

WALDO 5



When a convention is as big as SEACON was, everyone's convention must have been different, and I eagerly await the varied and diverse conreps that will appear over the next few months/years telling of the alternate Seacons that took place. I even await those written by that tight little band of Insular English who appeared determined to keep their segment of fandom untainted by outside contact - I can't understand a way of fannish life that deliberately avoids contact, but I'll be interested to read what their convention was like.

MY SEACON can perhaps be best described as one pre-dating MINNEAPOLIS IN '73 - BRIGHTON IN '62 perhaps, for it surely couldn't have been the almost twenty-years-it-is since I last saw Bob Tucker, Lynn Hicman, The Coulson's, et al, in the flesh. For me it was a convention out-time, peopled with past and present fannish friends, divorced not only from mundane life but also from the normal British convention of recent times. Apart from that tight little band of fake-fans already mentioned, there were other special-interest groups present who weren't of any especial interest to methe womens-libbers, for instance. I've always thought of fans as individuals, some of whom happen to be male, some female (and some Joseph Nicolas), and I've little time for pressure groups of any kind...but it was a big enough con that such groups as these, the Trekkies, etcetra did not impinge on my Seacon.

I'd had some misgivings about attending Seacon, as you may recall from the last WALDO, I'd thought it would be impossible to find those I wanted to find at such a mammoth affair. However, Jim Cawthorn pointed out that the size of the con would also make it easier to avoid those you didn't wish to see which, with typically inverted fannish logic, decided me to attend after all.



This late change of mind created a few problems in finding accommodation and I eventually ended up some twenty minutes stagger from the Metro-pole, but the actual journey down to Brighton was easy. I left the car behind for Beryl to use, and took a succession of trains which, miraculously were all on time and when the last of these entered Burgess Hill Station, I realised Seacon couldn't be far away.

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I arrived in Brighton just before lunch-time on the Thursday, and got to the Metropole in time for the Grand Opening...well in time for the Grand Opening, which was delayed for reasons of tradition and because one of the Scottish Pipers was attacked by a marauding band of Trekkies who thought he was mistreating a tribble.

" It's a tribute to H. Beam Piper, I think."

However, I'd located Norman Shorrock and a bar, just prior to the Grand Opening, and we were too busy trying to identify faces from the past to worry unduly about the delay...and it was quite an 'effective' Opening, although after the majestic entry of the Pipe Band, the dimming of the lights, the spotlights focusing, I was expecting at Least Prince Charles, at the very least one of the Corgies; Peter Weston was a little disapointment.

From then on the convention became, for me, a continual round of pleasurable meeting and renewal of friendship with fans, many of whom I hadn't seen for years and, in some cases, had never met in the flesh....that some of them had far more of the latter than expected made it all the more interesting.

"Norman, that thin fan trying to get out...it couldn't be, could it ?"

After the opening, Norman and I decided to tour the Metropole and try and locate where everything was...that I was still trying to do this on the morning I had to leave for home illustrates how many pleasant diversions I encountered. We did get as far as the Bookroom; met Lynn Hickman, John Millard, Jim Cawthorn, Ina, Ron Bennett, and others, and were still there talking (or so it seemed) when we realised it was time to go watch the STAR WARS presentation at 8 o'clock in the evening. I didn't attend many program items; I was too busy, but I was impressed by the sheer amount of programming scheduled for the convention, and by the general organisation of the convention. Oh, I could criticise this, or that, things did go wrong, but they were so minor, relatively speaking, that I've only praise for the committee...and sometimes when they went wrong, it helped.

Things went wrong during the STAR WARS Presentation; projector trouble made what would have been, probably, a slick-presentation into quite a fan-nish affair. Sound synchronisation didn't when they tried to show the trailer for "The Empire Strikes Back" the first time, and the projectionist had to do a re-wind. Tension was relieved, however, when Filthy Pierre struck up the Star Wars Theme on his harmonium, falsely alerting the back-room boys to dim the lights just as the projectionist was re-threading... a blue-haze momentarily emitted from the balcony.

Prior to the Star Wars show we had found the Art Rooms, and the Fan Room, and these area's, interconnecting with the Book Rooms, were where I spent my day-time Seacon. The art on display was very impressive, and I found myself returning again and again to both the main exhibition, and to the Dragon's Dream display. To one used to the small (good, but small) amount of art on show at U.K. conventions the Seacon Displays were almost overwhelming both in variety, and high standard, of work on show. The quite superb artistry and imaginative detail which many of the exhibits displayed deserves high praise. Few artists in the s-f/fantasy field get the recognition they truly deserve, probably because it isn't easy for fans (or anyone) to describe their reaction to a work of pictorial art. I know I feel totally inadequate to express the pleasure given to me by artists, known and unknown (to me), at Seacon.

In this context, I recently aquired a fine Jim Cawthorn painting which I never time of looking at, and which gives me something fresh to think about each time I look at it...this, I suppose, is what art should do, provide your imagination with everfresh inspiration...and send it off on new exploration beyond the boundaries of the painting itself.

The Fan Room...Oops, FANDOM ROOM, was less impressive in its displays (and I, for one, would have liked to see the bleeping, beeping video-games elsewhere, for they were a considerable distraction during Fan Room program items), but no less of interest in that here were to be seen walking, talking, occasionally breathing, exhibits of fandom past and present. At almost any time of day or night there was bound to be at least a dozen people there you wanted to talk with. I met Terry Hughes there for the first time, 'fresh' from flying the Atlantic, and the Maule 'mobile. Trufan that he is, he made light of these twin hazards and contributed much to the pleasant fannish ambience in which I passed the weekend.

Friday, like Thursday, like Saturday, are now a pleasant haze of distorted memories, and I can't even be sure which day it was that I ate lunch at 10p.m.... I think it was Thursday, still, that I ended the day/night chatting in the downstairs lounge with Frank & Anna-Joe Denton, Fred Prophet, Lynn Hickman, Joni Stopa, Wally Gonser, Roger Sims, and others too nameless to mention. Lynn, with Roger, their respective wives and several other mid-west fans had been touring around England prior to the con and innocently (?) had discovered a quite useful gambit which they were eagerly passing on to other budding tourists....'if you tour in two cars and run one into the back of the other, friendly natives will rush out and bring you drinks of tea, coffee, and whisky!'

" Youbsee, sir, this is th e Ground Floor - well, one of the Ground Floors - but the lifts for the Upper Floors are downstairs, so if you want to go down you have to walk and then take....."

