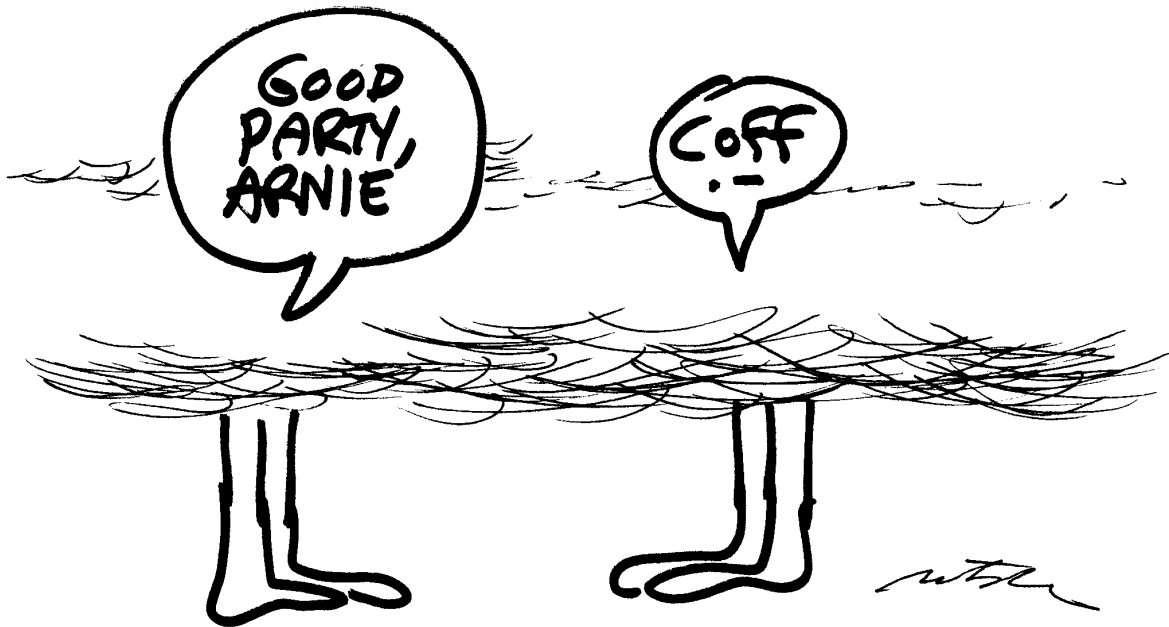


Corflatch

Considered as a Helix Of Semi-Precious Stones

A Corflu 2000 report by Arnie Katz
Art by Bill Rotsler



Everybody has a Theory and Practice time is over

Corflatch

Considered as a Helix Of Semi-Precious Stones

Introduction

*Talk Is Cheap, but Toner
and Paper Are Expensive*

What makes someone write over 11,000 words about a weekend in Seattle? Might as well wonder what compels a professional writer to do fanzines or makes someone decide to use a “dropped” capital letter when he has never previously done so in any of his thousands of fanzines?

These unfathomable questions will probably not be answered here. The best explanation for *Corflatch Considered as a Helix of Semi-Precious Stones* is that doing it felt right..

I try not to repeat myself, so *Corflatch Considered* differs from *Gist of the MAGIcon*

in one important way. *Corflatch Considered as a Helix of Semi-Precious Stones* contains no flights of fancy, no faan fiction, no slapstick, no fannish myth-making, no spectral appearances by dead fans or any of the other irregularities normally associated with my convention accounts. To the best of my hazy short-term memory, all of the fans whose doings I relate were actually there and did those things.

In short, even a British fan can read *Corflatch Considered as a Helix of Semi-Precious Stones* without encountering anything likely to outrage credibility. I have similar hopes for the readers’ common sense, but I’m not on that jury.

On the other hand, the mind works in mysterious ways. Mine is somewhat more mysterious than most, so I jotted down a few more dubious thoughts under the title *Corflu Apocrypha*.

Approach cautiously with sense of humor engaged.

I hope you enjoy this as much as I enjoyed those sweet hours with all my friends at Corflatch.

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Member fwa and afal.

Initially, I wasn't worried about the fact that Joyce and I were flying to Corflatch on Alaska Airlines. The big crash had just seized the headlines and sound bytes, but that could be good news for prospective passengers. During a phone call, Ted White reminded me

that an airline that has a crash usually goes at least four or five years without a similar tragedy. "If the plane goes down," I warned Ted, "the second volume of *The White Papers* goes with it."

Ted's pep talk made me feel better until Alaska Airlines' near miss a week or so later. The carrier seemed bent on beating the odds and I wasn't eager to contribute to a *Believe It -- Or Not!* story. I admit that I enjoy seeing myself in the media, but death would take the joy out of the experience.

The logistics of traveling have become somewhat more complex since Joyce manifested her heart condition at Corflu Nashville. Marcy Waldie drove us to the airport at 10:45 for our 12:30 flight.

Though it lengthens travel time, the early start lets Joyce negotiate the pre-flight routine at a more leisurely pace. McCarran's terminals sprawls in all directions, so even moving sidewalks and a subway-like shuttle don't eliminate some long walks.

On the other hand, we no longer wait on line to board. With perhaps just a bit of theatrical emphasis, Joyce shuffles to the gate at first call. I follow, all solicitude and concern. Since her health appears to be improving, Joyce may have to put more stagecraft into her performance if we are to hold onto this perk.

My celebrated courage, and the fact that

Chapter One

The Junior Birdmen *Meet the Menace of...* *The Alaskan*

the tickets were non-refundable, convinced me to board the flight on Friday shortly after noon. Naturally, the plane was the same model involved in the two incidents. They were careful not to call it an "MD10," so as not to alarm passengers who might have

seen or heard that designation.

I'm guessing that Alaska Airlines had encountered quite a few customers with cold feet since the accident. That would explain why they hustled us onboard with almost indecent haste. No relaxed stroll down the jetway for this outfit! They processed the boarding passes for the whole flight in a fraction of the usual time.

Having secured its prey in their narrow seats, Alaska Airlines seemed to lose interest. The plane lingered in its parking spot for about 10 minutes. Then a stewardess announced that a small problem was causing an equally minuscule delay.



By this time, the more alert passengers had realized that the aircraft's air conditioning system wasn't working. When the captives began making noises about stretching their legs back in the terminal, the flight crew reacted with horror. Having rounded up a full complement of reckless travelers, they were reluctant to give any of us a chance to escape.

They eventually surrendered to the clamor and let people go back into the airport. They made their disapproval evident. I was reading a John Grisham novel, so I stayed where I was. They corralled everyone and forced them back on the plane within 15 minutes. That turned out to be the beginning of the delay, not its culmination.

Fearful lest the passengers mutiny and bolt for the jetway, the crew locked the hatches. The pilot announced that the former lenient policy was a thing of the past and drove the aircraft a discreet distance from the jetway. "The hatches are sealed," a stewardess declared with heavy-handed satisfaction.

If she had had a moustache, she would have twirled it triumphantly. (This is a literary device known as "foreshadowing" that is regularly used in respected 18th and 19th Century novels. Mentioning it in your review will impress those who have not actually read *Corflatch Considered as a Helix of Semi-Precious Stones* and are unaware of this explanation. Fannish reputations have been built on less.)

We sat on the tarmac for two hours, slowly asphyxiating in our unventilated prison. Finally, the plane trundled down the runway to begin a completely ordinary flight. I hope those familiar with my early '90's con report *Gist of the Magicon* won't be too disappointed if I don't tell you about our hijacking by Agents of Roscoe or a clandestine meeting with a forger of imaginary issues of famous fanzines. No reason to map the same territory twice.

Besides, I wouldn't want to undermine my progress with some of the British fans at

Corflatch. I may've convinced a few that I'm not a capering loony in a propeller beanie who spouts a patois of *Fancylopedia* fanspeak and allusions to sixty-year-old events in which no one I actually know was present. I wouldn't want to replace that erroneous impression with one that suggests that I'm prone to free-form hallucinations.

My mind was very far from hyperfannish bullshit as the pilot steered us toward Seattle. Two days earlier, ChannelSpace Entertainment's top management reluctantly ordered salary rollbacks for executives and furloughs for about three-dozen people. The Content Department laid off 10 people.

Giving some deserving people a chance felt great, but breaking the news about the cutbacks was the downside. Their classy responses only made me feel worse about having to tell them.

Usually, I've been on the other side of the table, receiving the bad news rather than giving it. I've never stayed at one place as a print journalist for more than five years. The Internet has proven even more volatile. My last three posts averaged one year each.

CollectingChannel is doing what is necessary to survive, to make its investment funds last long enough to make key agreements to insure its survival. There's a good chance that they will win through and that many, if not all, of the furloughed people will be brought back into the fold. Barry Friedman's concept is brilliant and many are committed to making it happen.

Unfortunately, this optimistic prospectus offers little comfort to those coping with a current crisis. I felt pain deep in my heart for having to tell them that, through no fault of their own, they are without jobs. The knowledge that dwelling on my feelings when others had worse problems exposed me as shallow and self-centered didn't lift my spirits.

Many fans commented on the large number of fanzines distributed at Corflatch. Until I got the bad news Tuesday night, I thought

there'd be at least one more. Suddenly, I wasn't in the mood to finish *Jackpot #1*. I wasn't sure I should finish it, even if I could. Handing out a feisty faanish fanzine didn't feel right mere days after the furloughs.

I wasn't even sure I should go. I worried that the furloughed fans might not want to see my face. Ultimately, I decided to carry through with Corflatch plans. I felt bad, but not guilty, since the decision came down from the top echelon of company management. My desire to spend time with friends won out over trepidation.

The flight arrived two hours late, but Tom Springer was at the gate to meet us. Considering that it was almost 7:00 o'clock on Fri-

day night at Corflu, I wouldn't have held it against him if he had given up and gone straight to partying.

I was mighty glad to see him, though. Watching Tom and Tammy drive off in the general direction of their new home in Vancouver, WA, a couple of weeks earlier had been hard. The Vegrants are a tight-knit group, but Tom and I had grown especially close over the last couple of years.

We're still in the same simulation baseball league and plan a co-edited fanzine, so we won't exactly lose contact. Yet those pleasant evenings with Tom and Tammy, eating carry-in and gabbing about anything and everything, now belong to pleasant memory.



The delays left ample time to ponder my standing with British Fandom. Once I was fabulously popular and now the signals are mixed. It was on my mind as our flight approached Seattle.

I've got many fan friends in the UK, so please don't think this is a blanket indictment. That's definitely not the case. It's just that a very few individuals seem inexplicably hostile, ranting about alleged motives behind my fanac. Mostly they've had no direct contact with me and don't even see the full range of my fan writing and publishing.

