

In a Prior Lifetime #10

April, 2006

An electronic fanzine from
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This zine is available for downloading by permission, or by visiting Bill Burns' website, www.efanzines.com, which I strongly recommend viewing. Lots of fine, fun reading can be found therein. Go and enjoy; I command thee!



Frank Michael Lewecke © 2001

This fanzine is also available by requesting a hard-copy via sending me your fanzine in trade or a small bag of sunflower seeds. (Y'know, I've been asking for sunflower seeds in trade since 1976, and nobody has yet to do so. Go figure.)

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ASSORTED CREDITS:

Cover: www.harekrishnatemple.com/.../reincarnation.jpg; Frank Michael Lewecke - 2; image googled "cockatiels" - 3; clip art - 4, 14, 16, 18, 19, 20; David E. Romm, photo - 5; Aggiecon 37 program book, by "falconsong" - 6; David Dyer-Bennett, photo - 7; someone using my camera for the photo on page 9; www.cylon.org/images/stuff/xtra-cao1.jpg - 11; Googled "Tom Swift" images - 12; John Purcell, photo - 22.

BEMUSED NATTERINGS

Our cockatiel masturbates.

Don't ask me why, but he does. Maybe he's lonely and we really should get Sunny a life-partner, but I really don't think that's going to stop him from jerkin' his gerkin. Maybe it has something to do with the name of the breed. I dunno. It's all so strange to me.

It really gets annoying, too. All will be fine at night; my wife and I sitting in the living room, doing homework, reading, watching forensic shows on the television, grading papers, yelling at the kids to shut the hell up, we're trying to get work done...all of the normal, every day things that married couples do. Then all of a sudden, from up behind my head where the birdcage hangs down from the ceiling, we hear this low-pitched and rhythmic "erp! - erp! - erp! - erp!", which is the sound that the damned bird makes when he's rubbing up against the side of the cage, making it hit the wall in the process.



"Sunny!" Valerie yells from her chair. "Knock it off!" Then she flings a thick, orange highlighter at the bird, which rings off the wire cage, ricocheting down into my half-full water glass.

"Good shot," I compliment her. After a couple years of solid practice, her aim has really improved. Myself, I have perfected the non-looking, over-the-shoulder, left-hook pencil shot at - sometimes into - the bird cage.

"Thanks. You'd think that that stupid bird would get the idea that we don't want him doing that sort of thing."

"Well," I replied, "he is a bird-brain."

"Ha-ha-ha," came the derisive laugh. "If you're so smart, *you* figure out a way to make him stop that cage humping."

I thought about that for a moment, then said, "I don't know what to do. We could, I suppose, warn him in no uncertain terms to stop it or he's gonna need glasses."

"You're a big help."

"I try to be." Fishing the marker out of my cup, I added, "Only trying to do my job here."

Valerie went back to studying her French book, preparing for yet another Test From Hell with the French Nazi teacher born and raised in Jaipur, India, and I began reading about Education in Colonial American times.

A minute or two later, it began again: "erp! - erp! - erp! - erp!" Another pen clanged off the cage, this time missing my cup, which I had covered with my right hand.

She stared at the bird. "So what should we do? Cook him?"

I thought for another moment, then offered, "How about water pistol training? It worked with the cats, maybe it will with the bird."

She mulled that over for a moment, then asked, "Does Dan have any small water pistols in his room?"

I shook my head. "Nope. They're all in the garage with the pool stuff. Besides," I added, glancing up at the bird, "I was actually thinking about breaking out the heavy artillery."

"You don't mean. . ."

"Oh, yes, I do." Pausing for effect, I put my Educational Philosophy book down and said, in my best Rod Serling voice, "The Super Soaker."

Val's eyes lit up with anticipation. "That should knock him right through the wires."

"Could be," I agreed. "No matter where we are in the room, we can nail that little pecker-head from up to 35 feet away. A point-blank hit, in fact, might be lethal."

She got up and headed for the bathroom. "I'll get the tub filled with ice-cold water while you go to the garage and grab The Gun."

"Okay." As I stood and turned for the front door, my eyes glanced sideways at Sunny, and I nodded ominously at him.

He shivered. Stared at me. Then as I closed the door behind me, above the sound of water running in the tub, I heard a frantic "Erp! - Erp! - Erp!- Erp! - Erp! - Erp!- Erp! - Erp! - Erp!" as the cage banged hard against the wall.

It was Sunny's last night as a free bird.

Lord knows, he just can't change.



The preceding, although involving real names – including the bird's – was sort of all fiction. No animals were injured in the writing of this piece of faan fiction.

After getting the name badges for my son and myself (I had pre-registered two weeks earlier), a quick glance at the events calendar revealed that Steve Brust was signing autographs one floor up from where I was standing. I didn't need a nanosecond to think it over. Up the elevator, out the door, a jog to the right, and I was in room 301. Steve was sitting at a table with a couple other regional writers, and he was wearing his trademark cavalier hat. He never saw me coming. I hailed him with a hearty, "Brust, you old horse fart!" and stood there in front of him.

Steve's eyebrows knit in consternation, deeply quizzical about this sudden intrusion. He then looked closer at me, then said, "I get the feeling that I should know you."

