

The TED WHITE SAMPLER



Edited by Arnie Katz

contents

A Day with Calvin Thomas Beck	4
The Bet	8
With Jaundiced Eye: Hornbook for Would-Be Pros	12
I Had One Bitch But the Image Over There	15
Excerpts from Gambit 24	17
The Midwestcon	19
The Politics of Fandom	23
Who Was That Neo I Saw You with Last Night? That Was No Neo, That Was the Best New Fan of the Year!	29
Some Selections from Pong	32
Beyond Egoboo: Two Memorable Columns	39

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I spent a day with Calvin Thomas Beck -- 24 hours -- yes, I did, actually and literally.

Now, long before we moved to New York, I had heard stories about Beck; stories that grew long and fabulous in the telling. Stories about Calvin Thomas Beck and his

mother, without whom he had never... And since coming to New York, it had crossed my mind several times that here at long last was a chance to lay a legend, to see if the Beck Mythos was only that, or whether there was a flesh and blood substantiation to the stories I had heard.

Luck was with me in the person of Larry Ivie, a fringe fan and professional artist, and a long-time EC fan. Larry Ivie had found himself doing the layout for the second issue of a Calvin T. Beck prozine, **The Journal of Frankenstein**. For a week, Ivie had been taking the bus over to New Jersey to the Becks' home early each morning, working a long day, and returning late at night, and whenever he had the chance, he would regale me with stories about the Becks. Finally I could stand it no longer. I asked Larry if I might go along with him to meet these fabulous people.

"Well, it's your life..." is the way he put it. "But I could use someone to run interference; the way they keep wanting to talk to me all the time, I never get any work done. So, it was agreed. Sunday morning at 9:00 I would meet Ivie at the Port Authority Bus Terminal, and we would ride out together to North Bergen, New Jersey.

The Becks' house is a duplex, with the Becks on the left side. It is in effect a two story, with a "basement" on the ground floor, and a "first floor" which is reached by climbing half a flight of outside steps to the porch. Fortunately, the house is about three doors away from the bus stop. The neighborhood is a seedy residential one, made up of lower middle-class homes and cheap housing projects, with a run down "business section" of a couple of blocks a half-mile away. Like most of New Jersey, it is singularly depressing.

Larry knocked several times on the door, and finally it was opened by a small, plump grey-haired woman in a house coat. It seemed the Becks had just arisen. We entered through a crowded livingroom with an unmade studio couch-bed and two large bird cages, and Larry introduced me to Mrs. Beck. "This is Ted White," he said. "He came along to help me, since we're pushing so close to the deadline."

"Oh, yes," Mrs. Beck said, not for an instant questioning my qualifications, but simply accepting me. "Hello, Teddy," she said to me with a strange chirping-bird sort of accent. (Later I asked Calvin, who said it was a mixture of French and Greek accents.) I was to be "Teddy" for the rest of my stay.

We were then ushered down into the "basement," where Larry began showing me what had been done, while the Becks presumably prepared themselves for the day.

The basement had been newly done over into what amounted to an apartment, with separate (but equal) kitchen and bathroom

A DAY WITH Calvin Thomas Beck

facilities. (Calvin later said they intend to rent it as an apartment come Spring. Here's a great opportunity for someone who wants to do a psychological study, close-up...) It was light and attractive, and spread out all over the main room floor were layout sheets. "It was the only place where we had room," Larry explained, and started showing me what he had done. The layouts were rather good, I thought, but rather conventional and not very world-shaking. Larry had done lots of picture paste-ups, montages, etc., and a fair amount of title lettering. The latter, I nearly uniformly deplored. (Later, Larry agreed: "I'm an artist not a letterer. I don't know why people think artists make good letterers.")

The deal was this: The first issue of **The Journal of Frankenstein** had been a serious "work of love," and looked pretty lousy. It had also received lousy distribution and lost money. But Beck (who also publishes various cheap physical culture magazines -- "Queer bait," Larry calls them: he will have nothing to do with them) managed to find a better distributor: the one who handles **Playboy**. The distributor wanted something to compete with Ackerman's mag, so the slant of the mag was being changed 180 degrees. It was also getting better printing and would at least not look like a scrapbook, as the first issue had. The catch at this point was that the distributor wanted to see the final preliminary dummy the next day and the issue was only half completed. Larry was still explaining this when we were called up for coffee.

"Coffee" turned out to be "Coffee with." In this case, with two fried eggs and loads of unevenly burned toast, plus cheese sauce. It happens that I am not an egg fan and have only learned how to eat (and enjoy, that is) hard-boiled eggs and deviled eggs in the last year, and had never attempted fried eggs. Manfully, with a great spirit of adventure, and mindful of the fact that I had not eaten since rising that morning, I ate the two fried eggs.

I am still not a fried egg fan.

We were joined at this breakfast by Calvin Thomas himself, who turned out to be thirty-ish, plump, medium height, dark, and rather pleasant. It is difficult to imagine a man at thirty still bound to his mother as Calvin is, but the marvel is that Calvin seems to have adjusted to this as a life-long fact, and has accepted it with remarkable humor. (He often kids his mother, and puts her down, but still refers to her with child-like affection.) Calvin strikes me as a shy man, introverted, weak-willed and aware of it. Much of this can be credited to his mother's dominance.

Strangely (particularly in light of reports I'd heard), I found neither Beck unpleasant, but in the long run only wearing. Yet, Mrs. Beck certainly has some very strange

attitudes, which came out during the hour-long discussion we held as we ate. The Becks were pumping me, of course, about my background, so I played my bearded role to the hilt with such remarks as, "I had to leave Washington, DC, of course. It is a beautiful town, but so *dull*. There are no real opportunities, and nothing ever happens there; there's nothing to *do*." I was actually referring to career opportunities in writing and editing, but Mrs. Beck took this as a comment on social life -- which it could also easily be. "Well," she said, "I should think a man of letters would not mind that. It is not good to leave the home so much."

The Mama Beck philosophy seems to be one of Staying Behind Locked Doors, one which was to bear itself out several times later. Larry had earlier in the week told me her rather interesting views on social life between the sexes. "You know what boys and girls do now? They *date*. If I had a daughter and she told me she wanted to *go out on a date*, you know what I would do? I would hit her over the head and put some sense into her! Of course, I have never had that problem with Calvin... He used to go to the YMCA. But finally he was going to the YMCA too much, and we had to move out here to New Jersey." Mrs. Beck still thinks highly of the YMCA, however. "You know the 23rd Street YMCA?" (Larry had lived there a short time before he found an apartment -- "The queers scrawl messages and advertisements on the walls!") "That's a very good place for boys, you know?" She nodded her head in approval.

The effect this has had on Calvin, a very malleable individual with apparently a very malleable sex-drive, was to drive him into the introvert's fascination with sexological studies, and a vicarious approach to what in his house is an unapproachable subject. He told a rather funny story (funny more in the way he told it than for its intrinsic humor) about how at one time he had published a pseudo-**Sexology** type magazine, and George Wetzel, who had decided he no longer liked Beck, complained to the FBI that Beck was a publisher of pornography.

"These two men came around one day from the FBI and demanded to see my magazine. I stalled them a bit, and told them I didn't have any copies of it around, because I didn't like their methods, but I was pretty nervous, because it isn't every day you're visited by the FBI. They said that if I didn't produce a copy immediately, they'd get a search warrant. Of course I immediately got them a copy, because I didn't want them looking around through everything. You see, er, ha-ha, I did have one little item of pornography in the house; something I'd just picked up for curiosity, of course. I had it in my files, under 'P'..."

Little indications of Mama Beck's strong will and natural determination to take care of *everything* were amusing. For instance, she added milk and sugar to our coffee before serving it, and before asking if we wanted it. When I asked for salt, she salted my eggs (and Larry's, too, before he could

object) herself. Later on in the day, when we were again having coffee, served the same way, I asked for a spoon, since I like to sip my coffee when it is hot. Calvin related the request, and back from the kitchen came, "What does he want a spoon for? I have already stirred the sugar and milk!"

Past reports (including the one of when Mama Beck, having decided that Calvin had spent too much time in a men's room, charged in after him, calling, "Caaaaal-vin, where are you?!" -- which I can easily believe) of Mrs. Beck's activities have been pretty incredible, usually amusing if they don't involve you, and almost always indicative of the sort of busy-body-ish, PTA-ish, American "Mom" you'd love to hate. Mrs. Beck in person does not measure up to this. In person she is humorously pathetic, plaintive, insisting, ingenuous stereotype of the Old World Mama, a simple person bound up in the success of her son. Unfortunately, in this case, someone forgot to cut the umbilical cord.

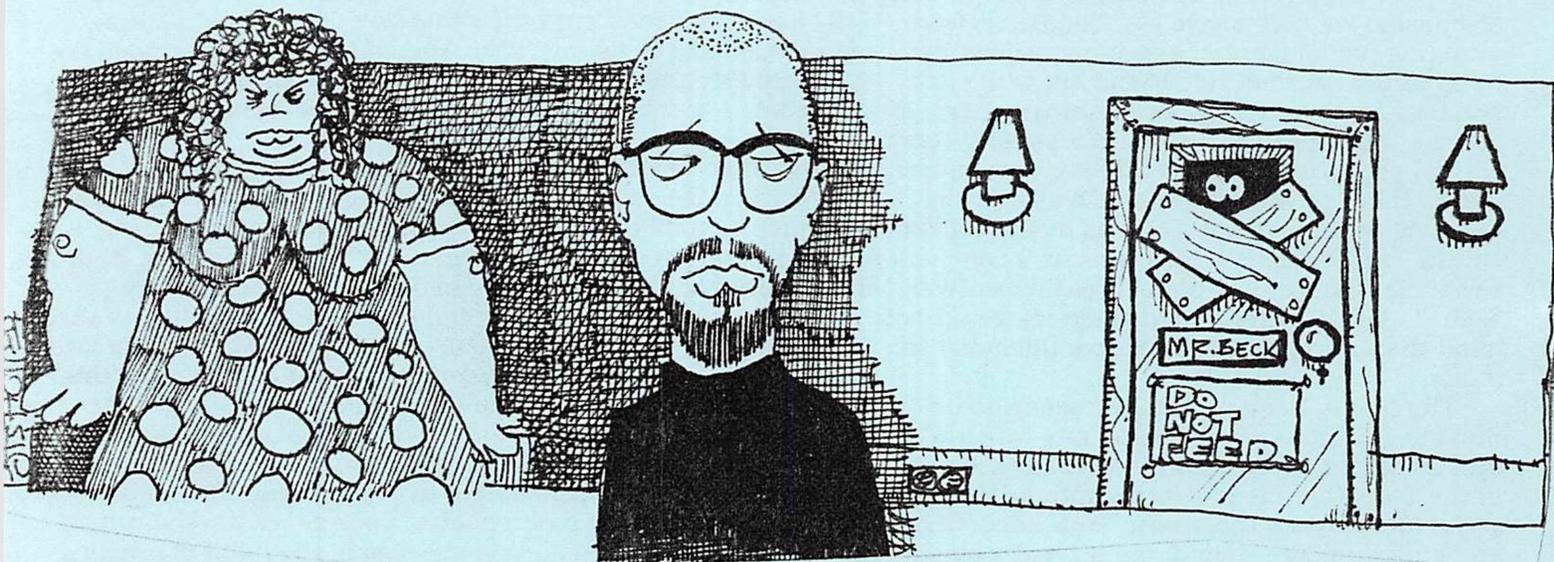
We didn't see much of Mrs. Beck as we worked, which surprised Larry, who said she was in the habit of bringing him coffee every 10 minutes on previous days. "No kidding. I couldn't drink it all, and at one point I had lined up along the wall 10 cups full of cold coffee. And every little while, she'd come down with another cup of the stuff."

When we returned to the basement, Larry began to letter a thing which read "Zacherley's Wife Contest." When he had finished, after a couple of brief minutes, I said, slowly, "Larry... that looks terrible."

"Yes," he agreed. "Now that you mention it, it does." The outcome of this is that I found myself relettering the page and handling nearly all of the remaining title lettering. I'm not that proud of it -- it was one for same-size reproduction, which I thought was a mistake, and was a little uneven -- but it was reasonably esthetically pleasing to the eye. (Especially at a distance. The further away one holds it, the better it looks... two blocks away seems about best, and I recommend it.)

The way we operated was that Calvin T. would type up some text on his electronic IBM and bring it down, and Larry would cut it to fit and past it up into a layout with photos, and I would letter in the titles, usually hand-lettering, but sometimes using artype. (I'm rather proud of the one I did with artype for "The Hound of the Baskervilles" -- you'd think it had appeared in **Fantastic Universe**...) Unfortunately, it was difficult to keep Calvin upstairs and banging away at the typewriter. After we had run out of material to paste up, and had ushered him upstairs to compose some more deathless prose, we would almost immediately hear this sound like two large barrels falling down the steps, and there would be Calvin, with a question, a joke, or two unusable lines of caption for a photo we'd previously decided not to use. This caused a considerable bottleneck, and was apparently the main reason for the previous week's slow progress.

In all fairness to Calvin, however, I should point out that he was apparently starved for fannish news of any sort, and seemed really very lonely. I was a new contact to the fandom he'd lost touch with -- Larry had mentioned that I put out a fanzine, remaining purposely vague -- and he wanted to soak up all the news he could. Most of the fans he asked about have since departed the scene, although we did discuss in detail the Wetzel mess. Beck had at one time been friendly with Wetzel, like many other well-meaning people, because Wetzel and he shared an



interest in fantasy and supernatural fiction. Beck had been one of those Wetzel had used to mail out letters with other cities' postmarks on them. One day Beck had investigated one of these letters and found it to be a poison pen letter to a friend of his, and had broken off relations with Wetzel. Shortly thereafter came the FBI episode.

Around mid-afternoon, we ran out of india ink. Calvin wanted us to try water colors, which we patiently informed him would not flow well through a pen, and black fountain pen ink, which worked extremely badly, so finally we decided in desperation to set out and try to find a place that sold india ink, despite the fact that it was Sunday.

We were just climbing the stairs from the basement ("But why does Teddy want to go with you, Larry?" asked Mama Beck; "I take him around with me for good luck," Larry replied truthfully.) when we made an astounding discovery! *We discovered Mr. Beck!* I had asked Larry earlier if there was a Mr. Beck, and he said he assumed that if there ever was one, he'd since been swallowed up by the earth, since he'd not heard a word or reference to any such person.

But there at the top of the stairs, shuffling about aimlessly in the hall in front of us was a tall, thin, aging man whom we could only glimpse, as through a dimensional rift, before Mrs. Beck, who had been ahead of us, hurriedly ushered him into a room.

"Mr. Beck has hurt himself," we were told. "He tried to cut a corn off his foot with a razor blade, which he had no business doing, and now it is bleeding, so please get me also a--a--" and here Mrs. Beck produced a series of inarticulate foreign-sounding noises. "Like a--a--a--bandage, you know?"

"A band-aid?" I asked.

"No, no, no! A--a--" and again the inability to communicate. Inspiration suddenly struck, and she said, "Like this!" and pressed into my hand an extremely filthy, used band-aid.

"Yeah, band-aids," I said.

New Jersey has Sunday Blue Laws, and as I've pointed out, today was Sunday. We trudged over most of North Bergen's dumpy "business section," finding open only one drugstore, which had no india ink, and probably couldn't have sold it even if it had. We did get the band-aids, however.

So, after about an hour, we returned to the Becks, Larry betting that Calvin would have accomplished nothing in our absence (he won the bet), and there the decision was made to get out the car and drive around looking for a place which sold india ink. By now we were all very hung up on india ink.

Mrs. Beck was not going to be left behind, so she followed the three of us back out of the house. I watched in amazement as she took a small padlock from off a hook and padlocked the door shut from the outside, leaving Mr. Beck locked inside! (To enlighten you about Mr. Beck, I later pieced together enough information to discover that he was connected with a restaurant somewhere, and came home only one day a week, during which he was kept in his room. It sort of fit into the Beck Mythos, after all...)

The four of us set off in the Beck's 1955 Buick and after searching most of northern New Jersey in vain, Calvin muttering all the while about how things were much worse than he had imagined -- "I haven't been out on Sunday in four or five years..." -- we finally headed over the George Washington Bridge to uptown Manhattan. On the way we talked about various things inspired by the subject of Blue Laws, finally settling on a discussion of the Mormon control of Utah (Larry's home state) which is so strong that bus passengers passing through the state must stop smoking at the state line, and the morals of Salt Lake City's youth. Their morals turned out to be rather good, and I jokingly said, in a semi-non-sequitur, "I don't know about their morals, but the girls in Salt Lake City are prettier than in any other city I've travelled through." (The Society of American Girl Watchers and Lechers, formed

by Bob Pavlat and myself on our various long trips to conventions several years back, using a one-to-five star rating system for the incidence of pretty girls observed in various cities passed through, gave Salt Lake City forty-eight stars!) Mama Beck took this to mean I thought pretty girls were immoral, and over the protests of Calvin, Larry, and myself, she lectured us on the morality of beauty, and how it was *immoral* to keep a beautiful girl locked up inside a house where no one could see and admire her beauty. We didn't think, then, to question this in light of some of Mrs. Beck's other statements.

We found ink in Manhattan without difficulty, and finally returned to New Jersey, Mrs. Beck pointing out "scenic vistas" every time the car rounded the corner and a new garbage dump was visible, and soon we were back at the Becks.

From there on, it was work, work, work. Fortunately, when necessary I could talk to Calvin Thomas and work at the same time, thus keeping him off Larry's back. I also freed Ivie from the drudgery of lettering, and thus speeded up his other work. By this point we were working on the latter portion of the mag, where a number of stills from a horror movie, plus captions, will be run, one movie to a page or two. Thus, I was really grinding out the titles, like "Have Rocket, Will Travel." "The Woman Eater." and "Horror Film Cavalcade."

The magazine calls for a humorous approach, ala Ackerman, and Beck certainly has a weird and corny sense of humor. One of his "better" jokes was to name the magazine's new club the National Frankenstein Fan Federation, or N3F for short... I began riding him about this, making caustic jokes about some of his worst attempts, and I think this upset him a bit, but it did prod him into a slightly more productive vein...

It also kept him out of our hair and at his typewriter where he belonged.

About eight o'clock we were called up at long last for dinner. We had had no lunch and were famished, but the food was plentiful enough to quell our hunger. It consisted of a plate for each of us heaped perilously high with potatoes cooked with still-raw onions, navy beans, and overcooked lamb. It was fairly tasty, albeit overstocked with carbohydrates.

After dinner we hit the final stretch, monotonously pasting up photos and captions, and lettering titles. "My layout is going to pieces," Larry said. When you have to create a new layout every page for 20 pages or so, it is impossible to keep them consistent to each other and make them all good. We were also getting tired (it hadn't helped that Larry, Sylvia, and I had been up to two or so Sunday morning watching old films over at Dave Foley's, and had thus gotten rather little sleep before coming out to the Becks'...) and feeling less creative.

It was rather a momentous occasion, then, when Calvin T. said quietly, "I think this will be enough." We were finally through. I glanced at my watch... it was four a.m. -- *four a.m.?* "The busses have stopped running," Calvin said brightly "They don't start again till six. And look! It's snowing!" Yes it was. And that precluded any chance of Calvin -- who was as tired as we were anyway -- driving us to New York. We decided

to wait the two ours till six, and then catch a bus. The Becks offered us a single, narrow cot to sleep on, but somehow Larry and I both thought we'd prefer to sleep in our own beds at home. So we sat around, those two hours long and indeterminable, filled with aimless talking and six came, and we were ushered out the front door into the still-falling snow by the still up and awake Mrs. Beck, and after three minutes or less we were on a bus to New York.

From there on, the trip assumed a surrealistic quality. Safely on our way, we relaxed, but could not sleep. We took the A train from the Port Authority Terminal, and split up at Columbus Circle, where Larry changed to the AA local, and I transferred to the downtown local IRT train. I boarded it with a crowd of bright, almost cheerful-looking people who had just risen and were on their way to work. I slumped down in my parka in my seat and regarded them fuzzily through my tangled beard, and reflected upon the difference between us. I preferred it my way. I had put in my own hours, and now I was free for as long as I wished. I was going home and to bed, and would probably sleep for a good 12 hours; and they, poor slobs, were off to work, probably still not recuperated from their weekends, and with eight hours of boredom, drudgery, or hard work ahead of them.

At 42nd St., four or five college types got on, carrying a six-pack of beer. Here were people who were marginally my kind, still drunk (not yet even hung over) and returning from a weekend not yet quite finished. They split up and drank the beer and sang songs to each other at the top of their lungs all the way down to 14th St., where one of them exclaimed, "Boy! You know I gotta make it home and change my clothes and be at work in two hours--!" I sympathized with him, but I don't think he made it... Especially since they were all on the wrong train, and thought they were getting off at Union Square, which was on East 14th St. and this was West 14th...

The rest of the passengers made an interesting study, as they attempted to ignore the college types (it has been said that if you disrobed on the subway, no one would stare directly at you, and probably most people would not notice), who made a little too much noise to be easily ignored. The whole scene -- particularly when one fellow offered another passenger a can of beer (which was turned down) -- furnished me with enough amusement to keep me awake until I'd reached the Christopher St. stop, and regained the street, where it was still snowing lightly. The sky was grey and darkly overcast, and I was still in a sleepy mood. I entered the apartment quietly, and surreptitiously slipped into bed, so as not to awaken Sylvia.

It was the end of a very long day.

An amusing aftermath occurred when Larry Ivie and I were discussing the day several days later. "You know, I had noticed the door to the room where they keep Mr. Beck, but I hadn't known he was there. It's real funny, though; the door opens inwards, and they have a rope tied to it from outside so that no one can open it without untying all these knots and everything."

"How strange," I said. How strange indeed.

(from *Mimosa* #12, edited by Dick & Nicki Lynch, July, 1992)

This is a story about how I won -- and lost -- a bet. The bet was with Harlan Ellison, and it was his idea. He was wrong and I was right, and in the end it didn't matter.

The year was 1960. My first wife, Sylvia, and I had moved to New York City in the summer of 1959, finding -- after several weeks of searching -- a pleasant five-room apartment in the west Village, a block away from Sheridan Square on Christopher Street. The apartment was on the fourth floor of a five-floor building that had no elevator -- good for catching a vagrant breeze on a hot summer's day, but lousy for easily coming and going. Those four flights of stairs could get to you after you'd been up and down them a few times.

Harlan moved back to New York City, after a year or two's stay in Chicago, in the spring of 1960. He had been editor on Bill Hamling's *Rogue* magazine, one of the few *Playboy* imitators to make a serious job of it. (Hamling had been offered a 50% ownership in *Playboy* when Hefner started that magazine, but turned the opportunity down and had been kicking himself ever since. *Rogue*, once a pulpish men's-sweat magazine, was transformed in 1959 into a slick competitor to *Playboy*.)

As a struggling young writer, I'd been submitting short items to both *Playboy* and *Rogue* (my first sale -- at 50¢ word! -- was in fact to *Playboy*), and had been getting back rejections notes from Harlan (although he did send me a check for a five word sale -- the title for an article *Rogue* used which I'd suggested to him at the 1959 Worldcon -- in the sum of 25¢). So perhaps that is why, when Harlan returned to New York City, he moved in with us until he found a place of his own.

Of course, I'd known Harlan for some years by then. We'd corresponded in the early fifties, and he'd contributed to my fanzines of that era. (I in turn had illustrated a story for his fanzine in 1953 -- and in retrospect I'm damned grateful neither the story nor my awful illos were ever published; Harlan had a massive file of unpublished material when he gave up putting out fanzines.) We met in 1955 at the first Worldcon I attended, and saw each other on and off in the years which followed, usually at conventions.

I held Harlan in awe in those days. He had enormous energy, and it fueled not only his talents (as a writer, editor, and -- now mostly forgotten -- cartoonist), but his activities. A trip to a restaurant or a store with Harlan was an entertainment, with Harlan the Master of Ceremonies and Star. Harlan decided at the 1955 Cleveland Worldcon to help George Young select and purchase a tie at a nearby men's store, and led half a dozen of us along on a short walk to the store. Along the way we encountered a construction project: men digging a deep hole in the street. Immediately Harlan took charge, issuing directions to the men in the hole and the growing crowd of bystanders. He was funny, and he had all of us -- fans, workers, passersby -- in the palms of his hands.

There was applause when he was done and turned

THE BET

to continue to the store. Although he was only a few years older than I, there was a huge gap between us in terms of experience and knowledge, and I looked up to him.

