



Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor
State of California

Edited by:
Woody Bernardi

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THE GAY BLADE

The Ramblings of a Vegas Fan

By **Woody Bernardi**

So there I was sitting in Arnie and Joyce's living room, near the end of a particularly enjoyable Vagrants meeting. I had been the first among Las Vegas Fandom to ever see Arnie and Joyce's new living room, some two years before, as I had been employed by Arnie & Joyce as a Realtor® and local Fan to sell "The Tucker Hotel" and then of course they needed a place to live and so I also aided them in finding their new home, "Launch Pad", on a street named for astronaut Eugene Cernan. So there I was speaking with Joyce when Arnie suddenly and ruthlessly made the comment that I was acting like Peggy Burke.

All I had been doing was informing Joyce that I had only that day begun thinking about actually doing a new fanzine. Up to that point I had thought about it and even spoken about it, but only in the most general terms.

Now, I'm rarely compared to women, femfen or otherwise, and so I was just a bit disturbed by the allusion. My interest in femfen, in particular, or even mundane women in general, rests purely with intellectual pursuits. Such shared moments might include the pursuit of the perfect male form—Mind you I'm not above pursuing a nice "young" man regardless of his intellectual prowess (or lack thereof)—but with women, it's purely intellectual.

While growing up my older sister Marie learned to rely on my opinions her outfits. Such things can be very important "intellectual" pursuits for two people to share. Marie, and I developed a code, I'll call it "The DK Scale" which was based on the daughter of a family which was very friendly with ours and we used the daughter's name of "Debra Krell" due to her rather conservative style of dress, only in the most loving sense, of course.

Now to be accused of "acting just like" a femfan, well this concerned me because after all I have a reputation to protect. Being accused of being a FemFan impersonator will just not do.

Now I know some men who just love dressing in drag, but this has never been my bag. Therefore I felt I had to set the record "straight" on this point. Don't ask me to go "straight" down the road when "going Gayly forward" will do and don't accuse me of having the "Shopping gene" (because I DO NOT), nor do I have the "Drag" gene either.

Now Arnie went on to explain that Peggy would often "talk about doing a Fanzine, 'some day'", but as she never seemed to have anything to say "'some day' just never arrived", Arnie concluded. Well, Arnie "someday" as arrived for me and it is TODAY.

You see before you (digitally or otherwise) my first fanzine in quite a number of years. Now it has been very close to 10 years since my last issue of Marquee, which was a FAPAZine—though I did distribute it to a very limited extent outside FAPA. But after I left Las Vegas,



Speaking of Dress-
ing in Drag!

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in 1997, to return to New England (from whence I had originated so many years before.). I did do a few issues of an APazine for a Gay Men's APA called GAPS. I called that zine *The Gay Pilgrim*. I felt that to be an appropriate title, as I was in the land originally settled by the Pilgrims and besides *The Improper Bostonian* was already taken.

So, since I have been back in Las Vegas just over 2 1/2 years now, and I published my last issue of *The Gay Pilgrim* a year or so before leaving Boston, it **HAS** been about four years since my last zine was published.

So, in this issue I have included a few articles written by myself. In the first I write about my acquisition of my two Real Estate Licenses, both in Massachusetts and Nevada and I go on to talk a bit about my current employment as an AmeriCorp VISTA Volunteer.

The next one talks about my Fanac in Las Vegas Fandom and my nonFan activities in the Las Vegas Lesbian & Gay Community during the 1990s. Because, such things must be documented in print for if it is not written up in Fanzine it never happened, or so I have been told numerous times.

Finally, I have written a piece documenting my Fanac in LV Fandom since returning to Las Vegas after a four and a half year sojourn in Boston, the land of my Italian immigrant grandparents, on both sides of my family.

So read on and **PLEASE** send me LoCs, with which I might fill my next issue. I'm working on my friend and newly published Pro, Kent Hastings, to provide me with an article for a future issue. So perhaps there will be future issues which will contain writings from someone other than myself, we shall see.



It's been several years since my last Fanzine. I need sustenance!

The Realtor[®] as Fan

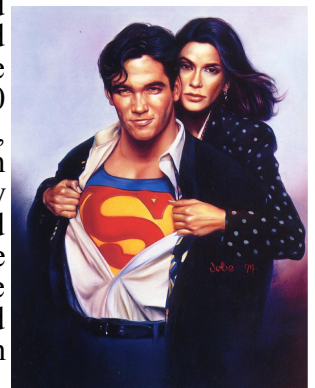
B y W o o d y B e r n a r d i

While I was in Boston, I answered an ad in a newspaper called *Bay Windows* (which is the newspaper for the Gay Community in Boston, The South End being the Gay neighborhood and home to both this newspaper, the Boston Ballet, and the Cathedral for the Catholic Archdiocese of Boston, go figure).

