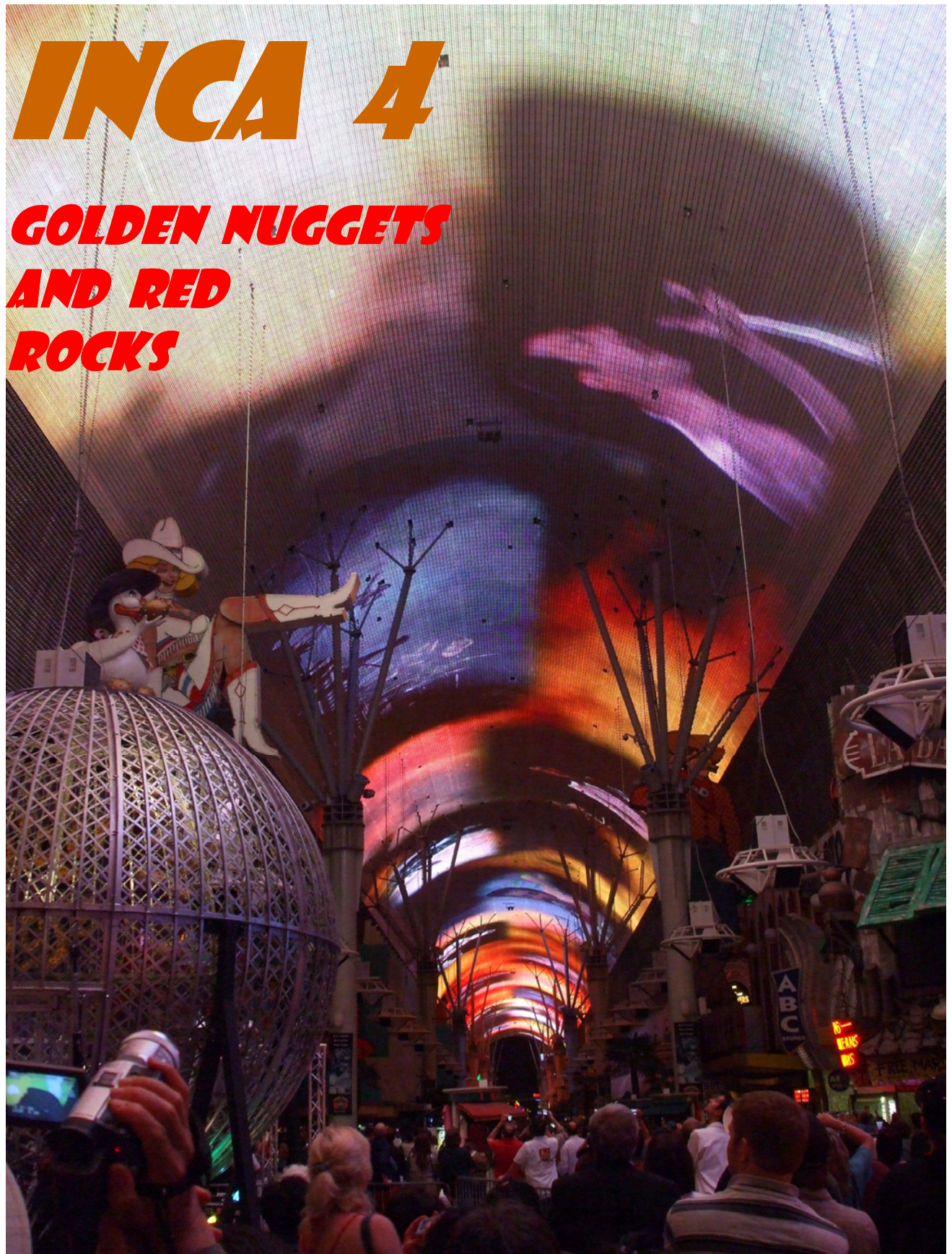


INCA 4

GOLDEN NUGGETS AND RED ROCKS



Inca 4

Edited & published by:

Rob Jackson,
Chinthay, Nightingale Lane,
Hambrook, Chichester,
W. Sussex PO18 8UH.

Email: jacksonshambrook at tiscali.co.uk.
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Incantations 4:

an introtorial

Rob Jackson

This is an interim issue of Inca. I had hoped to bring you something more substantial, but the features I had planned about the changes in the process of publishing and editing sf have yet to materialise. Never mind, maybe next time.....

As it is, this issue is more nearly a personalzine than the previous ones, in that the only outside contributors are Sandra Bond, with her thought-provoking bit of fannish alternate history (and her new lyrics to Highway 61 in the loccol), and you heroic letter-writers. Thanks to all of you, especially Sandra.

I didn't want to delay publishing it any longer, as the main content is my trip report on Corflu Silver in 2008. Trip reports go off the boil the longer they are left before publication. And I have so many photos of Corflu Silver, Las Vegas and the Grand Canyon that I don't want to leave it too long before using up all that lovely ink on showing them to you all.

Thanks to Graham Charnock for indirectly inspiring the puzzle which I have entitled A Round Trip, and to the baristas IntheBar for their off-the-cuff inspiration in the IntheBar Hymnal. (I have other sequences of lyric quotes available as quiz/puzzles – these will be sent off to various faneditors in the next few weeks.)

The other new source of old material in this issue is my historic art folder, which I dug out of the infamous attic as usual. This contains some stuff of Maya/Inca 1 vintage, plus some from the Conspiracy era (various artists, some even with talent, sent me stuff when I was i/c Publications for that con). Pages 21,24, 28 and 30 all feature good if historic stuff. And see page 31 for details of the back cover!

Contents

	Page
Colophon, contents	2
Incantations 4	Rob Jackson 2
Golden Nuggets and Red Rocks: a Corflu Silver trip report	Rob Jackson 3
A Round Trip (compiled by)	Rob Jackson 18
The Fan Who Might Have Been?	Sandra Bond 19
The IntheBar Hymnal	Various 22
Circulation – locs on Inca 3	Various 25

Artwork

Front cover photo	Rob Jackson
Photos pages 3-17	Rob Jackson
Page 21	Harry Bell
Page 24	Atom
Page 26	Harry Bell
Page 28	Stu Shiffman
Page 30	Jim Barker
Back cover	Noxi-Kun

GOLDEN NUGGETS

AND RED ROCKS

A CORFLU SILVER TRIP REPORT

ROB JACKSON

Ungava Bay. Godthab. James Bay.

It was all going incredibly easily. Can't anything go wrong? I asked myself. This fannish intercontinental travel is a doddle really. As long as you've got everything lined up...

The Virgin Atlantic flight was due to leave Gatwick for Las Vegas at 1045 on the Tuesday before Corflu Silver on the last weekend of April 2008. I had booked to arrive at the Plaza Hotel a couple of nights before the con itself, with a long bus trip to the Grand Canyon booked online to fill in the first full day in the south-western desert states of the USA. All booked and hunky-dory.

I was so well organised that I had even got an earlier train than I had expected from home up to Gatwick the previous night. I was at the Virgin check-in area before the advisory check-in time of two hours before take-off. No company on the flight this time except the company of strangers, but at least no worries about meeting up.

So there I was at one of the computerised self-service check-in terminals. I stuck my passport's machine-readable page into its maw and it thought for a while. The computer asked all about me, including exactly where I was staying on arrival in Las Vegas, and after five minutes of third degree it decided I wasn't good enough for this after all – "Sorry, self-service check-in is not available on this flight." Well, stupid machine, why did you ask me all those questions then?

So, off to the Virgin check-in cattle market. Three 747s leaving within an hour of each other, all for various hedonistic parts of the world (the one before ours was off to Montego Bay). Join the back of a queue with about a thousand people in it.

What have I done with my passport? I know I always put it back in my left inner breast pocket, and it isn't there! Did I put it in the folder with the booking codes and print-outs? No, not there. Oh my God, I've left it sitting on top of the automated check-in terminal. Run panicking back to the terminal. Not there either. Someone must have nicked it, and I'll spend three hours sweating while they fail to prove I'm me, and then send me off back home with my tail between my legs or even assume I'm trying this on. Help help help.

What's this inside my wallet? My passport! Phew, sheesh. Don't stop sweating for some time, especially as I have to run back to the main Virgin cattle market and finish up behind a further couple of dozen late-comers. At least I have plenty of time for the adrenalin to fade.

Virgin staff incredibly helpful. When my hand-luggage (stuffed with fanzines) proved 2 kg over their 6 kg weight limit, they were quite happy for me to open up my main case and stuff 2 kgs' worth of fanzines in there, so it got to only just under the 23 kg limit. I now know that when I fly Virgin, I mustn't have more than 29 kg's worth of clobber all told; overall, I just crept in under the wire this time. Next time I have a fanzine to trade at Corflu, I'll just have to do without a spare pair of shoes or something. Goodness knows why I take my slippers when I stay in hotels; I never wear them, but take them along just in case there's a fire.

It took so long to get all those people through the check-in desks that by the time I was at the front they were combing for the last few Vegas passengers, me among them, despite me having been in the queue at the advised time. Then at Security I set the beep off on the X-ray machine. The guard's metal detector kept beeping whenever it neared my umbilicus. Eventually he guessed I was committing the sin of having a belt with a large metal buckle. I know my stomach sticks out

Golden Nuggets, Red Rocks – Rob Jackson

more than it should, but there's no need for everyone to look at it.

I was given a damn good frisk after that, but it wasn't very exciting. (At Vegas on the way back they were more practical, and asked me to take the belt off. Easier.) By then the signs were already advising Vegas passengers to Go To Gate.

Damn. In the rush, forgot to buy a Guardian. Can I get a paper at the gate? Disaster – no newsagent. Complimentary Telegraph or Mail; Telegraph better than nothing, I suppose. At least I have a few other techniques to keep my brain in gear for 10 hours, even if that gear is neutral half the time.

Timmins. Thunder Bay. Fargo.

You can follow the place names on the I-MAP computerised flight path indicators, for a start. (Hence the interlinos.) They put only the most interesting ones on the screen. I'm no great film buff, so fanzines and fannish books to get into the mood for Corflu seemed like a good idea. As I was next to a couple of non-fans, I was a little worried what they might think I was reading, what with Dave Langford's "The Sex Column and Other Misprints". I also had my print-out of the Kim Huett collection of John Brosnan's finest writings, *You Only Live Once*. With a flying pair of buttocks on the back cover, I also had to be careful how I held that one. OK by me, but others might not be.

Long-haul flights are punctuated with nondescript food. Mine was called steak and ale casserole. Wearing a beige and blue-grey Hawaiian-style shirt is rather good with gloppy gravy, as the drips are camouflaged. A squeeze bottle of water and a largely unused paper napkin sort it. There. No-one need know.



There's another plane out there, honest
Window seats are good for sight-seeing but useless if you want to get out and move about. (On a 3-4-3

wide-bodied jet layout, they are the only seats where you have to disturb more than one other person to go to the toilet.) But at least I could take rubbish photos, even if they were nearly all of white snow or white clouds, or the one – nearly white – Air France jet that passed below us crossing our path from right to left, presumably on its way to Montreal or Quebec.

The air temperature outside went below -70°C at one point, and at times the clear air turbulence was bad enough that the engines were shaking up and down a couple of feet. I know aircraft are designed that way, but it's still unsettling.

It was also unsettling to open my eyes from a doze, raise the window blind, move my head forwards and look straight out of the window, to see the huge red Virgin Atlantic engine nacelle swim into my field of view and think "My God! There's a bus overtaking us!" Go back to sleep, Jackson.

The most up-market fannish reading material I had to keep me diverted was a colour print-out of Michael Dobson's *Random Jottings 3*, which is in a different social stratum from John Brosnan's collected work. Reading Michael's fanzine first was a mistake. It is not only painstakingly produced and laid out and full of colour photos, but the main content is also inspirational, about the part Mike has played in an international peace medal. He has helped the Samaritans (not the suicide prevention phone support group, but the original Middle Eastern race, who are still around and respected by both Israelis and Palestinians) promote this medal. The fanzine details his trip to Israel and Palestine in early 2008.

