



HANSEN & SONS

****.....CURRENT CONCERN CAUSED BY CLASSIC CONUNDRUM...A REAL PAIN IN THE..***

EDITORIAL

EDITORIAL...or: 'is there a problem or is it just me?'

EDITORIAL

OF BROAD MENTAL HORIZONS AND COSMIC MINDS.

Like most everyone who has any respect at all for the fanzine medium I usually put a lot of time and effort into my writing, each piece being focussed and refined through a varying number of drafts until it attains a form as close to I'm aiming for as my ability allows. At the same time I do all I can to make the piece flow, aiming all the while to achieve that illusion of spontaneity only usually arrived at after multiple drafts. In the NOTIONS column in particular I try my utmost to weed out any unintentional ambiguities and to convey my meaning as precisely as possible. This being so the thing about doing fanzines that most annoys me is receiving letters which totally misinterpret what I've written and attribute things to me I've neither said nor implied. There have even been times when I've laid a letter next to the article it purports to comment on and read the two in tandem in a desperate attempt to find some point of contact between them. At such times I have found myself thinking that even if I were to translate the original piece into Morse and tap it out on the skulls of these people with a sledgehammer it probably still wouldn't get through to them. At such times I have also wondered darkly whether I was wasting my time.

I'm hardly alone in receiving such letters, Avedon Carol having mentioned getting one which attributed views to her totally opposite to those she actually expressed, and this apparent inability of some people to extract the meaning from the words they read manifests itself in other areas as well. Even now, after all that's been written on the subject of 'standards' in the past few years, there are still people claiming those who talked about the standards one should apply to fanzines were seeking to determine content - which they never were, of course. It's almost as if such folk are incapable of comprehending that anyone would actually criticise them on the quality of what they write and so have to translate this into criticism of the content of their writing to understand it at all. Maybe that's it. I've been thinking about this phenomenon, this apparent inability of people who can plainly read to actually grasp what is being said, a lot lately and trying to find a reason for it. Perhaps in this case I have. I suspect, though I can't prove it, that some people don't actually read what's written at all but rather skim through a fanzine, certain words or phrases triggering trains of association in their thoughts and making connections with their opinions and prejudices that ignore the connections the various words and phrases make with each other on the page. Rather than make the effort to see what the writer is getting at they project their own views onto the piece and criticise him or her on that basis rather than on the basis of what has actually been written.

In the specific case of 'standards' the only way for those who felt the arguments were being directed against them to respond was to complain about these people "...telling us what we should and shouldn't write about..",

totally ignoring the fact that those who initiated the debate repeatedly stressed that you could write about anything you liked in the pages of a fanzine but that you should do so to the best of your ability and put no less effort into writing a piece for a fanzine than you would put into one for professional publication. The crucial point was, and still is, that if you say "oh, it's only a fanzine" and don't care what you write why should you imagine that anyone will care about reading it? I don't particularly want to re-open the whole 'standards' argument here, since it's something which has for the moment almost run its course, but that there should be those who doggedly persist in their belief that there are people trying to tell them what they should and shouldn't write about, despite repeated assurances to the contrary, is something that has reawakened my sense of wonder in recent months in a way that no SF tale could ever have done.

Something else I've regarded with a sense of wonder recently, and which follows on in many ways from the above, are the reactions to D. West's mammoth article PERFORMANCE, which received some attention in this fanzine last time. As one of the many people whose votes gave PERFORMANCE its well-deserved accolade of Best Article in the 1982-83 ANSIBLE fan poll the reaction I find most incomprehensible is that reported by Richard Bergeron in WIZ 5 of those fans who received TAPPEN 5 but "...skipped most of West's pages". I have a strange feeling that these people who find a 36-page article too much for them are probably the same folk who think nothing of ploughing through a 1000-page fantasy trilogy. Oh well, so much for cosmic minds and broad mental horizons.

Hey, you remember that quarterly fanzine I used to publish? Well this is the fourteenth issue, a mere seven months after the last. I suppose I could make the usual excuses for that long gap here, tell you how I seemed to be spending most of my spare time on fandom in those months yet never found the time to do a fanzine of my own though I wanted to (all of which is true), but as it happens I think that gap was a much needed pause. It gave me a chance to stand back and look at what I was doing and also allowed me to recapture some of the energy that was missing from issue thirteen, a less than dynamic zine as many of you let me know.

There is no TRUFAN & JUNIOR strip this time mainly because, in spite of all the months since the last issue, it was only about 21 days ago that I finally decided to get my arse in gear and push an issue out in time for SILICON and so, ironically, I didn't have time to draw one. It will, however, return since it gives me opportunities for satire that the purely prose form doesn't.

The two pieces that appear under the heading THE OL' EASTERCON ONE-TWO developed out of separate attempts I made at writing a con report. I tried to combine them at one point but couldn't manage it so both are presented here despite there being a small amount of overlap.

.....ROB HANSEN.

...YES, IT'S YET ANOTHER OF THOSE ENTERTAINING LEAD-INS TO.....

NOTIONS

NOTIONS.....or: "operating a microwave on a crystal ship
NOTIONS requires a cool head" - a new departure.

There comes a time when all the excuses have to stop, a time when rationalisations, evasions, and even failure of nerve have to be swept aside and the truth faced up to. At such a time the, ahem, 'resolute approach' has to be taken, the bit clamped firmly between the teeth and a path cut deep into those regions whose nature has always been known but whose edges have been carefully skirted for far too long a time. Ever since the direction of this fanzine first became clear, sometime around issue four, there has been something missing from it, something whose absence from these pages was - to me at least - painfully apparent (and no, Ashley, I'm not talking about references to masturbation). Given the way EPSILON has developed and the character of the fanzine it has become it's clear to me that what it lacks ...is a column of fanzine criticism. However, while this omission may have been obvious to me I suspect there to be those among you who won't grasp my reasoning because though the nature of EPSILON is perfectly clear to me it appears this is very much not the case with some of you....

Of late a couple of people in America and Australia have written of the difficulty they have in distinguishing between EPSILON, TAPPEN, and NABU, a state of affairs I frankly find astonishing since each seems to me to possess a quite distinct character of its own. I don't particularly feel like going through the differences between TAPPEN and NABU at the moment but I would have thought it fairly obvious how EPSILON differs from both zines, Unlike TAPPEN or NABU this fanzine deals exclusively with fandom and it is fandom that provides the basis for both the expository and anecdotal material within. Which is why, to take a recent example, a con-report such as Chris Atkinson's 'YORCON II Photo Album 1981' would have been perfect for EPSILON while her brilliant 'Life With The Loonies' wouldn't. Some of you may think this strange but I maintain that each fanzine should have its own distinct character and that no article, no matter how good, that is out of character should appear in that fanzine. This conclusion was reached as a result of a conscious decision I took back in 1978 and is a position I had thought self-evident until I put out a one-shot fanzine called LICKS and received LOCs asking why the material therein couldn't have been incorporated in an issue of EPSILON. Which goes to show, I suppose, just how unperceptive some people can be. Few have had problems in discerning that the non-anecdotal material that's appeared in these pages in the past has concerned itself solely with fannish issues but that material has never taken the specific form of fanzine criticism. And it should have.

So I've decided, as an experiment this time out, to dip my toe into these unfamiliar waters and report back on what it feels like. First, however, it seems prudent to go over what I've had to say on the subject before in order to recant or reaffirm as appropriate (one has to keep one's story straight, after all) and so pre-empt any who might seek to use those earlier pronouncements to undermine what I have to say now. Such a tactic is perfectly

valid and one I'm particularly partial to (hence this stamp of approval, of course), smiling sweetly as I twist the knife, but I don't intend to leave my back unprotected against those to whom it is an all too tempting target.

The earliest reference of any consequence I've been able to uncover was in issue five when, after the usual agonising about the meaning of it all, I decided that....

"Given that fanzines are an artform of sorts, a proposition I don't intend to argue at this point, critics seem to serve a more important function in relation to fandom than they do in relation to other forms of artistic endeavour. The position of critic seems to command more respect and ensure a higher position in the pecking order than would be the case outside fandom."

