

Dangerous Jade #3

The Geri Sullivan of Las Vegas

by *Aileen Forman*

For several years I've heard about the joys of Corflu from Arnie and Joyce Katz, but due to my strange occupation, I don't get to nearly enough conventions. This time I had no excuse - Corflu was in Las Vegas, friends were running it and I had a vacation coming. Best of all, Joyce asked me to run the ConSuites, which I really enjoy.

As the time approached, Arnie kept me updated on the people I'd meet. Now, since I don't really read very many fanzines, these names were, for the most part, only vaguely familiar. Some attendees I'd met before at SilverCons - our local convention - but one name stood out as someone that I'd never met but wanted to. Geri Sullivan.

For the last four years I've heard Arnie and Joyce say that I am "the Geri Sullivan of Las Vegas Fandom." Was this good? Arnie assured me that it was. "She holds Minneapolis Fandom together. She's a terrific hostess. She's bright and bubbly, intelligent" etc., etc., etc. This woman I had to meet.

As Corflu drew nearer, my hostess side kicked in with a vengeance - Key Lime pie, cheesecake and carrot cake were in the fridge and a gleam was in my eye. Chocolate, veggies, sausage and sodas flew like visions through my head at odd hours of the day. Even my upcoming operation took back seat to Corflu. It was all our circle of friends spoke of, the opening ceremony, the tours, etc.

Finally the week arrived. Thursday night at the Katz's was a blast, seeing old acquaintances from past SilverCons, especially Burbee was terrific. But it still felt like a terribly cool Social. The next day I drove my soda-laden truck to the hotel and went In Search Of Muscle. No good. The multitude of muscles were in intense conversations with people they hadn't seen in years. My weak "Excuse me? Guys...?" went unnoticed by all but Janice Frasier who sprang to my aid in the form of a soda guard while I went In Search Of Bellmen. I was more successful in this second quest and the setup of ConSuites began.

By the time I had returned with the second load of food, etc. more help had arrived in the form of Belle Churchill, Marcie Waldie and Karla Hardin. They held back the ravaging hordes while I sorted and loaded and talked Don Fitch, John Hardin, Arnie Katz, Janice Frasier and assorted other fen into hauling and toting from truck to room. At last everything was in place. Eric

Davis hauled ice into bathtubs and sodas got put into it, food got put out and my "feeding schedule" was found. I was set and ready to kick back and enjoy Corflu.

The first conversation that I had was with a local fan, though whom I hadn't seen in a while, Marcie McDowell. I was scheduled to appear with her on a Gambling 101 panel later and we started talking about "the business." People started to gather. Before too long the ConSuites was full of people listening to Marcie and I banter about cheats and high-rollers, the biggest tips and the stupidest plays. I'd forgotten how fascinating that can be for non-gambling people. I looked around suddenly at all the folks and thought "this is going to be fun." I was right.

The next thing I knew it was time for the Opening Ceremony. As we all went down to the Turf Room, Arnie met me with a query about the whereabouts of my husband. "Oh, I'm sure he'll be right back. He just went to get his tuxedo for the wedding." Tense minutes stretched by with no sign of Ken or JoHn Hardin, who had gone along for the ride. "Are they absolutely necessary for the ceremony, Arnie?" I asked timidly. "Their skit is the opening for the ceremony." he said tersely. We threw suggestions back and forth. Karla and I would stand in for JoHn and Ken. Maybe people wouldn't notice. Or then again, looking at Karla's very pregnant form, maybe they would. Damn! We'd stretched it too long. Finally, Arnie said to start without them. Poor NLE guys. They'd worked so hard on this skit. Oh well, the rest of the ceremony went really well.

After the Opening Ceremony came the Gambling 101 panel. This was the third time I'd been on this panel and each time gets better. The sincere curiosity of this trufannish audience carried us to higher heights and elicited the best of our anecdotes. We passed out decks of card and talked about all the ways there are of cheating. We passed out roulette fliers and told the audience about Cary Packer, our highest roller, who bets over \$70,000 on each blackjack hand, with seven hands in play each game.

