

HANSEN '61



I'M BACK I'M BACK, AS A MATTER OF FACT I'M BACK.....**

EDITORIAL

EDITORIAL....or: my, hasn't it been a long time?

EDITORIAL

There are those of you (a majority, I suspect) who thought you'd seen the last of EPSILON, after all it has been almost three years since the last issue, but you don't get off that easily because the old feeling started to well up again and the fanzine you hold in your hands is the end result. It's been an interesting period what with two YORCON'S, SEACON and a couple of NOVACONS in there somewhere, not to mention a SILICON and a MARVELCON (about which less will be said later), but as most of you are aware things of greater personal importance have occurred as well. Namely: I was made redundant in my job at GKN (South Wales) Ltd and left Newport to seek my fortune in the big city.

On getting involved in fandom in 1975/76 and beginning to receive consecutive issues of fanzines I was more than mildly amazed by the number of changes of address these fanzines carried, especially as in the course of a year or so the same names seemed to keep occurring over and over. Now, however, I find myself in the same position because since becoming involved in fandom my address has transmogrified thus:

51 Bryn y Nant, Llanedeyrn, Cardiff CF3 1PA.
22 Llanthewy Rd., Newport, Gwent.
c/o 7A Lawrence Rd., South Ealing, London W5.
9A Greenleaf Rd., East Ham. London E6 1DX.

Note that last address:

9A Greenleaf Rd.,
East Ham,
London E6 1DX.

This is where I now reside, having purchased said property at great expense and thus plunged myself into debt for the next twenty five years. This fanzine has been produced to function as both an official notice of my COA and, surprisingly, as a fanzine.

The mix is the same as before with the famous NOTIONS column of which Paul Kincaid, in a letter to EPSILON 6, said:

"NOTIONS continues to be the most important column in British fanzines. Nobody else seems concerned enough to produce such a critical look at the state of modern British fandom. Not only that, but you're so consistently accurate with your criticisms. I believe that we need this criticism, and perhaps the fact that nobody else seems prepared to make it may lend substance to your fears."

while Greg Pickersgill has long maintained that the column should be dropped.

ODZUNSODZ is the same personal diary it's always been and the LETTERS section, being of historical interest, is tacked onto the end in a desperate attempt at some semblance of continuity. Actually, the LETTERS section has

been on stencil for nearly two years and only the addresses have been altered.

This issue's 'fiction', 'Death of a Metaphor' was written as an attempt to justify the cover (and I wonder how many people will work out the allusion behind the title?), while 'A NORTH AMERICAN DIALOGUE' was all I actually wrote of what was originally intended to be a mammoth report on the 1979 Worldcon.

In his fanzine, the excellent TAPPEN, Malcolm Edwards stated his philosophy of fanzines thus:

"I believe that fanzines are a unique and very special form of communication in the form to which they have evolved in SF fandom. We are lucky to have them, and they deserve respect. I'm opposed to the view that it's okay to print any old rubbish in them because, what the hell, it's just a fanzine. On the contrary, I think that fanwriting is one of the few forms of writing that are pointless unless you are doing your very best."

Right on, brother! To such sentiments I can only add that everything I do in fanzines is an attempt, in some way, to entertain or amuse and that while I'm limited by my abilities I hope that in some measure I succeed.

Once again, as I was periodically wont to do in the Good Old Days, I've dispatched a few extra copies of EPSILON to the States in the hopes of a response of some sort and the building up of that side of my readership. This is, in part, due to the fact that while TAPPEN is the best fanzine I've seen in close on two years US fan Dan Steffan's BOONFARK is a close second and leads me to believe that further intercourse with the land of apple pie could be fruitful.

Linda Pickersgill (nee Karrh) has long maintained that the Great Myth of British Fandom, that except for MOTA and one or two others American zines were largely bland and boring, was a falsehood fostered by the fact that there were a lot of her fellow countrymen producing Good Stuff but disinclined to send it across the big water. This seems entirely reasonable and is even echoed to some extent in this country because, without doubt, that group of fans collectively known as Ratfandom were, in the early seventies, producing material of a quality not seen in the UK since the days of the Belfast Triangle, and yet because such a small amount of their output made it across the Atlantic they are nowhere near as well known over there as their illustrious predecessors. Which is a great pity. It's also a great pity that the role of fanhistorian is held in such low esteem over here and that, since the virtual gaffiation of Peter Roberts, there is no-one to write the Ratfan retrospective that I feel is so sorely needed.