By 1960 I was no longer a callow high school kid but the gap remained. Harlan had by then sold dozens of stories and one or two

books, served a tumultuous stint in the Army, been married and divorced, and had been working at *Rogue*. And he had no less energy. He seemed to sleep in half the time most people did, and to use the extra time to write new stories. He could write anywhere. In later years he would write stories in store windows and at Worldcons. I watched him write "Daniel White for Greater Good" (an excellent story) in my living room, in the midst of a party, pausing every two or three pages to announce, "Listen to this!" and then read us what he'd just written. I learned from Harlan how to write finished copy cold, in a single draft.

My own career was just starting to take off at this point. I'd joined the staff of *Metronome* magazine, then the world's oldest (and best) jazz magazine, which had resumed publication in the spring of 1960 after a six-month hiatus, during which a new publisher and production staff had been found. My article on Ornette Coleman -- then a very controversial and misunderstood figure in jazz -- was the cover story in the first new issue of *Metronome*, and earned me a lot of respect in the field when Coleman said (in print) that I was the first to understand what he was doing. This led in turn to my becoming a columnist for Ted Wilson's *Jazz Guide*, getting liner-note assignments, and covering a wide range of jazz concerts and events for *Metronome*, for which I also reviewed books and records.

One major event was the Newport Jazz Festival, still held then in Newport, Rhode Island. Sylvia and I drove up, along with *Metronome's* associate editor, Bob Perlongo, to find Newport a scene of near-chaos. George Wein (festival manager) refused to honor my *Metronome* credentials despite Perlongo and *Metronome's* editor, Bill Coss, vouching for me in person, so Sylvia and I drove a mile away to the Cliff Walk Manor, where an insurgent jazz festival was being held, featuring Charles Mingus, Max Roach, and Ornette Coleman. The streets along the way were full of rowdy college-age kids (some were mooning passersby in the mid-afternoon) and beer cans littered the sidewalks. During the evening's concert at Cliff Walk Manor, our eyes began stinging and we discovered that the police had been using tear gas at the main festival, a mile away, in what turned out to be a riot by kids outside the festival walls. We left after the concert, driving up to Boston to stay with our friends at the Ivory Birdbath in Cambridge. I called Harlan (who was then still living in our apartment) to tell him what had happened.

"Geeze, Ted," Harlan exclaimed. "That's a great story. Why don't you write it up for *Rogue*? I'll call Frank Robinson and set it up for you."

This led directly to my first major sale to *Rogue*, "Riot At Newport."

It wasn't, as I wrote it, a very good piece. But Harlan rewrote the lead, and Frank edited it into acceptability. (I've said it before and I'd like to say it again: Frank Robinson is the best editor I've ever had. He turned my dross into gold and always claimed: "It was all in your piece, Ted; I just rearranged a few things." I learned a great deal just by studying the changes he made, and my subsequent sales to *Rogue* appeared pretty much as written.)

That summer Harlan found his own apartment -- three doors up the street, in a building with an elevator. And he met a woman, Linda Solomon, who also lived in the same building. Linda would go on to a career of her own in writing and editing, but that was mostly ahead of her in 1960.

Linda had a small but well-selected record collection, containing a goodly amount of jazz. One of the records she had was a premium offered by Tom Wilson. Now, Tom is worth an article in his own right. He started up a very important small jazz label while he was still in college -- earning an MBA at Harvard. The record company, Transition, was essentially his thesis project, but it also released the first albums by people like Sun Ra and Cecil Taylor, and all Transition lps are collectors' items now, going for hundreds of dollars apiece.

In late 1959, Tom, with a partner, began doing jazz radio programming in New York City. They leased six hours an evening -- six pm to midnight -- on a local FM station, and presented some of the big names among jazz critics, like Nat Hentoff, in one-hour shows, every week-night. I listened to it regularly and subscribed to the program guide, *Jazz Guide*. The first issue of *Jazz Guide* came out the same week as the first revived issue of *Metronome*, and Tom liked my work in *Metronome* so much that he called me up and invited me to write for *Jazz Guide*, which is how I met and got to know him. (I also subsequently introduced Harlan to him, and Harlan became another columnist for *Jazz Guide*.)

The radio thing did not last -- Tom and his partner had a falling out -- and Tom dropped radio to get into publishing (he started up a magazine designed to be sold at record stores, called *33 Guide*, to which both Harlan and I contributed reviews) and returned to record producing, first for United Artists and Savoy, and later for Verve, where he produced the first Mothers of Invention album (adding 'of Invention' to their name). But while Tom and his partner were promoting their jazz radio programming, they offered albums as premiums to program-guide subscribers. The albums were in blank, white jackets, but the actual lps inside (obtained very cheaply sans covers) were a jazz sampler issued five or six years earlier on a Period label.

And Linda had one. So did I, but mine had the original Period cover, complete with liner notes and personnel listings for each track, since I'd bought it (for \$1.98) when it first came out. Tom offered me one of the ones he was sending out, but I turned it down; I didn't need another copy, much less one with a blank cover.

I tried to tell Harlan that when he came over one Friday afternoon to rave to me about Linda's copy of

the album, which he'd just heard.

"Great stuff, Ted. There's lotsa old historical tracks. There's one with Mildred Baily singing with the John Lewis orchestra!"

"With who?"

"With John Lewis! You know, the pianist in the Modern Jazz Quartet! I know you like him, Ted -- you've got most of his albums!"

In fact his "European Windows" and "Golden Striker" albums were heavy favorites of mine then. "You don't mean John Lewis," I said. "John Lewis never played with Mildred Baily. You're thinking of John Kirby. She sang with him on those 1939 tracks."

"No, Ted," Harlan insisted. "John Lewis. It was John Lewis she sang with."

I tried to explain that Lewis' first recordings were done after WW2, with the Dizzy Gillespie Big Band, and that in 1939 he was probably still in school somewhere. Then I hauled out my copy of the Period sampler, to prove my point.

But Harlan was not impressed. "This isn't the same album, Ted," he said with only a glance at the jacket. "I'm right, I know I'm right, and you know I'm right."

"Aw, come on, Harlan," I said. "You know you're wrong. You got the names wrong, that's all. It was John Kirby. She sang with him for years."

"Oh, yeah? You wanna bet? Huh? You wanna bet on it? Come on, Ted -- you know you're right, so let's bet on it, okay?"

"I don't want to bet on it, Harlan. I'd win, so what's the point?"

But Harlan insisted. Harlan can be very insistent. "I'll tell you what," he said. "I'll bet my entire record collection against one record in your collection, your 10-inch X-label album by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band!" This album documents the earliest known 'jazz' recordings, circa 1917, albeit by white musicians. The 10-inch lp was issued in the very early fifties by RCA Victor on its jazz-historical X label, and was by then itself of some historical importance. I consider the music on it of little value (others have other opinions) except as a historical document, but at that time I was trying to build a major jazz collection (in part to make me a more-rounded jazz critic), and the album was important to me for that reason. Harlan's collection, on the other hand, was as big as mine (over one thousand lps), and did not overlap it too much. He had a lot of classical albums I didn't then have, and a lot of the more or less 'hip' popular albums as well. He had one album that I really wanted, because I'd never seen it anywhere else (and still haven't to this day): a Johnny Mathis album arranged by some of the top jazz arrangers of the day, like Gil Evans. It was tempting to think of owning Harlan's collection.

Harlan did not drop the issue until I said, "Okay, Harlan, if you want to bet, you've got a bet." When Sylvia came in, he excitedly repeated the whole story to her, re-emphasizing the bet. One record in my collection, against his entire collection.

Sylvia got excited. "When can we collect?" she asked.

"We can't settle the bet," Harlan said, gently correcting her (Harlan liked Sylvia quite a lot), "until Monday, because Linda is away for the weekend. Monday we'll get together and go over to her place and look at her record and settle the bet."

"Is this a real bet?" Sylvia asked.

"Yeah, Harlan," I said. "No hanky-panky, now. You don't go over first and alter the label or anything."

"Aw, come on, Ted! Do you think I'd do a thing like that? This is a serious bet, man!"

Boyd Raeburn was in town that weekend, and at one point a crowd of us were in a subway car when the story of the bet came up again, Harlan excitedly telling Boyd about it. By now the stakes had escalated again: Harlan was betting not only his entire record collection, but his custom-made record cabinets as well. I watched all this with numb amazement. It was beginning to dawn on me that I was going to win a lot.

I'd had vague doubts. Although I knew it was John Kirby and not John Lewis -- and I had my own copy of the record to back me up -- Harlan was so dead-set insistent that I couldn't help wondering if, maybe, possibly, there had been a typographical error on the radio-premium copies (maybe the reason they'd sat in a warehouse somewhere for years), or some other explanation that could cost me the bet. After all, it was Linda's copy of the album that would decide the bet, and I'd never seen her specific copy.

If Harlan had wanted to drop the bet, if he'd come up to me and said, quietly, "You know, I think I'm wrong -- I don't want to bet on it any more," I'd have let it drop. I was embarrassed by the lopsidedness of the stakes. And winning the bet would be like taking candy from a baby.

It wasn't right.

But on both Saturday and Sunday, Harlan reiterated the bet. It made a good story and he told it well, to a number of people on a number of occasions. And every time he told it within my hearing, I believed a little more that it was really going to happen: I was going to win Harlan's entire record collection and cabinets! I started to feel lust for that collection. I began planning how I'd rearrange my living room to make space for his cabinets, handsome furniture in their own right.

In the back of my own head, I knew this was not good: too close to stealing. I'll winnow out the records I really want and he can keep the rest, I decided, full of magnanimous feelings.

Monday dawned. Harlan phoned. He was at Linda's and I should come on over, he said, his voice gleeful. He was already at Linda's. I was filled with foreboding as I went up to her apartment.

Linda greeted me at the door and I went in to find Harlan sprawled in a nearby chair. Without comment, Linda held out the album to me. I slid the record out of its blank jacket and looked at the label. There, neatly typed in the distinctive face of Harlan's Olivetti, was a thin strip of paper taped over the record label that said, 'Mildred Baily with John Lewis & His Orchestra'. I turned the record over; there was a second Mildred Baily cut on the other side. Here, too, was a typed line taped over the actual credit: 'John Lewis.' Again. Ha ha'.

I looked at Harlan with what I believe was sorrow in my expression. "You promised you wouldn't do this," I said.

"Yeah," he said, crestfallen. "Well, you know." He fished out his keys.

"Here," he said, and handed them to me. "I don't want to watch."

Do you have any idea what's involved in moving 1,000 lbs? They're heavy. You can't lift a stack of much more than fifty albums at a time, especially if you plan to carry it up four flights of stairs. Sylvia had asthma and tried to climb those stairs as infrequently as possible. I couldn't ask her to help carry the records. So I called up Larry Ivie, who was the only other person I could think of then who wasn't tied to a rigid work schedule (he was a struggling artist), and he came to help.

It was summertime in New York City. None of us had air conditioning, except maybe Linda. I don't recall it being a terrifically hot day, but it was warm enough. With Sylvia holding fort in our apartment and Harlan watching forlornly from his, Larry and I began carrying stacks of records from Harlan's to my place.

Midway through the task, Sylvia, Larry, and I agreed that once we had everything in our place, we'd tell Harlan he could have it back -- but that he'd have to carry it himself.

I know I couldn't keep his collection and cabinets. It was a silly bet. Hell, it was a stupid bet, compounded by Harlan taking an advance peek (Linda, it turned out, had gotten back Sunday evening, as Harlan had know she would), and, upon realizing he'd lost the bet he'd foisted upon me, typing up those silly, obvious, taped-over labels. Harlan should be taught a lesson, we agreed -- but he should get his stuff back.

By now, Harlan's records were in stacks covering much of my living room floor, the cabinets soon to follow. I'd pushed furniture to the side to make room.

I'd arrived at the top of the stairs at my floor with another stack of records, Larry Ivie just ahead of me, when I heard quick steps on the stairs behind me. I was still holding the stack of records, about to set them down on the floor, when Harlan burst through the open door behind me.

He was brandishing a gun. It was a small revolver, and I'd seen it once before when he'd shown me his 'lecturing exhibit', of a gun, a switchblade, and brass knucks, which he kept in a box in his closet.

"Okay, Ted," Harlan snarled. "Fun's over. Pick that stuff up and take it back to my apartment -- and I mean now!"

He'd been looking more and more disheartened each time we'd taken another stack of records from his apartment, but I'd never expected this. He had snapped. He'd been watching his prized collection disappear, for all he knew for good, probably kicking himself or ever getting into the whole thing, and at some point his dis-appointment turned to anger. Perhaps it had been addressed initially at himself, but by the time he appeared in my apartment, waving his gun, his anger was directed at us.

"Don't make me shoot you, Ted," he said. "I'll aim

at your legs, but if I hit your knees that's very painful." His revolver looked like and probably was a .22, but from a distance of eight to ten feet, it could not only be fairly certain of hitting me, but might do significant damage. And Harlan appeared to be in a state in which he'd not hesitate to shoot. It was the first time in my life a gun had been pointed at me, and to this day the scariest.

I'd never seen Harlan like this, in such a rage. He could easily go over the top, I thought. He'd demonstrated the capability to do so in other situations, ones that didn't involve me or guns.

"We were going to give them all back to you, Harlan," Sylvia said.

"I know you are -- right now!" Harlan responded. "Pick some up," he said to Larry, who had been watching all this with a bemused look on his face.

I was still holding the stack of records I'd just carried up. "Here," I said, thrusting them at Harlan. "You take them."

He dodged back. "No, Ted," he said, "I've got the gun. You carry the records. All of them. Back to my place. Now!"

So Larry and I carried all the records -- over two-thirds of Harlan's collection -- back to Harlan's apartment. Back down all those stairs (and back up again for more). We were covered with sweat, and getting more and more pissed at Harlan, who wasn't being 'taught a lesson' after all, but who was autocratically directing us with a gun. (Harlan waited in my apartment until the last load went out; Linda held fort at his apartment, giving us sympathetic looks but otherwise staying out of it.)

That's pretty much how the bet ended. I'd won, and I'd lost. I'd enjoyed a brief roller-coaster ride of emotions as I'd contemplated and then lusted after Harlan's collection, and I'd put in half a day's physical labor, carrying records back and forth with the unfortunate (to be caught up in this) Larry Ivie. It had been a joke gone sour, all around. Harlan had lost, too. He'd lost a lot of my respect for him -- not for pushing a stupid bet in the first place, but for the way he'd handled it at the end. He should have carried the records back, at the very least.

We fed Larry an early dinner, in gratitude for all he'd done and gone through, and were sitting around felling depressed and let down when the phone rang.

It was Harlan.

He was apologetic. The gun, he said, had been unloaded. I'd never been in any real danger. He was sorry and he wanted to make it up to us. Come on over, he said. He'd bought a cake to share with us as a peace offering.

It was a good cake.



WITH JAUNDICED EYE

HORNBOOK FOR WOULD-BE PROS

(from **Yandro #134**), edited by Robert & Juanita Coulson, March, 1964)

This column has been absent from these pages for more than a year now, and the reasons for its absence are also in part the foundations for this installment.

As I recall, my last column appeared in the late fall of 1962, or perhaps just into 1963. I wrote it in 1962, in any case. That year was one of many changes for me, not the least of which was the initiation of my slowly budding career in professional science fiction. Four stories were written (several others begun), and two sold. It was a small beginning -- all of my efforts were in collaboration with Terry Carr or Marion Bradley -- but the fact that the first two stories completed were sold in short order was encouraging to me, and -- I admit it -- by the time of the Chicon, I was strutting about in my new garb: Budding SF Pro. Unfortunately, since few had heard of my sales, this posture soon wilted.

In January of 1963, I followed Terry Carr into the confines of the Scott Meredith Literary Agency, where I took over the Foreign Department. Effectively, this made me responsible for handling all foreign rights and negotiations for the agency. An ad in **Publishers Weekly** which Avram Davidson clipped for me boasted of Meredith's "large and expertly staffed foreign department," but while the top-level stuff was handled by Scott himself or Henry Morrison, I was responsible for all the run-of-the-mill stuff.

There was a lot of this. Meredith has an expanding agency -- one of the liveliest and most go-getting in the country. And his foreign business is probably the largest of any US agency. Not only are all Meredith clients represented overseas, but the agency has taken on foreign representation for Pocket Books, Inc., Monarch Books and several university presses (whom I queried about our services as part of my job). On top of this, the agency acts as a US scout for several foreign publishers eagerly searching out bestsellers as yet up for grabs.

One of Meredith's best clients once told me, "Scott always has less space than he needs, and less men than he needs." This was true during my stay there. The offices occupied by Scott only a few years earlier in an expansion move were already so cramped that some men in the fee-reading section did most of their work at home; there weren't enough desks to go around.

And everybody I knew there was overworked -- and still are. We were expected to do a full day's work in the office, take home mss to read at night, and -- if work piled up -- work Saturdays.

I resent this. Meredith does not pay well -- his employees start around \$70 or \$80 a week and work up to \$100 or a little over for editorial positions which should be paying from \$150 to \$200 -- and I felt the demands on my "spare" time were excessive. In truth, I had little spare time -- one reason my fanac ceased almost entirely about then -- and if you want to know the reason for the abrupt cutback in both Terry Carr's fan and pro writing, you

can trace the change almost directly to the day he joined Meredith. I might add that one spends most of his day in the agency at the typewriter

I lasted about a month with Meredith. I had begun looking for excuses for quitting before then, but I needed the money, and there were enough rewards in the job to overcome my occasional depressions. But when I came down with a bad case of flu, and pressure was put on me to work half the week with a fever of around 103, and I then collapsed in bed for the next two weeks, my employment was, as they euphemistically put it, terminated.

That taught me a valuable lesson. It reaffirmed my desire to stay out of the clutches of dependency upon such an employer. I was mightily grotched at the Meredith Agency for some months after that, despite assurances from friends that such treatment was "only normal." Sandi was shocked. "They paid you less than a short-order cook or a truck driver gets," she said. Well, that's how a business makes money, I guess.

A recommendation from Avram Davidson brought me in touch with Ed and Joe Ferman, my present part-time employers. Our relationship has not made me rich overnight, but the working conditions are immeasurably better. In fact, the only drawback lies in the nature of my work.

I have to read the most godawful tripe you can imagine.

The real purpose of this column is to pass on to any of you who have aspirations to Turning Pro a few tips on what to avoid and just how the whole schmear works.

I read an average of 70 to 90 manuscripts a week. I reject better than 90% of these. The remaining 3-to-5% which I judge acceptable, I grade from A to B, with pluses and minuses (I used to include C's before Avram moved to Mexico, but the postal costs are too great for that now), and pass on to Avram for reading. He, in turn, will pick out one or less a month which he feels we should purchase.

Now I am, of course, speaking of the "slush pile" -- the "unsolicited manuscripts" sent in by relatively unknown writers and the less reliable agencies (I'm convinced a few writers have had rubber stamps made up for fictitious agencies through which to submit their work, but this dodge gets them nowhere: I still get their work in the slush, and it in no way influences my decision about the pieces) -- in other words, by you, if

you're a would-be pro.

The other day I figured out the number of manuscripts actually purchased in comparison to those sent in. On the average, **F&SF** buys one story in 600.

Now those are rough statistics, but they're not quite as hopeless as they sound. Because what this actually means is that out of 600 stories submitted, 599 will be pretty bad. A good story stands out like a shining beacon amidst that slush, let me tell you. And a good story is one hell of a reward after several hours of mediocre or worse.

So if your story is a good one, it will sell. It doesn't matter how many bad stories it's buried with; it will still sell. In fact, it's all the more noticeable for its company.

When I started reading manuscripts for **F&SF**, I read each and every one, all the way through. It wasn't just that I was conscientious, but also that I was still establishing standards to go by. I also tried to include a brief note on each rejection slip to at least give a hint as to why the story was unacceptable.

I also became backlogged by about a month's accumulation of mss.

These days I can honestly say that I do not read from start to finish more than 20% of the manuscripts that pass through my hands, and that in the case of better than 10% that reading it still wasted time. And I have stopped writing notes except to those whose work was *almost* worth passing on to Avram, I do not read handwritten or single-spaced mss at all, unless the first paragraph is singularly intriguing.

I developed this callousness by sheer necessity. And because over 80% of the mss submitted to **F&SF** are simply not worth reading.

I am pointing this out now, because I am typical of those who edit the slush piles for sf magazines, and I want you to know what you're up against.

After almost a year of reading such mss -- and that abbreviation could as easily stand for "mess" in my case -- I've developed an eye for bad writing. It's not hard: awkward phrasing, stiff wordings, such are immediately spottable, and their presence automatically means a story is unacceptable.

Bad stories almost always open with undramatic situations, too, I've found. A surprising number begin with a man waking up after dying or some other potentially interesting idea, and a good proportion begin by describing a fairly uninteresting character -- often a henpecked husband (who invents a time machine and pushes his overbearing wife into it). It's surprising how many aspiring writers have never heard of the narrative hook and begin their stories with slow plods.

I waste most of my time, though, not on such easily rejected stories (of which I usually read the first and last pages), but those which are written just competently enough that I must read them to the end to find that they don't make it.

"Every time you include a personal note on a rejection slip," Ed Ferman once told me, "you encourage another submission from him." This seems to be true. And while I have received stories from developing writers with some potential, and I can see

encouraging such writers, there's no point in encouraging a writer with nothing on the ball to waste my time yet again in the future. If I write a note to such a one today, it will probably say, "Handwritten mss. are unacceptable," or as in one recent case, "I will not waste my eyesight on this. Get a new ribbon." In the latter case, the typing was so light that at first I thought the sheets were blank.

Recently a young woman in Texas whose previous two submissions I had summarily rejected sent in her third. Attached to it was this note: "I have sent you two stories already, which you failed to print. This third story -----, is the story of [and we'll skip that, too].

"If you read the story twice, you will see more in it.

"If you do not start printing the stories I send you, I may stop sending stories to you."

I sincerely hope so. In fact, I was greatly tempted to put the story back in its return envelope unread. I didn't, of course. I read the first page, glanced at the next two, and finally scanned the last. It was terrible.

Perhaps she'll get the message when she receives her third story back, but if she does follow through on her threat she'll be a rare one. The woods are full of writers -- or, rather, *would-be* writers -- who continue to grind out the most incredible slush, year after year, without learning from bitter experience that they haven't Got It.

I have received several novels, of from thirty to sixty thousand words, which were almost unreadable. What possesses a person to *do* this? A short story (and most of the hopeless writers seem limited to pretty short stories) is understandable. Any fool can do it -- and most have. But a novel! That requires work, patience, and a discipline rare in a never-will-be writer.

Be that as it may, there is a second category of "bad" writer, and one that I should imagine most fan would-be's fall into: the write who's bad because he hasn't yet developed. And unlike the little old ladies who eagerly peruse the latest issue of **The Writer** or **Writer's Digest** and will *never* sell a story, this second type of writer stands a far better chance.

From time to time a young fan pops embarrassingly up with an issue of **Brevizine** or an early **Zip** in his hands, and confounds me with it. I was "Staff cartoonist" for **Brevi-**, and contributed four or five stories and articles to it as well. Most were written when I was thirteen or fourteen. A couple I had the bad taste to include as reprints in my own early **Zip**'s. I only printed about thirty copies of **Zip #1**, but copies of it still pop up -- apparently all thirty are still in circulation -- and it should not be impossible for an enterprising fan to check me out on this by glomming onto a copy for himself. At any rate, I want to go on record as being one of the Least Promising Fan Writers of 1952. The standard level of my work was far below that of many fans who are today no older, and every time I think about Jeff Wanshel or Paul Williams, I shudder at the memory of what I was doing at their age.

The only thing that saved me any real embarrassment at the time was that my own estimate of my work was not entirely unrealistic, and I never

attempted to submit it to any of the prozines or better fanzines. But I was at that time writing "science fiction" not unlike some of the poorer examples of that which now comes to me with a covering letter stating that "I am fifteen years old," or "This was originally done for my high school class."

Since then my writing has improved. It pretty much had to -- it couldn't have gotten worse. I cannot hold myself up as a paragon of Great Writing today, but I've sold several short stories, done a novel in collaboration, and in recent months I've been writing again, solo. I have a publisher interested in a new novel, I got a personal note of rejection from John Campbell saying, "I rather like your style of writing and suggest that you try us again" (which isn't as good as a check and letter of acceptance, but is better than the usual printed sort of rejection slip -- though *Analog's* is pretty fancy), and I think I'll have sold a good deal more before this year reaches its end.

I'm not pointing this out just to brag. I know I've only begun a career as an sf writer, and I'm far from among the best at this juncture. But, bigolly, if I could get this far, from the beginnings I've described, then there's hope for the rest of you, too.

