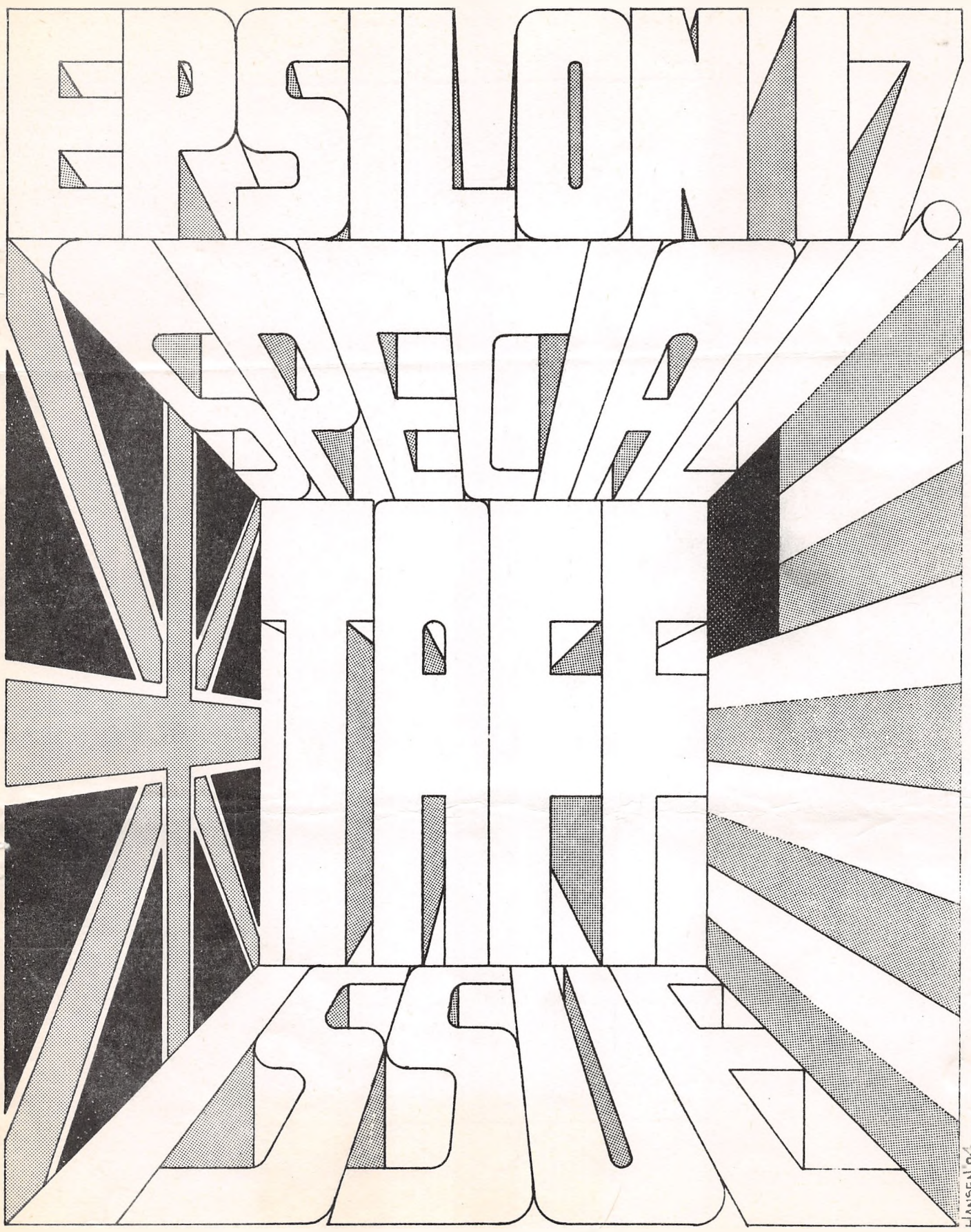


Text 11/23/84 SURFACE
Rev 11/30/84



HANSEN 84

EPSILON

"BACKGAMMON IS A BORING SPORT"

TAFFMAN'S LAMENT "So what was American Fandom like?", you ask, eager for the impressions of the recently returned TAFF delegate. Does Marty Cantor manifest his fascination with putridity in person at all? Does Ted White really tear the limbs from hapless crudzine editors, moaning softly as he sinks his fangs into their tender flesh? Is Rich Coad still as manic as ever and can he really have even less hair than ever? Is Taral Wayne's far-famed lack of chin a fact? Is the dealers' room at a US Worldcon full of people selling toys? And did you enjoy yourself? The answer to all of these questions is, of course: "Yes!"

What can I tellya? At the time of writing (23rd Sept) I've only been back a few days and what with jet-lag and the like I've yet to get my head entirely together, as they say. I'm still feeling kinda spacey and keep having random images from the trip flash through my head: Ted White guffawing at the Worldcon masquerade; Rich Coad and myself leaving Disneyland resplendent in our Donald Duck caps; the view of San Francisco from Twin Peaks and of Manhattan from the observation deck of the Empire State Building; L.Ron Hubbard's ludicrous inflatable 'Terl the Psyclo' in the con hotel car park; oil derricks pumping away on the roadside between Los Angeles and San Francisco; being in Palo Alto and tasting, for the first time, what Americans call pizzas - and being duly impressed; the incredible prices.

That last may come as a surprise to those Britons who attended the Boston Worldcon in 1980 and couldn't believe how low the prices were but back then it was \$2.50 to the £ and now it's \$1.25, half as much. That makes an enormous difference, let me tell you. The strongest impression though, the thing that stood out most, was the friendliness and hospitality of all the fans I met. For making a stranger in a strange land feel as if he'd found a second home I'd like to thank, in no particular order: Ted White, Avedon Carol, Rich Coad, Stacy Scott, Allan Baum, Donya White, Stu Shiffman, Spike, Patrick & Teresa Nielsen Hayden, Dan & Lynn Steffan, Allyn Cadogan, Lucy Huntzinger, Sharee Carton, Marty & Robbie Cantor, Larry Carmody, Alina Chu, Dolly & Alexis Gilliland, Dave Ettlin, Ken Josenhans, Tom Weber Jr., Andy Porter, Bill Wagner, Gary & Queenie Avedikian, and anyone else I've inadvertantly left off this list. Thank you one and all. Now all that remains is for me to go through my notebook, with its 88 pages of notes, inject the contents with liberal doses of wit, and convert it into a multi-part epic. Gulp. (23/9/84).

"well, have you recovered from the trip yet?" asked Avedon in a recent letter, "Stiles, Shiffman, Hughes, and I all agree there's always a depression afterwards. TAFFluenza." Yep, there sure is - post convention

blues with a vengeance! I'm over it now so all that remains are the memories...and the determination to get over there again one of these days. Sooner rather than later, I hope. (30/10/84).

MONTHLY FANZINE STILLBORN! This is not the fanzine you should be holding in your hands now. Instead you should be casting your lambent, and doubtless limpid, eyes over the first issue of a brand new monthly fanzine full of vim and vigour whose very frequency might well have made it the kick-in-the-pants currently much-needed by fanzine fandom in this country. Alas, it was not to be. The zine would have been co-edited and co-produced by Harry Bell and me but Harry decided that he wouldn't be able to keep up the necessary momentum and so decided to pull out before the project got started rather than leave me in the lurch later. A shame, but such is life. Since I felt I couldn't sustain the fanzine alone, that I needed someone else to play off if I was to build up a momentum of my own, that, effectively, was that. However, I had all these little bits and pieces that I'd written, a rough draft of the first chapter of my TAFF report, and a line on other material. Although it was less than two weeks to NOVACON I suddenly realised that I had the makings of an EPSILON to hand and decided to go for it. Hence this issue and this somewhat atypical opening section.

My reasons for wanting to do a monthly fanzine in the first place sprang from my perception of the current state of fanzine fandom in the UK - 1984 has not exactly been the most bountiful year on record for fanzines - and my desire to do something about it. I had hoped that last year's Big Thing - the Apas - might prove a breeding ground for new fans who would then go on to add to the richness of general fandom, but if anything the reverse has happened. Having railed against the way apas appeared to be responsible for the decline of American Fandom in the late-70s I feared they might have a similarly adverse effect on British fandom - and they have. Unfortunately the apas are acting as fannish black holes that suck in much of the available talent, allowing little or no light to escape the event horizon of their closed memberships. The apas came at a time when they were needed in British fandom, getting many writing again who hadn't put pen to paper in far too long, and for a while they generated a lot of excitement, but they've outlived their usefulness. What we need now are more general-circulation fanzines, and we need them to come out frequently. Could be a whole new beginning.

I ALWAYS LISTEN TO MUSIC when typing stencils, as readers of earlier issues will have picked up, music being very important to me. Sometimes I listen to radio and sometimes to records. A favourite radio programme is the John Peel Show between ten and midnight on Radio One, and some time back I remember being immediately captivated by a track on it from a then-unknown band. Months later that track eventually made the charts and climbed to number one. It is currently the fourth best-selling single of all time in the UK and still climbing. Yesterday, on its day of release, I bought their first album and am listening to it as I type, stopping now and then to bop around the room. The band, of course, is FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD and the album had pre-release sales of 1.2 million taking it to quadruple platinum before it even hit the shops. For a country the size of the UK these are awesome figures and way beyond anything even the Beatles

could manage in their heyday. Now what I want to know is: have I fallen for the hype? I mean I liked Frankie when they were unknown so I don't think I have, but I don't know. The other question is whether or not Frankie can last, but that's one I'm not even going attempt to tackle. More music reports as the fancy takes me.

WHAT YOU (&I) MISSED AT THE WORLDCON. When I popped along to the last BSFA meeting in London I asked organiser Judith Hanna what the evening's entertainment was and she replied: "You are." Which is how I found myself having to give an impromptu account of my travels in darkest America, and as is usually the case this relied heavily on gutter anecdotalism and outright character assassination. However, while that sort of thing is OK for the dodgy individuals who people the average BSFA meet the readership of EPSILON is a rather more refined group far more interested, I am sure, in the serious scientific aspects of my trip. So, to give those of you who weren't there some of the flavour of the Worldcon I'll just give you the titles of a few of the items listed in the 'L.A.CON II Pocket Program' and leave your fertile imaginations to speculate on the horror these innocent labels conceal...

'Meet-The-Pros Ice Cream Social & Literary Saloon - Jerry Pournelle' ; 'The Art of Flirtation (women only) - Bill Rotsler' ; 'The Wonders of the Ackerman Collection - Forrest J Ackerman' ; 'Jedi Knights of Orange County (open meeting)' ; 'Christian Fandom (open meeting)' ; 'The Power of the Teddy Bear' ((?)) ; 'On The Mark (the Mark Hamill Fan Club)' ; 'Regency Dancing' ; 'Fat, Feminism & Fandom'.

So now you know what you missed. I attended a few programme items at L.A.CON and would have attended all the above on your behalf as well only I was off having a good time with the fans.

MORE TAFF. I've just received a letter from Marty Cantor on behalf of the L.A.CON II committee informing me that "...as soon as each of the reps of those funds who visited L.A.CON II makes their trip report generally available their fund will receive the \$500 which has been set aside for it". I've asked for clarification of just what is meant by 'generally available' but it looks as if I'll definitely have to get my report completed now. Knowing that inaction on your part could deprive TAFF of \$500 places a heavy burden of guilt on you, let me assure you.

THE NEO FAN'S GUIDE TO SCIENCE FICTION FANDOM was edited by Mike Glycer and Marty Cantor, and published by L.A.CON II. It's the sixth edition of the Guide to appear, the first seeing print as long ago as 1955, and I have some misgivings about it. I'm particularly unhappy about the section headed 'FANDOM IN THE UK' whose four short paragraphs paint a picture of British Fandom that even those with no more than a passing familiarity with it would have difficulty relating to the real thing. The very first paragraph asserts that "...the first notable club, the British Science Fiction Association, was formed in 1935...", a claim sure to cause surprise and consternation among both those fanhistorians who had hitherto believed the Ilford Science Literary Circle formed by Walter Gillings in 1931 to be the first British SF club and to those

responsible for setting up the BSFA in 1958. I assume this entry actually refers to the Science Fiction Association set up at the first ever convention on January 3rd 1937, the SFA having no connection with the later BSFA.

In the second paragraph I discovered that:

"Today, the fans of the British Isles have formed a habit loosely known as 'The Eastercon' - that is, an annual conference occurring on (or sometimes not on) the Easter holidays. These meetings may be held in London, Manchester, Kettering, Birmingham, Harrowgate, or elsewhere."

