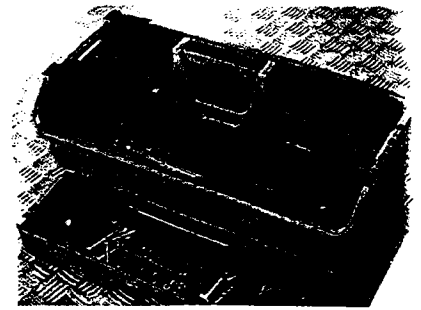


Never Quite Arriving

Número Dos

(the all home-improvement issue)



Following the popularity of issue one (soon to be renamed Nearly Quite Forgotten), I couldn't wait to get out the follow-up and stake my claim to a seat at the great fanzine revivalist banquet. Unfortunately, not being able to afford another trip to America to report on popular American shoe sizes and draw wild extrapolations on the future of trainers, I decided to resort to outside contributors.

"Peter-Fred," I said to my ex-husband as he drove me to the DIY shop to get materials for the shelves he was going to put up in my new house, "just because we're not married any more, don't think you can get out of writing for my fanzines."

"It never even crossed my mind," he assured me. "But I thought you wanted me to help with putting cork tiles on the kitchen floor."

"Well, actually, my wardrobe door needs mending first. Then I thought you could put up the new curtain rail and get those bolts on the doors. Now, when did you say you were going to write about your trip to India?"

"I don't know."

Then, oddly enough, he decided to take a rather long work trip to Munich and Seattle, and I had to put the cork tiles down by myself and think who else I could con into writing for my fanzine.

"How about an article on your sabbatical to Vancouver", I suggested to my one-time writing partner Lilian Edwards (I leave you to work out for yourselves which was the Lois and which was the Superman of this combination). "Your writing's been on great form lately," I added, hoping that flattery would get me everywhere.

"I'd love to," she lied. "But I have to write this paper for a conference, then a chapter for a book, then finish off the notes for my new MA course. Do you think I'll have time to do a fanzine for Mexican?"

"Not a hope."

"Maybe I could put in my latest family law article? I can't go on commuting from Edinburgh to London just to read Caroline Mullan's fanzine collection."

"Hah! She's been cut off the mailing list for Rastus Johnson. You'll have to come to Bristol now."

"No," decided Lilian. "I think I'll do a fanzine."

"If you do an article for me, I'll tell everyone to send you fanzines."

"And what good would that do!" she sneered. "You don't even get Wallbanger any more!"

Oh my God, it's true, I realised. Even Peter-Fred had had the latest Wallbanger, but not me (unless he was lying when he said my name wasn't on the mailing label.)

There was only one thing for it. I would have to get an article from an Australian. It was the only language the Harveys knew.

"Barb," I said to my Australian friend Barb, interrupting her as she sieved through her life's work in search of three stories to send to Virago. "Can I have the one on the Texas Rangers for my fanzine."

She considered. My fanzine wasn't Virago after all. It didn't pay. It probably wouldn't be very legible. It might not even know how to spell.

But what the hell, there was always the chance that someone would read it.

"Okay," she said, handing over three pages of text. I smiled. It looked like I might be doing a fanzine for Mexican 6 after all.

MY TALES OF THE TEXAS RANGERS

by Barb Drummond

I used to love watching "The Tales of the Texas Rangers" on the telly. But most of all, I liked their theme song which none of them ever actually sang. I used to sit really close to the screen at the start and end, trying to see into the back and sides to see how many men were singing and what they looked like. My mother sometimes caught me squinting with my nose against the screen and told me I'd go blind if I sat so close. Were the Texas Rangers too cool to sing their own theme song, or did they require all their Texas Rangers skills to march in formation and to enter and leave the group at the correct moment? I sometimes noticed the ones marching in the centre hurrying as they left the group, which disappointed me. I thought they were all tall, with long legs for striding after baddies. Only little kids like me had to rush to catch up with adults. I was very confused. The Texas Rangers were always calm and in control; they never rushed anywhere except on horseback, but that wasn't really rushing, that was riding hard and fast to stop the bad guys getting away.

I wished we could sing the Texas Rangers theme song in school assembly instead of those silly songs about rugged mountain ranges and the queen (who looked too much like my mum for comfort except that my mother didn't have a crown or a tiara, not that I knew of anyway). The Texas Rangers song was epic, rousing, it made you want to ride to the ends of the earth, or at least to the border of Texas to enforce the law with them. The fact that I was living half a world away in Australia didn't enter into my plans at all.

