

Catchpenny Gazette 12





Catchpenny Gazette

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Nick

Originally published in 1974

DAVE LOCKE

Back in the olden days, before our company created the position of Personnel Manager presumably for the sole purpose of destroying the spirit of Christmas, we used to have pretty good Annual Christmas Parties. We would take over a restaurant for an evening, drinking and socializing until everyone had a surfeit of it. We did not have structured programs provided us by a Personnel Manager. We did not all sing Silent Night precisely at 8:40. We did not hire a geriatric band to play the Charleston between 9:10 and 9:55. We always chose a place with a well-stocked bar, instead of providing Champagne Punch in giant glass punch bowls (Champagne Punch is created by pouring one quart of Idaho Champagne into a keg of ginger ale). We used to have a pretty good – if unstructured – time.

But we did have one yearly ritual. It was called the Indian Giving of Gifts. Everyone brought a present, and placed it under the tree. Each of us then picked numbers out of a hat. The person with the number “1” on his ticket would go up to the tree, pick a gift, and open it. Everyone would see what he got. He would sit down, and #2 would then get up and had the choice of opening and for the moment keeping his gift or of foisting it off unopened in exchange for the gift which #1 had received, in which case #1 would have to open that gift as well. And so on. The last person, say #50, had the choice of keeping the gift or of exchanging it unopened for any of the previous 49 gifts (which had probably changed hands a large number of times). If anyone had chanced upon a fifth of Jim Beam, for example, everyone with a higher number made careful note of where that person was sitting.

Someone unwrapped a present and announced that it was a bottle of 1967 Chateau Mouton-Rothschild. All eyes followed that person as he clutched the bottle tightly and made his way back to his seat. Half of those eyes were waiting for the opportunity to make their way over there and exchange an unknown item – probably a rubber

duck – for that fine looking bottle of red wine. The other half were aware of the fact that the bottle had been emptied and refilled with Welch’s Grape Juice.

The gift-swapping was at a fevered pitch that night. I wound up with a talking-picture book that sang *Old McDonald Had A Farm*. The fellow with the highest

number wound up with the 1967 Chateau Mouton-Rothschild.

That fellow’s name was Nick. He had come to the United States from Russia some twenty years before, and he worked in our Optical Repair Lab. After twenty years in this country, he still couldn’t speak English worth a damn. It took you an hour to hold a two-minute conversation with him. This was strictly his own fault; he never tried to blend in with the country in which he now made his home. He read only Russian newspapers. All his friends were Russian, and they spoke only Russian whenever they got together. He and his wife never spoke English unless they absolutely had to.

Nick didn’t drink. He said he didn’t like to throw money away on non-essential items. So we asked him why he had made it a point to pick up the bottle of wine. He finally got it across to us that he chose the wine because it was free, and he thought it a fine idea to have a bottle of wine around for “special occasions” such as anniversaries, birthdays, etc. He held the bottle of grape juice as though it were a fabulously precious non-essential commodity.

Nobody ever thought too much about it until, four years later, a coffee-break discussion turned to the subject of Christmas parties. During this reminiscence someone remembered the wine story and wondered how poor old Nick had taken it when he had discovered the fact that someone had neglected to ferment the grapes inside his wine bottle. We all chuckled. Then we saw that Nick had come down from the Lab for a cup of coffee, and was sitting over in the corner reading a Russian newspaper.

Somebody went over and asked him how he had enjoyed the wine.

I can’t write in a Russian dialect, and I don’t have the space to print all of the conversation that was necessary to make him understand the question or make his response be understood. If I may be allowed to skip over all of that, and get right to the heart of it, his response went like this:

“Oh, we loved it, the wife and I. We each had a small glass of it for our 30th wedding anniversary. We had a small glass of it when we spent our first night in our new house. We had a small glass of it to honor the memory of her father who passed away in the old country just a year ago. And we still have an inch or two of it left in the bottle for some future occasion.”

He beamed a smile at the person who had asked the question, and then went back to his newspaper. •



Notes From Byzantium

ERIC MAYER

The Baseball Player



When I read about company layoffs, I can't help thinking about my grandfather. It was from him I derived my unfashionable distaste for those people who make a living off the work of others and then discard them.

It wasn't anything my grandfather said. He wasn't much of a talker. A self-effacing man, his only vanity was the battered gray hat he wore perpetually to hide his bald spot.

He was born on a farm and left school in the seventh grade. In

his youth he played baseball. Once he faced the barnstorming Yankees as one of two locals on an all star squad that included Pepper Martin. He never talked about those days. I heard it from my Dad and my Uncle.

"Best pitcher I ever saw," my uncle told me. "And the best fighter too. Back then there was a brawl after every game. We played some tough crews, but Charlie never lost a fight."

When his ball-playing days were over and the family left the farm, he married and moved to what had once been a summer cottage, nearer to town. He took as much of the farm with him as he could. Using a wagon and a team of horses, he hauled rocks from the fields to build a wall, walkways and a rock garden, where, as a child, I was amazed at the "hens and chickens" growing from the stones.

