



## THE WORLD OF NULL NUTHIN'

by  
Milt  
Stevens

*Another, er, book review, sort of. Actually, Milt kinda re-writes the book as if Van Vogt had my sense of humour. Sort of. Or, maybe, what we have is a deconstruction of the book. Milt posted this to me: "I feel I have gone beyond mere deconstructionist criticism into the new area of demolitionist criticism."*

Near the beginning of *The World of Null A* by A. E. Van Vogt, we find our hero, Gilbert Gosseyn, sleeping in a vacant lot with a woman he had met under curious circumstances. Of course, you really wouldn't expect to be sleeping in a vacant lot with a woman you met under normal circumstances. Gosseyn has learned much in the preceding day. He has learned his name isn't Gilbert Gosseyn. He has also learned that the woman he believed to be his dead wife is neither dead nor his wife. He hasn't a clue as to who he really is. The last thing he remembers clearly is a wild weekend in Bakersfield. Thanks to Gosseyn's rigorous null-A training, he is no more confused than he usually is.

The year is 2560, and the world has adopted the philosophy of null-A. Null-A stands for non-Aristotelian thinking. By contrast, Aristotelian thinking led to things like science and civilization. Null-A leads to migraine headaches and acid indigestion. Null-A also includes non-Euclidean, non-Newtonian, and non-Cholesterol thinking.

The place is the City of the Machine. The machine in question is the Games Machine, which is a vast structure of twenty thousand electronic brains, five thousand wind-up brains, and two which are powered by rubber bands. For one month each year, the Games Machine tests thousands of applicants from all over the planet on the principles of null-A. Those who score the highest are sent to Venus which maintains an ideal society based on the principles of null-A. Those who don't do so well get jobs like President of Earth, Pope, or CEO of Microsoft. Gosseyn believed he had come to the City of the Machine to participate in the games. He thought it was a little curious that the Games Machine had kept referring to him as "son."

The woman who is sharing the vacant lot with Gosseyn calls herself Patricia Hardie. Gosseyn wondered about that, since he believed he had been married to a woman named Patricia Hardie. Nobody believed that, because Patricia Hardie was the name of the daughter of the President of Earth. The Patricia Hardie who is currently with Gosseyn also bears a striking resemblance to a barnmaid Gosseyn met in Bakersfield. Before Gosseyn can sort out all these puzzling details, a bunch of men in sinister black suits arrive, grab Gosseyn and Patricia Hardie, and transport them by limo to the Palace of the Machine.

At the palace, Gosseyn is escorted to a huge room where he is confronted by three men. The first man is Michael Hardie, the President of Earth. By using his lightening thought processes, Gosseyn realizes he may have some explaining to do about the whole vacant lot thing. The second man is named Thorson. You can tell he is a bad guy, because he sneers a lot. Bad guys always sneered a lot in old-time SF stories. The third man was in a wheelchair. He had a plastic arm, a plastic leg, and his back was in a plastic cage. Two human eyes peered from under a glass smooth dome of surgical plastic. Gosseyn had the disturbing impression there was a goldfish swimming inside the dome. The third man calls himself "X". Gosseyn instantly decides on the correct level of abstraction. He wails piteously and offers to do anything to avoid a fate worse than and including death. The three men sneer in unison.

Thorson explains that Gosseyn's arrival is the most recent in a string of totally improbable events. First a man with twelve toes on his left foot won a dance marathon in Peoria; next, two potted palms applied for a marriage license in San Francisco; and, finally, *The Last Dangerous Visions* was published. Something is obviously in the works. To find out more information, they have decided to photograph Gosseyn's brain. Gosseyn considers the null-Euclidean implications of having a camera stuffed up his nose. Thorson wheels in an atomic camera stuffer and proceeds to activate it. The device stuffs a camera up Gosseyn's nose while he screams at the top of his lungs.

A short while later, Gosseyn is experiencing an Excedrin headache with an unlisted number. However, he is very glad the camera was only a 35 millimeter. The bad guys mutter while reviewing the photos of Gosseyn's brain. He overhears some disconnected phrases such as "Galactic League," "Refulgent Framistan," and "Hong Kong Noodle Company". The bad guys finally notice something unusual about Gosseyn's brain. It glows in the dark. This impresses them as being suspicious.

The bad guys have Gosseyn thrown into the darkest dungeon in the economy section. Due to his superior mental coordination, his cortex and thalamus are experiencing a synchronized anxiety attack.

## Gosseyn doesn't

Just as he is approaching total hysteria, Patricia Hardie arrives and frees him from the dungeon. She gives him directions to reach her apartment in the palace and tells him to hide there. It's the best offer he's had all day. Later, while he is hiding in a closet in Patricia Hardie's apartment, she arrives with Eldred Crang, commander of the local secret base of the galactic conspiracy. They discuss Crang's secret allegiance to null-A. They also discuss a man named Prescott. As a quadruple agent, they distrust Prescott's motives.

Gosseyn decides he can't stay in the closet forever. He climbs over the conveniently located balcony and flees the palace grounds. His plan is to go to the Games Machine and hide there. As he is nearing the Games Machine, he is intercepted by a bunch of men in sinister black suits with even more sinister automatic weapons. They gun him down Like A Dawg.

He wakes up on Venus. Venus is a world of lush tropical vegetation where only crabgrass and Englishmen go walking in the noonday sun. Opening his eyes, he sees a forest of trees which are thousands of feet tall. He decides he really doesn't want to meet the aphids in this neighborhood. A short distance away he sees a house. It appears to be made entirely out of gingerbread. He has a bad feeling about this. Nearing the house, he notices the names on the mailbox are John and Amelia Prescott. This must be the Prescott he heard about. On the verandah, he encounters John Prescott and knocks him cold. When Amelia Prescott appears he knocks her cold as well. He ties both of them up with some loose plot threads. He is beginning to appreciate the wisdom of the null-A classic Self Expression Through Physical Violence. After locating a map and determining his location, he decides to walk cross-country to the nearest city..

Several miles from the house, he is crossing a meadow when a roboplane descends from the clouds and lands near his position. The roboplane sprouts 50 caliber machine guns and advises Gosseyn to come on board or else. It's the best offer he's had all day. Once on board, the plane identifies itself as an agent of the Games Machine. It proposes to take him to the home of Eldred Crang where he will be captured. With any luck, he may survive several days after that. This doesn't sound like such a hot idea to Gosseyn. The roboplane explains that through a program called Affirmative Villainy the galactic conspiracy has managed to fill all judicial, police, and sanitation jobs on Venus and Earth with their agents. Gosseyn has the choice between being captured by Crang or a one way trip to the sewage recycling plant.

Arriving at Crang's place, he observes it is a spacious apartment carved into a giant tree. He knocks on the front door. He knocks on the front door again. Determining nobody is home, he moves in and makes himself comfortable. Finding an ample supply of canned goods, Gosseyn locates an atomic can opener and an atomic hot plate. At least, he won't starve. A week later, he is beginning to

wonder about the roboplane's plan. He decides to use the videophone to order a pizza. The pizza arrives with four security men and Eldred Crang. Gosseyn is taken into custody and shipped back to Earth.

Once back on Earth, Gosseyn is lodged in a luxury apartment in the palace of the machine. Having failed to kill him permanently the last time, the bad guys have decided to invite him to dinner this time. Gosseyn considers the null-Cholesterol implications of being the main course. Before dinner, everybody in the plot drops by for a conspiratorial chat. Prescott even offers him an antidote. Gosseyn objects he hasn't had any poison yet. Prescott says not to worry. To ease the conspiracy flow, everyone enters by the front door and leaves by the back door.

Gosseyn is escorted to a large hall. Almost everyone else is already there. There is a long table with something covered by a white sheet. X pulls away the sheet to reveal what's left of Gosseyn I. Gosseyn II promptly throws-up. X wonders how anyone can be so obviously dead and yet still walking around. According to his null-A training, this is completely impossible. Thorson takes a different approach to the questioning. He drags a cocker spaniel into the room and holds a gun to the dog's head. If Gosseyn doesn't tell everything, Thorson will shoot the dog. Before Gosseyn can react, everybody else in the room including the dog passes out.

Prescott strolls into the room in a leisurely manner. He explains he has dumped Venusian whiffle dust into the air conditioning. He and Gosseyn are the only ones who have taken the antidote. After taking one look at the villainy the bad guys were about to perpetrate, Prescott whips out an atomic toothbrush and offs President Hardie and X before Gosseyn can stop him. With the President of Earth dead on the carpeting, Gosseyn's lightening fast mental processes tell him there may be a problem. He and Prescott appropriate a car and leave for points elsewhere.

Prescott tells Gosseyn that President Hardie, X, and the others are not just planetary villains. They are galactic villains planning the invasion of Earth and Venus. As part of their plan, they have partially disabled the Games Machine by means of a diabolical device known as a discombobulator. The discombobulator has been hidden in a wall in Patricia Hardie's apartment in the Palace of the Machine. Before Prescott can reveal more, they hear a radio bulletin that the President of Earth has been assassinated. The prime suspect is one Gilbert Gosseyn, an agent of the Games Machine and a conspiracy of Venusian slimeballs. Authorities have been ordered to hunt down Gosseyn and gun him down Like A Dawg.

Gosseyn concludes he needs a psychiatrist. He needs help in figuring out his apparently unique mental processes. He knows that a Dr. Kair, the author of Self Expression Through Physical Violence is living somewhere in the City of the Machine. By diligent use of the phonebook, Gosseyn is able to locate Dr. Kair and reach his home.

Prescott leaves with the stolen car as Gosseyn approaches the house. He realizes he may have a little explaining to do. While homicidal maniacs might certainly need the services of a psychiatrist, he has to explain that his real problem is that his brain glows in the dark. This may not be an easy idea to accept. As it turns out, an explanation isn't necessary. Dr. Kair doesn't believe a null-A conspiracy would resort to an assassination.

Dr. Kair performs a series of tests on Gosseyn. He mumbles and harrumphs significantly. After several hours, he announces he has found the problem. Gosseyn doesn't just have one brain which glows in the dark. He also has an extra brain located at the base of his spine. Gosseyn is very glad that no attempt was made to photograph his second brain. Dr. Kair is extremely enthusiastic about this new discovery. He offers Gosseyn a percentage of his forthcoming bestseller, *Analysis of a Wiseass*. Gosseyn points out there may be a few problems in the immediate future. Of course, Dr. Kair has thought of that. He proposes they escape by means of his roboplane to a remote cabin he happens to own on Lake Superior.

As Gosseyn and Dr. Kair are winging their way to the north, Gosseyn reconsiders the matter. If there is any point to this plot whatsoever, he must save Earth by one means or another. Otherwise, he'll have to look for a steady job. Deactivating the discombobulator is obviously the thing to do. After Dr. Kair has fallen asleep, Gosseyn redirects the autopilot to fly back to the City of the Machine. Gosseyn will use an ingravity parachute to land near the Palace of the Machine while the roboplane reroutes itself back towards Lake Superior. The ingravity parachute represented the purest null-A thinking. Mere Aristotelian physics said such a thing was impossible. Nearing the palace, Gosseyn dons the ingravity parachute. He activates the parachute, steps out of the roboplane, and screams as he plummets 1000 feet to the ground.

Crawling out of a rather large hole in the back lawn of the palace, he reflects that nothing works all the time. Fortunately, he has landed quite close to the conveniently located balcony to Patricia Hardie's apartment. After scaling the balcony and entering the apartment, he knocks Patricia Hardie out cold (for her own protection). He proceeds to locate the discombobulator and cut it out of the wall by use of his atomic Swiss army knife. He then locates packing material and stamps, wraps the discombobulator, and addresses it to the Games Machine. He drops it in the outgoing mail as he is making his escape.