When the first Ranger started striding manfully down the main street, you knew that he was worthy of respect; and as his partner and all the other unremarkable but strong and manly Rangers joined him to march down the street, you knew that they were worthy of respect and that they respected each other because that was what Texas Rangers were. That was what they did. Then at the end of the show, the process was reversed. These brave handsome men marched down the main street (or was it up this time) and split off to disappear off screen (again I would try and find out where they were going but had no more success in this than I had in finding out what the singers looked like). Finally when the singing was over, there was a single lone Ranger, but not The Lone Ranger - that was another show altogether - strong and silent, looking out over the sun scorched plain, knowing they had finished another job and that they had done it well. I knew that look: I could imitate it - I practiced in the bathroom in case the Texas Rangers ever decided to take in girls - but that never seemed to worry me too much. I would probably have accepted being a womanly woman in a long dress who was rescued from the baddies but never NEVER tried to distract the Ranger from his sworn duty (whatever that was, it must have been very important). The Rangers rescued ladies - that's all they did with them. Just being around a Texas Ranger was probably enough, they were so special.

I often wondered about their clothes. Our telly was black and white, so they wore uniforms of uniform grey, with widebrimmed hats to keep off the Texas sun, bandannas round their necks because everyone in Westerns wore them, and immaculate shirts and trousers. They never wore jackets or cardigans, and I never noticed any of them with handkerchiefs - or maybe that was why they wore them round their necks so they wouldn't lose them; but then if they blew their noses - I

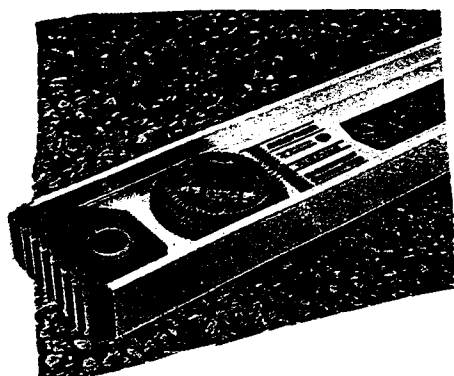
assumed Texas Rangers got snotty noses sometimes - the bogies would look really yukky on their necks. People would laugh and point at them, saying "Who's got a bogey, who's got a bogey" until they cleaned it up. Well, the kids in my class would anyway. And I would have seen if they had a dirty kerchief in one of their pockets. I noticed things like that.

My mother never let us go out of the house without taking a cardigan or jumper with us in case it got cold later. Even at the height of summer with half the children collapsing with heat exhaustion in school assembly, we always had to be prepared for sudden massive plummets in temperature, as well as making sure we always had clean hankies, neither of which the Texas Rangers ever seemed to bother with. I don't think they had very good mothers, even if they were only marching up and down the street to do the show, I think they could have at least made an effort at realism. If their mums weren't very good at knitting cardigans or ironing nice clean hankies, I'm sure my mum would have helped them out. But then I'd never been able to see any mothers hanging around in the edges of the screen, so maybe they didn't even have parents. Perhaps they were orphans who didn't have anyone to look after them and to iron their hankies and knit them cardigans so they could wipe their noses and be nice and warm in the middle of summer. Could they all have been orphans? I was very worried about this. Maybe they never even knew their parents, but why didn't they tell us this on the show? Were they too embarassed to tell us? Maybe they thought we wouldn't respect them as much, and the bad guys would call them names instead of shooting at them. That just wouldn't be right. There had to be another explanation, but I could never think of one.

Sometimes they went riding on beautiful sleek horses to enforce the law. But they never seemed to take much with them. If I went away for a few days I at least took a change of clothes, my pyjamas and slippers and a few books or a doll. I knew they probably would not bother with a doll because they were not girls, but where did they keep their toothbrushes? Indeed did they even bother to clean their teeth? And they seemed to sleep outside which seemed a bit risky - what happened if an owl flew overhead and did ones and twos on them? If they weren't in tents they'd get all messy. And where oh where did they keep their sleeping bags?

If being a Texas Ranger meant never changing your underwear or cleaning your teeth and sleeping outside without a sleeping bag, then I don't think I'd ever be allowed to join them. I decided I'd rather just sing their theme song and pretend in front of the mirror.

Barb has now been cured of her addiction to staring round the corners of TV screens and is currently writing a novel about the wind.



Art for whose sake?

The observant among you will have noticed that this fanzine has no cover art. Well the previous issue had no cover ART, but that's a different matter. Actually I must say I thought it was rather sweet of Chuck Connor in his review of NOA 1 to bother to criticise the cover. Someone actually taking my work seriously! I was quite excited. No, I have no illusions about my artistic abilities, but I did think I could draw a couple of straight lines and stick some bits of paper on where I intended. But clearly I can't, at least not if I'm trying to put it together at the last minute. It must have been over-excitement at the prospect of going to Novacon! (Seriously, Novacon Eve used to be like Christmas Eve. Now it's still like Christmas Eve, but the grown-up version sans stockings and santa). So, rather than wreck Mexican Eve, and prove that I couldn't draw a circle round a beer mat (or are most beer mats square?), I shall save myself money, angst and opprobrium and try and remember to commission some proper art next time.

Whose anorak is it anyway?