From that, with its high ideals and colour photos, to the low-life escapades of John Brosnan's early Aussie fannish years and arrival among Ratfandom, was chalk and cheese, or sublime and ridiculous. Kim Huett's production was plain not to say boring – but this only helped the words themselves stand out. John was a brilliant writer, especially when telling stories against himself – but his own worst enemy in many ways. Even apart from his notorious and ultimately tragic fondness for alcohol – about which he was very honest – he also messed up his friendships and professional life far too regularly. But flawed characters are often more fascinating than successful or well-rounded ones. I read with constant dread of where the next balls-up was coming from.

Casper. Billings. Cheyenne.

The Great Circle route doesn't even take you into the USA till the last third of the flight; the plane

Golden Nuggets, Red Rocks – Rob Jackson

crossed from Canada west of Winnipeg, then flew just south of south-westwards heading down to Vegas. We stopped passing over snow-capped peaks and started crossing desert. Then suddenly the contrasting blue water of Lake Mead appeared. Formed behind the Hoover Dam, this is in western Arizona just east of the corner of southern Nevada that contains Las Vegas. From the air you can see very clearly how much less than full it is.

Landing was straightforward, and being near the exit and thus at the front of the huge queue, I was lucky with Immigration. Some were turned back for not having filled in their I-94 visa waiver forms correctly and had to fill them in properly and queue again. I said to the officer in my queue: “Have I got it right?” “Yes, congratulations!”

I was free in front of the airport in only 25 minutes from landing, but it took a further hour to get onto a shuttle bus to the downtown area that contains the Plaza. First I had to get one shuttle from Terminal 2 to Terminal 1, then wait while the firm I had chosen accumulated enough passengers to make a bus worthwhile, then wait for the bus to turn up. All this in blazing Vegas sunlight – 2 pm local time, when something inside my head was saying it was dinner-time if not bed-time. But the more you look at the light, the more your brain gradually realises it isn't quite time for bed yet.

Bismarck. Sioux Falls. Mount Rushmore.



New York New York – one of the Strip hotels

The shuttle bus went up the I-15 freeway past the fantasyland architecture of the Strip hotels, then round the north-west corner of the downtown area with its mostly rather older hotels. The Plaza is a Sixties relic of a skyscraper hotel, one of the first of many, and largely unreconstructed as well as unredecorated recently. Many hotels would be much more ashamed of the carpet in the registration lobby held together by carpet tape.

They could at least have found some tape in a matching colour....

My room was spacious with old-fashioned comfortable furniture, but the electric sockets in the bedrooms were as ancient as the lobby carpet, and very wobbly. None of the lights could be reached from my bed, and I had forgotten to pack a torch.



El Portal Indian craft shop (a quiet moment on Fremont)

I hadn't arrived at the Plaza till 3.15, but by 4.15 I had already checked in and gone to start soaking up the Fremont Street Experience. As well as the casinos there are a few real shops, and there were some stunning genuine Indian artefacts in the upstairs (more exclusive) part of the only Indian craft shop there. \$8,550 for an 6 ft by 4 ft Navajo rug, though? Not sure which was the worse value, that or 99¢ for a deep fried Oreo cookie. (Which I never tried.)

I try to buy a torch. “Have you got a torch?” Blank look from checkout bloke with somewhat Mexican accent. Decide he is a bit thick, and try another store. None of them seem to have any torches – I decide that Vegas is somewhere you can't buy anything practical at all. Retreat to the hotel, to try out the pool on the roof of the hotel between the two towers. Concierge lady tells me the exit to the pool is on the fifth floor. Go to the North Tower exit, fifth floor, and find nothing of the sort. It is on the seventh floor. Only exit to the pool is a sort of fire exit door. Wonder where the rumoured health spa is, as it is nowhere near this exit, and there is no changing suite worth using by the side of the pool itself.

Go to the South Tower end of the pool and see another exit back into the south tower block. Aha – this one has a health spa and small gymnasium next to it – and this exit is on the fifth floor. Feel



Night-time view of the Plaza's North Tower and rooftop pool from my room

relieved that at last I have my geography sorted out, change in my room, go downstairs and have a swim. There was no locker for valuables, so I keep glancing over to where my towel is covering my room key, glasses and sandals. I'm not paranoid, honest, but the pool's facilities were ancient.

If you get out of an open-air pool into a keen, dry northerly wind, even if it is warm otherwise the dry air feels like an Arctic gale and takes your breath right away. Refreshing, but I've never dried myself so fast.

Back to my room and ponder the torch problem again. From the depths of my jet-lagged brain comes a dim memory which crystallises into a pavement/sidewalk moment.

What I want is a *flashlight*.

Back to Fremont Street. All of a sudden every drugstore and gift shop is crawling with souvenir flashlights. Select one and decide I might be able to find my way around my room at night after all. Later, tell this story at home, and it takes Venetia (17) all of half a second to say "You should have asked for a flashlight!" These youngsters – steeped in transatlantic culture.

Emboldened, decide to use my mobile – er, cellphone – to ring Arnie Katz. Amazingly, Vodafone's instructions work. He is very welcoming and says people will be gathering to set up the con suites from 3 pm Thursday. Volunteer to meet him & Joyce there and help however I can.

Linda Bushyager's restaurant guide recommends the buffet in the Main Street Station casino highly. Head that way, for early supper – need to get to bed early local time, as I am getting up at 5.30 the next morning (1.30 pm UK time, so not that early really) for the long day's trip to the Grand Canyon and back which I had booked for the Wednesday. In the lift – sorry elevator – friendly Yorkshire-accented holidaymakers accuse me of having a posh Oxford accent. Tell them aah'm a Geordie reelly, man.

Find the brewpub in Main Street rather than the buffet, and decide it looks OK despite the huge screens with non-stop sports action all round the hall. Order a burger (at 3 am body clock time) which comes with masses of garnish – slaw, refried beans, guacamole, the lot – good, but I can't finish it. Stomach out of synch; strange for me.

Bed at 8 pm local time, just as the Fremont Street party, drummers and all, is starting. Followed by a massive piledriver which cranks itself up for a minute once every 5 minutes, then stops for just long enough for me to nod off.

Scottsbluff. Yankton. White Butte.

Wednesday was my Grand Canyon trip day, when I was due to play the role of tourist to the full. A 600 mile coach trip taking 16 hours all told. Getting up at 5.30 am to catch a 6.45 am shuttle pickup sounds stressful, but as this was 1.30 pm body clock time it was actually pretty easy. Enough time for breakfast in the Plaza buffet. Blueberries with yogurt, followed by oatmeal and a small savoury item of some sort, made a balanced breakfast, so I constructed a Blueberry Hill daily.

My main allergy was to Fox News on the TV in the buffet – I tried to sit where I couldn't see it. Don't know if it was my liberal sensitivities, but I could hardly ever find any news items without a conservative agenda. (Either that, or trivia.)

The shuttle bus to take me to the departure depot for the tour was a couple of minutes early, but that's OK, as so was I. The depot was on an industrial estate a couple of miles from the Plaza. Eventually a virtually full bus-load of around 49 people assembled. We were shepherded onto the bus, and give instructions only to use the onboard washroom in a near-medical emergency. Our driver – the only crew member who looked after us for the whole day – was on duty with us all for 16 hours, so if I have a go at him in a minute for ramming religion down our throats, he is to be forgiven pretty much anything for the amount of work he had to do during the day. In Europe,

Golden Nuggets, Red Rocks – Rob Jackson

health and safety wouldn't let his employers get away with asking a 16-hour day of him. He was doing this 600-mile round trip 3 days a week.

Once the coach set off, he ran a 10-minute introductory video. After this, once the coach was out on the freeway, he started doing the tour guide thing. His highest praise for the Grand Canyon was that when there you were in the presence of the Lord. He knew this because of a recently widowed woman who had been to the Canyon with her husband a number of times before he died, but because of her fear had refused to join him in a helicopter flight down into the Canyon itself. After his death, she belatedly followed him on a helicopter ride, and while up there had a visitation from her husband telling her he was OK.

Anyone who knows the psychology of grief will get the point immediately – she would have been in a state of high emotion both in overcoming her fear of flying and in honouring the memory of her departed husband, so of course she would be in a suggestible state. But this wasn't the time to argue with a bus driver/tour guide about the origins of pseudohallucinations in bereavement. I didn't want the bus to crash.

Not least as we were by now negotiating the winding, steep, crowded segment of road down to the Hoover Dam. Before arriving at the dam, all traffic has to pull in for a security check. A policeman checks both the passengers and the contents of the coach's trunk (almost empty, as this was a day trip). We were exhorted to chant hello in unison, presumably to show how obedient and patriotic we all were. Trucks are banned from the Hoover Dam road; whether for security reasons (tons of undetected high explosive), congestion, or both, I don't know. Our driver was desperately looking forward to the new road, as on summer Saturdays the traffic can be so heavy there are four-hour tailbacks, even without any trucks. The dam itself is so familiar from photos that there is a sense of déjà vu on one's first (possibly only) visit. However the scale, and the massive half-built bridge and dual carriageway leading to it, brought me up short.

The scale was evident in the massive overflow tunnels. Though huge, they are unlikely ever to be used again, as the reservoir hasn't been over half full for years. Our driver was reassured that the winter just gone had seen 130% of the usual annual snowfall in Wyoming, so the dam would probably replenish slightly this year. However the preceding fifteen-year drought is more likely to set the pattern for the future; I suspect our driver is typical of many in having his head at least partly in the sand as far as water supply to the South-western States is concerned. (And I do mean



*Top: Hoover Dam from the east side
Lower: Part-built bridge (held up by a redesign:
original thought to be at risk in high winds;
completion now due 2010)*

sand.) Though he mentioned the need to conserve water, he was more excited by the prospects for expansion and rising land prices in the areas east of the dam which will have better access to Vegas once the new road is built. What will they all drink and shower in?

Once past the Hoover dam and out on the open road down to Kingman, my main amusement was trying and failing to get any photos of Joshua trees in honour of the U2 album cover. There seemed to be one close enough to the road every 5 miles or so – just far enough apart for my camera to have switched itself off, and each time one came along it took too long to switch it back on again. I must have played this stupid little game about 10 times, but at least it kept boredom at bay.

The driver gave everyone a 20-minute comfort and coffee break at a service area with a Subway shop at Kingman. In honour of Earl Kemp, who lives near Kingman, I took a photo of the place, but the only interest is Earl's proximity; the photo itself is very boring so you aren't seeing it here.

Golden Nuggets, Red Rocks – Rob Jackson

The I-40 highway east from Kingman to Williams is a very slow, steady, almost imperceptible climb up the Arizona plateau. Two hours' worth of steady plod along dual carriageway, with the landscape changing from the rocks and dry gulches of near-desert, to pine forest just as you are nearing Williams.

I was struck by just how well-behaved, almost regimented, American drivers are. We were passed by an almost militaristic phalanx of eight bikers all in neat black leathers, who passed our coach and then reformed into four pairs, staying beside each other as surely as if they were horses pulling a carriage. I have since gathered these were almost certainly Harley riders on the way back home from the Laughlin river run, which is an annual national Harley bikers' festival in a little town just west of Kingman.

At Williams, we weren't the only coach to pull off the road at a diner called Max and Thelma's, where I got a kick (natch) on seeing it is just off Route 66. This was set up to serve competent if uninspired buffet food quickly to coachloads of tourists. Robert Lichtman had warned me there was such a place, and that I shouldn't set my expectations too high. So I wasn't disappointed. Thanks, Robert.

For the South Rim of the Canyon, you turn off I-40 at Williams and head north. We made good enough time that a 20 minute stop was possible at the Double Eagle Trading Company, a tourist trap – er, souvenir shop – half way between Williams and the South Rim. They had a decent selection of inexpensive Zapotec Indian woven rugs, and I bought one in mainly reds, golds and blacks for only \$30. It is similar to a Navajo rug but much cheaper, not least as the weave is coarser – fewer stitches to the inch. At first I was seeing this as mainly for Coral as a gift to show the weaving technique, but after hanging it on the back of a chair in the dining room for a couple of weeks so she could look at the techniques, it has now taken up duty as our main bath mat. More of a success than I had expected.