"Yeah, you should," I replied, holding out my badge. His eyes went wide in shock and his mouth gaped in a big O under his graying, bushy moustache. The words came out slowly, but distinctly:

"Oh..... my.....God....." Then Steve stood up and we firmly shook hands. I was sort of expecting one of those long-lost, how-the-hell-are-you kind of handshakes with a complimentary quick, manly hug of camaraderie, but there was a table between us. Even so, it was quite good to see the old horse fart again.

From that point on, I knew that no matter what developed, my weekend was complete. I had stunned the Brust. Left him speechless, in fact.

Us then –



Photo by David Dyer-Bennett, ca. 1981, looks like a Minn-stf party. Left to right: Sarah Prince, Curtis Hoffman, Steven Brust, John Purcell, Emma Bull.

For those of you who know Steve Brust, this is a difficult task to accomplish. The guy is a travel-worn natural performer, and to render him mute is worth re-telling the tale as many times as possible.

And I really have to admit, three weeks later, that the memory makes me smile. It really *was* good to see Steve again.

But things have changed over the years in the science fiction and fantasy fan universe. The basic make-up and focus of cons has shifted to more of a media-focus as computer and video gaming

has become a major economic factor in the fan community. The common link that used to bind us all together is still there - love of science fiction, fantasy, and all that rot - but now cons - at least this one and others I noted in the program book and on flyers posted in the registration area - have programming geared towards the Anime and gaming crowd as those interests have grown in popularity.

Science fiction itself has grown immeasurably since my last convention. Big budget sf and f movies rake in mega-bucks, merchandise tie-ins add more income, plus the SciFi

Channel on cable television offers nearly a 24-hour schedule of alleged science fiction and related programming. (I really mean "alleged," too. This is a topic for another column or my other zine.) As a result, our conventions have changed to meet this demand as more and more young people are drawn into the sf&f media sphere.

Is this a good thing? Maybe yes, maybe no. To use the phrase coined by Arnie Katz, Core Fandom - or Fandom As We Know It, or even Fanzine Fandom - has debated this very topic for years, so I really don't want to go there right now. All I would like to say at this point is that contemporary conventions do provide a lot of fresh blood, and it may very well be up to those of us who have been around a while to direct them into other venues of fan activity: fanzines, apas, club memberships, con running, and so forth. People tend to do things that they enjoy; we need to be able to discern these tendencies and give these new folks the chance to develop them. A con can be overwhelming all by itself. Let's not try to overwhelm potential new fans any more than they already are.

So back to AggieCon 37. Even though it had a heavy media-influence and scads of gaming opportunities - my son Daniel had a grand old time in the computer and video game rooms, being ten years old and at his first ever con - there were a lot of familiar items that made me feel more at home than I had expected. There was a substantial huckster room with lots of books, comics, jewelry, and all sorts of goodies for sale; the art show was a nice size with extremely nice work displayed (the mixed media and photo-shop art were phenomenal, plus lots of really fine prints of dragons, planets, and assorted topics); the auction netted a nice profit to help fund next year's convention; there was multi-track programming; autograph sessions; and a midnight showing of *Rocky Horror Picture Show* on both Friday and Saturday nights (fans were encouraged to dress in "appropriate" attire). The lack of a film room really surprised me, and I was even more surprised by my reaction: I felt hurt and a bit betrayed. To compensate for this, they did have a large-screen projector in the main computer gaming room (40 computers donated by Texas A&M University, which some Cepheid Variable club members hooked up on a LAN for game-playing purposes) that showed music videos, cartoons (mostly Anime), and on late Sunday morning the movie *Labyrinth* was shown while people gamed. Maybe this was their idea of a video/film program. If so, it was pretty lame; I still wanted to heckle some god-awful movies for old-time's sake.

Yeah, there was a lot that was familiar to me, but being a student-run convention on a major college campus, there were limitations to what they could do. I do know that the convention hotel, the nearby Fairfield Inn, had some room parties at night, but I could not partake since I was there with my 10-year old son. So I had my own set of limitations; back in the day, none of these restrictive elements were in place, which makes for a whole different set of expectations and results.

Some cool things did happen besides rendering Steve Brust speechless for all of 30 seconds. I had the chance to meet and talk with Peter Mayhew, the media guest of honor, on Saturday afternoon when things were a bit slow. He was at a table tucked around a corner from the main body of the huckster room, and so I chatted with him, introduced Dan (who promptly made an impromptu Wookiee sound, making Mayhew smile), all the while never bothering for a photo with him or his autograph. Why? You ask. Because, I answer, I wasn't interested. My older daughter, Penny, came in that

afternoon with her boyfriend, Eric, who is a big-time *Star Wars* fan and collector of *SW* memorabilia, so they got a photo with and autograph of Mr. Mayhew. He was a true gentleman throughout the entire weekend, and is a very nice man. A true gentle giant if there ever was one.

Another good memory of the weekend was listening to a “performance” Friday night by Steve Brust of some fine old folk songs, some fine old filk songs, and some fine politically incorrect folk songs. Thanks to him, I had that idiotic song “One Meatball” popping in and out of my head for the next nine days. Damned annoying, but if he knew this, it would make Steve happy.