I'm far from the only one. Ten or twelve years ago Terry Carr was a noisy west coast fan. Marion Bradley was a letterhack for *Startling* and *Thrilling Wonder*. And Bobby Gene Warner was being billed in *Brevizine* as the answer to Ray Bradbury.

Warner has had, I believe, some stories in *Yandro* in the last few years, and his fan career must extend back nearly as far as mine if not farther. I've never thought that much of his stories in fanzines -- the ones in *Brevi-* were terrible --but in recent months he, too, has been maturing as a writer -- maturing to the point

of saleability. I've had the pleasure of reading three stories by him recently, and Avram tells me he's buying at least one of them.

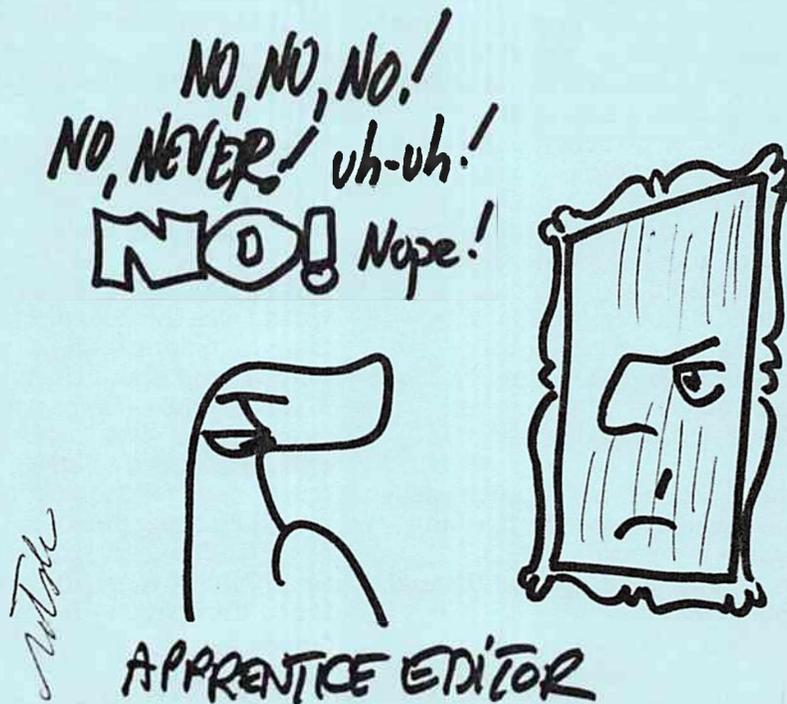
I've also read and passed on to Avram recently stories by Tom Perry and Juanita Coulson. These may or may not click with Avram, but if they don't it's only a matter of time until something else by these fans does.

So where does that leave you -- the hypothetical "you" who wants to write science fiction but hasn't quite Got It yet?

There are several paths open. One is to simply keep writing, keep submitting stories. As time goes on and you sharpen your awareness of what selling writers have and your stuff lacks, as experience polishes your way with words, sooner or later you'll click, and instead of receiving your thirty-first rejection slip, you'll get a check in the mail.

This is a hard and tortuous process though, and while it's the route many young would-bes follow, I don't recommend it. It adds to my work load, and it wastes a lot of paper and postage for you. I'm a firm believer in putting everything one does to good use.

Instead, write for fanzines. Don't write amateur sf. Write articles, letters, humor, political diatribes, or anything else. Most particularly, try your hand at *criticizing* published sf stories. Try taking them apart to see how they tick. Become aware of what elements you dig, and don't dig, in published stories. And while you're getting the feel of what a good story ought to be in this way, develop your facility for writing by doing stuff you *can* do and which rewards you (if only in egoboo) *now* -- fanstuff. Some day you'll sit up and say, "By ghod, I bet I could write a good story!" And maybe then you will.



(from *Fanraonade* #3, edited by Jeff Wanshel, July, 1961)

Recently I gave Lee Thorin, one of my favorite neofans, an article for her fanzine. We'd been talking for a while about Fans I Have Known, Parents She Had Known, and various other subjects, some of them personal. Suddenly, she turned to me and asked, "Ted, why do you have this reputation for being so vicious and nasty? I've never noted that in you."

I leered at her, replying "Heh, heh, m'beauty... there is a side of me you have not yet seen!"

Which is all very true, I suppose; there's something about attractive young femmefen which brings out the gentler beast in me. But she'd started me thinking (a laborious process, involving much cranking of the brains; ghod, how I could use a good electric starter on these cold summer mornings!), and I'm afraid I've been brooding about this reputation of mine ever since.

What finally pushed me over the edge was an item in *Kipple* (the fanzine from which I crib all my column and article ideas) wherein Jeff Wanshel is quoted as saying that he's "never heard Ted White have a good word for anybody except his fanzine (*Void*) and Walt Willis."

This is of course the same Jeff Wanshel, you understand, whose name I typoed a couple of pages back, and whose fanzine I run superlatively off for a mere *pound of flesh* pittance. The very same Jeff Wanshel who usually writes about me in his pages, but does so in constant reference to what an old grouch I am, and all that "Bitching Ol' Ted White," Simon Legree jazz....

I began brooding, as I say, about the wonderfully efficient public-relations job Jeff has been doing, and how all the neos now expect me to "bitch" at them. I reflected on the Pittcon, where Andy Main asked me to bitch for him while he took my picture, and Bruce Henstell actively encouraged me to bitch at him.

It wasn't like previous years. Why, in 1958, John Champion posed me with a Pepsi (which I was pleased to do), and his actions clearly implied that he thought of me as a young, fair, and debonair sort of fan -- clearly a different image altogether.

I hadn't changed all that much. In fact, if anything I've been a little less bitching as the years rolled past.

Then I hit it: It wasn't *I* who had changed! It was my *image*.

Now, "image" is very important in these Mad. Ave. days. Presidents are no longer elected by their qualifications, or even by their party. People vote for the Image. And products are no longer being sold because they're better, or even because the package is

nicer. It's the Image that counts. Who drinks Coca-Cola any more? It's just a soft drink, and in an old-fashioned bottle at that. Pepsi is suave, *debonair*. In a word. Image.

Well, what about *my* image?

My original image, made in less image-conscious days, was that of a hard-working neofan, whom everyone thought would Make Good -- someday. I was just One of the Bunch. Too late for Sixth Fandom, too early for Seventh; you know how it was. Disoriented.

So I began searching for an image. Not consciously,

you understand. I was just a hard-working neofan, and I wasn't image-conscious. Why, *The Hidden Persuaders* hadn't even come out then. But I knew I needed a gimmick: something I'd be remembered for. And since there wasn't that much to distinguish me, outstanding-talent-wise, I drop-kicked the ol' image over the goal-post, mimeo-wise.

Although my inspirations were Lee Hoffman and Dean Grennell, for an awfully long time I was known as The Guy With All That Color Work, and, more recently, The Guy With The Impeccable Reproduction (I keep trying to tell them: not "reproduction;" "*duplication*." But it's been

no go.) and The Guy Who Cleaned Up Fandom's Reproduction (*duplication*, I insist; I'm no crusader). I started out mimeoing illos in four, five and six flawlessly registered colors. Later on, I just settled for neatness and readability.

But the Image was flawed. It wasn't the Real Me. People said, "He gets all his kicks just running zines off. There's no creativity in him." They also said even less complimentary things like, "Dull, plodding and boring."

It wasn't the right image. I could sense that.

So I began cultivating creative communication, if I may borrow a phrase or two from Daphne Buckmaster. In simpler terms, I began writing stuff for other fanzines. By this time five years had elapsed, and I was no longer nearly as Hard Working. I'd learned a little about writing. So you see it wasn't impossible. I began writing criticism.

Slashing, biting critiques. With Laney as my model, and Redd Boggs on one side, I began writing Book Reviews, Fanzine Reviews, and all that, very cleverly and critically.

I became a Thinker, venturing forth with *New Insights* and *Strong Criticisms*. And people began to notice. My Image began to change.

People began to get scared of me. "Cold, Hostile," they said.

Aha! I said. I shall spoof myself, and they'll dig that I'm really Warm and Tender inside, like a juicy, cooked clam.

I began writing Humorous Pieces for my fanzines:

I HAD ONE
BITCH
BUT THE
IMAGE
OVER
THERE

IN AN EARLY - FAILED -
ATTEMPT TO DEVELOP A NEW,
DISTINCTIVE FAN PERSONA...



THE YOUNG TED WHITE BRIEFLY
WORE A MASK AND WAS KNOWN
ONLY AS "FAN X"...

HIS PLAN FAILED WHEN THE BOY
GOT BACK NO LOGS ON A FANZINE,
WHEN HE LISTED HIS ADDRESS AS
"PARTS UNKNOWN"...

frothy, light and delightful. Then I made a terrible mistake. I had been referred to in **Cry** as Bitter Ted White, in reference to my last Image, which was only then making way for my new, improved Image. So I wrote to **Cry**, and in it I referred to myself as Bitching Ol' Ted White. Golly, funny?

No.

Everybody picked it up. It was a great Tag. Ted White equals Bitching Ol' Disaster. The Image of Kindly, Humorous Ol' Ted White shattered into a thousand pieces.

And for the next two years I had to put up with snickering references to how bitching I was, while I tried in vain to write such happy, frothy, faanish pieces of mirth and humor that people would forget. But they never forget. Jeff Wanshel, I am convinced, has the brain of an elephant. He won't forget.

So much for that Image. It wouldn't be in vogue now, anyway. This year faanish wit and wisdom is Out. Serious, World Saving Discussions are In. Now all fandom is talking about The Sickness in our Society, and What we must Do About It, and like that.

I've tried to shape up my new Image. It hasn't been easy. I've been reading up about Sex, Philosophy, and Society, and I've tried my hand at a couple of columns for **Kipple**, and in the **Cult** and **CRAP**.

I thought about my choice of Serious topics, and I've decided that Bombs, Radiation and all that are too dismal. I've made my decision: Sex.

That's right; I think I've got the new Image.

I'm going to be Ted White, libertine and lecher.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Ted White Sampler, Volume One, would not be half so glorious if not for the efforts of many fine fans who agreed that Ted White deserves a collection of his work. Gafia derailed my original intention to do this volume in the 1970s, so I'm doubly pleased to be the catalyst for its publication.

Two fans, Dan Steffan and Andy Hooper, made particularly important contributions to **The Ted White Sampler**. Dan sent a stack of photocopies of prime TEW as thick as a telephone book. Andy Hooper responded to my pleas for help by not only picking a batch of vintage pieces, but typing them as well! Other typists, besides myself, were Laurie Yates, John Hardin, Ken Forman, and Joyce. Carrie Root performed the electronic miracle of uploading the files to me over Internet. Most of those fans, plus a few other members of Las Vegrants (identities unknown as I type these lines) helped with the collating.

The first batch of copies is earmarked for Silvercon 3, the annual Las Vegas regional that has had the good taste to choose Ted White as its 1994 Fan Guest of Honor.

(from **GAMBIT # 24**, edited by Ted White, Sept., 1958)

EXCERPTS FROM GAMBIT 24

I waited at the counter for the Service Manager to finish totalling the bill for the new fuel pump in the Jag. He looked up at me and asked, timidly, "Twenty-one dollars?" I mumbled a curse into my beard and reached for my wallet. As I handed the money to him, I asked, "Just what was wrong with the old pump, anyway?"

His eyes darted a frightened look at me, and he reached down behind the counter into a dirty cardboard box. From it he produced a small, incredibly dirty hunk of metal with a few loose ends dangling. He stared at it sadly for another moment or two, and then looked up at me with the wide and soulful eyes of an utter innocent, and murmured, "It...just wouldn't work..."

I watched him return the pump to its casket, picked up my receipt and left.

Another private universe, laid waste.

Ron Bennett was signing postcards and passing them to Boyd Raeburn to sign. Boyd in turn passed them to Terry Carr, who was sitting next to me. About the third card along, I found another signature below Terry's. I stared at it for a moment and then turned to Terry. "Like, what's this signature doing here?" I asked with my open mouth. And then it dawned.

"You bastard, Terry Carr," I said.

"I cannot deny it," said he.

I stared at the absolutely authentic signature again. "You sneak," I said. "You served two terms as OA of the Cult by running the second time under this name instead of your own."

Terry Carr smiled at me as I stared again at the signature on the card. The signature of a brilliant fan who never did and doesn't exist. "Carl Brandon" was the way the signature read.

It is true that Carl Brandon was a hoax. I wasn't sure it wasn't a hoax-hoax, though, until I spoke to Lars Bourne at Ackerman's party Thursday night. I said, "Did you hear about Carl Brandon?" "No," said Lars, "but he's a hoax." It seems that originally, back when Bourne was publishing **Nucleonics**, Boob Stewart sent him a piece of material which was so bad that Stewart didn't want his name used on it. "Run it as by 'Carl Brandon,'" said Stewart. Boob later departed fandom, and Carr and Graham used the name, first in the Cult, and later in general fandom, to create a fan who embodied their best talents. When Ron Ellik moved to Berkeley, he was let in on the gag, and became a part of Carl.

"Just wait till I get my hands on Ron Ellik!" was Noreen Falasca's reaction to hearing about the hoax. "Ooooooh*! That little bastard!" She turned to me. "We put him up for three days when he was out for the Midwestcon, and one night he talked for *hours* about Carl, and what a nice guy he was an everything. And we *believed* him, Ted. We believed him..." her voice ended in a wail of misery which I could well understand, having looked forward to meeting Carl

myself. I wasn't there, but I understand Noreen chased Ron all the way through the hotel when she saw him....

Ron chuckled as he considered what the Falascas' reaction would be, the night before. "Boy, I'll bet they get sore at me," he chuckled as he considered their reaction. "I bullshitted them for over three hours about Carl Brandon."

"Why did you do that, Ron?" asked Terry in a mild and approvingly-reproving voice. "Why did you tell them all those things about Carl, Ron?"

"Well, they made it easy for me. I mean, they prompted me, they led me on. Nick would say 'Tell me all about Carl Brandon, Ron. Is he like --' and then" Ron stared at us with the gaze of utter truth in his eyes "why, Terry, he'd actually put the words in my mouth!"

From ***INNUENDO*** #8: "Someday we'll have to pull a really *big* hoax and plunge all fandom into war." -- Terry Carr

"I used to be able to do this with a switchblade," said Ron Parker, tossing a hatchet into the air and confidently reaching out for the handle. The blade fell towards his hand as he hastily jerked it back, and the hatchet clattered to the pavement at his feet. He jumped. "I used to be able to do it all the time with a switchblade," he said, reaching for the hatchet. "Do you suppose it is because you are not using a switchblade that you are having trouble, Ron?" I asked Ron. "I think I'll get it," said Ron, tossing the hatchet into the air, and nearly losing his hand. Again he jumped back as the hatchet struck the sidewalk and sparks flew. He leaned over to pick up the hatchet again. "and then again..." the hatchet flew into the air "...maybe..." he leaped wildly as the hatchet dived straight for him "...*not*!" He stared down at the battered hatchet lying on the scarred concrete. "I don't understand it," he said. "I used to be able to do it with a switchblade..."

Have a peanut, Ted," said Ron Parker as he stared up at me. In his hand was a peanut. "A peanut?" I asked. "Is that right, Ron? You're offering me a peanut?"

"That's right, Ted, I'm offering you a peanut. Would you like a peanut?" At his left hand was a five-pound sack of peanuts. At his right was an ashtray filled to overflowing with peanut shells. "No thanks, Ron," I said. "You know I don't dig peanuts."

There exists in Baltimore, an establishment known as the N-D Restaurant. It is run by a Greek named Demetrius, who prefers to be known as Jim.

The place is a hole in the wall, but it has the dubious distinction of being situated at 420 N. Charles -- directly across from the fabled "419".

Jim's is not exactly the usual sort of restaurant. Taken what happened the other day as an example. Sylvia and I had just raided "419" -- only to find everyone out but Pat and John Hitchcock -- and I decided to take Sylvia to Jim's. We sat down at the fountain which stretched all the way to the rear of the long narrow place. The waitress took our orders and brought us cokes. About then Jim noticed us.

"Hi, Ted," he greeted me. "Who is this lusciously beautiful girl whom you've brought with you this time?" He savored each syllable. He turned to Sylvia. "Ted has brought some very pretty girls in with him, but you certainly top the list." He smiled, as he threw out this line, and then refilled our cokes.

He continued to banter small talk back and forth with us, asking about LA and all, till our hamburgers came.

I removed a five-dollar bill from my pocket and began toying with it, wrinkling it between my fingers, feeling its lush greenness. Then I began folding it into a paper airplane. "A five-dollar paper airplane," said Jim in admiration. "See if you can fly it down to the register." I did.

The plane swirled and looped once, and then fell into another customer's coffee.

He smilingly removed it and handed it back. I wiped it once with a napkin and Jim said,

"Try it again, Ted. Put a little more power into it. You know, a little more oomph!" I did, and it buzzed Jim twice and landed behind the counter at his feet. He picked it up and began to refold the tail section. "Ya gotta get it just right to make it fly, y'know," he said.

His attempt was even worse. The plane landed in Sylvia's lap. she looked at us pityingly, as if we were children playing with something too big for us. "You have to understand the principles of aeronautics, and the scientific method," she said. With a straight face. She then proceeded to refold the plane. She observed that the paper used for five-dollar bills folds well. "The paper used for five-dollar bills folds well. It holds a crease nicely," was how she put it. Then she picked the completed plane up in her right hand, drew back and let fly!

The waitress had been standing next to the cash register, minding her own business, when the plane landed beside her. She looked down for a moment at the five-dollar bill, and quickly demonstrated her agile mind by scooping it up and throwing it back. Sylvia repossessed the bill and began to smooth it out. Then, as she started folding and folding again the battered bill, I asked Jim, "by the way, Jim, how much do we owe you?" He stared at the counter a second and began to mumble to himself. "Hmmm, two hamburgers, 25, 50 cents, and cokes..." He looked up. "55 cents all right to you?"

"Sounds fine," I said.

"Here," Sylvia said, and handed him a tiny wad of green paper. Where else, I ask you, would such goings-on be so commonplace as to not even disturb the customers?

"You sons of bitches!" said the woman. We stared up at her. She appeared as an indistinct blob in a second story window. "You sons of bitches, carryin' on on a sidewalk, doin' things in public, you sons of bitches...!" I looked at Ron Parker, and then at Sylvia. Ron looked over at Fred von Bernewitz who was supervising a friend and the friend's two girl friends in the unloading of a trailer full of Fred's possessions. Fred looked up at the window, shrugged, and went back to what he was doing. "Could it be, Ron," I said to Ron, "that the fact that it is eleven o'clock is influencing her? Eleven o'clock, at night?" "I don't know, Ted," Ron said to me, seriously. "I don't know; it might be." Then he picked up the hatchet we'd been playfully chipping the pavement with, and ran towards the woman in the window, screaming...
"Aaaaaaaarrghh!"

"You sons of bitches!" the woman said.



THE MIDWESTCON

(from **Gafia #9**, edited by Ted White, Summer, 1958)

1: We left Falls Church about 9:15, Friday morning. Joanne Russell and John Magnus in Magnus' Metropolitan, and John Hitchcock with me in my Jaguar. I had borrowed the strip-map from Pavlat that Bob had used to get to Cincinnati last year.

Hitchcock took one look at it, and said "This is ridiculous! Look, it goes up into Pennsylvania -- only twenty miles from Pittsburgh! It must go a couple of hundred miles out of the way. We don't want route 40 -- we want route 50. See, it goes straight out." "But," I said. "We'll take 50," Magnus said.

So we took 50. Just beyond Fairfax Circle, we both missed the 50 turnoff, and I didn't realize it until we came to 17, which I took to regain 50. We weaved over narrow roads, and finally came to a construction area which stretched for miles. Finally we again came to 50. I waited for a Cad to pass by, and pulled out. When I looked in the rear-view mirror, there was a small Metropolitan behind us. I could make out Magnus' tall shape hunched over the steering wheel. "Look!" I said to Hitchcock. "Magnus is behind us!" John looked back and wig-wagged at Magnus. We had travelled another thirty or so miles when the coming trouble was forecast. I had been coasting down a long hill when I stepped on the accelerator. It went flat to the floorboards. I coasted to the side of the road, and Magnus pulled up behind. "I sure was surprised to see you pull out of that side road," was his comment. "What happened to the car?" I looked under the hood. "Throttle linkage disconnected," I said. A ball-socket had slipped loose. I fished the end up past the exhaust manifolds and examined it. Fifteen minutes later I had it back together and we were off again.

The next time was climbing a steep West Va. mountain. I was climbing a steep grade, and rounding a curve when suddenly the accelerator went flat again.

"Damn!" I said. I barely coasted onto a two-foot shoulder. The rear of the car stuck well into the two-lane road. I went to work on the socket again, and just as it was ready, it slipped, and fell back down below the exhaust manifolds. When I fished it up again, it was minus the small spring plunger which fits inside it. I cursed several more times and began pawing the gravel under the car for a small piece of metal measuring one-eighth by one-half and inch. After nearly giving up, I found it. After that, it was simple.

Then I looked at my hands. I hadn't actually touched the manifolds, but they were quite hot. Working from two to three inches away from them, I'd gotten burns on the back of my hands.

By late afternoon, we'd passed through Clarksburg, W.Va. at rush hour, and I'd gotten some salve at

a second-rate restaurant for my burns. The salve was the first I'd tried which worked. It began to rain. An hour or two later, descending another West Virginia hill, the throttle went flat again. By this time, I was well-trained. I had it fixed in three minutes. But a house was nearby, so I went up to it and asked for a paperclip to use to hold the socket together. I got it, along with a query: Was my car one of those German whatchacallits -- you know, a Volkswagon? I said no.

From then on the trip was fairly uneventful. Around eight or nine in the evening, we passed into Ohio. From then on, I remember only continual driving, with an occasional curve marked by a big arrow and a speed sign which I always ignored.

Around 11:00, we started singing to keep me awake and I began cursing in earnest the fact that Hitchcock couldn't drive. Of course by this time, we had surmised that Magnus would be in Cincinnati, since he had had no delays.

By 1:00 we were nearing Cincy, and took the cutoff from 50 over to Reading. We were on a winding road which lead through the most desolate area I'd yet seen when the engine quit. I checked the gas and decided we were vapor-locked. We were. We started off again in about fifteen minutes.

Around 2:00 AM we hit the North Plaza Motel. I promptly set my watch back an hour, and we set out to hunt up fen.

2: I don't remember the following few minutes too well. We were met in short order by Ron Ellik, Harlan Ellison, Magnus and several others. Magnus showed us where the suite we were all sharing with Madle & Family was, and we went up to room 19 where a party was underway.

I saw various people there, got a couple of Yandro from Bob Coulson, and grabbed a stiff drink of whiskey -- I'd promised myself that if I ever arrived I would have one. Then I followed Ellison, Magnus and Joanne out into the night. They disappeared somewhere, probably to talk over old times. I found a Pepsi in a machine by the pool, and wandered down to the lounge where I'd been told no one was. I pekked in and found Ellik, Kent Moomaw, Jerry DeMuth, and Joe Sanders, plus several others whom I did not recognize. I sank into an easy chair and began alternating sipping the drinks. We talked of many things, philosophy, comic strips, jazz, and lord knows what else. At 3:30 -- 4:30 my time -- I returned to our suite, room 21, and stumbled into bed where I promptly fell to sleep.

About 10:30, a little girl, followed by a little boy, walked into the room. They looked at me, and one said "Daddy!" I began to wonder what strange effects that one drink had had on me. Then the boy turned and

walked out closing the door behind him.

The little girl immediately began to scream at the top of her rather overdeveloped lungs. I stumbled out of bed and opened the door for her.

What a way to wake up.

I had breakfast, which consisted of one cookie and a Pepsi, and joined Kent Moomaw beside the pool. He'd slept in the lounge that night, he said. A few moments later, Magnus and Joanne turned up in swimming suits ready to go in. After watching them splash a few moments, I decided what the hell, and went back to change into my suit.

We spent most of Saturday morning and afternoon swimming and lounging around the pool. Evening came, and the Banquet. We had all agreed that \$3.00 was too much, and that we didn't want to drive into downtown Cincy where the Banquet was to be held this year. About 5:30, I entered the suite and found Magnus dressing for the Banquet. "Ellison talked me into it," he said. "Do you think he'd have room for one more in his car?" I asked.

Hitchcock also decided to come along, though he wouldn't be attending the banquet proper. He found Ellison in the parking lot, and he agreed. We'd leave as soon as Charlotte was dressed.

