



FLAG

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It's the terror of knowing what this world is about

The Bitter Fanac of General Fen:

A Lost Friend Forces the Editor from his Crabby Torpor

2016 began promisingly, with the ramp up to the Chicago Corflu, and a trip to the 40th Anniversary of Wiscon, the Madison, Wisconsin convention where my wife Carrie and I began our fan activity together. And I had fine intentions of covering those events in this issue of FLAG. Corflu was great fun, right in the heart of Chicago, with a good program, a hectic auction, many fine meals out, and

we followed it with three days of great Chicago museums. Wiscon was more like the early, serious and academic convention of its (and our) youth than the full-blown circus we worked on 25 years ago. Many fewer parties, but also fewer booksellers than in the Golden Age. It's the crossroads of a different community than the people who founded it, but that's really kind of wonderful to observe in action. If fandom as a whole looked more like Wiscon, I would have better hopes for its long-term survival.



After that, the year degenerated into a series of increasingly ridiculous catastrophes that served to distract me from publishing. My mailing list was depressed by the losses of Joyce Katz and Kate Yule, and our fandom shocked by the death of Aaron White, the young son of Ted and Lynda White. And wider political events, on both sides of the Atlantic, were arguably even worse. Fanzine publishing is in large part a form of correspondence, and who did I want to write to while all that was going on? At least partly to distract ourselves, Carrie and I replaced the 50-year-old aluminum windows and doors of our house, a process which required us to move 75% of its contents. I also blithely undertook the excavation of a section of the back garden for a small flagstone patio, a two-month ordeal known locally as "The Second Battle of the Crater."

However, the act of temporarily boxing and moving most of the house has also provided the catalyst to publish this issue. First, I found myself sorting and filing the hay bales of collected correspondence I have received across my life in fandom, awakening the nagging wish to have done more to reply. And then, I came across two boxes of toys and treasures from the collection of the late Stu Shiffman, that Student Prince among Fen, the Amateur Quacksman, the non-pareil. Early this year, I agreed to help find new homes for these items which Stu's widow Andi Shechter had in storage - and rather than simply auction them off on eBay, I thought it would be much more appropriate to do a fanzine about them. I hope the fact that Stu had these tchochkes will mean more to my readers than almost anyone.

If my life wasn't funny it would just be true and that would be unacceptable.



The picture to the left shows the first 25 items in the catalog of toys and character collectibles formerly owned by the late Stu Shiffman, which appears on the following pages. While I can't include a picture of every item in a 10-page fanzine, I'll have close-up photos of each one by the time you read this, and will be happy to send any or all of them to you through email. Everything shown here includes its original packaging, with the exceptions of the *Great Mouse Detective* plush dolls and the large Effanbee Toys Sherlock Holmes doll on the left. Wouldn't some of these look good on your computer table or a lonely bookshelf? With the exception of the Hasbro Batman figure 4-pack, everything shown here should fit nicely in a flat rate priority mail box.

A Key to the many linos published in FLAG #17:

Page 1: "Do you realize what we accomplished today? Today the spaceship was born!"

Attributed to Walter Dornberger (1895-1980), on the occasion of the first successful launch of the V-2 rocket in 1942.

Page 1: "So we bitched about his fans, and should we crush his sweet hands?"

Lyric from "Ziggy Stardust" by the late, great David Bowie (1947-2016)

Page 3: "Chris, you're still here? Chief said no more sleeping at crime scenes."

Deputy U.S. Marshal Chris Monsanto (Chris Elliot) still can't do things by the book, from Adult Swim's *Eagleheart*.

Page 4: "Steadman is now worried about fire."

& Page 5: "Shit, I said, we both look worse than anything you've drawn."

Lines from "The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved" by Hunter S. Thompson, Scanlan's Magazine, June, 1970.

Page 6: "Then you could cherish the look of surprise on my face."

Jim Moriarty (Andrew Scott) doubts that the Great Detective would actually *kill* him, from Stephen Moffat's *Sherlock*.

Page 7: "That was a great time, the summer of '71 - I can't remember it, but I'll never forget it!"

Attributed to Motörhead frontman Lemmy (aka Ian Fraser Kilmeister, 1945-2015).

Page 8: "We will drink to our partnership. Do you like gin? It is my only weakness."

Dr. Pretorius (Ernest Thesinger) seals his seduction of Victor Frankenstein, *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935)

Page 9: "I fought fire with oil."

Attributed to the writer James Dalton Trumbo (1905-1976)

Page 10: "According to Labvin, an alien power sacrificed itself for humanity."

& Page 11: "Incidentally, the meteorite people are clearly in the majority."

From a Discovery Channel documentary on the 1908 Tuuguska explosion. Per Dr. Yuri Labvin, the explosion was the detonation of an immense alien spaceship, which destroyed itself rather than contaminate Earth by crashing into it.

