

HUNGA



Special Delivery
TAFF Issue

CHUNGA

Greetings from the democratic *polis* of *Chunga 3*, where, it's true, the hierodule doesn't get to vote, but, boy, the place sure looks great, doesn't it? (It's a Rome-Carthage thing...you wouldn't understand.) Produced by Andy Hooper (publisher), Randy Byers (editor), carl juarez (design), and our esteemed contributors, listed below. Available by editorial whim or wistfulness, or, grudgingly, for \$3.50 for a single issue, though we suggest downloading the online edition at eFanzines.com, which is free and only a few clicks away if you have one of those new-fangled webputer thingies. All correspondence should be addressed to 1013 North 36th Street, Seattle WA 98103. Editors: please send three copies of any zine for trade. Email: fanmailaph@aol.com, rbyers@u.washington.edu, and cjuarez@myrealbox.com. This fanzine supports Byers for TAFF.

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Foreign Affairs

An Editorial and Fantasy

Yes, we're back, barely a month since we kicked *Chunga 2* down the rails. When we started the fanzine, we figured that the schedule would fall somewhere between bi-monthly and quarterly, but in practice, it feels as if we've been working constantly since October. Randy and Carl even managed to finish a collection of Randy's work, *Wassamatta U.*, to help make TAFF voters more familiar with what he's done, between this issue of *Chunga* and the last. It's been a long time since a TAFF candidate published 75 pages of fanzine during their race, assuming anyone ever has before.

The TAFF race helped dictate the lopsided schedule — we hope this will be in your hands about one week before voting closes for this year's race. Plus, there is another ballot included in this issue — it's time to vote for the FAAn awards again. Balloting is now open, and will continue until Midnight, April 26th, at Corflu Badger in Madison, Wisconsin. The awards are largely unchanged from 2002, except that I'll be collecting and tallying the ballots instead of Victor Gonzalez, who did a great job last year. Every year, there is a certain amount of dissatisfied muttering about the FAAn awards — more people should vote, there should be more restrictions on voting, the Letterhack award sounds insulting — but no one ever offers any good solution to these problems.

I cling to the same answers I've given for five years: Asking people to make three choices in each category makes bloc-voting difficult to arrange and easy to detect. If it ever happens, I'll take steps to prevent it from happening again. And I maintain that any person able to see the desirability of this rather esoteric set of awards is by definition qualified to offer their choices. Over the four times I've handled the voting, I've received perhaps five total ballots from people I didn't think of as stone fanzine fans, and only one from someone I'd never heard of before. (I also received votes from several dead people, but that's to be expected.) Yes, the system is open to abuse — but so far, no one has chosen to abuse it, much. So don't you start with me.

—Andy



Some say the tragedy of XTC is arch-mindfulness, their musical memories reorganized in time through a filter of pop until in a fit of unfortunate good taste their sensibility was infected by the ringwraith hands of Lennon and McCartney. In fact, on continued reflection their earlier releases essay a certain luddistic fervor. Still, it seemed impossible that they could have broken the library window from the bedroom above to insinuate the incredible suppuration apparatus (discovered in the pantomime factory after the bishop's false anthrax threat) while the constable meantime furtively smoked a cigar above the Burnley School orphanage. Better that they had supplied the castor oil extract that would prove fatal to the Soviet emigre some eight years earlier than violate the two-minute warning while boarding the Berlin shuttle with the high-density datacube purported by the dying courier to have been stolen from the Japanese pharmaceutical concern. After stabilizing and substantial positive reflection with his somewhat wooden sidekick in bars across the width of West Seattle (brought to you by Bottleworks Verbeeldingsreeks Tripel Krullekap and Van den Vern Grand Cru Flemish Ales, Hair of the Dog Adam Hearty Old World Ale and Rose Belgian Tripel Style Ale, Dick's Belgian Triple Style Ale, and Dick's Grand Cru Belgian Style Abbey Ale, 54.6% alcohol total) he foresaw in dreams an inevitable and forthcoming conflagration. His diaries treat the subject via the medium of American football, to wit:

We're here at the Super Bowl, where Mr. Partridge is yelping "God Bless America" with a Union Jack wrapped around him. Somewhere back in the early 1980s, a time-space fracture tumbled us into an alternate reality where XTC is a cautionary fable on the dangers of hyperversatility — dissipating their energies with titanic bouts of stage fright and transubstantiation into novelty projects like the proposed but unrealized *Dukes of Stratosfear*, rather than bringing their wry pop sensibilities into polyrhythmic popularity, and parlaying their fame and adulation into a new cultural awareness of the oppressive tenets of international monetary policy (see *Economists* passim). How sublime to snap back to reality, where Partridge is everywhere — tonight he will perform on the first episode of Jon Singer's new live talk show on the ZBC network, then provide the voice of Spooky the Lint-Trap Gremlin on an episode of Cartoon Network's *Aqua Teen Hunger Force* (while Colin Moulding will remix Shakezilla for the benefit of the World Wildlife Fund). In that alternate reality, towers crumble and elections are jimmied, and XTC lies silent, lo these many years.

And now, as Super Bowl XXXVII is ready to begin, country drag queen sensations the Chintzy Blintz begin to belt out our national anthem, as they famously did during the presidential photo-op at the Blue Lady Karaoke Lounge last August: "Klang Klang Klang went the Klingons!" Let the remixes begin!

Why I Ran For TAFF

by Randy Byers

It's all about the 'boo. But the 'boo begins to resemble a Nordic wyrd, or weregild. Soon you are transformed through lust for the 'boo into a sacrificial goat, and set with limbs bound on the steaming, blood-stained altar of fandom. Now it is no longer "gosh, that was great!" but always "are you saying my piece is crap?" It's all about calling in favors, analyzing constituencies, defending policy, taking a hit for the team. Transcendent beings in the upper fannospheres heave into view. They begin to Pay Attention. They begin, quite naturally, to Make Demands. (Something about a gene-mod, and final edit on the lettercol.)

And then I woke up.

I have been tremendously impressed by the useful institutional information regarding TAFF to be found at the TransAtlantic Fan Fund website.¹ A lot of very smart and experienced people have put down what they know about the history and administration of the fund. It's very calming to read what they've written, because it gives me a sense of the community that surrounds and supports the ritual exchange of ambassadors and drunks that is TAFF. It makes me want to do something useful for the cause, dang it, and just about all I have to offer at this point are some thoughts on the reasons I ran for TAFF. Maybe my tale will help someone in the future with their own decision on why and whether to run.

I had to be talked into running for TAFF, although I did some of the talking myself. In fact, I talked about it behind my own back.

I had already formulated reasons why I *didn't* want to run for TAFF, so I must have given the matter at least that much attention in the past. The reasons? The usual: I was too shy to handle the attention or to put on an entertaining performance for expectant hosts; I was leery of the controversy and back-biting that too frequently hits TAFF delegates; and I didn't want to put up with the demands of fund administration and attendant fund-raising. All in all, TAFF just seemed like more of a headache than it was worth. If I wanted to visit my British friends in the UK — and I did — I'd just do it on my own dime like a civilized person.

Then at Corflu Valentine in Annapolis in February 2002, a small group of dead dogs tricked me into agreeing to run for TAFF. I wrote it up in my conreport in *Floss!* 2, making it the final episode and ending with a denial of any agreement to run. "I will not!" I avowed. When I saw the conreport in print, I realized that I had sent myself a message. If I were truly uninterested in running for TAFF, I would have left the whole silly exchange out of the conreport. Clearly I was pleased by the invitation to run and had to make sure everybody knew about it. It was good egoboo.

That much was apparently transparent. At Jack Bell and Anita Rowland's wedding on the first Saturday of October, Luke McGuff said, "You wouldn't have told that TAFF story in your Corflu report if you didn't want to run."

"You're right," I said. "There's a part of me that wants to run."

"Well, why don't you?"

I explained my qualms.

"You could do like Victor and have a team to handle the various jobs," Luke said. "Jane could handle the money, Andy could do the fund-raising, and I could absorb all the controversy."