Actually, British fans have no more "...formed a habit loosely known as 'The Eastercon'..." than American fans have formed a habit loosely known as 'The Worldcon'. The Eastercon is our national convention and hasn't been held at any time other than the Easter holiday since 1954, 30 years ago! Also, the last time a convention was held over Easter in Harrowgate was in 1962, and in Kettering in 1958! This entry seems to me to be just a wee bit out of date and creaking at the seams. To prove the point it's only necessary to move on to the third paragraph....

After pointing out that "...British fans enjoy one distinction not shared by their American opposites - they created their own professional magazines when publishers ignored the SF field..." and citing early examples, the piece goes on to claim that "...recent years have seen the rise and demise of VISIONS OF TOMORROW." Depends on your definition of 'recent', I suppose. Since VISION (no 's') was published between August 1969 and September 1970 I'm afraid it doesn't qualify as recent in my book, not when there's INTERZONE - started back in 1982 by an editorial collective that contained a number of prominent British fans - as a far more recent example.

I haven't seen earlier editions of the guide but what's clearly happened is that some entries have been carried forward from earlier editions with little or no revision leading to the perpetuation of errors and to rather jarring anachronisms. As an example of the latter one need only turn to the 'MINUTAE' section of the guide to find, among the various definitions listed therein:

"Blog & Crottled Greeps - Nectar & Ambrosia; a spiritous liquor and a snack greatly favoured in the British Isles."

Oh yeah? When was the last time you heard someone refer to either 'Blog' or 'Crottled Greeps'? This is archaic terminology and should be listed as such. Coming across something like this is much like opening a dictionary and finding an entry that reads:

"Gadzooks - an exclamation much in evidence in the speech of the average Briton."

By the time I'd finished reading the various bits in the guide about British Fandom I felt the cold hand of dread, and other cliches, clutch at my vitals because the producers of this publication are also involved in the production of FANCYCLOPEDIA III, the first new edition of that work

since 1958, and I had a vision of the horrors that could be perpetrated in its pages. Look fellas, before you go to press let someone who knows a bit about British Fandom check your entries. Hell I'd be happy to do it since this is something I want to see done right.

After reading the above you'll probably be astonished to discover that this is a pitch and that I have copies for sale which I'll cheerfully part with for a mere 50p each at NOVACON, or post to you for 70p. What is more I've already sold 25% of the copies kindly donated by Marty - and to non neofans as well - (all proceeds to TAFF, folks) and am confident of selling the rest, because while the errors listed above make the guide almost useless to British neofans it's a very interesting read for those who've been around a while. This is a very attractive looking production, with the pluperfect duplication that is the hallmark of so many American fanzines and some nice illustrations from Brad Foster, and it contains a view of fandom sufficiently skewed from reality to make it quite an entertaining read. This is the fannish coffee table book that no fannish coffee table can afford to be without. Yes, not only can you feel good about donating money to a worthy cause, but in possessing such a cool item you'll be the envy of all your friends.

US readers can get their copies direct from Marty Cantor by rushing \$1.60 to 11513 Burbank Blvd., North Hollywood, CA 91601, USA.

KETTLE IN SHOTGUN-WEDDING SHOCK! On Saturday 20th October 1984 Leroy Richard Arthur Kettle and Kathleen Mary Mitchell were married at the Civic Centre in Wood Green. The groom wore white and was fooling no-one.

It was a glittering fannish occasion and attracted such luminaries as Malcolm Edwards, Chris Atkinson, Chris Priest, Lisa Tuttle, Graham Charnock, Faith Brooker, Chris Evans, Rob Holdstock, Peter Nicholls, and, surprisingly, Peter Roberts. John Brosnan filled the role of Best Man in a hastily-assembled suit of clothes and a pair of shoes borrowed from the groom.

At the reception that followed enormous quantities of food were served. So much, in fact, that the unheard-of occurred and Robert Holdstock reached the stage where he couldn't eat anymore! Malcolm Edwards immediately phoned the editor of The Guinness Book of Records while Rob himself was last observed by your reporter staring at the uneaten food and whimpering softly, a look of anguish on his face.

I'd last seen Malcolm two nights earlier when he turned up on my TV screen attired in a hired Moss Bros dress suit and looking like a particularly glum penguin. That had been the occasion of the annual Booker Award Ceremony and Malcolm was there in his capacity as SF editor at Gollancz since one of the company's authors, J.G. Ballard, was not only among the final half-dozen short-listed for that prestigious literary award but the hot-favourite with his novel EMPIRE OF THE SUN. Even so Ballard lost out in the end to Anita Brockner (who?) and she pocketted the £15,000 prize money. I asked Malcolm how the Gollancz table had taken the result.

"We were all sunk in gloom and despondency except for Ballard himself. He was quite philosophical about the whole thing."

"I don't think I'd be too philosophical about losing £15,000."

"You would if you'd just sold the film rights for substantially more than that."

After talking to Malcolm I chatted briefly with Peter Nicholls, urging him to include more on fandom in the possibly-soon-to-be-revised edition of his justly-praised Encyclopedia of Science Fiction, and moved on to Chris Priest. I had a message for Chris from Patrick Nielsen Hayden on how best to deal with Doubleday, the New York publishers who have US rights to THE GLAMOUR (or THE GLAMOR) and as I relayed it I was suddenly struck by the fact that everyone at the wedding that I knew either worked for a publisher or was a professional writer of some sort, right up to and including the groom and his best man. Feeling paranoid I sought refuge in the company of Chris Atkinson (a social worker!) before deciding to check out what Peter Roberts had been up to in the last few years. I remembered Pete as a civil servant and asked what he did for a living these days.

"I work for David & Charles - the publishers."

He had substantially less hair than I remembered but other than that was physically unchanged and as witty and urbane as ever. That he now drives a Lotus came as a surprise but not so much of a one as his casual mention of an already stencilled and duplicated section of his report on his 1977 TAFF trip - no less a section than the convention report itself - and did I know anyone who might be interested? I did, and the Worldcon report will be appearing in that person's fanzine no more than a few pages from now. The already-printed pages were originally intended for the never published next issue of Peter's own zine, EGG, this section of his report having only previously seen the dark of duper ink in some obscure apa or other (called FAPA, I believe - probably a pale imitation of FRANK'S). The bits on either side of this piece, Pete explained, had already appeared while still other parts exist but have yet to be published.

"As an act of generosity I offered one part to a neofan for the first issue of his fanzine", said Pete, "and he rejected it."

How are the mighty fallen!

Other pieces in this issue include one by Linda Pickersgill reprinted from the October 1984 mailing of FRANK'S APA; a statement by D West; the first part of my own TAFF report; and the ever-popular - though this time somewhat truncated due to the extra length of this issue - lettercolumn. Ah, savour those split infinitives!

FANNISH FANZINES seldom mention SF and so have acquired a reputation in some quarters as being produced by people with no interest in the genre. You and I know this to be untrue, even though we may not actually read much of the stuff these days unless written by Dick or Ballard, but we really ought to say so more often. Hence, EPSILON and its editor would like to present as a slogan for today.....

"SKIFF IS TRIFF"

"SKIFF IS TRIFF"

"SKIFF IS TRIFF"

...THE SERIOUS BIT....STATEMENTS ON THE CURRENT CONTROVERSY.....

FOLIES BERGERON
FOLIES BERGERON.....(title 'borrowed' from Dave Langford).
FOLIES BERGERON

D West has asked me to print the following statement, and I'm happy to do so. He would like this statement to get as wide a distribution as possible and has given his permission for anyone who wishes to reproduce it verbatim to do so...

"As the losing candidate I wish to make it absolutely clear that I have no complaints whatsoever about **either the result** or the administration of the 1983/84 TAFF election. I consider that the attacks made upon the integrity of Avedon Carol as North American TAFF administrator are wholly unjustified and unjustifiable and represent nothing more solid than slurs and innuendos arising from personal animosity and malice. To date no evidence at all has been produced to show that Avedon Carol is guilty of any wrongdoing, and I therefore call upon those concerned either to produce their proofs without further delay and equivocation or to make a full and public withdrawal of their allegations. In the event that this is not speedily done I urge fans everywhere to join me in publicly condemning with the utmost severity the behaviour of Avedon Carol's attackers"

..... D West, 26th October 1984.

Despite my position as European TAFF administrator I haven't so far commented on this business in a public forum due to a great reluctance on my part to encourage the spread of this controversy beyond the pages of the many heated letters it has generated to date. However, this position has let me in for a certain amount of criticism - not least from D himself who took me to task for 'going easy' on the main architect of this affair in the last issue - so I suppose I'll have to make some sort of a public statement. With necessary background information for those who never received the relevant issues of WIZ, what follows will have to be that statement.

Earlier this year Avedon Carol published a fanzine called THE AMNESIA REPORT and as a throwaway line in one of the pieces it contained she wrote: "I don't know if Cesar is real or not - or if he's gay or not - but I don't think he works as a second voice". Cesar is Cesar Ignacio Ramos, a fan who at that time was widely assumed to be a hoax character invented by Richard Bergeron. In the tenth issue of his fanzine WIZ, published shortly afterwards, Bergeron took exception and wrote:

"Ms.Carol...says she 'doesn't know if Cesar is real or not' or 'if he's gay or not', which if she is in doubt about his reality, is her way of inquiring something about me which is none of her god-damned business. I don't know if Avedon Carol fucks goats or not, but on the evidence of the habit she has of sticking her nose

into other people's dirty underwear I question how discriminating she might be".

Since Bergeron was aware by this point that Avedon and I had had, as they say, 'a fling' when she was over here on her own TAFF trip you'll note that there's a subtle insult to me in there over and above those directed at Avedon. Ah, if only Avedon had known that fandom hath no fury like a... Bergeron mocked! Not content with insult he went on to add insinuation:

"I don't know if Avedon forged ballots for her preferred candidate or not (the vote was scandalously lopsided Stateside)...."

While it's flattering to think that someone might imagine you to be such a terrific lover that you had the power to cloud women's minds even my ego won't let me swallow that one. As Avedon told me: "You're good, but you're not that good!"

Quite why Bergeron should think anyone actually gives a damn whether he's gay or not I can't imagine (it's 1984 not 1954 after all, and Francis Towner Laney is long in his grave), but his newly acquired antipathy towards Avedon Carol caused him to re-assess letters she had sent him earlier and to find in them evidence of a serious breach of TAFF rules on her part. Hence, much of the following WIZ was devoted to an attack on her which culminated with the demand that she resign as TAFF administrator, a rather curious thing to ask given that she'd already taken her trip and that the subsequent administration of the fund is not usually regarded as one of fandom's choicer perks.

In that part of WIZ 11 titled DOMINO THEORY Bergeron sees in a quote from Avedon about the game of dominoes - "I do wish, however, that D West would take up a game which makes a more interesting spectator sport" - evidence that "Avedon knows exactly through which ribs the knife should be inserted in order to penetrate the heart most quickly", a comment about which I will say nothing beyond suggesting that before reading on you pause for a moment and reflect on whether you could arrive at the second statement from the first.

The actual allegations levelled against Avedon by Bergeron, on the basis of a DNQ (Do Not Quote) letter she sent him in February, are:

- 1/. That she asked why he voted for D West and in so doing called into question his right to vote, and otherwise participate, in TAFF races.
- 2/. That she revealed the then-current drift of voting to him and did so in order to improve my chances in the TAFF race and to hamper D West's.

It's understandable that Bergeron would be annoyed if his right to vote in TAFF races was called into question, but this is something he fails to prove Avedon guilty of doing. That there were people who wondered why he voted as he did and why, if he wasn't going to meet the eventual winner anyway, he appeared to have such a personal stake invested in the outcome of the last race is also entirely understandable, and from the examples given in WIZ 11 that seems to be all that Avedon - or anyone else - has been asking of him.

Bergeron's second charge is grounded in the line on the TAFF ballot form

that reads "Details of voting will be kept secret", but he doesn't actually provide any evidence to support his allegation. No, when it comes to everything other than the accusation covered in 1/. above - the attempt to lay responsibility for the statements of others at Avedon's door, the stories of unspeakable horrors buried in private letters, and of terrible misdeeds - we have to accept the word of Richard Bergeron. Not me. Having seen how he can misrepresent someone in print, and having been a victim of this particular penchant of his myself, I'm afraid I'm not prepared to take anything he says on trust alone. However if we accept, purely for the sake of argument, that Avedon did indeed reveal then-current voting trends to him let's see how his accusations hold up...

