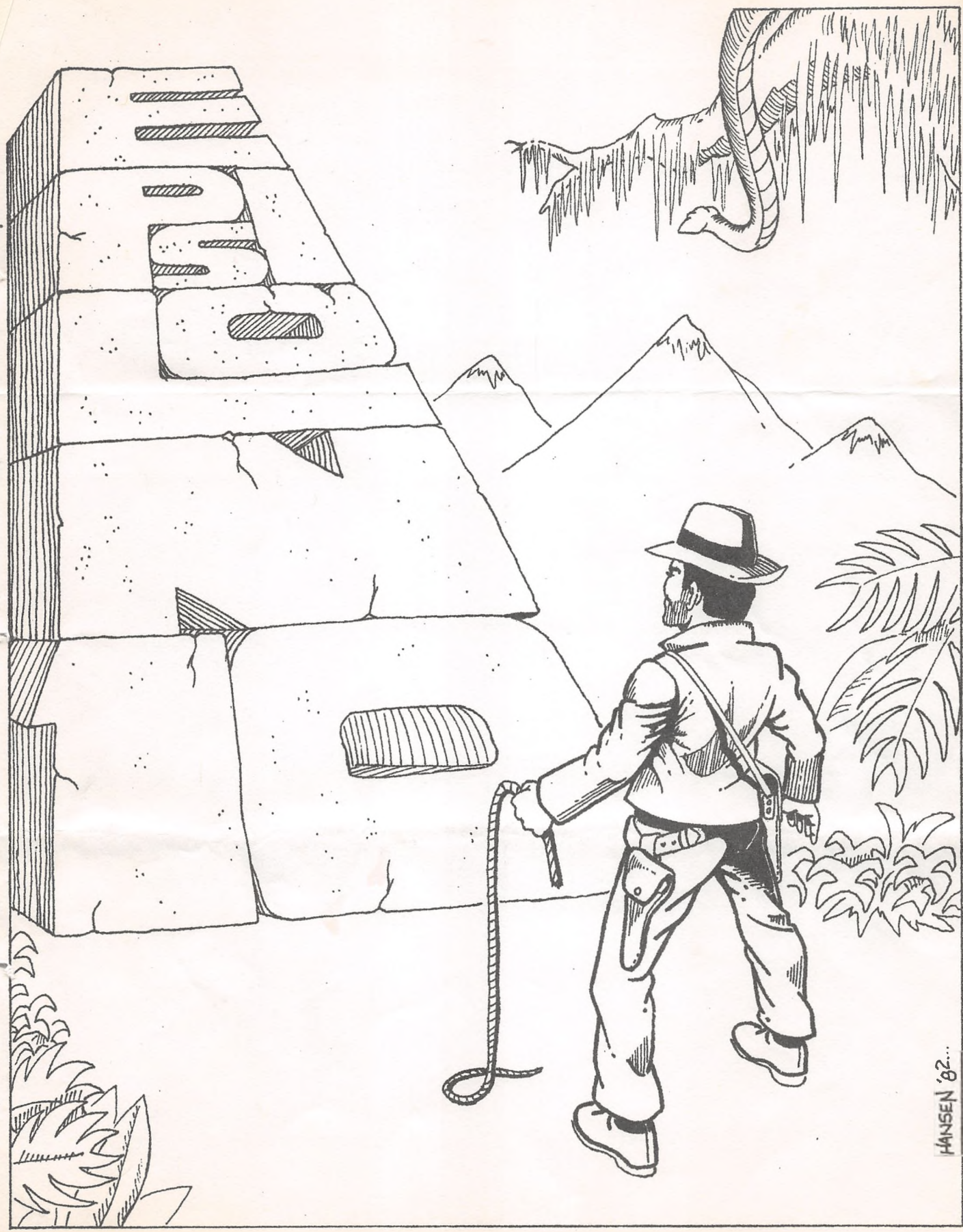


2047D - 5/28/82



HANSEN '82...

....IT'S THE NEWLY RE-TITLED OPENING BIT THAT'S NOW CALLED.....

INTRO

INTRO.....the usual introductory ramblings.

INTRO

As I put pen to paper the second Astral League (sic) album is on the tape deck and the dulcet tones of Graham Charnock singing "Hey Joe Nicholas" float across the room, putting me in a suitably fannish frame of mind for writing what follows. It is a cold evening in March and as usual I am laying in front of the electric fire, turning only when my right leg gets too hot (and I become alarmed at the smell of burning corduroy) in order to lightly toast my other side. Having just consumed two slices of cheese-on-toast and a pot of tea, for me a fairly typical evening meal, I am feeling OK and ready to go.

As usual the cold, wet and windy days that inevitably make up the opening months of a British new year have had the effect of making everything seem vaguely depressing, but in the past week or so the weather has perked up and my spirits have improved considerably. Spring is in the air, and spring (as Peter Roberts once observed) is that time of year when a young fan's thoughts turn to pubbing his ish. Things have been fairly quiet in London since Christmas, but they never entirely stop....

The year started not with a bang but a whimper and I was the one doing the whimpering as I awoke and clutched my head on the morning of January 1st, 1982. Convinced that the way I was feeling could only be the result of someone hitting me between the eyes with a hammer and then kicking me in the stomach, I gazed around me in some confusion and it took me a while before I was able to figure out from the fanzine collection in one corner of the room, and the pornographic magazines in the opposite corner, that I was lying on the floor of Greg Pickersgill's study at 7A Lawrence Rd. I panicked when I turned over and saw that I was sharing the floor with what appeared to be a bright blue wigwam, but was only Rob Holdstock unconscious in his sleeping bag. I dressed, remembering that Greg and Linda had thrown a New Year's Eve party the night before, but I could recall very little about it and was left with only a feeling of general embarrassment and the certain knowledge that I would soon have the reasons for that embarrassment gleefully revealed. My boots and glasses were missing so I went in search of them, wondering why my tongue was so sore and having hazy memories of someone biting it. My glasses turned up minus a lens and with a sticky substance smeared across the other, and I eventually found my boots under a sack of rubbish in the kitchen and stuffed with toilet paper. Try as I might I just couldn't account for this until a certain amount of prodding by others caused me to remember that Stephen J. Green had thrown up over them and Chris Atkinson (a friend indeed) had cleaned them off as this had been a task apparently beyond my capabilities at that point. No, I wasn't wearing the boots at the time of Green's technical yawn. This wasn't the end of things, a certain fellow countryman having suggested hair-of-the-dog, but I won't go into that.

Since then it's been mainly the usual round of One Tuns and FIS

meetings, but late in February Linda and I went to see a stage version of Hunter S. Thompson's 'Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas' (Chris Evans was supposed to be with us but though we waited at our meeting place as long as we could he didn't show - naturally enough, we later discovered, he turned up mere minutes after we left). I haven't actually read 'Fear and Loathing..' yet but I'm familiar with some of Thompson's other work so I was rather curious as to how a stage adaptation could be done. In the event both Linda and I agreed that it was excellent and Linda even commented that the American accents of the male members of the cast sounded perfect. Unfortunately the inability of both female cast members to do a convincing American accent did spoil the illusion somewhat. Knowing that I was going with an American to see a play set in America and based on a book written by an American I decided beforehand that a certain amount of dipping into American culture and the sampling of certain ethnic delights was in order, so I had a Big Mac and read an interview with Jack Kirby on the train down to Clapham Junction. In the interlude I decided to sample some of the Schlitz beer that the management had imported especially for this occasion. It was pretty bad, seeming tasteless and over-carbonated. As Linda had been getting used to British beer in the past couple of years I asked her what she thought of it.

"It's tasteless and over-carbonated", she said.

It occurs to me that I might get a few irate transatlantic letters for suggesting that that Schlitz and Big Macs are in any way ethnic delights or representative of American culture so I'll make it clear here (just about there) that I was only kidding. As for the contents of this issue...

There is no NOTIONS column this issue, though I started and almost completed one. This is because while I believe the points I wished to make are valid ones I found that the arguments I had used did not entirely convince me. And if I'm not convinced I can hardly expect you to be. I'll obviously have to try a different approach with this piece and also give it a bit more thought, and all that is going to take rather more time than is available if I want to get this issue out by Eastercon, which I most assuredly do. Still, this issue is long enough anyway and while the contents make this an atypical issue I hope it's still of interest and that Malcolm Edwards doesn't think I've given him a pizza.

I gather, from the cards that have been arriving recently requesting copies of it, that Simon Ounsley reviewed EPSILON 9 in the latest MATRIX, an issue that I didn't get, not being a member of the BSFA (as a contributor - I drew the cover - I am entitled to a copy anyway, but I have to admit that I wasn't sufficiently interested enough to reply to Graham James when he asked me if I had a copy). Unfortunately I couldn't oblige most of those who requested copies as I'd run out, in spite of increasing my print run by almost 50% the last time this happened. I have no desire to increase my print run again so in order to free a few copies to oblige such people I will be chopping some of the deadwood from my mailing list after this issue. If we don't trade and you haven't loosed an issue since, say, EPSILON 7 you come into the deadwood category and had better do something if you want future issues.

