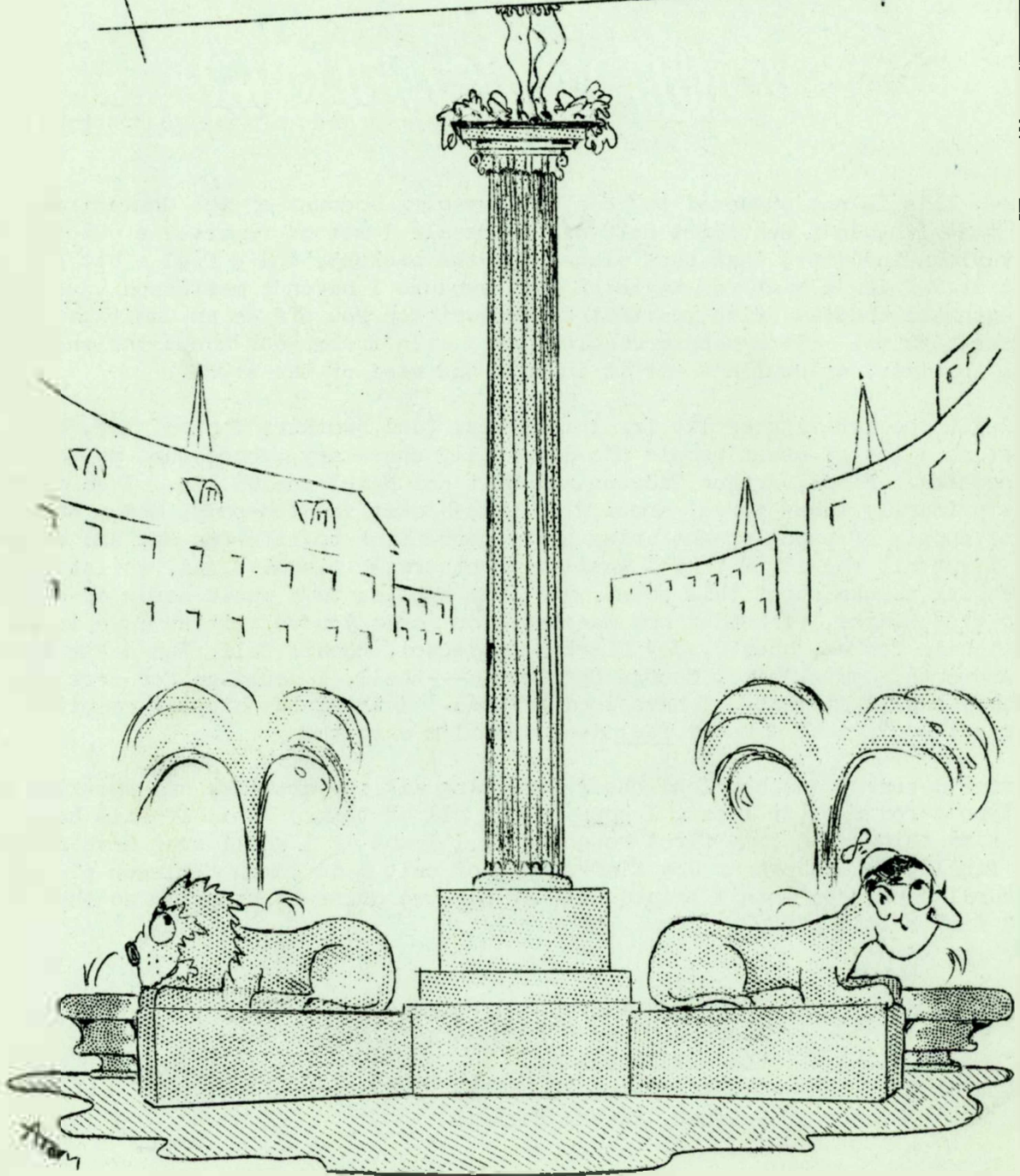


# LonConfidential



# INTRODUCTION,

## PREFACE,

### OR SOMETHING

Please, this is not supposed to be a blow-by-blow account of the Convention. I know that I haven't mentioned half of the people I met or reported a quarter of the various incidents that took place over the weekend, and I feel a bit guilty about it. I don't want you to think that because I haven't mentioned your name and enthused about meeting you that I have written you off as an unmitigated stinker. Ho no. It's more probable that I didn't remember about the encounter until too late, or couldn't fit it in with the rest of the stuff.

I get the activity credit for this thing, (and brother! I need it!), but there are a lot of other people who deservedly share any egoboo that may be forthcoming. First, Arthur Thomson and Walt and Madeleine Willis. I am deaf and it is primarily these three, armed with note-books, scratch-pads, and a never-ending supply of pencils, who bring every convention to life for me, and ensure that I get all the stuff that I would have otherwise missed. And, whilst we're expressing thanks about this point, the same applies to a whole horde of others, ---to Vin/ Clarke, (I wonder how many million words you've written down in the last decade for me, bhoy?), Joy Clarke, Sandersod, Bobbie Wild, Ken & Pam Bulmer, Mal Ashworth, James White, George Charters, --- hell, I could go for ever and probably should at that. I have good friends. I think the biggest compliment I can pay them is that I never feel deaf when I'm with them.