Martyn Taylor and Simon Ounsley are probably smiling broadly at this point but when I wrote that it was a reasonable conclusion to reach. The notion of the top critics being able to determine the direction fandom took didn't seem too far-fetched back in those days in the late 70s when there was the illusion, if not the reality, of a greater sense of cohesion to British fandom. Also, of course, the fact that the top critics were Greg Pickersgill and D.West - two of the best fanwriters around and capable of making up in energy and conviction what they sometimes lacked in prose style - lent weight to the idea. Up the line here in 1983 I'm no longer so convinced because with the perspective the passing of the years lends to events I can see that my arguments were based on a set of conditions that existed for a while in that time and place but which may never come about again. So what have I had to say on the topic since then? Well, in the lettercolumn of EPSILON 9 (December 1981), in the course of explaining to John D.Owen what I meant by 'informed criticism', I outlined my position thus:

"What I meant by 'informed criticism' was that process by which a zine under review is measured against ((the minimum basic standards of literacy that one would expect from any piece of writing)) firstly, which is the one thing it really must measure up to; assessed in terms of how it succeeds in what it appears to be trying to achieve; and compared to, and contrasted with, other zines produced at the same time. The criticism is 'informed' in the sense that a critic with a grounding in, and knowledge of, what has gone before can draw out common trends in the current fanzine scene and can examine and assess them both on their own merits and as viewed against the larger historical backdrop.

You will notice that nowhere in the preceeding have I made any comment on the actual substance of the contents and this is because, really, almost anything you choose to write about is a suitable topic for discussion in a fanzine. As long as it's well-written and entertaining, as long as you make it interesting, then it is good fanwriting but if the prose is dull and awkward then, regardless of how intrinsically interesting what's being written about should be or how deeply you hold the convictions it expresses, it doesn't work and is bad fanwriting."

I don't really like quoting large chunks of my own prose as a general rule (other people's, yes; my own, no), but the above almost perfectly encapsulates my thoughts on how one should go about this business and will serve as the statement of intent usually felt necessary when embarking on one of these columns for the first time. It is also so balanced and reasonable that no-one could possibly object to their brainchild receiving critical scrutiny under such terms, could they? Of course they couldn't (I remain the eternal optimist). Since I'm not into the fire and brimstone approach this won't be a column of KTF fanzine criticism, and anyway I much prefer the scalpel to the axe. How close I'm able to get to these ideals remains to be seen and while I won't claim total objectivity - anyone who does is a goddamn liar - I will keep them in the forefront of my mind as the goal every critic should work towards. So far as current trends in British fanzines are concerned, these can be handily dealt with by means of a few sweeping generalisations as follows....

The two most noticeable trends over the course of the last year or so have been in the shift towards a more personal and revelatory mode of fanwriting and in the increasing number of 'ensmalled' fanzines - fanzines containing between four and eight pages usually. This latter trend comes from the Americans by IZZARD out of PONG, though how significant it will be is impossible to predict, while the former was probably sparked initially by the much-acclaimed 'Life With The Loonies' and further fuelled by Jimmy Robertson's FELICITY. This type of fanwriting has always been around of course but it seems to have been gaining in prominence recently, perhaps at the expense of the more fannishly-oriented stuff zines like EPSILON specialise in - which is fine by me. Too many people going through the numbers I do in these pages and the whole scene would very quickly vanish up its own collective arsehole. Though it's not a trend as such the Women's APA could well be the start of one. It's too early to assess the effect those talents being nurtured in the APA will ultimately have on fandom at large but on the basis of the material by these women seen in other fanzines recently I'm inclined to believe people like Pickersgill and Priest when they claim (chortling all the while because their wives are in the APA and they get to see every mailing while I don't) the best fanwriting being done in Britain at the moment is appearing in the pages of the APA. The most recent evidence of this came in the form of NUTZ, the first ever fanzine from Pam Wells and by far the best first fanzine I've received from anyone in years, which featured the work of many APA members. I don't actually intend to review NUTZ here but it is strongly recommended.

While on the subject of the Women's APA I should note that another comment on it has seen print lately, namely Pete Lyon's cover for MATRIX 48. This depicts a half-naked woman lying on the floor and masturbating with a rolled up APA-mailing while lapping up the semen raining down from the muscular barbarian standing over her. Just what alla those crazy ABA-chicks really need, eh Pete? It's truly amazing that people still imagine they can get away with this sort of thing in 1983, and astonishing that this travesty was perpetrated not by a repressed teenage adolescent but by a supposedly responsible adult. I don't have the slightest doubt that Pete will seek to defend himself against criticism by claiming his drawing was intended to be

a gross-out.
Now a gross-out
doesn't always work.

humourous ("Aww c'mon man, can't you take a joke?"). Actually, Pete, most of us out here do appreciate a joke or two but if you think the grossly offensive is funny can we now assume that for a future cover you would not be averse to drawing something like, say, a bunch of ape-like blacks, enormous cocks dragging on the ground behind them as they suck melons through pneumatic lips? It's a pretty safe bet, Pete, that anyone who laughed uproariously at the cover of MATRIX 48 would find this fairly chucklesome as well, and after all the laughs are all that matter, right? The man who must take ultimate responsibility for this stuff seeing print is MATRIX editor Simon Polley and you have to wonder what was going through his mind when he decided it was fit for publication. Or even if anything was going through his mind. I'm tempted to explore Polley's attitudes via the issues of MATRIX. he's masterminded (?) to date, but since I intend taking a critical look at the BSFA magazines as a whole in a future EPSILON I'll leave it for now and move on, at last, to the first fanzine at hand....

The latest CRYSTAL SHIP from John D.Owen has the same high production values as earlier issues and is a real treat for the eyes with its technically excellent, if empty, artwork and clean litho printing. Which just goes to show the sort of package you can put together if you have lots of money to throw around. The writing within those expensively lithographed pages, however, is another matter entirely. Passing over the contributions of Alan Jones, David R.Morgan and David Thiry - of which all that need be said is these are examples of amateur fiction - the written material consists of an article on SF by Arnold Akien, one on terrorism by Ken Mann, and Owen's own contributions.

'An Age Without An Aim?', the Akien Article, is largely about how we came to end up with the science fiction we know today and a look at the conditions under which the body of SF cliches we are all familiar with came about. At least that's how I interpret it. The trouble is that it tells you very little you're unlikely to know already and its arguments neither reach new conclusions nor provide fresh insights. If the arguments had been presented more concisely (Akien admits to rambling in the body of the piece) and the article had been shortened to about a third of its current length it would have made a respectable, if unremarkable, filler but as a 15-page lead article it assumes a prominence in CRYSTAL SHIP 7 which it neither warrants nor has the weight to carry. Editor Owen presumably realised this on some level or other since he decided to run a series of cartoons along the top of some pages commenting on the article as it progressed, the figures depicted saying at one point: "Blimey, he's going on a bit, isn't he?". This sort of stunt puts me in mind of an actor in a film giving a knowing wink to the audience and while this may be appropriate in a screen comedy it is, in the context Owen uses it, something I find infuriating. Not only is it distracting, you see, but it shows a great lack of respect for the writer and has the effect of acting as a disclaimer, as if Owen is saying "Hey, I'm printing this, but don't blame me for it." I mean, presumably no faned accepts material unless he thinks it good enough and if it's good enough he doesn't need to lay this whole routine on us, does he?

With Ken Mann's 'Death On Two Legs' it's lecture time. Yes kiddies, it's time to sit still, pay attention, and stop making a noise at the back of the

classroom because Dr. Ken Mann is hereto educate you and by God you're going to be educated! Reading as though culled in part from press reports and paraphrased in large chunks from one of the many readily-available books on the subject this article is yet another attempt by a Concerned Young Thing to make you 'aware' and though written in a style designed to make you accept rather than question there was one thing puzzling me as I read this piece; namely what purpose it served. It had no personal element, showed no spark of wit or humour, and so could reasonably be assumed to have been written neither to entertain nor amuse. It presented no new facts and was not in any way unusual or surprising and so failed to be stimulating. If intended to tell you anything it also fails because if you're interested in or concerned about terrorism it's easy to buy one of the many books on the subject and discover more about it than this piece will tell you. And if you're not interested you're unlikely to finish Mann's article anyway.

Apart from the opening editorial Owen's main contribution is something called 'In The Halls Of Meritocrasse' which, as the title suggests, is his way of expressing his concern about fandom being a meritocracy - you know, the work of those with talent being held in higher regard than that of those without - by means of a little fable peopled with characters like Ted the Wight, Bergeroni, and Nickelarse (subtle, eh?). This method of putting your views over has a long history in fandom and is a perfectly respectable way of doing so but Owen's conclusion, with its implication that you should take a 'muddled but relaxed' approach to fanwriting rather than attempt to achieve the minimum standards of literacy expected of any piece of writing, is not one I can agree with.

