



Inca 2

or



The Return of the Native



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Paper version available for:

- Trade (paper SF/fannish fanzines)
- Publishable letter of comment
- Publishable stuff for future issues
- Other big favours or friendship!

Web (e-version) availability:

Once all the photos are processed, Bill Burns and I hope to upload it onto www.efanines.com.

Front cover photo key: All at Corflu Quire, February 2007; photos by Rob Jackson. Clockwise from top centre:

- Graham Charnock & Ted White, next to John Berry's poster for the arm-wrestling match
 - Rich Coad, Bill Burns: mutual photos
- At Threadgill's, l to r: (Andy Houtof sight to left), Frank, Pat, Harry, Stacy, Rich, Graham, my seat, Mike D, Carrie, and Carrie's sister's head
- Consuite: John Berry (left), Harry, Graham C, Jerry Kaufman (Frank Lunney and ? in rear)
- At the banquet: Bill Burns, Earl Kemp, Mike Moorcock, Peter Weston
- Banquet scene: Joyce Scrivner (front left, red diamond top); Andy Hooper standing – et al
- Long table at dead-dog do: Tracy Benton, Bill Badden, Hank Graham, Randy B (for others see p.33 caption); at right James Taylor
 - (Bottom centre): Graham Cin concert
 - (Bottom left): Frank L & arm adillo
 - (Centre): At Pappadeaux: clockwise from front: Marty & Bill B, Ted W, Lenny B, Earl, Frank
 - (Left): Art Widner (rear view), Peter W (at back), Earl
- Top left: The White-Charnock arm-wrestle

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Back cover photo key: San Francisco (top), Feb. 2007; Los Angeles (bottom), July 2006.

- Top photos by Rob Jackson; lower photos by Hugo Jackson.
- Top left: Bay Bridge from Coit Tower
 - Top right: Sunset over the Bay, from Broadway Tee, Oakland, Wed 14 Feb 2007
 - Centre: At Jay & Dixie's: Carol & Robert's legs, Jay, Marty, Bruce, Harry. (Simultaneous flash from Gary Mattingly's camera at left)
 - Lower left: Palm Trees outside the Convention Centre
 - Lower right: Characters from the gaming series Xenosaga
 - Bottom: A big Geneon stall in one of the traders' halls

THANKS TO ALL THOSE WHO HAVE HELPED WITH THIS – YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE!

Incantations 2 Rob Jackson (2007)

Twenty-eight years – that’s not too many, Meyer. (Who was it first said “that’s not too many, Meyer”? I may be getting on a bit, but I’m not quite old enough to have remembered that.)

A fanzine of my own, once again? For general circulation? Not just an apazine, a fanzine review column, a programme book or other con publication, or an extension of writing from e-lists?

It just shows the magical effect that Corflu can have. Corflu Quire was an amazing experience. The leadup to it and the anticipation, including the work and excitement involved in making sure that Harry Bdl was able to make the trip via the Get Harry fund; the sheer delight of meeting old friends, newish e-friends from IntheBar becoming real persons one can hug by e-by-e, and entirely new friends made at Corflu itself; the wonderful feeling from visiting the Bay Area afterwards, so familiar in some ways as to give a sense of déjà vu; and the return home to make sense of it all and build on the memories by publishing a trip report...

And the title of the trip report itself? Should be self explanatory. To return to one’s fannish roots after 28 years straying – first into fanzine reviewing, then convention organising, then into gafia with work and family cares at the top of the priority list – then curving gradually back, via the Memory Hole and IntheBar e-lists (and a couple of articles for Plokta) – that’s the return. But why revive *Inca*, an old fanzine name from 1979?

Because it makes so much more sense in context. The context comes from that fine fannish word, timebinding. The reconnection between different eras – the past and the present being linked, and by capturing the zeitgeist as right if you possibly can, giving a present to the future. (Yes, the other sort of present – a gift.)

So where were we all in 1979? As I’m an inveterate squirrel, it hasn’t been at all hard to find out. A slightly flaky carrier bag labelled “Fannish Correspondence 1979-81” comes out of a box in the attic.

Wonderous contents, some quite emotional. Strictly speaking it was in the wrong bag, but a card from Bob Shaw in 1983 congratulating us on our house move to this address: “I’m the one who should have a BoSham phone number ... And will it have Chint hay curtainth?”



Earlier (1980): a massive card, with Dave Langford's return address on it, signed by an embarrassingly huge roster of fannish and stfnal luminaries, congratulating us on Dulcie's birth. Probably both from the November 1980 Tun, and from that Novacon – signed by Les Flood, Bob Shaw, Chris Priest, Malcolm Edwards, Rog Peyton, Rob Holdstock et al. (Did I ever thank Dave enough for organising it?)

Also a beautiful card from Jim Barker showing Coral and myself holding a baby – in 2007, Coral looks at it and says of me: "Were you really that slim?"

"Probably not – I think Jim was just being flattering," I said. (Alternative explanation – I don't really want to admit how much I've filled out over the years....)

Four FAAn award plaques, from 1976 and 1977, to go with awards which had sadly already started to disintegrate by then.

A part-written column by Coral, Coralations, mainly consisting of a Guinness cake recipe with instructions on using a syringe to increase the potency.

A note I scribbled, probably in 1980: "I've just watched the closing credits of Saturday Superstore (27 Nov). Apart from Status Quo, Barry Took and other nonentities, appearances were credited to Peter Roberts, Dave Rowe, and Bonnie Langford. I've heard Dave Langford described as many things, but Bonnie?... Why this preponderance of fans, anyway? Perhaps it was because the videotape editor was Ian Williams."

We look anywhere in search of humour.

And then there were the locs on Inca 1 themselves. At first, I hadn't intended to print them; but at Corflu, Pete Weston and Ted White among others told me how shortsighted they thought that was. Well, let's look at the messages from the past....

Circulation

Letters of comment

(1979-1981)

Beginning with someone who richly deserved a FAAn Award for Best Letterhack during the late 70s and early 80s, if there had been an award for the category at the time...

Mike Glicksohn

Just finished reading *Inca* #1, the sixty-third fanzine I've perused in the last two weeks. (Jim Barker isn't the only one who occasionally feels undated with fanac!) It was quite reassuring to know that as I hastily dashed off loc after loc to fanzines whose next issues were probably already on their way to me through the mail I could be sure that there wouldn't be another *Inca* for months and months. All fandom is most appreciative of this, Rob, and we thank you for the consideration this shows.

((Anybody receive 63 paper fanzines in 2 weeks in 2007?? We've all gone electronic since then. Mind you, there is a chance you could receive that many e-fanzines in 2 weeks from Chris Garcia alone....))

That is truly an amazing cover and all the more mind-crogling because it comes from the notorious Leaning Tower of _____ ((Gee, I don't know where DW est lives: you'll have to fill that in for me.)) In the past I've only associated D. with fannish caricatures, witty if somewhat crudely artistically. This subtle and delicate cover is a real eye-opener and certainly one of the more impressive fanzine covers I've seen recently. It certainly should do away with D.'s reputation for shambling around and falling down all the time: it took an amazingly steady hand to create that work of art and I hope we'll see more of this new facet of D.'s talent.

((Oh all right then. Bingley – then, anyway.))

Having once found a moderately successful fanzine myself, I can sympathize with the reasons you offer for the demise of *Maya* and the birth of *Inca*. *Maya* will most definitely be fondly remembered by those of us who wrote for it and to it and you have every reason to be proud of the job you did with it. It was consistently one of the top two or three fanzines around and that's an

enormous accomplishment in today's fanzine-swamped fandom. As for *Inca*, well, it may not be as visually impressive as its parent but it has a nice comfortable feel to it, looks good, and reads well; I'd say the prognosis was good, Doctor...

I was a little surprised to see the normally reliable Dave Langford referring to a "repellent school master." As any person of sensitivity and intelligence will tell you, there is no such thing as a repellent school master, only obnoxious students!

I've never been especially nationalistic and although I think it's very nice to be Canadian and to have roots in England I don't really think of myself as belonging to any culture in terms of my identity. I'm always surprised when American fans think I've got a Canadian accent since I certainly don't know what one sounds like. Of course, while I'm not the Dave Langford of Toronto, I don't exactly have a very sensitive ear. I know Bob Shaw talks differently than Harry Bell who talks differently than Dave Langford and nobody talks like Ritchie Smith but I'd be hard put to associate a new voice with a particular area of England so it isn't surprising that I have the same trouble with North American accents too. Oh well, it really doesn't matter whether or not Dave has a Welsh accent since he talks too fast for me to understand him anyway and I can fail to understand a Welsh accent as easily as I can fail to understand Ritchie's Geordie tones.

It's a very rare occurrence indeed when I recognize a musical reference in a fanzine (punks like Rich Coadan and Greg Pickersgill do entire fanzines in which every section is named after some supposedly popular song -- or what they call a song, anyway -- and I never even realize that, let alone identify any of them) so I felt a small satisfaction in recognizing the title of Jim's column. (*Sheer Art Attack*.) It's beautifully appropriate, of course, and Jim's musical taste obviously makes him a prince among fans.

Having survived Seacon, I think I'd much rather have attended a Silicon and had the chance to meet a few more people and talk to them more. That was very much my own fault, of course, but I find that I really don't function too well in such a massive gathering. I just can't relax and since I'm not the greatest of conversationalists at the best of times, this makes it even more difficult for me to talk to newcomers than usual. I never did say very much to Don West, for example, and we certainly should have had a lot to talk about. But I need to get to know someone before I can relax and chat with them and at a con like Seacon there doesn't seem to be much chance to get to know new people, so one tends to stick with old, established

friends thereby defeating the whole purpose of an overseas world con. I wouldn't have missed Seacon for the world, but when's Silicon going to be held next year?

((Plenty of similar opportunities in 2007, Mike. Corflus... In the Barget-togethers And they're not the only ones.))

Frank Denton

You've managed to hold on to some very good writers. Dave Langford's article on his Welshness was a pure delight. Partly, of course, because I'm half Welsh. Anyone who chooses Scunthorpe for a football team to root for just because the name is sougly can't be all bad. I like Hartlepool myself. Partick Thistle in the Scottish League runs a close second because my weird mind tells me that it should be Patrick and the people there can't spell. I was pleased to meet Dave at Seacon (how come I didn't meet you?). I admire his ability to deal with his hearing loss so calmly and effectively, both in person and in print. Maybe he isn't so calm to those who know him better. I admire his writing, his ability to make me chuckle over his experiences and his ways of dealing with life. Hang on to him; he's a good one.

That Philistine, Bob Shaw, does a remarkable job of laying it all on the line. Many of his attitudes are ones I agree with. I wonder if it makes me a Philistine as well. Now I'd like him to turn this article around, and during the same topics, tell us what he likes. Could be interesting, and probably very enlightening.

I wonder what it is that draws some people into fannishness and others not. Certainly it isn't something you are recruited into. It just happens. I'm sure it has something to do with one's personality and ability to hit it off with other people. I recall a safari to dinner during the Seacon. The Mearas, Skeltons, Dentons, Bushyagers, Alvises, all trekking off to a fine Greek restaurant. It wasn't planned; it just happened.

This was a relatively unlikely group to get together, except for long-standing friends, the Mearas and Skeltons. We all had a superb time. It was a fannish happening. I'm not at all sure what I'm trying to say except that some people will naturally come to associate with others. It has nothing to do with liking certain authors or kinds of books, or the seriousness with which you take sf. Indeed, some of the most fannish people I know rarely read sf any more. Yet they come to conventions, meet their fannish friends, and fill their weekends

with good vibrations. Maybe we're born with a fan-nish aura.

I liked Jim Barker's column. He has a discerning mind and a good knowledge of sf art. For American readers, it will be useful to know what is being published over there so we can arrange for purchasing what is good and worth having. It was good also to hear about his involvement with Cohn Lester's work, and what happened to his art. Most of all I admire him for saying what a lot of fan artists need to say about lead time and the expectations of fan editors. Fan editors too often have the distorted idea that they are doing the artists a big favour by giving them a place to be published. Hog wash!! The artist is the one doing the favour, and if the editors would be more patient, more grateful, less demanding and self important, they might easily get more and better art work than they would ever have room to publish. You've got some very fine artists in this issue of Inca, and I'm sure you didn't get their contributions by acting beastly toward them. Barker, Bell, Canfield, and Rotsler are people who can always be expected to produce nice work.

Jackie Causgrove I do realize that you British fan have a tradition for enjoying a touch of blood-letting in your writings, and that vitriolic reviews such as Alan Dorey's are more the norm than the exception, but it seems to me that he did go on a bit more than necessary. To my views, there are two reasons for writing a fanzine (or any other kind) review: to inform/warn a reader about a particular work, and to possibly educate the editor so as to improve the results. Alan appears to write mostly in order to vent his spleen, which is fine, but couldn't he have done so just as easily in a personal letter? Are there some sort of mystical Status Points that he gains by being rude in print? The practice puzzles me, indeed. Preaching by example has always seemed a wiser course of action to me, in any event. To find the excellent aspects of certain fanzines and hold them up to view as being worthy of adaptation by all and sundry would seem a more workable practice than to hold up something awful and decry "Unclean! Unclean! Go thou and do not likewise!"

I suppose Bob Shaw's article will make every one immediately leap to their typewriters to confess their gastronomical/cultural/mental aberrations and/or lapses in taste. Not I, however, for my taste is simply excellent. It's not my fault that the rest of you never learned to truly appreciate the finer things in life, like Southern Comfort in a chilled glass of sugar-free cherry cola, or a tasty

MacDonald's Quarter pounder with Cheese, or a nice plateful of soggy, overdone green beans. Naturally, one should be reading the latest collection of Rex Reed's film reviews, or frowning bemusedly at Bo Derek (sp?)'s picture and wondering what anyone can find attractive in her, or possibly listening to some syrupy, sentimental tunes as played by the Mystic Moods and never missing Muzak. I'd point out the error in your ways, but why bother? Your lack makes my superiority stand out all the more in comparison...

Discussions on Women's Liberation make me tired in the head. They've been going on for far too long here in the States, and I hope this doesn't indicate a trait in your letter column that will stick around yet another cycle of years. I'm primarily a humanist, and in many areas women have been granted an unfair status because some people viewed them as less "human" than males. That state of affairs is being remedied, and as a woman, I can do nothing less than applaud the changes I see about me. But reverse sexism (as if to imply one can only be sexist in one direction!) saddens me, whether it's a female fan demanding that a convention set aside space for use by her gender alone, or another one daiming her genitals bestow a magical "superiority". Stuff 'n' nonsense. If it were men doing and saying those things, half of fandom would be down their throats. Some men are superior to some women, some women are superior to some men, and those who are superior aren't so in every aspect. We're the same species, for God's sake, and we have to get along with each other. Kind "Mother Nature" and our own witlessness throw enough stumbling blocks in our way without half of us trying to knife the other half in the name of sexism. In the main, fandom has been freer of the sexist taint than the "mundane" world, and if we continue to maintain our collective cool, it should stay that way.

Jim Meadows III Traditional greeting, addressing Jackson by first name,

Airy observation of transition from old fanzine to new. Whimsical query as to why Jackson is killing old fanzine instead of passing it on to new faned, as has been done in past. Ironic tie-up line.

Upbeat transition, complimenting on general appearance of fanzine, quality of repro, abundance of white space, skill of cartoonists. Desperate attempt to bring trite compliments to a punchline. Lame admission of failure.

Circulation – Inca 1 locs

Keith Freeman Strange feel about *Inca* – I suppose because the articles and locs are all, in some way or other, dated (I know the articles are ‘ageless’, but – perhaps in my subconscious – I feel they’re ‘old’). A few years back there used to be raging discussions as to whether duplicating or photo-litho was best. Oh, no-one denied photo-litho gave the best reproduction and allowed use of artwork that couldn’t be used with duplicating... But, the argument went, photo-litho was ‘cold’, whereas duplicated frnz were more human. Whether *Inca* will show the difference (when compared with *Maya*) only time and a few more issues will tell. Strangely this first issue has an aura of photo-litho about it – or am I imagining things?

(I was using a variable spacing typewriter, which was rather different to the basic Courier typefaces on most people’s typewriters.

And Keith was writing in 1979, and felt the articles were either ageless or old then!)

Eric Mayer I was able to enjoy the material without feeling myself continually in awe of your production work-expense-time etc. And about the most vicious thing in the issue was Bob Shaw’s attack on Fred Astaire. With a mind too warped to appreciate Fred’s dancing, it’s no wonder Bob is able to write all those strange and excellent sf novels.

Jeff Hecht Somebody’s loc complained that Bob obviously had more interesting experiences than other people, which was what made his interesting

more writing – no, I meant that the other way round, damn it. The secret is in how you tell the story. When I say that one of the downstairs ceilings fell in and we had to replace it, it doesn’t sound very interesting. But when I explain that the first piece fell square on Lois’s head as she was attempting to demonstrate to the tenants that it was in no danger whatsoever of falling, then it begins to get interesting.

(Does it?? It’s still in the way you tell ‘em.)

LAHF Arnold Akién, Harry Andruschak, Neville J. Angove, Brian Earl Brown, Avedon Carol, Ian Covell, Jim Darroch, Gary Deindorfer, Bernard Earp, Ahrvid Engholm, Chris Evans, William T. Goodall, Steve Green, Philippa Grove-Stephensen, Julian Headlong, Joy Hibbert, Phil James, Marty Levine, Chris Lewis, Eric Lindsay, Richard Litwinczuk, Celia Parsons, Jessica Amanda Salmonson, John Shire, Peter Singleton, Mae Strelkov, Kevin Tyler, Roger Waddington, Alexander Doniphan Wallace, and Dave Wixon, who is probably fairly used to being last in WAHF lists.

I have not listed any addresses for contributors of locs as they are almost certainly absurdly out of date. However, I do have three 2007-vintage email addresses to hand, which are – Mike Glicksohn: mgluck at interlog dot com; Keith Freeman: keithfreemanrbas at gmail dot com; and Eric Mayer: maywrite2 at epix dot net.

One of the really nice things about word processing is that you can edit things & adjust spacing so it comes to a neat end. But if you get it just that little bit wrong it’s not the end of the w



CAPER ON THE ELECTRIC STAIRS

visitor report

Jessica Amanda Salmonson
(1980)

I would like to recount to you the reasons why riding up the electric stairs caused me to cry.

