

# YANDRO



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# Wantedro

#258

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(Inquire about longer term subs if you really want to gamble. It's been two years since the last issue, but we'll try to be at least an annual, or more frequent.)

Rumblings.....	editorial:RSC.....	2
Ramblings.....	editorial:JWC.....	4
Difugalty #32.....	column:Dave Locke.....	7
Discussion.....	verse:Marian Allen.....	11
Natterings.....	column:Ethel Lindsay.....	12
Conan Meets Alicia Dyckman *.....	article:L. Sprague de Camp.....	14

(No lettercol due to the length of time between last issue and this one.....)

### LOGOS

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 Pp 2 & 4.....Atom  
 Page 7.....Dave Locke

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 Pp 2 & 4.....JWC  
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 Page 13.....Jann Frank

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You might say that Groundhog Day came late this year for Yandro; if it doesn't see its shadow on the day of its appearance, there may be more issues in the future.

The approximately two-year delay in publication has numerous causes, one of the major ones appearing on the cover (assuming it gets printed without problems) and in the colophon. We have a new house. But to take our excuses in chronological order:

During the early part of 1983, Juanita was too busy working on the third novel in her stf series. The editors had requested what amounted to a complete rewrite of her manuscript, and it took time to get everything done. (The rewrite was also rejected, which is why the third book hasn't appeared yet. She's still working on the series.) I made one abortive attempt to produce masters that could be printed, but never got beyond a half-dozen pages. My own problems were work-related; late 1982 and early 1983 featured the Great Overhead Door Purge. Every office department and most of the factory departments got new supervisors, the job of plant manager was held by four different people, and regular employees and even a few ex-employees were given lie-detector tests. It was a strain just to keep going to work. I even missed out on the fun; I thought that taking a lie-detector test would be interesting and possibly useful -- who knows when I could use something like that in a story? So of course I was one of a half-dozen or so employees who never were given the tests; either the company figures I'm completely honest, or too stupid to successfully steal anything. (Ostensible reason for all this was the discovery of massive thefts of Overhead Door products. There were promises of "full disclosure" and prosecution, which so far have remained talk. Most employees are skeptical of the whole thing; they figure it was an excuse for management to dispose of people they wanted to get rid of. On the other hand, I've had outsiders tell me that they've seen barns full of Overhead Door products in the area. Take your pick; I tend to be cynical.) Also, the factory was losing money, so the work force was reduced. There used to be four people doing my job of "order writing," each with a separate area of expertise. Now there are two doing the same quantity of work...so I'm having to work overtime.

Also distracting to Juanita was the fact that her mother had to go into a nursing home in the spring of 1983; she died there in December 1983.

About the time Juanita turned in her manuscript for the second time, right at Labor Day, our landlord told us that he'd sold the house we were living in to his son, and we'd have to move. This led to 3½ months of looking for a house to buy -- after having two rental houses in a row sold out from under us, we decided to get a permanent location -- and then finding financing. Two banks in a row told us that yes, our credit rating was A-1, and no, they would not loan us money. The first brought in an appraisal well under the selling price (the appraiser later admitted having made a mistake), and the second demanded the seller fulfill various unrealistic conditions. Anyway, we finally signed the contract in December 1983. Then we had to install a new furnace and new wiring, as neither was adequate or even safe. We started moving some stuff around the first of March, 1984, had a major "moving day" on March 17, and finally got the last of our possessions into the new residence on April 1, which seemed appropriate.

Since then, we've been unpacking. We still aren't done; Juanita said at the beginning that if we had most of the boxes opened by Christmas, she'd be satisfied, and it looks like that's going to be around the time we finish.

Moving credit belongs somewhat to Bruce, who came home ahead of time to help pack and move some of the early stuff, but the majority of the credit goes to various friends. Summer Miller not only did all of the legal work for us on the place, including finding errors in the abstract that even the seller didn't know about, but she and Steve Hamm came down on the 17th and helped us move; Steve probably did more work that day than anyone else. John, Sandra, Marie, Ann, and Peter Miesel came up on the 17th, and John and Sandra returned on the 24th. Gene and Bev DeWeese arrived late on the 17th, and stayed until the 19th. And David Smith, who is the young man who bought our previous residence, donated himself and his pickup to helping us get out of his way. I'd contacted a moving company to take two or three loads, but due to a mixup in schedules they arrived late and only took one load, of the really big furniture and appliances. In addition, I rented a 6 x 12 U-Haul trailer and we took 12 loads in that. David hauled 7 loads in his pickup. And we made at least 40 trips in cars and our station wagon and Summer and Steve's camper; I lost track of those trips. We had a lot of stuff.

Incidentally, our landlord and his son were not pressuring us to move, which I think is nice of them, considering that it took us 7 months after the initial notice to get everything removed. (In fact, our landlord kept reassuring us that considering we'd lived there for 14 years, he kind of hated to see us go.)

Another reason for the delay in production of Yandro is my professional writing. I mentioned in the last issue (remember the last issue?) that I'd acquired a job doing book reviews for Amazing Stories. At Constellation in 1983, I also acquired a job doing reviews of the science fiction magazines, for The Comics Buyer's Guide. (Which may not be quite as prestigious as Amazing, but has six times the circulation.) The Amazing column is bi-monthly; the CBG column is monthly. Writing them doesn't actually take a lot of time -- but reading the material to be reviewed does. I also did a few articles during the past couple of years, all of which have been accepted and none published, and I'm currently doing research for a songbook, to accompany Juanita's cassette tape, which was released this year.

A major force for publication of this Yandro came from the post office. Oh, contributors had been bugging us to get their material into print, but the final blow came when the post office said that if we weren't going to use our bulk mailing permit, they'd take it away from us and give it to someone more deserving. It became a case of publish now or forever hold our peace.