Arfer deserves another loud cheer for doing all the artwork, and spotting all the typo's for me. (At least, I hope it was all of them.) And, if Walt hadn't said kind things about my first rough draft I doubt if I would ever have finished it. Finally, blessings on Joy Clarke who not only made lemon meringue pie for me but hardly murmured when I swiped half of her two quire of stencils so that I could finish this off.

Written and produced for the FAPA/OMPA  
microcosm and a few outcasts crying in  
the wilderness by,  
Chuck Harris, "Carolin" Lake Avenue,  
Rainham, Essex, England.

I FOUND MY SENSE OF WONDER

CHUCK HARRIS

I know now what Damon Knight meant when he referred to our conventions as a sort of "love-feast." No matter how disillusioned and cynical you may get with fandom, (and, after the mingy response to my last HYPHEN, I was very cynical, and very disillusioned), once you have checked into the Con hotel, and gotten lost in the melec, all the resentment and feelings of ineffectuality vanish and are replaced by a sense of contentment and, more important, kinship.

Here were 268 people who shared my viewpoint, who accepted me as one of themselves, and who were, in varying degrees maybe, pleased to see me. Just like it says up there in Big Letters, I FOUND MY SENSE OF WONDER. I discovered I was just a goshwow boy at heart, and I skittered about meeting Big Names, getting people to sign my programme booklet, talking myself hoarse, and, well, having myself a hell of a wonderful time.

I arrived Friday night and met my first Real American at the Reception Desk, -- big, calm, competent Belle Dietz who had been working there for hours, and who must have been deadly tired, but who never failed to smile and look genuinely pleased as she greeted each new arrival. Belle, I thought seemed to be the American equivalent of our Bobbie Wild, -- one of those girls who slog their guts out to make the cons a success, and whose efforts are seldom noticed by the mass of us, and almost never appreciated.

Registration is always chaos for me, but this time Norman Shorrocks and Ethel Lindsay booked me in, found my room number, took my money, gave me maps, banquet ticket, registration ticket, programme booklet, my case with the vodka in it, and directions on how to find my room and Walt Willis. All calm and efficient they were too. Me, I was damn near frothing with excitement, trying to carry on six conversations at once, (which is no easy thing for a lip-reader as poor as I am), shaking hands with everybody in sight, including the hall-porter, and drooling at the hotel receptionist who was very blonde, very pretty, and very unapproachable.

I drew Room 42, third floor, sharing with my usual room mate, Arthur Thomson. His case was already there. I stepped into the corridor, hollered "Arfer" in the Moscowitz manner, and he shot from the room next door, looking excitingly dishevelled, along with Mary Dziechowski, and another American lass called Jean whose second name I never did catch. Bringing up the rear was Steve Schultheis and Our Boy Mal Ashworth, who used to be one of my very special friends until he double-crossed me and married my dreamboat, Sheila.

I said hallo to Mary, (umm), to Jean, to Steve, and to Arthur, and then turned to Mal.

"Well, where is she?" I asked.

He knew what I meant, and why I asked. I've been due to kiss the bride since way back when, and I don't like leaving these little jobs unfinished. Women are not

like vintage port, -- they don't improve with keeping, -- and Ashworth was quite capable of keeping her away from me until she drawing her old age pension.

However, he mumbled something about her arriving the next day so I unpacked the bottle, and, after a drink, we went off in search of Walt and Madeleine.

Walter Himself was talking to The Press, (Reuter's, no less!), and I wasn't able to get to him. So, I met Forest J Ackerman Himself instead. I didn't do anything, it just happened to me. I was just standing there, being quiet, on the landing, when this burly great chap came up, smiling from ear to ear, pumped my hand between both of his and said, "I'm very very pleased to meet you, Chuck. I'm Forry Ackerman!" Well, I gulped and I guess I said something in reply, but I'm damned if I'll ever know what it was now. Goshwow or not, brother, this was my Big Moment and if I had a tail it would be wagging yet. This was the man who was directly responsible for me being in fandom. The first fanzines I ever saw were VOM and SHANGRI L'AFFAIRES which Ackerman had sent to Fred Brown. (Fred, one of Britain's biggest collectors, has always given me the run of his enormous library and encouraged me to take an active part in fandom. He used to save the fmzs for me, and patiently explain all the esoteric bits about poos and yobbers and the rooster who wore red pants.) Dammit, here was the automatic choice of World's Number One Fan for all time, and he was pleased to meet me.

Is this naive? Is it gushing ingenuousness to say that I found him one helluva guy, -- lovable, unassuming, humble and so wonderfully approachable? He has no trace of that stand-offishness that afflicts many of the Big Names in the field, and he was just as pleasant and as courteous when he talked to Peter Reaney as he was when he talked to Arthur C Clarke.

(Which, incidentally, is more than can be said for Chuck Harris.)

Well, now I had to find Walt. I ran him to earth in the bar, chastely kissed Madeleine's cheek, (a privilege reserved solely for co-editors of HYPHEN), showed them the very hand that had been shaken, and then bubbled away about 4e until Ken Bulmer arrived with A Bombshell.

Whilst I had been meeting Ackerman on the landing, Ken had been there talking to the T.V. representative. Part of the jollity was to be televised and various people were being selected for interviews. Now, the T.V. man, -- a keen, perceptive type, -- had spotted me, fallen in love with my clean, intelligent, star-begotten looks, and wanted me to enchant his eight million viewers.