Unfortunately, he doesn't quite make it out of the palace before being confronted by Eldred Crang and a platoon of security guards. Crang explains that they are no longer trying to kill Gosseyn. If they kill Gosseyn II, they will merely activate Gosseyn III, who may be even more of a nuisance than Gosseyn II has been. Crang and the guards throw Gosseyn bodily out of the palace with sincere wishes for a long and healthy life. Gosseyn decides he really should go talk

to the Games Machine.

The Games Machine explains why Gosseyn II must kill himself. Gosseyn II will take a considerable time to activate his extra brain. Gosseyn III will have it active immediately. Without the extra brain, the galactic conspiracy can't be defeated. The machine explains that the invasion is only one small part of the plot. The master plotter is Enro the Red, ruler of the Ugliest Empire. Enro is an evil space emperor in the grand tradition of evil space emperors. He is so evil he uses mustache wax, and you can't get more evil than that. Enro plans the invasion of the solar system as a violation of the treaties of the Galactic League and a way of starting a galactic war. If that doesn't work, he'll have to violate fishing rights in the Crab Nebula. The machine says the forces of the Ugliest Empire have already begun their invasion of Venus. Gosseyn departs with the Games Machine's sincere wishes that he go broke and die soon.

Gosseyn buys a stack of Russian novels and rents a hotel room. Russian novels should be just the thing to provoke a suicidal state of mind. He reads, and he reads. His cortex weeps while his thalamus wails. While a wave of despair is settling over him, he seems to hear the sound of heavy artillery fire outside. Looking out the window, it appears the Games Machine is under full scale attack. He turns on the radio for more information. The Games Machine is broadcasting on all frequencies.

"GOSSEYN, DONT KILL YOURSELF. ALL IS FORGIVEN. YOUR THIRD BODY HAS BEEN DESTROYED. YOU MUST LEARN TO USE YOUR SECOND BRAIN. URK!"

The sound of a massive explosion accompanied the final "URK!" It was all so depressing. In a state of complete despair, Gosseyn passes out on the bed.

As Gosseyn awakes, he realizes he isn't in his hotel room anymore. It also seems he is handcuffed to a bed. "Where am I?" he asks reasonably. "You are a prisoner at the Hong Kong Noodle Company" Patricia Hardie replies. He looks around and notices Patricia Hardie has a rather large bruise on her jaw from their last meeting. She goes on to explain that the Games Machine has been destroyed. However, the discombobulator is still located at the ruins. The discombobulator must be retrieved as evidence against the galactic conspiracy. The government has already declared the remains of the Games Machine to be open for public looting. Time is of the essence. She tosses the handcuff keys on the bed and says he knows what he has to do. An hour and a half later, Gosseyn gets the cuffs off and heads for the Games Machine.

Later, Gosseyn returns to the Hong Kong Noodle Company with the discombobulator. The place seems to be entirely deserted. He had found the discombobulator in a crate labeled for shipment to the Hong Kong Noodle Company. He unpacks the device and begins to study it. By using null-Newtonian thinking, he pokes his

## Gosseyn plays games

finger into the device making contact with one of the glowing tubes with a resounding flash. In the next instant, he is out on a limb of one of the gigantic Venusian trees. He had actually been hoping for Bakersfield. With only a few additional steps, he falls through a knothole, slides down a long shoot, and winds up in Thorson's office.

Thorson isn't entirely surprised by his arrival. He has already concluded that Gosseyn is a first class nuisance. However, he is no longer interested in Gosseyn. He wants to find the Chess Player who has been littering the solar system with all these Gosseyn bodies. Thorson explains that the war is not going well for his side on Venus. His army of 25 million men is being trounced by the use of Refulgent Framistan. Of course, Gosseyn knows that all null-Aers use Refulgent Framistan to brush their teeth and even deodorize their sneakers. However, it does have another use. It can be used for eradicating invading armies.

Thorson is willing to let bygones be bygones. He is even willing to help Gosseyn learn how to use his extra brain in exchange for helping locate the Chess Player. For that purpose, he has brought Dr. Kair from Earth to aid in the training. The training proceeds slowly. On his first attempt, Gosseyn blacks out television reception on half of Venus. For his second effort, he turns Dr. Kair into a large white rabbit. With his third attempt, he discovers the cortico-thalamic pause that refreshes. After that, things go much better.

Within the month, both Thorson's spies and Gosseyn's new powers agree on the location of the Chess Player. The Hong Kong Noodle Company. Thorson surrounds the place with two divisions of soldiers. Gosseyn is to confront the Chess Player first. On entering, the place seems as deserted as before. A telepathic message slams into his brain. "Come down the corridor to your left and open the door." He opens the door and sees an ancient man chortling madly.

"Why, you, you must be....."

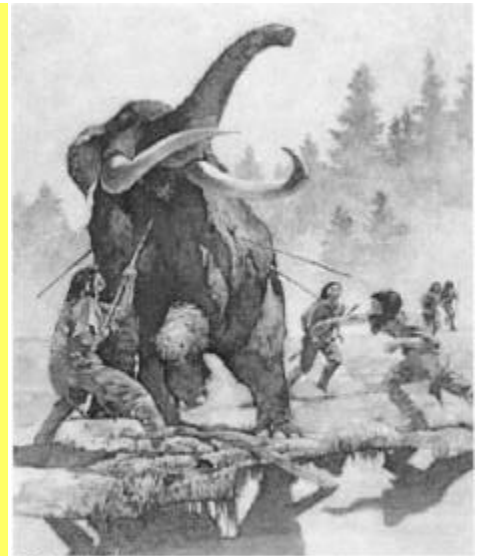
"Of Course, I am Gosseyn Dot Zero, and I am also the Galactic Chess Player. I have been doing this stuff for five hundred years now, and frankly, I'm up for retirement. This latest effort was meant to bring one of you other Gosseyns here to assume control of the family, er, well, maybe clone group business. You're it, my boy."

"But what about the two divisions of soldiers who are currently surrounding the place?"

"Not to worry." Gosseyn Dot Zero snaps his fingers and a vast spatial displacement occurs. "The Hong Kong Noodle Company is now back where it belongs. In Bakersfield."

♣

A (HALF-EMPTY) BRAIN THE SIZE OF A PLANET



©Greg Harlin

by Mike Glyer

Do we really use only a small fraction of our brains? I mean, the human race in general, not just readers of *No Award*. It seems like everybody believes this is true. Albert Brooks' *Defending Your Life* even jokes about a character's feelings of inferiority when the woman he's pursuing raves about another man, "They say he uses 53% of his brain!"

Where did the idea ever come from? What doctors made the original measurements? Did Archimedes measure the water displaced by students' heads before and after the day's lesson? Or was it simply a pragmatic observation by a Neolithic brain surgeon that people survived having their skulls out open, so we obviously didn't need everything that was inside?

And if it's true, why did we evolve such large brains in the first place? Surely three million years ago we had much less to remember.

In *The Naked Ape*, Desmond Morris seemed to think that evolution favored a large human brain because a hunter needed excellent body coordination to run after an antelope and hit it over the head with a thighbone. Except that once our brains became that powerful, we got too smart to need to do it. Which begs the question: Why did it take so long for us to quit chasing antelope and start eating slower-running animals? Or vegetables—I'll bet we've been faster than vegetables for a long time.

If I correctly recall the scientific answer (although this has never happened before), it's that humans enjoy the advantage of being the top predator in the food chain. What difference does that make? Simply ask yourself, is it more efficient to eat grass, or to eat something that's already eaten a lot of grass? Obviously there's a lot more nutrition in a pound of meat than a pound of leaves. However, this may bring us in a roundabout way to understand why our ancestors were running after antelope in the first place. One of the theories advanced to explain the mass extinction in North America about 50,000 years ago of half of the animal species weighing more than 100 pounds is that when Man migrated over the Bering land bridge, he ate all of them. Not on the very first day, of course.

Perhaps, our ancestors had already eaten all the slower-moving animals in Africa and been forced to choose between chasing antelope and eating broccoli at every meal. Then the human race, buff after eons of surviving in the veldt, branched out to other continents and rediscovered the good old days.

The first mammoth hunters in North America must have thought they'd arrived at a permanent picnic, even if it was the Ice Age. Mammoths were big and slow. If it wasn't lunchtime when a hunter came across one, he just wrote down the address and went back later. It would still be in the same zip code.

Ice Age hunters certainly never ran after prey to what it with a thighbone, *ala* Desmond Morris. The hunters were smart enough to make the prey do the running. Hunters set wildfires and frightened animals ran over the nearest cliff. True, the hunters wound up with a lot more meat than they needed for dinner; but remember, this was the Ice Age: nothing ever spoiled.

One of the big questions is whether mammoths were hunted to extinction, or climatic factors were also to blame. In a recent issue of *Archeology*, a skeptical author doubted there were enough humans in North America to have eaten all of the large mammals. He also asked, what happened to the mammoths in areas where there is no evidence of human habitation? Of course, there weren't any census figures then. (And if there were, the other party in Congress would have objected to them.)

Maybe, someday, human brains will be big enough to answer that question. In the meantime, I'm convinced they didn't achieve their existing size running after antelope.

Fortunately, all knowledge is contained in fanzines, so I recently discovered another theoretical explanation of the evolutionary growth of the human brain. Mark Leeper wrote an editorial in *MT Void* (how appropriate) discussing the ideas of Lewis Wolpert, a Professor of Biology as Applied to Medicine at University College, London.

Wolpert told the *London Telegraph* that human development of language and belief in cause and effect paved the way to tool-making and this, together with social interaction, led to an increase in size and complexity of the human brain.

Yes, language lifted us above the other primates. Without words we could only read each other's body language - - "He's twitching, he must be looking at - food!" It was hard to keep a secret. During the Stone Age everybody knew where to find the SFWA Suite.

Wolpert also theorizes that as soon as we developed these big brains we started inventing false knowledge to fill them, yet this was somehow also a survival trait. "The primary aim of human judgment is not accuracy but the avoidance of paralysing uncertainty . . . This gave our ancestors two advantages that enabled them to adapt to the tough environment: uncertainty, and thus anxiety, was removed, and there was an animate agent that might be appeased by a dance, offering, or sacrifice. Might it not be that those with this disposition of thought survived better than those who did not have such beliefs? If that was the case, any genes lined with a propensity to believe would come to dominate in future generations."

As Leeper summarizes Wolpert's wonderful reasoning: "It is not just that we frequently come up with the right causes, but ever that we frequently come up with the wrong causes. It is frequently better to have a bad theory than no theory at all."

I can't say that's been my experience with *File 770*. I'm lucky to be alive after some of the stuff I printed back in the 1980s.

What Wolpert is really aiming to do, however, is explain the marginally better medical statistics for people of faith while dogmatically dismissing their explanation, Wolpert suggest natural selection is at work. A relentless logic forces me to conclude that if strongly believing a bad theory is a survival trait, then the OJ jury was composed of immortals. (Okay, I admit Wolpert was talking about cosmology, not jurisprudence.)

In the end, there is no reliable answer to why human beings evolved such a large brain and use so little of it. Further study of similar problems is required. For example, Windows ME takes up a huge amount of space, and nobody can explain what that's used for, either.

And I'm still fascinated by the way the SETI data analysis project has organized people to use spare computer time to process packets of coded signals. The result is the biggest computer on earth. You understand, of course, that's another case of scientists copying fandom without giving us credit. We were the first to realize that although no single fan had the brain-power of John W. Campbell, if you gathered a lot of our smaller brains together - - well, we still wouldn't be as smart as John W. Campbell. In fact, we wouldn't be smart enough to keep from running Worldcons.