What else happened to the Coulsons in the interim? Well, Bruce and Lori were married in 1983; I performed the ceremony. Filker Bill Maraschiello was the wedding musician, playing the actual wedding music on the hammer dulcimer and entertaining at the reception with voice and guitar. He made a big hit with Lori's relatives -- of course, we already knew he was good.

Our pets currently include one indoor cat, Grundoon, one dog, Kari, and five barn cats, all but the mother unnamed. She's Eclipse (particularly appropriate since not only is she black but all her kittens through three litters have been black.). About three of the barn cats are due to be removed, probably to the humane shelter. We did manage to give away one.

Currently we're trying to get the house winterized before it gets really cold. So far, all our attention has been on the house; eventually we need to work on the garage, barn, chicken house (to become a tool shed), and privy. But that's for next year. We did raise a small garden this year, partly because we were short of time to prepare it, but mostly because Juanita's diverticulosis -- I'll let her tell you all about the wonders of that -- doesn't allow her to eat all that many fresh vegetables.

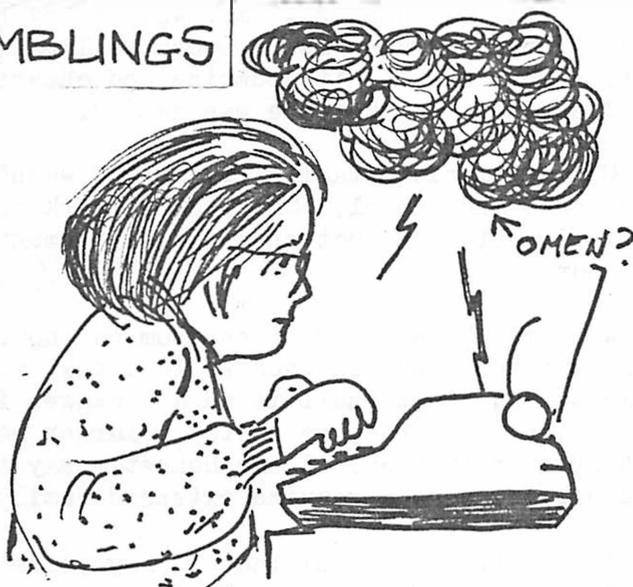
Conventions in 1984 have been Marcon (where we turned the tables and roomed with Bruce and Lori, for a change; normally they room with us), Empiricon, where

we were Fan GoH, Okon, where we were Fan GoH, and the Ohio Valley Filk Fest. Still to come are ConClave (where we will be Fan GoH), and Chambanacon. Okon was the big one: 1700 people at a regional. For a change, we actually got out of the con hotel a couple of times; at Empiricon we took a cab downtown to see the "Ancestors" exhibit at the Museum of Natural History, and at Okon we rented a car and visited the Gilcrease Institute and admired its collection of Western paintings, sculptures, and artifacts.

Next year, our conventions will depend a lot on how Juanita's writing career goes; this has been a very expensive year for us. All the savings have gone into the purchase of the house and various improvements, and most of our time has been and will be going into them, too.

Well, we got a ten-room house, with outbuildings and 1½ acres of land. Room sizes range up to 16 x 18, and in addition to the rooms we have various closets (one of them being an 8 x 12 room), two attics, and a half-basement. This should take care of the storage problems in the near future. Oh yes, and a glassed-in front porch. It's also going to take care of a lot of our time.... RSC

## RAMBLINGS



Betsy Curtis once wrote a story which we spun off into a family joke: When an appliance breaks down, a car collapses, or some other misfortune occurs, it's an "omen" -- a promise by the fates that something nice will compensate for the bad luck. Thanks to odd coincidences, there were times when we almost believed. But these past few years have knocked the stuffing out of the "omen." To paraphrase a really old joke: "T'ain't funny any more, Magee."

I realize that we are lucky, compared to many people. And I keep telling myself that surely a few of these events will turn

out to be blessings in disguise.. I'm not being a Pollyanna; I'm trying to make lemonade out of lemons.

Buck described our adventures in having our former house shot out from under us. After decades of renting, we know that rental properties have their drawbacks.

A landlord, even one of good will, won't always tackle the problems. Now that we've taken the plunge and are buying, at least we can set priorities and make a stab at fixing things the way we want them to be.

The expenses are shudder-making. We haven't lived in the real world of housing costs since we were married. I don't remember what rents we paid in Huntington, North Manchester, and Wabash, but since it was the '50's, it wasn't much. When we went rural, the rate was very modest, and remained so through 1983, when we decided to buy. By city standards, we're still shelling out peanuts. However, remember that our incomes are as modest as our house payments. To us, they're a whopping jolt. Ouch.

Experienced house buyers-owners warned us: the first year is the one where you have to buy everything in one swell foop. Certain essentials must be taken care of immediately. Furnace replacement. Complete rewiring. Energy-saving

window blinds and draperies, etc. Insulation. Etc., etc., etc. 1983-'84 have been the years when our bank account suffered a disaster.

On balance, there has been the support of wonderful friends, without whom... Lee Lavell. Gene and bev. Bruce. The Missels. Summer and Steve. Our former landlord and his family.

In writing, I was building what I fondly hoped was a solid foundation of a career. Things had been going pretty good. In the last two years, the foundations just sat. The third book in the SF series for Del Rey was written per outline and turned in, and rejected. So was the lengthy revision. At present, LEGACY OF EARTH is on hold -- a temporary hold, I pray -- and I'm working on Book IV. Still dealing with omens. The latest is a possibly serious malfunction with my WP. Sigh. So I'm keeping fingers crossed and skipping widdershins, figuratively, to make this omen become one of those silver lining blessings. Realsoonnow. All I can do is keep plugging.