Friday dawned reasonably pleasantly, and not too early, as I recall, and bright sunshine and a temperature well above freezing helped make my walk from the Sherlock Hotel to the Metropole quite a bearable one. My hotel was cheap - by Brighton standards - but clean, and offered several facilities the main con-hotels didn't; including a mobius stairway which not only ascended but passed through three different (but adjoining) buildings en route to my room. This was rather confusing after a room-party or two, and even more so, sober. It was also inhabited, mainly, by elderly lady residents who crunched their cornflakes exceeding loud at breakfast time with evial grimaces. It was only ~~for~~ respect for these residents that prevented me from turning my stay here to financial advantage - I had intended organising tours to my room for any Baker Street Irregulars at the convention.

I arrived at the Metropole in time for the Fan Room panel on American Fandom moderated by Frank Denton who, did an excellent job until faced with a fan seated in the front-row who was determined to give everyone the full story of fandom in march 1929. It was an interesting panel nontheless, tho' some of the speakers were difficult to hear because of the other activities in the area - highly coloured fannish prose being part drowned out by the tea-urn gurgling, cash registers clinking, and those previously mentioned bleeping video machines. I felt sympathy for Peter Roberts who (almost driven to impersonate a Berserker Budgie) would unplug these, only to have them plugged in again by the next cretin to enter the room. I suspect he now shares my nightmare of penultimate video-game technology in which the machines can plug themselves back in!

When my turn at the mike came the following day I realised that the problem wasn't quite as acute as I'd feared, since I could hear myself quite clearly.....

I'm not, in case my hyperbole has you confused, against video games in general (only their siting in this instance); I have a fairly basic one which gets played on the lounge tv quite frequently and I'm eagerly awaiting further developments in the field...providing, that is, that such developments head in the direction I want them to. I want a video set-up that by use of simulated gun, rapier, or bludgeon on-screen will enable me to eliminate those tv characters I detest. This would, of course, require a feed-back-to-studio link, and considerable advance on the current state of the art, but it would brighten my evenings.

I'd watch Star Trek (again!) if I were able to penetrate the Enterprise force screen (not, apparently a very difficult thing to accomplish) and eliminate certain characters; that this would result in the Klingons taking over the universe wouldn't, I think, be a bad thing at all. And think of the sheer personal enjoyment that could be gained by zapping participants in party political broadcasts, chat-shows, etcetra. Since nowone likes everyone this could, admittedly, result in a lot of blank screens....and recent events makes me wonder if science-fact isn't already ahead of science-fiction, and the suspicion that someone may already have developed such a device.

You recall that weeks long ITV strike? I think I know the true facts behind the blank screens on channel three; a certain well known fan and TAFF Delegate spent a lot of time bemoaning to me that UK commercial tv was off the air, a lot of time, and I think he doth protest to much. Those scurrying worrying trade-unionists, those frantic media men, they were just window dressing whilst the technical boys in the back-room tried desperately to triangulate Terry Hughes. That they didn't, speaks well for his speed of foot and his discovery that certain fan's breath made an excellent screening device. You wondered why aftercon he visited Bob Shaw, and Harry Bell, and...err, Holmes Chapel, and he a teatotaller!

His only mistake, in my opinion, was in discarding his device before boarding the plane for New York where they could trace it and inactivate it. (Admittedly, the fact that he'd wrapped it in a file of Fanzine Fanatique should have prevented this...)

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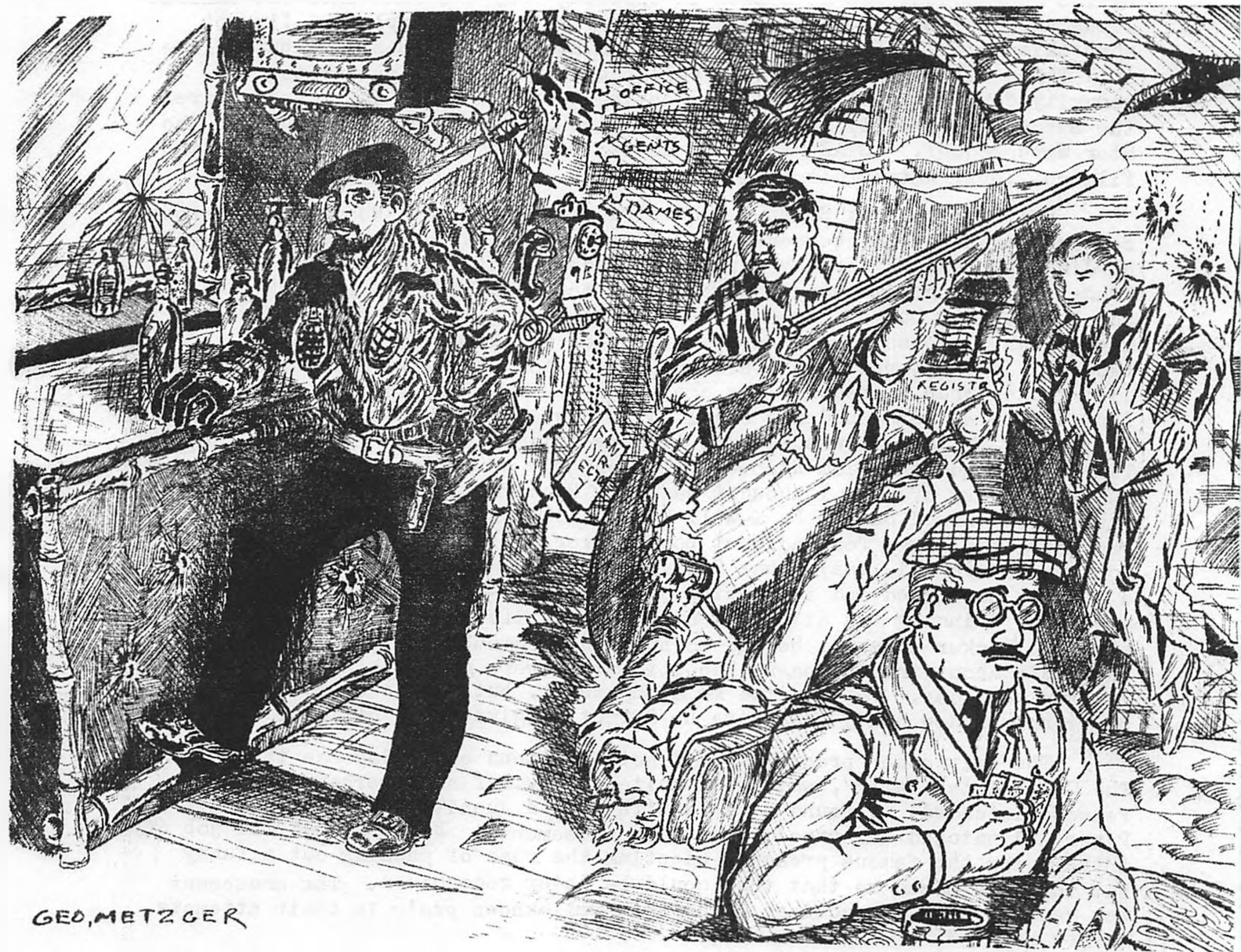
I'd sat and watched the American Fandom Panel with Terry Hughes; plying him with coca cola to oil his larynx for the upcoming TAFF/GUFF session which was to follow. The only other unfannish thing I was to discover about Terry was his predilection for neat coca cola...although, I understand that he has been known to cut it with orange juice when in extremis. An excellent TAFF choice nontheless, and I greatly enjoyed his company both at the convention and later, when he visited Holmes Chapel. He talked interestingly during the TAFF/GUFF Interview as did John Foyster who, remarkably is also a teatotaller. I'm not knocking the state (I rarely drink, myself, these days) but it is fairly rare to find two such paragons of virtue on-stage together at a s-f convention. John, in fact, features in one of my favourite Seacon stories. It seems that during the convention he went for a meal with Boyd Raeburn, former editor of A BAS and noted bon vivant, and several other fans. Boyd deferentially entrusted the choice of wines to John, discovering his error only whilst waiting courteously (if impatiently) for John to take first gulp, that he wasn't going to because he didn't drink. Hoocha, Boyd...and, Hoog!!