What was I talking about?

Oh, having a big brain, that's right.

⌘



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by  
**Joseph T.  
 Major**

*Nova Express* is a fanzine. Why is it a fanzine? Because the editor says so.

The matter of *Locus* is a bagatelle, not to be considered.

To be fair, *Nova Express* did start out just like your ordinary fanzine, a joint money-losing venture by some old friends from school. (I heard them say so, at LoneStarCon.) It has most of the appurtenances of a fanzine. One does wonder about the propriety of their famous self-campaign for the Best Fanzine Hugo, mostly because in fannish circles such things are simply Not Done. Which does reflect a certain style-deafness in inter-fannish relations.

But enough of the struggle for awards . . . what are we looking at? It takes an occasional *Fanzine Fanatique* for us to realize that the era of the crudzine, in the age of word processing and desktop publishing, is mostly gone. Nowadays the aspiring faned can produce a clean, decent-looking fanzine with the same effort that it takes to produce a poorly-done, ugly one. While appearance is still to be noted, it is more of as a given, rather than as a result of intense effort. This said, *Nova Express* does come in a nice "package," of crisp typography on sharp white paper, without the extravagance of slick paper.

The cover for this issue is perhaps suitably fannishly weird, showing a strange, electrified being sitting before a cheery Christmas fire, with three ghosts hung over the mantel. While odd, it is definite and to be preferred to abstract blobs.

However, this weird picture is fitted in among abundant cover blurbs, to the point where the zine hardly needs a table of contents. The would-be buyer will certainly be aware of the contents by examining this cover. There is a certain distraction.

But, jumping into the material, the reader is hit with an interruption. That is, this issue's interview, which passes under the title of "Gaiman, Interrupted". *Nova Express* is horror shock a \*ghasp\*ser-

con fanzine. They publish lists, interviews, and book reviews. How low can you get?

Well, maybe not, inasmuch as Neil Gaiman is best known for his comics work (*Sandman*), which makes it okay to interview him.

The interviews in *Nova Express* tend to be free-flowing, and for some reason there is almost always food involved. Usually the interview is at a restaurant, which entails a reference to "the moo goo gai pan arrived at this point" as an aside, but not in this instance, albeit it was interrupted when Gaiman was taken out to dinner. I would have trouble continuing my train of thought under such circumstances.

Nevertheless, Gaiman and Lawrence Person discuss such matters as writing, the economics of publishing, the problems of a busy con schedule, and so on. Gaiman turns out to have a broad range of interests. Even though in the interview he disclaims any intent to attend any cons in 2001, some future con might well gain by inviting him. Anyone who is so aware of the problems of fame now and obscurity later can be appreciated on a broad range of fields, and is unlikely to lose 90% of the audience with discussions of how that appearance by Peter Parker in that one panel of that *X-Men* comic raises its price by \$7.50.

Nevertheless, there is a high comics presence in this issue. Paul T. Riddell discusses their "Making Margaritas With the Titanic: An Overview of the Implosion of Comics Distribution." Riddell has had, I would say, a checkered understanding of the field, on the basis admittedly of reading his columns in *Tangent*; as when he called for a writers' strike until all writers got paid as much as Stephen King, or when he discussed the advisability of a writers-only professional convention. A fanwriter who touts "The healing power of obnoxiousness" does tend to give the impression of a professional juvenile, a permanent member of the Cosmic Circle.

From reading this article, however, I get the impression that Riddell had merely stepped outside his *métier*. He discusses the problems of the "implosion of comics distribution" with depth and without undue triviality. Fred Pohl has mentioned several times the "implosion of magazine distribution" that happened in the fifties, when some sharp traders killed the pig to sell the squeal - the American News Company, the largest magazine distributor, was bought and liquidated to realize the value of its land holdings, leaving most magazine publishers without much of an option in the distribution area. Whether this was as solely conclusive as Pohl makes it out to be is questionable, but it was a significant contribution to the decline in the magazine market of the fifties. Riddell points out the contraction in the comics distribution market, caused by the poorly thought out expansion of Marvel, which in turn stemmed (in part) from the comics boom of the early nineties. "Marvel . . . had just purchased trading card manufacturers Fleer for \$250 million and SkyBox for \$150 million, and SkyBox's attempt to enter the Pog market fizzled as a multitude of companies flooded a market that simply did not exist. Marvel subsequently sold Fleer/SkyBox for \$26 million in 1999. "[Riddell, *Nova Express*, "Making Margaritas With the T-

tanic”, page 11] Ouch! (If you don’t remember Pogs, they were replicas of the inner seals of milk bottles; one of those kewl fads that evaporates quicker than it takes to publicize them.)

Riddell provides here a serious, dispassionate analysis of a subculture that has many of the same concerns as ours - which should not be surprising, given the relationship.

Did I mention lists? They sure did. The next section, “Listomania!” is given over to (big surprise) lists. This ranges from the deadly serious, the editor-person’s “Modern Speculative Fiction: A Novel Master Reading List” to what seems, thanks to space constraints, a seriously restricted description, Gordon van Gelder’s humorous “Six Points When It’s Okay to Stop Reading a Submission”. (That is, it seemed to be limited to the writings of the esteemed editor/owner.)

The Person list is made by compiling; putting together award winners and the listings of “hundred best” works. Anyone who read all these works would have a thorough understanding of postwar SF, simply (if nothing else) because it contains so much representative work. However, doing so would take a while (there are almost three full pages of listings), not to mention the problems of availability. (For example, I have never heard of the first book listed, Peter Ackroyd’s *Hawksmoor*.)

Other of these lists are useful in special contexts. For example, someone really ought to take Jack McDevitt’s “A Golden Dozen: Twelve Stories to Demonstrate to Reluctant Seniors What They’re Missing” and create an anthology to be used, as McDevitt himself has used the stories, to get students to read in general (and, we hope, read SF).

The making of lists has been a sign of a humorless draining of the enjoyment of reading. It needn’t be, and this collection shows it.

One criticism leveled against *Nova Express* has been its lack of feedback. Oddly enough, one such criticism is in the “Viewer Mail,” by the notorious faned going by “E. B. Frohvet.” The column does seem rather pitched towards the insider, with locs from Richard E. Geis, Jack Williamson, Iain Banks, and Cheryl Morgan, along with one David Gamett, who plugs his forthcoming book *Bikini Planet* with humorous-verging-on-tedious exaggeration.

If not the bulk, at the very least a serious component of *Nova Express* is the book reviews. (Pause for repeated \*ghasp\*.) This section leaves me in a mild predicament. The reviews are very well done; they analyze the meanings, cite the backgrounds, discuss the contexts, and generally serve to communicate,

inform, and impress. My problem is that I don’t share their tastes; the only book reviewed in this issue that I have even begun to read, Mary Gentle’s *Ash: A Secret History*, did not impress me at all, unlike the glowing praise lavished on it by reviewer Nick Gevers.

The first two reviews are in particular worthy of imitation of methodology. David Davisson discusses “Achieving Saucer Wisdom: Rudy Rucker Surfs Transrealism to a New Peak.” Someone who can compare Rucker to Henry Kuttner and Robert Sheckley is clearly not a shallow cyberpunk who thinks that like, all that other stuff is, like, so five minutes ago? Similarly, Nick Gevers looks into “Exotic Sarcasm And the War Against Death: Brian Stableford’s Future History Series” and finds how someone else might well lay a series of works against a common background.

Frohvet’s letter cited several difficulties he had with *Nova Express*, including the isolation of the contributors and the “dryness” of the writing. In response, Person cited contributors like David Langford, Bruce Gillespie, Brad Foster, Alexis Gilliland, and Teddy Harvia. Well, the last three contributed art. The bulk of the contributors are more academic in tone and context. It might be fairer to say that *Nova Express* is the reviewzine of its own context, and not the one that people like “Frohvet”, ye Ed., and I operate in.

Nevertheless, it is, for all its fanciness, operating in a “fanzine context.” Publishing lists of “Ten Underappreciated SF Novels” that include *The Long Loud Silence* and praise Tucker for his pro writing is not the act of a self-consciously Serious Constructive Academic. *Nova Express* occupies a useful niche in the fanzine field, albeit one that could be improved by some more lightening up. Let’s have more meals in the interviews.

ℓ



## Probably Something



### PROBABLY SOMETHING

#### BUT NOT

CREATING A "DIAMOND LANE" IN MENTAL HOSPITAL CORRIDORS FOR PATIENTS WITH THREE OR MORE PERSONALITIES. (APA-L #572)

### PROBABLY SOMETHING

#### BUT NOT

ELIMINATING LONG WAITS AT FREEWAY ON-RAMPS DURING RUSH HOUR BY TAKING RESERVATIONS AHEAD OF TIME.

If it's good enough for restaurants it ought to be good enough for freeways, except you probably wouldn't want to have people waiting in the bar for their space to become available. (APA-L #574)

### PROBABLY SOMETHING

#### BUT NOT

WONDERING WHY, IF THE BAHAMA ISLANDS ARE AT LEAST PARTLY WITHIN THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE, THEY HAVEN'T VANISHED.

### PROBABLY SOMETHING

#### BUT NOT

INCORPORATING THIOTIMOLINE MOLECULES INTO VACCINES SO YOU CAN BE VACCINATED AFTER YOU GET SICK AND IT WILL PREVENT THE DISEASE.

For those who don't know, thiotimoline is a substance in several science fiction stories that has the property that one atom of the molecule is projecting out into the time dimension so that the stuff dissolves BEFORE you add water. (APA-L #193)

Part Three  
(and last)  
of this selection from  
Thom Digby's  
APA contributions

### PROBABLY SOMETHING

#### BUT NOT

"THE APA TIME FORGOT." "FANTASTIC APA." "LOGAN'S APA.." "VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE APA." "ZARDAPA." ETC. ETC.

". . . and they go off to this primitive island somewhere and bring back this giant apa that gets out of control . . . climactic scene of the giant apa being collated at the top of the Empire State Building until it's finally broken up by helicopters flying over and blowing all the loose zine pages away with their prop wash. Very touching closing scene of all those pages blowing away into the sunset. (LASFAPA #1).

### PROBABLY SOMETHING

#### BUT NOT

WONDERING IF A CAT FED ALL ITS LIFE ON TABLE SCRAPS WOULD BE ENTITLED TO WEAR THE LABEL "MADE FROM RECYCLED MATERIALS." (LASFAPA #31)

### PROBABLY SOMETHING

#### BUT NOT

TATOOING GOD'S NAME ON PEOPLE AS A "FAMOUS DESIGNER." (APA-L #809)

### PROBABLY SOMETHING

#### BUT NOT

POLAROID PIZZA.

You know — you have something that looks like one of those new Polaroid cameras that automatically ejects the picture, except bigger like it was for record album covers or something that size, and when you push the button out slides a tray with a pizza on it. The ingredients on the pizza are of course determined by the scene before the lens, but probably not in any simple or easily predicted manner (you may get a vague feeling that billboards in the upper right portion of the picture tend to be correlated with too much onions while overcast skies tend to reduce the probability of mushrooms, but can really prove it consistently . . . You just have to set up something that feels right in the viewfinder, push the button, and hope for the best. But portraits of your friends usually seem to come out fairly tasty. (LASFAPA #45)

### PROBABLY SOMETHING

#### BUT NOT

SELLING BOOZE IN BOTTLES WITH DRUNK-PROOF

**CAPS.**

Which might be done as an extension of the technology of childproof closures on medicine, etc. And in countries that don't allow drinking they can make the cap everybody-proof.

