

THE DAMN THING

T. Bruce Yerke *The DENvention*

We have just fled Denver. That is to say, we just checked out of the ill-fated Shirley-Savoy, leaving behind most of the Convention locked in their rooms, all of which betokens a lot of work for the porter. That was Fortier's work, or maybe Korshak, or McKeel. I don't know who the hell it was as I was trying to get some shut-eye before leaving for Hollywood at 5:00 in the morning. Anyway, the last day of that bender, the mob opened the door to 582 where I was boarding, locked the door on the outside and tossed the key through the transom. I could smell rum on one of them, so Korshak was in on the deal.

"Is this Yerke or Unger?" someone wanted to know.

"It's Yerke," I mumbled and heard the key make a ringer on the spittoon. With smug satisfaction, I heard the same happen to Unger, and with a smash, the key went over Widner's transom. "It's all in the Convention," I sighed and turned over to push Brady back on his side of the bed.

I should say that the most important accomplishment at Denver was to decide where the next convention was to be held. That's Los Angeles. Of course, it would be better for most of the fans if the convention were held in Philly. It's simply outrageous to have the convention on the West Coast. Besides, Madle says beer's cheaper in Philly and Lew Martin wouldn't need to borrow his draft card every time the boys head for a bar.

What, the eager reader who missed this awful affair, is tempted to ask, was the most inspiring moment of the Denvention? I am tempted to ask if he means the official session or the exclusive Drinkvention?

The most thrilling moment to we scientifiction anarchists came after several hours of debate. First, Daugherty got up and talked for a number of minutes in resounding terms, advocating that fans must unite; we must have a national organization; we must strive for this and that. Then E.E. Evans arose and repeated Daugherty. Then Art Widner, Jr. (Oh Junior, you great big gorilla) explained the NFF F. The anarchists were sick. The Futurians were sinking rapidly in their chairs. Your Editor was dying by degrees. And then— Korshak mounts the platform and speaks against the whole lousy mess. An eloquent plea for anarchism. A faint cheer from the back. And S.D. Gottesman arose and made a motion that the whole thing be dropped. We'll drop it here, and suggest that you listen to the other side, which will be amply expounded in the next few months.

The first night in (Thursday, July 3.) set the pace. I went out to have a look at Denver. Nobody was to be seen in the lobby. After staggering around the streets, trying to get used to the high altitude, I bumped into the Futurians on their way to lunch. "Hello," I said to Kornbluth. I recognised Wolheim from pictures. They don't do him justice. As for Michel. He reminds me of a missionary friend of mine who went to China. Lowdnes is one of those individuals who emphasises with his cheeks and does tricks with his teeth. But he knows good rum when it is served him. His judgement of Vermuth, however, is inferior, for the quart that was passed out in room 584 was cheap. It tasted like port wine— but Lew Martin liked it.

Up in Daugherty's room, things were being discussed and stuff. This was also tame. Convention booklets were passed around. Then I got Madle and Fortier and we followed the boys to supper. They went to the Blue Parrot Inn. This place is mentioned in someone's "Good Eating" book, and charges accordingly. We went to the Waldman Café where we discussed worldly matters over iced tea. (Which was the official drink of the Convention.)

Late the evening of the third it was decided to see what the mighty Metropolis of the West looked like on the inside. Someone from Denver had a car. So did Widner. Fortier, Madle, Rustébar, Bronson and Yerke set out with Polcat. Art took us back of the hotel and started fussing around an ancient vehicle piled high with chairs, pots, pans, bedding, and other bric à brac. We were curious as to how entrance was forced, and slightly amazed that Widner would drive such an Okieish contraption. "How did it get out of Boston?" Fortier demanded. Widner had us all fooled, for he was fussing around in back of the affair, making as if to open a door. We later that he owned a Ford next to it and piled into this.