Lake Sakakawea. White Butte.

Eventually – around 2.15 pm – we arrived at the south rim of the Canyon itself. Our group were given an hour at each of two viewing points, Mather Point, then Bright Angel Lodge. The rim is 7,000 feet above sea level, so we had climbed 5,000 feet during the journey. It was so cold that I regretted my shirt-sleeve garb....

No apology for including more picture space than words here. There were very competent standard



*(Above:) Snow lying at Mather Point
(Below): Sightseeing the Canyon vista*



tourist facilities, with plenty of info, decent books and other gifts, and a strong and welcome environmental message in the posters and leaflets.

When it comes to preserving the environment, they do their bit. In the 1960s, there was only one breeding pair of condors left in the Grand Canyon area. These were captured and put into a captive breeding programme based in Diego Zoo, with of course, exchanges of birds with other zoos in Central and South America – successfully enough that there are now around 50 breeding pairs back in the area. One of them perched on a rock just near the Bright Angel trailhead. I was so excited I took two photos of it each time I stopped on my way to where it was perched. In the first ones it is just a triangular black speck.

The driver recommended the ice creams in the Bright Angel café highly, so I had a butterscotch-type one. This was so laden with fat that I felt slightly queasy, and by the time I was back on the bus I longed for some fruit to soak up the grease. Overloading me with fat usually takes some doing.

Golden Nuggets, Red Rocks – Rob Jackson



Just visible – the river that carved this hole



Experimental giddy angle: don't fall down....



A condor ignoring humans with cameras

We were under stern orders to be back on the bus by 4.30 for the return journey, and the pack of tourists were very obedient – all 49 of us were counted back in on time. Another tourist trap

(and toilet – sorry, restroom) stop on the road back down to Williams; a few seconds' pull-in just as the bus was about to rejoin I-40 at Williams, so we could all gawp at a bank of soil pitted all over with gopher holes but no gophers; then just before 8 pm another stop at the same Kingman Subway as on the way out, to give us the chance to buy our own supplies of greasy pizza or whatever. I did manage to find an apple, but it had cunningly concealed bruised bits. As there were two coaches there at once, there was a huge wait for the Ladies'. If it was Britain, I could ask who put the Q in cubicle, but it wasn't so I won't.

Once back to Vegas at around 10.15 pm, thankfully the coach dropped me and one or two others off directly in the downtown area almost first – no shuttle needed. Thankfully there had only been the one sermon in the morning; no more religion thereafter. If I was tired, Ghu knows how the driver felt. My eyes had feasted, even if my stomach hadn't.

Fort Berthold Indian Reservation.

Thursday started quietly with a trip to the Walgreen's drugstore at the east end of Fremont Street for a 2GB XD memory card for my camera – \$60 plus tax, which is less than I spent a year ago in San Francisco on a 512MB card for the same camera. As usual, inflation in all things electronic goes in reverse – very fast in this case. Only enough room for about 1000 photos. Oh goody – I can torture everyone by going dickety click.

I also bought a pair of grey Polaroid clip-ons for my glasses. Very good, but they turn everything green. I didn't know my room had an avocado washroom suite. By this time I was skilfully avoiding gaming tables and machines – casinos were just an obstacle course full of bleeps and flashing lights. I must have been a rotten customer for the Plaza. The 6 nights at the hotel cost less than two in most UK hotels, but they didn't get back on the tables or slots any of their investment on my cheap room. Not a cent.

Late morning, I headed out to the Premium Outlets designer outlet mall. About 20 minutes' walk past some of the sleazy bail bond offices and parking lots that show the grimy underbelly of American society, but once across the incomplete road to the new designer mall, it is familiar territory for many Brits: discount factory outlets are nearly the same the world over. A place called Vitamin World has exactly the same vitamins as the UK's Holland and Barrett health stores, with even the same typefaces on the bottles. Health food goes global.... A week or so later, I saw another one just the same in Amsterdam.

Most of the shops were fashion or sportswear, and I bought a couple of shirts for Hugo. However there were a couple of interesting kitchen equipment shops, where I bought a veg peeler and a small measuring shot glass, both of types I hadn't seen in the UK. However when I get home, naturally Coral said "You can get ones just like that in Lakeland in Chichester." So much for importing bright ideas from the US – globalisation strikes again.

I decided to anticipate the pig-outs over the weekend by having the healthiest possible lunch in the food court. There was an excellent won ton soup, full of crispy, lightly boiled veg and hardly any noodles. Naturally I was hungry again only 2 hours later....

Back through the increasing heat to the Plaza, where at last fans were starting to arrive. At last, the real purpose of the trip, when for the past 3 days I had been playing Billy-no-mates travelling solo. Lenny Bailes, Jack Calvert (or was it Frank Lunney? – I thought so), Art Widner, Elinor Busby, the Katzes – too many to name them all, but eventually Arnie and Joyce not only got the room keys but worked out after much trial and error which opened which of the con suite doors. We were in! I helped many others, including James Taylor, bring trolley-loads of drinks and food from Arnie and Joyce's heavily laden car. I still marvel at the relaxed view US hotels take about external supplies – British hotels would have a fit if guests brought in any food at all from outside, let alone the heaps of goodies US cons provide in consuites.

Just on cue, various Brits arrived – Graham & Pat Charnock with James and Dan, their twenty-something sons, who despite only a nodding previous acquaintance with fans seemed to enjoy themselves hugely during the con; John & Audrey Hall; Sandra Bond; and Mark Plummer and Claire Brialey. Sadly Peter Weston, who had been expected, didn't make it – we heard rumours of an attempted late booking stymied by prohibitive fares or silly or inconvenient flight schedules. But it was great seeing Uncle Johnny (John Hall to those not inthebar) meeting in person people he'd only recently (if at all) known via e-lists. I must have been like that at Austin last year.

The influx of American baristas and others began – Frank Lunney (er Jack Calvert?), Ted White, John D Berry, Earl Kemp, Jay Kinney, Dan and Lynn Steffan, Rich Coad, Stacy Scott among others – and the nattering and drinking really began in earnest. (Oh, and in the smoking room, that too. Not that I was there much to witness it, though I did pop in occasionally when looking for people.)



Graham C twice, with Jack, er Frank, er Jack (actually Jack Calvert above, Frank Lunney below)

As part of the getting-to-know you game, I went for a meal in the Plaza's in-house Italian restaurant with Linda and Ron Bushyager, Jack Calvert, and Jim Young. Jim has long experience in the diplomatic field, and launched into a rant against the neo-con agenda that would I expect not only break various laws for me to publish in detail (if he was British, it would have been the Official Secrets Act) but also and much more importantly, if he had been on the IntheBar e-list it would have broken Harry's First Law against discussing Middle East politics.

I found his conversation fascinating. He has worked closely with the UK and US governments and had insights not only into the personalities in the various governments but into the complexities of the internecine strife in Iraq – not just Sunni versus Shia, Al-Qaeda versus the rest, Iranian influence, and so on.

Later, there was one of Nic Farey's infamous Jim Beam sessions in his and Bobbie's penthouse suite. As well as Nic (loud) and Bobbie (quiet) plus Jim

Golden Nuggets, Red Rocks – Rob Jackson



funny and Mark and I were quicker on the uptake than the others, can they please let me know?

Pumpkin Buttes. Bowman Haley Lake.

To get to Red Rocks nature reserve, you head south from the Plaza for about half a mile, then turn due west and head arrow-straight for about 15 miles through endless traffic lights, past low-built shopping malls and increasingly new plastic beige condos. Then the condos stop and suddenly you are in the desert, facing a line of mountains with drama folded into their layers of colour.



Red Rocks was the chosen destination for Ken Forman's almost-traditional Friday nature ramble at a Vegas Corflu. Earl Kemp and I were with Bill Burns in his hired car – thanks, Bill. In all there were about 6 or 7 car-loads of us making our way to Pine Creek – a small spring that has generated an oasis, with a sudden burst of different vegetation around it, at odds with the hardy cacti and Joshua trees of the rest of the desert. Late April must be the best time to go, as most of the plants seem to choose to flower then.



(top) Mark P, Sandra, Claire B; (centre) John B, John H, Stacy Scott, Rich Coad, Frank; (bottom) Nic Farey in trademark hat

Ken is a superb guide in this environment, as he has worked as an ecologist specialising in restoring and reclaiming desert habitats for clients who presumably include the US military. Sometimes he has had to battle conflicting regulations, such as a requirement both to have 90% of the land covered with plants within 2 years, and to obey the regulations against the planting of weeds. A catch-22, as the only plants that can grow that fast without needing ecologically unsound amounts of water are weeds.

in the bottle, this one featured Mark Plummer, Murray Moore, and Randy Byers, plus lots of second-hand jokes, which work very well if the audience haven't heard them before. My notes are increasingly incoherent hereabouts. I know what Two Circles and weeeEEEK are, as they were my jokes; but if anybody can remember the one about Chuck Berry's penis, and why null-A brains were

Others were founts of unexpected knowledge too, for example Jim Young revealed that the reason old red sandstone is that colour is that at that stage in the Earth's evolution there wasn't much oxygen in the atmosphere. This let anaerobic bacteria fix

Golden Nuggets, Red Rocks – Rob Jackson



iron into the rocks. When cyanobacteria suddenly appeared, as the first photosynthesising organisms and predecessors of plants, they generated lots of oxygen and drove anaerobic bacteria into specialised niches. No more iron was fixed into the sandstone, so newer sandstone is yellow.

As well as the stunning scenery and the geology and ecology lessons, I'd forgotten how much fun it is hopping about on rocky paths. You have to focus on where your feet go more than on flat pavements (sorry, sidewalks). Cons are usually mostly indoor, inactive and calorific. This was a great trip not only because of the refreshing change of an outdoor physical bit of fun but also the company.

I took so many photos that I unexpectedly ran out of memory – 250 photos is not enough. I hadn't brought my new, larger memory card with me, so I had to delete some. I told James and Dan Charnock I was deleting some of the crap to make space in the memory card, and one of them turned to their father and said "There are no photos of you left then, Graham!" They obviously have the measure of their father.



Devil's Tower. Cloud Peak. Omaha.

All this fun, and the con hadn't even officially started yet. When we got back to the hotel, the con suite had been closed to encourage everyone to gather in the meeting room. I was in the elevator with Lloyd Penney and commented how fast and smooth they were, with no jerks at all. Lloyd said: "Except for the jerks who get in, like us." He is evidently studying at the Marty Cantor school of smartassery.

Talking of Marty, after I got the Core Fandom T-shirts and Bellissimos laid out on some tables in the con hall, Marty's wish for an early tea coincided with mine for a late lunch, so we went off for a club sandwich at the Carson Street I in the massive Golden Nugget casino complex. Very competent and well served.



At Millie's (L-R): James, Dan, Pat & Graham C; Jay K; Dan S; part of Frank (Lynn & Ted to right)

Only two hours later – a major dilemma. Much bigger and more varied meal group starting to form – all four Charnox, Frank, Ted, Dan and Lynn Steffan, and Jay Kinney were forming a party to go to Millie's Noodle restaurant in the same Golden Nugget complex. I wasn't hungry but the company and the experience seemed too good to miss, so I went along. We left at 6, expecting to be back by around 7.30, when the musical soiree that was to follow the opening ceremony was to start. However the meal was not just a plate or two of noodles, more a full Chinese experience, especially with Frank's paternal guidance helping us all decide exactly what we should want.

We left thoroughly full in true American style (even I had had a few tasters), but didn't get back to the con till 8.15. By then Bill Mills and Teresa Cochran had finished the musical soiree early and given up, partly as they had expected Graham to be a part of the repertoire. He gave his apologies on return, but didn't realise either that he was seen as essential, or that we were going to have been so long at the restaurant.

Golden Nuggets, Red Rocks – Rob Jackson

Oh well. Nothing for it but party party. I must have been well up for it, as I didn't even remember to take any photos. Choice of three venues – non-smoking, smoking, or the Loud Penthouse, starring Nic F. You may have read of the legendary Calling of the Guards by the folk in the suite next door in response to Nic's decibel level. This has been thoroughly documented elsewhere, sometimes in rococo style – but I assure you I Was There. And Nic was more subdued after they called.

