

# ETA

EASTER

1989



Those of you not familiar with fandom will have probably wondered just what it is and why a convention should have such a thing as a Fan Guest of Honour (or two). And what one has to do to become a Fan Guest of Honour. Though it might not look that way this is in fact all one question, and fandom is as important as any other hobby, or as unimportant as a way of life. Fandom has taken me to America, caused me to move to London, and found me a wife - evidence that it can be a not-inconsiderable force in your life if you let it. Vinç Clarke has done a brief bigraphical piece on me in the Programme Book, but perhaps a fuller account might be in order here, an exploration of just what makes a fan....

I was born in Cardiff, South Wales, in November 1954. With the exception of my brother being born in May 1959 nothing of any interest happened to me in the next few years. In the early-1960s I discovered American comics through playmates and very soon Green Lantern and Adam Strange had become firm favorites, both of them having a strong SF bias. The next point of contamination came in the form of the early Gerry Anderson puppet shows on TV, most notably 'Supercar' and 'Fireball XL5' and the non-Anderson 'Space Patrol' (and how many of you remember that one?). Get 'em young, the psychologists say, and I'd certainly been 'gotten' by SF. Still, all this occurred during what I tend to think of as my 'pre-awareness' period, that time during your childhood when your awareness is still so centred on yourself that you don't really notice the larger world that exists beyond your own immediate concerns. Then 1963 arrived, and everything changed.

At the end of August 1963 Parlophone Records released the single 'She Loves You' by the Beatles. Two weeks later it was at number one on the UK pop music charts. Obviously, I'd heard contemporary music on the radio before this - Cliff Richard, Lonnie Donnegan, Joe Brown and the like - but this was the first time it seemed like the music was aimed at me. I date my appreciation of music from that single. On 9th November 1963 I turned 9 years old. On 22nd November, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated, and like everyone else my age and older I remember what I was doing when I heard the news (I was watching childrens TV when it was interrupted by a newsflash). I date my awareness of political events from Kennedy's

death. The next day, the 23rd, the very first episode of BBC TV's DR WHO was broadcast and, strange though it might seem, it's the advent of DR WHO that I consider to have sparked my awareness of myself as someone who was strongly attracted to a particular type of story, to Science Fiction.

The next couple of years passed uneventfully until, in 1966, I found myself in high school and taking books by H.G.Wells and John Wyndham out of the school library. These were the only SF authors they stocked so they were the ones I read. I had discovered SF books, and a love affair had begun. Of course, being from a relatively hard-up family and not having any money, I didn't start buying books of my own and building up a collection until 1971 when part time jobs had furnished some funds. A school friend, the splendidly-named Roderick Murdison, introduced me to Fantast (Medway) Ltd., Ken Slater's mail-order SF firm, and I never looked back.

In September 1973 I left school and went to work full time as a draughtsman for a local engineering firm. In January 1974 the first issue of the prozine SCIENCE FICTION MONTHLY appeared and naturally I bought it. Now, the fiction in SFM was nothing to write home about and seemed secondary to the poster-size reproductions of covers of contemporary SF paperbacks that formed the bulk of the publication. However, as well as fiction the text of SF'also contained a news column that talked about some strange thing called 'fandom' and gave details of the next convention. I'd never heard of conventions before but I remember being terribly excited by the idea. Somewhere you could go and meet your favorite authors!! The first convention they gave details of was TYNECON, the 1974 Eastercon and held that year in Newcastle. That seemed like a long way to travel to me (I'd never travelled more than 250 or so miles from Cardiff at that point) so I gave it a miss, but the following year SFM reported that that Michael Moorcock was to be Guest of Honour at the convention. My favorite author! I had to attend! By the time I got to the con Moorcock had dropped out and Harry Harrison was GoH, but it didn't matter anyway as it turned out.