He brought apple and pear trees from the orchards and since there wasn't as much room as on the farm, he grafted them so that each tree bore two or three different kinds of fruit.

He also went to work for "the Judge." For

thirty years, for 25 cents an hour, he tended the Judge's flower gardens, then took the bus home to tend his own.

I've seen old photographs of him, in his hat, standing in front of massed peonies, hollyhocks and snapdragons faded like hand tinted postcards. When I was a child only remnants remained, a few rutted paths between beds of phlox.

By all accounts my grandfather was generous with his talents. He supplied half the neighborhood with vegetables from his garden. No small thing during the Depression. Years later, an old neighbor pointed out to me the towering row of pines along the edge of his property. "Look at that windbreak – your granddad planted that for me."

The Judge was a staunch Republican. He couldn't abide Roosevelt's giveaways and never enrolled my grandfather in the Social Security program. So it was that when he left the Judge's employ, in his mid-sixties, my grandfather went to work as a janitor at the telephone company office down the street in order that my grandmother would qualify for benefits, so that she would not have to give up their home.

I was in grade school and thought it was the best job anybody's grandfather could have. After business hours, he let me into the big, deserted, brick building and led me through offices in the dim light that seeped through closed venetian blinds. He bought chocolate milk for me in the cafeteria and then allowed me to peek into the Board Room.



"Better be quick," he admonished, and I'd

duck back, away from the angry stares of the oil painted owners on the paneled walls.

Best of all was the switchboard where Mabel, the night operator, let me take over and perform what then seemed technological miracles, like placing three way calls to astounded playmates.

“But watch out,” said my grandfather, pointing to a socket next to a red light. “Don’t plug into that ’un. That’s the boss’s home phone.”

The chilling realization that a slip of my hand might bring us to the attention one of those baleful faces from the Board Room made the game all the more exciting. My grandfather managed to stay on the job for the required time. It was a hard struggle.

During that time he climbed a ladder to get to the fat Bartlett pears that only grew in the upper branches of the pear tree, fell, and was never right afterwards. Towards the end, I would see him limping home, half crippled by arthritis and an ulcerated leg that never healed.

My parents urged him to collect unemployment. He had a right, they said. But he was too proud.

“I oughtn’t tell anyone I’m looking for work,” said my grandfather. “I can’t work a lick anymore.” He took off his hat then and didn’t put it back on.

As a kid, I was fascinated by the family legend of his ball playing. For years his ancient catcher’s mitt, perfectly round and inflexible, and his 42 inch bludgeon of a bat sat out in the barn, next to the chicken coop – set aside but not discarded. Sometimes my friends and I would take the bat outside, though we could hardly lift it. We’d save it for when we needed a “big hit.” There was something magical about a bat that had existed in the era of Babe Ruth.

As I’ve grown older, though, and read the latest news of business, I more often think of how he worked for the Judge, and then the phone company. And how terribly old he looked coming home at night, in the years before he died. I remember how my grandmother lived in their home, caring for their gardens, for 20 years more.

And I remember my uncle telling me, “Charlie never lost a fight.”

Fear of Plagiarism and Falling Objects

Mary and I occasionally look over our shoulders while we write. There’s always that niggling fear that someone else has already conceived the same book we’re working on and will get it into print first. If we see a review that hints that another author has already used a device or

situation similar to what we’re working on, we cringe.

Once a writer puts an idea into circulation, it doesn’t matter whether another has come up with the same thought independently. The second writer might escape being charged with plagiarism, but the idea is no longer original as far as readers (and editors and agents and publishers) are concerned.

As co-novelists, we’ve never been preempted. In my case, though, I largely gave up much of the humorous writing I used to do for amateur magazines for fear of being labeled a copycat.

Actually, in the beginning, thirty years ago, I *was* a copycat, but not many readers would’ve realized. When I discovered Robert Benchley in the dusty stacks of the local library, I couldn’t resist trying out a lot of his comic devices. I figured it was permissible because Benchley allowed how he’d copied everything from Stephen Leacock and James Thurber admitted he’d stolen everything from Benchley. I was just carrying on the tradition. Besides, most of what those humorists wrote has been relegated to the stacks.

Unfortunately, before I started to sell anything anywhere, Dave Barry came along. I don’t know if he’s ever confessed to it, but Barry has lifted a good portion of his schtick straight from Benchley. (Or maybe Leacock or Thurber) I soon decided if I continued to write my usual essays I’d be dismissed as a Dave Barry wannabe.

Before I quit, I did sell a Benchleyesque essay to a small magazine called *Modern Secretary*. Oddly enough, the piece was about fear of being hit by a meteorite. Or perhaps it wasn’t so odd. For all I know fear of meteorites is endemic amongst modern secretaries, particularly since they no longer have steno pads to cover their heads with. I have to admit I have never actually asked a modern secretary whether she fears falling debris from outer space. It isn’t generally the kind of thing that comes up in conversation. Some people might even find it a peculiar sort of question and I must admit, when I think about getting a hard look from a modern secretary it makes me want to think about being flattened by a meteorite instead.

