

FLAG

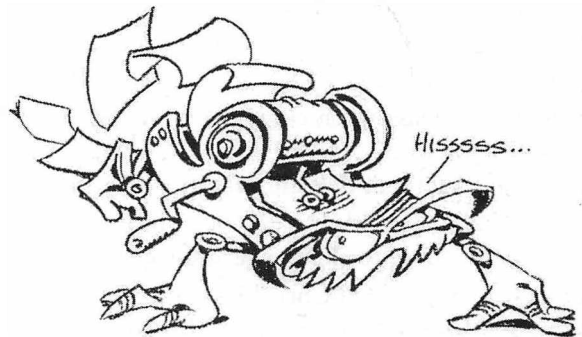
This is issue #17 of FLAG, an occasional fanzine published by Andy Hooper, member fwa, at 11032 30th Ave. NE Seattle, WA 98125, email to fanmailaph@aol.com. This is a Drag Bunt Press Production. First copies mailed on May 9th, 2016. FLAG appears primarily in printed form, and is available for trade, graphic artwork and cartoons or letters of comment. The next issue will be out after Corflu 33. Art Credits: Alexis Gilliland, Page 6; Ray Nelson, Page 11; Bill Rotsler, Page 5; Gilliland & Rotsler, Page 12; Marc Schirmeister, Page 1; Stu Shiffman, Page 9; Dan Steffan, Page 16. U.K. Assistance: Mark Plummer

Do you realize what we accomplished today? Today the spaceship was born!

Like a River that Don't Know:

Two Years Later, FLAG Flies Again

The last time I composed an issue of FLAG, some twenty months ago, I was getting ready to travel to the 2014 Worldcon in London, which would be my first experience with the World Convention since 1996. I had every intention of returning to Seattle with a full complement of fannish anecdotes and encounters to document in my fanzine. I had a thick file of letters of comment to print, and had just started publishing work by other fans, beginning with John Nielsen Hall's family story in #16.



FANDOM'S OBSOLETE BÊTE NOIRE
(The Gestetner Goblin!! Getcha!)

I could certainly attribute some of my subsequent inaction to the loss of several correspondents following the release of FLAG #16, including, but not limited to, Velma Bowen, Ned Brooks, David Hartwell, Stu Shiffman, D. West and Art Widner, all of whom cast long shadows over the course of my fan activity. Every time I seemed on the verge of actually publishing, some other problem seemed to intervene. My wife Carrie's mother, Saramae Root, passed away at the age of 90 in November of 2015, and I think we're still getting used to that. And we also discovered last fall that my longtime co-editor (of CHUNGA) Randy Byers was suffering from a particularly aggressive and lethal form of brain cancer, after some frightening seizures in the months approaching the 2015 Worldcon. Equally aggressive courses of treatment through surgery, radio- and chemotherapy have followed, and there is every indication that these will extend his life by a year or more. So, finishing our long-awaited 24th issue of CHUNGA has definitely been my foremost faanish priority for the past 6 months.

However, my attention has also been diffused by a new hobby, or avocation, or obsession; as I hinted slightly in issue #16, I became fascinated with my own genealogy in the late summer of 2014, and have been lost in the mid-19th Century ever since. I successfully identified the two ancestors who brought my mother's patrilineal name, "Oakey," to America in 1853. I discovered their origins in Naunton, Gloucestershire, and have documented what I can about their six generations of descendants in the United States. I've completed 12 "issues" of a journal documenting my findings under the title *Oakeyania*, and that has been my most substantive "publishing" activity across the past two years - issue #12 alone runs 44 pages. I looked up when it was finished to notice that Fandom -

[Continued on Page 2]

So we bitched about his fans, and should we crush his sweet hands?

the tarnish of Gamergate, SFFWAgate and Puppygate all having merged in a chiaroscuro of “character” upon its sensitive face – was still looking beckoningly at me from across the hospitality suite of life, offering another glass of “Blue Stuff,” a libation I now hasten to accept.

So, a new series; a new font (I left Georgia behind for Baskerville Old Face); and an old con report. I composed my account of Sasquan just a few weeks after the event, when my lungs and memories were still raw and undimmed. I completed it just a few days before his doctors diagnosed Randy’s tumor, so my hopeful thoughts about his health must be forgiven. To many of us, his staging of the “Lost World Fanzine Lounge” was the point around which the convention revolved, and he is really just one of the best people I have ever known; and it was delightful to see so much more of fandom realize this in Spokane.

A Key to the linos published in FLAG #16

Page 1: “Destroy your friends! Upgrade and weaponize!”

Exhortation hawking a video game for mobile phone play in the summer of 2014, now hopelessly obsolete.

Page 1: “At least two surviving Deep Ones live in Stockholm. One of them sells aquarium supplies.”

Assertion by writer Anders Fagen, in *Collected Swedish Cults* (2011), cited by Wikipedia; see “Deep One”

Page 3: “I tell them that things were better then because cigarettes tasted like burning flesh!”

Former telejournalist Pat O’Brien engages in highly enthusiastic self-parody on Adult Swim’s *Hot Package*.

Page 4: “It’s time to check out of this dump – and into Hotel Vengeance.”

Deputy U.S. Marshal Chris Monsanto (Chris Elliot) going rogue, from Adult Swim’s *Eagleheart*.

Page 6: “With his background of Rosicrucianism and Dianetics he should be just the man to organize an SF convention.” From “Eavesdroppings” *Hyphen* #9, July, 1954.

Page 10: “Basically, I suppose, I stay in fandom because it affords me an audience.”

Bob Leman, *from Why is a Fan? The Second SaFari Annual*, edited by Earl and Nancy Kemp, 1961



Ten Days in Trufandom:

From Prolog (ue) to Sasquan

Encounters in the Smoke

The narrative con report is still dead.

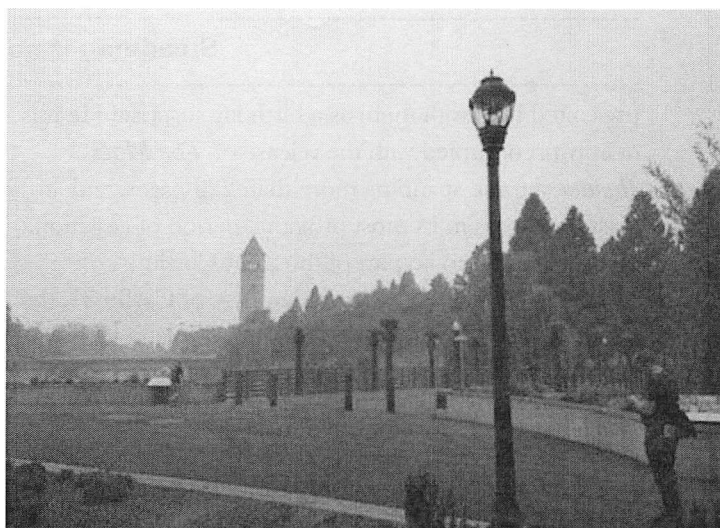
As you know if you have been paying attention, Taral Wayne rhetorically executed the traditional convention report as a form for fan writing in his fanzine *Broken Toys* several years ago, pointing how inimical the plodding description of each day’s events is to the rules of dramatic and compelling writing. Such things may well be essential to the historical record and critical to fandom’s future understanding of itself, but it is still excruciating to read about how you changed flights and ate at a Wolfgang Puck franchise in Phoenix on your way to the convention. Or how you and Ensign Mary Sue went out to Target to buy Spock-themed napkins for your room party. That such

things are now readily available is news that fans of yore might have coggled at, but the faanish eye struggles to stay open as it peruses such traditional minutiae.

It is challenging, therefore, to recount the many encounters and events of August, 2015, which involved, for me, 14 days of intense fanactivity, without creating a narrative that is nearly as exhausting as the experience itself. And my perspective is complicated by the fact that after not haunting the Worldcon for 19 years, I have attended two in the span of 12 months and a few days. LonCon 3 and Sasquan were dramatically different conventions in virtually every detail, but also stood as statements in an ongoing dialogue about the convention and the fandom that creates it. Everything that I encountered in Spokane I saw through the lens of contrasting details in the previous year’s experiences.