Their attempts to read my mind are projection, not analysis. I also can't figure out why someone would inaccurately paraphrase a written comment instead of quoting it.

No one is universally loved and I'm no candidate for sainthood. Still, I prefer to make my own enemies rather than have them

Chapter Two *We Join Corflatch, Which Is Already in Progress*

preprogrammed for me. The sad fact is that image travels farther than reality and I am coming to think that I somehow symbolize an approach to fandom that alarms them.

That's disheartening, because I see fanzines as a medium to entertain my friends. Many fans

consider communication the top priority, but I have other ways to disseminate my thoughts, should I have any.

I also consider my general circulation fanzines as artistic endeavors. Fanzines are an opportunity to create a total package, an environment, and that definitely includes the editorial personality. *Crifanac* doesn't showcase my whole personality, just the sliver that's germane to that fanzine.

I enjoy exploring fanzine fandom's rich variety of forms. Since I won't change my fanac to suit a few people who might not like me anyway, I'm hoping that increased con-

tact will replace wild speculation with disturbing knowledge.

The Internet is making fanzine fandom a smaller place. Electronic delivery of mail and fanzines erases the distances that have historically divided the world's English-speaking fanzine fandoms. Fans in Melbourne, Florida, and Melbourne, Australia, will be able to toss this con report on the "unread" pile the very same day. Maybe Corflatch, which will host a sizable British contingent, will help, too.

It was such musings that led to my plan for *Corflatch Considered as a Helix of Semi-Precious Stones*. Perhaps this con report will be more accessible to some, though the lack of a sense of humor will still hurt.

What with cooling his heels at the airport, Tom could report little of Corflatch doings, so we talked mostly of their move. Tammy, it developed, had stayed back in Vancouver to unpack some of the boxes. She planned to arrive later in the evening.

The University Plaza fulfilled my mental picture. The three-story complex's low-key ambience and frayed décor promised to be a wonderful backdrop to Corflatch. Joyce's inability to walk very far made the lack of multiple on-site restaurants a drawback for us, but it was obvious that more mobile attendees had many appealing food choices in the immediate vicinity.

While Joyce claimed our room at the registration desk, I looked around the lobby for a familiar face. This challenges me more than most people. A lifetime of extreme nearsightedness, now replaced by post-cataract farsightedness, has left my visual memory highly unreliable. I seldom recognize anyone until I've seen them five or 10 times, unless their physical appearance is so distinctive that even I can't miss them.

I had no trouble recognizing the first two fans I saw, Andy Hooper and Victor Gonzalez. Although they were both showing some stress, I was pleased to see how well

they were weathering the con's opening stages. I'm certainly no expert on con-running, but my personal experience is that once the event is truly launched, the tension decreases rapidly.

My impression is that more goes wrong in the 24 hours before, and the 12 hours after, the convention begins. I think Victor subscribes to a similar philosophy, because I also detected a hint of relief in his voice when he made a remark about "the worst being over."

The conversations with Andy and Victor were friendly, but neither long nor momentous. They had urgent missions and Joyce and I wanted to stow our bags, find some fans and get some dinner.

The first thing I like to do at Corflu is tap into the mood. Often the con is just starting to roll as fans arrive Friday afternoon and start to populate the parties. This time, because many attendees also went to Potlatch the previous weekend, the Corflu train had already pulled out of the station and was building up speed.

If the period surrounding the start of the con is the host's severest trial, it is also the pivotal point for the convention itself. Events during that period shape the con experience, establish the ambience and, ultimately, determine how fandom perceives it.

Sometimes this window of opportunity lets in invigorating fresh air; others it crashes down on the knuckles of fandom and leaves only bruises and painful memories.

Cons walk a tightrope. Fans love to complain. They feel it shows their taste and intelligence. Many seem to feel that life has short-changed them, and eternal whining is their revenge. On the other hand, fans are also very charitable and forgiving if they are in a benign mood.

In the "bell jar" of Corflu, fans vent their penchant for analysis. Their interpretations often have as much to do with their state of mind as the objective facts. If a Corflu gathers a lot of negative energy, as Corflu NoVa

did right from the start, the prevailing view of subsequent events may well get a negative slant.

My first impression of Corflatch was that most fans arrived determined to have a good time. Corflu Sunsplash was fun for what it was, but attendance was tiny. Many US fanzine fans weren't able to attend Corflu Leeds in '98, either. That's almost three years without a Corflu. I believe there was a fear, at least in some quarters, that a less-than-sterling Corflu might signal the beginning of fanzine fandom's death spiral.

Determined to preserve their little island in the chaotic stream of mainstream society, fans tended to see the good side of everything. It was like being at a convention with 110 Ken Formans, all pumping out those good vibrations.

This sunny spirit carried through the entire weekend. Fans noticed that the rooms were small and poorly ventilated, that the program had minor flaws and that the banquet meal wasn't much, but no one cared except for hard-core cranks.

No doubt a few hard-hearted con-runners made notes of all this and will soon provide us with a list of Corflatch's sins of commission and omission. Most of the participants plainly didn't give a damn. What counted most was the upbeat attitude and friendly feelings.

After stowing the bags, Joyce and I phoned Tom to let him know we were ready to think about dinner and then went in search of other kindred spirits. That's when the sound of happy fannish chatter drew us to a seemingly unlikely location, the Smoking Consuite.

That accurately described the clouds that billowed from it every time someone opened the door. All Corflus provide a Smoking Consuite as a courtesy to serious nicotine fiends, though it often draws relatively light traffic. This time, the Smoking Consuite was one of the con's focal points with seldom

fewer than 20 fans and sometimes more than 40.

Blessed with a hotel inclined to genteelly avert its eyes from victimless crimes, Corflatch was superbly positioned to capitalize on Ted White's canny observation that the output of a few tobacco smokers could cover a multitude of non-tobacco smokers. Potlatch, held at the University Plaza the previous weekend, tested the hotel's sanguine attitude, so there was no reason to prevent Ted from preaching his gospel to the multitudes.

This wasn't the first Smoking Consuite rededicated to this additional purpose. It came in for similar use at several previous Corflus, but generally only by a handful of people in the wee hours of the night. (Corflu Vegas offered the "Other Smoking Consuite," but it wasn't official.) What made Corflatch's Smoking Consuite different is that, once the Group Mind/Virtual fanclub cabal arrived in force, it became a constant hub of activity.

I understand some fans' ambivalence. The Smoking Consuite was small and crowded, though there was still room for complaint. The Smoking Consuite reminded me of the



Seinfeld episode in which Kramer turns his apartment into a den for exiled cigarette, pipe and cigar smokers. Someone who is allergic to smoke, like Joyce, or who simply finds it intensely disagreeable had to make a personal accommodation with the situation. It is only natural for those people to think, "I wish it wasn't so smoky around these fans." It's a compliment that others are willing to endure the heat and smoke to be with them.

Criticism of the way some fans made the Smoking Consuite their Corflatch headquarters is well meant, but a little naïve. The assumption that the choice is between lurking within the miasma of the Smoking Consuite or sitting in some smoke-free public area for the some period of time is erroneous.

That's not really the choice. If those folks are not in the Smoking Consuite, they will be in some private room, largely out of contact with the rest of the con. It's as much a part of their convention experience as camping out in the bar is at British conventions (says the man who has never been to one.)

The Smoking Consuite was hard on visitors' lungs and eyes, but it was a breath of

fresh air for Corflatch. The Smoking Consuite allowed the Virtual Fanclub to conduct its annual rites without removing all of its members from the convention mainstream. If anything, it reduced Corflu's tendency to atomize into sub-conventions.

I don't think anyone wants isolating divisions within the Corflu community. I can't speak for my buddies, but I have heard many lament the cloistering. Those private rooms far from the fanning crowd are downright seductive. Sitting in a comfy chair, imbibing surrounded by friends, it is easy to let the hours whirl away. Nevertheless, there's been a conscious effort to stay in circulation more at the last few Corflus.

Some regard any mention of cliques within the fanzine fan/Corflu community as heresy. They can cling to this ostrich thinking, but I'd rather base my opinions on empirical evidence. My experience is that people who get rattled by the suggestion that such cliques exist feel threatened by folks with different ideas and divergent views.

To me, these differences are the glory of fandom. No subculture I know boasts so many delightfully unique, stubbornly one-of-a-kind people. There's no harm in discussing the social structure of fanzine fandom as long as we don't confuse cliques with armies or differences with battle-lines.

Cliques are inevitable in a group as large and diverse as fanzine fandom. We resonate to some people more than others. That's no judgment against those people. I like lime sherbet a lot, but I love double chocolate fudge ice cream. Lime sherbet makes me happy, and sometimes it is even preferable, but most of the time I want that double chocolate fudge.

It's the same with people. It doesn't mean I don't like those other people, only that they may not be quite as dear to me, as central a part of my life. I won't spend *all* my time with just those people, but I want to spend a lot of Corflu time with them.



Let's not get too wrapped up in the word "clique," either. Corflu's cliques are loose networks of friends, not fanpolitical movements with agenda and goals. They just enjoy each other's company.

Some of my best friends attended Corflatch. Lenny Bailes and I grew up together and co-edited our first fanzines together. Ted White and rich brown are not just friends but mentors who have helped make me the person I am today. I've known Frank Lunney and Robert Lichtman since I was a high school student. Tom and Tammy Springer, Ken and Aileen Forman and John Hardin are part of the core group that established Las Vegrants. Andy Hooper and Victor Gonzalez are also among my closest associates since returning to fandom in 1989.

As it happens, these Corflu regulars all like each other, too. That's why they clump together. Recent fan deaths remind us all that we should enjoy people while we can. Jokes about the Group Mind aside, this is not a faction with an agenda, just a bunch of friends.

Every circle has its more vocal, voluble and visible members and there's no question that Ted White is such a person. He's earned the affection and respect of everyone in the group and his friends listen when he shares his opinions. That doesn't mean that his word is law. People disagree with him all the time and Ted doesn't get his way all the time. He often says things most of us think should be said and we love him as a friend, but there's nothing more at work here. (Did I say that right, Ted?)

The Group Mind/Virtual Fanclub appreciated the Smoking Consuite because it made it easier to spend time with many more fans than if we used a private room.

I hadn't eaten all day, since I always refuse anything the airline serves that doesn't come in a diet soda can or list its main ingredient as "chocolate." I wasn't the slightest bit jealous while Joyce battled a rather nasty looking salad beside me on the flight. By the

time we reached the Smoking Consuite, however, I was starting to think with my belly.