Thanks are due this issue to John Harvey for printing the cover, and most especially to Greg and Linda Pickersgill for putting me up (and putting up with me) during my first ten months in London.

This is EPSILON 7 and is available for the usual (editor's whim, trade, letter of comment) or a sample copy for 30p in postage stamps.

ROB HANSEN 17/7/81.

***DEJA VU, PARANOIA AND ALL YOUR OLD FAVOURITES IN THE COLUMN CALLED...**

NOTIONS

NOTIONS.....in which an ugly head is reared.

NOTIONS

The universe turns...and having turned turns once again. Or to put it another way, there are some things you can't get away from no matter how hard you try and it's kind of ironic that the concerns of the NOTIONS column for this issue that I wrote, and ultimately rejected, back in 1979 should appear in the one that finally sees print. The thing is, you see, I had EPSILON 7 all written and neatly typed up ready for duplication back in 1979, in those final days before the Collapse, but even so could not actually decide whether, given it's topic, that NOTIONS column should see print and such was the depth and duration of my deliberation and procrastination on this weighty matter that the whole issue became obsolete and never actually saw print. The topic I couldn't bring myself, after much soul-searching, to introduce into the British body fannish was Politics. Most of that original column no longer exists but the first stencil does and this is what I said:

'For all it's reflections of the problems of today, it's extrapolations of those problems into grim future scenarios intended to have a salutary effect, science fiction is still essentially an escapist medium and accepted as such by the majority of it's readers. While there is nothing wrong with escapism per se it has been suggested that those who take pleasure from escapist literature are somehow unable to face up to reality, that they have a set of values and priorities that are not as they should be. Who judges what your values and priorities should be is another matter but, as I'm sure you've noticed, there is no shortage of people willing to tell you what you should think.

All of which is a round about way of opening a discussion on an event, and it's ramifications, that have received little attention in British fandom, perhaps not surprisingly as things happening six thousand miles away can often seem to have little direct bearing on us. The place was Phoenix, Arizona, and the event was Harlan Ellison's stance as Guest of Honour at Iguanacon, the 1978 World Science Fiction Convention. Ellison chose to use the Worldcon as a platform for his views on the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), and specifically Arizona's non-ratification of said amendment. Now I'm not familiar with the intricacies of the ERA, beyond a feeling that it shares some common ground with the Equal Rights Bill passed in this country some years ago, but on the general question of Equal Rights I would imagine the majority of fans to be in favour of the necessary reforms. However at the moment I'm more concerned with the larger issues raised by Ellison's stance, the whole question of politics in fandom.

Commenting on Ellison's GoH speech in NABU 6 Mike Glicksohn said that Ellison "...advocates using the Worldcon as a weapon to fight for the ERA, as a tool in an essentially political struggle. To put it mildly, many fans were not amused or interested or enthusiastic. Once

again the question was 'What is a convention for?'. This is the crux of the matter. Has anyone got the right to use a convention this way, regardless of the specific issue, to use someones hard-earned weekend holiday as a political tool? According to Christine Atkinson in SEAMONSTERS 2 Ellison also "...talked about the reluctance of fans to be committed to any cause, and his feeling that this was nothing to be proud of". For my own part I've always been suspicious of those who wish to bring politics into every aspect of life, be it sport, music, or science fiction conventions. Just because fans are at a convention to enjoy themselves doesn't mean that they remain totally non-political when they return to the "real" world.'

I then commented on the attempt to politicise the Heidelberg Worldcon in 1970, as reported by Waldemar Kumming in EGG 8 (1974) for those interested, and went on to give my views on certain matters in Britain that seemed to me to be in need of fresh political initiatives. I won't bore you by reprising those arguments since, as I stated earlier, I decided that it was really not a good idea to foist them on fandom at large.

