

Fanhistory

No. 2

FANDOM
FIRST, LAST,
AND ALWAYS 



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First Fandom Is Not Dead!

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It has been our intention, in editing a high-tone fanmag like this, to keep the editorials on a high-toned, literary and timeless plane, but for the moment we will digress to the extent of saying that anyone who makes cracks about the quality of the paper or the typography in this issue gets a fist in the nush. Figuratively, if not physically. The paper is ~~AB~~Dick Red "abel, more expensive and therefore more show-through and more offset than the regular stuff. The typographical errors are accredited to the fact that we are in a transitional period between the Columbus System and the Touch System in our typing. In other words when we want a letter on the keyboard, we have to get out and feel for it.

Our subject this issue is Fandom, First, Last and Always. Our lead-off article ~~AFTER~~ 1939 - WHAT? is one of the first articles written concerning fan history. The Fandoms from the Fancyclopedia are reprinted as they appeared in that publication, followed by Bob Silverberg's famous article FIRST AND LAST FANS, one of the most influential fan items ever written. Spear's rebuttal ~~DECLINE~~ OF THE BEST, follows. And then two new items on the recent problem of Seventh Fandom, which were done for Fy under duress.

We regret the lack of space and reference material that prevent us from including some of the fan history writing of Sam Moskowitz, as well as similar work by other well-qualified authors. For further reading on Seventh Fandom, we refer the interested person to Richard Geis' "PSYCHOTIC" in particular. For readings in early Fandom, there is the monumental THE IMMORTAL STORE by Sam Moskowitz. For the period between the two, we know no particular items which cover the subject well, aside from those herein. The period 1940-1960 in fandom seems in need of a good historian.

Articles herein are in chronological order. Carry on!

---Mnemosyno

reprinted from
MADGE'S PRIZE ESS.
LASFL; 1938

After 1939 - What?

JACK SPEER

These predictions were made 24 Aug 38.

It seems to me little short of amazing, in a group of people confident as we are of the possibility of predicting future events from present knowledge, there have been so few attempts to forecast the future of Fandom. Yes certainly there will be changes; none know better than we that nothing is static.

To be sure there has been some talk of what science fiction will develop into, but what of fandom? A word here and there but everything seems to stop with the World Convention in 1939. There is perhaps good reason for this: What happens at the Convention will mold the future of fandom. So to predict fandom's future one must predict the outcome of the Convention; the next FAPA election also, and similar such.

And the difficulties are great, it must be admitted. We have little data to go by. To make it more difficult fans are such a queer bunch of people that predicting what they will do might well faze a more prudent man than I. It is a small group, easily influenced by a single person or event to turn in an entirely new direction. The mere prediction of a thing might influence the probability of its happening!

Yet we do have five years behind us; we have seen fandom pass from one stage to another and it is reasonable to assume the transition to a third stage will be accompanied by some of the manifestations of the first change. And while admitting the chances are against my predictions being correct I think they are more likely to come true than any other one set of developments. So, the fool rushes in--

Most prophets will talk in terms of trends and ifs-and-buts and let it go at that. My predictions are based on trends and on the most probable of the ifs, but I am going to try to make them as concrete as possible.

After the World Convention is over we can expect a general let-down. There will be talk about the Convention, Convention accounts and perhaps wranglings over who went to what automat with whom; but I expect for at least six months after the Convention fan activity will be at a low ebb. And I rather doubt it will ever build up again to the point it will have reached just before the Convention.

After 1937-What? (2)

It is not yet clear whether the Convention will take place before or after election time in the FAPA. After these two events are past there should be a long breaching spell. I am assuming the Wellheim group will lose most of the FAPA offices; this is a dangerous assumption but seems more likely than that it will stay in power another year. If it loses out things in the FAPA should be pretty tranquil and everything routine. If Daw and men should win again the Anti-Wellheimists can be expected to keep fighting another year or however long it may take. But the fighting won't be so fierce as that following the 1938 election.

I am also having to assume the Micholism motion will be defeated at the Convention. This is an even more precarious assumption as there is a strong possibility that, the Convention being held in N Y, numerous Young Communist Readers of stuff, whom most of us would not consider "fans", will swamp the convention and carry the motion. However, in this case it will not make so much difference. If Micholism carries a group of fans will detach itself, I believe, and go off at a tangent; and we remaining behind will simply deny the Convention as the voice of fandom and continue much as before, discussing the ideologies objectively, as the English do. If Micholism loses I have no idea the head Micholists will stay with us, tho some may return in after years. In either case fandom loses the most radical element.

One factor that will be almost completely disregarded in this discussion is the question of the increasing age of the fans. There will be so many things tending to let the average age advance only very slowly that this had best be passed by--if indeed any significance attaches to chronological age in our group, which one might well doubt.

But to the trends. One big trend I foresee is a blurring of outline, a fusion of the "inner circle" with the mass of scientificionists, as a result of cooperation by the pro editors and other forces. Our numbers have been somewhat augmented by the cessation of the old weird-sf battle and merger of their two fandoms but the publicity now offered by all the professional science-fantasy magazines should increase our numbers many times. McPhail tells me of reading of some amateur journal in a newspaper or magazine and writing for a copy. The boys who published it replied they'd had fifty calls for copies from that single mention!

