

THE ANNATTONITE

THE INFREQUENT NEWSLETTER OF THE HATTON GROUP

A CORFLU DIARY

Thursday 27th April 1989

My growing feeling that the omens were against us seemed to be confirmed when I found my assigned seat on the Northwest Airlines DC-9 taking Avedon and me from Washington DC's Dulles Airport to Minneapolis/St.Paul. At check-in I'd requested a window seat and been informed that the only one left was in the twenty-second row, at the rear of the plane. "Fine", I'd replied, "as long as I can see out I don't care." Imagine my surprise on discovering that the 'window' serving the back row of a DC-9 is in fact a solid and opaque section of the fuselage. Coming on top of my earlier discovery that I'd left a bag containing my camera and the book I was reading back at Avedon's folks' place, this naturally put a downer on the journey for me and I spent most of the flight sunk in depression. Matters were not helped by us arriving three-quarters of an hour late through having to avoid a storm front. Nonetheless, by the time we eventually landed at the Twin Cities airport my spirits had lifted a little and I was beginning to look forward to what lay ahead.

Spike and Johan Schimanski met us at the airport and drove us to Geri Sullivan's house in South Minneapolis, where we'd be spending the night, then left for Luke McGuff's place. Chuck and Sue Harris were already at Geri's, having arrived from the UK an hour or so earlier, and we greeted them warmly, welcoming them to America. Geri was exactly as I'd imagined she would be from reading her letters and fanzines, a mass of energy and bubbling enthusiasm. I liked her immediately. After she had fed us, Geri drove the four of us over to the pre-con party at Fred Haskell and Susan Levy's place, dropping Avedon, Sue, and me off while she and Chuck continued on to the airport to pick up Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden.

The Gillilands, Art Widner, Don Fitch, and Lenny Bailes were already there when we arrived, and we were soon joined by Moshe Feder, Lise Eisenberg, Luke McGuff, Spike, P&T, Chuck, newlyweds Jim & Kathryn (Craemer) Young, and various local MN-Stfers, not all of whose names I caught, I'm afraid. Avedon asked if smoking was allowed and was informed by Fred Haskell that not only was it allowed but actively encouraged, in a tone that told me instantly that he was grateful for 'allies' in what was probably a predominantly non-smoking local fandom. His fiancée, Susan Levy, was pretty striking and a genuinely nice person, as I was to note over the weekend as I chatted to her and observed how she handled her responsibilities during the course of the convention. Many of the people at the party were old friends, most of whom I hadn't seen since CONSPIRACY some eighteen months earlier, so we had a lot of catching up to do. As well as a number of the splendid pads produced for the con, Geri had also brought along the computer/word processor hired to enable Chuck to fully participate in con panels, and before the night was out he already had a couple of pages on disk towards a con report.

Friday 28th April 1989

The first day of CORFLU 6, the fanzine fan's convention, and for some of us it got off to a spectacular start. Around midday, when it was time for us to leave for the convention hotel, Geri announced: "Your limo awaits!" I smiled, imagining this to be an exaggeration born of enthusiasm and, hefting our

absurdly heavy suitcases, struggled out to the perfectly ordinary auto that awaited. Only it wasn't an ordinary auto: it was a fucking honest-to-God full-grown limousine! "Jesus!", I whispered, as the suitcases slipped from my hands. Geri was outside already, enjoying hugely the expressions on the faces of Avedon, Sue, Chuck, and me as we each came out in turn and caught our first sight of the monster. With oldtime Minneapolisite Jim Young (now a DC-area resident) acting as guide and Kathryn Craemer as hostess (she was doling out the champagne, ale, and other liquid goodies that had been so thoughtfully provided), we were taken on a tour of Minneapolis and its suburbs, a truly scenic city, ending at UNCLE HUGO'S SCIENCE FICTION BOOK STORE - where I bought a hardback of Delany's THE MOTION OF LIGHT ON WATER as a present for Avedon, and was delighted to find a used copy of Damon Knight's THE FUTURIANS for \$2, a basic text for a fanhistorian such as myself and a book I'd been looking for for years. We stayed at UNCLE HUGO'S for maybe forty minutes before eventually piling back into the limo and being driven to the Normandy Inn, venue for CORFLU 6. Our transport had been a nice touch, and I was well-chuffed. After all, how many other fans can claim they've been driven to an SF bookstore in a limo?

