

# SERCON-NAVIGATION

S-N#twenty-something is brought to you by the ill-prepared but brilliant (nova-like brilliant) mind of Tom Springer, insanefan. We reside at 2255 E. Sunset #2030, Las Vegas, NV 89119. Ph#: 702-263-6234 for those of you who wish more immediate conversation. The following should be considered a part of my Toner report which will surface whenever it needs air, or I want you to read it. Member fwa, CSFL, and supporter afal.

I sit at the computer waiting for it all to come rushing back in order of time and events, but the memory flow stumbling through my cerebellum is an incomprehensible stream of people, places and words, all revolving around Toner, the Pre-LAcon Fannish Gathering. Verily, a great idea. Certainly not a new one, but I knew it would work. The not-so-new idea was to parallel (we never follow) Precursor of last year and toss off another pre-worldcon relaxicon for all the adventuring fanzine fans who journey every year in pious fannish t-shirts to declare their faith and respect to Roscoe, Ghu, and Fandom, too (and to partake in one helluva party).

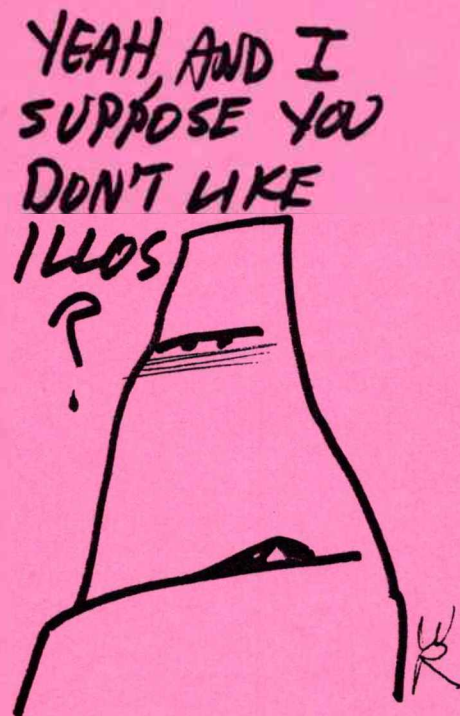
During its inception, many smoke signals were passed back and forth between Vegrants, communicating in the cloudy and high-minded way that we do (when we aren't reaching for a lighter). Conversations were held, glorious ideas were revealed with rapturous joy, marveled over with great enthusiasm, then tarnished and destroyed by the ugly claws of reality that would reach forth to pop our bubbles of genius with a dirty hangnail. This, of course, didn't stop us, foolish fans that we are. No, we continued meeting and discussing, talking and conversing, sharing great big ideas and feeling like great big fans. It was good fun. Big fun.

Living in Las Vegas, that's almost required.

It was quickly decided. I spoke loudest about the idea and was pronounced Ringleader on the spot. (Mostly because I made it clear to everyone having Toner before the Worldcon would be better than after. Believe me, some wanted it after.) Quick to assume command and even quicker to realize I'd need a lot of help, I looked to Ben to act as my Right-Hand Man. Young, fleet, strong, stoned. . . he accepted my invitation to potential reputation-ruining disaster and

joined me as my partner. Together we would hold Toner, Ben and I. Tom and Ben. We would walk the deadly tightrope that is party-throwing and create a swirl of smoky, boozy fun that would croggle even the most dull-minded of fans. Together we would make Big Names for ourselves and create Big Reputations fans would talk about for decades to come. (Many would argue that clinical study is not a form of egoboo, but they'd be wrong.)

Four fun-filled days of debauchery. What could be better? Four fun-filled days of debauchery with fanzine fans, that's what. Inside bacover advertisements began to appear in **Wild Heirs**, proclaiming to one and all that we decided to pick the weekend before the LAcon to celebrate our first five years of Vegas fanning. That was Arnie's idea, the five-year anniversary thing. Make them feel, if not obligated, at least invited. Good sneaky advice. But there was more. . .



"This is more than a party," Arnie said one night.

"Yeah," Joyce added. "Fanzine fans are gonna want things to do."

"They're gonna drink, smoke, eat, and sleep," I told them.

"No, Tom, you don't understand. We're talking about fanzine fans," Arnie explained. "They're going to want to do stuff."

"What sort of stuff?" Ben asked.

"Fan stuff," Joyce answered.

"Humph," I humphed.

Ben reached for the pipe. "I think we should smoke about this."

We all nodded agreement, perilously close to miring ourselves in the muck of convention thinking. "This isn't a convention," I reminded our little group of brainfarts. "It's a party."

"A fannish 'arty," Ben reminded me around the pipe in his mouth.

"I hate to say it Tom, but you're going to need some programming," Arnie told me, point blank. My back stiffened.

"Fannish programming," Joyce supplied before I could open my mouth in protest.

Ben blew a jet cloud and passed me the pipe. "Fun fannish programming," he added.

Before I could even have a puff it was decided. Programming, by Ghu; the last thing I wanted was a convention! I needed to think. I need to think great big thoughts. I also needed a smoke. Where's a lighter? I looked around, spying the mauve plastic tool on the arm of the couch. As I reached for it, my fingers leading the way and ready to grasp, the great big thought I'd been thinking about the programming for the party that wasn't a convention slipped through the curvy canyons of my brain. Phiiiiiff! Lost to the ether. It slipped away like a buttered banana peel. Brainfart.