Page 12: "Woof Washer 360 adjusts to any size dog!"

A genuine product. Order now and you also get the "Pocket Hose Duro-Rib."

Page 13: "Why must you be the screen door in my submarine, Brock?"

The intrepid Hank Venture (Chris McCulloch), wants in on the action, "Showdown on Cremation Creek, Part 2" (2006)

Page 17: "The first rechargeable lure with the genetic secret to catching fish."

From a commercial for the "Rechargeable Twitching Lure," which clearly ought to be the "Bassblaster 2020."



The Shiffman Characters

Recalling a Friend through his Lifelong Companions

As a natural collector, Stu Shiffman left behind a remarkable volume of stuff, including several tons of books and comics, which are gradually being dispersed to dealers and collectors. Stu's fanzine collection has been boxed with care, and Andi has some volunteers working on an online gallery of his artwork. My small contribution to this process has been to accept two cardboard boxes full of collectible toys, mostly action figures and toy cars, with the idea that I would do something to liquidate them, and pass the money to Andi to support efforts to catalog and post Stu's art. But if I sell them on eBay for the modest prices they would likely bring, half the money will be eaten up by fees. What I'd prefer to do is pass them on to people who knew Stu and Andi, or appreciated his art, or maybe just someone who loves Batman as much as he did. In exchange, I'll accept a donation of any amount, and pay for the expense of mailing an item or items to you, so more of your contribution will go to Andi. If there are multiple offers, I can conduct a short auction by email to resolve the sale. And if I can't find any takers this way, the list will still serve me as preliminary notes toward listing these toys and figures for public auction on-line. As to condition, most of these items are in unopened packages, but the boxes show some wear from handling and some of them were pretty dusty. The toys inside should all be in good condition.

A List of Toys for sale from the Shiffman Collection:

1.) 4-Pack of 5-inch action figures, *The New Batman Adventures*, Hasbro, 1999:

Four figures and accessories matching designs in the animated series that ran from 1997 to 1999. The four characters are Batman with Firing Bat-Launcher, Robin with Assault Glider, Alfred with Serving Tray and the villain Clayface, with a break-apart safe. Sold at Toys-R-Us for \$19.99 in 1999.

2.) 1:43 scale die-cast 1940s Batmobile #1, Corgi Classics Ltd, 2008

3.) 1:43 scale die-cast 1940s Batmobile #2, Corgi Classics Ltd, 2008

4.) 1:43 scale die-cast 1950s Batmobile, Corgi Classics Ltd, 2008

In the 1960s and 1970s, the British firm Corgi made high-end die-cast models that collectors truly coveted. In 2000, they started a new dual program of very expensive collectible models in limited runs, and more affordable "peg-hanger" cars that cost about \$5.00. The Batmobile collection was one my favorites among the more affordable series, covering the full design history of Bruce Wayne's ride from the early 1940s to *Batman Begins*. Stu favored the early models, of course; here he has the two 1940s versions, one a black prewar coupe, and the other a fanciful 1930's-type roadster with exposed manifold pipes and Batman's cape standing straight out in the wind behind it! The 1950s model looks like an Oldsmobile with a big fin glued to the top, like an iguana in a cheap monster movie.

5.) Collectible lunchbox featuring *The Spirit* by Will Eisner, Dark Horse Comics, 2000

Lunchboxes were among the "hottest" pop culture collectibles in the late 1990s, and naturally, many new boxes were manufactured with many characters that had never been so immortalized before. Will Eisner's "The Spirit" was a cult favorite with discerning comic fans, and Stu was inspired by both Eisner's pulp drawing style and his story-telling, which was hard-boiled with a heart. The lunchbox features four full-color panels of The Spirit in action, and is in immaculate shape.

6.) Elseworlds Series 2, *Gotham by Gaslight* Batman, DC Direct, 2006

Based on a design by artist Mike Mignola, this 6.75" figure was sculpted by Jonathan Matthews. The Elseworlds series put famous DC comic heroes into alternative settings; *Gotham by Gaslight* pitted a Victorian-era Batman against Jack the Ripper, a situation that Stu found irresistible. Mint in package, this figure is generally not available for under \$50.

7.) Marcus Cole with White Star spaceship model, Babylon 5 Collector Series Figures, WB Toys & Exclusive Premiere, 1997

Stu was a fan of the TV show *Babylon 5* and followed its history, and often recited favorite plots in an effort to get me interested, but it never really worked. I thought the costumes and spaceships were all great, though, and this figure of Ranger Marcus Coles (played by Jason Carter)

[Continued next page]

Look, I'm not going to dismantle the pipes and drink from the U-trap - that's what an *animal* does.

Randy lay there like a slug. It was his only defense.