Looked at dispassionately I suppose my dissatisfaction with CRYSTAL SHIP can best be summed up by quoting Greg Pickersgill, talking in STOP BREAKING DOWN 1 (April 1976) about...

"...a time when I'd just about heard of fanzine fandom and was busily preparing to issue my first fanzine. Called, if I recall correctly, NEW PEMBROOKESHIRE REVIEW (or was that another, later project?) it was going to be really good. Going to have fiction, book reviews, poetry, articles about really fascinating things I'd been reading about in the 'quality' Sundays or in the back shelves of the local library, and was going to be an all-round sensible and mind-improving little magazine....pretty much the sort of thing most new fans think is exactly IT when they contemplate pubbing their first ish (as we say in the vernacular)."

Exactly. And apart from the fact that its editor is hardly a new fan that's an almost perfect description of this issue of CRYSTAL SHIP.

Another fanzine I was disappointed by, though for different reasons, was MICROWAVE 5, the latest offering from Terry Hill. It's a sprawling production with a very good fanzine buried somewhere within its enormous bulk, struggling to get out. It's far too big and with material ranging from the brilliant to the awful it would have benefited greatly from heavy pruning. According to the contents listing its 78 pages contain 19 separate items by 16 different writers and therein lies its problem because very few

editors have ever succeeded in acquiring enough good material at any one time to sustain a fanzine of this length. In fact I haven't seen anyone pull this trick off in Britain since way back in 1977 when the Charnocks managed it with WRINKLED SHREW 7, and it is significant that while being of more or less the same length as this issue of MICROWAVE it carried only 9 items by 8 writers (I should mention, incidentally, that I've included the lettercolumn in the number of items listed for each zine). After all, there are far more likely to be eight writers at a given time both willing and capable of producing the quality of writing zines of this length demand than sixteen. And remember, a long fanzine has to hold the attention of its readers for a longer period than a short one and so must be far more carefully edited and planned. The order in which the articles are run needs to be chosen with the utmost care so that each piece leads the reader inevitably into the next with bridging pieces written to this end where required. This is unfortunately where MICROWAVE falls down most badly, with every appearance of having been assembled with little thought given to how each article relates to those around it.

While I don't propose to review all 19 items (gimme a break) it might well be worth taking a look at the best and worst. The best, without doubt, is Willis article which wins accolade by dint of its sheer quality. It isn't about something 'meaningful' or 'relevant' after the manner of those who imagine important subject matter somehow excuses careless writing or sloppy presentation, but it is well-written and beautifully constructed. Anyone who wants to learn something of the mechanics involved in putting together a fully-rounded article, how to plant all the information necessary in the early stages for the piece to flow perfectly to its natural conclusion or 'punchline' could do a lot worse than study 'A Kind Of Immortality' to see how effortless Willis makes the whole thing appear. Unfortunately we go from the sublime to the ridiculous when we move from Walt Willis to Terry Jeeves and 'Nartaz Of The Baboons'. As I understand it this form of whimsical little parody (Nartaz - Tarzan, geddit?) where an improbably tall tale climaxes in a truly awful pun guaranteed to make you wince, was popularised back in the 50s by Belfast fan John Berry but unfortunately Jeeves doesn't appear to have the command of the form that Berry did. From the examples I've seen it seems to me the whole point of this particular form was that it kept you amused and entertained with its wit and inventiveness, its sometimes cruelly accurate observation of contemporary fans and events, throughout its length and the appalling pun it built up to was a punchline to be sure but not its whole raison d'etre. Jeeves doesn't appear to have grasped this, however, and leads into his incredibly contrived pun via a dull little tale that has no purpose beyond setting up the pun. It doesn't entertain, it isn't particularly amusing and, since it doesn't require much effort to make up nonsense words to work a pun on a proverb, is not particularly inventive either.

Even so there is a lot in MICROWAVE to commend it and the very fact that Hill, who has only been in fandom a little over a year, is able to attract contributions from people such as Walt Willis, Ted White, Lee Hoffman, Vinç Clarke, Arthur Thomson, and Paul Skelton is quite remarkable. It must also be remembered that MICROWAVE has developed into a fanzine of some substance and much promise from a first issue that gave no hint of such things, and in a very short space of time. Viewed in this light the current issue is clearly a

case of an editor overreaching himself and though a failure is evidence that Hill is willing to take chances, something that counts for a lot. Better an ambitious failure than an unambitious success, after all. If Hill gets his act together as an editor MICROWAVE may well soon be one of the essential fanzines and many people could be in for a surprise when the next ANSIBLE fan poll is held.

Well, well, well, ain't life strange? Since stencilling the above and retiring bleary-eyed and brain-damaged (at least that's what it felt like) to my bed a full day has passed and guess what arrived in that day's post? Yep, MICROWAVE 6. Smaller, better-balanced, and better edited than the last issue it's a fine fanzine and well on the way, I think, to justifying my comments at the end of the last paragraph.

Finally, an unabashed rave and plug for A COOL HEAD vols.2&3, the latest fanzines to come my way from the very wonderful Mr.David Bridges. Following on from vol.1, which came out sometime last year, these two were mailed together with vol.3 being in two parts (by the standards of David E.Bridges earlier zine, ONE-OFF, this is a very conservative way of doing things). There's a rare humanity in Bridges' work, a strange innocence in the way he views the world that makes you warm to him immediately and even when, as happens in this issue, he indulges in a little self-pity its leavened with a quiet humour and gentle self-mocking rarely seen in the work of others who indulge that particular vice.

The material in A COOL HEAD ranges from the experiences of a bus driver in Sheffield (Bridges' occupation) through reflections on life in general to what it's like being arrested, all viewed through Bridges' unique perspective. It's not that he sees a different world to you or I but rather that he seems, in some mysterius way, to see it with a greater clarity, to keep his eyes open in those areas where we perhaps avert ours.

Of particular personal interest is Bridges' report that at age twenty seven he's suddenly found himself "...going back to those vague questions about the nature of reality and his role in life..." that every adolescent goes through because, curiously enough, at age twenty-seven I too found myself re-hashing those self same questions. "I keep having these weird dreams and when I'm awake I have Profound Thoughts. It's quite frightening; it's puberty all over again..." he says and as it happens it really did seem like puberty again in my case since there were physical changes - namely the sudden and unexpected sprouting of hair on my hiterto bare chest. I wasn't particularly happy about this since I happened to like having a hairless chest, but at least my balls didn't drop any further so I suppose that's OK. The way I figured it was that with a further decade of experience under my belt my mind decided it was time to drag out those old questions, dust them off, and see if ten more years of living had brought me any closer to the answers. In fact they hadn't, but whereas the fact that I couldn't find an answer to those questions ten years ago was worrying then it seemed totally unimportant now, which may have been an answer of sorts in itself. Bridges, however, claims that he has been getting answers and while the nature of those answers is not relevant here - and probably only applicable to Bridges himself, anyway - it's

(.....continued on page 17.)

...ONE CONVENTION, ONE CONVENTIONEER, TWO REPORTS...OF SORTS...IN.....

THE OL' EASTERCON ONE-TWO
THE OL' EASTERCON ONE-TWO.....
THE OL' EASTERCON ONE-TWO

1. DOOM & DESPAIR ON THE CONVENTION BIDDING TRAIL.

Glasgow. What the fuck were we doing in Glasgow? Stupid question of course, since METROCON lost to ALBACON same time, same show, last year. A very heavy scene that, 23 measly votes setting this whole gruesome circus on the road northwards, making what should have been your correspondents shortest ever trip to a con by far the longest. And why did it happen, I asked myself -- and the answer came back loud and clear with memories of that dark day of disbelief - because of all those lamebrains who thought METROCON was such a surefire winner, such a gold-plated cert, that a few more votes (and certainly their vote) would make no difference. Dull scenes these bidding sessions maaaaaaan, far better to lie in bed putting off that awful moment when you actually have to get up and face the shaking and the nausea, the throbbing temples and bleary-eyed self-loathing that is the legacy of too much drink and too little sleep. Or maybe not. Maybe you're one of those hardened veterans of the convention trail, the charred bacon and greasy eggs barely finished before you're heading for the bar and the few 'straighteners' that will serve as a foundation for the serious drinking that will follow - or at least as an excuse for staying clear of the bidding session. Not that, dear god, anything but that!