In the meantime..."How about taking your Jag around the block a couple of times, Ted?" The next couple minutes were spent in readjusting the driver's seat and showing Harlan where the controls were. Shortly we were scooting out of the lot and down Reading. "We'll turn here," Harlan said, and flicked his wrist to the left. Still in top gear, we shot around the corner. "Gee! Say, this little thing really corners!" I was thankful I'd fastened my safety belt.

We cruised at about 35 mph up a residential street which appeared to end in a cul de sac. Undaunted, Harlan continued in top gear around a drive into a parking space behind one of the apartment houses, and out again onto the street heading back for Reading. "On you next corner, try 3rd or 2nd, Harl," I said. "They're nice gears too..."

As we headed back for the Motel, Harlan sung sweet praises of the car and asked "How much do you want for this car, Ted." "Plenty, I replied," plus the \$25 you owe me from Cleveland." Harlan subsided. I'd touched one of his sore spots. After nearly running down Madle's family in the parking lot, we were once more at rest. That short drive had taught me a lot about the Jag... By 6:30, Mrs. Ellison still wasn't dressed, and Harlan was furious at the thought of missing the Banquet which he was supposed to MC. Finally he dragged her away with her earrings still in her hand, and we all squeezed into the small Opel Harlan was driving. I found myself in the front seat between Ellison & Spouse. The next half-hour was alternately the most hair-raising and side-splittingly enjoyable one I have ever experienced. Riding with Ellison is an experience which everyone should sample at least once in his life. There is no comparison. It comprises not merely wild driving, but a running mono- and dialogue which is completely and fabulously Ellisonian. Like, wild, man.

We arrived late, and barely found space at a small round table with Lynn and Carol Hickman. The

Ellisons, of course, had a space reserved for them at the speakers table. The meal was quite enjoyable, as was the conversation. Afterwards, there were speeches, exhortations for the '59 consuite, and generally a lot of fun. Ellison auctioned off some English prozine covers for the benefit of the London Circle, and then Bob Madle handed him some material -- manuscripts and Nebula interiors -- for auction for TAFF. Before the auction was over, I should imagine TAFF grossed between thirty and sixty dollars. There followed slides, and movies, including several from overseas. I didn't get to see much, as Ellison announced that a ball game would be letting out in half an hour, and traffic would be heavy. Hitchcock and I rode back with Ray Beam in a Ford Taurus which boasted even less power than had the Opel. I hadn't realized how under-powered some of the foreign economy cars were.

On return to the Motel, we hunted out the fabled Detroit party in suite 18. We found it across the landing from suite 17, where Chicago was having a party. The doors were locked open, and people filtered back and forth between both suites in one continuous party. Climbing up the stairs I met Howard Devore. We'd exchanged some hard words in SAPS, but somehow I was enjoying myself too much to mar the occasion with a scene. Howard must have felt the same, and so we shook hands and called it quits. He may have had an ulterior motive... an hour later, I bought a dollar's worth of magazines from him.

I decided to get a Pepsi, and returned to the machine by the pool, chucking the mags into the Jag as I passed it. I fingered the little gate which keeps the bottle from leaving the machine until a dime is deposited, and lo and behold, the little gate lifted.

Wow! I said to myself and took two Pepsi's without depositing said dime.

I found Kent Moomaw still poring over Devore's magazines, and offered him a Pepsi. Then I wandered into the Chicago room, where I found Rickhardt, Ian McCauley, Hitchcock, Joanne and various others. I mentioned my effortless acquisition of the Pepsi, and Rickhardt suggested we foray for a few more.

Several of us returned to the scene of the crime where I manipulate a couple handfuls of Pepsi's for everyone. We left these in the refrigerator in the Detroit suite, taking one or two at a time to drink over the night. Moomaw reported a half hour later that the Pepsi machine was now empty. Tch.

The party congregated on the floor near a bowl of popcorn. Various people who dropped down to the floor included the ones I've already mentioned, plus Ellik, who played footsie with Joanne; Bob Coulson, whose mysterious mutant strain carries Indiana's spark of fannishness; Magnus, and, goshwow, I don't remember who all else.

Sitting on the bed was Earl Kemp, who looked like a younger Chick Derry. I paid him for my Freas portfolio, which had caused some trouble with the post office over checks which never showed up in Chicago and suchlike. Joel Hensley dropped down for a few minutes and I asked him in a gratified voice how my name had been slipped into his speech at the banquet. He said he'd shared a room with me last

year. I'd been asleep and hadn't known it. It seemed only right to repay me somehow... I thanked him. I mean, gosh! When a big-name pro gives you a gratis plug and to the best of your knowledge he'd never heard of you... wow!

Sometime later in the evening, I drifted back into the Detroit suite and found a blackjack game going in the bedroom between Ellison, George Young, Jean Bogart, Walt Cole (He of **The Cole Fax**) and an unnamed "Al." And Joanne Russell.

Especially Joanne Russell. In the course of that night, Joanne Russell parlayed 50 cents into \$25 with monotonous regularity while Magnus stood by and beamed. Ellison was winning for a while, and then began losing, while George Young lost at first and then began rewinning. I couldn't see that the others did much at all. We left around 4:00 in the morning to get some sleep before driving home.

I entered the room I was sharing with Hitchcock to find Ellik sitting on the bed reading a fanzine. He covered it hurriedly, but I think it was **Yandro**. He'd stowed his luggage in the room that afternoon with the understanding that he could sleep on the floor someplace. Since Hitchcock wasn't back, I suggested he might as well use the bed until John did return. With which we both got into bed, and began talking. We were still talking when John showed up a half hour later. Ellik moved to the foot of the bed and assured us he had slept on worse. We talked for a few more minutes, and there was a knock at the door, and Joanne came in. "I heard the talking, and I had nothing to do, so could I join you?" So she sat down next to Ron. At this point she noticed that Ron was wearing only shorts and a tee-shirt. "Pardon my nudity," Ron murmured. "What do you mean, 'nudity'?" Joanne retorted. "You've got too much on!"

So we talked for what seemed only minutes and then Magnus appeared bleary eyed at the door. "It is now 5:30, and it will soon be six," he stated. No argument there. "since we ought to leave by 10:00 or 10:30, and since two or three hours of sleep is worse than none, we shall leave now." I violently questioned that last, since the most beneficial sleep comes in the first two or three hours, and the rest of the time is spent in gradually waking up. (I've studied sleep quite a bit -- since I've come to enjoy it so greatly.) Hitchcock announced that if I did not leave with Magnus, he would ride back with Magnus.

"Fine," I said, "and stick me with the total cost of the trip going back." his eyes opened wide. "What do you mean?" he asked, the perfect example of pure naivete. It developed that he had not comprehended that he was expected to share gas mileage and the like. He considered himself my guest, and it was against his ethics to pay me for the favor of free transportation on a 1,000 mile round trip. I seriously questioned his ethics. But more important, I needed a riding companion for, if nothing else, moral support.

3: We pulled away from the North Plaza Motel at about 6:30 am, Sunday. Before we left, I watched Howard DeVore and Ron Ellik jumping and splashing in the dawn-lit pool. Gory. I had had no sleep since Saturday morning. Hitchcock was in exuberant spirits.

The plan was to meet Magnus in Cumberland and to give him Hitchcock. He would then drive directly to Baltimore while I would take the last 150 miles to Falls Church alone. I noticed upon starting out that I had less than a quarter tank of gas left. I eyed the closed gas stations. "Wonder when -- if they do -- they open on Sunday..." I sleepily mumbled. By about 6:50, I was getting dopey, seeing inverted dimensions, flat shapes where there weren't any, and generally showing signs of going to sleep at the wheel. At last I found a Sunoco station. I pulled in and decided to wait for the owner. I dropped off easily into a half sleep. About seven minutes later, Magnus pulled in. "we've got to get to a phone and call the police," he said. It seemed that ahead of them had been a car, the driver of which Magnus had first thought sick, then drunk. "They would play Chicken with every car coming the other way. They'd pull over into the left lane, right in front of the oncoming car! Did it to every car in that army caravan." The caravan had had over twenty vehicles. "I've got the license number. Want to report it." He set off down the road to find a telephone.

At 7:00 a bright and happy kid showed up to open the station. He filled my tank, and, when Magnus returned, let him use the station phone, which John used to call the state police.

And then we were off again. About fifteen minutes later, we passed a grey Lincoln with the proper license-plate number pulled off the road with a state police car behind it. Fast work.

The rest of that morning is to me a series of phantasms, compounded of an hour or two of driving and from half- to an hour of dozing. We were returning by the strip-map route, on route 40. The roads were far superior to those of route 50. Mid-afternoon found us in Pennsylvania after having left Ohio. John remarked that we were within 30 miles of Pittsburgh. I half-seriously suggested, "Let's drop in on Phil Castora." But we were already at least two hours behind Magnus. About fifty miles from Cumberland, it happened. Going up a grade, the engine faltered and stopped.

"Vapor lock," I said, and went to sleep. A half-hour later -- around 6:30 EST -- I started the engine but it died.

We were fortunate in a way. We had just started up from a lake -- we were in mountain country -- and there was an old resort only a hundred feet or so away. It turned out not to be a resort any longer -- it was now being run by a community group known as The Society of Brothers. One of its members, Dave Ostrum, approached us and asked if he could help. He was a mechanic. We explained things to him. He suggested backing the car into the drive. It would roll down the incline easily. I did. Then John decided it would be best to try and phone Magnus. We'd said we would phone him at Western Union if there was any difficulty. We couldn't get him, but left a message. Dave suggested that perhaps we had no gas. Since the Society had a gas pump for private use.... We pushed the car up to it, collecting Dave Jr., a big husky man with the same twinkle in his eye as his father's, and a sportscar and racing fan -- and an English kid whose name I didn't quite get. A half hour of draining the

lines and suchlike developed the cause of my problem. A broken fuel pump. The Jaguar uses an electric pump that wasn't pumping. After some deliberation, it was decided to get a Grayhound to Cumberland, and see what developed. The next Grayhound would be after 11:00 EDT.

We reset our watches. In the meantime, had we had any supper? We hadn't, and so found ourselves eating in the big kitchen while listening to both Daves tell us about the Society, and how it had been set up after the First World War. "We felt something had to be done to find a way for Man to live in peace. So we read the New Testament and found the answer: our communities. We have three in this country and others in Europe and South America." They'd found the old resort an ideal place in which to live; "We just moved in. It was fully furnished, even the beds were made up. After we bought it, we moved in one night, went to bed, and woke up the next morning and cooked breakfast. Just like that."

I was impressed with both father and son. And to some degree with the others I met. They weren't namby-pamby. They were pacifists, but not naive or unworldly. Dave, Jr. and I swapped talk on sportscars and racing and such topics, and I found him in no way constrained by an idealistic or introverted private world. In fact, the Society would seem to have succeeded completely. Certainly it would not be a bad way of life, and it is the only idealistic community I have ever been able to consider myself living in.

We arrived in Cumberland about 1:00 or so in the morning. No Magnus. We didn't have enough money between us for either bus or train fare. John called his father from the YMCA. He suggested that we stay there for the night, but I've always carried a prejudice against the Y, and vetoed the idea. John's father said we should take the train. He, Mr. Hitchcock, would pay the fare at the other end. This we arranged at the station.

On leaving the YMCA, we were accosted by a gay young man whom we ignored. Later on at the station, as we waited out two or three hours on a hard wooden bench, John suggested that we make ourselves as inconspicuous as possible. "We look gay, you know." I had visions of getting run in by a cop on a disorderly conduct charge, and decided that this would be a perfect end to the day.

Around 4:00, give or take an hour -- I'm pretty hazy on things at this point -- we got on the train. I went to sleep but not completely. I hadn't had any real sleep yet. I remember someone pulling something off the rack over my head and brushing against my head. Immediately after, soft fingers brushed my hair back into place. I figured the person for a woman, and was a little surprised to see another young man walk by, suitcase in hand. But I was tired. Maybe I dreamed it.

Entering D.C. by train was a surprise. The sun had risen, and was shining in my eyes, so I opened them. We were passing through brush and woods, and a terrain which seemed quite hilly -- mountainous, actually -- when a conductor came through shouting "Silver Springs! Silver Springs!" I felt like telling him it wasn't plural, but I didn't bother. Soon we were crossing Georgia Avenue, and I was making contact

with lost landmarks. Half an hour later I was in Union station. I said goodbye to Hitchcock, who was going on to Balto, and leaving there that evening for a week or two in Cambridge.

It was the work of a moment to get a 42 streetcar to 11th & F, and there to get a Virginia bus. I rode with the office workers out of the city, and arrived in East Falls Church around 8:30 am Monday. I was home.

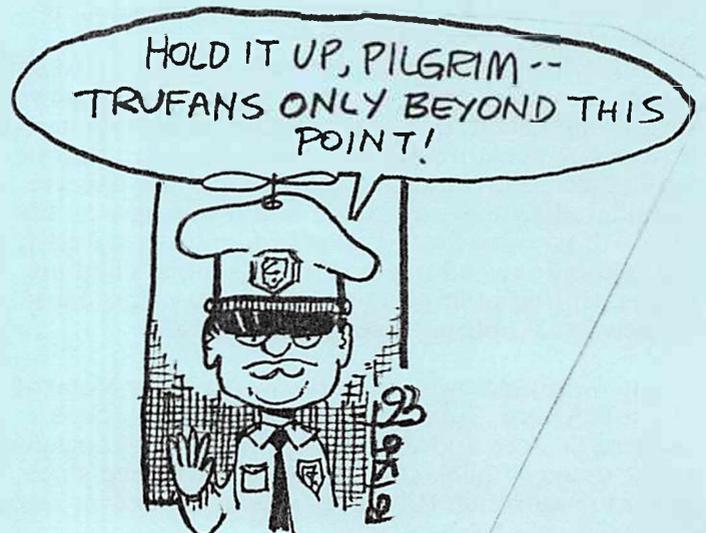
The Aftermath: Tuesday I showed up at work and was told that Mr. Elkins, the president, wanted to see me. He informed me that a Mr. Harness had left some stencils and paper for me (his SAPS zine) and had I made a job jacket out on this? He had read the stencils and did not want any of his employees associated with such material. (But, Bates publishes regularly *The Washington Little Listening Post*, an out and out crackpot occult and flying saucer zine.) Mr. Miller, the treasurer, would make out a check for me. And, oh yes, get those stencils and paper out of here.

While I was initially angry with Harness for bringing the stencils to work after I'd expressly asked him not to -- I was afraid this might happen -- I was also aware of a sense of freedom. I was actually rather glad to be free of what had become a constricting schedule. Now I could get a job with decent hours, and move to Baltimore, and have a more normal social life. By the time I'd left the building (without punching out on the time clock), I was whistling.

That evening I called up the Fort Necessity Garage, where my car was. Mr. Gleason said that the pump was fixed -- hadn't needed a new one -- and I could get the car anytime. Wednesday I drove out with my mother in her car, picked the Jag up, and returned without trouble to Falls Church.

The events surrounding the Midwestcon have almost dimmed the Con itself from my memory. But though the usual people -- Tucker, Bloch, Silverberg, Raeburn, Kidder, Steward, and others -- weren't there this year, I enjoyed the Con and the chance it gave me to meet and talk to others, such as Kent Moomaw, Joe Sanders, Ron Ellik, Jerry DeMuth, Don Ford, Lynn Hickman, and all the others who were there and whose company I thoroughly enjoyed.

Like, wow!



(from Warhoon 29,
edited by Richard
Bergeron)

THE POLITICS OF FANDOM

In the early fall of 1954 I finally screwed up my courage and attended my first sf fanclub meeting. I'd been contributing to fanzines for several years by then and had put out three or four issues of my own fanzine as well, but I was young and shy and afraid of personal contact with other fans, most of whom I knew were older than I, and most of whom I assumed to be more knowledgeable and more able than I as well.

The fanclub in question was the WSFA -- the Washington SF Ass'n -- and it had been formed a couple of fannish generations earlier -- at least six years earlier, anyway. The club had been organized by people like Bob Pavlat, Bill Evans, Chick Derry and Bob Briggs -- fans who had been active in FAPA or SAPS and had attended their share of conventions; in a phrase, seasoned fans. When I attended my first meeting the only one of those founders who was there was Bob Briggs, and I think that was because I had phoned him (on Bob Tucker's advice) for details on the meeting, and having given me that information, he felt obligated to be there to meet me. Bob was by then largely gafiated; he was still in SAPS but otherwise over the hill, fannishly speaking.

The rest of the half-dozen or so attendees were clubfans. They laughed uproariously when Harlan Ellison's name was mentioned (yes, even then!) but were otherwise ignorant of fanzine fandom. None of them had ever been to a major convention, and perhaps none had even been to one of the then-few regional conventions like the Phillycon. Bob Briggs spoke briefly, but entertainingly, about the car-trek West to that year's worldcon in San Francisco (in a car which included Harlan among its half-dozen passengers), and I was the only one there who recognized the names of the others he mentioned.

The club included an attractive young divorcee with two children, Dot Cole, whose apartment would, with the next meeting, become the WSFA meeting place for the next year or two, and for whom I nursed unrequited lust in my heart: an old man whom I knew merely as Mr. Morman, who carried a briefcase empty but for a fifth of Southern Comfort; Joe Valin, who was in his twenties and subsequently sold me for a modest sum a number of rare prozines (**Stirring**, **Cosmic** and the like from the late thirties and early forties), but whose personality was otherwise too bland to make much impression on me; and Phyllis and Bill Berg, whose newborn infant, Bettyanne, they brought with them to every meeting. Phyllis was fat and loud; Bill was thin and slightly less loud. They were WSFA's love-story, having met through the club. Both were heavy beer drinkers who tended toward maudlin garrulousness. They also fancied themselves the powers who ran the club.

Within a few months of my first meeting, the club had changed considerably in character. Bob Pavlat,

who had not attended meetings for some time, but who knew of me through fanzines, started attending regularly again. Briggs attended semiregularly. Derry and Evans also became once again

regular attendees. And within less than a year after that first meeting, I found myself elected club president.

Soon younger fans, fans of my generation like Jack Harness, John Magnus and Fred von Bernewitz were also coming to every meeting. The club became a genuine sf fanclub again, full of active fans who brought the latest issues of their fanzines, discussed FAPA and SAPS and Cult business, planned trips to conventions, and generally did what fans do.

As a direct consequence of this, I was never elected -- nor even nominated -- to another office in the club.

Dot Cole explained it to me: "Ted, you really shook the club up. The Bergs have never forgiven you. This used to be a little card-players' club until you came along. That's the way they liked it." The Bergs might have lost control over the nature of the club, but not over its politics. I remained on their blacklist for the rest of my stay in the area, and nothing I ever said or did changed their minds.

That was my first exposure to fan politics.

When I moved to New York City, some five years later, I was no longer the shy neofan. I'd been a vocal and active fan on both the fanzine and conventional level. I was putting out **Void**, which was one of the better fanzines of the era. I was hardly a BNF, but I'd been around; I was well-known.

There were a number of fanclubs in NYC. The most prominent was the Lunarians, which held its meetings in the Bronx in the apartment of Belle and Frank Dietz. I knew them both, of course. Frank had been in fandom since the forties, and Belle was the Phyllis Berg of NYC fandom: fat, loud, opinionated and determined to run things. Belle had already precipitated the WSFS, Inc., feud and lawsuits in the aftermath of the 1956 and 1957 Worldcons, and I was not fond of her. But moving to NYC made me the new guy on the block: all the fanclubs invited me to attend their meetings. So I tried a Lunarians meeting.

I did not attend another meeting of that club for five years, and the choice was mine. In the Lunarians of that time I saw the Bergs' WSFA writ larger. Meetings opened with formal business sessions, with minutes to be read and approved, old business and new business, reports from committees, dues to be collected, the treasury to be reported on, etc. Watching that meeting (I was a guest; I did not participate in the business session) was painfully boring. The "informal" part which followed was no better. An incredibly frumpy woman who dressed very badly cornered my rather pretty wife, Sylvia, to give her clothes advice. Milk and cake was served. People sat about politely. I felt as if I had somehow mistakenly wandered into a mundane gathering of some sort. I resolved not to return, and did not until after Frank and Belle had split up. Belle

had dropped out of fandom, and I heard rumors about an attractive young fan named Robin Postal who had started going to Lunarians meetings because her parents (who I then knew slightly) were members. (It is totally irrelevant to the point of this piece, but the first Lunarians meeting I attended in 1965 resulted in my taking Robin back to her home in Brooklyn, asking her for a date and, subsequently, making her my second wife.)

I have played the fan politics game. I've been elected to office in various clubs and apas. I co-chaired a worldcon. I even attained office in the Lunarians at one point (simply by allowing them to elect me). But I dislike fan politics enormously, and I've played that game only when it seemed to me that it was absolutely necessary.

Let us consider a simple hypothesis: Fandom is a meritocracy, conducted anarchistically.

Working backwards, let's take the "anarchistically" part first.

Fandom is a hobby. It may become an avocation (and has, for many of us), but we enter it and participate in it because we want to -- not because we have to. Because fandom is always and essentially *voluntary*, it is virtually impossible to compel anyone to do anything that they don't want to do. Some fans

assume obligations -- such as the schedule with which they intend to publish their fanzines, or a workload within a club or convention -- but only their own morality compels them to maintain these obligations. They must answer only to their consciences.

This was more obviously the case when most fans lived in isolation from one another and conducted their fanac on paper, through the mails. But it remains the case even today, when a fan may live only blocks away from another, and physical contact can reinforce obligations that have been assumed.

Since 1941, some fans have tried to organize the others. The National Fantasy Fan Federation (N3F) was the first such attempt. There have been many others. A pathetic fan of the early fifties named Orville Mosher started up something he called Project Fanclub, which was supposed to compile enough data on the then-extant fanclubs that not only could a directory be published (a moderately worthy aim), but the template for the Perfect Fanclub could be created. Mosher saw local fanclubs as only stepping stones to the Ultimate, Perfect Fanclub; a fandom so complete and perfect in its every aspect that all fans would fall all over themselves to join. We haven't heard from Mosher for twenty-five years now, but he may still be laboring somewhere over his vast project.

In the early forties the notion of an organized fandom was not as obviously ridiculous as it is now. Memories of Gernsback's SF League were still fresh. The SFL was basically a circulation gimmick designed to promote **Wonder Stories**, which was vying with **Amazing** in the mid-thirties for last place among sf magazines (**Astounding** being the sole other sf magazine). But Gernsback had enough belief and conviction in the idea and his readers were sufficiently in tune with it themselves (being proud and lonely fans who desired a little social intercourse with others of their kind; fandom was still being invented then) that the SFL was modestly successful in setting up local, if not regional chapters. The LAASFS began as the LASFL, the Los Angeles chapter of the SFL, for instance. A few other existing fanclubs affiliated themselves with the SFL, and new fanclubs came into existence as SFL chapters. The SFL effectively died when Gernsback sold **Wonder Stories**, and it was rechristened **Thrilling Wonder Stories**, though I believe it was kept up for awhile in the new magazine.

When Damon Knight (yes, the very same!) wrote "Unite or Fie" and called for a working national fanclub (the N3F, as it soon turned out), he must have been recalling the SFL. He might also have been thinking of the original idea behind FAPA when that organization was hatched by Don Wolheim in 1937: an amateur press association large enough to encompass all of fanzine-reading and fanzine-publishing fandom. Just think: if you joined one group you could get *all* the fanzines being published! (That didn't happen either. Fans joined FAPA and put out FAPAZines while continuing their non-FAPAZines.)

But it didn't work. And it never has worked. The attempts, like the N3F either died quickly or became bureaucratically clogged backwaters of fandom into which fans could disappear, never to be heard from again. (The N3F has been the laughingstock of fandom

THE WELL-DRESSED FAN



for at least thirty-five years now, and it still remains the home of the perpetual neofan, priding itself on the "services" it performs for fandom, few of which are needed and some of which are harmful. What Willis had to say about the N3F in the early fifties remains every bit as true today.)

Fans resisted being organized. And why shouldn't they? What was to be gained by making fandom over into an analogue of the mundane world in which they went to school or worked? Where was the enjoyment in trading one petty bureaucrat for another?

The attempts to organize fandom have always foundered on the simple fact that those who wanted to do the organizing were not people anyone else wanted to be organized by.

I think this became obvious to most fans in the mid-forties when the infamous Claude Degler and his "cosmen" (most of them his own pennames) started up the Cosmic Circle. Degler was another fan who had Heard The Call and wanted to organize fandom. His ideas were semi-religious and semi-utopian: he saw fans (with their Broad Mental Horizons) as the leaders of the future. They were, according to this scruffy semi-literate fan from Indiana, the next step on the evolutionary ladder, only waiting to be told their True Purpose before going out and setting the world to rights.

