

*Fellow fen and fine folk, I am here to tell you I have seen the light. Can I get an Amen?
Amen!*

Of late, several great fanzines have found their way, through the “now certified, anthrax-free” United States Post Office to the back reaches of rural California. I am inspired.

Actually, I’ve always felt crifanac was a marvelous name for a fanzine, I thought so when Arnie Katz first taught me what it meant, I thought so when he and I did a number of issues. I like it so much, and I had such a great time pubbing it, I’m reviving the title.

For all the fan historians, this run shall be known as Volume 2 or V2. Hence, this ish is V2 Number 1.

I think I’ll start my ‘zine with the story of what happens...

crifanac

When Ghods Speak

by Ken Forman

It All Started With The Tom Green Show

Ever experience one of those times when the ghods speak to you in a clear and undeniable voice? I did. The heavens opened up and a heavenly chorus sang. The voice of the One TruFan spoke. An oak tree appeared to me in the guise of a burning bush. A message as clear as Colorado River water came to me that read “KEN FORMAN – YOU WILL CHANGE YOUR LIFE.” Never being one to ignore such obvious portends, I listened – and my life changed, but not overnight. It all started nearly two years ago when I was visited by Tom Green.



Yes, *that* Tom Green. The one from MTV, ex-talk show host, perennial prick, testicularly challenged cancer survivor, *Mister* Drew Barrymore – *that* Tom Green.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with the Tom Green Show from MTV, please allow me elucidate.

For the sake of entertainment, Mr. Green developed a talk show to appeal to the less erudite members of the masses. It turns out that it also appealed to a certain cross-section of the more

educated set; probably triggering pleasant synaptic responses in the reptilian hindbrain similar to those caused by the Three Stooges, professional wrestling, and *Challenger*.

In addition to studio interviews, Tom Green frequently did “man on the street” type segments where he and a camera crew did their best to annoy their subjects and generally cause a vitriolic response. Some of his stunts included interviewing passersby with a dog shit covered microphone, making sure he shoved it as close to their noses as possible, or erecting – on *their* front lawn – a statue of his parents fornicating. Of course, all of this was

meant in the spirit of “good” humor and entertainment.

So how does this all relate to me? Well, Tom Green came to Hoover Dam to film a segment. No, I wasn’t exactly in the show, but let me tell the story in its proper order.

Word came down from the bosses that *someone* from MTV was bringing a film crew to film one of the Hard Hat Tours. Although there are certain guides who’re usually chosen for on-camera type situations, this time one of the middle management types decided he wanted the exposure. This was not a big problem, except that in this case, the guy – and we’ll just call him Pat – is pretty straight-laced, had never watched MTV, or even heard of Tom Green before. In other words, he was exactly the kind of boob Tom Green likes to mess with!

The general instructions when it comes to film crews, news media, etc. are to cooperate as much as reasonably possible. I’m guessing the basic philosophy is that *any* advertisement is a good thing. I imagine Pat thought this would be a cakewalk with this talk show host asking a few questions and generally being awed by the grandeur of the Dam – not a bad assumption since that’s usually what happens. However, what Pat didn’t count on was Green’s *modus operandi* – which was to annoy those around him, especially anyone looking vaguely official.

As soon as the tour left, Green started heckling Pat, asking him such puerile questions as “Where’s the dam bait?” and “Are you a dam guide?” Although such questions are commonplace, they are nevertheless annoying. Green’s plan was working perfectly, and the cameraman was getting it all on tape.

One part of that particular tour required the group to be crowded into a relatively small elevator – comfortably it would hold about a dozen adults, this time, with Green and his cameraman, there were twenty-one people crammed shoulder-to-shoulder.

“This elevator’s too small,” whined Green.

“It’s a short ride,” explained Pat.

“But this elevator’s too small,” Green repeated.

I imagine the conversation went on much like that for the entire ten-story ride – Pat’s face getting redder and redder with anger. I later learned that Pat warned Green

several times that he was disrupting the tour and that if he didn't relax, Pat would have him removed from the premises. You can imagine Green's delight at this. (In fact, he was so delighted that he aired portions of the tour every night for a week, but I'm getting ahead of myself.)

By now you must be wondering how I fit into this milieu.