Which is why I was able to feel so comfortable at a convention perpetually wreathed in the thick smoke of nearby forest fires – I might have been red-eyed and laboring for breath, but at least we weren't plodding along in the climate-controlled caverns of Loncon 3's Docklands venue. This August, had I chosen to, I could have walked east or west from the convention center, and within an hour, become lost in scrubland and Ponderosa pine with no other human beings anywhere within my field of view. Like Reno before it, simply concentrating 5,000 fans in Spokane offered an education in the magical and almost certainly unsustainable transformation of the American west – every night, sprinkler systems lavishly sprayed the waters of the Spokane river on the lush lawns and gardens of the city's resort corridor, while the Okanogan forest burned out of control only about 85 miles away.

Any narrative of the season would also be of prodigious length because of the now inexplicable decision to hold a small convention the weekend prior to Sasquan, here in the Seattle area. This was primarily the brainchild of Ulrika O'Brien, who has the energy to put many iffy ideas into motion, and also embraced by those of us who had attended "Precursor," a similar con held the weekend before the first Scottish Worldcon in 1995. That event had been largely inspired by the late Martin Smith, although John and Eve Harvey and several other heroes did most of the work involved. Martin was one of those fans most noted for a passionate devotion to their fannish friends and alcohol in equal measure, and that blurry, ten-day binge from Stevenage to Glasgow is probably one of the reasons why he isn't with us today. But we dealt with an impressive marching column of ghosts across the two weeks of Prolog (ue) and Sasquan, so lifting a few dark and dangerous beers in Martin's honor seemed like an innocent addendum to the Sasquan week. After all, what better way to conduct 72 hours of Sasquan sub-committee meetings than to cram into a few hotel rooms full of beer and cookies for the weekend?



Although it looks like London at dusk, this is Spokane at about 2:30 pm on August 21st, 2015. The sky was burnt orange.

The tale would be full of familiar characters – many locals including Jerry Kaufman, Suzle Tompkins, the O'Briens, Marci Malinowycz, Jane Hawkins, Liz Copeland, Jack William Bell, Carl Juarez and Scott Kreidermacher, all helped to put together what proved to be a particularly choice party for my 53rd birthday. There were numerous Bay-area travelers, including Mike Ward and Karen Schaeffer, and Tom Becker and his discreet partner S., desert dwellers like R-Lauraine Tutihasi, and visitors from the United Kingdom, including Mark Plummer and Claire Brialey, James Bacon (fleeting) and the intrepid Sandra Bond, who had driven to Seattle from Chicago in order to take advantage of a particularly low airfare. Longtime U.K. fan and pro Charles Stross was staying at another hotel in the area, but agreed to take the bus over to the con if we scheduled his events for daylight hours, and thus he was our de facto professional guest of honor.

A Fanthology to Remember

The biggest surprise of the event was the appearance of Portlanders Dan and Lynn Steffan, who had made no public plans to attend the convention, but Lynn had secretly secured train tickets to Seattle, and

Chris, you're still here? Chief said no more sleeping at crime scenes.

Steadman is now worried about fire.

presented Dan with them as a birthday surprise! He was deeply preoccupied with the release of *The Mota Reader*, a tome spanning more than 220 pages, and at least four years in its most proximal period of gestation. It was intended to be part of the 2014 Corflu membership package, so full members of Corflu 31, the Confederate Corflu, should have found one in their mail by now. Dan captured much of the unique perspective of Terry Hughes' fanzine *Mota*, reprinting both written material and art in a package that while not exactly compact, occupies much less space than a run of the original fanzine.

But it is Dan's introduction that staggered me – his "Kansas Wasn't Flattened in a Day: The Geography of a Fan Career" runs 60 pages, and inevitably tells much more than the story of *Mota* and its editor, the late Terry Hughes. A few years ago, Dan wrote a little note to my fanzine *FLAG*, expressing the belief that an influx of youthful "hippie" energy had propelled fandom's expansion in the early 1970s, opining that even Trekkies had been influenced by counter-cultural forces. Readers fell all over themselves in the effort to refute him, asserting that Trekkies had all been Republicans, or at the very least, had gone Clean for Gene. This essay is also Dan's rebuttal to that argument – punctuated by several rather blissed-out portraits of Terry and the companions of his youth, including figures like "Hippy Hank" Luttrell and his ex-wife Lesleigh, who more or less waved the wand of contact at early 1970s Madison, Wisconsin fandom, and might therefore be credited with my eventual presence in the field. Lesleigh is a mostly obscure figure now, but she also took the first trip to Australia under the auspices of the Down Under Fan Fund, and was a second-generation fanzine publisher, following in the footsteps of her mother Leigh. Dan's biography is full of that kind of timebinding connection, and also gives a fair summation of nearly 40 years of fan history in order to provide some useful context for Terry's publishing and post-publishing career. It is a deeply satisfying portrait, inevitably tinged with sadness due to its subject's passing at the age of 51 from the effects of brain cancer. I think it is also the best writing of Dan's own long fan career,

and the document as a whole deserves to be bound and published – on demand, certainly – as a book.

Dan's contribution was so engrossing that I haven't even mentioned John D. Berry's equally fond recollections of Terry, or the many articles by writers from Burbee to Bob Shaw. It was the fanzine event of the fortnight, if not actually the decade, and several fans at Prolog (ue) subsided into studious silence after acquiring a copy.

Enter the Nina

There was, however, a new and completely unfamiliar character on the stage during the ten days that spanned Prolog (ue) and Sasquan. The 2015 Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund delegate, Nina Horvath of Linz, Austria, landed in Seattle on Wednesday before the cons to begin acclimating to the Pacific Time zone, and immediately confronted an alien culture – namely fandom. Nina is a budding professional writer, a Web journalist and one of the few residents of Linz who owns a Star Trek uniform. But although she wrote a convincing platform statement and won by an easy margin over Austro-Italian fan publisher Wolf von Wittig, Nina's experience of the wider fandom that created TAFF was surprisingly limited. She had to be convinced to travel to several locations in North America, having originally thought that ten days in distant Seattle and Spokane would be more than enough. Many other traditions of the fund also seemed to come as a surprise to her, but she was perpetually adaptable and remained cheerful in the face of each new encounter.

She was in many ways the antithesis of the traditional seasoned BNF delegate who has as many friends in the host country as they do back home. She confessed that she had enjoyed relatively little face to face contact with organized fandom, conducting most of her correspondence and contact online. There is almost no native Austrian fandom, and most fans there consider themselves part of the German sf community, which, to judge by the experiences Nina reported having in it, is just as dreadful for women as one might imagine in one's more stereotypical nightmares. She had been to several conventions in Poland and found them entertaining, raising her hopes for international fandom.

But her first sustained contact with North American fandom was provided by Jane Hawkins, in whose guest room Nina would spend her first two nights in Seattle.

I also found myself firmly convinced that founders of TAFF like Chuch Harris would have found Nina personally irresistible, and approved completely of her role as the designated New Girl of the convention season. I found myself explaining fannish humor or language or tradition five or six times on the first evening I spent with Nina, and marveled at her efficiency in eliciting fandom's oral history from practically every fan she met. There must have been many, many times when this felt impossibly onerous to her: I had to roll my eyes at one point in the "Evening Fanzine Lounge" at Sasquan when Linda Bushyager tried to explain her gift of two free room nights at a Las Vegas strip hotel by referring to Bugsy Siegel. But Nina absorbed it all, and was capable of replying with rambling, heavily-accented anecdotes of her own, which left the listener glassy-eyed and nodding defenselessly, rather than admit they could not understand critical elements of her story.

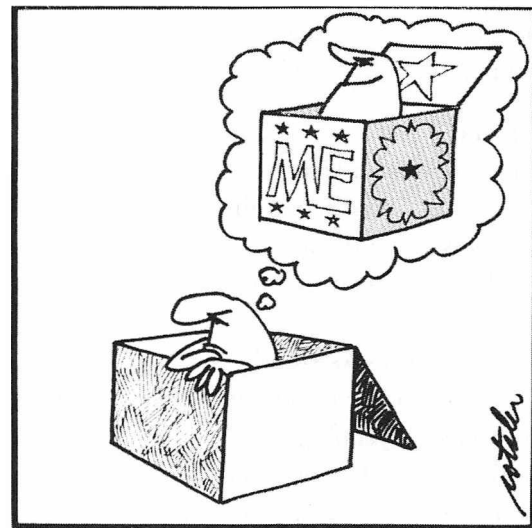
As if this were not enough cultural curiosity for the weekend, we found that the hotel was also the site of festivities associated with Renton, Washington's first annual "Polynesianfest," a celebration of Hawaiian and Pacific island culture, including music, dance and ample servings of food. A stage was set up in the parking lot, where a number of bands, most of which sounded more Jamaican than Hawaiian, performed on Friday and Saturday, quite close to the room where Prolog (ue) held its limited program. The simultaneous booking gave a more festive air to our little convention, and several members commented on the handsome young shirtless dancers that congregated in their version of a green room, also just next door to Prolog(ue).