6 " No, that isn't Boyd Raeburn, he's eating a Wimpey...."

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I was impressed by the friendliness and talent of the Aussie fandom contingent. I've been remiss in recent years in not maintaining any real antipodean contact, and during this period a whole new fandom has arisen of which I knew little. I still know little, for that matter, but not quite as little as before. I was impressed with their witty and effective bidding for the '83 Worldcon - that AMAZING STORIES Cover take-off in the program book, for instance, by M. Pride who, John told me later, has only recently discovered fandom but who appears to have been born a faanish artist. I liked their Cordwainer Smith Presentation at the Fancy Dress Parade, and the low cunning with which they released a balloon plugging the Aussie bid. It was only a small balloon but it came to rest just where the projector beam couldn't miss highlighting it. I'm tempted for personal reasons to support the Scandinavian '83 Worldcon bid, I might be able to make that one and I'm unlikely to be able to travel to Australia, but the Aussies deserve to win.

The British Fandom Chat Show, part-one, was the next Fan Room event; and as I was to be involved in part-two the following day I thought I'd better have my memory refreshed by what-went-before.



GEO. METZGER

" The SEACON Fan Room was rather noisy at times....."

Ken Bulmer, Ken Slater, and Bob Tucker (ably prompted by Peter Roberts) provided the audience with an interesting and entertaining flow of anecdotes about the 40's. Bob telling the Tucker Hotel Story for what must be the several-hundredth time, but making it fresh and funny still. The best kind of fannish program item is that where a group of good raconteurs can be got together (sober) on stage, and Seacon was fortunate in having a wealth of talent to draw on in this respect.

Watching all those people talk had made me thirsty and finding (who else!) Norman Shorrock in the bar, enjoying an aperitif or two before a LiG Brunch I joined him with alacrity. Drinking, reminded us that we were hungry, and pausing only relatively briefly to aid Bob Tucker in a SMOooth routine (and to admire those prone in his vicinity), we wended our way to an excellent little estaminet in Room 543. The Head Waiter (Tony Edwards) insulted us, as is usual on such occasions, but Hostesses Ina, Marge, and Marge made us welcome and fed us; and the Wine Waiter (Phil Rogers) was liberal in his dispensation - which couldn't have been easy since he was (as I recall) lying prone at the time! He said it was because he had a bad back, but....

It was sometime after this repast that I visited the Kent Suite STAR WARS Exhibit. I'm not really a Star Wars fan, but I greatly enjoyed the film as I do most well-done space opera, and I admire the policy adopted by its representatives at Seacon in allowing only s-f fans into the exhibit - mundanes and media men being turned away with great aplomb. I'm not sure this is the best way to promote "THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK", but I like it. There wasn't a lot to see, really, even when you'd penetrated the security cordon, but I had an interesting chat with Gary Kurtz and admired the Swampworld (model) and Iceworld (sketches) which are to feature in the Star Wars sequel. STAR WARS INC. are to send me advance publicity on the film so...err, watch this space, won't you.

Exiting the Kent Suite in the direction of the Fan Room I came across Bob Tucker, alone and bemoaning the fact that his specially imported stock of Jim Beam (enough for any normal Worldcon) wasn't going to last much longer. Joining him in another brief SMOooth routine, I agreed this was a sad thing. Ken Bulmer happened by at that moment and the three of us engaged in a pleasant remember-when session in the downstairs lounge, and had only just entered upon a serious discussion of how we could get to look like Tucker when we reached his age - and could we afford that much Jim Beam - when we were suddenly engulfed in a welter of mob-caps and bustles. At first I thought it was all due to this thing ~~of the~~ Tucker has about Time Travel and that Jim Beam was also one way of switching time-streams, but on enquiry of what I thought was Greg Pickersgill in drag (but which apparition turned out to be a well-known Author's Wife), I learned that the Georgette Heyer Tea had just boiled over. I'm told, by a usually impeccable source (Hi, Ina), that Georgette Heyer has created in her books a society as varied and intriguing as any good s-f world...but, but, I do mean but, drinking tea at a convention. A little de trop, what? This all affected Tucker so much, he had to hurriedly remember he had to go see his publisher about the Champagne Reception they were giving him at the Pavillion the next day. He invited me along to it, but was so overcome by all the tannin-laden heavy breathing he forgot to give me an official invite.

The only other program item I got to attend on Friday was the "Meet The Celebrities Party", which was quite funny...if not, perhaps, for the reasons intended. I found a table with Buck & Juanita Coulson, and Dave Piper and watched the proceedings with amusement. Bob Shaw had the job of introducing the famous present; adopting the ruse of passing out a funny hat to those named so that they could be later recognised. The amusement was generated by the actions of certain well-known pro's in their attempts to get noticed.

Larry Niven was probably the worst offender in that he made at least six Grand Entrances (and even managed to upstage Arthur Clarke during one...) before getting his hat. But others were not far behind in their exhibitionism. In fact, the only pro' present who appeared to be displaying any real aplomb was R.A. Lafferty who, on closer inspection, was found to have passed out!