So, my first convention was SEACON, the 1975 Eastercon (held at the De Vere Hotel in Coventry), and I attended it alone because I knew no-one else who shared my enthusiasm for SF. In one of their progress reports the con-committee had advised first-timers attending alone to share twin-bedded rooms, which proved to be good advice. I no longer recall the name of the guy I shared with but having one other person to talk to made the whole experience a much more pleasant one than it might otherwise have been (there can be few lonlier places to be than in the midst of a lot of people you don't know, but who are obviously having a great time) and also helped me overcome my initial reserve so that I found myself opening conversations with other people - something which should be an easy thing to do at a science fiction convention when you know that you all definitely have at least one thing in common.

While the sheer wonderment of my first convention alone might have been enough, talking to that handful of people about our mutual interest helped make it the enjoyable, indeed almost overwhelming, experience that it was. Even so, I was dimly aware that there was an extra dimension to this business, something I knew nothing of but which I sensed was important. It seemed unlikely that the large numbers of people, whose accents marked them as having come from all corners of the country and who plainly knew each other well, could have become so well-acquainted and friendly merely as a result of attending two conventions a year (Eastercon and Novacon were the only cons in Britain then - how times change!) In a small room tucked away in some far corner of the hotel I'd come across a

table on which were displayed for sale what the people behind it referred to as "fanzines", multi-coloured publications with titles such as EGG, MAYA, RITBLAT, CYNIC and CHECKPOINT. I flicked through a few of them and bought a copy of something called SFINX. This was a zine published by OUSFiG (Oxford University Science Fiction Group) and contained fairly awful fiction by people with names like Kevin Smith and David Langford. I'd chosen this particular zine to gamble my twenty-five pence on because of its slick litho production since, like many people unfamiliar with fanzines (and even some familiar with them who really should know better), I assumed that quality of production indicated quality of contents.

One of the people I got talking to at the convention was another first-timer by the name of Paul Kincaid and after the convention we began corresponding, mainly about the stories we were working on since both of us intended to become Big Name Science Fiction Authors and had in fact spent a large chunk of one evening at the convention reading each other's short stories. Paul then lived in Manchester and he began attending meetings of the Manchester and District (MaD) SF Group, which existed in that city during the 1970s, and began receiving fanzines put out by various of its members. Now, the MaD Group had won the bid for the 1976 Eastercon so when Paul told me that the convention chairman, Peter Presford, published a fanzine called MALFUNCTION I decided to write and ask for a copy since anyone who was going to chair an Eastercon must, I reasoned, be a Very Important Fan Indeed. Based on SFINX I assumed that all fanzines consisted of amateur fiction and book reviews so I thought I might condescend to give one or two of the tales I had penned, and which had stacked up rather too many professional rejections, to them for publication. I was going to be a Big Name Science Fiction Author, after all. Ah, the arrogance of the ignorant!

When MALFUNCTION finally arrived, I didn't know what to make of it. It wasn't so much Presford's creative spelling and random approach to layout as it was the subject matter that confused me. I mean, I had expected it to contain serious and constructive material about SF, but MALFUNCTION seemed to concern itself mainly with the activities of people I'd never heard of. What was this magazine? What was it for? I wrote a letter of thanks. Presford printed my address in the next issue. As a result I received a copy of the ninth issue of Rob Jackson's MAYA.

Two fanzines less alike than MALFUNCTION and MAYA it would be difficult to imagine. Whereas MALFUNCTION was duplicated on quarto sheets and side-stapled, its contents fairly messily laid out, MAYA was professionally printed on A3 sheets folded down to A4 and stapled like conventional magazines, and was beautifully laid out in double-columns of reduced type with right-justified margins. There was some SF discussion in MAYA but again much of it discussed people I didn't know and the things they'd been doing. It also contained heresy. Heresy? Well, yes - how else was I to react to a statement like "as you become more and more involved in fandom SF becomes increasingly irrelevant"? Strong stuff to a raw young fan who thought fanzines existed to further the cause of Science Fiction.