There will be far reaching repercussions of this influx of demi-fans. For one thing it will no longer be safe to assume, in an article for Fantascience Digest, say, that practically all the readers also get the New Letter, for example. Articles and columns must perforce in the interest of greater completeness within themselves be less personal, more laboriously composed, less spontaneous.

This influx of a new market will also mean the eclipse of hektography

After 1939-What? (3)

among the subscription fanmagazines. Mimeoographed and printed publications should come to have subscriptions running into the hundreds.

The subjects for writing will be more on the order of the First Fandom too. Since the pro mag eds have cooperated to bring this new audience in touch with our world we in return will have to print more news of the pros and authors; would in fact have to do so to interest the newcomers.

The majority of fans will no longer be of the "Star-begotten" type. The newcomers will provide a conservative element and a less brilliant one. We shall have to be more dignified in front of them.

Perhaps it is untrue to speak of them as a separate group since the whole will be fused into one. But there will still remain a less distinct inner circle and within that the very core of the Old Guard who stay with us. Graduated degrees of fan activity will extent all the way out to those who got only one fanmagazine and do not correspond at all. There already is a state of affairs like this on a small scale. Witness the wide variation in estimates as to the number of "real fans".

Another trend which might be noted is the tendency to discuss interesting books, ideas, movies etc. which are entirely outside the realm of stf.

When all this happens, the Second Fandom, in which we are now living, will be well behind.

I shan't go so far as to say whether this Third Fandom will be the last; I rather think it won't. But the activities of the Second Fandom are swiftly coming to a head, culminating in the summer of '39. None plans beyond that; it's not safe. When the Convontion is almost upon us some plans beyond it may be made but these will be few.

The FAPA will become a highly-sought-after honor for a while and then due to the increasing accumulation of "dead wood" (comparatively speaking only) revisions have to be made and the membership limit probably abandoned.

The mere fact articles and stories will be published in mimeoed or printed form will affect the writing theroof. Too, the realization everything written or published in the FAPA goes into a permanent library in Philadelphia will cause the writers to take greater care. Writing won't be quite so much fun as it is now.

There will be compensations. With a letup in controversy those so inclined can take time off to pursue those little side-lines they've always wanted to follow. Larry Farsaci will be able to devote his whole time to his index if magazine stf without fear the Michelists will slip something over while he's not watching; in fact, it is highly probable the central

After 1939-What? (4)

authority (of course there will be a central authority then) will appoint a committee to carry on the interrupted work of the Fantasy Magazine Service Department. Others may follow other lines. Lowndes, if he cares to stay with us, can write poetry instead of answers to Sam Moskowitz. I'll confess there are things I'd like to have time to do, too: Take up Will Durant; get all my collections (now in Oala) up here to DC and in order; bring that scrapbook and photo album up to date; there are parts of my diary still unwritten; I'd like to complete my listing of the comics dabblers; I have a faint vision of a Corpus Juris Fandom! Probably everyone has things he can do when there's time to relax.

In conclusion, some ifs should be considered. There is always the remote possibility of war, for example. I haven't met many physically yet so can't say whether I think many would be accepted by the selective draft but even if only a few are drafted into the army it would be highly advisable to suspend fan activities for the duration; otherwise, after the war were over and the fever had passed there'd be many a regret over what we'd written. And after the war, with many of the fellows embittered perhaps, and other profound changes having taken place, it would be difficult to restore the old round of fan activity in its entirety.

But the period from the fall of Fantasy Magazine to the Third Convention showed that Fandom as an entity is as tough as a boot. No matter what might happen to the old globe I think there'd always be a group that could be called "science fiction fans", expressing themselves without restraint to each other and speculating upon the future. (I might go off on a tangent here on the future of sf when space-flight is an accomplished, synthetic life a fact and all the other things short of pure fantasy realized. See [KSmith])

These, however, are the ifs. This prophecy is supposed to be based on what I think has the best chance of happening. So, to recapitulate:

A degree of fusion between the inner circle and the pro mag audience in general; a trend toward conservatism; a movement toward the literary and away from the spontaneous; a relaxation of heated controversy...

The central idea of pro-fandom was science (the Gernsback influence).

The First Fandom discussed fiction and authors.

The Second Fandom interest centers around the fan personality.

The basis for the Third Fandom may well be no more than "fraternity". Maybe I'm all wrong. I rather hope I am.

-----Jack Spuer 24 Aug 38

misspellings and the conventionalization of form from the original in the above article are to be blamed on the editor -----Leah

First Fandom - (Speer) - The period up to 1935. It was marked by interest primarily in science and science-fiction. Fanzine material consisted mainly of forecasts of lineups in the pros, interviews with prominent authors, fan fiction relating to the pros, fan science fiction, novelty fiction by groups of pro writers, new advances in science, discussions of why s-f is in a rut or s-x in science-fiction or the relative importance of plausibility and good style. Douglas Webster uses the term to indicate the first fans of Great Britain. Carnell, Gillings, Hanson, Mayer, et al. who continued dominant into 1938, and were mainly interested in the afore-mentioned subjects, and also in sociological questions.

First Transition - (Speer) - The period of fandom from the decline of Fantasy Magazine in later 1936 to the Third Convention. It was marked by a shift of interest from the pro field, then in a recession, to the fans themselves. There was consequently more fan news in the fanzines, a plethora of organizations, many new fanzines proposed and executed, and talk about things having little relation to s-f but interesting to the fans. There were fewer people in the fan field than previously. No organization or fan magazine held recognized leadership after the dissolution of the ISA, tho the SFA was regarded as the best.