When I was a kid, anorak used to be my favourite word in the English language. Admittedly, I pictured it written Annarak or something similar. But I loved the exotic sound of it, and so I loved too the turquoise quilted jacket that was my very first anorak (or maybe my sister's very first anorak. What the hell, it became mine over the course of time like all her clothes). So how come some smart journalist, who doesn't understand the intrinsic excitement of a new edition of the British Rail timetable, could hijack this beautiful word and make it mean unsocialised nerd with a beard who won't ever get a girl friend in a million years? It shouldn't be allowed! Are the British public going to sit back and let this victimisation continue? Write to your MPs, lobby Fleet Street, petition your local department store. Above all, reclaim your anoraks before it's too late!

I have sprouted wings

Russian update for those who remember my article on the subject in a long distant TNH. After scoring great success at a party with the phrase "Mestnaya promoeshlennost" (apologies for the bad transliteration), meaning local industry, I am now working on the latest vocabulary in my book with great diligence and can report that I have high hopes of the expression "Y mnya voeroslee kroelya" (see heading for translation). Perhaps if Lilian is really contemplating going to Moscow on Aeroflot she might need it!

The Case of the Missing Fruit

This was what I was going to write in response to Platypus 3, but the next day another issue arrived, so I didn't bother.

Not long after I moved into my house and had undergone various traumas like mysterious flooding in my bathroom, central heating breaking down and having to take out the rubbish all by myself every week, I was just starting to feel comfortable in my new home when suddenly something strange started to happen.

The first symptom was that I couldn't find my banana. I knew I had a banana. My bananas are important to me; they stop me keeling over for lack of sugar at the end of the day, so I don't simply misplace them. But after a long search, I decided to be

philosophical and have a pear instead. This was Sunday night. On Monday when I came in from work I glanced at the fruit bowl. It was empty. This time I knew someone had been at my fruit. I had definitely bought at least two pears and two apples on Saturday, and only eaten one of each over the weekend. Yet, the fruit bowl was precisely in its accustomed place, only empty. Feeling rather strange, I went round the house, not so much looking for the missing fruit, as checking all the cupboards to see if I had an unknown lodger living in the house. When I was satisfied that there was no-one there I sat down to think of possibilities. The fruit bowl was by the front room window. Could somebody perhaps have opened the vents from the outside and fished through for the fruit? Had someone broke into the house, and taken the fruit just to scare me? Was something supernatural at work? Was there a ghost with scurvy haunting my living room? Was I sleep-walking and eating it myself?

I happened to mention it on the phone to my brother and he said there could still be a rational explanation. Did anyone else have keys to my house? Yes, of course, Peter-Fred! Perhaps he had forgotten it was "bring a fruit" day at work and had popped round to my house to get some? Or just felt he was owed some fruit after all the money he'd lent me. I gave him a call, but try as I might, not even for the sake of my peace of mind would he take the blame. In fact, so sceptical was he, that he insisted that I must have miscounted and nothing had missing at all.

Well, to prove it one way or the other, I decided to leave out one of the bananas I had bought that day. I went to bed feeling rather worried, and slept with half an ear open for the intruder. In this state of semi-consciousness I could at least eliminate one possibility. I was not, no way, no how, sleep-walking. It was just too damn cold!

I went down the next morning hoping the banana would still be there, only to find with a shiver of fear that it really had gone. And this time I could see that the tray it had been in was just very slightly awry. Calming myself I went to get my breakfast cornflakes, and for the first time considered the hole in my kitchen left by the central heating engineer when he insisted on pulling out a blocked air vent. Could some kind of animal be coming up through that hole, taking the fruit and going away again? But what sort of animal could take away pears and bananas whole? It was a horrid thought, but not nearly so bad as any of the alternatives. As soon as I got to work I rang the pest control department, and they confirmed that my poltergeist could indeed be a rat, which really do drag fruit away whole to eat them. Clearly after taking the banana, it (or they) could not believe its luck at finding the bonanza in my fruit bowl the next night and had come back for more. Pest control advised me to lock up my edibles, and made an appointment to put down bait. So soon, like Simon Ounsley, I was in the position of killing the only pet I'd ever had. The rat took the bait but very generously decided to go somewhere else to bleed to death (like my cellar for all I know, but I shall try not to think about that.) My fruit is now safe, there is a new air vent over the hole, and my house is now no doubt marked with the rat equivalent of a skull and cross bones in all their good food guides.

I expect Simon's rather glad I spared him the experience (leaving him only with the prospect of the mind-wrenchingly tedious "How I Came to Love the Mormons - a family historian's perspective" if he doesn't put out another issue before it leaves the drawing board of my mind.)

CHOCOLATE CREAM FANZINES

British fanzines are quite an inspiration these days. For a start they show that it needn't take longer than a few days to complete a fanzine. Look at PLATYPUS 4, hard on the heels of PLATYPUS 3. Look at THE STARTLED BUNNY 1 which Jackie McRobert claims to have produced in a week. Look at this fanzine, completed in under a fortnight (unless you're not reading this at Mexican 6, in which case it probably took at least six months). More to the point they're quick and easy to read, unlike most of their American counterparts (though SATURDAY TO SATURDAY, actually only took me Monday to Wednesday to read, and it was only that long because the train arrived on time two mornings running). Bridget Hardcastle's OBSESSIONS were also easy to read on the station platform (handily pocket size too). In fact the only British fanzine I have any serious complaints about at present is RASTUS JOHNSON'S CAKEWALK, which took so long to get through that I could see the other passengers on the platform wondering why on earth I was still reading that gold thing instead of a decent newspaper. Also it doesn't read well in five minute snatches, so I was eventually forced to promote it to sandwich reading fare and finish it with my tea (very tasty. Could you add a bit of pickle next time, Greg?)