When I wrote a letter of comment to MAYA I included one or two drawings which Jackson didn't use but instead passed on to other Gannets for their zines, the Gannets being the Newcastle-based fan group he belonged to. None of my drawings actually saw print but as a consequence of all this I had a good excuse for introducing myself to the Gannets at the Manchester Eastercon, which I did, and they invited me to the first SILICON being held in Newcastle that August. At

SILICON, I met a number of interesting people, including Greg Pickersgill, through whom I got to know many of the other fans of the day, people such as Leroy Kettle, Robert Holdstock, and Malcolm Edwards. In the months leading up to the con I had received many more fanzines, most of them of the fannish variety. Gradually, I began to understand why more zines of this sort are published than of the sercon (serious and constructive) type. The month after SILICON, I published the first issue of my own fanzine, EPSILON.

On first learning that I lived in Cardiff, Greg Pickersgill had suggested that I get in touch with Bryn Fortey, a long-time fan who lived some fifteen miles away in the nearby town of Newport. I did so, and in February 1977 Bryn Fortey, Mike Collins, and I met for the first time and formed a local fan group. At that year's Eastercon, Dave Langford introduced us to another resident of Newport - Dai Price, his childhood friend - and he too became a regular at our weekly meetings. In March 1978 I moved out of my parents' house and into Mike Collins' Newport flat - which he was leaving that same day in order to move to London. Two years later I made that same trip myself, becoming a citizen of the metropolis in May 1980.

London at that time had a thriving fannish social scene and I threw myself into it whole-heartedly. Over the next few years I immersed myself in all the London SF fan/pro scene had to offer, and was sufficiently productive in the same period to win the 1982 Nova Awards for Best British Fanartist and Best British Fanzine (for EPSILON). During this same period lines of communication between US and UK fandom - which had atrophied during the 1970s - were reopened, and for a few all too short years we enjoyed the sort of lively transatlantic scene that hadn't been seen since the early-1950s. One consequence of this was more interest in TAFF than there had been in recent years. TAFF, for those who don't know, is the Trans Atlantic Fan Fund and it exists to send fans from one side of the Atlantic to conventions on the other, said fans acting as sort of ambassadors for their fandom. The fund was set up in 1953 and the sending and receiving sides alternate. In 1983 it was America's turn to send a representative to a British con. They sent Avedon Carol.

Since the late-1970s, Avedon had been one of the most prominent fans in the US and an inveterate letter writer. I first met her, a week or so before the 1983 Eastercon, at Dave Langford's house. We'd had a brief correspondence shortly before her trip so conversation came easily, but neither of us, I think, suspected how things would develop between us from that point.

In 1984 it was Britain's turn to send a representative to a US convention, and I was the fan selected by popular vote on that occasion. The convention I was to attend was L.A.CON II, and was held in Los Angeles at the Anaheim Hilton and Towers hotel, right next to Disneyland - which I naturally visited during the con (wouldn't you?). I had a great time at L.A.CON, and in the various parts of the US I visited afterwards, staying with local fans and getting to know a number of local groups. It's a tradition that those who win a TAFF trip later write up their experiences for those who sent them, a tradition somewhat patchily honoured down the years. Though I took my trip five years ago I'm still working on my trip report, serialising it as is traditional (the previous chapter having seen print in the American fanzine **I-94**, put out by Spike Parsons, last year) and by way of example of a number of things I present the next chapter here. But first:

The Story So Far: Our hero set off for the fabled land of America on Thursday 30th August 1984, and after an eventful convention found himself heading up the California coast towards San Francisco in a Ford Econoline van with Allan Baum, Donya White, and Spike Parsons. I'd met Spike (one of the formidable female fans who dominate the Madison, Wisconsin, fan group) at the con and she had introduced me to Allan and Donya. I needed a lift up to San Francisco, where I was to spend a few days with local fans Rich Coad and Stacy Scott, and they kindly offered to take Spike and me to Palo Alto, where we would spend the night at their house before taking a bus the short distance into San Francisco itself. Now read on....

## Chapter 6: THE CITY OF LOVE

Tuesday 4th September and as usual on this trip I woke early - 7.20am, the earliest yet. I looked out the window at that glorious California sunshine and once again I marvelled at my good fortune in being here, at the fact that my picking up a copy of SCIENCE FICTION MONTHLY in 1974 could lead, ten years later, to what must be the trip of a lifetime. Isn't fandom wonderful? I felt good - hell, I felt GREAT - but I was the only one awake as yet, so I pottered about quietly, reading some of Allan's comics and thinking deep thoughts about The Meaning Of It All.