Many moons ago I invited Rosemary and Darroll Par doe to stay with me and Sherri L File (a feminist fringe-fan and my roommate for more than two years) should they ever venture forth from Liverpool to Seattle (fan mecca of the universe). It came to pass that precisely that trip was planned. By this time, however, I lived with two other women – a temporary roommate, a fan Rebecca Lessees, and my uncompromising partner in crime, Diane Policelli. The flat had become known as Whileaway Hideaway, and until Darroll, no man had ever spent the night there in. Ro and Darroll arrived via bus in the early afternoon, all the way from Vancouver, B.C., where they'd spent the first week of their vacation with Dr. Susan Wood. John D. Berry and I picked the dynamic duo up at the bus stop. There was rest and talk and munchies and eventually dinner (what joy that most of us are vegetarians), and phone calls.

For the next week, five persons shared the roomy flat. On one of these nights, a slightly depressive young woman stayed with Rebecca en route from Vancouver to San Francisco, secretly filling her backpack with Whileaway foodstuffs before leaving. The place was delightfully crowded. Diane and I gave up our bed for the week and camped out on the dining room floor (this was quite romantic actually).

We were very soon impressed by the fact that two

Very Nice People were spending time with us! Perhaps I should have been less surprised, since Ro and I had corresponded off and on for a long, long while - but I've learned never to expect the actual presence of a person to match up with a letter persona. Too, my contact with Darroll had been virtually zero, and I did, after a bigoted fashion, expect him to be only slightly more tolerable than "most men" (who are boring and overbearing) or "most fans" (who are boring and stupid, as a generality). In fact, Darroll turned out to be every bit as intelligent and kind and interesting as Ro. I thought them a lovely couple as a matter of fact, which if you'll pardon my saying so is rare among heterosexuals. I quickly surmised that I had in no way erred in inviting these exceptional individuals into our household! Both my and Diane's life were in a good position enriched - and we've adapted some nifty britishisms into our vocabulary.

I worried at times that I was being terribly dull - since no one comes thousands of miles to sit in a living room and blather about sundry topics. Whileaway Hideaway does not have an automobile at its service (nor even a time machine); so to see Seattle, our impervious pair were at the mercy of the bus system (which is actually a very fine bus system, very cheap and in some areas free - really!). In the evenings, when various local fans were returning from mundane jobs, there was more talk and contact. The Par does spent an afternoon with Suzie Tompkins and Jerry Kaufman, before the "Par doebachanalia," which was also a late housewarming for Diane.

One room filled up with jabbering fans (partial list: *Kicksaw* editor and gourmet Clifford Wind who accidentally made a desert with MEAT in it, not knowing gelatin comes from cows' feet; authors Vonda McIntyre, Elinor and F. M. Busby, Jody Scott and her hard-core leather-jacket lesbian stormtroopers, and Paul David Novitski; Kaufman and Tompkins, of the lamented *Spanish Inquisition*; artist Oly Kvern; John D. Berry, Susan Wood, Loren MacGregor, Jane Emily Hawkins, Rebecca and her friend the thief, ad infinitum). Another room filled up primarily with feminist women listening to a very good folk singer doing mainly women's music. I was marginally anti-social that night, and scrunched between Chey, Amy, and other feminists so that I didn't have to deal with the fans dominating the dining room and kitchen. The Par does mingled in all rooms and between them and Diane, it didn't seem to be important that I surface from my anti-social state of being. This was really only the second large party to occur in the Hideaway; and big groups make me a little weird, though no one seemed to notice.

Susan Wood stayed in Seattle the next day as well, and took the Par does to the tallest mountain in the state (or on the coast for all I know – it's BIG), followed by an evening at John Berry and Paul Novitski's (also Virginia, Mike and Patty's – but not being fans, they don't count...) During this time, Diane and I rested from the first three days of very busy doings, and didn't stay long with the gathering that night. Rebecca out canvassing for voters that day – at the time, there was a People's Initiative coming before the voters designed to limit the rights to housing and employment for lesbians and gay men, and it stole a lot of our time fighting it. But we won!

Diane and I are vegetarians; during her stay, Rebecca was vegetarian by coercion; and the Par does are vegetarians. This is a more important point than you may at first realize. It is fairly common among our non-fan and feminist circle of friends to find ourselves surrounded by vegetarians, and we can share wonderful meals at home or in restaurants. Among fans, however, this is rarer, and it doesn't make the sense of community seem as strong. If we go to a Chinese Restaurant for instance, everyone orders "family style" to share – a shrimp plate, a chicken plate, a pork plate, a beef plate, and, oh yes, a cabbage plate for the one-or-two non-carrión devourers in attendance. So while the cannibals down their offal, there is a minority eating cabbage and rice. Chinese restaurants in Amerika have a wonderful variety of vegetable dishes, so it is many times more rewarding to go with a group of feminists (among whom vegetarianism is common in Seattle at least) than with fans. It was, then, a rare and

wonderful treat to be able to share vegetarian meals with fans with whom this was not considered a peculiar way to eat. I firmly believe that eating together is a really friendship-reaffirming endeavor, in some ways as important as sleeping together (no jokes from the prudently inclined please). Sharing food creates a strong family feeding.

By way of epilogue to that paragraph, since the Par does' visit, there has been a higher consciousness among local fans regarding vegetarianism. Vonda N. McIntyre, though not herself vegetarian, is having a pot-luck in a couple weeks, and everyone is supposed to bring vegetarian dishes! (This is partly because it is Paul Novitski's and my birthdays, and Paul is one of the few other radical vegetarians in the local fan community.)

On another evening, Diane, Ro, Darroll and I went to Anna Jo and Frank Denton's for dinner. They are famous for their excellent dinners, and really went all out for all of us. If I described that meal, and a couple others during that week, it might well make vegetarians out of *Inca's* readers!

There was a lot of sharing between all of us. It was frankly a remarkable experience. Diane and I started picking up a very few Britishisms. For example, it seems to be typically British to throw in the phrase "a bit of" here and there, and to use the word "quite" quite a lot. It's easy to pick these up almost subconsciously, the way it is easy to pick up the American misuse of the word "real" (as in "real good") if you're exposed to it much. We picked up a couple new vocabulary words altogether, such as Twee and Thickie. Most fans are thickies. Fan dom is a bit of twee. Everyone who stayed in Whilcaway Hideaway, of course, were exceptions to these rules.

We discussed Paddington Bear, and how Ro lost her leg in the famous Paddington Station. I learned a little about canals, obelisks, the inhabitants of Liverpool, the repression of women in Ireland where feminist literature is outlawed, more things than come to mind at the moment. I was impressed with Ro's feminist knowledge. I wondered if it weren't a bit of a shock for her to find herself surrounded by women fans of kindred knowledge, after the sort of fans doddering about Liverpool – but a later communication from Darroll suggested that Ro hadn't thought much about it, but that he personally was conscious of the "different" (and better) way women relate when together.

I encouraged Ro's notion of presenting more feminist concepts in her fanzine *Wark*... and warned her that though fans make great store of the "theory" of women's equality, any attempt to actualize this theory will meet with the fiendish outcries of

narrow-minded little boy-brats who don't want to hear about such things. But, too, I promised, the very act of including overt feminist ideology in fannish activity will attract many brilliant women into her sphere of friends and fandom, not for the sake of lecherous males but for the sake of ourselves, our strength, our growth, our mutual joy and love and sharing with one another.

Ah, forgive me as I wax supreme.

It was also joyous to watch Ro and Darroll interrelate. I know many couples (heterosexual, and lesbian) and only on the rarest occasion does there appear to be such communication and love. To be sure, they exchange many a whimsical insult; but always seem to love each other a lot, and do not suffer the kind of power imbalance which I observe more often between male/female couplings than between female/female couplings. I don't mean to be political about this though; I mean only that they showed a genuine love for each other – and for other people as well. In fact, I felt loved by them – and I love them too.

Then came the week's end. I took the morning off work to see Ro and Darroll off at the train depot, on their way to Allyn Cadogan (a dark beautiful woman who publishes a superior genre called *Genre Plat*) in San Francisco. Later, Allyn would send up photos of all of them, and her cats too; these will be cherished - Diane and I don't have a camera, so these are the only pictures we have of the occasion. We rode the escalator down to the train entrances which run under the city, sub-way style. We sat around a while, talking, sometimes quiet.

Then we hugged and said good-bye. Darroll was the most misty-eyed of us all. I was smiling ear to ear, because it had been such a wonderful experience for me - wonderful to think that I have cherishable friends in many parts of the world, in places the likes of Liverpool. I watched them board the train (they looked back once, but they couldn't see where I was standing).

Then I left, up to the street level by way of an escalator with a red neon sign saying archaically, "Electric Stairs." It was a short and tearful ride.

Bellissimo! Supplement

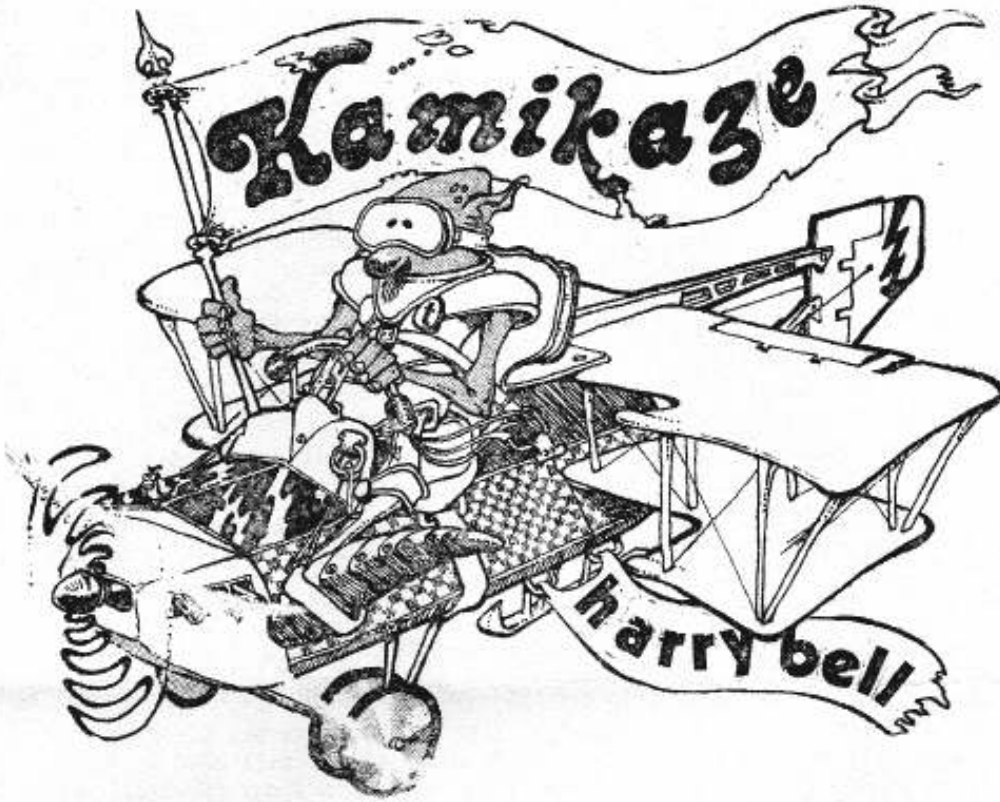
Art by Harry Bell

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13	Gannetfather of the Month	Gannetscrapbook 5, 1978, ed. Dave Cockfield
14	Gannetscrapbook 2	cover, 1975 ed. Harry Bell
15	Gannetscrapbook 4	cover, 1978 ed. Kevin Williams
16	Space windmill	Cynic 7, 1975 ed. Graham Boak
17	Centurion	Information welcome!
18	Wallbanger	Wallbanger 9, 1984 ed. John & Eve Harvey
19	Scotch shortage	Xenium 2.7, 1978 ed. Mike Glicksohn



•HARRY BENGI•



GANNETFATHER

OF THE

MONTH



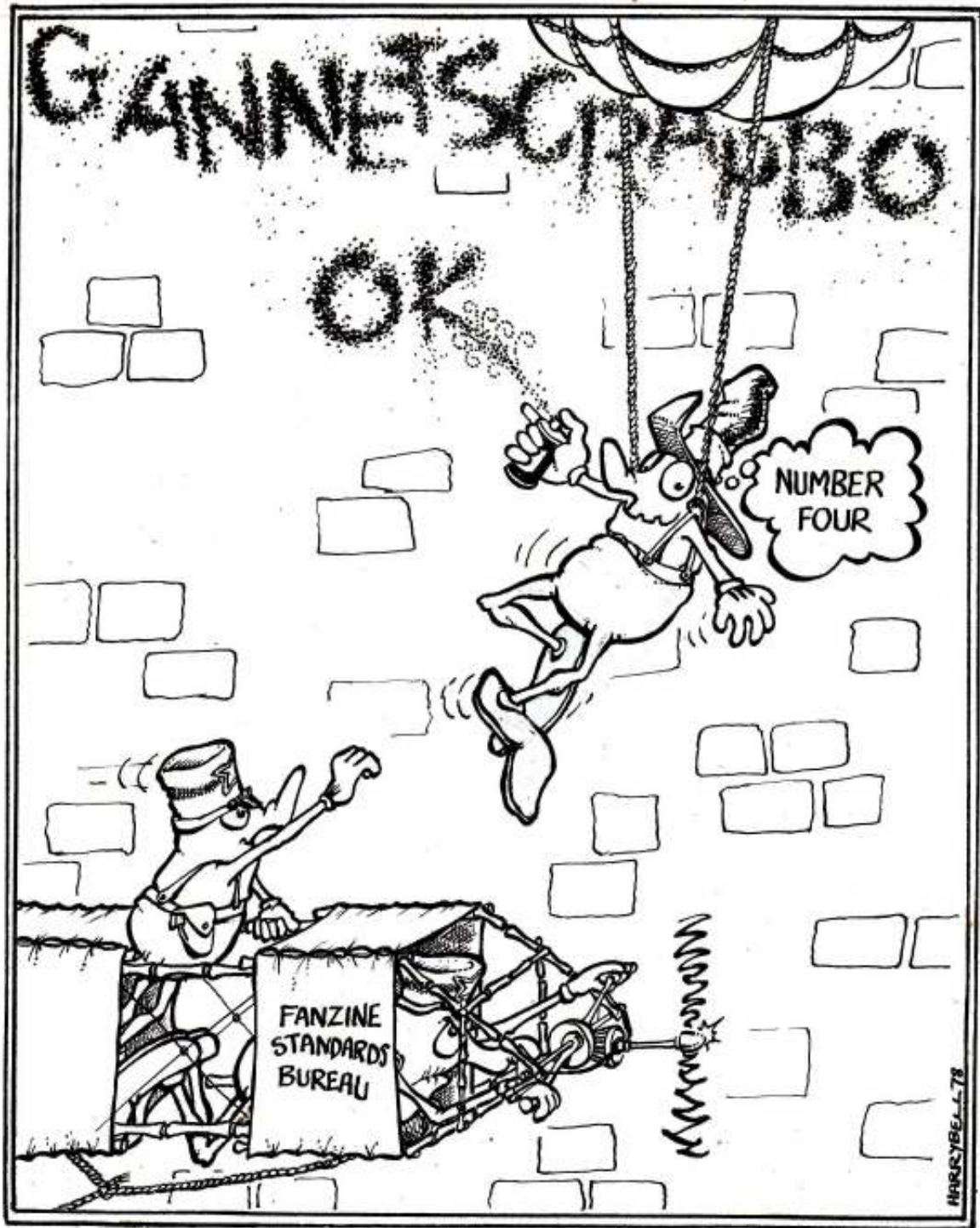
IAN

© 1994 Ian



HARRYBELL74

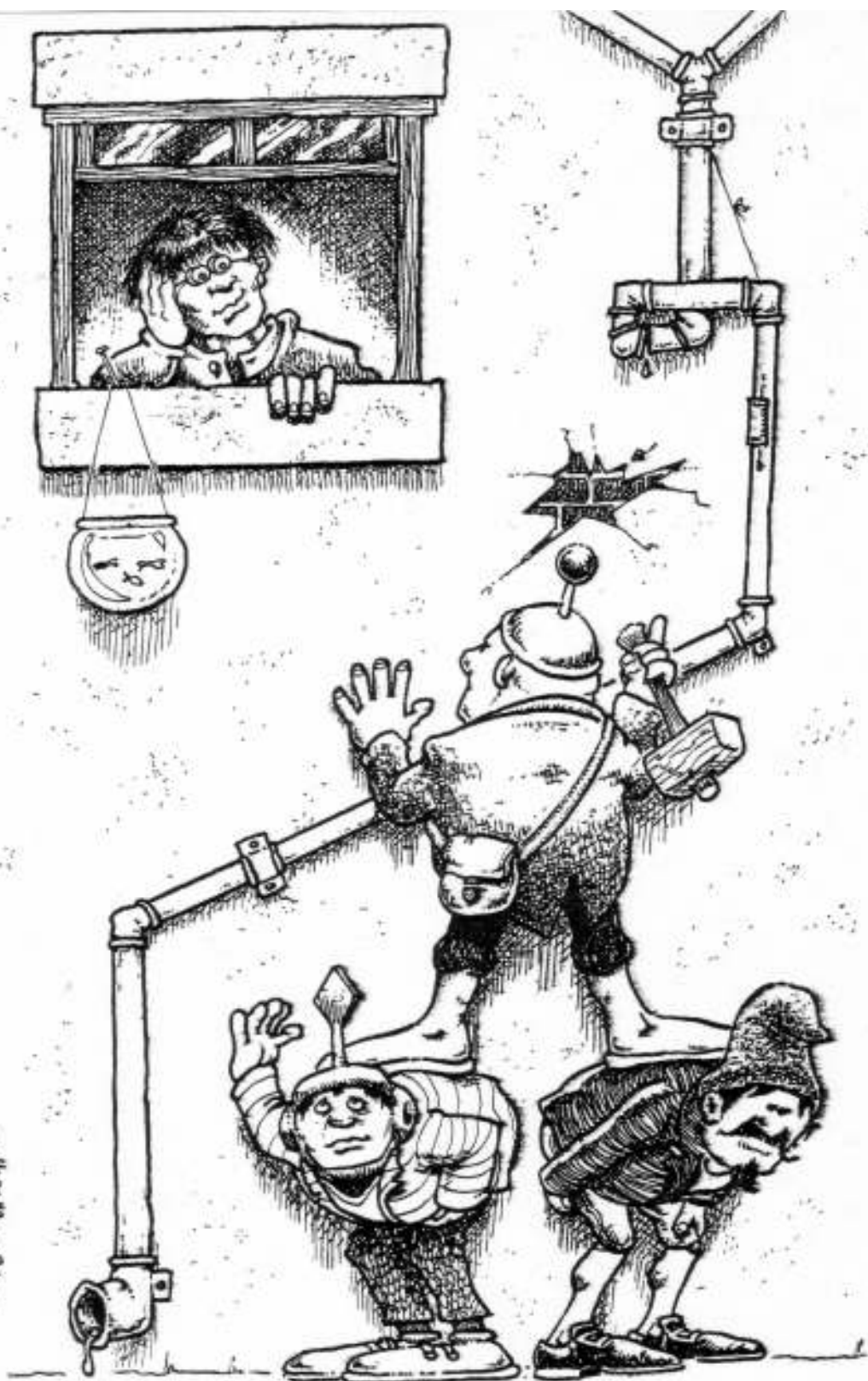
RISEN from the DEAD - 2nd Ish!



cynic







John Macaulay 84



The Return of the Native

A trip to America, and why

Rob Jackson
2007

**The nose is headed right into the settin' sun
The throttle's open wide to let the horses run**

I'm not precisely sure now how it all started. Maybe it was because of World In the Bar Day 2006, where Uncle Johnny (John Hall to non-baristas) and Rich Coad hosted twinned parties on the Glorious Twelfth of August. The gales in Wiltshire had an inglorious effect on John and Audrey's gazebo, and Harry Bell couldn't make it as he hasn't got much at all in the way of savings and can't just get coaches and trains across the country on a whim. But otherwise, we all had a brilliant time, and saw our colleagues on the other side of the Atlantic by webcam.



