

...is published monthly and produced and edited alternatively by Ted White (1014 N. Tuckahoe St., Falls Church, VA 22046, USA) and Rob Hansen (9A Greenleaf Rd., East Ham, London E6 1DX, GREAT BRITAIN), and is available for the usual: LoCs, whim, or fanzines in trade (copies to both editors, please). We are both founding members, fwa. Editor this issue: TED WHITE



UP FROM GAFIA: There was an oversight in the first issue of this monthlier fanzine -- and that was the absence of any credit to my Associate Publisher, Terry Hughes, whose name will be added to our masthead any issue now.

Some of you with long memories may recall Terry as the BNF editor of that old-timers' favorite, MOTA, and a TAFF winner before several of you were born. Like so many TAFF winners, Terry found that the administrative duties of the office completely wiped out the time he'd formerly devoted to fanac, causing him to lose the habit entirely. Thus did Terry Hughes gafiate, a story often told (as a cautionary tale -- the moral of which being that it's dangerous to win TAFF these days) around fannish hearths.

But Terry Hughes is not willing to surrender himself to Legend. Terry Hughes will not go easily into that dark gafia. No, Terry Hughes still lives, is still a fan!

His appearance at Aussiecon II this year startled everyone. Now he begins the therapy that will return him to prominence in fanzine fandom: his association with CRANK.

Let there be no doubt: without Terry Hughes there would be no American Edition of CRANK, the trufanzine. Terry not only supplies the first-page electrostencil, his is the physical hand that collates each and every indispensable copy. (I staple.) Yes, it's true: Terry Hughes has taken over the position previously occupied in my fanpubbing operations by Avedon Carol (who wishes everyone to address her now as Mrs. Rob Hansen).

I asked Terry how he felt about this new role. "How do you feel about taking over Avedon's position?" I asked him.

"Does this mean I'll start getting Express Mail from Puerto Rico?" Terry wanted to know. "I have to tell you, Ted, that this will be purely platonic."

I put my hand on his knee and assured him that I understood. -tw

CONGRATULATIONS HUGOWINNER said the computer-generated banner hanging over the bar, and it said it in Olde English, but of Langford Himself there was no sign. We were at September's One Tun gathering and, having pushed through the large crowd of Hitchhiker fans cavorting outside the pub, Avedon and I were dismayed to discover we were almost the first of the fannish fans to arrive. The Tun was as solidly packed as usual, and it was easy to think back nostalgically to the April One Tun, when the Nielsen Haydens were over on their TAFF trip, and fondly recall how much room there had been on that occasion. ("Is it always this overcrowded?" Patrick had asked. He looked puzzled when the Brits around him collapsed in helpless laughter.)

Once members of the fannish contingent began to arrive, Avedon went off to talk with the Pickersgills while I began handing out copies of the first CRANK. As I did this I was surprised to notice Greg Pickersgill grinning hugely at one and all. Since Greg is not much given to grinning hugely in these days of Margaret Thatcher and Guinness at more than £1 a pint, it would have been hard not to notice.

"What's up with Greg?" I asked Avedon as an undercurrent in the swirl of the crowd brought her close.

"He's got shingles," she replied, before being carried away again.

Malcolm Edwards washed up next to me and informed me that he and Chris had Langford's Hugo in the boot of their car, and we both wondered aloud what had happened to him. What with the banner and the award itself ready and waiting, it would be a shame if Dave didn't show. With a casual motion that showed all the signs of being an acquired reflex, Malcolm deftly lifted his pint clear of the flailing elbows of Rob Holdstock -- who was over-excitedly articulating some point or other -- and told me about his time in Australia.

As the evening wore on and more and yet more fannish fans turned up, I ran out of CRANKs. There were more at home, of course, but I was annoyed at having underestimated the number I'd needed to bring along. At this point Avedon drifted by again, so I quizzed her further...:

"Why should shingles have cheered Greg up so much?"

"Well, they're pretty painful, you see..." she began, but then a crowd surge carried her out through the door.

Determined to get to the bottom of this mystery, I left my safe spot at the bar and plunged into the undertow of the crowd myself. Which is how, as I emerged into the chill night air, I was just in time to witness The Langford Arrival.