Firstly, the line "details of voting will be kept secret" has been taken by Bergeron and his (few) supporters to mean that no details of any kind will be revealed whereas this requirement was actually established to protect voter confidentiality, to ensure that details of just who had voted for whom would not be revealed. This is the way that rule has always been applied by all those past TAFF administrators I've quizzed on this point and when a little logical thought is applied to reconciling the fact that a varyingly detailed voting breakdown is and must be published at the end of a TAFF race with the statement that 'details of voting will be kept secret' then that this line refers to individual details of who voted for whom is clearly seen to be the correct interpretation. So while revealing details of the then-current voting trends, if indeed they were revealed, would certainly be inadvisable it still constitutes no more than a minor indiscretion and is hardly the impeachable offence Bergeron imagines it to be. Which leaves only the motives ascribed to Avedon by Bergeron for this alleged release of 'details'....

Most of Bergeron's 'case' is based on this mysterious letter of Avedon's of which he says, in WIZ 11:

"In retrospect, I believe this letter to be nothing more than a devious bit of manipulation intended to lull West's supporters (with whom she might have assumed I was in general contact) into a false sense of success and spur Hansen's supporters into voting. The major part of the letter is DNQ...."

This is all pure unsupported speculation. Since I've been unable to find any of my 'supporters' who were similarly apprised of this trend in the voting I'm rather curious as to how something written in a DNQ letter to Bergeron is supposed to 'spur' them into voting. Also, given that Avedon was sufficiently surprised by the way Bergeron voted to ask after his reasons for doing so then, if this was "...a devious bit of manipulation..." on her part, why should she assume he was "in general contact" with West's supporters and so tell him all this? Wouldn't it make more sense to go directly to West's nominators who, it might reasonably be assumed, were a better bet in terms of being 'in general contact' with others of his supporters? As a 'bit of manipulation' this seems so devious as to be totally ineffectual. No, I'm afraid Bergeron has proved very little so far. The so-called 'case' presented in WIZ 11 relies far too much on the use of rhetorical sleight-of-hand and misdirection to hide a lack of real substance.

While Richard Bergeron may have made allegations concerning Avedon's handling of the fund none of this is really about TAFF. Nor has it ever been. As D West says in his statement...

"...the attacks made upon the integrity of Avedon Carol as North American TAFF administrator are wholly unjustified and unjustifiable and represent nothing more solid than slurs and innuendos arising from personal animosity and malice."

Indeed, and because of that 'personal animosity and malice' some of those reluctantly involved in this affair have been driven to the verge of gaffiation by it while most everyone else has been finding our mutual hobby a lot less enjoyable of late. We're paying far too high a price for one man's wounded vanity and it's time to say "enough is enough". This has to stop and it has to stop now. It's put up or shut up time, Dick. Put all your usual bullshit aside and either prove that Avedon attempted to influence the voting on my behalf as you have claimed or issue a full and complete retraction. Nothing less will do.

As a postscript to all this I should point out, in the interests of fairness, that I have no reason to feel particularly charitable towards Richard Bergeron and to explain just why....

Some copies of WIZ 11 were express-mailed early in August while the rest appear to have been mailed around mid-August - just in time to be read and assimilated and fresh in peoples' minds for when I turned up at the Worldcon at the end of the month. Nothing in that issue would have suffered by its publication being delayed for a few weeks - but then it would have had no effect on my TAFF trip, of course. Nor do I think there's any possibility the timing was accidental, not when Bergeron gloats near the end of WIZ 11:

"Hansen gets to walk the plank. Should be one of the most fascinating TAFF trips of the century - as the candidate tours the country on the Victory Train he'll be interviewed on the controversial issues that have arisen in his wake".

Except there wouldn't have been any 'controversial issues' if WIZ 11 had been mailed four weeks later. He also says of Avedon that "she has blighted the fruits of Rob Hansen's victory" and I can't deny that those fruits were blighted since I couldn't fail to be affected by the way all this was causing depression among those I stayed with on the East Coast. But it wasn't Avedon Carol who blighted them. It was Richard Bergeron. I believe he did so deliberately and with malice aforethought. A nice guy, Richard Bergeron.

Having already had more than my fill of this whole affair I'm not terribly interested in printing any long and detailed analyses or nitpicks in the next EPSILON that pertain to it and would urge anyone who feels compelled to add their two penn'orth to the debate to do so in some other forum. Japanese fanzines seem about far enough away.....

....BEGINNING AN EPIC TALE OF ADVENTURE IN FOREIGN PARTS.....

ON THE TAFF TRAIL

ON THE TAFF TRAIL....a report on the 1984 TAFF trip.

ON THE TAFF TRAIL

Chapter 1: HELLO AMERICA.

The biggest problem I'd have to face was jet-lag...or so various seasoned fannish travellers had informed me. It could ruin my whole convention, they had said, and I was courting disaster with my insane decision to fly directly to Los Angeles for the first night of the Worldcon rather than arrive a few days early so as to acclimatise to the time and temperature difference in Southern California. The thing to do, it seemed, was not to have jet-lag hit you when you arrived at your destination - so I didn't. No, I set out from home suffering from the effects of jet-lag. What with SILICON up in Newcastle the previous weekend and all the sleep I'd lost due to the unnaturally high temperatures and feverish humidity, I was pretty certain I knew exactly what jet-lag felt like. Thursday 30th August was the big day and I woke up yawning. I did a lot more yawning on my trip to the airport and it was while yawning that I made my first contact with the scientific meta-reality I was to slip into more than once in the weeks to come.....

It's the proud boast of British Rail that their Victoria to Gatwick shuttle train will get you to that far-flung airport from the centre of London in 30 minutes but 45 minutes into my own journey I began to doubt this. We had stopped on the line no more than 150 yards or so from Gatwick station and the train showed little inclination to travel any further. It was a lovely day, the sun streaming in through the windows suppressing any discontent we might have felt at this turn of events. Apart from the monotonous clicking of my jaw as I yawned the only noise in the carriage was the conversation of the two young Australians discussing the recently postponed flight of the US space shuttle. Seated opposite them was a middle-aged Texan who listened to them for some minutes before deciding to join in. I sensed some fun in the making and pricked up my ears. The Texan revealed that he was "in communications" and had "worked for NASA for 15 years before moving on in the late-70s". The Aussies listened politely to all this before putting a question.

"What about toilets?" asked one.

"Pardon?"

"How d'you take a leak up there, sport?" asked the other.

The texan was clearly flustered by this and I couldn't help chuckling at his discomfit. He recovered quickly, however, and explained with some dignity that his fifteen years in communications with NASA hadn't brought him into contact with the problem of waste disposal in orbit all that often. Gosh, I hadn't even reached the airport yet and already I'd encountered talk of space travel and bodily functions! It was going to be a good convention. I could feel it in my bones.

We got into Gatwick 20 minutes later than advertised but the long lead-times demanded by airlines made this no more than a minor annoyance so

I was still able to check my baggage in and make my way in the general direction of the departure lounge at a leisurely pace. This was only the second time I'd ever been to Gatwick and such was the impression my visit of five years earlier had made on me that the airport seemed totally strange and unfamiliar. Fortunately I am a fan, so I was able to find my way to the departure lounge by means of my cosmic mind, broad mental horizons, and the many signposts.

The departure lounge for transatlantic flights from Gatwick is in a circular building called 'the Satellite' that has aeroplanes radiating from it's gates like poles from a capstan. You reach this unique structure from the main terminal building by means of a totally automated shuttle, a high-speed and high-level train that whisks you along a gently curving track and deposits you in the Satellite with a woosh of automatic doors and the sound of a loop-taped voice telling you to alight. Since the distance it covers is only about a hundred yards a simple tunnel would have provided an adequate link, but what do I know? As the shuttle wooshed off on its return journey I looked around and got the distinct impression I'd been dumped inside the head of a giant mushroom. Only it wasn't a mushroom at all, but a doughnut. The entire departure lounge was a torus that fit snugly over the duty-free shop at its centre, a very smart and comfortably furnished torus that I tried very hard to relax in but couldn't. I was too nervous. It was beginning to slowly dawn on me just what was about to happen. Everything had seemed unreal so far but soon I'd be on a plane headed for Los Angeles and an American Worldcon, the duly elected TAFF delegate and the 25th to cross the Atlantic under the auspices of the fund. Would I live up to the expectations of those in the US who'd voted for me? I'd soon find out.

My flight, Northwest Orient NW45, was scheduled to leave at 1.30pm and fifteen minutes before this we began boarding. This being my first time across the Atlantic I requested a window seat and got one - over the wing. I silently grumped and bitched about this particularly as a view of a 747's wing isn't a terribly reassuring sight. Quite apart from the pop-riveted patches randomly dotted about its surface both the fully-extended aerilons and the wing itself flapped up and down in an alarming maner. Visions of a watery grave swam before my eyes and I sank down in my seat feeling helpless in the face of a cruel and uncaring fate. My misery was compounded by the ferocious air-conditioning and the failure of the blanket covering my legs to resist the wind-chill factor. Having given up on trying to understand the gibberish being spouted by the Belgian couple occupying the seats between me and the aisle I tried to catch some sleep. This proved a vain effort. I tossed, I turned, I figetted, I draped the blanket across me in every conceivable way and a few inconceivable ways as well - all to no avail. Resigning myself to sleeplessness I sighed, opened my eyes, glanced up at the screen on which the in-flight movie was being shown, and focussed blearily on the words:

'I have a twelve-inch penis'.

The film in question was SPLASH!, and the subtitle apparently because the characters were speaking Sweedish at that point. Despite these provocative words at no time did there cross my mind the name 'Robert Holdstock'. I wasn't watching the film since my good friend Avedon Carol had declared it

ideologically unsound and because I was too mean to pay the \$3 hire-charge for the headphones.

I have the ability of slipping into a semi-comatose state while travelling alone, one that while not particularly restful does at least make the hours fly by. Thus, having checked that the small view of the Earth's surface visible behind the wing was obscured by clouds, I slipped into this state and the hours flew by.

Not long after we'd taken off the aircraft's captain had spoken over the intercom to inform us that we were leaving the UK high over northern Scotland and would soon pass within two hundred miles of the tip of Iceland. Hours later he piped in again to let us know we were approaching the coast of Northern Canada so I craned my neck to look out of my window and saw what I took to be icebergs floating in the Atlantic far below. What I was actually viewing, however, was a very fragmented chunk of the northern Canadian coastline, as a ribbon of road zig-zagging across the 'icebergs' proved. I was above a whole other continent for the first time in my life and for some reason all I think to ask myself is:

"Shouldn't those who call themselves 'Canadians' be natives of a place called 'Canadia', and shouldn't people from Canada be 'Canadans'?"

It's an odd question, irrelevant yet indicative of my somewhat contradictory and confused state of mind at this point. Not that there weren't good reasons for some degree of confusion on my part.....

When Justin Ackroyd, this year's GUFF winner and a well-seasoned traveller, had suggested to me at SILICON that I set my watch to Los Angeles time as soon as I boarded the plane it had seemed like good advice. He himself swore by it, claiming it helped him to adjust more quickly. Having no reason to doubt him I took his advice. This was a mistake. What no-one had seen fit to inform beforehand was that my direct-flight to Los Angeles was direct via Minneapolis where I'd have to switch planes and since Minneapolis is in a different time-zone to that of Los Angeles all the captain's announcements as to e.t.a's and the like were given in Central Standard time. Desperately trying to juggle three different times I soon became totally lost and thoroughly confused and many were the curses I heaped on Justin Ackroyd and his damned useless 'good advice'. The one good thing about this situation was that we arrived in Minneapolis a couple of hours before I expected us to.

The jumbo began its gradual descent over a vast body of water I knew must be one of the Great Lakes and took to be Lake Michigan, but which a later perusal of an atlas shows must have been Lake Superior. As we continued descent through the clear Minnesotan skies I stared entranced at the view below, my first ever of an American city. The houses were arranged in lots on a grid-system that, while perfectly logical, looked totally alien to me. And so much land to each house! At first I was confused by the large number of turquoise specks scattered across the city but as we got lower these resolved themselves into the swimming pools of the wealthy. Or maybe, given their number, of the not-so-wealthy in American terms. Yes, I was definitely entering a foreign land.

I think of myself as a relatively ordinary chap of fairly normal appearance (good-looking, of course, but only averagely so) and not in any way unusual or disreputable. Unfortunately American customs didn't share this view. After the plane had landed I'd collected my suitcase and casually struggled over to the foreign arrivals' desk with it where my fellow passengers appeared to be having to answer only the most cursory of questions before having their passports stamped and being ushered into the land of the free. When I reached the desk, however, a stern-faced customs officer ordered me to open my case and began rummaging through my effects, asking me questions all the while.

Whereya going? Los Angeles. Why do you have a Washington address listed as the place you'll be staying? Uh...there was only room for one address on the form and that's where I'll be staying longest while I'm over here. What is the purpose of your visit? To..ah.. attend the World Science Fiction Convention in Los Angeles and then to visit friends in various parts of the US.

