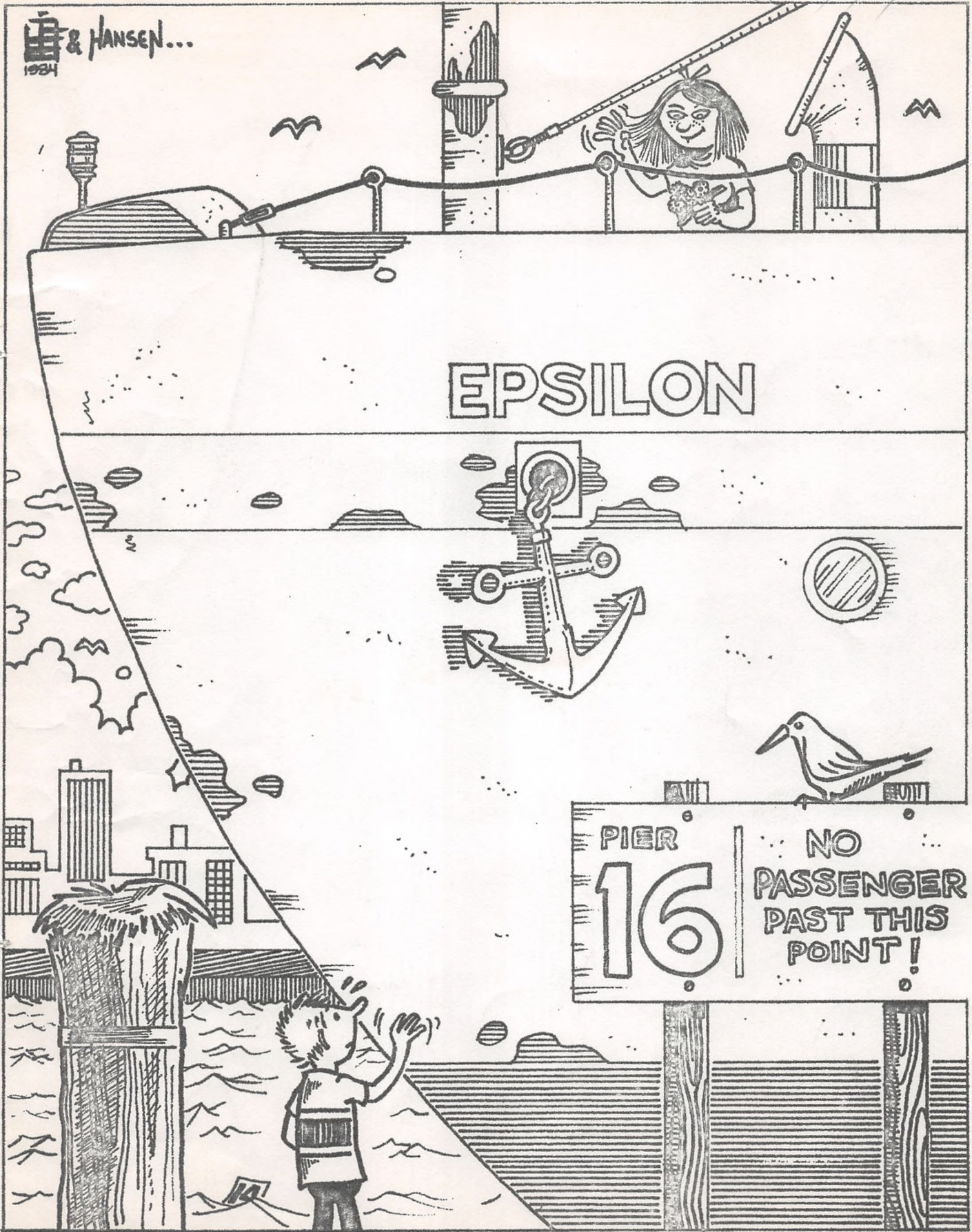


Sec 10/9/84

H&H & HANSEN...  
1984



EPSILON

PIER  
16

NO  
PASSENGER  
PAST THIS  
POINT!

\*\*\*...RELAX DON'T DO IT WHEN YOU WANT TO SUCK IT TO IT...RELAX.....\*\*\*

INTRO

INTRO...whose 'headline' is there to annoy Avedon Carol.

INTRO

Toothache, as someone once said, is a real pain in the arse and while it isn't actually giving me any pain yet the tooth disintegrating at the back of my mouth is giving me Some Cause For Concern. If I don't get it fixed up before my trip to America - little over a week away as I write - I may have to pay the horrendous sums charged for dental and medical treatment in the land of the free, a prospect which doesn't thrill me. Here in Britain, as we enter the final week of August, the temperature has topped 84° and the humidity is at levels where all but the most sedentary activity requires Herculean effort (and no, that's not a sly allusion to the Augean stable-like outpourings in recent issues of WIZ). Not that I can blame the almost nine month gap between this issue and the last on the weather, of course, since that issue came out mid-winter. No, there are other reasons...

In the first part of this year the energies I would otherwise have devoted to EPSILON were diverted to such things as helping to get MEXICON together, entertaining Avedon Carol during the two months she was my house-guest, and working on a short history of British fandom that was originally intended for the MEXICON Programme Book but which grew too large for that publication and will now appear, due to a chain of circumstance too convoluted to go into here, in the next two issues of American fan Joe D. Siclari's FANHISTORICA (which seems apt). I've enjoyed myself in the long months since issue 15 appeared but I'm still first and foremost a fanzine fan and the urge to once again experience the sheer masochistic pleasure of pubbing my ish grew to the point where it could no longer be ignored. Which is why you are holding this issue in your hands now. Of course, the fact that SILICON is this weekend and LACON is next weekend - meaning a great saving on my postal costs - doesn't hurt too much either.

This issue's outside contribution is WILD ARTHUR & THE VLAXINATORS, an article by Harry Bell which illuminates an obscure part of his personal fanhistory (sort of). If you've ever wondered why Harry's various fanzines have had such peculiar titles, here's where you find out.

Finally, my thanks to all those who voted for me in the recent TAFF race and to all those past and present who've contributed money and material to be sold off for the fund. Thank you one and all.

...ROB HANSEN 21/8/84.

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"Even Phil Palmer's bidding and you know what a tightarse he is...not that I have personal experience of this..."

...Greg Pickersgill with one of many cracks during his spell as auctioneer at the recent MEXICON.

\*\*\*.....THE POSITION OF THE FANARTIST...DOES ANYONE GIVE A DAMN?.....\*\*\*

FANART FOR FANART'S SAKE?

FANART FOR FANART'S SAKE?.....words about pictures.

FANART FOR FANART'S SAKE?

HOLIER THAN THOU 19, edited by Robbie and Marty Cantor, arrived the other day and a mighty fine fanzine it is too, the best issue to date. Of particular interest are a number of comments on fanart that appear in its pages. These include a LoC from Brad Foster praising the cover on the previous issue (a public health poster put out by our own beloved government) but cautions "...let's not do this too often; think of all the poor artists out there eager for every inch of space to put their work on!" Meanwhile (or maybe 'meanwhilst' since it appears in HTT) Taral Wayne (in a column, no less) spend two pages dwelling over what he sees as "...a bad deal for fanartists". Arriving at a figure of 75 as the number of covers to be drawn in a given year for fanzines that the average self-respecting fanartist wouldn't be too ashamed to see his or her work on Taral guesses that...