That was a punch I could roll with. There was no way to say things would get better when there was a major loss in the family, though.

My mother and I had always been very, very close. Few people I met dreamed such a relationship could exist, especially in this day and age. Mom gave me my first typewriter, when I was eight years old. She encouraged me in story telling, music, art, and creativity. I cannot remember a time when she wasn't boosting and cheering me on. Throughout the years, she gave me the freedom to Be that she was denied.

As the oldest daughter in a poor German-American family, my mother wasn't allowed to complete school, although she loved books and school. She started work in a factory when she was thirteen and worked almost without interruption until retirement age. Yet she somehow made time for birthing and nurturing me.

When she retired, she moved into a mobile home a few miles from our house and enjoyed being a grandmother and helping out constantly. When we lost that rental (the landlord, in ill health, sold the property and had to sell it as a package, including 100+ acres of land, which we couldn't begin to afford), we rented a larger house, one big enough so that Mom could live with us from then on. I can honestly say tired gags about mothers-in-law did not apply. Ever. We were a genuine extended family.

The divisions of labor were perfect. I like to think those happy years helped make up to her for so many unhappy ones in her younger days. She was needed, loved, and appreciated, and reciprocated.

A few years ago, her health began to fail seriously. She was a well-controlled diabetic, but the disease was affecting her vision, and glaucoma and high blood pressure worsened matters. The hardest thing, however, was osteoporosis, hard for her to bear and hard for those who loved her to watch happening. The combination of ailments sapped her strength steadily. She couldn't putter in the vegetable and flower gardens any more. She could barely walk. She could no longer do household chores. Pain in her back and legs and hands made living a burden. Fading vision threatened to take away her enjoyment of handicrafts and watching TV mystery programs.

In the spring of 1983, she grew very weak. (She hadn't been out of the house that winter at all; the public health nurse made house calls to administer medication and check her increasingly dangerous blood pressure.) Her grandson's wedding day was fast approaching, but she firmly declined to attend. I suspect she had a premonition of what was going to happen. The doctor put her in the hospital for tests, and when we returned from the wedding on Sunday evening, I visited her and gave her all the news.

That night she suffered a crippling stroke. It almost killed her, and would have been kinder if it had. It stole memories, permanently paralyzed her right arm, and severely disturbed her speech. The speech returned, partially. The memories and the

function in her arm never did. She needed 24-hour nursing care, and there was no solution but a nursing home, a decision we both hated. I visited her often, but she and I realized this was actually a slow farewell. That farewell lasted about seven months. In December, 1983, she died of kidney failure. She was lucid until the final coma, and a few hours before she died she was asking me about the space shuttle. There was some pain, but a compassionate doctor made sure there was no more than necessary. There are worse ways to die.

Her nightmare was that she would go blind before she died. She didn't. She knew who I was, had made her peace with the way things were, and in that sense she just slipped away. There was nothing anyone could have done that wasn't done, yet I still grieve. Writing these paragraphs has been very difficult.

She read SF and fantasy, bought me my first mimeo, attended a convention, subsidized my fanzine when I was single, and remained an avid devotee of space exploration and imaginative literature all her life. Bruce is a third-generation fan, thanks to the gentle nudges and supportive cheers she gave first me, then him. She is missed, and will be missed.

Music was always important to her, and to me. Some of my earliest memories are of standing by the piano while Mom and Dad sang. I was encouraged to take the lead and ham it up. Recently, music has been a refuge during some very rough months.

I've been a filksinger since before the term was invented. For years, it was totally ephemeral. There were no recording devices, and filkers could be counted on one hand, at any given convention. You heard the music, and then it vanished like fairy gold. Things have changed, for the better.

True, filksings are now crowded. Jam packed. I say, "Hooray!" No more singing in basements and hotel hallways. ConComs even give us rooms for filking, in these enlightened times. And there are tapes. Bhoys, are there tapes. One's own disorganized copies, and professionally recorded productions. An embarrassment of riches. Ain't it grand?

For decades, people told me they were going to find some way to record me. Promise after promise went nowhere. Until Off Centaur came into existence. They did record me. I've been setting the Kiplingesque verse of Martha Keller to music for nearly thirty years...and there's finally a collection of the stuff, my music and others'. The torch is indeed passed. RIFLES AND RHYMES was recorded when I wasn't at my best, but all in all, I'm very pleased to see it safely launched. There may even be some more tapes from me...and there are loads by other people. Filksinging is finally legit.

The reason why the tape doesn't sound as good as it should is that I had just escaped from the hospital a week before I did the recording. Details: Shortly after Mom's funeral, I had a bout of agonizing abdominal pains that I thought was just bad indigestion. In February, there was another, more severe attack. This time our doctor shanghaied me from the ER to a bed in the hospital for tests (and made me miss a shuttle landing, damn.) I would have been vastly annoyed if I'd gone through all of that and they hadn't found anything specific, but they did. Diverticulosis. Or, at that time, -itis. At least I know what it is. I now have to follow an exceedingly boring diet, probably for the rest of my life. Better than the alternatives -- or than going through those awful tests again.

There was a bout of cluster headaches and rampant TMJ syndrome, but, knock plastic, we're all back on track now. We're still here, and hope to be for years to come. So....onward. JWC

# DIFFICULTY

#32

COLUMN-BY

DAVE LOCKE

## FANWRITING ON THE HALF-SHELL

What? Oh, hi! Didn't know when to expect you. Here, let me give you a hand up onto the stage. What am I doing? Well, it's a play. Just a slice of life, actually. Call it a coming-of-age story if you wish. I wrote the tale, but don't hold that against it. You're just in time to help me with the props, and while we're doing that I'll tell you what it's basically about. In fact, the props tell most of the story.