While Pat was trying to keep a lid on his growing "situation," I was conducting a regular tour of the dam. My group was relatively small, only about 30 people, most of whom were teens and young adults.

Frequently (and this time was no exception) the Hard Hat Tours need to pass a regular tour. This usually occurs on the outside portion of the regular tour, so while one group is standing, mouth agape, the other can pass by without disrupting the talk. Ah, but there's that word "disruption" again. Tom Green couldn't miss the opportunity to annoy yet another official looking person (me). The difference in this case is that I *knew* whom Tom Green was and what he liked to do. Actually, most of my tour (being firmly within the show's demographic) recognized him.

As Pat's group passed mine, Green and his cameraman held back and started listening to my talk. In fact, the guy with the camera squatted down in front of me and started filming. Tom stood aside and just watched for a few minutes. Pat, on the other hand, had ~~led his group~~ charged past me and was trying to finish his tour. I just ignored them and continued what I was saying.

After a few minutes, Green came and stood beside me – to be in the camera shot I suppose. He leaned conspiratorially toward me.

"Can I borrow that?" he asked in a soft voice, gesturing at my microphone.

"Sure," I shrugged my shoulders and handed him the mic.

It's important to keep in mind that this particular microphone was attached to a loud speaker and had enough watts to be heard over the sound of noisy generators by a large crowd of tourists. In other words, this system can be very LOUD. Green took advantage of the situation.

"THIS PLACE SUCKS!" he shouted into the microphone. The echoes bounced back and forth between the canyon walls.

"THIS DAM SUCKS – IT'S TERRIBLE – IT'S SUCH A BIG PLACE, WHY DON'T THEY HAVE BIGGER ELEVATORS!"

The camera captured every bit of his tirade and I just stood by watching amusedly. Frankly, he's right, the elevators can be crowded. Besides, *my* crowd was enjoying the show. On the other hand, Pat was *not* amused – or at least his gestures indicated his annoyance (I couldn't hear what he was yelling over the amplified tirade).

After Green had gone on long enough (I imagine he sensed that he had milked the situation for all the entertainment it was worth), he handed the mic back to me and

in a quiet voice said "Thank you." He left, my crowd laughed, I continued my talk and the sun went on shining.

I heard later that after leaving my group, Green pushed Pat's buttons once too often. Apparently Pat finally decided that he'd had enough and called one of the dam's Federal Police Officers and had Green and his entourage of one escorted from the premises. Although all of the dam's FPOs are great people, they have no sense of humor and are *not* to be messed with.

Tom Green started his obnoxious act with the officer, but didn't get very far.

In a quiet voice, the officer advised "Unless you want to spend the next year in jail for obstructing a Federal investigation, I suggest you keep your mouth shut." Green followed his advice and that was basically the end of the incident.

Until about a week later when...

I received a written reprimand for my part in the whole incident. Yes, you read correctly, the government decided it was embarrassed by the way Green was handled, and felt it was necessary to punish – *somebody*.

There weren't a lot of choices, either. Pat is the kind of guy who "never" does anything wrong, that is if you ask him. Besides, his nose is so brown that if his bosses ever turned a sharp corner, Pat's neck would be broken. No option for retribution there.

The police officer simply did his job, removed the offender from the dam, and advised him of the legal situation. No candidate for scapegoatdom here, either.

The only other person involved was yours truly.

Great government gears ground at glacial speed. It only took them three months to write the two-page letter accusing me of not "maintaining control of government property issued to me." I was also admonished that any further infraction would result in more severe action taken against me. And that this restriction would stay on my record for one year.

What could I do? I laughed it off, shrugged my shoulders, and took the rest of the afternoon off. (A little known fact about the government is that if they admonish you in any way, you get the rest of the afternoon off with pay to recover from the emotional trauma incurred by the act. Who was I to argue? "Oh the trauma, oh the mental duress, oh the strain on my fragile emotional state. Ta-ta.")

Ninety-nine One Hundredths of a Year Later

Fast forward to nearly one year later.

With the Tom Green Show incident firmly behind me I continued my daily routine of guiding, fanning, and basically leading the life of a typical Las Vegas fan.

I certainly wasn't thinking about any previous infraction on the day in question. Granted, I was in a terrible mood, but that had much more to do with the normal events of the day and the general feeling that something crappy was about to happen. I didn't have long to wait.