One thing that will probably not strike you as odd (if I may use the term “strike” here) is that *after* the essay was published I found that Benchley had actually written an essay about fear of meteorites.

Footnote: I should probably add in the interest of scientific accuracy that what we are likely to be hit by are “meteors.” The large, deadly, fearsome rock is properly termed a “meteoroid” while outside the atmosphere, where it poses no threat. Only when it reaches the surface of the

earth does it become a “meteorite” by which time we would be under it. Or what is left of us would be. There would probably be little enough left that the “meteorite” could be said to have reached “the surface of the earth” scientifically speaking. Presumably, it is the flaming “meteor” streaking through the atmosphere which would smash into us. Not that it would matter at that point. I don’t know what the scientific term would be for the brief moment when the blazing boulder is in contact with our surface but has not yet reached the ground. “Ouch” isn’t Latin.

Footnote to the footnote: Some may quibble about the importance of nomenclature but I want to point out that “Look out for the meteorite” and “look out for the meteor” require somewhat different reactions. A limited vocabulary can sometimes put you at the bottom of a crater.

Addendum: Now I’m beginning to wonder if the reason Mary and I occasionally look over our shoulders while we write isn’t so much fear of what other writers are up to, as, well...

Mr. Potato Head On Writing

As I struggled to come up with a description for a minor character I suddenly remembered Mr. Potato Head.

I’m old enough to recall when he was a real potato. Now he’s just a plastic fraud. Calls himself a potato but he’s got no starch. At some point whoever decides such things came to the conclusion that those vicious plastic spikes on the backs of the assorted facial features posed an unacceptable risk. To whom I’m not sure. Amazing as it may seem, even very young children have the ability to stick bulbous noses and floppy ears onto a potato without injuring themselves, except maybe hurting their sides laughing. I reckon kids had more chance getting injured falling down on the playground than they did while playing with Mr. Potato Head.



Besides, the whole point of Mr. Potato Head, I would’ve thought, was not that you were creating a funny face, but creating a funny face on a potato.

I guess if you’re supplying minor characters with physical descriptions, it isn’t good to have a Mr. Potato Head flashback. Let’s see, shall I stick on some big lips or small ones? Round eyes or squinty? How about glasses? Now, what kind of hat should I use? They’re all funny hats, of course.

Part of my problem is I don’t have a very big box of features with which to work. I tend to think of the same ones and the same types. Nose shape, hair color. That might be due to the fact that when I read I don’t pay a lot of

attention to physical descriptions, even for major characters, unless they are very exaggerated (i.e. Nero Wolf or Blind Pew) and/or play some important role in the story (i.e...uh...the Man in the Iron Mask...or Gully Foyle).

When I read exquisite descriptions of the angle of the cheekbones and the shape of the chin and lips and the type of ears, not to mention the precise shade of the eyes and estimated number of hairs in the eyebrows, I immediately forget every detail and picture the character as looking like I’d expect a person to look who does whatever the character does and thinks the way the character thinks.

In the end it is probably more important to give minor characters some life, let them say or do a little something, rather than depending on physical descriptions. Give them some juice, like a real potato, in other words, instead of a soulless lump of plastic.

Halfway Home

Today, when I finished the latest scene in the new novel, appended it to my master file and clicked on “word count” I was pleased to see we’d surpassed the magic 50,000 mark.

After 50,000 words it’s all downhill. Mary and I have only once approached 100,000 words (in *Two For Joy*) so at 50,000 we’re assuredly more than halfway home. Heck, if we were writing a 1950’s noir we’d be all but done!

Part of the reason we write short novels may simply be our limited time. Mostly, though, we prefer to be concise. I’m a big fan of John D. MacDonald’s brief, fifties crime novels, Simenon’s Maigret series, Michael Moorcock’s Elric books.

Modern novels I read as often as not seem bloated. Character descriptions are twice as long as I can remember, scenes don’t know when to quit, conversations drag on and on. Even those books which mow the reader down with a machine gun barrage of page long chapters can have too darn many of the things. For my taste at any rate.

It’s like my preferences in music. There’s nothing wrong with a song less than two minutes. That’s why I love the Ramones. Say what you have to say then stop. •

Eric’s column is extracted (mostly) from his blog at <http://www.journalscape.com/ericmayer> “The Baseball Player” copyright © 1995 Eric Mayer

Found In Collection

CHRISTOPHER GARCIA

Once in a while, I'll find *something* that is fannish. It's pretty frequent actually, considering the people who have worked here over the years, but it is rare to find a *person* who is fannish. We've got a couple of reformed costumers on our volunteer roll, and a few folks who were into the fan art scene, but there's really not too many fans running around. This is a story of a fannish afternoon that I had no expectation for.