After a few minutes of my none-too-subtle prodding, I found myself testing the hotel's restaurant with Joyce, Lenny Bailes, rich brown, and Tom Springer. Well, the conversation was excellent, even if the menu lacked distinction.

I wasn't in a position to squawk about the menu. Since it was the only eatery in the University Plaza, I knew I knew I'd be getting most of my meals there during Corflatch. Joyce's careful regimen is effecting a long-range improvement in her health, but she still isn't capable of much walking.

I didn't expect fans to spurn the array of restaurants near the hotel, so I anticipated a few dinners *a deux*. In the actual event, fans were very sweet about our little problem. We always had company, even though I know most probably would've liked a tastier meal somewhere else.

As I looked around the table, I noticed something curious and remarked on it to the others. I had co-edited a fanzine -- *not* counting *Wild Heirs* or other Vegrants' projects. -- with all of them, except Tom. He and I had plans to start a fanzine together, *Baloney*, within the month. Then I realized that at least two other former co-editors were at Corflatch, Ted White and Ken Forman.

Nor was this the end of the list. John D. Berry, Bill Kunkel and Greg Benford might have come to Corflatch and further increased the co-editorial contingent, but didn't, alas. Peter Graham, Lon Atkins, Cindy Heap, Charlene Komar Storey, Kent McDaniel and Judi Sephton hover on the fringe of fannish perception. Terry Carr is attending the Enchanted Convention.

That's a lot of co-editors, even for a prolific fanzine fan like me. I enjoy the social aspects of fan publishing and seek out fans, singly and in groups, to play the game with me. Fortunately, I also have a track record of staying on good terms with former co-editors

once the game has run its course. I'm on excellent terms with all former co-editors at Corflatch and can even imagine co-editing with any or all of them in the future.

Sometimes, I admit it, I do get carried away. Toward the end, *Wild Heirs* had so many co-editors that I feared we would run out of people to send letters of comment.



The pleasant company encouraged all of us to dawdle over dinner. By the time we paid another visit to the public rooms for another round of greetings, the Friday evening festivities were about to start. I have noticed that some people go out of their way to miss such things, but I've always liked being there at the formal start of this aggressively informal event.

Victor and Andy went for a low-key opening, as opposed to some of the bombastic curtain-raisers of recent Corflus (including Corflu Vegas). It was a relief -- and much in keeping with the con's mellow ambience.

After Andy, aided by a hoarse Victor, welcomed the fans, they got right down to choosing the Guest of Honor. This is a brief ceremony during which fans who claim they don't want to be GoH call more attention to

Chapter Three

A Fan Of Honor

themselves than if they said nothing -- or if they had actually won.

Out of the hat came the name of Ken Forman, Las Vegas Fandom's favorite son. I couldn't have been happier.

The fact that Ken was collecting the late-arriving

Aileen at the airport made it that much better. It upheld Las Vegas fandom's tradition of electing people to offices and volunteering them for work details while they are out of the room.

I was in the group that shouted the news at him when he popped into the Smoking Consuite when he returned from the airport. A little later, I assured him this wasn't an elaborate joke, but he had cheerfully accepted the inevitability of the honor by the time we had a real conversation about it.

Public speaking obviously holds unspeakable terrors for some. I saw a survey that asked people to list their fears in order of severity. Death finished second to public speaking. As a tour guide at Boulder Dam, Ken wasn't too worried about talking to an audience and his un-self-conscious glee at being chosen for the spotlight was a refreshing contrast to the diffidence of some past Corflu honorees.

A version of *Jeopardy* followed the Guest of Honor selection. Like almost everything at Corflatch, it was well planned and went off without any notably awkward moments. The three contestants battled through two full



rounds, capped off by Final Jeopardy.

The questions offered reasonable challenge and gradations of difficulty, but I wish future Corflu quizzes would focus on fannish topics. At the risk of seeming overly literal, it might be more fitting for quizzes at fanzine fandom's worldcon to test knowledge of fandom. There's a right place to put zealot-level *Star Trek* and that's where the sun don't shine. (No, I don't mean Seattle.)

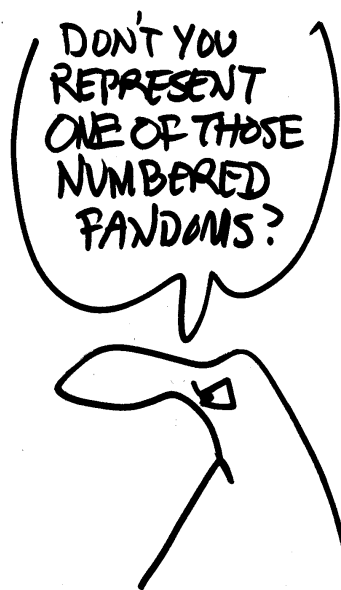
I wanted to see *Win Andy Hooper's Fanzines*, but I was burned out on quizzes after viewing the *Jeopardy* competition. The strongly positive word-of-mouth that wafted back to the Smoking Con suite suggests that I missed something good. It could've been one of the most popular program items had it been held Saturday or Sunday.

I love this concept -- and hereby challenge the irrepressible Mr. Hooper to put his collectibles on the line against me, perhaps at Toner 2001 next fall. Maybe we could cross *Win Ben Stein's Money* with one of those Las Vegas poker showdowns Cora Burbee is always entering. We could have three fans each put up some fanzines and battle each other for the right to face Andy head-to-head. The ultimate winner takes all the fanzines -- or maybe donates them to the convention for auction.

One of the questions involved me, or so I later heard. It was something like "What is Arnie Katz's real name?" They accepted "Arnold Katz," which is a correct answer, if not the *most* correct one. I might have rephrased the question for clarity and then insisted on "Arnold D. Katz," the name found on my earliest fanzines.

The change, which extended to every aspect of my life not just the byline, probably owes something to Fandom's effect on me as a teenager. Jewish parents nurture and shelter, but they also smother. Fandom guided me toward self-assertiveness and away from doing things merely to please my parents.

I never cared much for the full form of



my name, but I never did anything about it until I started publishing fanzines. It's hard to feel good about your name when it's regularly used for amusement value on a slew of sitcoms. Nothing feeds a teenager's ego like sharing his name with the pig on *Green Acres*. "Arnie" isn't the greatest, but I'd rather have the same name as a great golfer and a champion body builder than a stack of ambulatory bacon.

On the other hand, and against all logic, I've always thought "Katz" was a pretty cool name. Potential nicknames like "Pussy Katz" and "Kitty Katz" might've made me less enthusiastic if I were female, but they were never an issue.

I've never had a long-term, ongoing nickname. I've mostly been "Arnie" to my friends. In college, they called me "Hawk," a shortening of "Hawkeye" and a reference to my poor vision.

The baseball simulation league in which I managed in the mid-to-late '80s called me "Stats Katz" or even "The Stats-are-the-Stats Katz," due to my adamant refusal to believe in supernatural influences on the game.

In the late '60s, Ted White dubbed me "Jumping Jack Flash," possibly a reference to

my enthusiasm for The Rolling Stones. I kind of liked it, even though that wasn't one of my favorite Stones songs. Somehow, I never could bring myself to use it regularly and it

died out around 1970. Rotsler called me "The Moses of Vegas Fandom," several times, but it wasn't a true nickname. It's more the kind of thing you folks might write in my eulogy.

.....

Some of us hurriedly staked out comfortable spots in the Smoking Consuite after *Jeopardy*. You need an advantageous spot to enjoy a long night of partying to the full and my friends take this priority seriously. Chairs were precious and rare in the Smoking Consuite.

Even a strategically located spot on the floor out of the main traffic lanes fostered spirited competition. Chairs near the open window, next to the air purifier, were the ultimate perks. Mostly, we ceded them to Ted White and Robert Lichtman, both of whom were still feeling after-effects from their 1999 mishaps.

Once *Win Andy Hooper's Fanzines* finished, the Smoking Consuite went from full to jammed, making a mockery of the hotel's air conditioning system. The humidity was as high as most of the fans, at least to my desert-dried constitution, and the pitifully small cooling unit could only toil valiantly in vain.

One of the fans began to complain about the sweltering heat. Comparisons to other notorious hot spots and anecdotes about the climate of hotel rooms of the past flew through the heavy air. (This is a metaphor, not a hallucination.)

"It can't be too warm, the air conditioner is going full blast," someone commented.

"You call this air conditioning?" I said with high-desert haughtiness. "I'm not sure Seattle has anything that we in Las Vegas would consider 'air conditioning'."

The reply was a withering what-makes-

Chapter

Four

Everybody's Got To Listserv Somebody

you-such-an-expert look.

Some presumptions must not be tolerated. This native attitude, though rooted in ignorance rather than true evil, had to be expunged.

Don't tug on Superman's cape, don't knock the Cornhuskers to a

Nebraskan and definitely don't claim superior knowledge of air conditioning to a resident in good standing of Las Vegas, NV.

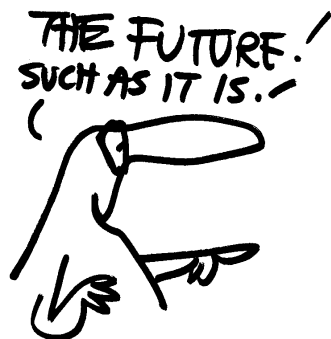
The 1.2-million population -- some with no criminal records -- and the 200,000 tourist's Vegas hosts each week would go elsewhere without the magic of air conditioning. It transformed a rest stop for GIs mustering out of the service into the nation's card dealer, buffet server and valet parker. Without the sweet rush of cool air, there would be no Las Vegas, the city of the bare shoulders, wallet skinner, credit card buster and whoremonger to the Western World.

Despite the combined efforts of the mob and Howard Hughes, Las Vegas could never have accomplished all this without its ceaseless research into the science of air conditioning. As many fans know, air conditioning envelops the entertainment areas like a frigid force bubble. When you stroll down Fremont Street, where walk-in casinos pump breath-restoring properly conditioned air onto the street, it can be 20 or 25 degrees cooler than the temperature at the Water Department complex a mile or three away.

"We are all air conditioning experts in Las Vegas," I declared with the full vigor of hometown patriotism. "Las Vegas is to air conditioning as Sodom was to ass fucking."

Thus ended the debate on Seattle Air Conditioning.

The air conditioning continued to labor with a forlorn whine. The smoke continued to billow. The fans in the Smoking Consuite continued to fight for their share of the still, fetid air.



I'm glad Corflu has a program and I usually enjoy most of it. In a way, though, I like the Shadow Program even more. That's how I think of the monologues, debates, panels and forums that spontaneously erupt when the party room reaches the proper state of elevation.