"Where've you been?" I demanded.

"Computer exhibition at Olympia, boss," he explained, and pointed to the ID card pinned on his lapel. This identified him as the representative of something called "Ansible Communications."

"There's a man inside with something for you," I told him, as I steered him into the pub.

Standing on a stool, waving the Hugo around like some royal sceptre, Malcolm called for silence, and -- miraculously -- the babel of voices fell to a murmur.

"The Fanwriter Hugo has finally been sent to its rightful home," he told them. "Britain."

The assembled multitude cheered this simple truth and applauded when Langford was handed the actual award. But when Dave mounted the stool and tried to make a short speech of thanks he discovered that Malcolm had already exceeded the short attention span of most of those present. His efforts were drowned out by the noise of interrupted conversations being resumed.

"So what is all this about Greg's shingles?" I asked Avedon.

"Oh, he's just delighted to know that there's actually a physical reason why he never seems able to do anything, and that it's not a flaw in his brain."

And, as it turns out, he's so delighted that he's actually managed to overcome his lethargy and he's busy writing fanzine pieces again.

Maybe Greg ought to get shingles more often. -rh

A NOTE FROM BOB TUCKER: "I learned by reading in CRANK for the first time, that Langford had won a Hugo and that Britain had won the 1987 Worldcon. Not too many fanzines find their way to me and it will be a month before the topical newszines arrive here with all that I want to know about Aussiecon, so I urge you to print as much Aussiecon news as possible, and as many trip reports as possible, because I'm starved for news. I wasn't able to attend this year, and also wasn't able to attend Nasfic in Texas, so I'm out on the ice awaiting whatever information the fanzines bring me.

"I yearn for the good/bad old days circa 1940-1950 when some of us who were gung-ho fan editors rushed out the convention news the very next week after we returned home. Never mind the wife and kids waiting to be kissed, never mind the dog waiting to be kicked; the stencils and mimeograph came first. We rushed to print, on twilltone."

FILE 770 is out with all the facts and figures -- and on twilltone, too -- and I've promised any Official con- or trip-report I may write to Irwin Hirsh, but just for you, Bob -- and on twilltone, too! -- here's a few bits which won't be in the Official report ---

ACT DECISIVELY: Tour groups are rarely composed of people under fifty years of age, and rarely fannish. The tour Lee Smoire put together for some sixty people who were going to Aussiecon II had its share of retirees (several brought their parents), and met only minimal standards of fannishness (by definition: everyone was a member of Aussiecon II), a majority never having read a fanzine. A good number were Trekkies, and loud about it. (Aboard a commercial airliner, a minority of thirty or forty amid more than a hundred mundane Australians, these loudmouths chorused; "Botany Bay??!" after the captain had mentioned we were passing over said Bay. Apparently this is considered hilarious in Treldom.)

My respect for Lee Smoire has been on the rise ever since she took over at the last second as hotel liason for ConStellation, and I must credit

her with a well-planned and well-run tour.

I was on the tour as a guest of Aussiecon II, as were the Wolfes. It seemed the obvious solution to the problem of figuring out where in Australia I might go, and in retrospect I appreciate it even more for giving me an overview of two-thirds of Australia, with the north island of New Zealand thrown in for good measure. Obviously any tour which spends only about two weeks in a country as big as Australia is only skimming the surface, and without question some of the staged-for-tourist events were as implicitly troubling as any staged American Indian dance, but I had a chance to sample much of the geographical diversity of the continent, and if I ever get a chance to go back, I'll have some ideas of my own about where to travel.

But I appreciate the tour most for the opportunity it gave me to get to know Bill and Mary Burns.

It's odd how fans can coexist for years in the same fandom without meeting. Bill and Mary have been fans for more than fifteen years, but I met them for the first time this spring, at Lunacon. Until then, they were names in the colophon of ANSIBLE ("U.S. Agents"), fans whom my friends in New York mentioned occasionally, people who gave parties attended by everyone I knew but me....