Maybe that's why people in the Bar in the States got the idea they would really like to see Harry Bell, as the list's moderator and guiding hand, get to Corflu in February 2007. The Get Harry! Fund was born, to help him pay for the trip.

I volunteered to help raise the cash at the UK end, and Rich Coad did exactly the same at the US end. Graham Charnock did a spot-on T-shirt design featuring Harry Carter, and people were amazingly generous, both buying T-shirts and simply donating. I could feel my own creative juices going, and the memories of the sheer volume of fun artwork Harry has done triggered the idea of an anthology of his best stuff. So Bellissimo! was born.

We in the bar got so enthusiastic about meeting that the idea of being at Corflu too started to get to me. My first con for 20 years – but as I've been back in touch with fandom, mainly electronically, for 5 years, there would be many more friends than strangers.

All right, I confess, I can afford the trip... but would Coral be happy about me going? She was a lot less worried either about me spending the air fare or about my safety than she might have been. Not sure why I was worried – Coral is actually pretty good at giving family members her blessing to sally forth round the world. Our eldest daughter Dulcie went on a 7-week summer holiday solo backpack round Australia, New Zealand and Fiji in 2001 and returned safely, and (as you may read elsewhere in

this zine) Hugo went to Anaheim last year – also just before turning 21 – for a 40,000-person anime convention.

Harry and Pat booked to go on to San Francisco on the Monday after Corflu. My original booking was for a whole week in Austin, so rather than just spend three more days mooching around Austin, I went for broke and booked another set of separate flights from Austin to SFO so I could join them. It wasn't possible to change the return flight to a direct one, as I'd booked a cheapo flight which they wouldn't let me change. So I had to get back from SFO to Austin in good time for a 4 pm Thursday departure for Houston, and the only connection which worked left SFO at 6 am Thursday for Phoenix. My cheap flights meant four take-offs and landings each way. Apologies to those monitoring CO₂ levels – but that's what cheap flight bookings do!

Graham booked on to the same outbound flight as me, so – provided we managed to get into adjacent seats – we would have each other for company on the flight out. The flight was at midday, so getting a train from our local station at 9.30 am on the Thursday should be OK.... But that didn't allow for the random British weather. It chose to get ready to snow the very morning I really, really needed the trains to be totally reliable.

I did an emergency Google on the morning of the day before the flight, for "Gatwick airport hotels." The Gatwick White House Hotel. Wow. It sounded impressive and had vacancies. I booked, and the booking confirmation went in the impressive folder of email printouts confirming flights, hotels etc. It was a huge wedge. Isn't the paperless society wonderful? Trains Wednesday evening should still be OK as the snow was only arriving overnight.

I had most things packed well in advance, but some things are always last-minute. I had had another last-minute mad idea. The website for the Doubletree, the con hotel in Austin, said there were irons in the bedrooms. Instead of doing a live fanzine I could create Harry Bell transfer T-shirts to order.

I cobbled together an order form for the live T-shirt printing on the Wednesday evening after getting home from work, and as the last few were coming off the printer after I fed it some extra sheets of paper, Coral was nagging me: "Come on – you'll be late for your train!"

I dragged my black wheeled suitcase out to the car. It was specially ribboned with a fluorescent green strap on which Coral had sown a couple of narrow purple ribbons for a totally unmistakable ID. As 90% of bags on airport carousels look exactly like this one, this turned out to be a brilliant move.

Standing on a deserted station platform with a shelter more suited to a bus stop, with only three teenage chav girls for company, was a small start to a big journey. Boarding a quiet train mostly full of oddballs through the invisible and cold Sussex countryside felt quite surreal.

The guard on the train was helpful to the point of solicitousness, and as well as my ticket, got his machine to print out a little timetable giving the ETA of the train at Gatwick station. However I'm not sure how clued up he thought I was. Not only did he seek me out to tell me which platform I needed when changing at Barnham, but I also later noticed he'd given me a Senior Citizen's ticket. Hmph. I'm *nine years* too young for that!

The hotel website says once you are at Gatwick you go to the courtesy coach stop and use a free phone for a coach. It took 30 minutes to arrive, then took us screeching round all the roundabouts to what proved to be a slightly smelly enlarged guest house in Horley, just over the Surrey border. The minibus driver dived behind the Formica reception desk and removed the notice which said "Please Wait 10 Minutes, Gone to Airport to Fetch Customers."

The restaurant was closed but off-putting anyway. It was like a transport caff with wipe-down tables, and crisps in the bar were not much guarantee of a hunger-free night. They recommended I turn left and take a walk to a Chinese take-away. Greasy spring rolls were the least worst thing I could find there – I really wanted clean carbohydrate, but plain rice wouldn't have done either.

However the bed was clean and firm, and the insomnia was purely down to excitement, tinged with anxiety about the weather possibly disrupting transport. It did indeed snow at 5 am, about 2 inches.

"Dear Guest, Please Must Bring Voucher With You For Full English Breakfast." I obediently did so. Coffee was a self-service water urn and a big jar of instant coffee on an eye-level shelf. What sophistication.

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A different minibus (thankfully with a rather more careful driver, given the snow) got us to the airport OK. Graham had texted me even before I left the hotel to say he was already at the airport. Impressive, given that I'd been worrying about London trains.

The airport was briefly closed, but reopened after an hour. Priority was being given to long-haul flights, so we were not all that worried – not least as Graham and I were at the airport three hours before take-off.

However I received a very cheesed-off text from Harry that his flight from Newcastle to Heathrow had been cancelled due to snow and they were having to queue to get a later one. He & Pat eventually had to rebook a day later, much to everyone's disappointment.

Meanwhile Graham and I had plenty of time to spare at the airport....



Graham at Gatwick, with uncharacteristic bottle of water

Security was hassle-free; the fingerprinting and iris scans were on entry to the USA. Graham had his bag given an extra once-over, which we hoped was random, not to do with him looking at all dubious. (Mind you, the people at Austin gave me an extra check with chemical wipes on my bag and shoes when leaving for San Francisco, so I think it is a 10% random process. Or maybe by then I was looking suspicious.)

Our flight in fact left pretty much on time. There was plenty of space, but our row of seats had non-functional headphones even though they rebooted the system specially for us. Graham, have you had the chance to tell Chris Priest that *The Prestige* doesn't work all that well as a silent movie?

Graham gave me enough guidance to the plot of *The Prestige* to grasp it but without spoiling it should I ever be able to see it properly. (Hugo is likely to buy the DVD, as he enjoyed it in the cinema.) I gather there are teasers and twists in the plot that make most sense in retrospect, like a crossword puzzle, or when you see the film a second time.

Talking of crossword puzzles, there was enough spare time for me to bore Graham with two of my favourite clues with politicians as answers. There was also plenty of time to notice that Continental Airlines' toilets (sorry, johns) are stocked by women, according to Bell's Law of Toilet Roll Positioning. (Bell's Law states that men prefer the paper to roll off the top of the roll, while women prefer to pull it from underneath. I don't know if anyone has done a controlled trial of this theory.)

There was also time to go to a window and wonder if that white stuff off to starboard was just cloud, or whether we could just see the southern tip of Greenland. Probably just cloud. Ain't long haul air travel fun. Graham and I took it in turns to nod off, in my case deliberately, hoping to be able to stay awake till 6 am body clock time, once we mixed with lots of long unseen fans on arrival in Austin.

We could also watch fellow travellers. There was one toddler on the flight out who cried intermittently, but when the seat belt signs were off, he was quite happy to toddle up and down the aisles.

I am enough of a geek that following the plane's progress on the computerised maps provided on the seat-back screens (on Continental 777s, at least) fascinated me. The screen kept switching from a global view with night and dark shown by a sine-wave shaped terminator, to close-up maps with evocative names. Shannon – Reykjavik – Qeqertarsuaatsiaat – Goose Bay – Chicoutimi – Huntsville – Saginaw – Fort Wayne – Normal – Metropolis – Memphis – Greenville – Alexandria. Eventually the altitude figures reduced, and were interrupted by guidance about immigration and ensuring you have filled out your I-94W if you are a visitor. So we glided down into Houston...

The Mississippi Delta was shining like a National guitar

When we had boarded at Gatwick, the outside temperature was freezing. However in Houston it was 27°C. Can't I just leave my thick coat somewhere? However that was the warmest weather we had all week, either in Texas or the Bay Area.

Through the corridors to Homeland Security and baggage reclaim. Only then do you go on to the transit lounge, as the Houston to Austin hop is a US internal one and doesn't process international arrivals.

You have to toe the line, literally, at the row of Homeland Security booths in a massive hall. Only one person at a time is allowed beyond the yellow line at each booth. The official who processed me was a massive, beefy, crewcut type with an ex-Army look about him. I did the fingerprint and iris scan bits, then he looked again at my passport. "Doctor. You a medical practitioner?"

I took a chance on some self-revelation. "Yes... consultant psychiatrist in fact."

"You'd have a hell of a case in me – I'm beyond Prozac." I'd obviously passed the exam.



Graham at Houston in more normal pose

Graham and I headed on to the baggage reclaim, and then had a short break for a bottle of Shiner for him and some good ol' USA stodge for me. The airside

eateries there were very down-home – the most upmarket place where we were waiting was a Starbucks. However the people-watching was a slight let down – there were fewer really obese Americans than the publicity had led me to believe. Most people looked quite normal.

In the transit lounge Graham let me have a quick skim over a single copy of a one-shot which he was hoping to have copied for distribution at Corflu. Some good creative stuff in there. Somehow it was never copied, so I'm the only one to have read it yet. Get in touch if you want some of the articles in it – either he'll let you publish it, or it'll prod him in to getting the fanzine round to the rest of us.

We checked in and went through Security once again. Graham had to reveal a tissue between his shirt and sweatshirt, and it had to be X-rayed. Wonder if snot is radio-opaque.

In the departure lounge, look who we found – they had been waiting 3 hours already....



Graham talking to Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer at Houston; Peter Weston and I are a mutual photography society

More accurately, they found us. Mark recognised Graham, but as I'd hardly been to a con since Claire and Mark became fans, it wasn't much surprise that I had to introduce myself! Peter is totally recognisable from the 70s and 80s, though. Because of the snow, he had had to travel from Birmingham to Mark and Claire's place in Croydon and get to Gatwick for a 9 am flight, then having to

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wait 5 hours in Houston and, as it turned out, get the same flight to Austin as Graham and myself.

Then we boarded. Peter, Claire and Mark were five rows ahead. We could have thrown bread rolls at them, but the flight itself was too short for them to serve anything more than orange juice. However the flight itself wasn't the time-consuming part.

On the internal flights, people were I am sure carrying on more and bigger bags than they were supposed to. The flight attendants spent 20 minutes playing an extensive and very stressful game of musical bags, just to get everything to fit into the overhead lockers. They appealed a couple of times for anyone with a small enough bag to go under the seats, to take them out of the lockers to make more room. So they do let people bend the rules a bit.

Then we had to take off.... There was a heavy, near-thunderly shower cloud to the south-east of the airport, and apparently they were restricted from their usual three parallel take-off runways, and were only using one at a time. We spent 50 minutes taxiing, and I counted 30 planes taking off ahead of us. As we took off, I counted a further 16 planes in the queue waiting their turn. As Houston to Austin is only 124 miles, Graham's question summed it up brilliantly.

"Are we going to fly to Austin, or drive there?" Yes, Graham – that's why they call it taxiing.

But eventually the thundercloud was behind us and replaced by a glowing dusk ahead of the plane. Eventually out into the tall steel architecture of Austin-Bergstrom airport. Wait for the baggage to descend out of the sky on a huge slanted conveyor belt. This bored Graham as he only had hand luggage. Then the five of us (Graham, Peter, Claire and Mark) headed out to find a courtesy bus or a taxi. There weren't any minibus-type taxis that could fit all of us, so we had a sort of taxi race through Austin's out-of-town freeways past endless drive-ins (which was about all we could see), and at the last moment cutting sharply across 3 lanes of traffic to the entrance to the Doubletree. (Which is exactly what the brilliant Pat Virzi warned us all not to do if we were arriving by car. Local taxi drivers obviously don't read Corflu PRs.)

Architecturally, the Doubletree is a jewel set in a dung-heap. It is just off a major freeway a few miles

from the business centre of Austin, and surrounded by a shapeless sprawl of drive-ins.

With the delays taking off from Houston, we arrived about 8.15 pm local time. We registered, dumped stuff in rooms, gathered in the bar, and found the place strangely deserted of fans. This is not British fandom, we thought. Either that or they've all gone out somewhere to eat. However there was a pretty decent bar menu as well as some beer available, so there was only one decision.

Which table do we sit at? We were indecisive about that – moving twice, choosing a table beneath a massive carved stone fireplace and a bit away from the irritating huge TV screen where we started. Then we moved again to one which was a better height and shape for food. I liked the fact that instead of fries or baked potatoes you could choose to have a bowl of fruit with your burger and salad – pieces of fresh melon and pineapple. A few calories less.

At first the only other fans who found us in the bar were Tracy Benton and Bill Bodden, who said hi to Mark and Claire in particular and were introduced to the rest of us. Later in the con I bought a Corflu fanzine bag from them which proved utterly invaluable, and also somehow finished up with two copies of Jophan's Guide to the Seven Fannish Sins, which is wonderfully accurate. Does the fact that I finished up with two convict me of the sin of Collecting?



Pat V, the one-person con committee, bouncing round organising things (and people)

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Soon afterwards Bill Burns found us, and in normal pose for him was posting from his laptop as the rest of us ate, as well as chatting to us. We asked where everybody was, and only when we had finished eating did he utter the magic words “Two eight six...”

Of course! So that’s where everybody was, in the consuite! We should have remembered the way US cons work. Pat Virzi, Ted (White, of course), Rich Coad, Jim Caughran, Mary Burns, Randy Byers, and later Jerry Kaufman. Where have I been for the last 20 years? I had to bring the bad news about Harry and Pat’s delay, but that was the only disappointment. Even those I’d never met before were instantly friends.

The way Pat Virzi worked, you’d need about four people properly to replace her. I kept saying to her “Delegate!” but she didn’t want to. Her consuite was wonderful. Small and personal enough to feel like a permanent, endlessly stocked room party. And the work that went into the con publications, including the stunning Ah, Sweet Laney! – of which more later – had to be seen to be believed. Also, there were little ideas that added to the fun, such as the large print of John D. Berry’s poster advertising the arm-wrestling between Ted and Graham, and the magnetic poetry words chosen by each con member. I keep wondering if next year’s organisers can possibly have as many good ideas.

I feel alive, and the world turning inside out

My room was in a beautiful setting, with its door opening directly on to the open-air balcony shown in the photo on the previous page. The first night, the fountain went on non-stop all night; but as the weather cooled down the next two nights, the noisy central heating kicked in so at least the fountain stopped being a bother.

The inner courtyard of the Doubletree, from immediately outside my bedroom door



I started Friday determined to be healthy, and discovered the American name for porridge is oatmeal. Claire, Mark and Spike joined me, and then Pete Weston and Spike’s husband Tom arrived so we moved tables. They all had full US breakfasts such as tacos, eggs Benedict and hash browns. The jokey waiter jollied us all along and made as if to give

me the bill for everyone else, but actually gave me a free second cup of coffee even though I was on a different table than when I had started. Great bloke.

There was a deceptively quiet period before the consuite reopened, but when it did the socialising started in earnest. Now I know why Art Widner and Jack and Ruth Speer are revered elder statespersons. Art is a phenomenon, still totally tuned in to everything at 89. We had conversations about everything from earth shoes via healthy diets to his views on phonetic spelling. On the Sunday evening when he was almost the only one still there who hadn’t signed up for Geri Sullivan’s dead-dog BBQ at the County Line, Pat Virzi left the consuite key with him. No worries. If I can be as (a) totally independent and clued-up and (b) fannish as Art Widner when I am 89, I will have done OK.

Rich, Stacy, Jerry, Peter, Randy and I headed down town on Friday lunchtime to find Stubbs’ BBQ. At first it looked closed, so we went for a walk round where Austin’s night life evidently is (a) at night, and (b) when the annual music festival SXSW is on – but it was quiet apart from us lot. At first it looked as if Stubbs’ was closed, so we walked around the area just west of the central business district, vaguely looking for other eateries. However we eventually got back to Stubbs’s, found that we had been looking at the wrong entrance, and made our way in.

Super fast food including things like pulled pork sandwiches. Portions not too huge. Randy is a really nice guy - had some fun chats with him,



Jerry, Peter, Randy, Stacy and Rich – outside inaccurately named nightclub

including about bilingual conversations. Ask him sometime about when he had to reply "oui, maman" to a woman in a French cafe.