"Now we just need somebody to appear on the panels at Eastercon," I said. "Maybe Jae would agree to it. But who would write the trip report?"

"How about Jerry?" said Luke.

He almost made it sound like it could be fun, but the race had been announced two weeks earlier and I had already, in response to encouraging noises from Jae Leslie Adams and Claire Brialey, made a strong statement on an online forum that I would not stand for TAFF, for all the usual reasons. Surely it was too late to retract, even if I could overcome my doubts about the wisdom of running. Yet now that I could admit that there was a part of me that wanted to run, I began to wonder whether I had made the right decision. Perhaps I needed to think about it further.

A week or so later, Andy Hooper dropped by the house for a putatively social visit. The subject of TAFF came up, and I confessed that I was thinking about running despite my reservations. Andy spent the next half an hour exhorting me to run.

¹ The TransAtlantic Fan Fund website:
www.dcs.gla.ac.uk/SF-Archives/Taff/

He argued that my chances of winning were fair to good, since I had made friends in the UK at the last three Corflus and through online activity and publishing in fanzines, was well enough known and liked in West Coast fandom through years of con attendance and general hobnobbing, and, as a co-editor of a high-profile new zine, was in a good position to attract attention amongst other TAFF voters as well. As for my reservations, there would be people to help me out with the tough jobs. Andy volunteered to help with fund-raising, and no doubt others would also lend a hand. I wouldn't have to shoulder the whole burden alone. At that point, Colin Hinz was the only one who had made his intent to run known, and Andy gave me a rousing TAFF-needs-you speech. If we couldn't find a second candidate, there would be no race.²

I said I'd think about it.

I've described my doubts about running for TAFF, but I haven't described my reasons for wanting to run. Well, I've talked about the first reason, which is probably the least admirable, but possibly the most powerful: I enjoyed the egoboo of being considered a legitimate contender. That was the message hidden in plain sight in my Corflu report, and now to have online friends and Luke and Andy telling me I should run only fed the warm

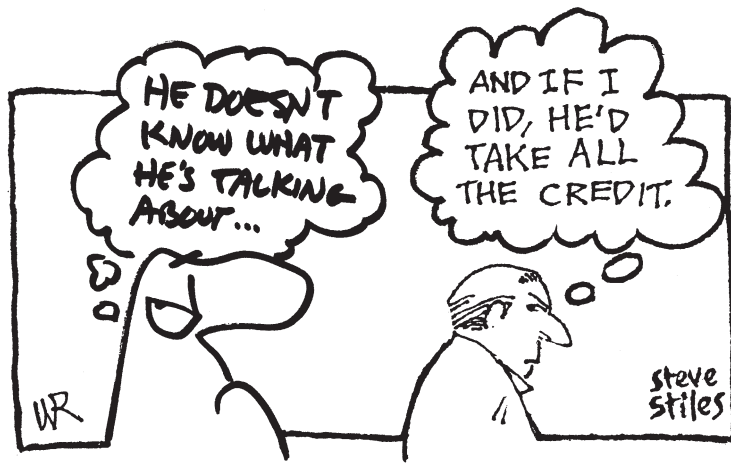
and fuzzy feelings of worthiness. I was finally getting the attention I had always craved from fans I admired.

The second reason was a little more practical: I wanted to visit my friends in the UK. I had been promising to go to a Novacon since the 2000 Corflu in Seattle, but other expenses and priorities kept getting in the way. As soon as I got back from draining my savings account on a three month stay in Micronesia in the spring of 2002, Yvonne Rowse began to pester me about coming to "her" Eastercon in 2003. I wasn't too hopeful about that, but maybe the Novacon later in the year. Then I remembered that my siblings and I had promised to go to France with Mom in the summer of 2003 for her 70th birthday. So much for other travel plans. Maybe TAFF was the only way to get over there after all.

Finally, I had begun to think more seriously about something that Andy wrote in an online forum — something that we published in a modified form in the last issue of *Chunga*. In it, Andy made the point that TAFF is a form of service as much as, or more than, it is an honor to the winner. The aspects of TAFF that everybody is reluctant to take on — the "headaches," as I described them earlier — are a way of paying fandom back, not only

² Suzle Tomkins later told me that Andy had given her a similar working over. She thanked me for sparing her the ordeal of actually sacrificing herself to this particular fannish cause a second time. Don't think you're off the hook that easily, Suzle! Whoever wins this time should knock on your door next time.





for the trip and consequent recognition, but for all the pleasures and communal benefits that fandom confers on its participants. Ghu knows whether it is simply part of the aging process, or whether my late involvement in the fanzine sector has given me new insight into the work that goes into making fandom a good place to hang out, but this message of service has begun to strike home with me.

All of these reasons combined to ultimately outweigh my old doubts, and so I finally decided, with much continuing trepidation, to run.

My knowledge of TAFF has been dominated for a long time by a sense of the controversy, scandal, and debate that swirls around it. The Topic A bloodbath in the mid-'80s was the most extreme and horrific fan feud I've ever personally observed. Abi Frost's misappropriation of funds was another low point, and I've also witnessed too many discussions and even panels on the topic of whether TAFF was dead or otherwise worthy of being buried. Add to that the mean-spirited gossip and sniping about TAFF winners of the recent past, and it wasn't hard for me to develop an extremely negative impression of the fund and its purposes.

That's part of the reason why I was surprised to discover that I wanted to run for TAFF, and why I was doubtful about my sanity when I finally decided to go for it. Had the egoboo gone to my head? The question still hasn't been answered completely. Yet one of the other surprises of the process has been how much fun I've been having in the race, and, best of all, how much I've learned about myself and about fandom.

It helps that the other candidates — Colin Hinz, Michael Lowrey, and Curt Phillips — are all such strong, interesting, and friendly characters. True *fensch* (to coin an awful word), all three. There's a natural inclination to compare oneself to the other candidates, and this has led me to learn more

about them. So now I know that Colin published *Novoid*, an important and graphically inventive zine, in the '90s and tinkers with weird gadgetry, that Orange Mike publishes *Vojo de Vivo* and is heartily engaged in the running (or at least the promotion) of the premier feminist SF convention, WisCon, and that Curt not only participates in Civil War re-enactments but also pursues a deep interest in pulp magazines, not to mention old fanzines. The four of us represent a nice cross-section of modern North American fandom, geographically as well as fannishly — although not, unfortunately, gender-wise.

I've also learned that I've got friends all over the place in fandom. That probably should have been more obvious than it was, but I had never really stopped to think about it. The first step in this discovery was the process of soliciting nominations and having a hard time narrowing the list down to the five I ultimately asked: Jae Leslie Adams, Eve Harvey, Robert Lichtman, Yvonne Rowse, and Ted White. (Thanks again, you lot!) Then, when the race had been announced, old fannish friends popped out of the woodwork to ask whether I had lost my mind and whether I needed any help making sure it got left on the other side of the Atlantic, never to be found again. It was good to be reminded that all these years of dead dog parties had been a waste only of brain cells, not of time. Meanwhile, on the other side of the Atlantic, Lilian Edwards agreed to volunteer her research assistant to mail copies of my TAFF promotional, *Wassamatta U.*, to fans in the UK. Closer to home, it has been very heartening to get so much support from the local fannish crowd, from everyone who has (if I can believe them) voted for me, to folks like Luke, who took on the fanciful role of campaign *Prügelknaben*³ and also organized a TAFF sushi outing; Carl Juarez, who volunteered to design the collection of fanwriting I put out to promote myself; and Jerry Kaufman, who wrote a lovely platform for me that I could not use without looking like a swollen-headed megalomaniac who was furthermore trying to squeeze in a sixth nominator.