I've always been willing to debate for the view that fanwriting is a great hobby if you go in for that sort of thing, but personal taste is easy to justify and hard to explain. We know that fanwriting can push a person's Hot Buttons in such areas as communication, camaraderie, therapy, egoboo, creativity, fun, and perversity, but each fanwriter has a different button sequence operation and reacts differently to the pushing. The reasons you write, the kinds of things you write, and the ways in which you write, are all a bit different amongst fanwriters, not that there are no commonalities.

In fact, there are enough of them to tempt some fanwriters to make generalized statements about fanwriting. One of the most recent to have pushed some people's hot buttons was Malcolm Edwards' "fan writing is one of the few forms of writing that are pointless unless you are doing your very best." A bit dogmatic, this has appealed to several fanwriters who have failed to see that it neither stands up to close examination nor applies broadly enough to be a good generalized statement about fanwriting. Let's prop this up, right here, and go on with some more stage setting.

Fanzine fandom has 'movements'. One of the latest, and least interesting, is based on the idea of establishing Fan Standards for writing and publishing. I call this uninteresting, which it isn't if you're one of the fans caught up in it, because there is no office of state to name it for and because the idea of Standards in fanwriting only has merit where people are encouraged to establish their own personal standards. Anyone who establishes their own standards is going to look askance at the idea of someone else doing it for them. It's not that an apologia can't be made for criticism in the absence of absolute critical standards, but rather that critical standards are at best subjectively presumptuous and at worst they're the basis for a poor institution. Let's take the idea of "Fanwriting Standards" as another piece of stage setting. I'll set it down here.

The only thing that any fanwriter has to initially contend with is their own self. Put the "Self" prop down on that spot. Thereafter, unless they ignore all input, they have to contend with the comments and opinions of friends, acquaintances, casual readers, critics, and occasionally antagonists. In other words, with the fan society. With fandom. On paper and, if they get around socially, they have other interactions to deal with and integrate, as well. But let's look at fan-

writing and the concept of dealing with feedback and reaction, specifically the extreme variety. While the nature of fanwriting makes it not a lot different than when dealing with these things anywhere else, it is another medium. It is, therefore, different. Here's the label on the prop: "Fanwriting: Dealing With Extreme Reaction." We had to make the prop big to contain all that wordage. Let me help you wrestle with that and we'll set it up right over there.

Okay, let's move along this way now, over to stage center.

With these additions we've got enough of a setting. The story line here is going to be about a new fan, a neo, an amateur writer by virtue of the fact that they like to write. Doesn't matter what. They get into writing mailing comments, editorials, personalzines, articles, reviews, critiques, commentaries, conreports, letters of comment, or whatever. But they write. As they get into fandom and make their way along they encounter a few things. Some of these things that they will encounter are represented here by the props, and you just helped me set up a few of the heavier ones.

The first thing you really encounter is yourself. There's the prop: "Self." You wouldn't mind standing-in as the lead for a moment, would you? We won't do any acting here, but put yourself in the role and let me show you some of what your character will encounter. Pretend you're new to fandom, and that's all you'll really need to get into your character. Now, as I say, you first encounter yourself. By that I mean you have little to contend with except your own thoughts. You like to write, and here is a new medium. Why do you like to write?, and if you answer you might ask why you would like to write within the new medium, and if you answer that all you have left to ask is what you want to write about. Life is simple at this stage of your tenure with fandom.

Now let's walk around the stage here and look at some of the other props, because they represent some outside influences that you encounter after you've asked and answered all those questions. Look, here's the dogma that tells you "fan writing is one of the few forms of writing that are pointless unless you're doing your very best." Is that so?, you ask. Who do you ask? Yourself, of course. You run this input around your frontal lobes for a few minutes, considering the factors and asking if this is for you. Should you shoot for a hernia every time you approach fanwriting? Do you bust ass on every mailing comment, every article, every letter of comment? If a person feels they must always do their best, you can't argue with them. If they feel it's relevant that everyone always do their best, then you can argue. You can point out that how much effort went into something is not always apparent or discernible, and is really academic to how well or how poorly received the effort is, let alone to how well it pleased you as the author. Obviously Your Best versus Less Than Your Best is not the thrust here at all. While you don't think too highly of someone deliberately putting out shit, you know that's not the alternative to everyone always working to do their very best. You have to ask whether you take yourself so seriously that every time you write you will consider it "pointless unless you are doing your very best."

Now, at this point in your role the new fanwriter gets some decent dialog when you address the prop here. You say: "If I were to phrase some kind of maxim, I'd find it preferable to say that fanwriting is pointless unless you are trying to do it well. To me, that sounds better. Not to mention unnecessary."

We can move along, now. Kick this prop over. As you know, it is only a prop.

The next prop is "Fanwriting Standards". You can see from the shape of it that it bears a loose resemblance to the last prop. By this time the new fanwriter has made



friends, and they spend their time talking about things other than fanwriting standards. So the idea is new to you now, and you look it over. You've got

a good speech here, where you say: "I don't presume to insult anyone by telling them their way isn't my way, and I don't intend to nobly coerce people into a mold that others believe would look good on them. Anarchistically speaking, we're peers. Fannishly speaking, we're all individuals. I'm not in fandom to issue or receive standards. I'm here for a variety of reasons, but those aren't two of them." Kind of rolls

slick off the tongue, doesn't it?

Well, after telling the Standards Crowd that they can feel free to issue and receive standards between themselves, and that you'll remember them at Christmas (go ahead and kick over this prop, now), you move along until you encounter the Fan Critic. Here we are, with the prop marked "Fanwriting: Dealing With Extreme Reaction."