"...at most 15 artists are likely to do the 75 covers in question next year. I count myself, Rob Hansen, D.West, ATom, Dan Steffan, Stu Shiffman, Charles Williams, Steven Fox, Brad Foster, Wade Gilbreath, Marc Shirmeister, Steve Stiles, Joan Hanke-Woods, Jerry Collins, and Harry Bell as the most likely candidates. There are a few other possibilities who may appear on a cover or may not. But it's also likely that one or two of the artists on my list won't make an appearance. Let's be conservative, then, and keep our count at 15. So there are approximately 15 artists vying for 75 covers.

Possibly I'm atypical, but I do about 35 full page works of art a year....."

Clearly, Taral is Extremely Concerned about this state of affairs and he sums up thus:

"The grotesqueness of the situation may not be appreciated by the normal, word-oriented fan ((as opposed to the abnormal picture-oriented fan, one assumes)), who believes that the written portion of a fanzine is all that really matters. Certain British fans have even said, quite forcibly, that art in a fanzine is at best a distraction, and highly probably a waste of space that could be taken up by more words. Imagine the shoe on the other foot though. Supposing ((sic)) we artists held the same opinions about words? That isn't vivid enough? Suppose then that the best Chris Atkinson or Dave Langford were permitted to write were five pages a year. (And a couple of dozen epigrams.) And then imagine that some more reactionary artist complained that the space were better taken up with more illustration.

Get the picture?"

Something that Taral conveniently forgets, apart from grammar, is that while I'm included on his list of "...approximately 15 artists vying for

75 covers..." I'm also one of those "...certain British fans..." who "...have even said, quite forcibly, that art in a fanzine is at best a distraction, and highly probably a waste of space that could be taken up by more words". To be precise what I said, in EPSILON 12 (and to which Taral addressed himself in issue 13's lettercolumn), was that...

"I've had several offers of artwork lately, for which I'm grateful but puzzled as EPSILON plainly doesn't run interior artwork. This isn't because I can't get any (I'm quite capable of producing it myself, after all) but is a matter of choice. I've always hated the use of random fillos to break up pages of type, and always ignore requests to do any, since it seems unimaginative and reduces the art to little more than interior decoration."

Though I did a handful of fillos during my first few years in fandom, **mainly** because everything was new to me and it seemed The Thing To Do, I've always regarded them as an abomination. A 'tradition' such artistic squibs may well be but I still find it incomprehensible that anyone is prepared to allow their work to be reduced to generic filler, to have it become visual muzak for those poor benighted souls apparently incapable of reading whole pages of text that haven't been broken up by pretty pictures. Interior artwork can serve a legitimate purpose when done to illustrate specific articles but I'm afraid I don't regard the general run of fillos as having any legitimate purpose at all. I assume fillos are done largely by those Foster calls "...the poor artists out there eager for every inch of space to put their work on..." since I can't imagine anyone with a more sober view of fanart producing them. Yet this is more-or-less the same attitude that Taral ascribes to cover-artists. His view of them 'vying' for these 75 covers conjures up the amusing, and rather pathetic, picture of these desperate artists sat at home, biting their nails to the bone as they await The Call.

This may be Taral's experience but it certainly isn't mine, nor is it the experience of any other fanartist I know. Harry Bell, for example, far from slaving at the bit to draw covers, has to be cajoled, flattered, bribed, threatened, and all but physically assaulted in order to get him to actually do anything. Similarly, the only artwork I do these days is for fanzine covers and since I've only done about four covers this year that's also the number of drawings I've done this year. Far from feeling this to be a terrible situation and a sad reflection on the position of the fanartist in modern-day fandom, it suits me just fine. Since I find drawing much easier than writing I'd much prefer it if those who want me to contribute to their fanzines asked for cover-art rather than articles but since requests for the latter usually outweigh those for the former then that's what I do. Ultimately it's up to the fanzine editors to decide what they want to run in their fanzines and it's not only their choice but their duty to carry through to completion with their view of how their zine should be. If that vision doesn't include artwork then that's just too bad and fanartists really don't have any right to bleat about it. No-one owes them anything and they have no automatic right to have their work used in any fanzines save those they publish themselves. Tough, I know, but then it's a harsh world.

While my views on interior artwork have long been known I've never made

much of a fuss about cover art. This is because I'd felt rather ambivalent about it until recently and could never entirely satisfy myself that even cover art served any legitimate purpose. Fanzines such as FOULER, RITBLAT, BIG SCAB, and TRUE RAT (through most of its run) had managed to be entirely successful without recourse to such frippery, after all, so surely it was unnecessary? Nonetheless I eventually came to agree with the accepted wisdom on these matters. As Taral says, "...the cover is supposed to characterise the zine...", to help establish a personality for it. If one artist does all the covers for a given fanzine they can be extremely useful in helping it to establish a distinct character and in making it stand out from similar productions.

Sub-consciously, I must have accepted all this for some time as the device of making the title of the zine a component of the cover-art has been used with EPSILON since issue 7 back in July 1981 and is now recognisably a part of the fanzine's whole 'look'. Since then a number of the covers have been collaborations with other fanartists and early on I promised that I'd share my thoughts on both these particular joint efforts and on collaboration in general. This seems like the perfect opportunity to do so....

There have been five collaborations used so far - on the covers of issues 11, 12, 13, 14, and 16, the first three with Harry Bell and the final two with Dan Steffan. With the exception of the cover for issue 13, which was one by me that I asked Harry to add gremlins to, these were all inker/penciller jobs with each of them inking my pencils and me inking theirs in turn. Issue 12's cover was the first time I'd ever inked anyone else's pencils - and I froze up! As I wrote then:

"What had happened, you see, is that I'd asked Harry Bell, a good friend and someone I've known for years, for a cover but on seeing it for the first time I realised that it had been drawn by HARRY BELL, someone I regarded as Britain's top fanartist when I first encountered his work seven years ago and someone I still regard as Britain's top fanartist, no-one having come along since to alter that opinion. I was intimidated, and this was not helped by the fact that Harry had furnished me with pencils so complete that I found it difficult to bring myself to touch them at all."

Dan Steffan's pencils for this issue's cover were also pretty complete, but for some reason, be it because I've grown more confident or because Dan puts less into the pencil stage or both, I found this a much easier cover to ink and I'm happier with the result. The main problem with the Bell cover is that I followed Harry's pencils too slavishly and the end result was not too dissimilar to what it would have been had he inked it himself. With the Steffan cover, however, my contribution is more readily apparent and the end-result more obviously a true collaboration.

Enjoyable as inking Harry and Dan's pencils was I found the prospect of them inking my pencils far more fascinating and the final product more pleasing. In both cases I supplied fairly loose pencils that were little more than breakdowns because I always work by solving the main structural and compositional problems (the aspect of drawing I find most difficult) and leaving all the detail work until the inking stage. Interestingly, Harry and Dan both laid down heavy areas of black and used 'splatter' to

good effect, producing pieces that hark back to the covers I drew for issues 7 & 8 yet which establish a greater sense of mood by eschewing the starkness achieved by the almost clinically precise separation of the black and white in those earlier covers. I prefer those covers inked by Harry and Dan to those pencilled by them and inked by me for a number of reasons. Firstly, they both have a greater range of techniques at their command than I do and so both were able to put more into their inking of my work than I was into my inking of theirs - and it shows! There is, however, a more important reason.