Second Fandom - (Speer) - October 1937 to October 1938, when the quadrumvirate resigned. Out of the Third Convention came Michelism, and political discussions were most noticeable in this period, but many other things not directly related to fantasy were also booted about. Fan feuds reached the proportion of fan wars, mainly between the Wellholmist faction and their enemies, climaxing in May-June 1938 with the Newark Convention and the FAPA campaign. Douglas Webster uses the term to name his own type of British fans, including Youd, Burke, and others, who are interested in many other things...They came into dominance about 1939 in partial reaction to the sociological emphasis of the original British fans.

Second Transition - (Speer) - From the 1938 Philadelphia Conference to the Union. It was marked by the barbarian invasion, the ascendancy of New Fandom, and the consequent switch of emphasis heavily back toward professional science fiction. There was however still lots of discussion of other things in the second-line fanzines of the day, and in correspondence etc.

The Fandoms (2)

Third Fandom - (Speer) - From September 1940 on. Warring factions in fandom healed their differences or were less in evidence, with the passing of fouds the underlying fraternity of fandom came more into evidence, and a broad balance was found between matters scientificfictional and other things that fans were interested in. There was much talk of fandom growing up, becoming more mature, and seeing less of adolescent bickering and fouding for fouding's sake; at the same time there was a flood of digests and bibliographies and indexes of this and that, regarding as a summation and consolidation of past achievements in fandom. A general fan organization was once again much desired, but ran into difficulties as war came to America. Doug Webster applies the term to the younger fans that appeared in wartime Britain, once again interested mainly in such science-fiction as they could get, and supporting the idea of a British fan organization (the BFS), which the sophisticated Second Fandom had outgrown.

----Jack Speer 1943-1944

"Follow me..."

An excerpt from the FANCYCLOPEDIA

"...Opinions differ as to the pattern of the past, but the swinging-pendulum model used in Speer's original history, involving three fandoms, is most generally accepted. A prize-winning profetic article by Speer, published by the LASFEL, was realized in the rain by the Second Transition and Third Fandom. Moskowitz, during the Second Fandom and Transition, wrote many discussions of the course fandom was following... He was...the first to point out the shift from the First Fandom to the Second in 'Fals Changing; Tendency Among; Fan Magazines'..."

---John Bristol--1944

first and last fan

It was in 1944 that Jack Speer's "Fancylopedia" brought into prominence the theory of a number of succeeding "fandoms", each a different era with different leaders, different ideas and different accomplishments.

The "First Fandom" is generally considered the 1930-36 period, marked by interest in the science part of science-fiction. As Speer says, "Fanzine material consisted mainly of forecasts of lineups in the pros, discussions of why s-f is in a run or sex in s-f or the relative importance of plausibility and good style."

I disagree with Speer on several grounds: his last two. The less familiar as an outsider than Speer, with fandom of the First Era, it's my belief that there were few discussions of sex in s-f for the simple reason that up through 1936 there was no sex in the s-f pulps. And if there were any discussions of good style, they certainly bore no fruit, as anyone who has read the 1930-36 prozines can tell.

The Second Fandom was a considerably more unified affair, with most every fan being aware, not only of the fan productions of every other fan, but of his private life, interests, appearance, and opinions. Speer says, "Fan feuds reached the proportions of fan wars." The Second Fandom is even more remote from present day fandom than First Fandom, and in these days of s-f's popularity there can be no reversion to the phenomenon of the Second Fandom.

Speer's chronology ends with the Third Fandom, the 1940-43 period, which was characterized by the end of fan feuding, and the beginnings of a movement which was to result in 1952 Fandom. Speer says, "a broad balance was found between matters scientific and other things that fans were interested in. There was much talk of fandom growing up, becoming more mature. At the same time there was a flood of digests and bibliographies and indexes...A general fan organization was once again much desired..."

And there Speer stopped. But let us continue this cyclic analysis, a la Stapledon, up to the present day:

The Third Fandom was succeeded, some time in 1944, by the Fourth Fandom. This was a reversion to the Second Fandom in many ways, probably the last such throwback. 1944 saw many of the old fans leave for the armed services, and when they returned they could find no place in the younger fandom which had sprung up. Some, like Ackerman (a mainstay of the first two fandoms) maintained a nebulous fan career while entering the professional field; others remained dormant, ignoring the younger element which had supplanted them until the growing popularity

*for full text see The Fandoms in this issue.

First and Last Fan (2)

of s-f in recent years enabled them to come back as professionals. Others, like Moskowitz, picked up right where they left off, as fans.

The Fourth Fandom, which began some time in 1944 and ended about 1947 left few remains of importance. The greatest increase in s-f publishing in 1941, 42 and 43 had all been lost, and fans were left with the original four prozines of the pre-boom days, *Amazing*, *Wonder*, *Weird*, and *Astounding*, plus a few newcomers which had been added in the 1939-41 expansion: *Famous Fantastic Mysteries*, *Planet Stories*, and *Startling Stories*. Of these just one was monthly in 1944: *Astounding*. *Weird Tales* was bi-monthly, and all the others quarterly. The entire year of 1944 saw just 45 prozines issued, compared with 143 in 1952.