Thus we faced the grisly spectacle of Boss Bob Shaw triumphant, the grim prospect of one who fondly imagines himself to be Scotland's Mr. Fandom lording it over Britain's premier convention for the second time, a state of affairs that Shaw doubtless believed would enhance his status. And maybe he was right. Though frequently characterised as a buffoon Shaw may well be the first true example we've seen over here of an animal common in American fandom, the fan who seems to devote all his energies to organising and running conventions. Possessed, to some degree, of a certain low-level cunning and bargain-basement charisma he set out to acquire status in fandom through putting on conventions, something which impresses fanzine fans not one whit but something I'm sure is highly regarded by those passive consumers of skiffy drool who make up the bulk of convention attendees. After all, I thought the chairman at my first convention was a being of awesome power and wisdom, rather than the piss-artist I now know him to be, and I have no reason to suppose the current crop of newcomers is any different. Of course Boss Bob blew the whole show with his acrimonious and much publicised split with the FAIRCON '82 committee (in large part also the committee for ALBACON II) whom he clearly thought incapable of running the con without him. His announcement that there was going to have to be "...some coming to heel... pretty damn quick..." did little to endear him to anyone and may well have contributed to his winning COFF (the Concrete Overshoe Fan Fund) at NOVACON.

Still, while Boss Bob may be the future back here in the present some of us oldtime fans...no, scrub that 'oldtime' bit (at a boyish twenty-eight I'm not gonna cop to that)...a number of those of us in the prime of mature

fanhood (hah!) still see fanzines and conventions as the two main manifestations of fannish activity, and though primarily interested in the former we've never denied the crucial importance of the latter in the fannish equation. Which is how I came to find myself on committee of one of the two rival bids for the 1984 Eastercon.....

Standing outside the hall after the ALBACON bidding session, toying with a pint of bitter and watching anxiously as convention members registered their vote by exiting through the appropriate door, it seemed impossible that I had started on the long and often frustrating road that had brought me to this time and place simply by calling round to the Duckett Road residence of Malcolm Edwards and Chris Atkinson for a drink with them and a few others.

It had started with a conversation about the then-recent abortive bid to secure the 1985 Worldcon for Britain and the sour taste left by the unnecessarily snide comment this had received in some sections of the Australian fan press. From there it was but a short step to the John Brunner inspired combined Eurocon/Eastercon bid, an idea we all had misgivings about. The holding of a Eurocon in the UK was something we all supported and long overdue but we weren't too happy about it being combined with the Eastercon, particularly as it appeared we were being railroaded into it by John Brunner (see DRUNKARD'S TALK 4 under 'moral blackmail'). The possible consequences of such an unholy marriage could have a profound and far-reaching effect on future Eastercons and so it seemed wholly wrong to us that Brunner's bid should proceed unopposed. It was both necessary to explain what could happen if this union came to pass and, we realised, to provide a viable alternative. And so the 1984CON bid came into being.....

Was it my imagination or was the flow of people emerging via the 1984CON exit faltering? I exchanged nervous glances with fellow concon member Rob Holdstock and bit my lip. It had all seemed so much easier during those carefree days before ALBACON, an endless round of committee meetings and conversations and, once, a visit to Blackpool to assess the hotel where we intended to hold 1984CON. After that visit we knew we had found the perfect Eastercon hotel but, as we learned shortly afterwards, this was not an assumption that was going to pass unchallenged.....

When a SEACON '84 (as the Brunner bid had, somewhat contentiously, come to be known) internal memo asking for 'knocking copy' on our bid was leaked things looked to be getting interesting. Aha, I thought gleefully. So this was going to be eye-gouging, rabbit-punching, knee-to-the-groin type of contest was it? So be it. We would, I decided, need a 'Dirty Tricks Dept.' to dig up dirt on various members of our rival bid, and where there was no dirt to create it. A classic move that, one used by many people in the past not least of whom was Lyndon B. Johnson. It is said he once told his campaign manager, during a particularly close race in one of his early Texas campaigns, to spread the word that his opponent regularly screwed his own barnyard sows.

"Jesus," the manager protested, "we'll never get away with calling him a pig-fucker! No-one will swallow that."

"Maybe not," replied LBJ, "but let's make the sonofabitch deny it."

Put the bastards on the defensive, that's the way to play the game, yes indeed,

but what would do the job and where to find it, that was the problem. Old fanzines seemed fertile ground for exploration, and hadn't I recently come across some truly atrocious amateur fiction by one K.Houston Brunner in a pile of 50s zines? A few of these shored up with quotations from those less liberated days, particularly any that could in anyway be construed as being derogatory about women or Scots, would be assembled into a special one-shot to be produced anonymously and distributed widely.

I thought seriously about this for maybe a full minute before deciding against it. Nah, too unsubtle. If this sort of thing was going to be done at all it needed to be done with a degree of finesse and at least some pretence of concealing it behind a thin veneer of genteel politeness - we are British, after all. Maybe Malcolm could do the job best, because behind the owlish innocence of that aging countenance lurks a debauched and depraved mind well versed in the ways of sly scheming and possessed of Machiavellian cunning. On further reflection, though, I realised that this whole routine would be just like farting in the bath - it makes a lot of noise and stirs things up but all you are ultimately left with is a bad smell. Malcolm quite rightly took SEACON '84 to task in DT 4 over certain things they had said and done, but no 'Dirty Tricks Dept.' ever materialised on our side. If, however, the disquieting rumours that have been circulating in recent weeks are true then we were far more innocent and naive in this regard than we should have been. If ever I'm able to substantiate even 50% of these rumours you will be reading the full exposé in these pages shortly afterwards. Count on it.

People were still leaving the hall via the SEACON'84 exit, but the flow through the 1984CON exit had ceased. We had lost. I felt....odd. The 60/40 voting split (232 to 139) was decisive, and for that I was profoundly grateful. A narrow defeat would have left me with the awful feeling that maybe the true will of the convention had not won out, and terrible guilt at the thought that with just a little more effort we could have tipped the balance. A nice fantasy, but this was real life and in real life sometimes the good guys lose.

Thinking further on my reaction to the result I realised that though disappointed we had lost I was relieved we didn't now have to do all the work necessary in running a convention. I was also relieved that 1984CON had provided a viable alternative to the Eurocon/Eastercon combo, because if it does have the detrimental effect we fear it will no-one can now claim they had no opportunity to alter the course of events. In that sense at least, we had achieved what we set out to. My final thought as everyone slowly dispersed was far from profound:

"The Brighton Metropole again? Jesus Christ!"

2. TALES OF ORDINARY MADNESS....

For most of you ALBACON II started on April 1st 1983, but for me it really started a week earlier. On Saturday 26th March, to be exact.....

I was beat. I had just finished acting out the lead role in the final episode of 'The Duplication Of Chocolates Of Lust 2', a soap opera in five weekly installments containing all the pathos, bathos, banality, and high

emotion of such melodramatic productions, but one singularly lacking in glossy-lipped ex-beauty queens and scheming Texas oil barons. Perhaps we would find them at the party towards which Phil Palmer's swish roadster was carrying us with all the breathtaking speed and elan of an asthmatic snail. Then again, perhaps we wouldn't. When the Langfords throw a party the tales of drunken mayhem, of sudden drug busts and wild and bestial orgies of sexual depravity, that circulate afterwards...are notable by their absence.

After being greeted at the door of Chez Langford by The Deaf One Himself we were ushered into the front lounge and introduced to the person in whose honour the party was being thrown, TAFF-winner Avedon Carol who had flown in only the evening before. Having only ever seen a badly-reproduced photo of her in an old fanzine I had no strong mental picture of Avedon and it was nice being able to finally put a face to someone I'd briefly corresponded with a few months earlier. After the introduction however there was between us that peculiar hesitancy and reserve, that awkwardness that comes from meeting someone you feel you know reasonably well due to the fanzine material you've read by them but someone who is, in many important respects, a stranger. In such cases fanzines have the effect of reversing the usual sequence of events, where you first meet a person and then get to know them, resulting almost in a new social situation, one without precedent in which standard social rituals seem inappropriate and uncertainty results. A weird state of affairs really, but I was confident that a little judicious application of throat lubricant would oil the wheels of social intercourse and enable me to cope.