Everyone's a critic, but specifically the Fan Critic in this case is the person you don't know who just read your fanzine or a piece of your written material, and who makes your eyes bug out with what they write concerning their displeasure over the experience.

As a new fan encountering this, once you get the bad expression off your face you realize the only question is the obvious one. Other than as an indication of one person being displeased with your work, does what they say have any significance? And there is usually just one answer: you don't really know yet. You have to know enough about the fan critic in question. Once you know these people, you're on a different footing. There you can ignore what anyone who likes to think of themselves as a fan critic says about the quality of your material, good or bad, unless you generally agree with their views on the material of others. But right now we're here, and you don't know who's giving the knock, and from the context you don't have a good feeling about it. You don't know about the Fan Critics Union, which issues credentials allowing members to feel free about turning themselves into bellicose animals, with claws and fangs, while wearing the badge of office. So you will encounter the union critic whose prose gets out of hand. There are no lines for you in this scene, by the way, because we're talking about dealing with extreme reaction to your fanwriting. Normal reaction would make for uninteresting dialog. Extreme reaction makes for a scene where you listen to all this, and then walk away. What else is there to do, argue? Listen, walking away works, because it always gets interpreted correctly. Besides, dialog makes it personal, and you don't know yet whether you want it to be. Kick over this prop and let's mosey over to the last one, which was actually the first one: "Self."

What the new fanwriter discovers here, what you discover in this scene, is that you've come full-circle and that once again you have to contend with yourself. By this time you have your own standards or the beginning of a set of standards, you understand the basis for accepting or rejecting criticism, and you know how to simply avoid people who crusade to change the nature of your fanac in ways that don't interest you. Now it's time to look inside yourself again.

Why? That's your line: why? Because by now you know who you are writing for, and that should make a difference. You say "why?" again here. And you answer yourself: "Of the people who read my writing, there are a lot more I know than I don't know. I know more friends and acquaintances, whether socially or via written fandom or both, than there are fans I know little or nothing about. I feel a difference between now

and the time when I didn't know who was reading what I wrote."

This is when you ask yourself what the difference is. The difference that takes place in your approach. To put it simply, you realize the difference is that you are no longer always just writing for yourself. The more you know your audience, the more you write to share what it is that you're writing. You could even get the point across to business-world types by telling them that understanding the demographics of a readership allows better targeting and impact with written communication, resulting in increased rapport and more effective material. They'd understand that, but what your character understands is that whatever is to be communicated or shared is better executed if you make use of what you know about your readership.

After all, if you weren't that concerned about communication or sharing, you'd be doing all your writing in a diary.

The knowledge you have gained has added up to this: that you are a writer, free to find your medium, and you are a fanwriter because the medium is receptive. The more you use your knowledge of that medium, the more the medium will be receptive, because you are no longer always just writing for yourself. You become a part of the medium, first because you want to be, second because no writer can succeed who writes without regard to communicating within the medium in which they work.

The key is to be interesting. That's what you arrive at. There are a number of ways, and we won't count them in this script, in which an item of fanwriting can be interesting. It is not necessary to be a good writer per se to be interesting. It is necessary to be interesting to be read. Unless your friends are kind.

In other words, the fact that you find it interesting is reason enough to write it. The fact that you feel reasonably certain your audience will find it interesting is the only reason to publish it. Any other belief is a game, a fiction, an ego-trip, and should be re-evaluated.

This is about where the play ends, with you mulling over the question of how to stay interesting, and interested. You scratch your chin and theorize that mixing in content, together with playing with expression and style, is a possible answer provided you have an awareness that what interests you is something you have to make interesting; obviously your form should be interesting even if you can't make a readership give a damn about the content. This is called a challenge. Well, you're the one who wants to write. Challenges are a part of that.

Another part is to understand what you're doing and why you're doing it. Once you know, all available resources can be tipped in that direction without much thinking about it.

A science fiction author, a poor but prolific one, once wrote that "words appear to stew out of me. There is nothing I can do about this except direct them at a typewriter and hope they will emerge in the form of stories or books." As fan David Hulan once commented, specifically to this point: "yes, and he did it without the intervention of a brain anywhere along the way." Having read both of these people, I had to agree with David: a brain makes quite a difference.

And the new fan didn't even need to know about this, about Robert Moore Williams and David Hulan, to grasp



the point. This is obviously a coming-of-age story for a fanwriter. Anyone can see that.

The problem is that not everyone does see this, but luckily most do. And this is the story of one of those who does go through a coming-of-age. Likely, and hopefully, your character from the play will continue to go through a coming-of-age. There are a lot of them for the person who works with their environment for the benefit of both.

Thanks for coming, by the way. Wanted you to see what I'm doing here.

It's just a slice of life.

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## —DISCUSSION—

The wombat and the unicorn  
In Never-never Land  
Discussed their popularity  
Among the fannish band.  
Their massive salability  
They could not understand.

"They cross me up with Pegasus,"  
The unicorn complained,  
"On everything from letterhead  
To glass, both etched and stained.  
I'm wingless and he has no horn."  
The unicorn looked strained.

"At least they know you're like a horse,"  
The wombat said. "Not all  
Who know jan howard finder know  
A wombat from a wall.  
A burrowing marsupial.  
Quite bearlike. Rather small.

"And yet they buy and sell us both --  
Our pictures or our names.  
A 'wombat' or a 'unicorn'  
Sells t-shirts, books, or games.  
Or aftershave. Or oven-mitts.  
Or plastic eyeglass frames."

The wombat and the unicorn  
Commiserated long.  
They never came to grip with why  
The fen had done them wrong.  
They stand, unwilling victims of  
The loving, thoughtless throng.