A List of Toys for sale from the Shiffman Collection:
[Continued from Page 3]

looks particularly stylish. Stu picked it up on the remainder table for \$3.00.

8.) Michael Garibaldi, Limited Edition Collector Series 9" Figure, Exclusive Premiere, 1997

Exclusive Premiere was a marketing company that made a lot of money off of action figure collectors in the late 1990s and early 21st Century. They sold through comic book and collectible shops, and were pioneers in direct online sales, but the quality of their figures varied widely from release to release. This figure of *Babylon 5* character Michael Garibaldi (played by the late Jerry Doyle), is one of their better efforts, with real fabric clothing and a facial sculpt that was state of the art in the pre-digital era.

9.) Collectible mini-lunchbox, *The Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle and Friends*, Ward Productions, 1998

During the "lunchbox boom" of the 1990s, many new designs were created to meet collector demand. Manufacturers developed a smaller box that was about 4 and a half inches tall and under six inches long; although this wasn't practical for carrying much of a lunch, it allowed collectors to put more boxes on a single shelf. Stu was always very fond of Jay Ward's Bullwinkle, and this little box is still in completely mint condition inside its protective plastic bag.

10.) Commander Data as Sherlock Holmes, Playmates Toys 9" figure series, Starfleet Command Target Exclusive, 1999

One of the things that Stu liked writing about was collections that followed a character or group of characters across a variety of media. His own crossover collection focused on Sherlock Holmes, and also included a variety of characters who merely dressed as the consulting detective. This *Star Trek: The Next Generation* figure shows Commander Data (Brent

Spinner) dressed as Holmes from the episode "Elementary, Dear Data." Includes a meerschaum pipe, a magnifying lens, and a Stradivarius violin!

11.) Basil of Baker Street beanbag plush toy, Disney Store Exclusive, 1998

Another figure derived from Sherlock Holmes, Basil of Baker Street is the title character of the 1986 Walt Disney animated feature film *The Great Mouse Detective*. The figure has been kept in a clear plastic display box, and is free of dust or stains.

12.) Professor Padraic Ratigan beanbag plush toy, Disney Store Exclusive, 1998

The villain of *The Great Mouse Detective* was Professor Ratigan, who seemed to have personality traits in common with both Professor Moriarty and Count Dracula. This little beanbag plush, created for Disney stores and theme parks, features a red-lined cape and slicked-back hair that are both pure Lugosi.

13.) Mandrake the Magician 5" Action Figure, *Defenders of the Earth* series, Galoob Toys, 1985

The Defenders of the Earth was perhaps the most "artificial" super-hero team ever devised, combining the Golden Age characters Flash Gordon, The Phantom and Mandrake the Magician, who had nothing in common except that they were all owned by the King Features Syndicate. A remarkable 65 episodes of their animated adventures were made in 1985, as well as a comic book that ran for less than six issues. Galoob toys made a nice collection of colorful figures inspired by the TV show - but of course, no one actually wanted them, which is why they were considered a particularly rare find by the time we began writing for Channelspace. Dealers are asking \$60 to \$80 for it on eBay now - which does not mean that they are *receiving* \$60 to \$80.

14.) Ming the Merciless 5" Action Figure, *Defenders of the Earth* series, Galoob Toys, 1985

It turns out that the Emperor of the rogue planet Mongo actually had skin as green as Froggy the Gremlin, at least if one is to believe this action figure likeness. Interestingly,

Flash Gordon's creator Alex Raymond was listed as one of the writers of the TV series, despite having passed away in 1956. Great cartoonists are indeed immortal.

15.) 1:64 scale die-cast 1921 Ford Model T, Matchbox Collectibles Coca-Cola series, Mattel Inc., 1998

The saga of Matchbox brand die cast toy cars is a fit subject for a book, and indeed, several fine ones have been written on the topic. Matchbox Collectibles was a particularly Byzantine arm of Mattel's toy car empire, sharing molds or "tooling" of pre-World War II cars with other companies including Lledo toys of Britain and White Rose Collectibles, which operated out of Oregon. They secured some very popular licenses for the brand, including Coca-Cola and the Elvis Presley Estate. Stu was not as passionate a partisan for Coke vs. Pepsi as his long-time friend Moshe Feder - I think he was secretly a Moxie man - but he loved the classic lettering and design as seen in this little delivery truck. Now selling on ebay for \$4 to \$6.

16.) 1:43 scale die-cast 1930 Ford Model A Van, General Post Office Livery, Lledo Toys Days Gone series, 1995

Jack Odell was one of the founders of the Matchbox line, and when the company sold out to a Hong Kong firm in the late 1970s, he took his share of the profits and opened his own competing "Made in Britain" firm, Lledo Toys. He secured many of the molds used to cast the famous "Models of Yesteryear" series of 1:43 scale pre-1940 automobiles that were among the collectors favorites. This red post office van would have appealed to Stu's love of all things suggestive of Imperial Britain.