**PROBABLY SOMETHING**

**BUT NOT**

AN OREO-COOKIE REGISTRY THAT LETS PEOPLE WHO ONLY LIKE THE OUTER COOKIE PART MEET UP WITH THOSE WHO PREFER THE FILLING.

So if you've been eating only the cookie part and either wastefully throwing away the filling or guiltily saving it even though you know you'll never eat it (while perhaps nursing a faint hope of someday making into the Guinness Book of Records or maybe Believe It or Not some years from now after you've accumulated several drums of filling) you would, at perhaps a small registry fee plus shipping charges if no one of the opposite persuasion lived nearby, have your problem solved. (LASFAPA #64)

**PROBABLY SOMETHING**

**BUT NOT**

A DRACULA DOLL WITH REAL FANGS THAT CAN SUCK "BLOOD" (THAT YOU BUY REFILLS OF IN THE TOY STORE FOR RIDICULOUS PRICES) FROM A "VICTIM" DOLL (SOLD SEPARATELY). (APA-L #821)

**PROBABLY SOMETHING**

**BUT NOT**

HEARING THE PHRASE "VACUUM TUBE" AND THINKING IT MEANS A TUBE OF VACUUM LIKE A TUBE OF TOOTHPASTE AND TRYING TO MAKE UP SOME USE FOR AROUND THE LAB BUT FINDING THEY ALWAYS ARRIVE ALREADY SQUEEZED.

And they're empty, too. (APA-L #988)

**PROBABLY SOMETHING**

**BUT NOT**

LETTING PEOPLE CARRY THE TORCH BACK TO GREECE AFTER THE OLYMPICS FOR HALF PRICE. (APA-L #1004).

**PROBABLY SOMETHING**

**BUT NOT**

A TYPEWRITER KEYBOARD THAT REARRANGES ITSELF EVERY NOW AND THEN SO TOUCH TYPISTS DON'T HAVE AN UNFAIR ADVANTAGE OVER HUNT-AND-PECK TYPISTS. (MINNEAPA #101)

**PROBABLY SOMETHING**

**BUT NOT**

PUTTING AIR BAGS ON PEOPLE INSTEAD OF IN CARS.

Not only would this protect passengers and drivers in cars in case of accidents, but with suitable sensing devices (perhaps an accelerometer connected to a thiotimeline module to trip the thing just before any violent motion) pedestrians could be protected while crossing the street, etc.

And even further, if the sensors were biological/psionic or something, the bags could be deployed in case of other kinds of distress, like falling from heights, drowning (the bag shouldn't deflate quickly for this type of use, in contrast to the kind in cars), rape or mugging, etc.

Of course, there may be such a thing as too much of a good thing.

"Son, didn't I tell you last time that if I caught you doing that again I'd spank the living daylight out of . . . " FOOMP!

"Good morning. We are God's agents, going around door to door bright and early every Sunday to ask you to join the Church of . . . " FOOMP! (APA-L #653)

**PROBABLY SOMETHING**

**BUT NOT**

WONDERING IF LUNATIC FRINGE IS WHAT THEY USE TO DECORATE STRAIGHT JACKETS. (MINNEAPA #109)

ml





*Part Three: The Outlander's Tale (continued some more)*

Femmfans were still few in number when the third Westercon was put on by the Outlander Society in July of 1950, so when an attractive young lady named Mari Wolf who worked in wind tunnel design showed up at the convention she was welcomed by one and all. It was hardly necessary for the Outlanders to take a vote to invite her to join as she certainly qualified geographically (she lived with her parents in Laguna Beach) and was pleasant combination of brains and beauty.

Despite the fact that I didn't have a car and had to hitch rides or take a bus we began dating. She did drive so sometimes she would spend the weekend at my home but most of the time, I would travel down to Laguna Beach to visit her and her parents. Her father seemed to like me but I wasn't sure about her mother, who was politely friendly but somehow I got the impression that she thought Mari could do better.

Not that I really cared about what her parents thought. Mari was also interested in writing (we even started a story together) and we danced well together. I liked jitterbugging and she had been an Arthur Murray dance instructor and was able to follow my free-form type of jass dancing.

But it was to be a short-lived romance. The 1950 WorldCon was in Portland, Oregon that fall. Mari, Rick and Stan attended it but I couldn't afford to go. Mari met Roger Phillips Graham at the convention and it was love at first whatever.

I only knew Rog as one of Ray Palmer's stable of writers and the author of a funny article in one of Burb's FAPAZines. The article was entitled "Jesus Christ, An Autobiography" and was based on a

telegram Rog had received from an editor stating: "Jesus Christ, I wish I could write like you!" Although I enjoyed the article, I experienced a short period of hatred for Rog. But I got over it, aided by friends like Dottie Faulkner who said that although Mari was certainly a nice girl, I was better off not marrying a pampered girl with rich, snooty parents. Well, perhaps her father was rich, and her mother snooty, but I never thought of Mari as pampered, and I doubted that Rog was any better off than I was financially. Anyway, I had the impression that Mari was supporting herself and that her job paid more than either mine or Rog's.

After they were married, Rog became an "Outlaw" which was what the Outlanders dubbed people who married into the group. And we became good friends. Every time I see an early photo of Walter Matthau I am reminded of Rog Graham except that Rog was better looking. He was also a big man and his huge hands reminded me of Renny's door-busting fists in the Doc Savage novels. I wondered how many typewriters he wore out from pounding them with those hands but perhaps he had a delicate touch despite the fact that they were strong enough to crush beer cans--the old fashioned steel cans, not the aluminum ones we have today.

Rog started his writing career by telling Palmer that he could write better stories than the ones then being published in AMAZING STORIES. Palmer challenged him to do so and Rog continued to write for AMAZING even after moving to Los Angeles. But he also wrote for other markets and one or more of his mystery short stories wound up in Anthony Boucher "Best of the Year" anthologies.

Rog told us of how Palmer used to phone him and say something like "I need five-thousand words right away to fill out an issue before press time!" Rog would get in his car and drive around, plotting a story in his head. When he had something to start with he would drive home and start pounding the typer. What he really hated was when he had to wind up the story within the word limitations required and try not to leave too many loose ends. No time for rewriting, of course. But it was a living.

Eventually, Mari and Rog broke up, I know not why. Mari gafiated and remarried, perhaps more than once.

Rog moved to the Bay Area where he met and married Honey Wood who was quite active in local fandom there. Eventually she would be dubbed an "Outlaw" or perhaps "Honorary Outlaw" when both she and Rog provided so much help with the Solacon in 1958.

During the time that I was dating Mari, the Hersheys split up. Freddie presently married Hal Curtis, a long time LASFS member, and they moved out of the area, winding up in Hawaii.

When Mari announced her engagement to Rog, Alan and I got together at his home in Bell one evening, drank gallons of beer, and solved all the problems of the world. I sure wish I could remember those solutions as I am sure the world would be a better place than it

## Len first meets June but marries Anna

is now.

The Hersheys had helped develop my interest in opera and ballet. One of the biggest thrills of my life was hearing Leonard Warren sing "Rigoletto" at the Los Angeles Shrine Auditorium. I preferred Verdi to Wagner, any night at the opera.

While I was still going with Mari, Alan said he was ordering a ticket for Swan Lake (I forget the company) and would I like to order a couple of tickets for Mari and me. Damn betcha. But when the ballet date was approaching we were no longer an item and so I was wondering whom I could find to go with us. (Alan was doing the driving, of course.)

I must have wondered aloud at a LASFS meeting because Wendy Ackerman suggested that I ask the new girl in the club if she was interested. The new girl was Anna Sinclair, a longhaired blonde recently moved to LA from Arizona. She was working as a housekeeper for a doctor and his family in the Hollywood area. We had barely met but I was bold enough to ask her if she was interested in ballet.

"What does it get me if I am?" was her reply. Perhaps that should have been a warning signal but I took it as a kind of cute smart-ass reply. Anyway, I was on the rebound and easily caught.

A lot seemed to be happening during that period. The LASFS had established an annual banquet (called Fanquet, what else?) to honor the new author who had sold the most words during the previous year. Dave Lesperance and I had tied for first place in 1950 so we both were Guests of Honor at the third Fanquet in 1951 --which was also a wedding banquet for Anna and me. We had been married that afternoon and once again Alan was our chauffeur that evening.

As I recall, Ev Evans was honored at the first New Writers Banquet, and Louise Leipiar at the second one. Louise wrote under the name of L. Major Reynolds but the best thing she ever did for LASFS (and eventually for me) was introduce her daughter June to the club.

June married Eph Konigsberg, one of the club's main book reviewers, who would eventually establish Konigsberg Instruments, a company that specializes in miniature medical implants.

Yes, June and I met at LASFS back in the Forties and got married to two different persons. More than a decade would pass before we were free to date and to marry.

Meanwhile, back at that third Fanquet, our fellow LASFSIANS and Outlanders gave Anna and me wedding gifts in the form of several hardcover sf books. The

winning new authors were expected to speak. Dave Lesperance alphabetically went first and gave quite a serious talk. He asked the audience what they wanted from a writer, what did they really expect. My talk was sort of serious but leavened somewhat with humor (at least the audience laughed in the right places). I even got a "Hear! Hear!" from Bradbury when I made some disparaging remark about television. Naturally, I also referred to my all-time favorite book, Gulliver's Travels. All in all, it was a fine first wedding night.

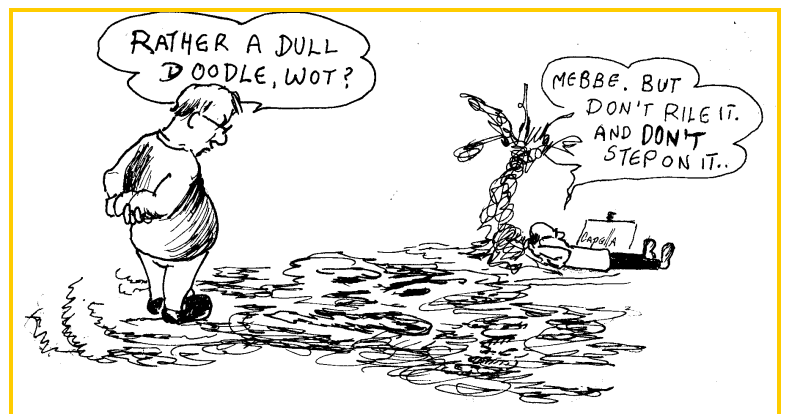
Alan Hershey would remarry soon, having met Mary Gibson, a Scot lass, who had come to the LASFS with her father, Dr. Gibson, a good friend of Forry's. Alan even lived for a while in Scotland, going to the University of Edinburgh, and courting Mary. Both of them are gone now but theirs was a long and happy union with many fine offspring.

The Outlanders seemed on the verge of breaking up what with the loss of Freddie and Alan but they weren't quite ready to disband yet. Anna was our new "Outlaw" and a teenager named Alvin Taylor, who lived in South Gate, joined us.

He and I had something in common, as we both loved jass as well as swing. Alvin was a kind of a smart assed kid but that didn't bother us. He wanted to be a stand-up comic and I think actually worked in a club for a while. Some years ago, I heard from someone who said that he was working in his parents' clothing store.

When we knew him, he went on a hiking tour in Europe. He came back with stories of meeting Papa Hemingway and how the famous author was in poor health, "bleeding from every body orifice." This was quite a few years before Hemingway committed suicide.