I also enjoyed reading in Randy's fanzine that he is a notorious teh merchant. I do that all the time – typing teh for the – so it is reassuring to find I am not alone.

As well as Randy, I also meet Andy Hooper. I got on well with both of them, though Andy Hooper is a little more initially reserved and a bit "deeper" as a personality. However Andy (a) spoke his namesake's lines on the In the Bar Live panel (of which more later), (b) promised to "Chunga-bomb" me, and (c) was part of the Saturday night group that couldn't finish all their main courses at Threadgill's. I look forward to the Chungas very much. They haven't arrived yet – six weeks after Corflu – but I am sure a copy of this fanzine for each of them will drop a hint if Andy has forgotten. (It's awfully easy to forget things you say at cons.)

Back to the con. The bath tubs full of ice and fizzy drink cans were just as reported by many previous UK visitors to US cons. I tend to avoid the sweet stuff. Neither fructose (for reasons to do with reactive hypoglycaemia, even though I am not diabetic) nor artificial sweeteners (for reasons to do with rotten headaches) agree with me, so it is either water or alcohol for me.

However various good friends kept disappearing off to Ted's room, but I didn't go with them. Various friends In the Bar have since noted this and respect the fact that I am not personally into getting sercon,

nor, for myself, being around when others are. An enlightening discussion developed, answering the question "what would you do if one of your offspring wanted to marry someone who was deeply into serconism?"

All Coral's and my children happen to be strongly anti; coincidentally, soon after the con, Venetia (15) was saying that her latest boyfriend really respects her for being so strong against any possible use of drugs when a lot of their age group are experimenting. That is an age when, of course, cannabis use can open the door to major mental disorder if you are vulnerable.

My own view is that 15 is a very different age from 30 or so. If our eldest daughter, now 26, had a 30 year old boyfriend who was a stable user and coped with controlled use like those ItB who do serconism, then that would be OK by me. However Coral's view on this is *much* stricter than mine, and it is just as well that our eldest daughter Dulcie's boyfriend is an absolutely straight bloke in this respect as well as others. You may find this a paradox, but then I do respect my patients, as well as their individuality and freedom to choose. It is the *problems* they develop that I dislike. I wouldn't call any of the use at Corflu *misuse*, as it was so evidently under control.

That clears the air then. Er, no, perhaps it makes it a bit smoky.

The fact that I don't do it myself but am happy to help others was borne out by another little tale. Pat V disappeared from the con for a while, but while she was away Earl Kemp arrived, to general delight – tempered by the knowledge that Pat had gone to the airport to collect him, but they had missed each other. Pat rang in to see what had happened and when she found out he had got to the hotel by himself anyway, she said "I'm going to kill him!" Luckily she refrained from actually doing so.

When Earl arrived, one of his greetings was to ask me "Where's Cartledge?" I whispered: "Gone to get sercon with Ted and Frank!" I don't think it took him long to head in the same direction.

In the con suite I was able to start selling Bellissimos and taking T-shirt orders. Pat V had kindly ordered a selection of black and white T-shirts from her warehouse club, and brought these with her on the Friday. Brilliant idea – only we should have ordered more black ones and fewer white ones. Anybody

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want a transfer on a white T-shirt? I still have them. Pat also said most fanzine sales were to be in the con hall, where the Opening Ceremony was to happen at 8 pm that evening. Down there were fanzines galore on tables down both sides.

The timing of the Opening Ceremony meant an early meal. Straight across the access road to the Doubletree was Pappadeaux, a fast-moving, loud and bright fish restaurant. Amazingly considering how crowded it was, they were able to fit 9 of us in there at virtually no notice. Ted, Frank, Earl, Lenny Bailes, Mike Dobson, Bill & Mary Burns, Graham and myself. (See the centre photo on the front cover.) Seafood cheesy bake for starter, followed for 4 of us by swordfish steak with garlic, crab and shrimp sauce and dirty rice. Much debate about the texture of Mike Dobson's mashed potato – does it count as starchy or floury? Good food but salty, as well as encouraging the plundering of an increasingly rare species. Guilt guilt guilt. Penance in the form of 3 glasses of water once back at the con suite.

They served us just fast enough to get back for the opening ceremony. Graham has published a video of this on YouTube, with a link on one of the IntheBar posts. I think the shiny dome in the very near foreground when Graham pans to the audience is not St. Paul's Cathedral, but the back of my head.

Back in the con suite, Lilian Edwards was interestingly challenging about IntheBar, seeing private e-lists as elitist by comparison with LiveJournal which she saw as public, not least as she herself was thoroughly familiar with it. It seemed to my perhaps jaundiced ears as if at least part of her annoyance about IntheBar was that she had only just learnt it existed.

All this time we were still waiting for Harry and Pat, with people anxiously hoping they had got a way. Since arriving in the USA I had had texts from him confirming they were travelling 24 hours later – ETA 10 pm Friday Austin time – and had texted him back, so we had to assume that no news today was good news about them at least having left. As their room was booked under my credit card, I had told the hotel the previous night they weren't going to be there on the Thursday.

I decided to ask Reception to let them know on arrival that Room 286 was The Place To Be, and was rather taken aback to find their reservation had been cancelled! In fact, they had been classed as a “no-

show”, and after I went upstairs to get my email print-out, the receptionist was able to confirm the reservation had been made, and reactivate it for the remaining three nights at the con's rate. But it was just as well I asked, or to find their booking cancelled would have added to Harry and Pat's hassle and tiredness at having been delayed.

Harry and Pat's delay prompted Geri Sullivan to have a brilliant and charming idea. From somewhere, Geri produced a 1976 vintage Harryillo which said everything about how Harry and Pat themselves would probably be feeling – the one about jet-lag in the Bellissimo Supplement. I was very moved to see this had been sold for 75¢ - by me. The sale label on the back was in my own handwriting. This must have been at Suncon in 1977, which is the only place I could previously have possibly sold something for 75¢. Geri said she had bought it more recently for \$5.

She suggested we do an iron-on transfer of this illo on to one of the T-shirts Pat V had procured, ready for Harry's arrival. Pat had the only printer and computer available, and understandably didn't want others messing with her kit. She was so busy it took a while to get the transfer printed, but I was able to iron it on eventually and Harry wore it the next day.



Harry & Pat being greeted by Graham and Frank

Harry and Pat did eventually arrive about 11.30 pm local time, and astonished me by being much more bright-eyed and bushy-tailed than they had any right to be, having had to get up at an ungodly hour two successive days to get to Newcastle airport. They were greeted by a very relieved batch of friends and baristas, and later retired to Ted's room for a little nightcap inhalation. I just went to bed.

**There's nothing left for you to fear
Shake your rarse come over here, now scream**

Saturday was the day with most of the programme items, including the In the Bar Live readings. The sheer fun and speed of some of the verbal tennis matches and quip exchanges In the Bar first gave me this idea back in October 2006, and I emailed Ted as soon as I knew he was putting the programme together. I put together a few draft scripts, but then I heard nothing and rather gave up on the idea. However, less than a week before the con itself, Ted gave me the green light for the item. The weekend before Corflu was given over to last-minute panic and preparation of individual scripts.

Many thanks to Pat V for printing the scripts off and bringing them to the con - having each one on different coloured paper was brilliant, and helped the readers know which script was which.

I had brought the scripts along expecting them to be done almost impromptu, but on the Saturday morning of the con, after having seen how the programme was scheduled, and what sort of event and audience there were, I realised there was a risk of it descending into chaos if done entirely unrehearsed. So I ensured that those baristas who were there had a chance to re-read their own words of deathless prose, and for absent baristas, I asked round and recruited those with the best experience of reading or performing in public.

So Ian Sorensen (who has obviously done loads of musicals and other events at cons) was Ian Maule, and did Ian's "Dear Andy" piece about a bygone fantasy England very well. Ian also did Paul Vincent. Andy Hooper has also done radio-type scripts, and read Andy P's pieces. I was also told that Lenny Bailes was a good reader, and he stepped very competently into Bruce's shoes. Lilian Edwards can also read stuff out well, and performed Pat C's lines. Murray Moore had handled the FA Awards nominations really well, and as he is also a tall thin fanzine collector, he read for Robert L.

There was only one brief line of Pam Wells's, which Joyce did. Pat M doubled up as Mary R for one line. Earl did John Hall's lines as well as his own, but was handicapped a bit by having forgotten his glasses. Mark Plummer was Jim Linwood, and Craig Smith was Jack Calvert. That completes the list of substitute barista performers!

Thanks to those who did their own stuff: in order of appearance Rich C, Bill B, Earl, Graham, Harry, Joyce, Pat M, Pat V, John B, Ted, and Frank as well as myself.



In the Bar Live: Graham, Rob J, Murray Moore, Pat Mailer, Craig Smith, Lilian Edwards (Photo Harry Bell)

Particular thanks to Graham C for impromptu scene-setting explanations - his experience introducing songs and putting them in context on stage for an audience really showed.

When the item started, I said in my introduction that e-lists can generate such rapid-fire exchanges that they can be like conversations, and I had the idea of seeing how they came over when read out or performed. Most of the scripts I prepared started out grounded in reality, then went off in all sorts of unpredictable directions - and I hoped to help people see that e-lists can be fun and creative. Or words to that effect.

I get the impression people enjoyed it; there were some good laughs and groans. The phrase that came to mind was "more fun than torture." I was relieved that at 55 minutes the timing was almost exactly right, which was more by good luck than judgement.

Joyce was really enthusiastic for the scripts to be published. I originally thought of putting the scripts in this zine, but after the con quite a few people rightly ticked me off for not having sought their

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permission in advance, not least as their original intended audience was purely the members of the IntheBar group. Those who were worried about consent were right, frankly. My excuses for this wrong decision were twofold: one, I didn't want people worrying about it too much in advance (which I now know was completely the wrong approach), and two, the last-minute green light from Ted didn't give me much time for reflection, or to consult with people once I thought it all through properly.

Lessons learnt: looking back I realise now it was a mistake to expect to do it on a semi-impromptu basis, and also to fail to get people's consent. It's a bit different to publishing "best of" bits in a collection as Graham has done, as it is being translated to a different medium and performed in front of a different audience. It was only during the

con that I realised these were more like radio scripts than anything else. So it could have done with being more fully rehearsed with all concerned getting a run-through, but as it happened it was all a bit last-minute.

In future, I think with a bit more planning, rehearsal and notice, something like this could give even more fun at cons. Those who are used to handling scripts will I am sure have some good ideas. If I do anything like this again I may even seek Hugo's advice, as he has hugely more experience at stage production than I do.

The scripts themselves are in the Files section of the ITB website, for their original audience to re-read. Those who had been worried eventually gave the OK for how it all read.

A golden dish with every wish

I haven't given the deserved egoboo for the rest of the programme. The panel on What If... (fans had never discovered fandom) predictably evolved in to a series of First Contact anecdotes, but if I'd been up there I would have had to confess that my life would have been massively different. Even though her enthusiasm is now more in the field of textiles, which is such a serious hobby it borders on work at times, Coral and I first met through fandom, and it is pretty unlikely that I would have moved down South without her then career and influence.

The fanzine auction was also fun and instructive. Now I see what interest there is for some historic items, I'll have a serious hunt for goodies for future fan funds.

We had to wait for the auction to finish as one of the auctioneers, Andy Hooper, was in the group of us who went out to Threadgill's, an authentic Southern American restaurant. After I had a brief panic when no-one else was in the lobby, we all found each other and drove off.

"We" were Harry, Pat, Graham, Frank, Rich, Stacy, Mike Dobson, Andy Hooper, Carrie Root, and Carrie's sister.

The restaurant's website shows it is genuine – there are only two of them, both in Austin, and we went to the original one on North Lamar Blvd. And got

bloated even on the starters – shared fried green tomatoes, onion rings, corn bread, and chicken fajitas. Everything seemed to be fried – we were definitely not in a low-fat zone here: <http://www.threadgills.com/menu.cfm>. See us all on the front cover.

We washed things down with margaritas with a salt rim – part of a classic Southern menu.

The restaurant has an armadillo theme, and had quite a cute one on display. Frank found it had a price tag, and a reasonable one: you can see him demonstrating it on the front cover. Graham moved quicker to buy it than I did (as a souvenir for Pat), and it was the last one they had. Damn. Coral and Venetia would have loved it.

After the IntheBar thread on this topic had thoroughly educated us on chicken fried steak (basically, steak cooked in a batter similar to a Wiener schnitzel) we had to try that. I was so full after the first course I only ate about a quarter of mine. The black-eyed peas and San Antonio squash were good but the cream gravy was bland, like a thick white sauce.

The conversation was brilliant, though. Stacy and Mike Dobson were full of info about the strength of sauces to go with chicken fried steak – apparently either further west towards Mexico, or east towards

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Alabama, the pepper or chilli level rises, but we were in a chilli-free zone as well as a high-cholesterol one.

And Mike Dobson is a born raconteur. There were tales about his childhood in the last remaining "dry" district in Alabama. Also about a mayor who had the job on a part-time basis who was also the local undertaker, and who *very nearly* got away with murder. I can't remember who had the bravery to rat on this chap or how it happened, but even when he was caught he was only given two years minimum security, probably because of his level of influence. Very entertaining about small-town corruption.

Mike had driven us there through the cat's-cradle that is North Austin's road system, with the help of his satnav. This proved even more invaluable on the return journey, as the signs on the freeway were confusing or non-existent. We eventually concluded the satnav was Mrs. Thatcher in an American accent, as each time he made a wrong turn it would say "Recalculating" in an *extremely* fed-up tone of voice.

We needed to be back not too late, as at 10 pm Graham's star turn was due. Pat Virzi had thoughtfully made her daughter's guitar available for a solo recital of the Astral Leauge's greatest hit, and other fun stuff. This included Starcruiser from the Mike Moorcock and Deep Fix album, recently remastered and re-released on CD under the title Roller Coaster Holiday. The next day when Mike was at the con, he undertook to pay Mike the requisite 40 cents or whatever royalties for a performance to a highly appreciative audience of 30.

Nostalgia for the Astral Leauge songs was brilliant for those of us who had heard them the first time 30 years ago. There are still some Good Lines in them, and they are definitely worth making available once again. However the highlight of Graham's performance on the night was an assertively improvised response to a shouted comment from Chris Garcia in the audience. Titled Make It Up Chris, he has redone this on YouTube – visit <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZ7BDB6Tuw>. Graham's experience telling stories to an audience really shows.

Graham had to stay in the limelight for the next performance – the Great Unwashed vs. Tidy Ted the Tokin' Terror, otherwise known as his grudge arm-wrestling match with Ted White. (Also visible on the front cover.) Ted won the first round with his secret weapon – a bar of soap to scare Graham with; then Graham retaliated with an oversized mock joint that

looked more like a wrapped tampon. The third, genuine, bout was won by Ted – but the gilt was slightly removed by an extra match with Peter Weston who won when Ted let his elbow lift off. Not sure how fair it was, as Peter was fresher.

Then back to the con-suite to try various Texan wines, and decide they are still learning, at least by comparison with a Californian one with better body and the decidedly fannish name of 3 Blind Moose. Why weren't the *Plokta* cabal there to give a verdict? Claire and Mark were the nearest.

Conversations fragmented thereafter under the usual influence, but I do remember talking about memory gaps, and asking a consultant in old age psychiatry's standard memory-checking question: "I'd like you to repeat this name and address in five minutes." Only to be totally outwitted by John Berry: "It shouldn't take that long!"

Sunday morning, people gathered in the con suite before the Sunday brunch banquet which is a Corflu tradition. I wore a tie in honour of the event, and in the hope of living down the reputation gained in the Bar from the appalling tie I wore in a photo taken at Tynescon in 1974. No-one noticed the motivation, but I did get one compliment on the tie.

Harry, Pat and I joined Graham, Pete Weston, Earl, and Mike and Linda Moorcock who had come in to the con for the day. Mike and Linda are Austin residents, and have kept in touch with Graham since Deep Fix days, with Earl since his publishing days, and with Pete since his *Speculation* days.



Corflu banquet table, l to r: Peter W, Pat M (rear view), Linda Moorcock, Earl, Mike Moorcock, Graham.

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Before we sat down, there was a chance to grab freebies left on a sideboard by delegates at commercial conventions and meetings. Which is why we now have a notepad in our kitchen which tells us exactly where to find a haulage company in Houston, Dallas, Austin or San Antonio. Very useful. Also, a couple of yellow rubber light-bulbs which Linda Moorcock used to give Peter an idea:



Harry Bell on the left, sporting Corflu Quire T-shirt; Peter W, Linda Moorcock



Two-thirds of Deep Fix have a reunion

There were reminiscences about how Mike and Linda had met 20 years ago when Linda was working for Harlan. Far from being pleased at being a matchmaker, Harlan was pretty angry with Mike for stealing his secretary. Linda is Mike's third wife, and those who know him reckon she has been very supportive and good for him – he certainly seems to be keeping well. He had to be careful what he ate, as

he is allergic to peppers – not an easy thing to manage with Texan cuisine.

About the same time as Mike and Linda met, Alfred Bester's health was failing. I mentioned Harlan's helpfulness in ringing me up out of the blue when I was on the Conspiracy committee, at a time when transatlantic phone calls were not cheap. He offered to help the Conspiracy committee make some sort of contact with Bester – very genuine. Harlan is known for impulsive helpfulness at some times as well as getting up many people's noses at others. As Bester effectively drank himself to death, the discussion gave the substance misuse specialist in me a bit of an outing.

Later on I talked with Peter W about how enjoyable it had been having Mike and Linda at the con, and how Mike was getting on. He is looking as well as he has for ages, and was pretty relaxed, even tolerating a GoH speech which was not his sort of event – and later on writing a marvellous conrep which has appeared in Earl Kemp's e-zine, eI 31. (Envy, envy, Earl.)

After the meal came the ceremonies and GoH speech. Ted compered. There was a huge and deserved standing ovation for Pat for her hard work and enthusiasm putting the con together. Murray Moore announced the FAAn Awards, and Colin Hinz gave his GoH speech. Having been selected by ballot, he had to endure the torture of preparing his speech during the con, which he did by picking the best bits of his own past fanzine reviews.

Overnight I had looked at *Ah! Sweet Laney*. I thought I'd done a decent production job on *Bellissimo!*, but the way Pat V has put this together, as well as the superb editing job Robert Lichtman has done on the selection of material, leave me breathless. I don't think I can ever remember seeing a better produced fannish publication. The other stunning thing about the production is that the choice of fonts and layout transport you straight back to the Fifties – a *tour de force* of timeliness and understated good taste as well as care.