Seriously, though, the British fanzine scene may be bubbling at the moment, but there is something almost childish about it, as if we're not ready to handle the real world. I mean, even RJC is full of people sharing nostalgia trips over old fifties TV series and magazines. Tony Berry talks about his airfix models. Bridget Hardcastle proves herself the Jo Brand of fandom (no slur on her physique intended as I have never met Bridget) by using an entertaining style to bring everything in life back round to chocolate. Jackie McRobert IS a child. Okay, before she kills me, she's in her twenties - but that's young compared to the many forty somethings of fandom. Also there's something about those cute bunnies all over the fanzine and the freshness and brevity of the style that shrieks youth and irresponsibility, particularly in the picture that Jackie paints of her working life (I love her indignation over being given work at work - but only because it's so unlike the seriousness of my own working life. If Jackie worked in my own office I'd probably be pretty pissed off that she could get away with it.)

I could go on - MORIARTY'S REVENGE and the goons, Mike Siddall's condom and Rhodri James dice superstitions for EMPTIES. Individually it's all quite endearing. It's actually a slant I rather like (as you can tell from the less than adult contents to this fanzine), but overall, what's it saying? That we're retreating from the doldrums of the '90s into the past, into making fetishes out of the trivial, into creating our own little world of significance. Perhaps we're trying to get away from the depressive gloom that has dominated the British scene since Michael Ashley began to win Novas and Nigel Richardson lost his job in London (though Nigel's obsession with bondage leather women is just as much a retreat from reality as Bridget's chocolate). I'm particularly intrigued by Greg Pickersgill's renunciation of the legacy of RatFandom and retreat to the values of an earlier fandom. Did I dream it, or is he seriously advocating writing fan fiction as good thing? (Maybe I was just over-excited by the train making its final approach to Montpelier station platform). I mean, what is going on here? Simon Ounsley is probably the only British fan capable of making something out of fannish fiction (judging from some of his con reports). Can you imagine it in the hands of Tony Berry? Ian Sorensen? Alan Dorey? Jackie McRoberts (hang on, she writes it already, cf Brian Amerigen is the cutest guy in fandom in STARTLED BUNNY 1). Perhaps Greg envisages it as some kind of glue bonding the sf community into a fictional alternative

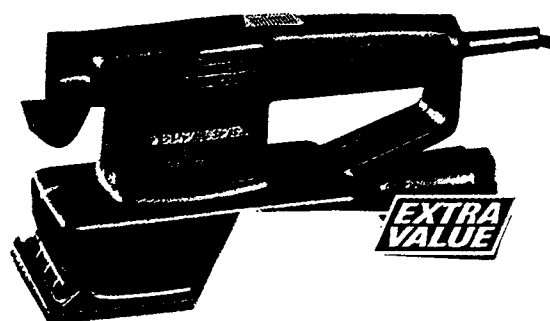
that is somehow better than the real world. A bit like the con reports of the 80s except without the slagging off, point scoring and hurtful gossip. British fandom may be in the process of reaffirming its faith and making newly innocent beginnings, but have we forgotten our native cynicism so completely as to go for this? I suspect not.

Another fanzine which seems intent in kicking fandom into some kind of new direction is ATTITUDE from Michael Abbott, John Dallman and Pam Wells. Apart from coming over rather patronisingly as the answer to all our prayers in the opening manifesto, this is quite a good fanzine. There is a range of articles, covering recent conventions and fanzines, explorations by the editors on their attitudes to fandom and (real world yet!) the government lack of probity. I particularly liked John Clute's article on fandom because in spite of the poly-syllabically worded social theories he seemed to be saying that the culture of fandom transcends all the deadbeats we see hanging out in it, so that (he didn't actually say this) we're not necessarily sad, retarded individuals just because we're here. (This sounds like we're getting dangerously close to fan fiction again, which I bet John Clute would love. As a phenomenon to analyse.)

The only article that sat rather strangely there was Linda Krawecke's account of getting a dog, not because it wasn't good writing, but because it seemed to have no connection with the brief of the fanzine to reexamine what makes fanzines and conventions tick. No doubt the editors will point to the clause in their manifesto that says "Produce a dead good fanzine" and claim that good articles need no other justification, but the rest of the issue did live up to the concept of examining attitudes, while Linda's story seemed to belong more in a gentle non-campaigning fanzine like mine (if she could push the travel angle a bit more) or the all animal theme issue of EMPTIES (or has Martin done that one already?).