It was Greg Pickersgill who first pointed out to me that the covers I draw for EPSILON always imply a story. This is not particularly unusual but because I've drawn the majority of the covers to date the nature of the stories thus implied is an element of the 'character' of EPSILON in a way that those suggested in the work of other fanartists can't be. I'm not talking about something that can be easily quantified here, or even fully articulated, yet Greg was right. In subtle but nonetheless important ways the covers pencilled by Harry and Dan are 'out of tune' with EPSILON's character. I can't explain precisely why this is so since it involves personal feelings and perceptions but this is why those inked by Harry and Dan are more successful as EPSILON covers than those pencilled by them.

If you're wondering why I embarked on this series of collaborations in the first place, I did so both to have fun and in the hope of learning something thereby. Cover art may not be vital in establishing an identity for a fanzine but it can be used quite effectively in that capacity so if you're going to do it at all do it as well as you can. Experiment where possible and learn all you can by doing so because while no-one owes fanartists anything they owe it to themselves not to stand still.

This look at the past few EPSILON covers is more in the nature of a few impressions than a deep and learned treatise on structure and intent since, lacking any formal art training and never having read much on the subject, I lack the necessary language and background knowledge to attempt such an analysis. Not everyone does, however, and Abi Frost (who knows her onions) has talked of doing a piece on the use of fine, decorative, and graphic art in fanzines as exemplified by the work of Margaret Welbank, Richard Bergeron, and myself, respectively. This is something I'd be very interested in reading and I hope she actually gets around to writing it, but in the meantime articles such as Taral's are useful in getting people talking about what is, after all, one of the least discussed areas of fanac.

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"Harry Bell, by cunning use of 3½p stamps (remember them!) and two sheets of paper per person, has managed to demonstrate yet again in not many words what an ace fanwriter he is. Added to his cartoons and devastating smugness, his fanwriting puts him up there with a handful of other buggers who should be putting out more than they are. Nevertheless a four page GRIMLING BOSCH 2 is a reminder that something is alive behind that dimpled mask. Christ knows what."

.....Leroy Kettle, TRUE RAT 6, 1975.

\*\*\*...A TALE OF CHILDHOOD SCHOOL DAYS IN THE FROZEN NORTH.....\*\*\*

WILD ARTHUR & THE VLAXINATORS  
WILD ARTHUR & THE VLAXINATORS.....by HARRY BELL.  
WILD ARTHUR & THE VLAXINATORS

What we have coming up next is an inaccurate tale. What's inaccurate is the historical bit at the beginning. I thought I'd be able to look up the facts I needed but when it came to doing so they weren't where I expected them to be. No doubt one of you clever buggers out there has the facts at his fingertips and if so, I'd appreciate having them in case I ever feel like telling the story again. I know John Barfoot doesn't have them, because when I told it to him in the Poetry Corner of the Innisfree Catholic Working Men's Social Club and Bargello Centre, he believed every word of it. (Mind you, his French knitting came out of the bobbin a funny colour.) So I shall tell it to you just as if I knew what I were talking about. But first an aside...

When I first brought out GRIMWAB, I used as my editorial title "VLaxinations" and confidently - and naively - expected fans to ask me what it meant so that I could tell them the story I'm about to tell. Instead, they asked me what "Grimwab" meant. Since it didn't mean anything at all, I just forgot about the whole thing.....HRB.

\*\*\*\*\*

When I was fifteen I was in a class of unusual people at school. We were thought to be "unusually bright" - I tell you this out of no sense of self-aggrandizement, merely to colour the scene - but it was a wayward brightness which the teachers found difficult to harness. It manifested itself in the spontaneous writing of plays which the English master was reluctant to let us enact; in the sudden enthusiasm for a duplicated magazine produced in opposition to the official publication; in the substitution of MJQ and Al Bowly records for Mozart in music lessons. In the long run, it was a brightness proven to be unharnessable when the 'A' Levels came round. The failure rate was phenomenal.

We had a penchant for words. Odd words. "Grimwab" was one of them, as was "the Grimling Bosch". Stories were written in English Lit. in which all the characters were called Grimwab. The music teacher was driven daft by our insistence that the answer to every question about musical notation should be "Non Troppo, Sir?" and the Religious Knowledge teacher could barely get through a passage about Barabbas, Joshua, Isiah, or any of the Apostles without being asked if this took place "Anywhere near Galveo, Sir?"

Mr Wilson, the English Master, made valiant attempts to channel this aberrant interest into something useful. He once read out to us the full text of "The Ruum", but although we, the closet SF fans, enjoyed the story, the word itself didn't seem all that funny.

His great triumph was telling us one Monday morning about the origin of the word "quiz". It seems that in the 18th century a wag was bet a considerable

sum that in the space of a week he could not introduce a new word into the English language. He accepted the wager, invented the word "quiz" and set about having it posted up here and there and having his cronies say it to each other and to just about everyone they met as if it meant something. By the end of the week, for obvious reasons, the word had entered common parlance as meaning "a puzzle".

This was real knowledge. This was what education was all about!

We invented a word: VLAX.

On Tuesday morning "VLAX" appeared on the blackboard between every lesson. It was chalked on the desks. Our blazers developed chalked armbands with "VLAX" on them. Anyone not showing the mystery word somewhere was "VLAXinated" - "VLAX" was chalked on his arm for him. By lunch-time "VLAX" was appearing on every wall, every desk, every boy in the school. It was a runaway success. Boys who knew nothing whatsoever of its origins were chalking it with neophyte vigour.

Our totem was Wild Arthur. Arthur Wild by birth he had, by the natural laws of school registers, become Wild, Arthur. He was a good-humoured, untidy lad with buck teeth, unruly hair, and not a lot of brain. (A sort of spotty Alun Harries.) Wild Arthur had VLAXinations all up his arms. All down his back. On each pocket, up the lapels and over the front of his blazer. None of them his own work, no-one carried the Word more prominently or more stoically than Wild Arthur.

Dr Caffrey, the Headmaster who had turned us into a rugger-and-cricket-playing Grammar School saw anarchy in his playground. He was in a fury and we well knew his furies were not to be taken lightly. This defacing of school property must stop and the ring-leaders summoned to his study. A task-force of masters stormed the playground but as is no doubt common in most schools, the whispered voice of warning went before them. It was difficult for them to find a boy whose jacket did not have chalk smudges on it, but even more difficult to find the VLAXinators.

Only one boy, living as he did in a perpetual dream, failed to grasp the danger he was in. To the masters Wild Arthur, still bearing the multitudinous signs of our campaign, was the obvious ring-leader and he was whisked away.

I wish I could tell you that VLAX had acquired a genuine meaning, but it hasn't. I do find it fascinating that in the small world of a Boy's Grammar School a meaningless word was on everyone's lips, not to say their blazers, for the best part of 24 hours.

I'd also like to tell you that poor old Arthur was let off, but in fact he got six of the best and when he came out of the Head's study we laughed at him.

God, aren't kids awful?

.....HARRY BELL.

(reprinted from FRANK'S APA 5, March 1984...)



PROLOGUE

PROLOGUE.....some background notes on a TAFF candidacy.