It was a good party, all things considered, music played loud enough to shake the walls and dance tracks you could get down and boogie to were totally absent, as always at a Langford get-together, but this was more than compensated for by the large number of interesting people at the party. Also present were Joe Nicholas, Judith Hanna, Chris Priest, Lisa Tuttle, Kev Smith, Faith Brooker, Dai Price, the Jacksons, the Maules, the Hoares, and others too forgettable to have been recorded in my diary.

Very little alcohol passed my lips that night, as is usually the case of course, but I did happen to find myself holding cans of the stuff once or twice. On the first occasion I had just slipped quietly into the front lounge, having left a group listening to Chris Evans praising the work of Piers Anthony and Julian May (she of the doggo giant brain), when I happened to notice a beer can with a rather interesting and unusual design on its side. Naturally enough I picked the can up for closer inspection and no sooner had I done so than I was blinded by a flash of brilliant white light. When my sight returned I saw Avedon unconcernedly winding on the film in her camera. On the second occasion I was sitting in an armchair, idly toying with a half empty can of pale ale that someone had carelessly abandoned, when she struck again.

"You do I hope realise", I said, as the world slowly came back into focus, "that the pictures you've just taken are not at all typical of me and bound to give the wrong impression to the folks back in the ol' US of A?"

It was two days later that she gave her response. We were at a gathering around at Malcolm Edwards and Chris Atkinson's place, the Langford get-together having wound down the previous day, when Avedon caught me in the act of raising a can to my lips. What strange fascination did snapping pictures of male fans

holding cans of beer have for this woman? Unfortunately it was not a question I had long to ponder because Malcolm Edwards chose that moment to reveal the shattering news that he wouldn't be going to ALBACON. My heart sank, not so much at the prospect of Malcolm's absence but at the implications for myself.

Malcolm, you see (along with Chris, Linda Pickersgill, Rob Holdstock, Chris Evans, Graham Charnock, Leroy Kettle, and myself), was on the committee of 1984CON, one of two rival bids for the 1984 Eastercon, and since any bid that hopes to be successful needs to be presented by someone who is glib and able to convincingly fake total conviction and sincerity he had been the obvious person to put our case. With Chris in hospital Malcolm was out of the picture, as it were, and a new chief spokesman was needed urgently. Though we had a number of good speakers in people like Chris Evans, Leroy Kettle, and Rob Holdstock none of these looked like attending. With Evans impoverished, Kettle abroad, and Holdstock uncertain I realised, with a sinking feeling deep in the pit of my stomach, that the person on whose shoulders this task was most likely to fall was me! I was not happy about this. I knew I was glib but could I fake the sincerity and conviction well enough? It looked like I was soon to find out.

A further two nights later I found myself stood at the bar of the One Tun, still preoccupied with this problem. Around me circulated such fannish luminaries as Vinz Clarke, Arthur Thomson, Joe D.Siclari, Rob Holdstock, Linda Pickersgill, and Many Others (an obscure 50s fan). This was not the usual first-Thursday-of-the-month bugaloo but rather a special one-off One Tun declared unilaterally by Langford and Edwards to show our TAFF-winner one of the more famous of our quaint olde fannish customs. This made me feel a bit like one of those residents of faraway and supposedly exotic places who don traditional native dress for the tourists, and dance the reputedly traditional native dance, but who on their own time doubtless dress in T-shirt and jeans, watch DALLAS on the idiot-box, and eat Big Macs from the local hamburger joint. If Avedon was impressed by this little fannish Morris dance, so unlike the high-order waltzing needed even to get to the toilets at a normal One Tun meeting, it didn't show and she appeared to be regarding the whole proceedings with admirable insouciance. When I later questioned her about the 'sights' she had gone out of her way to see these turned out not to be the Houses of Parliament, or Buckingham Palace, or St.Paul's, or Trafalger Square, or even the waxworks. No, though a non-drinker (as a depressing number of US fans seem to be) what she found most fascinating about our little country were our pubs! Which proves, I suppose, that the tun is mightier than Tussaud's.

Directly after leaving the One Tun Avedon, in the company of the Langfords, travelled up to Glasgow on British Rail's Nightrider, and the next evening Linda Pickersgill and I followed in her tracks.

The advantage of the Nightrider is its low cost. The disadvantages are the near-impossibility of getting any sleep in the infernally uncomfortable seats, which doubtless won their creator some award or other for innovative design ("This design wins the award for it's creators daring approach to lower-back support, namely its total elimination, and the novel tilting lever which deposits the passenger in the lap of the person seated behind"), and being dumped in Glasgow at the ungodly hour of 6.45 am, a time whose existence I had previously considered a hoax. In my usual attempt to appear cool, laid

back, and stylishly hip (a forlorn hope, this) I had worn light clothing. This was a mistake. When I stepped off the train my life flashed before my eyes.

It is, I have since become convinced, a long-established practice of the Scottish Tourist Board to bribe cartographers into showing Glasgow on their maps a lot further away from the Arctic Circle than it actually is because the difference between stepping off that train and stepping into a meat freezer was negligible. With me hopping, slapping my sides, and rubbing my hands vigorously we made our way out of the station. My long-held belief that there is no justice in this world was re-affirmed by the discovery that while Linda's hotel would let her have her room at 8.20 am, with a resultant fall into the sweet arms of Morpheus, my own wouldn't let me register before noon. I killed the time as best I could but even two circuits of the Glasgow Metro - which to we big city sophisticates who regard even the London Underground with jaded disinterest seemed like something out of an amusement park - did little to allieviate the boredom.

When I did finally get to bed I managed to grab no more than a couple of hours sleep before Linda woke me by phoning and demanding to know why I wasn't handing out 1984CON badges. Sighing, I dragged myself out of bed, dressed, and went among the milling throng, handing out badges to all and sundry.

Though Rob Holdstock had decided to attend ALBACON after all the knowledge that I would be called upon to present at least some part of our bid at the Sunday morning bidding-session, the first time I'd ever had to do anything of the sort, coloured everything that happened at the convention prior to that momentous event, and there was within me a growing sense of expectancy, tinged with fear. This was it; the bottom line where it was make or break and there were no prizes for coming second. I knew very early on that we had the vast majority of those who spent most of the convention in the fan room on our side, but what of the faceless masses attending the programme items reputedly taking place beyond the walls of this room? Would they regard John Brunner with the same contempt as those who had observed his antics at conventions over the course of many years or would they, as seemed more likely, see only a Big Name SF Author and vote for a bid fronted by him on that alone rather than on any ability he'd ever shown at running conventions? It was all very worrying. Still, this worry was greatly allievated by good times spent propping up the fan room bar with people like Linda and Rob and Avedon and Dave and Rog Peyton and Many Others (who'd followed us up). However, more and more I knew that - win or lose - I wanted that bidding session behind me.

Strangely, as the bidding session drew closer the tension it was generating keened my appreciation of the convention and those around me, making Saturday evening the high point of the whole convention for me. It started fairly quietly with a trip to a nearby Chinese restaurant.

"That was a damned good Chinese restaurant", I told Langford on my return.

"What did you have?", he asked.

"A T-bone steak."

With the bidding session tomorrow morning this was the ideal time to throw a 1984CON party, but there was a problem. The Brum Group had booked the fan room for a NOVACON party. Though Linda and I approached him with some trepidation

Peter Weston was totally amenable to moving the NOVACON party back twenty-four hours to make way for us, and so it came to pass. There were large quantities of Tequila Sunrise for all and great music courtesy of tapes compiled by Phil Palmer and Jimmy Robertson, my dancing partner and I moving to a primal rhythm deep into the night.

Breakfast the next morning was an all 1984CON committee affair with each of us poring over the copious notes provided by Malcolm Edwards and memorising the bidding strategies he'd devised. I tried to eat something but my stomach rebelled and so had to be content with tea. I also wanted desperately to go to the toilet, despite having gone shortly before we sat down. Finding myself unable to sit still I decided to fill in the few hours remaining before the session by going for a walk in an attempt to loosen up and dissipate the feeling in the pit of my stomach I knew to be nothing less than total fear. It was ridiculous, after all, that anyone should be terrified by the prospect of speaking to an audience of a couple of hundred people, but ridiculous or not the fear was very real. When it finally came to the crunch and I actually found myself sitting up on the platform and facing all those people the fear subsided considerably, the anticipation having been far worse than the event itself.