Two years passed, eventful years both personally and in British fandom where the Collapse came and apathy ruled, until we reached Easter 1981, Yorcon II, and some strange indications of the way things might, perhaps, be heading. There had been signs earlier, of course, when Roz Kaveny and Abi Frost launched Dupers for Poland, an appeal designed to raise the money necessary to buy one or more duplicators and ship them to Poland where the free trade union Solidarity had great need of them. This was a fine and noble enterprise and, in essence, one which I supported and yet, even when I first heard of the appeal I felt a vague disquiet. Could this, I wondered, be the thin end of the wedge?

On arriving at Yorcon and skimming through the programme I was more than a little surprised to note that one of the films being shown was 'Year Zero' the John Pilger documentary originally shown on British TV some time ago, and a brilliant and disturbing insight into the plight of the Cambodians to be sure, but I failed, and still fail, to see what it was doing on the programme of a Science Fiction convention. Ian Watson, British GoH, announced that he intended standing as the Labour candidate in the upcoming Helmdon Council Election, as is his right, but to use his GoH speech as a platform for extolling the virtues of Socialism seemed to me to be an abuse of his position.

"But Rob, everything is political!", protested Abi Frost when I suggested, during an outing to a chinese restaurant, that mixing fandom and politics was not really a very good idea. I conceded that, in the broadest terms, everything is political and I'm certainly not going to claim that my opinions on certain issues, which must be moulded by my political perspective, don't creep into my work on occasion because plainly they do. They did so most overtly in the article I wrote stating my views on Devolution in an issue of SKWELSH some years ago and in STARFAN where I made my views on macho

stereotypes and attempts to justify terrorism pretty obvious. I now regret having written the Devolution article, though my views on the matter remain much the same, but since STARFAN is satire of a sort some political dimension was inevitable, though it's fairly broad rather than specific, a state of affairs which was both deliberate and a strong act of will.

No the real danger, as I see it, is specific party political arguments appearing in fanzines since these are not only potentially divisive but also essentially futile. You're not going to change anyone's views by writing in a fanzine anymore than you're going to change their religion and while I'm as happy as the next guy to stand at the bar and solve the problems of the world I'm not really interested in reading in a fanzine why you think that Margaret Thatcher, Tony Benn, or whoever, is an evil loony. I've spoken in the past of the need for new ground for fanzines to explore, new paths to follow. The politicising of fanzines isn't one of them.

At the Yorcon panel discussion of fandom and fanzines Abi lauded the printing and distribution network that had evolved in fandom and asked:

"Don't you think this is a great tool for revolution?"

Frankly, no.

A NORTH AMERICAN DIALOGUE.....

Some of the more rural areas of Wales are only a few short miles outside Cardiff city limits so thatched roofs are a familiar sight but until I went to stay with Greg Pickersgill and Simone Walsh immediately prior to SEACON, the 1979 Brighton Worldcon, I'd never seen one on a human being. It was 4pm on Tuesday 21st August 1979, and the door of 7A Lawrence Rd., where I was to spend the night, was opened by a shortish guy with a mass of hair that concealed most of his head and chest and from which poked a nose and a pair of eyes.

"Hi, I'm Mike Glicksohn...you must be Rob Hansen!"

A smile appeared, miraculously, amid all that hair, and we shook hands. The pre-con warm-up had begun.

Upstairs was balding San-Franciscan fan Rich Coad who looked up, said "Hi!", and returned to the Sex Pistols biography he was reading. For those of you who have ever wondered how Americans and Canadians relate I present the following remembered conversation:

Rich: "Everything north of Seattle is a wasteland. They oughta use it as a nuclear testing ground."

Mike: "Pretty soon now it'll be economical for us to extract the vast quantities of oil in our shale beds then you'll come begging on your hands and knees to us."

Rich: "We're already doing that with the Mexicans but there's no way we'll go on our hands and knees to Canadians. We've got some pride. No, if it does become economical we'll just annexe Canada."

Mike: "We threw you out last time you tried and we'll throw you out the next."

Isn't solidarity wonderful?

****REDUNDANCY, RE-LOCATION, AND A TALE OF TWO CONVENTIONS IN.....****

ODZUNSODZ

ODZUNSODZ....as to what I've been doing lately, well.....