Laney is a fascinating and flawed character. I'm afraid I have yet to read this from cover to cover, but after reading Apologise, Al Ashley! and Jack Speer's remarkably insightful appreciation of Laney which Robert thoughtfully placed at the end, and skimming other parts of it, I have a greater appreciation of how far we have come in Western society since the Fifties in terms of social tolerance.

The psychiatrist in me can't help wondering about Laney. People who are as vehemently anti-homosexual as him are quite often having to work very hard in their own psyches to repress unwelcome urges. Which is in line with what Jack said.

In the con suite on Sunday afternoon, I had a chance to look in the copy of *Quandry* 18 which Geri Sullivan had bought at the fanzine auction, and found by chance a wonderful little piece of doggerel by Walt Willis, reinforcing what I was thinking about Laney:

It is with Francis Towner Laney a
Species of mania
That the sex life of the fan bachelor
Should be naturaler.

Also on Sunday I made up the T-shirts that various people had ordered on the Saturday, as Pat V eventually had the chance to sit down long enough to print off the transfers on her computer.

I actually sold 8 T-shirts @ \$20 a go (or rather sold 3 there, and came away with 5 further orders for large black T-shirts which I couldn't fulfil then and there because of incorrect guesses as to which shirt sizes and colours people would want). One of the ones I actually made at Corflu, for Joyce, had to come home on the plane with me as she left just before I came down to the con suite with it. If I'd had any sense I'd have asked Rich to keep it and post it on to her internally within the US, but to be honest I didn't think of it as I was too distracted by other things. I also have a sense of guilt about asking people to do extra tasks!

No-one wanted any white T-shirts. Anybody now want a nice Harry Bellillo on a white T-shirt? I have 6 available....

Chris Garcia is one of the most naturally generous people I met on this trip, and I met quite a few. He is great fun. He has terminal logorrhoea, but of a type I can live with. He ordered a T-shirt with Harry's Cows in Space illō. Infuriatingly when I did this it both was a bit off vertical and later it peeled off even as he was wearing it, probably as the iron in my hotel room wasn't hot enough. Though he said he was OK with it as it was and was going to re-iron it when he got home, I did another one and posted it to him.

For the Sunday evening, Geri Sullivan lined up a massive, many-headed expedition towards the hilly

country to the west, to a barbecue joint called the County Line for a dead-dog get-together. (If anyone wants to find it, it's on RR-2222 where it touches a river called Bull Creek, part-way out towards Lake Travis. Mr Google has told me so.) Nearly everyone left at the con headed out there, almost the only exception being Art Widner. He said he'd just hang out in the con suite – and Pat said “Fine – here's the key. Look after it!” Never volunteer, that's my motto. I hardly ever follow it.

The roads were a total maze as far as I was concerned, and I usually feel I have a good sense of direction. John B gave Frank, Lenny Bailles and me a lift, when it was already getting dark. None of us who were in the car with him could understand how he found the way. Rich Coad got seriously lost on the way while he and Stacy were giving Harry, Pat and Graham a lift. On in the Bar afterwards John confessed to having that extra brain cell – and we got there quite a lot earlier. I think John must have been crossed with a homing pigeon sometime in his evolution. I used to work for a behaviourist consultant psychiatrist, who would have called John a maze-bright rat (as opposed to a maze-dull one).

When we arrived there was still enough light to go out on the veranda and look at the mostly dry riverbed – in February. Texas has been abnormally dry as well as warm this winter - the river was nearly dried up because of the reservoir upstream being depleted. Later on, on the return flights in and out of Austin on Thursday I noticed how brown and dry the ground was. (Houston was a bit greener.)

I shared a table with Jack and Ruth Speer, John, Rich and Lilian. US licensing laws were a rich topic of conversation; they vary from state to state and even county to county – strange to those of us in the UK where licensing has an overall national framework. In the UK, magistrates have some influence over how many outlets there are in any given area, which sets the tone for how boozy your local town centre is. But otherwise the laws are passed nationally. (Oops, this is a fanzine, not a treatise about national alcohol policy.)

John B had linked tales about students hauling from a dry town to a wet one for booze, and the accidents that happened on the way back... The conversation also gave a good going-over to crime rates, drugs and civil liberties. We worked out that Britain's social security is as poor as it is because of pressure from the right-wing tabloids. Both the Brits present, Lilian and myself, were left-of-centre politically, which might explain the conclusion. Though the



The long table at the County Line. (There were four other smaller tables, including mine.) Clockwise from centre front: Janice Murray (pale silver-grey shirt), Craig Smith, Murray Moore, Alan Rosenthal, Teresa Cochran, James Taylor, Tracy Benton, Bill Bodden, Hank Graham, Randy Byers, Geri Sullivan, Tom Becker, Jim Caughran, Janet Carrington (almost invisible), and (back to camera, leather jacket,) Pat Virzi.

first significant conversations I had had with Lilian were at this con, and politically we are on similar wavelengths, she was good fun and a stimulating conversationalist, even when barking up what I considered to be various wrong trees (for example her lack of awareness of the In the Bar list turning into an accusation it is secretive).

I liked both Jack and Ruth Speer a great deal, even though to start with Jack had a bit of trouble following my English in tonations and perhaps too-rapid talk. Ruth was incredibly nice, not only appreciating the production of Bellissimo! earlier in the con, but also being very helpful in checking out the ladies' restrooms (see, this US jargon is getting to me) at the dead-dog barbecue do when Lilian Edwards, who had asked if she could have a lift with John, promptly disappeared.

We later gathered she (Lilian) was safe; presumably she either got a lift with someone else or vanished to meet the local friends who had belatedly emailed her. John was a lot less than impressed at her failure to tell us of her change of plan. When we got back to the hotel his comment was "Lilian who?"

The final evening in the consuite was, as you might expect, a slightly elegiac affair. However Rich

showed how much more of a natural salesman he is than me, by taking some of the Bellissimos I'd given him to sell in the US and hawking three to unsuspecting punters then and there.

One other thing I learned on the Sunday, 30 years late, was the Smoooth! ritual. Yet another thing I have to thank Geri Sullivan for, as well as Harry's jet-lag ills, the Quandry Willis quote, and the dead dog party. For those who don't know, the Smooth! ceremony involves a bottle of the best Jim Beam's being passed round a circle of fan friends and drinkers, each of whom takes a swig and raises their right hand up into the air and keeps it there till everyone has got some. My memory of this is already a little vague as I am writing nearly three months after the tutorial, but if I remember rightly you keep the mouthful in your mouth (if possible) till everyone has had some, then you all swallow together, swing your arm downwards and round in a circle to a slow chorus of "Smoooth!"

I was acting as postman to Robert Land and Marty Con on the West Coast, so had a heap of extra fanzines to cram into my case as well as the unused white T-shirts from the Bellissimo sales pitch. The only real problem I had on Monday morning when I packed was how to get my case shut. A bit of rearrangement sorted it.

Overall, this Corflu was an overwhelming and wonderful experience. I don't think I've ever been to a con where there was such a spirit of togetherness among the whole of the con's membership. On the Sunday night at Geri's dead-dog party, nearly the whole membership still present attended. It is a massive tribute that I could have sat absolutely anywhere on those five or six tables and been guaranteed a great time in really good company.

The In the Bar group, and the sense of satisfaction and spirit of friendship that helped support Harry and Pat's trip, helped, but were by no means the whole story – there were just as many interesting non-baristas, and people who have become baristas since Corflu. Other cons early in my fannish career invoked a greater sensawunda, but not the togetherness. It has made me totally determined to repeat this as many times as possible. That is at least partly why you hold this fanzine in your hand – I need an excuse to attend the next one!

An Old Cat in Texas

Graham Charnock

2007

OLD CAT

I guess the worst conceit any person can have is that their internal ramblings and musings are of any interest to anybody else. Take notice Chris Garcia, and especially Rob Jackson. But Peter Weston is the main prime example of this of course and I have already established a charitable trust to help him in the name of my cat who died of a heart attack when it heard of the attack on the Twin Trade Towers. Of course the one may not have been consequent upon the other, and the whole incident may have been because my cat was pounced upon and had its lungs ripped out by a passing kestrel. The cat was old after all. Don't anybody lose any sleep over it.

OLD FART

The delectable odour when you smell your own farts principle abides here, of course, and seems in fact to apply to much of fannish fanwriting, especially Chris Garcia's and Peter Weston's. And of course my own, which I parade before you here in this con report sort of thingey, with no expectation that you will not wrinkle your nose from the stench.

NEW STUFF

Look, Pat, I said, I've just come across this article on page four of the Haringey Advertiser, after that feature about crack dealers operating out of the local Laundromat. It says there's a convention (whatever that is), going on in Austin in Texas, sometime in February, 2007. It's called Corflu and it's for Fanzine publishers. Didn't we once publish a fanzine, Pat? Yes we did several, said Pat, stroking one of the three Dalmatians that were curled up at her feet. You did Phile and Vibrator and I did Wrinkled Shrew without any help from you I must hasten to add, not even in the cranking the duplicator handle department.

You've always resented me for that, haven't you Pat, I said, and you have often frequently used it as a metaphor for my sexual performance.

All this is true, Pat said, you non-cranking wanker. Now pass the other Dalmatian. The other Dalmatian licked Pat's hand and I felt a strange distinct sense of déjà vu, mingled with wistful disappointment, as if in the past I had been involved in some kind of licking activity, the specifics of which of course escaped me now. I changed into my second best pair of carpet slippers, hoping she wouldn't notice and take it as a personal affront. God, one has to be so careful. I remember being useless to you, I said. I was upstairs all the time changing the baby's nappies and downing bottles of Vodka, despite holding down several jobs and somehow managing not to veer off into an alternate fandom involving brewing your own beer, and somebody called Martin Easterbrook. Why don't you go to this convention thingey said Pat.

What on my own?

Yes, at least it would get you out of the house for a weekend so I can entertain my self-help group of roundheads and cavaliers in my own house for once, instead of going to that expensive hotel in Newbury. Oh, then, I said, somewhat sulkily, because I had never been sure which were the roundheads and which were the cavaliers, and why they all invariably wore masks and leather trousers and drove Vdvos. Just then the phone rang. It was my old friend Dr Job Jackson, whom I hadn't seen for several years. I wondered who had given him my phone number. Have you heard about this convention thingey in Austin, he asked, straight away not even bothering to enquire about the state of health of my wife, cats children and Dalmatians. Of course, he said, I use the word thingey in a totally non scientific sense, since Coral has always refused to allow me to use real scientific terms and I have thus lost the knack.

An Old Cat in Texas – Graham Chamock

Not half, I said. Do you get the Haringey Advertiser as well, then, wherever you are these days? No, it's the Bournemouth and Christchurch Literary Review with the monthly medical digest, and weaving supplement, he said. Look I've had a wizard idea. Why don't we both go. I used to do a fanzine after all, he said, I don't know if you remember. It was called Maya, and was probably even better than Wrinkled Shrew. We could even fly down on the same plane. I'd quite like someone to natter to inanely in between listening to Dire Straits on my iPod. And if you get painful cramps in your fingers I could always diagnose it as painful cramps and perhaps come up with some kind of treatment, but I wouldn't count on that, since I tend to specialize in head-doctoring these days, as we call it technically.

So a pact was made, and so it was the night before departure I received a hysterical phone call from Dr Rob. Have you heard, they are forecasting six feet of snowy stuff throughout the kingdom for tomorrow. I am going down tonight to stay at a humble corner hotel thingey run by somebody called Patel to avoid the worst exigencies that this meteorological phenomenon on might throw upon us.

I looked out of my window. Nonsense, Dr Rob, I said, get back to diagnosing attention deficit disorder amongst the underprivileged or whatever it is you do. It's a calm, mild night with a cloudless sky. See you tomorrow.

Still, I was nervous and arose every hour or so to look out of my window. At three o'clock in the morning there was no sign of snow so I lapsed into a deep dreamless sleep which can only be consistently brought on by large doses of vodka.

Eventually my alarm clock woke me at five in the morning and I pulled back the curtain to look out upon... houses and gardens swathed in a ten foot drift of snow. Fortunately I had packed the night before so only had to shave, shower, douse my armpits with laxatives (or whatever they are called) strap on my snow-shoes and stumble out into the murky dawn heading for Green Lanes and a bus and train connection to Victoria to catch the Gatwick Express.

By some miracle of science possibly involving snow ploughs the lines to Gatwick and back were open, although the ones back didn't exactly concern me right then. Little did I know this was not to be the first time meteorological phenomena would influence this particular adventure.

By the way, who is Gary Mattingly, and why did he avoid us when we visited San Francisco? This is an aside (1). I believe I'm allowed twelve of them in any fanzine article according to a new dictat issued by Peter R. Weston.

By the way (2) what does the R. stand for?

Somehow thanks to the miracle of something called mobile phones Rob and I managed to meet up at Gatwick. I was surprised at how little he had changed since I had last met him some forty years earlier, except he was not wearing the same hideous green tie, unless it was possibly a new green tie he had just expectorated on. I remarked upon this and he promptly transcribed my statement verbatim, even asking me to repeat it so he could get it word perfect. These are my notes for the conreport I intend to write, he said. I'm already on page forty. Oh mine's a bottle of beer, by the way, I'd offer to get you one but I'm busy making notes. See what I've just written: 'Graham bought me a bottle of beer'.

Before too long, and after drinking our beers, we had managed to fight our way past the fat Americans, the paraplegics in wheel-chairs and the mothers clutching screaming children and managed to board our plane, and even more surprisingly it managed to take off relatively safely, if that means I managed to avoid vomiting down my trousers.

I used to hate flying, like any normal rational person does, but now I mentally anaesthetize myself by repeating endless mantras based on the principle that more people die crossing the street than crossing the Atlantic. But what street is that? Obviously not the one at the end of our road where regularly small children get run down by buses, so that's not any comfort when you're cruising at 30,000 feet with a suicidal pilot. So that's what I was doing, gibbering silently. Rob must have noticed my lips moving because he offered me a spare set of earphones so I could share his taste in atrocious music on his iPod. I managed to bluff my way out of this by pulling out the Agatha Christie novel I'd bought at the airport, under the misapprehension that it was in fact an Agatha Christie novel and not a novelisation of one of her least regarded plays. I still haven't figured out who did it.

Just then my fingers started cramping. Help me, I pleaded with Rob. I'm sorry I can't help you, he said, because as I have said before I am a head-doctor, not a finger doctor.

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Never mind, I said, look Prestige is showing as one of the in-flight movies. We eagerly plugged ourselves in and juggled with every control given to us to try and get some sound to play. But no luck. Later it transpired that we were in the only bank of three seats in the plane where no sound was available. We complained to the flight attendants but they just laughed and didn't even offer us free drinks, let alone sex in the toilets. In fact drinks were charged at \$5.00 each. Fortunately I had brought enough spare change to allow me to get in sensible, whilst remaining apparently cogent, so as not to get me thrown off the plane. Remind me to fly British Airways next time. I settled back with my Agatha Christie and Rob with his iPod. Nine hours later...

Houston. Apparently some other people had read of this so-called convention in their local papers, so approaching the Austin connect desk, we were promptly leapt upon by Mark Plummer, wearing a ridiculous aborigine head dress and loin cloth, claiming that he has recognized us from afar by some sort of sky sense, although it wasn't immediately obviously he knew which one of us was which, but he managed to resolve this through a strict regime of interrogation.. Did I say, Mark Plummer, I meant Peter Nicholls. No, I was right the first time. Fortunately Claire Brialley was adopting a louché attitude in a nearby chair, possibly because she had been waiting there for six hours already and had already seeped into the upholstery. Somebody called Peter Weston also showed up, who promptly accused me of hating him, but that didn't stop him getting on the same plane as me to Austin. If only he had known about my hastily assembled shoe bomb constructed with just him in mind.

When we touched down in Austin, I have to report a frankly unsavoury struggle took place to determine who should get what taxis to the venue hotel. After I had found out where to get the taxis, some people (nonames no pack drill) strode ahead of me to take over said taxis. Fortunately Rob and I got a taxi shortly afterwards, and arrived at the hotel only minutes behind *them*, i.e. Peter Weston.

We made it all up in the hotel lobby and agreed to meet up in the bar after sluicing ourselves down. I intended to do this myself, so probably did Rob, but as to what Claire and Mark intended, who knows. Perform some aborigine sky ritual perhaps.

Food seemed now imperative for many of my associates, after landing in Austin at probably what was midnight in our body time. So we hit the bar and ordered food.

Which eventually came. This was beginning to feel good, I thought, tucking in to my nachos with guacamole whilst Pete tore at a half-pound steak like a man possessed. Halfway through burping at each other rather than making meaningful conversation, Bill Burns appeared, seeking a hot spot for his computer.

Apparently according to Bill the convention had already started and people even now were massed in the convention suite, doing very little more than guzzling diet Pepsis and awaiting the arrival of someone more interesting which just might be us. Pete wiped the sauce from his jowls, belched, farted, and suggested we repair upstairs 'just to show our faces'. Why anybody would be interested in seeing his face escaped me, but I went along with the general plan.

What horror awaited us in that infamous consuite. If I had known I'm sure I would have gone straight to bed. It was a room full of zombies, perhaps best typified by Lenny Bailes. Some grizzled grey haired skeleton best past his resurrect date, claiming to be Ted White embraced me with a cry of 'we meet at last'. A tall imposing man claiming to be Frank Lunney looked at me askance then seemed to accept I existed and was shorter than him. Geri hugged me, but only after I threatened to hug her first.

We drank and mingled like only the truly jet-lagged can do.

When I finally left that room, Peter Weston was still holding forth, surrounded by his sycophants, White, Byers and the like, with the air of a man who actually knew what he was talking about and didn't care what time he got to bed. Hey Graham, he yelled I was only joking about sending you a free cover so I sent it to Pat instead. (This could count as aside No. 3.)

I went up to my room and thanks to the offices of a whore I had had the foresight to hire, I managed to get a night of fairly relaxed sleep, (if you don't count the dream about Earl Kemp). When I woke up she was shaving her legs and chipping toenails into the basin. I gave her 500 dollars and she seemed willing to accept that in exchange for me whinging about her habits.

I awoke from a night of gratuitous and expensive sex to the peculiar idea that I had stumbled across a convention where there was an always open consuite to cater for its attendants and which also served free beer, and snacks.