Spike was the next to wake and, being the athletic type (how many other fans do you know who found fandom through weightlifting?), was keen to go jogging before breakfast.

"Why don't you join me, Rob?" she suggested looking fit and tanned, a picture of well-fed Midwestern wholesomeness (I didn't know her as well then as I do now).

I may have been feeling great but I was also someone whose main form of exercise these days came when I got out of my chair to switch channels on the TV so I said that I didn't think I should.

"But Rob, jogging is the quintessential Californian experience. How can you visit here and not jog?"

Damn! She had me there. I protested feebly that the only trousers I had with me were a couple of pairs of jeans, and I could barely move in one of those.

"I remember", she grinned, reminding me that she'd seen me in them at the convention and had commented "Cute ass" in that disarmingly casual way American women have. She offered me a spare pair of running shorts she had with her and I bowed gracefully to the inevitable. I added my own T-shirt and brand-new pair of trainers to the shorts and soon we were off.

With the glare of the sun off the pavement dazzling me I began to think that maybe this wasn't such a good idea after all and hoped I wouldn't fall too far behind Spike. To my surprise just the opposite happened. I shot ahead of her and had to slow down a number of times for her to catch up. This left me feeling understandably smug but that smugness was soon wiped away. First, my feet started to hurt. The brand-new, unbroken-in trainers were pinching my toes and raising painful blisters. Second, we got lost. Since our plan to keep taking left turns should have prevented this we were puzzled. Also a little worried

since neither of us could remember the name of the street Allan and Donya's house was on, nor knew their phone number, nor even had any money on us to ring them if we had known it. To add insult to injury the road we got lost on was Hansen Way. Since there was no other choice we stumbled around trying to find our way back, Spike offering to carry me piggy-back to relieve my feet and me being macho and refusing, eventually giving cries of joy as we came upon a familiar Ford Econoline van parked outside one of many identical houses. We rang the bell and the door was opened by Allan Baum, who looked deeply alarmed by the piteous cries of relief with which we greeted him.

After we had showered and breakfasted, Allan drove us to the bus stop where we caught the 7F to San Francisco. Shortly after pulling away we passed the British Bankers Club ("The BBC!" - Spike). As always the roadsigns pointing to such exotically named places as San Mateo and Burlingame exerted a powerful fascination, though they probably seem totally ordinary to those who live in the area. Soon we were back on US 101, the highway that we'd followed from Los Angeles to Palo Alto yesterday, but from here it was right on the edge of the Pacific' following a bay that was apparently the bay that gave the Bay Area its name. High up on a hill was a sign that advertised the area we were passing through as SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO - THE INDUSTRIAL CITY. As we followed the curving bay road many of the groups of houses we passed were disturbingly reminiscent of those that can be seen in most any Victorian seaside town in Britain.

The bus journey took maybe an hour, and eventually we pulled into a bus terminal on the corner of Mission and Fremont in San Francisco proper. We put in a phone call to Rich Coad and in no time at all he'd shown up in his VW Beetle and had driven us back to the apartment he shared with Stacy Scott at 251 Ashbury Street (yes, the Ashbury of Haight-Ashbury fame in the '60s). The apartment was quite a decent size, certainly larger than my own flat back in London, and was - ah - interestingly decorated. On one wall the framed drawing of a leather-jacketed, mirror-shade wearing rat loomed over a red plastic Felix the Cat clock while on another there was the poster for a film called 'Astro-Zombies' ('See Brutal Mutants Menace Beautiful Girls...See Crazy Corpse Stealers...See Berserk Human Transplants!') We pondered the artistic experience offered by Astro-Zombies while Rich reached up for the Walkman sat on the mantle next to the propellor-beanie wearing china bulldog - only it wasn't a Walkman. Chuckling, Rich showed how it converted into a robot, my first experience of the Transformer-type Japanese toys that were to flood the market a year or so later. Another poster read "We don't care because we don't have to - The Phone Company". I asked Rich who he worked for.