17.) Collectible mini-lunchbox featuring Quick Draw McGraw, American Specialty Confections, 1999

This is the most colorful item in Stu's little collection of lunch boxes, although the graphic of "Queekstraw" fanning his six-gun at a collection of tin cans is repeated on both sides. It is still sealed in plastic shrink-wrap, and apparently still contains "3.8 ounces of Nostalgia Candy Mix." If confronted by a zombie apocalypse, I'm sure the nostalgia would still be mostly edible, but short of such circumstances, I'm content not to know.

18.) 1:43 scale die-cast 1926 Ford Model T, Matchbox Collectibles Coca-Cola series, Mattel Inc., 1998

So only now, after finding the third Model T panel van, do I realize and recall that Stu had a thing for early delivery

trucks, something which we shared. Like me, he loved the way the wide back panels became a mobile canvas for a legion of commercial artists. This larger-scale model T features a spectacular graphic of a paper-hatted Coke vender with a yellow tray of red-labeled bottles - sublime!

19.) Futurama metal collectible figures, Rocket USA, 2000

These figures of Fry, Leela, Bender and Professor Farnsworth are about 3" high, and make excellent computer fauna. But like Stu. I've kept mine on the display card, because it's so lavishly decorated with Matt Groening's art. Made of finest Chinese Zymac, as the card proclaims, "20th Century technology at 21st Century prices."

20.) Limited edition 16-inch Sherlock Holmes figure, Effanbee Toys, 1983

Certainly the largest Sherlock Holmes figure in Stu's collection, this was probably the most expensive as well. The tag indicates that the seller was at least *asking* for \$90 for the doll. No idea if the figure's pipe and hat were present then, but they have apparently been lost.

21.) 1:43 scale die-cast 1948 Commer 8 cwt van, Matchbox International Ltd, The Dinky Series, 1988.

Another example of the convoluted history of Matchbox is this series from the late 1980s, which reproduced models originally cast by Dinky Toys, another major British toy maker. The Commer 800-weight van was produced by the Rootes Motor Company which also issued famous marques like the Humber, the Hillman and the Sunbeam, all frequently seen in Lledo and Matchbox Collectibles castings. This model has side livery advertising John Sharp and Sons "Super-Kreem Coffee."

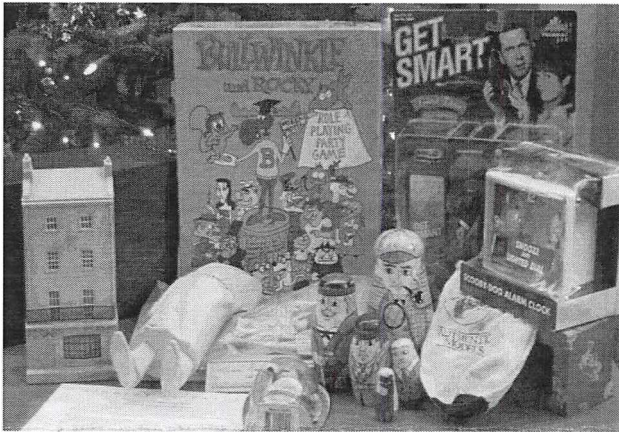
22.) 6" Dr. Evil & Mini-Me action figures, Toyfair 2000 Exclusive silver edition, McFarlane Toys, 2000

These handsome effigies of Mike Myers and Veme Troyer depict them as Dr. Evil and Mini-Me from the movie *Austin Powers, International Man of Mystery*. These silver-suited models were distributed at the 2000 New York Toyfair, an event that Stu and I both covered for Channelspace. At the time, McFarlane toys had a growing reputation for accurate and intricate figures that sacrificed some articulation in the name of detail. Now, even the simplest action figures appear to have been fabricated with a 3-D printer - which they soon will be.

[Concluded next page]

Cromwell, why are you such a person?

Funny how I blind myself, I never knew.



Items #26 - #32 of the Shiffman Collection

23.) Micro Machines National Geographic Society Collection #5: Cretaceous, Galoob Toys, 1998

The “Micro-Machines” line of miniature toys included a remarkable variety of subjects, from Star Trek and Star Wars ships to research submersibles and models of modern and extinct animals. This pack of dinosaurs from the Cretaceous period includes a vicious little Deinonychus, a toothy Tyrannosaurus not quite 2” tall, and a spike-frilled Styracosaurus. Stu had strong interests in both archeology and paleontology, but then again, who doesn’t like dinosaurs?