I think it's because I seldom talk about fandom and its Burning Issues. The Vegrants meet twice a month and there's a lot of visiting in-between, but fandom isn't often the main topic of conversation. We usually exchange fan news and swap vows about publishing something soon, if not sooner.

Usually, fanzines are my outlet for fan gab. When in extreme need, I call Ted White, Robert Lichtman, Tom Springer or rich brown. We consider fandom's eternal questions for a few minutes and that's it for another month or so.

I hadn't published anything beyond membership-extending FAPazines for over a year, so I probably had a lot of pent up fan-

nishness. Perhaps, in this era of Publishing Midget-ism, other Corfluvians have similar surpluses of fannish chatter.

Whatever factors inspire them, these improvised presentations often lead to lively conversations. They may even be a truer index of where fannish minds are trending at that moment than the official line-up.

The Shadow program erupted in the Smoking Consuite on Friday night. It spewed forth a variety of fan-oriented items. There is no Program, official or otherwise, that lists the topics, which tended to flow into a meta-conversation that spanned a much wider range of topics.

Listservs remained a Shadow Program topic, but the slant has changed remarkably in the last two years. Few fans, at least among those who voiced an opinion in the Smoking Consuite on Friday evening, dispute the legitimacy of listservs as a form of fanac.

Ted White offered the idea that listservs are replacing amateur press groups rather than genzines. I see his point, though I think listservs don't cover the entire territory. They could possibly substitute for apas, like TAPS or the Cult, which focus on communication, but I don't think the listservs have proven conducive to more literary efforts. Granted, that type of apazine is more rare today than 30 years ago, but they do still exist.

Maybe we're just early in the cycle. Fanzine distribution will go electronic in the near future, through use of *Acrobat* or similar programs. That could cause a slight shift in the classic fanzine paradigm. Listservs may completely swallow print apas while the greater ease of electronic publishing lets fans who might have done a little jewel of a SFPazine distribute it throughout fanzine fandom.

I considered the ramifications of that change for some time after Joyce and I returned to our rooms at around 2:30 AM. We could be on the edge of another golden age of fanpublishing. Eliminate the time and expense of copying, collating and mailing a fan-

zine and you've removed the things that keep many otherwise capable fans from doing a fanzine. Inertia will still overcome some fans, the same ones who haven't done a fanzine since the 1980s, but the ease of the process could tempt many others.

Electronic distribution could also change mailing list dynamics. Traditionally, fannish

fanzines, seldom available for cash, circumscribe their mailing lists to hold down costs. Electronic distribution removes money from the equation, leaving only aesthetic considerations. Fanzine editors are likely to be more lenient about who stays on the mailing list when it costs nothing to send it to them digitally.



My daily schedule puts me at the keyboard by 7:00 AM. Since I work a six-day week, it's nearly impossible for me to sleep late at Corflu on Saturday. Even after going to bed about 3:00 AM, Joyce and I were up, dressed and fairly presentable by 7:30 in the morning.

The "common wisdom" of Corflu is that no one gets up before 11:00 AM) and that scheduling anything before noon is an imposition. This accurately reflects the habits of some notable fans, but I have trouble believing that everyone sleeps that late. Surely there must be others, like Joyce and me, who prowl their hotel rooms like caged beasts waiting for a seemly hour to show themselves to the world.

We met the early risers in the Consuite and the Smoking Consuite, though the latter wasn't crowded either Saturday or Sunday. Joyce still can't walk much, but we found little groups of hearty fans willing to engage in friendly chitterchatter and forgive my lack of verbal brilliance at that hour. (I was awake, but not necessarily at the top of my game after about three hours' sleep.)

Saturday's program began at 11:30 with a review of the 1999 fanzine year. It served its main purpose, reminding fans of their favorites to encourage participation in the Fan

Chapter Five *Getting Hammered at Corflu*

Achievement Awards.

Bill Bowers seemed ill at ease, or maybe just ill. He had little to say and slipped quietly off the stage at the first opportunity. Robert Lichtman and moderator Andy Hooper rose to the occasion and primed our memo-

ries for vote casting. Alison Scott, nominally a member of the audience, talked more than all the panelists combined. She seemed to have a passionate opinion on every topic. .

Victor Gonzalez invited me to join the "TAFF, Essential Tradition or Worn-out Fannish Football" panel, but we are still friends. This early warning gave me ample time to solidify my thoughts and set up my strategy.

When "Fanzine Favorites of 1999" ended, I was ready. I looked around me and saw the same determination written on the faces of my friends. They were ready, too.

"Let's get out of here," at least three people including me said almost simultaneously. We were cruising toward the Smoking Consuite before the TAFF panel participants reached the front of the meeting room.

Don't get me wrong: fans should talk about TAFF (or anything else) as much as they want. You won't hear a peep out of me if they make the TAFF panel an annual tradition, like the fwa election or people getting

drunk and stupid. It's just that if they do, I'll make Being Elsewhere a personal Corflu tradition, too.

Judging by the size of the crowd in the Smoking Consuite, I don't think I'm alone. The most telling indicator of that group's opinion is that we didn't discuss TAFF while avoiding the official panel. Discretion, taste and deteriorating short-term memory prevent me from describing the whole, multi-pathed meandering conversations in the Smoking Consuite on Saturday afternoon, but I'm reasonably sure that TAFF contributed less than a minute of commentary.

I don't hate TAFF or even resent its democratic evolution in new directions. TAFF can, and will, continue as long as there are fans to contribute enough money to subsidize the trips.

Unfortunately for me, changes in approach and philosophy have made TAFF largely irrelevant to my fan activity. I no longer attend worldcons and I have trouble summoning enthusiasm for sending someone I don't know to the UK. I'm not saying they aren't fine folks or that they won't be entertaining guests when they get to Eastercon. It's simply that their names trigger no insistent inner voice that says, "You must dig deep to send this fan to England."

As I predicted in an article a few years ago, TAFF has moved beyond its fanzine fandom origins to become part of All Known Fandom. The voting procedure guarantees an ever-widening electorate.

TAFF won't suffer much if a few fanzine fans stop contributing. TAFF now draws from a much broader spectrum of fandom. That means each voter doesn't have to invest as much money or commitment as supporters did in the '50s or '60s. The increase in the number of trips in the face of fanzine fandom ennui shows how much fandom as a whole supports TAFF. I can easily imagine TAFF shuttling whole groups of fans back and forth in the '00s.

I prefer Special Funds to continuing ones, anyway. They don't burden the winner with subsequent administrative duties and don't perpetuate a bureaucracy.

Let me assure lovers of fan bureaucracy that I have no plans to spoil their fun. I don't want to keep amateur bureaucrats from enjoying their panicky emails, middle-of-the-night emergency phone calls and all the other trappings of over-management. I just want to minimize contact with bureaucracy in my own life.

File this under "Improbable...but True!" Sometime on Saturday a number of fiercely independent, feminist, confidently aggressive women embraced the collective nickname, "The Brit Babes." That impressed me a lot, because it showed so much understanding of the intentions of whoever first blurted out the moniker.

What a charming bunch of women! I can't remember when I've met so many delightful female fans in so short a time. It was obvious that many US fans lost their hearts to one (or more) of them.

I love the fanzine auction. I love it even more when I get to do my auctioneer shtick, but a seat near the front of the room is fine. Not that Corflatch's pitchfen needed my help. They did splendidly without any help from me. They framed each bid lot well and no one could quarrel with the prices they got for a very good assortment of fanzines.

A nearly complete set of *Hyphen* and a selection of *Quandrys* (including the *Quannish*) were the highlights. The *Hyphens* went under the hammer for \$30-\$50 each. Fans have paid more for *Hyphen* at other cons, but no one could recall so many issues going for such a high average price.

A little mental math pegs the value of a set of *Hyphen* in good condition at \$1,600-\$2,000. I wouldn't want to measure the worth of my run of *Hyphen* in money, because that's not why they are dear to me, but it's interest-

ing to know that fanzines are appreciating in value at a respectable rate.

The otherwise likable Nigel Rowe remains an enigma to me. He bids aggressively

for every good fannish fanzine that comes up for bid at land-based or on Internet auctions, yet his interest in current fanzines by those same people appears to be negligible.

It was a pleasure to see my old friend Frank Lunney looking so well and acting so much like his normal (quirky) self. This was the first time in a few years that he's truly seemed like the Lunney of old.

Frank has always enjoyed fostering debate, a polite way of saying that he would like to call the play-by-play for fandom's first over-the-top Battle Royal. Anyone who remembers *Beabohema*

knows his genius for sparking heated debates in the letter column, much like Dick Geis did in *Psychotic/Science Fiction Review*.

Frank has refined his technique a lot since then. This year the puppet master was at his inflammatory best. He knows ex-

Chapter Six *Saturday Night Is Not Dead*

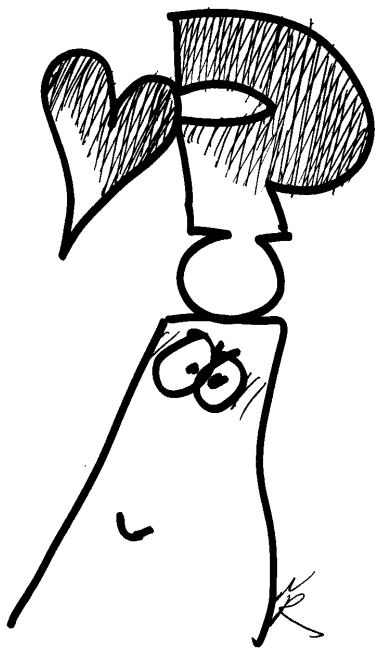
actly the words to whisper in the right ears to set two feckless fans on a course to confrontation, if not conflagration.

Not that Frank is really evil. In fact, he is a stalwart and sterling individual whom I feel privileged to know. He's just got this curiosity about human behavior and enjoys watching personality collisions.

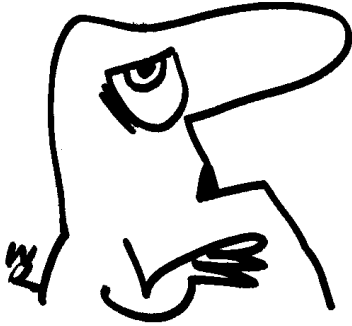
I enjoy his company tremendously, but he does keep me mentally alert. Frank Lunney is a constant reminder of the dangers of taking myself or anything else too earnestly.

Linda Krawecke, in a madcap mood, toured the con with a special mission. She wanted to take photos of all of us posed in emulation of Seattle's Space Needle. So, one by one, we put the palms of our hands together to create the point above our heads. She subsequently posted these photos with appropriately wry captions.