The ad was for a Loan Assistant, at Union Real Estate and I discovered while interviewing with the owner, of the office, that the position paid 100% commission, I took it anyway and began working as a Loan Assistant.

Arnold was the Loan Originator and also the owner of the RE office and had become very busy trying to handle the administration of the office and the files for all of his loans. This began my career in the industry of Residential Sales and mortgages. Arnold taught me how to calculate ratios for potential borrowers to determine if they were even a candidate for a mortgage and if so what price range they could reasonably afford. I learned that it was not necessary to go through any formal instruction to learn to write mortgages.

After about a year of that I decided to get into RE sales, there was a husband and wife team in the office, very common in RE, who were both licensed Realtors[®] and also immigrants from Brazil. They both had their hands full with their very lucrative business working with the Brazilian community (there are more than 50,000 portuguese speakers in the Boston Area, all centered around Union Square, Somerville which was where the office was located) and so they were looking for an assistant. They were both bilingual, so they didn't need a translator, in fact they needed someone who would deal mostly with other Realtors[®] and RE Attorneys and city clerks. In spite of that they specifically told me that they wanted a Portugese Speaker, it was clear that it wasn't simply a language issue with them.(just because I'm a white male living in the U.S. doesn't mean I have not experienced discrimination—I was onced fired from a job, when the owner discoved that I am Gay, but that's a story for another time and perhaps another venue).



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After being turned down for this position I decided to go to RE school and get my own license. So, Arnold referred me to the school at which he studied. I took their course over a two day weekend, a total of 24 hours of instruction, and subsequently scheduled my licensing exam administered by the State.

So on the appointed day I reported to the appropriate state office and waited in the waiting room with about 50 others awaiting the same fate. While waiting for the doors to open, I heard several horror stories. Stephan King isn't the only New Englander who has apparently experienced some horrors in "Old New England". I heard many people talking about having failed the exam on more than one occasion in the past (some of them having failed it three or more times) and there they were waiting to try yet again.

At that point I began to get nervous, I had not studied a single word between the time my class ended and that moment. I suddenly saw every penny I was about to spend on the exam fees flashing before my eyes and being sucked down a drain never to be seen again. At that point, I pulled out my notebook and began to furiously read over my notes.

I had not gotten halfway through my notes before the doors opened and we began filing into the room to pay our fees and be seated before a computer terminal which would randomly select the 50 questions we would need to answer correctly, in order to pass the exam and receive our licenses to sell Residential RE in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

I soon discovered that I needn't have worried, I answered ALL of the questions in a fraction of the time allotted and left my computer and waited for several agonizing minutes before a stern looking state employee with a suitcase camera on the counter next to her. I felt like I was in the DMV and was expecting them to find some reason why they couldn't give me my driver's license. Though presently I was informed that I had indeed passed (on my first attempt!) and was licensing fees and was subsequently Massachusetts.

Upon returning to Las Vegas, I was Nevada to take another 24 hours of instruction Real Estate, before being permitted to pay dubious pleasure of once again taking an exam more fees as a prerequisite to receiving a license good news was that I was not being required to portions of the instruction.

Upon completing the 24 hours required of correspondence course, I once again found listening to still more horror stories about occasions.

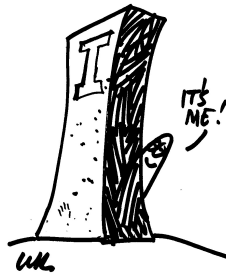
One woman was **PROUDLY** proclaiming that she had failed the exam not once, twice or even three times. No she had managed to fail the exam no less than four times before. She was sitting with us waiting for her **FIFTH** attempt at taking the Real Estate Examination for a license to sell Residential Real Estate in the State of Nevada.

Now, it occurred to me at that point that I probably would not want someone who could not pass the licensing exam the first **FOUR** times they attempted to take it, assisting me in perhaps the largest single sales transaction (whether as a buyer or a seller) in which the vast majority of us will participate during our lifetimes.