I think the idea of the session was for people to circulate round and meet the celebrities; I did leave the table with this vague intent but all the people I really wanted to talk with were surrounded by autograph hounds, and I'd probably bump into most of them at one or another party, anyway. One person I really would have liked to meet, ex-goon Micheal Bentine (a surprise, to me, attendee) had already vanished, alas.

During the next few hours I visited several room-parties and I'm grateful to those hosting them (even tho' I can't remember now, who those hosts were): I think the Seattle Bidding party was one of my calls - it could have been Denver, but I recall talking to Elinor Busby and she is from Seattle and of such chains of logical recall is this account writ. I also recall a pleasurable session with Boyd Raeburn, Terry Hughes, and Norman Shorrock - and embarking upon a census of room-parties being held in the Metropole with that latter hardy campaigner. Norman wanted to conduct a surver of Room Parties being held in Brighton that night, but I managed to dissuade him from this, I think. I'm not sure, though, since we became seperated around 3a.m. by a lift door with better reflexes than ours.....

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When I awoke Saturday, a monsoon was hovering over Brighton, and even wearing a cagoule over a raincoat I was saturated by the time I reached the Metropole, and beginning to wish I hadn't left the car at home. After drying my feet using a hand-drying machine in the Metropole toilet, not a very easy manoeuvre after a fan party or two and little sleep; I headed once more for the fan room. Not directly, of course, I never went anywhere directly at Seacon; each sorte was a pleasurable zig-zag from group to group, conversation to conversation, being handed fanzines here, hearing of Wild American Fan Adventures Abroad there. I got to the fan room in time for the latter half of the Fan Artist Panel featuring Alexis Gilliland, Harry Bell, Jim Barker, and that old Walnut Tree Rancher, Bill Rotsler - and frustration followed. I hadn't known Bill was at the con...we'd responded by tape and letter in the past, and he'd gifted me with many fine illo's, and I wanted to talk with him. But, I was on the next program item and we had only time for a few brief words (and for Bill to present me with a hand-crafted Rotsler con-badge), and never managed to find one another again. Seacon was sometimes too big.



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Part Two of the British Fandom Chat Show, on which I added a few words to those of Bob Shaw and Terry Carr, with Peter Roberts prompting, seemed to go quite well even though my brain wasn't functioning as well as I wanted it to... The subject for discussion, "The Fannish Fifties", even got mentioned a couple of times between anecdotes - such as Bob telling of how he got into fandom. He didn't tell the true story, but few of the audience would know this anyway, instead he related how he found Walt Willis' name and address in a copy of Astounding he came across. The real truth of his discovery of science-fiction fandom is that he happened to be passing a house in Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast, just as a crate of Guinness was being delivered there! The first Slant developed shortly afterwards.

I should have had Saturday lunch with about a dozen other fans, but 'X' was missing and I went to look for him, and met "Y" who couldn't be convinced he was hungry, and came across "Z" who was but just had to pop up to his room, and when I got back to the foyer the rest of the alphabet had gone without me. I ate lunch, eventually, with a couple of devotee's of The Soc. For Creative Anachronisms. I won't mention their names because they didn't agree with my viewpoint that in the U.K. we didn't need to create anachronisms.

A more pleasant interlude after-lunch was spent in the downstairs bar with the Coulsons, John Owen, Jim Cawthorn, and Dave Piper - amongst others - the personnel of the group kept changing as one or another fan joined in the conversation or drifted away. Dave Piper at his first convention but acting like a tried and true veteran, was a pleasant find and I hope this won't be his last convention. Of the American fans I met at Seacon who I'd met previously, I'd essay that Buck and Juanita have changed the least. The fact that they have a long, prolific, and continuous involvement in fandom (despite both now being pro-authors, as well) probably has something to do with this, as does the fact that they are one of the few married fannish couples to remain so. A sort of American Ina & Norman Shorrocks, and that's praise...

The FANCY DRESS that evening was....fantastic....GREAT! To one used to the most outre convention costume being a bare Brian Burgess, this was fabulous...even though we did still get the bare Brian. Many of the costumes were quite beautiful; almost all were of a very high standard and the presentations were well executed. Bob Tucker made an excellent compere (almost beyond compere, even) and the two STAR WARS Stormtroopers helped him enliven those occasional lapses when a hitch or an itch caused problems backstage.

I'd watched the Fancy Dress from the hall balcony, together with a crowd of frustrated photographers - frustrated because they weren't allowed to use their flash-units. Whilst having some sympathy with them I think the committee had made the right decision here, for there is little that is more off-putting for an audience, or contestant encased in an ornate but visibility restricting costume, than the constant explosion (Megablitz power) of Japanese terror weapons. I'd been a little late getting to the Fancy Dress, and perforce not had time to locate the Portable Shorrocks Bar before the parade took place, but I was able to locate it whilst the judging took place and, since it was well sited at the rear of the hall, get a second look at several of the contestants as they posed for photographers. S-F surely is a wonderful thing.

Saturday night was a good night for parties, and I was able to assist Norman with his ongoing census of them...I took leave of his census at a fairly early hour though as I had to travel back home the next day. My firm had been unkind in arranging a sales-meeting in Sheffield on the Monday. Before then, though, I managed to take up quite a few party invites and indulge in further convivial sessions. The sixth-floor was a pleasant, if confusing, venue with three different parties going on in inter-connecting

rooms - I think the whole suite was that of Dave Kyle who was, perhaps a little unwise to allow three dissimilar groups to have parties there at the same time. As I recall it First Fandom were having a meeting in one room; next door was a party of more general nature (but which several of its attendee's wanted it to be 'exclusive'), and next door to this a party that was variously (according to who you were talking to) hosted by Lynn Hickman and other mid-west fans, or Aussiecon Survivors. I enjoyed both these latter sessions but things began to get a little confused when an overflow(!) party developed in the bathroom at the far end of the suite from the First Fandom meeting and a certain, perhaps misguided, lady tried to apply her own rules of entry way beyond the party she was involved with....it was all quite chaotic fannish 'fun', but when she attempted to exclude TAFF and GUFF delegates, I left.

I left with John Foyster to seek out the SFWA party which was rumoured to be going well; it was actually fairly quiet when we got there, but I did have the pleasure of meeting Susan Wood, who I'd previously known only through her fine personalzine 'Amor'. I wasn't quite expecting the Susan Wood I met, but it was a wholly pleasant surprise. Terry Carr and Mike Glicksohn were there, too, and it was a good place to be until I gathered up my energies to return to the Sherlock.