I suppose my only other beef about ATTITUDE is the slightly "thought police" aspect to it all. I've nothing against ATTITUDE as a title (apart from the excess of ts in it) - in fact it's rather good in the post-punk 90s sense of the word, but I'm a bit dubious about it as a concept. Hey, great, we all share a common attitude to fandom. But what about those who don't? Are we going to have wrong attitudes and bad attitudes, not to mention attitude problems? Having already fallen foul of some kind of informal fannish credit check system, that has me down on the Worldcon database as unreliable, I don't want to feel that my next achievement will be to fail an attitude test. So, let's have attitudes by all means, but don't let the editors con you into thinking theirs is the right or only attitude.

By the way, I now have an issue of Habakkuk, a serious size (but unusually readable) American zine to pass the time on the train platform, which is just as well, since Great Western Railway (as we now call them) are celebrating the forthcoming new timetable by making the trains run late. If this is a taste of things to come, then I could be talking about the intellectual (and muscular) challenge of the American fanzine next issue!



One of the reasons I seemed to end up doing so many fanzines in the 1980s was to publish the letters I received. One of the reasons why I found it easy not to do fanzines in the 90s was because I stopped receiving interesting letters (with a couple of honourable exceptions from people in Southend). Response to NEVER QUITE ARRIVING was not massive, but after being convinced by Greg Pickersgill's review in RASTUS JOHNSON'S CAKEWALK 3 that it was a complete waste of space, it was quite heartening to receive a few letters from people who appeared to have enjoyed the issue.

The most comprehensive came from Moshe Feder, written auspiciously enough on New Year's Eve.

Moshe Feder, 142-34 Booth Memorial Ave, Flushing, NY 11355, USA

What a pleasant surprise to find that "never" as in NEVER QUITE ARRIVING is only 31 days. I don't write many LoCs these days. Indeed, in contrast to my youthful impatience, I often don't even open fanzines for days after they've arrived. I think this is some weird psychological quirk rather than indicative of any decline in my interest. It was wonderful to be reminded of that very enjoyable Madison Corflu and particularly to see it freshly through your eyes. As someone who's attended not all, but a majority of the Corflus (and run one) it didn't seem that Madison's was unusually heavily programmed. I'd say it was about average. If anything there was grumbling the year before that LA had carried things too far in the relaxacon direction so that the con had lost its shape.

You hardly do justice to the trivia quiz, which was quite a battle to the death, with embarrassments and triumphs on both sides. Rob and I were the team captains (i.e., told by Hooper to go out and recruit teams) and I thought I was being very clever to immediately snap up fans with fannish tenures even longer than my own 23 years (gak!), and fans known for their fanhistorical knowledge at that. As it turned out, I outsmarted myself for Rob's mostly younger crew, if not quite so deep in knowledge, was quicker of reflex and faster at hitting the buzzer for the right to answer the all-important "toss-up" questions (the correct response to which entitles you to the more point-heavy bonus questions). Perhaps more importantly, Rob had not shared my stupid misconception that Tucker's memory might be getting foggy after all those years and all that Jim Beam. Tucker turned out to be the key, because Andy, knowing he would be at the con, put in a lot of questions relating to Bob's own fan career. In many cases he won points for answering questions about his own life! As a result, by the halfway break we were way behind. I'm proud to say, never daunted, we fought our way back and almost caught up before time ran out. As for that WRINKLED SHREW question, I believe I finally got that, after some brain straining. Why what else could you possibly call a fanzine from Greg Pickersgill....

With a bit more seriousness, let me say that anyone who allows themselves to be put on the line on one of these quiz things deserves some sympathy. Knowing something deep in your brain and getting to come out of your mouth when you're under pressure are two different things.

((Don't I know it. You should have seen me trying to remember some of my favourite music at a recent pop quiz. You could almost count the missing brain cells!))

The mimeo panel didn't excite me, despite my interest in the topic, but I will say that I have one of the last significant supplies in two or three colors, of twiltone-type paper

in private hands. Unfortunately, these never-opened cases of Topsham's Coloured Mimeo are so old now that it's questionable whether they could be put through a duplicator without crumbling.

I'm glad you came along to the [softball] game. It can't have been as memorable or as much fun watching it as playing in it - what a slippery, muddy mess! - but I think you could tell it was something special all the same. It would have been wonderfully poetic if Martin [Smith] could have had a hit and scored a run.

((Or scored at all. Or then again, maybe he did...))

I was having similar reactions to seeing Julie and Martin together, particularly when I subsequently saw her passionately kissing Ellen Franklin.

I should bring this to a close if I want to get to the New Year's party I'm attending before midnight! ((You mean I can't have your first loc of the year too!)) I can't really comment on Mexican anyway, except to say it sounds inferior to the one we attended in Nottingham. Of the two cons in this instance, since I could only make one, I'm glad it was Corflu. But don't put too much faith in American enthusiasm. This fall's Ditto was nothing to write home about. As for the coming spring : Please warn anyone considering your two cons for the price of one idea [Disclave and Corflu] that Disclave, once one of my favourite conventions, is now off my list. The people and locations that made it special are no longer there.