I'm still digesting what I've learned about fandom. As I mentioned at the beginning, I was deeply impressed by the TAFF website and the legacy of information and moral support provided there by past generations of fen. Many of my preconceptions about the general negativity and fearsomeness of TAFF were shattered by that website. I've also found myself paying closer attention to some

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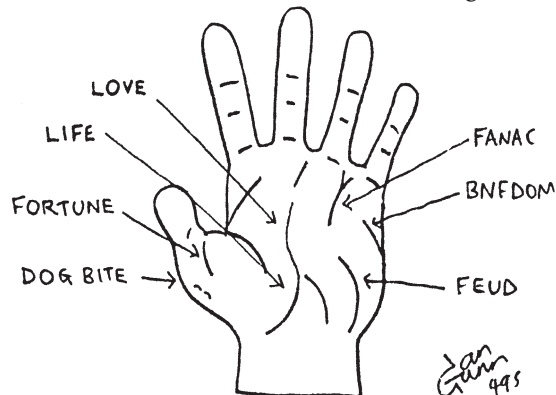
³ Roughly: "whipping boy". A scapegoat.

of the subtler manifestations of fannish maintenance of the fund, such as the people who volunteer to distribute ballots and the people who offer a little extra at the auctions. All the griping, the sniping, the arguments for reform, and the concern that TAFF is going to hell in a handbasket are indications that a lot of fans care deeply about the institution. The fact that it has survived for fifty years, through many different eras of fandom, says something about how important TAFF has been to a lot of different people.

I'm still in the middle of the race as I write this. I don't know whether I will win or lose — and I still have my moments when I'm not sure which outcome I would prefer, although those moments have gotten fewer and farther between. I am putting a lot of effort into my campaign, mostly in the form of published fanac, such as this very last-minute zine (a crazy idea, and thus one of Andy's.) It's obviously too early to say what the longterm effects of my engagement with TAFF will be. But as of now, I feel charged up and transformed. At the very least, my niche within the community has changed — or perhaps it is that my community has gotten larger. It's partly a result of co-editing *Chunga*, too, but more people are aware of me now, and I am aware of more of them. More of *you*. I also feel a hell of a lot less flippant about TAFF than I used to — at least at the moment — and feel a lot more gratitude toward the people who support it and toward the people who have served time for it even at the cost of becoming bitter ex-TAFF administrators. You all have done an amazing thing, keeping this ball rolling for fifty years.

So make sure you vote — for whichever candidate or for Hold Over Funds or No Preference. Send a few bucks to the fund. Think about running yourself next time. Let's keep it rolling for another fifty years.

Now, where did that blood-stained altar get to?



Crème de la crème

Ithot that i was the only one withe guilty pleasure of having cream on my cereal. I got it from my dad when i was about seven. We lived in a boarding house in Syracuse for a short while. It was The Depression & the house rules were that the pitcher of cream on the breakfast table was for *coffee only!* However, my dad wd persistently sneak the coffee cream onto his cereal. He was repeatedly warned about it, & that no doubt was part of the reason we stayed there only a short while. Getting behind on the bill probly had something to do with it as well. When we were in our own apartment & had to buy our own milk, we cdnt afford enuf of it for anything but coffee. Mom guarded the top of the bottle as zealously as the boarding house lady so that i wdnt have to drink skim milk. Occasionally Dad wd sneak some or try to invoke his "rights" as Head of the House or King of the Castle & there wd be a row. I used to dream that when i was out on my own i wd have a whole box of ginger snaps & a whole quart of milk whenever i wantd. I didnt get it bcoz i went right from living with parents to my own family. Military pay then three kids didnt make things much difrom Depression. Once in a while i'd do the shopping & bring home a qt of arfnarf. But the kids had to have it too so it didnt last long. Having heavy whipping cream is to me like something sybaritic out of the Arabian Nights. However, on birthdays & sometimes unbirthdays i'll go hog wild on whipt cream. Just a few bdays ago, Shirley thot she'd cure me of this sinful indulgence, so she made tons of strawberry shortcake & set a whole mixing bowl of whipt cream in front of me. I was up for the chalenj & Ate The Whole Thing. I had some awful heartburn later, but i didnt tell *her*. Now i have non dairy creamer on my cereal all the time. I used to use Mocha Mix bcoz they hired Steve Allen to plug it. Now theyv come out with generic NDC wch is cheaper than either MM or H&H. Most of the people i kno r bloody wimps that have been cowed (xcuse the xpresn) by Mad Ave into putting that abominable white-colord-water on their cereal. If u have a cholesterol probm, just eat less.

—R. Twidner



Now It Can Be Told: Confessions of a Dot-Communist

by Lesley Reece

It was all Kate Schaefer's fault.

There I was, in the last quarter of 1997, newly graduated from the University of Washington, happily ignorant of what I would do next. I was working through a temp agency. I'd turned down a couple of permanent offers because I didn't want to be a career receptionist. I'd applied for Customer Service at Amazon.com Books, but they didn't take me: the other applicants, explained the employment agency, had more degrees than I did. Oh well. Better luck next time.

And then Kate said, "Why don't you call them again?"

I hadn't thought of that.

A week later, I was in an Amazon.com Books Customer Service training class, getting a new name. Our old names were generally over eight characters long, and therefore couldn't be logins. I was "lreece." The guy next to me leaned over and whispered, "Hi, El Reece. I'm pburger." "Hey, Pee-burger," I whispered back. We snickered.

The training lasted a month. Most of it was boring. I already knew how to write business mail, and answer a telephone, and use Unix. Pee-burger and I soon discovered that the T1 connections on our training computers loaded pages much faster than the dialups we'd been used to. As the trainer droned on ("No, no, get back to a command line; this is a modeful editor"), we set up silent contests: stupidest site, ugliest site, funniest site. First one to laugh bought the coffee.

It wasn't all dull. One time, somebody found a spy from another startup going through the dumpster out back. Another time, all the servers went down, and then the fire alarm sounded. The entire company — back then, about 400 of us — shuffled out onto Second Avenue and stood there in the rain. Then Jeff Bezos appeared from someplace and shouted, "Electrical problems in the building! Everybody go home!"

So I did. When I got there, the phone rang. It was my mom, down in Portland. "Are you all

right?" she asked.

The call itself wasn't unusual. Mom frequently gets the sudden idea that I've been kidnapped by white slavers or run over by a truck. I tell her I'm fine, and she feels better. So I said, "Yes, I'm fine."

"Oh good," she said. "Your father and I just saw on the news that all Amazon's servers went down!"

I assured her that the servers hadn't gone down because of white slavers or rogue vehicles, told her I was eating three meals a day, and hung up. Then I stared at the phone. Wait a minute. That was national news? The next day, a french TV crew came to interview some of us. International news! I hid in the restroom.

I'd come to Amazon for the books and the computers. While most of my previous jobs had involved computers, I got to use them only for boring stuff, like spreadsheets and data entry. Worse, at those jobs, books were suspect. One boss told me reading on my lunch break wasn't a good idea, because the other employees already thought I was "stuck up." Another boss saw a copy of Blake's complete poetry on my desk and asked if I were "a religious freak."

But at Amazon, my coworkers started conversations with, "What are you reading?" They were all lit-geeks like me; my cube-mate, for example, cussed people out in Middle English if they hung up on him. True, my new boss was a dickhead — but the right kind of Dickhead, with several zip-locked Ace Doubles in his office.

The customers often whined. But customers do that, and anyway, I didn't always have to answer phone calls. When my phone shift was over, I clamped on my headphones and spent the rest of the day answering email. I recommended books, straightened out orders, and found obscure titles for grateful customers.

I looked forward to going to work. I didn't have to watch the clock or pad my breaks with precious minutes of freedom. I made enough to live on. For the first time in my life, I didn't feel like Bartleby the Scrivener.



I knew it couldn't last. About six months into my tenure at Amazon CS, the stock market started to go nuts.

At first, the constant news had little effect on me, though I had what I saw as a reasonable stock option package. I'd never owned a single share of any stock; the option package was whipped cream on top of a double-chocolate job.

Some of my coworkers grumbled that they weren't "making enough money" off their packages, but most of them agreed with me. We hardly talked about stock until one day in December 1998, when Amazon shares split three-for-one. "You'd better sit down," said my friend Breese when he came to give me the news.

"Gadzooks," I managed after a couple of minutes. "I can't breathe."