An Old Cat in Texas – Graham Chamock

I had never come across this concept before at any convention, especially the free snacks, although I think this idea was once mooted at a Silicon only to be overridden by Greg Pickersgill who insisted no one should have undue fun. I cornered Pat Virzi about it. Is it true, I asked? Yes, it's true, she confirmed. But is it really true, I asked. Yes, she said it's really true. I loved talking to Pat, because every conversation somehow lasted twice as long as it should have. And can anyone take advantage of its facilities. Well, we had to eject Lenny Bales for farting too loudly the other night, but yes that's generally true, she said. Is that really generally true? I asked. Yes, she said. So how much of your total budget goes on this, I asked. Oh, about 99 per cent she replied. By the way you are blocking my truck in the hotel's garage so could you please move your vehicle, I have to take twenty people out tonight to a restaurant which serves fried armadillo. I don't have a vehicle, I quipped back, I think you just be mistaking me for Michael Dobson. Well, can you tell him when you see him, she replied, strutting off on her high heels. What a woman.

The idea of having a con suite as an ongoing venue for partying was new to me in respect of conventions, and one which I enjoyed so much that all the experiences in it tended to meld into one super experience. I spent so much time in there I cannot chronologise many of them accurately, but they just flit by as if on some event viewer.

One night, for instance, after listening to Peter Weston talk endlessly about something he called Third Fandom, I staggered into the con suite after an interesting couple of hours playing tonsil badminton with Lillian Edwards, (at least I think that was what she called it). Ted grabbed me, but not in a sexual sense, or even in a sense that it interested me. Someone had given the crazy old guy a keyboard and he was riffing off on it like a man possessed, but unfortunately not of any talent. Teresa Cochran had been given a piece of wood with strings upon it and was struggling to make interesting noises while James Taylor (not that James Taylor) smiled sheepishly in the background almost like a man who knew he would soon be railroaded into helping to run a Corflu in Las Vegas.

Pretty soon, after talking to Frank Lunnery for several hours I felt the time was right for me to visit the toilet.

Whilst I was in the toilet having a good time entertaining myself with the toilet roll dispenser, pulling it off the roll and then attempting to rewind

it, and so on, I became aware that Chris Garcia had entered the stall next to me. I heard him talking on his cell phone to someone whom I can only assume must have been his mother or else John Purcell. No, mom, he said, I won't be eating any rich Mexican food, why should I do that when I can get that at home? Trust me. And me and John Purcell are just good room buddies, honestly. There's no truth in that gay rumour. Look, ma, I've got over the fact that Robert de Niro put me down when I was a kid. I can take anything, hell even Graham Charlock calling me out if I heckle him in a public performance. Like that's ever going to happen. Sure mom, love you. Watch out for those reptiles, eh, and wear a snow suit if you're thinking of crossing the border.

But horror happened when I returned to the con suite, and no I'm not talking about when Catherine Crockett fell over while trying to do the Astral pole and laddered her tights, or when Murray Moore fell over while trying to do the bottle walk, and laddered his tights.

What happened was that Ted, pausing only to take a spliff out of his mouth, casually suggested to me that he had put me on the program to perform musical renditions of my past Astral League hits. If it had been anyone but Ted I would have hit him and told him to bugger off, but one just doesn't do that with Ted White.

I spent most of the rest of the convention, at least those moments in my bedroom, trying to recall and remember and rewrite songs I had given up on several decades ago. The worst thing was I didn't realize I had perforce become a folk-singer. No, the worse thing was actually performing this stuff in a sort of ad lib environment, whilst pretending I wasn't drunk out of my mind on the Texas Vodka Pat Virzi had given me. Thank you for laughing Teresa, when all else fell quiet, and thank you Chris Garcia for providing the spark that set it all alight, and allowed me to do what I think I do best, improvise and riff off the top of my head. People seemed to like it. Even Chris Garcia.

Most of the things I remember with warmth and affection about the Corflu weekend, besides when my whore introduced me to a bell-hop named Manuel and suggested we enjoy a threesome, involved convivial meals, most likely in unconvivial restaurants, like the outing to the vaguely Spanish franchise restaurant just across the parking lot on the first night, and the trip to Threadgills on the second, where if nothing else I came away with an Armadillo puppet.

An Old Cat in Texas – Graham Chamock

I am not going to go into the horror of what happened when Harry, Pat and me asked Rich to drive us to the Last Resort which was partly some shack out on the outskirts of Austin dedicated to slaughtering and roasting bits of meat. I am not going to recall this because I have already documented it elsewhere. Oh, okay it went like this. Rich despite being an American, I think, was frankly baffled by the arrangements of Austin's road layout, so when he set out with us in the back it was frankly on a wing and prayer. He kept complaining that every route he tried to take fed him into the freeway system going in the wrong direction. This was confirmed by us passing the same Chinese restaurant several hundred times, as we took turns and intersections.

Despite this happening time after time, Rich didn't seem to learn, like a normal maze rat might have done, which I had thought was a normal process. No, we kept going up and down and round and round. Now I don't mean to appear ungrateful. I'd asked Rich to give us a lift in the first place, and he did his best, even if it was his second best. Eventually we got there after everybody else so there was a shortage of tables. Rich promptly absconded to a table with Earl Kemp, leaving the rest of us to talk huckstering over what should have been a good dinner, occasionally looking out of the corners of our eyes to see if anybody else was having more fun than we were. Well I know I was. Looking out of the corner of my eyes, that is.

Apparently Lilian Edwards spent the night with some trucker in a lay by. So let her sue me.

On the way home the second meteorological phenomenon of this outing hit me. I was sitting in Austin airport waiting for the flight to Houston for a link to the UK, when I found myself in a bar behind a couple of punks. They moved off and I ordered a very big beer, and then when I went to sit at an adjacent table the punks turned out to be Johnny Rotten and his road crew. I considered introducing myself as a long time fan of his, but heard him say as an aside, 'I hate fans, they're such a hassle.' So I didn't.

I got the 737 to connect to Houston, and boarded, but it stuck on the tarmac because there was a tornado warning in Houston who refused to release it. We had about two and a half hours to connect with our flight to Houston but as it sat there grounded it was obvious it was never going to happen.

On the plane I sat next to a nice woman called Kath, returning home together home with her son, Simon. She started to get nervous about the delay and the way this would affect our connect, and I tried to mollify her, without any confidence in my own arguments.

When we finally got off the ground in Austin and landed in Houston it was obvious we were not going to connect with our flight. Nevertheless we ran hopefully several miles through the sprawling terminus to the gate, only to find obviously our flight had left.

My de facto travelling companion was distraught and seemed to think this was the end of the world. We went to the American Airlines service desk and were given tickets for hotels and food and booked on to the next day's flight, but Kath was gibbering by this stage because she had run out of money. I gave her 20 dollars and took her down to wait for the shuttle to her standby hotel, which wasn't the same as mine.

Meanwhile I picked up a shuttle to my own hotel, driven by a strange person who pretended to fart vocally at thirty second intervals. The bus filled up quickly because quite a few planes had been delayed because of tornado warnings. I asked the farting driver if they had had bad weather and he just looked at me in a perplexed kind of way, as if he didn't know what I was talking about.

Next morning, after the enforced stopover, I tried ringing Pat to tell her why I was delayed, but none of the airport phones would accept a call on my credit card. What's the point of fucking credit cards if you can't use them to phone home in an emergency. Finally I threw myself on the charity of the American Airlines service desk and one of the guys managed to connect me.

Oh yeah, Kath finally caught up with me and paid me back the \$20.00. She had run out of money but had forgotten she had a credit card. Doh.

And so to home. I used to suffer from post-con depression because it always seemed a long time before the next one was on the horizon. But that seems to be a thing of the past because now I can't seem to avoid the slightest chance for social interaction. So I'll be there, whenever, and even if you don't like the smell of my farts, I will fart nevertheless.

The Native Goes Further West - After-Corflu in SF

Rob Jackson
2007

You're gonna meet some gentle people there

One of the last things I did on Sunday night was book a taxi away from the Doubletree for the Monday morning at the unconscionably early hour of 6.30 am. Thankfully Murray Moore was getting a plane to Toronto at a similar time, so we agreed to share the trip. No point in trying to eat that early, so I just stuffed my case full of everything.

As I had promised to act as postman for the various San Francisco baristas not at Corflu, in particular Robert Lichtman but also Bruce Townley and Marty Cantor, I had to take away at least as much bumf as the Bellissimos I had brought. Also, 6 white T-shirts that no-one had chosen to use for printing Harryillos. It proved virtually impossible to zip my big case shut, so I had to pack a jumper and a fleece in my in-flight bag. Lucky they rolled up tight enough.

Once we were in the cab, as you might expect the topic of the weather came up – the strangeness of snow this far south, the weather we were going back to in Murray's case, and the dry winter. Even the cabbie was spitting blood about Dubya on account of global warming. He must have been one of the more cosmopolitan Austin Texans, not your typical redneck from the rest of the state. Reassuring to know that there are Middle Americans who also have a global perspective.

I was very lucky on the flight from Austin to SF. I was booked to leave Austin at 8.45 and have a 4-hour stopover at Phoenix, arriving at SFO at 3.05 pm local time, which was the same time as Harry and Pat were due. However when I arrived at the airport I was told my flight had been cancelled but I was rebooked onto an 8 am departure *direct* flight to SFO! Needless to say, I didn't say no.

I was given a random "SSSS" security code on my boarding pass, which means my bag, shoes and I were given a chemical once-over. I passed no problem; just as well I don't go clay pigeon shooting. If I did I'd have to be very careful which shoes I wore to go to the States. There was still enough time to grab a few bits of fast-food rubbish to avoid hunger before boarding the plane. I got to SFO fully 5 hours earlier than originally booked.

By this time I was getting used to readjusting the analogue hands on my watch to local time, while still leaving the digital face on UK time as a sort of mental baseline. I was also getting used to the sequence ET/CT/MT/PT, each an hour apart on TV news shows. (For Brits who have not travelled to the US, these are Eastern, Central, Mountain and Pacific time. Texas is Central, Phoenix is Mountain, and SF is naturally Pacific.)

When I arrived I tried to ring Robert Lichtman to say I was in San Francisco. Though it was coping fine with texts to home, my cellphone didn't want to make contact with the US phone system. So I just rode the BART into the Civic Center and booked in at the Holiday Inn, who didn't bat an eyelid at me arriving at 11 in the morning. (San Francisco is an unusual US city – it has ubiquitous and efficient public transport.) On arrival at the Holiday Inn I saw the bus stop for the legendary 19 Pdk bus..... Legendary in Bruce Townley's life, that is. I knew then that one of my major destinies in life had been fulfilled.

I rang Robert from the hotel. He was suitably boggled to hear I was already in town, but we arranged to meet at 2.30 and have a look round parts of SF before picking up Harry and Pat. That

*The famous
19 Polk, as
commemorated
by its bus
stop sign
outside the
Holiday Inn
on 8th Street*



left me with about 3 hours in which to find a light lunch and some extra memory for my camera (all too many photos – the poor thing was full to bursting).

The Civic Center Holiday Inn is on Market Street, which cuts diagonally right across the blocks in the city centre. As the cycle maps of San Francisco Pat V had printed off for us showed, the words “SF” and “flat” rarely coexist.



*San Francisco, looking up Market Street – photo taken from Twin Peaks on Tuesday.
The Bay Bridge to Oakland visible to the right.
(Note the abnormally clear air.)*

So the top floor of the hotel was an excellent place to orient myself, ready for an Instant Expert act on where we were when Robert was driving us around later.

The neighbourhoods vary dramatically – even between 8th Street, where the Holiday Inn is, and 6th Street, where I found a branch of Radio Shack who knew what I was talking about and sold me the

required memory card, there was a quantum shift after 7th Street. Suddenly the street was full of hoodies, down-and-outs carrying all they had in plastic bags, and people with massive ghetto-blasters mounted on the front of bicycles. I later found out this is Skid Row – the original one.

Most of the cafes around were pretty nasty. I almost decided to play it safe and get something from a Subway just across the street from the Holiday Inn, which would have been a real waste as I can get Subway sandwiches any day I am in Bognor. However just the same side of Market Street as the Holiday Inn I found a pretty amazing Chinese restaurant called the Moonstar.

The lunch time choice was 150 or so buffet items on an all-you-can-eat basis for \$10.58. Dim sum, classic Chinese, salads, sweets, you name it, they had it: too good to resist. How on earth the San Francisco Corflu two years ago at the same hotel didn't find this place and turn it into fannish legend I don't know. Perhaps it has only just opened. Unsurprisingly I wasn't hungry until much later when we went to the Tu Lan.

Robert collected me and we went on a quick tour of SF via the Mission Dolores on the way to collect Harry and Pat. He kindly took me to the Pacific beach so I could say I have got my fingers and shoes wet in the Pacific Ocean. I did the souvenir thing by collecting five sand-dollars (a disc-shaped sea-shell with a very pretty pattern). I gave two of them to Pat Mailer.

The architecture of the beach-front houses was remarkably similar to those facing the sea in little British seaside resorts such as Bognor's suburbs. Yes, Bognor has suburbs – go and look up Middleton-on-Sea and Pagham. But don't bother visiting them – San Francisco is much more interesting. I suspect parallel evolution – shuttered wooden houses with flat roofs, to cope with the salty wind and occasional driving rain and spray.

We drove across the peninsula through a heavy shower to the airport, just in time to wait kerbside outside the baggage reclaim area for Harry and Pat's flight. As well as Robert being pleased to see me anyway, I was able to help by going to find Harry and Pat while Robert waited to move the car if showed on by parking attendants. Which he was. We met up OK; I did enjoy the look on Harry and Pat's faces when I said "I've already been here 5 hours!"

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There was more guided tour from Robert as we headed back to the hotel. As we drove back into the city we all agreed it is both more comprehensible (I could follow the freeway signs, unlike those in Austin) and more human; we visitors felt we could actually live there. I shocked myself by realising I could actually tell where we were, only 6 hours after having landed in the city.

The architecture is mostly wooden, to withstand earthquakes, with mostly very fine-looking painted houses. There were sidewalks, and a sense of neighbourhood. (Sorry – if that is sidewalk, it should be neighborhood, and if it is neighborhood it should be pavements.) The contrast with Austin gave me the metaphor for the Doubletree and its surroundings as a jewel set in a dunghap.

We decided to head for Lombard Street, the famous wiggly steep road.



Pat and Harry look out down Lombard Street – Coit Tower on skyline

Then back to the hotel. A bearded, slim, bronzed bloke with a bushy grey beard and shock of hair was sitting in the lobby reading a copy of *Ah! Sweet Laney!* This was too much of a coincidence – of course it was Marty Cantor, who had arranged to travel from LA to SF and spend two nights just to meet us all. Robert, Marty and I went up to my room, and Harry and Pat were to join us later.

When they turned up about 20 minutes later there were three of them, as Bruce Townley had arrived. Much friendly greeting and exchanging of fanzines took place. With the loaves of rye bread Marty had brought up for us from a Jewish deli in LA, some for

Robert and some for general consumption, it turned into a sort of early evening room party.

As agreed, off we went to the Tu Lan, the Vietnamese restaurant on Sixth Street that was the stuff of fannish legend from the San Francisco Corflu. Though it is on the edge of Skid Row, I was less worried about my wallet this evening than when I had been out in the morning – there is safety in numbers.



At the Tu Lan: Harry, Pat, Marty, Bruce, Robert

Just as we had heard, it is a scruffy place but serves excellent food in huge portions, nicely cooked; the vegetables were as with other East Asian cuisines, crisp and healthy. However the service was somewhat chaotic, if fast; we kept being given other people's orders, and when our stuff did arrive it was in dribs and drabs. Marty has to be careful to avoid spices, but what I had (mixed meats/fish with mixed veg on crispy noodles) would have been non-spicy enough for Marty, indeed was pretty much spice-free. Marty can't do fish though. It could have used a little curry sauce or other spice, to be honest, but it was good nevertheless.

Robert had to leave for his journey back to Oakland, but the rest of us rode the 19 Pdk to North Point and back with Bruce as our host. The Charnox had made the same trip in September 2006 and been fascinated by a confrontation between a mad woman passenger and the driver who was almost as mad, so we had been primed to expect anything.

While we waited at the stop, a young man virtually skied down the middle of the steep road on a skateboard while jabbering away on his cellphone. Once on the bus we thought our fantasies were to be

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fulfilled when an unshaven, wild-eyed man got on and sat next to us, tapping his feet and a rolled-up piece of paper in a non-stop nervous twitch while staring at us as we talked.

We were discussing the brackets on the front of the bus. Bruce explained they are used to carry bikes or wheelchairs, and I said the British health and safety people would probably worry about impaling pedestrians with handlebars or other sharp objects. Then the wild-eyed chap spoke, and our expectations of madmen on the bus were dashed.

“When I was in Jordan they had the brackets for bikes on the *back* of the bus.” He got off soon after that, but it was a reasonable point. (Apparently the answer is that as the bus entrance is at the front, there is too high a risk of valuable bikes being stolen before their owners can accost the thief.)

At North Point, the lights of Alcatraz were shining out in the Bay. This is where the 19 Polk terminates. There was a bit of a discussion with Marty about the meanings of the words “north” and “point.” This was as Marty had misremembered which of the islands in the Bay was where. However it was eventually established that the rest of us were right,

and this was indeed Alcatraz not Angel, Treasure or Yerba Buena Islands.

As I had been up since 3 am Pacific time, I started to nod off on the way back, and slide back and forth on the side-facing smooth plastic seats as the bus accelerated or slowed. Marty went to bed as he is under doctor’s orders to eat breakfast at 5.30 am, but Bruce, Harry, Pat and I went to the bar at the Holiday Inn for a couple of pints, and I can remember pleasant conversation including overhearing some Germans talking and agreeing it was an expressive language – punctuated by my eyes repeatedly shutting. Bedtime, definitely. Bye-bye to Bruce outside, till the morning when he was to return and be Native Guide to Marty, Harry and Pat (with Marty as chauffeur), while Robert and Card were to show me round.

My room was jolly freezing, unless you used the huge eight-cylinder heater at one end of the room, which was like having a jet engine indoors. Very comfortable otherwise though. I did have some earplugs but didn’t use them. Either I was too zonked to remember, or I had become habituated to jet engine noises over the past few days.