I had been told that there was a visitor coming to take a look at the collection back in the days when our building was at the foot of the giant dirigible hanger on Moffett Field. I was the junior man, only about 25 at the time, so I had to go and give the tour. I had given tours to all sorts of people, including Gordon Moore of Intel, my dear pal and astronomer Cliff Stoll, and the Crown Prince of Tonga. I figured this would just be another tour. I was given a name, Jen Kaltman (or maybe Kaltmen or Keltman, Caltmen...not 100% sure, this was 5 or 6 years ago) and I had been told she was from the south. I got there early, turned on the lights and started straightening a few things. She arrived around 12:35, 25 minutes early.

"Is this the Computer History Center?" she asked in a New York accent.

"Yeah, you Jen?"

"I sure am."

She was dressed interestingly. She had a t-shirt with a piece I know I recognized and a jacket from one of the lesser Hard Rock Cafes. I started touring her around, showing her the various interesting machines, and when we got to the Sun-1, she stopped.

"You don't happen to know Janice Gelb, do you?"

At that point, I didn't know Janice well, I mean I had met her once or twice, I think, but I knew the name.

"I've seen her someplace, she might have come for a tour...or maybe BayCon."

At that, she seemed interested.

"BayCon? That's the big con around here, right?"

"Yeah, good con. I've been going off and on since it started."

At that, the conversation started. I kept touring her, but we kept talking about various fans. She mentioned names like the Lynchs, Big Hearted Howard and Sharon Sbarsky, while I talked about the old timers I have met over the years like Art Widner, Forry and Dave Kyle. It was a wonderful conversation, and the strangest things would send it off into a narrow corner of fannish existence. I pointed out that we had a copy of *Warhoon* in the room (I hadn't, and still haven't, read it yet, and I'm still not sure why we have it) and she went off on how Richard Bergeron engulfed fandom in that darkest of feuds. She mentioned some of the art by folks like Ed Emsch, and I pointed out that the most famous computer cover, the *Astounding* that Emsch did in the late 1950s, had the tragic flaw that it had three tape reels that seemed to feed from one to another.

Fans love our museum, and at that point you could get close enough to the machines to touch them. Jen and I took what would have been a forty-five minute tour and turned it into more than an hour and a half. She then offered to take me out to lunch, which we did and it was wonderful. I wasn't as deeply back into fandom as I would be just a year later (when I discovered that I could get cons around the country to let me speak on panels) and considerably before I jumped my fanac up to include regularly writing for zines like *Nth Degree* and later my own stuff. She knew a lot more about fandom's current running than I did, though we both had a solid grounding in the history of fandom. It's always nice to have a fan around to chat to, especially when you're not as in on the game as you'd like to be.

Sadly, I've never run into Jen again. If she had come just a year or two later, that tour would probably still be going on! •

Everybody's Free (To Do Fanac)

PETER SULLIVAN

after the many other satires of the Mary Schmich / Kurt Vonnegut / Baz Luhrmann original

(This might have been a more timely pastiche of "The Sunscreen Song" if I had written it eight years earlier, but never mind.)

Ladies and Gentlemen of the class of Corflu 2006.

Do Fanac.

If I could offer you only one tip for a non-mundane life, fanac would be it.

The long-term benefits of fanac have been proved by generations of fen, whereas the rest of my advice has no basis more reliable than my own meandering experience.

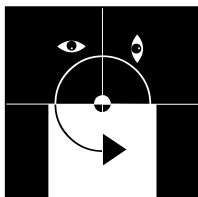
I will dispense this advice now.

Enjoy the power and beauty of your fanzine. Oh never mind, you will never understand the power and the beauty of your fanzine until it has folded. But trust me, in twenty years, you will look at your back issues and recall in a way you can't grasp now, how much fanac lay before you and how fabulous your layout really looked. Your margins are not as fat as you imagine.

Don't worry about the next issue - or worry, but know that worrying is as effective as trying to decipher an Arnie Katz faan fiction story by matching it to reality. The real troubles in your fanzine are apt to be things that never crossed your worried mind. The kind that blindsides you just as you are about to start the photocopier.

Publish one thing every issue that scares you.

Spellcheck.



Don't be reckless with other peoples' LoCs; don't put up with people who are reckless with yours.

Collate.

Do not try to race issue numbers with *Vegas Fandom Weekly*. Sometimes you're behind, sometimes you're ahead. The race is long, and in the end it's only with Chris Garcia.

Remember good reviews you receive, forget the bad ones. If you succeed in doing this, tell me how.

Keep your old fanzines; throw away your old fan-feud circular letters.

Staple.

Don't feel guilty if you don't know what to publish in your fanzine. The most interesting people I know didn't know at 22 what they wanted to publish, some of the most interesting 40-year-olds I know still don't.

Eat plenty of crottled greeps.

Be kind to your typing fingers, you'll miss them when they're gone.

Maybe you'll co-edit, maybe you won't. Maybe you'll have regular columnists, maybe you won't. Maybe you'll gafiate at issue 10, maybe you'll do sercon with Ted White in your 50th annish.