Right in the middle of my tour, a gentleman asked a stupid question.

"How high are the mountains on either side of the dam?"

I'd been asked this question many times before and every time I heard it, a mental twitch happens in the back of my brain. Invariably this query occurs when we're at the base of the dam, looking up the face of the edifice and framed on either side by sheer rock faces. I can't help but wonder what kind of an idiot can't tell that we're standing at the bottom of a canyon rather than the base of a mountain? The more id-controlled portion of my mind wants to shout, "Are you some kind of idiot? Don't you know the difference between a mountain and a canyon?"

Fortunately, my higher mental facilities are usually able to restrain that desire, and I usually respond with something like "You can't see *mountains* from here, we're at the bottom of a deep *canyon*." This time was no exception, and I offered my usual response. However, this time, the visitor (who was a member of a Christian Tour Group) was not interested in semantics – he wanted facts, damn it!

"Whatever! How high are the mountains?"

I don't know if it was his "I'm With A Christian Tour Group" tee shirt, his smarmy attitude, his obvious ignorance, the dismissive flip of his hand, or the tone of his "Whatever!" that sent me off, but something did. I'll admit it, I lost control – I didn't maintain – I reacted without thinking. My reply was cutting, harsh, and far too intelligent for him to understand.

"Sir, it's obvious you think words don't have specific meaning since you can't distinguish between a canyon and a mountain. The "*mountain*" is 3,576 *farfnals* high!"

His confused "What?" just made me more exasperated.

"I'm sorry you didn't understand that...the "*mountain*" is 7.6 *nerfratz* high!"

"No, no, no," he said "I don't want it in metric – how high is the mountain in *American*?"

By now you can be sure I was on a roll, and even though that little voice in the back of my head kept saying "*Shut up, shut up, shut up, this guy's an idiot and not worth your time...*" I just couldn't stop myself.

"Sir, I'm sorry I confused you, but I feel that if we want our children to grow up with some intelligence, we – ourselves – must set a good example and exhibit some intelligence, too. Don't you agree?"

I smiled broadly and walked away to continue the tour.

Immediately I regretted my words, not because I had offended him, but that I had wasted my time with him. I could have just answered the question he was trying to ask

(about 650 feet), and gotten on with the tour. I knew nothing I could say would change him, and rising to the bait just demonstrated my lack of control. It reminds me of an old saying: "It takes 34 muscles to frown, and only 7 to smile. But it only takes 22 to thoroughly bitch-slap the shit out of somebody – and sometimes it's worth it."

Well, my actions were not without consequence. A couple weeks later, I received a copy of a letter of complaint he sent to my manager. Apparently I had "embarrassed" him in front of all his friends.

My supervisor asked me to draft a letter of apology to the offended gentleman. I tell you, it's amazing how obnoxious I can be when tremendously annoyed, and boy was I tremendously annoyed by this whole mess.

The first letter I drafted was dripping with sarcasm. I appealed to his "*Christian* sense of right and wrong" and begged his forgiveness. I just knew he had a "forgiving heart and that God would want him to forgive me and accept my apology."

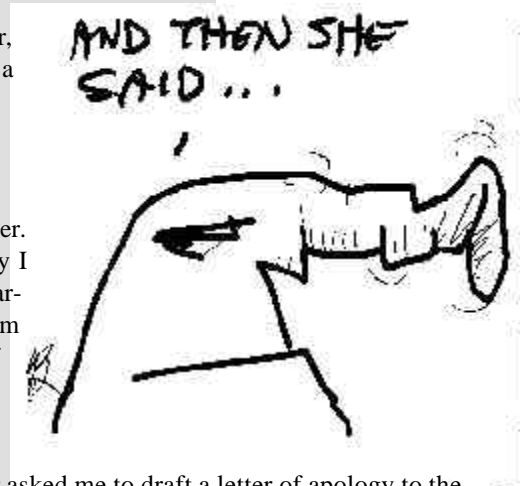
My friends on the guide force (all of whom have a triple digit IQ) thought my draft was funny, witty, and simply too cutting and sarcastic. I pointed out that first of all the idiot probably wouldn't recognize my sarcasm, and that secondly since he was supposedly Christian, he would have to forgive me because his religion required it. I couldn't lose. Unfortunately my supervisor wasn't swayed by my argument and asked me to write another letter.