Colorado Springs. Pine Mountain.

I woke earlier than I needed to on Saturday, possibly as the clock in my head was still not quite on Pacific Time. I was predestined to read John Hall's *Motorway Dreamer* 5, with John's own (almost certainly semi-autobiographical) fictional account of four Buddhist disciples seeking enlightenment on a pilgrimage to a teacher at a retreat in Nepal. Without telegraphing the ending, it was evident at least two of the lead characters are seeking understanding of, and release from, some sort of compulsive behaviour.

After being able to share a breakfast table with Rich Coad and Stacy Scott, it was time for the programme to get started. A semi-serious item kicked off, with a debate on Whither Core Fandom. Arnie Katz quite dominated this, but was aided and abetted at times by a panel with Randy Byers, James Taylor, Andy Hooper and Mark Plummer. Vegrants 2; Seattle 2; Croydon 1. I wonder what happened to the East Coast and female viewpoints, but there was a certain amount of audience participation.

It's impossible to avoid a certain amount of either elitism or paranoia when debating whatever distinguishes "our" fandom from the rest of them out there. This is the case whether "us" is Star Trek, Discworld, anime, videogames, filk – you name it, any fan group will patrol the borders, encouraging some people in. Optimists outnumbered pessimists in the debate, I thought; plus points were the vigour of e-fandom, with e-zines such as Vegas Fandom Weekly, Drink Tank, and eI supplementing if not supplanting traditional paper zines.

People also noted that nowadays, fans reach "core" fandom (whatever that is – partly but not quite synonymous with Fandom Prime?) more gradually than 20-30 years ago, when an impulsive, gosh-wow epiphany was traditionally followed by immediate hyperactivity. The transition is more of a maturation, or a graduation from other bits of fandom.

The panel didn't make as much as it should, I thought, of the emphasis "core" fandom places on creative *writing* in fanzines. Not just about sf, but about life, and fandom itself – part of the traditional meaning of the word "fannishness." That is still at the core, I feel. (At least that was the point I wanted to make, but the debate never went in that direction. Assertiveness training courses for audience members, anyone?)



Later Sandra Bond and I prepared for our appearance on the US vs. UK fannish quiz, to be compered by Ken Forman, by going to the Main Street Station brewpub for lunch with Jay Kinney and Frank Lunney (*see above*).

Not that the fortification was much help, given the rules Ken had devised. Sandra's encyclopaedic, not to say eidetic, knowledge was not much help to the rest of the UK team (including me) who were often clueless or just unfortunate to be answering the wrong question for our era – or area – of knowledge, as Ken allowed no team conferring at all, but handed the question over straight to the Other Lot. The quiz topics were also somewhat lopsided, testing UK fandom's knowledge of US fandom, and vice versa.

As US fandom is about 5 times the size of UK fandom, this was more like a specialist subject for the Americans, who were Ted White, Robert Lichtman, Mike Glycer and Andy Hooper. We Brits (Mark Plummer, Nic Farey as well as Sandra and myself) were often lost – not least as the US events tested were often from the 40s and 50s, many of them supposedly famous quotes made by individual fans; and the questions for the US team about UK fandom included the really difficult one "What do the letters BSFA stand for?" An analogous one for the UK fans would have been "What does NFFF stand for?" Any of us would have got that, just as any of the US team would have got the BSFA one. If I'd known, I'd have brought my copy of *All Our Yesterdays* with me and mugged up on it on the plane journey, as that

Golden Nuggets, Red Rocks – Rob Jackson

was probably Ken’s chief reference book for all those quotes.

At one stage things became rather chaotic when Ken forgot his own structure and gave the answer rather than handing it to the other team for half marks. Ted, ever one for rules to be applied properly, demanded, and was eventually given, an equivalent question.

The US team did just win, and deservedly so, as their knowledge was more evenly spread. However a University Challenge format where conferring is allowed, might have produced a more even contest. There is a lot of scope for different quiz formats – it will be interesting to see if one built round audience participation can work!

Wichita. Dinosaur National Monument.

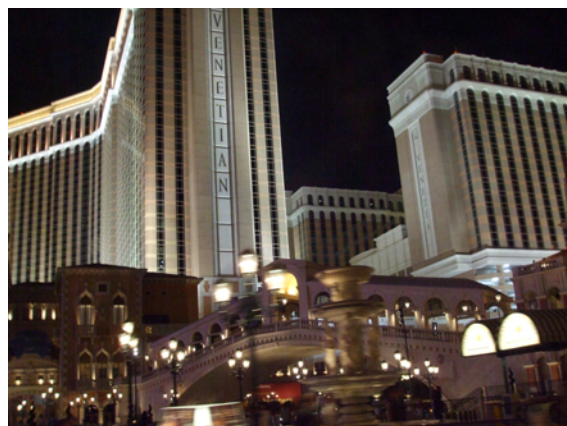
Next up was Andy Hooper and his cast’s dramatic reading of his tale of an on-line Carl Brandon-style hoax. There were a few good laughs in it, but not the controversy I had generated last year by “borrowing” other people’s material written for IntheBar for a live reading, as this was all Andy’s own work. The play contained egoboo for Dave Langford twenty years after the event, for his pint of beer poured over Fred Harris of Bridge Publications, the publishing company front organisation for the Scientologists. Though this was at Conspiracy, the 1987 Brighton Worldcon, it is still remembered with affection. A pint poured was not a pint wasted. Keep Fandom For Fans!

The auction was next. As usual, lots of Good Stuff materialised at the last minute. I nabbed two Lake/Edwards fanthologies prepared for the 1995 Worldcon; Science Fiction Five-Yearly 2001; and a 1957 Advent Publishers limited edition portfolio of Frank Kelly Freas black and white prints. There were only 150 of these ever printed, but I was frankly crogged (and delighted) that no-one outbid my \$20. Ted White later agreed this was a bargain.

After the auction, there was sponsored pizza in the con suite, courtesy of a local convention, Xanadu. Thanks, folks. However one slice per person is a bit more than a canapé, but not a full meal. Some other fans were heard to whinge that this was not a full meal, or that there was inadequate policing of the ravening hordes until they personally had turned up and grabbed their bit.

Tuff, frankly. As it was a freebie there was no reason to complain, unless of course it removed your incentive to form the traditional posse and hunt down a restaurant. It was possible to do what

I did and sneak down to one of the food counters near the casino on the ground floor and select another slice, for only \$2.95. One thing you could never accuse Las Vegas of is a shortage of cheap food. You could say that of any US city, but it is true of Las Vegas in particular, as its eateries are I am sure very heavily subsidised by the casinos. They may even be a loss-leader, but I am sure the casino owners and hoteliers don’t rake in their profits on the food.



Surreal hotels on the Strip Saturday evening: the Excalibur; the Imperial Palace; the Venetian

Golden Nuggets, Red Rocks – Rob Jackson

It would have all been just chatting in the consuite for the rest of the evening, were it not for John and Audrey's excellent plan to see the sights of the Strip. Sandra and I volunteered to share the taxi and the cost, to max the glitz value. Around 8.30, off we went.

We got a three-row taxi and I was crouched in the back, so couldn't hear much of what the driver told John, Audrey and Sandra, but at least I could take snaps out of whichever side window had the more dazzling sights. The driver thought it would be a three-hour bumper-to-bumper crawl, but there was at least some free movement most of the way. Helped by the fact he was prone to swerve between lanes without warning. He was the maddest driver I came across all trip; US drivers are usually very law-abiding.

Even more than downtown Vegas, the Strip is totally devoted to conspicuous consumption. You either love this or hate it; for me, it was strange, unique and unrepeatable, as the lifestyle is totally alien. Strange sights included a metallic cobalt 4x4 with jacked up suspension and seven rear shocks. You could count them very easily, as all the suspension and transmission were spray-painted silver and polished to a gleam – and the whole underside of the vehicle was lit up with concealed spotlights behind the running boards. I couldn't help pointing out that the driver was showing off his undercarriage.



The ride finished, and we had to pay. (You may have read other versions of this tale in Quasiquote and Motorway Dreamer, Sandra's and Johnny's fanzines.) The ride came to \$48, and we agreed \$60 was reasonable, with a 25% tip. Sandra and I swapped notes so we could give the driver \$30, only to gather Johnny had already given the driver \$60! The driver very reluctantly handed back \$10, but we still finished up paying \$20 each instead of \$15. D'oh. Shoot me now, folks.

Back to the consuite, for smoffing about future Corflus. Corflu Zed should with luck feature the

quiz I discussed with Andy Hooper, and I also discussed the proposed UK Corflu in 2010 with Mark Plummer.

About 10 pm, Robert Lichtman and I headed briefly onto Fremont for some fresh air – but the place was so crowded and smoky that we agreed the air in the hotel was cleaner. After noshing some gooey gateaux from the sponsored cake event, I had to have one night that wasn't too late, and this was it. And thankfully that nearby nocturnal piledriver was resting for the weekend.

Whiskey Peak. Great Divide Barn. Tooele.

Sundays at Corflu feature the traditional brunch banquet, so it has to be OK to start with just coffee. In the consuite I was shocked by Jay Kinney actually wearing a tie, so I wondered whether to change out of the Harry Bell-adorned T-shirt I was wearing – tastefully adorned on the left lapel with his Texican – and give an airing to the tie I had brought. Nope. It travelled 10,000 miles for nothing.

The banquet fare was basically the breakfast buffet plus eggs Benedict with salad, veg, and braised steak. Afters were pastries, and drink was coffee or water. (If there was fruit juice I didn't see any.)

Our table had all four Charnocks, Mark and Claire, Nic and Bobbie Farey, and Randy Byers as token solo American – as well as the webcam and computer with the online link. Twenty or more folk were on line, and Graham and I were able to read the postings. For some strange reason someone online said "Show us yer tits!" or words to that effect, so Graham went in front of the webcam and started to unbutton his shirt till almost wrestled to the ground by horrified fellow diners not wishing to be put off their banquet. Apparently various online spectators also spluttered into their beer or coffee. And this was before he'd even had any significant vodka at all.

The FAAn Awards – to general approval, but with somewhat prolix presentation by Murray Moore – went to Peter Weston (Prolapse – fanzine), Arnie Katz (writer and Fan Face), Dan Steffan (artist, and also Past President of FWA), Robert Lichtman (letterhack), and John Coxon (best new fan). There was a particular cheer for eFanzines.com as best website. Via the online network, egoboo was duly transmitted to the absent Peter Weston and John Coxon, and thanks were returned. Randy Byers's bid for Corflu 2009 to be in Seattle was accepted by acclamation, titled Corflu Zed. Andy Hooper's Fan GoH speech was tinged with worry from the audience after he announced that his

Golden Nuggets, Red Rocks – Rob Jackson

preparation for it the previous night had been truncated by a haemorrhage inside his right eye associated with his diabetes. He thus could hardly see with it. As he had (so Carrie told me) just had an operation on the other eye, his vision overall was temporarily pretty poor. (It recovered; Andy has since told the tale, excellently, in Chunga.)

Wasatch Plateau. Durango.

The afternoon was spent chatting in the consuite, not least with Dan Steffan and Andy Hooper about the Corflu Zed programme. Dan also has an idea for a quiz, but we discovered our ideas are different enough to coexist on the same programme. No details here – you won't get spoilers! Judge the results at Corflu Zed (\$60 to Randy Byers in the US, or the £ equivalent – variable depending on exactly how weak the pound becomes – to Claire Brialey in the UK. Plug.)

Sadly Rich Coad had to dash back to the Bay Area for his work on Monday, so he forgot to collect the unsold *Bellissimos* he had brought with him. I arranged – via Robert Lichtman's good offices – for them to chase Rich to the Bay Area, or at least as far as Oakland.

John and Audrey, the Charnock family and I all arranged to go to the Golden Nugget buffet at 7 pm that evening. Just as we were leaving Catherine Crockett started to try out the famous Astral Pole exercise in contortionism. She managed remarkably well; though she is not that slim, she put her flexible joints to very good use.