The program, which Ulrika had asked me to organize, was mostly harmless. Friday evening was dedicated to a reception for Nina, but one of the cakes served that evening was in honor of my birthday. Saturday had a single track of relaxed programs. We had a minor echo of Loncon 3's fannish storytelling event in the morning, and ran Dave O'Neil's pub quiz in the afternoon.

Charles Stross read an excerpt from an upcoming novel in his Magic-meets-MI-5 series, and it was funny and cheerfully campy. Nina's education continued at a program where former fan fund winners told tales of their adventures. And a program on the changing roles of women in fandom ("Geek Girl Revolution") drew an enthusiastic response. Ulrika's Saturday evening game show seemed to be just as popular. There was also a conversation about local beers and wines, which cast some light on the remarkable selections that Scott Kreidermacher had gathered for the con suite.

It was, overall, a really good time, and only slightly diluted by the general tension which many of us felt about the upcoming events in Spokane. The culinary highlight was a trip to Lemongrass, a Vietnamese restaurant where the food we received was sometimes difficult to correlate to the menu items we had ordered, but was uniformly delicious nevertheless. Our dinner there was so good that we returned for lunch the following day, and left just as satisfied.

For me, the "Big Event" was a memorial presentation on Sunday morning, honoring our friends Art Widner and Stu Shiffman, who both left us in the past 12 months. I gathered a selection of writing by and about both men, and asked about 8 to 10 fans to read the pieces, which generally alternated between the two. The final push to prepare for the conventions had begun the



Shit, I said, we both look worse than anything you've drawn.

Then you could cherish the look of surprise on my face.



previous weekend with a large work party at our house, and most of that day was spent preparing displays of art created by Stu, and covers of fanzines from Art's long career. So Art and Stu were already on our minds, and listening to their words had a particularly vivid effect on me. I went home after Prolog (ue) and wrote *Widner's Worldcon*, the fanzine I submitted to W.O.O.F., the Worldcon apa, the following weekend, feeling like I was again temporarily immersed in the world of 1939.

On the Road

The work of finishing the fanzine, and printing the W.O.O.F. covers (executed by the highly talented Patrick Ijima-Washburn,) assembling envelopes and other stuff, pretty much ate up the two days we had between the conventions. Sasquan shifted the usual Worldcon Thursday to Monday span back by one day, and ran from Wednesday to Sunday. I found this had distinct psychological advantages. The Wednesday before the con is inevitably just as busy as the first day, and given that we couldn't be there on Tuesday, I think the marathon felt less consuming than in previous years.

Sasquan was the first Worldcon to be held less than a full day's drive away from Seattle since Seacon in 1962. The section of highway which winds through the passes of the North Cascade Range is an invigorating drive under the best of conditions, but rock falls and reconstruction have turned it into a theme park attraction in several sections. Carrie handled the white knuckle sections expertly, while we goggled at the sight of usually-broad lakes rendered dried mud by the persistent western drought.

The drought was also responsible for the other major hazards to navigation on the route, which were the huge fires burning in the Okanagan and other forests in eastern and central Washington. There were fires to the southeast in Idaho as well. As we stared at the murky horizon to the north, we wondered what impact the smoke would have in Spokane....

Downtown Spokane is remarkably compact, spreading a relatively modest number of blocks along both sides of the Spokane River. Sasquan enjoyed the lingering benefits of the makeover which the city gave itself in the early 1970s, in anticipation of hosting the World's Fair in 1974. (Spokane is the smallest city ever to host such an international exposition, a record which seems very unlikely to be broken.) In the aftermath of the Expo, the area around the river was redeveloped into a park, and the various pavilions and exhibits replaced by a very ample convention center, and a phalanx of comfortable hotels. The distances between the hotels and the convention center, and between sites within the con itself, may not have been very different from those required for transit through LonCon 3's echoing General Services Vehicle, but things simply felt as if they were organized on a more human scale. Our path from the Riverside Red Lion to the Con ran across a mid-river island, partly fenced off and filled with brightly colored effigies and structures under construction for the upcoming Chinese lantern festival. The dragons and other fanciful creatures seemed to be a visual

harbinger of the faanish precincts that waited on the other bank.

Fort Roscoe on the River

The other feature of Sasquan which made me feel quite comfortably at home was the Lost World Fanzine Lounge, tucked into one corner of the Exhibits area, and quite conveniently close to Guinan's Bar, Sasquan's pipe-and-drape watering hole. It didn't have the central location of last year's bar floor, but it was pleasantly dim and quiet, apart from those hours when musical entertainment was on offer. Studded with comfortable chairs and patently open to all, the Fanzine Lounge seemed to be a popular hangout and resting place for a broad cross-section of the convention. But it also served as a congregation point for old-timey fans who like fanzines, or at least know what they once were - faces like Andy Porter, Ron and Linda Bushyager, Joe Siclari and Edie Stern (happy retirement, Edie!) and the eternally colorful Marc Schirmeister, were seldom far from our version of Rora Penta land.

My wife Carrie also made one very specific contribution to the fanzine lounge. Last year, LonCon 3 attempted to arrange a set of memorial "park benches," to be scattered about the exhibit area, and decorated with brass plaques bearing the names of deceased fans. Randy Byers organized a collection for a plaque honoring members of Seattle's Vanguard fan group.

Unfortunately, the benches and plaques arrived at LonCon rather late, and were displayed for part of two days at most. When the plaques were returned to the subscribers, Randy passed the Seattle set on to us, and Carrie purchased a lovely metal-framed cedar-plank bench and installed the plaques on it. It has been a lovely addition to our deck, and we decided to bring it with us to Spokane. Scott Kreidermacher, the young titan, carried it up from the parking lot on his shoulder, and we enjoyed having it in the lounge all weekend.

There is something very satisfying about having a job to do at a Worldcon. In addition to nebulous responsibilities to "staff" the fanzine lounge, I was the collating W.O.O.F., and would serve as auctioneer in

United Fan Funds auction on Friday afternoon. They were interesting little jobs, both of which could be staged out of the fanzine lounge, and provided some anchor to build around on at least two days of the convention. I also resolved to get to more actual convention programming at Sasquan, and was relieved to find that the demand for space at Sasquan was nothing like that at LonCon 3; I was never turned away because the room was too full, something which happened several times in London.

Life in the Sasquan exhibit hall was almost idyllic, with the dealers, art show, scientific and fannish exhibits, registration and concessions all co-existing in the same vast room, divided by the familiar architecture of pipes and drapery. These design conventions also created an easily-accessed backstage warren running around much of the hall; at several points, we could hear small staff meetings of convention personnel going on behind our backs in the space behind the Lounge's drapery "walls."

Noise went right up into the high ceilings and didn't come back. Intimate conversations were always possible, but amplified voices seemed to carry extremely well, especially that of "Ceiling Cat," the particularly self-amused P.A. announcer who interrupted programs at random intervals for the first day, and then on the half hours after the angelic Tom Becker pointed out to her how disruptive her commentary was. In her defense, she had no idea that she could be heard outside the registration area.

The Lost World Fanzine Lounge was decorated with galleries of fanzine covers, a rack of recent fanzine issues carefully printed out by our friends at Professional Copy and Print at the behest of Jerry Kaufman, and a selection of trip reports and imported chocolates on sale for the benefit of the fan funds. As often occurs, several fans brought their fanzine collections and put them out for anyone to take. The most notable (and slightly sorrowful) sight was David Levine and Kate Yule's fanzine collection all in hanging folders lovingly alphabetized and stored in banker's boxes. Kate's recent experience with brain surgery, which came not long after

That was a great time, the summer of '71 - I can't remember it, but I'll never forget it!