Up until then some fans of a utopian bent had been thinking along similar lines. Naive, genuinely idealistic, politically questioning, and the products of the Depression and the social ferment of the thirties, many fans had espoused somewhat visionary causes, from Marxism to Technocracy. The explosion of the atomic bomb had a real impact on these fans. There were those among them who believed that it might be possible to build a genuine community of fans, a utopian town of some sort. In Michigan, in Battle Creek, the first Slan Shack was organized along such ideals. The very term, "slan shack," derived from the aphorism, "Fans are Slans"; van Vogt's *Slan* was still fresh in everyone's memory as a strongly compelling novel about mutants called "slans." Fans, paranoid about their position outside the mainstream of society and the general attitude about stf expressed by mundanes, identified readily -- if not entirely seriously -- with "slans."

Degler changed all that. By taking such ideas to their *reductio ad absurdum* extremes, Degler showed fandom just how inherently foolish they were. Degler was the embodiment of fandom's lunatic fringe. (He was also something of a beatnik/hippie who rarely bathed or changed his clothes, wandered nomadically from one fan household to the next, freeloading and often departing with more possessions than he'd arrived with. Laney, among others, was aghast to discover the condition in which he left the beds he'd slept in, and years later, around 1950, fans were surprised to find Degler -- under another name -- huckstering their long disappeared books and magazines at conventions.)

Today fandom is in some respects more

organized. Large regional and world cons require manpower; efficiently run conventions require organization. But fans voluntarily submit to this kind of organization on a purely temporary basis. Although it's been twenty-five years since Dave Kyle first incorporated the World Science Fiction Society to run each year's worldcon, it's been twenty-two years since the WSFS Inc. was abandoned. It's my impression that some sort of umbrella organization presently exists to create continuity in the rules for worldcons, but it's been my observation that each year's con committee pretty much runs its worldcon as it chooses, accepting those rules as a pro forma arrangement and ignoring them when convenient or necessary.

Because fandom remains a voluntary hobby, there is little likelihood that fandom will ever be anything other than anarchistic. As always, things will get done when specific individuals agree to do them and then act upon that agreement.

Fandom is a meritocracy.

One of the most common complaints of the new fan, fresh upon discovering fandom, is that fandom appears to be class-conscious -- that there are circles within circles, each conferring upon its members certain aspects of status. It used to be that one heard complaints about the exclusivity of BNFs, about supposed snobbery, and about closed, invitation-only clubs and parties.

I think we can understand the attacks on people like Willis (who is, in my opinion, uniquely undeserving of such attacks) by people like Charles Platt and, several fan generations later, Don West, when we view them in this light. (The only other ready explanation is that these are people who feel that the only way to Make A Name for themselves and advance themselves in fandom is to seek out the best-liked person and attack that person irrationally.) Platt and West are attacking what they wrongly perceive to be a class-consciousness -- like communist termites boring from within.

They are easily dismissed as individuals who have failed to understand either fandom or their perceived targets, but they are symptomatic of a general misunderstanding which equates the castes of fandom with mundane class consciousness.

I am not going to either excoriate or defend mundane class consciousness here, although I will note that fandom is probably not entirely free of it, and that this is especially true in Britain, where it permeates mundane life. It is significant that both Platt and West are British, however -- or more specifically, English, and their target was Irish. It's a safe bet that both individuals are more closely bound to their mundane culture than most fans are, whether in acceptance of that culture or in rejection of it.

The mistake many new fans make is in assuming that those who appear to have status did nothing to earn that status. A new fan finds it easy to equate the social structure of fandom with that of the world he or she grew up in. In the mundane world many people enjoy a status they do not appear to deserve, whether through inheritance or through connivance. It is this basic apparent inequity which has fueled most of the world's revolutions over the past one or two hundred years.

But fandom operates anarchistically. Being the progeny of a BNF does not automatically make

one a BNF also. Money means little, since even in these more affluent times most fans are students and have relatively little money to spare. Nor is mundane position of much importance. Many fans are blissfully unaware of what their friends by correspondence do for a living.

Further, one's sex and race and appearance mean little if one conducts one's fanac on paper. Fandom has had its share of polio victims, cripples, hunchbacks (Ray Palmer) and others with handicaps. (Fandom even has its blind, though this handicap causes special problems for those who indulge in paper fanac.)

I caused a minor uproar in fandom a few years ago by pointing out that until recently fandom had no gender barriers; that women could as easily go as far in fandom as men, since the deciding factor was not who they were but what they did.

Fandom's present-day feminists, who seem unwilling to accept this idea (possibly because they are in fact trading on their gender rather than their intrinsic talents), have tried to import into fandom all of the wars raging between the sexes in the mundane world, betraying their own ignorance of the significant differences between fandom and the mundane world.

Fandom is a meritocracy.

I could be a thoroughly repulsive-appearing individual, perhaps dying of a leprous disease, my hair falling out and my skin flaking off. But if I can create something of intrinsic merit, a drawing or painting, an article or a story, a fanzine or a piece of music, my reputation in fandom will be based on that work -- not on my personal circumstances, whatever they may be.

When Lee Hoffman revealed herself as a woman in 1951, fandom was astonished. Not because "a girl!" had created in **Quandry** a fine fanzine, but because Lee had successfully hoaxed everyone, even if the origins of that hoax were inadvertent. Nor did her reputation suffer when fandom found out the truth. Lee was, and for many of us still is, a BNF because of her evident talents and abilities. **Quandry** was, and remains, a high-water mark in fanzines. There were other female fans in those days (not many; women were enculturated in other directions for the most part, and few admitted an interest in either science or stf in those days; those who became fans did so for the same reason we males became fans -- a "loner" attitude and outlook which distanced us from all mundane society), each with her own talents and abilities.

"BNF" means "Big Name Fan." That's not a term you can take too seriously, any more than forties fans could take too seriously the appellation, "Number One Fan Face," the term applied to the major egoboo poll winners like Ackerman and Tucker. Self-ridicule lies just below the surface.

But it is a descriptive term, and what it describes is the way others see the individual in question. One becomes a BNF by acclamation. No one can simply assume the title. You are a BNF when people say you are. Your status is earned by what you do and how what you do is received by

your peers -- your fellow fans.

BNFs are fans who are highly thought of by their fellow fans.

Fandom, thus, has no pre-ordained social structure. The social structure is created by those who make up fandom, and the ways in which they perceive fandom and their place in it.

But some fans can't leave it at that.

One of the biggest problems fandom faces at present is the balkanization of fandom brought about by its increasing size. Where once fandom was analogous to a small town in which everyone knew everyone else (and worldcon attendance figures ran in the low hundreds) fandom is today a moderate-sized city, which because of its size has divided itself into a series of vaguely overlapping neighborhoods. It is now possible to be a BNF in one neighborhood and unknown in the next. Regional cons, like Balticon, have larger attendance (over 2000) than worldcons did fifteen years ago.

This has caused some dislocation in fan traditions, and has resulted in an influx of "normals" -- mundane types who are not in any real respect distanced from mundane society and who bring normal mundane concepts and expectations with them into fandom. I always mention the feminists; far worse are the "greedheads" who see fandom as a place to make a living. One such individual puts on conventions in California for a profit -- an idea borrowed from those barbarians, the Trekkies. This would be marginally acceptable except for the fact that he sees traditional West Coast cons (like the Westercon) as competition, and has tried to put his competition out of business with both legal and illegal harassment.

Less immediately threatening, but perhaps more invidiously dangerous in the long run is the actual change in the character of fandom itself, as brought about through the change in the character of its component fans.

As already mentioned, fans until about fifteen years ago were, by and large, outsiders in mundane society. Often first-born or only children, readers, above-average in intelligence, fans tended to be those who always stood outside the society of their mundane peers; neither jocks nor otherwise popular in school, they were from an early age the "loners," often shy and socially inept. Beset at once with superiority and inferiority complexes (they knew they were smarter, were convinced they were more foresighted -- who else believed in space travel before Sputnik? -- but they also know they were outnumbered and subject to scorn and derision for the very foresighted views they espoused), they found themselves uniquely distanced from the society in which they were raised and lived.

Scornful of mundane values, fans found their own. Most of the early fan-values were intrinsically idealistic. A fan might be just an ordinary guy working in an ordinary shop during the mundane hours of his life, but his hobby could operate on a higher plane, a more idealistic plane. Conventions were deliberately structured to be non-profit (a position that is slowly but surely eroding as the potential for profit in conventions increases -- no one can convince me that Denver won't make at least \$100,000.00 in pre-con attendance fees, a sum the committee is very unlikely to find legitimate uses for, and fanzines were never expected to make a profit even if they broke even -- itself an unlikely event more than fifteen years ago. The basic currency of exchange in fandom was egoboo, and when Eric Frank

Russell published his story, "And Then There Were None," in **Astounding** around 1950, the idea of social credits and obligations ("obs") immediately caught on with fans because it so exactly paralleled contemporary fannish practices -- something of which Russell might well have been aware.

In its imperfect way fandom had evolved a utopian structure based upon common human decency. Fandom is the only case I know of in which anarchy has naturally evolved and works.

Fannish anarchy worked precisely because it offered fans an idealistic alternative to the mundane world in which they still lived and worked. On another level, fandom was a place in which everyone was, or could be, an artist -- a creator. Maybe you drove a taxi to pay your rent, but as a fan you drew, wrote, edited, or published. You had a creative outlet, and your creative work had value and could be exchanged via the barter system for the creative work of others. In fandom you could be your total self.

Today this is less true.

Fanzine fandom has fallen upon bad days. When the "small town" of fandom was scattered over the continental United States and portions of the rest of the world, paper was what bound it all together. Now that fandom has grown much larger it is possible to be an active fan without either reading or contributing to fanzines; indeed it is possible to be a "neighborhood BNF" without any involvement in the paper world of fanzines, and many have achieved this state. Such fans attend many regional conventions, and are socially active in their own fancommunity.

Direct social contact emphasizes different values and virtues. Shy, socially inept people who can write brilliant sentences on paper but don't speak forcefully (or surely) are not going to be BNFs in this new social fandom. People who learned how to socialize well in school will do much better. But these people, by virtue of their success among their peers while growing up, are much less (if at all) alienated by and from mundane society and are themselves much more mundane in their values. They accept unquestioningly what we once did question.

Then too, science fiction no longer carries the social stigma it once had.

The success of "Star Wars" and its sequels points to this, as does the generally successful "deghettoization" of written stf. (In passing, I might remark that one sure way to separate the old fans -- in attitude -- from the newer crop is to check out their opinions on "Star Wars" and similar "sci fi" movies. The newer and more mundane fans embrace "sci fi" unquestioningly, and even use the term approvingly.) Thus, stf no longer symbolizes the distancing from mundane attitudes and values that it once did, and is increasingly attracting into fandom "mundane" people.

I can't help viewing the "mundanization" of fandom with distaste. More and more, fandom is taking on the attitudes and values of mundane society, and to the extent that it does it loses what made it both unique and valuable. The idealism is starting to disappear, for example, and mundane conflicts (like those surrounding sexism) are infiltrating inward.

But worst of all is the politics.

Fandom has always had its fan politicians. In the late thirties, a time of mundane political turmoil, fans brought some of that turmoil into fandom but they did so on an idealistic, utopian level. (Which is to say that Wolheim and the Michelists saw "Michellism," or Marxism, saving the world.) What disgusted fandom was the way this was translated into purely fan politics: the politicking in fanclubs, the Exclusion Act of 1939, etc.

New York City fandom was always particularly reprehensible in this regard: fanclubs were forever undergoing coups and schisms, reflecting the personality clashes of the participants. But NYC was hardly unique. It was just that there were more fans in New York City earlier than there were in most other metropolitan areas.

Early fan politics had a very juvenile cast to it, which was not very surprising when you consider that most of the participants were still in their teens.

But by the time I became an active fan there were several generations of "grown up" fans around -- people in their thirties and forties who had been fans by then for ten to twenty years. (It's sort of startling to me to realize that I myself have been in fandom now for nearly thirty years!)

Fandom to me was always a place which despite its idealistic underpinnings kept a sense of humor about itself and never took itself too seriously. But fandom always had its fuggheads, and I define as "fuggheaded" anyone who takes himself too seriously and takes fandom too seriously. As a rule these are the same people who want to organize and run things, who feel that fandom has some specific "purpose" which it could easily achieve if only people would just do things a certain specific way.

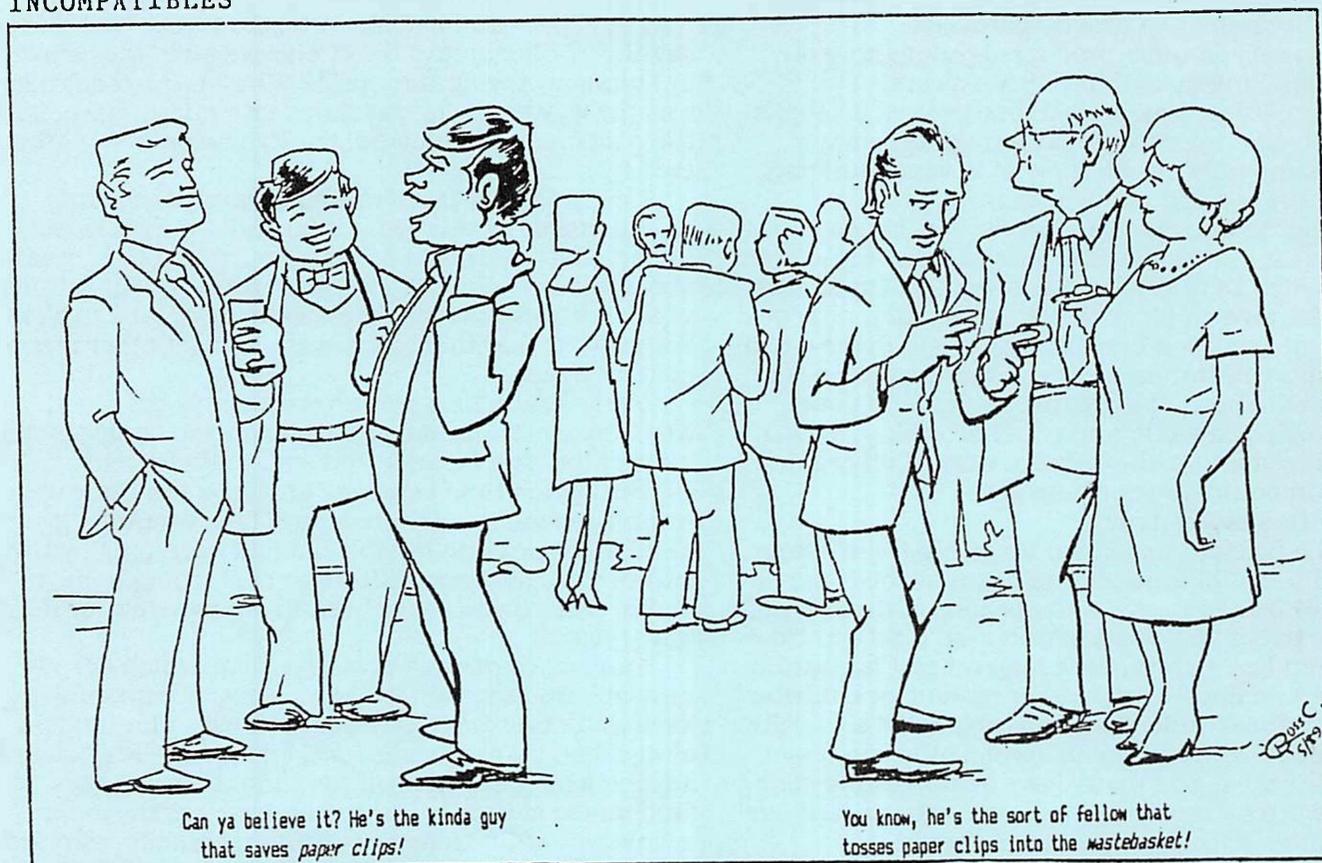
Often a fuggheaded fan is simply a person who has seriously misapprehended the actual nature of fandom. I have met people who think that if only fandom was "properly" organized it could do all sorts of good things in the world, as if fandom were simply another variant on the Elks or the Rotary Club or the American Legion, and its purpose were to Do Good Works in the local community.

But for some of these people fandom is a place to make up for their failures in the mundane world. Fandom is still, even now, a relatively small pond in which some people feel the need to be big frogs. These people seem to gravitate automatically into fan politics, just as their mundane cousins have made their way into mundane politics, whether it's the local school board or national office.

Choosing politics as a career is obviously something few of us care for. The very nature of the job tends to weed out those who would be best qualified to lead. People who are comfortable with themselves and confident in themselves rarely seek positions of public power; those positions are sought by precisely the sort of people who should never hold them. Power-trippers are insecure, emotionally unhealthy people who seek outside assurance of a power they invariably lack.

In fandom the power-trippers are also insecure; one can measure that insecurity by the extent of their overbearingness. My antipathy to the Bergs in WSFA in the middle fifties and to Belle Dietz a few years later was

INCOMPATIBLES



Can ya believe it? He's the kinda guy that saves paper clips!

You know, he's the sort of fellow that tosses paper clips into the wastebasket!

born out of my own intuitive awareness that these were at root unpleasant, devious, manipulative, hypocritical and insecure people who wanted to have a hand in ordering my life and telling me how I should be a fan.

These people did not accept fandom as an anarchy. They knew that was "wrong," and that the mundane values by which they were raised were opposed to anarchistic values. They could not live and let live; they had to dominate. I can think of nothing good that has ever come about in fandom from the efforts of the fan-politicians -- only strike, conflict and unpleasantness (including lawsuits).

Nor were these people who, for the most part, were willing to "succeed" in fandom on their own merits and abilities. No doubt unconvinced of their own merits (as insecure people always are), they were unwilling to put themselves to the test. It was easier to thrust their ideas and opinions on others, convinced that bluster and pushiness would succeed and viewing fandom's anarchistic operating procedures as a chaotic vacuum crying out to be filled with their own "leadership."

One of fandom's most famous politicians wrote his own book-length history of "fandom," a book which detailed his own microcosmic battles in New York City fandom as if nothing else existed at that time. A man who never achieved genuine literacy, he next promoted himself as an editor and critic, although his victims (actual authors) rarely appreciated him in

either role. Ultimately he appointed himself science fiction's chief historian, although he had not involved himself in the field until a number of years after the events he chronicled, and his "knowledge" was based on self-serving anecdotes from one of the principals recalled some twenty-five years after the fact. This "historian" clung to his version of history even when researchers (doing the research he'd never bothered to do) proved it false. Worse, he attacked the chief researcher *for doing the research* and not accepting the version he'd been promulgating for years unquestioningly.

It made no sense until one realized that for this person the "history" he'd been pushing *was his own validation*: it gave him the status he could not otherwise earn. That's a bit pathetic, and I can feel some real sympathy for the man. It's no fun being in a meritocracy if one's abilities appear to be mediocre. (Oddly enough, outside fandom and in his real, mundane job, the man has proved himself to be a genuine expert and earned wide respect. There's an irony for you.)

The worthwhile politics in fandom are not the make-believe transplants from mundanity, with business meetings, minutes, dues and officers. The politics of fandom which are worthwhile are to be found in learning to get along with a diverse and anarchistically inclined bunch of people, learning to do whatever it is one wants to do within this context.

For fandom is, after all, really just a ghoddamned hobby.

(from **Guip** #8, edited by Arnie Katz, June 1968)

Every so often a fanzine arrives in the mail with a letter or article in which a young fan delivers himself of his pent-up frustrations with fandom as he sees it. In **Arioch** #2, a young fan named George Foster railed out in the letter column: "They're just getting more

**WHO WAS THAT NEO
I SAW YOU WITH
LAST NIGHT? THAT
WAS NO NEO -- THAT
WAS THE BEST NEW
FAN OF THE YEAR**

corrupt every year," he said of Worldcon committees. "It seems that BNFs get a lot more attention toward that sort of thing. It helps to have connections too. 'Neos don't deserve anything.' Look, everyone was a neo at some time or other. Why look down on someone who is struggling to get out [of?] neoship when you were once in the same predicament."

And a few days later, at a party for Shelby Vick during his brief visit to New York, I found myself in a discussion of Neo-fans -- Their Cause and Cure, with Arnie Katz, Alan Shaw, and Johnny Berry.

Now, when you think about the juxtaposition there, it might bring you up short. It did me. Because I was a neofan during Shelby's heyday, in the early days of Sixth Fandom. I never saw an issue of **Confusion** while it was coming out, principally because in my neoish shyness, I was afraid to send for a copy or try trading my little fanzine for it. I mean, who was I, among all those BNF's who wrote for and received zines like **Confusion**, **Opus**, or **Quandry**?

Three fannish generations were spanned in my living room. Lee Hoffman was sitting on the couch reminiscing old times with Shelby, while rich brown and I laughed over our old fake/real feud in **Disjecta Membra** in 1959, and Arnie and Johnny were looking over a contraband copy of the latest **Guip**. Alan Shaw was quietly grooving to himself while Van dyke Parks was on the turntable... but that's another fandom.

We were all neos. George Foster is so right. I remember rich brown's 1957 introduction of himself to the Cult: he talked about his membership in the Boy Scouts in a semi-legible letter. A bunch of us Cultists sat around the Wormwood, a Washington D.C. fan hangout of ill repute, and laughed raucously at rich's letter. Arnie Katz still recalls vividly an early Terry Carr review in an issue of my **Minac** of one of his early fanzines. "It was awfully critical," he recalls, the Pepsi

beading on his upper lip. And who can't recall some moment of trial or pain from his own days in the purgatory of neodom that preludes the heaven we call fandom...?

On the other hand, remember your first days in grade school? I recall that during Orientation Day -- that day a couple of days before school really starts and you're shown around the school and told where you'll report next Monday -- at the age of six, I was standing out in the playground of Falls Church's Madison School when a Big Boy swaggered up. He was one of the Tasker boys -- a family of rough-necks according to local legend, and a family that never amounted to much.

(Later, John Tasker, who just might have been the boy of that occasion, got married in high school and later killed a man in a barroom fight before somehow managing to graduate... but I digress.) He might have been in the third grade or sixth grade. He just looked Big to me.

I was standing around with a friend, talking or doing whatever kids that age do to pass time, and this big Tasker kid swaggers over, a kid I've never laid eyes on before, never heard of before, and -- without warning -- he punched me in the stomach.

I'd never been punched, hard, in the stomach before.

The tears were in my eyes before I was able to draw that first gasping breath again, after a heart-stopping eternity or agony and breathlessness. And I was shocked.

Why'd he *do* that?

Big boys traditionally beat up on little boys.

Some people never forget. They fix each incident in their memory, find a pattern to them, and proceed to assign each new situation a place in the pattern, whether it fits or not.

Some neofans enter fandom with the predetermined assumption that the Big Boys are going to Pick On Them.

But the analogy is imperfect. By the time we're fans, we're not -- most of us -- sadistic kids flexing our muscles any more. We're -- supposedly -- adult individuals with at least a degree of maturity. Some of us may -- and do -- launch attacks upon that which strikes us as fuggheaded. But we don't pick on neofans as a class; we never have.

Back in the late fifties, the N3F was a traditional laughing-stock. And one of the main reasons for this was the outraged reaction of the "103% Neffers" to what ridicule they earned. Just as Sam Moskowitz,

twenty years earlier, reacted with shock to Tucker's lampoons of his pomposity, the Neffers of the fifties would periodically castigate "the BNF's" who laughed at them. It was the reaction of the humorless to being made fun of. It wasn't funny, Gertrude McGee Carr, then a FAPAN of some duration, would periodically wonder out loud what possessed other FAPANS to laugh at her fanatical defenses of the N3F. And then there was Racy Higgs... Well, I won't even *try* to describe him.

Later, Seth Johnson wrote angry letters to **Void** after Greg Benford wrote an accurate but humorous editorial about the ISFCC, a minor club that, if anything, upstaged the N3F for stuffed-shirt emptiness.

And more recently, Harriet Kolchak has been devoting herself to angry queries about why no one of any importance pays any attention to her Neofan fund.

Which brings us back to neofans. Some people outgrow the condition. Some don't. Those who don't are sometimes pathetic, often ludicrous, and usually touchy as hell about it. They see nothing funny about being failed six times and still being in the First Grade. Well, I suppose there isn't much that's funny about it for a loser, but can you see this skinny, gawky, forty-year-old woman who buys all her clothes at the Salvation Army, sitting at a desk amid a row of six-year-olds? It's laughable. I'm sorry but it is.