Cor! And, better still, he didn't ask Walt Willis or James White. My cup runneth over.

However, Ken knows me better than most people, and guessed that I wouldn't want to take part in the show. He told the bod I was deaf, and would have to work from a pre-arranged script, (my lip-reading can't be depended upon, and nobody seemed to have thought of T.V. with sub-titles), but the man was still eager and interested, so Ken came and told me about it.

Ordinarily, I would have politely refused to even consider such an idea unless they promised me a two-minute commercial spot for a HYPHEN plug, but under the circumstances ruling at this time, even Jayne Mansfield wouldn't have been able to drag me on the screen. I was away sick from work and desperately holding the boss at bay with sheaves of medical certificates stating that I had influenza, coryza, bronchitis, and just about everything up to, and including, Stigwort's Disease. If he knew that I was even out of bed, let alone whooping it up in a West End hotel and starring on his telly, he'd have fired me out of hand. The very thought of such things was enough to send me into a decline, and it was fortunate that Eric Bentcliffe arrived at the Crucial Moment with a free drink to revive my shattered nerves.

The Con proper was due to commence at 9 p.m. and Good Old Ted Carnell, a stickler for tradition, only kept us waiting for the minimum ten minutes before actually opening the thing. Ted is awfully good at platform work. He has a good relaxed manner, and a sort of authority which holds the audience. After declaring us open, he introduced the Guest of Honour.

Campbell, a huge man-mountain apparently consisting of 95% brain, physically and mentally dwarfed everyone else present and earned a huge ovation. He has an impressive personality, and he gesticulates like a Frenchman, but it struck me that just below the surface, he was very shy, nervous, and tense. I suppose it must be a bit of a strain at that, -- to be damn near revered by 300 people, and to know that later on, each and every one of them is going to get you into a corner and demand that UNKNOWN is revived by next Thursday week at the latest. As the Con went on, he grew more at ease and seemed more relaxed, but the mere fact that he is THE Campbell seemed to act as a moat between him and the rest of us that has not yet been bridged. I suspect that this demigod would dearly love to step down from his pedestal if only he knew how; that underneath that Editor of ASTOUNDING facade there is an awful lot of Joe Fann just waiting to be discovered.

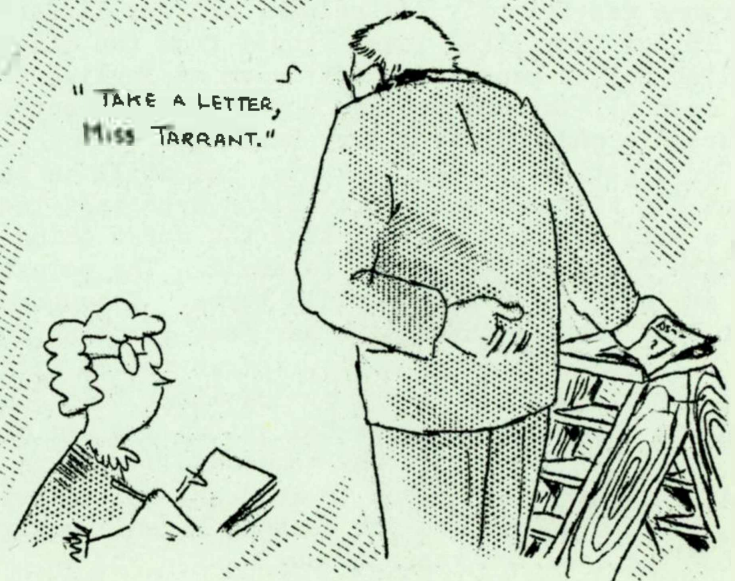
A paragraph in a recent letter from Walt adds weight to this surmise of mine: (Quote) "Do you know Ellis Mills invited him to his room party and he was delighted? So Mrs JWC said. Apparently in the US the fans never invite him.....and he was tickled pink."

I wish now that I'd given him that free copy of "-" and a shot from my bottle, instead of shaking hands so very respectfully and calling him Mr Campbell.

Mrs Campbell was entirely different from John, and made a big hit all by herself. She was so warm and so nicely ordinary that towards the end of the Con there was a sort of spontaneous movement amongst everyone that ended with her being presented with a little souvenir to mark the occasion. Apart from Eric Frank Russell, -- who is scared of nothing except the ghost of Charles Fort, -- she was probably the only person present who wasn't intimidated by JWC, and she was fun too. On Sunday morning the Campbells went to Hyde Park Corner. This is where the orators, each mounted on a soap-box or a pair of steps, preach total abstinence, total drunkenness, salvation and bloody revolution to anybody who'll stop to listen. Peg Campbell enjoyed it all immensely and came back proclaiming, much to our delight, that she was going to buy John a pair of steps. If you see any added vehemence in future ASF editorials, you'll know why.

After this session we sat in the lounge, -- Arthur, Ethel, Walt Madeleine, Bobbie, the Dietz's, Rayburn, Schultheis, -- hell, a big crowd of us, and talked ourselves dry.

Hours later, after Belle had bought a great raft of coffee for everyone, I found Arthur (who had sneaked off to Bentcliffe's room to swill Belgian whisky with Boyd Raeburn), and we went to bed at 2.30 a.m.