We will drink to our partnership. Do you like gin? It is my only weakness.

she wrote one of the best letters of comment in FLAG #16, has left her less likely to spend time cataloging fanzines. But many people seemed to be considering similar gestures, in the face of the general migration to electronic fan activity. I spent the weekend scooping choice runs of beloved fanzines out of the box and presenting them to fanzine readers with less extensive collections, like Chuck Serface and Portland's Alexander Case. I expect this saved those titles from immediate recycling anyway.

At the end of the weekend, we loaded the banker's boxes and the remaining fragments of David and Kate's collection onto a truck, and they were returned to Seattle, and I eventually took possession of them. My fanzine collection has gone through numerous perturbations in recent years, as I have sold chunks of it off, and created a distinction between older and more recent titles. The entire thing needs to be sorted again, and Kate's file folders will serve as the first part of the new storage system, which will hopefully be far more compact and accessible than the current heap.

The Doom of the Red Sun

LonCon 3 and Sasquan were also similar in having a waterside setting, but it felt as if it was much easier to actually exit the vast spaceship of Sasquan's convention center than it was in 2014. Sasquan actually had a get-acquainted party in the riverside park on Wednesday afternoon, and the DC in 2017 bid hosted an immense barbecue there on Thursday.

But it would be stunningly inaccurate to say that most convention members enjoyed having such easy access to the outside world on Sasquan weekend. Clouds of thick, gray, literally choking wood smoke from the huge fires burning in the distance blanketed the city to varying degrees for the entire weekend. Wednesday and part of Friday were mostly clear, with only a strong smell of smoke to betray its presence. But on Thursday, Saturday and Sunday, major parts of the day were quite unendurable to anyone with a respiratory illness and hardly pleasant for those not so compromised. Visibility was limited to about a block and a half. As the blood red disc of the sun hung safely observable in the coal-

dark 5 pm sky, the wry joke circulated that it was as if the Beijing Worldcon bid had won after all, although that ignored the real sequence of events.

Some members simply booked a taxi to the airport and went home early, a trickle on Friday and quite a significant group on Saturday. Had one arrived, bag in hand, on mid-Friday afternoon, one could probably have had a choice of rooms, even at the opulent old Davenport, or the extra-convenient Doubletree, growing up from the center of the convention complex. At times, even the convention center's immense air system couldn't keep the smoke out of the Exhibit area, although most interior program rooms were scrubbed more effectively. It was interesting to contemplate that Dr. Kjell Lindgren, serving as the convention's Sciences Guest of Honor while aboard the International Space Station, was enjoying a far better air quality than the terrestrial members of the con.

Many people also saw some disturbing portent and parallel between the apparent Shadow of Mordor descending on Spokane and the political situation regarding the 2015 Hugo Awards. I assume that anyone reading this far is probably already aware that this year a group of conservative writers and fans sought to block-vote a particular slate of works and authors that they felt reflected their ideas and principles into the awards given out at Worldcon since the early 1950s. Their choices dominated the nominations, leaving many fans feeling that voting for "No Award" was their only palatable alternative. The rhetorical temperature of the subculture rose dangerously over the issue, so much so that some fans expressed private fears that someone would attend the convention and/or the award ceremony armed, and try to perpetrate a massacre. Or that some sort of supervillain would bore into the hall from a subterranean hideout in order to protest the lack of Mole People on the ballot. Not all of these fears seemed quite rational, but there was a distinct sense of shared unease that was an unwelcome innovation to the Worldcon milieu.

But none of these fears were realized, of course. The most agitated confined themselves to some churlish booing and hissing when "No Award" came first five

times over the course of the Hugo ceremony. And there were certain advantages to having so many of the professional awards dismissed without the necessity of an acceptance speech. The Hugo Awards for fan related work - Fanzine, Fancast, Fan Artist and Fan Writer - were all given to actual recipients, all of whom seem completely delighted to have won, whatever the motives of the voters might have been. Once again, the indefatigable Nina Horvath stepped in here, trading banter with David Gerrold through the presentation of all four fan-specific awards, her inner Trekker clearly beaming with ecstasy to be sharing the stage with the inventor of the tribble!

I cannot resist gleefully digressing a bit to gossip about the fabulous time that Nina had at Sasquan. Profoundly single before her arrival, she indulged in one of the oldest rituals of fandom, the convention romance! She caught the attention of a handsome young Canadian stranger named Keith Mordern, who had come down from Chilliwack, British Columbia, to take in the con. Planning originally to camp out in his car, Keith found himself sharing the Ambassador suite at the Doubletree, and serving as Nina's escort to the Hugo ceremony! I had to marvel at the way that TAFF had enabled Nina to extend the wand of contact to a fan even less experienced in the arcana of fandom than herself - surely, somewhere the shade of Chuch Harris is smiling at these developments.

There were a number of awards handed out. You could look them up if you were curious. I found myself actually smiling a bit as *Journey Planet* took home the rocket as "Best Fanzine." It was amusing when James Bacon gave part of his acceptance speech in Irish, but it was a shame that Chris Garcia was too busy caring for his infant twin sons and their mom to attend. I'm pretty much at peace with the two of them riding this pony as far as they can. I see them as "Publishers," rather than "Editors" - they make it attractive for the issue editors - Collin Harris Alisa McKersie and Helen J. Montgomery - to gather some excellent work. With a different theme to each issue, JP has a sercon format, but often veers into uniquely personal and fannish territories. It is a real

Fanzine, in other words, and a sign that our tradition is not quite dead yet.

Topical Ointments

The difference between the past two Worldcons was summed up by the relative visibility of George R. R. Martin over each weekend. The world's most famous living fantasist was carefully shepherded from place to place in London, always in the middle of a cloud of escorts, and drawing such huge crowds that some events were cancelled out of concern that the audience couldn't be kept safe. But in Spokane, George seemed to be everywhere, and occasionally even appeared to be walking around by himself. He rented a Spokane mansion to provide a venue for the Hugo Losers' Party, which he had helped found in 1976, and which he reclaimed as his way of assuaging some of the hurt felt over the 2015 Hugos. He created a new award - from an old hood ornament, as was meant to be - called the Alfie, after Alfred Bester, who won the first Hugo award, for his novel *The Demolished Man*.

Much of the weekend seemed to be occupied in the effort to find anything but politics or forest fires to think about. The movie theater was always full every time I stuck my head inside. Because I am terribly old and sad, I actually took in a recent fan-produced *Star Trek* episode, titled "The Mind Sifter." I found I was surprisingly comfortable with the acting; if some of the



I fought fire with oil.

According to Labvin, an alien power sacrificed itself for humanity.

the actors bore only a vague resemblance to the original performers, they had clearly studied their performances in detail. They captured the rhythm of the characters and their dialogue perfectly. And it was a story with many references to previous episodes, including “Errand of Mercy” and “City on the Edge of Forever.” The venomous Klingon Captain Kor kidnaps Kirk, and tries to strand him in the distant past by using the Guardian of Forever. As months drag by, Spock must take command, but does not genuinely accept Kirk’s death, and eventually discovers an image of him in a newspaper article from the 1960s. Spock tricks a Federation task force into following him to the Guardian’s world so as to scare off the Klingons, then he and McCoy leap to the past to retrieve Kirk from the New York State Hospital.

In another nice twist on “City,” Kirk is treated by a sympathetic doctor, played by Rivkah Raven Wood, who believes that his story of life in the future might just be true. When Spock and McCoy appear, she asks if she can return to the future with them; but Spock advises her that he believes her to have an essential role to play in the future equality of her gender. After Kirk has endured hallucinations of various women who died through some act or omission of action on his part, it is nice to see a female character emerge from their encounter somewhat happier for it.

Another hour of media-related fun was provided by a telephone conference between the two surviving members of the Firesign Theater, David Ossman and Phil Procter, and their current archivist and impresario Taylor Jensen. The hour was meant to introduce the restored and enhanced version of their film *Everything You Know is Wrong*, scheduled to be shown a short while later – but unfortunately for me, during the time I was supposed to be organizing lots of donated items just before the Fan Fund auction, so I had to miss it. But Jensen swore on a copy of *The Naked Lunch* that the DVD would be out in time for Christmas.

Apart from the background to *Everything*, which invoked the name of the late Evel Knievel, and his 1974 misadventure above and in the nearby Snake River Canyon, Ossman and Procter spent a surprising amount of

time talking about the late Ray Bradbury, whom they both admired. Ossman had worked with Ray a lot on projects celebrating old time radio drama, of which Bradbury was a great fan.

