

FANZINES 25

By Ted White

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WASSAMATTA U. (Randy Byers, editor & author, 1013 North 36th, Seattle WA 98103; e-mail to rbyers@u.washington.edu; available to promote Byers' TAFF candidacy – but send at least a dollar to cover the postage)

One of fandom's unique traditions (starting in 1953) is the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund which exists "for the purpose of providing funds to bring well-known and popular fans familiar to those on both sides of the ocean across the Atlantic" to a major convention – the Worldcon, if possible. The TAFF alternates, bringing overseas fans to the U.S. and then sending U.S. fans abroad – usually to the U.K. The fan who is thus funded is one who has won an election and after he or she wins and takes the trip, the winner takes over the administration of the fund from the previous winner on the same side of the Atlantic. There is also the tradition (unfortunately honored as often as not in its breach) of writing and publishing a trip report. These are known as "TAFF Reports."

Fans become well-known and popular and familiar to those on both sides of the ocean largely via written communications – fanzines and the Internet newsgroups and e-lists which have grown up over the past decade.

This year the candidates for the trip to the U.K. are three Americans and one Canadian, all of whom are known and liked and capable. They are Randy Byers, Colin Hinz, Mike Lowrey and Curt Phillips. I will be happy with whomever wins. But Full Disclosure requires me to admit that I am one of Randy Byers' nominators.

And Randy has done something I'd like to see all TAFF candidates do: He has published a collection of his own fanwriting, covering a full decade of work. *Wassamatta U.* is a 36-page fanzine, very simply but attractively designed by Carl Juarez (who is one of those guys who doesn't want his name capitalized), containing 13 of Byers' pieces, plus an introductory "editorial."

"In the short term – such as it is – this collection is a promotional tool for my 2003 TAFF campaign," Byers states in that editorial. "I thought that voters might be interested in a sampling of my writing to help them make up their minds one way or another. ... There are a couple of con-reports here that should give you an idea of what my TAFF trip report would be like. I think you'll find my writing full of fantasy, good humor, and near-hallucinatory levels of bewilderment, but grounded in a terse, sweaty fear of love and death. Just the qualities one looks for (and finds) in a TAFF candidate, I'm sure you'll agree."

There's a lot of excellent writing in *Wassamatta U.* Byers tells strange tales of encounters with fans and ruminates on what "fannish" really means. He reviews a book (Gwyneth Jones' *North Wind*) and considers a proximate death. He wends words in personal but meaningful ways. *This* is what fanwriting is all about. If TAFF didn't exist this would still be one of the top fan publications of the year.