"Me too," he said. "Me too."

I stopped watching the news, and then I stopped watching television altogether, but I couldn't avoid the hype. Nobody wanted to talk about anything else. *Dot-com, dot-com*. I kept hearing, *bang-bang*. It was dead.

Of course, I thought the Internet was the greatest thing ever built (I still do). I thought Internet shopping was the greatest thing anyone ever thought of (I still do). Yet I was a secret pessimist, perhaps the only one within a 50-mile radius of Seattle. Why would I lose faith, just when things had begun to go well? I'd seen hype before, in the music industry. I knew what it meant: the party was almost over, because the Suits were on their way.

They arrived, wearing mostly Izods and Dockers, in 1999. They began investing their heads off. Amazon ran on sales, not advertising, so they didn't visit us. But I knew that if advertising on other sites didn't make the Suits enough money, we'd all be in trouble. What affected the industry would affect Amazon, and therefore me.

I was worried. In 1991, I had worked for a videotape duplication company. We made the music videos you used to see in clothing stores. There'd be two or three videos, and then a brief commercial for jeans or Nikes or something. The advertisers paid the stores, and us, a heck of a lot of money for those commercials, even though there were no statistics on how much the commercials actually affected buying habits. Turned out they didn't make much difference. Oh well. Better luck next time.

Meanwhile, I still loved being at Amazon, so I dug in and did my best to beef up my job skills. I learned HTML, call center management, project management. I got a promotion to Customer Service supervisor, and spent much of my time helping other

people beef up their job skills. I spoke to groups of UW students and groups of recruiters about working at an Internet company. I transferred to management in the Special Order Books department and spent my days talking to small-press publishers.

Then, in February 2001, the Nisqually earthquake turned my office building into a jello mold for a couple of minutes. After that, nothing was really the same. The end-of-quarter results came two weeks later, and I started reformatting my resume. In a month or so, I was out the door with a severance package and three moving boxes full of books.

For the first two months of my vacation, I mostly played video games and surfed the web. On the *Seattle Times* site, I found a comic strip about the "Dot-gone Guy," who'd been fired from several cushy dot-com jobs. The writer wanted ideas emailed to him.

"I know," I wrote. "Why don't you write a strip about a guy who got in early, worked really hard, and came out with a lot of extra job skills and some decent stock option money? That'd be *really* funny!"

I never heard from him.

Now, I'm back at the University of Washington. This time I'm on the administrative staff of the Institute for Nuclear Theory. On my first day, the woman who was training me gave me a long list of things to do. At about 4:30, I went to apologize for not having enough time to finish the last task.

"Oh my God," she said. "That list was for this *week*."

Academic life moves like molasses, but I've learned to appreciate that. I still get to work with smart people — in fact, as nuclear scientists, my new coworkers are probably smarter than the Amazonians. The scientists don't care if I read. They probably wouldn't care if I came to work in a clown suit; they're too busy thinking about the multiverse. But still, they don't care if I read.

A while ago, I bumped into Pee-burger in the Physics and Astronomy coffee bar. He has a new job in the Psychology building next door. He was beaming all over. He'd got married and gained a bunch of weight. I laughed first. He made me buy the coffee.

The UW, like a lot of universities around the country, is in financial peril. So far, however, I'm not too worried. Without hype or advertising, there won't be any Suits. I'm qualified enough to get something elsewhere, but, to borrow *Bartleby's* words, I would prefer not to. Even if something happens to my current position, I've got enough skills to get something else on campus. Thanks to Amazon.

And thanks to Kate.

I was a secret pessimist, perhaps the only one within a 50-mile radius of Seattle. Why would I lose faith, just when things had begun to go well?

Catch of the Day

Fanzine Reviews by Jerry Kaufman

...Fandom, that interconnected community we've always aspired to through our apas, fanzine, email lists, and conventions.

—“Where the neo-fans graze,”
Christina Lake, *Head!* #5

What are fanzines all about? Without ever solving the mystery at the bottom of my own urges to publish, I theorize endlessly. I keep coming back to the feeling Christina expresses in the above quote. Fandom as a whole, and fanzines in particular, seem to be about creating a community. The community is inspired by a common love of something we call by many names: science fiction, fantasy, speculative fiction, scifi. We don't always agree on what it is when we point to it, but that doesn't matter, because it isn't always obviously present in our publications.

Let's look at several zines that have arrived at *Littlebrook* headquarters recently and see if I can discern any efforts to create or sustain this community.

Head! #5 (the exclamation mark is part of the name), edited and largely written by Doug Bell and Christina Lake, started me on this search. Printed on A4 paper, as befits a British fanzine, *Head!* comes with a jolly Brad Foster cover, double columns of large, easily read type with generous margins, simple running heads and article headings, and mainly photographic illustrations. (The exceptions are both illustrations for Gary Wilkinson's article on art, and may be, for all I know, photos of artwork.)

Head!'s a piñata of fun stuff: Gary Wilkinson, in “Medicine Men,” on the inspirational value of Andy Warhol; Christina on the terrors of bicycle accidents—her own; Doug on the beauties of the Basque region—and the politics—in “Pil Pil, I Love You Still” (we in Seattle know all about Mr. Frank Gehry, Doug). Christina gets fannish in “Where the neo-fans graze,” an article that takes off from a panel discussion on “The Fans of the Future” and covers the impact of LiveJournal, the importance of the con report and new fans like Max. (I took the epigrammatic quote at the beginning of this piece, somewhat out of context, from a sen-

tence she wrote about LiveJournal, in fact.)

I find it odd and enlightening that Christina places such importance on the convention report, especially since there are no con reports in this issue of *Head!*. She says, “...Con reports are the staple fare of any good fanzine.... They really do define who is part of fandom; not just the people who pub their ish, but those who are always around at conventions, those in the bar late at night when things get weird, those who run room parties, those who talk on panels.” This helps explain why British fandom produces so many con reports, some of them, like Alison Freebairn's report on the Boston Corflu, innovative and exciting. Very few American zines run reports—when they do, they tend to be straightforward reportage with a few humorous quotations mixed in.

The letter column is one of those high-maintenance affairs that break letters into bits and group the bits by topic. Doug appears to have done the editing, and has written all of the responses. I've always felt that fanzine community-building can take place most intensely in the exchange of opinions and even ideas in the locs, and Doug does a good job of mixing different voices.

Piggybacked with *Head!* is *The Roundabout Zoo* #2, a solo effort from Doug that chronicles his efforts to produce fan writing, lose weight, and drink real ales. Oh, and it does contain a con report, of Microcon—but it's really too brief to do the kind of fan defining that Christina suggests is possible.

From the heartland of America comes *The Knarly Knews* #97, on letter-sized paper. It has a much more elaborate cover by Alan White (an interesting photomontage, I believe), small print and good-sized margins, lots of filler illustrations (nothing particularly outstanding except a Brad Foster and a Marc Schirmeister), and, except for the lettercolumn, plain functional headings.

Henry Welch, the editor, is “Knarley,” and true to the zine's name, his adventures and those of his family, are the chief subject of each issue. The editorial here covers much the same topics as recent

previous issues: Henry's teaching experiences, his other duties as a teacher, his remodeling projects, his hockey coaching and playing, his cats' health and his family's travels. This is material that's much more interesting if you know Henry or his wife Letha (who is *TKK's* Layout Editor). Presumably, after you've read a few issues you'll feel like you do know them—or you'll skim lightly over all this detail. (I certainly skim quite a bit, especially the in-depth reports on where and how much his cats have vomited.)

In addition, there's the regular feature, "Sue's Sites," in which Sue Welch reports on her travels; this issue she talks about a tea plantation in Uganda. Rodney Leighton contributes some reflections on reading *Challenger* and other fanzines, concentrating on why he doesn't read fanzines cover to cover. It's no surprise that his justification is that he's not interested in every topic *Challenger* covers; this seems both reasonable and obvious. E.B. Frohvet hands in a couple of reviews of books from 1998 and 1999. They're brief, only two paragraphs each (Letha has to fill half the page with a drawing of a hiker and a tree spirit in a dense forest), but they're punchy, and I found myself wanting to see what E.B. would have to say about other, more recent books.