Eventually a final version was drafted and – once again – I thought the whole mess was behind me.

Nay, true believer, it was not to be so.

I hesitate to guess, and this is only rumor, but as I understand it, my supervisor's supervisor decided my sarcasm and outlandish behavior was simply too much to be overlooked. She contacted the offended gentleman and asked him if he was satisfied with the outcome of the situation. With some prodding and prompting from her, he decided his hurt feelings hadn't been properly assuaged, and that even though several months had passed since the incident, he was still feeling embarrassed and ashamed to show his face in front of his friends and fellow parishioners. Revenge may belong to the Lord, but retribution is the providence of man.

The result? I received two day's suspension without pay.



I was indignant, I was shocked, I was mortified. I couldn't believe it. Here I was, one of the dam's best tour guides – receiving awards and commendations left and right – subjected to such severe punishment. After all, it's not like I did this kind of thing all the time.

I pointed out that I had spoken to approximately 42,000 people in the previous year alone and only one had enough of a problem with me to lodge a complaint. Them's pretty good odds, I'd say.

"Ahh," they said, "but this is twice in one year. That shows a *trend*."

"Twice in one year?" I couldn't believe what I was hearing. "Twice in one year? When was the other time?"

I imagine you've figured it out by now – the Tom Green Incident. Yes, that's right, the Tom Green Incident had occurred precisely 362 days earlier. And even though the complaint letter was weeks after the occurrence, that didn't matter. One year is one year, and I had two "serious" infractions within that year. Obviously, I am a bad person and deserve to be punished, and the fact that not one, but three letters of apology had been written (my manager's assistant wrote and sent one, also) to this guy, it just wasn't enough.

Two day's suspension, beginning immediately.

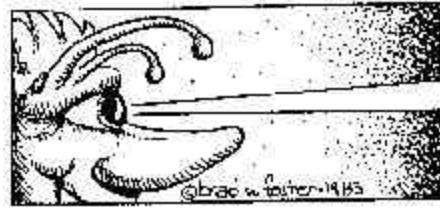
At the dam, my normal workweek was four 10-hour shifts with three days off. I worked Monday through Thursday. It's kind of nice to have Friday, Saturday, *and* Sunday off each week. I usually devote one day to completely goofing off, and two days to Aileen, the house, and various chores. With an extra two days off, a normal long weekend would be turned into a short week off. Almost like a mini-vacation. With my truck, I could go camping, or drive up and visit my good friends Tom and Tammy Springer. Or I could take that long motorcycle ride up to Lake Tahoe. Two extra days off would be like a holiday. How could I go wrong? You'd think that by now I'd learn not to ask that question.



Stay tuned to next issue when we find out what Ken does with his mini-vacation...



...and now we'll continue on to our first guest columnist, introducing Mr. Doug Burbidge. Some sort of introduction being necessary, let me say that Doug's is a mind remarkably quick at taking a big bite out of the obvious, masticating it into something unexpected and spitting it out in an entertaining fashion.



Doug worked in Vegas as das Übergeek for an international "laser-tag" group called Megazone. His journeys take him from Vegas, to England, back to Vegas, and then on to his native Australia. His first installment of an ongoing travelogue is called...

Burnmoor Street

by Doug Burbidge

The landlord's name is Simon Barre; not to be confused with my future co-worker, Simon Willetts. He used to own the Laser Quest site that later converted to Megazone equipment, and that was later bought by Megazone to become their base of operations for the UK, and that later held Pat and Katie, and later again, me.

So Pat and Katie had know him from way back, which is how they hooked up with him to rent rooms to Simon Willetts and later, me.

Burnmoor Street is south and a little west of the city centre, not far from the twisty-turny ring road, and next to the football stadium. ("Football", of course, means soccer.) Above the houses on the west side of the road, two of the stadium's lighting towers are visible.

The houses all appear to be two-storey, all built in a row. In Las Vegas, apartments are built one above the other. In England, at the time these terrace houses were built, this innovation had apparently not yet been made. Each house is extremely narrow, and extremely tall. Most of the houses have a little concrete nameplate built into the facade, giving the name and year of creation of the house. The even side of the street contains Buxton Houses; Haddon Houses; Derwent House; Stratford Houses; and ours, Warwick House; all built in 1898.