Since the con proper wouldn't start until early evening Avedon and I spent most of the afternoon in the bar with Jim, Kathryn, George Flynn, Art Widner, and others, talking fandom, SF, absent friends and the like. As the afternoon wore on more and more people began to show up and Avedon, Pat Mueller (who was 'heavy with child', as they say), Jeanne Gomoll, Patrick Nielsen Hayden, and I had a meal in the hotel restaurant. I had a steak and once again noticed, as I had been noticing all during this trip to the US, that the quality of restaurant and diner food had declined since I was last in America two years earlier. In fact, I would go so far as to say that these days the quality of food for those eating out in the UK is probably higher than for those eating out in the US. Britain has a reputation for bad food, one that was fully deserved up until as recently as six or seven years ago but isn't any longer. A number of those American fans who were at both the '79 and '87 Brighton Worldcons remarked to me that while they hadn't much enjoyed eating out at the former con it had been a pleasure at the latter. I agree with them, but the connection between Britain and bad food is so ingrained in many people's minds that it may never be broken.

By the time we left the restaurant CORFLU was up and running and still more people had shown up. Hope Kiefer gave me a hug, and I finally got to meet Andi Shecter, Stu's significant other and the person who finally got him out of women's underwear ("It was comfortable, but the time had come" explained Stu). I was introduced to Emma Bull (like many of those present I really enjoyed her book WAR FOR THE OAKS and am sorry I wasn't in Minneapolis long enough to do the tour of those places that appear in it), renewed my acquaintance with Taral, greeted Nigel Rowe (who is this man and why does he keep following me around, from country to country?), and retrieved my bag and camera from Ted White, who'd called in on Avedon's parents on my behalf and brought it along to the con with him. Andy Hooper was handing out fanzines, as were all manner of people (I was one of them, with PULP #12 and THEN #2), and I pulled in a fair crop. Here memory dissolves into a pleasant haze of conversation and laughter, none of which comes into focus until the point at which I crashed out (around 1.15am), and returned to our room, where I was dismayed to discover Avedon and Patrick & Teresa loudly and smokily discussing British fanpolitics. Though I was trying to sleep they carried on with this for another two hours, and I was in a foul mood when I eventually drifted off.

Saturday 29th April 1989

At 8.15am we were all awoken by the phone ringing, a wake-up call apparently booked to the wrong room. None of us was able to get back to sleep but since, on my performance so far this trip, this was around the time I would've awoken anyway I wasn't too perturbed. Not so the others. Thinking thoughts of karmic justice I headed out for a breakfast of bacon double-cheeseburger at the local Burger King (and was deeply unimpressed by their service), leaving them to their coffee and the long-process of 'coming-to'.

CORFLU's noon opening ceremony began sharply at 12.45pm with Fred Haskell impromptuing at the podium in lively and amusing fashion, and continued with Jon Singer performing strange incantations. Jeanne Gomoll followed this with a very funny reading of her fanzine article 'Burning Barbie', which led to her con badge being 'Shiffmanized' (a process of personalisation carried out by Stu on the badges of at least half those present) to read 'Jeanne Gomoll - Barbie Burner' under a drawing depicting a match being applied to the unfortunate doll. Next was a 'debate' on methods of fanzine duplication with the audience being divided into 'traditional' and 'modern' camps. Despite doing much of my actual writing on wp (this, for instance) most of my duplication is done on the trusty Gestetner in my office so I naturally sided with the trads. It was of course an artificial debate, but since fans will argue about anything (it's one of their most endearing/infuriating qualities) a good-natured debate was soon in full flow. In no time we had been characterised by the mods as Luddites wedded to the potato-cut and tray of hekto-jelly, and Lenny Bailes was soon referring to us as "the potato-peelers", a name gleefully taken up by others on his side of the room. The main failing of the trads, I feel, was that we didn't come back with a name for the mods for what, after all, is any debate without a healthy dose of n calling?