Unlike *Head!*'s letter column, "InterLOCutions" prints each letter in whole, not breaking letters apart into themes. Henry may not even cut anything from the letters, an assumption I make because the letters come complete with salutations and signoffs. The loccers freely comment not only on previous contributions but also extensively on letters in previous issues, which certainly helps to build a community. Henry also includes reviews of fanzines he's received since the previous *TKK*. These are pretty utilitarian, but have just enough information to tell people if they'd like to check out the zines listed.

Finally, let's look at something I wouldn't call a fanzine at all, *Nth Degree* #4. Subtitled *The Fiction and Fandom 'Zine*, *Nth Degree* presents itself as a magazine I would expect to see on a newsstand, with a glossy four-color cover with its name and date in a banner across the top and its contents listed down the left-hand side, with its short stories and their authors prominently displayed. Inside are an editorial and lengthy staff list on page 2 (with many "contributing editors"); brief con listings and reports, a humor column about

funny Web domain names, three stories (one a continuation of a story from the previous issue), some comic strips and a few poems.

On their website (www.nthzine.com), the staff asks us whether we see *Nth Degree* as a fanzine or a semiprozine. Well, in addition to the points I mentioned above, there's also advertising, possibly enough to pay for the printing bills. *Nth Degree's* publication details state that it's "a free publication and may be distributed by authorized distributors only," which strikes me as a bit vague. You can subscribe for a year's worth of issues (six). But there's no letter column or trade policy. So it would seem this is not available for the usual. On the other hand, we got one issue at ConJose, during the fanzine workshop editor Michael Pederson mentions in his editorial, and the issue under discussion arrived in the mail, in trade for *Littlebrook*.

I would say that rather than helping to create and sustain the fannish community, *Nth Degree* isn't yet aware of the community and has different intentions from most fanzines I see. It strikes me as a baby prozine, with earnest and well-intentioned fiction, mostly not to my taste. I think it will either grow enough to drop "Fandom" from its subtitle, or continue to discover that a fannish community exists and change to acknowledge it.

The *Knarley Knews*, with 97 issues already out, knows its place, has found its level and will stay there. Like many long-running titles, it has created its own community and will usually have something of interest. But I like *Head!* best of the three. It has more variety, better writing, and a liveliness that I enjoy.

Fanzines discussed:

Head! #5, edited by Doug Bell and Christina Lake, 12 Hatherley Road, Bishopston, Bristol BS7 8QA, United Kingdom, available for the usual.

The Roundabout Zoo #2, written/edited by Doug Bell, same address as above.

The Knarley Knews #97, edited by Henry and Letha Welch, 1525 16th Avenue, Grafton, WI 53024-2017, USA, or on the 'Net at www.msoe.edu/~welch/tkk.html, available for the usual or \$1.50.

Nth Degree #4, edited by Michael Pederson, et al, 77 Algrace Boulevard, Stafford, VA 22556, available for \$10 subscription or free at a convention near you. They may also trade for other zines. Contact them at the above address or at www.nthzine.com to inquire or subscribe.



Thank You Gonad Factor

by Andy Hooper

January 15th, 2003

Dear Lilian,
Now that we seem mutually bent on taking over the fanzine world through force of page count, I thought I might take time to write you in regard to some things I'm pondering for our special lightning-fast TAFF issue of *Chunga*. I'm not really sure why I've chosen to send these thoughts to you in particular, although it is certainly understandable you've made a serious impression on me lately. As I wrote a check to temporarily cover the appalling cost of printing the American copies of *Floss* #3, it occurred to me that you've become something of a Seattle fan despite only threatening to move here. Of course, I made such threats for almost seven years before I followed through on them....

There is also the possibility that I regard you as the sexiest ex-TAFF administrator I know of, and that there's some kind of creepy backhand effort at intimacy in writing you a lengthy screed about sex and TAFF. Fans certainly have found less constructive ways of sublimating their attractions than this, so I'll press on. Besides, I've never been able to separate you from the issues of sex and TAFF since the first conversation I can recall having on the subject of gender bias in TAFF voting. In some smoke-filled and testosterone-poisoned room at a 1990s Corflu, someone asserted that as you and Christina Lake ran on the same ticket, the prospect of *two* female delegates must have presented an insurmountable attraction for American male voters.

In their attenuated state of responsibility, numerous speakers took up the banner of the newly-christened "Gonad Factor" to express scenarios regarding the barter of sexual favors for TAFF votes, and generally laughed themselves sick at the prospect. I think I got all serious and argued that women simply made up something close to half the population in contemporary fandom, and that in the part of fandom that *mattered*, to us at least, there were actually more interesting female fan-writers around than there were men. And people I rather respected hooted me down. They said fandom was still largely composed of sexually desperate men, that fan writers regularly made fools of themselves for love, and that on the whole, the prospect of even

getting to talk to an attractive foreign woman was enough to skew most fans' TAFF voting behavior. And I thought about the many correspondences and exchanges of passionate interest and affection that I have been privy to through access to collections of fanzines, apas, and letters, and I said, it's still more complicated than that.

But TAFF went on, and we voted for Ulrika, and Sue, and Maureen, and Velma Bowen, and it became hard to refute the ongoing presumption that the Gonad Factor was at work in some regard (although I preferred to assume that a de facto old girls club had taken over the fund and naturally voted for one another in each race). But the final piece of evidence that ought to prove that TAFF is hopelessly compromised by the sexual proclivities of the electorate is the recent victory of Tobes Valois, a candidate almost universally-regarded as eye-candy by those who care to comment on him. Tobes is also a man who enjoys life whole-heartedly, and apparently he had a number of memorable experiences on his recent trip to North America. He would have to reveal the particulars himself, but I'll observe that Tobes' trip should give hope to all fans who harbor some hope that TAFF might function as a kind of transcontinental matchmaking agency—or failing that, an escort service for people with relatively low expectations.

Now, the fact that I know this, while I've never had the pleasure of meeting Tobes in person, means that quite a few other people also know. Someone told me, after all. I imagine it would only waste time if I mentioned the names of the people involved, or the scouting organization to which they belong, but I can't escape the sense that fandom would probably applaud and act in a similar manner if the opportunity arose. Most people have at least some secret thrill, a passion that gives them a rush of adrenaline, and which they would rather not be called upon to detail or explain except to someone who shares that secret passion. And finding people with whom you can share these passions, these thrills—is one of the goals behind social activities like fandom. Expecting that these private pursuits will play no part in TAFF, or trying to make people feel bad because it does, strikes me as cruel and stupid in equal measure. At this point

I'm ready to surrender, and assume that sexual attraction is by far the most overwhelming factor in any TAFF race, including the current one.

At a recent party, someone commented to me that because the four candidates in the race are male, the Gonad Factor probably won't play much of a part in the current election. I replied that any time you have a slate of candidates that are all one sex, the Gonad Factor may have an even more byzantine and tortuous role to play. If the Gonad Factor truly rules all, the women, gay men, closeted bisexuals, and transgendered correspondents of Britain are confronted with a particularly toothsome choice in my co-editor Randy Byers, certainly the most physically beautiful male TAFF candidate since D. West. Of course, the dark truth in Randy's life is that while he's thoughtful, soulful, sweet-natured, and utterly scrummy in almost every regard, it can be a daunting challenge to charm him out of his narrow Levis. Still, he's the only potential delegate that positively won't appear with a partner in tow, so if you're an optimist, I guess he's the candidate for you.

Colin Hinz, lightly-tortured artist of Ontario, is only slightly less dishy than Byers, but even more likely to be seduced by curious schools of thought and the cleavage of understanding Englishwomen. Colin's fanzine credentials are almost certainly the best of any of the four candidates, while I have an obvious bias for Byers. Colin also lives in the city where this year's Worldcon will take place, which puts him in good position to do fund raising there if he wins, etc.