The first joint had too many singers, and we couldn't hear anything. I was sitting next to a very peculiar and entertaining person, discussing the merits of Doc Lowdne's poetry. I later found out that the person was Lowdnes! Ah well! The gent from Denver took us down to the river district where we ordered Cuba Libre. Yerke adroitly managed so that he didn't pay for liquor all evening. Now we went back to the hotel and the Futurians were just starting. Doc Lowdnes brought some Vermuth, and Chat Cohen had an epileptic fit in the foyer. The hotel boys were in a dither, Cohen was in a comma, and the rest of us in a stupour. (In passing it might be added that the rest of the Convention was in bed.)

Around about three in the morning the floor manager began to complain. He was a swell guy about the whole mess, but when the whole fifth floor was in an uproar he decided to stop it— tone it down to a mild riot. Poker games were in 585. There was a classic bull session in 584. 507 was keeping a private wire connected to the Shirley-Savoy Tavern. Brother, it was Holy Hell, but we loved it!

Of course, the next morning the convention was supposed to start at 9:00, but naturally nobody could get down till around 11:00. Then they all went out to lunch. (Breakfast for some; others still thought it was Thursday night.) Ackerman will probably tell us all about the Denvention Official Convention Session. Who cares about that? Brother Heinlein gave a very excellent talk, questions were asked, and all adjourned for beer.

That night at the party, a large keg of foaming stuff was placed in the kitchen. Fans sneaked cautiously around it. Leonard Jenkins, a Denver man, had a small pump, and promptly pumped up pressure. "Granny" Widner lead the fans in a devil dance around the sacred fluid, and Adam Lang (of no relation to Adam Link) turned the first tap. For the next hour we got nothing but foam. The party had to suffice on wine while McKeel, Martin, Wiggins, Madle and the others bailed out the foam. Towards eleven, we began to get some liquid. But then it was past hotel drinking hours and the barrel was removed. (Cries of anger and remorse.)

The kiddies being boisterous, lay down on a rug in the lobby and whistled at doormen. When they were kicked out, they took the rug with them and made an encampment on the street. All was going nicely when sirens were heard in the distance. Fortier wanted to know if they were blond or brunette sirens, but when he

Was told they were sirens with red lights he joined the rest of us in scattering down a side street. The fans reformed again, slightly above 17th St. on Broadway, and headed northward looking for a bar. Jenkins of Denver was especially jolly, and after telling us all that the bars close at midnight, he fell down on the sidewalk and laughed and laughed. Little Audry laughed and laughed too, for she knew that the horizontal bar at the YMCA was open 'till two in the morning.

Striking out north again, someone espied a slightly rotund fellow in a white uniform, heading for the Blue Parrot's Bar. He was duly heckled as the little white man who was coming to take us back to the asylum. The eighteen of us closed in on him. "I've been looking for you, you b——s" he snarled. Gadzooks! It was an army Captain. He took the matter to Korshak, who was clad in an after-dinner jacket (known as a hic jacet). Korshak had climbed down from the awning to see the doorman. Ah! The situation was saved by Jenkins again, who got up and sauntered over with the pump over his shoulder and wanted to know what the trouble was about. The Captain quickly shifted his strategy and disappeared into the saloon. Phil Bronson was quite loudly explaining to everyone how he would jump up and down on the Captain's belly, after the rest of us had him down.

Turning on 18th, we passed several closed places and a gas station, in front of which our staunch companion Jenkins fell down again and had a good laugh over the whole affair.

With a sudden war whoop Junior Widner discovered a quaint place called the Bungalow which was still open. There was a large crowd of sailors around some girls who were being escorted into a taxi as we pulled up to the place. "They must be those taxi girls I've heard about," Al McKeel said.

The jolly fans formed a line and passed the door keeper. He stopped poor Lew again and asked him how old he was. Martin was twenty one and had seven draft cards to prove it. The manager was consulted, and as he had his glasses off, Lew was allowed to pass into Valhalla.