We got four hours sleep and then awoke and groaned in unison. I felt awful, but Arfer insisted that he felt fine, and that there were no after-effects to the Belgian whisky of the night before. Personally I found this a little hard to believe: he was bending over the wash-basin, gently scrubbing his teeth, and had his free hand pressed firmly to the top of his head to stop the damn thing falling off.

We phoned the desk to ask if they could send up some tea, but this was refused because we hadn't ordered it the previous night. Breakfast was still hours away so we went out and found a transport cafe in a side street that was open. It was a crummy fly-specked place, but the tea was like nectar, and after a couple of cups apiece we began to feel more human and convention-minded again.

Back at the hotel most everybody were still in bed, but we found Mary Dziechow-ski looking all fresh and vivacious in the lounge, waiting for the restaurant to open. She had been up until 6 a.m. and then gone to bed and found that she couldn't sleep. (Convention insomnia is something new to me, and something which I hope I never catch myself.) She'd gotten dressed and came downstairs again, but found it lonesome. Forry had been talking with her group all night and had gone to bed at the same time. Mary liked Ackerman. She decided that he would make an ideal breakfast companion. So, she picked up the phone, dialled his room, and told him to come down for breakfast.

"Was he pleased?" I asked her.

"Well," she said, "he didn't sound very enthusiastic, but he's coming!"

Personally I would have screamed obscenities at her, pretty as she is, and come downstairs only to clobber her into insensibility with the bedroom utensil, but American men are different. Ackerman came downstairs, almost limp with fatigue, but still as courteous and as charming as ever, and toddled off to breakfast with us.

This courtesy stuff was the thing that impressed me most about the American contingent. They were all disarmingly friendly, polite, and without the slightest trace of the brashness that I was led to expect from them. Arfer and I liked them all very much indeed and spent most of the morning circulating, and asking what they liked and disliked most about England. They were all prompt enough to answer about the things they liked, but very reluctant to criticise anything at all. Most of them decided that the nicest thing were the British themselves. They thought everyone was friendly and helpful and far different from what they had expected. The things they liked least ranged from the old complaint about the thickness of English toilet paper to a criticism of English licensing hours, (in N. Y. the bars are open all day and you can buy a drink at anytime), but I thought the most remarkable one came from Rory Faulkner.

Rory, petite and near seventy, but still as pert as any teen-ager and not the least bit flurried about travelling over half the world from L. A. to London, thought for a bit, and then decided that the worst thing she had encountered were the English flush-toilets. She is small. The pedestals were too high for her liking and she said so in no uncertain terms. I suppose we should have felt sorry for poor Rory sitting there with her feet dangling into space, but nobody, unfortunately, was the least bit sympathetic, and we roared with laughter.

Ackerman didn't help any by drawling, "Odd Johns!" either.

After Walt and Madeleine had got up and had breakfast we all congregated in the bar again. I don't know why we became bar-flies for this Con, -- perhaps Walt was expecting Tucker and Bloch to drop in, and wanted to be the first to greet them, -- but it was a good place for meeting Legendary Figures that have been just names to me for the last ten years or so.

Sam Moscowitz was the first one, and I liked him very much indeed. Stocky, well-dressed, charming and affable, he looked anything but the tough truck-driver that I'd been expecting, and he was one of the most fascinating conversationalists that I'd ever met. He was full of his adventures in England so far, and told us of his experiences the previous night.

He'd been out walking with Bob Madle and, (probably in the Bayswater Road), he'd been accosted by street-walkers no less than five times in three blocks. SaM, an ex-editor of SEXOLOGY, --(the facts-of-life magazine)was interested in such a phenomenon. New York streets, he said, were comparatively free of whores, so he stopped to chat with the last girl who smiled at him. "Stunning girl," he said. "Face, figure..." he waved his hands expressively and didn't need to say anymore. He went on to ask the girl what she thought of the Wolfendon Report (a preface to some new legislation aimed at cleaning up vice in London). She reckoned that all the men Should Do Something About it, -- they should write in and protest!

SaM had a most wonderful attitude to the whole business as if, in a sense, he and the girl were sort of coworkers in the field, and he was all serious and constructive about the business. A girl accosts him in the street and rightaway he gets down to market research and analysis just as if it was sf.

Anyway, after a long talk with this girl he eventually got a most cordial invitation to her flat. He refused the offer, but, courteous to the last, softened the blow with a white lie about how it takes all his time to keep his girl-friend serviced.

Oddly enough though, (and this possibly comes from working for Gernsback), he had forgotten to ask what her rates were. Ever helpful, we told him..... about £3 to the natives, or £5 to the rich Americans. SaM was silent for a split second whilst he multiplied by 2.80 to get a total in dollars, then he looked up, grinned and drawled slowly, "Is that with or without shower?"

These bloody hygienic, dispassionate Americans!



Bob Silverberg arrived and sat talking for a while too. Very dark, and, I imagine, very attractive to women, he has the same sort of deadpan humour that James White specialises in, and a sort of whacky style that cannot be recaptured properly in print.

I had a heavy cold and my ever-present box of KLEENEX was on the table in front of me. Bob sat down and, whilst he was busily talking to Walt, he leant across the table, took one of the tissues, folded it carefully and tucked it into his pocket.

"Take some more," I said generously, "there's plenty there."