"The Phone Company", he replied, "and we don't."

The journey from Palo Alto had hardly been arduous so after drinking a few beers, fairly palatable beers I might add, we went out and walked along Ashbury up to Haight Street, where I converted most of the money I was carrying to travellers checks, and felt a lot better for having done so. We ate at a cafe on Haight called 'All You Knead' (groan), chatting inconsequentially about absent friends, then returned to the apartment. Rich drove Spike over to John Bartelt's place - she was staying with him while in SF - and when he returned he and Stacy took me for a drive around the city.

One thing I couldn't help noticing was the diamond-shaped roadsigns all over the place that read 'Ped Xing'. Given San Francisco's large Chinese population it made sense for there to be signs in that language, though I thought that making

the signs yellow was a little tasteless. I mentioned this to Rich and asked him what 'Ped Xing' translated as. Rich stared at me in amazement and then burst out laughing.

"You dickhead!" he said. "It isn't Chinese at all. It's an abbreviation for 'pedestrian crossing'!"

As with those of most American cities, the streets of San Francisco are laid out on a grid pattern, but these grids can get disrupted when they hit the coast or if the city has many hills. San Francisco has lots of hills, due mainly to the fact that rising up from the middle of the city is a low, twin-peaked mountain called - logically enough - Twin Peaks. It was to Twin Peaks that we drove first, the highest point in the city.

"A conceptual artist once constructed a giant bra over the peaks" said Rich, as we approached them, a boggling concept indeed.

The view from the top of Twin Peaks was breathtaking. Out on my left was Golden Gate Bridge, the Pacific flowing under it, while further along Alcatraz could be clearly seen, unlike the Bay Bridge which was partially obscured by the high buildings of the business district. On the far side of the bridge lay Oakland, and the bay itself swept away off to the right and was lost in the haze.

"One of the islands the Bay Bridge stands on, Treasure Island, is man-made" Rich explained, "while the bay itself is about 25 miles long and the biggest natural harbour in the world. You're lucky to have such a fine view. It's rarely this clear and often shrouded in fog."

I was glad of my luck as I wouldn't have missed that view for the world. It's one of those sights you carry with you forever. I took photographs, but there was no real way they could capture the scale and grandeur of the bay.

Other touristy parts of the trip were the drive down Lombard Street - that crooked and winding street that has featured in innumerable car chases filmed in San Francisco - and Castro Street.

"Gay capital of the world" explained Rich, putting his foot down as we pulled onto the top of Castro. We tore along the street at high speed, only slowing when we reached the end. I rubbed my neck, suspecting whiplash.

After visiting the Sutro bath ruins (don't ask) we parked the car and walked up Columbus Avenue and past Washington Square Park ("As written about by Richard Brautigan" - Coad). We passed a strip joint called The Condor where Rich decided to get me some postcards from the doorman/bouncer by telling him I was Welsh.

"You're Welsh?" he said in feigned astonishment, thrusting a dozen or so postcards into my hand, "then come in and take a free look, no obligation."

Before I knew it I'd been ushered inside where a couple was making simulated sex on a grubby stage. A barman hurried over and tried to hustle me into a seat at the bar, but I side-stepped him, made hurried excuses, and left. It was a close shave. A bit further along the road was the famous City Lights bookshop whose owner, Ferlinghetti, was the first to publish Ginsberg's HOWL. All this culture was making us thirsty so we ducked into the next bar we came to, a picturesque little place over whose door was the legend "We're itchy to get away from

Portland, Oregon" - Lord knows why. Inside, a sign on the wall announced that "MODERN DANCING and IMMODEST DRESS STIR SEX DESIRES leading to Lustful Flirting, Fornication, Adultery, Divorce, Destruction and Judgement". So that's what I was doing wrong. 'Immodest Dress' here I come! The only sane response to this sort of thing was a few bottles of Dos Equis, and I've always firmly believed in sanity. I also took this opportunity to update my notes, and am now disturbed to discover that at this point in my notebook there appears the impenetrably cryptic "Naaru - island in Pacific - airline to anywhere - Giant turd". What can it mean?