Whatever you do, don't congratulate yourself too much or berate yourself either. Your choices are half chance; so are everybody else's.

Enjoy your mimeograph.

Use it every way you can, don't be afraid of it or what other people think of it. It's the greatest instrument you'll ever own.

(continued on page 14)

Epistles

LETTERCOLUMN

CHRIS GARCIA

A newish look, but still with the flavour of the original. I love the little inset photo of the LINC computer with Wes Clark demo-ing it that you used with "Found In Collection." He's been here a few times and I'm sure he'll get a kick out of it when I forward it to him.

The new masthead is great. I really love the old-timey feel you play with.

The latest eclipse that we could see in NorCal happened to coincide with my break-up series of fights with Gen. We took a pause and the last thing we did as a couple at that point was take The Little One out and show her the eclipse. That was an interesting night. I had the break-up, the Sox won the Series, and the moon went darkish. Can't say it wasn't eventful. When we got back together, we decreed that any time there is an eclipse, we shall not be in the same space. The same goes for anytime the Sox are in the Series, though I don't think we have to worry much about that.

I am now on the hunt for *Desert Island Eric!* It will be added to the Christopher J. Garcia Collection, soon to be retitled the Chriseonian Institution. Goat is delightful. I say this as a guy whose Mexican Granma used to make Goat Tacos all the time. It's delicious! It takes a while to properly cook it, and it can be very stringy, but it's darn tootin' tasty. I'll also point out that my total received funds for selling writing is somewhere around \$200.00 US. For editing, it's about the same, and that includes a year of editing a General Interest Magazine that I had a stake (10%) in that never seemed to sell any issues. Such were the go-go 90s.

Wow! David Mattingly! Crays don't look like computers, that much is true, and still, to this day, people think that a computer thinking equates a tape drive spinning. I spend a lot of my day cleaning those beasts and I still wonder where the punch cards go in on the old Crays!

You know, my constant investigation into the strange things I find does get me into Hot Water once in a while...usually when I'm obsessed with something right around the end of a big project.

I admit it: I love a good teen read. I've read

a lot of teen magazines, and not just for Lindsey Lohan photos! I was a Creative Writing major with an emphasis on Children's Lit and especially Young Adult. I read a lot of teen fiction, some of which can be really good and a lot of which is a tonne of fun. Mixing in Ghost stories with Romances is as old as the oldest Romance Mags, which date back quite a ways. There was always at least one ghost story in with the weepers and the like.

Having visited Vegas fandom this weekend, I can honestly say that even though I have a large clan of fans that I can hang with, there's nothing like Vegas fandom when it comes to hospitality and fun. Just a great group of people. You should move to Vegas, enjoy the dry climate and cheap food! I may even join ya. It does seem that all fans like to chat about their bad health. Hell, Harry Warner Jr. made it fashionable back in the day. It's odd being the youngest guy in a room full of elder fen, which is something I've done a lot, because they have excellent stories of surgeries and procedures and I got bupkiss.

Consider yourself lucky – it's a rough way to "join the club."

I do seem to be stuck in the past with the look of CPG, don't I? A little bit of Victorian, a dash of Art Nouveau, with some Art Deco thrown in. In some ways I'm "inspired" by concert posters from the 1960s, which at the time seemed to be pretty retro to me, and still do. I particularly like the posters of Randy Tuten (<http://www.rtuten.com>). I have to admit that my use of Windsor as the typeface for the article headers this time around is a bit of a personal in-joke; it's an homage to the original Whole Earth Catalog. Maybe next issue I'll do it in "punk" format – I'll print everything out and then toss it all on the floor; however it lands, that's the layout •

ERIC MAYER

Your heart palpitations, described more fully here, sound frightening. I'm glad everything checked out OK. My health has always been more or less perfect. Some kind of karmic

trade-off for me being so grossly underweight. I look like I should check into a hospital immediately. So I always laughed in the face of advancing age, until a few years ago. When I was in my forties I got into running. No marathons, but 5k and 10K races. I was strictly average, but for a total non-athlete that was pretty satisfying. I really loved running. Trouble is, when I began to run I discovered I had a bad back. I was, and am, so sedentary I'd never have noticed. I managed to run for quite a few years anyway but finally the back made it impossible and not being able to do something I wanted to do – well, that's when you feel old, although at 55 I'm hardly old. Come to think of it, seeing friends who've lived their lives in a more sensible manner taking early retirement at 55 while I'm doomed to work indefinitely – that makes you feel old too.

Fandom today seems very different from what it was 25 or 30 years ago. I do think the average age of fans has increased. And the activity – fanzine fandom at least – seems more nostalgic. In part, it is me. One of the sad things about life is that things we encounter can only be fresh and new and thrilling once. Even if I could travel back to the early seventies, fandom wouldn't be as exciting because I'd already know what to expect. Then too, back then fanac was my main creative activity. I poured everything into fanzines. Now, of course, my main focus is trying to write fiction. I can't invest as much into fandom and thus cannot get as much out of it. But I have to admit, there seems to be, with *Catchpenny Gazette*, and e-APA and *The Drink Tank* all sharing contributors, a bit of a nascent community/subgroup which is forming now and not merely something out of the past.