The con wound down early Sunday afternoon. Dan and I went in for a last two-hour session of computer gaming - we really liked “Desert Combat” and “Star Wars: Battlefront” - and later that night we walked over to the Dead Dog party at 3702 Marielene Circle and chatted for about half an hour with club members I had met over the weekend. (Does that address sound familiar? Look at the colophon on page 2 and all shall be revealed.)

On Tuesday night I chatted with Steve via telephone - he was in town until Wednesday night before flying out of Easterwood International Airport in College Station (yes, this is a joke) to his home in Las Vegas - and tried to get him to visit my writing classes at Blinn College, but his schedule wouldn’t allow it. Too bad, but it was worth a try. We both agreed that it would have been cool for my students to ask a fealthy pro about the writing process and what it’s like to make your living that way.

Aggiecon was an alright con in my final estimation. Yes, it was a very different experience from the many other cons I’ve been to over the years, but that’s okay. I can live with it now because if you can accept change as a life constant, you’ll be alright. I think it *is* possible to return to yesterday, but only if you can make the adjustments.

So I will see what next year’s version will be like. Who knows? Maybe I will follow through on a thought I’m having on running a fanzine room for Aggiecon 38. We shall see what happens.

- Us Now



Here’s a picture for the ages: the gracefully aged Purcell with Steven Brust on Friday night, AggieCon 37. Man, would WE love to do the time warp again!



Fanzine Reviews

Pixel #1 from David Burton
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Available for downloading at efanzines.com

One of the unexpected benefits of what I call cyberfanac is the return of many old time fans to the realm of fanzine publishing. Without doing too much digging around trufen.net, fanac.org, or efanzines.com, I can name notables such as Arnie and Joyce Katz, Earl Kemp, John Nielsen-Hall, Richard Geis, David Burton, and myself. In fact, in the most recent issue of *Chunga* (the 11th) Mike Glicksohn's name pops up in the lettercolumn, and he hints at the possibility of his becoming active again in fannish circles once he retires from teaching this year (after 35 years!). There are many other names, I am sure, who have returned from The Great Beyond; I just thought of Shelby Vick's *Planetary Stories*, and remember seeing John Thiel's name in the zines hosted on efanzines.com. But you get the idea: a lot of us are returning to the fold after many years away.

One of the finest fanzines being produced right now comes from one such degafiate, David Burton. In keeping with his personal tradition of running no more than 15 issues of a single title, David has retired the title *Catchpenny Gazette*, reformatted it, gave it a bit of a face-lift, kept the same columnists and a lively lettercolumn, then re-named the zine *Pixel*, after bits from the phrase "Picture Element." And I tell ya, folks, it is a fine zine. I will let David say it himself:

Pixel is essentially Catchpenny Gazette with a new name and a new look, designed for onscreen reading, although it can still be printed out easily for those who prefer it.

Well, I am one of those folks who likes to print out e-zines; having a hard copy in front of me makes for easier letterhacking and reviewing.

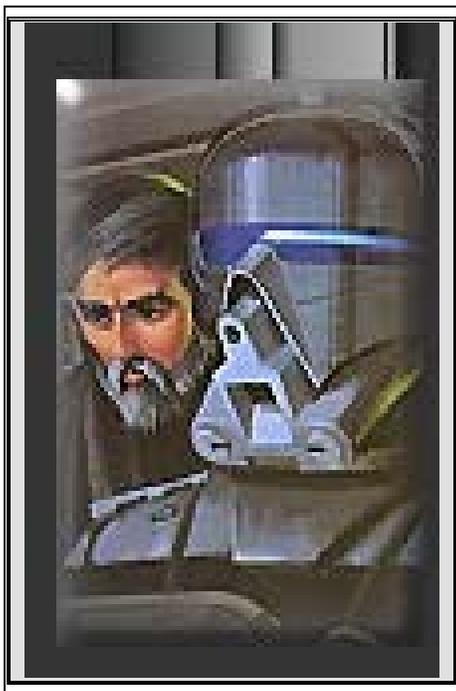
So what can I say about *Pixel*? A lot of good things, if you really want to know. The main comment I have is that the zine is extremely eye-friendly. One of the things that I really enjoy about cyberfanac is that I can enlarge print, adjust contrast, brightness, or whatever, in order to make a zine easier on the eyes. *Pixel's* landscaped, three-column format contributes nicely to this effect, too. It is obvious that David has been experimenting with format and design. The effort shows, and lots of loccers compliment David on his work with *Catchpenny Gazette*.

As for its contents, there isn't a weak link anywhere in this chain. There is a nice balance between a couple of zine reprints from the 1970's from the late Jim Lavell (a wonderful pastiche of Swift's "A Modest Proposal," this being about the long-lost practice of fanzine burning) and a slice of Dave Locke's life, titled "Difulgalty: I

Remember Lemuria, and Mu, Dimly." Two great choices of fine fannish humor from the not-so-distant past.