The next two items were a panel on fan-funds (interesting, but I won't go into the details here as you can probably supply most of the arguments yourselves) and one on the pro/fan divide and the awkwardness sometimes felt by those with a foot in both camps. Since this featured, among others, P&T, Emma Bull, and Kathryn Craemer, I was tempted to stay for it, but I was also hungry so when Jerry Kaufman and Suzle suggested a meal in the coffee shop I went with them.

Spent the rest of the afternoon sitting around chatting (and at some point in there Spike handed me my copy of APA OF THE DAMNED #1) before going off for dinner in hotel restaurant with Chuck & Sue, Ted, Geri, and Jeff Schalles. Later, I spent a while talking fanhistory with Joe Siclari and Moshe Feder, two people particularly interested in the subject, and surprised them both with the link I'd uncovered between fandom and the Beatles (as I'd earlier surprised Ted with it when I visited him in Falls Church during the first part of our trip). In fact, Joe seemed to think I was pulling his leg at first but I wasn't, and the full story will be in the next part of the serial history of British fandom that I'm writing. The evening was rounded out by a long session around a table at the poolside, with Ted, Teresa, Moshe, Joe, Fred & Sue, Don Fitch, Lenny Bailes et al. Ted was holding court and regaling us with tales of his early days in New York fandom, the sort of thing I'm a sucker for. Bed beckoned some time around 3am.

Sunday 30th April 1989

Muffins and coke, chips and ranch dip, turned out to be a surprisingly pleasant way to start the day and I was one of four or five hardy souls who breakfasted thus in the con suite around 10.30am. Most everyone else was still abed but Susan Levy had gotten up and dashed about putting this repast together. It was, however, a mere appetizer...

The traditional CORFLU buffet/banquet was at noon. I managed to rouse my reluctant roomies in time for this, and the food wasn't bad. As usual at CORFLUs, the GoH was chosen by having his name pulled from a hat - and this time it was Stu Shiffman. The Madison group formed a human pyramid for him, and he got to listen as various people (Andi, Avedon, Jeanne Gomoll, Moshe, and Andy Hooper) came to the podium and delivered testimonials to him. There are people who have been honoured more by fandom but few, I think, held in such genuine affection by so many of us. Jeanne Gomoll gave her Toastmaster's speech next, a stunningly good piece perfectly delivered, one at times clever and funny, moving and inspiring, that I will not spoil by trying to excerpt from it here. Both Avedon and Chuck tried to get the typescript for publication immediately afterwards (I remain uncertain as to who succeeded) so if you missed it you need not remain in that deprived state.

The final 'business' of this session was the auction. Conducted largely by Joe Siclari (with assistance from Jerry Kaufman) it raised money for TAFF, DUFF, the Harris Fund, and CORFLU variously. The prices were pretty impressive for the most part, a set of the first 44 issues of Terry Carr and Ron Ellick's late-'50s newszine, FANAC, being knocked down for \$215, and Moshe Feder picking up five copies of NOVAE TERRAE (circa 1937/8 and donated by Vinç Clarke) for \$150.

Those who had to be in work tomorrow began leaving soon after this, and Avedon and I only just managed to catch Patrick and Teresa in time to say goodbye. Around 5.30pm or so, we went out to eat with Emma Bull, Will Shetterly, Jon Singer, and John M. Ford (known as "Mike" to friends) On the way we passed a turnoff to Cretin Avenue, a name which made me laugh, not surprisingly.

"Guess what the high school on that road is called." said Will.

"Not...Cretin High?" I replied.

"That's right. There are many other Cretin Highs in the US, but that's the only one that cops to it. It's a private school, too"

"I can just see them supporting their school team on sports days: 'Go Cretins, Go!'."