Our house, 26a, is on the east side of the street, on the corner of a tiny stub street. Presumably this stub once went somewhere, but no longer: it ends after about 10 metres, in a brick wall. The front door to 26a is on this stub street. It has two locks: a familiar Yale-style tumbler lock, and one of the really old style warded locks, which I haven't seen for years; the key with a long round shaft

and symmetric mask pattern on the end.

Brian is in, and Simon introduces me. Brian is the only current tenant. He has the downstairs bedroom. He's a sports reporter for the Express, a national newspaper. Simon mentions to Brian that there's plenty of electricity in the meter; a statement whose meaning completely eludes me until I get an explanation from someone else, much later.

It seems that in England the authorities are not allowed to simply cut you off from the electricity supply without first installing a special pay-as-you-go meter. You then feed this meter cards which you have bought from the electricity company, and it dispenses power accordingly. The meter has a little LCD screen, showing how much credit you have remaining. Just why 26a is on this scheme I don't know; but Simon periodically turns up and feeds the meter another card.

Simon shows me around the house. Ground floor is Brian's bedroom to the right of the front door, so it faces onto Burnmoor St; and kitchen / living room to the left. There is a hot water system clearly retrofitted in one top corner of the kitchen, which Simon describes as supplying "plenty of hot water". It looks to me rather small for coping with showers for three people, but that's because I haven't seen the bathroom yet.

The kitchen also contains a stove circa 1975 complete with original grease, the front-loading washing machine (about which more another day); and in the living room is a TV that picks up all four channels. The whole house has that piecemeal style furniture you get in rental accommodation; but this being England the pieces have had longer to accumulate. For example, there are plates from fourteen different sets of dishware.

Behind the kitchen / living-room is a tiny back yard, about 4 metres by 4 metres. In the middle, where the front door enters, is a short corridor leading to the door to the basement, and the Staircase Of Sudden Death.

The entire house is only about 4 metres deep. The Staircase needs to leave enough space for the front door to open into, and then use the remaining space to rise one floor. This means that it is extremely steep; more than 45 degrees. It goes up for about nine steps (steps that could be treated as a ladder as easily as a staircase) and then turns 180 degrees in four steps.

On the first floor (remember, that's the one *above* the ground floor) are two bedrooms and the bathroom. The bedroom facing onto Burnmoor St will be mine; the one opposite is Simon Willett's. Simon has lived here before, when last he was in Leicester working for Megazone; and this was his room then.

(Various other rooms have also been occupied at times by various other Megazone personnel; the house is its own little Who's Who of Megazone.)

One corridor off the Staircase of Sudden Death serves the two bedrooms; the other corridor off it connects to the bathroom, tucked in behind Simon's room. But since the Staircase had such trouble gaining the necessary height

with sufficient rapidity, there is no landing connecting these two corridors: to get from my bedroom to the bathroom, you have to step down onto the first step, and then up again into the bathroom corridor. Nice and challenging when half asleep and in the dark.

The bathroom itself is quite large and is carpeted with some kind of stuff obviously designed for bathrooms: it's like walking around on a huge bathmat. It contains a bathtub, onto which has been retrofitted an electric shower.

That's right: an electric shower. It's a box, with a single cold water pipe running into it, and electric power rewired from what used to be a light fitting overhead, and which indeed still has a string hanging down, by means of which the light could be turned on and off. There is a knob on the box to control water temperature: you twist the knob and water starts to flow, and is electrically heated by an element in the box.

I am stunned. "What a clever idea," I think to myself, "mixing water and electricity in a highly humid and poorly maintained environment, less than half a metre away from a naked human who is standing right in the middle of the shortest path to ground."

The bathroom also contains the warming cupboard. This is part of the house's heating system, and it contains a large tank full of warm or hot water. I am uncertain as to whether or not this tank is associated with the hot water system downstairs in the kitchen; I think not. This warm water is then piped to a series of radiators, one in each room in the house; a procedure which occasionally involves an amazing collection of creaking, groaning and clanking noises. The warm water heats the radiator, which in turn warms the room. The whole thing is obviously retrofitted: all the radiator pipes run *outside* the



walls, around skirting-board height in most of the rooms.