My niece Shirley, now a teenager herself, had joined our group. I remember that both John van Couvering and Avin Taylor were interested in dating her. She wasn't all that interested in science fiction but she did like reading and probably found the lads interesting if not exactly her type.



## Len's cat and dog do interesting things

When Shirley was still in grade school, she used to help me publish my FAPazine, MOONSHINE. Older FAPA members may remember an issue where a die cut silver colored corrugated paper moon was pasted on a black construction paper cover which had the zine's title hand stenciled (I think in white ink) on the black back ground. It was a lot of work but she seemed to enjoy it. (The die-cut moons were scrap from a job in the paper box factory. I managed to salvage enough to use on the covers.)

Alvin Taylor once sold me a gimmick for a story. It wasn't a plot but a piece of business to use in a vampire story. He said if I wanted to use it, I could have it for a penny. So, I gave him one red cent and came up with a plot to go with the gimmick. What I wrote was a satire of vampire stories, which I called "Father's Vampire."

Writing satires or burlesques was what I liked to do best.

I should have by-lined it "by Len Moffatt, based on an idea by Alvin Taylor" but that seemed too unwieldy and besides if he had not sold me the gimmick there wouldn't have been a story. So, I gave him equal by-line credit and when Forry sold it to WEIRD TALES I split the payment with Alvin. This made Anna angry.

She was quite serious when she argued that I owned the gimmick because I had paid Alvin's asking price. That Alvin didn't deserve the shared by-line, and certainly did not deserve any of the payment from WT as I did all of the plotting and writing, etc., etc., etc.

"Father's Vampire" was translated into Spanish and reprinted in LOS CUENTOS FANTASTICOS, a Mexican fantasy magazine as "El Vampiro de Papa"--but there was no money to argue about there as it paid not one centavo. Nearly five decades later the story was reprinted in a Marty Greenberg anthology, *100 Creepy Little Creature Stories*.

That Mexican promag pirated another one of my stories from Don Day's FANSCIENT, which was as much a "little magazine" as a fanzine in that it used fiction and artwork. I remember the story's title was "Early Butchering" (yet another post-Atomic War tale, of which there were so many back then) because I received a letter

from Redd Boggs telling me how much he liked it. When it was reprinted in LOS CUENTOS FANTASTICOS they used Lou Goldstone's b&w drawing from the cover of the 1946 Worldcon (Pacifcon) program book. It was a woman's head, half skull, half flesh, and was a good symbolic illo for the story. I don't suppose Lou got paid either.

A Mexican friend at work, after reading both the English and Spanish versions of my stories, assured me that the Mexican promag had done a good job of translating without changing anything so I'll give them credit for that.

Eventually Anna tried her hand at writing. She didn't type so I had to type anything she wrote. Fortunately, her handwriting was a lot easier to read than mine. She wrote a short-short story, more of a vignette, to which I added a last line, to give it "closure" so to speak. Forry sold it to one of the short-lived promags of that era--I forget which one. I thought it an interesting mood piece that could have been part of a longer story but she never wrote anything else except for fanzines. Later she would get into painting with watercolors.

My mother moved in with my sister and brother-in-law and eventually got a place of her own. Our dog Rascal, after living seventeen pampered years, died of too many things wrong with him.

Some time before that we were given a kitten that turned out to be a female. I named her Bynderly Bubah, which was the name of a character in a children's story I was trying to write. Rascal treated the kitten as an old man would treat a pesky child. He was a Spitz-Collie with a furry body and lion-like mane. Bubah liked to jump on the latter and hang on with her claws, which never actually touched his flesh. He would stand up and stalk away shaking her off. Sometimes she managed to hang on for quite a while as her claws got tangled in his mane.

When Bubah got older, Rascal suddenly realized that she was female. So, he would try to mount her and it was her turn to shake him off, in a manner of speaking. He was actually never able to touch her but he sure as hell tried. As they both grew older, they managed to live in peaceful co-existence and I think she may have missed him somewhat after he was gone.



What has this to do with Los Angeles area fandom? Not much, but I'm vamping until I have the time and energy to dig out some old fanzines and apa mailings to help refresh my memory. Until then, this old Outlander's tale will have

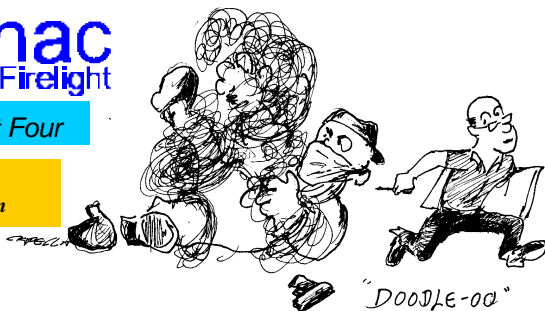
*to be continued...*

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# Fanac by the Firelight

## Part Four

by  
Ed Green



*In case you have forgotten, the Los Angeles Riot is going on during this behind-the-scenes view of what the California National Guard was doing during the rioting.*

In a time where every day brings something so totally odd that I end up standing and gawking, this new morning brings perhaps the weirdest damn sight I'm going to see this entire deployment.

All the Personnel Officers and NCOs have assembled for a meeting headed by one of the Division Generals. In keeping with true Army tradition, we're all about a half an hour early and killing time by comparing war stories. Now sit back and picture it with me. Men and women, Black Hispanic, Asian, and White. Some into their 60s. Some barely old enough to drink. Dressed in cammies. Wearing all the gear of modern warfare: gas masks, Kevlar vests, M-16 rifles, and .45 caliber pistols.

And fully half of them are drinking coffee from the friggin' Starbucks that's located just outside the main gate of the former Naval Air Base the Guard had been using for years. Shaking my head, I grab a cup of hot water and toss in a bag of some unspeakable brand of tea. As I walk through the mob, I see a hand raised and hear my last name being called. It's the female Major S1 officer from my immediate higher HQ, Donna Small. She looks lost in all the crap we're all carrying and her eyes are rimmed in dark circles. Sleep isn't in any better supply at higher echelon.

When I get over to her, I also see Julie Smith, Small's NCO. She's shorter than Small, thinner, and has a heavy Spanish accent to her voice. Julie and I have butted heads time after time over the years; but, thankfully, we both always manage to leave those fights behind us. For those who may think women aren't capable of doing a soldier's work, I would refer them to those two. They are professionals, quite able to do whatever needs to be done in the paperwork jungle, and also more than competent in the violent side of the business.

I lost a case of Pepsi to Julie the last time we both qualified with the M-16 rifle. Despite my whining about the rifle not being my favorite weapon, she was just plain a damn good shot. She looks even more tired than Small, which is a bad indication of what's going on in her playpen.

We talk about things in general, with Small spending a few minutes telling me that I've got to stop sending in the strength reports late. I just nod my head, with no intention of trying to explain the daily war of dragging the strength figures from my units.

"So, what's this meeting about?" I look around, hoping for the General to walk in, or a sniper to open up, anything to change the subject. It's too early to get into a fight.

Small shakes her head. "No clue. I don't even know who the ADCS is." A 2-star General commands Army Divisions, but he is assisted by a couple of 1-star generals. One is responsible for the fighting units, the ADCM (Assistant Division Commander - Maneuver). The other handles all the support folks, having pretty much the same title as his peer, with the word "Support" used instead of "Maneuver." Our general is someone who just came into the 40<sup>th</sup>, on some kind of a swap with a unit from New York State.

We talk some more about section manning across the Artillery units, and trade horror stories about the screw-ups. Among the contenders for the best was the Private who, during the third day out, got a visit from some LAPD detectives. Seems that a video camera in one of the stores that got torched early in the mess caught the very same Private (wearing his gang colors) tossing in a homemade firebomb. Half the problem was what, exactly, to do with the young boy. Since he was now a Federal troop, he was subject to the military code of justice. But the Los Angeles cops really felt that they should have the bust. There was a brief shouting match in the office of the kid's Commander about who actually took him into custody. As this went on, the soldier just sat in a chair, not sure which side to root for.

The other story was the one serious shooting that the Guard got involved with. The thumbnail version, someone driving after curfew tried to run his car over two female soldiers. Although he missed the first time, he spun his Mustang around and tried again. Neither soldier was about to risk luck a second time and fired three rounds each at the car. One round punched through the driver's door, impacted on the outside of his left thigh, and finally exited out the passenger's door. And, in the immortal words of SFC Julie Smith, "Along with a good chunk of his balls!"

Before I could choke on my tea, or start to laugh, a voice calls out, "Attention!"

From the back of the room we hear another voice shout, "Take your seats!" It's a loud New York accent. Brigade General Pat Nappi had arrived.

As I watched him march to the front of the hall, I got two very simple impressions. First, this was a real hard charging General. The second was that this was a guy I could never work for. He was the type who ate people up.

This turned out to not be a meeting, but a series of orders and directives. Almost all of it was the boring, routine administrative stuff that never gets mentioned (and for a good reason) in the

## Ed Green becomes a 5% man



movies. At the end of the meeting, the General had one last instruction for us that was not normal.

"Effective 0600 today, no unit is authorized more than 5% of its on the ground strength for service and support. This comes directly from the Commander, Joint Task Force LA." I pulled my head up from the notepad I was scribbling notes on to look at him. There was silence in the hall. Finally, one senior NVO from an infantry unit stood up and spoke.

"Sir . . ." He started.

The General looked at him and spoke.

"It is simple math, Sergeant. If you have 100 people on duty, only 5 may be used to support them. That means 95 on the streets, performing missions. Do you understand basic math, Sergeant?"

"Yes Sir."

"Then sit down please."

As he lowered himself, the rest of us looked at each other. The average unit needs between 15 and 20% of its strength to support it. Someone has to cook, fix the trucks, maintain the weapons, account for the bullets and patch up someone who gets hurt. If you push it, you might make do with 10%. For a short period of time. But that's deferred maintenance. Now what the Hell was this all about?

No one else wanted to ask that question. so the General walked out. We stood at attention as he left. People started to jump on the phones in the back of the room to call their units. So was I, until Smith caught me and told me to head back to my armory. She and Small would call all the Commanders from their cell phone and give them a heads up. That would save me time, and the stomach-ache of trying to explain to my Commander orders I didn't understand.

The drive back was quick. Traffic on the freeways was, except

for the official vehicles, light. I counted maybe two dozen cars. And over 100 police and military vehicles.

It was quiet at the armory as I pulled in. The sentry waved me in, and I saw a small convoy of 4 vehicles heading out. The Battalion Supply Sergeant headed it. The morning's chow and supply run. Among the vehicles was a Humvee with the bumper ID HQ7. That was "my" Humvee. Well, it was the section's. But, I was the one who usually ended up running around in it; and, as the Guard was always short of vehicles, I got protective about it. It was getting a fan belt replaced last night, or I would have driven it to the meeting.

Minutes later, I'm talking with Major Hood, giving him all I can about the meeting. He stared at me when I gave him the "guidance" about the manning levels.

"That was an order? Not a suggestion, or recommendation?"

"An order. Delivered by one very hard ass General."

"Sounds like it. I assume you've been thinking about how to shuffle the troops around to do this?"

"Nope. This is a Commander's call. I just get to fight with them over the strength numbers. I have been giving some thought about how we might . . ."

The Major's door flew open and a Specialist stuck his head in. "Gunny is on the line for one of you, Sir! it's an emergency!"

Gunny was the Battalion Supply Sergeant. Hood picked up the phone and listened. He then asked for an address and wrote it down. As he hung up, he told me, "Gunny's had a vehicle in an accident. He's got men down. You still got a vehicle?" I nodded. "get your crap and meet me outside."