ODZUNSODZ

As you're all no doubt aware by this time I'm now living in London, a citizen of the metropolis. While the thought of moving to London has always had a kind of appeal I would have been quite content to carry on as I was, spending my days finding new and novel ways of falling asleep over a drawing board and my evenings finding new and novel ways to cook a baked bean. I'd gotten kind of used to living alone and fending for myself (ie. underpants need washing if you throw them against a wall and they stick; shirts need changing when your workmates communicate with you by writing messages on paper darts), and I had a reasonable flat at the not unreasonable rent of £14 per week, a figure I was informed would have to be more than doubled for a similar place in London. I had found my niche, had crawled into a comfortable rut, and was quite willing to continue with this secure and somnambulistic lifestyle, willing that is until I was prodded with a sharp stick called redundancy.

GKN is an international company with a large turnover but the part I worked for, GKN (South Wales) Ltd., had been in deep financial trouble for a couple of years with losses in the millions and while I admit to making a few mistakes I refuse to take all the blame. I worked in the drawing office and for the past few years I'd kept my colleagues amused with my amiable wit and creative snoring, contributing greatly to the atmosphere of the office, (and no, that had nothing to do with the new and novel ways to cook baked beans). With this in mind you can imagine how surprised I was to find myself one of those cast overboard to lighten the load of a sinking ship, an apt metaphor since the re-organisation that rendered my services surplus to requirements entailed dividing GKN (South Wales) Ltd. into 'ships'. Still I'd been dissatisfied with my job for some time, though too complacent to do anything about it, and the fact that I had a payoff in excess of twelve hundred pounds meant that it was not exactly a bitter pill to swallow. The fact that I had a job to go to also helped.

Being qualified to HNC level in Mechanical Engineering and having trained as a mechanical draughtsman I'd never considered that I'd one day make the change from heavy engineering to groceries, but I now find myself working for Sainsbury's, a company in excellent financial health with record profits last year and it's shares steadily rising on the stock market. On the assumption that people always have to eat no matter what, working for a grocery chain seems a reasonable thing to do in these recessary times, even though I don't have the cut-price grocery 'perk' that most everyone naturally assumed I would have. In actual fact one of the first notices I encountered at head office announced, in a manner designed to evoke awe, that Sainsbury's would shortly open a special staff-only store where employees would be able to purchase goods....AT SAINSBURY'S STANDARD RETAIL PRICES!!! Truly, my employers' generosity knows no bounds. However, I'm getting ahead of myself, because before all this there was.....

THE MOVE

Since this piece is being written many months after the events described occurred, and since my memory is no more immune to the distortion and dissipation of time than anyone else's, what you are about to read is a concoction of fact, half-truth, fantasy, and outright lies. Much like any other piece of anecdotal fannish writing in fact.

An Englishman's home is his castle, or so they say, but as a Welshman whose home was a rented flat I didn't much care whether it was or not. No, it was the morning of May 31st 1980 and I was more concerned with packing my belongings than with the castle I would have to find in the England I was about to make my home. The time was fast approaching when Linda Karrh and Greg Pickersgill would arrive, and they would be expecting to load their van with neatly packed items, items that were not actually packed, neatly or otherwise. Packing had degenerated into shoving handfuls of fanzines into random paper bags when Alun Harries and Bryn Fortey arrived. Reasoning that they could best be of assistance by lightening the load to be transported they sat down and began eating their way through my meagre food stocks, Fortey complaining of my meanness all the while and rooting through various boxes in the hopes of finding literature and devices of a sexually dubious nature.

The London contingent eventually arrived and Greg, used to my usual efficiency, snorted in disbelief when he saw how much still had to be packed. I gave Greg and Linda tea and would have given them biscuits as well but Harries and Fortey had by now devoured my supply and were rummaging among my effects for anything else that looked remotely edible. Somewhere during these proceedings the anorexic Dai Price had arrived so, with our force assembled we set to work at the task of loading up the van, a task which seemed to consume an incredible amount of time and effort considering that I haven't accumulated the same weight of material as most of my fan-nish contemporaries. The loading done it was suggested that we all adjourn to the pub, which we did. At closing time we wandered the streets, Dai Price guiding us and pointing out such tourist attractions as the home of Councillor and Mrs Langford, parents to TWLL DDU's notorious editor, before eventually heading for London. It was a largely uneventful trip and we arrived in Lawrence Rd after dark, the unloading having become a task for the following day.