((Oops, a bit late! But if anyone did go, I'd be interested to hear their impressions. Here's someone who definitely won't be doing any doubles...))

Lloyd Penney, 412-4 Lisa Street, Brampton, ON Canada L6T 4B6

I don't think I could ever travel for so long that I could do two cons back to back. I usually keep myself so busy at a con that two in a row would be exhausting, if not for myself, then definitely for Yvonne. I also think I'd need a solid lottery win to do this kind of thing. (Next time you travel, come to Canada. They sell PG Tips here. And lots of other things you're used to)

((I may well do so, though not for the PG Tips))

Yvonne and I are the Canadian agents for the Scottish Worldcon, and communications from the committee have been spotty. One of the few letters I've received was a postcard from Jenny Glover, and I whipped up a quick letter for her. No response so far. However, hope springs eternal... I would have a much better chance of suggesting Canadian fannish programme ideas if I knew which Canadians were attending Intersection. I suspect that after ConAdian, there aren't going to be many Canfen who'll have enough money to actually go to Scotland.

((Well, I hope that you and Yvonne make it over. Is there a particular slant to Canadian programming? I tend to believe that a British Worldcon should concentrate on producing a British approach - though using as many interesting international fans as possible.

But, let's return to the subject of Corflu before I get on my Worldcon hobby horse again...))

Pascal Thomas, 7 rue des Saules, 31400 Toulouse, France

Really it was quite a kick to get a zine from you after all those years. In the interest of accuracy I should point out that my name was only the second (if not the third: my memories are dim) out of that hat at the first Corflu, the first to come out being that of a local fan who had - unlucky chap - stayed home because of a flu, or something. And my impromptu speech, hastily conceived with Lynn Kuehl and Cheryl Cline's help the night before it was delivered (I was staying with them during the con), seemed to me like a faux pas at the time since it irritated Ted White, and shortened the time left for Jerry Kaufman's DUFF auction. Thus is history made! In the subsequent Corflus) (strangely, I went to the first three and none since) some people expressed doubts about the wiseness of randomly selecting Corflu GoHs - but I see that the custom endured, and learned last autumn, to my pleased surprise, from Jeanne Gomoll that it had been ensconced in Tradition. Wow.

Perhaps I should say that Christine (my wife) and I spent said autumn in Madison, Wisconsin. Sometimes I feel like a concierge, or like an old spinster aunt who only likes hearing gossip about the people she already knows. Your Corflu report certainly evoked a number of stream-of-unconsciousness remarks, like

Gee, Moshe Feder grew his beard back!

Gee, you actually asked Jim Frenkel who his wife was (and you have the guts to admit it in a zine)

Gee, Long-legged Jane, hmm, a good nickname, a person I admire much.

Gee, Nevenah is really sweet.

But something surprises me : Elk, non fannish? To me, Elk was an important part of Madison fandom, as an organiser of the Tiptree quilt, a successor in a sense to The Bakery Men don't see, aimed at raising funds for the The Tiptree Award. Christine and I spent a number of Monday nights sewing patches together and taking part in Madison fannish gossip. Which revealed that some of the husbands you mention in your report are no more - no more husbands, I mean, divorces having taken place, much to the proclaimed relief of the former wives. However, Elk and Steve are still living together, despite the latter's occasional trip to Seattle.

((I guess I just caught Madison fandom on a bad weekend for getting to meet Elk. Well, you'll have to add Peter-Fred to the list of husbands who are no more since that Corflu (qua husband, I hasten to add, as Peter is still very much around fandom)))

Brian Earl Brown, meanwhile, was not too sure if I was in existence, either.))

Brian Earl Brown, 11675 Beaconsfield, Detroit, MI 48224, USA

I had developed the suspicion that you had fallen off the face of the earth sometime during your TAFF trip since that was the last I'd heard from or of you. I do worry about the tendency for TAFF winners to not merely fail to write a trip report but, seemingly, to gaffiate following their trip. Are we doing these fans a favor voting them for TAFF when it seems to mean their destruction as fans? And it makes me all the more appreciative of Abi Frost who has hit upon the novel idea of writing her trip report as it happens and mailing each separate portion back to Dave Langford for publication. Even if she collapses from exhaustion upon her return we will at least have the record of her interim reports.

((Abi shows no sign of collapsing from exhaustion, though I nearly did, running about for her at the Novacon TAFF auction. I didn't disappeared completely after TAFF - I

did issues of TNH, Caprician (both with Lilian Edwards) and Balloons Over Bristol, plus was involved with an Eastercon fan-room (back when we still had them). I guess though there was little coherence to this activity and it's been pretty low key of late.)