In less than two minutes, I'm behind the wheel of the Hummer, spinning out of the parking lot. I've got the Major, one medic, and an address. The traffic on the streets is steady, and I wish we had a police light bar and siren. We didn't, so I slapped on the flashers and drove as fast as I could. Hood might have said something about slowing down at one point, but I was too busy driving to pay any attention to him. In less than 5 minutes, we've arrived at the accident scene. There's a civilian station wagon with a crumpled engine block in the intersection, and a Humvee on the sidewalk, facing south when it should be facing north. As I pull up behind it, the Medic is jumping out and running. I can see one man on the ground.

Hood and I rush over and see Gunny. A short, stocky black man, we can tell he's ready to kill someone.

## Ed Green starts World War III, with the media as the enemy

“Damn fool just blew through the intersection. Tboned the Hummer. It ejected one of the soldiers. He seems to be alright, but we’ve got him down and resting until the ambulance arrives.”

“Where the fuck is it?” asked Hood.

“I don’t know. I called almost 10 minutes ago.”

I hustle over to the soldier. I can’t do anything the Medic couldn’t do, but at least I can get the poor guy’s name and see if there’s someone I can call for him. And then, the news van arrives.

One of the local network’s vans pulled right up next to the Hummer, and the crew deploys out of the thing with the kind of snap and speed I’ve been seeing my fellow soldiers have. The cameraman pulls the video unit up on his shoulder and the light comes on. His lens starts to swing to the man on the ground.

I move between it and the soldier. Raising my hand, I tell them that they can’t film the soldier. The cameraman starts to move around me. I follow him, telling him that we’d rather not have the soldier filmed until he’s treated and we can notify his family. We seem to be dancing at the moment with each other. He’s intent on getting the shot, and I’m damn well not going to let some poor mother or wife find out, on the next news break, that their loved one got racked up.

Maybe diplomacy should have been the first thing in my mind. Maybe I should have let him film the scene and then talk with him about it. Maybe I should have just stepped back and let everyone calm down.

And, maybe, the cameraman shouldn’t have slammed his hand against the side of my helmet as he was going in for another angle.

But I didn’t, and he did. Our discussion became more heated at that moment, with a great deal of hand motions. I believe his hand motion against my stomach came first. I wasn’t sure. I was more intent on busting his chin with my hand motion. We were about ready to move onto round two when my troops and his fellow news people jumped in. On top of that, the ambulance and the police came screaming in at Code 3.

That wasn’t the only screaming. The cameraman is telling me that I’m going to be arrested and sued. I’m yelling that if he airs the kid’s face, I’ll do more than knock the camera out. Hood is telling me to shut up, and the news anchor is yelling, as near as I can tell, for fun.

The cops step in, and pull everyone apart. Blame is being cast about, and the back of my mind tells me that my career has just ended. “You actually got into a fight with a news person? You are a dumb bastard, Ed.” After a few more moments of anger, the police calm everyone down. There is much discussion about me, and I end up sitting on

the curb. I’m going to jail. I just know it. The cameraman and his crew are clustered around his truck, talking to one of the cops.

Hood is standing next to me, glaring.

“Damn it, I know. I’m sorry.”

“Christ, Ed. Could you have done anything dumber?”

“Look, U just got pissed.”

“A news may? With a camera? How stupid can you be?”

“Hey . . .”

“That’s Sir, Sergeant!” Hood’s eyes were wide with his own anger. I could see it from his point of view. This was the kind of incident that would fly up the chain of command in 30 seconds. He was about ready to take some serious ass chewing for letting this happen.

“Sorry, Sir. Jesus, I’m sorry.”

Hood grumped at me and walked over to the cops, who were with the news people. After a moment, he waved me over. I walked over, head bowed down and looking at my boots. Man, this has turned into one really crappy morning.

“Sergeant Green,” Major Hood said, “it appears that the cameraman has reconsidered filing any charges against you. I have assured him that even if he won’t file any charges, I will make sure that you pay for this unprofessional behavior.”

Then the Police Sergeant spoke up. “And, considering that when my partner and I arrived, all we saw was him striking you, Green, you do have the option of filing charges against him.”

I shook my head. “Nope, he was doing his job. I lost my cool. I’m sorry.”



## Ed Green visits repair Hell

The newsman walked over and stuck his hand out. "I'm sorry too. Lots of hours and stress."

I shook hands with him and mumbled something about being sorry again. Hood told me to stay of the way for the rest of the time on scene, and to not say anything. Again, I nodded and leaned against the hood of the wrecked Humvee.

The soldier who'd been the source of all this excitement was being loaded onto the ambulance. According to the EMT, there didn't seem to be any damage, but they'd take him to the ER just to make sure. I got the kid's ID card, and copied down the data, along with preparing our casualty report. I thought about writing my statement about the rest of the mess, but decided I'd let that sit for now. Crap.

Later, Hood came over and took his helmet off. He laid it on the roof of the car and sighed.

"Ed, what am I supposed to do now?"

"Reduce me a grade, take some of my pay, and transfer my ass to another position."

"Right, take the easy way out of it." I could tell from his tone that his sense of humor had come back.

"Look, you got damn lucky that he didn't press charges."

"I know."

"And, for what it's worth, I'll tell the Colonel why you got into the fight."

"I appreciate that."

As we talked, the wrecker from our unit showed and hooked up the wrecked Humvee. They'd tow it back to the unit where the long repair process would begin. The repairs would be easy. The paperwork to explain what happened and to request the funds to fix it would take time. The maintenance troop asked us to step aside as they raised the front end off the ground, and they pulled out, towing it slowly.

As we watched it being dragged, I looked at the rear bumper. In black letters, showing up against the medium green of the body paint, I saw "HQ 7." I nudged Hood and pointed that out to him. After a second, he understood. We both watched as my Humvee was pulled down the street, and into repair hell.

As we stared at it, Hood said, "There's an important lesson in this, Green."

"What would that be, Sir?"

"Never underestimate the power of the press."

I considered that for a moment, and replied. "Actually, he couldn't throw a punch for shit."

Hooked looked sideways at me.

"For shit, Sir."

Six hours of sleep followed this event. I was still on for driving the Major all over town tonight, and both of us wanted me to be as rested as possible. For all the strain I'd been under up to now, things could only be worse tonight. although Hood did consider pulling me after my fight with the news crew. What won the day for me was simply the fact there wasn't anyone else who could it. Especially with the new manning policy.

Early afternoon found me in another staff meeting, going through a long battle with the other Staff Officers and NCOs about the 5%. They kept assuming I had some magic answer about how they were going to do their jobs when they didn't have the people to do it. Well, they didn't really, but they needed someone to vent at and since people were my area, I got the venting. The Colonel finally said that the units need to reduce the support as much as they safely can, and he would answer any questions from higher if we didn't meet the 5% goal. He then looked at me and said that all strength reports would be reviewed either by him, the XO, or the Staff Duty Officer before they were sent out. I could smell this scam coming.

The rest of the afternoon was spent prepping the vehicle, finding copies of maps, and generally getting ready for the evening. There may be thousands of troops on the street, but I wasn't about to find myself stranded in the middle of the riot zone with a busted car, or no idea of what intersection I was at.

*(to be continued)*

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# Loc 'N Load Gazette

This is the lettercol for NO AWARD #9, consisting of locs on No Award #8— editorial comments in italics (like this) and blue in PDF

## TED WHITE

I read Milt Stevens' piece on *Dhalgren* with growing incomprehension—which may well have been his intention. Let me say up front that I never read the book (indeed, I've never even handled a copy), and I was hoping for a piece which would explain it to me. I'm left wondering, after reading Milt's "Into the Incomprehensible," if in fact the piece *did* explain the book to me. That is, I am wondering if Milt has given us an actual précis of the book's "plot," or if his piece is a put-on. (This is not intended as a criticism of Milt, but may well be a criticism of *Dhalgren*.) In other words, to what extent did Milt keep his tongue lodged firmly in his cheek while writing this piece?

At first I took the piece as a description (suitably condensed) of the events which transpire in the book—which, for all I know, it *is*—but by the final paragraphs I was having doubts. I have the feeling that I need to read the book (all 800 pages!) to get the joke. Since I never found Delaney all that readable (I quit *Einstein Intersection* a few unbelievable chapters in, and I don't think I've ever read one of his books all of the way through), this is of course very unlikely.

*I can assure you that this is not a plot to get you to read the book. I do not think that Milt has yet recovered from reading it.*

Joseph major's review of *BALONEY* is comprehensive to a fault, but leaves me wondering what he actually *thought* of the fanzine. I mean, did he *like* it? I'm not sure. However, he dropped one minor bombshell in passing.

"As it was when Joel Nydahl's father paid off his bills on the condition that he quit fanpubbing, mundane considerations have cramped and constrained fanac."

That's a valid observation, and one with which I have no quibble at all. But I'm

sorta stunned to see a reference to an event from 1953 pop up in the year 2000, especially since Joel Nydahl is not much remembered today (and then mostly for "Nydahl's Disease") and I wouldn't have thought Major would even know who he was. More stunning to me is the actual news contained in that sentence: that Joel gafiated at the request of his father. This is something I had never heard before.

I knew Joel moderately well; I was one of the few who received the hectographed *VEGA #1*, and I contributed the cover art to #3. We were both neofans in 1952 when Joel started *VEGA*. But the monthly *VEGA* quickly moved to the forefront of fanzines in early 1953—undoubtedly due in part to *QUANDRY's* demise—attracting fans like Bob Tucker and Marion Zimmer Bradley as columnists. *VEGA* lasted only a bit over one year, its annish (the *VEGAnnish*, mailed out in two installments it was so fat) being its last. Joel had a piece (or a letter, I forget) in Geis's *PSYCHOTIC* late in 1953 explaining that he'd gafiated to go on to college and more or less publicly telling fandom goodbye. If he said anything about his father requiring his gafiation I don't remember it.

So where did Major glean this factoid? Curious minds wish to know.

*Joseph Major replies as follows: "I believe Harry Warner said it somewhere in a letter—which isn't much help. What I can find is that he did say (A Wealth of Fable, p. 103, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition) that Nydahl's father helped pay the bills."*

Len Moffatt's "Califania Tales" was not elegantly written but kept me reading nonetheless. Interesting stories, about people some of whom I knew and some of whom I did not. I was touched by his remark that Stan Woolston "may bealive, but the marvelous mind that was Woolston is no longer with us." I remember meeting Stan (and Len) in 1958, at Solacon, and

that's a sad comment to have to make about anyone, much less a good friend. What happened to Stan? Alzheimer's?

*Len replies: "Stan has Alzheimers as well as other problems that keep him wheelchair-bound. He no longer recognizes his sister or old friends like June and me. Mentally, he is in a world of his own in which he babbles to himself or someone, we know not whom, about we know not what."*

It's a sad fact that as we grow older the people who were fixtures in our world begin to slip away. Most of my childhood favorites among movie stars are gone now, as are so many of my favorite jazz musicians, and here in fandom things aren't a lot better. Virtually a whole block of '50s Irish-British fandom left us in the last decade, and all I can do is to wish continued good health to Bob Tucker, Forry Ackerman, and Art Widner—who have survived so many of their contemporaries. And Len Moffatt.

"I have heard some writes brag that they never wrote more than one draft of their stuff," Len notes. I have too—and am among them. In my case it was a matter of being a one-finger typist. Retyping was Sheer Hell for me.

I learned from watching Harlan Ellison write. He rolled a piece of paper and two carbons into his typer and wrote cold. If the story went awry on any given page he'd throw that page away and start it again at the top. In the 1960-61 period when Harlan was either living with me or next door to me, I watched him write a number of good stories in this way.