The current contributions are regular columnists Eric Mayer and Christopher Garcia, now joined by a brand-new fanzine review column by everyone's favorite British neo-fan, Peter Sullivan. Most of the zines Peter covers are British, but that's to be expected. (This is another development that I am glad to see: more fanzine review columns in fanzines. If I don't watch it, I could easily take off on this topic, so it may wind its way into the pages of *and furthermore* in the not too distant future.)

Then there is a lively lettercolumn, which Chris Garcia, in CPG #15, compared to a bunch of "drinking buddies who can't seem to all meet in the same place." And it really isn't just the usual bunch of suspects who seem to be in every single on-line zine: in addition to Eric Mayer, Lloyd Penney, Chris Garcia, and Peters Sullivan, *Pixel #1* features letters from Ted White, Lee Lavell, and me.



All in all, this is a fine debut issue. It is available not only from David Burton (e-mail address in the box above), but can be had on www.efanzines.com.

Other zines
viewed/received:

Drink Tank #70-74, Vegas Fandom Weekly #68-71, el #25, Peregrine Nations #5.4, Taboo Opinions #87, SF in SF #20, Chunga #11, Banana Wings #25, Corflu P.R. #3.

Thank you everyone for your efforts, and a major league "thank you" to Bill Burns.

Next issue: a look at fanac.org, trufen.net, and maybe some other stfnal sites of note.

www.cylon.org/images/stuff/xtra-cao1.jpg

oo

This fanzine doesn't support any of the current TAFF, DUFF, GUFF candidates, or any particular WorldCon bidding site.

So there.

From The Hinterlands

Electronic epistles and epithets that have found their way into my little out of the way place here in SouthCentralEastern Texas. Topics range everywhere from home electronics to philosophizing on fandom. Leading off this issue is a letter from one of our favorite letterhacks, Eric Mayer.

Eric Mayer writes:

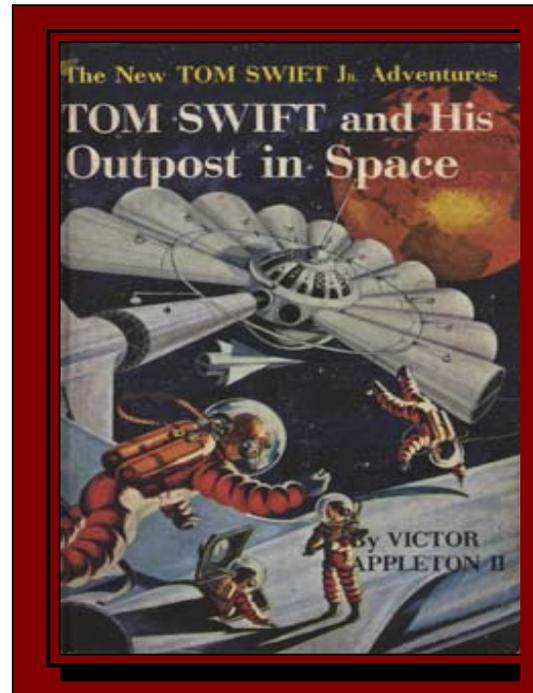
John,

I've been a little slow in my zine reading this past week. Mary and I have been trying to put together an outline for the next history mystery. Mostly I sit around muttering to myself, or make internet searches to discover that the great plot idea I had won't work because Simeon the Stylite was born in the wrong century, or else I just pound my head against the wall.

Reading your inventory of modern devices I guess I can see I must be doing the right thing, sticking to writing about sixth century Constantinople. The only device we have that was made in the 21st century is my computer monitor and that only because the monitor that came with my eight year old machine conked out. The other computer and monitor are fine and have been going for 13 or 14 years. I can't recall. Windows 3.1 still works in the 21st century so I guess that proves the physical laws of the universe remain the same all through time.

We don't even have a working television. Can't get decent recap-tion where we are worth without cable. As for cell phones...I admit,

I've never used one and wouldn't know how. I think they finally put a tower in around here someplace, but I've never been able to figure out whether I could actually make a call from someplace I might need to make a call from to another place I wanted to place a call too, and I barely have any need to get on the phone which I do know how to use.



Our phone, by the way, used to belong to the phone company, which qualifies it as a museum exhibit. We purchased it from the phone company, when we had the option to do so, when they

emancipated all their phones, and at the time it didn't seem like a good deal because phones actually cost something and when it was the company's phone they would send someone out to repair it for free. You couldn't buy a disposable phone for \$5. And wireless...well, I had a walkie-talkie when I was a kid and it had a range of a hundred yards or something. That was wild.

The con report was pretty amusing. When I was involved in computer text adventure games I noticed a lot of the writers/players were academics. In fact, a few of them seem to be making an academic career out of studying the form. One fellow wrote a book. Several have written papers and teach courses on old computer text games. Maybe you need to be focussing on fandom as a text-based communication paradigm applicable to the web or some such.