PROLOGUE

In early- August 1981, Harry Bell phoned.

"Have you thought about standing for TAFF?" he asked, and went on about how he'd nominate me and how easy it would be getting others to do the same. I couldn't, in all honesty, claim that the idea had never occurred to me but, as I wrote in EPSILON 8:

I duly considered the proposition, phoned Harry back, and declined. The thing is, you see, I have a great deal of respect for fannish traditions and TAFF is one of the oldest and most respected. Thinking about all those fans who had made the coveted trip in the past I felt I just didn't have the necessary credentials. Sure, I may have put my time in, having got involved in fandom at the same time as Jim Barker and been involved as long as Langford was when he won, but I'm not well enough known across the big water to be deserving of the honour. For that matter I don't think anyone over here is now that Greg has dropped out...

That's my first real connection with TAFF and though it might seem I was none too enthusiastic about the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund my objections were based solely on conditions as they then existed. Times change however, and over the course of the next year or so the links between fandom in the UK and US were re-established and strengthened to the point where the situation was transformed. Which is why I responded less negatively to the next approach, though it took a rather unusual form...

In August 1982, on the outside of an aergramme LoC about EPSILON 12, Ted White wrote: "ROB HANSEN FOR TAFF"?, and around the 'See the USA - vacationland of the world!' printed on the back he added "THE TAFF WINNER WILL..." and "WILL IT BE YOU, MR 'ROB HANSEN'?". I wrote in reply:

"It's still all very provisional at the moment, but Harry and I are contemplating standing next time and running a 'friendly rivalry' along the lines of the Langford/Barker contest of a few years ago."

Ted explained himself in his letter of October 14th:

"When I wrote that "ROB HANSEN FOR TAFF"? on the back of my last letter it was something of a sudden flowering of a notion which had been building in my mind.....your energy and burgeoning abilities suddenly made me realise that a) you would be an ideal TAFF candidate, and b) of all the Britfen I could think of there was none I'd prefer to meet right now. When Kev Smith was here I brought the subject up with him and he said he thought you were rather down on TAFF (he alluded to Pickersgill's influence) or had been recently, but agreed that you ought to stand. So I'm quite pleased that in fact you are considering it yourself."

At this point 'considering it' was still as close as I'd come to standing, and I wrote back giving....

"my thanks for agreeing to be one of my nominators if I decide to stand for TAFF (plenty of time yet before a decision needs to be made."

Indeed there was, but by the following March that time had run out. Harry Bell had chosen not to run after all but, as I explained to Ted, I had...

"...definitely decided to stand myself. I had intended not making a final decision before Easter but curious items in a couple of recent fanzines suggesting that D. West intends standing have tipped my hand. I don't know whether this is serious or not but it necessitates me 'coming out of the closet' now to forestall anyone pledging their support to D who would otherwise back me. Ah the machinations, the machinations! I've only actually told Langford to date (tho' that's virtually the same as telling everyone) and he offered to nominate me so that's one important area tied up, at least."

During this period I'd also been maintaining a sporadic correspondence with Larry Carmody who, with Stu Shiffman, co-edits RAFFLES, the American fanzine I write a regular column for. Larry had been one of the TAFF candidates to lose out to Avedon Carol in the 1983 race and in February I wrote offering "my condolences on not winning TAFF this time out" and adding that...

"...there's a chance you may see me in L.A. in '84 since I'll be standing for TAFF myself this time around".

In a later letter, which I've misplaced, the RAFFLES boys both offered to nominate me. I accepted their offer:

"Yes, I'd be delighted if you or Stu were to nominate me for TAFF. I have, as I may have mentioned, already secured Ted White as a nominator (hardly difficult since he was one of those who suggested I should stand) so one of you as nominator (or both - I've forgotten how many I need at the moment) would be most welcome."

Actually the number needed is two from the host country and three from the candidate's own so with Stu, Larry, and Ted in the US, and Dave Langford and Harry Bell over here, I was only short one UK nominator and he was soon forthcoming in the shape of Arthur 'ATom' Thomson. Now that I was finally committed I thought I'd better discuss the problems I might encounter in the US with local American person, Linda Pickersgill.

"The thing to remember", she said, "is how easy it is to trip over the differences in the language. For instance, over here we use 'pissed' to mean 'drunk' while over there it means 'annoyed'."

"Yeah, I suppose it is possible to make a terrible gaffe that way. Maybe I ought to practice saying 'sidewalk' instead of 'pavement', 'fall' instead of 'autumn', 'elevator' instead of 'lift', 'gas' instead of 'petrol', 'kwy-nine'(quinine) instead of 'kwin-een'(quinine), 'persons' instead of 'people', and 'burglarised' instead of 'burgled'."

"Do you think you're gonna need to use 'burglarised'?"

"I certainly hope not. Still, there are other things that could trip me up too. I mean, don't you people drive on the wrong side of the road over there?"

"No, we drive on the correct side."

Chris Atkinson also gave me some advice.

"Americans," she said, pausing for effect, "are not like us."

"Australians" she added suddenly, "they're like us; but Americans are different."

Which was what made the idea of a visit to the US so fascinating. An English-speaking country whose culture is not based solely on our own but is instead a pot-pourri incorporating elements as disparate and diverse as those waves of settlers from whose Old World cultures it was drawn. Though I'd be going to the US to meet other fans that mix of the totally familiar and totally unfamiliar, an intriguing sub-text to the trip. First though, I had to win TAFF... was

At the 1983 SILICON - held over August Bank Holiday weekend in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, as always - D West at last bowed to the inevitable (not to mention the formidable Joyce Scrivner) and agreed, finally, to stand for TAFF. Under the mistaken impression that they had to be in by the end of September I hustled written nominations from those backing me and rushed them off to Kev Smith. Having, after five months, totally forgotten about Stu and Larry's offer one of those I hustled was Mike Glicksohn. Oops.

Mike and Ted made do with a single line apiece for their nominations while ATOM provided a choice of seven single lines. Harry and Dave showed no such restraint, however...

"I, HARRY BELL, fan of this parish, do hereby nominate and endorse as candidate for the forthcoming TAFF race to the USA the ever-lovely ROB HANSEN. I disagree that being Welsh should be an impediment. Well, hardly at all."

and...

"I, Dave Langford, being of soundish mind and in receipt of the usual vague bribes and threats, hereby nominate Rob Hansen as a deserving (ie. Welsh) TAFF candidate for the 1983-4 race, in the full and frank understanding that in the event of his victory I am free to ask to publish a bit of his TAFF report and Rob is free to say 'Piss off.'

Given under my hand (whatever that may mean) this twentieth day of September 1983..."

And just like that I was a contender. You all know how the contest that followed caused heated argument, the rise and fall of major fanzines, feuds, the biggest sex-scandal fandom has ever seen, the birth of a two-headed goat, and a fan in Puerto Rico to lose his marbles, so I won't bore you by going through it all again here. Suffice it to say that I won and will be representing British fandom at the 1984 Worldcon in Los Angeles. All that's required of me in turn is that I administer the UK end of TAFF for the next two years and write a trip report that's long, humorous, insightful, well-written, wry, perceptive, epic in scope, witty, ironic, and which sets a new standard for all fanwriters to aspire to.

Uhh, is it too late to change my mind?