They are a fascinatingly transatlantic couple. Mary has picked up the inflection and locution, if not the full accent, of a Brit, while Bill's accent has been flattened by his proximity to New York City. They seem to have that certain sixth-sense common to some married couples: an instinct which allows them to divide without prior discussion to deal with complex situations, each taking a task complementary to the other's. During the tour this often meant that one would get a seat for them both on a bus, in a restaurant, or a place in line somewhere, while the other saw to luggage or handled another task.

This was important on the tour, where dalliance or delay might mean getting trapped among the more obnoxious tour-members, a bad seat on a speedboat, or worse.

Early on, Bill assessed the group dynamics of the tour group -- the way certain members of the group milled aimlessly (while others were making moves on the few attractive and unattached women in the group), or, like one whom we dubbed Fat Cathy, would manage to block everyone getting off of or onto a tour bus while she fumbled with the excess of luggage she carried on her day-tours, constantly mumbling, "Sorry...I'm sorry..." in a helpless fashion.

"You've got to Act Decisively," Bill said, and this became our watchword. When the World War 2 Army-surplus "Duck" -- an amphibious vehicle -- was ready for the first of us to board it, Bill, Mary and I found our ways to the bench-seats directly behind the driver, who grinningly took us into the rain-forest jungle of the Atherton Tablelands, and drove us full-tilt into a muddy lake populated by a pet eel.

When, in Alice Springs, we took a camel-back tour to a desert winery (which supplied surprisingly good wines), and the party was mounted first at the rear of the camel-train, we positioned ourselves to be mounted on the lead camels where we could talk to the guide/driver. Suss the situation, and then Act Decisively. It worked.

Bill wears a watch-calculator, but -- like most intelligent users of

such devices -- he doesn't fully trust it. That is, he is aware of common problems, like accidentally hitting the wrong button, misplacing the decimal-point, or a malfunction from a run-down battery. So he does the calculation first in his head, to at least a close approximation -- so that he can be reasonably sure his calculator has given him the correct answer. Bill carries about in his head lots of conversation tables. He knows the conversation formulas for translating Celsius to Fahrenheit, kilometers to miles, and all the various currencies into each other (in our case, US dollars into NZ dollars into Oz dollars....), and could be relied upon for instant conversions whenever needed.

In Cairnes we found a tropical town that rolled up its sidewalks at 5:30 in the afternoon (or about half an hour before sunset). But Cairnes has very wide streets -- two or three wide lanes in each direction, divided by a wide median-strip which is occupied either by palm trees or parking spaces -- but only a small handful of traffic lights and no stop signs. The vast majority of the intersections were totally uncontrolled. When we queried our tour-bus driver there, he shrugged and said they didn't need stop signs or traffic lights. Of course, he was driving a vehicle at least three times bigger than a car. But he was right, and the reason was simple: very little traffic. It was possible to stroll across nearly any street without worrying about cars. And no wonder: there was no reason for traffic with everything closed after 5:30 except the restaurants and the video-rental shops.

As we wandered on foot one evening in search of an elusive restaurant (which turned out to be miles away) I noticed a curious thing:

Each time we crossed a street, I glanced first to my right, and then to my left, for oncoming traffic, visible in the dusk by headlights. Often I'd see a car midway down the block, coming towards us. Or perhaps it would be further away. I'd start across the street and before I'd reached the center-median the car I'd seen would turn off, either onto a side street or into a parking spot in the middle of the block. At first I thought this was mere coincidence.

It wasn't easy for an American to cross these streets. Unlike any street I've seen in Britain, these were wide, American, Californian, in their obscenely luxurious waste of space. But they observe British traffic rules: the cars all come down the wrong side of the street at you, in the wrong direction. It took time for me to build up new reflexes, but by the time we'd reached Cairnes (in the second week of the tour), I could hear Bill's voice in my head, calling out "Look right!" each time I was about to step off a curb.

But here, in Cairnes, I had only to look at an oncoming car to force it to turn off. If I started across a street and Bill or Mary called out, "Ted!" I had only to wave my hand nonchalantly and continue. Invariably, every time, the oncoming car turned or stopped well before reaching us.

This happened every time we crossed a street. It did not happen if Bill or Mary crossed without me. It always happened when I crossed.