I realize that we are not talking about the Bar Exam or anything like that. Even the Insurance Exam, I have been told, is incredibly difficult to pass and contains scores of questions which have no relationship to the knowledge necessary to actually selling insurance. The Real Estate Licensing Exam is not like that at all. There are about 50 questions and while they test us on concepts, the mechanics of which we don't really use again; things like how many feet to an acre and forcing us to know the formula for determining the actual square footage of a given structure (Actual or Gross Living Area, etc...). We do use these concepts everyday as a Realtor[®], it's true (We don't ever have to "show our work" as in Math Class, however). We don't ever again need to know how to calculate the correct information as that information is given to us either through previous RE transactions (in the case of a resale) or from public record or the builder in the case of new construction. That said, there is a very direct correlation between the questions asked in the Real Estate Licensing Exam and the actual knowledge required to work as a professional Realtor[®]. As with any profession, of course, one's work experience quickly exceeds any training and/or examination process one goes through in preparation.

I did learn a lot about contractual law, in both RE schools (from Federal Law to the State Laws of two

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compelled by the laws of the State of Nevada State Laws pertaining to more examination fees for the before being permitted to pay still to sell RE in the State of Nevada. The retake any of the Federal Law

me here in Nevada, through a myself sitting in a waiting area people failing the exam on multiple

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different States). The actual practice, however, of putting together a contract for two parties to enter into on a sale of "Real Property" which will typically exceed \$100k, can be a sobering responsibility for anyone to take on. Rest assured, my experience since receiving my first RE License in November of 1997, has entered into the multimillion dollar range and has included experience in representing Buyers and Sellers alike (and in some cases has included the need to act as a "Dual Agent", which means that my fiduciary responsibility is actually to protect the best interests of BOTH parties). This has had a most sobering effect on my life. I know that Arnie and Joyce can attest to my learned skill in managing the sale of Real Property, as I have personally heard Joyce proclaim her satisfaction with my work in the sale of Toner Hall. In that transaction we had a "Buyer", another married couple (brought to the table by a cooperating RE Agent from another RE office), who quickly turned into the Buyers from Hell, but I digress.

After selling RE for a little over two years, here in Las Vegas, I have only recently decided to take a job which will actually give me a regular paycheck and to continue as a Realtor® in a part time capacity. This is very common in Boston, though not so common here in Las Vegas. Beginning September 1, 2004, I have been working as an AmeriCorp VISTA. AmeriCorp was created by President Johnson in 1965 and it is often referred to as the domestic Peace Corp, all AmeriCorp positions are for domestic service only.

I am working in the Southern Nevada Health Education Center (SNAHEC) on the Prevent Child Abuse Nevada Project (PCA NV). My job is to assist the project manager with various wordprocessing assignments. Part of my job is to maintain the registration database of licensed preschool teachers who take our three hour class entitled: **"Recognizing, Reporting and Preventing Child Abuse for the Day Care Provider"**. I am also charged with reestablishing and expanding the Speaker's Bureau for presenters to assist us with conducting the classes (which are accredited by the State for continuing education credits). We are working with Nevada Child Seekers on the Fun Run and Easter Carnival to be held on March 26, 2005. I have just distributed to other nonprofit organizations, inviting them to participate in the Carnival and setting up booths with games for the children attending.



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Over the previous five plus years of working in the Residential Real Estate Sales Industry, as both Loan Assistant (writing mortgage applications) and Licensed Realtor®, I had completed many RE sales transactions with about 2/3 of them being business I had brought in on my own. This is very common in RE but I had gotten tired of hearing the various sales pitches from Brokers trying to seduce new Sales Agents into their offices. They are all very quick to tell you how much money **YOU** can make in the business and working in **THEIR** office. They are very smooth in their pitches when telling you why you will make more money with them than you are in your current office, but usually wanting money up front from new Agents and often not willing to take those fees out of your first commission.

They are also constantly filling your head with rhetoric about how many sales leads one can get from **THEIR** office, which **WILL** without a doubt translate into steady income. Well, in my several years as a full time Realtor®, most of the business I conducted was through business which I personally generated. This is very common in RE but I was generally in an office in which I was giving anywhere between 40%-25% of my commissions to the office.

I got tired of working in various offices in which I received little or no support from Brokers and office staff in generating new business, all the while giving them such large chunks of the business I did write which was largely entirely my own. In the RE business it is possible to enter into an agreement to receive 100% of one's own commissions, but these will require a monthly desk fee paid to the office whether or not any sales actually close.