I thought it was good-natured fun and an important step up from the "family album" approach to fan photography. I believe the electronically distributed fanzines of the future will make much more use of photos as illustration and Linda's concept is a first step toward more sophisticated use of the me-



UH-OH,
REALITY'S
COMING...



dium.

Geri Sullivan acquired a sheet of self-adhesive false moustaches and revived the mid-'90s vogue for moustaches for women. As a former New Yorker, I've seen enough women with moustaches to last me a lifetime, but it was all good-spirited fun. Of course, anything involving false moustaches seems even more irrelevant to me than TAFF.

"Have you met Alison Freebairn?" was the question I heard most on Friday and again on Saturday afternoon. One of my *crifanac* articles, a Burns and Allen pastiche had made some jokes at her expense. The column built up to a marriage proposal and declaration of undying love that some could have taken as less than sincere.

I was standing in a roomful of fans, which could've been the Smoking Consuite or the Christina Lake birthday celebration in Victor Gonzalez's room, when a beautiful woman came up and introduced herself as Alison Freebairn.

She told me that she laughed many times while reading the piece, which shows she knows the way to my heart. I responded that it was all lightly meant and that I had been impressed by the fact that she hadn't blown

up in print or the like.

She also told me that many Corflatchniks, notably Victor, had been prodding her about whether she'd met me yet.

"I think we've disappointed them," I acknowledged. "They want living faan fiction."

It is seemly to draw a discreet veil over the rest of our conversation, which involved mushy stuff like our wedding plans.

Joyce and Alison really hit it off and there was much talk of visits to Las Vegas. And if the two of them can agree on who gets to *not* do the cooking, we might have a pretty exciting announcement for the Plokta News Network.

Speaking of that web site, one thing that Corflatch underscored for me is that the day of the hard copy newszine is done. When work pressure forced me to stop *crifanac* about 14 months ago, I cherished the thought that I might go back to this well yet again when circumstances improved. I've done several newszines over the years and didn't feel entirely finished with the possibilities of that kind of fanzine.

Now I know that it'll never happen. Almost all fanzine fans have Internet access now, so the best way to disseminate fan news is definitely on a web site or through an electronically distributed publication.

I don't think the first great online newszine has been done yet, but I predict it won't be long before someone like rich brown, Ken Forman or Andy Hooper puts one together that might have the same impact as the legendary paper news sheets.

Bob Webber is one of the fans I enjoyed talking to for an extended period for the first time at Corflatch. I go to very few cons and Bob hasn't produced much in the way of fanzines since my return in '89.

He confirmed the rumor that he'd been encouraged to bid for Corflu 2001, which led to a lot of talk about the con. At the time, Bob wasn't certain where the con hotel would be. I encouraged him to find someplace in the Bos-

ton area, but it sounded like Newport, RI, hotel would be a more practical choice.

I'm sure Newport will make a colorful and historic setting for Corflu, but I don't think it's going to be the easiest destination. I got to Panama City, FL, though, so I guess it won't be any harder to get to Corflu 2001 than that.

I didn't see the "Iron Faned" competition, but excellent word-of-mouth now makes me wish I'd watched some of it. The idea, modeled on the "Iron Chef" show on the Food Channel, was for two, three-fan teams to produce a six-page fanzine within one hour. David Levine drew favorable notice as the master-of-ceremonies of this work-shoot

event. (The jokes were mostly rehearsed, but the teams actually did publish a fanzine in the allotted time.)

Both the Ploktoids and the US contingent acquitted themselves very well. The UK entry seemed slicker, but less spontaneous. The US fanzine was lavish in its use of white space, but was also the livelier of the two. Really, both teams acquitted themselves very well.

Before they understood the semi-scripted nature of "The Iron Faned," the *Nine Lines Each* bunch, Ken Forman, Tom Springer and JoHn Hardin, flirted with the idea of entering. I'm not sure they shouldn't have done it anyway.



The food wasn't noteworthy, but that didn't keep me from enjoying the banquet. That's because the Corflu banquet is a state of mind. If the company is good, the speakers are clever and brief, no one gets food poisoning, it may go down in fanhistory as one hell of a banquet.

Some, like the infamous Corflu NoVa banquet, are too weird, even for fans, but expectations are low enough to give any decent effort a shot at earning favor.

We had a very congenial group at our table, including Ted White, Lenny Bailes and Frank Lunney, so of course Joyce and I had a good time. We didn't eat as many meals with our various friends at Corflatch, so this was a welcome chance to break bread with some of our favorite people.

One improvement in recent years is that more fans now stay through till Monday morning. The worst part of the banquet, al-

Chapter Seven *Food, Dancing And Entertainment*

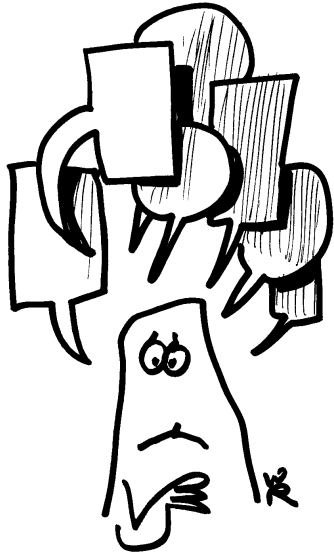
ways excepting Corflu NoVa, is seeing friends get up in the middle of the event and head to the airport. Now almost everyone stays, so there are no sad parting between the main course and dessert.

My favorite Corflu whimsy is the election of the

fwa past president. It's a brilliant, beautiful bit from every angle. Now it has persisted long enough to have a colorful tradition and history. Ted White reminded us of these points in a well-delivered talk.

I was glad when Ted deflected a drive to make Walt Willis past president for 1999. Fans quickly saw his point, that the fwa presidency is meant to honor the living. The quickly reached compromise named WAW the fwa past president for 1952, That let fans make a gesture in his memory without disrupting the general course of fwa.

I nominated Frank Lunney for fwa past



EVER HAVE YOUR MIND GO BLANK?
OH, IT IS NOW?

president. He's very well-liked and respected and I thought his sudden spurt of online activity would increase his appeal as a candidate. Sadly, this wasn't true. Apparently, voters prefer Frank Lunney to remain the same aloof, Olympian presence he has been on the fan scene for the last 25 years or so.

Although Frank received quite a bit of support, Geri Sullivan achieved a strong majority to become fwa 1999 Past President. Who could argue with such an appropriate choice?

Maybe there's a lesson in this for fandom. Corflu attendees give out this honor with little fuss or politicking, yet no "award" for fanzine fanac has a finer list of winners.

Trap Door won deserved honors as 1999's most popular fanzine. It's encouraging that a fanzine of impeccable quality can still elbow the heavy tonnage titles out of the spotlight. It is certainly my favorite fanzine of the last few years.

Andy Hooper totaled all the category-points in the Fan Awards and proclaimed Christina Lake the "number one fan face." (Presumably "of fanzine fandom" is

there, too, but unspoken.) I hadn't perceived her as such, despite enjoying her fanzine and her writing, but the reaction to the announcement convinced me the sobriquet was on target.

Along with Victor Gonzalez and Pam Wells, Christina is one of the fans who has done the most to bring US and UK fandoms closer together in the last couple of years. Corflatch showed how much fun it is for everyone when the English-speaking fanzine fans get together in a positive context. Still, it made me wonder whom I'd select if fandom voted on this frivolous question (along with the other, equally trivial, categories).

The logical first question: What are the criteria? To me, the number-one fan face is an active fanzine fan whose fan activity makes them the most respected and admired big name fan. Still pretty vague, I guess, but I hope it conveys the general idea.

Out of an array of possibilities, I think I would choose Robert Lichtman. No active fanzine fan is more universally respected for both the quality of his fanzine work and his well-balanced character.

Ken Forman's Guest of Honor presentation combined a short talk with an exhibition of ballroom dancing by Ken and Aileen. It's not every fan who comes to Corflu with a white dress suit, so I'm glad the Mainspring didn't try to snow us about how he was only undertaking this bothersome chore under duress. A little honest enthusiasm is a nice change-of-pace and "optimistic" certainly describes this year's GoH.

The speech wasn't content-rich, but Ken's polished delivery earned the requisite laughs. In light of some of the perfunctory Corflu guest of honor speeches of recent times, Ken could've stopped with a few minutes of ebullient fannishness, but Las Vegas fans seldom do things by halves.

Following the breeze monologue, they turned on the music. Fans sometimes scoff at

their friends' talents, but the stately and graceful tango impressed most of the audience. I guess those lessons are paying off.

Bob Webber proposed his Corflu 2001 bid and received immediate and overwhelming ratification. After several months of hand-wringing about no one bidding for Corflu 2000, most fans were ready to welcome rescue from almost any quarter. I don't know Bob very well, as I indicated previously, but he seems like a good choice to run a Corflu. I'm sure he'll do everything possible to pro-

mote its success.

It's nice to see Corflu heading to the Northeast after a long absence from that part of the country. I've been going to them since Los Angeles and no Corflu has gotten closer to the Northeast than Corflu Nashville and Corflu NoVa. Corflus often draws fans from the surrounding area who haven't been seen in awhile. Maybe Corflu 2001 will entice Chris Couch, Mike Gorra, Bruce Telzer and other long-gatified friends to put in an appearance.

.....

Despite Lenny Bailes' testimonial to my athletic prowess as a pubescent playground athlete, my baseball playing days basically ended when a line drive smacked me in the left eye as I ran for third base. My remaining vision is puny and monocular, so I give live baseball and softball a pass.

During the annual Corflu baseball game, therefore, I got nowhere near the diamond. I almost got drafted to be the umpire, which I agree would be hilarious, but I was too afraid for my own safety to accept the invitation. I think I could've been pretty funny in this role, perhaps amusing enough to forestall the beating I would have otherwise suffered at the hands of the team that lost due to my screwy calls.

So though I have a great interest in the annual classic, my contact with it is tangential. This should explain the lack of a detailed account of perhaps the most memorable play in fannish diamond history.

I was miles away, both literally and figuratively, as Debi Kerr ran her way into Corflu

Chapter Eight *There Is Joy In Mudville*

baseball history. While she executed her soon-to-be-legendary overrun of third baseman Ulrika O'Brien, I was sitting in the Smoking Consuite with a frosty Diet Coke in hand, comfortably sprawled on the carpet and leaning against the bed

Much as I would've liked to witness this fannish morality play, I wouldn't have missed the leisurely afternoon. Besides the usual cast of characters, I got acquainted with two fans whom I had always liked but never met, Jim Caughran and George Metzger. No one handed out membership cards or collected dues, but both seamlessly and effortlessly blended into the group.

I'd never had direct contact with Metzger, who has always been a friend-of-a-friend. He amply lived up to his billing as a storyteller, even though he now lives a quieter life than the one described in his older columns.