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Sunday morning wasn't made particularly welcome when it came upon me, with thoughts of once more returning to mundania, via British Rail. However, I managed to visit the Metropole briefly en route to the station, to say farewell to those hardy souls who were up for breakfast...and those who were still considering whether it was a wise thing to indulge in. Any media man looking for little green men wouldn't have had far to look that morning.

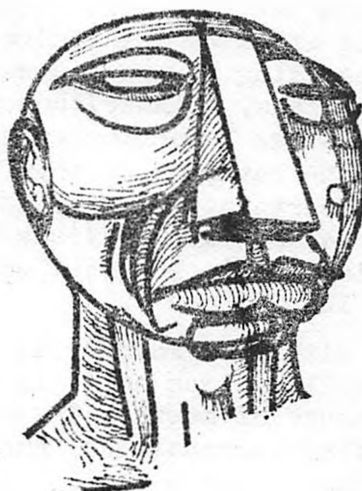
On reaching the railway station I was brought back to mundaneity almost immediately. I'd just boarded the train, found myself a seat when the p.a. system announced loudly that everyone shouldn't panic, but should leave the station and train immediately! It was a bomb-hoax, and for a time forced the pleasant fannish euphoria out of my mind. Enough of it returned, fortunately, to enable me to recall some of my Seacon...and much more, inevitably, will come to mind after cutting this stencil.

It was a good convention, for me, and I thank all those who helped make it so. SeaConCom and all, even though they have left me with a puzzling thought. Does anyone know what Dr. Rob Jackson was doing with those carpenters he was constantly advertising for during the con? There must be a reasonable answer but my mind boggles still.

" Have sustained a bruise or two this week through being unwise enough to ride passenger in a Dodgem car driven by my 11-year old nephew. His 7-year old brother and (naturally) deadliest rival was driving another, with his mother, my sister, as passenger. It was sheer murder, with no quarter given or asked. My sister is still wary of sitting, leaning, or reclining upon anything more solid than swansdown. God knows how many other crews perished - they mowed down anyone who got between their respective chariots, and I heard that three local Hell's Angels had to be led, quivering, to the St. John's Ambulance hut." Jim Cawthorn.

PUSS IN CAHOOTS

By
JOHN BERRY



(Advocates of intimate socialisation with felines are warned not to read this narrative, and if prompted to do so by an errant curiosity, it is suggested that they should pour a neat whisky, and have it readily to hand.)

When I was a youth, and indeed, as far back as I can recall, my mother always had cats in the house....they were well cared for, and comported themselves with dignity because they recognised her great powers as a disciplinarian. The cats were friendly to me, and I was never cruel to them, or subjected them to frustrations, like the time I parachuted a pekinese dog over a cliff with an umbrella stuck through its collar.

I did note however, that cats are quick tempered. I once read that from whatever height you drop a cat, it always lands lightly on its four paws. Just in case my mother's cats did not possess this ability, because she cossetted them so much, I felt it my duty to train them. They didn't mind being dropped from about a yard high, and, incredibly, did always land as promised, but, say, when being dropped from a height of fifteen feet, they just didn't seem to want to know. When I tried to drop them from this height, they clung with clawed ferocity to the sleeves of my jacket, spitting balls of agitation...their reluctance to negotiate this drop was brought home to me very forcibly one day when I tried to drop Blackie from the bedroom window when I wasn't wearing my jacket. My mother's application of iodine to my forearms was somewhat over enthusiastic, and the antedote was not placed on my arms as soothingly as the directions on the bottle dictated.

When I joined the forces in 1944, Treasure was in its ascendancy, a nice tabby tom, who liked to curl up on my lap, purring happily...I had of course grown up since my cat-dropping mode of self-expression... My first home leave created quite a bit of tension, because since my departure, Treasure had taken over my chair. I had travelled quite a long way, and was exhausted. I picked up Treasure from my chair and dropped him nearby, and settled back in the comfort of my own home.

I heard a subdued hiss, and noticed Treasure digging his claws into the carpet, back arched, tail waving madly, giving me a beady eyed glare.

" You've got his chair," observed my mother, and Treasure, noting her interest and apparent support for the under-cat, staggered over to her, mewling loudly, and rubbing his body in a fawning manner against her legs.

Whenever I got up from the chair, there was a flash of fur and he was immediately curled up in the warm spot I had just vacated. Moving him was no easy matter, and his yowl of frustration, designed to alert my mother, was accompanied by the frenzied waving of claw-exposed paws and threshing tail. I eventually solved the problem by sneaking up behind the chair and giving a couple of loud barks, followed by a threatening growl. People say I'm rather good at it. I used to get quite a kick out of noting the alacrity with which Treasure disappeared out of the top window. It worked every time, because although Treasure was highly suspicious, he was never quite certain, and of course it was decisions....decisions....

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Thirty years passed by....I had not encountered any cats on a personal level during this period, but this euphoric state was due to end in a quite horrible manner.

I moved to a large house in Hatfield, owned by the Hertfordshire Constabulary, in 1975. The garden was large and had been uncultivated for almost a year...there were groups of dandelions and buttercups aspiring to rise above the foot-high grass, and it was a formidable task to reorganise horticulturally....it took me a couple of years.

At first I did not object to the presence of half a dozen cats who had adopted the garden as a communal centre, and toilet. They had taken over whilst the house was unoccupied, and from the glances they gave me as they followed their beaten tracks amongst the grass, I was the intruder. Gradually the lawn was cleared of weeds and took on a healthy green hue.... the left side of the garden had been liberally covered with horse manure, and it dug easily and all traces of the original clay had vanished. All this time, the cats continued to negotiate my garden at regular times, and we had a sort of mutual non-aggression pact, tactfully observed by both sides.

Then, one day, the projected vegetable garden became a reality...it was dug and raked and seeded and carefully watered and made as level as a billiard table.

Next morning, it resembled a section of the battlefield at the Somme. Half a dozen craters had been dug on the plot, and worst of all, the ultimate degradation, the sneaky Siamese had excavated a suitable area and deposited the contents of its bowels just where my prize vegetable marrow was destined to mature.

The cats had by now assumed personalities, and I knew from its scornful attitude towards me when passing through the garden that the Siamese was going to be my biggest problem, or, as it transpired one of my biggest problems.

(Before describing my opening gambit, it should be explained that although my garden is large with a high hedge around it, a row of council houses overlook it, and my actions are immediately evident to those voyeurs amongst the tenants. I must also mention that I work normal office hours and consequently the advances made during the evenings and at the weekend in the Cat War were nullified by my lack of active service during weekdays.)