I never used his method for anything longer than a short story, however. When I wrote a book I did so on canary second-sheets, and after I'd written a chapter I'd go over it the next day (before starting the next chapter) by hand, making corrections and changes between the lines or in the

## White, Frohvet, Stinson, Murdoch

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margins. Once in a while I'd throw away pages and start afresh in a different direction. (I had to do this with my first solo novel, *ANDROID AVENGER*, tossing over 100 pages when I realized I'd taken a wrong turn, plot-wise, in an early chapter. I also tossed over half of a never-finished juvenile which was wedded to an unworkable plot.) When the novel was finished I'd have someone else retype it. (My second wife, Robin, retyped several of my novels; Dave Van Arnam did the rest. He was so fast and accurate that he could retype one of my manuscripts in a weekend.) But essentially all of my books were single-drafts.

Plenty of other SF pros wrote single-draft besides Harlan, although not all of them were as neat typists. Judy Merrill's book review columns for *F&SF* came in on scraps of paper of different sizes, with arrows and XXXed out sections. Gordon Dickson's manuscripts were even worse—so much so that Fred Pohl docked him a penny a word for them. They sometimes had only one or two usable sentences a page, with everything else crossed out, and included insert pages required when Gordy thought of something which belonged earlier in the story. No retyping for him.

It's *déjà vu* all over again to see you still jousting with Joseph Nicholas in your lettercol. I'm slightly stunned to see him slugging Poul Anderson in the same sentence with Larry Niven, as though they both wrote the same kind of SF in the same period, but I'm even more stunned to encounter his statement that "I doubt that even Anderson and Niven would claim that they had no other agenda than the telling of a story." That's the sound of *Joseph's* agenda going "clunk!" And a good example of the danger of over-intellectualizing.

*Whew! That is much more than I usually excerpt from a loc. But I included this much material because so much of it is either germane to things I want to see in print or is just plain fascinating.*

*And now for a little change of pace. In fact, it is such a change of pace that the first paragraph of the following loc is not even about NO AWARD #8 but is something which refers to a "contest" in the loccer's zine, TWINK. Herewith, a 180 degree change of pace from the previous loc, something which belies Frohvet's serconish reputation.*

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### E.B. FROHNET

I hereby declare MARTY CANTOR the winner and new Resident Curmudgeon of Fandom. To anyone who objects to my administration of the election, or wants a Florida recount, I offer this thoughtful observation in constitutional law: Bite me.

*I thought that this was a self-evident fact. I guess that the "election" just "verified" reality.*

On a related topic, I plan to nominate *NO AWARD* for the "Best Fanzine" Hugo, in accordance with my usual policy of spreading my nominations around.

*But NO AWARD already is automatically nominated in the "Best Fanzine" Hugo category - and every other category as well. It will be, er, interesting if NO AWARD gets listed twice in the "Best Fanzine" Hugo category - it will make my nasty little heart glad.*

I find it curious that Alison Scott would not like *NO AWARD*; because, conceptually, it has much in common with *Plotka*. *NA*, oddly, has more editorial voice, perhaps from being the product of one fanned rather than a committee. It is less surprising that Alison does not care much for my zine; admittedly, it's just not her sort of thing.

When I send out an issue of my zine, roughly a third of the envelopes have at least brief notes in them. Sometimes I get the urge to shuffle the notes at random, so you might get the note intended for Sheryl Birkhead, and Joseph Nicholas might get the note written for Janice Murray. Does that impulse count for anything?

*I think that you have blown your cover as a "sercon fan." Anyway, I am assuming that this loc was intended for Alison Scott.*

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### JAN STINSON

Thanks for sending me the PDF version of *NO AWARD* #8. I like the hanging sign details - haven't seen that done anywhere else.

*I will not be sending the PDF version via e-mail in the future. Rather, I will be notifying those on my PDF list that the new ish is available and they can then go the web site and download the files at their convenience.*

*As for the hanging sign details, I must say that I found it a nice unifying theme throughout the zine. In that respect it was successful. However, after discussion with a knowledgeable fan, I have come to the conclusion that its very "busyness" detracted from clarity in presentation. I have used this design in short APazines but I can see that my layout in the longer format of a gengine is not appropriate.*

Mike Glyer's "Freeware" struck a chord with me. Long goblets of quotes in e-mail that only inspire a line or two which add little or nothing to the discussion are serious time-wasters. If one wants to say "me too" one should send it in private e-mail to the writer alone.

Great selection of illos throughout the ish, too; especially liked the Foster "One Day in the Year," which would bear a remarkable resemblance to my own life if one substituted "write" for "draw." And a good lettercol, always appreciated.

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### ANDREW C. MURDOCH

You can at least be thankful Doctors waited until you were near retirement before telling you had high cholesterol.

*Actually, I found out about the problem 8 months after I retired.*

The bit in the review of *Dhalgren* about everyone stopping to smoke dope

made me pause, as it really sound like that's how the book came about in the first place.

Leslie Norris didn't mention my favourite new School of Thought: The Darth Vader School of Personnel Management.

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ERICA MARIA LACEY

Hoo Hah publication number 540? Really? That's heaps! Let's see . . . if done in the 20 years that I am alive . . . 27 a year. Wow. Impressive. I bow at the feet of Hoo Hah publication numbers.

*I would prefer that you bow down at my feet rather than at my Hoo Hah Publication Numbers. But, whatever turns you on . . . These numbers (now up to over 560) reflect 26 years of fanning (including 5 or 6 years in semi-gaffiation, a time of no zining). "Building up the numbers" was not all that difficult, given that in my early fan years I was in a weekly APA (and I returned to APA-L near the end of 1999). Had I stayed in that APA during my whole time in fandom the Hoo Hah Publication Number would be some 1200 or so higher. I also produce a zine for the monthly LASFAPA (of which I am again the OE) and the HHPN would be higher still had I not been absent from that APA for about 18 years. And I have now been editing the monthly LASFS newsletter (DE PROFUNDIS) for the past year. Zine production is, indeed, a passion of mine.*

Fall 2000? Upon reading that I immediately thought, "Hmm, pubbed in April, hey" only to bring myself up short and go, hand on . . . more like August. These little things of seasonal differences do make for interesting confusions. It never ceases to amuse to hear "fall." "Autumn" is so close to the word "August" that it has become my way of trying to pinpoint the northern seasons.

*Please note that I have stepped away from any sense of Northern Hemisphere Chauvinism in my current pub date listing. I visited Oz on my DUFF trip and I know, first hand, the seasonal differences 'twixt*

*the hemispheres.*

Dietary changes I know something about. A friend of mine was found to have some illness . . . I forget what its' called now . . . as well as high cholesterol, and had to change her diet. Considering that all she ever ate were in two food groups: a) Greasy, and b) Sweet, it was difficult for her. She still hasn't made the transition properly, and it's been a few months, but living in a household full of other people eating a) & b) isn't very helpful (5 20-ish year old folks living in the one apartment).

*That many 20-ish entities living in one place is not an apartment, it is a menagerie. Not that I have anything against 20-ish beings - they are as insultable as are people of any age. But your friend has it relatively easy, at least as in comparison to a person such as myself who has lived on "Grease" and "Sweets" unto retirement age. I mean, those habits are set and deucedly difficult to change.*

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HENRY WELCH

Congratulations, I think, on getting the electronic issue together. I've done a few issues that way, but the sheer size of the files make them a pain to upload.

*I do not know what programme you are using, but Publisher 2000 (the programme I use) creates very large files. PDF conversion, though, greatly reduces file size. As I remember it, the .pub version of NO AWARD #8 was about 12.4 MB - the PDF version was about 1.3 MB. I now create the colour version first and then convert that to black and white (which prints in black and white better than printing the colour version in greyscale), leaving both versions on my hard disc. I then convert the colour version to PDF (which takes less than half a minute).*

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JOSEPH T. MAJOR

Editorial: Seems to me you get pretty well exercised just by that listing of things now banned. As the priest said to the

demon-possessed man, "You need a little more exorcise."

Into the Incomprehensible: I stand amazed. Milt, my hat is off to you. There is hope now for our space-going future, for if any part falls, the whole falls. I refer, of course, to the famous SF Jeopardy answer: "The speed of light, the center of the Sun, Page eighty of Dhalgren." And the question is, "What are three things man cannot reach?" We should have starships within the decade. Thanks, O Milt, who gave mankind the boundless oceans of forever!

*Nah! The boundless oceans of forever are epitomized by Joseph Nicholas and Marty Cantor "conversing" in lettercols.*

New Schools of Thought:  
The Claude Degler School of Leadership  
The Donald Trump Modesty Academy  
The George Armstrong Custer School of Native American Affairs  
The Imperial Storm Trooper Marksmanship Academy

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ERIC MAYER

Wow. I'm writing a LOC. Well, not a proper LOC. I hardly remember how. More like an acknowledgment at receiving NO AWARD #8. Well, not really that, either, since I do wnloaded the pdf version.

*What you sent is a "proper loc." And it is good to see you again back in the pages of one of my zines.*

Milt Stevens/ Dhalgren piece was hilarious. I had that book. I tried to read it. No way. And I speak as one who did read the entire, unabridged version of Korzybski's SCIENCE AND SANITY . . . and enjoyed it!

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NED BROOKS

I enjoyed the zine, though Acrobat Reader takes some getting used to. Great artwork, I had to make myself a printout of ATom's bouncing typewriter illo on p.21.

*I just wish that there were a bottomless well of unprinted ATom illos like there are of Rotsler's.*

The doctors at NASA used to lecture me about diet when I got my annual physical, even though I was never overweight. I never could see any way to change it much - life is too short to eat stuff you don't like.

*I, too, have never been overweight (with 160 pounds being the heaviest I have ever been). I think that genetics can be a contributing factor in cholesterol problems for many people. Of course, my life-long addiction to fatty and sweet foods was also probably a contributing factor in my case. Anyway, my main problem is triglycerides as my LDL is really only slightly elevated.*

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ALEXIS A. GILLILAND

Your aversion to exercise is noted. If you don't enjoy something, it may get done under duress, oh, maybe once a year. But as a regular thing? Perhaps you could find a donut shop you were willing to walk to.

*It is not so much donuts I miss as pastries, evaporated milk in my cereal, cheeseburgers, chocolate candies, greasy french fries (chips), and other real food. I do not think that my feet would hold out for the amount of walking I would have to do if I went back to these tasty things. Damn! Now I have made myself hungry.*

Milt Stevens's take on Delaney's *Dahlgren* has a curious verisimilitude. Impossible to believe that someone would be so wildly inventive as to make it up out of the whole cloth; merely implausible to imagine that Delaney might have actually spun such a blow for the 1968 zeitgeist. Doing a nice critical turn, Stevens notes Delaney's concretization of a poetic metaphor for Hell: "The City has been on fire forever, but it never burns down. One suspects they are using gas logs."

I am surprised that you published the rudeness of Joseph continues to vent his spleen in your direction. From his pov, you

are an incorrigible smartass, and the fact that he wastes as much time and energy on you as he does suggests that his time is rather less valuable than he seems to think. Or maybe he is intellectually underemployed without a noble cause to support. After all the passion that went into *FUCK THE TORIES* he has been rewarded with the centrist Labour government of Tony Blair.