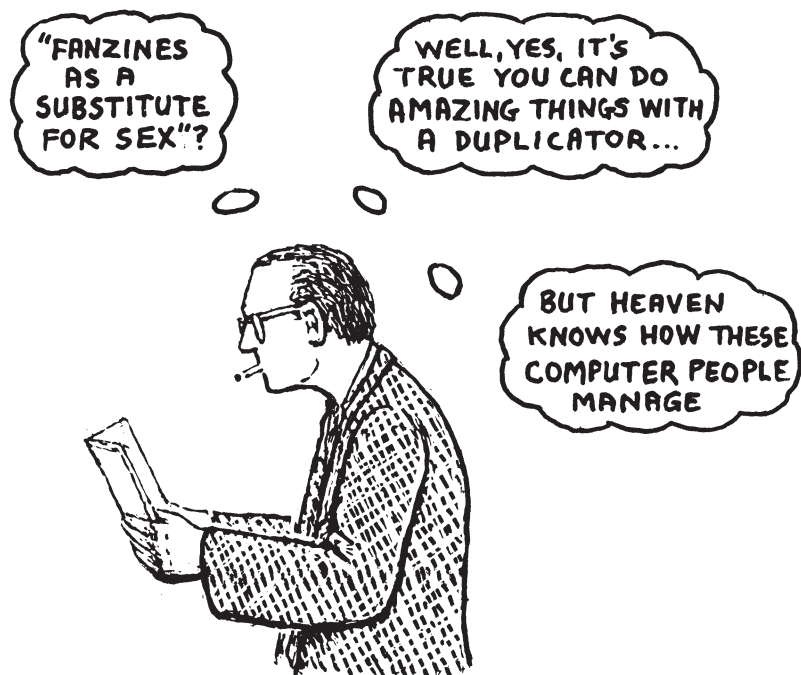
You might be quick to assume that the legendary "Orange" Mike Lowrey is fannishly appealing in many ways, but that no one is hot for his body. As Mike is a frequently bearded and somewhat pear-shaped man, the idea may suggest jokes, particularly to many British fans who feel comfortable making fun of fat Americans. Mike himself is not exactly sanguine in regard to what he might characterize as "sleaze" in his online posts. But Mr. Lowrey also hails from an amazingly complicated fan group, with crossover into pagan, S&M, costuming, creative anachronism, mystery, and media circles. And he has been a part of this wild roundelay for more than 20 years now. I would find it hard to imagine that Mike has no intimate contacts in British fandom, people with whom he has shared something that we would think of as private, or embarrassing, or at least sticky. He's just not especially forthcoming on the subject. He's also been happily married for many years, which makes him either more or less attractive depending on your attitude.

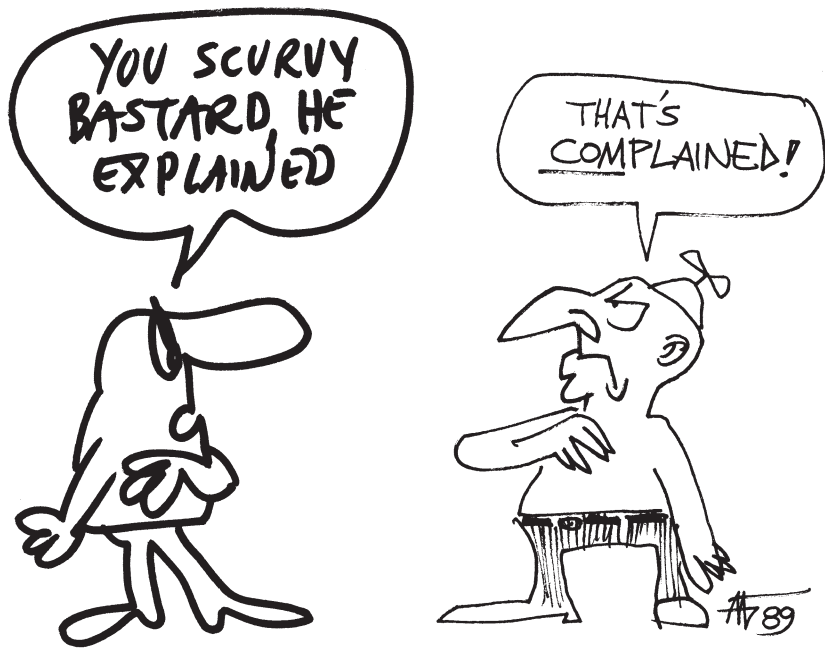
The only candidate in this race who would probably prefer the "gonad factor" to lie dormant is Curt

Phillips. Curt is, if I may presume to characterize him thus, a somewhat more conservative personality than the other three, married, and presumably not "available" on even a short-term basis. In fact, I expect Curt to vigorously assert the veracity of this presumption at the first opportunity. Yet, Curt will surely argue with considerable passion about the depth of his feelings toward his friends in fandom on both sides of the Atlantic, and that his heart is as affected by the prospect of a trip to Britain as any of the other three choices.

And it is important to remember that desire, attraction and affection have all exhibited noteworthy powers in fandom that do not always find expression in individual physical intimacies. The most overwhelming example of this in my recent memory was the Seattle Corflu in 2000, when so many female British fans sat flirting with so many American male fans for 72 hours straight. (There were several American women flirting with British and Australian men too, but I think they decided to actually sleep some of the time.) Add in the fact that the British fanzines of the hour seemed to be quite literally dominated by women writers, many of whom doubled as Bad Girls in the "Bad Girls Smoking Room," and it's no wonder that we sat in slack-jawed appreciation for much of the weekend. It was the first convention I'd been to in years that set a tone I'd characterize as "horny." If that was the gestalt we created when stuffed together in a hotel for a rainy weekend in Seattle, how could we doubt that TAFF voters let their hormones make decisions for them? British and American fandom have a crush on each other—can there be any other explanation for the way they fight non-stop, yet never

British and American fandom have a crush on each other—can there be any other explanation for the way they fight non-stop, yet never seem more than an arm's length from one another?





You can't deny that a number of relationships, including marriages, have begun as a result of someone's TAFF trip.

seem more than an arm's length from one another?

In some ways, fandom feels like Junior High School, hiding all our attractions behind imbecile humor, and spreading rumors that someone else is a slut for doing what we wish we could. When the suggestion arises that someone might "sleep their way" to TAFF, all you can be sure of is that they didn't sleep with the person making the suggestion. But I ask you; if someone actually set out to sexually satisfy the TAFF electorate in exchange for their votes, would that really be a less worthy campaign technique than publishing a personal fanzine?

After more than two decades in fandom, I begin to feel that we could do with a lot less judging people by their opinions of Dr. Who and Neil Gaiman, and more discrimination on the basis of who is a good kisser and who doesn't brush their teeth often enough.

There is a certain strain of old high slannish thought that protests this tendency toward the visceral, that recalls fandom as a refuge from the generic imperatives of sex, a place of enlightenment where utilitarian technocracy could drive away the hierarchies and torments of traditional mating ritual. I suspect this is a vision that endures for each fan until their first bathtub full of beer. Whatever ideas bring you into Fandom, whatever your fandom is focused on, you end up staying for the people and the friendships that you make with them. In fact, this is what makes me think that fandom actually has a chance to persist and continue to maintain a coherent history into the distant future. So many fans end up marrying or carrying on long relationships with other fans that we see second-generation fans all the time now, and third-generation fen are not unheard of. You see a certain amount of father-son transmission

in other hobbies and interest groups, but fandom is one of those subcultures that will envelop the whole family if given a chance.

So, voting with the voice of our hormones, and expressing our attraction for foreign crumpet through fan fund contribution, is a fundamental gesture toward self-preservation, as well as indulgence to impulses and ideas that we appear powerless to resist. Sexual attraction is just part of the rich fabric of interaction that can be covered by the simple word "fanac." I feel like the world at large is all too ready to condemn people for satisfying their sexual inspirations, and there is no need for fandom to add to that tide of disapproval—certainly not in defense of some brittle concept of propriety that seems to serve no one very well.