In terms of fandom, we can discount *Weird Tales*, *Astounding*, *Amazing* and *Fantastic Adventures*, all of which ignored fandom, and also *FFM*, which was and still is a reprint magazines for fans to congregate in *TWS*, *Startling*, and *Planet*.

Keynote fans of the Fourth Fandom were all letterhacks: such people as Chad Oliver and Joe Kennedy went on to become professionals but many merely dropped by the wayside. No outstanding fanzines were published through 1944, 45, 46, and 47 consistently in the manner in which *FANTASY MAGAZINE* had dominated the First Fandom, *SCIENCE FICTION FAN* the Second, and *SPACEMAYS* the Third. There were, it is true, a few fine efforts: *NOVA*, *ACOLYTE & VALPIEE*. But the symbol of Fourth Fandom, the person who represents the atmosphere, aims, and general attitude of Fourth Fandom is Sarge Saturn.

Fifth Fandom was short lived. It began in the declining days of 1947 and lasted only until 1949. Dominant fans of this period are a different bunch: Art Hopp and his circle of admirers; Don Day; Redd Boggs; K. Martin Carlson. The fanzine which summed up Fifth Fandom is *SPACEMARP*, which lasted through the entire era. Fifth Fandom was a period of awakening of escape from juvenility for the first time since First Fandom, of enlargement. Fans began to realize once again that the prozines were still being published, and fans took notice of them. Fifth Fandom marked the re-awakening of eternal interest in Bob Tucker, who had played an important role in the first three fandoms. It saw an expansion of fanzine publishing far above the previous 1938-41 peak, chiefly due to the efforts of Hog Phillips' *Club House*. Just as Sarge Saturn led Fourth Fandom it was Phillips who proved the unifying force for Fifth Fandom, bringing about a boom in fandom and fan publishing which has not yet been checked.

Sixth Fandom is a horse of a different color. Just as Stapledon's Sixth Man branched off into all sorts of variants, so has Sixth Fandom. It is impossible to generalize about it, because it is still going on (although some have detected the identity of a Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Fandom). But new names begin to appear again, chiefly those who moved up from the lower ranks to take over the roles of leaders. Those who started at the bottom of Sixth Fandom or even at the tail of Fifth Fandom and over a course of several years began to take the leadership of Fandom include such names as Hoffman, Elsberry, Kessler, Silverborg, McCain, Macaulay, Burwell, Willis, and Vick; all unknowns before 1948, 1949

and some as late as 1950. Redd Boggs who entered fandom in the Second Fandom and vanished in the middle of the Third, had re-entered in the Fifth Fandom and has remained to be a mainstay of the Sixth. But in the main, it has been the new names, as always, who have sparked the era.

The Sixth Fandom exists in a period when there is, oddly enough, too much s-f. After a period of years when hardly anyone outside the insular group of fandom had heard of it, now science-fiction is in every theater and splashed all over television; we have upwards of two dozen prozines and over a hundred s-f books are issued every year. The field no longer has an air of secrecy, of cultism.

Nevertheless an "inner circle" has grown up, centering around Leo Hoffman's QUANDRY, forming the nucleus of Sixth Fandom. But again, Sixth Fandom, the biggest of all, is too diffuse to pin down exactly. Even as, in 1951 and here in 1952, it has finally reached the point where it is possible to assign it a place in fan history. There is a new crop of fans coming up, which will probably replace it in short order and set up a Seventh Fandom. This vanguard of Seventh Fandom (which will probably be a going concern by the end of 1953) included such names as Ish, Calkins, Hirschorn, Ryal, Wells, Bergeron, Semonovich, Anderson, Schrieber, and Rosen; with few exceptions all in their early teens, and just raring to go out and found Seventh Fandom in a year or two.

How will the cycle end? I can't say. Just as it was inconceivable to say in 1944 that in eight years there would be two dozen prozines, it is inconceivable to me what twists fandom will take in the next eight. Probably, as I re-read this in 1960, a graybeard remnant of Sixth Fandom, it will seem odd to me that I was unable in 1952 to forecast the nature of Seventh Fandom, and Eighth and Ninth.

But, if we follow the Stapledonian scheme of things---and I hope we don't--- then we have twelve cycles left to us. Stapledon allowed two billion years for the Eighteenth Men to appear and be exterminated by a sun going nova. Following this chronology the Eighteenth Fandom should appear some time in 1997 and about 2004 fandom will come to a complete stop, reaching its end after 84 years of tumultuous existence.

But I'm not much good at being a prophet, anyway. I can't say for certain that that's the way it'll happen, but I'm pretty sure I won't be around to see it.

---Bob Silverberg 1952

.....

jack speer

THE DECLINE OF THE BEST

reprinted from Quandry #29
May - June, 1953

Someday a principle may be discovered which will organize the entire history of fandom into a coherent whole, or correlate its fluctuations with events in the outside world. The device of distinguishing several different periods, unfelicitously called "fandoms" does not do this. However, pending the emergence of a Spengler, it is a convenient device for organizing our historical data, and accordingly we should choose the one which best organizes data, when confronted with a choice of proposed systems of "fandoms".