ROB HANSEN, 1/4/82 (no foolin')

This is EPSILON 10 the fanzine that begins, literally, at the beginning.....

....HOW THE EDITOR 'GOT SCIENCE FICTION'....A CAUTIONARY TALE.....

CLASS OF '72

CLASS OF '72.....a personal genesis.

CLASS OF '72

I have two photograph albums. One is for my convention pictures and on occasion I pull it out and flick through its pages, noting the way all my friends have changed with the passage of time (did you know, for instance, that Malcolm Edwards once had a beard?), though Greg Pickersgill looks just the same in photos I've seen from more than ten years ago. The other album is smaller and contains pictures of my family and non-fan friends, of the dog I once had, and of a former girl-friend of whom not all my memories are pleasant ones. It also contains, on the very first page, a photograph showing the sixth form of Howardian High School circa 1972, and in that array of fresh-faced 17 year-olds are some of the people who played a part in my awakening as an SF reader and fan.

I'm on the far right of the picture in the front row, my right leg in plaster from ankle to crotch (the legacy of an illicit trip to the pub during my tea-break at the motel where I had a weekend job as a dishwasher and my inept attempt at slipping back in unnoticed), and third from left in the back row is Chris Kelly. Roderick Murdison should also be in the picture but he doesn't appear to be, even though I would have sworn he was before I checked. However, I'm getting ahead of myself since my tale really begins nine years earlier.

On Friday 22nd November 1963, in Dallas, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated and it's said that everyone remembers where they were and what they were doing when they heard the news, but not me however. I had only just passed my ninth birthday a mere fortnight before and, while I remember the effect the news had on those around me, an event that occurred the following day was to have a far greater effect on me and remains more vivid in my memory to this day. On Saturday the early evening news was still full of the story of Kennedy's death, naturally enough, but it was the programme that followed the news that was to prove more personally significant. The show was the first of an 'educational' SF adventure series predicted to last forty weeks and was called Doctor Who. I watched that first episode enthralled, and watched it equally enthralled when it was, for some reason, shown again the following Saturday. It was with its second serial that it won me totally, however, with the story that unleashed upon an unsuspecting world those menacing mechanoids, the Daleks. (Recently, as part of a Doctor Who retrospective, the BBC repeated that first show but I didn't watch it - some memories are best left untampered with.)

I suppose that most of my contemporaries became hooked on the idea of SF through the pages of The Eagle and the adventures of Dan Dare, Pilot of the Future, as I'm sure I would have had the Eagle been one of the comics I read, but I was more interested in those American comic books that featured the incredible adventures of gaudily-costumed superheroes (in fact I still sometimes think that if I take off my glasses and tear my

shirt open I'll discover a bright blue costume emblazoned with a big red 'S'), and even though the plotlines often made use of SF themes it was with the advent of Doctor Who that I first became aware of SF as something separate and unique.

I've no doubt that the public library on the council housing estate where I grew up contained a fair bit of SF but unfortunately all the fiction (be it SF, western, romance, or whatever) was arranged alphabetically by author and my total ignorance of who actually wrote SF prevented me from making use of whatever SF the library actually contained. At the time the books I took out tended to contain stories about daring he-men with such improbably 'macho' names as Mike Moran (or Paul Kincaid) engaged in adventures that Lucas and Spielberg would later turn into Raiders of the Lost Ark. My favourite reading at the time, however, was a series of books telling the story of Biggles, that intrepid British aviator and champion of the Empire whose adventures were the staple reading diet of generations of schoolboys. It was my interest in Biggles that led to another connection with SF (of a sort) because when I'd exhausted the library's supply of Biggles books I discovered that their author, Captain W.E. Johns, had written a series called 'Kings of Space', which impressed me deeply when I first read it and of which I now recall nothing.

My move to Llanrumney High School at age 11 and subsequent transfer to Howardian High School at 13, gave me access to two reasonably stocked school libraries and I soon worked my way through the science fiction novels of H.G. Wells and John Wyndham. Unfortunately the works of Wells and Wyndham were the sole concessions these libraries made to SF and my progress along the path that leads to the here and now might have been halted if, when I was around age 15, a friend hadn't lent me the first two books in Edgar Rice Burroughs' 'Martian' series and, more importantly, Tolkien's Lord of the Rings. My extravagant praise of this book and my habit of recommending it to anyone who would listen caused Chris Kelly, whose desk happened to be next to mine in class at this point, to remark that if I liked Tolkien I should appreciate the works of Michael Moorcock. I hadn't previously suspected that Kelly read such books but now I knew I naturally asked to borrow them, something which proved impossible as they belonged to Kelly's elder brother who was not in the habit of lending books.

By this time it was already 1970/71 and I still had yet to make any lasting connection with SF and the reasons were as much to do with money as with anything. Having lucked out at the library the next obvious step would have been to have bought my own copies of SF paperbacks but while my parents kept us well fed and clothed money was never in great supply so my weekly allowance was the less than princely sum of seven shillings and six pence, most of which was spent on...comics. Since first encountering American superhero comics at the start of the 60s I had been an ardent follower of the four-colour adventures they depicted, though at one stage my father banned them from the house on the grounds of their 'excessive violence' and I was forced to feed my addiction in secret. One of the comic books I collected was Marvel's Conan the Barbarian and strangely enough it was only a short time after Kelly suggested I read some Moorcock

that the comic featured a two-part meeting of Conan and Elric adapted from an original plot supplied by Moorcock himself. It was reading this tale that finally persuaded me to channel some of my meagre funds into buying a few books at the local Woolworth where I was able to pick up remaindered Sphere editions of Moorcock's Blood-Red Game and Shores of Death. I also picked up a copy of Philip K. Dick's Counter-Clock World, which makes Dick the first American SF author I'd read (I regard ERB's stuff as fantasy), but though Dick is now one of my favourite authors I disliked this book so much that I didn't read anything else by him for another five or six years. Be that as it may, this was the real start of my SF reading and with the cash generated by my newly acquired weekend job the months that followed saw a great expansion in my reading as I discovered the whole vast pantheon of American SF writers and the works of people like Heinlein, Asimov, Farmer, Silverberg, Ellison, etc., began to flood into my home at an alarming rate. And yet even this wasn't enough. With the fanatical zeal of the convert I wanted to read everything my favourites had ever written, and the fact that large portions of most authors works were out of print in the UK at any given time was a major source of irritation. Salvation was to come from an unlikely direction.

Roderick Murdison carried a stigma. Having failed miserably at his end of year exams he had been held back to take the year's schooling again, and the reason for his poor results had much to do with him spending every minute he could reading science fiction. I was sufficiently perceptive to see in Murdison's plight what could well be my own position in the near future if my obsession with SF continued to increase, but my caution against being drawn in further was tempered by the realisation that here was someone who would almost certainly know where to lay hands on those works I so desired. Murdison put me in touch with Ken Slater's 'Fantast (Medway) Ltd.' SF mail-order firm (Slater having been in large part responsible for the revival of fandom in Britain in the immediate post-war period, not that I knew anything of fandom then), and thus was I lost.

In 1975, under the impression that Michael Moorcock was to be the GoH, I registered for the Eastercon, SEACON '75, but whenever I'm asked when it was I started reading SF I always say 1972. There had been a number of false starts, to be sure, but it was in 1972 at age 17 that I caught the SF bug and became a committed SF reader.

As an interesting postscript to all this Chris Kelly, whose desk was next to mine all those years ago, became an actor and as Tom Kelly has appeared in a number of British TV's SF programmes. He was in the second episode of Blake's Seven, though he had the good taste to die halfway through; he played the ghost of a World War Two fighter pilot in Sapphire & Steel; and, to bring things full-circle, was one of the aliens to whom his fellow Gallifreyans were apparently betrayed by...Doctor Who.

.....EVERYTHING YOU NEVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT EPSILON...IN.....

THE STORY SO FAR...

THE STORY SO FAR.....a look at what has gone before.

THE STORY SO FAR...

And so EPSILON reaches issue 10; gosh! It's been a long and uneven road since that first issue and there were times I thought I'd never get this far - indeed, at one point I'd decided to fold the fanzine, as the unused cover printed herein attests. Still, ten consecutive issues of a fanzine, to me at least, is something of an achievement (even if it has taken six years) and this seems like a reasonable time to reflect on those earlier issues.