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\*\*\*.....IN THE NAME OF PUBLIC ACCESS TO FANZINES WE PRESENT THE.....\*\*\*

LETTERS

LETTERS.....the first coming from Woody Allen-lookalike....

LETTERS

ALUN HARRIES

42 Stelvio Park Drive, Newport, Gwent NPT 3EJ.

I am a bit surprised you made such an issue of my recent violent/medical/police procedural incident. The fact of the matter is that we live in what is a violent age still, mind you, considerably less so than, say, 100 years ago when people were afraid to go out alone after dark in large areas of the towns and cities of Britain. What has changed are the chances of bringing the perpetrators of these acts to some form of justice.

To fill in the details for your readership, I am OK now except for a few crowns where I had teeth before (and am as handsome as ever) ((for which you have my deepest sympathies)) and the guy who did it is in jail for the next two years (and I hope he has a thoroughly unpleasant time). I suppose I will never wander about with quite the same confidence in my unassailability again, but one lives and learns. As far as I'm concerned the affair is closed, although I am still due some compensation money. How I agree with your comments on the accessibility of weaponry in this country.

((Much has happened during the vast periods of geological time that have elapsed since the last issue of this fanzine, including the publication by Harries of a largely illegible zine for the July '84 mailing of FRANK'S APA, done on a Sinclair dot-matrix printer of all things, wherein he reports : "I have just got my cheque from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board. It is for £945, which is far in excess of what I expected". Nice one, Alun.))

I am not too sure about the wisdom of your revelation of the existence of the 'Taffia' - better see what the Grand Master says. Doubt if anyone will take it seriously though, thank goodness. Incidentally, for the benefit of your non-Welsh speaking readers I may as well reveal what 'gwerin' means. According to my copy of the Collins-Spunell Welsh-English Dictionary it translates as "men, people; democracy or crew", but we know it has subtler shades than that. ((Indeed.))

JOY HIBBERT

11 Rutland St., Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST1 5JG.

It would help if you interpreted 'Gwerin' for those of us who don't speak the language. You sure you've got this Gwerin business right? I always thought that Linda was the power behind the throne. But on the other hand, if that was so, she wouldn't have got TWP going - it makes her power less behind the throne. It's good of Gwerin to run MEXICON, to get all those pillocks who object to other fans having fun away from the real Eastercon and off on their own where we don't have to listen to them moaning. Such as Leroy, for example. Fandom is more like school every year. When I was about 13 most of the people in my year went through a phase of sneering at people who openly enjoyed things - sneering at everything was 'in'. This is strongly reminiscent of your circle of fandom. Since baldness doesn't generally

strike men until they're well over 20, I doubt Judith's theory. Urrghh, glad I missed the pizza this Novacon, usually it's the only quickie meal I can eat, this year it sounds even worse. It's quite obvious that Leroy has forgotten the UNICON committee meetings he's been to. Chris doesn't whistle with shock. He verbally abuses the whole committee, then resigns, while Jan attempts to calm him down. Strange that this is the first Novacon report I've read this year that didn't think the Barn Dance was a great idea. Back to the 'sneering is in', I suppose. The real question is whether Steve Green, chairman of the next Novacon, God help us, will listen to sensible con reports, or be taken in by Leroy's pathetic moans. Probably the latter, knowing Steve.

'Adolescents of all ages' is a nice phrase, subtly insulting.

Michael Ashley's found you, eh? Aren't you the lucky one! EPSILON is less like TAPPEN and NABU and more like ABDUMP and EMPTIES, which also have the great good fortune to get letters from Michael Ashley.

MICHAEL ASHLEY

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

Your savage criticism of myself for being 'adolescent' might carry more weight if the other letter writers - 'mature adults' doubtless - weren't such a boring lot. Or is that an immature observation? (Life's hard when you're just a crazy mixed-up kid.)

Good stuff from Kettle, though I wonder if he's merely going through the motions (as it were) at times. Dunno really, guess I'll just have to wait for the witty response of the massed EPSILON letterhacks ("Kettle runs out of steam", "Kettle off the boil" - the old jokes are the best). All the same, even average Kettle is still very, very funny. A line such as "the pizza was like the top of a tub of margarine liberally spread with the vomit of an extremely ill beagle" makes me wonder (again) why people aren't queueing up outside Kettle's front door, waving cheque-books, and demanding anything containing Kettle-esque witticisms. I know he failed in his attempt at being a Big Time Science Fiction Writer, but what was he doing trying that nonsense anyway? I get the impression that a rather large percentage of the people operating in science fiction publishing are humourless dullards. Certainly I find it rather disgusting that he should be wasting his time with pseudonymous hackwork like SLIMY, or whatever it is.

PAUL SKELTON

25 Bowland Close, Offerton, Stockport, Cheshire SK2 5NW.

'The Nerds of November' makes me feel good. At last I've found a flaw in Leroy Kettle. I've always thought him to be the finest fanwriter who ever drew breath, but then I was always younger than... In the past, if he wrote it, I'd roll up in a ball laughing at it. This time he's trying too hard for laughs. He makes the joke, and then, in the same sentence, he puts in another in case the first didn't get the laughs. He's trying too hard. Either he's out of touch or I'm getting more discerning. I'd like to think it's the latter but I suspect it's the former. Look, you don't put jokes in a fan article like you were stringing barbed wire across a frontier (... "OK, get past this you fucker!").

Cas says to ask Simone what it means when you prefer Boy George to either

John Travolta or Nick Heywood? I think it means I should shoot myself, on account of I'm obviously not what women want. Hoping you are the same....

ARTHUR THOMSON

17 Brockham Hse., Brockham Drive, London SW2 3RU.

Leroy Kettle reads like the usual Leroy Kettle or like the usual D West, you could have put his name up there and I doubt any of your readers would have known the difference. That style of 'clever' writing can only be read for so long then it becomes nauseous. It's all the same boring prose they come outwith... "farting on this, farting on that...vomiting on this, vomiting on that...telling this neo to fuck off, telling that neo to fuck off...saying how clever and perceptive they the writers are even though they've just drunk fourteen bottles of vodka or at least three of orangeade..." It's a pity that seeming to be people who can put words together they continue to endlessly put the wrong words together. It was a lot of wordage just to make the point of the 'cylindrical' corner joke.

((Whoa, hold on a minute Arthur. I know you're exaggerating for effect but where have you seen anyone "...telling this neo to fuck off, telling that neo to fuck off..."? An individual who is annoying people may be told to take a walk if he gets sufficiently aggravating but I personally have never seen this happen to anyone purely because they were neos. After all, these are the people who'll be producing the fanzines of tomorrow that you and I will doubtless want to receive so why should we deliberately alienate them? Which is not to say that you don't sometimes inadvertantly alienate them, of course. From conversations we've had I know you think that fans had more fun back in the 50s, and you know that I disagree. The world has changed a lot since then and is, perhaps, a less innocent place. As always fandom has mirrored these changes, and styles of humour have altered accordingly, but the humour of today is no less funny or valid than that of thirty years ago. In fact it seems funnier to me but I accept that my inability to appreciate some of what was considered shit-hot stuff in 50s fanzines is due purely to being born in a different age to those who wrote it and having been exposed to a different set of influences. It's a pity you don't like this style of fan humour however, Arthur, since the Rats seem to be the true successors to you guys, or so I've always thought, far more so than any group in the 1960s ever was.))