That said, I still could have built a very lucrative business as a Sales Agent, if I had been willing to be a "Hustler" and push people into transactions with which they might not really be comfortable or go out and seek new business even at the expense of my colleagues. But I never really developed that "survival instinct" which would let me behave in a way which, while technically ethical and certainly legal, is not a very nice way to treat other people.

Consequently, the commission checks very quickly proved to be too few and far between. So, now I am working in an office environment which is allowing me to utilize my computer skills while working on a

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“project” which will hopefully have a very real positive effect on our society. Also, I get to travel from time to time at my employers expense. In September I flew up to Reno to attend four days of training in Carson City, Nevada (the State Capitol). This was a mandatory meeting and we were required to arrive in Carson City on Monday morning and return to Las Vegas on Thursday evening. So I arranged to fly up to Reno on Saturday morning, where I met Joseph, a friend of mine who lives in Oakland, CA, and we spent the day together in Reno and visited with one another. Joseph stayed overnight in my motel room (no hanky-panky, I know SOMEONE was making assumptions) and he returned to Oakland the next morning. I spent the day exploring Reno a bit and the following morning took an airport shuttle back to the Reno airport from which transportation had been arranged to get us into Carson City.

Between November 15th-18th, I was in Provo, Utah for my Pre Service Orientation (PSO). Normally this would be attended prior to ones start as an AmeriCorp VISTA, but a special exception was made in my case as the project needed someone to fill the position and I was available and already living in Las Vegas. In December I'll be in Los Angeles from November 26 - December 3 attending another mandatory training. The training is from December 1-3, I'm going early so I can attend Loscon.

A Boston Yankee in King Arnie's Court The Gay 90s in Las Vegas By Woody Bernardi

Upon returning to Las Vegas, in March of 2002, I spent the first several months taking some Real Estate courses I would need in order to get my RE License in the State of Nevada. I also began reconnecting with Las Vegas Fandom, by both attending SNAFFU Meetings and Vegnants gatherings, at Arnie & Joyce's invitation.

Over the past year and a half, I have been working on reestablishing the Vegas Science Fiction Association (VSFA). I and my cohort, Shawn White, established VSFA back in 1991 to host VegasCon 1991. SNAFFU had appointed Shawn and me to a committee to explore the possibility of planning a convention in Las Vegas. Since Shawn and I were the only two who attended the first “Committee” meeting we decided to move forward with actually starting the preparations for a convention. Once we had acquired a hotel and set a date, we again approached SNAFFU and offered to make it a SNAFFU event. A vote was held and the membership of SNAFFU, at the time, voted it down. So Shawn and I created VSFA and moved forward with the preparations for the first ever Fan-run general SF/Comic/RPG con to be held in Las Vegas.

It quickly gained a life of it's own, we built a bonifide ConCom of about a dozen people and acquired Larry Niven and Stephen Barnes as our coProGoHs, thanks to a local fan named Renee Christy who we discovered knew both Larry Fuzzy Pink Niven. By the time the dates came around, we had established contact with the LASFS in the form of Christian M'Guire and through him Elayne Pelz, Robbie Cantor and several other LA Fans. At Arnie Katz' suggestion we invited Bruce Pelz to be our FanGoH and thus Bruce became the first FanGoH ever to grace a Las Vegas Con. Bruce did a panel on the “fate of the printed Fanzine verses the electronic Fanzine (this was back in 1991). Too bad we didn't think of recording the panels, it might have made for some interesting reviewing today.

Held over the weekend of November 1-3, 1991, this was the first of three or four cons to bear that name. This first con was very successful, having an attendance of about 450 members. This con was considered a financial success as it generated enough revenue to pay all of the current year's expenses with enough left over for seed money for the following year.

It was considered an “artistic” success as most, if not all, of the members seemed to have had a good time and generally found what they had come to a SF con in search of (no Leonard Nimoy was not there). Even the dealer's were happy, while very few of them made a great deal of profit. The several with whom I spoke had either reached a break even figure or very close to it and they were generally happy to have gotten a weekend in Las Vegas in the bargain.

Each of the future VegasCons were held as an RPG only con. This was presented to the ConCom as a fait accompli by Shawn White and the two RPG coordinators, at the first ConCom meeting held after the con. At the suggestion of several others I and the other SF Fans on the ConCom decided not to bother

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fighting that decision. Joyce pointed out that I could occupy my time working on SNAFFU's SilverCon.