I decided that the huge black and white neuter and I were destined for an eventual titanic confrontation, so, first of all, I decided to eliminate the gorgeous female tabby who was the cause of the horrible banshee noises heard in the early hours of the morning when sleep, once lost, is hard to regain. I figured that if this sex kitten didn't come into my garden, the others wouldn't bother...except the neuter and, possibly, the Siamese. This was an incorrect assumption.

It was a Sunday afternoon, and I remember every sweet second of the kill...the female tabby tip-toed across the lawn, scooped aside one of the remaining patches of virgin soil, and commenced a complicated defecation. With a terrible scream I leapt from my place of observation behind a strategically positioned bush, waved the broom round my head and charged up the garden and brought the brush end of the broom crashing down, missing the cat's rear by 1.3 of an inch. The broom handle shattered into three pieces, and I was left with a splintered stub of handle in my grasp.

But the cat.....?

It rose vertically for almost three feet...legs outstretched like a weather vane, each hair on its body seemed to have doubled in length and stiffened at the same time. A head with flattened ears looked round at me as the cat reached its apogee, utter horror on its beautiful feline face. It seemed to hover, then drop, screeching with terror as it took the six foot fence without touching the top.

I have never seen that cat since, and I am given to understand that neither have its owners.

% % % % % % % % %

A couple of faint-hearted cats gave my garden a wide berth after this ...occasionally I noted feline faces peering at me through the hedge. Just in case they had worked out a time-table of my at-home hours, I took the day off and appeared in the garden unannounced. This finally broke them. Reducing the numbers in opposition considerably.

My climatic battle with the neuter was a psychological and tactical masterpiece. This was a Big Cat. It was crafty enough to avoid a direct confrontation appearing only when my back was turned, positioning itself always so that it could only be seen out of the corner of my eye. A year, two years passed by, and it retained its stake on my land by dint of daily appearance, albeit usually in a furtive manner. But it would not give up its territory.

This summer, my peas had flowered really well, and for some reason the budding flowers were considered a delicacy by the sparrows who had become domiciled in my roof eaves. I was annoyed about this, but I like birds, and I invariably scattered them by a sudden trot on all fours across the lawn whenever cats were on the prowl, emitting a sort of poodle-like yap. This must have fascinated my neighbours, who I am told have become rather worried about my demeanor in the garden...I mean, they could see me but not the cats and birds...you get the picture ?

One Sunday morning recently was C-Day. I knelt behind the bushes for an hour...and then I saw the neuter creeping along the hadge, moving slowly so as not to disturb the birds, and, I like to think, because he knew it was a Sunday, and I was sure to be thereabouts. He was actually paying me the compliment of trying to remain invisible. Unfortunately, he was black and white. He hunched up when he neared the birds, and suddenly leapt. They scattered wildly in all directions, and the unsuccessful hunter stood near the peas, tail waving angrily.

Meanwhile I had gether a handfull of pebbles, and I lobbed them so as to land behind the neuter. My aim was good and in alarm he raced from the noise directly towards me. I was like a coiled spring behind that bush. My bucket of dirty water, carefully hidden till then, met him in full flight, an impenetrable wall of H2O. It was a horrible sight, the drenched moggie was flabbergasted...he staggered towards the hedge dripping a mournful 'meow'.

He hasn't been seen since. That leaves the Siamese. This cat is in a class apart, a calculating bundle of wiles who I rarely see, but who deposits his message of defiance on my lawn daily...I admit that so far he has me beaten...but, that plastic gnome in the middle of the lawn isn't all it seems.

In your reviews....you remark about being able to tell after a few pages whether a story is going to be worth reading. How true, but I go even further, I am ashamed to admit (at least the Old Rick Sneary would have been ashamed); when the story is by a questionable unknown and the title vague, I've taken to reading the last three pages. With the emergence of the Death Wish School of writing, I like to make sure the lead character is not dead, dying or mentally destroyed, and the world gone to hell before I start. ((Must admit that this method has merit, Rick, and I do wish I'd done this with the Foulbreath Trilogy...my own common sense should have told me that any book starting out with the hero dying from leprosy wasn't going to be wholly enjoyable!! Ghod, but that's a really miserable saga. In life there has to be hope; authors please note.))

Jim Cawthorn, 106 Oxford Gardens, London. W10 6NG.

I seem to have found my first sf mags earlier than you, as I can recall being lured by the cover of the bre of Asf showing Joe the mutant from Simak's City series. I was about 15, I think. And then I began to dig around in local second-hand bookshops and found more, though I don't recall that I ever put two and two together and deduced the existence of other sf readers (fans was a term unknown) in the neighborhood. ((You were better at math than I, Jim, I always used to come up with 5 when I added two to two, which could be why....)) Serving my time with the RAF 1948-49, I aquired assorted TWS's & SS's and so on. Recall loaning SEA KINGS OF MARS to a fellow Tynesider who lapped it up and was astonished to learn that the writer was a woman. Also, at 17, I subscribed directly (well, via Ken Chapman) to the U.S. edition of Astounding, which was like a message from another world! Attended my first con in '49 at the Lord Raglan near St.Pauls. I never lost a Lancaster, though. Only time I got anywhere near an operational aircraft was when billeted at North Weald when we were being used as blackleg labour during the London dock strike.

LAST ROCKET TO VENUS was set in 9939, so I'd guess it was published in 1939. I remember Venus had 200ft-tall robots which shot lightning-bolts from their fingertips. Our hero was called Gavin Ainsworth and his friend was called Toby. ((And he didn't have leprosy.... Interesting typo I just had to correct here; Lindsey's radio led me to type Last ROCKER To Venus! And I'll drink to that.))

Alan Hunter, (COA) 1186 Christchurch Rd, Boscombe East, Bournemouth. BH7 6DY.

What interested me most was the "First Contact" piece of personal nostalgia. Apart from a slight displacement in time (I have, it appears, tucker more years under my belt) it is surprising how closely my experience seems to have run parallel to yours. My first contact with magazine sf was before the war, while I was still at school. Copies of AMAZING, TWS etcetra could be bought at the Saturday market for 3d each. These were unread copies, but several months outdated, being unsold copies sent over as "ballast" on the cargo ships from the States and disposed of cheaply in bulk to the dealers. Current issues were on sale at W.H. Smith's but at 2/6 each, which was beyond the reach of my 2/- a week pocket money.