There is also an upwards continuation of the Staircase. Cleverly, part of the ceiling over this stretch of Staircase is sufficiently low that if you choose to climb it in staircase mode (as opposed to ladder mode), you whack your head, quite hard.

The second floor contains two more bedrooms, at slightly different floor levels; with low, sloping ceilings. These two rooms are effectively the attic, so although there's plenty of space where you enter the rooms, at the middle of the house, there is a rapidly diminishing head clearance as you move towards the edges. These two rooms are presently unoccupied.

The phone and TV lines are retrofitted, similar to the heating system. (Obviously none of these things were standard in housing a century ago.) The phone line is tacked to the outside of the building and snakes in through a window to the house's sole phone jack, in the living room. However, most of the wiring for the lighting (except in the bathroom) and some of the wiring for electrical outlets is run inside the walls. The visible portion (switches and outlets) all looks modern, but I wonder what kind of wire is buried in the walls. I have a nasty suspicion that if I opened up a switch or an outlet, I'd find solid core copper cable with woven cotton insulation, long since dried and turned weak and brittle.

My room contains a bed with a heavy duvet, a bedside table and wardrobe that actually match (although the wardrobe is broken such that the doors don't actually close), and a mismatched bookcase, desk and chair. It now also contains my suitcase. Brian and I go out for fish and chips, which for some reason involves mushy peas; and then I go to sleep.

Tomorrow morning Phil will pick me up and we'll walk into the office together. This will supply me with a guided tour of the way to the office, and a bit of a look around Leicester.



We'll hear more from Doug in further issues. Meanwhile, having heard from one former Vegas fan, I think it only proper we hear from another ... none other than that aggressively friendly friend of fiend or foe ... JoHn Hardin.

JoHn also has the distinction of being a former former Vegas fan. He moved to Ohio years ago, although he's now back in the desert. In this missive, he introduces us to his...

Tim'rous Wee Beastie

by JoHn Hardin

We have a mouse. Not from the pet store.

We first saw our mouse on the front porch, whereupon Karla and I enjoined the dog not to catch and eat the little thing. In retrospect, that would have been better.

Not that the dog could ever catch it. This mouse is apparently equipped with the latest ZipMouse[®] stealth technology. All sightings to date consist solely of small, gray, rodent shaped *streaks* from one place to another. We're only sure it's a mouse because of the calling cards.

About a week after the initial sighting on the porch, we found a loaf of bread with suspicious gnaw marks on one corner. A quick inspection turned up Conspicuous Mouse Droppings nearby, so tiny they could almost be cute, until you remember Hanta virus.

On Thanksgiving morning I went to move our big cast iron skillet off the stove. Conscientious skillet owners that we are, we apply a bit of coconut oil to the pan after every washing. This morning, preserved like dinosaur tracks in petrified mud, scores of perfect, tiny mouse prints decorated the greased surface of the pan.

Now we keep it in the oven overnight.

And that's my problem with this rodent. I wouldn't mind if he wanted to move into the basement and do small home improvement tasks, but he's gallivanting around my kitchen and I doubt that he shares my commitment to personal hygiene. For that he must die.

Maybe.

We're contemplating the purchase of a humane, non-lethal trap but that seems like a big investment for a single, ice-cube sized crumb-snatcher. Old fashioned spring traps are cheap and lethal. The only trick is to make sure I find the dispatched mouse before the kids.

Still my inner Buddha says to spare the stupid little thing's life (my inner Buddha doesn't call it stupid, either, I'm paraphrasing here). So I'm torn, as usual.

If we did use a humane trap, what would I do with a live mouse? This isn't some pet store inbred snake food; the kids couldn't play with it. I couldn't let it loose anywhere near the house; it would probably just find it's way back in. I don't blame it for that. I wouldn't want to sleep outside in December either. If I have to get in the

car to drive it to a field in the country, I might as well drive downtown and let it go in the local Republican Party headquarters.

But it hasn't come to that yet. We hope that it will leave under it's own power, deterred by the dog and our heightened state of security in the kitchen. For example, I've learned that a liberal sprinkling of cayenne pepper around the periphery of the countertop will keep it rodent free overnight. I doubt that this alone will drive mouse out of the house, but I do derive a certain sadistic glee when I think of the furry interloper getting a noseful of my chemical warfare countermeasures.

