

Implosion

Implosion #33 is the local monthly fanzine of Arnie Katz (330 S. Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107). It is produced for the 33rd Distribution of Apa V, the Las Vegas apa, which has as this month's theme "FIJAGH/FAWOL" which I have blithely ignored. Today is Tue 29, 1996.

Implosion: The Fanzine that proves anyone can publish a fanzine.
Member, fwa.

Before Charles Burbee died, he gave specific instructions to his family and friends. He wanted his ashes scattered in the desert near Amboy Crater. Never religious, Charie made it clear that he didn't want any form of ceremony or a lot of hand-wringing histrionics. He told his son Ed that he wanted those close to him to throw the ashes and then go have a party.

No weeping and wailing. Maybe a few Rotslertoons and a couple of trenchant epigrams.

When Ed Burbee e-mailed the date for the scattering, June 15th, I knew we had the party wired. The monthly Social was scheduled to begin at 4:30 on that Saturday.

Bill Rotsler and Robert Lichtman decided to join Joyce, Ben Wilson, Ken Forman and me on the trip from Las Vegas to the appointed place, Amboy Crater. This beauty spot is located several hours away between Barstow (well-known as a source of virile truckers to fans of Sheryl Crowe) and Needles, CA.

Joyce orchestrated Bill and Robert's arrival on separate planes for about 4:00 pm on Friday afternoon. Despite delays, her arrangements were perfect. We'd just popped the trunk to stow Rotsler's bag when Lichtman emerged from the terminal and ambled in our direction.

Bill and Robert are among my favorite fan friends, but it was especially good to see them. I didn't trust myself to keep to the spirit of Charlie's instructions without their help. And when that help failed, as I suspected it would, I wouldn't be the only one getting emotional.

Their presence reminded me that even the tragic loss of Bob Shaw, Redd Boggs

Charles Burbee and Ethel Lindsay in so short a time doesn't destroy the continuity of fandom. Fandom is losing its pioneers, but there are still many prolific and talented fans with decades of fanac ahead of them. And behind them is another generation of talented fans and so on and so on right to the relatively new group here in Las Vegas.

Apart from the after-effects of a little flight turbulence, both seemed reasonably sturdy. Bill has been sick, but his energy is still tremendous, and Robert Lichtman remains his impeccably easy-going self.

The trip back from the airport crackled with good cheer as Bill told us several pretty funny stories about his adventures in Hollywood. Though he's done a few articles on this subject in the past, and I gather he writes about similar material in a Certain Private Apa, I wish we could induce him to cull a few stories and ship them over to **Wild Heirs** like a good co-editor.

"Artists draw," Rotsler said, summing up his credo in a single phrase. "Sergio Argones told me about some Mexican artists who don't draw anything that doesn't have payment attached to it," Bill said. He went on to make it clear that he has a different philosophy.

I'd say that Rotsler sees art as a processes. He explores a theme the way a musician improvises around the basic tune. He indicated that it might be his preference, at times, to see only a few examples of each series published, but that he'd like to turn down the requests for art from fanzine editors.

At the risk of my future art supply, I can't entirely agree with WR. I enjoy seeing many examples of a Rotsler series, even if a few stand out as superior. In the Wild Heirs anniversary, Rotsler did dozens of cartoons on the theme "Vegas Fandom is" which we ran in the letter column. One of the cartoons has become Las Vegrants'

unofficial semi-official slogan: "Las Vegas Fandom has the strength of 10 because we are 20."

We love this cartoon and quote it to each other at appropriate moments. It will live in Las Vegas fanhistory. It may even avert a future catastrophe, like a worldcon bid.

Yet I wouldn't want to give up the other 20 or so cartoons about LV Fandom, many of them quite humorous and perceptive in their own right, in the name of publishing only the series' high point. The group of cartoons is a multi-faceted artistic statement.

This gave me a convenient opportunity to ask Bill about a set of illos he'd sent about twoweeks earlier. They were very funny, but I wanted to make sure that he still wanted them to run in the near future inlight of some recent fannsh occurrences.

The cartoons' format is a word or phrase and then a drawing that symbolically illustrates the copy. The phrases are all things like "heart attack" and "stroke."

"Definitely run them" Rotsler responded immediately. "I did them while I was having a heart attack," he added. That got everyone's attention.