The boys promptly rearranged the booths to suit the taste of science fiction fans. Unger and Yerke had liverwurst sandwiches and beer in true Brooklyn style. Most of the fans ordered beer. Lew Martin presented one of his seven draft cards and wanted to know if that gave him a chance at draft beer! When the joint closed at two in the morning we tore down several lamp posts before bursting into the lobby of the Shirley-Savoy. "My God!" cried the floor manager, "they're here again!" Everyone adjourned to Widner's room, where a bull session was started again. Such a mingling of jokes from Boston to Hollywood produced a varied mixture of stuff such as: "Gladys may have been a Wall Flower, but she was a Dandy Lion in the grass." It was now dawn, and after throwing several bus boys and special detectives out the window along with old bottles, we adjourned to get some sleep, before the second day of the Convention was upon us.

Looking at the program, one would discern that the morning of the Second featured a meeting of the Colorado Fantasy Society. By now, of course, everyone looked at the printed program, displayed prominently in the front of the lobby bulletin board, to see what was not going to happen. And of course, after the session in Widner's room, no one got down Saturday until noon, so the meeting of the Fantasy Society transpired with several persons in the Colorado Room, listen-

ing to Milton Rothman play excellent Beethoven, Wagner, and Boogie Woogie. (Who must be one of the Strawinski-Moussorgsky school of Russian Composers.)

Somewhere between one and six in the afternoon, we had the speeches. There were, on the program pages, numerous items about Directors' reports, CFS review and such, but, being neither of the nonce, there was none of the same. We had reports and harangues. These were discussed out of their chronologicale order on the first page of this write-up. Daugherty held the floor most of the better part of the afternoon. Then jolly-lolly E. E. Evans arose and repeated Walt, and then proceded, á la newshawk manner he used as a youth in Deluth (cries of "No no!" at that one) passed out some green sheets with his speech written on it in condensed form.

After more of stuff 'n' such, everyone dispersed until the auction. Korshak, a good egg, enlived the first part of the auction, but after awhile it got pretty damn boring. Besides, we wanted to go to Lakeside, which is a pastel take off on Coney Island (of which the Futurians will be familiar) and Ocean Park. (of which the Angelenos will be familiar.) Korshak wanted to go with us, so we had to sit through the auction watching Brady bid \$10.59 for a copy job of a Finlay orignial, and listening to the monotonous intonations of Brother Erle.

It was with great sighs of relief that we finally gave away the last canvas for ten or fifteen cents. Then it was discovoured that not only was the thud and blunder bunch going to Lakeside, but even everyone down to Bill Deutsch. This created a shortage of automobiles, and how they all got there is Unknown.

Lakeside is a good place, but nothing more than Coors Beer is served there, and you get the same effect on a roller-coaster, which isn't much. The gang piled on the Denver version of the '6th Ave. "L" and enjoyed the first trip—thrills and all that. The second time on, we enjoyed the scenery from the tops of the deep dives. The third time on, Fortier and Rustébar were so bored that they eased the dullness of the first 150 foot drop by lighting cigarettes.

The rest of the evening at Lakeside is quite tame. No one had anything, and you know what we mean. Unger, Fortier, Bronson, and someone else and Ye Ed went for a boat ride. We were shanghaied. We also went to the fun house. Here we Doc Lowdnes staggering all over the place. The rest of the Futurians were standing outside heckling. "What's he been drinking?" Kornbluth rasped in his unique voice. "That's Lowdnes drunk again," Michel was telling interested bystanders. I approached the rococo scene and beheld our good friend staggering about for all the world as though he were moving the Shirley-Tavern, carrying the contents in his stomach. With the help of Unger, I forced my way through the line and saw the rest of the story, but it's....oh well, ha ha....you know how those things are, Doc Lowdnes was in a....oh, I really shouldn't tell it at all; it's so damn silly you know. (For God's sake, Yerke, cut the picayuneity, Michel.) Well, Lowdnes was as sober as Morajo, he was merely...I don't know why this got all mixed up like this; I should have started out at the begining and stated what Lowdnes was doing instead of starting the other way around, which I did. (Yerke, are you going to SMILE it or not? Kornbluth.) Cripes, now Kornbluth is in on it. Why, I was merely telling about Doc Lowdnes staggering around in the....hah hah ha ha....I'd liked to have seen Widner there with Lowdnes.....the way that...I remember how Cohen tried to help poor old Doc. (Leave ze Rajah out of zis, and tell vot happens. Cohen.) O.K. Chet. Now that the whole mob is with me I'll tell why Lowdnes was staggering from side to side, falling down every five or six feet....and pumping his arms desperatly for bellance as if he were..(I was in a fun house barrel. "Doc".)