Lichtman gets credit for enticing Metzger to Corflatch. George appeared to enjoy his encounter with Robert, Ted and the rest of us and displayed genuinely reluctance when it

came time to leave. Fanzine fandom would be enriched if he decided to dabble as a result of his brief encounter. I know Tom and I would love to add his column to *Baloney*.

Jim reminded me a bit of his onetime schoolmates, Ron Ellik and Terry Carr. Those names were invoked, since they were mutual friends, but discussion ranged freely without stumbling across anything momentous. I told Jim I had always put his FAPAzine *A Propos de Rien* in the "keeper pile" and he said nice things about Joyce and my contributions to the group. That doesn't make us blood brothers, but it sure makes a pleasant ambience for a conversation.

Jeff Schalles dropped by the Smoking Consuite to say "good-bye" before his return to Minneapolis. Unfortunately, Jeff and I are on the outs these days, so I don't see much of him at Corflu, but I was glad that he's apparently healthy and happy. He very kindly donated party supplies before departing for the airport.

I don't recall who told us that Debi Kerr had rushed down the basepath to third like Ty Cobb and that Ulrika had been struck by the resemblance. Though the messenger's identity is lost amid the clouds of the Smoking Consuite, the message itself blazed across the room in fiery letters too incendiary to ignore.

Thus did we learn of the basepath collision. I'm not exactly proud of the spontaneous cheer that erupted in the room when we learned of Debi's Cobb-like takedown of third baseman Ulrika O'Brien. I don't think anyone wished Ulrika any harm, but the metaphor spoke powerfully to a band of fans feeling their annual Insurgent rush.

Dinnertime neared as fans began to trickle back into the Smoking Consuite after the game. Andy Hooper emerged as the day's slugging star despite Art Widner's spindoc-toring that emphasized the one time the Seattle Strongboy struck out. Andy's account, though delivered with endearing modesty, made it clear that Widner would've been bet-

ter off if he'd saved some of that spin for his curveball.

Rich brown joined the Katzes, Formans and Springers for dinner in the hotel restaurant. He told us that, while in Seattle, he planned to visit his boyhood pal Paul Stanberry. This led to a discussion of the phenomenon Stanberry had loosed upon fandom in the early 1960s, Coventry.

It may be easier to understand Coventry in this age of 24/7 fantasy roleplaying and people who think they are dragons or Klingons. Rich explained how a project to create a detailed background against which novice writers could set their tales evolved into the ancestor of *Dungeons & Dragons* and live-action RPGs like *Vampire*.

Despite Gary Gygax's peripheral connections to fandom, the inventor of *D&D* has never acknowledged awareness of, much less inspiration from, Coventry. Since Gygax isn't zealous about acknowledging his influences, this may be a question that only Coventry's survivors such as Bruce Pelz can answer. Most likely, Coventry was more of a generalized factor, along with the Tolkien boom and Creative Anachronism, that contributed to the climate that led Arneson and Gygax to sculpt *D&D* out of fantasy miniatures.

The party spot moved to Victor's room early Sunday evening for a celebration of Christina Lake's birthday. It didn't take long for us to turn Victor's room into a somewhat smaller, and more intense, version of the Smoking Consuite.

I bailed out briefly from 10:30 to 11:00. A quiet half-hour alone in the tranquility and clean air of Joyce and my room proved wonderfully restorative and I lunged into the party with renewed vigor.

I returned in time to meet Debi Kerr, itinerant Orgasmatron operator. It was a give-a-Brit-Babe-a-buck drive for TAFF. I'm not much interested in TAFF any more, but I handed my dollar over to Debi with little hesitation. Who turns down a sexy woman

who wants to demonstrate something called the Orgasmatron?

It was both less, and more, than expected. The deceptively simple device consists of long, flexible projections. The Brit Babe or other skilled Orgasmatron is placed on top of the head and then worked up and down to stimulate nerve endings in the scalp. I was relieved that this concept was applied to the cranium rather than any more obvious places. Considering the size of the thing, I had some initial, unfounded worries that I would grievously disappoint Debi. My skull, at least, is distinctly on the large side.

It definitely does *something*. At first I felt a pleasurable, rapidly intensifying tingle all over my head. Then I moved my head or

laughed or something and it abruptly felt annoyingly unpleasant.

Joyce and I capped the evening, as we have on some many other occasions, by sitting with Robert Lichtman for a while. We talked of Corflu and fandom in the easy way that makes it seem like it hadn't been nearly two years since we'd seen him.

Leisurely good-byes filled most of Monday morning. Robert, Ted, Frank, Joyce and I had arranged to share the trip to the airport, so after breakfast we sat in the lobby and watched fanzine fandom disperse to the four winds.

Our car finally arrived and sped us to the airport. We sat around together for a while, but eventually we went our separate ways to the appropriate gates.

.....

An upbeat, relatively harmonious convention like Corflatch is very energizing. Victor Gonzalez and Andy Hooper created a congenial ambience, tireless volunteers like Jane Hawkins took care of visitors' needs and wants and fans made the most of the occasion.

Tom and I had already started work on *Baloney* before Corflatch, but the con considerably boosted our enthusiasm. It demonstrated that fanzine fandom is not only alive, but also possessed of a strong life force.

On a personal level, Corflatch quelled worries that increasingly troubled me in the months prior to the event. I came to Seattle with doubts about my place in fanzine fandom's future. My relish for the hobby has scarcely diminished, but I wasn't as sure about fandom's enthusiasm for me.

The deaths of so many fan friends proba-

Chapter

Nine

Epilogues

And

Egoboo

bly started my melancholy mental trend. Each bereavement brought, along with fresh sorrow and loss, the feeling that someone who understood fanzine fandom the way I do had left the party.

Will a day come when those

who share my understanding are an insignificant minority in fanzine fandom? A few bizarre responses to *crifanac* and some odd comments from UK fans made me wonder if that day had already arrived

Not that I claim to understand fandom better than "newer" fans with 20 or 30 years in the hobby. It's not the One True Path. My view is neither worse nor better, just different. It overlaps to a large, but some of my beliefs may be out of step with fanzine fandom current consensus.

Evolutionary change is a characteristic of

healthy social organisms. Fanzine fandom must react to change in the macro-culture to remain relevant. I have no desire to freeze fandom at some mythical "perfect moment."

This didn't begin the day fanzine fandom found Lenny Bailes and I huddled on its doorstep in March 1963. I'm fairly sure those who joined fandom in the early 1930's subscribed to a substantially different consensus than I did three decades later.

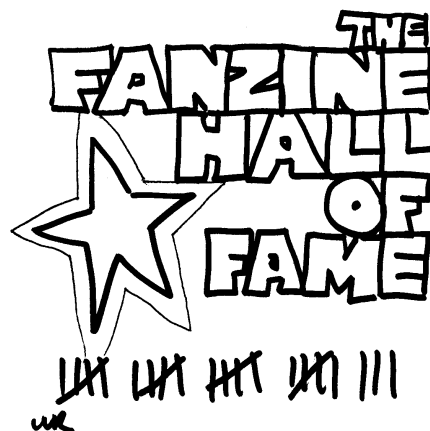
The world of the 1930's offered little solace to our first-generation fans. People with glasses were four-eyed mommy's boys, suitable targets for epithets, fists and flying objects. Readers of that "science fiction crap" were unspeakable, a not-quite-nice fringe element. Look at those covers! And the stories were all about things that were never going to happen.

Fanzine fandom in the '30's became a haven for people who could not fit into mainstream society despite abundant talents. It was a sub-culture that applauded voracious reading, encouraged discussion of the future and provided the fellowship that most of those teenage boys lacked. The early fans used talents they could not properly employ in the big world to produce wondrous works in the more congenial confines of fandom.

The prejudice against eyewear and reading abated somewhat by the '50's, but science fiction's negative image improved only slightly. I remember, as a fourth grader, a one-on-one meeting with the school librarian in which she lectured me on the evils of reading too much "space stuff."

At some point, possibly the mid-'60's, science fiction became acceptable, an integrated element of the macro-culture. The Burroughs and Tolkien booms, the mass-pop accessibility of electronic science fiction and the rise of fantasy roleplaying made liking science fiction about as rebellious as liking *Friends* or Stone Temple Pilots.

The fans of today seem much more socially integrated, much more well balanced



than those from the other side of that mid-'60's divide. I sometimes feel like current fanzine fans love fandom and want to be fans, but that we aging misfits and one-time pariahs love fandom and *need* it. Fanzine fandom is more than just a nice place to visit for we outsiders; it's a refuge against the assaults of mainstream culture.

The sub-culture of fandom teaches as it satisfies. It has always provided an unusually forgiving context and eases bright, alienated people into human social experience. Fandom is life with training wheels, a low-pressure social context that supports instead of censors. It doesn't seem like this need is as critical for newer fanzine fans.

Fandom therapy has worked wonders for many pre-mid-'60's fans, including me. I think I've led a reasonably successful and happy life in mainstream society, but it is very hard to forget the formative role fandom played in my maturation. It gives me strong familial feelings and loyalties that might not be appropriate for a contemporary fan.

My *Philosophical Theory of Fanhistory* identifies seven basic fan philosophies (Professionalism, Commercialism, Trufan-nishness, Insurgentism, Serconism, Commercialism and Scientism). Each fan's approach to the hobby is an amalgam of those seven philosophies in varying proportions

The prevailing fan consensus at any point in time is also a mix of these seven philoso-



phies. Which ones are dominant colors the entire fanzine fandom subculture.

The relative strengths of the seven philosophies have changed over the years. These are long-term changes, not the two-year epochs the Numbered Fandoms Theory covers.

In the late '20's and early '30's, Scientism and Serconism held sway with Professionalism and Commercialism also very much in evidence. Bob Tucker and, a little later, the LA Insurgents (Charles Burbee, Francis Towner Laney, Bill Rotsler, Elmer Perdue) sparked a trend toward Trufannishness and Insurgentism that reached its first full flowering around 1951.

Sixth Fandom, led by Lee Hoffman, Walt Willis, Shelby Vick and Max Keasler, picked off a 25-year period when Trufannishness and Insurgentism were the two prime fanzine fan philosophies. Communicationism was third or fourth, depending on the ambience of the current focal point fanzine.

That's the way it was when I entered fan-

dom in 1963. A more knowledgeable observer than I was at that time might have noticed the winds of change.

Today, Communicationism is the dominant fan philosophy. Back-dates like me still cling to what we know (Trufannishness and Insurgentism), but fanzines are now more widely thought of as a medium of expression than as a medium of entertainment or the glue that holds the fanzine fandom subculture together.