—————MARION ALLEN

# NATTERINGS

COLUMN BY

Ethel Lindsay

During the War I worked in a hospital situated in the countryside around Edinburgh. Whenever I was off duty I used to head for 'Auld Reekie'; but the bus service was very poor and -- like all the staff -- I did quite a bit of hitchhiking. I used to land in Edinburgh in all sorts of queer vehicles, once even in a coal lorry! I used to head for the main Princes Street, where I spent hours in those fondly-remembered bookstores or in the Gardens which line one side of the Street. This February I was in Edinburgh to attend the first SF convention held there, and on the first day went happily to my old haunt. As usual, there was a cold wind blowing along the street, as keen as a knife against the face, and, as usual, Princes Street was thronged with tourists. Alas! The shops are not what they were -- too many chainstores and too many devoted to riotous Tartanry. There were a couple of bookstores -- but they were selling remaindered books that were still too expensive for me to buy and pretty limited in appeal, anyway.

So I crossed the Gardens, climbed a lot of steep steps to the Royal Mile, and dived into the many back streets that ramble from it. Here I found the small secondhand bookstores where customers are not plentiful and the owners friendly and ready for chat. From that first foray I came away with a very mixed batch; as an example, Durrell's *THE BAFUT BEAGLES*, Monica Dickens' *MY TURN TO MAKE THE TEA*, and Amis' *THE EGYPTOLOGISTS*. James Thin is the name of a fairly large bookstore whose basement is a happy hunting ground for me. I located a couple of early Mary Roberts Rinehart's mysteries and when I went to pay for them found the assistant being harangued by one of those self-important men with too much time on their hands. As I handed the books over he loftily declared, "M.R. Rinehart is the best mystery writer, Agathie Christie comes second, and P.D. James is third." I felt very tempted to tell him that Rinehart is blamed for having invented the "Had I but only known" school of mystery writing. I decided against saying this, however, on the grounds that it would only encourage him.

From there I went to one of my favourite places -- The Grassmarket. This is a tree-lined square with many historical associations. Tanner's Close used to branch from here, which was the home of the notorious criminals, Burke and Hare. It was also here that many executions used to take place. At the eastern end of the square there is a cross traced in rose-colored stone, which marks the spot where more than a hundred Covenanters died for their religious beliefs. The Grassmarket is situated at the back of Edinburgh Castle. The well-known view of the Castle is from Princes Street, where it looks mightily impressive. From the back, one catches glimpses of it sometimes looking grim and sometimes almost homely. I keep expecting to see a line of washing hanging out.

In the Grassmarket was a rather posh-looking craft/cum books store. I



Don't let  
that old  
Mass media  
git you  
down.  
Read a  
Book...

ventured in to ask for help for a correspondent of mine who wanted to know if Alasdair Gray's book LANARK: A LIFE IN FOUR BOOKS was still in print and available. He had quoted Canongate as the publisher and fortunately I knew this was an Edinburgh firm. This shop was called The Portcullis, and I found the elderly bookseller more than willing to help. He not only checked that the book was still in print, but telephoned Canongate to double-check.

After this, I went up to Kings Stable Road where another bookshop with a large stock of early paperbacks took up my attention. I found a copy of James Norman's THE NIGHTWALKERS, which is one I had not seen since I was in my teens and only able to obtain books through the Public Library. A few doors on and I collapsed gratefully into the kind of coffeehouse that expects

you to sit reading for ages...homemade shortbread, too...no wonder I get stouter!

When I came out the cold wind drove me back to the con hotel from which I never stirred till it was time to go home.

I am absolved from giving you a convention report, for this is for Yandro, and we all know Buck's firm views about sic craters. Still: I must comment that it was the smallest convention I have gone to in years, which accounts for the fact that I had more varied conversations than I have had for years. I even found myself having a discussion on the merits of fandom with a fan's wife, who thought it "such a lot of nonsense". I doubt if I converted her views. It surely was a friendly convention, reminding me strongly of my early convention-going. The convention committee were very lucky in having Harry Harrison as their GoH. He was helpful to them in so many ways, and particularly when it came to dealing with the Fancy Dress awards. I could also see the Glasgow fans being very helpful; I spotted them doing all sorts of chores. Now that was nice.

One highlight for me was being able to have a long chat with Joan Harrison -- the first time we had done so since the Loncon in 1965. My goodness! What a lot of water has flowed under the Tay Bridge since then.

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Editorial addendum: As of early December, we're still not completely unpacked. However, we now have the conventions behind us for the year. Chambananacon was pleasant, as usual. ConClave was an exceptionally good con, once we got a room; slight mixup in reservations. At one point I was idly wondering about the softness of Steve Simmons' floor, but the concom rallied around and solved the problem. Then we were paid speakers at Unicon I, in Muncie. Interesting in that it was a gaming convention, and we didn't know much about those, and also because it's the only con we've ever commuted to; since it was only about 25 miles away, we drove back and forth each day. We didn't even have to work very hard for our pay.

So, once we finish with assorted insulating, we can resume putting up file cabinets, bookcases, and artwork. (Juanita is considering tapestries for our bedroom, because of their original function; if they could cover up cold castle walls, they can do the same for ours.)

RSC

# CONAN MEETS

# ALICIA DYCKMAN

ARTICLE BY L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP

My friend the late François Bordes, the great French archaeologist and pre-historian, wrote science-fiction novels. He used the pseudonym "Francis Carsac," since professors were not then expected to write paperbacked novels. "Carsac" is the name of his ancestral village in the Dordogne Valley, the heart of the Crô-Magnon country.