One of my class-mates sent his name and address to a "Pen Pals" page of an American comic. He never did see a copy of the issue in which his entry appeared, but he received over 100 replies. Being resourceful, he farmed them out around the school and I took three from him. This contact never developed because all three were illiterate and used slang words which shocked my parents, although I'm sure they never intended the words to be taken the way they sounded. My first "genuine" pen pal came from Ken Slater. I had been active in fandom for some time, and contributed art to Operation Fantast, when in 1951 Ken sent me the name and address of a Stateside fan who wanted to donate a subscription to Galaxy, which had just begun publication, to a British fan.

This started a postal friendship which is still active today. In the early days, I sent copies of the few sf mags being published in England, and EAGLE, GIRL and SWIFT comics for his children, which was an inadequate exchange for the parcels of almost every American sf mag being published. These parcels became so large at one stage, that I too had a request for an Import License from the customs authorities. I wrote, explaining the nature of the arrangement and offering to permit full inspection of my sf collection. The invitation was never accepted, but two large parcels were released from custody and I was never troubled again. ((We were fortunate in our customs in those days, I think, and more so than most countries. I recall that Rog Dard (I think?) in Australia not only had parcels from the States confiscated, but his home raided and part of his collection impounded around that period....and it was only sf he collected, he wasn't into copies of Alice In Wonderland, or anything else considered unsuitable reading Down Under at the time!))

Mike Glicksohn, 141 High Park Ave, Toronto, Ontario m6p 2S3.

I very much enjoyed your fannish reminiscences. In fact, your opening remarks reminded me very strongly of an article I wrote some time ago for Ben Zuhl explaining why I wasn't going to be writing any sort of a fan history. Like you, I'm lazy, but also like you I lack the sort of vast resources that Harry Warner seems to be able to draw on. I seriously doubt I would ever be able to write even the sort of article that you've written here: as I said in that yet-to-see-print article, my memory is among the very worst in fandom and not all of that is due to excessive drinking. I've never had a good recollection of places, names ((So that's why you kept calling me Cobber, at Seacon!)) or events and that makes the role of fan historian a pretty difficult one for me to undertake! The sort of precise details with which you sprinkle this piece would probably be quite beyond me: I have great trouble remembering conventions that took place just last year so trying to remember even as recent fan history as 1966 would be quite literally impossible for me. Perhaps that's one reason that I enjoy reading other people remembering the past so much. ((It's certainly the reason I can get away with having my 'precise detail' considered as such...I even managed to put the SupermanCon in the wrong year on the Seacon Panel and nowone noticed...except Norman Shorrocks, and he only because it reminds him of a certain wine vintage!))

One of the differences between your early days in fandom and my own, though, is the different emphasis on science-fiction. Whilst it was great to discover that other people read the same books and writers that I did, sf itself was never a really vital part of my own interaction with fandom. I very quickly moved into the social aspects of the culture and fans and cons became friends and parties pretty well as soon as I discovered their existence. I can never remember any sort of special feeling arising out of being able to discuss science fiction with my new found peers. Mostly it was a matter of having found a group I could feel at ease in, even if I wasn't inclined to talk about the literature that had originally brought us together. If I ever tried to write a personal history of my own days in fandom, I'm afraid that science fiction, s-f books, prozines, stories, etc would rarely if ever be mentioned. Different strokes for different folks, obviously: fandom still means a great deal to me even if I don't particularly associate it with the literature of science fiction. ((I suppose we remained with s-f longer because there just wasn't enough fans, cons, to provide an alternative; the progression from fan to faan took about the same, relative, real-time....but pers@nality enters into it all as well; there are fans around now who will never get beyond an interest in science-fiction Fandom.))

Fine letter from Moorcock, excellent article from Berry. No comments to make, but one should acknowledge good stuff even only in passing.

I think Taral's comments on TAFF are really part of a larger problem that applies to all the fan funds and to which I've been directing comments to fanzines of late. Basically there just aren't enough qualified candidates eligible for funds like TAFF and DUFF. At least eligible in the sense that I have always considered to be necessary. My view has always been that any fan fund candidate should be a fan who has made such a contribution to fandom at large that fans in the country to which he or she is going will really want to meet them. And lately, it seems to me, we've been getting candidates who are all really nice folks who've been around a few years and done a few things but who haven't really established themselves the sort of international reputation which would make overseas fans eager to pay to meet them. That's why Terry was such an overwhelming favorite, because he has established himself on an international level in fanzine fandom and a great many English fans really wanted to meet him. (The same was true of the last DUFF campaign, where the only really qualified candidate withdrew when he got a new job.)

I'm not at all sure what can be done about this matter (or even if anyone shares my view of it) but I do think it's something that should be discussed. There's a lot of money involved in a TAFF or DUFF race and I think we ought to be very seriously considering the sort of candidates we would like to see trying for it. ((I tend to agree... I'm considerably happier about the TAFF winners of recent years (Peter Roberts, Terry Hughes) and the fact that there is more interest in the fund, more fans putting themselves forward as candidates (Jim Barker and Dave Langford who I find it very difficult to choose between for the next TAFF race) than a few years ago when the TAFF was really in the doldrums, but I do know what you mean. Terry was well known even to our isolationist faction; Fred Haskell I knew of through RUNE and liked what I read (and I'm unsure as to whether it was his fault or that of the state of UK fandom that he was less well-known than Terry); Suzle Tompkins, I listened to at Seacon and after she'd told me for the third time how much she'd put herself in hock to come over, I wasn't too concerned at her not winning - I may be doing her an injustice here, and if she was suffering from jet-lag, jet-lag, jet-lag, at the time, I do apologise. I don't think there is really any solution to this problem, with the vast, and splintered, fandom of today, even back in 1960 when I won TAFF probably only 60% of fans belonged to 'International Fandom' and that was a peak...today I doubt that 6% really know of one another. Or want to...mores the pity.`` The onus is, always has been really, on the TAFF Candidate and his/her supporters to ensure other fans, potential voters, know him/her and like what they know.))

Gary Deindorfer, 447 Bellevue Ave, #9B, Trenton, N.J.08618.

I don't have a car and haven't even driven one in over ten years, so my appreciation of the opening FANKLE is especially vicarious, but it was very entertaining reading. Have you seen the recent MOTA's...the letter-columns in both are cram packed with automobile anecdotes. Do I sense a trend? Probably not, but the mark of the inveterate trend spotter is that he senses a trend even if there isn't one. Between your comments, and the car anecdotes in MOTA, maybe a brand new subfandom is being born before our eyes, and soon there will be new fanzines devoted to nothing but the anecdotes of fans on the open road. ((If you call a fnz MOTA, what do you expect....published in the heart of the Fan Belt, as it is...DON'T feed me lines like that, Gary, the puns that come to mind exhaust me.))