Thank God that's over. And so was the amusement park, it being about 1:30 in the morning. The kiddies congregated in front of a restaurant that was just closing and made the management open up and put on the hot dogs and hamburgers. We actually got in to the Shirley-Savoy at 1:30. The only person who seemed to get a kick out of the affair was our good friend Julie Unger, who was so exuberated, it must have been the city lake air, that he was doing flip-ups in Widner's car to the tune of the radio as we came down Broadway.

And so to bed. Of course, I couldn't get to sleep. There was Brady, all over the bed again. Sound asleep! Christ, I wondered, doesn't that guy do ANYTHING at all? I remember the first night he was sharing the room with me. I came in (on July 4, about three fifteen in the morning,) and find my roommate Brady lying diagonally across the bed. Impossible to get in without awakening the fellow. Lest I scare him too much, I turned on all the lights and began to sing loudly to myself as I undressed. No soap. Someone across the hall yelled at me, but Brady, ah Brady, the slumber kid in person, didn't even bat an eye lid. Annoyed at this, I commenced more urgent methods of awakening him. "Brady," I called softly... gradually increasing the volume of my voice until I couldn't stand the racket. Brady turned over slowly and started to snore.

This was too much. I picked up the wastebasket and began to beat it with the whiskbroom. "Throw him a horn," the Futurians yelled across the courtyard. Still Brady failed to respond. I finally got him awake by the quiet and scientific method of tickling him with a pen point on the schnozzle until his eyes slowly opened. "Roll over," I shouted. "Ugh," he mumbled and I had to push him at that.

So much for the flashback to that first night. I had the same trouble again after the amusement excursion, but I slept, since it was only 1:30 A.M.

Sunday morning dawned, but I was asleep. Brady got up at 5:00 or some such ungodly hour and I had the single bed. Well, Sunday was a nice day, and all that. There was a stiff-fan baseball game, which was grossly participated in by the stiff-fans. Much time was spent looking for fans who had gotten lost in the wilds of Denver City Park. Eventually everybody was rounded into an area roughly an acre in diameter, within which spacious ground, the pro-fan game was played.

Afternoon featured Convention bids. Daugherty got it, so be sure to come to the Daughertycon in '42. Then we had a final party. During the last three days a lot of us had made a lot of friends. For myself, I prize the reknewal of my acquaintanceship with Joe Fortier, and the pleasure of meeting Al McKeel, Robert A. Madle, Phil Bronson, Art Widner, Korshak, Julie Unger, and Doc Lowndes. There were a lot of others there, good guys all, but the foregoing were bosom buddies, one of the bunch, so to speak. (Oh, yes, there's Mission on that list too,)

So we got together. The gang of us. Walked out of the Shirley and decided to close the glorious affair in the same spot we started it, The Bungalow. We walked along the streets laughing, talking, cracking jokes in the distinctly individualistic style that only a gang of scientifiction fans out for a spree can do. And we got all bowled up looking for the place. Good old Art, Junior, (hah) paid your humble servant (oops, servant) a great compliment that I remember with tears in my eyes as I recall the boys standing around a lamp post under the moon

hanging high in the sky over the Metropolis at the Foot of the Rockies. "Imagine that," said Widner, "Yerke missing a beer hall!" Perhaps it is a poor thing to call a compliment, many would wrinkle their noses in disgust, but it will always recall to my mind a bunch of, perhaps, misfit fellows, closing a three day meeting before they pack up their grips and steal away to the prosaic world, some, not to meet again for many years, others, perhaps not at all.