After François's untimely death in 1981, his admirers published reprints, in well-made hard-cover books, of his novels. I received one, LA VERMINE DU LION (the lion's parasites), originally published in 1967. François dedicated this novel to Poul Anderson (also a personal friend of his) and to me. He candidly borrowed elements from both of us and dropped a few in-jokes along the way. The dedication reads:

"A L. Sprague de Camp  
à qui j'ai emprunté ses bishtars,  
et à Poul Anderson,  
en m'excusant d'avoir donné un ancêtre à sir Dominic Flandry"

He means he borrows the bishtars from my Krishna stories and asked Anderson's pardon for giving Poul's Flandry an ancestor of that name, who plays a minor role.

When François's characters are on a safari, an elephantine beast looms over their campfire until frightened away. The hero explains that he named the animal Bishtar gigas "after an old American science-fiction story that I found in the place of a Chinese on Papeete, in which there was an animal curiously similar to that which you have just seen" (p. 129). As on Krishna, the heroine carries a movie camera concealed in a finger ring, made on Earth by "the firm of de Camp and Barnevelt" (p. 67).



In anticipation of a trip to the French Caribbean, I read LA VERMINE DU LION to polish my French. Although I was brought up bilingually, in recent decades my French vocabulary has shrunk from neglect, and I wanted to refurbish it.

François could certainly tell a rip-snorting tale. He supposes a matter transmitter for inanimate materials and faster-than-light space travel for living organisms. On the mineral-rich planet Eldorado, an international bureau, the B.I.M., has a mining monopoly. The planet harbors humanoid inhabitants, with "54 chromosomes and 40 teeth" (p. 25), whose culture ranges from the Stone Age to that of ancient Mesopotamia.

The ruthless director of the B.I.M., John Henderson, believes that "God has given the universe to mankind" (p. 119). Like a 23d-century James Watt, he would like to eliminate the native Eldoradans so as to exploit the planet's minerals unhindered. Under Henderson's rule, the B.I.M. has become the most powerful branch of the World Government and bids fair to reduce the other branches to impotence. Henderson, however, must move cautiously, because if open warfare breaks out between the aborigines and his Earthmen -- administrators, engineers, miners, prospectors, and their dependents -- another international bureau, the B.U.X. or Bureau of Xenology, takes over and quarantines the planet for ten years.

Terai Laprade, an independent geologist, opposes the B.I.M. He is of mixed ancestry: French, Chinese, Polynesian, and Amerind. He is a bronze, black-haired, slant-eyed giant, "nearly two-meters tall" (that is, six and a half feet). He has a severe countenance and a rude, rough, brusque, overbearing manner. Partly because of his background, he is an implacable foe of colonialism. He has been accepted into the Ihambé tribe and is married to a female of that race.

Laprade also hates fanatics and fundamentalists. When his father was a scientist in Toronto, a Fundamentalist mob burned the laboratory and the scientists in it on the ground that they were "mocking God's work" (p. 53). These scientists had developed a breed of super-lion with a large brain and an IQ of 85. The sole surviving super-lion of the holocaust, Léo, is Laprade's pet and companion.

To get the goods on Laprade, Henderson sends his daughter Stella, a tall, athletic, beautiful, brilliant green-eyed blonde, to Eldorado. Stella Henderson first meets Laprade when he is leading a gang of prospectors on a pub-crawl through the dives of Port-Métal, the spaceport and Terran enclave. The crawl culminates in a riot in a crooked gambling joint, wherein Stella narrowly escapes being killed, the joint is burned down, and its personnel are slaughtered.

Pretending to have quarreled with her father and become a simple journalist, Stella engages Laprade as a guide to show her some native peoples. Being himself rich, he agrees only at a high price to take her on his next field trip. Since Stella also has a forceful, self-assertive personality, relations between the two are bumpy.

The story displays attitudes that seem a little old-fashioned today. The novel obviously antedates the sexual revolution but is all the better for that; sex as casual as toothbrushing has no more dramatic impact in fiction than toothbrushing. When later Stella tells Laprade that she is escaping confinement by seducing her guard ("j'ai séduit mon gardien!" p. 253), she makes it plain that she does not mean that she gave him a free fuck; merely that she lured him close enough to break a vase over his head.

When Stella is persuading Laprade to take her, he says: "And what would your reputation be, when you return from being alone with me for six months?"

She replies: "Couldn't we take someone else with us?" (p. 46).

So Laprade enlists a green young Greek geologist for the B.I.M., Achilles Gropas,

as chaperone. Gropas and Laprade do not get along, either. This is not strange in view of the contemptuous way Laprade treats the tenderfoot. He kicks him to awaken him and calls him "baby" and "cretin" when the Greek fails to measure up to Laprade's exacting standards of perigrinism.

Gropas is soon killed in a fight with the hostile Umburus. Laprade says: "Too bad; with a few more adventures, he might have made a passable prospector" (p. 71).

François's two larger-than-life characters escape to the friendly Ihambés. There Stella sees Laprade's hideaway, a cave enlarged to accommodate a library, a laboratory, and an arsenal. She is shocked to meet Laprade's native wife, Laélé. This female urges Stella to bear Laprade a son because she, Laélé, cannot, the two species being intersterile. (François repeatedly stresses the necessity for a man to have a son.) Laélé's brother Eenko, a mighty warrior who is also a blood-brother to Laprade, proposes marriage to Stella at a tribal betrothal ceremony, promising her the heads of her enemies among other goodies. She turns him down as tactfully as she can, but he is nevertheless furious at the rejection.

Laprade explains that he must some day marry a "Terrienne" in order to have children. He makes a pass at Stella only once. On one of several occasions when he saves her life, he kills a pseudo-tiger with his bare hands, or rather holds it while she stabs it.