The buffet was all-you-can-eat, which for me was not very much as I was so full. It was like so many other American restaurants and buffets, incredibly competent and with a huge range of choices. There were around 40 different types of sweet alone, never mind the starters, sashimi, salads (around sixty), and around a couple of dozen hot dishes. Lobster had a cabinet all to itself. As

usual, absolutely no boundaries on portion size except those you set yourself. I think it was a bit more limited as far as John and Audrey were concerned – both vegetarian – but they didn't entirely go hungry either.

Soon after, I was in one part of the consuite and heard cheering and clapping from the room next door. James and Dan Charnock both proved that being young, fit and not overweight are huge advantages in mastering the Pole!

Some of us then decided to take a look at the Fremont Street Experience lightshow. After a false start due to technical problems for the 9 pm one, the Charnox and I returned for the 10 pm show and saw the We Will Rock You version – 200 yards of stunning lighting effects flashing along the lights embedded in the roof of the arcade. See the cover of this zine for a still from it, as well as the back of the heads of various Charnox.

Back in the consuite, Graham was told that Nic Farey had a present for him. This proved to be a baseball cap with the blunt message "Fuck Off" on the peak. Nic wasn't aware of the catchphrase on the IntheBar list at the time – Fuck Off Graham – but his serendipitous choice showed he had Graham sussed very quickly. To his credit, Graham was overwhelmed with gratitude; and to hers, Pat was overwhelmed with embarrassment. (Not for the first time.)

Delano Peak. Escalante Desert.

Monday morning's buffet breakfast was different two ways – not only very light in quantity after all the food of the previous few days, but also in a separate tiled area, where thankfully they didn't have Fox News on.

While I was waiting for breakfast, Ruth Speer wheeled Jack past in his wheelchair. At Corflu Silver Jack was very obviously frail, with oxygen tubes up both nostrils. It was a huge tribute to Jack's faithfulness to the fannish ideal, and to Ruth for supporting him, that he came to the con despite his infirmity. I seized the chance to say to Jack that it had been really nice to see him at the con and people appreciated his presence. I knew in my heart it was unlikely I'd ever see him again, and it was a sort of farewell to a great fan and a great man. So it was really important looking back that I got to say it. I am sure many others at Corflu Silver will have felt the same way, as it slightly eased the pain of his passing soon afterwards.

More sadness – though not such pain – in the task of helping the Vegnants – especially James Taylor

Golden Nuggets, Red Rocks – Rob Jackson

and Joyce – dismantle and tidy the ensuite. And dispose of four less than half eaten gateaux which had been left out at room temperature overnight. Nothing much anyone could do.

More importantly, farewell to fans whose friendship is increasingly important – the Charnocks, Robert Lichtman, Rich and Stacy (who had left the previous day), Frank Lunney, Ted White, Bill Burns, John Berry, Dan and Lynn Steffan, Jay Kinney, Sandra Bond and others IntheBar; but also Vegrants and occasional baristas Arnie and Joyce, James Taylor and Teresa Cochran; and non-baristas with great personalities such as Bill and Roxie Mills, both of whom were real stars at Corflu Silver, and I became very fond of them in only four days; also Mark Plummer and Claire Brialey, who are both brilliant and need no introduction, and Nic and Bobbie Farey. This was my first meeting with Nic, who is amazing. Superficially he is a hard-drinking Brummie wide boy (and occasional prat) transplanted to the States, but underneath that exterior is a very caring nature, and astute and articulate brain.

John, Audrey and I shared a shuttle booking to the airport, and said more fond farewells while waiting for it to arrive – to Dan, Lynn, Arnie and Joyce in particular. As they went through a separate channel for Audrey’s mobility support needs, I lost track of them until we were ready to board, but did make contact with Mark and Claire in the departure lounge who were on the same flight. Mark and Claire make good use of Virgin’s loyalty scheme and were in the Upper Class top deck of the 747. I went up to say hi to them during the flight and they had more space and better food. I’ll have to see if I can tot up that many airmiles.....

Pathfinder Reservoir. Kingman.

Overall Vegas was a never-to-be-repeated experience – and take that how you like. I succeeded in never touching any gambling equipment while there, and gradually lost my aversion to going through casinos – if there was a decent meal or other fun at the other end, I stopped worrying and ignored the bingly bangly bongly tuneless electronic noises of the slots. It was difficult to leave them behind, though. Even in the airport departure lounge they were still there, burbling tunelessly in their mating calls to their potential slave mates, and competing with real life in the form of passenger announcements.

I didn’t mind not gambling, but I did object that in 6 days in LV I never set foot in a bookshop. None were to be had in downtown LV – and I did ask, but was told none were to be had without going out

to the suburbs. Even the factory outlet arcade I went to on the Thursday before the con majored on clothes, gifts and just a few household goods shops. The only time I saw any books for sale were in the souvenir places on the Grand Canyon trip, and in the airport; and the only truly culturally uplifting experiences were the better parts of the souvenir shops on that trip, and the true Navajo creations in the upstairs part of the Indian craft shop on Fremont Street.

I might have enjoyed one or two of the shows, such as Cirque du Soleil’s Love! (the Beatles’ music set to stunning aerial ballet), and yes, I could have booked for that. But the rest? – the Rat Pack, Viva Las Vegas, Elton John? No thanks!

The conspicuous waste also grated. Outside the Plaza alone, the thousands of white tungsten bulbs under its canopy must burn off a megawatt by themselves. Certainly, if you are under them the heat is tangible. Goodness knows how many gigawatts LV burns up just to maintain the glitz and bling. And the attitude to it was frightening – the taxi driver who took us round on Saturday night just thought it was all fine, as it was hydro-electric. (Is that entirely true, anyway?) That doesn’t stop it being wasteful, mate. That juice could light tens of thousands of California homes where they are still doing it with fossil fuel.

But (cliché no. 243) it is the people who make the experience. I’d not go back for the place if I could possibly help it, but if there was no other way to meet the people, I would.

I must have enjoyed the trip – I made 34 pages of notes. I said so on the ensuite on the Monday morning. “That’s sad,” someone said. Pat Charnock replied: “But not as sad as the fact that you counted them!” Here’s to 2009:



Joining Corflu Zed: Frank, Ted, Robert L and Colin Hinz surround Randy and Claire

A Round Trip

Compiled by Rob Jackson

Recently I was asked to write a piece for a special musical issue of another fanzine. So I started to think about, and make notes for, an article about what rock music lyrics mean to me.

The first version of this threatened to be a bit earnest. So I wondered about livening it up with some snippets of lyric as interlinos. Suddenly the interlinos told a small story of their own.

Full credit is given to the original artists – in an envelope at the back of this fanzine. But first, you have to identify the track and the artist, if you can, of all 20 couplets. Some are very well known; those are often the ones where very short quotes indeed have been provided. But others are a bit more obscure. Here goes.

Rob Jackson, January 2009

Where can a man go that's sweet to his soul
When his time is not ready but he's still turning old

There's a feeling I get when I look to the west,
And my spirit is crying for leaving.

If you ever want to lose some time
Just take off, there's no risk

Roll up
To make a reservation

The tower gives the signal and we start to roll
But I'll make him eat my smoke before the story's told

Well on the way,
Head in a cloud

In the dock of Tiger Bay, on the road to Mandalay
From Bombay to Santa Fe, over hills and far away

Let me sail, let me sail, let me crash upon your
shore,

Let me reach, let me beach far beyond the yellow
sea

We sailed for parts unknown to man, where ships
come home to die
No lofty peak, nor fortress bold, could match our
captains eye

Oh I'd rather go and journey where the diamond
crest is flowing and
Run across the valley beneath the sacred mountain
and wander through the forest

Let it roll down through the caves
Ye long walks of cool and shades

I was feeling part of the scenery
I walked right out of the machinery

I'll make a path to the rainbows end
I'll never live to match the beauty again

Seems to me that I've been floating on the wind
I'm just a drifting seed, looking for some place to
be

Captain says there'll be a bust,
This one's not for me

Call for the captain ashore
Let me go home, let me go home

God bless you, southern trades, you got me safely
back this time
Oh, you'll never have the need again to save this
soul of mine

Far have I travelled
And much have I seen

Do we have to roam the world
To prove how much it hurts?

It stays with you until - the feeling is gone
Only you and I; this means nothing to me

The Fan Who Might Have Been?

Sandra Bond

When one thinks of American fandom from the early 1970s one thinks, perhaps, of *Locus* and *Science Fiction Review* heading inexorably down the path of sercon stodge, of a proliferation of Star Trek fans and fanzines, and of Worldcons just starting to suffer from the bigger-is-better syndrome. But it would be unfair to dismiss the era out of hand; even if *Warhoon* and *Innuendo* were slumbering, fannish fandom could still look to *Focal Point* and *Foolscap*, the early *Mota* and the late *BeABohema*, and a bunch of other fanzines with their fannish hearts in the right places. Among this number must be counted a fanzine from Des Moines, Iowa, namely *Iatrogenetic*, which flourished for a dozen issues or so.

The first couple of issues were thin and unpolished, but betrayed a love of puns and wordplay typified by the first two letters in the title always being capitalised as a homage to the fanzine's home city, a theme continued by the title of the letter column, lively from the start, "IA Shub Niggurath". Issue two saw Harry Warner Jr's first letter of comment appear. With the third issue Terry Hughes joined as a columnist and Ian Williams started contributing chatty pieces about British fan doings. Issue four saw the letter column burst into controversy with certain pungent comments by Ted White, whose editorship of *Amazing* at the time saw *Iatrogenetic* garner several positive reviews and, no doubt, several new readers. The arguments rumbled on for four or five more issues, which appeared every couple of months, and the twenty-year-old editor, who referred to himself self-mockingly as 'The Thunderbolt Kid', showed himself neither afraid to print comments that tweaked the noses of the high and mighty, nor undiscerning enough to print simple abuse that was not founded on a solid basis.

At issue ten the editorial carried news of its author having spent all the time (and some of the money) meant to be dedicated to his university studies on *Iatrogenetic*, on smoking dope, and on fanac in general. This, he wrote, had led to an inevitable

result, namely drop-out status. "But wotthehell," he commented. "A degree is only a degree, whereas fanac is... well, it's fanac!" He declared his intent to continue publishing despite these setbacks.

But the writing was on the wall and it saw only two more issues next year, before making one final appearance nearly twelve months after that. The glory was departed from the house of *Iatrogenetic*.

The editor, though, remained mildly active in fandom, and to this day he continues to appear in letter columns and to pen the occasional piece for a fanzine. A brief spell in FAPA was inglorious and ended without any actual contributions from him to the apa, but more often than not, when Corflu rolls around, he's in attendance and happy to greet his old fannish pals from thirty years ago. Every now and again, indeed, he makes noises about holding Corflu in Des Moines one of these years, but it hasn't happened yet. Approaching sixty, his beard is grizzled now, and his hair is starting to thin, but on the whole he's worn well, and the spirit of fannishness plainly burns bright within him still.

An unexceptional story, perhaps, of a typical fan of the era? Maybe.

Like many a good story, it isn't true. But it could very easily have been. The fan in question is Bill Bryson, and in the world we know, the erudite wit and skill with words which he possesses went to produce, not fanzines, but professional writing.

The point of my conceit above is that Bryson, more than almost any other professional writer outside the field of science fiction (and more, indeed, than some people in it) is very obviously a fan *manqué*. And I am not saying this merely to make a cheap joke about his hanging round all the time with a guy called Katz.

Certainly Bryson's books sit uncomfortably in their usual spot on bookshops' shelves, namely the

travel writing section. Perhaps half of his books could be defined as travel writing, stretching the point to a greater or lesser extent. The other half spread themselves over popular science, biography, autobiography, linguistics, and the whole damn world in general. I would say that Bryson defies all attempts to cram him into boxes and stick labels on the outside, except that his relaxed, casual, gently amusing style would sit ill with so active a word as 'defy'. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that attempts to label him are deflected by a force-field of wry self-deprecation.

I first happened across Bryson in the mid Nineties when an inspired Christmas present brought me *Neither Here Nor There*. Travel writing not being my usual cup of tea, I let the book moulder on my unread pile for a few months before even cracking the cover and sampling the first page.