Next week I'm buying a jar of habanero peppers. So far, my inner Buddha has no comment.

So let's progress from heating things up with capsicum to using trinitrotoluene. I worked with Bruce at Hoover Dam, and his story deserves telling. I'm twisting his arm, albeit not too hard, to squeeze more stuff from him. In the mean time, although this probably wasn't the exact utterances used at the time, it'll suffice to say it could have been said.

Just imagine listening to the echoes from the surrounding hills when one man turns to the other and says, ...

“Do You Think You Used Enough Dynamite There, Butch?”

by Bruce Swanson

When I was a young man, I went off to the wars as a mercenary. Going to other people's wars for money is not a way to live a long and healthy life, but it will satisfy a taste for adventure. If you know the right people, it can also be profitable.

The secret is to only take contracts for short-term specialist work...you can make as much in one day as a regular soldier makes in a month. If you have the right contacts, the contracts will come.

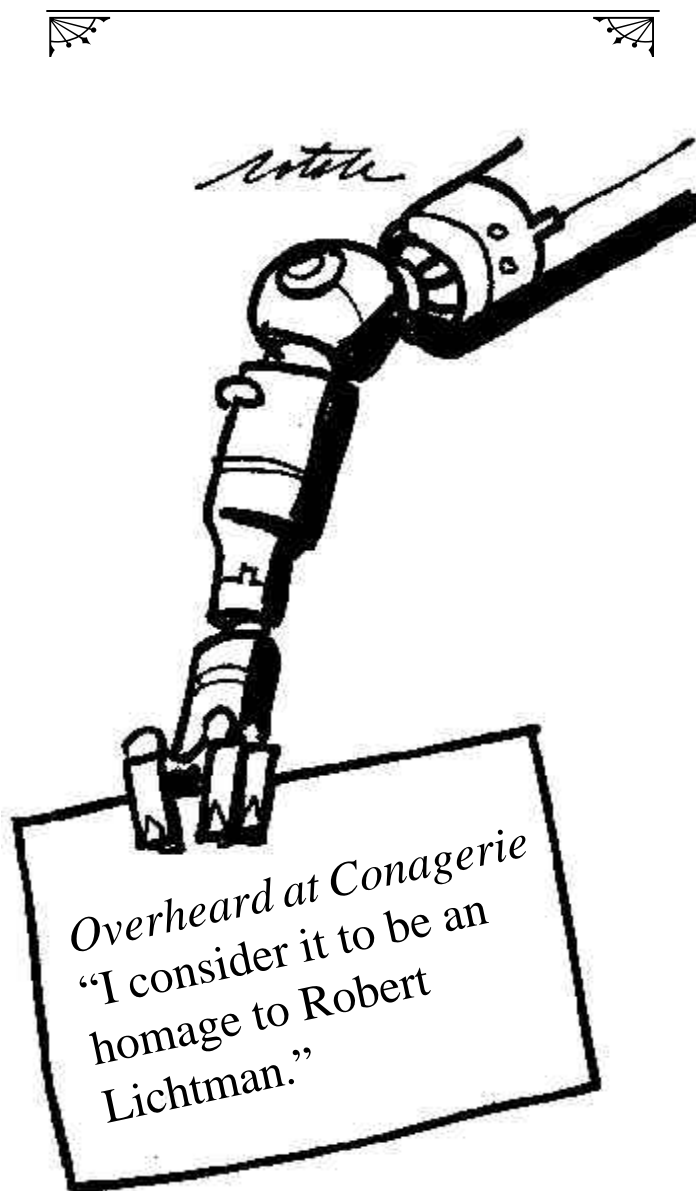
When I got to Ft. Hood, one of the first people I met was Danny. Daniel Riordan Fitzgerald. Danny Fitz. Nice German feller. We had a psychic connection that was some times frightening in intensity. We would be sitting in the barracks, look at each other, and without a word exchanged we would go and play the most elaborate practical jokes on people. We were the right hand and the left.

Once, I saw Danny talking to a couple of suits. Company men, although I didn't know it. I walked in, to more trouble and pain than I can explain. They were trying to hire Danny for a job in a country that shall remain nameless. He agreed, and when they invited me too, like a fool I said yes. Hell, I was young, a soldier, it was peacetime and I was bored. The money they offered was good and it was something that had the potential to be exciting at times.