In deciding how "best" to organize the data, we might observe the following criteria: we ought to be reluctant to designate more periods than are easily remembered; we should be slow to overturn generally recognized groupings and interpretations of events; and as the very idea of a history of fandom is pure stobism, it seems that we should attach greater importance to a proposed scheme's capacity to organize stobistic data than to its capacity to organize stobic (i.e. relating to the fiction) data.

A "fandom" is a period, not a group of people. The several "fandoms" in the sense we are considering here, correspond to such terms as "Elizabethan", "Puritan", "Neoclassical", "Rationalistic", "Romantic", in the history of English thought. Since there is less material in fan history, there is less opportunity for broad trends to emerge from the welter of detail. But we will usually find that each natural period has a dominant group of fan, who may of course have individually been around before and be around afterwards, the membership of which group may be quite

different at the beginning and at the end of a period, but which has a continuous group life, like a winning football team thru several seasons. Such a "natural" period (this may constitute the crine of projection) will probably also have definite interests and literary characteristics that distinguish it from other periods. There are always divergent trends within an era, but in the compartmentalization that we are seeking to impose, without doing too much violence to the raw material, a distinctive description applies to most of the important materials in a given compartment of time, and much of the rest is consistently related to it, perhaps by opposition. What is "important" must ultimately rest on a consensus of individual judgements; the writer should try to discover, and perhaps influence, such consensus, for if we are to use "fandom" or any other word, with this sense attached, there would be a disadvantage in everyone's adopting his own scheme based on his particular standards.

We must from an examination of the record that fandoms as above described are sometimes of dissimilar lengths. The Second Fandom lasted hardly a year in its pure state, but because of its unusual characteristics and highly developed involvements we recognize it as a unity. On the other hand, the Third Fandom lasted from a year before Pearl Harbor to a year after Hiroshima. It would be well to point out that between such sharply distinguished fandoms Fancyclopedia and its predecessors placed periods I called "transitions", which had characteristics of their own, somewhat more mixed. Usually it is feasible to take a big annual convention as the dividing point between a fandom and a transition.

As the foregoing indicates, my present view of the shape of stefnistic history is not exactly in accord with Bob Silverberg's article. The only change I would make in the scheme embedded in Fancyclopedia would be to distinguish an earlier period, which I have since called Eofandom, from 1920 to about 1933; I was unaware of the extent of historical events in this period, until The Immortal Storm came out.

However, I would not end Third Fandom with the date the Fancyclopedia was published, as Silverberg assumes. All of its outstanding characteristics -- the dominance of the Brain Trust in FAPA, NFFF, and other organizations; the prevalence of thoughtful discussions of all manner of subjects; the bibliographies, indexes, and other research work; -- continued to prevail up to the failure of Operation Futurian in 1946. The Foundation that would have been thereby established would have institutionalized the Third Fandom world-outlook; but due to a thinning of the Brain Trust's blood (a poetic way of saying they gave preference to other things in demands on their time) this was never realized. In the ensuing years by default, I suppose the younger element described by Silverberg was the center of stefnism; certainly the Hull-a-Men and their friends were prominent at the Philcon. This year I would call the Third Transition.

After the Philcon, commercialism was triumphant. Since my contacts with the fan field began to fray about this time, I cannot say with any

Speer (3)

authority what the characteristics of the Fourth Fandom were, but the principal voices that reached me were the cries of the hicksters. The pure-stefnistic opposition to them passed to the Insurgent Element (which, as those in the know know, was more than a Southern California phenomenon). A bacover for one of my last Synapses started out to be a tribute to FAPA, but I became so interested in contrasting that citadel with the state of fandom at large, that the cartoon ended up as an indictment of the Fourth Fandom. Its crowning dishonor, I felt, was the toleration of that intellectual slob, Zeda whatsername, as official welcomer for the NFFF. It is a measure of the difference between Third Fandom and Fourth that the corpse of the only round robin letter I saw in those latter days was laid in my hands by Zeda.

I will not say, though I egocentrically imply, that this entire time when I had less and less contact with the field was a single period. I am still not so well acquainted with the current scene as to try to define its characteristics or even give it a designation; but the emergence of the Quandry circle at the Nolacon time undoubtedly marks an epoch, and I hope I will be able to write a sequel to this article, entitled THE DECLINE OF THE WORST.

-----Jack F Speer,

16 Nov 55

A hope as yet unrealized....

This article, which Mr Speer wrote in reply to Bob Silverberg's FIRST AND LAST FEN was, perhaps unfortunately, overlooked by the founders of what was called Seventh Fandom. But say what they will about it, the historians must admit that the Seventh Fandom movement was the prime concern of "fandom" during the period of its occurrence. Probably the most detailed discussion of the subject was running in the fanzine PSYCHOTIC in its latter issues. It is doubtful that any one fan is more in a position to speak authoritatively on the subject of Seventh Fandom than Harlan Ellison.

seventh fandom

the dust was thick

by Harlan Ellison

Nov 1955

Seventh Fandom, from a retrospective view of several years, is no more clear a mirror than it was during its uproarings. The only things I can contribute to the rooms reamed about it are a few personal opinions, and several observations, all of which can be taken for what they are--- opinionated observations.

Seventh Fandom did begin with the group consisting of Dave Ish, Norman G. Browne, John L. Magnus, Jr., Bob Pentrowsky, Ray Thompson, myself, and a few others whose names escape me at the moment. On this point, to my mind there is no conjecture. Charles Wells, Su Rosen and the few others mentioned specifically by Silverberg in The Article never really contributed to the movement--and in the case of Miss Su Rosen and one or two others, they just dropped away or showed no interest.