Though the membership of SNAFFU had voted down the idea of co-opting VegasCon as a SNAFFU event, sometime between the advent of VegasCon 1991 and the end of that year, it had been brought to my attention that SNAFFU had decided to hold a con of their own calling it SilverCon. As an active member of SNAFFU, I had not been aware either of a vote occurring at any of the meetings which I attended even while I was busily planning VegasCon, nor had I been aware of the fact that a vote might have taken place at one of the meetings which I did miss. Nonetheless, Ken Forman himself announced SNAFFU's plans to hold their own con in May of 1991.

SilverCon I was rife with problems, not the least of which was the unfortunate reality of the Rodney King riots occurring on the very same weekend (or rather the week just prior to) on which it was to take place. Consequently, the attendance was considerably less than those we had enjoyed at VegasCon only about six months before. However, SNAFFU managed to get through it and with the generosity of more than one local Fan the hotel bill was paid and Las Vegas managed to avoid having the stigma of ending only the second Fan-run con ever to be held in our Fandom with an outstanding hotel bill.

With the support of Arnie and Joyce Katz, Su Williams and a few other members of SNAFFU, I was elected to chair SilverCon II. My first decision as ConChair was to move the con to a new venue. One of the problems which SCon I had, in my opinion, was that it was located in a nongaming hotel. This had the unfortunate effect of looking just like a "LA" hotel and the restaurant was priced well over the relatively low prices of coffee shops in most Hotel/Casinos. While, a LA hotel is great for a con being held in LA, this is Las Vegas. I have always maintained that Fans don't need to come to Las Vegas to experience a LA con. They'll go to Loscon or an LA Westercon or Worldcon. I recognized the fact that the LASFS can do a LA con far better than we possibly could. Therefore I sought out a new venue for SilverCon and found it at the Union Plaza Hotel/Casino. The Plaza Hotel has proven to be a very Fan friendly hotel and we have since seen two SilverCons, two Corflus and a Toner (a Fanzine Fan con of local creation), held at The Plaza with very appealing results.



SilverCon II had about 150 members and generated enough revenue to pay it's own bills and to repay a portion of the debt from the previous year and we had Poul Anderson as our ProGoH. The members of SNAFFU were happy enough with the job I did as ConChair that I was elected to chair SilverCon III, the following year. About a month (or possibly six weeks) prior to SCon III, I resigned my position as ConChair, in favor of Aileen Forman. Aileen took over the saw the event through to it's conclusion, doing the at-ConChair work. There were a couple of reasons for this but the main reason for me was that at the time I was unemployed and it made sense for me on a personal level to resign and concentrate on my personal life rather than continuing to run this the third con for SNAFFU. SCon III went off as planned and people had a good time.

oh, really...!

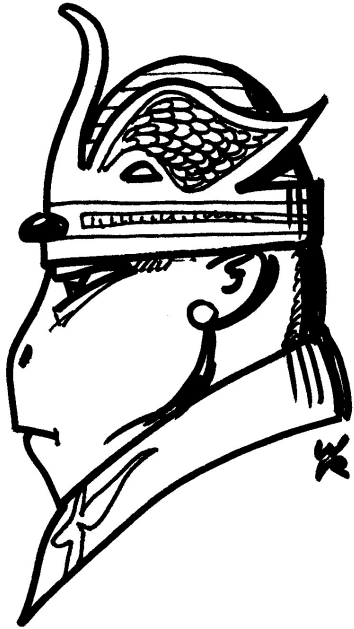


Since this is the first issue, there aren't any LoCs.
There's always the next issue-Hint!
Besides I have an awful lot of Rotsler LoC Illus.

The following year, Aileen Forman chaired SilverCon IV and the first thing she did was relocate it to the Mardi Gras Inn, a much smaller property with a casino consisting entirely of slot machines and video poker. The unfortunate thing about the Mardi Gras Inn was that it had an open courtyard with hotel rooms open along both sides and the pool area is located out there as well. They also had a nice little gazebo right in the middle of a grassy knoll just outside of several of the rooms which various con members had rented and were hosting room parties, Arnie and Joyce included. Unfortunately, the hotel had decided to fertilize their lawns on that particular weekend.

The con had planned one or more events around that gazebo, this turned out to be impossible and more than one attendee was heard to utter the phrase ManureCon.

Several months after SCon IV, it was announced at a SNAFFU meeting that since Aileen and Ken were the only two local Fen capable of planning a con there would be no more cons hosted by SNAFFU. Again there was no vote of the membership that I had been aware of, nor was such a vote brought to my attention at anytime since then.



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IS ALIVE AND
WELL!**

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www.VegaCon.com**

MERRY HO-HO!

