? (There was nothing illegal on my person or in my luggage.) Didn't they realise I'd just gone through a previous security check? Why had I been picked out for the body-search? (Did the five-day growth of beard on my cheeks give me a disreputable look?)

My indignation was not much assuaged by the lay-over while we waited for notification of a new plane to board. There was a bar and a cafeteria of sorts, and it was plain that the passengers of some delayed flights were treated to free meals and drinks here - a bulletin board listed the flights to which these priveleges were extended - but not us. I cruised the cafeteria and found to my amazement that there was not one thing that interested me in all the selections offered. (Later I overheard another passenger complaining, "You'd think they'd have sandwiches, or something," a complaint with which I completely agreed.) Instead I forced my way up to the bar, got a lukewarm Pepsi, and had to dig out the British coins I'd already retired from active duty to pay for it.

After an hour they announced our new boarding gate, and two hours later we finally took off.

The sun was shining in Virginia, and everything looked green and beautiful, although the humidity - there had been a thunderstorm earlier -- was oppressive. Dave Bischoff met me at the airport, and as we drove back to my house I felt like I'd either returned to reality after a long dream...or I'd regained my usual dreaming state after five days of reality. It was hard to tell which it was, and it didn't really matter.

.....*Ted White / Reading, London, and Washington D.C.*

NEW YORK OR BUST John Jarrold - aging boy librarian and looney - recently caused great consternation on both sides of the Atlantic when he phoned Patrick Nielsen Hayden and announced:

"I'm on my way to the airport. I'll phone you when I reach New York, about thirteen hours from now."

Assuming Jarrold to be joking and/or drunk Patrick thought little of this but decided to ring the Jarrold household sometime later anyway - 2am local time - to check on his condition. The phone was answered by John's mother with the news that:

"He isn't here and I don't know where he's gone. It's very strange."

Which is how come, an hour after Jarrold was due to hit the Big Apple, I received a phone call from a worried Patrick that led in turn to me contacting the Jarrold household. John was there, of course, and greeted me by saying:

"I almost flew to New York last night!"

He went on to explain how he'd been hit by a particularly severe bout of post-con blues following the general wonderfulness of SILICON, and that...

"I got all the way to the airport but I couldn't get a flight."

America, you've had a narrow escape.

.....*Rob Hansen.*

A NOTE FROM TED It's the morning of the day I depart for Australia and I have Laboured Mightily; you wouldn't believe how much I've had to do these last two weeks. Got STARDATE finished and off to the printer - but won't have a printed copy to see until I return from Oz. Took my daughter to camp. Re-arranged my basement so a water-tank can be installed when the well water is diverted from my grandmother's house directly to mine (sometime soon). And lots of other stuff. I'm exhausted - and about to embark on an exhausting trip. Whew!

Hope everything is well with you and Avedon and look forward to CRANK #1.

.....*Ted White / August 4th.*

Well, Ted, what did you think of it?

.....*Rob Hansen / September 3rd.*

U.S. edition::QWERTYUIOPress::