I thought this was a wonderful Corflu report, the sort of conreport I enjoy reading. It told not only of the events of the day but something of the people who were there and somewhat more of the person writing. This is the sort of writing that makes for great TAFF reports. If you haven't written your TAFF report I encourage you to do so. I don't think they have to be as long as some in the past have. Some of those were, I think, way too long. But I think that you should write some sort of report because interesting things undoubtedly happened and its fun to share those experiences. And because I think TAFF winners owe it to the people who paid their way. Admittedly TAFF winners do a lot of work the next two years as administrators but I don't think it's the same thing. People support TAFF because they think these candidates are interesting people to meet, if not in person at a worldcon, then indirectly through a trip report. Also LA con makes a generous cash donation to TAFF (and DUFF) each time a trip report gets published.

((I'm in two minds about the value of producing TAFF reports after a certain lapse of time. I can't help thinking of all those chapters of Rob Hansen's trip report which seemed to turn up inexorably in various fanzines over the past decade. It's not that they are bad or particularly uninteresting, but just seem so pointless at this juncture. In fact, I only single out Rob because, being a conscientious guy, he has been plugging away at putting out bits of his trip report for as long as I can remember. The Harveys attempt at catching up on their trip to Australia seems slightly less meaningless, partly because there haven't been so many GUFF reports written up (have there been any?). But even so, it's a bit thin on local colour at times, probably due to the distance in time. Then there was the bit of Irwin Hirsh's report printed in Empties, which I rather enjoyed because it brought back the era to me, and reminded me of how much I'd enjoyed having Irwin and Wendy around.

But, aren't trip reports meant to be for the folks back home that couldn't go? Yes, if they appear, like Abi's snippets, when the convention in question isn't ancient history and the news and gossip are still current. Otherwise, as far as I can see, old trip reports are only worth something for the people who were there too (a nice bit of their past conveniently written up for them by someone else) or to screw money for the fan fund out of the moguls in LA. I don't disagree that I have a certain duty to produce a report. I just wonder how many people are really that interested. I wrote up my Corflu report of last issue, partly out of a sense of duty and partly to capture it all for myself before it faded. But I'm not sure in the end if it was worth the time and attention I lavished on it. To many readers it must just have seemed an over-long and tedious account of the doings of people they didn't know and weren't interested in. The favourable response, in the main, has come from people like Moshe who was there or Pascal who had recently been living in the same town as the people I was talking about. If it was hard enough to capture anything universally valid or strikingly real enough in the Corflu report to convey the experience to someone who wasn't there, imagine how hard it will be to do anything with the TAFF material which is over five years old now. My memory simply isn't good enough, even with the help of notes and photos.

This is not to say that I am categorically not going to write my TAFF report - in fact I may do a bit for the next issue, just to see if there is anything still worth saying

about this long ago adventure - but I would need a lot more convincing of its potential worth before investing enough time to do the whole report. As far as I'm concerned the only chance for making something worthwhile of the project is for it to be an interaction between myself and Lilian on the events that occurred. At least then it would be different.

Personally, I blame Langford. He did America too well and too thoroughly for anyone else to feel the need to bother. Still, one of my aims for Never Quite Arriving (aims, god this ATTITUDES stuff is catching) is to present some good travel writing particularly trip reports. And see if there is a way forward. So, Pam, Robert, Jeanne, Abi, Irwin let's hear from you!

Here at least is one potential reader for my travel mag))

Ann Green, 33 Scott Road, Olton, Solihull B92 7LQ

I love fannish travel writing as it both gives you a taster of what you've missed and stretches the writer's talent to avoid becoming a 'then I did this, then I did that' type of article. Your Corflu trip report gave me a nostalgic pang of yearning for the Silcons of old, with Rounders in Jesmond Park, catching the metro with Suzle and Jerry, Laura Wheatly and I being photographed sunbathing at said rounders match by Arnold Aiken, looking like two beached whales... Ahem! Also liked the two-colour format - very American, even if the text was a bit fuzzy.

((Actually that design statement came courtesy of Millways who failed to deliver the paper on time, so Peter-Fred improvised in complementary colours.

Meanwhile back to Brian Earl Brown, who goes on to discuss other aspects of the last Corflu...))

Brian Earl Brown

I've tended to avoid plays given at conventions. Maybe it's because the ones I've seen all seemed to involve Doctor Who landing on the Enterprise... Another convention, a convention for fans of pulp magazines (not limited to SF but all genres -- mystery, western, adventure, romance etc) offers an interesting variation to the convention play. They hold radio re-enactments. The organizer and director of the production acquire the script from an old radio drama -- say an episode of The Shadow or Light Out! -- auditions for a cast from the convention membership, rehearses them a bit and Saturday night they perform the script with the director and a couple of helpers providing the sound effects. It's a lot of fun. The scripts are always top-notch and at a half hour long never too long. Something like this could be adapted to SF conventions since there were several SF radio shows in the 50s. The original screenplays would probably be impossible to find but the chosen broadcast could be transcribed. I suspect that's how it's done for the Pulpcon radio re-creations.

((It sounds a bit like what was done at Mexican 5, except that there were no auditions for the parts. I don't know how it turned out, but like the fannish play at Corflu, I suspect it was more fun for those taking part than for the audience.))