I like to read fan's accounts of their first contact with fandom. yours conveys a clear feeling of how dedicated a fan could be in the days when sf was really hard to come by, even more so in England than the U.S.A. Your long, guelling trips back and forth to that shop to exchange an old

magazine for a 'new' one....that says it all. This was fine evocative stuff. That is, for me it doesn't evoke memories; you're the one with the memories of the experiences actually lived. But it is rich enough in sense memory writing that it evokes vivid images in my mind which I might call my recreations as imagination of your memories. ((I just hope I have not given you nightmares of long, tedious Tramrides during which you read the magazine you just got and have to take the very next tram back again for another magazine....))

Mike Moorcock's letter isn't only a letter, it's kind of like a psychodrama in miniature. He is right that just about anybody these days can do a sercon fanzine, but few people can capture the essence of fannishness that TRIODE managed to get a purchase on. And yet, I don't think you have to worry that with WALDO you're only just doing another fnz about sf. The reason I think, is the historial flavour you give to it. You're not writing about sf, present tense, so much as your personal reactions to sf in the past, in your early years as a fan. The angle of vision is through your eyes as a fan and this makes your comments on science fiction essentially fannish. I hope I've managed to make my circuitous point.

It's always good to see something by John Berry. After reading this article I wondered for a minute how much of it was true. I finally came to the conclusion that it is entirely true, which makes it all the more fantastic. ((John is a catalyst - particularly this issue - who actually remembers the funny things that happen around him, because of him..which is as good a definition as I can think of for a humourist.)) In all the years I've been in and out of fandom (over 20), it has always been fan humour which I have found the single most interesting element to read and write. I'm interested in the idea tripping the discussions, and so on, but it's the humour that is the real drawing card. A lot of it isn't really top drawer, but it can be exhilarating to come upon a real gem, especially if it is by someone new with a style all his own. If I find something new in the way of fan humour, it isn't long before I'm trying to steal some of it and put it in my own writing. I try not to be obvious about it and steal from one source....I lift ideas and styles from a half dozen different humourists, and mix them together in my own writing and try to disguise my sources; but actually I think the inspirations for the humour pieces I have in such zines as MOTA and ROTHNIUM are primarily my own, though there is some peripheral influence inspired by other fan humour writers. Copycat that I am (in some ways), I am often inspired by some mainstream favourites, such as Robert Benchley, George S. Kaufman and Oscar Levant. ((I'd like to see you use all those styles in one piece, Gary!))

Frank Denton, 14654 - 8th Ave, Seattle, Washington, 98160.

WALDO comes off as very much an Eric Bentcliffe personalzine, and that I like a lot, with its digressions, asides, and whatever else pops into the Eric head.((Yes, it's true; Waldo is written at my convenience.)) It's not that I didn't like TRIODE, but there's a bit more of yourself in this one, and still enough of others to make it most pleasant reading. Isn't rolling a stencil into a typer and proceeding apace a nice way to do a zine? ((Yes, it is...or would be, if I could just restrain myself from suddenly deciding in mid-stencil that this bit doesn't belong here, and would be more effective there. This issue is about 50/50 impromptu: I did a rough draft of the SEACON thing first to try to attain some sort of chronological order.))

I was most pleased with your mentions of Richard Cowper. He was one of the British pro's that I particularly wanted to see and hear. I fortunately had the opportunity during one of the panels and I was even more impressed by some of the things he had to say. Afterwards I hid myself forward to stand about looking like a neo and have him autograph several books purchased in the huckster room.

One of the humourous moments of the convention occurred at that moment when I was patiently waiting for Cowper to autograph my books. The five panelists were swamped by fans awaiting autographs. Along with the panelists was Arthur C. Clarke, awaiting his turn at being on the next event (it may have been A View of Serendip). He slipped up alongside me, pen in hand, and looked at the three books I had in their shimmering yellow Gollanz colours. *Yech!* He bent down to look at the titles on the spine, then muttered, "Oh, I don't believe that I wrote The Custodians," and turned abruptly away. I don't believe that I did any more than grin a little. ((The committee, apparently, had trouble getting certain authors to join in the autographing sessions...and also stopping them signing everything in sight when they were present. I may have the only copy of LUCIFERS HAMMER signed by Niven & Pournelle, and also inscribed 'Those Noted Plagiarists' by a certain other well-known sf author!!))

FANKLE

Discerning readers of this peripatetic publication may have noticed that Part Two of my threatened personal fan-history is conspicuous by its absence, this is partly due to my discovery that I'd far more to write about SEACON than I'd expected; but also because I'm not finding the mental time-travel involved in casting

my mind back thirty years very easy. Yes, dear Alan & Joseph, I do so live in the present-day fandom! I wrote a rough draft of the second saga of this voyage through the fannish dark-ages, but I'm not happy with it. It needs more nurturing and also, I still have to find a photo-repro' process of not too great cost which will do more than adequate justice to the fine collection of sepia souvenirs of the fifties I have here. Using these would make the thing of more interest and add a little historical tone to the whole affair. I'd be pleased to hear from anyone who can help on this....soon, because at the present rate my chronicling is proceeding, it looks unlikely that I shall bring myself up-to-date this century.

Speaking of Fan History, I recently received Part One of WEALTH OF FABLE, Harry Warner's excellent fan-history of the 50's (I'd had Parts Two and Three for nearly two years, but that's another story...), edited and published by Joe Siclari, 2201 NE 45th St, Lighthouse Point, Florida 33064. It is excellent, both as a good read and as a reference-book to that which went before; covering both Stateside and U.K. Fandom (as well as the other geographical groupings) in considerable depth. It doesn't gild the lilly, but it does leave out some of the less savoury affairs of the period which are best left un-recalled. I doubt that anyone other than Harry could have written as unbiased and entertaining an account of the period, and I'd recommend it to anyone who has an interest in the period, or, who would like to be entertained by some of the weird and often wonderful fannish happenings of the fifties. I don't know the position as to availability of WoF, currently, so write to Joe.

ADDENDA TO CONSEQUENCE....It deserves to be recorded that Norman Shorrock actually got the Metropole manager to help subsidise his bar-bill. Prior to the con he'd come across this old, and tatty, photo of the hotel; he showed it to the doorman who said the manager would like to see it, he was much taken with it and since they were thinking of putting on a display of the hotels past (!) glory...Norman kindly sold it to him for £5!

" This has to be what they call 'hard s-f', at least, I couldn't understand it."



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