Could we have kippers for breakfast, Mummy dear, Mummy dear? Gotta have them in Texas, as everyone’s a millionaire

On Tuesday morning Marty confirmed the Holiday Inn’s breakfasts were expensive, but in the meantime the three Brits with more relaxed culinary timetables (Harry, Pat and I) had met at 9 am and gone over the road to Steven’s Café as recommended by Robert. Marty is always ready for coffee, and joined us. By 10 am Bruce was waiting back at the hotel with detailed plans for the day’s tour. There was just time for Marty not only to show me his Scion XB bread-box-on-wheels but also try out his seat-back vibrating cushion. I have a similar one which is excellent at easing lumbar or shoulder aches and pains while you are driving, but Marty’s is two levels superior, with a thigh massager and a heating facility as well. Envy. Americans always do things over-the-top.

Robert and Carol arrived – though we’d never met, Card felt like an old friend, as had Robert when we met the previous day. With Robert it was likely anyway, as we’d been in touch so much via In the Bar and also off-list emails setting the trip up and

chatting about all sorts. I felt I knew Carol via Robert, as his descriptions of her had been so accurate and sympathetic.



Robert and Carol on one Twin Peak, with the other behind

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We started our tour via lots of decent residential areas, including an old haunt of Robert's, then on via Haight-Ashbury to look at the old hippie haunts turned tourist traps. Then up to Twin Peaks. The weather fairy had really waved his or her magic wand – in all directions were brilliant blue skies over cityscapes, seascapes, bridges and blue far distant hills. Apparently you only get around 10 days like this a year.

Every time we got in the car, Robert and Card's enthusiasm for SF's domestic architecture shone through. They are seriously knowledgeable about the city's variety of mostly wood-framed buildings. It is mostly low-rise, with shingle or painted exteriors.

We returned via the city's main business and shopping district to a patisserie with exquisite Italian gateaux. I could have committed serious caloric carnage here, but was already conscious of future meals, the bathroom scales and the Food Police waiting back home. I can't remember exactly what I had, except that it was something heavenly involving chocolate, coffee and cream.

Card's experiences as PA to a psychiatrist then doing assessment and counselling work herself had piqued her interest in my own work in the UK NHS mental health and addictions services, so we talked shop at length. ("Your essay title is: "Compare and contrast mental healthcare systems in the UK and US." That's a book!)



The Golden Gate Bridge, the Marin Headlands and the distant Pacific from Coit Tower

Next stop Coit Tower, where many megabytes of camera memory were used up on the 1930s murals

of American working life. I looked for textile workers for Coral, without success – but almost every other form of occupation you could think of was portrayed. Stunning views from the top too. Decent souvenir shop: I bought a small dragon pendant for Venetia and three tin mugs "Stolen from Alcatraz Mess Hall" for the three teams where I work. These safely protected the sand-dollars on the flight home, and now feature pens, paper-clips, elastic bands and things.

We saw more varieties of domestic architecture on the way out west – from one with a 12-foot total frontage that must have been like a caravan to live in, to a Millionaires' Row where even if the architectural styles were mongrel, the money was pedigree. After this, only one block south and three west, and we were on a wide, welcoming low-rise shopping Main Street. Almost English had it not been for the US road and shop signs. This is Chinatown West, where Green Apple Books live.

Green Apple Books is a chaotically creative place. Unlike other stores which have huge numbers of a narrow range of popular books, this has only one or two of a massive range of rare, specialist and back-list items.

Card and I both noticed a huge coffee-table tome on Spanish art, including Antoni Gaudi's architecture. For those who don't know, he was the mad creative genius behind some of the most unique buildings in Barcelona, including the still only part-built Sagrada Familia church which is the city's icon. Gaudi was an eccentric religious fanatic whose design techniques included the use of thousands of weighted strings weighted to create parabolic shapes, then inverting the whole design for Sagrada Familia. Although he was a massive celebrity in Barcelona, when he was fatally run over by a tram in the 1920s he was so scruffily dressed that people took him for a tramp and he was unrecognised in the hospital for two days, until after he had died. I had been to Barcelona for a conference in 2003; a unique experience.

In the shop I also asked about John Berry's dot-font books, the first two of which were about to be published. He wasn't yet on their authors list, but damn well better had be by now. (Plug.)

I finished up committing serious damage to my credit card for books to take home for the family, all from Green Apple Books' main store or the annex. Two for Coral – World Textiles: A Visual Guide to

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Traditional Techniques, and From the land of the Thunder Dragon: Textile Arts of Bhutan. One for Venetia, to feed her interest in fantasy art – Freaks! How to Draw Monsters (very good on how to make fantasy anatomy seem real). For Hugo, The Art of Howl's Moving Castle. They all liked them. So did Robert and Carol and Harry and Pat, who had a chance to look before I lugged them home.

Carol and Robert found a lovely little dim sum eatery just immediately over the road from the bookshop, and the little box of dim sums were really excellent. Now I know why dim sum rhymes with yum yum. They nicely filled a mid-afternoon gap before we got to Jay and Dixie's and the tapas at Picaro's. But first I had to go back and complete my purchases. I'd texted Coral back at home about the books, as she has been known to have strong opinions sometimes!

But first, back in the car for more touring. We drove past the old Armory building on Mission Street, a monolith with massive, forbidding inward-sloping flint walls. There has been a bit of local controversy about this. The building stood unused for 30 years but has recently been taken over by a film-maker who has used it to shoot porn films. It has no windows whatever, so of course the neighbours wouldn't be able to complain directly about the filming going on inside. They'd need X-ray eyes!

Rather than just keep driving round and round, we parked up a little early and went to a little bar round the corner from Jay and Dixie's. Carol insisted I take a photo of a shop opposite called Weston Wear. You didn't know Peter was a ladies' outfitter, did you?

Jay and Dixie welcomed us to their flat, which is stuffed full of fascinating books and other signs of creativity such as the wonderful doll's house Dixie made which has pride of place at the top of the stairs up from the street. Greetings also from Mr. Willy Woo, their famous black pug. Being used to dogs, I didn't find him nearly as scatty as others had promised. He just seemed lively and good fun as a companion.

Marty, Bruce, Harry and Pat arrived in good time from their city tour, and Gary Mattingly joined us too, so the Picaro's party was complete (except that it would have been great if Rich and Stacy could have made it; Rich was overworked and Stacy under the weather with a cold).

The tapas gave us a very good variety to choose from. Jay felt the spicy potatoes were piquant rather than hot – my view too. There were octopus rings; Bruce christened them Cthulhumari. I only had one piece, just so I could say I had. I tend to find most molluscs a bit chewy, and the flavour doesn't compensate for me. But the rest of the meal was good fun.



At Picaro's, l to r: Marty, Jay, Dixie, Carol (almost invisible), Robert (at end), Harry, Pat (standing), Bruce, Gary.

However I think I was once again starting to fade with evening jet-lag; I didn't even make notes, and so can't say exactly what the conversation was about. Silly me. I bet it was about art, music, In the Bar, transatlantic trips and friendships. I am sure Jay and Dixie mentioned their forthcoming trip to the UK for Alan Moore's wedding. And I have the photos to prove I looked carefully at Dixie's beautiful doll's house with exquisite miniature furniture and real paintings an inch or so high. There was also an ottoman less than two inches tall, containing real papers and other treasures; with my right hand, I took a photo of my left hand holding it open.

Another sign that my brain was fading was my failure to bring along any Bellissimos. Gary and Jay would I am sure have been interested. Then they could have had them autographed. I'm obviously not a natural salesman.

I have a feeling Marty had to leave early because of his need to have an early breakfast and drive back to LA the next day. I do remember getting back to the Holiday Inn via BART with Harry, Pat and Bruce, and a series of farewell hugs outside the hotel.

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Wednesday began once again with breakfast at Steven's for Harry, Pat and myself. Vague memory of something yummy, fried and naughty – corned beef hash or something like that. Good coffee and conversation too. Robert L came to pick Harry, Pat and myself up for the day's sightseeing. As Carol had decided to stay home and rest her back till we arrived, there was easily room for the 4 of us.

Harry and Pat had missed out on the view from Twin Peaks the day before, as they had done other stuff. So Robert decided to put the omission right.



Harry, Pat and myself on Twin Peaks, with the city behind (Photo Robert L, on my camera)

This time we went down the hill to the west and north, to the Golden Gate Bridge. We pulled into the car park and service area on the Marin County side of the bridge, to explore the bridge on foot. On the Bay side is a small Second World War naval base, which in the event was not needed to defend the homeland as the Japanese never got close to invading. More relevant nowadays are the signs on the walkways: "Emergency Phone and Crisis Counselling."

Then we went round the Marin County headland into the nature reserve. Totally unexpected wild beauty so close to the city; apparently nearly deserted in winter. A sign said "Frogs on Road when Wet." Right next to a small settlement was a herd of five deer, remarkably unspooked by cars stopping for photography.

Through the tunnel under the coastal mountains towards Sausalito. We hoped to see the harbour there, but a wrong turning saw us back onto the freeway so we continued north past San Quentin jail



Pat and Harry looking back from the Marin headland: the bridge needs no introduction

(of Johnny Cash live concert fame, as well as for housing various celebrity prisoners). This whole area used to be isolated but is now full of development. The marina just north of Sausalito was obviously only for the well-heeled.

I had spare Bellissimos to leave with Rich Coad so they could be mailed off to buyers in the States without incurring transatlantic postage. Just before we reached Richmond Bridge we stopped so Robert could ring Rich or Stacy Scott to see if either of them was at home. Stacy had come back from Corflu nursing a developing cold, so she was at home and happy for us to pop in and say a quick hello to drop the stuff off, but warned us against too much infectious contact.

So the famed naked cats, books and records were not in evidence, regrettably. However it was nice to pop



Coad Hall

The Return of the Native – Corflu trip report – Rob Jackson, 2007

in, even if only briefly, and see her. I took a photo of their place from outside. I told Coral I was going to ask Rich if I could make a reference to Coad of Coad Hall, and she said "if he's got any sense he'll refuse!" Mind you, I think it was Harry who made the joke first, if I remember right. Or maybe Robert. Someone else can take the blame.

By this time we were getting hungry, and we had been Saving Up our appetites for Robert's recommendation of the Sonoma Grill in Albany (which is between Richmond and Berkeley). This did prove that American cuisine can be really well cooked and presented; the burgers were great. Robert also paid – far too generous.

Then on to Berkeley, the centre of the East Bay side of the late 60s hippie movement. Harry remembered how Darrall Pardoe had come from the UK to Berkeley as a strait-laced young man, and returned with a huge shock of frizzy hair which he has maintained ever since. A revolutionary effect.

One presumed sign of nostalgia for the hippie era was a personalised number plate: "SOW LOVE."

Robert said: "Perhaps he likes pigs."

Out of Berkeley, southwards to Oakland. Broadway Terrace winds up the hill overlooking the Bay through houses that are all less than 16 years old, as the area was devastated in 1991 by a massive fire started by someone's bonfire. I said I hope they felt guilty.

The fire stopped at the top of the hill, just two houses short of Carol and Robert's house (which is just over the brow of the hill, and of course had been Terry and Carol Carr's house before Terry's untimely death in 1987). Everyone is aware that wooden houses are a risk, but then so are earthquakes, and wood stays together better when it's shaken. The forest fire bit... ideally you choose somewhere without too many trees.

Not to belittle the actual losses of those whose housing was burnt down, but if Terry and Carol's house had gone the world would have been deprived of some priceless SF and fannish mementos. Carol and Robert still have lots of Terry's stuff to cherish as well as Robert's massive (and beautifully organised) fannish collection.

Built out from the crest of a steep hollow and supported on the side away from the hill by massive

wooden stilts, the house has a most unusual and fascinating inverted layout. The garage is in effect the attic, being at road level, with successive floors below. Down a flight of steps to the front door which is at the main living level. Below that again is the floor with Robert's capacious study/library, and also some storerooms full of books and other memorabilia.



Looking down from the road to Carol and Robert's house (the garage is higher up to the right)

Carol welcomed us all with drinks and a brief look out on the patio/terrace which looks out over the hollow, but we didn't stay out there long as the weather had turned sharply colder. Indoors for a look round the house, which Robert and Carol both protested was a bit untidy, but it was nothing of the sort as far as I was concerned (but then the Jackson household is a chronically creative mess, so I'm not one to judge).

The highlight for me was the chance to take photos of their beautiful collection of Navajo weavings. I used up many megabytes of camera memory for Coral's interest, and to try to encourage her to come to Nevada next year. She was fascinated, but knows very well how much these would cost if bought nowadays, so regrettably doesn't think that a trip over would be worth it just for the chance to buy weavings. Let's just say that the weavings Carol and Terry bought in the late 60s and early 70s have been very sound investments indeed. One on the floor in Robert's study dates back to 1910 and is still in superb nick with no fading or wear at all. I hardly dared walk on it.

Robert let Harry, Pat and me look through his collection, including more generosity in letting us

take any books we fancied from the spares and duplicates in the storeroom. To be honest I felt a little guilty, but couldn't resist a copy of "Terry's Universe", the tribute anthology edited by Beth Meacham after Terry's death in 1987. Though there were a number of copies of the Gollancz UK edition, I thought the US publication looked more interesting - and certainly had a more interesting cover.

Most of the afternoon was spent chatting, as well as looking at fanzines and books. There was a real meeting of minds in the conversations, both about matters fancish and political. Harry willingly disobeyed his First Law as imposed in the bar (the one about not discussing Middle East politics), and there was universal dislike of Anglophone and other Western boots stomping where many don't want them.

Card also talked about a psychiatrist she had worked for in the 70s. She had loved the actual work, which was administering psychological tests, but he was an almost impossible boss, as he took advantage of people, definitely including Card, so instinctively he didn't even realise he was doing so. He sounded a total sod. For example, he would one by one steal all her pencils, then when she said "You've got all my pencils," he would reply "Our pencils." What's mine is mine, and what's yours is mine....

We also sampled some American beers – further proof that not all US beer is tasteless lager. Nor are the names all bland: we liked Arrogant Bastard Ale both as a very tasty dark porter-type brew and for its name. Think Newcastle Brown with a dash of Guinness.

Just before sunset Harry and I went for a walk just over the brow of the hill to see the sunset over the Bay – see the back cover for some of the visual results.

As my body clock had stayed on US Central time, I'd woken far too early that day, so ran out of conversation at times. In any case, we had to leave at 6.45 so Robert could drop Harry and Pat off at the Holiday Inn where they still had 2 more nights, yet still get me to the motel I had chosen near SFO airport in enough time for at least some sleep. I had booked at the La Quinta Inn so I could get up at 3.30 to leave at 4 am and check in in time for a 6 am flight to Phoenix.

More conversation in the car over the Bay Bridge, then all too suddenly it was farewell hugs between Harry, Pat, Robert and myself at the Holiday Inn. Finally Robert dropped me off at the motel – I felt very emotional, tempered by the certainty of reunion in a year's time.

After dumping my bags in the room, I felt alone but not deserted, as I had a snack at the Lyons restaurant across the car park from the motel. The rest of American society started to make itself felt, though, in the sign on the wall near my table as I was eating loaded potato skins: "We Will Never Forget 9/11." We all know that was a total and massive horror, but should grudges really be eternal?

The motel itself was OK, though, and I slept reasonably from 9.30 till 3.30. I had become used to using TV as a soporific. I stayed in three hotels while in the USA, and each one had *exactly* the same remote handset, provided by the same company. Different range of channels though, even in the two in San Francisco.

At the airport the breakfast bars had a pretty good range – a big bowl of oatmeal with brown sugar melting at the bottom and banana on top was one of the healthiest meals I had all week. Mind you, I had no fries at all until the return visit to Austin airport, and even then it was only because the woman serving took no notice of my "no fries" request.

On the Phoenix-Austin leg I bought the least unhealthy option of the four \$5 snack-boxes. I ate the cheese crackers and the dried fruit mix (which was quite good), but kept the chocolate mini cookies for emergency use only. I ate about four of them during such an emergency before the mid-Atlantic breakfast. When I got home, Coral nibbled one, decided they were extremely nasty and threw the rest away. So that's your expert verdict on Famous Amos cookies.

There was a 40-minute queue - sorry, line - for security checks at Phoenix, but that merely filled the gap between flights, rather than leaving me at risk of missing it. Strangely, at Houston there was no security check at all - presumably as we were already airside, they thought the check had already been done?

Overall, though, my journey home was about as hassle-free as one with four separate flights made in two separate bookings can be. I remained well enough oriented that at Phoenix I gave the correct time to a woman who asked, by adding an hour to

what it said on my watch which was still on Pacific time. In this day and age, it boggles me that people do things like travelling by air without watches.

The Austin flight was full, staffed by a real martinet of a chief steward: "Please step into your seat rows while packing so others can go past and we can leave on time." On that leg, a 20-month-old in the seat behind me was captivating - he just kept saying "Air-pay!" His Mum told us he did know other words, but I think he's going to be a pilot when he grows up. So I didn't encounter any major irritants. Austin airport was considerably more efficient and less stressful than Phoenix.

To confirm my booking, the airline only needed to swipe the machine-readable bit in my passport. So the airlines' booking systems talk to the passport info systems, eh? That makes it more convenient, quicker and safer, but don't get paranoid – just accept that They Really Do Know All About Us.

Houston airport seemed much more crowded than the same time last week, probably as I was headed for an international departure gate rather than a domestic one. The food court and shopping areas were much more extensive, but still not all that upmarket. There was a Pappadeaux fish restaurant upstairs, but I had neither the time nor the space in my stomach for that. However I did buy myself a rather dull ice cream, and a mug at the NASA souvenir shop, which I think I remember was called Space Trader. "It ain't rocket science... Oh wait, yes it is."

Back on to a Continental 777. This time, the take-off traffic jam at Houston was a full hour long, caused by strong northerly winds which were above the cross-wind limits for the usual half-dozen east-west runways, so they were crowding all planes onto a rarely used north-south one. Again, as we took off I could count 15 planes in the queue (sorry, line) behind us.

After a rather dull meal, at one point I did some actual *reading*. I found out one thing, and decided to contact Robert and Carol as soon as I got home. I read "The Dance of the Changer and the Three" again in "Terry's Universe" (edited by Beth Meacham, remember), and was boggled once again by the sheer strangeness of the world and creatures he posited. However I then looked through the rest of the book, and found a dedication in the front.