Nice article on Chris Garcia. I've been reading a few zines this past year mostly because of some names I recognized from way back (you and Joyce and Arnie Katz) and a few returned old-timers I didn't recall but who interested me by dating back to around my own time (i.e. David Burton) but it certainly helped keep my interest to find a newcomer pouring out such an interesting flood of publications. I fear I'm drawing on toward that age for excuses - - you know, how you slow down when you get older -- and too much looking back in nostalgia - - and his enthusiasm and productivity have definitely given me a needed, if figurative, kick in the creative ass. **Me, too. I think Chris's energy is infectious.**

Re the loccol...I guess what I was trying to say is that I think "timebinding" in the philosophical sense, the way Korzybski used it, means more than just an interest in history which seems to me to be the way most fans use the term when they mention it in relation to Fandom.

I agree with you and Ted in that I liked twilltone. To me, nothing was more faanish. I never encountered twilltone publications except in sf fandom. The few mimeographed things I ran across never used twilltone. The whole ditto process reeked of school exams.

By the way, the evidence suggests that, like me, you haven't figured out and/or warmed up to LiveJournal?? I've poked around. I keep thinking I might mirror my blog. I know there are sf fans there. But only one who is interested in fanzine fandom, weirdly enough. And no names I recognize. Lots of strange names. I dunno.

--
Eric

I am not keen on Live Journal for a few reasons: One, I am way too busy to be involved with it; two, like you, I can't recognize names thanks to all of the nicknames used; and three, security reasons; even with spam blockers and spy sweeper, these sites run the risk of infecting your computer with viruses and other electronic nastiness. No thanks, I am happy with what I do already.

And here's a loc from my favorite Canadian letterhack:

Lloyd Penney writes:

Dear John:

Just downloaded *In a Prior Lifetime 9*, and thank you for that. I decided that with what's inside, I'd better respond immediately.

One internet connection in our home is quite enough. We are finding that with MacAfee virus scan, and Webroot Spy Sweeper installed to protect the computer from malware, there's barely enough computer power left to actually operate the computer itself. Works great when those two programmes are deactivated, but then, we dare not go online without them. Probably need a new computer, but that's not in the cards. We are looking into getting the computer we have updated with new chips and a new hard drive. There's so much about it that's still good.

Don't think I ever saw *This House*, and probably never read that Spencer article. It will interest to see Garth's writing from that far back. ***Well, I'm working on it. Slow going; after the school year's out, then I can really get back on it.***

I'll bet you saw at that teachers' conference that there aren't many differences between those conferences and our conventions. We run them with tried and true methods that we did not invent. I've probably told you I work part-time for an agency that provides registration staff for such conferences; I've learned a few things from these conferences, and will try to bring them to local cons to see if they can be applied.

Agree with you on Chris Garcia. Youth gives him enthusiasm, and the positive feedback, in addition to the dozens of locs we send him, keeps him going. His father John was involved in fandom way back, so he got a head start in this stuff we all could have used.



Who's taking the blame or praise for that term with my name in it? The Purcell-Sullivan Axis of Zine Creation? Some have noticed (I think Ted White mentions it here) that most locols now seem to be composed of me, you, Chris Garcia, Peter Sullivan and Eric Mayer. Are people getting tired of the same names? Do some faneds publish so many of our letters, they are considering asking us to share the publishing costs? John, I imagine you have to filter out some of my British spellings, too. ***Ah, heck with it.***

I don't mind the term Core Fandom, but as Eric Mayer, I don't care for anything that becomes a tool to exclude others. I try to immerse myself in what I'm doing, but I often feel like I'm on the outside looking in. We're retiring from

our local convention, and even now, I still don't feel like I've been fully involved with what does on in the committee structure. Same goes for fanzines sometimes. I seldom really feel a part of things. Not for lack of trying, but...

Greetings to Ted White. You're right, the wording of that line was not good. I checked my loc, which was to IAPL 6, and I can see the confusion. Replace the word "were" with the word "weren't", and that is what I meant. Reads a lot clearer, too: "Ted was positive and negative here and there, but at least they weren't those damned KTF reviews..."

My carelessness, my bad, and my apologies. I did try to direct clubzines from the Canadian clubs I am in touch with to reprint your reviews, and some of them did.

With our impending conrunning retirement, we may have some more time, but we've always found that other interests rush in to fill the vacuum. Yvonne will be working in space advocacy, and may be consulting with a group trying to bring the International Space Development Conference to Toronto for 2009. I plan to do more writing for zines. I find myself that some of my writing is a little dull; time to flash it up a little, keep grinding out the locs, and perhaps do an article or several.

My emergency was to correct any wrong impressions I might have given in my loc. Hope it's cleared up now. I may have just made the local last zine, but I think I might be first this time. Take care, and see you nextish.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

*All seems clear as mud to me. And this time around you were the third loc received, well before any self-imposed publishing deadline loomed. If, Lloyd, you do start doing more fan-writing, I am positive that you are considering supporting your favorite fanzines, *wink-wink, nudge-nudge.**

Chris Garcia writes:

And here we are again, friend, sitting on opposite ends of a network designed for Researchers to share datasets. I've often wondered if they knew that I, one of those chosen to document their existence, would be using the net to send letters of comment to my favourite zines. I'll have to ask them when next we meet.