With early evening already upon us we took in Chinatown, Rich pointing out the spot where Bridget O'Shaunessy shot Miles Archer in 'The Maltese Falcon'. Had I seen the film I would have been suitably impressed but that experience, alas, still lay a couple of years in the future. Where London's Chinatown consists of no more than a couple of streets behind Leicester Square, San Francisco's is an entire district and is a whole lot more impressive. Here was a richness and - well - authenticity that put the twee pretensions of Gerrard Street, with its pagoda-style phone-boxes and disappointingly limited selection of restaurants, to shame.

We ate at a Hunan restaurant at 853 Kearny (it says here), a Chinese restaurant in the heart of Chinatown, before returning at last to Ashbury Street. It had been a day full of new sights, sounds, and experiences, one that needed to be sorted out and meditated upon, but it was not over yet.

We had not been back long when Lucy Huntzinger turned up with Paul Williams and Robert Lichtman in tow (known to me as 'Glen Ellen fandom', but perhaps better known to you as the editor of the PKDick Society Newsletter and 1989 TAFF winner, respectively). In the short time we had been back I'd been playing a tape of Leroy Kettle's Fan Guest of Honour interview from the 1978 Eastercon, a classic of fan humour that had Rich rolling about with laughter, tears running down his cheeks, so I ran it for them. Their laughter was somewhat more restrained, not having had the experience of living in London and hanging out with Leroy and co, as Rich had done in the early-1970s. Having a physics test in college the next day Rich crashed early, but the rest of us stayed up late talking. This was one of those freewheeling sessions that are so much fun at the time that you don't take notes and so can't reconstruct them afterwards. However, from notes I made later I see that apart from learning that Rich and Stacy's budgies were called Molar and Bicuspid there was the fascinating revelation that Stacy's parents were Beats and she got to meet Ginsberg when she was ten. Then there was her maternal grandfather, who'd been a member of Al Capone's gang. My own claim to fame, a maternal great-uncle who'd once been Mayor of Kidwelly, paled in comparison. So it goes.

I was awoken the next morning at 7.45am by the phone ringing. It was someone called Kent responding to the RSVP on the invitation to tonight's party in my honour.

"Let them know I rang, OK?"

"Uh-huh."

"Are you Rob?"

"Uh-huh."

"Then I'll see you tonight."

"Uh-huh."



Having impressed Kent with my witty ripostes I fumbled the phone back on to its cradle and tried in vain to get back to sleep. It was no use so I got up, once again the only one awake, and caught up on my note-taking and postcard-writing.

Things didn't actually come to life until the early afternoon when local fans Sharee Carton, Allyn Cadogan, Lucy Huntzinger, and DUFF winner Jack Herman turned up and the five of us went for a walk up the Haight. I got Lucy to take a shot of me standing on the corner with the Haight-Ashbury street sign behind me. Back in 1967 this had been the Hippies' Mecca, but the summer of love lay almost 20 years in the past now and most of the Hippies were long gone. I imagine that the majority of them cut their hair, traded in their love-beads for filofaxes, and became advertising executives, realtors, and the like. Still, vestiges of that long-ago summer, that long-lost innocence, still remained and could be detected in the dress of the buskers and derelicts, and in shops on the Haight that bore names such as 'The Anxious Asp' and 'Mommie Fortuna's'.

Haight Street is one of those long, straight, and seemingly endless thoroughfares that are a natural and inevitable consequence of grid-pattern planning, but like most things it has its end, and where it ends is at Golden Gate Park. We spent a few hours here, taking many silly photos of each other, marvelling at the detail on the horses on the closed carousel and marvelling even more at what looked like a three-masted ship floating in the clouds. This was in fact the Sutro Tower, some sort of communications mast, which produces this remarkable effect when its lower portions are wreathed in mist. Weird. With afternoon rapidly giving way to early evening we headed back via the California Academy of Sciences. It was time to party!