Country A wanted us to go into Country B and destroy a riverboat that was carrying arms and other contraband to guerrillas fighting against Country A. Since Countries A and B were not at war with each other, but were not friendly either, a covert operation was required.

We were eight in all. We could not all go in one of the helicopters available, so two were used. The landing zone we were using was so small that the helicopters could not land and we had to rappel to the ground. Danny and the others in the first helicopter made it to the ground without problems.

When my helicopter came to a hover over the landing zone, we threw out the ropes and began our descent. Someone began shooting at the helicopter. Tracers went past the cockpit canopy. The pilot banked the helicopter and began to fly away while we were still 20 meters in the



air. The trees were getting close rapidly, and we had only a few seconds to react.

I let go of the rope and dropped to the end. There I became entangled with the weight used to deploy the rope. The trees were getting close so I drew my knife and cut the rope. I fell about 10 meters and landed on my rucksack and backside. I was stunned for a few minutes by the impact. I am lucky I didn't go into orbit cause I had 27 kg of TNT and 4 Claymores in my ruck.

Two of the other men also cut their ropes and dropped to safety, but the third was dragged through the treetops until his rope broke. His back and many other bones were broken. We gave him Morphine and when he died, we buried him and split up his gear.

Danny and the other group had hunted down the shooters and killed them. Luckily for us, they were guerrillas and had no communications equipment. Our only worry was if someone had heard the shooting. We waited for some time, but it seemed as if no one had noticed.

We marched for three days to reach the river. There we dug in and camouflaged ourselves on the bank and watched the riverboat for several days. It was an old wooden riverboat about 12 meters long with a beam of about 5 meters. It drew no more than 1,5 meters. It was a stern-wheeler, which had had the steam engine and boiler removed. The new engine was a two-cylinder two-cycle long stroke diesel. This is a very simple engine that can be built by a blacksmith or simple machine shop. It is a good engine in a low-tech country. It made a very distinctive sound and could be heard for a long way, so we had plenty of warning when the boat was coming.

We decided to destroy the boat on a section of the river where there were no farms or villages. Our best option was to blow up the boat with a mine.

I had been reading about how the Partisans would destroy German tanks during the war by hiding in a ditch and pulling a mine into the road with a rope as the tank passed. We marked a rope so that we could pull the mine across the river to where the boat would run right over it. We made the mine out of 36 kilograms of TNT, and fitted it with two firing circuits, one electrical and one non-electrical. We hid the mine on the opposite side of the river. With everything ready, we waited.

When we heard the boat coming, I watched it approach until I knew where it would pass. I pulled the mine across until I reached the correct mark on the rope. When the boat reached the mine, I ducked down and detonated the explosives.

The explosion was tremendous. Have you ever seen films of bombs being dropped in Viet Nam? You can see the shock wave because the air is humid and there is an expanding white ring. I saw that ring pass overhead. If we had not been dug in, we would have been killed. As it was, we were badly bruised by the shock pressures. My toenails hurt. My hair hurt. I hurt from head to toe. For the first time, my back didn't bother me cause everything else hurt more.

The boat must have been carrying explosives in its cargo, which detonated with our mine.

I looked out. The boat was gone. All of the water had been blown out of the river and we could see the riverbed. Water was beginning to run back into the crater from both sides. Tiny bits of debris rained down. We noticed that some of the debris raining down was corn flakes.

We had to leave quickly. It was a three-day march to where we were to be picked up by the helicopters. We ate Tylenol like candy the whole way.

The money was all spent within three months, but my back has never stopped hurting.



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I like to share my fanzines with people who share their stuff. It's more fun when everyone plays.

...but it was a nice jungle.

Westercon 55 Conagerie was a wonderful, fannish blur. As always, things whipped by much too fast for me to completely savor the moments. But I like rollercoasters, too.

I got to meet Dwayne Kaiser, Las Vegas Eo-Fan. Great guy, thanks Dwayne.

Using a style that seemed like a cross between Mike Wallace and Mr. Rogers, Arnie Katz interviewed FGoH Robert Lichtman. State secrets were revealed, scandals were mentioned.

I couldn't possibly remember all the people who made the con so enjoyable, but special thanks should go to Milt Stevens for a superb Fan Lounge. Bravo, sir!