The unloading was an easy, if time-consuming, affair and eventually everything was in what was to be my room in the coming months, everything that is except the desk! For those of you unfamiliar with 7A Lawrence Rd it's a first floor flat reached by a flight of stairs from street level with a couple of attic rooms reached by a second flight directly over the first, the two being connected by a landing running parallel to them which gave two 180° turns to traverse in getting the desk up from the street. Having helped me move into my Newport flat two years earlier Greg was all too familiar with my desk and regarded it with a loathing I've never known him to have towards any other inanimate object.

"I've got an axe out back that'll make it easier to get indoors", said Greg, his eyes having narrowed to mere slits as he gazed at the desk. I

declined his kind offer and we set about hauling the thing upstairs. The desk is a product of Eastern Europe and thoughts of a subtle Communist plot to give hernias to the flower of Western manhood flitted through my mind as we struggled up that first flight. After much blood, sweat, cursing, crushed fingers and bruised balls we got the desk up to the landing and collapsed over it, dripping sweat and panting heavily. Greg looked across at me, his top lip curled into an almost imperceptible sneer. He didn't say anything; he didn't have to.

At the top of the second flight the stair turns through another ninety degrees and up through the door to the attic rooms with no landing at all, the roof overhead sloping downward and restricting access. After much huffing and grunting we managed to get the desk up to this point but couldn't turn it to get it through the door. Greg ordered a stop and Linda brought us choc ices as we debated the problem.

"We have to bring the desk up the stairs on it's other side", Greg announced after some deliberation. This seemed logical enough and so the desk was eased back down to the landing, turned and, after a great deal of further huffing and grunting, taken up to the door once more. We couldn't turn it. Greg scratched his head and climbed up over the desk and into the attic rooms to examine things from that angle.

"It has to go back down", he said, and since it required both Greg and myself to effect this he climbed onto the top of the desk to come back over and then stopped, gazing down the stairs with a look of horror on his face.

"I can't do it!", he cried

"What can't you do?", I asked, through gritted teeth. The desk was supported on my leg, my back braced against the bannister, in order to prevent the desk from sliding down the stairs, and the extra weight of Greg on top was killing me.

"It's too far down; I know I'll fall!", he announced, with a certainty that bespoke of the ultimate futility of life, the universe, and everything (good line, eh?). Since there was no other way out but over the top, and since I could neither get the desk down by myself nor hope to move and dash down the stairs before the desk came crashing after me, things were looking grim.

Eventually, of course, Greg was cajoled into dropping over the desk and the offending object itself was lowered to the landing yet again. It was at this point I decided to measure the desk and discovered that it would never have gone through the doorway anyway.

BODILY FUNCTIONS

In her recent apazine SMACK, Linda Pickersgill said that she gave the following advice to the TAFF-winner, fellow American Stu Shiffman, at YORCON:

"If you want to get to know Brit fans stay close to the bar, keep a drink in your hand and make jokes about bodily functions. The Brits think that

nothing's funnier than anything that comes in or out of any bodily orifice."

This is, of course, entirely true and as a case in point Malcolm Edwards and myself, while recently duplicating TAPPEN, spent a fair time reminiscing on the many and varied occasions on which we had thrown up, especially those which were particularly embarrassing or had had the direst consequences. When you consider it bodily functions are a perfectly valid topic for conversation because, after all, most of us have them. I'm sure you've all given a fair bit of thought to the numerous orifices and Bits That Stick Out scattered here and there about your body and explored the various interesting and enjoyable uses to which they can be put so, bearing in mind this shared interest, it seems a reasonable idea to include, as a semi-regular department, a small section devoted to bodily functions.