"This is an awesome power you have, Ted," Mary told me.

"Yes," I said, "but I have to learn to harness it for the good of mankind."

"It's either that or watch our way of life be destroyed," Bill agreed.

JACQUELINE LICHTENBERG has long held a special place in the affections of British fandom and recently a proof copy of her new book -- called Farfetch, I kid you not -- has come into my possession. As a special service to you from CRANK, the fanzine that cares, here is the book's moving dedication, written with Ms. Lichtenberg's unique panache:

"To Tom Baker, who portrayed the Fourth Dr. Who and reawakened my sense of wonder by juxtaposing depth of understanding of the universe with joie de vivre. He has given me new aspirations, new definitions of the art of drama, creating, among many things, this series of books. May each reader of this book say a special blessing for this man. May each writer among you aspire, as I do, to create a part that could be played only by Tom Baker." -rh

ART WIDNER showed up at Aussiecon looking more than a trifle worse for the wear. Missing several front teeth and sporting the remnants of a shiner, Art explained that it had all happened to him on Tahiti.

"I was spending a week there, you know, on the trip here. So I rented a bicycle and I was riding it down this flat empty road, just sailing along, enjoying the ride, and then -- suddenly -- there I was in the ditch, spitting out blood and teeth." Apparently the front fork of the bike failed, pitching Art without warning head over heels.

"It shook me up," Art said, shaking his head at the memory. "I couldn't think clearly. I just wanted to get back to where they speak English, so I did a foolish thing. I checked out of my room a day early and went straight to the airport. Then I sat in the airport for thirty hours wondering what I was doing there." Consequently, he didn't look too steady the first day of the con, but by convention's end Art was looking better. Hope it's all behind you now, Art. -tw

TAFF NOTES: Although the nominating period for the next UK to US TAFF race doesn't formally open until November, a number of people have already declared their intention to stand as candidates for the trip to next year's Worldcon in Atlanta. The first to declare was fannish sex-symbol Simon Ounsley, erstwhile editor of STILL IT MOVES and one of the suaver members of the Leeds SF Group. Though recently somewhat out of things due to illness, Simon would be a prime contender for the honour at any time. Next to declare -- to the astonished surprise of many -- was Greg Pickersgill. The former enfant terrible had originally planned to have as nominators British residents of North American birth, and North American residents of British birth, but this plan has given way in the face of other considerations. But if nothing else Greg's platform promises to be at least as interesting as that of D. West last year.

The most recent to throw her hat (complete with corks) into the ring is Judith Hanna, who's been very much a feature of London fandom in the last few years. The elfin Ms. Hanna hails from an area where the men are men and the sheep are worried, which may help explain why she married British fandom's answer to Rambo, Joseph Nicholas.

I'm tempted to delve further into the merits of these candidates, but,

given the trouble recent TAFF administrators have found themselves in for comments even more tongue-in-cheek than these, perhaps I'd better not. -rh

((Since one half of CRANK's Editorial Board is required by his duties as British TAFF Administrator to remain neutral, and the other half -- me -- would be delighted if any of the above-named candidates won, CRANK will not officially support any of the them, but wishes them all good luck.-tw))

A NOTE FROM MAL ASHWORTH: "I hear Greg has shingles and a notion of standing for TAFF. Well, I can understand that. I seem to recall that shingles does make you pretty suicidal. It seems to have possibilities for introducing a little novelty into the contest. Rather than 'choose your candidate,' it could be on a 'choose your ailment' basis, with spaces on the voting form labelled:

Shingles

Glandular Fever

and so on, instead of names. It's ideas like this that make me so popular wherefer I go...."

GOSSIP: Freed for a week by his wife (who disapproves of fandom) taking a vacation, Arthur ("ATom") Thomson has been more in evidence at fannish gatherings of late than is usual. During a recent trip to the south coast to visit a large second-hand bookshop housed in an old church (where Avedon bought a copy of Secret of the Marauder Satellite by a pseudonymous hack writing as "Ted White") he showed us the hotel to which he is dragged off on every Easter, and explained mournfully that this is why he can never attend an Eastercon. However, he will be at Novacon in a few weeks, the first convention he's attended in twenty years!