24.) Mutts by Patrick McDonnell collectible figure 4-pack, Dark Horse Deluxe, 2006

Stu was a historian of the comic strip, and appreciated Patrick McDonnell’s daily “Mutts,” which has often made graphic homage to the great cartoonists of the 20th Century. This collection of 3.5-inch figures of his creations includes the cats Mooch and Shinky, and the dogs Earl and “Guarddog.” Still sealed in the colorful display box.

25.) Republicans Attack! trading cards, by James Vance and Mark Landman, Kitchen Sink Press, 1992
“A Paranoid Fantasy in 36 Parts.” Pure Schadenfreude.

26.) Agent Maxwell Smart 6” action figure, Exclusive Premiere, 1998

Both this figure of Don Adams as Maxwell Smart in the TV Series *Get Smart* and the display card are in near-mint condition. Stu’s sense of humor was always his most keen.

27.) 9” plaster/resin architectural model of 221B Baker Street, Timothy Richards, London, 1998

This handsome painted plaster model of the front of Sherlock Holmes’ apartments in Baker Street includes a metal balcony railing, and a custom-contour box for mailing. Retail price is abot \$150.00.

28.) Nikolai Tesla mini-figure, Statubreak Toys, 2008

“Little Bighead” style figure, about three inches tall, with metal wand and static orb. Tesla was one of many *fin de siècle* figures that populated Stu’s fiction and art, at home in both real scientific history and its imaginary shadow.

29.) Scooby-Doo, Where Are You? Alarm Clock, Warner Brothers Studio Store, 1999

Includes snooze alarm. Still sealed in plastic shrink-wrap.

30.) Sherlock Holmes Russian nesting dolls, Authentic Models, late 1990s

Set of 5 *Matryoshka* figures includes Sherlock and Mycroft Holmes, Watson, Lestrade and the Baskerville Hound. Includes box and printed storage bag.

31.) Rocky and Bullwinkle Role Playing Party Game, TSR Hobbies, 1988

So loosely organized it can barely be described as a game, but full of fun features, like a half-dozen spinners instead of dice for decision-making, and cardboard stand-ups of characters including the Moon Men Cloyd and Gidney. Designed by David Cook and Warren Spector. All parts appear to be present, including the plastic hand puppets.

32.) 12” Plaster Resin figure model of Basil Rathbone as Sherlock Holmes, unknown manufacturer

This is the most mysterious item in the collection, a superb resin casting of Basil Rathbone as Holmes, with separately cast head, arms and hands, one holding a pipe. Other parts include Watson’s bag, a table lamp, a book, a magnifying lens, and a pair of tobacco boxes. There is no mark anywhere on the model to indicate who made it, but this sort of model seldom sells for less than \$75.00.

That’s it! Email me for pictures of any item listed. And whatever these things are “worth,” it can’t hurt to ask.

COLOR PARTY: Readers' Letters to FLAG

[It is at this point that I always begin to feel as though FLAG's days as a paper fanzine are numbered. I received more than twenty letters on FLAG #16, several of which ran to 3 or 4 pages. Without the restrictions of space and postage cost, I'd probably run them all. But with relatively little to comment on in this advertising flyer, I'll be able to share some more of my accumulated correspondence in FLAG #19. With the end of the year bearing down in less than 48 hours now, I can't even take the time to re-type the letter which came to me through the U.S. Mail; so Steve Bieler, Paul DiFilippo, Martin Frenzel and Howard Waldrop will appear in #19. Your letters are presented in Baskerville Old Face, like this, while my comments are expressed in Monotype Corsiva, like this.]

Pete Young

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Your new buzz on genealogy is applauded. It's something I'd like to dig further into, myself; my father did something similar in his 50s and discovered not-so-distant relatives in Sydney, Australia, on his family's side, and also on my mother's side, which was genealogically (is that a word?) far more interesting as her parents were both immigrants, from Belgium and Switzerland. My Belgian grandfather on my mother's side died when she was in her teens so I never knew him, and his surname was Cloet... or was it Cloët? The family have always been undecided about the umlauts, and strangely we have always pronounce it "Clo-ee", even though it was definitely pronounced 'Clert' in Belgium, and is certainly related to the anglicised 'Clute'... I wonder how far back in time I would have to go to find THAT particular family connection.

I'm very grateful to you for your high rankings of my output in your FAAn Award nominations, a very pleasant surprise. It also makes me realise I really ought to get stuck into the next issue of Big Sky, which I would like to complete this year, parenthood permitting. A double issue is planned, on British Space Opera, and it's currently about half complete. I've even thought about tapping you on the shoulder for something on Iain M. Banks, although I expect you may have already said all you want to say in past issues of FLAG.

[I've no idea how close you are to publication some six months later, but I'm quite ready to take up the topic of Culture again if there's still time. You'll have to let me know. I find the various

snapshots of family trees that my readers have offered quite fascinating.]