First off, you're showing a little ass on the cover. Are you trying to compete for the Fannish pervert market with *The Drink Tank*? Then again, I remember old covers of *Holier Than Thou* and realize that we're both pretty tame. **Have you read some of those old issues of HTT? Their content was just about as perverted as their covers. It was a fun fanzine.**

What's amazing is that there were people in the 1960s who had a vision that computers would come into the home and we're still not there. There was a guy named Jim Sutherland who built a computer called the Echo-IV. E-IV was made from components the guy brought home from his day job (I think it was at Westinghouse) and he made it as a machine to run his household duties. There were several terminals throughout the house where tasks could be programmed.



The machine controlled all the digital clocks throughout the house, managed the alarm system, the garage door, the lighting when they were away. He was hoping that it would become an inventory system, but he never did get it working. Basically, he got tired of replacing parts and fixing it in the middle of the night, so he gave it to us. We've got it in deep storage now.

A College Teacher's Conference? Yes! If you've read my report on Wedding Crashers and the stunts I'd pull, you'll know that Teachers Conferences are gold. I would have made a killing in Houston! The Daily Grills in LA are wonderful. Not for the food, but for the lovely waitresses. There's one named Melody at the one in the old LosCon hotel. I could tell you stories...

Wow, an entire Fanzine review column dedicated to me! That's like giving Red Skelton a one-man show at the Met! Two minor points: The Computer Museum is in Mountain View (almost ½ way between San Jose and San Francisco) and I'm only 31. That extra year is VERY important to me. I suffer from a rare disease often kills its victims at the age of 32 or 33. It's called the Agile Funny Fat Man Syndrome and it's taken the lives of John Belushi and Chris Farley. That year may mean a lot, though it can be defeated (Horatio Sanz is

still alive at 36). I don't publish as much as I'd like (I'd like to have a weekly, and bi-weekly, a monthly, a bi-monthly, a quarterly, a twice-yearly and a yearly going, but that's not possible) and since I'm about to be taking on more responsibility with SF/SF, it's getting tougher to maintain my APAs (to the point where I've dropped from one until my Sub to another comes up and I'll return and drop the other).

ZIM!!!! I love Zim. A good friend of mine is pals with Johnan Vasquez and was even featured in an issue of Johnny The Homicidal Maniac.

Wow, nice long LoC from Ted White. His comments on the small group that comment on everything that pops up on eFanzines has a ring of truth. I'd add Peter and you to that list. We just have too much to say! I'd like to see more people commenting on eZines, and Arnie has gotten folks like Robert Lichtman and Mark Plummer as regular commentors, but I'm happy with what I've got.

Chris

Thank you, sir, for the corrections and clarifications on the information about you last issue. <> It's not that the a small circle of fanzine fans have so much to say - which might be true, but I won't get into that now - I think we show up in locs so often because we have "fannish courtesy": when you get/read a zine, you send a loc in response as a matter of courtesy to show that fan-ed you appreciate their efforts and all. It was all about keeping in touch back in the day, and some of us still feel obligated to do this.

At this point, I would like to mention that I may start editing down letters to key points in the future, which is what an editor should do. A current trend, I have noticed, in a lot of e-zines is to simply copy-paste whole locs into the main document. But the following letter - all 2,017 words of it - had so much good stuff in it that I really couldn't bring myself to edit it down. To whit,

Ted White writes:

Dear John,

Another day at work with nothing (momentarily) to do, so I check with efanazines and here's IN A PRIOR LIFETIME #9, hot off "the press."

Striking cover. As an admirer of the female form, I'm quite taken with it. But what does it actually represent (beyond a take on the famous drawing)? Is the female lying on a giant roulette wheel? Are those hands at the bottom those of bettors? Intriguing.

High-tech houses: No, your house isn't high-tech -- just some of its contents. They are building genuinely high-tech houses, however. These have all sorts of cable wiring built into the walls, and are called "smart" houses. You can theoretically monitor and control the house remotely, and all its functions (temperature, lighting, etc.) are computer-controlled.

I have mixed feelings about this. Such houses are very vulnerable to power failures. To keep one running you'd need a backup power supply. One local company advertises a non-generator-form of power backup, which I gather uses batteries, capacitors, or some such -- and

it's Not Cheap. But in this era of million-dollar houses down the block (a new one built across the street from me sold for \$1.1 million), I suppose that's not a major issue.

You have three kids. That guarantees the presence of a variety of hi-tech gadgets. I'm past that -- my kids are all grown, or living with another parent -- but my 18 year old son has a collection of game-playing devices (of every era and type), as well as a TV set, a computer, and a cell-phone. (At his age I had an ABDick 100 and a Gestetner 160 mimeos, a lightbox, tons of lettering guides and shading plates and styli, and a makeshift mono record-playing system, along with maybe 100 LPs.)

My house has three TV sets, four VCRs, a DVD player, two DVD player/VCR combos, three stereo systems (in different rooms) (all with back-channelspeakers, plus turntables, CD players, reel-to-reel tape decks and cassette tape decks), two standalone CD burners (one two-drawer, one one-drawer), and a Betamax VCR linked to a PCM unit which I used to record my band digitally in the '80s (producing hundreds of hours of tapes). (Currently the band I'm in has a mixing board with a hard-drive which can record up to 16 channels separately and simultaneously. This cost us \$600 on eBay and is the equivalent of about \$30,000 worth of analog studio equipment in use a couple of decades ago. Ain't technology wunnerful?) Plus a bunch of computers (three on my desk), the most recent of which has 1 GB of memory and a 160 gig hard-drive, and a DVD+-burner.