And so on and so forth. The customs officer called in a second to go through my hand-baggage and a third to run a computer check on my passport. I began to feel paranoid and racked my brain trying to remember if I'd done anything particularly subversive. I was fairly certain that I hadn't overthrown the state recently, and also knew that I hadn't used my highly trusted position as a draughtsman for a major British grocery chain to spy for the Russians (though possibly GUM might be interested in a little commercial espionage - must find out what they pay). Then I remembered. I had been on a couple of anti-nuclear marches in London during the preceding year and in the second I marched with a group of American students under a banner that proclaimed them to be EMBARRASSED AMERICANS AGAINST REAGAN. Could that be it? The banner had attracted a lot of attention from the press and I'd marched at the front of the group. Such an action was sure to get me branded as a dangerous pinko in Ronald Reagan's Amerika, I realised, as visions of my passport being stamped 'undesirable alien' swam before my eyes. What would Avedon think of me being officially described as both alien and undesirable, I wondered. I started to sweat and began to consider how far I was prepared to compromise my principles to gain entry to America. If pressed could I bring myself to say "Ronald Reagan is a great President and a wonderful human being" without choking on the words or would I be forced to return to the UK, a fannish martyr? We shall never know because eventually the customs officer gave my passport an entry stamp, somewhat reluctantly I thought, that allowed me to stay in the US until March 1985 and told me to re-pack my bags. It had been an unpleasant few minutes but I'd passed the inspection and now I was in. I had entered America!

Outside a shuttle bus waited to take us from 'International Arrivals' to the 'Domestic Flight Terminal'. During the short drive between the two I got my first brief look at the US at ground level - a stretch of road with a few cars on it (which surprised me by being fairly small rather than the enormous gas-guzzlers of myth and media) and some low industrial buildings. As fodder for first impressions the scene left something to be desired.

The fact that we weren't given the number and time of our connecting flight to L.A. coupled with my discovery that Americans place less emphasis on adequate signposting than do the British led to my spending a panic-stricken five minutes or so dashing about the corridors of Minneapolis/St. Paul airport trying to find out where the hell I was supposed to go and when I was supposed to be there. Still this, and the eventual two hour wait for the connecting flight, were more than compensated for by the view from the window of the DC 10 taking us to Los Angeles. It was awesome.

We must have been thousands of feet up but the plains extended as far as the eye could see, vanishing over the horizon in all directions, yet the mark of man was everywhere. I'd seen large stretches of flatlands in the north of England but that paled into insignificance next to this. I stared out of the window entranced, fascinated by the country below, by the plains and **how they** gradually gave way to desert high over Wyoming. The landscape was - that word again - alien; totally beyond my experience yet stirring my sense of wonder in a way that no SF has ever done. It was at once humbling and exhilarating, awe-inspiring and just a little frightening. Maybe it was the call of the genes, the pagan affinity with the land of my Celtic ancestors echoing down the years, or maybe not, but I hadn't realised the dead and arid wastes of our planet could possess so strange and terrible a beauty. Transfixed by the view I only turned away from the window during that transcontinental flight to eat and tend to other bodily functions, and so saw the shadows that brought the desert canyons into such sharp relief lengthen into dusk with the dying of afternoon as we neared the West Coast. I was almost sorry when we left the desert behind and descended into night as Los Angeles appeared before us, spread across the blackness like a monstrous neon quilt.

Since I'd already entered the US at Minneapolis/St. Paul there were no tedious formalities to be endured at LAX (not a name to inspire confidence in the efficiency of the airport) so I headed straight for the baggage area on alighting. On the way I was delighted to spot the familiar figure of Lucy Huntzinger heading towards me. We greeted each other, laughed, hugged, and turned to her companion, a big bespectacled black man.

"Hi, I'm Ken Porter" he said, pumping my hand.

After retrieving my suitcase Ken drove us onto the freeway (via an airport road where they drove on the left, for some bizarre reason) and we headed for Anaheim. As Ken talked about the convention I looked about me at the giant neon signs, the large cars, the road signs to exotic places like Santa Monica and Ventura, letting the John Lennon album being played on the local station and the warm air coming through the open windows to flow over me. So this was Southern California. Goshwowboyoboy!!

The hotel seemed to be miles from the airport but driving along chatting to Ken about blues music and trading fannish gossip with Lucy I didn't mind a bit. Everything was right with the world and I was feeling great.

As we entered Anaheim and pulled onto Harbor Boulevard the skies

over Disneyland filled with exploding fireworks in a colourful display that lasted for some minutes and was more and more impressive the closer we got.

"That was amazing", I said, "but they didn't have to go to all that trouble just to make me feel welcome."

The Anaheim Hilton and Towers was the main convention hotel for L.A.CON II and is right next door to Disneyland on Harbor Boulevard. When Ken dropped us off in front of it I breathed a little sigh of relief. I'd spent 15 hours in transit; lived through a day with 21 hours of light, the longest I'd ever known; and had covered 6000 miles. Now, at last, my journey was over.

I had arrived.

The second part of this report - A LIMEY AT L.A.CON - will appear..... somewhere. Being less well organised than Dave Langford I haven't lined this up yet but it will probably appear in an American fanzine and may well form the first installment of my column for Stu Shiffman's POTSHERD. Keep you eyes peeled...

The first episode of my trip report is based on the first 4 pages of the 88 I took while in the USA while the printed page count was $5\frac{1}{4}$ quarto. At my present rate that would make the length of the complete report some 115 pages but you won't be the only one who's very surprised if I actually achieve that figure. Having only just finished the first part of my trip report it'll be some time yet before I reach its end but this hasn't stopped someone from writing her own scurrilous version of my return journey and casting it in a form that might best be described as Leroy-Kettle-Has-A-Lot-To-Answer-For. She calls this libellous account....

THE TERROR AT 40,000 FEET
THE TERROR AT 40,000 FEET...by LINDA K. PICKERSGILL.
THE TERROR AT 40,000 FEET

A reputation is a hard thing to live up to, or to live down depending on the reputation. Americans have this reputation for being warm, open and friendly to visitors. Then there's our intrepid TAFF traveller; he has this reputation about beans and beans is what he got from the eager-to-please Americans. From California to the New York highways, from the Redwood forest to the gulf stream waters, this fan ate beans for you and me. I mean, it was his faanish duty and they were just trying to make him feel welcome by giving him what his reputation indicated that he craved.

Now it was time to depart this somewhat over-zealous fandom and return home. Checking in at the airport was just a bit embarrassing. It was bad enough trying to explain that the extra weight in his baggage was due to several tims of beans given to him as a going-away present as were the badges made specially for him proclaiming "I've Bean to L.A.", "I've Bean to N.Y.", and "I've Bean to S.F." but did they have to all come see him

off at the airport? It was a good-hearted gesture but people did stare at the banners saying "Beans Across the Galaxy" not to mention the women dressed up as tins of Campbell's Pork&Beans.

Well, he was off for home now. Settling into his assigned seat set firmly in the middle of the No Smoking area he fastened his seat belt, not too tightly though. His full belly was still fermenting away with the feast he'd been fed on his last night in the US. What a feast! After an afternoon of Dos Equis beer (the only one he could tolerate in this beerless society) and Doritos with Jalepeno Bean dip he sat down to a meal that began with a lovely black bean soup followed by a selection on bar-b-q beans, Boston baked beans, red beans and rice, chili con carne with extra beans, frijoles, and - to add a touch of home - beans on toast.... He settled back, closed his eyes, and let the sensation of the take-off lull him into a much-needed sleep.

The woman who sat next to hm was the first to ask to be moved. She had a weak stomach, she explained, and though not prone to nausea during flights she was afraid she might toss her dinner up if she had to stay where she was. Next was the young mother with her crying baby. Nothing would quiet the tiny thing down and she was afraid it might be suffocating. Our TAFF traveller slept on, blissfully unaware of the commotion around him. Soon the whole cabin was buzzing with people speculating on where the smell came from. It seemed to be strongest in the middle of the No Smoking section but they couldn't find anything dead and everybody had their shoes on their feet. The air was becoming thick with the nauseating miasma and people were crowding towards the two extreme ends of the cabin. One person with a weak constitution began clawing pitifully at the tiny window.

"Air...all that air out there...I gotta breathe!"

The stewardess slapped him hard - she didn't want a panic running through the passengers. A light on her panel blipped. It was a call from the pilot.

"What's going on back there? My controls indicate some sort of atmospheric disturbance."

"I'm not sure, Captain. It's the air...it's become thick and the smell...it's...I've never smelt anything like it. We think it's killed one passenger in the No Smoking section. He's just lying there. The smell doesn't seem to be doing anything to him."

"I'm sending someone back there. No...wait...the emergency system has switched itself on. It must have detected something wrong...its..."

Suddenly the lights in the cabin flashed and all the panels above the seats popped open releasing the oxygen masks, which dangled over the empty seats like so many jellyfish. Before they could stop themselves the passengers crammed into the two ends of the cabin raced forward and grabbed the nearest mask they could find. One old lady threw her hip out. A 14 year old boy broke his toe. A crazed business man knocked his wife over the head with his portable computer. Battered and exhausted, everyone eventually found a seat with a mask and they settled into a somewhat inconvenient position until they touched down at Heathrow...all but the so-called dead man, who began to snore.

...LINDA K. PICKERSGILL.



SUNCON

AND THE SEA OFF MIAMI

TAPP report by Peter Roberts: New Routes in America

Rob Jackson, Joyce Scrivner, Gary Farber, and I arrived at the Suncon on Wednesday evening after a day on the road and unloaded in front of a disapproving audience of functionaries. Rob entrusted his caseful of *Mayas* to an elderly porter who disappeared for some heavy lifting gear whilst we went off and registered. I had to pay a \$100 deposit, which was a bit thick (after all, they were the ones who were bankrupt); Rob, however, pulled out a credit card and they smiled and tugged their forelocks, just like in the adverts. Flash bugger.

We went up to our rooms. Mine turned out to be a single - the only one in the hotel the porter claimed - charmingly hidden among the broom cupboards at the end of a corridor. The room itself was alarming. I've never seen an abandoned Guatemalan opera house, but that's the sort of decor the Fontainebleau favoured - jungle fin de siecle, only in plastic and plywood. The matching bed and dressing table were sickly enough, but the giant rococo tv set was almost beyond belief: the screen was menaced by gilded cherubs clutching grapes and to find the knobs you had to negotiate thickets of ormolu acanthus leaves and glittering vines.

I managed to turn it on nonetheless and eventually got a flickering picture in strange acid colours. Various unclad starlets shrieked across the screen before disappearing in a crackle of interference. It was a commercial for the allegedly pornographic films available to residents for a few dollars on the bill. "In the privacy of your own room...", said the announcer, lasciviously.

Gosh. I began to wonder what sort of place I'd booked into. I mean, porno movies and nineteen fifties rococo. Corruption and decadence already - and the convention hadn't even started.

Rob and I met up again, went downstairs, and headed for the bar. We'd heard, of course, that American fans didn't use hotel bars, but we were sceptical and in any event even if they didn't we reckoned we could wreck that tradition fairly swiftly.

We came across Ted White and Dan Steffan on our way in - they'd beaten us down from Washington, probably by ignoring Pedros and the lure of free grapefruits. We all went inside and found the bar in darkness. I thought at first it was closed, but my eyes adjusted gradually and I caught up with the others as

they groped their way to a table. Apart from the sepulchral lighting, it seemed ok and we chatted quite happily for a while. Dan bought me a couple of drinks, and, since they sold tobacco at the bar, I went over and asked if they had any cigarette papers. They didn't, but by this time I'd taken to smoking Camels and the question was becoming more of a ritual than a genuine enquiry.

Then came a sort of double-shock. First, with a flash of lights and a roll of drums, a cabaret started up in some unseen corner. Discouraged by the noise and the fact that Ted White disapproved of the music, we decided to leave and were presented with our bills. That's when Dan Steffan discovered he'd paid about £2,50 for the privilege of buying me two halves of lager.

Enough said. I told Dan I'd buy a return round if he ever visited Britain. In fact I offered him three or four rounds. Promises are cheap. And as for the Suncon, I resigned myself to American hotel tradition and subsisted on coffee, smuggled tins of beer, and room parties.

There seemed to be few fans in evidence elsewhere, so we went off together for some further exploration of the hotel. Somewhere in the basement, at the end of a corridor of locked shops, we found an opening to the outside, and decided to go for a walk on the beach. We threaded our way through gardens, fountains, terraces, and tennis courts. The place was deserted and there was only that strange humming silence and electric half-light that you get in city centres late at night. After some searching we found ourselves effectively imprisoned. The Fontainebleau was that sort of hotel: it had locked up the Atlantic Ocean for the night.