It started half in jest, half in folly, with a sort of subconscious eye cocked to the possibility that in it we might establish reputations of lasting worth. There was no formulated and set pattern to the genesis of Seventh Fandom, however. Like Topsy, "it just grew."

The causes? Well, that's a bit more difficult to delineate. It entails all sorts of obscure and darkly-hinted subjects like child psychology and pathology, the lawd of civilization and decay, the structure of interregnums and historical fluxes, of, a lot of equally dismal and uninteresting things.

For clarity, I think Seventh Fandom came about because it was time for it. This is not as ambiguous as it might sound. There was a general slow-down and dimming of fan activity in the period immediately preceding what may be nebulously referred to as 7F. (And after, too, I might add.) This slow-down was due in part to the exodus of Hoffman, Calkins, Shelby Vick, Max Kessler, Bob Silverberg, Hank Burwell, Inn Macauley and other associated lesser lights of Sixth Fandom, who had--at that time, though they may have made a re-emergence--shot their funnish wads. This left the field wide open for anyone with any gumption.

Ellison (2)

The West Coast cartel tried to move in, but the stuff--it now appears--just wasn't there. They couldn't make the grade, and so fandom ached, subconsciously of course, for a new factor. This charged the atmosphere, along with the fact that those who I have named as integrally 7F were reaching the peak of their fanac, caused an explosion, and Seventh Fandom emerged. A catalyst was Geis' PSYCHOTIC, which became, oddly enough through a blunder on this writer's part, not a pillar of 7F, but a semi-neutral sounding-board. All this made up the stimulus that brought forth Seventh Fandom.

Organized 7F did several things. It issued two full-sized mailings of the Seventh Fandom Amateur Prose Association (7APA), and one thin mailing. It showed a concerted front at several conventions, and left behind a few interesting traditions and fables. True, the mailings were not noted for their innovation or sorebility, but there was an attitude, I felt, a feeling of jewelity that might have blossomed into something rather interesting had it continued.

Effects? Mmm, yes, those.

Seventh Fandom left in its wake a bad taste. It was a taste stemming from all the abuse heaped on 7F members, from critical surveys that damned before considering, from fuggheadedness typified by "The mad dogs have kneeled us in the groin," and a sort of restless animosity on the part of those not in the group, and an urge to run on the part of those in the maligned queue. It left a backwash of fanzine controversies the likes of which I don't think fandom has seen since the old Wollheim-Syzera or Tucker Staple War days. It was controversy. It was FIGHT!

And by god if they didn't.

I like to look back on 7F with fondness, though that is awfully hard to do. I was sort of a proud poppa, just from a personal point of view, you understand. But now that it's gone I think Seventh Fandom served one wonderful, and remarkable, purpose. It showed the fans of today just what idiocy "organized numbered fandoms" are, and it delineated another type of sorcon fuggheadishness from which to steer away. It showed what can happen when talented people extrapolate incorrectly.

It's dead, I was sorry to see it go, I'm glad it's dead.

Let's let it Requiescat En Pace, wet say?

--- Harlan Ellison

Seventh Fandom

as never was

by Bob Silverberg

In the October 1952 issue of Quandry, #25 I believe, I offered a continuation of the Jack Speer fan history set forth in Speer's 1944 Fancylopedia. Speer's record went as far as Third Fandom; briefly I reviewed his original categories, and then added three of my own--- Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Fandoms. I drew what seemed to me valid distinctions between the successive periods, and ventured a guess at the nature of the Seventh Fandom that would eventually supplant the current era.

I had no idea at the time that the people whose activities gave Sixth Fandom its characteristic tone were all to drop from fandom almost immediately afterward, but such an emigration has happened before and did not come as a surprise. The real surprise, though, was the unexpected banding together of a group of younger fans into a vociferous little organization calling itself "Seventh Fandom". "Seventh Fandom" -- the "Phony Seventh", in Tucker's apt phrase -- consisted of people who, completely misunderstanding the basic premises of Speer's system and my continuation, set out to carve fannish reputations for themselves. They did -- in a way which I don't envy.

The fact to remember is this: a "fandom" is a period, not a group of people. When Harlan Ellison talks of "organized Seventh Fandom" his phrase has no cognitive meaning; it is a contradiction in terms. Sixth Fandom was not the group of fans revolving around the Lee Hoffman-Walt Willis-Max Keasler axis; it was the period of fannish history during which those people flourished. It is foolish to talk of "membership" in a given fandom; Bob Tucker, for example, can date his fan career to the First Fandom, but he reached the greatest peak of his fan activity in some years during the 1950-52 period we designate as Sixth Fandom. Redd Boggs, as well, dates from an earlier period, but he may be classified as a Sixth Fandomer just as well. Had Boggs remained in fandom after the end of the Quandry era, he might well have considered himself a Seventh Fandom fan, were it not for the well-meaning but foolish fans who forever fouled things up.

Let us grant that the period known as Sixth Fandom came to its end with the death of Quandry and the simultaneous lapsing of activity on the part of its leading lights. In the normal course of events, there would have been a reshuffling, an influx of new faces, a changeover in the aims and general practices and customs of fandom, and, after a brief transitional period, we would have moved into a Seventh Fandom.