CHUCK HARRIS

32 Lake Crescent, Daventry, Northants NN11 5EB.

I do wish I knew more about all these people. I thought Leroy Kettle was superb; I'd hardly heard of him before, and he turns out to be a fantastic writer who kept me laughing all the way through. I particularly liked the Brussel sprout bit, and Rob Holdstock and his mighty emission...and...hell, all of it. It doesn't really matter who he's writing about, you just sit back and enjoy the words.

I do wish you'd have second thoughts about a Kettle anthology. It's almost impossible to get hold of anything about Ratfandom nowadays. I feel that it's time for Kettle to be Preserved. A sort of fly in amber to be fondled

and marvelled at by BAFFandom and all Those Who Came After.

How come the Newcastle Lot ((on the back-page ad for MEXICON)) offer... "THIS IS THE CONVENTION....where attending membership is only £5..."? To me, this seems a bit steep. In my time there was free admission for them. (To the convention, that is.) And what happens to all this money?? Will all of us poncing around in fandom get a sort of PUBLIC PUBIC LENDING RATE percentage from all the activity, or is it just freebies for the Con Committee again??

It's a pity our time streams didn't coincide 30 years ago. Fred Brown, who had the biggest SF collection in England, used to live in Burges Road.... within spitting distance of you. Every Saturday I used to catch the 23 bus from Dagenham with a small suitcase full of magazines and books to exchange for a fresh load. If only, if only.....

((From a later letter, after I'd sent Chuck a photocopy of the first issue of Kettle's classic 70s fanzine, TRUE RAT....))

TRUE RAT was fantastic, marvellous, truly terrific! I could lift enough one-line quotes from there to fill a HYPHEN bacover twice over. I was really pleased and grateful for it, and will pass it round to Vinç, Walt, Arfer, and Terryll.

Funny you should mention that about ".....the Rats seem to be the true successors to you guys....". Only last week I wrote to Vinç and said.. "I think Ratfandom is basically the same as us. We tend to forget that we were irreverant too in our time. The enemy, to me, has always been the Gert Carr outlook....attempting to clean me up....and the fall-in-ther-and-dress-by-the-right outlook of the organisers...BSFA and N3F and their ilk. I'm beginning to see Ratfandom as our natural successors...or another valid tentacle on the body of fandom. They are unlikely to kiss the hem of my garment...but why should they? They read a bloody sight more and write a bloody sight better than I have ever managed. Perhaps I should be inspecting their hems for a clean spot...."

Isn't it marvellous when you get these coincident meetings of Fine Minds? How very perceptive of you Rob, sir; you are veritabily the Wisdom of the Ages, Chuch mate. Yes, verily.

MIKE GLICKSOHN

508 Windermere Ave., Toronto, Ontario, M6S 3L6.

Roy's conreport was vintage Kettle which would have made it just about the highlight of any fanzine it appeared in. As is well known I'm second only to John Brosnan in my admiration for Roy's devastatingly vicious sarcastic humour so it was with great joy that I watched him laying into all and sundry with his rapier-like bludgeon. (Do you think I could get a book published by John's publishers?) If there's one thing fandom needs and would be improved by it's more writing by Leroy Kettle and I count on you, Rob, to ensure that we get it.

I'm sure Darroll knows that his attitude, Terry Carr's attitude, and my attitude aren't mutually exclusive. Saving and enjoying old fanzines doesn't prevent us from attending and enjoying cons and interacting with other fans. As I see it, Terry and I are better off than Darroll because we enjoy "the on-going participation in fandom" that interests him as well as a fascina-

tion with fandom's history and sociology. I'm also a bit baffled by Darroll's apparent insensitivity towards his fellow fans as exemplified by his "why should I feel an obligation to help them in their task?" I know for a fact that Darroll has received assistance from other fans because he and Ro once visited me in Toronto and I was delighted to see them because we were all fans. The way I see it fandom is a kind of extended family and I like to repay the kindnesses I've received by extending similar kindness to other fans. If that included giving some interested new fan some fanzines I didn't want rather than tossing them out it wouldn't strike me as an excessively demanding or difficult way of returning a little of the pleasure fandom has sent my way. This whole attitude of Darroll's seems completely at odds with the thoughtful and considerate persona he presents through PIG. Nice touch, the way you tied the lettercolumn together.

BRIAN EARL BROWN

Who-Didn't-Put-An-Address-On-His-Letter, USA.

I'd like to thank Mike for the fine lead-in to my LoC and hope that Ted will like the way I segue into his letter (well, perhaps not since I will have to disagree with some of his comments in this issue). I think it's a neat idea commissioning the lettercolumn rather than just waiting for people to write in and trying to edit the resulting indifferent mess into the concise and cohesive column that people have come to expect from EPSILON.

TED WHITE

10i4 N.Tuckahoe St., Falls Church, VA 22046, USA.

EPSILON came as a welcome distraction from my mammoth undertaking of the moment, the remodelling of my office. Gee, what a nice issue. The sequencing of letters is almost sublime - very impressive!

Mike Glicksohn's letter prompted me to think about my conflicting and contrary opinions about fans. On the one hand, there is the obvious fact that we are all Star-Begotten, have Cosmic Minds and Broad Mental Horizons, and are Proud and Lonely. The fandom I have admired and enjoyed most of my life is populated by Neat People and Brilliant Essayists, a few of whom are still alive and publishing anthologies of their own works. But then there's "the stupidity of fans in general", upon which Mike remarks, and with which I have also been known to agree. Dorks. Nerds. Pear-shaped people. Con fans. Club fans. And, pace Brian Earl Brown, even (\*sob\*) fanzine fans. People who scan but don't read. People who think Taral on PONG in STICKY QUARTERS was "even-handed", "balanced", "fair", and "accurate". Some sort of essential fannish conundrum, and one which has intrigued major fanwriters since Burbee and Laney, right up to D West. Love/Hate. Yin/Yang.

And to prove the point, Darroll Pardoe, whose method of saving what he likes from fanzines must surely be as alien to D West as it is to me, since he removes everything from its context, turning fan-stuff into clippings. I always thought Pardoe, on the strength of his fanzines, a dull fellow. Now I think him rather more weird than dull. But to each his own, I suppose.

As to Earnest Joseph, I suppose his complaint about my "fanhistory" ("too much raw data and not nearly enough analysis") is of a piece with his



notion that PONG was dominated by "fanhistory". Hey, I'll leave the learned analyses, along with the nitpicking, to the academics of the next generation. This stuff isn't ancient history yet, and as a rule what I write about is stuff I experienced, tendered in the form of anecdotes, stories, reminiscences, etc. The idea is to share an experience, and sometimes to make a point. Sure it's "raw data"; unlike Joseph I usually feel my reader can draw his own conclusions if I give him all the data I have. (And when I have provided analysis, as in 'The Politics of Fandom' in WARHOON 29, I've gotten a lot of grief from people who preferred their own analysis to mine.)

But, hell; I see the "fanhistory" most of us indulge in as camp-fire storytelling, not as learned theses couched in the 'In-Terms' of some popular contemporary philosophy, whether it's Freudian, Marxian, or Macluan. So Joseph is looking for something that's not there, which is his problem and not mine.