When I did finally start reading, I was hooked almost immediately. This is not hyperbole; I really and truly could not put it down. It almost seemed to vibrate in my hands, so lively and energetic was the writing. This was, in short, a book worth writing my name inside and not lending out without a security of gold bars in return.

I think I was about a quarter of the way through when I stopped dead, having come to a realisation of what it reminded me of.

"Hot damn," I may have said, or perhaps it was "Fuck me gently with a chainsaw". "This is a TAFF report."

It wasn't, of course. But the style was right (not to mention the frequent references to travelling companion Katz.) Bryson wandered over Europe, an innocent abroad, being fed fried eggs by Belgians, reading Norwegian comic books over their owners' shoulders, passing sarcastic comments on Bulgarian cuisine – practically every anecdote in the book was told from a fan's eye view, and would not have been out of place in a fannish fanzine. In a *good* fannish fanzine, at that; the stories were amusing enough, and well enough told, that they would have been right at home in that context.

I became an immediate evangelist, buying another copy of the book and sending it to Vicki Rosenzweig in New York with a burbling note that she must, must, read this. And I lost no time in snagging a copy of his previous book, *The Lost Continent*.

Minus Katz this time, Bryson borrowed a car and simply drove about the continental USA, again the

innocent abroad for all that it was his home country, telling more tales of his encounters. If anything he was slightly more self-deprecatory in this book, poking mild but good-natured fun at Iowa and Iowans, getting lost on back roads, and stopping for the night in towns with no source of food but chocolate bars. Recounting his difficulty in trying to be a pedestrian in an automobile-obsessed Carbondale, IL, I muttered "The Revolt of the Pedestrians" to myself. And even knowing that Bryson was not a science fiction fan as we know it, I was slightly disappointed that he didn't drop in a reference (all Bryson's references are throwaways, dropped in casually) to David H. Keller, MD.

It was around this time – ten years ago, as I write now – that I first started burbling about Bryson-as-fanwriter to other fans. I have an all too clear memory of Maureen Kincaid Speller looking askance at me as I tried to explain my argument.

Bryson, of course, was still writing, and he was starting to gather fame. His earlier books *Made in America*, a history of American inventions and manufacturing, and *The Mother Tongue*, an amusing and erudite history of the English language, were reissued and sold just as well as his travelogues. *Notes from a Small Island* followed, in which he made a farewell tour of Great Britain prior to quitting it in favour of a return to the USA. Once ensconced in New Hampshire, there followed *Notes from a Big Country*, a collection of columns from a Sunday newspaper I would not normally be found dead buying anything in the least related to.

Once more I must disclaim any hyperbole in saying that *Big Country* is pure fanwriting. I don't think there's a single column in that book that couldn't be lifted out and with the most minimal of rewriting and filing off of names, inserted in a fannish fanzine. And almost every piece shines with fannish wit, as good-natured as Bob Shaw's and as ready to mock its own author as Francis Towner Laney. My copy of *Big Country* is so worn from multiple rereadings that the print is nearly off the pages. If these had been fanzine columns, the fanzine lucky enough to secure Bryson's services would have been a shoo-in for awards and acclaim.

I could go on singing Bryson's praises over his subsequent books – his walking the Appalachian Trail, again with Katz, in *A Walk in the Woods*, his visit to Australia in *Down Under*, his wonderfully evocative autobiography *The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid*, and now his work on Shakespeare, *Shakespeare: The World as Stage*. But I know all too well that good reviews are

boring to read compared with bad ones, and besides, what more can I say about Bryson that I haven't already reiterated? Let me just, though, give one more example of his influence upon me.

In both *The Lost Continent* and *A Walk in the Woods* Bryson visits Gatlinburg, Tennessee, a small town that has chosen to turn itself into something like a gigantic amusement park with people living in it at the foothills of the Smoky Mountains. Bryson wrote at amused length about its cheesiness, its glitz, its willingness to prostitute its own children for a tourist dollar. But Bryson liked it, nonetheless and despite himself; that much was clear.

Recently, faced with an itinerary that took me from Minneapolis to Florida in a hire car and that allowed me about two days' leeway en route, I eyed the map. Most British people – most American people, even – would no doubt have chosen to spend the extra time seeing the sights of Chicago, or visiting one of the myriad theme parks in Florida, or something along those lines. But I noted that Gatlinburg was not at all far off the route I would be taking, and that was my mind up. I was going to Gatlinburg.

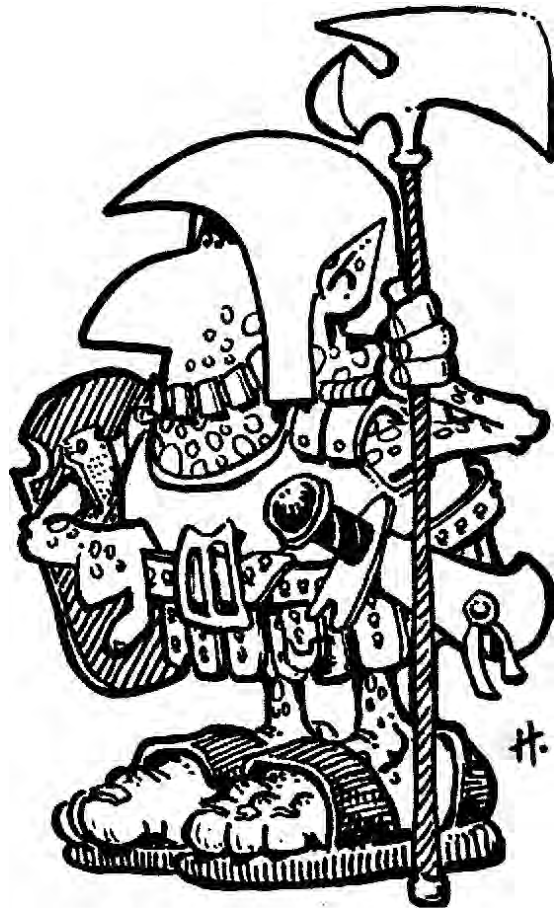
And really, I'm so glad I did. It was every bit as tacky as Bryson describes it, and yet it was wonderful. I rode the cable cars, went round Ripley's Believe it or Not Museum, played crazy golf through herds of plastic gophers singing the Camptown Races, and took photographs of the General Lee at Cooter's Dukes of Hazard Museum. Anyone who knows me will tell you that such activities are far, far outside my normal definition of things I would consider fun, and yet I still left Gatlinburg reluctantly and with a silent vow to be back. I commend Gatlinburg to you all nearly as much as I commend Bryson's books.

If you were expecting this article to build up to a big finish, I'm afraid you're doomed to disappointment. Not only can I not think of one, but somehow, for an article on Bill Bryson to conclude with a roll of thunder and a wave of the conductor's baton followed by frenzied applause from the audience would be just... wrong. A Bryson piece is far more likely to conclude with a cup of tea, a biscuit and a gentle chuckle at the various mishaps along the way to the end, told – as most of the columns by Walt Willis were told, indeed – in perfect sonata form, theme and countertheme blending at the end, tying the piece up as perfectly as a parcel wrapped with a bow on top.

Bryson's fannish personality was, I suppose, denied to fandom as we know it by the mere

chance of Bryson failing to read comics and science fiction with quite enough obsessiveness, or quite at the right time. But it's hard to mourn fandom's loss, because fandom's loss in this instance has been the world as a whole's gain. It would seem selfish to deny the general reader the joy of Bill Bryson's books just so that a select few could enjoy his work in fanzines.

And yet I somehow can't help but wish that we had an example – just one example would do at a push – of a con report by the Thunderbolt Kid.



The IntheBar Hymnal

Cast in order of appearance:

Harry Bell; Pat Charnock; Dave Langford; Roy Kettle; Graham Charnock; Rich Coad; Robert Lichtman

((Editorial introduction, for readers not part of the IntheBar email list, where all this originated....

Why we started to talk about hymns I just don't know. All you need to know is that it had been Graham Charnock's birthday, and that Ian Maule had been practising how to bake bread in his new breadmaker. Graham dropped a hint that although he had had plenty of nice DVDs and CDs, he would have liked his own breadmaker for his birthday. Roy Kettle is very tolerant of having his leg pulled about his (real) OBE.

Oh yes, and Uncle Johnny is John Hall, who is an accountant, quondam kidney unit patient, lover of music with fewer guitars (and more drum machines and synthesisers) in it than Graham Charnock would like, and like many IntheBar, an occasional Grumpy Old Man. Those that aren't grumpy old men are probably grumpy old women. That includes Pat Charnock, but she is otherwise surprisingly tolerant of Graham's peccadilloes. Rich observes all with amused tolerance from the Bay Area when he is not being overworked.

Dave Langford and Robert Lichtman probably need no introduction. Nor do Earl Kemp, Ted White, Frank Lunney or Bruce Townley who are mentioned in dispatches. Now read on....))

All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.
Him serve with fear, His praise forth tell;
Come ye before Him and rejoice.

Harry

See, that starts good, with a "cheerful" in the second line. But it descends into "fear".

Pat C

Indeed. That old loving god is a bit two faced and wrathful.

The funny thing is that I definitely remember it as "Him serve with mirth..." Maybe in Newport (Mon.) we got the expurgated edition? No, apparently that's the original translation, which gloomy puritans altered because they didn't want any authorization of mirth and suchlike lax behaviour: 'William. Kethe, a refugee in Geneva, Switzerland, from the persecutions of England's Bloody Mary in the sixteenth century, found the Calvinists using the Psalms in French metrical versions, so translated them directly from the Hebrew into English. A line from "Old Hundredth" read, "Him serve with mirth, his praise forthtell." This was changed by later English divines who considered it too light to: "Him serve with fear, his praise forthtell."

But while we're in this mood:

O Lord, please don't burn us,
don't grill or toast your flock.
Don't put us on the barbecue,
or simmer us in stock.
Don't braise or bake or boil us
or stir fry us in a wok.
Oh please don't lightly poach us
or baste us with hot fat.
Don't fricassee or roast us
or boil us in a vat,

The IntheBar Hymnal

and please don't stick thy servant Lord
in a Rotissomat.

Dave

Yet another cheery hymn involving dismal images
and exchange of body parts.

John Julius Norwich's commonplace-book
collections include several =Hymns A&M= verses
that were cautiously removed from the Revised
edition. This painful one, for example:

Lord, circumcise our hearts, we pray,
And take what is not thine away;
Write Thine own name upon our hearts,
Thy law within our inward parts.

Another one (by Isaac Watts, the "O God our help in
ages past" chap) discovered by the late great
Robertson Davies, who collected this kind of stuff:

Blest is the man whose bowels move
And melt with pity for the poor;
His soul in sympathizing love
Feels what his fellow saints endure
His heart contrives for their relief
More good than his own hands can do:
He in a time of general grief
Finds that his Lord has bowels too.

There's a much more gory and revolting example in
another JJN collection, but perhaps you'd rather I
didn't try to find it ...

Dave

Yes, that's another one we sang (or mouthed in my
case) at church:

Two-faced and wrathful though I be
I give some of my love to thee
Vengeful, wilful, harsh, unfair
I yet have tenderness to share
Vicious, brutal, proud, unkind
I offer rapture to mankind
The reason is that this should be
I'm stuck with thou as thou with me.

Roy

And on Wednesday was written this one:

Oh Lord protect thine OBE
Who served well his fair country
Please satisfy his natural cravings
With £50 from the National Savings
Save him from illness vile and foul
And please don't ever mention bowel
Bid all our organs, mighty and small
swell with pride if they swell at all
And please don't mention Ian Maule

Old Hundredth Man (**Graham C**)

Verse the first

Oh Jesus, saviour of old men
Help yet your Old Man in his den
He got no breadmaker today
Give him the bread of life, we pray.

Chorus

Fucking thing won't rise for me
Yet I obeyed the recipe
Panasonic's faulty beast
Oh shit I did forget the yeast.