I could only hope mine wasn't the first, and puffed great big clouds in the hopes of disguising my failed genius. They either didn't notice or were numb to the many electrons charging around my gray matter. It's not like sparks go off shooting out my ears, and if they had, whoever had the pipe at the time would lean forward expectantly, eyes crossed on the bowl. I inhaled a mighty lungful and passed the brass tool to Arnie.

"Maybe some sort of roundtable discussions," Arnie suggested while tamping down the bowl with a finger.

"Like at Corflu Nashville," Joyce supplied.

Ben sat up. "We could have some fanzine readings!"

"Ooooooh," we marveled together. Heads nodded in enthusiastic agreement. Before we could laud our comrade, Arnie brought us back to reality.

"Could I get a light?" he asked. I tried another great big thought, but Joyce thrust forward the lighter, turned its wheel, and fire appeared. Ordinarily this would have distracted us like the primates we are, fannish or not, but it had been voiced; it would be remembered. Fanzine readings, and a couple roundtable discussions. Yeah, we could do that. It wasn't going to be so bad. We knew what to do.

Fortunately the Vegnants' High Priestess schooled us well in the way of the hosting fan. She passed on to us her wisdom and knowledge, ancient lore passed down through the Numbered Fandoms, arcanum known only to a few. By lecture and example she guided us down the path, pointing out the important stuff with austere confidence. Is she not the High Priestess?

"The way to a fan's heart is through his stomach," she advised us one Saturday afternoon as we sprawled about the Katz estate before another Snaffu Social.

"Shouldn't it be a little higher up, through the chest?" Ben asked.

Wisely (because she is the High Priestess) she ignored him and glided into the kitchen. "Come, slow one, let me show you," she beckoned with one elegantly crooked finger.

Ben got to his feet and clumped into her laboratory. Despite her lack of the plural, I jumped to and followed Ben. In what she called her kitchen, with her pots and pans and electric heating elements, she showed us the way. Soon food was sizzling and sauces were simmering and the tummy-tickling waftings of her labors proved her point. "Listen carefully to something your women probably already know," she advised us. "Food is the way to a fan's heart. With food you may control and manipulate," she said, waving a spatula around for emphasis. "Food



will keep them happy, keep them slow and sluggish, making them more manageable, more pliable. With food you will fulfill their desires, forestall their questions, and give them something to do."

She pointed her greasy food-tool toward the couch. "Go now and contemplate. We will talk of this later with your women." Stomachs growling, we did as she ordered, retreating to the couch to assuage our hunger with potato chips, chocolate-chip cookies, and a sympathetic Arnie who passed us the pipe. We were hers to command.

And so the Master Plan was made clear. Inundate them with food. Bury them with it. When they opened their yaps to complain about something, stuff them full with cookies. Ah, it could not fail. A tested and time-honored method. We would succeed where other fans had failed, for Tammy and Cathi could cook. Oh baby, could they cook! Everywhere they turned they would find food, see food, breathe food. We decided to keep some plastic bags, a bucket, and a couple of mops around in case someone exploded. Those were the chances we were willing to take.

Like a large drunken fan, the idea of Toner took awhile to get going. We had menus to plan, articles to choose, programs to, er, program. Yes, we had lots of stuff to do. Too much stuff. This, sadly enough, didn't dissuade Ben and I from our mad plan. Insanely thinking in the backs of our minds that our women would stop us. Silly men. Silly fans.

When queried, Cathi and Tammy responded delightfully to the challenge. Eight soups? Hors d'oeuvres for forty? Hotwings, meatballs, pasta salad, deviled eggs, Mexican layer dip, ham asparagus roll-ups, cookies and sweets, a vegetable tray, cold cuts and sandwich fixings for everyone? No problem! Willingly they followed us down into our self-made hell. (Now, in the aftermath of Toner, Cathi and Tammy have been secreted away to a private psychological clinic for further study. Experts say they're beyond treatment.) In two whiz-bangs, a golly-gee, and several joints later, we had a tentative menu. We were intent on doing Joyce proud. Trouble is, we never stopped what we were planning to think about it. Actually, that's what saved us. If we'd taken the time to stop and consider

what we were planning, it's likely one of us would have come to our senses. This would have resulted in three regrettable but necessary murders. The film would find its way to an underground middleman who arranges such things, and the one sane member of our little party would be on some beach in Barbados drinking pina coladas and wondering, "What's new in fandom?"

As you can see, there's no sand between my toes.

Plenty of it between my ears, but not my toes.

A flyer was written, something like "Come to Toner, or else!" Oh yes, it was a piece of work, that flyer. Told the date and times, the convention hotel, how much it was going to cost, room rates, and a stupid little ramble by me (much like this one) about what we were going to be doing for four days holed up in some downtown casino in Las Vegas. This wasn't hard. Hard enough for me to screw up the date on the second flyer, but coherent enough for anyone to understand and believe what I had written. Nope. I knew on some mystical level, despite my own publicity, that if we held it, they would come. Unlike in all those science fiction books we've read, no one came more than once.