PATRICK NIELSEN HAYDEN

75 Fairview Apt.2B, New York, NY10040, USA.

As usual, Joseph Nicholas makes me wonder if we really do live in alternate universes. On the face of it, his explanation that what he really dislikes about so much "fanhistory" is that it isn't real history, but rather unanalytical nostalgizing, seems sound; unfortunately, just as I was sitting down to agree with him it occurred to me that most of what gets published as nostalgizing doesn't claim to be serious History. ALL OUR YESTERDAYS, on the other hand, has a lot of the analysis and real-world context Joseph seems to want, as does Knight's THE FUTURIANS and, for that matter, a lot of the stuff Dan Steffan published in the 'Incomplete Towner Hall' series (particularly Greg Benford's introspective piece on the real-world psychological circumstances which led to his own adoption of the cutting fannish voice he wrote in for so many years). In fact, the more I thought about it, the more I realised that Joe's assertion is a red herring; fan-history may not yet have had its Toynbee or Spengler, but it's done pretty well considering. Whether we should attempt to be Toynbees and Spenglers with it yet, forming grand syntheses, trying to "delineate the great movements of a particular time and the influences that those movements have had on the shape of the present" - whether the time is ripe for this sort of thing is another question. Joe goes to a lot of trouble in this letter to make sure we all know he has Big Bookshelves and reads Big Books on this history stuff, so it may surprise him to know that someone else knows historiography from a hole in the ground, but in fact these questions are something I've thought and talked about a great deal. At the moment I'm too conscious of my own and everyone else's sheer ignorance of real fan-history (the experience of fandom being as subjective as it is) to want to earnestly essay forth into the kind of vast generalisations Joseph obviously craves, but when I have written critically about fandom and its history (viz. the article on D West in WARHOON) I've tried to do so with just the attitude he seems unable to find anywhere in fandom. On the other hand, it's just possible Joseph wouldn't notice that since in so many other ways we obviously disagree. If nothing else I happen to enjoy all those boring "names, places, dates, events" which bore Joe so; they, along with old fanzines and reprints, are what constitute the primary source material for any more ambitious study. Not thrillingly abstract, to be sure; not

daring, exciting syntheses of What It All Means - but very human, interesting information all the same. Small things first. Patience, Joe.

The other throwaway comment of Joseph's which brought me up short was his reference to those "great thick American genzines", which only goes to show the dangers of Joe's peculiar penchant for sweeping generalisations. Correct me if I'm wrong but the only "great thick American genzines" I recall getting in the last year were single issues of BOONFARK and AURORA, and the latter is only a fanzine in a borderline sense by now. The same period of time saw three dinosaurs of the duper from the UK; TAPPEN 5, STILL IT MOVES 3, and MICROWAVE 5. Most of the fanzines I've been getting from North America lately have been smaller. But what do the facts matter compared to a good line, eh?

MAL ASHWORTH

16 Rockville Drive, Embsay, Skipton, N.Yorks.

Joseph Nicholas is interesting and infinitely condescending as he lays down The Law as to what constitutes history ("an interpretation of past events that attempts to delineate the great movements of a particular time"). From snippets I snap up here and there I gather that Joseph is something of a Marxist, which would help to explain how he is able to be so sweeping, so didactic, and so very certain. And so wrong - in my (moderately humble) opinion. Certainly he would be unable to accept what to me is a simple truism, that every interpretation is a falsification. Let me continue to extend my telescopic neck. History is, quite simply, the most accurate record we can compile of the past. At that level it should be as free from interpretation, conceptualisation, ideologising (!), etc., as possible, granting that this is, of course, never anything like 100% attainable. After that the Professional Historians, Interpreters, Ideologists, Zealots, and whatall can each do what they like with the data, as the Critics do with Literature. But by any commonsense (and every other kind of sense) the bare bones come first - and that is your basic history. Anathema, that, to the Marxists. For them, the ideology always comes first (as for Jesuits, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc.) and then the facts can be found to fit it. Permit me to quote Big Karl himself in a letter to Engels about some of his (Marx's) writing on the Indian Mutiny. If his predictions did not work out, he said, nevertheless "with a little dialectic one will still get away with it. I have actually given to my considerations such a form that in being wrong I shall still be right". Now while I'm no great champeen of the Objective Reality myself (I've seen too much of it to know it isn't there, as they probably say in Dublin) nevertheless Karly-boy and I do not see eyeball-to-eyeball on facts and the like. I suppose I dislike intellectual dishonesty. I wonder, then, if we have any slight chance of getting Joseph to concede that an alternative view of history from that which he considers absolute, may just be possible?

Dare I, I ask myself, let rip with a few 'Huzzahs' and 'Tally-Hos' and 'Whatnots' and admit that when Simone Walsh writes, anent D West's writing - "It is still possible to be articulate, eloquent, and bloody boring" - she expresses something close to what I have been wanting to say for some time. I haven't made a study of D's writing (Vinç Clarke is the BAFF agent on that case), and I confess, to my shame, that I have not yet managed to finish the much-lauded 'Performance', so I am quite prepared to be told that I am not entitled to an opinion. In which case I will turn it in to the

Authorities right after I have told you what it is. What I find boring is the substance of his writing, which seems to me to be of two main kinds. One of these is analysis (often suspect) and exhortation on the subject of fandom, fanzines, fanwriting - in other words, writing about fanwriting rather than doing it. And the other, the more personal strain, which should be fine and dandy, seems to be marred by an element of something like a literary equivalent of Fifties fan Ken Potter's shtick of yelling out obscenities in public places so that people will look at him, take notice of him. There seems to be too much of an effort going into creating a certain effect so that the credibility and the overall rhetoric (Omigod) suffers. All of which sounds, perhaps, harsher than I mean it, and may be unfair being based on too small a sample. For my real point is this - if there is any truth in this view, it is a pity. Because there is no doubt that D has great writing ability and an impressive command of writing technique for all of which I have great admiration. But he seems to me never to have found his fannish metier, if you like - something which would result in some fine, original, first-order fanwriting (by way of example, even) rather than second-order comment on fanwriting (by way of exhortation). Thus I am able to offer you the view (which must surely seem a star contender for Prime Fuggheadism of the Year, considering the length of time D has been around in fandom and all he has done) that D West is a writer of great potential. There, I saidit.

#### D WEST

48 Norman St., Bingley, W.Yorks., BD16 4JT.

The stern words of Michael Ashley suggest that (after 15 issues) it's just about time I wrote you a LoC on EPSILON. Actually, I keep setting out to do this, but such is the pace of modern fandom (and my typing) that another issue always arrives when I'm only half-way through. But this time for sure, since I have a few things to say which can't wait indefinitely. Besides, this strikes me as a never-to-be-repeated opportunity to put you on the spot: as my rival for TAFF you can't be too keen on giving the West name extra exposure, but on the other hand can you face the prospect of twenty years of Ashley jeers if you fail to publish this oh-so-rare communication before the election is over?

((Looks like I'm gonna have to since, for reasons given in the INTRO, this fanzine has been a lo-o-o-o-o-oong time a'coming.))