I enjoy the work of all your regular contributors, although I admit to feeling kind of comment challenged today. Lack of coffee due to our broken percolator maybe? I'm glad Peter Sullivan read that teen romance magazine so I didn't have to but I wonder, seeing as the article is from the early nineties, whether such magazines are different today, or even exist. I always find Chris Garcia's articles fascinating. It's fun to have the chance, vicariously, to poke around the dusty corners of a museum. And Dave Locke's essay was wonderful for combining humor with that rather profound last paragraph.

One thing I've noticed since coming back to fandom is that zines these days tend to develop more specific "communities" than they used to. By that I mean that most of the zines I read (and that's virtually everything that gets posted at efanazines.com, plus a

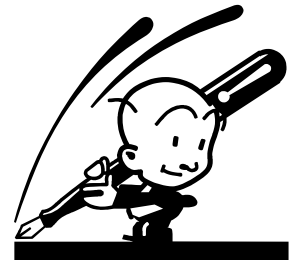
handful of print-only zines) have a certain group of people who contribute articles and/or are letterhacks – and many of them don't appear in other zines. Unless my memory completely fails me (not an impossibility!), this wasn't the case 30 years ago. I don't know whether this is good or bad, just that I've been really aware of it in the last two years. And to some extent it's also the case with CPG, although I think less so than with some other zines. As you note, CPG seems to share contributors and letterhacks with a couple of other zines, making a slightly larger community.

CPG does have some nostalgia involved, if only because the majority of the work that I've published has been reprinted. But that's because I've had the devil of a time getting new material. Since there seem to be fewer fanzine fans these days, the number of those ready, willing, and able to write (or draw) something for them is correspondingly smaller, and there is, it seems, a greater demand on their output.

Like you, I wonder about more current teen romance magazines, and if there were any different than they were 15 years ago. Unfortunately when I asked Peter to check out a current version of the magazine he'd read, he informed me that it was no longer being published. And I didn't quite have the testicular fortitude to ask him to read any others. •

LLOYD PENNEY

I am not surprised that most people do not have the faintest clue about astronomy. The pretty lights come on at night, and that's all they know. They probably ask when Niagara Falls gets turned off at night, too. Yvonne and I belong to the Canadian Space Society and the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, and we have some connections with the Royal Canadian Institute for the Advancement of Science. Yvonne also belongs to The Mars Society and The Planetary Society. Not every lecturer is a good one, but we do go to a number of lectures and presentations. I met Marc Garneau at one of those lectures, and just a couple of weeks ago, we caught an appearance by Buzz Aldrin. Yvonne's been to a number of space conferences, and she has some impressive ex-



periences.

I remember *Galileo* magazine, and I might have an issue or two in my collection. I remember thinking this should be a science magazine with that name, not a science fiction magazine. Still, the contents were wondrous to read and enjoy.

LoCs...stupidity is in, and smarts are out. I remember kids in my high school who could barely read, so I'm not too surprised it still happens today. Schools, and universities too, are too interested in churning out graduates, rather than actually teach.

I dug up that box of pulps I mentioned in my LoC, and there's more treasure in that box than I remembered. There is the run of *The Original Science Fiction Stories*, incomplete, I'll admit, from July 1956 to May 1960, plus there's also an incomplete run of *Galaxy* from June 1961 to August 1965, the June 1959 issue of *Nebula Science Fiction*, and two issues of a magazine called *Gamma*. I must make the time to read them...the most common name on the spines is Willy Ley. So much to read, and so little time.

Arnie Katz's zine must give everyone the impression that Vegas is the true party town, especially for its fandom. I think that's why some of the Vegrants move away...they need the rest. When I first got a grasp of fanzine fandom and what was going on within it, there was a sense of excitement, especially for me being a journalism grad, interested in publishing. When I made inquiries, I was basically told it was a closed shop. I have been as encouraging as I can to bring newer people into this happy asylum, and many of them now run cons here. I am hopeful that as I age, I will have cons to go to, parties to attend, and pretty girls to flirt with. I've got that now; I just want to make sure I can enjoy that 20 years from now! Ulterior motives? I've got a million of 'em! We've had our day? Well, sure, but who's to say we won't have more of them? I want fond memories to reminisce with, but I'm still making those memories. Old does not mean dead.