The real problem with these chronic failures at fandom is that they get bitter about it, and they start looking for someone to blame their failures on. The whipping boys they usually pick on are "the BNFs".

It's easy to resent those who embody what you want to be and aren't. Have-nots traditionally rail at the Haves. The next step is to begin thinking to yourself that the Haves have such a good thing going for themselves that they've become exclusive snobs and are deliberately keeping all the Goodies from you. And this way lies full-blooded paranoia. Yes.

You'll notice that for these people the Neofan's Bane is "the BNFs", rarely if ever specific people. They don't *know* any specific people that well. (I ought to make a disclaimer at this point: George Foster's quote was a nice peg to hang this piece on, but I do not consider him one of the above-typed perpetual neofans, and I'm not talking about him here. I'm not picking on you, George!) And what these strange half-world people do is seek out the company of newcomers into fandom.

How many fans have told me, "You know, I used to have a real big correspondence with X." (or Y or Z) "It took me a year and a half before I just lost interest in him." Or, "When I finally started meeting the people he was always warning me about and found out they were pretty good people, well..." Or, "Finally, I saw through him and I dropped him."

The Losers, the always-will-be-neos, the forty-year-old women who consort primarily with teenage boys, their real damage is in the attitudes they attempt to instill in newcomers to fandom.

What good is a "Neofan's Fund"? Why should anyone want to occupy herself exclusively, obsessively, with young fans who have had little experience in fandom, even to the extent of (shudder) taking them to

bed with her? For most fans, neofannishness is simply the first phase of learning about fandom -- it's the stage of inexperience. It means, simply, "new fan".

You can be -- you *should* be -- new to any area of activity for only a limited amount of time. I mean, after all, sooner or later the newness wears off. For young fans -- by which I mean early teenagers -- the process may take a little longer, because it is being combined with a growing up process that can't be hurried beyond certain natural limits. (Although the Jeff Wanshels of this world have always amazed me -- Jeff was a well-known fan of evident talent when he was thirteen, and he outgrew us in another couple of years, unfortunately. Sometimes fandom *shouldn't* be coupled so closely with Growing Up....) Fans who discover fandom after they're twenty or so usually pass through the neo stage so fast you can blink your eyes and miss it. Dean Grennell burst upon Sixth Fandom as an almost instant BNF. So, later, did Bob Leman and (the Irish) John Berry. But then there are those who happen upon fandom after they've reached middle age and have (usually) made a failure of their lives. For these people, neofannishness is a state never outgrown, because they're seeking the smallest pond around. They maintain their ignorance and naivete about fandom at large for year after year, because they're afraid to get any closer to it, afraid of being losers again.

These people, as I've said, are pathetic, but they're also poisonous. They seize upon raw recruits and, in a false representation of themselves as old hands who can help the newcomers out, they fill neo's minds with garbage about fandom. They try to spread a festering sort of Underdog Paranoia. "See, those BNFs, they don't give a damn about you poor neos -- they just kick you under the carpet like dustballs or last week's garbage." "Those BNF's are clannish, they stick together, they scratch each others' backs, they have no use for the neofans. They've forgotten they were ever neofans themselves." Etc. And a lot of young fans believe this.

They believe it because they know no better. They never thought out just what a BNF is, what he *has* to be by definition.

A BNF is a Big Name Fan. Right? And what is a Big Name? A kind of microcosmic fame, a reputation based on some sort of values achievement. Fans among whom? A reputation based on whose evaluation? Yeah, fandom's. Anyone who is a BNF is a BNF by dispensation of fandom as a whole. I've read in fanzines where a fan of six months' duration refers to the guy who preceded him into fandom by a year as a "BNF", and I guess that guy *is* -- to him. But when someone -- a Tucker, a Willis, someone like that -- is universally considered a BNF, it is because we all regard him highly. It is a status *we*, all of us, bestowed upon him.

Not a status anyone can confer upon himself.

BNFdom isn't a private club. It's not something you pay your money and join, not something those already BNFs can blackball you from. Each fan has his own mental list of those he considered BNFs. To me, for instance, all the great BNFs date from Sixth and Seventh Fandoms -- the periods when I was,

respectively, a neo and a developing fan myself. They were the ones I looked up to. Some have fallen, some have gaffed, but that's who they are -- to me.

And if we all compared lists -- members of Apa L did this a few years ago at Bruce Pelz' instigation -- there would be many names in common. Those are fandom's BNFs.

Neo A and Neo B enter fandom at roughly the same time. A year later Neo B is attending the so-called Closed Door parties at the cons, while Neo A is still running for junior office in the N3F. How come Neo B got so far ahead? Favoritism? Palm greasing among the BNFs? (You laugh? I've heard just such speculations offered by the perpetual neos.) It's simpler than that. Fandom is a social organization. Every alliance of value in fandom is based on friendship. Every fan gets wherever he gets as an individual, based on the responses to him of other individuals. Some fans find themselves fitting easily among older, more established fans. Neo B got into those parties because the others there dug his company.

All fans are not created equal. Equal *opportunity* is here -- more so than anyplace I can think of -- but each, like water, finds his own true level. Some of them have taken many years to grow to the positions we occupy now. Others among us have very quickly shot to the top. The same year I published my first fanzine, a fan my age -- fourteen -- named Joel Nydahl, had a story published in **Imagination** and found his **Vega**, launched from a hectograph only a few months earlier, the number-one fanzine in the field. His **Vegannish** is still talked about -- although it was his last fan

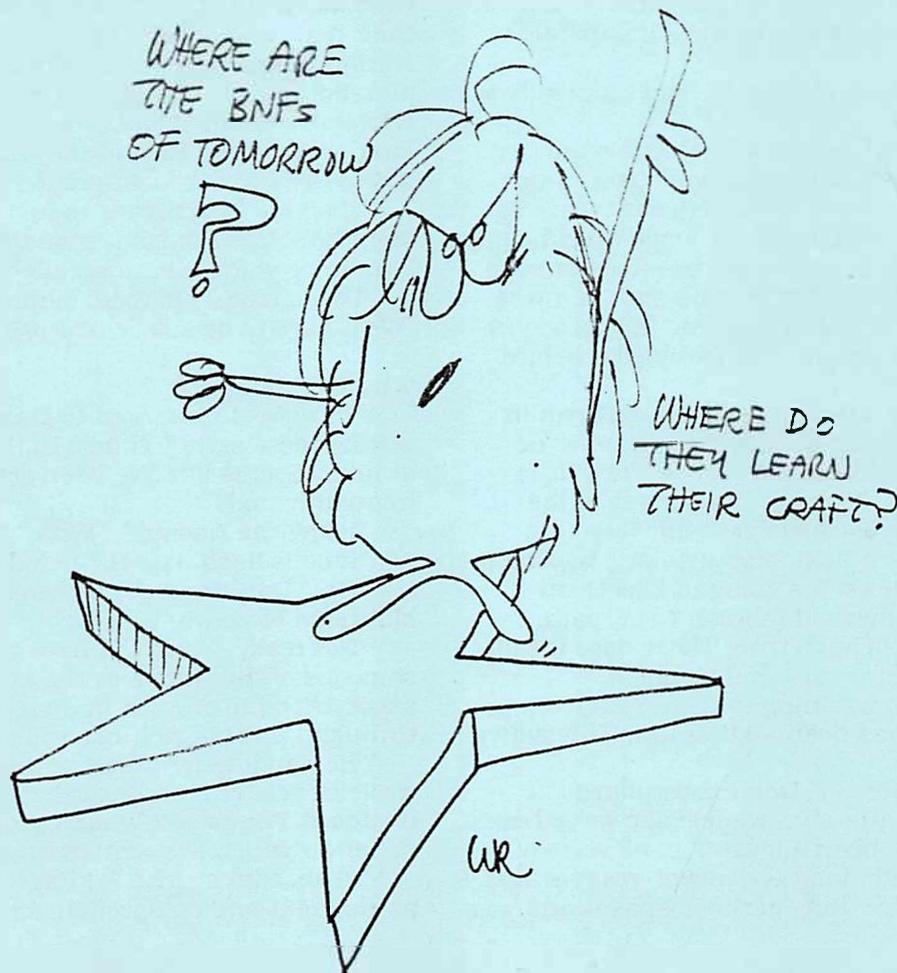
publication. One year, start to finish, from bottom to top, neo to BNF. And out. It took me ten or fifteen years to get where he got in one year, and I never did publish the number-one fanzine. We each make our own way, and our own pace.

But it is all based on individual accomplishment. If **Guip** is a good fanzine, it's because Arnie Katz has put in a number of years learning how to publish a good fanzine -- and the process isn't finished even now. If, a few years from now, **Guip** is a number-one fanzine, and Arnie is a BNF, it won't be because of anyone but Arnie.

That's the sad fact of it. Nobody is holding young fans back. So few have shown much promise these days that when I meet an Alan Shaw or a Johnny Berry, I encourage them like crazy, just because I don't want to see a vacuum develop between the fannish generations. (Johnny says he's going to publish **Folscap** on a regular schedule now; Alan is going to MIT and has been restricted in his activity to an APA or two. That's the breaks. I'd like to see them both putting out monthlies, but there *are* Higher Realities and stronger priorities than fandom...)

So you can't say that Neo B is apple-polishing his way up, or that Neo A is being deliberately held back. There are no cop-outs, only the blunt, plain truth: If you've got it, you make it. If you don't, you won't. Some have it more than others. Some take longer to make it. And some never will.

But ignore the losers' sour grapes, Neo C. We're all waiting, all hoping that, sooner or later, you'll make it. We need you.



from **Pong #3**, edited by Dan Steffan & Ted White, Nov. 24, 1980

Focal Points in Theory and Practice

Dan and I (or "we" as we still call ourselves) were sitting at his dining room table, collating and stapling **Pong #2** when the subject of focal points came up.

"Ted," Dan asked. "Here we are putting out our second ish, and -- forgive me for saying this, Ted -- we don't seem to have set fandom afire yet. I mean, how many copies of #1 did we send out? Almost a hundred? But we've gotten only half a dozen letters on it. Can this be right?" He looked at me imploringly, his large brown eyes moistening noticeably.

I gave him a reassuring smile. He hadn't finished collating yet. "You have to give these things time, Dan."

Reassured, he returned to the collating. As he collated each copy I stapled it. (There's an art to stapling a fanzine which is folded in thirds, as **Pong** is. One doesn't want the staples to go on the folds.) This continued for a brief time, then Dan paused again.

"Uh, Ted?" I could tell by the tone of his voice that a question remained in his mind. He voiced it: "Ummm, how *much* time, Ted?"

This was a tougher one -- and one I wished he hadn't asked just now. I *hate* to collate. "Well, Dan," I said, pausing to wait for him to resume collating, which after a moment's hesitation he did. "... it's like this, I've been giving this a lot of thought. Yes, a *lot* of thought. You see, the problem is one of temporal dislocation."

Dan's eyes narrowed. "I used to read that skiffy stuff," he remarked.

"Right," I said. "Our essential problem is that we are putting out the type of fanzine which was much more common ten or fifteen or even twenty years ago. Why, more'n half our mailing list is made up of people who were more fannishly active ten or fifteen or even twenty years ago." I paused to let that sink in. I was rewarded by a gleam of understanding in Dan's eyes. He handed me another copy, and I stapled it before continuing.

"We're starting up a machine that hasn't run in years," I said. "Not to over-extend the metaphor or anything, but things are kinda rusty. We're a little rusty, and they're a little rusty. Why, many of the people on our mailing list have probably forgotten what it was like to get a neat, zippy-looking fanzine in the mail every two weeks. It's going to take them awhile to reanimate their old fannish habit-patterns.

"Yeah," Dan said. "That's true. These days it's all apas and a stray genzine now and again."

"Moreover," I said, warming to the topic, "it's not like either one of us has been all that fannishly active recently."

"Hey, wait a minute -- !" Dan expostulated.

"Sure," I said relentlessly, "we *feel* like we've been active all along. We've been engaging in all sorts of personal-type fanac all along -- conventions, parties, stuff like that, to say nothing of those apas -- and you

SOME SELECTIONS FROM **PONG**

work regularly on **Boonfark**. But look at it from *their* points of view: **Boonfark** comes out once every two or three years -- "I held up my hand, the stapler still in it, to forestall his objections; I knew that

he had another issue planned to appear soon, but that wasn't the point, since *they* couldn't be expected to know that; -- and for all they know, so will **Pong**. We have to establish credibility, build up momentum. We have to re-educate fandom -- our part of fandom, anyway, if not those five thousand others -- to the very *notion* of a focal-point-type fanzine. I mean, after all, there hasn't been one for *years*."

Dan collated the last copy of **Pong #2** and handed it to me. Absentmindedly, my thoughts on a higher plane, I stapled it precisely on the folds. "I've been meaning to ask you about that, Ted," Dan said. "Just what, precisely, is a focal-point-type fanzine, anyway? I mean, I only got into fandom ten or twelve years ago."

"Well," I said, rising to my feet and climbing up to stand on the chair in which I'd been sitting, "a focal-point fanzine is a fanzine which gives fandom a center-point, a gathering place, a coherency. It puts us all in touch with each other, gives people a common medium through which to relate," I waved my arms in the air.

"Really? I've never seen one of those."

"Exactly. Back in the Good Old Days, fanzines like **Quandry**, **Vega**, the original **Psychotic** and **Fanac** were all focal-points. Fans rallied around them and got their news from them. When Jim Harmon broke down Harlan Ellison's door at the Midwestcon one year, we all read about it in **Psychotic**, for example. And when Harlan wrote his famous piece about the Mad Dogs of Fandom Kneeing Him in the Groin, that also appeared in **Psy**. **Psy** was a focal-point."

"It's kind of arrogant to just come right out with one, though," Dan said, thoughtfully. "I mean, to just announce your intentions like that."

"That's true," I agreed, climbing down off the chair. "We'll have to be subtle about it."

Who is this man?

"Y'know," I remarked to Dan recently, "I keep getting these scruffy things in the mail." I waved a copy at him. "Seems like I've been getting them awfully frequently, too."

"Huh?" he riposted. "What's that?"

"It calls itself **Apa-H**," I said.

"Oh," Dan nodded knowingly. "John Thiel. He's an old friend of yours, isn't he?"

"Not really," I said. "I have this vague memory of someone of that name in the late fifties, but few associations to go with it. Just someone who passed through... I think rich used to correspond with him."

"He had a letter about you in the **Unicorn Times** a while back, didn't he though? A couple of years ago?" (**Unicorn Times** is a Washington D.C. entertainment paper for which I've written and Dan illustrated.)

"Yeah, that's right. I'd forgotten that. It was about as coherent and comprehensible as these things are," I

waved the latest **Apa-H** at Dan. "**Apa-H**," Dan said to himself. Then he looked up. "That's supposed to be a hoax apa, isn't it? Members all use hoax identities or something?"

"Well, that's what I thought it was," I confessed. "But this new one here says I may have had you deceived if you thought **Apa-H** was an apa. **Apa-H** is simply a fanzine. The idea that it's an apa is the fooling part of it. It's sort of a take-off on an apa and what one looks like, and who's in it."

"Yeah? No shit. Sure fooled me."

"Me, too. Of course, it's so scruffy that I rarely read any of it."

"So how come he's letting everybody in on the Big Secret?"

"I'm not sure. The sole contents of this one is a long list of people who won't be getting it any more, and a shorter list of those who will."

"Which one are you on?" Dan asked.

"The wrong one," I said. "The shorter list."

(from **Pong #4**, December 8, 1980)

Not Fade Away

I was sorting the day's mail (bills in one stack, stuff to be thrown away unopened in another stack, letters to be opened and read in a third stack, mail for Rich Brown in a fourth stack, and mail for my daughter in a fifth stack -- I'm thinking of applying for a federal subsidy as an unaccredited station of the post office) when Dan walked in.

"Look at this!" I said by way of greeting. "He's sent me *another* one! It hasn't been more'n a week!" I waved a stapled sheaf of paper at him.

"What's that?" Dan asked. "Stop waving that thing around, will you? I can't see what it is."

"It's the latest **APA-H**-thing from that guy John Thiel," I said, throwing it into the stack of junk mail on top of two offers of life insurance ("Just for *you*, T. White!"), a come-on for an investment service, an ad for a housing development disguised as a recreational community in the Blue Ridge Mountains, and a catalog from a local department store. This one is dated 'February 1981.' That's getting a jump on the new year, isn't it?" I dumped the entire stack into a wastebasket, the first step toward burning the entire lot in my fireplace.

"Do you realize how much it cost to mail out the last **Pong**?" I said.

Dan refused to rise to my gambit, stooping instead to retrieve the **Apa-H**. "I thought you never throw away a fanzine, Ted," he said. "I don't see why you are so down on... Oh. Huh. Well, maybe I *do* see..." he said, thumbing through it.

"You'll notice that the entire issue -- if that's the right word -- consists of loose pages from old magazines, stapled together with the **Apa-H** cover," I pointed out. "I don't consider that a 'fanzine.'"

"Here's a page from an old issue of **Mad**," Dan mused. "Davy Berg... not very good..." He was going from back to front. Pausing only briefly for the cover from the January 1972 **Playboy**, he arrived finally at the inside front cover -- Thiel's editorial message and the sole content of the "issue." "Listen to this!" Dan said, half incredulous. "As you noticed, there weren't

much, or any, contents last issue. ...Last issue I told you that **APA-H** was "just a fanzine." Now I tell you that it isn't even a fanzine. **Apa-H** is almost nothing whatsoever. ...Next issue will be even more ephemeral, perhaps lacking even an editorial. ... This is the second issue of its sort that you have seen. You can well believe that I'm going to keep it up. But in some near or distant day, the last dim pages of this fanzine will also disappear, like smoke, and you will never know what happened to it..." Dan stopped and paused to admire the lines he had just read aloud. "Why, that's almost poetic!" he enthused.

"Hmph," I muttered "What a mailbox tease...!"

"Oh, come on, Ted," Dan said. "Look at it this way. I've heard you talking about minimalism in music, which you like. So, ok, *this* is minimalism in fanzines!"

"Do you want it?" I said, gesturing grumpily at the **Apa-H** still clutched in his hand.

"Good ghod, no!" Dan exclaimed, tossing it hastily back into the wastebasket.

"Fine," I said. "I need it to start a fire."

(from **Pong #6/7**, Jan. 19, 1981)

Pong Goes to a WSFA Meeting

"Really, Ted, you should check out the WSFA meetings," Steve Stiles, ace artist, said to me recently. "There are lots of attractive women there." Now WSFA (the Washington SF Ass'n) is not what I think of when I think of attractive women, but it is true that I've met a few there over the years, and with that thought in mind I announced to Dan, "I think I'll go to the next WSFA meeting."

The WSFA meeting that I picked was the one which occurred on the first Friday of the month, since those are held at the northern Virginia abode of Alexis and Doll Gilliland, which gives it two advantages. The first is the Gillilands, and the second is the location, which is only a few minutes (by car) from either Dan's or my house.

While we were there a large youth with pimples and falling pants was pointed out to me. "That is Martin Morse Wooster," Avedon Carol said to me.

"Really?" I inquired politely.

"He is writing a history of fandom," Avedon said.

"Really?" I inquired with slightly more interest.

"He is being *paid money* to write a history of fandom," Avedon told me.

"Really?" I inquired with a sudden pique of my curiosity. "To what extend is he qualified to do this thing?" I asked.

"I don't know," Avedon admitted, wryly. "I think he's read some fanzines -- I heard him refer to doing things in 'a D. West' once."

"Really?" I said.

With a smoothness that may or may not have aided if not abetted by the smoke I'd had a little earlier, I segued into a fantasy. Why not? In my mind's eye I saw the preface to the new Martin Morse Wooster *History of Science Fiction Fandom*.

"We've all read Sam Moskowitz's *The Immortal Storm*," the preface would say. "And we've read Harry Warner Jr.'s histories of fandom in the forties and fifties. But these are the histories of only a vocal minority of true sf fandom. What of the rest of fandom?"

What of all the science fiction clubs scattered over the United States -- and, indeed, the entire world -- which never produced fanzines? This history is dedicated to telling *their* story." And what would follow, for the rest of this very fat book, would be condensations and synopses of the minutes of every sf club that could be tracked down. I savored this fantasy for a long delicious moment, and then turned to Alexis Gilliland, who had been a silent witness to my exchange with Avedon. Briefly, I described my vision to him.

"Libraries will snap it up," Alexis commented dryly, "especially if it's on microfiche."

(from **Pong #6/7**, January 19, 1981)

Why Me?

"Look at this," I said to Dan when he came in the door. "It's getting out of hand," I said. I waved my hands in the air. "Now he's sending me *things*," I said, handing Dan the opened package.

"What's this?" Dan inquired. "A Christmas gift?"

"Look at the return-address sticker," I said sourly.

"Ummmm... oh!" Dan said. "John W. Thiel. I didn't know his middle initial was 'W'. What do you suppose it stands for? 'Wally'?"

"Warburton," I said. "Look inside."

Inside the wrapping paper was a small box, not quite the size of three paperback books stacked on top of each other. Inside was some wadded-up paper towels.

"Smells like Corflu," Dan observed as he pulled out one of the paper towels. He opened it up, smoothing out the wrinkles, probably looking for a written message. The paper towel was blank, unused.

Dan threw the paper towel aside and pulled a small blue plastic bottle from the box. "'Avon Electric Pre-Shave Lotion,'" he read. "'four fluid ounces' -- actually that's '4 fl. oz.' Well, Ted, I'm impressed. John W. Thiel has sent you a gift!"

"Turn it over," I said, and Dan turned it over. A piece of white paper had been Scotch-taped on the other side of the bottle. On it was typed: 'DADA AWARD Ted WHITE pablo lennis '77 a 'do not ship in or near Washington' special.'

Dan unscrewed the top of the bottle and sniffed. "Smells like Avon Electric Pre-Shave Lotion all right," he said.

"He's gone too far this time," I said. "From now on I shall return mail from him and mark it 'Refused.'"

"It *was* thoughtless of him not to check whether you had a beard."

(from **Pong #8**, February 2, 1981)

Feud for Thought

Lee Hoffman pointed out last issue that "It is hard to be fabulously fannishly witty -- or even to make very dull, mundane sorts of comments -- on the stuff in **Pong**. I delight in your humor. I am fascinated by djs's ability to turn a three-sentence quote into a half-page piece. But there just aren't any hooks in **Pong** to hang comments on. At least none that I can locate." But Lee is not the sort of person who has only negative criticisms to make; having put her finger on the problem, she is ready to offer a workable solution. "What you need is to get a good feud going like in the

Good Old Days."

Dan and I both immediately recognized the Wisdom in Lee's remark.

"She's right," Dan said. "We've been too friendly and easy-going. You, Ted -- you used to be known as the Scourge of Fandom --"

"Be careful how you pronounce that," I muttered.

"Whatever," Dan said, shunning all possible digressions and plunging ahead with his thought. "You used to get into feuds at the drop of a used staple. You used to provide regular entertainment for hundreds of fans. What's happened to you, Ted? Have you," his voice fell to a suggestive whisper: "have you *burned out*?"

"I prefer to call it 'mellow out,'" I said a trifle testily. "Actually, I've enjoyed not being involved in any feuds for awhile."

"Aw, come on, Ted," Dan said cajolingly. "You attacked Orson Scott Card just a year or two ago."

"I did that on commission," I said. "And besides, that was a mistake. It just involved me with another turkey, and who needs that?"

"Well..." Dan said. "Okay. You don't want to start a feud of your own but you admit the wisdom of having one in **Pong**. What's the answer, then?" Dan gets like that on occasion, usually only moments before reminding me that I was fanning before he was born.

"Well, obviously, you can't get into a feud," I said.

"Huh? Why d'you say that?"

"You're constitutionally unable," I pointed out. "Look at the way you turned into marshmallow when you were on that fan-artists panel with Phil Foglio. You went out there vowing to breathe fire at him, but in the clutch you turned into a pussycat. And I can recall other occasions when you were boilingly angry with a fan but what you ended up writing was almost apologetic. Face it, Dan, you don't have the basic nastiness of personality that's required for a good feud."

Dan sighed and nodded glumly. "You're right," he admitted. "So what are we going to do?"

"Well," I said, voicing my thoughts as I reasoned aloud, "if neither one of us is going to do it, then we'll have to turn to our readers."

"How?"

"A -- a contest," I said, the idea popping out suddenly. "That's it -- we'll have a contest!"

Dan's head snapped up, his eyes freshly aflame. "Yes!" he enthused. "You're right! A contest! I can see it now -- who will star in the **Pong** Feud of the...um... Month?... Year?..." He stumbled to a halt. "Ted?"