To kick off this first installment I intend to discuss a letter published in the LANCET, June 27th 1981 issue, from someone at Georgetown University School of Medicine in Washington DC (and no, I don't usually read that august journal but someone I work with brought this particular letter to my attention; my colleagues know what I find amusing). Now I'm sure the male section of my readership have all had the occasional experience of being unable to piss when a stranger decides to use the urinal next to theirs, particularly when all the other urinals in the place are unoccupied. According to the letter this is "...only a slight exaggeration of a normal male response" which I didn't know and that "most cases of psychogenic urinary retention occur in women" which I also didn't know. However, what I found amusing is the fact that this dysfunction "received both it's name and some amount of notoriety in newspaper columns" and that that name, which for some reason amused me greatly, is...Bashful Bladder Syndrome! Great title for a fanzine! Whether or not you find the title inherently amusing I'm sure this anecdote, also in the letter, will raise a smile-

"During the Vietnam war, troops returning to the United States had to pass a urine drug screen for which the collection of the specimen was observed. The return of one young lieutenant was delayed for 72 hours before he was finally able to urinate with someone watching."

Kinda sad, eh? Apparently the successful treatment for this condition, which is presented here as a special service for EPSILON readers and entirely free of charge, "...consists of instructing the patient to do silent serial multiplications. This cortical activity blocks any inhibiting impulses and permits the patient to urinate in a public toilet. Apparently, it is not possible to think about more than one subject at a time." Having conducted trials on this method EPSILON's editor has to report wet feet. It seems it really is impossible to concentrate on two things at once.

THE LITERARY SECTION

The Death of a Metaphor (by flogging).

In this line of work lucky breaks are about as common as balls in an American fanzine critic and I was leaning back in my chair, my feet up on my battered and ink-stained desk, thinking of how few came my way, when the door to my office opened and the broad sailed in. She was twentyish and blonde, well-stacked and with legs that went all the way up, the sort of chick who could make an old man very happy...and who wasn't doing too bad a job with the young one staring up at her. She stopped in front of the desk and parted her ruby lips as if to speak but paused, her mouth forming an inviting oval that Freud might have had a thing or two to say about. I sure did but I kept quiet and sucked my thumb speculatively.

"Are you....him?", she blurted.

"Well I ain't her!", I blurted right back at her, pulling open the bottom drawer of the desk and taking out 'medicinal supplies'. I offered her some but she shook her head, a look of distaste on her pretty features.

"Suit yourself, sister." I said, opening the can of beans and spooning down a fifth. It slid down easy; I felt better able to face the world.

"What's up, babe?", I asked, leaning back in my chair. Maybe I should have stood up when she came in but times are hard and so was I and all things considered it seemed better to stay on my butt. She didn't answer but gave me the kind of look that's accompanied in the funny pages by a lightbulb flashing overhead.

"I know you now!", she said, and I felt a sinking feeling in my gut. I knew what came next.

"You were in fandom!"

I nodded and spooned down another fifth.

"What did you do?"

"As little as possible."

"How come you're not there anymore?"

"I had to get out."

"Mafia?"

"Fafia. Look sister, this ain't 'This is Your Life' and you're not Eamonn Andrews so cut the concerto and spit it out. Just why are you here?", I snapped, stroking my Gestetner. Clean reproduction is essential in this game.

She told me and it wasn't the kind of thing you'd let an innocent young neo hear. According to her she'd uncovered an insidious plot by the more degenerate editors to expunge SF from their fanzines and thus, by example, foster a movement away from Science Fiction. She was deeply perturbed by this heresy and asked me what I intended to do about it.

"As little as possible. That's Fandom."

MASSED ATTACK ON EPSILON 6...EDITOR IN INTENSIVE CARE UNIT...***

LETTERS

LETTERS.....voices from beyond the typer.....

LETTERS

GREG PICKERSGILL

7A Lawrence Rd., South Ealing, London W5.

Actually, it's not such a crummy issue as I thought it was when I read it in manuscript (so to speak) but the weak points are there... such as your continual harping on 'the meaning of it all' which has got to go, and your Welsh-like tendency to give only the barest bones of an anecdote. Definately a time for reassessment here boss, got to get some new ideas going and so on. LICKS, despite a rather posey aspect, sounds like something a little more dynamic than what you're at in this issue. Get it together son, can't have my hot tips for stardom blowing the whole damn thing.

PAUL KINCAID

114 Guildhall St., Folkestone, Kent CT 20 1 ES.

EPSILON arrived at just the right moment. I'm off work today with a heavy cold, and it was pleasant to have something good to read. And EPSILON continues at it's usual high standard.

Strangely, it was your artwork that let you down this time. Eve, Harry and Joe were good portraits, but I've seen far better self-portraits from your pen before now. What went wrong?