He elaborated with an anecdote. While visiting a mall with a friend, he felt the imminent onset of a small cardiac episode. (He evidently gets them occasionally to no grrreat lingering effect).

Rotsler told his buddy not to worry and sat down on the nearest bench. While contemplating the progress of this intra-Rotsler phenomenon, Bill decided he ought to try to draw. Under the spell of this spell, he turned out this series and sent it to me.

Once Ken Forman, Ben Wilson and Tom Springer arrived, we went off to the reborn New York Deli. Once located 'way over on the east side, it recently re-opened near Toner Hall in the Northwest. Despite a three-year absense, it appears to have the same owners, workers and menu. I think they had the booths and tables mothballed, because it also looks like the original restaurant.

It wasn't long after we finished dinner that Tom had to head for the airport. He and Tammy had scheduled a trip to San Francisco to see Tom's ailing sister, and it was impossible to change plans by the time

the family set the date.

The evening broke up fairly early, despite the appeal of the company, because we had to get moving early the next morning to reach Amboy Crater by the appointed time.

So Saturday we went to the desert to scatter the ashes of Wild Heirs co-editor, seminal insurgent -- he'd like that term -- Charles Burbee. He was a great friend to Las Vegas Fandom, a great personal friend to me and an inspiration to every fanwriter and publisher,

Since I'm one of the frequent complainers about tardy Vegas fans, I should report that Ben and Ken didn't arrive on time with the van. They showed up early. So when we dawdled a few extra minutes being sociable, it didn't prevent us from hitting the highway at 7:30 as planned. This unprecedented promptness is the ultimate compliment to Burb. Nothing else has ever evoked comparable time-consciousness.

The van was spacious and comfortable, except for the second row seatbelts. Mime fit like a garotte, which was bad noose to someone starting a three-hour car trip.

The problem was that the chest strap was anchored about a foot behind the seat. An extra fitting, over the window and parallel to the seat, might've alleviated the problem. I sat for awhile with the strap tight under my chin, but soon threw caution to the winds and shucked the belt. Ken's driving to Amboy Crater (and Ben's homeward piloting) gave us a smooth trip, so it wasn't as though I need lashed down tightly.

The trip unfolded without incident. Ken, who's a tour guide at Hoover Dam, narrated our passage through the barren land. He spoke knowledg-ably about the cactii and rocks as we whizzed past them and ciled several of them by name. Rotdsler, a frosty Barq's root beer in hand, old stories about many colorful characters, in-cluding the Notorious Thea and the even more notorious Harlan Ellison.

Joyce had gone out about 7:00 am and gotten a dozen assorted bagels. We munched these, with or without cream cheese accompaniment and washed them down with cold sodas.

"Amboy, Populations 20," Robert read off the sign that announced our arrival. The crater isn't exactly a tourist mecca, so when this

stretch of old Route 66 lost out to a bypass, Amboy shrank to little more than a widening in the road. It's little more than a combination gas station and cafe, a post office and the atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe tracks.

I briefly considered the possibility of all of us becoming residents. We could run this place with six votes. We could conquer Amboy for Fandom and remake the place in the image of fandom. The only hitch is that we'd have to live there, and it might be tough to import necessities, like bagels, toner and XXX videos.

By 11:00, everyone was ready for the short ride-and-walk to the site. Cora, his three kids, their cousins the Bouchards, and an assortment of grandchildren trekked a little deeper into the desert to the lava flow from the Crater. (Ben and Ken could barely be restrained from scaling the black crater walls, but the frailer participants wouldn't've survived the climb.)

After Cora and Ed spoke, they asked me to say a few words. I didn't speak long. My voice was very y, and it was hard to get the words out. I don't remember the exact words, so you're spared the complete official text. My final line went something like: "He will live as long as we, his heirs in fandom, are inspired by his example and work in the tradition he established."

Burbee looked down on us from the big semi-circular bar at the Enchanted Convention and shook his head. "That Arnie," he said, nudging Terry Carr, "he sure is one serious and constructive fan."

"There's still hope, meyer," Terry says loyally.

"There is? Glad to hear it." Burbee always did like me.

"Yeah, Victor Gonzalez has given up on him."

"It's a start."