The session went off reasonably well with Holdstock, Charnock, and I doing most of the speaking, and I noted with some satisfaction that while the Eurocon people were trying to imply that anyone who opposed their bid had to be xenophobic we were the bid who had foreign nationals on our panel in the form of Linda Pickersgill and Avedon Carol, the latter having been drafted in as 1984CON's American representative after some last minute persuasion. Maybe they weren't European but they did at least speak English (well, sort of).

Our bid lost for much the reasons I'd thought it might, namely that while we appeared to have the majority of fanzine fans on our side we failed to win over enough of those who made up the bulk of con-attendees. In many ways this also pointed up the divided nature of ALBACON itself with most of those who hung around up in the fan room - predominantly fanzine fans - forming almost a convention-within-a-convention and reporting that they'd had a great time, while rumblings of discontent reached us from those down below who felt the convention organisation was falling apart. Such splits are hardly a healthy sign but from here on in they are, I'm afraid, inevitable.

After the session I hung around long enough to hear Kev Williams give his presentation - a proposal to hold an Eastercon as they used to be, one stripped of media programming and peripherals, that concentrated solely on written SF and fanzines, an idea of which more was to be heard in the weeks that followed - before going off by myself. Still on an adrenal high and needing to go somewhere or do something to work it off I first wandered around Glasgow city centre - the only place I know of where police telephone boxes like that the TARDIS in DR.WHO is fashioned after still exist - and later hit the spot with a few stiff drinks. It took hours before I finally came down, probably not until early evening, but when I did I knew the bid was finally over with and I could really begin to enjoy the convention. And though I had my reasons for not wanting to drink too much I did enjoy it. Immensely.

The days following ALBACON became a reprise of those preceding it, with get-togethers at Duckett Road and the Nicholas/Hanna flat to bid Avedon farewell where earlier they had been to greet her. For those of us involved in such matters the ALBACON had expanded to encompass her TAFF visit, and had in doing so been re-defined by that visit.

It was Thursday 7th April and as I watched Avedon vanish into the departure lounge at Heathrow Airport's Terminal 3 (to catch British Airways flight BA277 at 11.30 am to Boston and Washington) I realised that it was, at last, over. I was beat. It had been a good convention but now 'the real world' beckoned and I knew I must return to it. Until the next time.....

NOTIONS (continued from page 9.)

a tribute to David Bridges that while you know it's extremely unlikely you'll ever discover the meaning of life in a fanzine you feel that if you were going to find it in any fanzine it would be in one written by him.

Ah hell, there's no way I can really do justice to A COOL HEAD here and so I can only urge you to make every effort to secure a copy of your own. As someone probably said elsewhere about something else entirely - if you don't don't appreciate this fanzine check into a morgue, because you're probably dead.

The fanzines recommended and reviewed above are available from the addresses below. A polite request will probably be enough to secure you a copy of any of them, and if you like them a letter of comment to the editor is pretty well guaranteed to get you on the mailing list for the next issue. Send those polite requests to:

NUTZ: Pam Wells, 24A Beech Rd., Bowes Park, London N11.

CRYSTAL SHIP: John D.Owen, 4 Highfield, Newport Pagnell, Bucks MK16 9AZ.

MICROWAVE: Terry Hill, 41 Western Rd., Maidstone, Kent ME16 8NE.

A COOL HEAD: David E.Bridges, 130 Valley Rd., Sheffield S8 9GA.

Hmmm. This column of fanzine criticism didn't turn out quite the way I it would but it was an interesting exercise and if I decide to do another I'll doubtless come up with some smartass title for it rather than letting it take over the NOTIONS column again. For the moment this still is the NOTIONS column and there's one other thing I want to bring up in what little space remains, namely the WORLDCON.

Rumours of discontent in Europe over the WORLDCON (on the basis that it's really an American convention rather than in any real sense a world convention - an argument I have some sympathy with) and the intention of setting up what is, I suppose, a REST-OF-THE-WORLD-CON have reached my ears recently. I'm rather curious about this and if any of the continental fans on my mailing list (or anyone else for that matter) can give me any more information on it, particularly how it will be run and what hope it has of being any less of an organisational shambles than the Eurocon has reputedly been in recent years, I'd be very grateful.

...VIEWS, VITRIOL, VITUPERATION, AND EVEN VIVACITY...IT'S ALL IN.....

LETTERS

LETTERS....pray silence for this issues first speaker.....

LETTERS

PAM WELLS

24A Beech Rd., Bowes Park, London N11.

In your NOTIONS column you mention both the Women's APA and SHALLOW END, and as the only person directly involved with both ventures I feel I should make some comment.

I was present at the 'Women and Fanzines' meeting at CHANNELCON, where the APA was first proposed. Although initially expecting a fanzine workshop with hints on how to actually put out your own zine, I joined the APA because at least it was somewhere to write. At first I was reluctant - it bothered me that men would not be admitted, and that as a small circulation project it was essentially defeating its aim of promoting new women writers. Fortunately time has proved these pitfalls to be benefits. The exclusion of men is unfair, and has led to misunderstanding and criticism from some of the men in fandom. But it is exactly this criticism which has led to the APA's success - after all, there's nothing better than a good controversy...anything's better than apathy! Anyone can republish their work once the APA has been distributed (as Linda has done) so the small circulation presents no problem, and in practice ensures that only the best writing sees general circulation.

People join the APA for different and diverse reasons. Some see it as a place for experimentation or writing practice; others as a way to become better acquainted with other women in fandom. It is a place where we can all meet together at the same time, without interruption, and as such performs a very important function. In my original rumblings of dissent I had not realised the value of such communication.

You are slightly incorrect in your description of the birth of SHALLOW END. It was actually conceived by Eve Harvey and myself one lunchtime in the City, shortly after I had joined the APA and Eve had declined. We agreed that there was another way of encouraging new writers, and talked about the possibility of setting up a sort of genzine workshop. It was only after the inclusion of Judith Hanna and Janice Maule, who had both declined to join the APA because they felt that a genzine would be more appropriate medium for new writers, and Roy Macinski (often described as the 'token male'), that the project began to take shape. We set out to produce a fanzine which would 'show an example' as well as actively encouraging new writers to submit their work for criticism. It all just grew from there. The pilot issue has generated a good amount of response, as has issue one. As a response-only fanzine we know whether there continues to be a demand. As soon as the precious letters dry up so does SHALLOW END. But there definitely does seem to be a place in the fanzine market for such an animal.

The main strengths of the APA seem to be the emergence of women who had not written for some time and the promotion of communication between women fans. SHALLOW END is more successful in attracting interest from new writers, and

those who admit they wouldn't have written at all without encouragement. It still remains to be seen just how successful both innovations will be in the future. They are both as yet very, very young...

PETER CAMPBELL

80 Royal Terrace, Thurso, Caithness, Scotland KW14 8NP.

Interesting to hear the background to the Women's APA, and the justifications for its existence. Personally I'm not entirely convinced by the rationalisations you've given. If its purpose is to provide, as you say, 'a forum for the discussion of those problems peculiar to women in fandom' surely it would be more profitable in public so that all we males can learn what those problems are? We aren't all macho ogres incapable of sympathising with specifically 'female' problems. Hiding away from the world won't change it and may only help to increase the rift. What next? A Gay APA? A Rasta APA? Bickering aside, I always thought fandom's (unconscious) objective was harmony, not dissension. SHALLOW END seems to me a much more positive project and even though the first issue had flaws in abundance it also had a positive aim and an enthusiastic spirit that can only bode well for the future.

JUDITH HANNA

22 Denbigh St., Pimlico, London SW1V 2ER

Though I'm not in the Women's APA (due more to laziness than to any ideological disapproval of such separatist activity), it seems to me that what you say about "why it is necessary" shows just the sort of confused reasoning that Kev Smith's letter comments on. The reason the APA is restricted to women is as much to do with the nature of the APA as it has the number of women in fandom. After all the fact that women are, I'm told, 52% of the general population, and thus in a slight majority, has not meant that women outside fandom haven't found it desirable to form themselves into special discussion groups that the problems of the female role and all its implications with a few more pretensions to being taken seriously than the traditional tea-and-gossipgatherings our mothers had to make do with. The normal charge against APAs is precisely that they do turn into gossip sessions of feedback and endless mailing comments on mailing comments. It's this stuff, more than the occasional meaty articles, that is the heart of an APA, and it's very much in this less formal give and take that it's nice not to have to worry about whether men might think that what was being discussed was trivial, boring, strictly girls stuff. It's also nice not to be subjected to male-type ravings about cricket, computers and other subjects that they might find more fascinating than, for instance, memories of cooking lessons, or comparing experiences of being hassled on the street or in the office.