I found the beer hall, and we went in. No draft trouble this time. Even old Lew was admitted. We took the same booth and ordered. Art was high. We were rolling in the aisles at his imitations. Widner, the pharmacist clerk, was a genius that time. Brother Art, I salute you! And if you come to the Pacificon, I want to see a humour-duel between you and Bradbury. Admission: At least \$10.00.

The party broke early, I left, my stomach was tight. (Sentiment or liquor, I don't know.) I tried to go to sleep, but there was a farewell bull session in Widner's room again. I blundered in. We talked, laughed, and said good-bye. And I went back to 582, where the incident that opened this report occurred.

So long, Julie, Art, Joe, Al, Phil, Korshak, Lang, and the rest.
We'll blow the top again in '42 if we can all make it.
To paraphrase VoM, Den-ver-de-daze.

.....fini.....

A FEW INTERESTING HIGHLIGHTS ON OUR TRIP...

I came to Denver in a 1939 Plymouth Coupe with Freehafer and Morojo. It was jovially termed the Scientisardine Can. We understood the meaning of this at the end of our 2500 mile round trip.

With only two drivers, (I don't drive) it was no picnic, yet we got to Denver from Los Angeles in thirty six hours of continuous, non-stop driving. This is as good as Lindburgh did. At one place in the desert, I recall that we paid more for water than gas.

Our attempts to get to Salt Lake City were rather humorous. For miles and miles it was only thirty miles to Nepi, which we insisted on calling Nehi. Finally we got through Nepi it was forty miles more to Salt Lake. We seemed to be making a huge circle. On and on, round and round, -- always forty miles to Salt Lake, until we got there about 12:30 A.M. The last highway sign we passed still said forty miles.

The trip back from Denver was less fortunate. It took us forty six hours. Instead of taking the broad highway through Las Vegas, New Mexico, we were too tired to turn at the fork, so we went through Raton pass, over miles of torn up road. Freehafer went to sleep at the wheel at one time and we tried to climb up the side of the pass instead of along the road. Then, in Taos, New Mexico, the gas tank got punctured. This was a three hour lay over in a rainstorm with drops as big as canteloupes. This phase of our trip was appropriately called "Chaos in Taos". However, it is fortunate that we did have the blasted hole, for we were told that the road we were following lead back to Denver! Had we pulled into Denver after making a gigantic circle of the Western states, there would have been three suicides.

Of course, we had to have a blow-out in the middle of nowhere 100 miles out of Santa Fe. And, except for boiling the motor on the Desert in California, we had an enjoyable trip....plopf

THE GREAT AMEN

Thornton Cragmyre *Book Review*

The other night at the Science Fiction League, Forrest J Ackerman approached me with a book. He was very humble about it all. "This," he said, "is a magnificent book for the cause of Pacifism." He went on to elucidate why he wanted me and a lot of others interested in the theory of pacifism to read it, so, I read it.

Burks, old boy, you not only had a good chance to prostitute a very excellent idea, and continue to prostitute it throughout the book, but you must have had the urge to write a good bit of pornography for a hell of a long time.

I suggest you change the title to: "I RAPED THREE WOMEN. (One was my wife.)"

First of all, the hero, whose name I forget, and want to, is a marine who walks into a shrapnel shower somewhere in Flanders and gets killed. While he is dead, his "spirit" gets up and what do you suppose happens? In just such an irrevelent vein as I have written this review, Burks strongly hints, but hasn't the fortitude to come out and say it, that Christ is walking through the No Man's land and visits the spirit of our hero and brings him back to life to "rear four sons."

Then they find the physical body of our hero half dead and take him into a hospital, where this weakened wreck has a terrifically hale and hearty urge to cohabituate with a nurse there. After he gets out of the hospital and the war ends, he makes merry with Mary and Burks condescendingly gives us all a thrill by devoting a whole chapter of the book to the cohabitation. (I thought I was reading some of Shroyer's stuff for a while.)