We ate at a Tex-Mex joint called 'La Cucuracha' (I know it's a common name for Mexican restaurants but it still seems odd eating at a place whose name translates as 'The Cockroach'). Good food, good conversation, good time, nuff said. Back at the Normandy it appeared that those fans who hadn't gone home had gone out to eat and it was curiously depopulated, a situation remedied when the diners returned. By my estimate, we had some 60% of the convention staying over so another night of fun looked set. And so it was, the usual haze from which little can later be reconstructed followed and a good time was had by all. The evening ended with Art Widner showing slides of '40s fandom and Jeff Schalles showing slides from the early-'70s. Hard to believe rich brown was ever so thin, something which led me to ponder the possible lack of permanence of my own waistline.

Monday 1st May 1989

Breakfasted with Spike at LE PEEP and finally got the lowdown on the tensions in Madison fandom that I'd been hearing about. Fandom is much the same everywhere, it seems. Avedon and I checked out of the Normandy at noon and got a lift back to Geri's with Canadian fans Catherine Crockett and Colin Hinz. CORFLU might be over so far as the hotel and most of its attendees were concerned, but for us it still had another day to run.

Byerly's is a rather large and magnificent supermarket (it featured in Jonathan King's piece on Minneapolis on his ENTERTAINMENT USA show on British TV) and that afternoon it was visited by a contingent of fans consisting of Geri, Chuck & Sue, Moshe, Lise, Catherine, Art Widner, Avedon, and me. Working for a major UK grocery chain, I had a certain professional interest in the store. I bought some imported beer (Bass) and some dips (mainly jalapeno and that rather delicious ranch dip I'd had for breakfast the previous day) towards the party at Geri's that night and, like the others, marvelled at one particular sculpture on sale in the gift store. There, among the Lalique and Waterford crystal was a bust of Ronald Reagan that its creator (clearly a sick man) wanted \$3000 for. That was too rich for my blood but seeing it had whetted my appetite and I decided that I wanted a souvenir of the great man for myself, something intimate yet inexpensive. I wondered idly whether Byerly's stocked Ronald Reagan dartboards....

There were maybe 40 people at Geri's in the evening, now familiar faces such as those of Fred & Susan, Will & Emma, Stu & Andi (but not Moshe & Lise, whom we'd had to say goodbye to at Byerly's) mixed with those of MN-Stfers who hadn't been at CORFLU, with the result that I hadn't met them. Denny Lien was one of these. The others all seemed to be large and bearded and named David, the men too. I chatted to Sue Harris for a fair bit and was delighted that she really seemed to

have enjoyed the con. Never having been involved in our little sub-culture it was always on the cards that she wouldn't. Towards the end of the evening, I got into a long conversation with Stu and Jeff Schalles about the preservation of old fanzines and photographs, a discussion occasioned by the slides Art Widner had shown at CORFLU, slides made from old photos. A lot of early fans have been dying off in recent years, and in some cases their collections of fanzines and early fannish memorabilia have gone with them. A systematic and organised programme of making slides is a good idea for photos (a large club/group funding or fund-raising for the project and agreeing to store the slides and make copies available at cost to those who want them), but I have another idea for fanzines. Not being a computer buff I'm not sure how feasible this idea is, but it strikes me that scanning old zines and storing them on floppy disks would be a good way of preserving them. Disks are easy to copy and hardcopy could presumably be made with most any dot-matrix or laser printer. What I don't know is the time such scanning would take, or how the zines would have to be filed on the disk to make page by page access easy.

I like the idea of anyone who wants a set of HYPHEN being able to get a copy of them on disk, and I like even more the idea of the really early stuff being made available. I mean, a collection such as Vinç Clarke's holds what may well be the only remaining copies of some early UK zines - and thanks to the trashy paper some of them were printed on they're deteriorating rapidly. I think some sort of preservation and access programme ought to be organised (a project for CORFLU to sponsor, maybe) and would like someone who knows more about computers than me to explain what it might entail.