The other story which made an impression on me was Ossman’s account of how he had done voiceovers for several industrial films, including some for IBM. This had led them to invite him to a job and technology fair where had encountered a machine running ELIZA, the very early natural language processing program created by MIT researcher Joseph Weizenbaum in 1966. Ossman encountered the DOCTOR variant, which used scripts to attempt to psychoanalyze the user. Users interacted with the program through a teletype keyboard, which also printed the machine’s responses. This dialogue generated huge piles of paper, which were discarded into a drum nearby. Ossman described how he had gathered up a full day’s worth of output, which had also included diagnostic and control dialogues, with references to such things as “Direct Read Memory” or DR MEMORY. Fans listening immediately understood that this had been the origin of the dialogue between the protagonist (Ah) Clem and the computer which controls the Future Fair, scene of the action in *I Think We’re All Bozos on This Bus*.

In fact, *Bozos* is so closely intertwined with the history of computing that if one addresses an Apple OS through its avatar Siri by stating, “Siri, this is Worker.” Siri will reply, “Yes, (Ah) Clem, what can I do for you?” But if you ask “Siri, why does the porridge bird lay his egg in the air?” she replies “Sorry, you can’t shut me down that easily.”

Got any Badges, Posters, Stickers or Bullets?

There were several other interesting events that I attended some or all of. There was another memorial program for Stu Shiffman, which was very well attended; I wished it could have gone on for about three hours, and allowed the audience to relate many of their stories as well. A program on early childhood reading experiences with Alma Alexander, Kevin J. Anderson, Scott Lynch and Marissa Mayer was generally fascinating, but dominated by the charismatic Steven Barnes, who could have convinced the audience to seize the post offices and the armory by the end of the hour.

Seattle writer Vonda McIntyre was one of the convention's Guests of Honor; her interview by Nancy Jane Moore, and the retrospective of her early novel *Dreamsnake* were both engrossing, although I left the former before they showed the trailer of the adaptation of her book *The Moon and the Sun*. After all we've heard I was almost afraid to look.

Various *Mr. Wizard*-like science presentations took place just a few yards away from the Fanzine Lounge, and the bangs and whooshes of rapidly combusting or escaping gases were difficult to completely ignore. One of my favorite installations was a display by the Stonerose Interpretive Center, a privately-owned complex of fossil beds in northeastern Washington, which allows collectors to keep some specimens gathered on their ground and if you discover a new species, they might name it after you!

The Fan Fund auction was my major turn of the weekend, and I think we did extraordinarily well, raising something in excess of \$1,800 in just about 90 minutes. I think we were aided by the seemingly random assortment of goods and memorabilia, which ranged from old fanzines to books to buttons to toys to exotic Austrian chocolates and many, many T-shirts. Quite a lot of the shirts were WETA crew shirts from one of several Peter Jackson Tolkien pictures, and they were very popular indeed. But we had unique things like two compact discs of 1950s radio space operas burned by Curt Phillips, which brought a generous bid. Curt also supplied the item I found most quizzical for the venue, a very clean and nicely-shaped .58 caliber Minie bullet from the American Civil War, dug out of the Cedar Creek battlefield. I was prepared to return it regretfully to Curt, but it sold for \$40! It was great to have forty or fifty people in the room, all of whom seemed inclined to bid on something. There were also at least ten people who helped to run items around the room, kept track of the bids and took payment, apart from my fellow auctioneer Jerry Kaufman, who was just as exhausted as I by the end of the event. I also said goodbye to a few items that I had purchased at previous fan fund auctions, and maintained in "near mint" condition for more than two decades, and it was lovely to see them pass on to a new set of curators.

Like many of the activities of my weekend, the auction was officially under the supervision of Randy Byers, who took the step of joining the Sasquan committee so we could have a comfortable place to play with fanzines. It really was the ideal place to collate W.O.O. F., which we did on



Saturday night during the simultaneous broadcast of the Hugo ceremony. The committee process is seldom without its problems and discontents, and Sasquan appeared to have quite a lot of personnel changes not long before the con actually took place. I don't know if this contributed to the aggravation of it all, but the experience may have taken a toll on Randy, who suffered both a bout of shingles and an apparently stress-induced seizure just a few weeks before the convention. But by that time, all of us knew what our jobs were, and we were more than capable of doing the work without having Randy to supervise us. In the end, Randy was able to attend the convention, and gradually ramped up his activity, despite the dismal atmospheric conditions. I was particularly glad that he had been able to attend the convention on which he had worked so hard, not least in convincing our circle of diffident former hipsters to attend.

Perhaps his greatest feat was in convincing various committee powers to grant him one of the precious party rooms in the Davenport Hotel, where we enjoyed a cozy gathering on Wednesday through Saturday evenings. (This became far easier to arrange after our friend Suzanne Tompkins agreed to serve as the convention's hotel liaison, just about six weeks before the event!) One evening saw another reception in honor of Delegate Nina, and another was a wake and Scotch-tasting session in memory of Art Widner, who would surely have loved to be there. A few

Incidentally, the meteorite people are clearly in the majority.

Woof Wash 360 adjusts to any size dog!



hours of conversation there was more than enough party for both Carrie and I, and we retired together for the brisk, smoky walk back to our room in the Red Lion around midnight most evenings except Saturday, when the giddy energy of collation kept us awake until 2 am.

Cliques and Whistles

Spending so much time with old friends made it easy to look on the various crises and controversies of fandom as distant disturbances, but I managed to immerse myself in the struggle for Social Media Justice by attending what was one of the last programs of the con. It was ostensibly concerned with fan writing, and I was easily misled by the presence of fan publisher Mike Gyer on the panel. The other three participants were: A very shiny professional writer who used social media to promote herself; a cancer survivor and activist, who used electronic media to communicate with other cancer fans; and a second-generation sf conrunner who apparently lived primarily through social media, and who opened the event by sexual harassment accusations against another, nameless member of the Sasquan committee. But that was just preamble – most of the hour was spent in vague generalizations about pleasing followers, liking useful things and using the power of the mob to market your own opinions and shout down those who don't agree with you. Every now and then they asked Mike, grizzled old-timer that he is, to illustrate how things worked in the ancient world of content longer than 140 characters. He replied with simple explanations that

invariably drifted off into slightly inappropriate laughter, as if he were channeling Springfield's animated physician Dr. Julius Hibbert.

It was, at best, a waste of time. But the hour was over soon enough, and I found I sympathized with the panelists even as their arguments seemed pointlessly grating and strident to me. It was a bit like that all weekend – my "Side" seemed to win in most of the questions of the hour, including the 2017 site selection ballot, which went to Helsinki, if only because they had been bidding for so long and so well. But I found some of "our" arguments weirdly hostile and syllogistic, and I reject the idea that stories about spaceships and coherent beams of energy are now too regressive to be among the best in the field.

Hugo-nominated stories – not to mention the world – may be populated by gay magical realists translated from another language. But stories about square-jawed Libertarians and sinister alien menaces are hardly about to disappear from the market. One of the most popular items in the Fan Fund auction was an advance proof of an unpublished novel by Lois McMaster Bujold, still exploring themes of honor and nobility in an impossibly old-fashioned universe after all these award nominations. We still eat that stuff up whenever it appears – but we also like to pretend we have better taste when someone asks us. Whatever we may prefer for our daily entertainment, the best things in the field may actually be fiction that defies formula and presents unusual and sometimes quizzical characters and situations. Even if that isn't the most comfortable way of looking at the world, or at ourselves. There are some futures that I long for, and some that I would resist. But I want to have the freedom to imagine either, and to live in a fandom that can accommodate any dire or glorious vision I may happen to expound.

At 3 pm Sunday, time ran out on our little pipe-and-drape paradise, and it was time to tear things down again. It took less than an hour to get everything packed, including our park bench, all blow-up dinosaurs deflated, and the Lost World was lost once more. After a return visit to our favorite combination Indian restaurant and taxi service, we tried to join the throng at the Dead Dog party in the Doubletree, but the press of humanity had finally reached

a level that said "Worldcon" to me. We were happy to accept an invitation to Mike Ward and Karen Schaeffer's room, where the scene was just slightly less crowded.