It's amazing how much discussion Sharyn McCrumb has been given over the past few years on the basis of two quasi novels of fan fiction. She's calling herself the Salman Rushdie of science fiction which is a bit extreme since no one feels strongly enough

about her to place a bounty on her head, but since her "sin" is disrespect to fandom, as was Rushdie's to Islam, she's not entirely wrong. Recently I read one of her other mystery novels and came to the conclusion that McCrumb is one of those people whose whole life is organized around getting ahead -- the kind of people who always stare in disbelief when you tell them that you give your fanzines away for free. The book I read was called the Windsor Knot and mostly revolves around the efforts of the heroine to get herself married to her Scottish boyfriend in time to attend tea with the Queen as his spouse. This involves imposing on an aunt to arrange the ceremony, another to make the dress, a third to arrange the catering, and so on. No one exists for the heroine except as they are useful to her. But one character in the book stands out from all the beloved eccentrics, a nerdy man who learns that he will inherit a fortune if he can get married first. Also he has no idea how to go about meeting girls and would only "waste" the money supporting some lunatic science project similar to Biosphere II. He is a definite type, one we've all met. And for some people cuts a bit closer to home than they'd care to admit. But he is so repellent to McCrumb that her personal disgust can't help coming through. Having read this book I'm not surprised that she feels that fans lead wasted lives and has no pity for them.

((Oh well, maybe we should set John Clute on to her!))

There's a lot of controversy about what sort of music to play at convention dances around here too. The biggest problem is that the people who seem most eager to program the dance music just want the power, they have no idea what is good dance music. While a friend of mine who did the music one year has a good idea of what is dance music but found himself getting complaints from the individuals on the con committee because he was playing too much "shuffle music", i.e., Motown. The poorly disguised racism of that comment so offended my friend that he doesn't do dances for conventions any more. As for how fans here in Detroit dress for convention dances -- the three local cons all run "masquerade balls" so there are a lot of people dressed in strange clothes. The women running around the dance in little black slips and teddies I've never quite decided whether they are in costume and as what. I wouldn't say that black has taken over as the color of choice among femme fans, but I also can't remember when the last time was that I saw the wife of the friend mentioned above dressed in anything besides black.

((I think it was the use of the word "dance" that made me uncertain what to expect from the Corflu disco. On the whole the set-up you describe of someone from the fannish community choosing the music seems to work better than having an outside DJ. Hence the success of the Mexican people's discos - which generally just involve a ghetto blaster, a few good tapes, and a bit of enthusiasm (traditionally fuelled by the Mexican death punch!). The other problem I've noticed with convention discos recently has been that half the potential audience just want old hits from the sixties, while the other half want the latest indie stuff. I can't say that I've been subjected to the interminable dance and house music that Pat Silver mentions as being typical of the convention disco in her SouWestercon report for ATTITUDE), and since we're on the subject, I would also like to take issue with her contention that conventions shouldn't fund discos because "one can go to a disco in any town on any day of the weekend." No doubt one can, if one is on the scene, but I bet for the majority of people at the convention disco it is one of the few places where they can

still dance in an informal setting with their friends, and have some influence over the music that is played.

Still, to show that I'm not biased I shall leave the last word in the disco debate to William Bains.))

William Bains, 101 Beechwood Avenue, Melbourn, Royston, Herts SG8 6BW

Your attitude to discos is incomprehensible to me. Finding the bloody things too loud is not evidence of being old before my time (although I am), but of still retaining the hearing that fifty million year of having my ancestors not quite eaten by very quiet predators has left me. Most modern discos are painfully loud. Even the company Christmas Party (average age about 42) was too loud. I kept looking around for a coat hanger to stick in the ring-main and blow all the fuses, but I could not get one. Next time I will go with a cross wired plug

((William felt safe to make this statement as he was writing this loc on an airplane somewhere over the North Atlantic. He goes on to wonder...))

Why does the name Karen Babich seem familiar? Is she a molecular biologist, or something big in biotechnology, or the like? It cannot be fannish - I have become too totally FIELDS to know anyone fannish anymore.

Hah, got you there, didn't I? I made it up, of course. GAFIATED seems wrong for what happens to a lot of fans. They just get more and more tied down with children, mortgages and so on that they cease to, well, do anything really. So, they become Fossilised In His(/Her) Own Life-Style. I increasingly feel that this has happened to me. Moan Moan.

I have just read the bit where you state, without confirmatory photographic evidence that Lilian Edward's hair is blond. This seems inherently implausible. Or is it another Lilian ((could there be another Lilian?)) Behind me, someone is speaking Icelandic, which sounds like this. Ike kaiser sentser vatisky sensor yeo yay visa hongler gussy muir bluckler-meur dollarees merchler norprovalarerish ski-arler. I probably have missed out lots of words here, so I would not expect an immediate translation Now the buggers have turned the lights out.

((Such is the penalty of international jet-setting. Still, I would put up with it for my own lap-top, or even a decent explanations of how to get italics in WordPerfect (not the font, but for my interpolated comments))

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Never Quite Arriving 2

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