"Obviously," I said, "a feud requires several elements. I mean, it takes more than just the antagonist -- it needs an issue, a point of controversy."

"Got it!" Dan said. "We have a contest to pick the controversy."

"More than that," I said. "'What we require of our contestants are three things: First, the controversy, and second and third, the two antagonists. We'll accept all entries, even from members of our own families. And the antagonists named in the winning entry receive free space here in **Pong** to use in conducting their feud, for as long as the editors -- that's us -- deem fit."

"How do you think it'll really work, Ted?" Dan asked me. "Do you think we'll get a bunch of obviously silly, stupid entries, or will somebody come up with something real, like the 1958 WSFS Inc. lawsuit that provided a lot of the meat in early **Fanacs**?"

"Well," I pointed out, "We really have no control over that. I suppose if we get nothing but silly entries we can print the best of them -- that at least might provide a little entertainment even if it still leaves Lee Hoffman with no comment hooks."

"What if we get something really nasty -- you know, somebody stirring up dirt, trying to cause people trouble?" Dan queried.

"Well, we don't have to print it, do we?" I said.

"But where do we draw the line between real controversy that deserves to be aired, and plain nastiness, though?" Dan questioned.

"We'll just have to trust our own common sense and our ability to provide checks and balances for each other," I responded. "After all, the decision of the judges will be final."

(from **Pong #9**, February 16, 1981)

Hold the Presses!

Who is Martin Morse Wooster, and who is paying him to write a fanhistory?" Robert Bloch wants to know! His blood-red scrawl continues, "Offhand I can think of few people qualified for such a task -- and no publisher in right mind who'd commission it. On the other hand, considering the plethora of publishers who *aren't* in their right minds... I'd like to know more about the project, being of a morbid nature as I am."

The astute among you will recall that Dan and I had journeyed to a WSFA meeting at which Martin Morse Wooster was pointed out to us, because Steve Stiles had recommended it to me as a place to meet attractive women. And you may recall that I did not mention meeting any. Whether this is due to my gentlemanly discretion or bad luck on my part I will leave for you to decide, but in any case it was obvious that we had a mandate to attend another WSFA meeting. Robert Bloch wanted to know!

"Martin Morse Wooster," Alexis Gilliland said dryly, "gives 'sercon' a bad name." Dan clutched my arm and pointed. At that very moment Martin Morse Wooster walked past. The tail of his shirt was hanging out, obscuring the half-mast condition of his pants. I looked at Martin Morse Wooster, and then I looked at Dan. Dan looked at Martin Morse Wooster and then at me. A shudder seemed to run through Dan's body for a moment. "I -- I can't do it, Ted," Dan said. "I cannot bring myself to converse with him. I can't ask him."

I shrugged. "That's okay, Dan," I told him. "We're investigative reporters, doing an in-depth investigation for this story. We'll work our way in toward the facts -- like peeling the layer of an onion. We'll talk to other people first." Dan brightened immediately.

"Did I tell you that I sold a second book?" Alexis said.

"That's not important right now," we told Alexis. "We are on an important mission! Robert Bloch wants to know! Tell us everything you know about Martin Morse Wooster."

"Well... did you know that on the strength of the

sale of his book about fandom, Martin Morse Wooster has become an Associate Member of the Syph-waw?" Alexis said, giving SFWA his usual drawling pronunciation. "He *wanted* a full membership. In fact, he tried to bribe the syph-waw into giving him a full membership. He offered a bribe of eight dollars."

"Who's going to publish his book?" we inquired.

"I'm not sure," Alexis said. "Probably the University of Maryland."

But that proved to be incorrect. A short time later I found myself rubbing up against Avedon Carol.

"Avedon," I asked her, "what do you know about the publisher of Martin Morse Wooster's book about fandom?"

"Hmmm," Avedon said. Then: "Hey, Martin!" she yelled across the crowded room. "Who's the publisher of your book?" She turned back to me. "Greenwood Press. He signed the contract and got his advance in November."

"How much of an advance was that?" I queried. "Robert Bloch wants to know!"

"I dunno," Avedon said. "He won't say."

"Is there anyone else we could ask?" Dan wanted to know. "What about his friends?"

"Hmmm," Avedon said. "You know, I don't think Martin Morse Wooster has any friends."

Dan and I looked at each other. "This is going to slow down our investigation," Dan remarked.

"Yes," I agreed, "but a picture is beginning to emerge as a result of our investigations. We *have* gathered some of the facts in this matter. Still, next month you may have to interview Martin Morse Wooster himself."

Dan shuddered again. "Yeah," he said. "I guess so. After all, Robert Bloch wants to know!"

(from **Pong #10**, March 2, 1981)

Journalistic Ethics

"Dan," I said to my coeditor of that name, "we have a serious problem."

"Huh?" Dan said. He was watching Mary Tyler Moore on the afternoon reruns.

"We are serious investigative journalists, right?!"

* See **Hold the Presses** in **Pong #9**

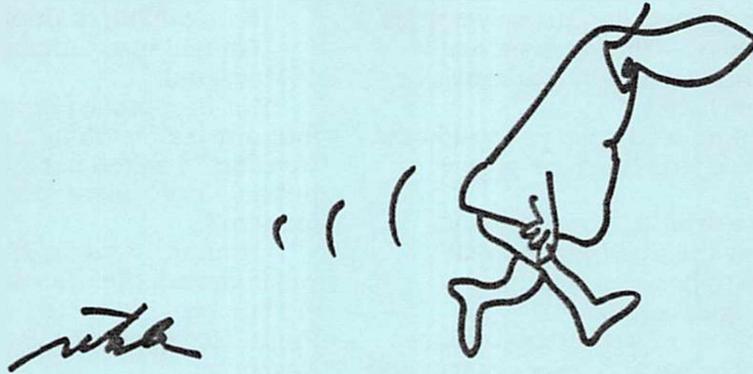
"Yeah, sure." His attention was straying back to the tube, where Ted Baxter was doing something typical."

"Well, we have a serious problem. It has to do with our ethics as investigative reporters."

"Aw, come on..."

"I mean it. Listen to this card from Ray Nelson: 'For some reason I can't seem to get a really good laugh out of you condemning someone you don't know just because his shirttail hangs out, as in the bit on Martin Morse Wooster. I know you're only kidding (I hope you're only kidding), but this insular attitude toward newcomers, which seems to have developed as a reaction against Trekers, Star Warriors, etc., has made fandom far less pleasant than it used to be in the days when any damn fool (including myself) could write a fanhistory which would be judged without reference to my shirttail.' He signed it '-sigh- Ray.'"

HOTO? XEROX? FAXED?
MIMED? PRINTED? CHIP?



Dan exhaled noisily and got up, turning his back on the TV. "Yeah?" he said. "Well listen to this, which just came from Bloch in today's mail: 'Congratulations on your efforts to track down the truth about Martin Morse Wooster. Surely, this is the finest example of investigative reporting since Woodward and Bernstein blew the whistle on Watergate. I have only one small question left unanswered -- who is Martin Morse Wooster and who is paying him to write a fanhistory?'"

"You mean," I gasped, "Robert Bloch still wants to know?"

"I had a talk with Jeff Schalles the other day," Dan pressed relentlessly onward, all thoughts of Mary Tyler Moore gone now in the heat of the investigation, "and it seems he got real drunk at a WSFA meeting and went up and braced Wooster Himself. He says Wooster got 'a typical first-novel advance' for his fanhistory."

"From Greenwood Press?" I asked. (I asked that not because any doubt existed in my mind, but in case Bloch had overlooked that name in our earlier report. *) "How much is 'a typical first-novel advance' these days?"

"One or two thousand bucks," Dan said. "Isn't it? Anyway, Jeff says that Wooster has read Warner and Moskowitz and goes to the Library of Congress a lot to read old mundane apa mailings from fifty, sixty years ago."

"Hmmm," I said. "That ought to improve his history of fandom. Of course, it's all there in the first chapter of *All Our Yesterdays*."

"He also calls up Mark Owings a lot."

"Well," I said, "that's all very well and good, but what about Ray Nelson's card?"

"What about it?"

"We need to explain to Ray," I said. I waved my hands in the air. "We need to explain that under our flippant exteriors we are Concerned Investigative Reporters. We need to tell Ray that it isn't just Martin More Wooster's 'shirttail.' We need to tell Ray that we *don't* have an 'insular attitude toward newcomers' (some of whom are reading this), and that it's the huge influx of Trekers, Star Warriors, etc.' which has changed fandom and made it a less pleasant place. We need to explain to Ray that it is Wooster's unwarranted arrogance in attempting to write and publish a book

about something he doesn't know very much about that actually ticks us off. I mean, we *are* Ethical Journalists!"

"Oh hell, Ted," said Dan. "All we really need to tell Ray is that Martin Morse Wooster is a dork."

(from **Pong #12**, March 30, 1981)

Look for the Big Red Letters

One of the things which distinguishes modern-day fandom is its provinciality. With a few exceptions, no one knows much these days about fandom beyond the perimeters of one's own locality. Gone are the days when New Yorkers and LASFen expended huge amounts of energy and postage contributing to each other's weekly apas. The price of gas has done a lot to make regional cons much more regional in nature. There are whole separate scenes in each part of the country, and it's only when I get a **Xenolith**, for instance, that I get much idea what current midwestern fandom is up to (or down to, in Bill's case).

For this reason there are people on the fringes of Fabulous Falls Church Fandom about whom you're unlikely to hear much -- unless of course I talk about them here.

We had so much success with our Martin Morse Wooster pieces that I think it's time I told you about Eldon. His full name is Eldon Knowles Elkhart, and he's our local hermit-voyeur.

Eldon is one of those people who likes to know everything that's going on, without participating in any of it. He has never, as far as I know, ever contributed so much as a postcard or loc to a fanzine, but it pleases him to be up to date on the better fanzines. He used to send stickyquarters for them, twenty years ago, but now he mostly borrows them. He borrows them from Dan, from Terry Hughes, from Alexis Gilliland and from Jeff Schalles. He does not borrow any from me. "I see more fanzines than you do, anyway, Ted," he told me recently. "Why should I want to borrow yours?" Eldon still gets **Apa-G**. My supply dried up after I refused one with postage due on it at the post office.

We refused to give him **Pong** at first. "You have to do *something* for it," Dan told him. "At least put your foot behind your head," I suggested. He borrowed a

copy from Jeff and then sent us a five-dollar bill, our first and only \$5 bill so far. It was sticky. He'd dipped it in honey and then wrapped it in waxed paper... a good example of Eldon's self-proclaimed sense of humor.

The other day Dan told me, "I wish you'd stop bringing Eldon around. It seems like all I have to do is open my mouth and I'm in the middle of some stupid argument with him."

I agreed with Dan that Eldon was opinionated, but pointed out that I hadn't brought him around -- he'd given me a lift while my car was in the shop. I asked Dan what the argument had been about.

"Okay," Dan said. That time he told me that my review of **Telos** in **Pong** was really stupid, and that he agreed 100% with Creath Thorne in **Telos** about the **WASH**. He said Creath had his finger right on it. When he told me I sucked up to Bergeron, that I was "really obvious," and that my series, "Stalking the Wild Bergeron," was in bad taste. I mean, really -- who needs that?"

I told Dan not to worry. Seeing his name here will really infuriate Eldon.

Next In This New Series: Michael Nally, legendary *Snow Queen* artist and proprietor of the Hole in the Wall Books shop.

(from **Pong** #17, June 15, 1981)

Final Thots on Martin Morse Wooster, Fanhistory, and Dorks...

I got a letter in the mail recently from Martin Morse Wooster. It was cleverly addressed to Dan and me, with my street address and Dan's county and zip. It took ten days to get to me from Washington, D.C., but I suppose I should be grateful to the Postal Service for delivering it at all -- a copy of the last **Pong** mailed to Sandy Cohen was returned (marked "No Such Address") because we left the "s" off "Redlands" in his street address.

Wooster seems to feel we've been "denouncing" him. He proudly informs us of his new job as an intern with a national magazine, and then states that he "has no doubts" that this will lead us to "resoundingly denounce" the magazine "as a sort of 'dark digest'." He then characterizes Dan's "Social Hysteria" in #15 as a "denunciation of me."

Well, I think the time has come to call a halt to this whole business. Martin Morse Wooster has all of the fascination of a garishly-colored mushroom found growing on the underside of a rotten log. We have given him more than his fair share of space in this zippy little fmz, largely because of that fascination. We have, up to now, published each of Wooster's letters -- giving him ample room to make whatever points it was that he wished to make. Despite his lapel button and his letters, Wooster has never been "denounced" by either Dan or myself; it has hardly been necessary.

The meat of Wooster's newest epistle is as follows:

"And now for the usual corrections of my intent in *Children of the Universe*. As I stated in **Static Electricity**, I do not claim any special virtue in writing fanhistory other than the ability to sell a proposal and pocket the advance. I do have the advantage which neither of the editors of **Pong** have of seeing fanhistory as *history*, rather than personal experience; it is not

my purpose in writing about the past to justify my career, or to win feuds twenty years after they occurred. All I can do is keep my biases visible, and let the reader judge these prejudices accordingly. Unlike the editors of **Pong**, I do not claim the history of fandom as a personal fief; I do not treat differing views of fanhistory, as you do, as a sort of patent infringement. There should be a continuing debate over our roots; this debate has not yet occurred. Monuments such as **Warhoon 28** are useful, necessary, and admirable, but fanhistory should be something more than preserving archives, a pavane to the music of past masters.

"I am not, as Harry Warner believes, focusing on amateur journalism at the expense of fandom; the amateur journalists take up *one* chapter (out of twelve). (Lovecraft and his circle are the subject of the second chapter.)

"As for Ray Nelson's explorations into profan-history, it is true that William Blake put out a publication that could, by an extremely broad definition, be called a 'fanzine.' Many nineteenth-century sorts put out amateur journals of this sort; Harry Wanner gives the example of Lewis Carroll, but the list also includes Thomas Edison, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Cyrus Curtis, and Jack London. But amateur journals before 1869 were sporadic "one-shots;" it was only with the organization of the first amateur press association (with the fitting title of 'Amateur Press Association') in 1869 that the movement began to have any continuity. (This was a direct result of new and cheaper printing presses that began to appear around 1867.) The forms that the amateur journalists created, together with the spirit of the gentleman-amateur that was nurtured in the ayjays for seventy years before the advent of fandom (your statement about putting out **Pong** as a well-made homebrew would not have been out of place in a National Amateur Press Association mailing of, say, 1905) were passed on to fandom, who promptly forgot their ancestors. The same transition is occurring now. It was not possible for Harry Warner in 1970 to discuss the completion the closing movements of fannish history. [sic] With the death of fandom as it was known since the 1930's between 1973 (when the last fanzine won a Hugo) and 1978 (when the remaining genzines died, like a chain of falling dinosaurs) it became possible to write about the closed cycle of fanhistory. This is what I am attempting to do."

Back in #11 we asked Martin to send us a copy of his FAPazine, **Static Electricity**, to which he had referred us then and to which he refers us again. He has failed to do this.

I am struck by the various examples Wooster offers in this letter of his perceptive abilities. I can't recall ever having claimed the history of fandom as a "personal fief," for example (and I've more than once rejected requests that I write fanhistory, and although Martin claims "a continuing debate over our roots"... "has not yet occurred," it was my impression that Martin himself has been taking part in just such a debate, right here in the pages of **Pong**. Further, I'm rather taken aback by Martin first dating the beginning of "the ayjays" as 1869 and then stating that

they existed "for seventy years before the advent of fandom," which would put "the advent of fandom" in 1939.

But then, the basic thrust of all Wooster's explanations and claims for his (largely unwritten) fanhistory makes it clear to me that (here comes that denunciational!) that Wooster has very little understanding of what fandom is or has been. For instance, he fails to perceive that the history of fandom is in fact the history of individuals and the ways they influenced one another through communication. This underlying fact is tacitly assumed in both Moskowitz's and Warner's histories because, unlike Wooster's, their histories were written for fellow fans.

Wooster's history, if it follows his own description, will have much more in common with Dr. Wertham's book on fanzines -- an outsider's perception of some of the superficial aspects of fandom, written for fellow outsiders, in which the mechanisms of fandom are treated as its substance.

Only such an external point of view could -- or would -- try to justify linking mundane amateur journalism with fandom because both had in common the mechanics of amateur publications. The fact that in content there has always been a wide gulf (bridged by a very few people, like William Danner) is seen as nonessential. Indeed, only someone with an incredible superficial notion of fandom could state that "the remaining genzines died" in 1978 -- a statement which ignores fanzines as diverse as **Fenre Plat**, **Janus**, **Space Junk**, **Warhoon**, **Boonfark**, **Mota**, **Telos**, **Energumen**, **Beardmutterings** and **Void**, to name

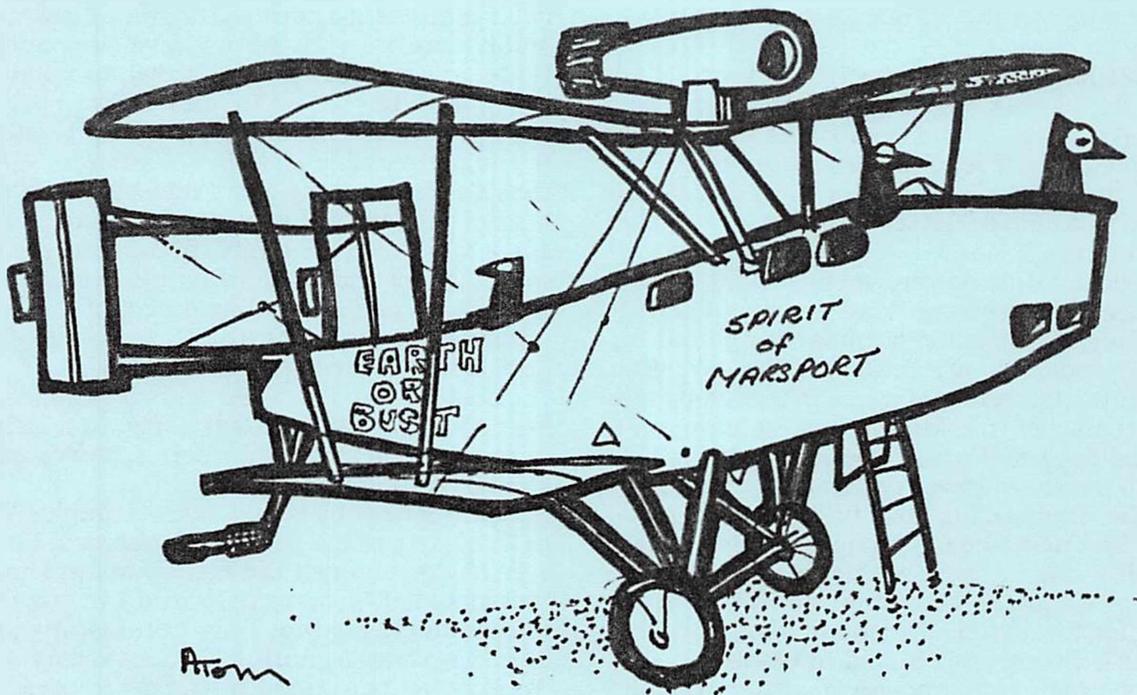
only a few North American titles which spring readily to mind. Only a shuttered mind would describe this as "the closed cycle of fanhistory."

And I'm afraid that Wooster, in his statement characterizing **Warhoon 28** as a "monument," but only "archives, a pavane to the music of past masters," has totally failed to perceive its essence or the essence of Willis' writing: that Willis wrote about people, and that within the pages of **Warhoon 28**, Sixth Fandom springs eternally to life, more completely captured through Willis' writings than if it had been somehow filmed or videotaped on the spot. **Warhoon 28** is true fanhistory because it contains within it much more than descriptions of past events -- its pages hold the *experience* of Sixth Fandom, available to anyone who cares to read it.

We still listen "to the music of past masters," Martin. We call it "classical music," and it survives yet.

It was in issue #6&7 that Wooster's name first appeared in **Pong**. Since then he has supplied us all with some sport and a good deal of widely-ranging discussion, from the nature of dorkishness to the roots of fandom (mine trace back to Hoy Ping Pong and the Great Staple Wars). In return we have given Wooster both more publicity than he had previously acquired for himself in fandom and a forum from which to rebutt the "denunciations" he has suffered at our hands (poor wretch!). But it's starting to get tedious. Wooster is repeating himself on the one hand, and trying to bait us on the other.

I think the ledger has been balanced, and it's time to close it.



Beyond Egoboo (from Beardmutterings 3, Edited by rich brown, Feb. 1982)

"...It's from a young Baltimore fan, one of the STAR*ROCKETS crowd who are swarming all over the place organizing one another...."

--Walt Willis, "The Harp That Once or Twice," OOPSLA! 13, May 1954

"...It was while tearing up a copy of STAR*ROCKETS, the precious lifeblood of that master spirit Raleigh Evans Multog. I had almost rent it in twain when I noticed the name of Bob Shaw. At that time, and indeed to some extent during his entire career, Bob had been under what amounted to exclusive contract to me. It was not so much that I jealously hid his light under my bushel (Shaw's column in HYPHEN was called "The Glass Bushel"), though I admit I did not go about proclaiming his availability, so much that everything he wrote he showed to me first and I promptly published it: and since he seldom engaged in correspondence other fanzine editors sensibly and ethically assumed he was a SLANT/HYPHEN property. The exceptions were those too naive to know better, and when one of these stupidly asked for material, Bob innocently and helpfully complied. The result was that the work of one who many including myself consider to be the greatest fan writer of all time appeared not only in fanzines like STAR*ROCKETS the illiteracy of which was alleviated to some extent by its almost complete illegibility, but in fanzines which were never really published at all, like Ken Potter's first efforts which were handwritten and intended to be passed from hand to hand.."

--Walt Willis, "The Harp That Once or Twice," WARHOON 23, May 1968

Few fans today, weaned on the stories of the Great Fanzines of the Legendary Past, are aware that those halcyon days boasted not only the best of fanzines but the worst of fanzines. Crudzines published in the fifties may indeed be unrivaled by any of the abominations turned out by inexperienced neofans since.

Probably the most infamous of Sixth Fandom's crudzines was Warren Dennis's THURBAN I, a fanzine which somehow achieved in three issues greater notoriety than most fanzines manage to attain. Articles were written in the late fifties and even in the early sixties about THURBAN I. Oddly enough none of those articles caught THURBAN I's real claim to historic importance--it's serialization of a 3,000 word "novel" by the then very young Roger Zelazny, which marked Zelazny's debut in print and his sole appearance in fandom before he achieved professional prominence in the sixties.

But THURBAN I was, relatively speaking, a flash in the pan. A fanzine which hung in there for several years was Raleigh Evans Multog's STAR*ROCKETS, which achieved such notoriety as a crudzine that even Willis felt no compunction about tearing up his copies. Although STAR*ROCKETS was published

from December 1952 through 1954, few copies survive today--possibly because they were all torn up by their recipients. Actually, I've never torn up or thrown away any fanzines I've ever received, but when I decided to write this column and I descended to my basement files, I could not find any copies of STAR*ROCKETS. I did, however, find my file of correspondence with its

editor, Raleigh Evans Multog.

The first letter in the file is dated March 29th, 1954. Raleigh began by informing me.

"Since you are fanzine editor (sic) of the well known zine ZIP I would like to offer you free membership

in my club in exchange for your zine. I'll also send my own zine STAR*ROCKETS for trading purposes." Raleigh then told me that he was twenty-four (I was just turned sixteen, myself) and "I give free membership only to fanzine editors and a few others who are limited; by that I mean I limit my free memberships to a certain few who I think can aid the club most--follow me or did you get lost like I believe I did in that sentence. Hmhmhmhmhm!

"So if you want to share your copy of STAR*ROCKETS with other fen around your way also, I'll give them free membership and full membership priviledge along with the membership cards, but only you will receive the 'zine in trade. That way I hope to build up my membership list in my club, The Star Rocket Science Fiction Correspondence Club (SRFCC) and save the amount of the cost in putting out SR.

So what about dropping me a line. Would appreciate it.

"Sincerely yours,

"Raleigh Evans Multog

"Editor: STAR*ROCKETS

"Editor: ANEW"

As I remember it, STAR*ROCKETS was none too neatly mimeod on thin white paper. Some issues were mimeod only on one side of each sheet of paper. There was little sense of format or organization. Titles and headings were traced from the kind of cardboard letter-stencils which were then available at places which sold school notebook paper (rather than from mimeo lettering guides). Most of the editor-written material was on the same level of coherence and in the same style as the letter I quoted above, and the rest was--with one exception--little better. The exception was Bob Shaw's contribution, obtained, apparently, by Multog's innocent solicitation and probably without Shaw's knowledge of the nature of STAR*ROCKETS. I recall being surprised to see it in STAR*ROCKETS, but my memory of the piece stops there.