Hope Leibowitz

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I was totally appalled when I read the words "there is every indication that these will extend his life by a year or more". I sure hope it is a LOT more. How old is he, anyway? Not even 50 I'm guessing. He should have 20 to 40 more years to live. So far, he is the only one I know with glioblastoma who hasn't already died. And I had no idea he had seizures. I'm not sure if Kate Yule has the same thing, and I haven't heard anything about how she's doing for months.

As to ancestry, I never had much curiosity about it. All I know is that my father was one of 12 children in Russia but three of them died in infancy. He came to the US in 1914 I think, probably with a brother or two. I have only the vaguest memories of them. He went to night school to learn English and at some point got a job at Hershon (no idea of spelling) Metalworks, or something like that. He was a sheet metal worker at the same company for 44 years. They made him retire at 75 as they were afraid he'd hurt himself, as he was already going senile. He got a watch - no pension. He lived around four more years after that and my mother hated having him home all day, but she died first, though she was 18 years younger. Eventually I had to put him in a home as I couldn't take care of him. Thanks for the Spokane Worldcon report - I haven't heard much about it except for the smoke, and people having trouble breathing.

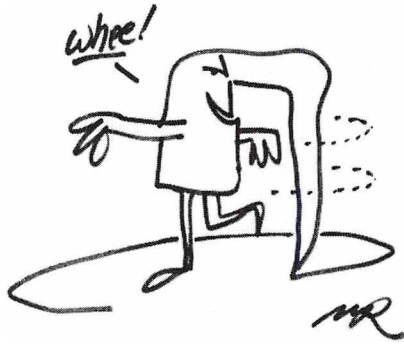
[Hope, I left in your comment about our departed friend Kate Yule because it's quite true that if you know anyone fighting an aggressive brain cancer, you shouldn't wait to spend time with them. Meanwhile, the remarkable Randy Byers is a year out from the surgery that removed his tumor, keeping us updated on his crappy chemotherapy experiences, and making plans to be at Corflu 34 in Los Angeles this coming spring.]

Tara Wayne

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Of course, anyone who decides to publish a frequent fanzine *on paper*, is laying the groundwork of his own failure. Few of us have the disposable income to drop \$100 or \$150 in a mailbox once a month. As much as anything, the arrow of entropy that has driven fanzine publishing to digital formats can be blamed on postal rates.

Of course, in your case, we can blame genealogy. While I've had intermittent curiosity about my antecedents, the



cost and trouble it would entail to unravel the genetic trail has dissuaded me from making any but the most cursory attempt. An aunt of mine spent considerable money, before her own death some years ago, to uncover her family roots. I never saw the results, but one or two details trickled down to me, one of which was that the name "Benbow" did indeed appear on the family tree, a century or two ago. This was significant because my Uncle once told me that the English admiral John Benbow (1653 to 1702) was related. Strangely, my aunt, his sister, was unaware of this! In any case, Benbow is an uncommon name and its appearance in the family tree does lend credence to my uncle's claim.

Of course, what does it matter that I share .0001% of my DNA with a long dead admiral of the Royal Navy? That's reckoning it through the entirely artificial paternal line, which is about as meaningful as reckoning the line through the tallest or best dancer in the family. There is a distinct possibility that genetically I'm as closely related to the Queen as to this admiral ... though I bear neither name. And I might be more closely related to William of Normandy than the Queen is. Such is the absurdity of genealogy. All the same, I do not deny the fascination of the subject.

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I'm rather partial to these so-traditional editorials on "why this is late", although sadly some of the news therein is less welcome. In particular all good wishes to Randy.

Good long Sasquan report, thanks. Nina Horvath's encounter with USA fandom (and vice versa) echoes the old cultural-exchange side of early TAFF visits, and I hope to read her own side of it all someday.

Should confirm to Bob Jennings: yes, I did mean what I wrote, "no sustainable model of human civilisation." From my millennia-long perspective within a modern "Celtic" society, I note that the neolithic mammoth-hunting civilisation wiped out its resources, the Bronze Age

civilisations collapsed, the Roman Empire ran out of outside wealth to loot, etc, etc. As a species we may have survived previous disasters, but as a series of civilisations I see nothing long-term sustainable. Basically we are warlike consumerists pursuing unlimited growth amid only finite resources. (When I was young there were just two billion humans around, not seven billion, in a world less depleted of resources and other living things.) But perhaps I shouldn't prolong this in *Flag*. For more on "we're doomed" see similar off-the-cuff comments in recent issues of *Vibrator*.

Baskerville Old Face? Looks nice in bold, but the main print seems thin and grey - the font, the reproduction, my eyes? Wonder if anyone else had this problem.

[I'm sure at least part of the problem arises from my persistent use of ten-point type, which seems rather gray no matter what face one uses. But as Tara! said, this is the business we've chosen.]