Well politics certainly is a fun game. (Though I don't know what you're doing supporting the forces of counter-revolution. That girl on your cover is certainly no leftist, since an examination of her legs reveals that she has two right feet. Double-gaited, you might say. Viva Maricon!) At this moment I'm looking forward to the Chesterfield by-election tomorrow and the TV appearances of representatives of all the parties, each one of them simultaneously trying to claim the result as a famous victory and trample their opponents into the mud. And a couple of weeks ago I watched Robert Redford in The Candidate, a nice portrayal of the democratic fix at work. I particularly liked the ending, when Redford (having unexpectedly won TAFF) glares round in a panic-stricken terror and mutters "What do we do now?" Fear and loathing in a single blinding flash.

Arthur Hlavaty may well be right about the LBJ pig-fucking gambit being

apocryphal rather than historically true, but it doesn't really matter. Either way it's a perfect illustration of dirty politics at work: smear or tie up your opponent with the have-you-stopped-beating-your-wife routine. To say Yes is a disaster, to say No is a disaster, so the only thing left is some attempt at self-justification which is bound to lack the crude black-or-white force of the original allegation and will also put the victim completely on the defensive. And some of the mud will always stick, if only as a vague general impression. Yes, I heard there was something a bit funny about that guy....

It happens all the time in politics. It even happens now and then in fan politics. To be specific, it happens in the editorial pages of Terry Hill's MICROWAVE. Cute supporters you've got, Rob. You haven't by any chance let fall a casual enquiry as to who will rid you of this turbulent West, have you? (Well, maybe not. I get the impression that Hill is not so much loyally pro-Hansen as virulently anti-West.)

The interesting thing about Hill's attack is that it's a new and improved version of the pig-fucking line: instead of alleging that the candidate does (or did) fuck pigs, he declares that if elected the candidate might fuck pigs. Like: I haven't ever run off with (or otherwise misspent) the TAFF (or any other) funds, but according to Hill if I were elected I might do just that. (on the other hand, "out of sheer perversity" I might not. As fine a piece of hypocritical back-covering as has been seen since the days of Graham Boak.)

Well, this is certainly a toughie, though I suppose the concept of Thoughtcrime is appropriate enough to 1984. Innocent 'til proved guilty? Hell, no. This is the new high-speed crystal ball justice: the crime hasn't even been committed yet and already Terry Hill is passing the verdict. Under this ageeable system the accused doesn't have to do anything - just be suspected of looking as if he might (perhaps) be (possibly) thinking about (maybe) doing something.

Even allowing for the imaginative and extrapolative tendencies of SF fans this all seems rather presumptuous on Hill's part. He's never met me, never been in contact with me, never sent me a fanzine (Simon Ounsley showed me this one - you can rely on your best friends to tell you some things) and gives the impression that he's never even read anything I've written except for the TAFF platform and the flier advertising Fanzines In Theory And Practice, both of which went out with ANSIBLE. In short: he's got fuck-all idea what he's talking about. The extent to which he's substituting spite for knowledge is evident in his attempts to characterise me as a totally anti-social recluse who would never speak to anyone. Since I go to Leeds Group meetings most weeks, attend three or four conventions and several parties a year, and am more famous for propping up the bar in the open than for hiding in an obscure part of some programme item's audience this might strike those who know me as rather far-fetched. Even those who don't know me - but have actually read my work - might find the suggestion somewhat bizarre. It's all a bit too blatant: there's only one thing Hill knows about me for sure - that he'd like to do me down.

Well, I guess I have to take the philosophical view. "Many enemies - much honour" as Freud used to say. And I guess old Sigmund would have found it easy enough to account for Hill's aberrant outburst. I mean, what else can

you expect from a guy who fucks poodles?

Yes, I can recognise that glint in the eye from fifty yards. (In fact I did recognise it from fifty yards, when I saw the guy at BECCON last summer. But let's not get hung up on mere technical details.) Terry Hill is a Poodle Fucker. Just ask yourself: why does he go through this devotees-of-fifties-fandom routine? So that he can hang around with Vinç Clarke, of course. And why does he want to hang around with Vinç Clarke? Simply because whereas most fans have cats, Vinç Clarke has a poodle (quite apart from Terry Hill himself, I mean).

The rest is painfully obvious, though I guess the innocent Vinç may not have spotted it yet. (The owner is always the last to know.) I just hope the poodle is well-greased. Though come to think of it, the poor beast didn't seem to be around at that last convention... Maybe things have got even worse - maybe it's dead poodles now. (With black fishnet stockings? Richard Bergeron would know.)

All-very sad. Yes, I'm sorry about this, but Kent Poodle Fandom supports you for TAFF. I guess I'll just have to update the old KTF to KTFP - Kill The Poodle Fuckers!

((Finally, we have a letter from that learned gentleman whose Serious Scientific Talks have been the serious and constructive highpoint of the Eastercon since 1974. Here, with what I hope is the final word on the subject, he turns his fine mind to the matter of a now-notorious cover....))

BOB SHAW

66 Knutsford Rd., Grappenhall, Warrington, Cheshire WA4 2PB.

I see people are still going on about the infamous MATRIX cover. Perhaps it is destined to go down in fannish history as the Polley wally doodle.

I'm amazed to read that you thought the emission to be semen. To my engineering mind it is perfectly obvious from the distribution and density of the droplets that they are emerging from a flaccid organ and therefore, barring freakish medical conditions, have to be urine. If you don't believe me, just check with any professional astronomer. The math involved is much the same as for the analysis of the distribution of white dwarf stars in the arms of spiral nebulae.

Perhaps all the above tells us something about Man's place in the Grand Scheme of Things.

WAHF: Sue Thomason: "...about this cover: you know it's sexist. I know it's sexist. From the neck to the waist it looks just like Kenny Everett. I get sick of complaining about it. You probably get sick of hearing people complaining about it. Shall we both just stop, huh?" So large breasts are sexist, eh? Must remember that and make all the women I draw in future pre-pubescent. Helen Starkey, Roger Weddall, Lucy Huntzinger, Alyson Abramowitz, Tom Taylor, Jean Weber, Gloria McMillan, Glen Warminger, Dave Collins, I.M. Barrington, Anthony L. Tomkins, Harry Warner Jr.,

(continued on back page.....)

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\*

Cover by Dan Steffan & Rob Hansen.

\*

WAHF (continued.....): Sharee  
Carton, Dave Bridges: "I'm  
still getting letters from  
people asking for my fanzine and  
saying 'Rob Hansen sent me'. Bet  
now you wish you were working on  
commission. Ha ha. Come to that  
I wish I was working on commission."  
Beneficencia Cliveras, with a LoC,  
on the back of an Oklahoma postcard,  
entirely in Spanish, from the  
Nielsen Haydens' address. I was going  
to get D West to translate this for  
me but forgot to take it to both  
SEACON'84 and MEXICON. So it goes.

\*

Last stencil typed 21st August 1984.

\*

L.A. here I come.....

\*

**FAMOUS FANS  
OF TODAY.. No.1:-**



**CESAR IGNACIO RAMOS**

\*\*\*STOP PRESS\*\*\*STOP PRESS\*\*\*\*\*

The day after duplicating this  
page a reliable source informed  
me that Cesar actually exists &  
has phoned a number of US fans.  
This makes the gag above point-  
less (& the 30 or so copies of  
EPSILON already distributed sans  
this bit collector's items). The  
photo was taken around 20 yrs ago  
& is, of course, Richard Bergeron.

27/8/84....