But my house is delightfully old (built in 1935, added to in

1946), and pretty low-tech. I have a wood-burning stove in my living room which has supplied half the heat each winter for a number of years now. That's all that has allowed me to escape the worst crunch of the Energy Crisis. That, and a lot of physical labor, acquiring and cutting/splitting firewood.

Amusing to see a "con report" of a mundane convention. But where were the room parties? And if the mundanes were unable to deal with a TV monitor showing massages, one can only wonder what they'd make of serial backrubs, much less late-night skinny-dipping.

Good overview-review of Chris Garcia's fanac. The guy has positively "exploded" into fanpubbing. One of my strongest regrets is that at last year's Corflu I didn't get into a conversation with Chris -- whose zines I hadn't read yet then. I've sent him a piece (on the 1967 Worldcon) for his "Worldcon Issue," and a LoC on DT #69, but so far he has yet to use the latter.

The thing is, efanazines has empowered Chris -- and, for that matter, you, Dave Burton, Arnie Katz and most of all Earl Kemp -- to crank fmz out as fast as you like. All you have to do is to "prepare" an issue, and Bill Burns effectively "publishes" it for you, saving you not only from the expense and effort of printing out copies, collating them, and mailing them, but the obligation to maintain your own separate websites on which to post your zines. Plus, efanazines is an ideal Central Location on the web for people looking for zines. Win-win, eh?



Lots of meaty LoCs. I like Peter Sullivan's and I agree with most of what he says, but I really wish he'd stop spelling "zine" as "zeen." It's an affectation and I can live with that, but when he quotes others and changes their spelling to match his, I feel that he's going A Step Too Far. I've seen "zeen" used to differentiate between fanzines and mundane zines, describing the latter, but that's not how Peter uses it. And if he came up through postal Diplomacy fandom, I'm reasonably certain he was originally exposed to "zine," since John Boardman (a founder of postal Diplomacy, and an old friend of mine) would have used it.

Eric Mayer doesn't like the term, "Core Fandom." I can understand that, because it's a relatively recent coinage, but I think it's valuable and descriptive.

The whole problem arises from the Balkanization of fandom, which began in the '50s and was given considerable impetus by the advent of /Star Trek/ and media fans in the '60s and '70s. Before this time fandom was too small to do much splintering. Oh, there were odd offshoots, like the Burroughs Bibliophiles, and the first con-fans were turning up, but when All of Fandom numbered 1,000 or less,

fandom was pretty coherent, and most fans were what was later called "omnifans." That is, they were involved, to varying degrees, in all aspects of fandom. We were all collectors, prozine letterhacks, con-goers, and active in fanzines. And we all knew, or knew of, each other.

Now many fans are specialized. Some collect. Some involve themselves in conventions (and may attend scores of conventions each year). No one letterhacks to the prozines any more, and there's not one prozine editor (themselves a dying breed) who has any clue about the value of lettercolumns to prozines. (They all edit serial anthologies for a disappearing audience.) And fanzines? Ask any con-goer and if they even know what fanzines are, they'll tell you that fanzine fans are part of some elitist backwater eddy.



So we find ourselves marginalized as "fanzine fandom." But, as some of us like to point out, our interest is not exclusively in fanzines. It's really in the community that still surrounds fanzines, and still acknowledges them as a significant part of our fandom. How to more accurately describe that community? Well, "Core Fandom" (did Arnie Katz coin

it?)(**Yes, he did.**) seems to do the job better than any other term or phrase I've heard. It's better than "fanzine fandom," which implies that we're fans of fanzines.

And it's historically accurate. We in Core Fandom can trace our roots directly to Original Fandom. We encompass what was originally embodied in Original Fandom and remains at the "core" of present day fandom. "Core Fandom" affirms our validity as fans.

I think Eric is on much more solid ground in his analysis of "timebinder." I think he's right about its original meaning and the possible inappropriateness of Heinlein's usage of it, which introduced the term to fandom.

But, usage evolves and terms redefine themselves. Just as "sercon," coined as a put-down of fans/fanzines which took SF and themselves too seriously, has evolved into a neutral (if not positive) term happily used by those to whom it was once applied, so "timebinder" has acquired a newer meaning, one more literally in line with the word itself, and ignoring Korzybski's original usage. In other words, "timebinder" now has a "fannish" meaning, perhaps unique to fandom.

Let us not forget that the first fannish e-list was called Timebinders (and it's still up and running).

I've decided, on further contemplation, that the quote in my letter from Lloyd Penney about my fmz reviews, "...but at least they were those damned KTF reviews that give no benefit to anyone," was probably intended to read "...but at least they weren't...." That would make more

sense if he was talking about the reviews posted on efanzines.