"For Card, with thanks and love. Beth. (sgd) Beth Meacham."

Which definitely meant I shouldn't have this particular copy – it was perfectly obvious who should! It must have been put in the storage boxes by accident. So I emailed Robert and Card, apologised for the eye-tracks on the copy but said I had respected the spine, and arranged to post it back in exchange for one of the Gollancz copies.

In the 70s, I made two transcontinental trips putting me at risk of jet-lag. In 1973 I'd been to Sri Lanka for a student elective (fannish reference: *Ren dezvous* with Arthur, published in *Spanish Inquisition* 6). Then there was the 1977 trip to America for Suncon (reference: *Maya* 15, and *Ganne tscrapbook* 3). Both times, eastbound jetlag had crippled me for about a fortnight, though westbound had been manageable. So I concluded that I was built for a planet with a 25-hour day – which is apparently pretty normal.

This time, though, coming east wasn't nearly as awful as I'd thought. It helped that though I was on a night flight, and contrary to advice from some to stay awake, I had a row of seats to myself and got about 3 or 4 hours' fairly OK kip.

I was just about alert enough to appreciate the irony on the final train journey home from Gatwick to the South Coast of England. The train was stopped at a red light, and the driver was obviously an airline pilot wannabe. Barnham is a large village in a farming and horse-riding part of West Sussex, now taken over by Polish tomato pickers. Its station's main claim to fame is as the junction for the Bognor branch line. Hence the surrealism in the pilot's – sorry, driver's – announcement: "Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, this is your driver speaking. We are parked at a red light waiting for the Littlehampton express which is now passing on our starboard side. Once that has passed we shall be making our way to Barnham International."

By the time Coral collected me from Chichester at lunchtime on the Friday I had made up my mind that as long as I could afford it and the law allows us to continue to pollute the skies, I am going to keep flying to meet friends in the States. Am I being selfish by wanting to have fun? Is our collective fun at Corflu more important than holidaymakers wanting to get some sun, sea, sand and sex in Barbados? Only our global consciences can answer.

Progenous Peregrinations

Hugo Jackson, 2007

Trip report on Anime Expo 2006
E-interview – HJ = Hugo Jackson; RJ = Rob Jackson

RJ: I'm a long time sf fan, that is a member of "traditional" sf fandom that has evolved since the 1930s around books and magazines, and has developed "fannish" traditions such as conventions, fanzines and more recently e-lists and so on. So I'm really interested in how anime fandom is different. How and when did it develop?

HJ: Anime in Japan came about as a result of Japanese animators studying animation techniques used in the West at the beginning of the 20th Century (which is ironic, especially considering now Western animators are becoming more influenced by Japanese animation works).

The first widespread popular series was Osamu Tezuka's *Astroboy*, produced in the 1963. In the 1970s it began separating from the Western techniques to develop its own unique style – this period in time generated such talents as Mamoru Oshii and Hayao Miyazaki.

With the advent of *Star Wars*, anime series started shifting focus towards space opera stories, and the popularity of programmes such as *Space Battleship Yamato* spurred many anime magazines, which in turn began generating a subculture later to be known as Otaku. The much-acclaimed anime film *Akira*, despite making a loss in Japan, became a cult hit in the West and is now considered to be a very symbolic step in the medium's rise in popularity overseas. Although I haven't seen it. Other notable franchises that have made an impact over here are *Cowboy Bebop*, *Neon Genesis Evangelion* and the infamous *Pokémon*.

I suppose the fandom developed in much the same way as sf fandom has, although the greatest surge and base of its popularity lies within the Internet – especially as most, if not all fans have at least dabbled in downloading fan-subtitled episodes through BitTorrent or the like. The 'Net plays a big part in the changing face of the fandom and its recognition in wider circles. It's still struggling to break into the mainstream market, and I think it's still quite misunderstood by a lot of people.

It tends to go hand-in-hand with an interest in gaming, but while most anime fans are also gaming fans as well, by no means are even most gamers anime fans.

The largest social groups are definitely on internet forums, and given the relative scarcity of anime conventions and the overall age of people in the fandom, that's where most of the friend and contact-making happens.

RJ: How is it different from sf fandom, and what are the similarities? What happens on Otakuboard?

HJ: Ah, I have to be diplomatic here – I think it takes certain kinds of people to become anime and/or science fiction fans. A lot of anime is science-fiction anyway, so you can definitely see some parallels between stories I've heard you and Mum (Coral) tell me and what I see at conventions. The costumes are there – I can remember walking through one of the convention halls in Anaheim and being bewildered at all the different costumes, varying from the obviously home-made to the wonderfully elaborate. I always want to make a costume but I can never bring myself to, especially as I know I'd inevitably need to ask Mum for help. You can buy them on eBay now, but it's not the same.

There's still a very social aspect to the conventions, and old favourites like the Time Warp and that weird Star Trek song played a big part at the party at the London Expo last year. You still get the nerds and the fanatics and for better or worse you still get the men wearing female character's outfits. And drinking.

I suppose the biggest difference may be the age of the people in anime fandom now – I know many 14-15 year olds who love anime and are actively involved in the fandom, whether it's running a website or going to conventions. I suppose it's the modern equivalent of sf fandom, although a lot of anime is far more frivolous than the majority of sf stories in terms of its content. There's a much greater diversity of anime genres, too – you get

manga and anime series specifically written for male or female target audiences, both in science fiction, fantasy, drama, comedy, romance, crime, horror...there's a great richness of animation styles. And you get people who are interested in the fandom simply for the costume designs, others for the music...there's a sense that you're embracing a bit of Japanese culture in every aspect of it.

In honesty, I don't do very much at OtakuBoards now, but I used to be a Moderator of the forums. Basically, it evolved as a gaming site and then progressed to become a message-board themed around the discussion of anime. Its parent site is www.theotaku.com, and now offers a book made by its members on how to draw manga.

RJ: Was it through being on Otakuboard that you decided you wanted to go to Anime Expo last year?

HJ: Yes, essentially. I was thinking about going the year before, but I couldn't as I was still in college. I had a lot of friends from OtakuBoards who I wanted to meet and were attending, and Anime Expo is one of the biggest English language conventions in the world. It certainly has a lot to its name in terms of guests, screenings and space.

RJ: Any highlights and low points of the trip?

HJ: Conveniently enough, the trip also coincided with a concert in Anaheim's House of Blues by a Japanese rock artist, Hyde, who is also the lead singer of one of my favourite bands – L'arc-en-Ciel. It was his debut concert in America, so I was quite proud to be there. As it was rather impromptu attending, though, I didn't even know any of his songs when I went. Not that it mattered, as I couldn't hear any difference in the songs when I was inside. But I got absorbed into the atmosphere of the concert and it was all good fun. I made friends with two people who'd come all the way from Las Vegas to see him, one of whom took me aside afterwards to apologise for acting so weirdly because he was on drugs. A bizarre conversation, especially as three hours before I didn't even know he existed.

Walking to the concert was an adventure in itself – on the map I found of Anaheim, Downtown Disney (which is where the House of Blues is) is just around the corner from my hotel by the Anaheim Convention centre. So I reckoned on a five-ten minute walk. The problem is, I'm used to *English* corners, not American ones. It took me about twenty minutes, and was actually about a mile and a half away.

A friend of mine and his boyfriend drove me out to Hollywood the evening after and showed me around. It was really interesting being able to see Grauman's Chinese Theater where the Oscars are held and the Walk of Fame. Surprising number of porn shops on Hollywood Boulevard, but I guess I somewhat expected that. Nice chips, though.

They took me to a shopping centre where I was able to buy the complete series of *Beast Machines* on DVD. That was probably the highest point of the trip for me!

The lowest point for me was probably on the first night I was in Anaheim, before the convention began, sitting on my own in this gargantuan room on a bed that could easily fit six, and listening to all the other convention attendees who were sharing rooms and bouncing up and down the corridors with their friends. During the whole trip I didn't get to spend that much time with the people I wanted to meet up with for various reasons, and I felt rather isolated by it all. I didn't have a costume, so I couldn't really integrate even with fans of the same series. A costume gives you a base for people to approach you, and while I did buy a lovely sleevedessjacket, some cat ears and a tail and got a few hugs out of it for looking cute, it wasn't quite the same as going with someone and being able to share the experience all the time.

Guacamole. That was another low point.

The flights were pretty bad. Don't really want to travel Economy class again if I can help it. On the flight there I was sat next to an odorous Lebanese family who didn't understand my English or my French, so failed in filling out their visa application for me properly and, I imagine, were hence detained at Los Angeles airport for umpteen hours while being processed. I didn't wait to see if they did actually make it through immigration or not. And I was ill on the flight back.

RJ: Any highlights and low points of the actual convention?

HJ: I got to have a really long conversation with a voice actor, Dan Worren, about all sorts of things, from voice acting to Buddhism. He's a very interesting guy. It was really nice being able to spend time with people I'd met over the net, and the shopping opportunities at the convention were amazing. I could easily have spent everything I owned (and a lot of things I didn't) in these two Leviathan convention halls set up just for traders.

I went to the Charity Auction they held at the end of the convention and I couldn't believe how much some people were paying for signed memorabilia and/or sketches that manga artists had drawn. I

think one girl paid upwards of \$6,000 for one small sketch. That was a jaw-dropper. I hope never to become that much of a fan of anything.

I didn't go to any of the parties that were held in the evenings, though, because I didn't really know or interact with many people staying there. Parties aren't really my thing, but it's part and parcel of the experience, so I was a little disappointed not to have been able to take advantage of that. I saw some photos afterwards, though, and was at least a little reassured in my belief that parties are not always A Good Thing.

Another low point was I suppose more of an irritation. There was this 'Whose Line Is It Anyway' take-off being held on one of the last days, and members of the audience could give suggestions for the anime fans on stage to act out. Most of the jokes at some point or another devolved into two particular rival Final Fantasy characters being gay, or something else of equal crudeness, so I stuck my hand up with (what I presumed) would be a pretty clever joke. I suggested a specific event from *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, referred to in the series as 'Third Impact', whereby the Human Instrumentality Project comes into operation and succeeds in joining all human consciousness into one being. No laughs, so I walked out, disgusted. I'm still disgusted, to be honest. Philistines can't appreciate a good joke. I'll show them, though, you see!

RJ: Many people on the In the Bar e-list are veterans of many sf conventions. One or two of the World SF Conventions (Worldcons) have been held at Anaheim. One of my In the Bar colleagues, Andy Porter, says the convention center there is artificial, which I take to mean rather soulless. Was this your experience?

HJ: I can understand his point, definitely. Inside it's a series of large, empty spaces decked out in dismal whites and greys, and there's nothing particularly welcoming about the building as a whole. Even when it was filled with people, they looked incredibly out of place in their wild costumes and bizarre picket signs against the barren corridors. The air conditioning was nice, though.

RJ: I was amazed by the 42,000 total attendance at Anime Expo; traditional sf Worldcons have hardly ever exceeded 5,000. What's it like being 1 of 42,000? Did you ever feel lost and purposeless, or was it OK to be one of many scurrying ants?

HJ: Erm...it was somewhat some. Most of the time I was wandering around the traders' halls, so there was always something to look at and unless it was crowded I didn't pay that much attention to the people around me, unless a costume I liked caught my eye (sometimes literally). There were some stalls, such as ADV Films, that would periodically throw out free things like T-shirts and DVDs to a crowd of people, who soon enough would all start chanting 'A-D-V! A-D-V!', like some sort of tribal worship.



The ADV mob, being thrown offerings from their tribal leader – HJ

I didn't engage in such affairs, so I suppose you could say I was a lost and purposeless ant, scurrying around trying to buy things before the other ants got hold of them but generally being content in being by myself.

Outside the convention centre was the place to be in costume to have your picture taken, or to take pictures – if people were inside they were generally watching something, going to a panel or shopping. But as I didn't have a costume I couldn't join in the large series-specific costume gatherings except to take pictures. And there are only so many times you can look round the same shops over and over again. It's a four-day convention and there was a lot of it. I don't think the brochure even told me half the stuff that was really happening. I think if I'd been a little more outgoing I probably would have had a better time being one of many ants, as opposed to a surly loner ant.

RJ: Now to the really important bit - the friends you met. How many of them were previously "web-only" friends, and what was it like when you actually met?

HJ: They all were people I met over the internet. It was quite bizarre actually getting to meet them for the first time – I'd seen pictures of a few but couldn't really remember what they looked like.

The only clue I'd been given was to look for someone holding a stuffed panda (one of my friends' screen names was 'Panda', you see).



'Panda' on the right, with two characters from Fullmetal Alchemist – HJ

I've met a few people in person who I've befriended over the internet and it's a different experience each time – for one thing your communication medium is different, and I know I speak differently from how I type, so there's a quick learning curve in assessing how you can actually speak to them, and you almost have to get to know them again despite knowing you've had so much interaction with them in the past. 'Panda' was costumed up as a character from the *Tekken* computer game series, and was with 'Mamma Vash', dressed as Vash the Stampede from the *Trigun* anime. I also met up with a guy I'd known for about three years previous – my boss on Otaku Boards, 'Shy' (who took me to Hollywood), and another Moderator who appeared on the team at the same time I did: 'Shinmaru'.



Aaron, 'Shy', 'Shinmaru' and myself, in one of the gaming rooms – HJ

We'd had many long and ridiculous online chats together, but in person Shinmaru, Shy and I are all

fairly introverted, so conversation wasn't as easy to make, or as free-flowing. But you still share those certain rapport that make you friends in the first place, and it was really nice getting to know them in person.

RJ: As you are an aspiring actor, the chance for a side-trip to Hollywood presumably had a special meaning for you. What did it mean to visit it? Did it live up to expectations, or was it disappointing?

HJ: (Well, possibly more an aspiring writer than an actor now, although ideally I'll strive for both.) Hollywood itself doesn't have that great a connection to me, possibly because I believe films exist more for me in the mind of someone who's created it and in the studios where they're made than anywhere else. For me, I almost ignore that Hollywood exists, save for that all-encompassing power to decide who's famous next. Likewise, I don't really believe in celebrity, and to me Hollywood seems to be the place for the names, and not the films themselves.

The visit did mean a lot to me though. I didn't get the chance to look around any studio backlots or anything like that, which would have meant more to me, but it was great standing outside Grauman's Chinese Theater. Quite a magnificent building, despite its location. I couldn't really say whether it did or didn't live up to my expectations as I didn't have much of a preconceived opinion as to what it would be like. Bits of it were more run-down than I would have expected, and it was all a little dirty, I suppose. I would have liked to have seen it a bit cleaner.

RJ: Is the whole trip now a treasured memory, a bit of a let-down, or a mixture? Why?

HJ: I think it's filed away in 'experiences and adventures', as the first piece of travelling I've done by myself, for myself without any great guarantee that I was going to meet someone at the other end. I wouldn't say it was a let-down, though, not by any means. I enjoyed the chance to reflect on myself and my place in anime fandom, as well as more serious issues like where I wanted to go in life. I was able to complete the synopsis of my prospective novel, too, so it was useful in that respect. I may not have had the motivation if I were at home during that time.

One thing I will always hold with me is a comment someone made when I was in the queue to pick up my attendee's badge the day before the convention actually started. I'd bought an old Luftwaffe jacket and, with Mu's help, emblazoned some rather stylish bits of tattoo-style embroidery on it. It

looked rather smart if I do say so myself, and quite a few other people seemed to think so. This one particular girl who was filming the queue on her handheld camcorder pointed at me and said: “Did you make that?”



*Hugo and jacket at point of departure – RJ
(Embroidery, and photo, Coral Jackson)*

“Er m... yes,” I said, not really wanting to get into the technicalities of the fact that, actually, I didn’t construct the jacket from scratch, nor indeed design the embroidery, that I just decided where I wanted the symbols and then got someone else to sew them on. Anyway, that aside, she replied most emphatically:

“You win at life.”

I can now carry with me that one simple truth that whatever befalls me, whatever hardships I face, that *I win at life*, and therefore I can achieve anything. It never occurred to me that life was something I could win at, but obviously I have been bestowed this Godlike ability to do so. I certainly won’t question it, but it does make me feel a little sad that nobody else will ever be able to live up to what I’m due to do with my life. I have eliminated the competition completely simply by being alive. I am amazing. Thank you, camcorder girl.

RJ: Has the trip made you more committed to anime fandom, or has your involvement dwindled since?

HJ: I’ve been involved with a lot of things, so I suppose I’ve grown out of it in a way if only because I haven’t had time to absorb myself in it again. I don’t moderate at OtakuBoards any more, because between making films, writing books and

doing various other bits and pieces, I just don’t have time. And OtakuBoards specifically have changed a lot since I was last active; I’m not so sure how well I fit into that any more. I do very little reading of internet forums generally now, although I have a friend who keeps me regularly informed. I still have my diary site under the Otaku.com’s banner, and have friends who I communicate with through there, but not much else.

But there are still times when I’ll sit down and have a marathon run of something like *Bleach* or *One Piece*, because I love the stories, the characters and the artwork. I think it will always be my favorite kind of animation, not only for the style but the beliefs that run intrinsically through it. There’s a very subtle, but incredibly poignant difference between anime and Western animation in the presentation of characters – that strength comes from within, and that you can better yourself to overcome an obstacle that has already almost beaten you.

It’s a little different to a lot of Western stories that rely on gifts, power or strength being given to someone in order to overcome evil, by way of a prophecy or otherwise. It also tends to emphasize the strength of bonds of friendship when you’re all fighting for the same goal but aren’t necessarily in the same place; Western animations tend to depict a more literal teaming up against whatever you’re fighting against. So the storytelling aspect of it is something that will always mean a lot to me.

I’m intending to go to more conventions in the future, with or without costume, to meet people and make friends with similar interests. Because anime’s social life is basically the internet, you don’t get much of an opportunity to meet people locally with your interests. I probably should have gone to University – they have anime clubs and things.

RJ: Do you have any photos that would help Inca’s readers get a feel for what it was like? Do you mind if I print a few of them?

HJ: Yes, please feel free. I’ll even caption them for you.

RJ: Any ideas for a title for this piece?

HJ: I’m an editor now too? Well, if you want to be mythological, you could call it something to do with Sinchi Roca, who was the son of the first king of Cuzco and second ruler of the Inca Empire. Or something colloquial, like “Progenous Pommie Perigrinates the Pond, Pater Poses Poll for Passing in Prose”. But let’s not get too Daily Mirror about it.



SF



LA