((OK, 'comparing experiences of being hassled on the street or in the office' is the type of thing probably most easily discussed within the context of the Women's APA, given the inevitable differences in the way men and women perceive such things, but your other examples are a little odd. You seem to be suggesting that such things as cricket and computers are strictly for the boys while only girls can have 'memories of cooking lessons'. Given the anti-sports bias in much of fandom there may well be more male fans with no interest in cricket than there are with (and I

certainly have no interest in the game) and, given that most people who get involved with fandom are well educated and that many have an interest in technical and scientific matters, there are doubtless many female fans who find computers fascinating. Similarly, while I couldn't reminisce about cookery lessons my brother could since they had, quite rightly, become a standard course for both girls and boys by the time he was going through school. I also doubt that 'men might think that what was being discussed was trivial, boring, strictly girls stuff' unless it really was trivial since there is, surely, a large degree of overlap in what men and women see as trivial, and in what they see as serious.))

It seems to me that men's paranoia about the idea of a Women's APA is largely the sort of natural reaction to a sign that says "No boys allowed", a combination of curiosity and the feeling that you might be missing out on something which occasionally verges onto the paranoid feeling that the girls might be "getting at" you guys. (Oh dear, screw syntax). It's always seemed to me that those most prone to paranoid reaction are precisely those who, in mixed social groups, don't talk to women anyway. or if they talk to them tend not to listen to what women say, but rather talk over female voices. Or, in other words, those who worry most are those who don't get on well with women anyway, wouldn't want to join a feminist APA unless they thought they ought to be laying down the law for these poor helpless little chicks, and are precisely those that women do, quite understandably, want to exclude. And there is some basis for their paranoia. After all, it's that sort of male chauvinist behaviour that the rabidest of humourless feminists find gut-bustingly funny. But luckily that sort of male does seem pretty rare, at least among those fans I have met.

MIKE GLICKSOHN

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

I'm somewhat ambivalent about apas for women: intellectually, I realise they are perfectly acceptable, just as invitational apas are a long-established part of fandom, and I cannot possibly object to them. (This is completely different from special women-only programming at a convention which is funded out of general convention finances: I remain adamantly opposed to any such use of convention memberships for activities that all con members aren't allowed to participate in.) Personally, however, I had a regrettable experience with the women's apa that started here in North America and it left me with a bad feeling about the apa. It boiled down to the fact that a small amount of rather uncomplimentary things were written about me in the women's apa and I found out about it purely by chance when a member of the apa let me glance through one of her mailings. I was extremely upset by several aspects of the situation: (a) the material itself was largely a misrepresentation and contained several outright falsehoods; (b) nobody in the apa thought there was anything wrong with publishing such material without letting the target either read it or have a chance to refute it; (c) when I found out about it there was a big brouhaha but not about the fact that I'd been slandered without a fair chance at rebuttal but rather about the fact that the "secrecy" laws had been violated and a mere man had been shown the mailing! When special interest groups use their interests as a rationale for abandoning the normal standards of fandom then I look askance at those groups. Women or any other members of fandom have the right to form their

apa but they don't have the right to use it as a forum for slander. What happened to me may be an isolated incident in the history of A Woman's Apa, but I'll never know because I'm not allowed to see what they publish. I hope the English ((arrggghhh!!!)) version is run along more positive lines....

Brian Earl Brown makes one good point in the midst of two asinine ones; he owes it to himself to remain his own man and to act according to his own standards. Every fan has that responsibility. But he still rants on about there being some mystical trufannish elite which excludes those who fail to worship properly and that's his first stupid statement. He also tells us that he doesn't feel fandom is a place where he should feel any constraint to do his best. That is his second stupid statement. (It's also why Ted and Dick and Patrick and I won't let him into the Inner Circle, but don't print that part, okay)

((Sure thing, Mike.))

I couldn't disagree more with Darroll Pardoe (which is why I have a whole stack of PIG ON THE WALL scattered in various boxes throughout my apartment) and I've never thrown away a fanzine in my seventeen years of fannish life. His argument that fanzines are ephemeral and once they've served their purpose can be tossed out applies equally well to postage stamps or to any other collectable commodity. Fanzines may be worthless to Darroll but they nevertheless have their value to someone else. The difference between a stamp/comic/magazine/etc and a fanzine is that the former are usually produced in enormous great quantities so that someone interested in them has a reasonable chance of obtaining one. Throwing away a single copy of a fanzine can destroy a sizeable percentage of the entire print-run and make it very difficult for someone who does have an interest in them to find one as little as a couple of years down the pike. I can understand Darroll not caring enough to keep fanzines but I can't understand his not understanding the nature of fans and fandom enough to at least make them available to someone willing to come by and cart them away.

PETER WESTON

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I'm a bit shocked by my old pal Darroll Pardoe's admission that he destroys fanzines. Get rid of unwanted items, yes, but for goodness sake don't destroy them! Give them to some neofan - give someone else the chance to enjoy them. Many a fan has come into fanzine fandom that way - if Ken Cheslin had destroyed his old fnz, rather than donating them to the Brummies, then I would not be here today. (OK, Darroll, you win).

I enjoyed EPSILON, particularly Linda's UNICON report. This was a con that I very nearly attended, even having gone to the trouble of writing to the organisers to enquire about accomodation. Reading her report I'm rather glad I didn't go - I don't think I'd have been 'with it' last year. I also must say how very much I like Linda's style, both as a writer and as a person. As with you, I hadn't had much chance to talk to her before ALBACON II.

Not having seen any of your zines before I was pleasantly surprised to find you're so interested in fan history and fnz of previous years. Forgive my ignorance, but as you know I've been resting for the past couple of years, and have had the vague feeling, from occasional comments that I've read, that

almost all fans today have little interest in the past. Who was it said that "the proper place for old fanzine articles is in old fanzines"?

Anyway, your interest strikes a chord, as does your theory about fannish Generation Gaps, which I think you have about right. Let me tell you how it happened in my case....

I discovered "fandom" in January 1963. Actually, this was the primeval Birmingham Group, with almost total lack of contact with fandom as it then existed, but it was sufficient to give me my first sight of a fanzine, somewhere in the summer of 1963. I saw two separate titles; one was INSIDE, a litho printed, sercon zine that was full of authors and impressive articles; the other was (I now realise) a duplicated crudzine by a fan called Mike Deckinger.

It was enough, however, and I happily toiled away to bring out my own effort, which appeared in October 1963. It was a half-size, purple thing, pretty pathetic, but a start (by an odd coincidence, Charles Platt surfaced just two weeks earlier, also with a half-size purple thing). My problem was, by late 1963 there were almost no other zines around. Thus, I had no 'Good Examples' to look at, which might have set me straight and saved a few years of re-inventing the wheel. It wasn't a case of my refusing to learn from the past - so far as I was concerned, the past wasn't there!

What seemed to have happened was that British fandom of the early 1960s had dissolved in acrimony, leaving people like Archie Mercer and Terry Jeeves as resident BNFs. Both are worthy and well-meaning, but were distinguished more by their longevity than by talent. Simultaneously, U.S. fandom had fallen apart, so that in 1963-64 the big zines were things like YANDRO, DOUBLE:BILL, NIEKAS, none of which are (or were) exactly inspiring.

It was not until I'd wormed my way much further into fandom that I actually saw a good fannish fanzine; I remember being so frustrated, finding out that high-rated titles like WARHOON, VOID, XERO, CRY, INNUENDO, INSIDE, OOPSLA!, BANE, A-BAS, GRUE, even SHAGGY (Shangri L'Affaires) had gone defunct just months before I arrived on the scene. At the time it seemed like a conspiracy!

It wasn't until mid-1965, I think, that I was actually able to see most of the above-mentioned titles. This happened while we were moving the BSFA Fanzine Foundation from Manchester (where it had been neglected) to Birmingham (where it was neglected). In the middle I actually sat up all night in my car, an old Ford Popular, rummaging through mounds of zines of every description, and snatching reads of interesting items. The theory was that I could borrow whatever I wanted, once the Foundation had been sorted out. (It never was, and the way things worked out, I wish I'd kept the fnz while I had them, in the car).