Standing bloodily over the corpse, he utters a Tarzanian war cry. Then he grabs Stella, tears off her shirt, and kisses her. When she resists, he steps back and apologizes, explaining that after such a hand-to-hand combat, "je suis comme une bête!" (p. 99). His feelings toward her are mixed. On one hand he is drawn to her, but on the other he suspects her of treachery. She likewise is troubled by the prospect of playing Delilah to her heroic companion after he has more than once saved her life.

In Kintan, the capital of the semi-civilized empire of Kéno, Laprade discovers that the B.I.M. has smuggled Terran arms to the empire, whose new ruler they hope to use as a puppet. The priests of the cult favored by the new monarch, secretly backed by the B.I.M., seize Laélé for sacrifice. In the ensuing battle, Laélé is killed; Laprade mourns her loss. Eenko, still seething over his rejection, irrationally holds Stella to blame and threatens to kill her.

In a tremendous sequence of intrigue, battle, suspense, torture, and massacre, Laprade blows up the arms cache. The survivors escape, and Stella returns to Earth. When Henderson learns that she has begun to sympathize with Laprade's views, he has her seized by his guards and confined in one of his mansions.

Stella discovers a plot by the B.I.M. to exterminate the Eldoradans by giving them coffee, which they love, laced with an addictive and sterilizing drug. She also learns that her father engineered the "accidental" death of her fiancé when she was studying physics in college.

Laprade also returns to Earth, inconclusively confronts Henderson, fails to find Stella, and goes back to Eldorado to make war on the B.I.M.

Escaping confinement, Stella returns to Eldorado to warn Laprade of the B.I.M.'s plans. She also confesses that she wants to stay on Eldorado, because she loves him. Laprade has been forced to admit to himself that he also, if against his better judgment, loves her.

There is, however, no time for lovemaking. The natives, armed and trained by Laprade, attack Port-Métal, forcing the B.U.X. to take over the planet and oust the B.I.M. During the battle, Léo is killed, and Eenko murders Stella.

Sorrowing, an embittered Laprade buries his loves Stella and Léo. He goes back to guiding his native friends on the road to civilization, while seeking Eenko for revenge. Seeing a young Terran woman washing laundry in the river, he asks:

"What's your name?"

"Sigrid Nielsen, Monsieur Laprade."

"Married?"

"No."

"Good! You shall be my wife. I need a son. But I don't love you; don't think I shall ever love you!" (p. 279).

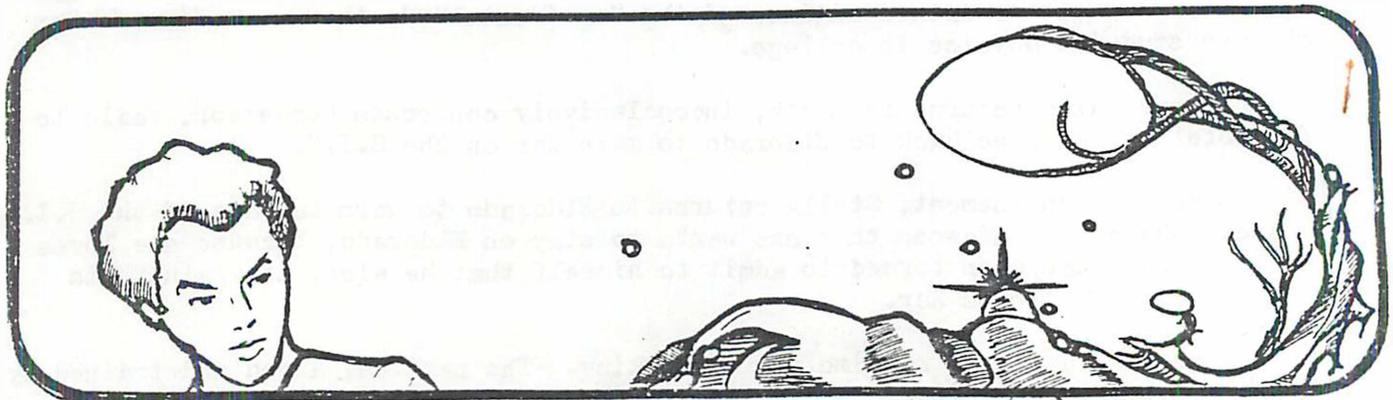
Her father, a prospector, almost protests this brutal proposal. But he wilts under the giant's ominous glare, consoling himself with the thought that the girl could be worse off than as the wife of the great Laprade. End of story.

François could certainly tell an intense, fast-moving tale, even if some of its elements are open to criticism. The theme of the wicked corporation oppressing poor natives now seems old hat. Sending Stella and Laprade back to Earth and then back to Eldorado three-quarters of the way through badly breaks the continuity. The revolution in Kintan is the major climax; but the novel still has over 80 pages to go. The later events, while melodramatic enough, seem a bit of a letdown. The author's sexism stands out, as in the dialogue between Laprade and the Nielsen girl. A contemporary girl, unless an utter wimp, would tell Laprade to put his proposal where the sun never shines.

François has gone out of his way, by a string of unlikely coincidences, to kill Stella. Nothing in the preceding plot makes Stella's arbitrary death, after surviving so many seemingly more lethal perils, seem inevitable and fictionally "right." It gives the reader the feeling of having the rug jerked out from under him; it serves no dramatic purpose save to show the author's unsentimentality.

This is not to say that endings must always be happy; not all my own stories end happily. But for a well-told tale, the end should follow logically from what has gone before. In real life, of course, accidents happen and a malign fate visits undeserved doom on the worthiest; but such events, while they pose a problem, do not resolve it; and a well-told tale resolves a fictional problem.

Still, it is a wow of a story. If someone would make it worth my while, I might undertake to translate it. But I shan't hold my breath waiting for an offer.



(c) Mel. White