My article, though, was the unpredictable factor that destroyed the naturalness of the evolution. Instead of the normal rebuilding after the collapse of a fandom, we had the curious phenomenon of Organized Seventh Fandom. Strangely, only one of the ten names I suggested as leaders of the new fandom -- Charles Wells -- ever acquired any position of prominence. One, Gregg Calkins, was actually Sixth Fandom in approach; one, Richard Bergeron, never became active except as a fanzine illustrator. The others -- Norbert Hirschhorn, Dick Ryan, Dave Ish, Joe Semenovitch, Larry Anderson, Jim Schreiber, and Su Rosen -- were of no great consequence in the world of fandom, and most have dropped from activity.

The new names were chiefly unknown in the spring of 1952, when I wrote my article. Only Dave Ish and Harlan Ellison, of the entire Seventh Fandom group, had been nationally active for any length of time, Ish's activities confined to an illegible fanmag and Ellison's chiefly to make noises at conventions. The others -- John Magnus, Norman Browne, Ray Thompson, Sally Dunn, etc. -- were unheard-of as of May 1952.

It was these people who decided to form Seventh Fandom, as if such a thing were possible. The characteristic quality of a fandom can be determined fully only in retrospect; an "organized" fandom is impossible. But the conscious effort on the part of the so-called Seventh Fandom group, paradoxically, did result in a real Seventh Fandom -- a short lived era characterized by juvenile pomposness, fan-a-a-a-n-like antics, and detailed charts of what a Seventh Fandomer should be like.

Since I am no longer active in fandom, I don't have any idea when this group vanished and a new group appeared, but I would like to suggest that the concept of numbered fandoms is, perhaps, a thing of the past -- and that it died with Sixth Fandom. A "fandom" is really a fiction, a generalization with only limited validity. We now consider the Quandry group to have characterized Sixth Fandom -- but at the same time there were fans functioning completely outside the realm of "Sixth Fandom", fans like Roy Squires and James Taurasi, publishing excellent fanmags without ever partaking of any "Sixth Fandom" qualities, or even fans like Lee Kiddle, who simply did not function according to the generalized dictates of Sixth Fandom characteristics.

First Fandom, it may be safely stated, was a fairly unified affair, consisting as it did of only a handful of fans. But by the time of Sixth Fandom, it was perfectly possible for fans to be fully active without ever sharing the prevailing Zeitgeist, and, with that Zeitgeist dissipated with the dissolution of its central core, it is questionable that any later group can constitute enough of a central core to lend its characteristics to a new numbered fandom. Whether the Seventh Fandom group as such was important enough to be considered the tone-setting group that is necessary to the pinpointing of a fandom's characteristics is doubtful.

I'll suggest -- somewhat timidly -- that Seventh Fandom is still going on, and will continue to go on indefinitely, thereby bringing to a halt the entire numbering system. And its overriding characteristic, the generalized tag on which the numbering system depends, is simply its lack of any generalizability. It is, I feel, no longer meaningful to call any particular fannish philosophy the dominant trend of a "fandom", the way it was possible to point to the hektographed fanzines of Second Fandom or the letterhacking of Fourth. In short, the vast expansion of fandom in recent years, its overwhelming decentralization, makes it impossible to characterize it any further.

Some future historian will probably be able to refute all this with ease.

---Bob Silverberg
Nov 1955



Larry T Shaw

says



It was all very confusing.

My most fanactive period was in 1942, '43, and '44--the downgrade half of Third Fandom, presumably. I was aware at the time of Speer's fandom numbers, but they seemed to me to be merely one way (out of a possibly large number of ways) of describing what had happened in history.

I felt a faint flicker of interest from time to time after that, but was almost entirely unaware of what was happening in fandom until 1952, when it became convenient, and seemed like a pleasant idea, for me to go to Chicon II. Although I had never been to a major convention before, I assumed I would have no trouble getting re-acquainted and becoming part of the tight but fascinating fannish circle. I had learned to hold my liquor pretty well in the meantime, and fandom was fandom, wasn't it?

It wasn't. I might as well have been the rawest neofan, as far as preparation for the nature of the event and ability to find my niche in it were concerned. I was frankly bewildered--and the size alone of the affair had very little to do with it. What really had me farblondjete was the attitude of the new inner circle.

One of the predominant characteristics of the fandom I had left was a habit of self-analysis: individuals searched their souls and searched for a soul in the microcosm as a whole in every available public confessional. By comparison the new bunch seemed brash, self-satisfied, certain of its aims and desires, and--though it may sound silly to say it right out loud--uninterested in any traditions and without proper respect for the people who had worked to make fandom what it was. (They had also, by and large, already learned to hold their liquor at an age when I had never touched the stuff.)

Yes, it was confusing. It was, perhaps, bad luck that I had to wander blindly smack into the middle of the birth of Seventh Fandom. Bad luck because the rallying cry itself was such a sharp point of contrast (we didn't form fandoms like this in the good old days. I kept telling myself; who do they think they are anyway?, I griped). Bad luck, too, because the rallying cry was only a symbol of the deeper change that had taken place. It was a change that, at the time, was nothing short of startling.