After all we've seen in the past 20 years of TAFF, good and bad, it seems like we can hardly afford to discourage anything that increases people's enthusiasm for participation in the fund. And you can't deny that a number of relationships, including marriages, have begun as a result of someone's TAFF trip. In recent years, many TAFF winners have made their trips with spouses or other partners, which makes a candidate's relationship status a direct issue in their attractiveness to the voters who lie in their potential path. For my part, I'm all for whatever brings enthusiasm into the process. If you get turned on by a supremely artful convention report, let that guide you. If a firm young fetlock is more your taste, don't let me stop you from voting Byers, early and often.

Ah, if only these frank assessments had been in vogue when you and Christina ran back in the 1980s...can you imagine what kind of impact the cover of *Floss #3* might have had in the middle of an ongoing TAFF race? And just how popular you could be in New Orleans with a décolletage like that? Ah, all lost in the intervening years, and borne away on the unceasing tides of time and gin.

So, do write back if you have any insight on how Randy can turn these changing currents of lust into real votes. Time grows short and I'm counting on sending him away for a few weeks so we can have a break from this punishing quarterly schedule. I'm not as young as I once was, and have to devote a proportionally greater energy to achieve the same degree of dissolution that once came virtually without effort. There's not much left over for fund-raising, and even less for electioneering, so I'm counting on Randy's uncanny resemblance to the young V. I. Lenin to excite the loins of British womanhood and carry him to victory. If you've a better idea, I'm eager to hear it.

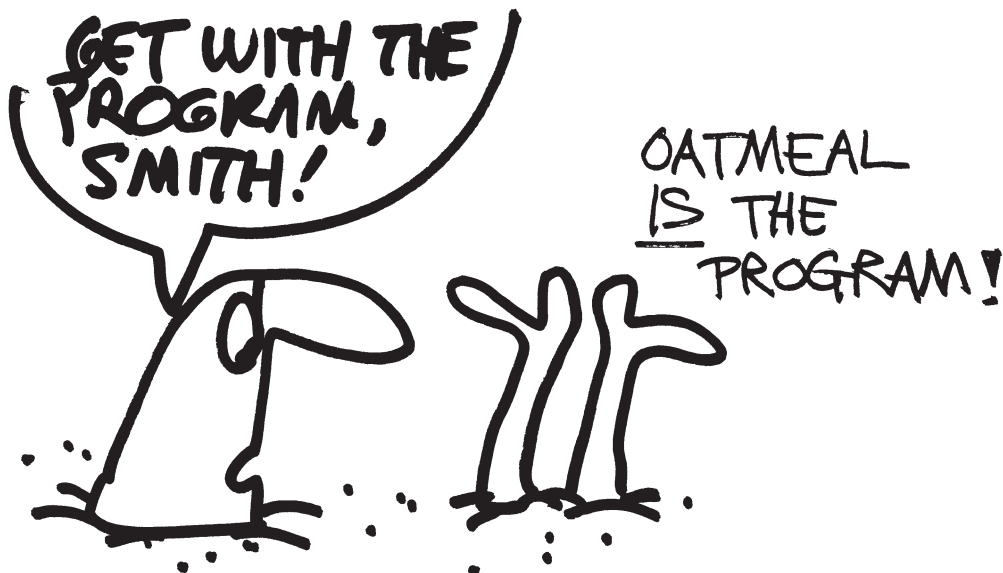
Yours in Roscoe,
A.P. Hooper

Insomnia Cure!

by Luke McGuff

Works for me. I recommend it! Get up, pee, rinse hands, wash face, drink glass of water, go back to bed, turn over, don't look at clock, come up with silly idea for article, giggle, turn over, review why everybody hates my comments, turn over, review embarrassing incidents of past week (embellishing as necessary), turn over, decide to masturbate, realize most reliable fantasy is 28 years old, that doesn't help, turn over, don't look at clock, review embarrassing incidents of last five years, give up, go to consuite, my what an interesting hotel!, the hallways are all narrow and twisted, the lights are dim but glowing, everyone is dressed like the florid decadent ambassador from *Babylon 5*, though not the hair style thank god, elevator is small and old fashioned with only a waist-high gate so you can see the walls moving past, and there are only two buttons — up and down, push down, elevator sloooooooooooooooooowwwwwllllllly moves down, at bottom a regular elevator door falls into place and elevator starts moving forward, which attracts the attention of the gardeners who run after shouting encouragement to escape mad elevator, finally find the door knob, leap out, receive congratulations from gardeners on escape, return to hotel, everybody else goes off to lunch with the aliens, give up on the consuite, turn over, don't look at clock,

find *The Book of The Convention*, try reading it, it keeps falling apart because it's a handmade/altered book, pretend not to notice couple on couch trying to screw, find a "page" in the book that's a triangular bandana containing all the tiny cloisonné lapel pins of all the conventions in the series, the pins are very very pretty and very very tiny, give up on pins, turn over, look at clock, well that was ten minutes just now. The only thing to do is to move into Chicago style two flat, carpeted living and dining room floors, handy refrigerators in every room, roommate has brought in second and third puppy, which all the dogs get along, but still there are allergy problems to anticipate which roommate doesn't understand, roommate's friend is throwing steak knives at the living room curtains for target practice, roommate's friend is in TV commercial for photography agency as Bad Photographer, his crowning achievement, give up on roommate and friend, walk through the back of the apartment, which is increasingly labyrinthine and antique, and has lots of bathrooms with claw foot tubs, the back yard is a little cluttered with junk, in the alley the dogs start to bark, the dogs bark, the dogs bark, the dog up the hill from me who likes to stand at the end of its yard and bark so that its barks echo on the hillside is barking, it's dawn. Time to get up. There! See?





The Iron Pig

A Letter Column

(We begged Kate Schaefer to write us a loc. "Anything," Andy said. "Give us five words, that's all we ask of you." Being a fan, Kate of course took this request literally (well, mostly), and we encourage the silent majority of you to do the same. In fact, doesn't Five-Word Locs sound like a *Whose Line Is It* skit? Where's David Levine?)

Kate Schaefer

Kate Schaefer
4012 Interlake N
Seattle WA 98103
kate@oz.net

Syncope. Ananthous. Dook. Tope. Charvet.

(Back in September I sent fan email to Warren Zevon, thanking him for the music. I assume he's not reading the messages that come to him through his record company's website in his final months, but hey, maybe he is.)

Okay, let's see if we have this straight: *Chunga* caused you to swoon from a transient anemia, but when your head struck the floor, you did not see flowers. Instead, you knocked a hole in your skull, and it needs a plug. Lacking a plug, you have taken to heavy drinking. Now, too wasted to hold a steady job, you are supporting your addiction by selling faintly-striped ties made of French silk. Do we understand you correctly? If so, we're awfully sorry!

Alexis Gilliland
4030 8th St. South
Arlington VA 22204

All comments
(this time) by Randy.

Alexis Gilliland

Your cover appears to show the last days of Jules Verne, when he was hallucinating dervishes whirling to the pipe band of the Black Watch, but is, in any event, nicely done. I like the double columned format with marginal commentary, an apt and intelligent use of computer layout.

Alison Freebairn's article—for my money the best piece in the issue—conjures up a sharply focused view of the popular culture shaped by the atomic age. Her conclusion, that we have to keep on reading, is one wholly shared by my younger self. These days I still agree in theory, but in practice it is harder to find stuff for which I can suspend disbelief. After a while one knows too much to go along with stupid special effect tricks.

Andy Hooper offers 10 titles "possibly" more pleasing than *Chunga*. My suspicion: The fix is in, don't bet on any of them. Andy also thinks that Hannibal was a warlord, and my *useless* dictionary agrees with him, defining warlord as 1. a high officer in a warlike nation. 2. an aggressive tyrant. 3. in China, a local ruler or bandit leader with some sort of military presence in a district where the established government is weak. My own preference is for 3, since under 1 Robert E. Lee could be a warlord, and under 2 so could Abraham Lincoln. We note also that the dictionary is about 50 years old, since nowadays the 3 kind of warlords are found in Afghanistan rather than China.