Then our hero gets back to America to wed Sarah and have his four stalwart sons. He also goes back to work for piece (oops, peace) but that is a sideline. The middle section of the book consists of largely detailed description regarding the conception of the four sons. Also how our hero has a nassy fight (muchly in detail) and gets an urge for his Secretary but he isn't through with Sarah yet.

Our hero gets rich, and Burks decides to put in a bit of peace propaganda so as to justify the Amen angle. Our hero gets rich, all right, and things get tough for him. It seems, this is all very hazy in the book, the main theme being how much he is missing the Secretary, that the U.S. is getting into the war again. Bang! Our hero meets the Secretary. He has that old urge, so he rapes her in her apartment (twenty pages or so of this) and starts crusading for peace in a very unperceful manner.

Everything ends up in a blaze of glory as a mob burns down the radio station where he is making a peace broadcast to prevent a war entry. There is the Secretary again and they all end up sizzling. All thru the story there is a strong reference to the Promise which Christ is supposed to have given our hero way back in No Man's land.

I'd say that the book is about the cheapest, most irrelevent thing written. Trying to link Christ, Pacifism, and descriptive sex play in one book is something that only Burks could do. As peace literature it stinks. As pornography it's O.K.

Now Burks, why don't you keep your Marine hangover in one book and whatever desire and old leatherneck like you may have for Pacifism as far apart as good writting and plot construction in "The Great Amen."

You have been eating too many rare steaks for a man your age.

A portion of this article is out-dated by later developments...

PAGE TWELVE

THE DAMN THING

Handwritten scribbles and symbols, possibly including the word "PAGING" and "MR. DAUGHERTY".

-or-

PAGING MR. DAUGHERTY

A work of—

—Lothar Penguin

Chums, here it is the middle of November, and by the time you read this, probably the middle of December. And so goes the Pacificon. It's just like Old Man River. Under an outward guise of supreme efficiency, the Pacificon goes to pot. They say that soups and drunks are better if they stew a while, but this does not apply to Conventions.

A lot of this so-called exposé will hit at Daugherty (Eleanor's husband) but if a target gets hit, it can't complain. As far as we know now, not much more can be said of the progress of the Pacificon that could be said after the Denvention.

Daugherty, the veritable human dynamoe, the F.D.R. of Fandom, was practically a nervous case after the Denvention. He burst in upon the first meeting of the LA SFS to be held nach der Tag and within three hours the following stupendous program was outlined:

1. A bi-weekly newspaper about the thing. (Weekly, maybe.)
2. Stickers in a hurry.
3. Pacificon Society meetings every two weeks.
4. Movies, publicity, celebrities.
5. Oh My God: It's simply colossal!

The Fourth World Science Fiction Convention Society was formed. Daugherty and his supporters made every possible effort to keep and maintain this Society apart from the local group. This was achieved by much blowing of horns and glittering pictures. There was a great deal of private financing going on. It was even suggested that shares be sold in the Convention. The Pacificonews was to be privately financed. Local members, suddenly awoke to the danger of a "Big Four" convention, privately financed and controlled, and killed the measure.

So now it is December. Christmas lights are in the air. Sweet music and angelic words float upon the night sky. And from the "body" of Mr. Pacificon, dead silence. So far not a single one of the avowed objectives of the organisation has been reached.

Meetings number less than four or five, and except for one hectic meeting at the home of Freehafer, where the private financing deal was voted down with much loss of temper and hot words; these meetings accomplished nothing.

Pacificonews hasn't appeared more than three times. The stickers are now promised "very soon," but Christ, man, five months have gone by so far since the last Convention.

The date of the Convention, and the place, are still as nebulous as Andromeda.

The fact does exist that there is a Treasury of some fifty dollars, for Walt says there are that many members, and each member means one dollar.