After the panel came The Wedding. At long last our old friend Ben Wilson was winning the hand of Cathy Copeland and boy, was he nervous! Ken, his best man, had arrived during the Gambling Panel, along with the rings. Cathy was ready, the guests were ready, and while Ben would never be truly ready, he was there and waiting. The ceremony was performed by another Vegas fan, Raven. The words spoken were thought-provoking and romantic. The replies to the vows were whispered and broken but totally sincere. I looked at my handsome husband and smiled.

Up at ConSuites, the fen swirled, munching and laughing, typing on the one-shot and swigging soda. A lovely, well-dressed femmefan came up to me and introduced herself as ...GERI SULLIVAN!!!! At last! Wow! This lovely

person was the fan I had been compared to for years. Ghod! My ego swelled and glistened with pride. She was pretty, animated and obviously well-liked. I resolved to meet her.

Friday night was Dessert in the Desert night and out came the goodies at midnight. We pushed chocolate, carrot and red velvet cakes, cheesecake, key lime torte, fruitcakes, pineapple ring and left-over wedding cake. By 1am, people were starting to blanch at the sight of sweets. It was about then that I met Geri. Our eyes met across the room and we came together as if walking on air. "I've heard so much about you," we said in chorus and proceeded to sit and gush over each other. Both of us were thrilled to be compared to the other. How rare that is in life. The connection was made and no matter how tenuous, it will never be broken.

Saturday morning came way too early, complete with eggs and ham prepared by Joyce herself and a multitude of coffee flavors prepared by my loving husband. It was a terrific start to the day which proceeded in a haze of fans and food. By Saturday night the faces were familiar and I had collected a stack of fanzines, all while explaining that I wasn't a fanzine fan, my husband was. Obviously, I wasn't serious since you all are reading this. My husband has clarified to me that I am a fanzine writer, but obviously have no interest in becoming an editor. I was happy to have that made clear.

At midnight we started the Chocolate Tasting. By 1am, again, people were starting to avoid me as I passed through them offering fudge and chocolate-dipped fruit. Since I really hate that kind of reaction, I started passing out milk and water, which were much more well received. It made me feel much better about myself. The beer provided by Tom Springer, John Hardin and Mike McInerney was extremely well received as well.

Sunday dawned, but I wasn't awake to see it. "Forget it" I thought sleepily and then dragged my butt out of bed. There wasn't a lot of interest in food among the throngs, since the banquet started at 10:30am. I was accustomed to the terrific spread that Jackie Gaughan's Plaza puts on since we've held SilverCon there twice and I wasn't disappointed. By this time it was obvious that Corflu 12 was a success and when I went to greet Arnie and Joyce at their table, their glows of happiness made my heart swell. Both Joyce and Arnie mentioned the work and time that the Veggrants had put into Corflu and it worked! It really worked! When we were introduced at the banquet we all stood up with pride.

The Guest of Honor, Gary Hubbard made a speech which I must admit I didn't pay too much attention to, choosing rather to watch Rotsler write on paper dinnerware. Everyone received Rotsler's works with glee and greed. The other awards went out and then I headed for the ConSuites, my home sweet home.

This was the day that Geri Sullivan got drunk. Boy, did she! I hope I'm half as amusing when I'm skunked. We held Burbee's Barbecue and Beer Bash without Burbee, since he had hurt himself Thursday and went home Saturday morning. We toasted him a lot and ate tons of beef in his honor. By late Sunday night, I decided to get toasted too and started drinking.

Monday morning came way too early. (Yes, that's right. I'm not going to talk about Sunday night. Suffice it to say that Geri and I bonded even further and ask Vijay Bowen about the rest of the night. I'm accepting thanks for my indirect contribution to TAFF. Ask Vijay about that one as well.) Anyway, as I lay in bed thinking "I am the ConSuite hostess. I must help clean up. I am the ConSuite hostess. I must help clean up..." I heard voices coming from the ConSuites. Curiosity accomplished what duty could not and I wandered into ConSuites. There were Geri Sullivan and Jeanne Bowman had been waiting for Ken to open the door and had already whipped it into shape. Without any help from me, it was packed and distributed to various fans. Throughout the morning, fans wandered in, ragged and solemn. As one by one they said good-bye and hugged me, I thought to myself, "Yes, Arnie. You were right. Corflu is very different and special. And so are the people that attend it."