Actually, some of the fabled titles weren't so hot. CRY was only a long running clubzine, very sloppily put together. Same with SHAGGY. But WARHOON was overpoweringly brilliant; so much so that it gave me an acute inferiority complex for years. HYPHEN was in there too (not actually defunct at the time, but I didn't see a current issue - the last - until mid-1965, at almost the same time I found some back issues in the car), and this gave me my first real glimpse of a fannish fandom that seemed recognisably close-to-home; I remember

looking upon Irish fandom of the early 1950s as a sort of Golden Age for many years afterwards. Then there was APORRHETA, which was even closer; this was the focal point fnz of British fandom until the Inchmery blow-up of 1961-62, and again I remember faunching for the opportunity to have participated in this wonderful age.

Best of all was Ted White's VOID, of which I have about eight or nine issues. This was the US fannish 'focal point' fnz, finishing with the 28th ish in February 1962. It was micro-elite on Twiltone, with an absolutely overwhelming fannish presence - three-page illustrated covers, interlineations, referents, "built-in, Instant Nostalgia", and so much sheer good fun that I read those issues over and over, and almost lived the life of a fan of that era. VOID seemed so good to me that I loaned my file to Kevin Easthope, about five years ago, and he seemed to enjoy them almost as much as I did. I'm afraid to open them now, in case the illusion is spoiled, but by god, at the time those 'old fanzines' gripped me in a way that our feeble contemporary efforts couldn't match .

So what am I saying? Am I saying anything or just rambling on like a boring old fart? (It's now 12.15, long after everyone else has gone to bed in my house.) I think I'm agreeing with you that there was a dramatic Generation Gap in 1963-64, which also hit many US fans - they had to re-learn things all over again, although they were helped by the fact that rather more of the old-timers in the US came back (Bergeron, Geis), or never really went away (White, Carr).

I'm also saying that some old fanzines can outlive their natural time, and still be fresh and accessible to later generations of fans who otherwise have no connection with the era described. It's more than a purely historical interest, too; you'll notice from the above that I was obviously taken into the mood of the fnz concerned, and was able to participate in them in a sort of vicarious way. The same process is repeating itself today, since I'm lending out things like MAYA to some of the more recent newcomers to the Brum Group, and they're finding them enjoyable even though times have already changed.

I was always very impressed by the laid-back humour of Burbee, but never managed to find more than fragments of his work; somewhere there is a copy of a reprint volume, titled THE INCOMPLEAT BURBEE, which I'd much like to see.

((Me too, Peter, me too.))

TERRY CARR

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Latest EPSILON is another good issue (I voted for you in the Hugo fanzine category, though no doubt it'll do you little good), and it mainly prompts thoughts about fanhistory, of course....

...or really, about history itself, its value and appeal to various people. Somewhere during this continuing discussion I was moved to remember that there are people who don't give a faint damn about history in whatever form or about whatever subject. I don't think it has much to do with fan history per se that many fans would rather not hear about it; rather, I

realise that there are people to whom the past is inevitably boring and has nothing to do with anything; to them, only what's happening Now is interesting. I find such people at least as alien as Trekkies, etc., because their mindsets just aren't at all like mine. Of course I'm fascinated by fanhistory, but that is not, as one might suppose, because I'm an oldphart, but rather, because when I get interested in something I want to know first its history. I was fascinated by fanhistory when I first came into the field, because that's just the kind of hairpin I am. I think Clifford Simak put it very well in some interview when he said, " I'm interested in history just because I want to know what has happened."

Quite so. The study of history in order to learn lessons from it, or avoid making the same mistakes again, or having to re-invent the wheel, or whatever, is a rational exercise that's usually defended on those grounds alone. But though I agree that such considerations are valuable, my own interest in the history of anything stems simply from wanting to know the interesting development and fascinating sidelights of the genre/field of learning/geographic area involved. Most of my pleasure reading is non-fiction about history, whether it's Burton Roueche's articles about medical research, books about explorations in Africa or the South Pacific, or biographies or Letters of famous authors. Good historical writing gathers and condenses the best stories and anecdotes from the past and fascinates me purely for that reason; writings about the present have less material to draw from and tend to be less interesting to me for that reason.

((But surely, Terry, the best writing about the present takes the past into account, at least unconsciously, because the past and it's legacy are a part of the present and of our mental landscape. A piece of writing may not necessarily be about the past but the past will be part of the sub-text that a piece with any depth will have. Since past and present can't be quite as neatly separated as you suggest then surely anyone writing about the present has, in a sense, more material to draw on?))

For anyone who doesn't share this fascination with What Has Happened, such an attitude must seem really peculiar. The difference, I think, lies in the fact that They regard history as a record of truly important events - so that naturally they feel fanhistory is boring because nothing about this tiny field of ours can be important or meaningful. Oh yes it can, but that's an argument that simply doesn't interest me much (it's not a strong argument, anyway). I simply like to hear the best stories about anything, and if it's fanhistory it's more interesting because I'm involved in the ongoing story, however fabled I may be at present.

I honestly believe that this is what separates the fanhistorians or fancestor worshippers, so-called, from those who like (apparently) D.West regard last year as over and done with and quite irrelevant to what's happening now or in future. I think they're right, and we're right, and the only thing that matters is how interesting the words on a given page are. To me, the pages of the books or fanzines I read are more interesting when the stories told come from a much broader range of material. Not because the doings of West or Nielsen Hayden are more 'important' than those of Laney or Rapp, but because we've had time to digest the tales of the latter and repeat only those that are still diverting.

FanhistorY as an anthology of the most interesting stories and anecdotes, that's what appeals to me. Whereas it would seem the anti-fanhistorians prefer the latest issue of anything, because at least it's current. This is not, as it is so often made to seem, a difference of opinion over Values; instead it's a difference of interests, and so what.

MARC ORTLIEB

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I seem to be fast coming to the conclusion that I'm never going to find myself within the circle of Ted White's covered wagon train. It all comes down to not really giving a damn about D.West. I tried, I honestly did, to read his piece in TAPPEN. I even read part of the letter in WARHOON. However, I guess it comes down to the fact that I'm into fandom for its entertainment value, and with all these people getting so heavy into what fandom is, there are times when I figure I might as well exchange my mimeo for a half ton of split-ring washers, and knit myself a suit of chainmail for the next SCA tourney.

Mind you, your statement that D.West's style is rather like that of Hunter Thompson goes a long way towards explaining why I can't get into it. From what I've read of Thompson, to be quite honest, I couldn't give a shit. (Mind you, my personal feelings about Thompson are that he intrudes a lot into ROLLING STONE, and that means that there's less space for the really important things in life, such as who Grace Slick is fucking this week.)

Another aspect, of course, is that the sorts of things that West, White, Nicholas et al are getting their knickers in knots over are, by and large, totally irrelevant to Australian fandom where we're still in the throes of developing an awareness that our fandom is no longer the monolithic structure that it once was. Few people here have even heard of D.West - with the exception, of course, of a hard core of fanzine fans.

Linda Pickersgill's con report was lovely. It showed what a truly creative con report can be, and though it didn't quite come up to the standards of a fragment of YORCON report that Skel once ran in SFD, I found it most amusing in its own way. Mind you, the catch cry of "Cretins" makes me wonder about those accusations of elitism in fandom. Though philosophically no worse than 'neo', it contains more blatant negative emotive connotations.

WAHF: Joy Hibbert who "..liked Linda's article.." but "..noticed something about the 'names of' game - the women named boring items of clothing, the men named perverted items of clothing..apart from Jan Huxley." Perverted? A wimple, split-crotch panties, fish-net tights and a hernia-belt? Joseph Nicholas wrote: "Dear Rob, Seems like I can't even write you a note explaining why I'm not really LoCcing EPSILON without you making a major production of it (and thus bearing out, inter alia, the point I was making in its final paragraph. God only knows what you'll do with a squib like this - turn it into a three-act opera, perhaps? Best, Joseph." Not me, boss; maybe it'll be Michael Ashley: "A pretty pedestrian conrep from Linda. Trufan strip is pointless - not at all funny. One point: West's articles aren't 'long' so much as every one else's are short. A 36-page article in other circles is perfectly average (I've read longer articles about one stanza of one poem)." Also heard from were ATom, rich brown,

EPSILON 14.....August 1983.

is the once and future (hah!) quarterly fanzine that comes to you from....

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and is available for letter of comment, trade, or by editorial whim. Letters received will be considered for publication unless marked otherwise.

Cover this time is a tribute to the great Will Eisner by Rob Hansen and Dan Steffan. The philistines who don't know who Will Eisner is can go to the back of the class.

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*

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