What I--and the rest of fandom--did not then know was that Raleigh Evans Multog was "exceptional," or, to put it bluntly, retarded. He attended a special school for the exceptional up into his early twenties, and it was in

BEYOND EGOBOO TWO MEMORABLE COLUMNS

one class there that he met John Hitchcock. John too was "exceptional" but in quite a different way: he was abnormally bright. Although John shared a class with Raleigh, he was more than ten years Raleigh's junior, and he left that school to begin Johns Hopkins University at the age of fourteen, graduating with honors at eighteen.

However, Raleigh and John became friends and Raleigh introduced John to fandom. (It was John who wrote the very neoisish letter quoted by Willis as exactly the sort of letter one should not write, although Willis did not name Hitchcock in his OOPSLA! column.)

In the late summer of 1954 the young west-coast hotshot fan Peter J. Vorzimer sent an invitation to thirteen of his peers in fandom to start a new apa. Pete made his selection of invitees from various geographical groupings and solicited both Hitchcock and Multog, apparently regarding them as a matched set, although nothing in Multog's fanac indicated his suitability for the group. He also invited Larry Stark, Bbob Stewart, and myself since, although we were geographically widely spread, we had become known as tight friends with our own three-way correspondence as well as co-editorship of the EC fanzine POTRZEBIE. (Only one fan on Vorzimer's list--Ron Ellik--declined the invitation, leaving twelve of us, plus Pete, so he decided to christen the thirteen of us "The Cult," a name which still survives, or so I'm told, even today.)

Thus it was that I was drawn into much closer communication with Multog and Hitchcock through the new apa, and it was inevitable that sooner or later we'd meet face to face.

In the pre-expressway era it took several hours to drive from Northern Virginia (outside Washington, DC) to Baltimore although DC and Baltimore are only about thirty miles apart. However, when Larry Stark made plans to come down from New Brunswick, New Jersey, to visit me over his college vacation in early 1955, we began planning a trip to Baltimore as well.

In a letter dated January 6th, 1955, after nattering for most of a page, Raleigh told me, "If you get to Baltimore try to get here on a Sunday. I am off on Saturday once a month, and am off on Thursday from work every week. But Sunday is the best time for visiting."

In his next letter, dated January 14th, Raleigh began with "So far as I know I'm off on Saturday the 29th, so maybe you boys could make it over then. ...John can give you the best directions as to how to get to our places. I have all my fanzines filed away in folders in my new filing cabinet, so maybe you all could meet out here...though Hitchcock does have a bigger house." That last turned out to be an understatement.

Larry was then a grad student at Rutgers, and five or six years older than I was. His visit was to be the first of many. We had been corresponding intensely and we became closer friends once we met. Larry lived with me and my family the summers of both 1955 and 1956, working in DC and co-editing STELLAR with me. As I've remarked elsewhere, I was something of an anti-intellectual in those days. My favorite reading matter was Doc Savage. Larry took me to movies, plays, art galleries and museums, and did his best to

intellectually stimulate me while giving me the basis for forming a more knowledgeable taste. In many respects Larry was my guide, my mentor, and it was he who started me thinking about actually writing (rather than fan-nattering, which was all I'd aspired to until then).

Another of my early friends to whom I introduced Larry was Fred von Bernewitz. Fred lived in Maryland directly across DC from Falls Church. We first "met" through a mutual interest in comics. Fred and I communicated largely by phone and occasionally by letter, not meeting face to face until more than a year after we'd made first contact. I believe that first contact occurred when he was twelve and I was thirteen, although my memory is a bit vague now. (Whatever, Fred remains, of all my old friends, my oldest with whom I've stayed in contact, and we still get together every now and then.) Once I was old enough (fourteen) to have a motor scooter I started visiting him (an epic journey then), and Fred went on to become both a well-known EC fan (author and publisher of the EC CHECKLISTs, the descendants of which are still in print) and a fringe sf fan who attended occasional WSFA meetings and contributed art to various local fanzines.

Saturday, January 29, 1955, I borrowed my mother's 1954 Hudson Jet and set out with Larry Stark to pick up Fred. Each knew of the other, but it was their first meeting. From Fred's we took the then brand-new Baltimore-Washington Parkway to Baltimore.

John Hitchcock lived in Catonsville, a suburb of Baltimore, in an area called Eden Terrace. The neighborhood was one of private streets with one or two mansions per block. It was named after Anthony Eden, a British Prime Minister whose wife or family or ancestors had once lived there.

The Hitchcocks lived in one of the mansions, a vast three-storey house of forty or fifty rooms. It had been vacant for ten years or so before they bought it, and had achieved a local reputation as a haunted house. It was a trifle shabby and poorly maintained. The Hitchcocks were naturopaths and vegetarians--I subsequently came to despise meals there because Mrs. Hitchcock served "meat substitute" veggie-patties and similar stuff which I found unpalatable--and John's father was a legally-blind doctor of homeopathic medicine.

John, a bit short, stocky, with straight dark hair and a wide grin, greeted us enthusiastically. He was then either thirteen or fourteen (I was shortly to turn seventeen), and although intellectually precocious he was otherwise a typical kid of that age. He ushered us inside, where we met his mother (who greeted us cheerfully), and took us on a brief tour of the house. I remember little about the house itself, but I recall the Hitchcocks rented rooms on the third floor to three or four rather odd men, and that they had rooms on the ground floor which were entirely filled (floor to ceiling, wall to wall) with stacked newspapers. When one room was full they closed it off and began filling the next. I have no idea why.

Once the tour was accomplished, Fred, Larry and I took John back to the car and drove to Sudbrook Park,

near Pikesville (another suburb of Baltimore) to the house where Raleigh Evans Multog lived with his parents.

The Multog abode at 7 Greenwood Road was a neat brick house more typical of the suburbs. Raleigh's mother answered the door, invited us in, and called Raleigh, who met us that Saturday afternoon dressed in neatly creased pants, a white shirt with a tie, and a pullover sweater-vest. Although he was older than any of us (even Stark), he seemed curiously youthful in his innocence and naivete. He was very pleased to meet us and immediately conducted us to his room. It was the neatest, most impeccably organized room I have ever seen. Absolutely nothing was out of place. He had file cabinets neatly filled with his correspondence, and his prozines. (I'd never seen prozines stored that way before--when the drawer was open their spines stared up at one from neat rows that filled each file drawer.) His typer was neatly centered in his desk. The desk's cubbyholes had been precisely allocated their pencils, rubber bands, paper clips, staples, address stamps, etc.

My first thought, as Raleigh proudly displayed and explained the arrangement of his room, was one of envy. I didn't envy what he had--I envied him the organization, the neatness. My own room was messy beyond belief in comparison--comics, books and magazines were stacked everywhere, already overflowing the available shelf space. Then I considered what Hitchcock had told us on the way over about Raleigh's background--his "exceptionality." Then I understood the neatly organized room better and my envy was replaced by pity.

Raleigh was not obviously retarded. He did not say "Duh," and he betrayed his problem only by implication. He spoke earnestly. He obviously looked up to John with admiration. Meeting Raleigh made it impossible for me to ever again think derisively of him. Would you kick an admiring puppy? Raleigh did not have what it took to make it past the N3F/neofan stage of fandom, but he sincerely tried. STAR*ROCKETS was indeed a crudzine, but Raleigh Evans Multog was not a fugghead.

As it turned out, Raleigh was over his head in the Cult and gradually came to realize it, dropping out after a year or so. But while he was a member we--Hitchcock, Stark and I-- carried him, putting out his Cultzine (AH ALSO) for him and generally seeing to it that he did not come to grief. I don't think we were being all that altruistic about it; we simply realized that he needed our help and it was not in us to let him down.

There was not a lot to talk about at the Multog's so we returned to the car for the next leg of our trip. This was across Baltimore to the blue-collar area known as Dundalk, where George Wetzel lived.

Now even then George Wetzel was a well known fugghead. He had first achieved a reputation in the forties as a Lovecraft fan (which supports my thesis about Lovecraft's fans) and a Fortean. He was the author of several articles (which Hitchcock had published in UMBRA) on such topics as the caves under Baltimore (which sometimes collapsed, taking houses or portions of streets with them) and the odd

things in the Baltimore water-system (like eels that sometimes popped out of waterfaucets), and had just recently put out a quasifanzine of his own, BALTIMORE SUBTERRANEAN. But by 1955 he was also known as a follower of Joe McCarthy, a racist and an anti-semite. (He had a running feud with Harlan Ellison, whom he called "Harlem Ellison," and his idea of a clever attack was to argue that with a name like "Harlem" Ellison must be "a niggerlover." He also once accused Larry Stark, Bob Silverberg, Harlan and the late Dave Mason on being members of a "communist cell.")

I didn't like Wetzel, by reputation, but John insisted that we visit him because John felt that George had other redeeming virtues and with help might transcend his bigotry. Then too, there weren't as many fans around in those days and as a fan Wetzel was considered "in the family" albeit perhaps deserving of being kept locked up in the attic.

I have met George Wetzel only twice in my life. The first time was that Saturday in 1955. The second time was in the mid-seventies, when George approached me after a panel I'd been on at a local convention to reintroduce himself. I found neither occasion unpleasant, but I kept both as brief as politeness allowed.

Wetzel lived in an area I would characterize as a slum, and he greeted us warmly, his smile revealing very few teeth. John told me later that George had in his childhood been forced to go to a dentist who was sadistically painful, and as a result skipped his appointments. When he was drafted during WW2, an Army dentist took one look at his rotting teeth and pulled out most of them. But before dentures could be made for George the Army decided he was unsuitable for service and gave him a psychological discharge. (A few years later Wetzel took to writing letters to the FBI and other government agencies denouncing people like Dean Grennell for having been "draft dodgers" while he had proudly served his country.)

We didn't spend long with Wetzel. Although he was a pleasant enough host and cracked only a few jokes about Ellison (about whom it was even then popular to make jokes) I disliked him on principle and felt uneasy in his company. (A year or two later, after Wetzel had published several viciously deranged attacks on a wide variety of unsuspecting fans, accusing them of everything from traitorous communism to pornography, John gave up on his mission to improve George, admitting failure.)

After returning John to his house, Fred, Larry and I drove back to Falls Church for a late dinner. I suspect my mother was grateful to see both us and the car still all in one piece.

That was the beginning of an era for me. For the next three years I made frequent trips to Baltimore to visit John (often for the weekend) and John occasionally made the trip to DC for the Sunday night WSFA meetings. John Magnus returned from Oberlin college to live in Baltimore, and he joined our group. And one summer afternoon the two Johns showed up at my house with another guy in tow named Richard Wingate who deserves a column of his own, for he was to have a profound influence on my life in the latter part of the

fifties.

In 1956 construction was started on the Baltimore Beltway and the Catonsville interchange was mapped to go right through Eden Terrace. I first knew of this on an evening when I drove over to visit Hitchcock. When I turned off the main street into John's street, I found, half a block up the street, a large house blocking the way. It was sitting in the middle of the road, obviously in the process of being moved but left there for the night. I had to back my car up and find the rear way around through Eden Terrace to the Hitchcocks'. When I got there John told me the news. Their house and land had been condemned by right of Eminent Domain and they were being forced to move into Baltimore. Although I came to know their small row house (on University Boulevard between John Hopkins and the municipal stadium from which one could hear the crowd roaring on summer nights) much better, I always wondered what the demolition of their old house was like and what happened to the roomsfull of old newspapers. Eventually I moved to Baltimore--initially because I'd met a girl there whom I dated on weekends, but she gave me a quick brushoff once I was living there and could see her more often--where I stayed for about a year before moving to New York City.

But I saw little more of Raleigh Evans Multog and indeed that first visit may have been our only face to face meeting--his personality was so passive that if I ever visited him again no memory of it remains now. Within a year or so Raleigh had gafiated, perhaps overwhelmed by the pressures fandom exerted upon him, perhaps hurt by the negoboo STAR*ROCKETS had earned for him, perhaps simply unable to keep up with his peers who, as teenagers, had briefly crossed his orbit before going beyond his own limits.

Until now his only lasting notice has been in Willis's "Harp"s, republished in WARHOON 28 and thus embedded in the amber of fannish history. I wanted to round that picture out a bit.

(from **Beardmutterings #4**, edited by rich brown, March 1983.

In the last installment of this column (**Beardmutterings #45**) I described meeting Raleigh Evans Multog, the reatrded editor of the crudzine STAR*ROCKETS. Only a month or two after the column was published--wouldn't you know it?--I turned up a photo of Raleigh. Would have been perfect for that column. Instead, we see it here. Better late than never, and besides which it should reproduce more clearly this issue.

I hadn't intended to make this column a series of fifties reminiscences--yet another chapter in the ultimate autobiography which Bergeron calls "White on White"--but several circumstances, not the greatest of which was my discovery of Raleigh's photo, have prodded me into making this installment a continuation of sorts to the last.

One of those circumstances was that I was in error in my last instalment, when I said, "I have met George Wetzel only once in my life. The first time was that

Saturday in 1955. The second was in the mid-seventies..." I had forgotten an entire incident which took place later in 1955, in June I think. What reminded me of it was a piece I'd written for my FAPazine, NULL-F #4, dated "Spring" 1956, which I recently turned up and reread.

Then too, there's Terry Hughes, who wrote the editor of this esteemed journal and said of my column, "He portrays Multog in a sympathetic light and explains that Multog was retarded.... At the same time Ted White goes on to thoroughly villify George Wetzel. John Hitchcock evidently found something in Wetzel he found to be a redeeming quality but Ted never gets around to saying what that was. He only states Wetzel's faults, which seem most numerous." It appears that Terry thinks I erred in giving only Multog a balanced treatment. If so he is wrong. I gave no one a "balanced" treatment; I simply described the people involved as I saw them.

I suppose a comment like Terry's is possible, now, simply because George Wetzel's infamy has grown faded and forgotten. Easily the most disliked fan of the fifties, George Wetzel was the first person to be thrown off the FAPA waitinglist (after previous FAPA officials had "misplaced" him from the list and he'd reapplied under his own name and two or three pseudonyms as well just to play it safe)--and for good cause.

George Wetzel was a "poison pen" letter writer. He delighted in writing letters in other people's names, going even to the extent of getting them mailed in the city lived in by the person whose name he'd used. One of his little games was to write to two fans, writing to each in the other's name. These letter were always insulting and scurilous, and if taken at face value guaranteed to set the recipients off into an explosive feud. (Sometimes George worked a variation on this: he wrote letters, in the name of the two participants of an existing feud, to those participants. He did this to Harlan Ellison and Joe Semanovich--with whom Harlan was feuding in 1953--among others. This involved having one letter mailed from New York City and the other from Cleveland. George went to the trouble to do this, making use of innocent third parties who had little idea what was going on.)

But that was just good clean fun next to George's other letters. These went to government officials, usually (but not always) in the Post Office or FBI. Upon taking dislike to a letter Dean Grennell had in a Georgina Ellis fanzine, WENDIGO (which George felt insulted Georgina's delicate feminine sensibilities), Wetzel complained to customs authorities (WENDIGO was a Canadian fanzine), the FBI (whom he told that Grennell, ex of the Air Force, was a "draft dodger"), and the Post Office (who, acting on his complaint that Dean used the mainl for obscenity, began opening all of Dean's mail). This appeared to be Wetzel's ace-in-the-hole tactic: when people got mad at him he "turned 'em in" to every government authority he could think of.

Bear in mind that this was in the mid-fifties, a time when Joseph McCarthy and the House UnAmerican Activities Committee were terrorizing the country. It could be very unpleasant to turn up on one of those government lists, and names go onto those lists via letters like Wetzel's. Several fans of the era worked for

the government and required security clearances. A letter from Wetzel could cause those fans real trouble--and they knew it quite well.

Ultimately, in the late fifties, after Wetzel had begun writing letters under various identities he had assumed, supporting his, George Wetzel's, case--but they were so transparently his, from the messy typing to the paranoid raving which was a dead giveaway--fandom simply turned it's back on him. He was ostracized, completely ignored, his letters unanswered, his name dropped from all mailing lists. Only one other fan has ever been given similar treatment, and that was Gertrude M. Carr, whom fans of the same period did not forgive for her campaign of malice against Walt Willis (she apparently held against him his "unAmerican"ness, and Gertrude was also something of a bigot--she was one of the few fans to Join the John Birch Society--but in every other respect she was a far more decent human being than Wetzel and does not deserve to keep him close company in the fan histories).

I think fandom finally decided that in George Wetzel it was nursing a viper to its breast, and that Wetzel was an unstable, unpredictable, and thus even more dangerous viper, who had to be cast away before he struck again.

What then were his redeeming qualities? How had he managed to stick around for more than ten years?

George was, I am sure, mentally unbalanced. He was also the product of Baltimore's slums, strongly bigoted about race and religion. But he was not stupid. He had the intelligence to do long and painstaking research. He was a Lovecraft bibliophile before it was fashionable to be one (the early forties) and still apparently has a good reputation in that misbegotten field. His serious pieces for John Hitchcock's UMBRA, which I described here last issue, were fascinating and well-researched and documented. I'm sure John hoped to encourage that side of Wetzel.

But Ultimately even John Hitchcock gave up.

Here's how it happened:

In late June of 1955 I was living at my present address but as a seventeen-year-old in his parent's house. Larry Stark, who was one of the protagonists of my last column, was living in our house for the summer; he had a job in Washington, D.C. With my mother's approval, I invited John Magnus and John Hitchcock to drive over from Baltimore for a Sunday dinner at my house.

When the two John' pulled up in Magnus's Ford, I was dismayed to George Wetzel in the back seat. My mother, who had not counted on an extra place at the already crowded dinner table, was probably even more dismayed. But George was on his best behavior. He was polite, friendly and helpful after dinner with the dishes, doing his best to make up for the inconvenience he'd caused.

It was still only mid-afternoon once dinner was over and cleaned up after, so we decided to drive into Washington and browse several bookstores which were open. This occurred largely without event, the five of us (Magnus, Hitchcock, Wetzel, Stark and me) just fitting into the two-door Ford. (I found a lot of forties AMAZINGs and FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, and some

forties bedsheet-sized GHOST-STORIES, for prices that would only make you weep if I could recall them....)

The drive back was a different story.

First Wetzel started making cracks about all the blacks in D.C. "They'll drive all the white people out, damn them," George said. (By then well over 50% of D.C.'s population was black; it eventually went up to over 70%.)

That prompted Magnus to point out a group of whites at another corner. "They'll drive all the black people out, damn them," John said, accurately mimicking Wetzel's words and tone.

Wetzel then told us that the New York Fanarchists were filthy Commies, and drifted into a general condemnation of Communism and Russia.

After Wetzel had babbled for a bit Larry Stark calmly said, "But you're wrong," and proceeded to tell him where he was wrong and why he was wrong. Larry spoke dispassionately and from good knowledge of the facts. Wetzel was blathering on about how the Russians had done nothing in World War Two; Stark recited the actual list of their accomplishments.

Subsequently Wetzel, in his version of this conversation, stated, "Stark said to me why are the russians villains now when they were our allies during the war" (strictly sic). Here are some other things Wetzel wrote about the same subject: Dave Mason "found out of my anti-Commie sentiments from Larry Stark who is a fanatical pro-Commie..."..."I date the smear from Mason as immidiately after a rather hot discussion I had with Larry Stark in D.C. in the summer of 1955."..."Stark and Ellison, and Mason, Ron Smith and Silverberg form a little circle of their own in New York. Hence Mason picked up my anti-commie views from Stark, who also told him of my anti-Negro view (which Magnus needled me into giving that smae day as Hitchcock and White will tell you)."..."...I date very definitely Mason's smear with with my anti-commie views told Stark." These quotes come from two letters (Totaling 12 pages!) printed in G.M. Carr's GEMZINE.

The thread of paranoia which runs through those quotes should be obvious to anyone, but for those of you who know nothing of fifties fandom I should point out that the "little circle of their own" came as a complete surprise to Stark (who lived in New Brunswick, New Jersey, went to Rutgers, and knew only Silverberg of the other "members," and him only by correspondence), Ellison (who had just moved to New York City that year to become a pro), Mason (who was a dedicated anarchist and whose friends included Bill Donahoe, Karl Olsen and Dick Ellington--a very different circle), Smith (who with his wife published the photo-offset INSIDE and emigrated to Australia in the late fifties), and Silverberg (who had by then succeeded in selling professionally and was phasing out his fanac, and who shared an apartment with Ellison). None of these peopl were Communists or even Sympathizers, although all were more or less liberal in their politics and some were left-wing antagonists of the Communists. Wetzel was too innocent of any real knowledge about left-wing politics to be aware of that. To him, as to McCarthy, if you weren't with him, you

were a Commie or a "pro-Commie." I don't recall the nature of Dave Mason's "smear" against Wetzel, but likely enough it was simply a response which properly identified Wetzel's activities. To Wetzel any response to his own smears, any attempt to pin the blame on him for the letters he signed other people's names to, any rejoinder to his bigotry, was a "smear" against him which could only be motivated by the Communist leanings or sympathies of his attacker.

I imagine Stark argued against Wetzel in that car ride back from D.C. at least in part because he didn't like George or didn't like the tone of what George was saying. Wetzel, claiming that "Communies are brutal bastards," provoked Stark into a mild assertion that Russians were as human as the next person. And so it went. Magnus, Hitchcock and I occasionally chiming in to support Stark with various "for instance"s from time to time until we were back at my house again.

We were at that point still in a good mood, no one having taken Wetzel's arguments very seriously (and little realizing how seriously he'd taken Stark's opposition).

Then George asked me if there were a mailbox nearby. It seems he had this letter he wanted to be mailed with a Falls Church postmark on it. I was at that time the only fan who lived in or near Falls Church, so I asked to see the letter, which was still unsealed.

It was one of Wetzel's poison pen letters, this one addressed to Harlan Ellison. In this letter Wetzel followed his usual line of reasoning where Harlan was concerned. First stating that since Harlan's name was "Harlem" (because George thought it cute to always write it that way), he must be a "damned Niggerlover," the letter continued in what Wetzel regarded as a humorous vein, full of threats and vilification. It was unsigned. I thought it was a sick letter, the sicker because Wetzel showed it to me, chortling as he did so about how funny it would be to see "that little twerp" when he read it, never considering for a moment that I might not share his glee.

I should have torn it up, but I didn't, simply because it would have been futile--Wetzel would have just written another. What I did do was to direct George to a mailbox two blocks away, outside the city of Falls Church, where it would get an Arlington County postmark.

That, I think, was the last time I saw George until the mid-seventies. However it was not the last I'd hear of him. In the six months which followed that Sunday afternoon, George was a busy man writing letters everywhere. the two G.M. Carr printed wre typical; equally typically, no one else gave his raving the prominence she did. I assume their shared hatred for Commies initially biased Gertrude in George's favor.

Let the last word here come from John Hitchcock, he who found redeeming qualities in Wetzel... for a while. In a letter to me, written for publication in NULL-F #4, John said:

"I have discontinued my and UMBRA'S relation with one Wetzel fan...his constant and extremely personal attacks and counter-attacks on several

thoroughly innocent figures in fandom make him an undesirable element in UMBRA; hence, his forthcoming comic selection in Um 13 will be his last appearance there. Although I am still convinced that he can write well, his nearly slanderous vilifications and accusations have eclipsed the other side of him, to the extent that thoroughly serious or pleasantly humorous mss. under his authorship are automatically rejected for the same reasons from other fanzines using his material.

"His attacks themselves usually have no observable foundation except for his very vivid imagination. Provocation for a feud is quite slight, as far as I myself can see. And, if this letter is published, I'd like to warn whoever reads it to take everything Wetzel says about other fans with a large brick of salt. I can't defend Ellison or Mason, his old standing targets, but I can say that I don't see any cause for his accusations against Boggs or Silverberg, to take two examples. And lately I've heard him, in our conversations, take exception with Larry Stark. Quite probably Larry will serve as his newest public target, so I'd like to reassure you beforehand that Larry has no observable subversive affiliations or intentions, as George has been muttering, but rather is one of the nicest fellows it's been my fortune to meet, in fandom or outside. Don't let anything Wetzel may say against Stark influence you in any way. His conclusions are based upon imagined relationships existing only as a mechanism in his psychology, whereas mine are based on a year-long, fruitful, and happy close acquaintance with Larry himself."

I hope the foregoing has provided the balanced look at George Wetzel that Terry Hughes was looking for.

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