It's often said, and rightly so, that before deciding to put out a fanzine you should have something to say and you should try to say it in a distinctive fashion but, in truth, when I put together the first issue of EPSILON I did so with only the vaguest idea of just what I wanted to say and even less idea of how to do so with a distinctive voice. My main reason for doing a fanzine at all lay in those well-known words 'the usual', since I had enjoyed most of the fanzines I'd seen up to that point and wanted to receive more, but was a less than scintillating LoC writer. Thus, though fanzines were a part of the fannish action I wanted to get in on, I began EPSILON in order to get other fanzines in trade.

EPSILON 1 contained a conreport on the first SILICON, a piece of illustrated fiction, an introductory editorial, a fair bit of artwork scattered throughout, and was lithographed. The type was double-spaced and great use was made of white space, this being partly due to my desire to establish a distinctive visual appearance but mainly the result of a lack of written material. Even now that first issue is lovely to look at but it's the beauty of a Christmas tree bauble, a beauty that contains an emptiness within, because I paid more attention to image than to substance. Though I really should have known better I made the usual neofan mistake of assuming that because there were few fanzines of that type around I was being daring and innovative, not realising that such zines had been tried and discarded many times previously. I suppose that solipsism is the classic sign of the neofan and looking **at** the rest of the zine with its fiction and its "then I did this, then I did that" convention report it's clear that I didn't miss a trick (actually I did miss one - there was no poetry in the issue).

EPSILON 2 was pasted up on A3 sheets for reduction to A4 but the prices quoted by the local printer were beyond my pocket so the issue was eventually produced by illicit photoreduction and reproduction on my employers' xerox machine (between EPSILONs 1&2 I'd put out two issues of a two-sheet crudzine called SKWELSH by these means). This issue saw the first appearance of the ODZUNSODZ column which consisted of various bits of anecdotal reportage and suchlike and it also contained two outside contributions in the form of a cartoon from Harry Bell and a report on the 1977 Eastercon by Paul Kincaid. Being a very slow typist (how slow can be gauged

by the fact that since starting to put this piece on stencil my stereo has played through the second side of Magazine's The Correct Use Of Soap and most of the first side of Muddy Waters' Can't Get No Grindin') I'd asked Paul to type the report up on A5 sheets as these could then be pasted directly onto the A3 sheets for reduction to two columns on an A4 page. This certainly had the advantage of cutting down on production time but it effectively removed the possibility of me editing the piece, which is not a situation to be recommended. I certainly wouldn't consider doing things that way again.

EPSILON 3 was the first duplicated issue - and the first occasion I'd typed any stencils. This was also the time when, unaware that it was a contraction of the words 'correction fluid' and thinking it a brand name, I went into a shop and asked for a bottle of corflu. John and Eve Harvey duplicated the issue for me, and though I certainly hadn't intended it to be a personalzine all the contents were by me due to my inability to get contributions out of those I wanted them from. In retrospect the reason for this is fairly obvious - there were many better fanzines around also clamouring for material and it is, after all, much more satisfying to see print in the company of the best in the field.

Those first three issues are not ones I look back on with any great pride but they were a very necessary part of the process of learning how to put out a fanzine, which is not as obvious as it may seem - as many of you no doubt discovered for yourselves. The poor response to the third issue was a sure sign that it was time to re-assess just what I was doing and after a lot of thought I decided that the only way to evoke a better response was to comment on certain things actually happening in fandom and to adopt a definite editorial viewpoint on specific issues rather than just carrying on with the anecdotal reportage that had been the only real substance of EPSILON (and that pretty thin) until then. Thus was the NOTIONS column born. Though begun as a coldly calculated ploy to generate more letters of comment I discovered, within a few issues, that this was the part of the fanzine I most enjoyed writing and also that I had more of a knack for this type of writing. I also figured that a change of image was needed to separate the 'new' EPSILON as much as possible from what had gone before so I initiated the 'triple-decker' column titles topped with 'headlines' that have continued ever since. I also changed from A4 size to quarto. This was not, as some of you might imagine, an ideological move but rather an aesthetic one since with three A4 issues under my belt I'd come to realise that a slim fanzine such as EPSILON looks better on the smaller size paper.

EPSILONS 4, 5, & 6 were put out in fairly rapid succession and all were personalzines, structured as described above and duplicated by Greg Pickersgill. Though dated December 1978 the sixth issue wasn't actually published until early in February of the following year due to certain production difficulties and, although I didn't know it then, it was to be the last to see print for more than two-and-a-half years.

This was 1979, the year of the Worldcon, and in the months leading

up to that momentous event the flow of fanzines slowed to a trickle as everyone marshalled their energies for what was to be the final fling of seventies British fandom. An era was drawing to a close.

The collapse of fanpublishing in this country after SEACON has been commented on many times since, and had even been predicted beforehand, but the collapse wasn't immediately apparent in the first few months that followed.

Shortly before the convention I had completed LICKS, a one-off fannish fanzine that took as its theme the experiences of certain fans in the music business, and a couple of days after the con Greg duplicated it - the last fanzine he was to print for me. Though it was planned as a one-off I began to contemplate a second issue of LICKS before the first had even been published. Dave Langford's brother was the drummer with the Mekons, after all, so there was further scope for development and at SEACON itself I recall talking to Rich Coad about rock music in general and enthusing over the Dead Kennedys (whose singles 'California Uber Alles' and 'Holiday In Cambodia' had been among my 1979 favourites) whereupon Rich revealed that he knew a member of the band and that he might be able to get an interview when back in San Francisco. Unfortunately there never was another issue of LICKS.

In the closing weeks of 1979 I assembled what I intended to be the seventh and final issue of EPSILON. It had become apparent that fandom as I'd known it up 'til then was withering on the vine and my own analysis, in earlier issues, of the traumatic effect I had predicted that SEACON would have on seventies British fandom had led me to believe that the fandom to come would be sercon - a fandom I wanted no part of. In the event that version of issue 7 never did see print, for reasons mentioned in the version that did, and I turned my attention to another project, one I had begun prior to SEACON.

At the same time as I had been putting LICKS together I'd also been working on a series of four page 'sort-of-satirical' comic strips featuring 'an alien neofan'. However, I hadn't given any thought as to where these strips would be printed and consequently I eventually ended up putting them all together and publishing them myself as the first issue of STARFAN, (Issue two, RSN, ho ho) in May 1980.

The early months of 1980 were a depressing time both for British fandom, which seemed to be largely dead, and for me personally as my job had been made redundant and my services rendered surplus to requirements. Naturally enough I felt no desire to write for fanzines and, in any case, such frivolities had to take a back seat to the more important and immediate task of writing out job applications. It wasn't until I moved to London and took up my new job at the end of May that I could even think of hitting the fanzine trail again, but though I now felt more inclined to produce a fanzine I just couldn't get into the right frame of mind. Drawing was no problem, however, so I drew up a Dick-Whittingtonesque cover to replace the now redundant 'last issue' cover (though I eventually drew a third, and final, cover which duly saw print) and one or two minor pieces for other fans.