He shook his head once, and tapped his pocket. "Completist," he said, dead-pokerfaced without even the suspicion of a smile, and carried on his conversation with Walt without a pause. James, with all the years he's been working at it, couldn't have timed it better.

The next person that Walt introduced me to was Bob Madle, the TAFF representative. He was a nice guy, and I liked him. I think everyone found him completely and utterly charming, and I think he liked us too, and that he enjoyed his trip. But, -- and you are at liberty to call me a bad sportsman if you wish, -- I still don't think he should ever have been nominated, and I still think that Eney should have won. Bob was very nice and very pleasant, -- but we just hadn't even heard of him before he was nominated, and we shared little in common with him.

Apropos of nothing, does any of the audience believe that TAFF would have survived if Madle had fallen sick, and left Hoffman to make the trip and to administer the fund next year, hmm?

The Convention Banquet was a new innovation for Anglo-fandom, and one that I hope will be repeated at all future conventions. It was an enormous success, and a complete sell-out. The only thing that marred it was the fact that the hotel restaurant, -- a very long, very narrow, room -- wasn't really suitable for such a large luncheon. However, the management and the ConCommittee had done their best to overcome this by a clever arrangement of tables and seating. The tables really sparkled with glassware and cutlery, and were most effectively decorated with flowers and lighted candles, (for poverty-stricken fans without Ronsons), as centre-pieces.

I was sitting at a fine fannish table, flanked by Madeleine and Terry Jeeves, and opposite some dark-haired dish who turned out to be Erika Russell. I thought she was a bit of all right too, -- a bloody sight prettier than her old man, --and, after being introduced by Walt (who knows more pretty young women than any married fan has a right to), was chonk full of ideas about showing her my fanzine collection etc. as soon as we'd finished eating. Unfortunately, before my big, friendly smile had had a chance to warm up, she remembered her father's last words or something, found she was in the wrong seat, and had fled to the comparative safety of the H Beam Piper part of the table.

For 13/6 we had iced cantaloupe melon, soup, roast duck with orange sauce, fruit salad, coffee and wine. I thought it was a most reasonable price, and they weren't mean with the wine either. It was a very sharp red Medoc, and although I did not care for it with duckling, it was at least a drink. Connoisseur Willis summed it up pretty nicely. He sipped it, rolled it around his mouth in the approved manner, sniffed the bouquet, and considered his judgement. "HMMMMMMMMMMMM," he said impressively, "imported."

(This, mind you, from the only wine-bibber in the world who adds three spoonful of sugar to a wineglass of Beaujolais before he'll even consider drinking it.)

There were speeches after the meal, but neither Madeleine nor I stayed for them. I wanted to go to bed for a couple of hours and she wanted to sew sequins onto her



fancy dress, (a front and bacover by Atom: Arthur chalked the cartoons onto a black dress, and then Madeleine carefully sewed tiny sparkling sequins all over the chalk lines,) and I went to bed for a couple of hours.

I awoke just in time to go to supper with Walt, Madeleine and Forry, -- we had ravioli, (a favourite of mine and Walter's), at a little Italian espresso bar in Queensway.

We had hardly gotten back inside the hall, when I found myself with both arms full of woman, and myself being kissed from here to hell and gone. Most enjoyable, -- even though I spent five minutes slurping away before I managed to get my eyes focussed, and found it was my Sheila who was so glad to see me. Naturally I was just as enthusiastic about this as she was, and I stood right there kissing back at her until we both had to break for breath. Mal, who had been standing by doing his very best to look blase about such uproarious salutations, sighed with relief when we did finally unclinch, and got a firm hold onto his wife again before we decided to make a habit of it.

A very lovely girl, young Sheila, -- if only I could break her of that nasty habit of referring to me as "Uncle Chuck" whenever she sees me.

The fancy dress ball was already in full swing by this time. Madeleine went up to change into her frock, and then, typically, decided not to enter after all. A pity because it was a restrained and clever costume, and I think it would have stood a good chance in the "most fannish" category. Some of the other costumes though were very wonderful indeed, and it must have been a hard job to judge them fairly. I think though that the Dietz's, dressed as a pair of E.T.'s in red and black, complete with face make up and tendrils, well deserved their win. And, for that matter, so did the Kyles and John Brunner.

The one that impressed me most of all though was that of Paul Hammett's exquisitely beautiful wife, Joan. It wasn't stefnic, -- she was dressed as a typical English schoolgirl in a gym tunic and sandals and her hair in plaits, -- but it was so realistic that most everybody was completely fooled by it, and didn't connect this brat with the sophisticated, groomed Joan that they all know. She had every childish mannerism right down pat, -- even to the way she tugged excitedly at people's sleeves before speaking to them, -- and Paul was having a high old time going around introducing his child bride to all and quandry. I offered to baby-sit for him, but he wasn't having any.

There were no prizes for the worst costumes or I guess Peter Reaney in his usual female impersonation would have won it. I'm not certain if Lawrence Sandfield was in fancy dress or not, but he certainly looked ever so gay, darlings, with a ducky wisp of red chiffon tied around his neck.