I sometimes wish I still had the science fiction magazines I read in the late 1960s to read again. I regularly bought Galaxy, F&SF, Amazing, Fantastic, and If at the local drugstore. They probably weren't as "great" as the classic pulps, but I probably waited as eagerly for them each month as people did for those earlier magazines. I suppose Sturgeon's Law applies, but I have fond memories of reading on lazy summer afternoons, getting lost inside the pages of those publications. •

PETER SULLIVAN

I am having real difficulty coming up with a proper letter of comment on *Catchpenny Gazette* 11. I mean, it's not as if I haven't tried, he whimpered pathetically. I read the thing when it first came out, and have re-read it a couple of times since with the intent of making notes, but each time I end up with a blank sheet of paper. It's not the quality of the material – most of the articles are excellent – but I just can't seem to find any comment hooks to hang on to.

Take Dave Locke's "Eclipse" article. I really can't think of anything useful to add on the subject of Eclipses. The only one I've ever even really been involved in was the big eclipse in 1999. And I missed much of that, as I was at work that day, and the sun was the opposite side of the building to me. Although I did get a good view of other people in the courtyard watching it with their special "eclipse glasses" (either bought or a newspaper freebie). As I was in a location where there was only a very partial occlusion, I didn't feel too hard done by – the TV news that night and the next day's newspapers had far better pictures than anything I could have seen with my own eyes.

Eric's material is interesting as always, but likewise difficult to comment on. Fannish writing is a distinctly slippery thing to get to grips with, as the "house style" is so different to any other kind of writing. I would consider myself, like Eric, a journeyman fan writer, but unlike him, probably not any better at professional stuff either. I think I'm better at short distances – a fanzine article or letter of comment – rather than the hard slog required for even a proper-length short story. The idea of writing a novel - as in Chris Garcia's foray into NaNoWriMo (National Novel Writing Month) would fill me with The Fear.

Chris Garcia's "Found in Collection" piece was, as always, interesting. I gather that the Computer Museum got a fairly large donation from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation recently, so hopefully there will be lots of new, old kit (if you see what I mean) coming Chris's way soon. You see – another comment that has very little to do with the underlying article, and another example of how difficult I am finding it to find any comment hooks to LoC on this issue.

That Peter Sullivan chappie writes quite well – a bit of a journeyman writer, however. Maybe you ought to try to get some more pieces out of him.

The issue number battle between *Vegas Fandom Weekly* and *The Drink Tank* is fascinating to watch from a distance – sorta like

a WWF death-match, a reference that both Arnie and Chris can be expected to grok. Actually, with Chris taking a month off to write a novel and Arnie coming up to his first annish, anything could happen from here.

Anyway, that's enough for now. Maybe next time I'll send you a letter of comment, or something.

Rectangular pieces of paper with either portraits of dead U.S. Presidents or reigning British monarchs can easily be sent in lieu of LoCs. •

RUTH DAVIDSON

Dave Locke's "Eclipse" story was great. Next time I'm at B&N, I'm going to see if they have the Griffith Observatory. If it's as spiffy as it sounds I may get a subscription.

Eric Mayer's talking of dreams reminds me of how I often hope to have normal dreams. Freud would have a field day with some of mine and probably lock me up for some of them.

All the things you're not supposed to be able to do in dreams, I've done. Reading (music and words), sweating, feeling pain (if you can feel pleasure in a dream why not pain?). Twice I dreamt I was male, and one of those was where I – wait, never mind.

I'll dream in color and in black & white (though those tend to be the scary dreams or, when I was a kid, night terrors – those are still scary when I think about them – which I



remember).

I've had some that have come true, (more than getting ready for work in the morning and waking up thinking "Damn I still have to get up" but at least you know what you're going to wear) but one that has *not*, and I pray will not, is the one - with everything in shades of red - of China invading the West Coast of America. It disturbs me greatly, because a friend started telling me about a weird dream and suddenly he was describing my dream (which I hadn't told him). Then my brother recently mentioned reading about some other folk dreaming about it. Then I told him about mine and he was like NO WAY!

Ya'll probably think I'm crazy and paranoid now, but hey, that's all right. As long as it never happens...

So yeah, normal dreams are good.

Regarding Chris's comments on sleeping habits. Me? I have to sleep in two hour increments or it's no good. 4 hours sleep is better than 5 for me. If I take a nap, rarely do short ones do anything. It's gotta be two hours. It's highly annoying, especially if I oversleep by an hour and I end up being sleepy all day. Erk.

David Burton, are you sure that fannish group is too sercon for you? Maybe they do other fannish stuff like movie outings or social get togethers. I also think that embracing fanlings, fringefans, and neofans is an important part of getting local fanac. You never know when you'll find a fan in the making. I think that's part of Vegas' success in the active fannish scene. We have some pretty spiffy neofans who started out as fanlings or fringefans.

And don't worry too much about traditional fanzine fandom dying. The face is just changing. Young fans instead create fansites which have much of the same kind of content that a traditional fanzine has.

Old fans often make me feel quite young. I'm only 26 and many of the people I am interacting with are old enough to be my parent or grandparent. After reading about your joining the old fans, I think I'll enjoy "being left out."

I'm just a fakefan - any group that wants to talk about science fiction, even marginally, is too sercon for me!