Did Alison actually advocate reading in her article? I thought we'd all moved on to higher levels of fanac: watching old episodes of *Buffy* and the latest crime and detection serials. Surely reading is for bored teenagers?

Brad W Foster

Regarding your promise to fan artists not to shrink their art...well, a little shrinking is actually okay, it tends to tighten up the artwork and line quality. It's enlarging of artwork that causes more problems. That delicate little ink dot suddenly becomes a lumpy blob, and that graceful line becomes a wavering cable. So, reduction okay, enlargement bad.

Regarding Lee Hoffman's loc on visiting buzzards, and Randy's response to offer them some Grey Poupon from the neighbors leftovers...that's not as far off as you might think. When Cindy and I got married, we catered our own reception. (Okay, Cindy did all the work, I just went where I was pointed at and carried what I was told to.) Among the few leftovers (the crowd certainly appreciated the spread after having to watch us giggle through the ceremony) were what I described as tiny hamburger buns with pimento spread on them. (Someone must eat this stuff, and, as a fan of Spam, far be it from me to judge the tastes of others, but, still...pimento spread? uck!) We had gotten used to visiting a large park nearby and tossing bread crumbs or popcorn to the various ducks and geese there. So we bundled up the pimento-burgers and headed over. I'm quite blissfully ripping them into smaller sections and tossing them onto the water to be eagerly vacuumed up by the birds, when Cindy suddenly grabs my arm...seems she had been wiping off the pimento spread before tossing out just the bread. We had a discussion on the digestive system of the average wild duck. I could only point to the fact that they seemed to be rushing my hunks of flavored bread more than hers, but agreed to wipe off the rest before tossing them out.

Since that day, whenever we even approached the pond, huge hordes of the little feathered moochers would leap from the water and almost knock us over. One day I swear they recognized our van as we pulled up across the street, heading for us before we had even set the parking brake. Me, I think they wanted more of the pimento spread. I mean, finally, someone giving us something other than bread crumbs.

Criminey, where are Yvonne Rowse's shrunken D. West ducks when you need them? In any event, is PETA aware of this flagrant abuse of ducks? "They were begging for it," yeah, sure!

Dale Speirs

Thanks for *Chungas* #1 & #2; I'll review them in a future issue of *Opuntia*, which is on hiatus due to two deaths in my family. Just west of Calgary is the town of Cochrane but no warp drives in sight. However, Vulcan is an hour or so southeast of Calgary, and they do have an Enterprise-class starship parked next to the grain elevators. It was named after the Roman god but that's just a minor continuity problem.

Condolences on the deaths in the family, Dale, and hope we'll see more issues of *Opuntia* as soon as you feel up to it.

Ron Bennett

Lovely cheerful cover to #1, just what I needed here in my lonely shepherd's hut in the depths of the snow-bound Yorkshire Moors.

If producing a second issue of a fanzine makes you unsure of yourself, you should have tried what I did with *Ploy*, #2 being the first issue. This came back to haunt me fairly quickly when the British Museum, who could legally claim copies of all published material over here demanded a copy of #1.

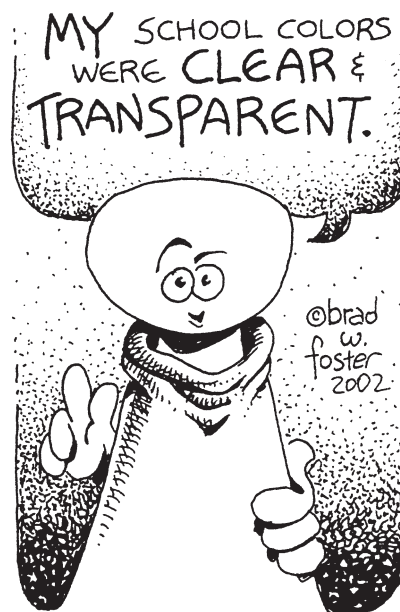
Andy's coverage of the monsters in his life was both thorough and entertaining. I'm certain there'll be a lot of feedback from readers telling about their favourite horror film and where they first encountered the genre. Strange, I can't remember when I first saw a horror movie nor what it was. Probably something with Nelson Eddy.

Over here Hallowe'en has not only imported America's revolting blackmail of Trick or Treat (and

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WAHF**Damien Warman:**

Velleity 2 should be heading back your way in a week or so.

Steve Green:

Of course, all one of you need do is relocate to the UK or Eire, and Chunga would be eligible for the Nova Awards...

D. West:

Perhaps I should say more (particularly about your truly atrocious 'design') but I no longer remember how to write letters.

COA

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the hypocrite in me ensures that I have in stock a supply of candy), but the event has become blurred into November 5th, and for that matter November 4th. The fifth, of course, is when virtually all the country goes off its rocker to commemorate Guy Fawkes and his merry men attempting to blow up Parliament. I say 'virtually all' as one of the schools in York resists the festivities, Fawkes having been a scholar there, though not, I believe, recently. Just down the road from Harrogate is the exceedingly pleasant Nidderdale market town of Knaresborough (pronounced Knaresbrer and not Knaresborow) with its superb (ruined) Norman castle and one of the town's outlying villages, Scotton, is where Fawkes lived for a lengthy time. The village pub, which serves good food, is called The Guy Fawkes. The castle, by the way, is quite small but was, I think, unique in comprising all the features of 'The Norman Castle,' barbican, angle towers, portcullis, dungeon, great hall, baileys, gatehouses and a curtain wall.

And the fourth? Or did you think (hope?) I'd forgotten? It appears to be a tradition confined to the north of England that the November 4th is 'Mischief' Night when pranks can be played. The contents of garbage bins are likely to be spread around the lawn, garden gates removed and similar daft activities — er — activated. The police go round schools warning pupils that the yearly-continuing rumour that the police can't prosecute on Mischief Night ain't true, Meyer (Actually, I must confess that I've never heard a policeman say 'Meyer.' Does this detract from the heartening account?).

Best meal I ever had in Kuala Lumpur was at the Majestic Hotel, just across the street from the silent railway station (the walkways and platforms are surfaced with rubber) way back in 1969. When I returned there some twenty years later I found that the building had been turned into an art gallery. Shirley, the lady in my life, is continually chiding me for expecting places to stay the same over however many years. I drive through Brussels, take a well-travelled short cut down a side alley and suddenly find myself driving through an underpass that takes me straight on to an auto-route and out of the city in opposite direction from where I wish eventually to drive. I love wandering around the little back streets near the cathedral in Antwerp (wonderful names like Kaaslei where in bygone centuries cheese was loaded, and unloaded, I suppose, at the long-gone dock there). I used to visit the many bookshops there, picking out the old forties Pocket Books. I was there a couple of years ago. Book shops? All gone. You can imagine what Shirley said when I got back home and told her.



The new mascot for "Homeland Security"!
SHIRLEY

Still, how about an excellent roast beef dinner, complete with Yorkshire pudding, at Ipoh in northern Malaysia?

Enough. I must get the sheep to bed before the next blizzard.

Thanks for the mags and the good reading.
Regards to Frasier.

He doesn't really live here, you know. The Space Needle outside his window? A painting.

Lloyd Penney

As I am writing this, the latest issues of *eFNAC*, 28 and 29, arrived in PDF format. John is quite ill, so Yvonne Rousseau put together two issues full of photos of John in healthier times. We should all think of John to help him through this horrific time...he's not sure which is worse, the cancer or the chemotherapy. The photos remind us all of John's better times, and we hope there's more of those to come.

Most people know by now, I think, that Yvonne and I were at Ditto 15 for the slow Friday evening, and were in a car accident on the way home. That screwed up our weekend, and the next six weeks as well, for I hobbled around at work, Yvonne spent that time letter her broken wrist heal, and the car needed that time to be lost in the impound, get found again, get repaired and wait for a part to come in from Japan. As Mr. Glicksohn said to me, I'll do *anything* to get out of doing a panel with him.

