

## FANZINES 12

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By Ted White

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CONTACT!/SPIRITS OF THINGS PAST #4 (Dick Smith & Leah Zeldes Smith, 410 W. Willow Rd., Prospect Heights, IL 60070-1250; e-mail to either Dick at [rhes@enteract.com](mailto:rhes@enteract.com) or to Leah at [lazs@enteract.com](mailto:lazs@enteract.com); published for members of Ditto 14 combined with FanHistoriCon 11, October 2001; copies are available for \$10, postage included, the proceeds to benefit Ditto, FanHistoriCon and DUFF)

Up to this point I've reviewed the regular issues of various fanzines here. This time is different: *Contact!* is an extraordinary (final) issue of an unusual fanzine. The first three issues of *Spirits Of Things Past* were essentially elaborate progress reports for the then-upcoming convention that combined Ditto and FanHistoriCon. Because Ditto (named after the once-popular method of spirit-duplicating fanzines) is a "fanzine-oriented" convention, this approach – turning progress reports into full-fledged issues of a fanzine, complete with letter columns – made good sense. And the Smiths, editors of the well-established genzine, *Stet*, were ideal for the task.

For the convention itself they produced *Contact!* which although billed as the 4th issue of *Spirits Of Things Past*, is in fact a stand-alone volume, a "fanthology" of material by 72 fans oriented around a common theme: how they first encountered fandom. Some of these contributions are only a paragraph or two long, occupying perhaps a quarter or a third of a page. Others are full articles or essays, some of which run for several pages.

The volume opens – once past a glittery cover – with a prefatory page which quotes a passage from *The Enchanted Duplicator* (Walt Willis & Bob Shaw's timeless allegory of fandom), in which Jophan is touched by the Spirit of Fandom's "Wand of Contact." This perfect introduction is followed by Leah Zeldes Smith's "Our Fandom and Welcome to It," in which she explains the nature and genesis of the volume and draws some comparisons between it and the 1961 Earl Kemp publication, *Why Is A Fan?* In this piece Leah observes the changes which have occurred in fandom over the last half-century, and wonders if the parts of fandom which she most values (as do I) are still attractive to the latest generation of incipient fans.

Then come 85 pages of reminiscences by 72 fans, arranged chronologically and beginning with Forry Ackerman's 1929 entrance into fandom as it was beginning to form ("I guess I didn't discover fandom, it just kind of grew up around me.") and ending with Lisa C. Freitag's first encounter with fandom in 1984. This is followed by a five-page index and a back cover quote from the conclusion of *The Enchanted Duplicator*.

Most of the contributors to this volume will not be known to anyone not already involved actively in fandom (the real exception is Mike Resnick – whose piece runs more than five

pages), and many of their stories will be most meaningful for those who already know them best. But for anyone curious about fandom, this volume of initial experiences may open a few doors and reveal a commonality shared by all of us who have become active fans.

—Ted White