Literally minutes before we had intended to leave, I sat down and found myself next to Fred Lerner, the longtime member of FAPA and publisher of the excellent personal fanzine *Lofgeornost*. I enjoyed our conversation immensely, and as we ambled back through the smoke to our own hotel, I reflected on how fortunate I had been to persist at the Dead Dog until Fred appeared – and immediately saw it as a microcosm of the whole convention experience. Worldcon had been as weird and wonderful as always, but I had only experienced it because I have chosen to linger in organized fandom for nearly forty years.

Sasquan was a worthy entry in the long Worldcon tradition, and the days that ran from Prolog (ue) through Sunday's coda was a period of near-complete fannish immersion like few I have experienced before. Even now, the stress and physical fatigue of the event is fading into a rosy glow of pleasant memory. I only wish I had the stamina to write a proper account – the line of names that I have forgotten to mention could stretch around the block. David and Diana Thayer. Artist GoH Brad Foster, whose lovely robot-themed calendrical print now adorns our living room wall. Catherine Crockett and Colin Hinz. Rosie and Guy Lillian. Pat and Roger Sims. Steven Vincent Johnson and Darlene Coltrane. Hope Kiefer and

Karl Hailman and at least two of their kids. Alan Baum and Donya White. Tamara Vining. Kate Schaefer and Glenn Hackney. Karrie Dunning. Filthy Pierre Strauss. And Connie Willis, who is now required by law to make at least a guest appearance in every Hugo Award ceremony.

Despite the tide of disasters before and during the convention, everyone seems to have survived the experience, which is more than can be said for many previous Worldcons. I was truly impressed by the competence, energy and efficiency of my friends, who all appeared to work much harder at the convention than I. Some qualities of the event will surely remain memorable, like the fires, and the fact that Sasquan was the first Worldcon to be held in an ongoing Federal Disaster Area. But other details, like the unprecedented number of Hugo voters, and the politics around the nominations, will gradually be forgotten. Eventually, Sasquan will become best known as the Worldcon where *Ms. Marvel*, the saga of a Pakistani-American girl who gains superpowers, won the award for best Graphic Story, and *Orphan Black* won its second consecutive award as Best Dramatic Presentation. Surely this was an age of unprecedented commercial and critical stature for women in the sf field. Surely this was an age of unprecedented progressive idealism, wherein humanity stood confidently on the brink of a genuine utopia.

September 19th, 2015

Why must you be the screen door in my submarine, Brock?

COLOR PARTY:

Readers' Letters to FLAG

[Let us see if August, 2014's fanmail still makes any sense. Your letters are presented in Baskerville Old Face, like this, while my comments are expressed in Monotype Corsiva, like this.]

Ray Nelson

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Thanks for the praise in FLAG. One nit to pick though. The word "beatnik" was not coined by LIFE magazine, but by my good friend Herb Caen in his column in THE SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE. LIFE was just quoting him. Yes, it is a play on the word "Sputnik." Actually I prefer the term "beatnik" because it does highlight my activity in the San Francisco bohemian community, but separates me from the Beat Generation. I was friends with Alan Ginsberg and on occasion shared an open mike with him,

but I did not share the style and content of his poetry. For example, I do not think it is possible to understand his breakthrough poem, "Howl" without knowing his personal circle of friends. Also I take issue with Alan's hostile attitude towards women and his exhibitionistic showmanship, which included dropping his pants to display his scrawny butt and uninspiring genitals. My French authoress date at his Paris bookstore reading remarked that Alan had a pimple on that butt, and that French poet Boris Vian had brought tears to the eyes of hardened veterans of the French Resistance while, to quote my lady, "No one will ever cry for this Ginsberg."

[I appreciate both the correction and the anecdote, Ray. When Ginsberg passed through Madison in the late 1970s, he appeared on "The Vern & Evelyn Show," a public access program ostensibly hosted by a pair of pet mice. He performed a passionate chant against the evils of smoking tobacco, accompanying himself on handheld percussion. I have to admit, I've never forgotten it.]

Sumner G. Hunnewell

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Taking a few days off after Corflu to visit with my mom also gives me the opportunity to read while she sleeps (she's still recovering from treatments that clobbered her lymphoma). Being handed a paper fanzine at Corflu is a treat and it's a sad and lonely thing when you see others receiving as you are passed by. Corflu 31 netted me Flag, Jiant 2, and Inca 11, all pulled from their sacred satchel. (But you are right in your comments in Nine Lines Each #85, we should be handing out more, especially at Corflu.) I do plan on pubbing my ish, hopefully within the year. I've amassed a huge collection of items and I will cajole The Frau to provide some artwork. Between now and then I have a paper I have to write for Mythcon. There may be another baseball book index in the offing as well.

Thanks for including me in the plays, even if it's frustrating to blow a line. Forgiveness is always sought. Maybe I ought to j-u-s-t s-l-o-w d-o-w-n with my delivery but I also know the Corflu crew isn't prepared for two hours of play, no matter how spritely and accurately delivered. The only criticism I have of "Sock Puppets in Love" is the detail provided for each of the songs deleted. It shows your musical acumen, but something shorter, sweeter, and familiar might have played better. Nic Farey's reaction to the revelation of his character's identity was a priceless moment. He had obviously been double crossed. And, I'm afraid I cast the play's comments on gender issues in light of the whole gender SF con representation issue, so I didn't take them as germane to the story, which on second reading was a big mistake.

And talk about falling in love with a radio voice - I suggest you dig up examples of G. I. Jill of the World War II "G. I. Jive" show put out by the Armed Forces Radio Network, esp. this Memorial Day. Yowza.

[Gary, any play you can walk away from is a good one. The historical research you and I talked about at Corflu 31 turned out to be an inescapable attraction for me, to no one's surprise.]

Bruce Gillespie

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I no sooner printed your PDF of Flag 15 than your mailed copy wandered in this afternoon, postmarked 15 May. You don't actually put an airmail sticker on the envelope - maybe it was sent Economy Air instead of airmail.

Greg Benford doesn't mention the most obvious characteristic that unites utopias: smallness of population. From various sparsely populated planets, such as Le Guin's Anarres, to tight little communities where everybody is

supposed to agree with each other, such as the backwoods village occupied by the heroes in Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*, utopia usually depends on getting rid of everybody who disagrees with us, which is almost everybody, and getting on with the perfect life. But if, like Stalin or Hitler, you're running a big country where lots of people don't agree with you, you just get rid of lots of people.

However, an SF writer should be allowed to think up ways in which things could be better than they are, since in almost all countries things get very bad for large sections of the population from time to time. Greg Benford seems to think that SF writers should not even think idealistically, whereas as a bunch they are in a better position to do this than any other group of writers.

No sooner did I read a discussion that mentions Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* than somebody posted a link to a recent *Paris Review* interview (No 221) with Ursula Le Guin, which includes the following:

'The Dispossessed ... started as a short story. I had this physicist and he was in a prison camp somewhere. The story just went nowhere, but I knew that character was real. I had this lump on concrete and somewhere inside it was a diamond, but getting into the lump of concrete - it took years. For whatever reasons, I started reading pacifist literature, and I was also involved in antiwar protests, Ban the Bomb and all that. I had been a pacifist activist of sorts for a long time, but I realized I didn't know much about my cause. I'd never read Gandhi, for starters.

'So I put myself through a sort of course, reading that literature, and that led me to utopianism. And that led me, through Kropotkin, into anarchism, pacifist anarchism. And at some point it occurred to me that nobody had written an anarchist utopia. We'd had socialist utopias and dystopias and all the rest, but anarchism - hey, that would be fun. So then I read all the anarchist literature I could get, which was quite a lot, if you went to the right little stores in Portland....

'I swam around in that stuff for a couple of years before I could approach my lump of concrete again, and I discovered it had fallen apart. I had my character, and he was a physicist, but he wasn't who I thought he was. So that book started not with an idea but with a whole group of ideas coming together. It was a very demanding book to write, because I had to invent that society pretty much from scratch, with a lot of help from the anarchist writers like Paul Goodman, who had actually tried to envision what an anarchist society might be like....