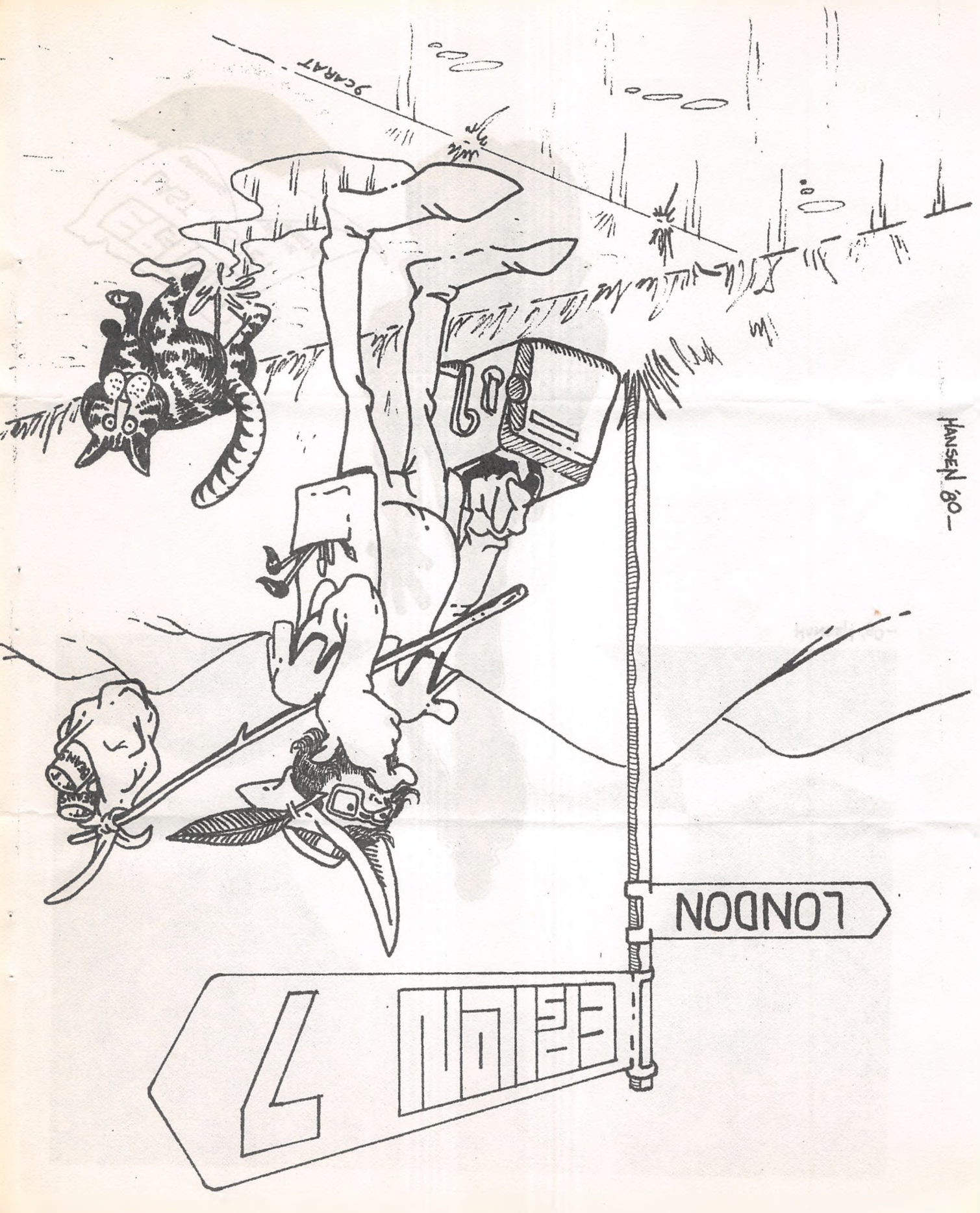
HANSEN '80-



7 FIFTH

LONDON

HANSEN '30-



EPSILON 7 came out in August 1981, much of it being the recycled remains of the unpublished issue I had put together two years earlier. It published a few weeks after the first issue of Malcolm Edwards' TAPPEN and shortly before the seventh of Greg Pickersgill's STOP BREAKING DOWN. As Malcolm put it in TAPPEN 3, this was a case of "...two or three people who haven't published a fanzine for a while for a while deciding it was about bloody time they did so, the simultaneity of the things perhaps being because they meet in the same pub every Sunday and tend to egg each other on". Indeed. I have to admit that I hoped our example would encourage lots of other dormant pre-SEACON fans to get off their arses and start pubbing again - and for a while there it looked as if it might have. EPSILON 8 saw print in October and issue 9 followed in December. Issue 10 you know about.

The seventh issue was in many ways a new beginning for EPSILON in much the same way that the fourth had been, but whereas the changes at that point were a deliberate act of will the new phase came about because external circumstances had caused such a long gap in publication, and a consequent change in my attitudes concerning, and commitment to, fandom. I was also nearly three years older. With EPSILON 4, though I didn't realise it at the time, I established the basic format that the fanzine has utilised ever since, the ODZUNSODZ and NOTIONS columns representing the anecdote and the essay - the two main forms of fannish writing. Some critics have suggested that this is a restrictive format but I need a framework within which to work and I've found it well suited to my needs. Though I find anecdotal writing much more difficult than 'state of the art' essays I realised early on that it provided a necessary counterbalance to such essays and so I've persevered with it but last issue, as an experiment, the anecdotal material was supplied by Leroy Kettle and it was, in terms of response, the most successful issue to date.

All in all it's been an interesting six years and doing these ten issues has given me a lot of pleasure. Nothing lasts for ever they say, and they're right, but I intend to be around fandom for some time yet and to continue publishing EPSILON. I hope you'll be along for the ride.

IT OCCURS TO ME....

...that some of you, having read CLASS OF '72, will assume that it reflects my current taste in reading, but nothing could be further from the truth as the following list of just a few of the books I've read since the last issue attests.....

- RIDDLEY WALKER - Russel Hoban
- THE WHITE HOTEL - D.M.Thomas
- THE TRAVAILS OF JANE SAINT - Josephine Saxton
- THE GREAT ROCK N'ROLL SWINDLE - Mike Moorcock
- THE GOLDEN MAN - the late, great, Philip K.Dick

This is the only bit of space left to tell you that EPSILON's editorial address is: 9A Greenleaf Rd., East Ham, London E6 1DX, UNITED KINGDOM.

...BEGINNING WITH 'LATE' LoCS ON EPSILON 8, IT'S.....

LETTERS

LETTERS.....take it away, Dick!

LETTERS

RICHARD BERGERON

Box 5989, Old San Juan, Puerto Rico 00905.

I'm the world's worst LoC writer but I must make an observation or two on your comments on WARHOON 28. Especially your perceptive thoughts on the sercon vs fannish tradition where you note that sercon types probably imagine that sercon writing would be the type that would survive the passage of time and be reprinted "...reasoning, no doubt, that within a few short years the fans being written about have faded from the scene and that their writings and activities would be of no further interest." You'll be amused to note that in WRHN 29 (which I sent you a few weeks ago) I quote a letter from Willis which he wrote me on 1 Sept 1960 (sooner or later I get around to publishing everything) wherein he makes very much the same point: "Incidentally isn't it remarkable how 'articles of lasting interest' - biographies of pros, surveys of sf trends etc - seem to be forgotten almost immediately, while the ephemeral gossipings of people like Burbee are constantly being quoted and reprinted?" Well, the two of you are only twenty years apart in time but right on the target as far as thinking is concerned.

You were probably aware that in the early 60s WRHN was greatly concerned with political issues (and in fact I was an art director for the Bobby Kennedy campaign against Lyndon Johnson and active in several other political campaigns) and a lot of it seeped into WRHN. In fact that Willis letter referred to above also commented "Wrhn was fascinating, as I was deeply interested in what you had to say about US politics, which I follow as keenly as our own if not more so. I saw Nixon on TV here..." And then, of course, you're aware of what the first WRHN harp was. Re the political thing it's interesting to note that one of Walt's major articles pointed to political activism outside the system and in many ways echoes what Abi Frost had to say in your letter column this issue. Writing in an apa in an article titled "The Apa And The Survival Of Civilisation" he concludes "The conventional information media cannot bring them this message because they are themselves part of the problem, not of the solution. They are vertical channels belonging to the system, whereas what is needed are horizontal channels, like the photo-copied manuscripts which circulate among the dissident Russian intellectuals. Or like this."

I might also add that WRHN's popularity was extremely high when I was overweeningly involved in political discussions. I have no interest in going that route again but it's obvious that such discussions are fascinating to fans.

((Could be, but it's the bottom of the page and time to hear from...))

GARY DEINDORFER

447 Bellevue Ave. Apt.9B, Trenton NJ 08618, USA.

I'm starting to get more English fanzines than I used to, and I'm loosing most of them. I'm all for increased communication between your side of the Great Water and mine. Not necessarily slavish agreement between Britishers ((or even Britons)) and Americans, all sweetness and light. By no means. I'm all for candour, running both ways. In fact I see signs that the transatlantic communication between fans is more outspoken than it was, especially in the mythical, halcyon days of the Sixth Fandom of Willis and Co. Then the fans seemed to be just a shade squeamish about knocking their counterparts across the Atlantic, in either direction. More recently MOTA established some groovy links between the countries, but as Ted White points out in PONG, controversy was excluded from its pages. So let there be controversy and wide open give and take flashing across the Atlantic. (I'm excluding Australia to make things simpler and also because Australian fanzines seem amazingly bland, shying away from the slightest controversy.)

I didn't send away for a copy of WARHOON 28, but I've read a fair amount of Willis's writing over the years, since I got into fandom in the late 50s when he was still active. There is no doubt in my mind that he is fandom's greatest writer to date. It is good that this special publication gives some of the current day fans a chance to immerse themselves in his golden, silver-tongued (mixed metaphor?) Irish prose.

I used to have some fanzines from the days of Sixth Fandom. For instance, I had a copy of Lee Hoffman's legendary QUANNISH, complete with the Willis column. Fanzines from that era have a magical quality to them. You can sense how cosy fanzine fandom was in those days.

But I'm not one for living in the past. It's good to be aware of great achievements of the past so long as they don't stultify your creativity in the present. I like good nostalgia articles and can go for classic reprints, but it can be overdone. As much as I like Dan Steffan's BOONFARK -maybe my favourite fanzine being published today - I think it's a little too past-oriented, and I'd like to see Dan include more stuff about now.