I don't mind talking about jazz and sports cars (or the modern equivalent -- coffee and prostate), but that never will be my main reason for publishing fanzines. No one who writes 11,000 words about a convention has communication as a top priority. If I want to air my ideas, I have other ways to do so.

I certainly don't begrudge the use of fanzines for that purpose and often enjoy the results. It's simply not my main motivation for publishing.

I came to Corflatch feeling a little alienated and returned home cautiously optimistic. The affection of old friends and the enthusiasm of new ones is a wonderful restorative. I don't expect to convert anyone to my personal fan philosophy nor should anyone expect me to suddenly launch a latter-day *Kipple*.

I've always thought that the individuality and diversity of fanzine fans was one of the subcultures great strengths. The harmony and positive atmosphere of Corflatch reminded me of that. Thank you all.



WARNING!

Proceeding Beyond This Point Requires a Sense of Humor

I've been good for nearly 24 pages. Now *Corflatch Considered* has reached its stirring conclusion, so it's time to take a walk on the wild side. Rather than stifle my impulses, which can lead to brain cramp, I diverted them to *Corflatch Apocrypha*.

I hope you'll take what follows in the spirit in which I wrote it. I can't vouch for the truth of any of it, but I hope you enjoy the material.

Corflatch

Apocrypha

Joyce looked up from a Corflatch flyer she'd printed out a day or so earlier. "Arnie, did you know that a lot of British fans are coming to Corflu?"

"Oh, really?" I said as nonchalantly as I could manage. "How very nice." I returned to my copy of *The Enchanted Duplicator*, but my hands were trembling.

"Won't it be exciting, meeting all of those interesting fans? Don't you want to know who'll be there?" she pressed, slightly thrown by my apathy.

I wanted to hear about the impending visit and yet I didn't.

For whatever reason -- and I'm not casting blame -- my standing with British Fandom is shaky these days. Some of them don't like my fan writing enough to suit my ego. Worse, my stuff unsettles, even irritates, a few vocal British fans.

That's very distressing. It's doubly troubling to me both as an admirer of British culture and a lover of vintage UK fanzines. Walt Willis and John Berry were among the first major fans to support my early efforts. Arthur Thomson drew plenty of cartoons for my fanzines, as did Harry Bell. *Hyphen*, *Ape*, *Retrograde* and *Triode* influenced my fanzines of the '60's and '70's. Nor

"Will Rob Hansen be there? Pete Roberts? Pete Weston? Harry Bell?" I knew, or could guess, the answer to my questions, but I was playing for time.

Joyce scanned the list. "They're not listed,



but it's still awhile until Corflatch. Maybe they're coming," she said trying to stir the embers of my interest. "There are a lot of others, though, more than a dozen. " She rattled off the list.

"What about... D. West?" I asked, trying to keep anxiety out of my voice.

"Ummmmm... he's not listed," she said, "but maybe he hasn't decided yet." Another idea occurred to her. "He could be a surprise guest!"

That was the last thing I wanted to hear.

Don doesn't like me since I reprinted his article in the Corflu Vegas *Fanthology* without permission. I was very distressed when I learned of his ire from Chuch Harris. My fervently apologetic letter failed to soothe the savage beast Don, so I've kept out of his way, despite admiring a lot of his fan art and writing.

Joyce's observation had the ring of truth. Having D. West arrive in a puff of sulfurous smoke is exactly the kind of stunt Victor might concoct.

In my defense, in light of what I'm about to confess, people aren't responsible for their dreams. Images erupt from the subconscious, unbidden, and unfold without regard to propriety, sobriety or rectitude. (Normally, there's a lot of rectitude in my dreams, but that's for another, hornier article.)

The phantasmagoric dreams started the very night Joyce raised the possibility of D. West coming to Corflatch. My waking mind

wondered what would happen when we two 50-something fanboys met. Lurid nocturnal visions conjured grim answers to that question.

Don West shambled through increasingly terrifying nightmares, his legendary surliness transformed into outright menace. He confronted me at imaginary Corflatch panels and parties. Inevitably, he was sullen, defiant, ready to swing out. He and fellow British hooligans waylaid me in elevators, lured me into dangerous bars and loomed over me in restaurants.

Finally, inevitably, my subconscious began to fight back. The confrontations took on the trappings of *Monday Nitro* and *Raw Is War*. A couple of times, I thought I heard Jim Ross call the action and once or twice Michael Buffer announce the results.

It could hardly have been sillier, even to me, but that's the way my subconscious chose to deal with a potentially unpleasant and upsetting event. I don't go to cons to fight, but I wasn't sure in my heart that D. West would embrace the same principles of harmony and pacifism.

One night, I dreamt that D. West at-

tempted to bully me while I was having dinner with some of my fan friends. He loomed over the table, talking trash and demanding protection money. No one likes to be shown up in front of comrades, so that's probably why I smashed him to the floor with a chair shot and dropped the People's Elbow on his prone carcass. For some reason Joyce, Ted and Lenny began chanting "ECW! ECW! ECW!"

It was quite cathartic. The next time Don West invaded my sleep, I gave him a fanzine and he grumbled something that might possibly not have been an insult.

Now, if D. West does come to Corflatch, I'll know exactly what to say and do. I'll walk right up to him, square-shouldered, steely-eyed and unafraid. "Well, Don," I'll say, because I don't know if he actually likes to be called "D", "I've been dreaming of meeting you for weeks." I'll extend my hand in the spirit of international friendship. If he takes it, the past will be wiped clean and we can train our critical faculties on more deserving targets.

Of course, if it doesn't go that way, there'll still be that chair in my other hand...

.....

My hands shook as I punched in the number. I hoped it wasn't a joke. I didn't think my nerves would stand it being a joke.

It was two weeks since my last fannish conversation and I could feel the compulsion and the craving twisting through my body like a cosmic corkscrew. I was hot. I was cold.

I needed relief and I needed it fast. For all I knew, convulsions and final gafia lurked just around the corner.

I guess that's why I was trying this number.

It was ringing...



"Welcome, you've found... Fanac Phone," said a chilly female voice. "Now you'll never have to be unfannish again." It ran through a lot of legalese about restrictions and charges and billing, a lot of things that simply didn't matter right then. I had to have fannish conversation and I had to have it *now*.

"If you want to get in on the stimulating fannish conversation," she said at length, "press '1'... now" I thought my finger would punch through the button.

"We're so glad you decided to join us... meyer," she said with just the edge of a

chuckle in her voice. "Please make your selection..."

"Press "1" if you want to talk about TAFF..."

"Press "2" if you want to discuss Numbered Fandom

"Press "3" if you want to re-fight the Bergeron Wars

I think there were more choices, but I did-

n't hear them. I slammed the receiver down.

How low had I sunk?

"This isn't the way," I told myself sternly. "You can't retreat into a whacked-out crazy world of lurid 24-hour fan talk and people who'd chat about *Fosfax* if the money's right."

So I called up Tom Springer and read him this article.

Those who piled up extra sleep instead of joining Saturday's early risers missed the most singular event of the entire Corflatch program. I'm not sure who decided to present it at that hour or why, but it was an unexpected, and amazing, experience for those who wandered into the meeting room at 9:00 AM.

We who were there viewed the premiere of *Fugghead!*, a musical comedy-drama based on *Ah, Sweet Idiocy!* by Francis Towner Laney. Someone said it was the most unlikely subject for musical comedy since *Oliver!*, but the clever script and promising libretto surprised the Dickens out of us. When it was over, two hours later, even skeptics had to admit that Andy Hooper and Moshe Feder had done something unique.



As a nervous Andy kept telling us, *Fugghead!* is still a "work in progress." The cast, though rehearsed in an all-night marathon practice commanded by the two authors, read their lines. The absence of a band encouraged many of the participants to talk their songs. Few actually tried to sing more than a chorus, because Friday night's carousing had left them

the verse for wear.

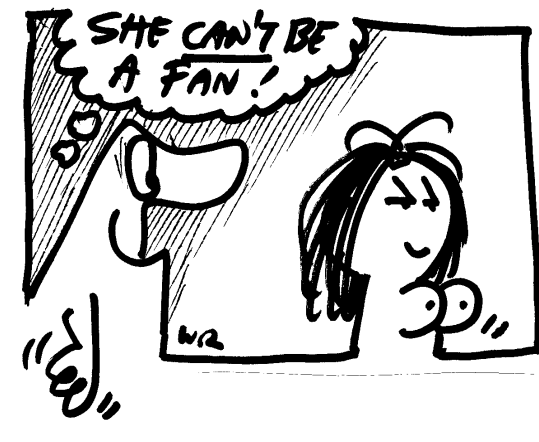
The show opens with the entire cast singing its signature tune; *She's a Fugghead (but I Don't Care)*. The catchy song derived from *Bad Boy*, sing by the fannishly connected Holy Modal Rounders on their most recent CD.

She a Fugghead
(But I Don't Care)

Don't it hurt your fannish pride?
Don't it make you mad?
When the girl who looks so hot
Turns out to think so bad.

She's Dougherty incarnate,
She's AI without IQ
Her ego is enormous
Thank Ghu her rack is, too!

She's a Fugghead... but I don't care!



AH, THE INNOCENT
DAYS OF FIRST
FANDOM!



She never buys the prozines
She forgets the ones she's read
She's a fannish Cleopatra
when she takes you home to bed
She's a fugghead.... But I don't care!

Her poetry is awful
Her art is a disgrace
Her articles are drivel
But her underpants are lace

She knows fuggheaded people,
She does fuggheaded stuff
She always votes with Ackie
But she looks great in the buff

She's a fugghead... but I don't care!

The plot of *Fugghead!* follows the “plot” of the Laney memoir pretty much as written. Laney’s journey to Shangri-LA didn’t fit on the stage well, so the focus is on his discovery of fantastic literature and his days at the LASFS.

In the opening scene of the First Act, FTL

(Victor Gonzalez) discovers Lovecraft in an all-night bathroom reading session. Absorbed in the macabre visions of Lovecraft (not wholly unlike *Corflatch* apocrypha, except the names are easier to pronounce than in *The Outsiders and Others*). As he lies there, paralyzed on the bathroom floor, Laney nonetheless summons up the energy to sing a rousing parody of *Rollin' and Tumblin'* called *Sittin' and Readin'*.

Sittin' and readin'
Till the light of morn

I'm sittin' and readin'
Till the light of morn

When I read that HP Lovecraft,
An acolyte was born!

After falling in love with fandom and starting *Acolyte*, Laney moves to Shangri-LA. He visits fans along the way and sings snatches of *LA Fandom, Here I Come!* (*California, Here I Come*).