Pete Daniels, of Liverpool fandom, was leading the dance band, and blows a very hot horn indeed. I haven't danced since I went deaf ten years ago, but I could feel the beat from the way the floor was vibrating, and I badly wanted to try again. Arthur persuaded me that I could, and Little Sister Ethel Lindsay said she'd be glad to dance with me, so I trotted out onto the floor for the next quickstep with her. She was good and patient, and after a couple of false starts, I found my old groove again, didn't tread on Ethel and had myself a pretty big time. Afterwards, for the next ten minutes, I wandered around happily asking everyone if they'd seen me, and being reassured that they hadn't missed a single misstep. Truly, I do so enjoy being told how wonderful I am.

Unfortunately, before I could get back for a second helping, Pete Daniels had packed up, and the guitarists had taken over. We left the hall hastily. The others had had a gutfull of Sandfield unamplified, and wanted no part of him, and his guitar helped by a microphone. Even Brunner, (and he's reckoned to be good), wasn't sufficient counter-attraction, so we fled to the Writing Room.

We sat here for the rest of the night whilst Peter Philips, (Famous Author Peter Philips), entertained us with flute, harmonica, and weird demonstrations of the art of Yogi. He wasn't very good at any of them, and the yogi was spoilt by his odd tendency to topple over as soon as he had one foot securely behind his head, but I thought it a very wonderful performance. He was, of course, on a par with any newt you care to name, and there was some tsK-tsking because of this. Personally, he seemed just the same as he always is to me, -- comic, gentle, and very captivating, --and, stewed or not, it didn't stop him from playing cards later on with Bennett, Thorne, and West and taking each and every one of them to the cleaners.

Things got a bit blurry for me too after 4 a.m. I vaguely remember one of the American girls staring at me intently and informing all and sundry that "Chuck has a halo." I made a speech aimed at those who believed the girl to be hallucinated, intoxicated or both. I decried the fannish lechers and degenerates, (amidst loud cheers from the lecherous and degenerate audience), informed them that I have now sworn a vow of eternal chastity, apologised to the hallucinated lass who seemed to think that I had decided to promote her from the ranks of the vestal virgins, was ceremonially presented with a placard that read LUNCHEON on one side, and "Have you got your Wolfendon Licence?" on the other, and then went to bed at 4.45. a.m.

I was hoping to sleep until Sunday afternoon. I was dead beat and could hardly stay awake long enough to get my clothes off.

However, James, Arfer, and lovable Mal Ashworth had other ideas. They had stayed up all night. Just before 7 a.m. they missed me. Instead of doing the decent fannish thing and sending me a "Wish you were here" card, they decided to come up and see how I was getting on. There they were, three happy smiling faces, all enjoying the struggle between fatigue and awareness in the bed before them, and carefully waiting until I was fully awake before saying in unison, "You needn't get up." I reached for Arfer's wrist to see what the time was, and then screamed in agony. It was just 6.45. I had been in bed for all of two hours.

Still, once I'd dragged myself to the basin, splashed water on my face, and brushed some of the garbage from my mouth, I decided I felt okay, and we went out into the streets to search for tea. It was Sunday so we didn't find any, but it was good to get a breath of fresh air anyway.

Back at the hotel, breakfast was a quiet subdued meal. Most everybody else had been up all night, and were going to bed as soon as they had eaten. Even the venerable George Charters had stayed up all night, and had only been driven back to his own hotel by the empty feeling in his stomach. (GATWC, for some reason or other, never stays at the Convention Hotel. He always books at some place elsewhere. He said that this year he was staying at our old Con Hotel, The Royal, but for all I know, he could have been sleeping on The Embankment.)

So here we are, all shushed and quiet, and trying to eat breakfast. Wally Weber, -- I don't think he'd been to bed since landing in England, -- was so tired that he couldn't even shudder as he drank "the stuff they call coffee over here" and just couldn't summon up enough energy to attack the cereal.

At the other end of the table, Tony Thorne, -- specially resurrected from the fannish dead along with Bert Campbell, -- was engaged in repartee (no less) with the waitress.

"What would you like for breakfast, sir," she said, "bacon and egg?"

Tony thought for a moment. "Is there any alternative?" he asked.

"Er, I'm afraid not," said the waitress.

"In that case," said Thorne, reaching a momentous decision, "I would like bacon and egg."

After breakfast there was a Musical Interlude. Along the street outside the hotel there came a band of street musicians. These are a fairly common occurrence in London, -- just four or five musicians and a couple of "bottlers" who thrust collections bags at the passers-by, who are, presumably, entertained enough to drop in a penny or so. Evidently such goings-on are unknown in the States, and the American fans flocked out onto the pavement to watch as the band shuffled by giving their all to "When The Saints Go Marching In."

The Yanks seemed fascinated, but a wee bit puzzled so I thought I'd be all helpful to the poor bloody foreigners. I turned to the American girl who was standing next to me and said, "They're called buskers, love."

Well sir, I had a heavy cold, and maybe my accent isn't all that it should be, but the lass recoiled in horror just like the heroine in a Tucker story. I was only trying to be helpful: I smiled all reassuringly, and spelt it out for her.

"B. U. S. K. E. R. S. dear,"

I was just trying to be helpful, but she gulped and was gone sharpish as if I'd been demanding droits de seigneur or something, and I still haven't got the faintest idea whether she understood me or not. I would love to know what she thought I was saying though.

Back in the hotel things were stirring again. We stepped over Ray Nelson, -- the originator of the beanie as a fannish symbol way back in Fandom's Paleozoic, -- who was prostrate on the floor of the lounge, completely and utterly absorbed in Knight's IN SEARCH OF WONDER, and made our way to the Writing Room again.