Mark Plummer

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For the Worldcon itself, The Lost World Fanzine Lounge was of course a huge hit, and the evening fanzine lounge in the Davenport even more so. The way that you talk about it being 'very satisfying ... having a job to do at a Worldcon' reminds me incredibly of Greg Pickersgill, although I think Greg usually makes the point about conventions generally, and generally I'd agree although I think in the case of Sasquan it was far more important for me personally not having a job to do. Because, like you, 'everything that I encountered in Spokane I saw through the lens of contrasting details in the previous year's experiences' but those experiences were the culmination of something I'd been intimately involved in for half a decade, whereas Sasquan was something I hadn't even intended to attend until a spur of the moment decision five months previously.

Loncon 3 was a personal failure for me for various reasons including the disconnect between official and personal participation, something which would have been mitigated by a Prolog(ue) type event the weekend before. My quintessential Loncon 3 experience involved being in the wrong place at the wrong time and thus being conscripted by James Bacon and tasked with standing outside the back-door to a catastrophically overcrowded George R R Martin programme item. There I was to look vaguely official and tell people that they couldn't come in. So I was stuck there for the best part of an hour, missing a committee meeting I was supposed to be attending, so that I could disappoint people. Now there's a summation of running a Worldcon.

So I relished not having anything to do at Sasquan beyond hanging a few of those fanzine cover boards and helping

Scott to raise the pteranodon. I was amused by Scott's observation that he had spotted some of the covers weren't quite set straight but he didn't like to say anything in case it was one of those fannish things we do. And I still feel we missed a collective trick: the raising and lowering of the pteranodon should have been a daily ritual to mark the the opening and closing of The Lost World Fanzine Lounge.

Our last night experience was similar to yours in that we returned from dinner with Ruth Leibig and Ian Stockdale to in turn discover and be appalled by the overheated overcrowded frenzy of the official dead dog party, and then the relief of Karen and Mike's room, even if as you say it was only marginally less crowded. I marveled at the way that for our last night in Spokane they'd managed to assemble so many of the people we wanted to see in one place for our convenience.

And The Lost World Fanzine Lounge lives on, scattered across the globe. I know Randy has the banner on his bedroom door, and as I'm typing the triceratops is sitting on the adjacent sofa bed as a tangible reminder of a fun Worldcon. I really think I could carry on for many more pages about 'Ten Days in Trufandom', possibly to the extent of matching its word count.

[Indeed, so I hope you don't mind that I'm stopping you there; yours was one of those letters that rival the length of its subject fanzine. I honestly think the value of a Worldcon is directly related to the number of friends you have present there and how much time you get to spend with them.]

David B. Williams

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Your interest in genealogy rings several bells for me. I'm not personally interested, but my sister has been ransacking libraries and court houses across the South, trying to find

an ancestor who fought for the CSA so she can qualify to join the Daughters of Confederate Veterans Association. No luck so far, which is surprising because several branches of our family came from Virginia and Kentucky. Also, a great aunt did a thorough job of tracing my paternal grandfather's line and got back as far as the 10th century. She got lucky because she found a connection with the Dutch royal family in the 16th century, and once you break into royal territory there are good records of who begat whom. So I know that I am descended from Basil the Bulgar Slayer (not a very savory ancestor, but what the hell, he wore the imperial crown). The only ancestral fact of any pertinence today is that one of my Dutch forebears settled in New York City in the mid-1600s and built the oldest residence still standing in that city.

Your "Ten Days in Trufandom" was well done. You veered pretty close to the dangerous con-report shoals charted by Taral Wayne (for example, I call your attention to the Vietnamese restaurant item, not something that belongs in a con report of 24 carat purity) but otherwise the account rates a high mark. But what were you thinking, staging a pre-convention con? This is what I would call too much of a good thing.

[Earlier this year, Carrie and I did two conventions in three weeks, and that was really more than we could take too. It's made me resolve at last that if I am confronted with a similar choice in the future, I'm going to skip the con that's on fire.]

Other Correspondence Received From:

Jason Burnett (on FLAG #12!), Steve Bieler, William Breiding, Paul DiFilippo, Brad Foster, Marlin Frenzel, Bruce Gillespie, Kim Huett, Steve Jeffrey, Robert Lichtman, Jim Linwood, Ian Millsted, Lloyd Penney, John Purcell, Dale Speirs, Garth Spencer, Milt Stevens, Philip Turner, R-Lauraine Tutihasi, and Howard Waldrop. Some of those letters will appear issue #19.]

FANZINE COUNTDOWN?

While this issue of FLAG is appearing about 18 months more quickly than the previous number, it's still a bit too long a period for me to execute the full list of all the fanzines published in the intervening six months. Perhaps I'll get there next issue, which will need something to fill up its rearmost page as well.