Still, Ted found a coke machine in the tennis courts and that, as far as he was concerned, vindicated the entire expedition.

He'd set up some stereo and cassette equipment in his room and we spent the rest of the evening up there. Rob and I knocked off fairly early to prepare for the first full day of the con.

* * *

The next morning I explored the hotel in more detail. First impressions seemed about right. The architect had apparently conceived the place as a synthesis of bus station and barracks, but the decorator had eschewed such utilitarianism and had done the whole thing up like a backwoods brothel.

My favourite monstrosity was a chair outside the lifts near my room. It was massive, high-backed, covered in red plush, and winged with two elderly nymphs whose sharply-pointed breasts jutted out so far that they snagged the clothing of passers-by. I've never seen a chair with dangerous nipples before. I wouldn't have minded that as a souvenir.

With the bar out of bounds, the convention lacked a focal point. There was a large open lobby in front of the main con halls which served as a gathering area, though it was little better than a cherub-encrusted waiting-room. It looked like the sort of place you'd pass through on the way to somewhere more interesting. Apart from this there was really just the entrance lobby and the hotel lounge. This had a Liberace piano and a vast electrolier, surrounded by secretive clumps of high-backed chairs. Drapes and carpets deadened any noise, so that you felt compelled to lower your voice. Unwanted lackeys lurked in dim recesses, peering out from amongst the statues. Elderly residents, hidden deep within the furniture, whispered and coughed at each other. The whole thing looked like a cheap remake of *Last Year At Marienbad*.

After this quick tour round, I met Rob again for breakfast. I didn't investigate the hotel's restaurants - with names like "Boob's Steak Room", "Club Gigi", and "The Poodle Lounge", I wasn't much tempted - but the coffee shop was the Fontainebleau's one excellence. It had a menu full of all sorts of interesting things; it wasn't expensive; the service was good; and it was open virtually all the time. I wouldn't have minded that as a souvenir as well.

We breakfasted with a couple of strange fantasy fans who invited us to their wedding, a costume affair that was to take place over the weekend and was actually down as a programme item. British conventions suddenly seemed staid and rather old-fashioned. They also complained about their eggs, which caused us a fit of embarrassment, though the waitress seemed to consider this perfectly reasonable. Which, of course, it is - except in the UK, where it would create a scene equivalent to tap-dancing on the table whilst exposing yourself and shouting bad things about dogs.

After breakfast I bumped into Terry Hughes, fresh from Ordeal by Greyhound, who with all the composure of a fannish master held out to me no less a thing than a packet of cigarette papers.



What could I say? I whipped out my Old Holborn and immediately rolled a fag. When the moment came to lick the thing into completion, however, I discovered a certain unlooked-for problem - the papers had no gum. The small, anxious audience of fans who'd gathered to witness this event seemed perplexed. Terry suggested that a sufficiency of saliva might weld the thing together. I slobbered delicately and lit up. There was a spluttering noise and the cigarette went out; the paper uncurled and deposited a neat pile of half-burnt tobacco on my lap.

I eventually mastered the technique by tying small knots in the cigarettes, though Joyce Scrivner later found me some giant gummed papers ("... in Strawberry, Wheat, and other gourmet flavors...") that were big enough to blow your nose on and were presumably made for rolling substances other than tobacco.

Actually this presented a genuine problem. Despite British adverts featuring sun-

burnt cowboys rolling in their saddles, few if any Americans actually indulge in this habit. The sight of me flaunting my papers in public, therefore, often produced shocked silences and accusing stares. "It's only tobacco," I'd say guiltily; but nobody seemed convinced. One hotel security man actually came up to me and asked barefaced if I was rolling a joint. "British!" I said desperately, waving my Old Holborn pouch like a passport. "Rats," said the security man. "I thought you might sell me some stuff..."

After that unnerving incident I settled for the quiet life and carried on with the Camels for the rest of my time in America. So it goes.

Meanwhile, back at Thursday, I was discovering that the daytime sobriety of American fans was not a myth and that whole roomfuls of fans were capable of not clutching drinks for minutes - even hours - at a time.

Looking around the lobby I could only see one fan with a drink. And that, of course, was Pete Weston, veteran of previous US conventions who'd thoughtfully provided himself with a small stock of daytime lager. I helped him diminish the stock and we both strolled round a bit, looking for action though nothing much seemed to be going on.

The con didn't officially start until the evening and since we were both at a loose end we decided to abandon the Fontainebleau and go and see *Star Wars* at a local cinema. In these latter days this may seem somewhat surprising; but the film hadn't opened then in Britain and neither of us knew our jawas from our droids - in fact we were missing out on the references and witticisms that were going around and were likely to be mystified by half the masquerade costumes. Besides, we thought we'd get one up on Rob Jackson...

Despite warnings about long queues and the need to book well in advance, we decided to chance our luck and try to get in anyway. In the event the cinema was deserted - almost literally. We found out why when we left - it was raining and we'd missed the forecast.

Not every reader may fully understand the term "rain" when applied to Miami Beach in August. A couple of month's worth of good Devon drizzle fell out of the sky in as many minutes. The road and much of the pavement was under water; no one was attempting to walk through it, and most of the traffic was at a standstill. A couple of pointless dashes to nearby shelters got us both thoroughly soaked - it was like leaping into a river. My cigarette didn't even have time to splutter before it disintegrated into a dripping mess of sodden tobacco. I was impressed by the whole business, even if we didn't look like getting back to the hotel.

Eventually a taxi cruised by and docked on the other side of the street. We waded across to it and started back. It was more like riding in a boat than a cab: the road was awash and invisible; rain thundered on the roof; the driver peered through the downpour, gripping the wheel like some old sea dog. We two sat in the back, keeping an eye open for sharks. "This is ok," growled the cabman. "I've seen worse."

We got back ok, though, and dried out at the official opening party. And after that I don't rightly recall what happened, unless this was the night of the Dirty Film.

I'd met Frank Lunney at some stage - a large and amiable bloke with Harry Bell eyes and a marvellously slow crazed-hippie sort of drawl. He's actually a

successful businessman and invited me out to his dude ranch in the outback of Pennsylvania. Anyway, I met up with Frank, Dan Steffan, Ted White, and some others on their way to see the reportedly lustful *Cinderella 2000*. We sat down and listened to feminist heckling and male chauvinist jeering before the film began.

It wasn't too good. Either there are two films with the same name or we saw the Bible Belt version. Whenever something decadent and pornographic seemed on the verge of occurring and Ted White leaned over and said "This is it...", the actors began to sing - forgetting in the meantime whatever it was they'd almost planned to do. We stared slack-mouthed at this fiasco for some considerable time, unwilling to believe that any film could be quite so bad. It wasn't till the orgy scene, when Cinderella and co inexplicably and at the last moment donned pink rabbit suits and started dancing, that we left.

* * *

I don't remember doing anything much on Friday morning, so I probably spent the time looking for fun, action, and excitement - the usual quests at cons. Though the Fontainebleau was full of fans, the hotel's layout meant that most of them remained hidden for much of the time. I seemed to spend hours at the Suncon wandering around, trying to find out where everyone had got to. You know how paranoid you can get on those occasions: when you start suspecting that people are Having Fun somewhere else - only you don't know where. Occasionally as I shuffled around peering into rooms and dimly lit corridors, I'd make a fantastic discovery, like an explorer finding a legendary lost world. It was thus, working only on rumours and native folklore, that I discovered the Hucksters' Room (a vast subterranean cavern filled with strange life of its own) after two days at the con. The entrance was hidden in a cupboard under the stairs, heavily overgrown with ormolu cherubs.

Other discoveries included the Fan Room, interestingly situated in an alternative universe somewhere upstairs whose gateway shifted constantly. At times it was only approachable through a secret balcony behind the Liberace piano and thence through an oddly-shaped room where elderly tourists played silent card games.

It turned out that I was on a panel that afternoon in the Fan Room. In fact I was on four panels throughout the con, though no one had mentioned this until I arrived. That, I believe, is called Last Minute Programming. Anyway, the first one was on fannish writing and a few hardy souls spurned the main events and made their way up to the fan room to listen. Terry Hughes and part-time British fan Tom Perry were on the panel, as well as Dave Emerson who looks like a Minneapolis version of Tom Jones (the singer, that is) and was then editor of the fanzine, *Rune*.

We were doubtless wise, articulate, and fannish on the panel, but I don't remember a thing, except that there was another panel in one of the main halls immediately after and I was supposed to be on that too. I rushed downstairs and eventually located the event, just about to start in the East Ballroom. It was on International Fandom and so I joined Jan Howard Finder, who was already up and speaking to the half dozen or so people who'd thus far come in; he'd managed to find a couple of Italians, one a monoglot, and had persuaded them to get up on the platform too. I sat down and waited for the other five panellists and the audience. The East Ballroom seats 2000 and is big. Jan kept on talking. I

exchanged pleasantries with Roy Tackett in the front row, and we all sat and waited. That, in essence, was the International Fan Panel.

Sometime later there was a Meet The Pros party in the depths of the hotel lounge. Since I'd by now discovered that the con committee weren't about to fete a mere TAFF delegate, I thought I'd go along and see if I could at least get a free drink out of them by pretending to be a pro. I don't think it worked, but Ginjer Buchanan was kind enough to give me a ticket and a special professional hat anyway. I like Ginjer Buchanan.

The special professional hat was a garish orange bowler, which was fine by me. There were plenty of other fake professionals there, lured by the free drink. Naturally enough this included Mike Glicksohn who'd just come from the Mooncon - a pre-Worldcon get-together in the Florida Keys (I'd been hoping I could've got down there, but you can't have everything). Mike was wearing a strange outfit, reminiscent of nothing much at all, except perhaps an Hawaiian sheep-shearer. Much of it was obscured by hair, anyway. I only found out what Mike Glicksohn *really* looks like a few weeks later when Jerry Jacks showed me a photo of a smooth-skinned and rather podgy kid. Gosh.

Whilst Mike and I can probably wear orange bowlers without looking a great deal stranger than we already do, the headgear certainly gave Pete Weston and the rather remote figure of Andy Porter a peculiarly daft air, rather like carnival bouncers. The three of us, still behatted, had a meal together; I rather think the others had forgotten about the bowlers. Anyway, our professional status wasn't impressing anyone, since the rest of the clientele were all chatting in Spanish. Andy ate several things that made Pete sick.

A Britain in Seventy Nine bidding party was planned for later that evening, Suncon being the place where the winning bid was to be chosen. During the day in fact I'd helped man the voting desk along with a representative from the New Orleans opposition. Several of the visiting British fans lent a hand and between us we had a bunch of publicity - badges, t-shirts, and so on - since that seemed the thing to do. The bona fide New Orleans fans were actively helping us, leaving the 1979 bidders a little at a loss. They were certainly out on the fringe - one of the blokes standing next to me struck up a conversation by asking "What is this 'fandom' thing, anyway?"

Thanks to Gary Farber we had a committee room for the party, which wasn't too bad even though the Fontainebleau had thoughtfully provided free cockroaches in the bathroom (I was quite pleased about that - first time in my life I'd ever seen a cockroach). Rob, Pete, Tom Perry and others had clinked in guiltily with several cases of drinks, much of it soft as a concession to our electorate, and we'd got a few items planned - just so's the party-goers would remember why they were there. We had some slides to show; Vera Johnson was going to sing the Seacon song; and we'd arranged a knurdling contest, with the help of several beer tins and Bill Burns (Champion Knurdler of 1971). Pete was also anxious to stage the mystical Hum & Sway, but it turned out that nobody had ever witnessed the event. He finally decided to bluff his way through with the aid of much alcohol.

Anyway, the party seemed to go off pretty well. A startling number of people packed their way in, sang lustily, competed at knurdling, drank all the fizzy pop, and generally had a good time. We awarded the Champion Knurdler a bottle of whisky (which I generously helped finish) and, since Pete turned off the lights, the mysteries of the Hum & Sway remained mysteries.

By the end of the party (and the whisky) I was no longer in a state of clear-

minded sobriety. I think I may have been enticed away by wicked hippies and forced, entirely against my will, to indulge in certain substances; at any rate I can only vaguely recall talking to someone at a party and suddenly, in the middle of the conversation, accusing him of being well over seven feet tall. Actually he agreed with me and was only surprised I hadn't noticed earlier. I have my doubts about that incident.

There was a policeman, though. I don't think I made him up. He was shorter than me and was trying to quieten down a room party I was at, or near, or about to go to.