Roy (Official Breadmaker to the Empire, by order of
Ian Maule – whoops mentioned him)

Praise Maule, from Whom all Nabus flow;
Praise Maule, who lives in Ashford;
Praise Maule and his written word;
Praise Mistress Janice, and Ian Maule.

Rich

Paise Rich and Stacey far away
Over in the USA
Praise Cueball and Bertie too
And Earl and Frank and Ted and who
Else? I'm running out of folk
Who's that guy who rides the Polk?
Oh, Bruch especially praise him Lord
Our voices are raised in one accord
For Barack has come to save the offended
Although, Lord, I appreciate that might not have
been what you originally intended.

The IntheBar Hymnal

Oh Lord, Can we rely on you
To impeach Bush and all his crew?
And keep Frank happy too.

Graham C.

You forgot....

Robert Lichtman (& Carol)

All praise Robert and Carol too
Living within the earthquake zone
Please carry them to safety should the big one come
And not destroy their lovely home
God look over Robert's zines
And protect them by all holy means
Do not allow a page to be burned
Or in the final purging left unturned.
For as we know thy holy will
perpetuates itself in fanzines still

Graham C.

Bread of Ian, Bread of Ian
Feed me 'til I want no maule?

Roy

Oh Lord watch over Blessed Unc
Even though he spouteth junk
Save his one remaining kidney too
Even as we pray to you
to save him from dialysis
And bring him to psychoanalysis.
Bless the gorgeous Audrey, Lord
We raise our voices with one accord
Shine your light on his musical taste
Which heathens would like to lay to waste
(I include myself amongst that group
Since his music resembles turkeys with croup)
Bless his fanzine, but also bless mine
One is ridiculous, the other sublime
I know thy judgement ruleth supreme
And thus it is I dare to utter
Even you, Beneficent Lord
Must know Stork from Butter.
For we know Good Lord whatever his sin
St Peter will let even accountants in

Graham C.

Oh please dear lord
Look over Rob
And when he seeks to explicate
Please stop his gob
He may be a doctor but knows fuck all about verse
And about poetry even worse
His rules of syntax bother me
I'm sure oh Lord, you must agree
But send him balm and sympathy

Graham C.



Circulation

Locs on Inca 3

Jack Calvert

Thanks for giving me a copy at Corflu [and, I should add, I was delighted to meet you there], and my apologies for taking so long to respond. I enjoyed it very much, getting a pleasant sense of having come unstuck in time and dropping in on different eras as I read through the articles, starting with your visit to Arthur Clarke long ago. Clarke's fiction looms large in my memories of childhood reading. Images from *Childhood's End* and *The City and the Stars* still float around in my mind.

I remember both Brian Parker's tale of his encounter with David Hockney and Keith Freeman's story of his adventure in Normandy from their posts on In the Bar, and it was good to read the expanded versions. Both well done. DC-3s appear to be immortal. I remember them from World War 2 movies, then I rode in them during the Vietnam War, and I recently saw one that flies tourists around San Francisco Bay.

Then, modern times with ItB Day and Orbital reports. I was off in the penumbra of ItB through much of the time of that ItB day, I think. But I enjoyed the tales and the pics. And I'm going to give Coral's Curry recipe a try, though in a smaller version. I make curries meself in a sort of improvisational way. Orbital looks like fun – I haven't been to a big-scale convention for many decades. I've got to admire Rich Coad's fannish dedication in flying all the way from the west coast to attend it. (And that of everyone else who braved the sleetstorm to show up.) I like the term "maze-dull rat." I've been in a few hotels, con and otherwise, that made me feel that way – though I usually manage to get to the cheese. Or the bar.

In the letter column, Ian Williams mentions Iain Banks and *The Crow Road*, a book that's on my list to read. Of his non-sf, I've only read *The Bridge*. I'm currently reading *Matter* by Iain M. – a full measure of the big-scale skiffy that he does so well.

Also liked all the artwork – Harry Bell's cover, the Jim Barker clone illos, and Venetia's photo on the back cover, which has an appropriately Clarkean feel.

((I could certainly have seen shimmering lights like that in the Ultimate Trip part of 2001. But wouldn't that have been more Kubrick's visual choice than Clarke's?))

Steve Green

Running through the Nova Award shortlist, I realised I didn't get *Inca 3*, which reminded me I never finished my loc on *Inca 2*. Hell, I locced #1 and probably thought I had another 28 years to get my act together.

Back when Martin Tudor and I were producing *Critical Wave*, one of the innovations we were proudest of was our art portfolios (we featured work by Jim Porter, Sue Mason, David Hardy, Alan Hunter, Dave Carson, Harry Turner, Dave Mooring...). No surprise, then, when I point to your Harry Bell gallery as a particular highlight of *Inca 2*; I just wish Harry – and Jim Barker, and Pete Lyon, and D West, for that matter – were still regularly gracing fanzine covers.

((If you look in the right places, you can see Harry's stuff around even now. From time to time, anyway. Like Inca 3. And see next page...))

Of course, I also wish there were the fanzines out there for them to grace. Mike Glicksohn's remark (freshly released from its Seacon-sponsored time capsule) that *Inca 1* was the sixty-third fanzine he'd read in the previous fortnight would only ring true now if he'd spent those two weeks ploughing through sixty-two fanzines already resting in his in-tray.

It was strange – yet oddly reassuring – to see a passing reference to Bob Shaw as a contributor to *Inca 1*. Bob was a massive influence upon my early fannish activities (as I recall, we were already in correspondence when I was still in my final year at grammar school and planning my first fanzine). I miss Bob an enormous amount, not least our occasional 'phone conversations. Shortly after his death, Ann and I paid a pilgrimage to what we surmised what Bob's local (it was a stone's throw from the newsagency with the largest sf selection)

and raised a glass in his memory; it was the very least I owed him.

Harry Bell

Relaxing a little after a week in London and a frantic day or two finishing off a couple of paintings for the Biscuit Factory, I thought I'd have a wander through *Inca 3*. Well done, you've made another good one.

It was lovely to see all those old Barker cartoons. I wonder what he's up to now? Still muttering incomprehensible rubbish in his beard, I expect, but since he's also still living in Scotland, I don't suppose it matters much. It does, however, give me an excuse to trot out an old cartoon [see *attachment*] which never got used because A) I never pubbed the ish it was supposed to go in, and B) Jimbo eventually gafiated.



Fig. 1 : The Barker Stance

((If you want to know what Jim is up to, visit <http://www.jimbarker.net/>. "NEW: Download your 2009 Calendar [HERE](#)," as it says. Specimen joke for February, very topical: a bloke's wife saying "Get used to them – we'll be eating them for a while yet," as he helps himself to Credit Crunchies for breakfast.))

The best bit of *Inca* for me was probably the raking over of Gannet coals. The evenings at Kev's place in Seaton Delaval, drinking pints and pints of terrible lager before staggering home to eat mountains of stomach-eroding curry, before falling asleep on the floor because Kev was playing those fucking Pete Atkin records again, are nights never to be forgotten. Oh, but mostly, I've forgotten them.

Your comments about learning to swim at school made slightly uncomfortable reading even after all the years have passed since my own experiences of swimming lessons. I hadn't learned to swim by the time I went to Grammar School (an earlier incident in which I fell in the sea at Portobello had left me very wary of water in any but the smallest quantity), so I looked forward to being taught at the school's Tuesday sessions at the local baths. Foolish me. The swimming instructor was Norman Sarsfield, a fat cruel man with no interest whatsoever in anyone who couldn't already swim. He was then the swimming coach for Brian Phelps, the Olympic diving medallist and it was obvious I was never going to be in that league, so he took no interest in me, except to lash me with the occasional rubber tyre on the end of a broom shank. Interestingly (to me, at any rate), Phelps was recently convicted of indecently assaulting children and one wonders now and then (in a totally fantastical sort of way, of course, for it cannot possibly be the case) whether the delightful Norman had a hand in this part of Brian's tutelage. (Don't worry, Rob, Mr Google tells me that Sarsfield, a former army major, died in 1986, after miraculously becoming Mayor of Durham, so he can't sue you.)

((You've included a denial anyway, so that's OK. Purely fantasy. Definitely.))

Anyway, the treatment handed out by Fat Sarsfield, as we children cleverly referred to him, eventually led to my being physically ill every morning at the thought of swimming lessons. My Dad sussed it out enough to go to the school and have me taken out of the lessons, and I spent the rest of term sitting on the benches doing homework with Ian Bertram who wore calipers. At times, I felt a bit like Fred Ellinger and one or two others whose names I never learnt, who didn't take part in morning prayers and so were known as The Pagans. I rather wish my Dad had had me declared a Pagan, too, but then I wouldn't have known all the salacious words to "Men of Harlech." (Look, I don't know why we sang Men of Harlech at morning prayers, but we did. I blamed Dilwyn Scott.)

((You weren't at the only school where rude words got substituted. Mind you, I was at a public school, so mine were posher rude words. At Oundle School the whole school were forced to take part in the big sing-along bits of oratorios by Handel, or things like Bach's Mass in B Minor, or Mozart's Requiem – usually with the words in Latin. One of these dreary items contained the line Rex Tremendae Majestatis (king of tremendous majesty, as if you couldn't guess), which the music master in charge decided in his folly would be enhanced by the whole school giving a jolly sing along to the Big Chorus. More fool him. If you try to make about 700 14-18 year old boys sing those lines, there is only one likely outcome.

You guessed it. Sex Tremendae Majestatis.

It was an absolute picture to see how red his face went when he screamed at the whole school: "The WORD is REX!!")

So Ian Williams is a small grey-haired beer barrel. Well, it's not news to me.

((Beer? I thought he was more into wine, at least at home. Mind you, it's more than 20 years since I had a drink in Ian's company; I think the last time was at New Year 1985/6. I can date it fairly accurately, as he was burbling happily about this new-fangled thing he had just bought called an Amstrad PCW, and how good it was. At that stage that was all news to me.))

Robert Lichtman In your editorial you write, "The topic of swimming cropped up on the list, and we found out that not all middle-aged Core Fandomites like swimming, or can even do it at all." That would include me. At a very young age I formed the opinion that if man was intended to be underwater the species would have been equipped with gills. I resisted learning how to swim mightily, and succeeded in avoiding it until about age ten. At that point my parents forced me to take lessons at the local swimming school, and I reluctantly – hating every minute of it – complied and managed to get through it all. But I never voluntarily swam afterwards. In my second year of high school a brand new pool was completed and six weeks of swimming was added to the physical education curriculum. On the first day of instruction I walked into the pool room and was nearly knocked over by the strong chlorine smell. When I got in the water, my eyes teared up and I could hardly breathe from being that close to the source of the smell. I got right out and refused to go in again. This of course pissed off the instructors, but in a

small miracle my parents didn't object and I spent those six weeks getting good at volleyball with a handful of fellow students who for one reason or another had gotten excused from swimming. That was pretty much my last experience with it, and I don't feel I've somehow missed out of something that would have, ahem, enriched my life.

I feel the same way about camping, but that's another subject.

Elsewhere in your editorial you note that "The only claims to fame of the area of Surbiton near Coral's parents are where they filmed parts of *Oh! What A Lovely War* on the Alpha Road estate, which you have to go through to walk from Coral's family's place to Ethel's." I wonder if I'm the only one who will know—especially in the absence of any other references—that the Ethel to whom you're referring would be the late Ethel Lindsay. Or at least I assume that's who, since she lived many years at Courage House, 6 Langley Avenue, Surbiton, Surrey.

((You're very diplomatically pointing out a piece of crap editing on my part. I did indeed have a brief reference to Ethel Lindsay in there, but it didn't somehow fit with the rest of the reminiscences, and so it got edited out. Except for the reference to Ethel in that sentence, which I didn't spot, and left dangling like a lonely participle.))

I enjoyed reading your "Rendezvous with Arthur" and think it's really a wonderful thing that you got to meet and spend time with him.