You seem to handle slice-of-life anecdotes well, to judge by the harrowing story of you and your keys. This kind of thing has to be done well to be entertaining. You managed to bring it off. Moving on to your tale of two conventions...it is funny how candid you English people are about your bodily functions. Chris Evans in the new TAPPEN is almost nauseatingly explicit about his farts and snotballs. Americans seem to be more body-shameful in their conreports. They try harder to present themselves in a good light - while English fans often like to present themselves in the worst possible light at a convention. Well, some of the stories you highlight are amusing, though I keep reading anecdotes about Greg Pickersgill, yet I've read hardly anything written by him.

((In that last paragraph you refer to "...you English people", but while Chris Evans, Greg Pickersgill, and myself are British none of us are English. We are all Welsh (as is Dave Langford, as a matter of interest, and even Malcolm Edwards is half-Welsh). While I realise you had no way of knowing this there have been sufficient

instances in the past of American letter writers referring to 'England' when they obviously mean 'Britain' (culminating in my receiving a letter, back when I still lived in Wales, addressed '..Wales, England' which is on a par with addressing a letter '..Canada, USA', which incensed me) that I'm beginning to wonder if basic geography is taught in North American schools. This is far from the first time I've bitched about this in these pages and I know, with the certain inevitability of death and taxes, that it won't be the last.

There is another 'late' LoC on issue 8 that I intend to run but for a number of reasons I'm saving that 'til later, so lets move on to the letters on the last issue, starting with...))

TED WHITE

1014 N.Tuckahoe St., Falls Church, VA22046, USA.

Enjoyable as I've found earlier EPSILONs, issue 9 seems to pull together the threads into the best issue I've yet read. I've been thinking about this - about the nature of EPSILON in general, and of this issue in particular - and the thoughts which follow may not be fully ripe as yet, but I'll lay them out for you anyway.

It seems to me that you are at this point in your fan career in a place not unlike the one I occupied in the late fifties: you hang out with the BNFs, and can get contributions from them for your fanzine, and you have a good idea of What Is Going On, but you are still developing your own fanwriting and fanediting talents, still finding and refining your own voice. Earlier EPSILONs struck me as good 2nd-string fanzines - the kind of zines which make up the actual bulk of any given era's fanzines and which really set the tone for fandom for that reason more than the outstanding ones do - and in saying that I am not putting EPSILON down. I am comparing it with the 2nd-string fanzines of the fifties and sixties (here); today there are very few as good as it in the US 2nd-string.

Issue 9 seems to me to show signs of moving up and out of the 2nd string into the 1st-string, and it does so largely on the strength of what you yourself have written for it. Your NOTIONS is, this time, more immediate and also more significant than anything else I've seen by you. There are moments in it when you seem in danger of fumbling it, but you recover on each occasion. Your response to John D.Owen in LETTERS cements what you're doing more firmly into place.

There is, of course, little per se that is new in NOTIONS, nor could there be, given its nature. But what makes it effective is the way you've pulled together the quotes and made the piece a virtual survey of contemporary fandom and fanzines.

I've railed, in PONG, against those who maintain an obliviousness to fanhistory and go about reinventing the wheel in happy ignorance of the fact that they're doing a rough job (their wheels aren't round and some have corners) where others before them have perfected it. It seems to be a cyclic thing (no pun intended), but what startles me is the shortness of

these cycles in Britain. SEACON was barely two years ago - hardly time, I would have thought, for a whole fandom to have sprung up in near-total ignorance of pre-SEACON fandom.

It also bothers me to see how ignorant these people are of the true nature of fandom - as revealed in the quotes you give from SECOND-HAND WAVE - which they see as a mirror of mundane social structure and to which they apparently apply mundane political attitudes. To the extent that they practice what they preach, they remake fandom (or their corner of it, anyway) into what they perceive it to be, in a self-fulfilling prophecy sort of way. What is saddest, I guess, is that they remain so culture-bound. Fandom used to be remarkably free of such things, but is less so today than ever before.

You stumble a little in saying, "The trouble is that this Don Quixote has decided to tilt at windmills without taking the trouble to find out what a windmill is beforehand..." since in fact Don Quixote never seemed to realise that what he was tilting at was a windmill; thus "tilting at windmills" means implicitly not recognising the true nature of one's target, and your image is flawed by its redundancy if not oxymoronic qualities. Still this is a minor problem in an otherwise impressive piece. The other fumble is the way you chose to tell your own story: I think it would have worked better as a straight narrative than as a "little tale" which concludes "This is a true story. I know...for I was that boy." This way is, if I may quote Mike Glycer totally out of context "excessively cute", and obviated by the genuine quotes you follow it with to buttress it. But these are essentially stylistic quibbles and I pass them along in the nature of shop-talk.

When you get to Nicholas in NABU 11, you get to the meat of the piece and I think your style matures considerably. You pin Joseph down with accuracy and economy, the quotes chosen to considerable effect.

What amuses me is that yours is the third response to Nicholas's NABU 11 piece I've read, Malcolm's in GAMBIT 55 (in which he reviews NABU 11) and my own LoC to Ian being the other two, and while both you and Malcolm call him out over his "you all fell into my clever trap" cop-out, each of you does so in a somewhat different way (while making essentially the same point), and each of us finds enough in Joe's piece to respond to that there is little real overlap.

I have to agree that prior Nicholas material I've read was nowhere nearly so sloppy in its thinking as was his NABU 11 piece. I wonder what this portends: is Joseph getting over-cocky in his fannish old-age? Or did he just do a rush-job on that one piece?

What I think makes NOTIONS ultimately effective is the way you've tied Nicholas together with your opening topic and left him holding the bag as the villain of the piece. Thus is Joseph confounded. I don't know how accurately you've pinned him down, but you've certainly left him in an awkward position with much to explain (or attempt to explain). That was a deft job, and one I think Joseph, by virtue of the games he likes to play, well deserved.

I've read relatively little by Kettle, and "Sphincters at Dawn" may not be the best place to start, but despite its single-minded anal focus I enjoyed it. Rather a tour de stench. This is a topic rarely covered so exhaustively (if at all) in fanzines, but certainly opens the door to future examinations of, perhaps, offensively bad breath (so many fans have rotting teeth) or possibly even the differing natures and types of vomit produced by overdrinking, bad drugs, or bad food. I look forward with bated breath (and clenched nostrils) to Kettle's next piece for you.

What disturbs me about Owen's letter, beyond those aspects that you responded to, is his tacit assumption that "the 'Olg Guard'" has had its day and must retire from the field to give newcomers a fair chance. What a fascistic concept! Make room, make room! As though fans were interchangeable modules and nobody new can put out a fanzine as long as Pickersgill, or Edwards, or whomever is still putting out his!

Time for me to say again that fandom is a working anarchy, based on merit. There is always room for anyone with talent, anyone with something to say, and in fact there is also room for those with no obvious talents or things to say. It's not like a room party with a fixed attendance, whereby for someone to enter another must leave. If Owen has been around for "5 or 6 years" he ought by now to have realised this, and also to have realised what a red-herring his whole outburst against the re-establishment of "standards" is. What he is really objecting to is anyone noting that current day fanzines from post-SEACON fans (none of which I've seen) might be sloppier, less-informed, and more poorly-produced than the fanzines of pre-SEACON fans. He is objecting to the education of those newer fans.

I must agree with Harries' recommendation of Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas, which is vastly superior to (and shorter than) the collection, The Great Snark Hunt. Thompson's "gonzo journalism" reached its manic peak in Fear and Loathing, and it parallels some of the best fanwriting. As for Wolfe, The Right Stuff is a good book, but The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test which follows the most charismatic people in the sixties US counterculture, Ken Kesey and Neal Cassady (earlier the lead character in both Kerouac's On The Road and Holmes' Go) describes what virtually amounts to a parallel fandom (which itself had connections with fandom).

Finally, I'm genuinely pleased to see Walt Willis's letter, since it signals his involvement in current British fanzines and perhaps his general re-involvement with fanzines as a whole. This is a man who should never have to leave the room of fandom.

((It would be nice to think it signalled some degree of re-involvement, I agree, but that's something only time will tell.

I'm quite curious about the "connections with fandom" that the counterculture depicted in The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test had. Any chance of some more on this?

Not everyone agreed with your comments on the NOTIONS column, and for another view I refer you to.....))

ARNOLD AKIEN

6 Dunblane Rd., Seaburn, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear SR6 8EU.

A little introspective overview of the state of fanzine fandom - or indeed fandom in general - is no bad thing. It's when fandom's overseers take themselves too seriously that they begin to look and sound silly.