I tend to agree with Joe Nicholas about writing LoCs. On the other hand there are half a dozen zines, no more, (DEADLOSS, SEA-MONSTERS, TWLL DDU, DOT, GROSS ENCOUNTERS and EPSILON) that are so good that they demand extra effort. Yet I am nearly always dissatisfied with the result, I never think they do me justice. Both TD and DOT had to make do with very brief notes this time since I couldn't come up with the goods. And for SEAMONSTERS I have, at various times over the past few months, tried to write a LoC and then thrown it away. In the end I just had to scribble a very ordinary letter.

EVE HARVEY

43 Harrow Rd., Carshalton, Surrey.

The art of writing's a peculiar thing, you know, dead peculiar. There I was sitting reading Epsilon when CREATIVITY rose up in me like the phoenix from the ashes.

"Paper, John, quick. I've got crativity! Paper, paper, my kingdom for some paper."

Rustle, rustle....paper thrust at me and then he sits back in adulation to watch this historic event.

Oh, my hair needs combing (mustn't let it dry without combing it, it'll go all frizzy). Now, what was it I wanted with this paper? Back to the

drawing board.

Really, Rob, your EPSILON 6 must be one of the worst efforts that I've seen in recent years from an established literate fan. What has happened? Is life in Wales that deadening that you're gradually losing your faculties one by one? It's not that badly written but there's as much life to it as there is to an embalmed corpse - you haven't died and forgotten to tell anyone have you?

((And there you have it. Reactions to EPSILON 6 were mixed with the concensus of opinion being that it was not up to the standard of the previous two issues, a view I've come to myself after due deliberation. You win some you lose some. The above, by the way, was Eve's first LoC. Fanhistorians please note.))

CHRISTOPHER PRIEST

1 Ortygia Hse., 6 Lower Rd., Harrow, Middx., HA2 ODA.

Your NOTIONS raised a smile here, at the thought of Weston becoming a spokesman, or PR man, for British fandom. I take your point ...but does it matter what the outside world thinks of fandom? Of course not...but to someone like Weston, who stakes his personal status on what the world thinks of him, it does. This is because Weston sees himself and British fandom as being one and the same thing.

It's funny you should mention Melvyn Bragg, the holy mediocrity. Did you see that programme he did last year about C&W music? Sitting there watching it, a slow chill came over me that it just might as well be about SF and/or fandom. Bragg was trying to be earnest, and interviewed people like Pete Townshend, who was saying that there is a high degree of musical expertise in the upper echelons of C&W. (Translation: some SF writers are pretty good.) C&W music now has a huge following here and in the States. (Translation: SF books are selling pretty well.) There were several extracts of C&W groups playing their stuff. (Translation: extracts from 2001 or Star Wars.) Country singers were talking about their roots. (Translation: Brian Aldiss explaining about the pulp-magazines.) Then came Bragg's trump-card. He took his film-crew to a C&W festival, and interviewed a number of fans. They all either looked like Pete Weston or talked like Pete Weston, the only difference being that they were dressed up like Roy Rogers and Trigger. (Translation: Pete Weston dressed in his dinner jacket or Joe Fan dressed up like Darth Vader.) From there, any attempt to 'sell' C&W as a serious or interesting form of music was lost, as Melvyn Dragg well knew. I could imagine C&W fans (of which I am not one) being pretty pissed off with the programme, just as SF fans get pissed off with the way television presents SF.

All I can say to those of us (including Pete Weston) who wish to be television stars, is: Remember The Lesson Of Malcolm Edwards's Budgerigar.

On second thoughts, I hereby nominate Peter R. Weston as Official Spokesman for British Fandom. ((?))

JOSEPH NICHOLAS

Room 9, 94 St. George's Sq., Pinjico, London SW1.