*Oh, come now, Alexis. What would any of my genzines be (except, maybe, better) if Joseph and I were not tilting at one another?*

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RODNEY LEIGHTON

Letter columns are intriguing things. My favourite portion of fanzines. Even though *PLOKTA* doesn't have one, often. I am always intrigued at what each fanned prints, and excludes. Sending stuff to your bosom buddy Tim is fun since he doesn't edit me but sending locs to other folks is more fun, in a way, just to see what the fanned chooses to exclude and what he, or occasionally they or rarely she, decides to print from other people. Which is invariably less interesting than the material excised from my loc. Of course, everyone see things differently. Periodically someone makes a derogatory comment about me which someone decides to print. Such is the nature of fandom. I do not think I will rise to either of the comments about me which you included in hopes of creating a feud or even a fuss.

*What, me create a feud or a fuss? Never happen. I am just a smartass. Which is why I have edited in the interesting material from other locs and have, very carefully, edited the interesting parts out of your loc. If you do not like that, go saw another tree.*

Are you sure Alison Scott doesn't like *NO AWARD*? After all, if you added some more superfluous technology and printed a bunch of photos in lieu of much of the loccol, and divided the fanzine into 3 issues, there would be damned little difference

between *NO AWARD* and *PLOKTA*.

*From a part of the loc written on a later day:* In one of those delightful coincidences which happen occasionally, I went off to earn a few pennies. Came home to find a nice batch of mail, including *PLOKTA 21*, complete with somewhat personalized envelope and baby pictures. Reading it that evening I wondered what in hell I was thinking when I mentioned that *NO AWARD* and *PLOKTA* are quite similar. *NO AWARD* is far more sercon . . .

*It is yet to be proven that you perform that function known as "thinking." Even if you are right every once in a while. NO AWARD and PLOKTA are alike in only one (very important and overriding) way - both zines share the same sense of faanishness. Though calling NO AWARD sercon, in any sense of that word, is just plain silly. An occasional bit of serconism in a faanish zine does not a sercon zine make.*

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LLOYD PENNEY

The Search for Intelligent Life on the Internet for Fans (SILIFans) will continue, but I have little hope for its success. Granted, sources of energy in the form of flames and hot air have been found, but intelligent activities are mere rumours at this point. The typographical world has found the Internet to be a rich source of tildes, carats, and at-signs, which may hold off any possible shortages.

*The typographical world will not need to harvest the internet for various typographical symbols for some time as there are more than enough of them in various typos and wretched grammar lying around in 70 years of fanzines.*

I like a thick slice of Baloney from Vegas and VanWash from time to time, and any Katzine has that usual jolly attitude of inclusive fun for all, while still taking time for some self-promotion and words from our sponsor, Arnie himself. Still, Arnie can't resist pissing in the stewpot a

little, and now the fugghead total on the mailing list is up to ten. Those who think they are the fuggheads Arnie refers to are upset, and thy have exposed themselves. The rest of us just smile, and mentally wag our fingers at Arnie in reproof while laughing our fool heads off. I'm sure five more fuggheads will be added to the mailing list next time, right on schedule.

*When I first saw Baloney, the first thing I did was to create a loc template on which I could respond to the zine. Remember, the zine originally mentioned that it was going to the regular mailing list "plus five fuggheads." So the masthead on the loc had a logo about "Fugghead Number Six." With me, smartassery will always out.*

There must be only a few fans left who have inner knowledge of Topic A, but many of us were treated (definitely not the word) to a rehash of the whole thing on line. Fan history is one thing; re-enactments may leave a little to be desired.

*I was a (mostly) bystander to the on-line discussion. It was pretty tame compared to the original one 15 years ago. It should be noted that some of the major opponents in the original, er, discussion were present on that e-list, and it should be noted that they were quite civil towards their former opponents. As a former "major player" I was quite circumspect in the few comments I made this time around. Well, my "mouth" really has no off-switch (just an on-switch), and I find that I have become quite friendly with many of my former foes - I see no reason to jeopardize these friendships.*

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**ERIC LINDSAY**

Glad to see you reprinting Thom Digby, as I'm sure are many others. Although if he is also on the net, it adds yet another reason to attempt to get on at least some of the fannish mailing lists. But first, I need to work on some filters . . . such as Mike Glycer recommends.

I'd like to find an ISP or a filter that:

1. Rejects all posts in which the quoted content exceeds the original material contributed
2. Rejects all signatures that exceed say a half dozen lines, or that are longer than the posting.
3. Rejects all posts that are directed to more than three or four groups.
4. Reject all threads that consist of two or three people having an argument amongst themselves.

*It is not at all unusual to find that computers are smarter than some people but methinks that for which you are asking is never going to be possible as long as people have access to computers. Remove humans from the equation and you have a chance to realise your dreams.*

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**FRANK DENTON**

I was especially taken with Milt Stevens' analysis of *Dhalgren*. Now there are four people who have read it—Milt and me plus the two he mentioned in the article. I read it many years ago, when it first was published and everyone was talking about it. The circular novel was the most common comment. It ends up just the same as it started. I remember shaking my head when I finished it and saying, "OK, what was that all about?" Perhaps I should have kept notes, as Milt obviously did. But I didn't. At least Milt got an amusing and highly entertaining article out of it, and our thanks to you for publishing it.

*One thing that seems to distinguish fans from mundanes is that fans seem to have the capability of getting humourous articles out of seemingly catastrophic happenings. Like my triglyceride/cholesterol problem requiring me to entirely change my lifestyle. And like reading Dhalgren.*

**W A H F**

**Ben Indick** (who included a one-page pastiche of *Dhalgren* he put into *WILD FENNEL*, Sept. 1975): **Alex Slate: Mike Deckinger** ("I enjoyed Leslie Norris contribution. I may be wrong, but isn't "Norris" a pen-name, used by various LASFSians since the '60s?" You were the only one who noticed that—and you are correct.): **Karen Pender-Gunn: Terry Jeeves** ("I liked the cover even though I wasn't sure what it was saying—or was it without a hidden meaning?" Well, the figure with the pipe in its mouth was a pretty good caricature of me.): **Sheryl Birkhead.**

**BRAD W. FOSTER**

The eighth issue of *NO AWARD* showed up in the mailbox this past week. Eight issues in three years . . . very impressive.

*Seven issues in three years. NA #1, produced on a Selectric, was done in the early '90s—NA #2 was done in '97.*

By the by, a thought occurs. I've gotten other zines recently with color pages that were obviously printed off their color computer printers. Couldn't you do up a color piece now and then in the print version that way? (Again, apologies if this is way off, I've just no real idea how this stuff all works, time and money wise!)

*My computer printer prints about 11 pages per minute for black—and prints colour slower than that. It would take about 9 hours to do a colour print run of one page (and adding more paper every once in a while). I have no idea of how many colour cartridges I would need for this—and they are not inexpensive. As you can see, using my printer as a copier is Not An Option.*

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# Proposed Official Rules of APA-L

*With tongue in whatever cheek you wish,  
here is Phil Castora's "take" on how  
APA-L's official rules should be, er,  
modified.*

From APA-L #1869

1. The Official Collator of APA-L may make any rules he or she damn' well pleases, and may change them with or without notice.
2. Actual and intended participants in APA-L may not hang, shoot, draw and quarter, stomp into fudge, or otherwise commit bodily harm to the person of the Official Collator without giving at least one week's notice and without first providing for a successor.
3. The Official Collator may not use APA-L monies to hire a goon squad to enforce these rules or to protect himself or herself from irate contributors.
4. Intended contributions must consist of at least forty essentially identical copies of such trivia, ephemera, or other euphemisms for trash as the contributors choose.
5. Intended contributions written in English must be legible to the Official Collator when viewed by him or her in a reasonably strong light with such aids (glasses, contact lenses, microscope, . . .) he or she normally uses. Contributions in other languages and/or alphabets may (or many not) be trashed, at the Official Collator's whim.
6. "Legible" in the preceding rule means that the Official Collator can read at least ninety percent of the words at no less than twenty-five percent of his or her normal reading speed and still have enough eyesight left to distinguish between Cathy Beckstead and George Mulligan at a distance of five feet, with or without the aid of glasses, contact lenses, and/or binoculars.
7. Contributions shall be on paper of size 8 1/2" by 11". Contributors living in parts of the world where this size of paper is available at extraordinary expense or not at all shall, 1) provide a master copy suitable for use on any reproduction device available to APA-L, or, 2) arrange for a local agent to provide suitable copies. If the Official Collator provides paper or other supplies or services he or she shall be reimbursed for their cost. However, the Official Collator may waive this rule - or any other - if appropriately bribed, blackmailed, or otherwise persuaded.
8. Any person composing, signing, or distributing any petition directed against the Official Collator or the Official Rules shall be deemed to have volunteered to replace the

Official Collator, unless said person is mad enough to actually want the job.

9. Persons entitled to a copy of any week's distribution of APA-L are, in order of decreasing priority:
  - a) The Official Collator;
  - b) Contributors to that week's distribution.
  - c) APA-L's Official Archives;
  - d) Volunteers providing material assistance collating and/or stapling that week's distribution;
  - e) Subscribers;
  - f) Contributors to the previous week's distribution;
  - g) Contributors of covers of the past three weeks' distributions;
  - h) Guests of the LASFS who wish copies (one each, absent good reason otherwise);
  - i) Any person paying the sum of \$.50;
  - j) Such other persons as the Official Collator may deem worthy.

Or none of the above, at the whim of the Official Collator. All letter-bombs sent to the Official Collator must be small enough to only destroy the OC without damaging nearby LASFS equipment.

ml





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## 25th Anniversary Celebration

**ATom:** In a better place

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LASFAPA, a monthly APA, was founded in October of 1976. The APA started out as a monthly alternative (to the weekly APA-L) to connect Los Angeles fandom to the rest of the fannish universe who found participating in the weekly APA-L too hectic. APA-L still continues its weekly ways whilst LASFAPA has never missed putting out monthly disties.

This is an invitation to all ex-members to rejoin us for a "celebration" to be conducted in two disties, #300 (September 2001) and #301 (October 2001). (Anybody else who so desires can also join us at any time. To make it relatively easy for those who wish to join us in this celebration but who do not want to join or rejoin the APA, LASFAPA (which has yearly dues of \$3.00) is waiving the membership fee for those who are joining us just for these two months.

1. Any ex-member returning for these two disties will be given a free membership for these two disties. If anybody who returns for this "guest period" decides to stay as a regular member, they must let the LTG (Little Tin God, the title of the OE of LASFAPA for non-members reading this) know by October 25 so that he can let the members know of any changes in the copy count in time for #302 (November).
2. Any ex-member returning for this guest period must notify the LTG by August 10 so that he can notify the members in #299 (August) what will be the copy count for the next two disties.
3. All returning ex-members will get copies of both #300 and #301. Those who are not local to the LTG must set up a mailing account with the LTG at the time of notifying him that they will be guests for #300 & #301.
4. The LTG will offer printing services for all of the "guest" members at his usual rates and with the same deadlines.
5. Considering the possibility of the disties being larger than normal, the absolute last-minute deadlines of things being handed or mailed to the LTG will be on Fridays for these two disties. Except that I will still accept FedEx and other special delivery service on Disty Day Saturdays as long as such special delivery service is before noon. FedEx delivers before Noon.
6. There is the possibility that these two disties (#300 and #301) will weigh over a pound each. If so, they cannot be dropped into an outside mail drop and must be given to the Post Office over the counter. If this be the case, I will not be able to mail the disties until the following Monday instead of the usual Saturday.
7. We will accept guest memberships from non-ex-members if said fans wish to temporarily join us. If they wish to stay after the celebratory disties, they may do so under our regular rules. And, naturally, anybody who wants to join in the regular manner during this (or any other) period may do so. Regular membership requires the payment of regular dues.
8. For Those Not In The Know: the Little Tin God of LASFAPA is the editor of the zine you are holding in your hot, little, hands.