I dropped into fandom during SEACON and, sometime later, in a LOC to Jeff Suter's PERIPHERY I mentioned my encounter with a panel of fanzine fans who were 'debating' the much-heralded sercon invasion - that, I could only assume, must be me since I was the only neofan in the 'audience' (such as it was). You could claim that it's because I'm in the same age group as the pre-SEACON generation that I've encountered none of the barriers of BNFness that some have claimed exist - and maybe in some small measure this is true - but I never encountered the initial difficulties of 'getting into fandom' that I've heard mentioned by the still small voice of discontent. I was never aware that any barriers existed beyond the normal ones you'll find in any social situation, and I found that I could make friends in fandom astonishingly rapidly. Moreover I'm not in a minority of one, or one of a minority of post-SEACON fans - many newish fans of my acquaintance ignore this silly, non-existent BNF barrier. So why do we have another wave of establishment-bashing? It's because it has become a British tradition in fanzines that a good and perfectly acceptable method of gaining and keeping the attention of your peers is to denounce, in letters of fire, some established fan or group of fans or, better yet, the social condition of fandom. Then some 'establishment figure' like, say, Rob Hansen, goes onto the defensive and voila! A Debate begins.

((It's only 'acceptable' if the attacks on the 'establishment' are the result of genuine greivances and not paranoid whining based on a distorted or ill-informed view of the way fandom functions.))

It's fairly harmless - and a waste of time; since it's an argument which can, by its very nature, never be resolved. Circular argument is fun if you like that kind of thing but don't please let it go too far. You've mentioned some of the ace fanwriters of past and present. I put it to you: how much time did they spend making interminable lists of quotations from the writings of fannish pundits in the pursuit of an unattainable goal?

The only memorable part of EPSILON 9 is Leroy's 'Novacon Report' - the rest has all the lasting interest of candy floss. Don't let yourself be caught up in being a historian of the relics of age old arguments. You are capable of original work - and that's what you should be doing.

((I have to admit that I see the NOTIONS column in issue 9 as being something more than "interminable lists of quotations from the writings of fannish pundits", indeed I recently considered doing a column composed entirely of quotations, the points I wanted to make arising entirely from the juxtaposition of the pieces quoted. And I would regard that as much a piece of "original work" as I regard my last NOTIONS column.))

MICHAEL ASHLEY

86 St. James Rd., Mitcham, Surrey, CR4 2DB.

Sorry I haven't responded to the past few EPSILONs you've sent me but while Graham's been digesting their contents I've been stuck at Lancaster University busily writing essays on Anthony Trollope. To be honest I'd be hard pushed to say who had the most boring task. Certainly EPSILONs 7 & 8 weren't too exciting; grammatically correct, logically ok, and so on but all lacking anything memorable. Not even any real dirt, so far as I can recall. Solid issues to some but by a majority vote the Ashley brothers found them dull.

EPSILON 9 had a bit more life because of you criticisms of Connor, Nicholas, and SHW. Your arguments are doubtless valid but I can't help wondering why you've only waited till now to point out faults in Joseph's comments which have been visible for a good few years. "One is not cheered to read the column in NABU 7 where Nicholas says such-and-such" - yes well, you've left it a bit late now; perhaps if you'd been as critical at the time you could have exercised more influence than waiting until Joseph is more set in his loony ways. Cynical buggers (eg. M. Ashley, G. Ashley, etc.) might suggest that you've waited until Joseph is generally an easy target (particularly after prodding him has received the okay from West) before chipping in yourself.

((What a bizarre view of the way fandom functions! I can't imagine why you should think criticism of an individual needs to be sanctioned by D. West before it can be attempted - and the only terms in which I see one person as more of an "easy target" than any other is if that person, by his words or by his actions, has left himself open to attack. In this instance my 'attack' was prompted by the excesses of Joseph's article in NABU 11, and while thinking of how best to respond to that piece I had cause to re-assess all he had previously written for fanzines. Hence my picking up on that quote from NABU 7 where I hadn't previously. The thing is, you see, I've always enjoyed Joseph's articles and agreed with much of what he had to say, but with the NABU 11 piece I decided that his excesses had finally undermined his credibility. Hence the retrospective nature of much of that NOTIONS column.))

Best bit was Kettle's nonsense. This sort of joke first think afterwards scurrility is terrific, it's got that edge to it which makes the genteel, intricate writing of, say, recent Langford seem ponderous, pedantic, bland and generally unfunny. What does Leroy do if he doesn't write for fanzines? He should be where media jerks like Richard Stilgoe are. Tell him that Mitcham fandom (St. James Road branch) think that he's fab and probably groovy too.

The letter column provided some enigmatic comments - enough, in fact, for a quiz for EPSILON 10:

List the following statements in order of how ludicrous they are. State reasons for your choice of most ludicrous.

1. "Fandom is full of talented people" (Ted White)
2. Presentation and content can be separated (Rob Hansen)
3. "Anyone can afford a trans-Atlantic trip with a few sacrifices
(Mike Glicksohn)

Correct answer is 3,1,2 and 3 wins because it shows such an appallingly profound middle-class ignorance (words to that effect).

Having searched through most of the issue for things to comment on I'm finally left with the cover. Your lip trembles, there is doubt in your eyes which stare unseeing above the typewriter and into the distance, your body has frozen into immobility. Over this tableau a voice comes out from behind your right shoulder: it is the FIS logo come alive!

"Hansen," it says, "this is the spirit of fanzines past;
SBD and Wrinkled Shrew, Daisnaid and True Rat.
Epsilon seems a trifle dull:
Now what you gonna do about that?"

The tableau dissolves. A new light has sparked in your eyes. You lick your lips meditatively. "I feel like some baked beans" you say.

((For some reason that cover attracted quite a bit of comment and the next two writers even went so far as to use it as a basis for psychological exploration. The first letter arrived between my typing the last stencil and beginning this one...))

GARY DEINDORFER (address as before.)

I like your zine. It is a vital contribution to the ongoing exchange of polemics and ideas on things fannish that has been going hot and heavy lately between North America and the UK. ((uh, sure **thing**, Gary.))

I said something in my las LoC about not being all that enthusiastic about your art. It isn't really that, just that I have found your style a little cold and arid, though your art is technically very fine. The cover of issue 9 is more immediate for me because it is a self-portrait. It is well drawn, but then I have come to expect that of your stuff. Still, your conception of yourself suggests to me, rightly or wrongly, I don't know, that you are a bit stiff and withdrawn in your give and take with other people. Pardon this amateur psychoanalysis. I an trying as best I can to convey my feelings about issue 9's cover. You look in the drawing rather ceremonial and sacerdotal, as though you are a sacred statue rather than an informal, improvisatory kind of guy. Yet your writing is relaxed and idiomatic; it doesn't have the feeling of holding the emotions tightly in check that your art does for me. I repeat, it is clear to me that you are an accomplished artist. I can convey what I am trying to say by coming up with what is to me the fannish art antithesis to your fairly rigid drawing style: Dan Steffan's. Steffan's illoes give an impression of sloppiness of personality held just barely in check. Sometimes his illoes look like they are threatening to slide right off the page, there is so much liquidity to them. Whereas your work suggests to me a sort of mineral nature. As with you, Dan Steffan's writing is different to his artwork. His writing is not as splashy and liquid as his drawing, and your writing

seems to be a touch looser and more fluid than your artwork.

BOB SHAW

3 Braddyll Terrace, Ulverston, Cumbria LA12 0DH. .

I must say that - as a keen student of abnormal psychology - I have been intrigued by the symbolism of the cover illustration. You portray yourself with an expression of brooding indecision, obviously a man deeply divided in his inner nature, going through untold agonies as he tries to come to terms with one or other of his inner voices. What, the reader asks himself, is the nature of the crucial decision? What is the source of this inner torment? Examination of the detail in the picture gives us an immediate clue. All the fingers are the same length - the classical sign of a werewolf! When one looks at the other significant details - the excess of facial hair, those feral eyes, the glasses specially designed with an extra bit in the bridge to disguise the telltale meeting of the eyebrows - the werewolf theory becomes quite convincing, but old Sigmund and I have learned to distrust overt messages and signs. The subconscious mind does not yield its secrets so easily, and it is only on closer scrutiny of the illustration that its true significance is revealed. The answer lies in the shirt buttons! Half of them are attached to the right hand side of your shirt, which is correct for male garments, and alternating with those are buttons attached to the left hand side, which is normal for female garments! Aha! At last we are getting somewhere! Going even further into the unconscious symbolism, I note that each of the buttons on the female side is attended by a little cluster of carefully drawn stress marks, the significance of which is obvious. The female side of your persona is trying to break out and become dominant, Rob, and my advice to you is that you shouldn't fight it. Come out of the closet and into the bright pure light of fandom in 1982.

After all, where else could you find frank and open discussion of such imponderables as the difference between companionship and cliqueishness, and the desirability of excellence in fanzine writing? (the term BNF in this part of the world, close to Windscale, usually means British Nuclear Fuels, and I get a lot of innocent enjoyment when the local papers run headlines like BNF ACCUSED OF RADIOACTIVE LEAKS, though there's never any mention of people's shoes getting splashed.) The exclusive club notion of fandom is obviously pure scrotum fillers - what a miserable world it would be if there was some ruling against enjoying the company of old friends at a convention or anywhere else!