I suppose there are fan sites that approximate fanzines, but I've haven't run across many of them. And those I have seem to be more sercon than I'm interested in. •

Barking Spiders

DAVID BURTON

DaveCon 2005

In late October I had the pleasure of having lunch with my old fan friend and CPG stalwart, Dave Locke. Dave and I have been trying to arrange a get-together ever since I attended my last convention (Midwestcon in 2004); plans kept getting made only to be changed (largely my fault) and he finally hit on the bright idea of literally meeting me half-way between Lawrence and Cincinnati.

The Mid-Town Diner in New Point (or Newpoint – they can't seem to decide exactly how they want to spell it), Indiana will probably never be the same. Dave and I had met face-to-face only once before, at Midwestcon, and we hardly recognized each other; strangely enough it was mostly a matter of hair. Dave now sports my former “do” -- hair about ¼ inch long, while after 10 years of being nearly scalped I seem to be reverting to my younger days, and am letting my hair grow. We finally did recognize each other, though, most likely due to our Sensitive Fannish Faces. In spite of his heart attack and related health problems of nearly a year ago, Dave looked very good – he's dropped some weight (I think I must have picked it up somehow) and otherwise was just as I remembered him.

The diner, which didn't appear to have changed much since the 20s (and I'm not sure whether I mean the 1820s or 1920s), was surprisingly busy, and the food was good and served in extra large portions at very reasonable prices. I don't know exactly what it was that Dave ordered (there seemed to be something from every known food group on his plate, all piled together), but there was enough of it to feed the citizens of many third-world countries, with some to spare.

I have to admit that I was a little surprised when, after lunch, Dave said he had to go out to the car and get his medicines. Fortunately, a troop of Boy Scouts happened to be passing by, and Dave enlisted their aid of getting his pills out of the U-Haul trailer hitched to his car – it was really more than one person could handle comfortably. As the group struggled gamely to get the medicines into the diner, I overheard

the man at the next table, apparently the town pharmacist, exclaim that he wished he stocked that much in *his* store. There was a slight 20 or 30 minute lull in the conversation as Dave tried valiantly to swallow 43 pills, one at a time. Our waitress, apparently tired of standing by with an extra large pitcher of water and refilling his glass in response to Dave's cries of “More water! More water!” called the volunteer fire department, and in short order they arrived. Once they stuck a fire hose in Dave's mouth, well, that extra volume of water did the trick, and as soon as the water stopped spewing out of Dave's nose and ears (and maybe other orifices as well; I didn't ask) we resumed our conversation.

All too soon it was time to leave. We knew it was time to leave because they closed the diner on us. As we noticed the waitresses and cooks sauntering toward us with crowbars in hand to pry us out of our seats, we reluctantly decided it was indeed time to call it a day. Never let it be said that Dave and I can't take a hint. After a brief tussle over who would pay the bill (I really have to start working out – in my prime it would have taken me only 5 or 10 minutes to beat the snot out of someone ten years older than myself, with a pacemaker to boot). As we left the Mid-Town, I noticed that someone had brought in a BobCat and was trying to lift the ashtray off of our table with it. Ironic, since with our respective heart problems Dave and I are both “cutting back” on our smoking.

As we headed to our cars, we talked about doing it again, and making it a somewhat regular event. And possibly even turning it into a small regional convention. That's right, DaveCon II will be held in New Point (or Newpoint) Indiana on Saturday, October 28 2006 from 11am to 2pm at the sumptuous Mid-Town Diner. Memberships are a paltry \$25 in advance, and you'll want to book early to get the best table. •



Everybody's Free (To Do Fanac)

continued from page 9

Filk.

Even if you have nowhere to do it but your own bathroom.

Read the directions for your Desktop Publishing software even if you don't follow them.

Do not read articles on layout, they will only make you feel ugly.

Get to know your First Fandom friends. You never know when they'll be gone for good.

Be nice to your co-editors. They are your best link to your past and the people most likely to stick with you in the future. Understand that fan editors come and go. But a precious few, who should hold on.

Work hard to bridge the gaps in geography and lifestyle, for as the older you get, the more you need the people you knew when you were a neo-fan.

Publish in APA-Q once, but leave before it makes you hard. Publish in APA-L once, but leave before it makes you soft.

Travel. Especially to conventions.

Accept certain inalienable truths: toner prices will rise, fan club committees will be fuggheads, you too will get old and when you do, you'll fantasize that when you were young, toner prices were reasonable, fan club committees were noble and neo-fans respected their elders. Respect your elders.

Don't expect anyone else to support you pubbing your ish. Maybe you can do a midnight requisition on the copier at work, maybe you'll have a wealthy "angel" but you'll never know when either one will run out.

Don't mess too much with your layout or by the time you're forty, it will look eighty-five.

Be careful whose interpretation of fan history you buy, but be patient with those who supply it. Fan history is a form of nostalgia. Writing it is a way of wishing the past from the disposal, wiping it off, painting over the ugly parts and recycling for more than it's worth.

But trust me on the fanac.



When the going gets tough, stay cool