Here, Eric Jones had rigged up a couple of Psionics machines. Arthur, Rory and I played with the things, and Arthur got a Definite Reaction. It wasn't until after we'd excitedly filled in a report form, and envisaged all sorts of erudite and weighty articles in ASF, that we discovered that the machine wasn't plugged in to the power source.

"ODD DRESSERS THESE YANKS"



At lunch time we went back to our ravioli place with Peter Reaney and one or two others. We didn't actually invite Reaney, (you guessed?), but he has certain leech-like tendencies and short of pushing him under a bus there didn't seem any way we could dispose of him. Unfortunately, Bayswater is badly served by buses on Sunday mornings. However, once inside the place, we picked our tables carefully and left him and his friends to sit at the far end of the restaurant and leave us in comparative peace.

I chose my table with Steve Schultheis and Ellis Mills, and I enjoyed my lunch immensely. Ellis, who has been in European Fandom so long that we all consider him a native, was in strict training for the International Tea-Drinking Contest that was due to take place in the afternoon, and was coating everything with a thick layer of salt before eating it. By the time he'd finished preparing it, his omelette looked as if it had been frosted, and I was tempted to call the waitress and order one coffee for myself and six salt cellars for Mr Mills. This, however, turned out to be unnecessary when Ellis delved into one of his capacious pockets, and brought forth his own tube of salt to add to that supplied by the restaurant.

Ellis is back in the States now (for four years school under the G. I. Bill of Rights), and we are going to miss him badly over here. He is one of the most friendly and unassuming persons that I have ever met, as well as one of the most generous, and the most thoughtful. For instance, a non-smoker himself, he knows the most Anglofen have a liking for American brands of cigarettes and, quietly and unostentatiously, he distributes packs to all and sundry as if it were the most natural thing in the world to do so.

And, best of all, he listens, and he laughs.

When I am rich and powerful I am going to hire Ellis Mills as my Chief Appreciator. He will accompany me everywhere, and under the terms of his contract, he will be required to laugh at one or more of my whimsies on each and every day.

That laugh is a wondrous thing. It starts as a smile, gets wider and deeper, starts off a muted rumble deep down in the chest, commences his shoulders shaking and then gradually takes over the rest of his body until all of Ellis is laughing, and I get a mental image of his toes flexing and unflexing within his mocassins as they appreciate me too. And, of course, it's highly infectious. I have a dreadful tendency to laugh at my own jokes already, but I try to be objective about it, and usually I give my poorer witticisms no more than a perfunctory titter. But, when Ellis is around, I feel like Jack Benny and Bob Hope and Tommy Trinder all rolled into one: I am then a helluva wit, -- albeit a trifle corny -- and such heady stuff gives even ravioli a new savour.

Again, back to the hotel, past the street musician aimlessly plucking his battered harp, (we'd posed Walter Himself against the thing on our way down whilst Steve took a few pictures of the Harpist that once or twice), to arrive there in time for The Ceremony of St Fantony, staged by the Cheltenham Circle. Walt, Ellis, Ken Slater, Bob Silverberg, Terry Jeeves, Eric the Bent, Bobby Wild, Rory Faulkner, and several others were inducted as Knights and Ladies of the Order of St Fantony. They each got a parchment, a trophy, (an extremely well done replica of a knight in full armour), and a glass of "water from St Fantony's Well" which turned out to be 140% proof white spirit. It was all beautifully produced with the Cheltenham people in fabulous costumes, and apart from the quasi-religious overtones, I thought it very impressive indeed. I guess now it will be Sir Walter who'll be sewing sequins on his bloody fancy dress next year.

This was followed by some fine fannish films made by the Liverpool and Cheltenham groups, -- including the candid camera one made at the last Kettering Con.

When I saw some of the situations which had been filmed without the participants being aware of it, I was rather relieved that I hadn't been present myself. I'd hate to be caught like Shirley Marriott, for instance, -- shown helplessly drunk on the floor, beaming vacuously whilst somebody near drowns her with a soda syphon. On the other hand, I would have loved to have held the camera, my breath, the crowd back, anything, whilst they filmed Ina Shorrock in her bath. This, brother, was stupendous, terrific, colossal, and in glorious technicolour too. Ina is a dish at any time, but clad in nothing but a little LUX lather she's enough to make strong men scream, and even George Charters and the rest of the Oldest Guard lean forward and quietly bite chunks out of the seats in front. I tried to ask Norman Shorrock afterwards what happened to the pieces he must have clipped from the film before showing, but he was vague, non-committal, and not interested in trading for a mint set of GALAXY.

The only thing that marred the afternoon for me was the ever-present Peter West and his bloody camera. I thought it was stupid and dangerous to wait, as West did, until the hall was totally darkened, and then to stand up and let loose at the audience with a high-powered electronic flash. If this is the sort of irresponsibility we get from the "Official Convention Photographer" then I think we'd be a bloody sight better off without him in future.

The camera maniacs seemed to have turned out in full force for the Con, and even Campbell's speech was spoilt by some weirdie who writhed and gyrated at the side of the stage in a sort of Presley imitation before reaching the orgasmic stage of shutter-clicking. I know that photographs are a Good Thing, and I'm all in favour of them within reason, but if the Dietz's, Schultheis, and Weber could show camera courtesy, I don't see why the others couldn't do so too.