The thing which niggles at me a bit though, when there's talk of elitism, is the suspicion that I was unusually lucky with my entry to fandom. I heard about it, wrote one letter, and was put in touch with, of all people, Walt Willis - who lived only a mile away and who at once invited me to write for his fanzine. I was painfully shy and awkward in dealing with strangers and if I'd had to start off by going alone to conventions I think I would have done an awful lot of standing around by myself and gazing wistfully at groups who were enjoying animated conversations and who seemed to be "in" on everything. Nowadays at conventions these thoughts sometimes cross my mind when I see somebody new alone and palely loitering,

and sometimes I make the effort and go and introduce myself to the person and let him know that he isn't invisible. The effort can be considerable - I enjoy my time at cons and am quite miserly about each passing minute - but more than once I've had a reward out of all proportion to the effort when, years later, I've read a piece by somebody well known in fandom which contained the words, "The first person to speak to me at a convention was Bob Shaw..."

Some of the difficulty lies in the relationship between conventions and fanzine fandom. I've been a fanzine fan from the beginning and therefore I believe that fanzines are the durable armature around which all other fandoms were built. I also believe that conventions are largely irrelevant to "true" fandom. But because conventions are well publicised and easily accessible some people will come along and pay their money and make the mistake of thinking they have done all that is necessary for them to become part of fandom. Not everyone will have the perspicacity to realise as you did - as described in your mini-version of *The Enchanted Duplicator* on page 4 - that fanzines are the essential touchstone.

If, however, a newcomer does take the right steps, gets himself into fandom and then decides to go for broke and publish a fanzine - I think it's sad, and quite wrong, for someone in fandom to criticise him so savagely that he quits publishing. (That isn't to say that the neo-publisher isn't compounding the error if he allows another person's opinions to dissuade him from doing something he enjoys.) Of course we want more good writing in fanzines, the more the better, but what's wrong with allowing the market forces - the laws of egoboo and negoboo - to exert their natural influence? Fans like egoboo and they dislike negoboo (ie. not seeing their names in print), and when they find themselves getting too little of the former and too much of the latter they invariably take appropriate action, to the best of their ability. That's all the incentive towards excellence that we need.

Fanzines are about communication. Do we want a system in which only the acknowledged "best" communicators are allowed to communicate? If so, where do we draw the line? Some fans can't tell anecdotes as well as others - should they be told to take a vow of silence?

Stray thought: Why is it always writers we hear about in this context? Do fan artists ever sharpen up their palette-knives and flay the hide off each other?

((I don't know about other fanartists but I'm usually reluctant to criticise artwork since I know neither the necessary terminology nor the objective criteria, if any, that should be applied to the task (the result, I suppose, of my lack of any formal art training and of any real depth of knowledge of the development of art). The only criterion that seems applicable is how effective the piece of work is (indeed, when I was assessing cover-art for *PAPERBACK INFERNO* some time back I first established that I saw such work as nothing more than packaging designed to attract the buyer's eye, and then assessed each cover on how well it succeeded in this). Some would no doubt argue that things such as perspective,

correct relative sizes of objects, and anatomical accuracy are essential, but in actual fact they're only really necessary where lack of them impairs the effectiveness of the piece of work. I'm afraid that I'm very much of the "I know what I like" school of art appreciation - and for those interested my favourite fan-artists are Dan Steffan, Derek Carter, and Harry Bell. The most cursory appraisal of that list will reveal who I've voted best British fan-artist in every CHECKPOINT/ANSIBLE poll since 1976.))

BRIAN EARL BROWN

16711 Burt Rd., Apt 207, Detroit, MI 48219, USA.

I want to mention how much I enjoy your art. There are many good artists in fandom today but it is hard to think of another whose work so often captures that fannish feeling as well as you do. You have a quiet, wicked humour that avoids excess and which really appeals to me. I really am going to nominate you for the fan artist Hugo.

I think Ted White has had his head in Lotusland a little too long if he really thinks "no one becomes a BNF because he wishes to be one". I've seen too many examples where exactly that has happened. For example Roger Reynolds, a man who has a dozen issues of a consistently pathetic fanzine, FUTURE FOCUS, has, by hanging out with the right people and being a glad-hand at conventions, convinced people that he's someone to know. He's going to be Fan Guest of Honour at about three conventions this year. Meanwhile someone like Tara!, who has written and illustrated and edited numerous fanzines (including doing most of the writing for DNQ), has never been invited to be FGoH, and likely never will be, because he's never sucked up to the right people. Perhaps Ted will respond that being FGoH at some local convention is nothing and hardly makes one a BNF, and I will concede the point. But there are a lot of people being made FGoH who have done nothing that I'm aware of to deserve being asked to that position.

((The following writer is also concerned with BNFs - or rather with those he sees as BNFs.....))

PETE LYON

2 New Row, Old Micklefield, Leeds LS25 4AJ.

The netherspatial dolorous moan of anguished linguists echoes eerily down the corridors of time. "ARRRRGH!" they cry, "The precious metal of our lingua franca has been debased". So as these odd chaps scuttle off to apply monetarist policies to their spoken currency I shall quickly explain the self-evident fact that the term "BNF" has been corrupted by over-usage, a process these scurrying pedants should have been familiar with.

((I'm fully aware that usage can alter the meaning of words and fannish jargon certainly hasn't been immune to the process (the words 'gafia' and 'sercon' now mean something other than what they did when first coined, for instance). And trying to halt the process, as the French are trying to do in their attempts to weed out 'franglais', is plainly futile. However, in this instance what we are dealing with is not usage but abuse because what you claim to be "the self-evident

fact that the term 'BNF' has been corrupted by over-usage" is neither a fact nor self-evident. What we have here is a term being mis-used, through ignorance, by a section of those fans who have become active since SEACON and who have assumed, wrongly, that they know what it means. It has hardly been "corrupted" through "over-usage" to have a new or modified meaning when pre-SEACON British fans still use it in its original sense and with its correct meaning...as do American, Canadian, and Australian fans. The term you should be applying to us, and possibly yourself, is 'trufan'. Personally I only find a handful of fannish terms useful and would like to see a lot of them dumped, but if we are going to use them at all they only have any worth if used correctly.

Now let's hear from someone who genuinely is a BNF.....))

MIKE GLICKSOHN

137 High Park Ave., Toronto, Ontario, M6P 2S3, CANADA.

You know, I never thought I'd say it, but I think I'm starting to get bored with fanzine fandom. Not with fanzines, mind you, but with fanzine fandom. I can enjoy EPSILON but I just can't seem to get up any interest or enthusiasm for yet-another discussion of where fanzines are going or where they are coming from or what's happening to writing standards or whether fanzine reviewers serve a useful purpose or even who is Joseph Nicholas and why is he saying these nasty things about me? I'd rather read a fanzine and enjoy the well crafted parts of it or publish something that pleases me rather than argue with either new young fans or old fans about the rationale behind the fanzine and its publication. Like sex, fanzines are more fun to do than to talk about.

((You haven't chosen a very good analogy there, Mike, because talking about fanzines is part of doing them....and a part, I might add, that I particularly enjoy. I agree that a lot of the arguments are very familiar to those of us who've been involved in fandom for more than a couple of years but I think that's inevitable. The lack of a widely available written record makes periodic exhumation of the arguments by those familiar with them the only way to combat the inevitable solipsism of the newcomer.))

I was delighted to see Kettle back in a fanzine with an actual article rather than a collection of squibs but then I read the article...The old wit flashed through occasionally but for me the framework Roy chose to base his conreport on weighed it down like an albatross. I guess it takes a certain kind of creativity to make farting an amusing topic (even fictional farting) and I don't think even the legendary Leroy was up to the task. On the other hand that might be my North American viewpoint; British readers may hail it as a return to the Golden Age of FOULER...I'll be interested in the comments.

((I don't think that the time of FOULER was regarded as a 'Golden Age' particularly, since its importance lay in the ground it broke and the atmosphere it created. It laid the foundations for its editors and others to build on and it was what followed its demise that was, if

anything, a 'Golden Age' for British fandom. As D. West put it in his mammoth 27-page fanzine review column in WRINKLED SHREW 7 (March 1977):

"It's something of a tribute to the revolution (Pickersgill and Kettle) brought about that those early writings - which at the time of publication must have had the impact of something wholly new and extraordinary - now seem to be nothing exceptional."

When you consider that FOULER was the product of a couple of adolescent provincials, ran for only six issues over a two-year period, and ceased publication ten years ago, the fact that it's still remembered and discussed gives testament to its significance.

You've by now read much of the British reaction to Leroy's article, but what about the San Franciscan reaction.....?))

JAY KINNEY

3165A 16th St., San Francisco, CA94103, USA.