*'I was not writing a program, I was writing a novel. After I wrote *The Dispossessed*, I thought further about utopia,*

and I realized that utopia as a concept was dying, that people were not able to write it. Dystopias all over the place. I did write one other one, In *Always Coming Home* -- I think that's my best utopia. But it's *Dispossessed* that appeals to the idea-minded. They see *Always Coming Home* as a sort of hippie utopia, advocating that we all return to the teepee. All I can say is, read it a little more carefully, guys!

[SF Readers, myself certainly among them, have a tendency to remain fixated on setting well beyond the point that any author intends us to. Likewise, the question of whether the characters live in a "genuine" Utopia obsesses us far more than they.]

Bob Jennings

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I found David Redd's long letter about utopias/empires to be very interesting, until I came to this comment: "This means, basically, that we still have no workable sustainable model of human civilization." Wow! I reread the letter to see if I had missed something. Apparently not, and apparently David means what he wrote. But this is going to come as a big surprise to the seven billion human beings currently on this planet and also to all those who have gone before during the past ten thousand years or so. It sure looks to me as tho all of us today and all of those who came before us have managed to survive in assorted sustainable civilizations pretty well.

Being a dedicated collector means having a steady supply of extra money to spend on that collection. Most of the people I know who collect things are more accumulators and dabblers than dedicated enthusiasts. There are people who are willing to spend ten thousand bucks on a rare coin or a rare comic book, but there aren't too many of them around. On the other hand there are plenty of people who might be willing to spend seventy or eighty bucks on a rare 1" edition fantasy hardback or a key sports card, if they had the money to spare. I know lots of people like that. I'm one of those people myself.

Greg Rihn

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Thank you for the many heretofore un-commented on issues of FLAG. There's been much good stuff in them, but nothing I had an adequate or interesting response to.

Many years ago, perhaps at WisCon 1 or 2, I said, "It's not that fans are more open-minded than other people, it's just that the holes in their heads are in different places." This in particular was in response to observing some young(er) fans rather rudely rebuff UFO enthusiasts who had come

to the con in vain hope of finding kindred spirits. However, I have since affirmed that the principle has general application.

Thus, I've always known that Fandom (and, for the purpose of this letter, that will include Prodom, as well) harbored a cross-section of all that was bad and good in humanity, including sexism. (Although, it must be said, the incidence of outright criminality is low and has gotten lower; the rascals have, by and large, gone on to the great green pasture of credulity that is the Internet--of which more later--.) After all, this is a self-selecting club that anyone can join. The only more-or-less uniform factor is an alleged love for something in the increasingly broad spectrum of things loosely classifiable as Science Fiction and/or Fantasy.

So, we've always had little Heinlein wannabees, just like we've had Ayn Rand wannabees and H. Beam Piper wanabees, who, like most wannabees, typically exhibit all their model's faults and none of their charm or originality. The shocking thing that the Frenkel affair and the SFWA controversy has brought to light is how much sexism there is, and that it has grown tolerated enough to allow sexists to rise to spokesperson positions in organizations such as SFFWA.

We have, perhaps, gotten too familiar and cozy with our resident cranks. After all, we say, in here, where it is bright and reasonable, we are only debating whether or not women are "destroying science fiction"; Out There, people are seriously asserting women should not have the right to vote. However, having been at Ground Zero for N.K. Jemison's searing speech, one has to admit that the barbarians are within the gates.

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Just possibly in the case of inadvertent sexism. I seem to recall seeing relatively recently a comment by a fan that they have a tendency to interrupt people in conversation, and that they suspect this tendency may be greater when the person speaking is a woman. I can't swear as to who this was, but the two names that I associate with it I would consider equally representing the *ne plus ultra* of alright guys (or 'sensitive new-age guys' if you prefer Christine Lavin's take) in this regard. So it is quite possible that any of us could, having been brought up in sexist societies, harbour such inadvertent tendencies.

However I would certainly hope that if I did, and were to display same, somebody would, not so much confrontationally call me on it, but rather draw it to my



attention, so that I might become aware of it and hopefully do something about it. It is in this context that I find the observation by Pat Virzi ("bless her") that "she had experienced something that made her feel harassed, menaced or just plain creeped out" at the current convention. Now given the nature of the then current convention, and hence the knowledge of the attendees thereat, one would only hope that any such harassment, menacing or just plain creeping out, had to have been inadvertent and that the person responsible would have been mortified had they realised. I would have been...but I would rather have had her take me to one side and explain her problem with whatever I had done or said. After all, the whole thing about causing offense inadvertently is that **you don't realise you are doing it** and therefore cannot possibly mend your ways unless the problem is brought to your attention. Even if you feel that you have been misunderstood you would then at least be aware of the possibility of such misunderstandings in the future and take appropriate steps to minimise such occurrences.

So, I wonder, did Pat do anything about the problems she experienced at that Corflu, or did she diplomatically let it slide?

What I want to see in fanzines is the most enjoyable and stimulating writing, artwork and letters, irrespective of the gender of the person responsible for them.

[I think your last paragraph expresses values which every read of FLAG would enthusiastically endorse But I note that of 23 fans

writing letters in the wake of FLAG #15 and 16, exactly one of them is a woman. So, while I can't put my finger on what it is either, there honestly does seem to be something wrong here, And Pat Virzi did "do something" about it, or else we wouldn't be talking about her experience. Harassers frequently claim their actions occurred in innocence or ignorance of their victim's reaction to them, but I think that's usually just an excuse. In practice, I think it usually quite easy to tell when you are harassing someone.]

Jerry Kaufman

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I read Flag 16 on the plane to London, so memory of the issue is weak. Also, you're probably putting the final touches on another issue as I type. I am sure you'll have many interesting observations on the LonCon, as well as on the Royal Observatory and other Greenwich sites and sights. So this email may be more a bread-and-butter note than a praise and print-worthy LoC.

I'm not a big Mingus fan - I've listened to some of his stuff, but it didn't take up permanent residence in my mental jukebox the way that Thelonious Monk's work did. But it was still interesting to hear at second hand Ted's reminiscences and thoughts on the subject. I wonder if Ted's ever given serious thought to collecting and publishing his old music reviews and essays? This might not be something a major publisher would be interested in, but even self-publishing would be worthwhile.

I enjoyed the John Nielsen Hall history. Did you meet David Redd at Worldcon? Was he there?

One of my highlights of our trip was stumbling across Rough Trade Records in Spitalfields, thanks to guide Alun Harries. Even our best local record shops like Silver Platters or Easy Street don't come close. One big difference is that Rough Trade also produces records, and has some fine compilations of the year's best and similar. I picked up a double disc of "End of the Road," a gathering of numbers from performers at a certain festival - I'm being vague because I can't remember if End of the Road is the name of the festival or just of the compilation.

Taral Wayne

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It wouldn't be politic to call Corflu the Ted White Group mind ... even though I suspect that half of fanzine fandom thinks so.

Since people seem to be talking about Corflu (and the FAAns), I figure I've done some good by carping about it

(them). Maybe it will result in some sort of consensus and fixing that loose rudder. (Assuming you feel it needs fixing.) If I've made you uncomfortable with my criticisms, it wasn't my intentions. What I've done, I think, is take the lid off of a topic that I was aware many fans had private thoughts about, but had not been articulating. I've gotten them to speak out, which I think can only be a good thing. If it doesn't lead to beneficial changes to Corflu or the FAAans -- and I don't expect the dialog will any such thing, really -- at least there should be a better understanding of the current state of fanzine fandom.

As for my sometimes bitter sounding attitude toward fandom, I think it is readily understood as an ambivalence I feel toward fandom at present, since I can barely interact with in any positive way. Fanzines are about the limit of my contact with fandom, but my interest isn't what it was a few years ago, and I'm feeling directionless. I can think of much that's positive about my interactions, but it seems banal to just say, "I like my friends," or "this was a great movie." The only "issues" that come to mind tend to bring the Ambrose Bierce in me to the fore. It does not mean I cannot see anything worthwhile in fandom, but only that I see little that requires much thought.

Chicago would be a welcome change of pace, and it is much closer. Still, I don't have the money for travel, and these days it's difficult for me to manage things like airports, convention hotels and getting around in a strange city. I'd even have to do something about my lapsed passport, I think, thanks to border paranoia.

[I agree that anyone who is willing to talk about Corflu or the FAAAn awards ought to be encouraged. I hope you'll get to see some new winners this year -- prohibiting votes for the administrator, as well as self-votes, were both good ideas.]