There was also Jon Singer, an ebullient, long-haired bloke with his own personal fan club and more knowledge about moose than most people have ever needed. I met him in a corridor and we had a long conversation before I found out it wasn't him.

I think I wisely decided to go to bed at this point. Jon told me the next day that there was someone at Suncon who looked exactly like him, but I think he was just trying to comfort me. Anyway, I enjoyed myself and didn't piss on anyone's shoes.

* * *

The weather brightened on Saturday, though it was still so humid that whenever I left the hotel my glasses steamed up. Not finding anything better to do, I rather nervously changed into a pair of shorts (orange, of course) and attempted to act nonchalantly as I made my way downstairs and out into the sun. Nobody, I hope, recognized me.

Now that the locks were off, it was possible to reach the Atlantic by way of a tunnel and a viewing screen into the depths of a swimming pool infested by Cuban kids. In fact there were a lot of people about; the hotel had a small section of beach surrounded by huts that, taken together, was rather grandly termed the Cabana Club. Club members paid \$2000 per year for the privilege of using the facilities, so there were plenty of people about, all eager to get their money's worth and to be seen doing so. Cliques of fat businessmen jogged up and down the beach whilst scantily clad young women toasted in rows beneath their feet. The ocean itself was pretty quiet and didn't look much like the Atlantic as seen from Cornwall. A plane went by with a streamer advertising somebody's "deli". I parked myself down and waited for the sharks to eat the swimmers. There didn't seem to be any other fans on the beach; maybe the hucksters' room was giving away free wookies, or something.

Using the back corridors, I crept back in before lunch and changed into something more civilized. I must have met up with Tom & Alix Perry because a bunch of us, including Pete Weston, Terry Hughes, and Lee Hoffman (a charming and ladylike figure with the sort of half-moon glasses that always give people a quizzically humorous look), packed into Tom's car and went off in search of somewhere cheap to eat. In fact, we went cruising for burgers. I've always wanted to go cruising for burgers since Frank Zappa waved to me once in Liverpool. Anyway we eventually found a MacDonalds opposite a derelict striptease palace. It was the first time I'd encountered a MacDonalds and, God willing, it'll also be the last.

There wasn't much choice, but I ordered french fries, which came in a cardboard funnel, apple pie, which came in a cardboard tube, and a milk-shake, which

probably also came in cardboard, though I don't remember how. The others gathered together their packages and we all sat down, looking for all the world as if we'd just come out of Father Christmas's bargain grotto. Everyone seemed quite content, tearing along dotted lines and pulling flaps to get at the food. Even Lee Hoffman seemed quite happy, though she looked magnificently out of place.

I unpacked my chips and found that they were actually potato sticks of the kind served up at parties. Moreover some miserable bugger had covered them in salt - a substance I'm not greatly fond of. I moved on to the apple pie tube and extracted something resembling a sausage, or worse, in batter. Biting tentatively into this I unwittingly released a scalding cataract of green slime which dribbled down my chin and burnt holes in my t-shirt. I gave the milk-shake to Tom Perry - I know when I'm beaten.

Despite the food, it was an enjoyable outing. I left hungrier, but wiser.

Saturday evening was quieter than I anticipated. The Masquerade was on in the main hall and included several pretty costumes and a wookie. It was during this event that I was accosted by a local journalist who was impressed out of his mind at actually being inside the Fontainebleau. "Isn't this something?" he kept saying, gazing around like a schoolboy in a toyshop. I told him there were more cherubs in the hotel than in the whole of Cornwall and he wrote that down in his notebook and looked quite pleased with the comment. I then told him that Cornwall was an independent nation on the western border of England, and he wrote that down too. I wished I'd found out what paper he was writing for.

Anyway, there were parties later on - I had a whole matchbox covered with room numbers - and I started off with the best of intentions of doing the rounds. As luck would have it, however, the very first one I went into was the wicked hippie party of the evening, even if it was full of eminently respectable fans and authors. I sat down to chat for awhile before realizing that I was now part of a chain of mysteriously smouldering objects. Fully half of these were so mysterious that, with all my decadent wisdom, I couldn't for the life of me figure out quite what one was supposed to do with them. Several had bells on, so help me.

Anyway, whilst trying to strike a balance between sociality and sobriety, I miscalculated by several miles - as usual - and swiftly ended up with a faraway look in my eyes and no conversational ability beyond an abstracted nod. Part of the gathering got up to investigate the Gay Lib party, so I stumbled after them and decided to take a detour to my room to plunge my head in cold water and generally recover.

Five hours later, when I awoke, I felt considerably more lively. So it goes. Anyway, I continued on to the party which, amazingly, still contained some half dozen or so fans - though whether they were organizers, committed radicals, or just late-night wanderers, I never found out. We decided to have a meal downstairs, but found the coffee shop shut. We were just about to go away when the manager bounced out, apologized for the inconvenience, and said he'd be open again in a few minutes time.

Good place, America. After MacDonalds my confidence had needed a little restoring. But here we were at 5.15am, sitting comfortably in the coffee shop, and ordering a disgusting mixture of breakfast, supper, and snacks without anyone turning a hair. The only order that dismayed the waitress was mine - cold beet-root soup with sour cream. "But that's Jewish," she kept saying, looking worried. I'm still not sure what she meant by that.

* * *

On Sunday morning Brighton officially won the 1979 bid and Rob Jackson, our Official Worrier, was at last able to relax and enjoy himself. We decided to go down to the beach with Pete Weston. This may not be everybody's idea of a treat, but it was a nice day and the sun was shining.

We sat on the beach. "Isn't it good just to sit down and not work on the bid," said Rob, luxuriating. Pete and I nodded guiltily, as if we'd never dreamt of leaving the registration desk before now. I tried to hide my sunburnt legs in some convenient sand. Seacon seemed a long way off.

Anyway, I got the rare chance of seeing Rob floundering in the waves and the even rarer chance of seeing Pete Weston doing the doggie-paddle (a feat of which he's inordinately proud).

Come the afternoon and I was on a newszine editors' panel where I met the rotund and affable Charlie Brown for the first time. We talked about whatever newszine editors talk about. Looking at the programme sheet, I now see that's why I missed the Amber Style Wedding. Pity about that - I imagine it was pretty strange.

Not finding much to do after the panel, I allowed myself (for the third, final, and most foolish time) to be lured away by the ever present wicked hippies. As usual I ended up pleasantly happy but almost totally speechless and, since I'd agreed to make some sort of tape-recording for an archivist at six o'clock, I decided to have a quiet period of recovery in my room. When I awoke it was 7.30pm exactly - the time the banquet was due to start. That's what I call lucky timing. I've heard of other TAFF delegates getting nerves and wishing they could miss the banquet; but I've never heard of a TAFF delegate who slept blissfully through the entire proceedings.

Anyway, I changed into my day-glo orange suit, tailor-made for the occasion, and got downstairs in fairly good time. One way and another I felt pretty ill-at-ease: I'd given myself a fright by waking at the eleventh hour, I still hadn't woken up properly and felt pretty dozey, and it suddenly occurred to me that I might be asked to say something. It was a trembling and befuddled Roberts, therefore, who sat down at the table in between Messrs Weston & Jackson.

The banquet was a bit of a mess, as banquets usually are. John Millard, Seacon's Canadian agent and a solid old-time fan, had individually invited the three of us onto his table at the beginning of the con and we'd accepted. Now that we were sitting there we were feeling a bit conspicuous - British fans sticking together, and all that. Apart from John and Jan Howard Finder (who supplied most of the conversation) we didn't know the rest of the people at the table, though I recognized one as the monoglot Italian I'd seen earlier. Poor old Pete had a couple of mutes sitting on his left and a less than sparkling Roberts on his right. It was a bit grim.

I was just toying with my main course, which consisted - without a word of a lie - of eight carrots and a spoonful of beans (have you ever tried eating eight carrots?) served long after everyone else had had their's, when somebody squeezed past me clutching a pile of books, and knelt beside Roger Zelazny's chair immediately behind me, demanding autographs - which he got too. In the middle of a banquet. Gosh. It's all so being an author.

The meal over, Bob Silverberg got up and started toast-mastering - a thing he does very well. He called upon the first speaker - a visiting fan from England...

It still makes me nervous just to think about it. I enjoy public speaking, but not on formal occasions when I'm given an introduction and have to start talking on cue. It induces a crescendo of nerves that makes me physically speechless for 30 seconds or so - and 30 seconds is a long time to stand silently in front of a microphone.

Fortunately our table was some way off, so my nervousness (and consequent silence) peaked and ebbed whilst I was clambering shakily up the steps onto the platform. It looked worse from up there - a sea of after-dinner faces and flash guns. I was only intending to say a few words of thanks (I'd rather leave speeches to those who are good at them), but I thought I'd start off with a quip about needing special filters to get a photo of my suit.

Well, I started off in a sort of high-pitched mumble which had all the clarity of an Albanian liturgical chant. Bob Silverberg, smirking evilly, was playing with the switch controlling the movement of the mike and lectern. It wasn't a good speech, or even really an adequate one. But I survived, and that seemed the important thing at the time.

Still, the advantage of going first is that you can sit down and relax for the rest of the speeches. This, of course, is when an amazing number of witty and worthwhile things you might have said suddenly occur to you. Meanwhile Bob Silverberg was doing well and several of the Hugo winners were comforting me by sounding possibly more foolish, maudlin, or nervous than I might have been. And then the wookiee was on stage again and I suddenly felt a lot brighter, and ready for the Season celebration party.

Pete was particularly looking forward to this since he'd found a professional belly-dancer to give an authentic British flavour to the party. "Noice girl," he told me, confidentially.

Anyway she turned up at the party as did several hundred other people and I reckon we enjoyed ourselves. I probably went to bed after. I certainly should have done, even if I didn't. Let's say I did and move on to Monday.

* * *

Monday was notable for several things. Firstly there was a



panel in the morning at which a handful of wide-awake Americans were treated to the sight of several bedraggled and hung-over British fans who were ludicrously expected to discourse learnedly and wittily on the subject of British fandom. Few of the panellists could remember anything at all about British fandom. Most of us couldn't remember each others' names. Several thought they were still in bed.

After this nonsense I stayed on to hear one of the few programme items I managed to catch at Suncon - a panel, or more nearly a dialogue, on fandom in the sixties with Terry Carr and Ted White. Joined later by Lee Hoffman, the panel strayed into the fifties as well and produced a fund of entertaining anecdotes and little-known facts. Though some of the American fans seemed dismayed at the outburst, my favourite moment came when, during an explanation of the arguments between fannish and sercon elements in the fifties, Ed Wood (who looks like a large American, and is) suddenly bellowed out a defence of the hardline sercon stance and incited Ted White into a fannish counter-attack. The result was a spontaneous re-enactment of fannish history - a dramatic interlude illustrating an ancient feud, with full audience participation. (Ed Wood: *I used to trash every issue of HYPHEN unread and unopened!* Audience: *anguish, smiting of foreheads, general uproar!*)

This seemed to be virtually the last hurrah of the Suncon programme and it was evident that the con was coming to an end. From early morning evil-tempered congregations of black Southern Baptists had been gathering for some vast evangelical conference. Though they addressed each other (always as "Sister" or "Reverend Doctor") in splendidly rich and friendly Southern Baptist accents, they addressed the hotel staff otherwise, since the Fontainebleau had gone in for a bonanza of double-booking and general incompetence.

The hotel in fact was casting its greedy eyes on Suncon rooms - mine included. I was paged and curtly told to get out. This was pushing their luck, since I'd kept their original chit confirming my booking; I clung onto it tightly and eventually convinced them of my right to stay. Others weren't so lucky: Gordon Dickson told me he went up to his room to find a couple of particularly elderly black Baptists sitting bewildered on his bed, staring at his collection of sf and alcohol. He'd had a long and curious conversation with them, whilst the hotel tried to unscramble matters.

At some stage I went swimming and met with Terry Hughes, Hank & Lesleigh Luttrell, and a couple of other Madison fans. There isn't a great deal to do when swimming, but inasmuch as we were doing anything we were body-surfing. This is a rather tame pursuit, especially to someone brought up on Jan & Dean and the delights of Surf City, USA. However, one of the unknown fans was big enough to generate his own excitement, as waves thundered and crashed against him, mistaking his massive girth for a barrier reef. He looked quite impressive, battling against the tides in a passive sort of way, so I decided to be more active and plunged headlong into each incoming wave, scattering spray all over the place just like a tingling fresh toothpaste advert. It was a sort of reverse surfing - guaranteed wipe-out every time.

Tiring of this unusual burst of activity I took to swimming about a bit. The others had left, except for Terry who was paddling about somewhere.