How to capture a party? How indeed? Well first a listing of those present, which according to my notebook included Rich and Stacy, Allan and Donya, Spike, Lucy, Allyn, Grant Canfield, Gary Farber, Steve and Elaine Stiles, Bill Brieding, Gary Mattingley John Bartelt, Jack Herman and doubtless many others besides including, presumably, the mysterious Kent. Dancing started when Spike discovered an album in Coad's collection consisting of nothing but cover versions of 'Louie, Louie' and I, displaying my usual good taste, put the Kingsmen's version on and took to the floor (I'm used to being the one who gets the dancing going). In one of those strange silences that happen occasionally when everyone finishes talking simultaneously I heard Spike say "...cucumbers, wrapped in aluminum foil." I never did get to ask what she'd been discussing. At one point Allyn Cadogan decided to reveal her dark secret to me:

"Before I changed it my name used to be Laverne, but don't tell anyone, OK?"

I promised that I wouldn't. Rich, who was standing in the next TAFF race, complained to me about the way his rivals in that race, Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden, were conducting their campaign.

"P and T are using dirty tactics - they're publishing wonderful fanzines."

We then got talking about this and that and I decided to ask him him about the rivalry I had noticed between San Franciscans and Los Angelenos.

"We hate 'em" he explained. "Their uncool mellowspeak and laid back image gets Californians a bad name. I mean, San Franciscans are sharp!"

He then went on to tell the doubtless apocryphal tale of a fellow citizen who had tried to buy a compass while visiting the City of the Angels. The owner of the first shop the man asked at sneered at him and said:

"Why would I sell something which only points north?"

So now, explained Rich, most San Franciscans carried a compass with them when they visited L.A., so they'd always know where home and sanity lay.

Jerry Kaufman rang, to assure his place in this report, and the party wound down in a haze of dancing, drinking, talking, and good times had. With all the people staying over I had to share a bed with Gary Farber but I was too tired to care. With a cheerily tasteless comment to Gary, I climbed under the covers and was soon dead to the world. I'd enjoyed San Francisco, one of the most beautiful cities I've ever been in, but tomorrow I was setting off for the Big Apple itself - New York.

\*\*\*\*\*

The rest of this report will eventually appear - somewhere (honest! It's only been five years since I went, fer Pete's sake!).

The year after my trip, 1985, Avedon moved to the UK and we got married. Since then it's been the usual domestic round of house-buying, house-repairing, mortgage-paying, and all the other everyday realities that can keep even the most ardent fan from publishing. Not that it's stopped me entirely....

In 1987 the World Science Fiction Convention, or Worldcon, was held in Britain for only the fourth time in its history (the previous occasions being in 1957, 1965, and 1979 - making it once a decade) and I found myself in charge of fan room publications. As part of this responsibility I wrote a brief history of British fandom - it was one of the publications offered for sale in the fan room - which was adequate enough for what it was but which got me interested in doing a far more substantial history. Since October 1987 I've spent much of my time researching British fandom from its beginnings in 1930 and writing it up, in the process producing some 75 000 words or so (I'm up to 1960 at present) of what I hope will eventually be published as a single volume when it's complete. Even if it's not, however, it won't really matter since the simple reason that I'm writing it in the first place is that I want to read it. It is a labour of love, the work of an amateur in the truest sense of that word (from the Italian for love, amare), and in itself probably as good an example as any of why I'm in Fandom.

You'll recall that when I first got into fandom I thought I was going to be a Big Name SF Author, that I saw fandom as a possible stepping stone towards that ultimate ambition. Well, exposure to fandom totally changed my ideas on that score. Fandom has broadened my horizons in more ways than I can count, it has given me its honours, brought me to the capital to live, and taken me half-way around the world to party with kindred spirits. It has brought me friends, given me love, lovers, and a wife. Next to this being a famous SF Pro seems - well - irrelevant. Maybe one day I might want to try my hand at writing that stuff again, but for now I'm content. I've had a ball during my first decade-and-a-half in fandom and can only say....roll on the next!

...Rob Hansen, March 1989.