The very idea that no less a person than Peter Weston might be called upon to act as a PR rep for the Worldcon is enough to frighten me out of my skin. It's not his accent that I'm worried about, nor his attitude to Science Fiction itself, it's the fact that he's simply too damned old. Or, if not old, then at least part of a completely different fannish generation, and thus inevitably likely to misrepresent the situation to the Fleet Street hacks looking for something with which to fill the back pages of the Sunday colour supplements. Any point of view that Weston is likely to foist off onto the media representatives will be, in our terms, distinctly old-fashioned, if not positively antiquated; and yet there's nothing that we can do to prevent him because he's the chairman of the convention and thus the obvious target of any media enquiry. I suspect that, should the remainder of the committee make any attempt to appoint someone specifically to handle the PR side of things, he'd put up a strenuous objection on the grounds that it would only serve to cause confusion in the minds of those seeking enlightenment.

MIKE GLICKSOHN

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When EP6 arrived I studied the cover quite carefully trying to figure out who was being depicted. Harry Bell was immediately obvious but I have to admit I couldn't figure who the other three were. I took the chappie with his arm around Harry to be Chris Priest (I've never met Chris but I've seen him in the distance whereas I don't think I've ever seen Joseph) but it may surprise you to know that the lady looks a lot like TAFF candidate Suzanne Tompkins and you yourself are the image of American faned David Truesdale. (This is somewhat akin to finding out you're a dead ringer for Typhoid Mary.) So the cover is probably a lot more effective than you originally planned it to be. A cover for all fandoms, to be sure.

Which leads me to an amazing misrepresentation of fannish history in the opening sections of your NOTIONS. I do not take you to task for this but I must correct it: it is hard to imagine that things can get so easily distorted in so short a time. In the first place TORCON was in 1973, not 1974, and in the second, while I was on the committee I was very far from being the chairman. (It takes a certain combination of masochism and altruism to actually chair a Worldcon and I'm afraid I lack both qualities totally.) However, you are almost correct in at least one of your assertions: TORCON did try to give serious consideration to the problem of press coverage of the con. I wish I could report that we were successful, as you intimate, but it

didn't quite work that way. We did set up a press room and we did channel all acknowledged reporters and news teams through the capable personnel we had manning that area constantly and we did prepare press-kits for newspapers et al who wanted to know about the con and we did do our very best to direct cameramen and reporters to intelligent and mature individuals in the SF and fannish community so that we'd at least start out with a chance of decent coverage but unfortunately the sensationalistic local tabloids still managed to find enough publicity-hungry-misfit-mongoloids to satisfy their preconceived notion of what a science fiction convention was supposed to be like. (The largest of the three Toronto papers headed it's feature story on the con with the line: "3000 Sci Fi Fans In Town" and "They're weird, just weird". That quotation in the headline was from one of the maids in the hotel although we'd made sure that the reporter talked to people like Bob Tucker and Isaac Asimov. If the media already knows how to cover a story I doubt there's anything we can do to change their minds. And there are always enough lunatic fringe types around to give them the sort of impression they've come looking for. The fact that these are the very people you and I wouldn't walk across a room party to piss on doesn't alter the fact that they manage to end up representing fandom to the world at large. So good luck in handling this particular aspect of running the Worldcon.)

It certainly wouldn't be the first time that holding a convention in a city decimated the organised fans of that area were SEACON to result in the collapse of English fandom that you seem to be worried about but perhaps it might be the first time that holding a worldcon resulted in the demise of the fandom of an entire country! I can't help but believe that you are worrying a little too much about the possibly injurious effects of SEACON on fandom as you know and love it. It's true that immediately after helping run a worldcon quite a few well-known North American fannish couples have gotten divorced (I happen to have been a partner to one such action) and quite a few established fan-groups have disappeared but it always happens that new fans replace the old (Toronto was a classic example as the hard-core old-guard group of fans that ran TORCON was replaced almost completely by a new generation of fans who'd never heard of fandom before a worldcon happened to materialise in their home city) and fandom keeps going. Only the names are changed to protect the guilty.

Of all the people who were involved in TORCON I think I'm the only one who comes even close to achieving the sort of level of activity I reached in those halcyon days. Susan Wood is still well-known, although inactive, but how many names do you recognise from among John Millard, Peter Gill, John Douglas, Gord Van Toen, Don Hutchison, Ken Smookler, Gar Stevens and Derek Nelson? And that wasn't even six years ago!

((The errors in my historical placing of TORCON resulted from my not being in fandom at that time and in trusting to memory.))

Which is all for this issue. Seeyou in EPSILON 8.

HANSEN '81