After we scattered the ashes in defiance of federal and local statute, which is the way Burb would have wanted it, Ben and Ken gave a unique tribute. "We want to share a beer with Burbee," they said as they opened a Bud and each took a sip. Then they poured the rest of it out on the same lava flow where we'd tossed what Rotsler called "The Incomplete

Burbee." What a sensitive tribute!

After the ceremony, we returned to the restaurant to have lunch together. I ordered the Route 66 burger, proudly billed as "the greatest hamburger on earth."

That's an impressive boast. As I waited, expectantly, I wondered if I needed to revive my idea of taking over Amboy. If they had "the greatest hamburger on earth," I'd have to bribe a noted critic and hamburger expert Walt Williams here, and it would have to be fixed up nice to welcome him.

The actual Route 66 burger disappointed me. It wasn't the best hamburger on earth. The only way in which it could validate itself as "the greatest hamburger on earth" is if they served it on a bed of dirt.

In fairness to the establishment's reputation, I must admit that Rotsler rated it much higher than I did. "Of course, I had a 'Rout 66' burger," he observed, referring to my pronunciation of the item as a "root" 66 burger.

"You probably had yours with 'to-mah-toe' too," I sneered.

Cora promised to visit in July, I hugged her good-bye, and Ben wheeled us back onto the highway. Ben and Ken chose a slightly different route, "for variety." Even this surefire plot complication failed to. We drove back from the crater without approaching anything remotely reminiscent of an anecdote.

The social proved an odd postscript. I guess my thin veneer of insurgentism isn't strong enough to let me carry on like "The Man Who Came to Dinner" a few hours after saying good-bye to a friend. More than a friend, a father figure.

I'd just gone to the living room after finishing my chores when a guy I'd never seen before sat down next to me and struck up a conversation. He let me know he'd done a little pro work, including some stuff for "Logan's Run," and that he'd been a fan for a decade or two. He's a former LA fan who has moved to Las Vegas and was checking out the Social on the encouragement of Alan and DeeDee White.

Someone's passing reference to the trip to Amboy Crater piqued his curiosity. "Is it that good a crater?" he asked.

"No, it isn't much," I admitted. "We went there, to scatter the ashes of Charles Burbee."

"Who is Charles Burbee?" asked the LASFS bveteran.

"Besides being a friend of most of the people in this room, Charles Burbee is arguably the greatest American fan of all time."

"Oh? I never heard of him," said my new acquaintance. "What cons did he put on?"

He never heard of you, Burb.

"Charles Burbee" I repeated more slowly and distinctly. Maybe my elocution, after a long, hard day, wasn't all it should be. No light of comprehension disturbed his lineless, deeply tanned face.

He still didn't know you, Burb.

"Charles Burbee is arguably the greatest US gan of all time," I told him. "He wrote and published many fine articles and fanzines. He edited Shangri-"l'Affaire," I offered. Unfortunately, as a late 20th Century LASFSan, he had apparently never heard of this fanzine. "He's nominatyed for two retro Hugos," I said with a certain amount of exasperation. "Charles Burbee!"

Later in the same conversation he referred to being active "in fandom and also on the creative side."

That told me everything, including why he didn't know you, Burb.

"FIAWOI" (Fandom Is A Way of Life) and "FIJAGH" (Fandom Is Just A Goddamn Hobby) are polar opposites in a long dialogue

about the proper relationship between individual fans and fandom. Since things are seldom black and white, most fans espouse a position somewhere between these two extremes, but the rival rallying cries continue to sound through fanzines and at clubs and conventions.

Which philosophy sounds right is a function of that fan's individual experience. It is unlikely that a fan in a small town bereft of other fans will embrace FIAWOL. Fanzines without in-person contact can't be more than an enjoyable, time-consuming hobby. Conversely, a fan from a large metropolitan area with lots of in-person fanac may find fandom looming pretty large on their social calendar.

The isolated fan experiences the *hobby* of fandom, but they don't share in the *subculture* of fandom to the same extent as someone who lives surrounded by other fans. When you dine with fans and go to the movies with fans and watch TV with fans and cruise the mall with fans, then fandom *can* come pretty close to being a way of life.

What do I believe? Like I said, most fans are somewhere in-between, and so am I. I believe fandom is more than just an interest, that it is a complex and rich subculture. Yet there's a lot to my life that isn't even tangentially part of fandom. Maybe the answer is "FIAPOL" -- Fandom Is A Part of Life. I know it's a significant part of mine.