Robert Lichtman

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Most enjoyable piece of personal history by Uncle Johnny!

I thought your comments to Joseph Nicholas about collecting were very well-put. Back in the '60s I was a completist when it came the albums of groups whose music I loved, even though in some cases their early work wasn't all that wonderful. We all know I collect fanzines, but not indiscriminately. For instance, I recently acquired an enormous collection of the various newszines published by Jimmy Taurasi--*Fantasy News*, *Fantasy Times* and *Science-Fiction Times*--but having no desire to keep them I was

able to pass them on collectors in New Jersey, Japan and Denver, all of whom were happy to get them. That's just one example, but let it go with the final observation I have no urge to own more issues of *Yandro*

I can't remember for sure which was the first science fiction book I ever read, but I think it might have been *Marooned on Mars* by Lester del Rey. I would have gotten it from the library. I see that there were editions as early as late 1952, which would put it right in line for me as a precocious reader of more "adult" material. Around the same time period I was also reading the two EC comics, *Weird Science* and *Weird Fantasy*, and listening to all the radio SF I could find.

[I know that I was exposed to SF in comics and on TV before I was old enough to read even the simplest juvenile SF novel, and had been very taken with fantastic elements in Felix the Cat cartoons. But I think my real introduction to the fantastic has to have been through Christmas stories, particularly the Rankin-Bass production of Rudolf the Red-Nosed Reindeer, with its misfit toys and enormous abominable snowman.]

Ned Brooks

1938-2015

Hi Andy - Thanks for the zine. I quite agree with Greg Benford about skiffy utopias - and even nostalgia is not what it used to be. I have enjoyed many Ursula LeGuin books but go nowhere with THE DISPOSSESSED. The past is a different country, and while many of the artifacts that remain are interesting or beautiful, I have no desire to dwell there. My sister is more into it - she just spent two weeks in Chile where we grew up in the late 40s and early 50s. On the other hand, she did get to be on Easter Island at Easter - it now has a 5000-ft runway (paid for by the US in case they needed it for a Space Shuttle) so it has regular airline service.

[I meant to tell Ned that I was familiar with the STS-capable landing strip on Easter Island from some 1980s techno-thrillers, and to ask him more about his experiences in Chile. Alas, gaffa and procrastination have real-world consequences.]

Other Correspondence Received From:

Steve Bieler, Paul DiFilippo, Nic Farey, Brad Foster, John Hertz, Rob Imes, Steve Jeffrey, Fred Lerner, Lloyd Penney, John Purcell, Garth Spencer, Milt Stevens, R-Laurraine Tutihasi, and likely several more whose replies - and trades -- have been received in the past two years. Hopefully the tide will continue to flow both ways.

The first rechargeable lure with the genetic secret to catching fish.

The last page or pages of FLAG were traditionally devoted to short reviews of the fanzines received since the previous issue, a folkway first practiced by the Obotrites in the late 9th Century CE. Alas, it seems unlikely that I can summarize the past 18 months of the fanzine milieu, not even the fraction of the whole that I receive in the mail or take the time to read at eFanzines.com, in the space of this back page. I could certainly list the cigar box of titles that have arrived since January 1st, 2016, including Robert Lichtman's **TRAP DOOR** #32, Brialey & Plummer's **BANANA WINGS** #61, Farey & Mowatt's robust **BEAM** #9, and Bruce Gillespie's fantastic **SCIENCE FICTION COMMENARY** #91, the arrival of which, gleaming in the purest shimmering samite, probably inspired this issue of FLAG to appear; not to mention the immense, sun-occluding bulk of **CHUNGA** #24, which ought to be posted to eFanzines.com not long after this issue reaches you.

And if I was trying to pick a "Best" fanzine of the first four months of 2016, there's no question I would name the first three issues of Dan Steffan's **FUGGHEAD**, available so far only as an email attachment. Dan had intended this to be a vast and terrible genzine, a forest-crippling slab that would easily dwarf the bulky **MOTA READER** that he and his angels released into the world last August. But faced with insoluble obstacles to traditional printing and distribution, Dan decided to break it into a series of monthly bites, full of names like Terry Carr, John Brosnan, Walt Willis, Charles Burbee, and #3 is 20 pages of Dan's memories of the first Las Vegas Corflu, held 21 short years ago in 1995. The narrative is studded with fan-freaking-tastic new caricatures by Grant Canfield, who might just be entering a period of renewed fan-activity in the wake of his retirement in 2012. Anyone familiar with the remarkable art that Grant provided to so many fanzines in the 1970s and early 1980s will regard this development with happy expectation.

But the sad fact is, in the wake of my rather frenzied presentation of the Fan Activity Achievement Awards in the spring of 2014, my passion for daily fanzine activity waned, and as I observed on page 1, spent the energy that I had previously put into FLAG on seemingly infinite hours at online newspaper archives and Ancestry.com, discovering nuggets like the fact that one of my ancestors was Hall-of-Fame pitcher Christy Matthewson's dentist. I didn't compose many letters of comment when I was fully crifanatical, but in 2015, I don't believe that I wrote any. I'm still involved in an amateur press association – the Madison-based *Turbo-Charged Party-Animal Apa* will celebrate its 30th Anniversary this June – but used it to sublimate my historical obsessions, publishing series like "Madison Mysteries" and "with titles like "The Lost Cities of Lake Wingra" and "The Wandering Pistol of Pliny Brunsell."

I was forced to confront the consequences of this long period of ignorance and inaction a few weeks ago when the deadline for the 2016 FAAn Awards fixed me in its steely gaze. Having shamelessly browbeaten Claire Brialey into voting when I was Administrator, I either had to send a last-minute ballot or plan to endure the hurt in her eyes when I stand in her company in Chicago less than seven days from the hour in which I am typing this. Last year's paper fanzines made a handsome heap on my coffee table, and Bill Burns' helpful index of titles released at eFanzines.com in 2015 stretched out in front of me like the Great Wall of Chunga....

It took about 24 hours, and six or seven final versions, to settle on my choices, and then I had to add 4th and 5th place candidates because I forgot that we had switched from 3 to 5 choices somewhere in the past two years. And these are the titles and people I voted for, in the categories that don't make me sleepy. I did my best to vote only for titles published in 2015, and to avoid the administrator and her works:

Best Genzine: 1.) **SF Commentary**, Bruce Gillespie; 2.) **Big Sky**, Pete Young; 3.) **Raucous Caucus**, Pat Chamock; 4.) **Fadeaway**, Robert Jemmings; 5.) **Beam**, Nic Farey & Jim Mowatt

Best Personal Fanzine: 1.) **The White Notebooks**, Pete Young; 2.) **Lofgeomost**, Fred Lerner; 3.) **Nowhere Fan**, Christina Lake; 4.) **A Mirror for Observers**, Mike Meara; 5.) **Askew**, John Purcell.

Best Special Publication: 1.) **The Mota Reader**, Dan Steffan, editor; 2.) **A Vince Clarke Treasury**, Dave Langford, editor; 3.) **Tyne Capsule**, Rob Jackson, editor

Best Writer: 1.) **Randy Byers**; 2.) **Pete Young**; 3.) **Christina Lake**; 4.) **Fred Lerner**; 5.) **Sandra Bond**

Best Artist: 1.) **D. West**; 2.) **Patrick Ijima-Washburn**; 3.) **Ditmar**; 4.) **Alan White**; 5.) **Teddy Harvia**

Best Fanzine Cover: 1.) **Raucous Caucus #4**, D. West; 2.) **W.O.O. F. Collation 2015**, Patrick Ijima-Washburn; 3.) **The Reluctant Famulus #207**, Brad W. Foster; 4.) **Big Sky #5**, Pete Young; 5.) **Journey Planet #23**, Various

Harry Warner Jr. Award for Best Letterhack: 1.) **Jerry Kaufman**; 2.) **William Breiding**; 3.) **D. West**; 4.) **Jay Kinney**; 5.) **Steve Jeffrey**.

Best Fannish "Site" on the "World Wide Web":
1.) **File770.com**; 2.) **Corflu.org**; 3.) **Facebook.com**

If my choices offend or mystify, remember, I've been trapped in an iceberg since 2014. I'll be back in substantially less than 2 years, with the usual countdown of recent titles in FLAG #18, including treasures from our trip to Corflu 33 and Wiscon 40. Desperate fun!