Now I'm hardly an ace swimmer. The last time I'd gone into the sea before Miami was some fifteen years earlier when I was a kid, so I was sort of

breast-stroking and splashing about at around shoulder depth. Rapidly tiring of this unaccustomed exercise I put in a couple of fairly powerful strokes to reach the end of a wooden breakwater where I could rest for a bit. The couple of strokes, however, didn't advance me at all, so I gave up and decided to wade there. That's when I found my feet weren't touching the bottom. Panic.

I started swimming again. The breakwater was just a couple of feet away. I lunged at it once or twice and tried to concentrate on the niceties of a co-ordinated breaststroke. The breakwater remained a stubborn two feet or so away. Panic.

Terry was paddling about contentedly. I looked wildly over to him. He waved and I gave a confident and nonchalant wave back and promptly sank. By now I was feeling more than apprehensive. The ability (at age twelve) to swim two lengths of a five foot deep pool wasn't proving much of an advantage in this situation. In any event I'd already swum that much without gaining an inch and my arms were giving out. More panic.

Then I noticed the end of the breakwater was now three foot away and I was actually drifting out to sea. Huge panic.

My life didn't unwind before me - I just sort of saw headlines - "TAPP delegate drowned at Suncon!" - and felt more embarrassed than anything else. The people on the beach were all sunning themselves. Kids were splashing around in the shallows. Terry was paddling about quietly. I couldn't bring myself to shout out "Help!" to save my life. Typical British reserve, I suppose. Meanwhile the breaststroke had become an intermittent floundering and I was gulping down huge quantities of Atlantic Ocean whilst moving hopelessly backwards. It all seemed so bloody silly.

I spent some time, both above and below water, trying to think of something both witty and urgent to say to Terry, but couldn't concentrate well enough. I eventually settled for something like "Can you give me a hand, boss. I think I'm drowning."

MANY BRAVE
HEARTS ARE
ASLEEP IN THE DEEP



This had a marked effect on Terry, especially since I was by now disappearing under the water at uncomfortably frequent intervals. I've rarely seen anyone so dismayed. He began edging crablike towards me. It occurred to me he couldn't swim either. Two at once - it might even make the front page of *Locus*.

But you can all ease back into your chairs now, since an attack of common-sense came over me and I realized that if Terry was as far out as I was, yet still only shoulder deep, I must be in some kind of well or trough. Accordingly I told the bravely advancing Mr Hughes to hold still, swam sideways, and touched bottom.

I felt quite elated actually. For a few moments back there I really thought I'd done myself in. Terry was still looking somewhat wan, but I felt great. Nothing like escaping death for cheering yourself up - not that I fancied making a habit of it.

Meanwhile, back at the Suncon, hucksters were still selling pulps as if nothing had happened. The evening came on and with it some final parties. I met up with Charlie Brown who in turn met up with some affluent-looking people who seemed inclined to hold a party somewhere. We all went up to the penthouse suite - the only place in the whole hotel decorated with any taste or restraint - and, with our own private bar, began to hold a party.

Apart from Charlie the only other person I recognized was Poul Anderson and, as introductions were made, it slowly dawned on me that this must be a secret pro party, full of publishers, agents, and Hollywood sci-fi people. Goshwow.

They started talking about *Star Wars*. The publishers seemed rather earnest and nodded their heads a lot, in between mouthfuls of peanuts. After a while it wasn't too fascinating. Charlie drew me a comprehensive map of American fandom on the back of a matchbox and also gave me an Official Fanzine Control Number on a serviette. Our cosmic minds weren't paying much attention to the characterization and cultural significance of wookies.

I was thinking that at least I could casually impress Rob Jackson & Pete Weston, when the two of them walked in, together with a lot of other riff-raff. The party livened up considerably and in fact turned out to be very pleasant, especially since the penthouse suite had a balcony with a fine panoramic view of Miami at night. Whilst gazing out I chatted to someone about the virtues of growing Swiss chard and other vegetables. Swiss chard is less often discussed than *Star Wars* and also tastes better.

I must have wandered around a bit. I remember getting even higher by going out onto the roof where there was a really spectacular view, even if the lead was soft underfoot - a weird sensation. Terry was up there too - I suspect he was glad I didn't fall off the parapet or sink out of my depth in lead.

I finally ended up down on the beach again, circumventing the Fontainebleau's locks and bolts by going through a neighbouring hotel. I chatted on the shore with Tim Marion, a nice bloke with amazingly long hair and an equally amazing Southern accent. I'm easily amazed by Southern accents.

And so to bed. The next day I visited Disneyworld, but we'll leave that for the next chapter...

.....COMMENTS OF CONCISION AND CULTURED CONVERSATION CONVERGE IN...

LETTERS

LETTERS.....your thoughts on the last issue.

LETTERS

GLEN WARMINGER

72 Linacre Ave., Sprowston, Norwich, Norfolk NR7 8PG

Fanart is something that has totally underwhelmed me for a while now. I enjoy fanzines for the written word and any illustrations are secondary at best. What is fanart anyway, art by fans or about fans? It immediately confines itself by its existence as fan art as opposed to just Art. Cover art I agree, while not being exactly essential (a nearly blank cover with just the title of the fanzine is adequate and has a certain functional charm) is a way of giving atmosphere to a zine. A picture cover on a book, magazine etc., has become the normal way of things in the twentieth century, maybe due to some psychological reasoning connected with advertising but more likely because people like it that way. I don't know, but I am of the opinion that fan cover-art is a good thing. So too are the sort of illustrations or short strip that D West does. These are essentially about fandom, make a point, make sense, and are humourous. And they stand alone as communication. I dislike fillos, or whatever they are called, because they are mostly nothing but vaguely artistic doodles that just get in the way of the reading. More inept than adept they spoil the flow of the page. Most fillos (and that name condemns) are splattered willy-nilly through fanzines and appear like blotches of disease amongst the sun-filled glades of fannish prose (hee,hee). Some people even go so far as to bung an illo to one corner of a page but continue writing the article to the side of that illo which you then have to read over. This annoys. I think typography is more important than art in fanzines. EPSILON is a good example. Nice clear easy to read pages with a decent border at top, bottom, and sides. A clear, normal typeface on the typewriter used. No pages with the lines of type bleeding off the bottom of the page, therefore the only thing that can be boring about a page is its content - and of course quarto size. I champion the use of quarto-sized paper, not because of some archaic fannish tradition or because the great fanzines of the 70s were generally printed thus, but because it looks better ((My own reason for using it)). You can get just enough words on a page to make what seemed like an awful lot of effort actually appear to be in some way substantial - you could probably get EPSILON on two sheets of micro-elite covered A4 if you really wanted but it would be an unreadable and most unattractive mess. Eye-ergonomics, that's what it's all about. That is why more newspapers are becoming tabloid, because they are easier to read and that's nothing to do with literary quality. How many times have you seen people reading broadsheet-sized papers folding them in half in order to read in comfort? I think this is getting off the subject a little.

So I agree whole-heartedly with your piece on fanart. I do my own covers for my fanzine and as an ex-art student could, I suppose, be a fanartist (the merit of which is not for me to say) but I do not want to. I am interested in fandom and fanzines for their writing. I no longer find any

enjoyment from doing artwork and leave that to those that do. If fanart miraculously disappeared overnight I for one wouldn't give a damn.

DAVE COLLINS

21 Exleigh Close, Bitterne Southampton SO2 5FB

I couldn't disagree with you more over your views on fanart. Fanartists get a raw enough deal as it is without one of their own number speaking out against them. Unless you include cartoons with captions I don't do fillers but it's not for the same reasons you give. Why should so-called fillers be looked on as fodder useful only to fill a gap in the text? I've seen some pieces which are not only better than the zine's cover but are far more interesting than the words surrounding them. Why should fanartists be forever treated as the poor relations of fandom, using their time and effort to create pieces for which they get little or no feedback? Sometimes the covers and/or illustrations are the best parts of a fanzine and yet it takes something like the infamous Pete Lyon MATRIX cover for any reader reaction on fanart to appear in a loccol (I don't blame the editors totally for this as I know they get little or no feedback on this subject). I have recently done a number of illustrations for specific articles. What I wish is that someone would ask a fanwriter to write an article for specific illustrations.

I will continue to fight for the rights of the fanartist. I believe we deserve equal consideration with fanwriters. It's just that with noted fanartists like yourself putting down fanartists as a whole it's going to make the fight a whole lot harder.

JACKIE CAUSGROVE

6828 Alpine Ave. Apt 4, Cincinnati, OH 45236, USA.

I note a difference between Taral's view of Art-n-Fandom and mine: I don't view myself as an artist. I draw. I always have. I pretend to no special 'creativity' which, to me, differentiates the artist from the craftsman or draughtsman. Obviously Taral sees himself in a different light (I regret to say that I don't....but then, that's what makes horseraces...a difference of opinion.) He also makes as- and pre- sumptions about the relationship between artists and faneditors that really set my teeth on edge.

"...there are approximately 15 artists vying for 75 covers." Vying!?! While I cannot speak for all fanartists (a distinction Taral chooses to ignore), those I know - none of whom were mentioned by Taral - do not 'vie' for covers. Their work has been done on request, pure volunteerism, or to serve as exchange for fanzines. There has been no competition for fanzine appearances. Does Taral seriously believe he beat out other artists in some sort of race for fanzine space? I am, to put it bluntly, aghast.

Your lack of productivity (only four drawings in a year's time!?!) makes mine shine by contrast. I think I did about eight drawings in 1984. But your point, that most fanartists have to be beaten (always being careful not to harm their itty-bitty fingers, of course) in order to get some work out of them is well-taken. Well, that is a slight exaggeration, since many fanartists are pleased to perform when suitably bribed, but the fact remains that few, if any, fanartists have to beg for space to be given them in

fanzines. If Taral views his relationship with faneditors differently, then I really pity him.

MIKE GLICKSOHN

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

When I read Taral's comments about cover art and cover artists I found myself doubting the accuracy of his numbers but basically agreeing with his remarks. I'm interested to read a reaction from another artist (I draw to the occasional outside straight but that's all) which so totally differs from what Taral had to say. Unlike you, I use a lot of art in my fanzines, always trying to make it relevant to the surrounding text and incorporating it into the total visual package of the fanzine. That's important to me, and not to you, which is fine and is also why EPSILON is one of the most boring looking fanzines around. Luckily for us, the material and the writing rise above that flaccid appearance and make EPSILON a very enjoyable fanzine. To me, though, it would still be a better total fanzine if the same high-quality writing was embellished by good design and art. Different strokes for different folks.....

I hope your TAFF trip wasn't too tainted by all this shit that's been going down; I'd hate to think you weren't able to enjoy a deserved victory because of the unpleasantness that's been spoiling fandom for so many of us of late. (I don't envy you the task of trying to write a TAFF report around all this extraneous garbage.) It's a hell of a waste of the time, talent, and energy of a large number of important fans but I expect it to continue for a while yet. I'm still waiting to hear from Bergeron myself after replying to the first issue of Cesar's AEON ((which I've never seen, incidentally)) and expressing extremely negative reactions to what Bergeron has been up to - I sent him (Bergeron, I mean) a carbon and covering letter. I just hope to hell I'm wrong and this ends before many worthwhile fans are driven into gaffiation from the bad taste it's leaving in everybody's mouth.

Odd how old-timers like ATom and Chuch can read the same contribution from Kettle and react to it in such dissimilar ways. Just goes to show you how different fans find humour in different places. Of course, that doesn't happen today: nowadays everybody realises that saying something like: "Backgammon is a boring sport" would be fannish humour. Don't they?

Either Brian didn't write his letter or I didn't write mine and I have very strong memories of using those very turns of phrase so I'll have to assume that this issue's lettercolumn is merely another example of the creativity and thought that you put into designing (and writing) the replies to each issue of EPSILON. As no less a fan than Ted White Himself says (the very one with whom I sometimes disagree in public) "almost sublime". (Although now that I think of it doesn't that have something to do with turning into gas?)

AVEDON CAROL

4409 Woodfield Rd., Kensington MD 20895, USA

God, that little bit from Brian was a nice bonus for you, wasn't it - even if you did have to fake it slightly. Some people still don't believe I didn't write the letters to RUDE BITCH that appeared in DEAR RUDE BITCH because of the way the first two letters fit together so perfectly. If this keeps up

no-one will believe any of us get or write real LoCs at all. Gee, why do I find myself nodding like a wind-up toy while I read D West's letter? Too bad Don didn't win, we could abscond with the funds together.

((Careful. Jokes of that nature are likely to be taken as evidence of further malpractice on your part by people in parts Puerto Rican.))