I don't think of those reviews as "critical" at all. They were not written to critique the fanzines, nor primarily for the benefit of the fanzines' editors -- which my HABAKKUK reviews were -- but simply to introduce club fans to a variety of fanzines by making them sound interesting and appealing. So they are "whitebread" or "vanilla" reviews, presenting each and every fanzine reviewed in its most favorable light.

I had high hopes for that column when I launched it and solicited its appearance in five regional clubzines (plus efanzines -- but that was Bill's welcome notion). I remain at times a naïve idealist about fandom.

Fanzines have always had a tremendous appeal to me and I wanted to share that enthusiasm, to turn on a few club fans to them. I wanted to reverse what I saw as a disheartening trend in "fandom" away from fanzines. I didn't expect a Big Turnaround, but I would have been happy if I'd sucked one of two people into fanzines.

It didn't happen. Periodically I checked with the editors of the fanzines I reviewed. "Get any queries, based on my review?" I'd ask. And the answer was always the same: No. I think it's possible some readers of the efanzines-posted reviews may have electronically investigated a few fmz, but no one sent any faneds any Sticky Quarters, or even an email of inquiry.

Now I think I was doing it All Wrong. The way to suck new fans into fanzines is not to review them in clubzines. The way to do it is the way Chris Garcia is doing it: to "pub yer ish," and

suck people into it. THE DRINK TANK has a whole cast and crew who are new to me and who seem to be enjoying their participation a lot. Kudos to Chris. **Total Agreement, Ted.**

Still in my LoC and your response, the question of Standards in fmz is an old and unresolved one. Since pubbing a fanzine is a wholly voluntary thing, no one can force an faned to do anything he/she doesn't want to do with it. And I've never seen Standards as something Imposed From Above on any fan.

Rather, I think -- well, I like to think -- we all strive to improve, as part of our never-ending growth as individuals. And thus we strive to improve on our previous efforts. We strive for better, more attractive and readable presentation. We strive to improve our writing in terms of both clarity and style. We strive to make the content of what we write and publish better. And if someone offers us useful advice toward that end, whether it's spelling corrections or advice on how to handle a subject, we ought not to allow our egos to form a barrier to that advice.



Throughout my lifetime in fandom I've encountered many writers whom I've admired, and I've learned a lot from each of them. My most recent "influence" -- as of 25 years ago, now -- was Greg Pickersgill, the vigor of whose prose just knocked me out. And each time I've picked up something that has improved my fanwriting. It's all a Work In Progress that won't end until I die. (And that, of course, will never happen. Will it?)

What happened at the bottom of page 17? Your type fonts and sizes shifted. Why? To fill more space, to make an even 20 pages? And page 20 -- blank on the right side. My first thought was anachronistic: that you were leaving room (as we often used to do) for the mailing labels, stamps, etc., on printed-out copies. But do you actually print out copies? (I like the Times Roman -- serifed -- face a lot better than the sans-serif faces you used in most of the issue, and I hope you return to it next issue.)

Another good, solid issue, John.

All best,
Ted

First response is to your last paragraph: In formatting last issue's lettercolumn, I simply forgot to make that last section match the rest. My bad. Plus, I try to leave the right column blank as a mailer for hard copies I mail out in trade.

When I bother to think about it - which really isn't that often, I assure you - I agree with your assessment that the technology, especially what Bill Burns is doing with his website, has empowered a batch of old fans to get active again. Speaking for myself, I enjoyed producing dead tree zines back in the 70s and 80s, and modern technology has made fmz production so much, much easier. And you are so right, Ted, that Bill's function as "publisher" has made this process even easier. He so deserved that special FAAN Award for efanzines.com.

Some Closing Thoughts

It is 11:40 PM on April 13, 2006, and Daniel has finally tired of playing video games and been tucked into his new loft bed. Josie has fallen asleep while watching television in her room, and Valerie and Penny are out at Wal-Mart shopping for things we need and don't need for the house. All is quiet, so it's a perfect time to sit at the computer back by the sliding door leading out to the backyard patio and make the push to get this issue done.

The wind picks up, and a swirl of color catches my eye. I look out back, and notice that our rose bush is resplendent in bloom, a multitude of flowers waving majestically in the breeze. It is so hugely beautiful that I grab the digital camera, step out back, and take the following picture:



The photo doesn't do it justice, and you can't smell the sweetness tinting the air, but I realize one thing:

I am a *terrible* gardener. Definitely not a constant gardener, nor even a Chauncey Gardener. Chancy is more like it, given the way that I rarely do much yard work beyond mowing and trimming with the occasional weeding; if something survives for any great length of time in our yard, it really is only by chance.

Fast forward to the next day. It is a beautiful Good Friday late afternoon, and I am out here on the patio, grilling bratwurst and hotdogs, reading the latest *Banana Wings*, a tall glass of ice water on the patio table next to me. Behind my chair, the rose bush rustles in the breeze, and the sweet smell washes over and around me.

It is a moment like this when I really don't give a crap about being a decent gardener. Just give me a beautiful day, brats on the grill, a cold drink, and a fanzine to read - even a good, old-fashioned science fiction book will do - and I am in a perfect state of bliss.

Nirvana has arrived. Don't bother me.

See you folks next issue,
John Purcell