Victor is quite convincing in the play's dramatic feud scenes, but he may need some coaching to prepare him to sing *LASFS Is Dark Tonight*, which is a filk of the '00 pop tune *Broadway Is Dark Tonight* by the Goo-Goo Dolls

LASFS is dark tonight
It's empty and shut up tight
Old fan sitting in a young fan's club
Waiting to pick a fight!

Forrest J Ackerman (Ken Forman) is almost as central to the play as Laney himself from Act 2 to Towner's decision to quit fandom in Act 13. Although Ken (wisely) decided to talk his few songs, *LASFS Kind of Mood* captures Forry's optimistic attitude about the club. Moshe said it is based on

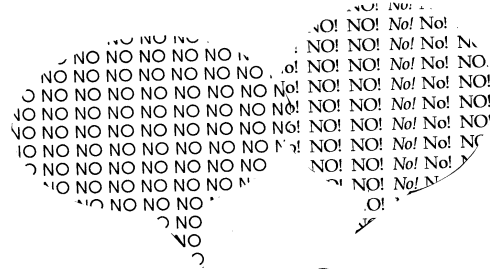
Serenade in Blue.

A brief sample:

Mundanes live for Fri to Sunday
But Thursday is my fannish funday
When I'm in a LASFS kind of Mood

Another high spot, especially for a Clash fan like me, was *Outing the LASFS* spiritedly sung by PoGo (Debi Kerr) to the tune of *Rockin' the Casbah*. ("4e don't like it/outing the LASFS!/outing the LASFS!"). Other songs included *Fran the Revelator (John the Revelator)*, *Fanzine Blues (Cocaine Blues)* and *Dougherty's Defeat (Bonaparte's Retreat)*.

Robert Lichtman was brilliantly cast as Elmer Perdue, but he was not sufficiently recovered from his auto accident to do the physical comedy of the drunken collating scenes. Andy Hooper improvised for this performance by appointing Lindsay Crawford the official stunt double for Corflatch. He



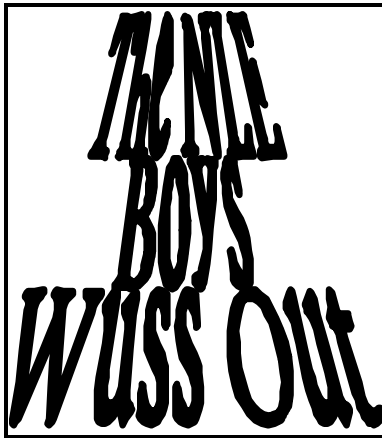
NOT LISTENING

took some spectacular flops, but true fans of fannish theater can only look forward in anticipation to the day when the estimable Lichtman will be able to bring the full weight of his talent to bear on the pratfalls.

See what you miss by sleeping late?



I tried to convince Tom Springer, Ken Forman and JoHn Hardin that they should not give in so easily when they discovered that the "Iron Faned" competition was a semi-work that they could not join. What could be more appropriate to a scripted "sports fentertainment" than a pro wrestling-style run-in?



The plan was simple. They could go down to Kinko's and rent an hour of time to do an issue of *Nine Lines Each*. All they'd have to do is bring the stack of com-

pleted copies to the "Iron Faned" room just as the two official teams finished their official entries.

"It's the insurgent thing to do," I told Tom.

"I would have to leave this room, wouldn't I? He said, as he waved his brawny arm through low hanging smoke clouds you-know-where.

"Yes, you would have to go a block to Kinko's," I admitted.

"I think I will wait till next year," said Tom.

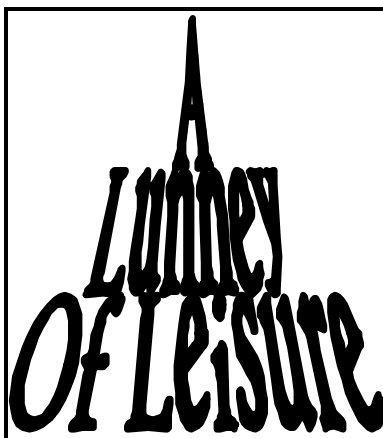
This may be the most expensive con report in history. My disk drive went into an advanced stage of meltdown while I was writing *Corflatch Considered as a Helix of Semi-Precious Stones*. After all other methods failed, I had to resort to a drive rescue service. Although getting this con report back wasn't the only objective, I estimate that restoring the text cost me at least \$1,500. I'll be waiting for those letter of comment...

I thought Frank should become Past President of fwa because, as I realized during Corflatch, he has solved the Mystic Secret of Fandom. I know that's quite a claim, but the evidence is clear.

Actually, I am just guessing that fan illuminati call it something like that. You'll have to ask Frank, or the Enlightened Fan near you.

I don't know how Frank does it, but for year after year, decade after decade, he has maintained the illusion that he is an active fan without actually writing or publishing!

I asked several people at the con if they considered Frank Lunney an active fan. Every last one of them said they did. He is an active fan, yet he does not write nor does he publish.



That I don't know how he does it should be manifest in any examination of my fan career. I've written and published a lot. I've clear-cut several forests enroot to papering fanzine fandom. And yet I always feel that I am six months away from being totally forgotten.

Not Frank Lunney. He can conjure an aura of actifannishness out of thin air. Alas, his recent spate of interesting and insightful Trufen posts may have persuaded fans that he had somehow lost his grip on that elusive secret.

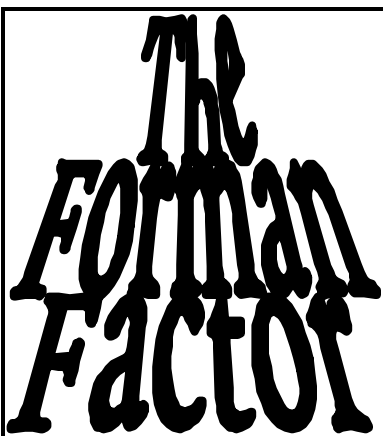
Rather, I think Frank's mastery of fandom has now advanced beyond the stage when he must refrain from all activity to prove his Svengali-like power.

Something to ponder, eh?

Toward the end of the afternoon, perhaps under the spell of an especially entertaining party, I noticed an interesting phenomenon: Ken Forman's fan career is growing at both ends. He is not only moving forward in time, day by day just like the rest of us, his fanac is also slowly extending back through fanhistory.

That's a remarkable assertion, granted. It shocked me, too, though I've since become used to this science fictional concept. Now my mission is to alert fandom to the dangers of the Forman Effect -- and fandom's narrow escape from its fell influence.

Most fans who have not yet succumbed to the Forman Effect know that Ken and Aileen Forman made their fanzine debuts in 1991. This was not, however, Ken's first contact with fandom outside Las Vegas. He had attended several regional conventions, mostly in Arizona, as well as the Los Angeles worldcon in



'87. (Ken talked to several fans at that worldcon, but as he explained it to me, "the subject of fandom never came up in conversation.")

Now, though, fans have started to remember Ken Forman from even earlier conventions! Though even those beguiled by the Forman effect still know that he did not attend the Solacon in 1958, more and more are ready to reminisce about the wild times they shared with him at the Pittcon in 1960.

"You've now been in fandom longer than me," I marveled to him after yet another fan said something that pushed his fannish pedigree ever farther into the past.

"Soon you'll be my protégé," he told me, confident in his mysterious power. "People will thank me for teaching you about fanzine fandom!" He looked reflective. "Only maybe not." I sensed that, by this time next year, the Forman Effect will have caused fans to be-

lieve he had taught that catchphrase to Calvin Demmon, when he brought him and Lichtman into the hobby.

Then a good thought brightened my mood. "You may be able to fool confans and filkers, but you'll never pull the wool over the eyes of fanzine fandom!" I challenged him, newfound defiance stiffening my spine. "You can convince the non-literate that you planned NYCon I with Moskowitz, Sykora and Taurasi, but fanzines constitute an immutable record."

"So far, you have only seen 'phase one' of the Forman Effect," he retorted. "Check your fanzine collection on July 1 for a big surprise." He laughed an evil laugh. Absolute power, the Forman Effect, had unhinged his mind and distorted his good nature, like Claude Rains in *The Invisible Man*.

"You devil!" I said.

"Perhaps, in time. We shall see." He laughed maniacally, again. "Soon all of fandom will surrender to the Forman Effect. Soon I will bestride fandom like a colossus, ever-present and enduring!"

"You mean?" I was appalled by the man's temerity.

"Yes," he said, "I will become an Elder Ghod."

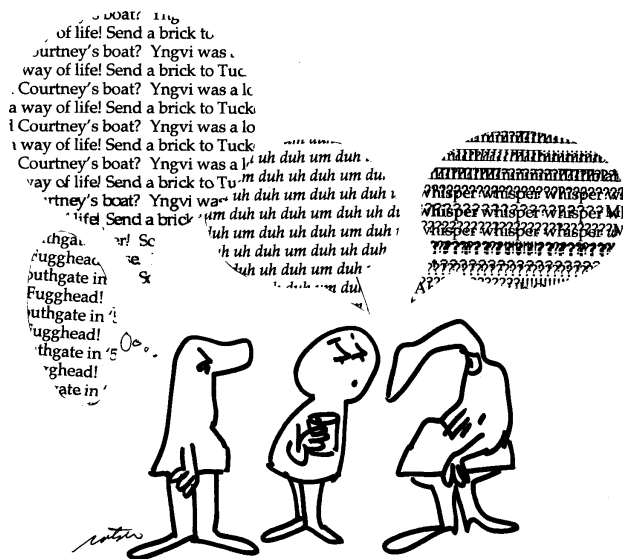
"If you force me, Ken, I will distribute facsimile copies of *Dalmatian Alley #1*." Thunder boomed outside the consuite window as Ghu, Roscoe and Foo declared their displeasure at the mere mention of this legendary fanzine.

Suddenly, he hung his head. "I give up."

"You must renounce the Forman Effect and become once more the fine fellow and rising fanzine fan you were before your mind plunged into this malaise."

"Yes, I have no choice." Ken said. "Even the Forman Effect can't re-cast *Dalmatian Alley #1*. It can add my articles, but I can't remove my stuff where it actually exists."

"So anyone who reads the first issue of *Dal Al...*"



OLD FANS

"...will know what a neofan I was when I did it," he said with resignation. "It would completely destroy the grand illusion."

"It's probably better this way, Ken," I consoled him. "You're well-liked and well-respected in fandom. You can carve out your own fabulous fan career, a real one."

"It probably is," he acknowledged, "but I still wish you could've read my article in *Hyphen #12*."



Acknowledgements. Thanks to Victor Gonzalez, Andy Hooper, Jane Hawkins and all the others who worked so hard to make Corflatch so much fun for the rest of us.