It isn't confusing or startling any more, though. The change was, I think now, a direct result of fandom's growing older and larger. Though fanactivity had ebbed occasionally in the interim, the overall curve had been upward. Fandom was no longer something that had to be nursed carefully, just to keep it alive. Fans no longer had to worry about preservation of the microcosm first and look for a way of bending it to their own ends second. Fandom was there; it had been there

(Show ... 2)

quite a while, had a reasonable degree of solidity, and would probably be there for some time. No wonder, then, the new group took it for granted and almost immediately began to plan things they could do in it, with it and to it.

Parts of the picture as I see it are still blurry. I came back in on the middle, at a particularly exciting point, without the synopsis I needed. But Seventh Fandom had its beginning, I'm sure, some time before.

Yes, Seventh Fandom took what had been a neat way of capsulizing historical periods and applied it to a group of people. It drew form for itself from a prediction made by a fan historian. But what of it? We've had plenty of future histories in science fiction itself and because they were fictional their dominant elements were people or groups of people with definite leaders. Isn't it possible that these have influenced the way fans think about fan history? And is there anything essentially wrong with allowing science fiction (the elements in it, that is, not the state of the market at any given point) to have an influence on the way fandom develops?

I don't think there is. So we've taken a historian's chart of the past lifted it bodily from the history books and used it as a means of shaping current events, with or without a complete knowledge that we were doing so. Does it matter when it was a change that clearly had to take place? I don't think it should, unless we're determined to keep history locked in already-written books, and never try to re-interpret it in order to understand it better for its own sake, or learn from it to avoid present mistakes and possibly alter the future for the better.

Again, Seventh Fandom demolished the numbering system as a neat device for historians. But it did so when the device was becoming obsolete in any case. Simply stacking one "Fandom" on top of another is, clearly and unquestionably, no longer a useful way even to remember events, much less to gain perspective on them. (We'd soon have to take off our shoes and start counting on our toes, anyway, which would be kind of silly when we've just barely gotten used to wearing them.)

So we have the future ahead of us, and someday perhaps, the historians will be able to look back in perspective, and classify and compartmentalize us. But under the circumstances, they will no doubt use a different system of classification, than our numbered fandoms. I don't know what the system should be. But I am certain of this, the era following Seventh Fandom, offers promise of being one of the most interesting periods of all fandom.

-----LTS

With additional dialog by Leah



It is not our purpose to start feuds or add fire to old feuds. This issue of *Fy* is intended as a documentation of the situation in fandom up to the present: a bringing together in one volume of several related items which survey fandom for the reader, from its beginning, albeit not thoroughly. We find these items all related, and present them to you here. There is much much more to be found on the subject of fandom, its phases and history, in the fanzines.

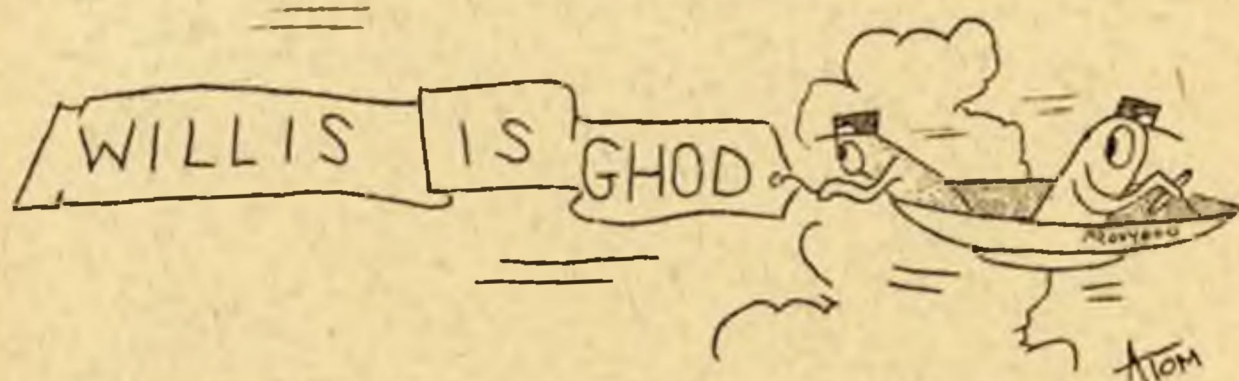
The past is behind us. It is the foundation of the present. The historians tell us that it is from the wise use of the cumulative experience of the past that we are able to build our future.

* * *

In this ish we have some artwork by the incomparable *ATom*. It was not our original intention to use fanart per se, only neat lettering-guide headings, and art of historical significance or directly related to material herein. Well, *ATom* is a MG, and lacking adequate vehicles wherein we might present his work in connection with our publications, we considered using some of it in *Fy*. Hence, another bit of policy goes smash, and *Fy* has the good fortune of *ATOM* decorations.

In fact *Fy* seems to wax less formal every time the merry-go-round goes round. Your opinion on this will be appreciated.

Herewith a personal note: It is unfortunate but true that your editor must pursue employment of some nature in order to buy mineo ink, paper and the other necessities of fanac. Yod must also, to stay happy, indulge in occasional non-fanac in spare time. This doesn't leave as much time for crifanac as it used to back in the pre-Holacoon days. Therefore, we ask that you bear with us if we fail to answer when you write. It isn't that we don't appreciate and enjoy your letters.



even so, there is
no editorial by him
in this issue of Fy.