Your NOTIONS column in issue 9 was a bit too parochial to be of much interest to me, while the Kettle piece lost me near the top of its second page. Need I say that this piece reeked as much as its subject? In fact it sent me scurrying back to EY BRITISH to re-read the Kettle pieces in there just to reassure me that this guy is supposedly one of the top UK fan writers. Or used to be. Or...uh...Braaaap.

ABI FROST

69 Robin Hood Gardens, Cotton St., London E14.

I won't go on and on about how grossly and unwarrentedly offensive Mike Glicksohn's reference to me as "one whose brains are filled with slogans instead of thoughts" is; nor will I waste your valuable time and space by speculating bemusedly on what it all might possibly have to do with bullockshit.

I am a little surprised at his continuing to respond so venomously to arguments he claims to have demolished many times in the past eight years; lesser souls would have given up by now, or maybe even begun to wonder if there might be some grain of sense in them....

However, there are a few matters I'd like to return to, since Mr Glicksohn, in his haste to accuse me of missing his point (I don't think I did actually, I just don't agree with it) has obviously missed mine.

1) I never said that con committees should refrain from promoting an artificial view of conventions - I merely expressed a perverse delight in TORCON's failure to put over its own.

Obviously, any event can be reported from a vast number of different viewpoints, and the view of the TORCON committee is no more 'artificial' than, and quite as valid as, any other. However, it is not the subjective, final, truth; no one image of an event as complex as a convention could be. (That, surely, is one reason for the tradition of writing conreps - if it were possible to write one perfect, 'correct' one, there'd be no point in doing it.)

2) I don't think it's awful that the TORCON committee should have tried to influence the press; I think it's only natural that they should. But I do think the Toronto journalists should be congratulated on writing the story they wanted to (however cliched or arguably distorted), not the one TORCON gave them. It's much easier to rehash the 'official' press release than to find your own copy, you know.

3) The really important point, though, and the one Mr Glicksohn has missed most spectacularly (or finds too shocking to consider is this:

I really don't care what people who do not go to conventions think about them. I hope that anyone who does come finds something to enjoy, but I'm not that bothered why they came. I understand some of the real life pressures that cause press reports to be different from my own experience, and tried to explain them. (I notice that Mr Glicksohn is now writing of forcing reporters to see his own choice of interviewees. What's he going to do - ask for help from the weapons fans?)

I go to conventions to enjoy myself in a particular atmosphere, and I don't care what people I don't know think of my pleasures. If the whole of SF fandom ever became something I didn't want to be associated with, I'd leave it. I think any other attitude would be either extremely pompous or utterly dishonest.

Or, perhaps, neurotic. Mr Glicksohn refers to 'neurotic costumed misfits', but the costume fans (over here at least) seem to me among the least neurotic people in the world. They get on with what they like doing, they do it very well, and they give other people a minimum of trouble and a certain amount of free entertainment. I can't vouch for 'what fandom is all about', but they are quite as representative of me as Mike Glicksohn, Bob Tucker, or Greg Pickersgill: that is, not representative at all. We are all individuals doing what we like doing.

If press interviews with costume fans mean that my friends and associates outside fandom think that I'm one, so be it. If I think it matters I can explain that I'm not. (Actually, I'd be amazed and flattered if anyone thought I could look as good in not very much as Katie Davies... or that I had her nerve.)

Fanzine fans aren't all there is to fandom anymore (never have been in my time); still, we manage to enjoy ourselves and produce (not quite enough) good writing. Who cares what they think in the benighted suburbs of Toronto?

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I must confess that I enjoyed EPSILONS 8 & 9 immensely and took particular note of your comments regarding BNFs, fanhistory and related matters. My advice is not to worry: history recapitulates, and the questions you pose were already being considered by the fandom of the late thirties and early forties. The one major phenomenon we didn't have to cope with was the proliferation of conventions and their enormous increases in attendance, accompanied by a similar increase in the amount of professional publication.

In those ancient times an enterprising fan with only a modest income would attend virtually every convention on his/her continent, meet practically all of the other attendees, and read every SF prozine and book published over the course of any given year. This did make for a somewhat greater solidarity, to say nothing of encouraging a sort of "us against the world" attitude based on our minuscularity (is there such a word? If not, I just came up with a neologism). ((Umm...if I've interpreted my dictionary correctly the right word is 'minuscularity'...I think.))

All the other dilemmas were very much in evidence - and I suspect that they always will be.

VINÇ CLARKE

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Many thanks for EPSILON 9, which I found very interesting, especially your editorial remarks concerning fanhistory. As a reanimated remnant of fifties fandom I've little knowledge of what has happened in the last twenty years, but I'm hoping to find out. I wouldn't say that I was a 'fan-historian', exactly, but in my day we were obviously a little nearer to the primæval, as it were, and many of us were more aware of the progression of fandom.

We came into fandom from a mundane world which was muzzily aware that atomic bombs and V-2 rockets had been predicted by weirdies writing in obscure magazines...and that was all. We naturally formed a sort of family, with family in-jokes and squabbles and its own small culture. Knowledge of the past, just as in a mundane family, tended to get built in...what Uncle Joe said to Aunt Mabel at the funeral of Cousin Bessie, as it were, reverberating down the years.

Now there are, as you point out, fans who are essentially history-less. There are others who are regarding the fifties as a Golden Age. I don't know enough about the intervening years to give a judgement on that, but I do know that we had a sense of belonging to a continuing sub-culture; as PONG has recently noted, in 1955 a US fanzine (which was 17 years old at the time) announced that a particular issue commemorated the 25th anniversary of the founding of the first SF fanzine. There was no great fuss made, but the conciousness of fanhistory was there.

As for original matter, I thought Leroy Kettle wasted some brilliant writing on a basically unpleasant subject - no, sir, I'm not referring to Rob Hansen Himself. I seem to remember that there was a Frenchman in the 1890s who made a music-hall act out of farting on stage, but it didn't catch on. This is a good example of the school of thought that equates humour with the beginning of a breakdown of a minor social tabu. There's a lot of these subjects being dragged out of their closets in the last few years... "obscene" language...dog-shit on pavements...Royalty...skin-colour...Makes one wonder what's coming next. Menstruation? Senile decay?..

((Except that most taboos, particularly 'obscene' language went out of the window with the advent of FOULER back in 1970 so I don't really

(see this as an issue)).

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The sensational and triumphant return of Leroy Kettle provided me with as much pleasure when I read his narrative as I felt in anticipation of that activity.

I liked Chris Evans' remarks about political intrusions in fandom, but he didn't mention one aspect of them which I find particularly annoying. It's the manner in which adherents of a cause try to force their platitudes and cliches to fit into fandom despite the fact that the situation in fandom doesn't provide anything remotely resembling a proper fit. This has been most evident in the women's lib manifestations in fandom. I fully support women's lib, I know very well how accurate are its complaints about the way women have been treated in the mundane world, but I can't stomach the efforts some libbers have made to claim that fandom in the past was repressive and discriminatory and humiliating to women. It is all suspiciously like the old Ray Palmer method of getting stories for his Ziff-Davies publications; use western plots and characters, changing just a few proper nouns and settings here and there to turn them into stories that were technically science fiction.

WAHF:John D.Owen: "...let me say how pleased I was to see the very fair (with one slight exception)treatment you gave my letter and the excellent response that it drew from you, which certainly makes much clearer where you stand on the issue of 'standards'...my own 'ideology'of fanzines is quite simple - they are communications devices, pure and simple - to call them anything else is both pretentious and wrong, in my humble opinion ((Yes, but surely you've heard of the art of communication? A fanzine that communicates with all the subtlety and finesse of a telegram is not a good fanzine.))'Angry of Carshalton:"All this recent talk of BNFs, elites, etc., applying to anyone who has been active in fandom since before August 1979 has gradually been getting under my skin, and John D.Owen's LoC has just tipped the balance. I object vehemently to my every utterance being pulled apart and elitism/fear of losing supreme position/etc., read into it. Other people are pushing me into a role I DON'T WANT TO PLAY! - and I am being included in the generalisation purely on the arbitrary criterion of the date of my first SF convention. I wish to hell people like JohnD.Owen would try to read what we say, not what he/they think we ought to mean." John Jarrold:"The number of times I've read the words 'arrogant' and 'elitist' lately make me wonder whether the new influx of fans have either been listening to the wrong people or else have minds as open as a bank vault." Harry Andruschak: "I have for the most part said the hell with fandom as a social group....I am just too hung up on the Space Programme. I guess this is one of the hazards of working at JPL. 'When you have soared with the eagles it is hard to walk with turkeys.' And fandom is shot through with turkeys." Finally there was Jim Barker, Edgar Bonka: who "...enjoyed it immensely", and EPSILON 9, one assumes. Just getting in under the wire a late LoC from rich brown, which really deserved to be quoted. So it goes.That's it - you can go to bed now.