Tuesday 2nd May 1989

Yet again I was the first up, so I ambled over to Geri's neighbourhood Burger King and had a bacon double cheeseburger. It's not that I particularly like Burger King, more that it was all that was available. (When I want fast food why aren't there ever any Taco Bell's around, I wonder?) I dropped off the remaining US copies of PULP at the local post office, amusing myself while waiting in line by perusing the FBI wanted posters pinned up by the counters. They catalogued an amazing array of death and mayhem, making me profoundly grateful for British restrictions on public ownership of guns.

When Geri and Jeff eventually got up they, Chuck & Sue, and Avedon & I, looked at Geri's slides of last December's TROPICON in Florida, the one that Walt & Madeleine Willis were guests at. Walt's trip report THE ENCHANTMENT had been on sale at CORFLU and I was carrying back a bundle to sell in the UK for TAFF.

Shortly before 4pm we all set off for the airport, stopping briefly to take in Minnehaha Falls. At the airport we sat around until Avedon and I boarded our flight at 5.30pm (Jeff was also flying out today, leaving for New York about a half hour after our departure). Chuck was effusive with his goodbyes, Geri gave us both hugs, and then we were off - back to Britain and everyday life.

When I'd arranged our seats I'd asked for a window seat "Anywhere but over the wing". I imagine you're ahead of me at this point. Yes, to give our time in Minneapolis a certain symmetry those wonderful folks at Northworst had given me a seat right over the exact centre of the wing! Fortunately, the jumbo was more than half empty so I was able to get myself a choice seat before take-off and to watch wistfully as Minneapolis fell away beneath us. It had been a great con.

At some indeterminate point over the Atlantic it became...

Wednesday 3rd May 1989

...and we landed at Gatwick around 8:45 local time, returning to a surprisingly hot and humid Britain and to climatic conditions more unpleasantly hot than any we'd encountered in America. Jet-lagged, we slept through a large part of the next 24 hours.

Sunday 7th May 1989

Yep, that's the date as I write. This time last week I was at CORFLU. I wish I still was. It only remains to thank Fred, Susan, Geri, Jon Singer, and Ken Fletcher for putting on such a good con, and to especially thank Geri Sullivan both for her hospitality and for being one of the main forces behind the fund that finally succeeded in getting Chuck Harris to an American convention, despite his worries. See, Chuck, I told you you'd have a good time.

The above report, in slightly different form, appears in my first contribution to APA OF THE DAMNED. It's reprinted here for those half-dozen or so people who usually receive THE FANHATTONITE, and for Fred Haskell, Susan Levy and Geri Sullivan.

GROUP BIZ Future meetings, and those held since the last issue of this woefully infrequent yet curiously and cutely endearing little newsheet, are as follows:

31 - 26th Jan 1989
32 - 9th Feb 1989
33 - 23rd Feb 1989
34 - 9th Mar 1989
35 - 30th Mar 1989
36 - 13th Apr 1989
37 - 11th May 1989
38 - 25th May 1989
39 - 8th Jun 1989
40 - 22nd Jun 1989
41 - 29th Jun 1989

In other news, Harry Bond reports that he went along to the White Horse on 27th April expecting there to be a meeting that night (which there would've been had Avedon and I not been in America). There was a sign on the pub announcing that it was closing the following Saturday, the 29th, so Harry popped in and had a pint, becoming the last fan to drink there. (I don't know about you, but I find the thought of Harry being at the end of a fannish association that dates back to 1946 a sobering one.) This being so we'll meet at the White Hart on New Fetter Lane on the 11th (as those of you reading this there will have deduced). And when I think of moving from the White Horse to the White Hart, the pseudonym Arthur C. Clarke gave the White Horse in the series of tales he wrote in 1953, I'm sure I can hear the strains of the Twilight Zone theme playing in the background....

ISSUE 5

THE FANHATTONITE
11th May 1989

ed. ROB HANSEN