Jim Barker's "Sheer Art Attack" reminded me of one of my favorite political cartoonists of the late '60s and a LASFS member, Ron Cobb. I don't have his first book, *RCD-25*, and I see from an on-line search that it's become rare and pricey (cheapest copy is \$80). But of the others Jim mentions I have several editions of *Mah Fellow Americans* and *The Cobb Book*. And I also have *Cobb Again* and *Raw Sewage*, all of which I treasure but none of which have reached the used book price heights of his first. Jim's paean of praise for George Barr's *Upon the Winds of Yesterday* sorely tempted me to get a copy, especially since it's available for not much more than the £6 he paid for it at Faircon in 1980 or earlier. And I succumbed to one just now, and look forward to confirming Jim's impressions for myself.

Brian Parker's and Keith Freeman's articles were both read and enjoyed, but are the sort of self-contained interesting/informative fanzine fare that



(for me at least) leads to no further comment. Nice to see the mini-Bell portfolio—and his wonderful front cover! I especially liked the ATom homage of the latter. Your collected InTheBar Day 2007 account is good to read again, and very nice to have the photos in print and not have to seek them out in the ITB photos section. The same goes for your Orbital 2008 report. Coral's vegetable korma curry recipe reads well, by which I mean I can practically taste it from going through the ingredients list and using my imagination. I do wonder, however, what constitutes a "packet" of red lentils and carrots, and how large a jar of mango chutney and korma paste, and just what are "bhuna, jalfrezi and biryani paste."

((Coral is now shocked to realise that the recipe quotes 2 packets of lentils – each packet is 500 gms, or 1 lb in what Brits think of as old money. However she now thinks that even for a large party she would have only used 500 gms, and for a standard family size batch – 4-6 people – more like 200-250 gms. Carrots come in 500 gm or 1 kg packets.

She says I must have misread her handwriting. It's got to be my fault, of course. She is also shocked to read the quantity of cauliflowers – "three cauliflowers?!" – and mango chutney – "a whole jar?!"

She reiterates that the ingredients are just what you have to hand, or feel like putting in. These recipes are most definitely flexible.

The curry pastes are all made by Patak's; whether you can get them in Indian (or even British) specialist shops in the Bay Area I wouldn't know. Biryani majors on coriander and cumin; Bhuna has tomato and tamarind; and jalfrezi has sweet peppers and coconut.

Another secret ingredient that has crept into the fridge more in the last few months is tamarind chutney.)

In my letter I can hardly believe the typo I made and let stand: "On to your trip report... where you first get a checkmark in your discussion of Bell's Law, which 'states that men prefer the paper to roll off the top of the roll, while women prefer to pull it from underneath'... This is wrong on a couple of scores, the first of which is that Carol for one prefers 'off the top' (she emphatically doesn't)." I mean "she emphatically *does*," and regarding your question, "Does that mean you are disproving Bell's Law," the answer is yes.

Thanks to Hugo for his "Guacamole explanation: it was just quite bad guacamole, served with some tacos I ordered. I'm not too fond of eating things that are green and slimy at the best of times, and this was green and slimy and fibrous and had an outer crust." I'm quite wary of eating guacamole when it comes as a garnish/add-on to a taco or whatever, too, having at times encountered the same foul goo that offended Hugo. Guacamole is best made in relatively small batches when served in a restaurant, and if it must be stored before serving it should be covered and well-refrigerated – and would probably benefit from a squeeze of lemon juice to keep it from turning prematurely brown.

In commenting on your letter column in *Inca* No. 2, Chris Garcia notes with perhaps a hint of a shiver, "Letters from so long ago. When some of the zines I've read that took long breaks do that, invariably there'll be one or two from long-gone fans. I saw one a few weeks ago with an LoC from Harry Warner and another from Walt Willis. It's like voices from beyond the grave, it is." I'm one of the fanzine editors who's done that, and I don't have the excuse of being 28 years between issues. Over the lifetime of *Trap Door* I've published posthumous comments from Terry Carr, Ron Bennett and Harry Warner Jr., just to name three.

That's a nice back cover photo/collage by Venetia!

Claire Brialey

I started reading *Inca*

while we were still at Corflu, stopping only to sleep, read science fiction and attend the convention since – as I mentioned at the airport – I had the firm intention of writing most of my letters of comment on the plane. Instead I slept again and read more science fiction. I suspect that to be a Big Name Fan in the twenty-first century it is necessary to give up either or both of these activities, unless they are done in front of one of Bill Mills's web cams.

((Claire, you typed contention, but I am assuming it was an inadvertent typo, not a deliberate one, as there wasn't that much that was contentious about Corflu Silver.))

All interesting reading, but what most drew my comments were the multi-handed report of the In The Bar day and the letter column; doubtless by the time other people have commented on the substantive articles in this issue in the letter column next time around, I'll be able to make almost intelligent contributions to the conversation about them.

Is it an In The Bar tradition that all reports of events should begin with a description of the route travelled to get to or from it? It seemed to go beyond the traditional journey-to-the-con ritual, reading like a code as you all establish one another's credentials through the careful exchange of passwords – AA, roadworks, North Circular, M25, satnav, RAC, M3, A3, all fall down – before proceeding to the serious business. Which in this case was obviously drinking, eating, and generally hanging out although I did begin to wonder when I came across Pat's reference to Spanko and Ian's to Crouchers Bottom whether there was something even more arcane going on. As each successive account of the weekend built up more of the picture, adding colour and texture and sometimes whole new perspectives, I began to wonder what I would be able to see by the end. Armoured dogs, chocolate-dipped goldfish, curried Charnox...

Meanwhile, having noted one or two references to rain in some of the In the Bar reports (did Uncle Johnny by any chance become a little soggy?) and then your reports of fears of blizzards over the Easter weekend, I was very taken with your description of Alison Scott in the Orbital conrep as 'a miniature force of nature' in herself. Then I turn to the letter column and the first thing I find is Earl Kemp explaining that it's 120 degrees (Fahrenheit, I hope, although that's quite bad enough) and thus a bit too hot to type. It was something of a relief – given that I read this in Las Vegas, only just down the road from Earl's place

really – to realise that these were the summer temperatures rather than all year round...

I was further startled in the letter column to find that anyone has a preference for which way their loo paper unrolls. Then my mother assured me on the phone that my father does. All knowledge, if not contained in fanzines, appears to be provoked by them – including things I had not previously thought to discover about my own family. (Given Hugo's comments to John about the need, or rather lack of need, for condoms during his LA vacation, maybe the same was true for you.) Whether this is an entirely good thing remains as a question for you and other readers.

And then Chris Garcia posed the question: 'That photo of Burns, Moorcock, Earl Kemp and Peter Weston makes me think that one of those things was not like the others...' And my mind just wandered away to consider all of the possible answers there could be.

((I can feel an Odd One Out round, as in Have I Got News for You, coming on. Only one is American by birth? Only one still lives in the UK? There must be odder and more interesting answers.))

Otherwise the only questions that remain after reading *Inca* are:

(1) When will the next issue be?

((Sort-of now, whenever you're reading this.))

(2) For what use, precisely, had you intended those tents in your grounds?

((Lots of reasons. One – just for hanging out and drinking in, if the weather had been fine, or just a bit showery. Two – if Graham C had still been determined to put up his disposable tent despite horrid weather, he could have had a tent inside another tent. Three – to conceal our nefarious activities from the neighbours.

And actually, that was exactly what the same or similar tents were used for at the – thankfully drier – 2008 event. The first and third of those, to be precise. Goodness knows what the neighbours would have thought if they had been able to see or hear the fannish rendition of Highway 61 Revisited, with Sandra Bond and Ian Maule on guitars. Actually, Sandra's lead guitar was pretty good, but it was her revised lyrics to the track that were really outstanding.

Oh all right then, if you insist; but don't forget to send performance fees to Sandra as well as Mr Dylan....

Highway 61 Re-revisited – lyrics by Sandra Bond

Hall said to Charnock, do me a zine.
Charnock said to Hall something quite obscene.
Hall said, fine. Charnock said, what?
Hall said, you publish what you want to, but,
Motorway Dreamer's gonna be the best thing I've done.
So Charnock said, bye bye Johnny my son,
I'm gonna leave you in my dust on Highway 61.

Dr Rob Jackson he sent out an invite,
Told all the baristas to come round that night.
Made Hall and Charnock promise not to fight
And promised to write a conreport just for Ted White.
Oh boy, said Dr Rob, this party's gonna be some fun.
He got out his bazooka and set phasers on stun
Before the guests started arriving down Highway 61.

Leroy Richard Arthur Kettle he was an OBE,
Meant he could get into public lavatories for free.
Even to join the Astral League he needn't pay 50p,
He had all charges waived by that guru, D.
But then Roy said, guys, you must excuse me cos I got to run.
He made two final bad jokes and one last pun,
And then he took off on Highway 61.

Ole Robert Lichtman was a tie dyed fan,
Got more fanzines than most any other man.
Hung out at cons with his panache and elan,
Pouring sorghum all over his pemmican.
But then his head got blown by a Marty Cantor pun.
Last we saw of him he was clutching at a cream bun
Running into the distance down Highway 61.))

Jerry Kaufman Thanks much for sending Inca 2 and 3, the latter of which arrived right around Corflu time. Based on the little I've heard or read, you all had a great time there. We expect to see Randy Byers tomorrow at our monthly "Fans with Beers" gathering, and will get a first-hand report.

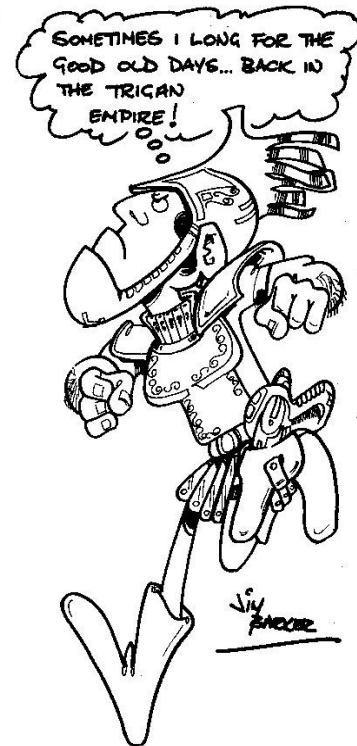
((See also the first half of this zine....))

Meanwhile, here's a little praise for Inca 3 - I liked it. Starting off with Harry Bell's salute to Atom doesn't hurt. I read a metaphorical meaning into his aeronaut taking off from a wall of Atom critters. The fan artists of today stand on the shoulders of the work of their fannish elders and will soar even higher.

If that's not the meaning of the cover, then it's just silly.

The issue was also helped by your reprint of "Rendezvous with Arthur" and the never-before-seen Jim Barker "Bob Shaw Clones" cartoons. Of course we gave permission to reprint your article, because we don't have the right to refuse you – we always indicated in our copyrights that rights were returned to the writers and artists. But it's definitely polite and gratifying that you asked. I wish we'd been the ones to have received the Jim Barker cartoons so you could ask our permission to reprint those, too.

I thought the Jim Barker article was a slightly odd item to have used after twenty-five years, as some of the material he wrote about has long been forgotten. However, since some of the artists, like George Barr and Kelly Freas, had a strong impact on the field, I still found the piece interesting. It does fit nicely with the Barker art.



A Round Trip

KEY – Answers and artist credits

1. *Kantner, Slick and Freiberg – Harp Tree Lament*
2. *Led Zeppelin – Stairway to Heaven*
3. *The Who – Armenia, City In The Sky*
4. *The Beatles – Magical Mystery Tour*
5. *Roger McGuinn – Draggin’*
6. *The Beatles – Fool On The Hill*
7. *Ian Dury and the Blockheads – Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick*
8. *Enya – Orinoco Flow*
9. *Procol Harum – A Salty Dog*
10. *The Byrds – I Wasn’t Born To Follow*
11. *George Harrison – The Ballad Of Sir Frankie Crisp*
12. *Peter Gabriel – Solsbury Hill*
13. *Fleetwood Mac – Seven Wonders*
14. *Matthews Southern Comfort – Colorado Springs Eternal*
15. *Paul McCartney – Wanderlust*
16. *The Beach Boys – Sloop John B*
17. *Andy Williams – Home Lovin’ Man*
18. *Wings – Mull Of Kintyre*
19. *The Proclaimers – Letter From America*
20. *Ultravox – Vienna*