"I felt I owed it to my public to put in an appearance," the diminutive Mr. Thomson told a reporter from CRANK, "and also my wife said that I could."

Speculation that ATom would, as in days of yore, share a room with Chuch Harris and register as "Mrs. Harris" was apparently quashed when, at a recent KTF meeting, this man who has proven himself handy with Abi Frost's bra-strap made it clear that he intends to share Pam Wells' sleeping bag. We shall bring you more on this man's delusions as they develop. -rh

A NOTE FROM CHUCH HARRIS: "Teresa thinks I am a veritable mine of useless information (but loveable), and how strange that I was actually talking this very week to another aged codger who had to flee from the kerosene fallout from the Heathrow flightpath*. He had emphysemia, shortness of breath. The Civil Aviation Authority denies that (a) dumping of fuel takes place over any built-up area, and (b) any health hazard is involved -- but if you stand in the streets at Wraysbury on a summer afternoon when the big holiday jets are taking off every 90 seconds you can smell the kerosene from their exhausts as it seeps down.

"One thing about Daventry: we may be encircled with nasty thermo-nuclear devices, but it's comforting to think that our lungs, hearts and minds will be pure, pristine, and uncontaminated when the Last Trump sounds."

*Cf "Five Days II: The Final Day" last issue

CRANKING IT OUT: A note from ATom to Rob says, in part, "I looked in vain" through CRANK #1 "for a statement on your ideas, aims and aspirations for the zine. ... What is the editorial line or aim? Do you see it as more than just a 'neat' up-to-the-minute fannish fmz? Or do you just hope to see the magazine develop into its own 'thing' as it gets pubbed?"

To which Rob replies, "Would you believe CRANK's policy is third party, fire, and theft, Arthur?"

Frankly, Rob and I never discussed the Editorial Aims & Policies of this high-class fanzine, although we spent hours working out the knotty problems, like how big the logo should be. Questions like, Should the master copy of Page One be mailed to the second publisher, or just a new electrostencil? (Rerunning a used electrostencil, we both agreed, was Out Of The Question.) And, What about stencil-heading compatibility? (We agreed that Brute Force would deal with non-compatible stencil-heads.)

Perhaps we should have devoted equal time to our Editorial Objectives, but I think that we both understood, without discussing it, that beyond a certain point those Objectives would define themselves. That's what comes of having two brilliant editors: a certain kind of telepathy. We understood that the basic format -- monthly, snappy, short -- would create the basic editorial approach, and that beyond that the fanzine would evolve into its own creature no matter how detailed our plans for it might be. But let's get one thing straight:

CRANK is dedicated to the proposition that fannish talent knows no national boundaries, and that if we have fun cranking it out, you will -- we hope -- have fun reading it.

Remember our motto: More Fanzines!

-tw

RETURN FROM OZ: Until Avedon dragged me along to the September BSFA meeting as part of her mad determination to sample all the many delights London's sprawling and kaleidoscopic fannish social scene has to offer, I hadn't been to one in months.

But at that meeting, fresh from their antipodean adventures, were John and Eve Harvey, Joseph Nicholas, and Judith Hanna. They regaled us with their tales of exotic places half a world away, and entertained us with amusing anecdotes from the Worldcon, a surprising number of which featured Marty Cantor.... Biggest surprise of the evening, however, was the sight of Joseph's bare neck, his lovingly-tended tresses shorn, his hair shorter than ever before in fannish memory. When I'd finished laughing at the sight, I asked him what had happened.

"It was Singapore," he explained. "The fascist junta there, controlled by running-dog lackeys of Capitalism doubtless in the pockets of such as Thatcher and Reagan, have been ruthlessly suppressing basic human freedoms, including a man's inalienable right to wear his hair over his collar."

"So they wouldn't let you into the country with longer than regulation-length hair?"

"Right. It was a question of standing firm on a point of principle and refusing to get it cut, or getting it cut and being allowed in...and Judith wanted to see Singapore."

Thus another man has lost his hair for the love of a woman. -rh