Somewhere around here I was introduced to Eric Frank Russell. I was a bit tongue-tied, but I managed to ask him where Willie Pugmire was. He grinned, but it seems that friend Willie, the dirt-Christian, hadn't been able to make the trip down this year. Rory Faulkner reminded him that he'd promised to throw her down and assault her if she was able to make the trip. Eric glanced around uneasily, and said it was a bit too public.

"Hell," said Rory, as she came back into the hotel, "Five Thousand miles I've come under false pretences."

Anyway, I thought EFR looked like a Big Name Pro. He's not quite nine feet tall, but he's well over the six foot mark, and has a build to match. He doesn't act the Big Name though. He was nicely approachable and seemed genuinely glad to meet people. Too bad he had to warn Erica off about us though.

On Sunday night I came home to sleep, but I was back at the hotel in time to talk with Walt, Madeleine, and the insomniac Weber whilst they had breakfast. Dave Newman came past our table sporting only one half of the luxuriant moustache with which he'd started the convention. We looked at him blearily but sympathetically. "Tough luck, boy," I said. "These bloody souvenir-hunting Americans will whip anything that isn't nailed down."

Along with 21 other early risers we managed to make the Business Session at 11.00. The first item was the election of two new directors to the WSFS, -- the organisation which runs the World Conventions. Belle Dietz and Arthur Kingsley (N.Y.) had already been nominated, and Bob Madle then nominated Dave Newman. Belle, of course, was a stone-cold certainty, but I was surprised when Dave was elected to the other vacancy rather than Kingsley. As Joy Clarke pointed out, Dave, living in England, could never be much more than a figurehead, and she was agin the proposal. So was I, but he was still elected by one vote.

In a way, the Big Thing of the Business Session was a bit of an anti-climax. We'd gone there determined to make it South Gate in '58 or die in the attempt, but it turned out that everyone else had the same idea. South Gate was the only site proposed, and voting for it was just a formality. It was fun though to see every hand in the hall thrust up for it, and all the heads turning round to see if anyone had the temerity to dare make it anything but unanimous. And, -- even though I shall never go, -- to scamper down the passage afterwards to try to be first to register Convention membership for next year. (We weren't first, -- but at least we tried to be.)

After lunch, 4e, SaM, and Bob Madle put on a little quiz show of their own. It was a three-cornered contest with each of them out for blood, and deliberately making the questions as hard as they could think up. Truly, it staggered me at the way they did find the answers, but it would be unworthy to suggest that it was cooked up beforehand. Anyway, cooked or not, I don't think I shall ever forget Forry rattling off the titles and dates of all the Frankenstein films in sequence, or SaM, carefully and methodically, giving title and place of publication of every Weinbaum story ever written....and, after about six minutes, getting down to those that were published in fanzines.

It finished as a draw, 9-9-9 points each, and I'd love to be around if they ever hold a return match.

Campbell's talk on psionics followed this, but I couldn't stay for it. My Convention was over and I had to go home. I collected my bag, said my few good-byes and left the hotel for the last time. I was dog-tired, I still had my cold, and I'd spent far more than I'd intended, but it was worth it. It was my first world con and I'd enjoyed all of it. I'd met people who had been nothing but names to me before, and I'd made new friends. As I said to Forry before I left, "It was a bloody pleasure, mate."

And, it was.

# THE THIRTEENTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAand a partridge on a pear tree.

Dear Dorothy Dix,

My True Love wants us to get married in May.  
And I would, -- except for his habit of doing things in such a big way.  
I know that every girl likes to feel appreciated,  
But his idea of Useful Gifts is vastly overrated.  
I admit that the first partridge was both tasty and savoury,  
But since then he's turned my upstairs flat into an upstairs avairy.  
You might believe that a pair of doves are a pretty swell love-token,  
But not when it turns out that the damn things aren't house-broken.  
The gold rings were all right though, (even if they were only nine carat,)  
But the calling birds turned out to be some weird species of parrot.  
(Their conversation varies between the rude and the obscene,  
And they are always "near the knuckle" if you follow what I mean.)  
The bathroom looks like 'Swan Lake', and those goddam geese are moulting,  
And the mess beneath the hat-stand, (where they roost), is quite revolting.  
French hens are no bit different from the old Rhode Island Reds,  
Except that they hate nest-boxes and lay their eggs in beds.  
As for the drummers and the pipers, --- well, they're worse than Guy Lombardo.  
It's always "Flowers of the Forest" or tunes from "The Mikado."  
The worst thing though, Miss Dix, is these young scions of the nobility,  
And their never-ending efforts for perpetual mobility,  
These landed-gentry boyos have been leaping every day,  
--- And at night they leapt my milkmaids and put them in the family way.  
Now I've eight dishonoured wenches who never stood before a minister,  
And eight little coats-of-arms each scarred with a bar-sinister.....

Miss Dix, I'm not a prudish, animal-hating cynic,  
It's just that I don't want this poultry-farm and ante-natal clinic.  
Please, please, put on your thinking-cap and help rid me of this crew,  
And then come round and shoot our postman before tomorrow's mail gets through,  
And my love-besotten dreamboat decides to send me C. O. D.  
The corpse of Tutankhamen and a full-size Sputnik III.

Hepzibah Snoopwhistle.