In FLAG #16, I offered a list of my choices for the 2016 FAAn Awards, which were duly bestowed in Chicago a few days later. CHUNGA tied with Pat Charnock's RAUCOUUS CAUCUS for Best Genzine, a result that

was doubly pleasing to Carl, Randy and I. There was a program to discuss the past and future of the awards, and the incoming administrator Murray Moore promised a new procedure that's closer to the system that Moshe Feder - and Arnie Katz - wanted to implement on their mutual invention of the FAAns. A jury, consisting of all the people who voted in 2016, has been invited to submit their nominations for the same categories as were awarded in Chicago. This will be used to create a shortlist with four nominees in each category and a fifth space left for a write-in vote! Given this situation, a list of some 2016 favorites is clearly in order.

1.) **XENOTECH #1**, Grant Canfield, 15 Scenic Drive, Novato, CA 94949 Email rgc45@gmail.com. So do I call this a personal zine or a special publication? The Corflu 50 brought Grant to Chicago to attend Corflu 33, and he presented every member of the convention with a personalized copy of this remarkable anthology/portfolio of his art, including many notable fanzine covers, cartoons, caricatures, pin-ups, even a floorplan recreating his grandfather's drugstore in Britt, Iowa, circa 1952! It's a real pleasure to page through this work, and thereby review the past 40 years of science fiction fanzine publishing. The best robots in fandom, too.

2.) **FUGGHEAD #3-6**, Dan Steffan, 2015 NE 50th Ave, Portland, OR 97213 Email Dansteffanland@gmail.com. The single flaw I find in Dan's superb and frequent genzine is his relative reluctance to include a full-blown letter-column, something with which I also obviously struggle. Issue #6 became a memorial for our beloved friend Joyce Katz, to which I and a few other writers contributed; but Dan's own heartfelt memories of Joyce are the real deal, one of the best pieces of fan writing I've read in any year. While I'm marking Dan's name under "Best Artist" again this year, I'm seriously thinking of giving him a nod as Best Writer, too.

3.) **SF COMMENTARY #93**, Bruce Gillespie, 5 Howard Street, Greenborough, Victoria 3088 AUSTRALIA Email gandc001@bigpond.com I could easily include Bruce's fannish genzine **TREASURE #4** in this listing. Bruce's fanzines are classy and beautiful, and I read more actual criticism and review of science fiction in them than in most other fanzines combined. But what stands out here is Bruce's editorial "Revelations: My Life, Science Fiction and Fanzines," which includes both a charming autobiography and superb precis of the practice and value of fanzine publishing, originally delivered as a talk to the Book Collectors Society of Australia! Books discussed range from Philip K. Dick to Joyce Carol Oates. And Bruce's design pleases me so much that I think it induces a mild euphoria.

4.) **THE WHITE NOTEBOOKS #5-#6**, Pete Young, 136/200 Emerald Hill Village, Soi 6 Hua Him, Frachuap Khiri Khan 77110 Thailand Email Peteyoung.uk@gmail.com Pete Young's voice seems effortless and honest and brilliant, while detailing a year of huge joy and deep sadness, including the birth of his second son Sky (born on the day of the Brexit vote!), and the death of his father, which came after #6 was published. As fascinating as Pete's dual English/Thai experience.

5.) **BROKEN TOYS #50**, Taral Wayne, 245 Dunn Ave. #2111 Toronto, Ontario Canada Email taral@bell.net And so ends the run of one of the most thoughtful fanzines in recent years. Taral should be pleased with what he did with **BROKEN TOYS** -- it was, as he notes, only sporadically a "focal point," owing to the lack of activity of the modern fanzine fan, but it provided him with a place to write on subjects that ranged from contemporary fan parties to the ancient world. It's a point of pride to Taral to write in his true voice, which is dour and regretful, but also intelligent and realistic. He runs all over the map here, resurrecting unpublished stuff from 1979 and detailing unsuspected media convention experiences, finishing up with a lovely but literal middle finger. I prefer his work on the front cover, one of the year's best.

6.) **INCA #12**, Rob Jackson, Chinthay, Nightingale Lane, Hambrook, Chichester, West Sussex PO18 8UH United Kingdom Email robjackson60@gmail.com. One of the funnier zines of a grim 2016. I particularly liked Sandra Bond's "The Ballade of Facebook," and poor Sumner Hunnewell's "My Meth Neighbors."

7.) **FADEAWAY #50**, Robert Jennings, 29 Whiting Road, Oxford, MA 01540-2035 Email fabfcbks@aol.com. I also wanted to congratulate Bob on the achievement of publishing fifty issues of what I tend to think of as "Curt Phillips' Favorite Fanzine." This time, I assume Curt enjoyed Bob's article on the radio drama *The Whistler* best.