I am inclined to throw out your entire argument with Taral's position purely on the basis of two little things in it that make me want to thump you. I refer, of course, to that cheap little "((sic))" you insert into his text. As someone who is often guilty of typos and spelloes, I do, of course, have a personal interest in this matter, but even without that I would still disapprove of what you've done here. Aside from distracting from your own point with cheap shots like that, you don't exactly make people feel like writing to you or anywhere you can see it when they know they're going to be ridiculed for such minor little slips. As an editor I always feel it's part of my job to copyedit material people submit to me for publication - I may not always be good at it, but at least I try. Thus, when I recognise a misspelling or typo in a letter, I do not repeat it, I correct. The same goes for poor usage or other such errors. When someone gives me an article that uses the word 'disinterested' to mean 'uninterested' I type 'uninterested'. I don't use the same wrong word and then insult my contributor by putting "((sic))" after it. And when I'm quoting in an instance such as yours in EPSILON 16, I can't correct the usage but I certainly don't have to draw attention to it with silly little parenthetical inserts like that. Anyway, "Supposing" is a pretty minor sin, when you get down to it. Shame on you. And then you compound the error by repeating it. "Something that Taral conveniently forgets, apart from grammar, is that" people like Rob Hansen don't have enough conviction behind their own arguments to stick to their point and lay off Taral's minor grammatical infractions. Really! This from a man who uses such silly phrases as "since you're not going to meet D or I anyway", where you use the subject form of the pronoun as an object. You want to stop doing that unless you'd rather spend the rest of your life being taken to task over your grammar, Mr Smartypants.

No. You don't use those snarky little "((sic))" inserts unless you have a point to make that's really germane. Taral's little grammatical slip is not germane here. It's just the sort of spoken-language/slanguage people use all the time, and being able to reproduce it in print is sometimes considered an art form of its own. To some of us content is a lot more important than these little trivial details. I say this as someone whose grammar is significantly better than yours, chum.

I like Harry's article, which clearly defines Vrax - a word much needed but not previously used in the English language - as when you not only take the rap for something you're not responsible for, but people (especially those who are responsible) laugh at you. Sort of like what happens to rape victims. Isn't that what's always happening to Peter Parker? He's just that kind of guy, a sort of Wild Arthur who shouldn't be.

That Chuch Harris, he really does write pretty funny stuff, no matter what he says here about not writing as good as modern fans. I've already got three new members for the Chuch Harris Fan Club I started, you know, and

that's with almost no publicity. Anyone can join by admiring him and you don't have to send money but I don't give you anything for it either. I hope I can be a "true successor" to him when I grow up, too.

Avedon Carol
President, Chuch Harris Fan Club International.

((Hah! The hoary old reprobate is so busy corresponding with Avedon and warning her against the Welsh - "I hardly know how to tell you this, but on Friday evenings they carry out this dreadful fertility rite called, I think, Sospan Fach, which you aren't going to like at all. I hope." - that he hasn't the time to write a separate LoC on EPSILON 16 but instead buries his comments in one of his many letters to her and copies it to me as an afterthought. Hah and double-hah, Harris! Then, to add insult to injury, he slags the cover off....))

CHUCK HARRIS

32 Lake Crescent, Daventry, Northants NN11 5EB

What a rubbishy old cover we're fobbed off with this time. The good ship EPSILON looks a pretty foul-breeched old scow in need of a good scraping. Now, I used to go around with lots of sailors and one of the other things I learnt was that the nameplate, or logo - as us tars call it - should be right up the sharp end instead of drooping around the bottom. Further, - and I'm not just trying to flash my nautical bit but somebody has to tell you - the pier notices ALWAYS state "No visitors past this point" NOT "No passengers". Otherwise how the hell would you imagine they get on board - a Lord Greystoke up the anchor chain, or something? I don't think either you or Dan Steffan will ever make a good sailor - but I've got some nice addresses here, dear, if you want to prove me wrong...

And if that's Avedon on deck, what the hell is she doing clutching your tawdry jonquils instead of the daily dozen red roses I've been sending her?

And just what are those two tiny strands of wire festooned around the bow? These are the railings? The edge of the palings? The gunwales? Or bulwarks to you? It certainly looks like a pretty abandoned ship all round. Man the goats!

MAL ASHWORTH

16 Rockville Drive Embsay, Skipton, N.Yorkshire

I'm a slow bugger. I just don't think about some things. APAs, for one, but D West, Paul Vincent and Simon Ounsley, in league with a Concatenation of Circumstances, have persuaded me to change my ways. And no mean smidgen of that concatenation is Harry Bell's 'Wild Arthur & The Vlaxinators', a lovely bit of writing. It does sadden me now that I am taking the trouble to think about it that but for the suss and nous of people like Linda Pickersgill (for an all-too-brief Golden Dawn) and yourself pieces like this would be buried for aye and a nonce in some APATIC catacombs. Verily, the time is out of joints (I'm out of them myself, in fact, now that I come to look).

Seriously, though, it does seem a rather sad business. I know APAs are cosy, mini-fandoms and all that but the net result of the present state of

affairs is that a lot of people miss out on seeing some excellent fan-writing; the writer, by restricting his material to such a small readership reduces his egoboo-trawl; and there is some impoverishment of general fan-zine fandom. Up to now I've seen all too little of Harry Bell's writing but I now note that he is leading figure in Midwich Cuckoo fandom or "another of those goddamned multi-talented bastards", as us BAFFs put it.

Yes, yes, yes to Chuck Harris' plea for a Leroy Kettle Anthology. I mean, yes, I'm wild about it too. Do it somebody, please. (Of course, I have to say 'yes' to anything Chuck says, but still..)

Yes, yet again, it may well be that Ratfandom - of which I've also seen too little - is/was some kind of successor to, even if not lineal descendant of, 50s Trufandom, as both you and Chuck suggest. My evidence is not so much a comparison of styles, content, interests, etc., as a pretty scintillating bit of real hotshit linguistic analysis. For - do you see - if you transpose the first letter of the prefix 'Tru' to the third position and the second letter to the first and make a slight shift in the intervening vowel, what have you got? Not a lot, perhaps, but then what did you expect?

Goddamn your letter column anyway, Hansen. Glancing through it casually with the aid of nothing more than a x10 magnifying glass and a fine-tooth comb led me to wonder which particular brand of brain-lesion I had been indulging in when I wrote you that letter burbling on about the nature of D West's writing when the previous issue had clearly offered such a rich Gorgonzolic chunk of Leroy Kettle, which I should have been slavering over. I have, only minutes ago, re-read his superb Novacon report. His Novacon sounds so much better than the one I was at at the same time and I don't understand why I didn't go ga-ga over his write-up last time around. D now harangues me every Friday evening on the train going into Leeds about how I actually ought to read his writing if I'm going to pass opinions on it. I haven't yet managed to get him to see what a weak and piffling argument this is. Thus it is that he also harangues me in similar vein on the train back from Leeds. (Fortunately there is a break between these two events. During this time we are in the pub where D, by way of introducing some variety into the evening, harangues me about how I ought to read his writing if I am going to pass opinions on it. I gravely consider the force and potency of his position with my full attention while wondering with the other 90% of my mind whether anyone else is going to turn up and buy us a drink before it's my round again.)

I cannot leave you without putting into operation a magnificently West-stymying ploy I have just come up with. I want to say what an excellent letter that is that he wrote you, really truly. Now maybe we'll have a real whoop-up on our next trip into Leeds, full of scintillating fannish dialectic about who gets to buy the beer instead of these mundane arguments about whether I ought to read his writing before I pass judgement on it.

JOSEPH NICHOLAS

22 Denbigh St., Pimlico, London SW1V 2ER.

"From snippets I snap up here and there," says Mal Ashworth, "I gather that Joseph is something of a Marxist." And from the comments which follow this remark it would appear that, for Ashworth, this is sufficient condemnation.

One wonders if he'd feel so certain were he denouncing someone he suspected of being, say, a Christian, or a sociologist, or a fanzine fan...

The awful (for Ashworth) truth is that ideology ("the science of ideas", says my dictionary, also terming it "A manner of thinking") is one of the many means by which we seek to interpret the world around us, and the fact that some people happen to misuse an ideology or theory is hardly a valid ground for denouncing it altogether. If this was the case, one would end up repudiating Darwin (for instance) just because the Social Darwinists have misunderstood his ideas, or rejecting genetics because of Hitler and the Holocaust; and that is obvious nonsense. The fact remains that if we didn't attempt to organise and systemise our knowledge ("the raw data") we would never be able to make any sense of it; interpret it, understand it, and make use of it.

But then, for Ashworth, "every interpretation is a falsification". Perhaps he'd better brace himself for another awful truth, which is that our brains are interpreting the "raw data" that flows in through our senses every second of the day, and if they didn't we'd all have died of sensory overload the moment we were born. Does this therefore make us all deliberate liars, endlessly deluding ourselves about the nature of reality? Yes, but first reality...although the reality here, in this context, is that Ashworth's observations and interpretations are thus no purer or more objective than mine.

Yes, interpretations - because what is his first paragraph but his interpretation of what he believes to be my position? (As D West once put it in another context: "One would expect a more careful writer not to contradict himself until at least the top of the next page".) And it's compounded by the fact that it happens to be incorrect,..because I'm not a Marxist at all. I happen to agree with a couple of Marx's basic tenets - such as his division of economic endeavour into the exploiting class (who possess capital resources) and the exploited class (who are employed by those capital resources) which is as concise a description of Capitalism as you'll find anywhere - but this is a very long way indeed from agreeing with every one of the ideas he puts up.

Or, indeed, agreeing with every one of the ideas put forward by the various historiographers I mentioned in EPSILON 14, and Ashworth's suggestion that I have an "absolute" view of history causes me to wonder whether he's actually read any of them. (Certainly anyone who thinks a High Tory like G.R.Elton is pushing the same line as Karl Marx is either ignorant or a fool.) And what "alternative view of history" would Ashworth like me to concede is possible? His own, in which (it would appear) the raw data are left as raw data? No thank you!

WALT WILLIS

32 Warren Rd., Donaghadee, Northern Ireland BT21 OPD.

I thought Mal Ashworth's letter stood out in this issue, for the rare sort of critical comment that is really constructive. That it is witty too is almost more than we deserve. Arthur Thomson's letter was also interesting, and constructive in its way. I think it illustrates the fact that we older fans are too inclined to see the use of 'bad language' as what it used to

EPSILON 17.....November 1984.

is the once-again quarterly fanzine
edited by Rob Hansen
9A Greenleaf Rd.
East Ham
London E6 1DX.

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

Final stencil typed 8th Nov 1984.

CONTENTS:

INTRO.....1.
A STATEMENT BY D WEST.....7.
FOLIES BERGERON.....7.
HELLO AMERICA.....11.
THE TERROR AT 40,000 FEET.....16,
by Linda K. Pickersgill
SUNCON & THE SEA OFF MIAMI.....18.
TAF report by Peter Roberts
Illustrated by Steve Stiles
LETTERS.....31.

TAF - THE TRANSATLANTIC FAN FUND - YOUR VOTE COUNTS.....PLEASE USE IT.....

(Willis continued...) be, the self-label of the semi-literate, whereas
nowadays of course it is merely a stylistic mannerism,
the macho equivalent of feminine underling.

((Whatever your thoughts on the subject it's some indication of the
change in mores that one of our national TV channels now runs a comedy
show called 'The Bullshitters'.

ATom's letter came across in print sounding more negative than he'd
intended it to and he was somewhat surprised by my reaction to it since
he thought I knew him better than that, while I'd been somewhat surprised
by his letter since I thought I knew him better than that. Fortunately
we were able to resolve this over a few drinks at the One Tun thus
proving, once again, one of the main advantages of in-person fanac.
Namely, that misunderstandings can be quickly and amicably resolved
rather than dragging on for months and escalating, as they tend to do
in fanzines.))

WAHF: Pascal J. Thomas, Darroll Pardoe, ATom, Harry J.N. Andruschak, and Ving
Clarke: "Like many others I am awaiting your Report with great interest.
I can't think of anyone else in current fandom whose views on
the US scene I'd rather read."

THROUGH THE AGE BARRIER: Tomorrow is the 9th of November, the first night of
NOVACON, and my 30th birthday. (I was 20 when I
attended my first convention and now the last act I perform as I leave my 20s
is the production of this fanzine. There's cosmic significance in there
somewhere.) Tomorrow also happens to be Dai Price's birthday and I've
deposited a sum of money with the estimable Mr Price so that we can celebrate
by imbibing lots of falling-down juice at a party to be held in his room. If
you're reading this you're invited. Bringing drink of your own is probably
also a good idea so that we don't run out too fast. See you there. 8/11/84.
