

In a Prior Lifetime #15



September, 2006

Special Post-WorldCon Issue

This is ***In a Prior Lifetime #15***, the September, 2006 issue.

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Chris for TAFF

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Bemused Natterings

An interesting question usually comes up whenever the World Science Fiction Convention rears its all-engulfing maw ever Labor Day Weekend (except for this year, but stay with me here), and it is this: Why do science fiction fans pub fanzines?



Now, this is a valid question, and I am positive that I can provide an invalid answer. At the very least, I can provide an answer that is quite valid for me:

Because it is fun.

From where I am sitting, this is all the reason I need. There has been raging in fandom for over a year now (it seems) about what constitutes a fanzine; this is the electronic vs. traditional paper debate, and has branched off into the nether realms of discussion to include bloggings, LiveJournals, fans with websites,

and so on. A few months ago I plunked out a rudimentary homepage onto the Internet, and haven't done much with it since. In fact, last week I did work on it a bit, wrote a little thingie and added some other stuff, but haven't figured out how to update it on-line. (I know, I know; it's not hard, but really, I just haven't gotten around to doing it yet.) Funny thing, too, updating my homepage was an enjoyable way to eat up some free time I had last week at school.

Now, I don't spend great amounts of time cogitating on deep, underlying meanings of fandom and fanac. However, there are times when I do think about why I do what I do, and I believe a lot of us do this. And chances are we all reach the same conclusion: "Because it is fun."

The bottom line always come back around to whatever the individual wants to do once he or she encounters this microcosm of Western society called Science Fiction Fandom. This really is one place where a person can simply be himself or herself and be accepted at that level. Chris Garcia is the most recent person to say this (in his *Drink Tank* #95), and thus whenever I start in on wondering how and why I got into fandom for the first time back in 1973, and now again in the past couple years, the answer remains the same:

Because it is fun. I do not require any more reason to write and pub a zine other than that.

Dust From the attic redux

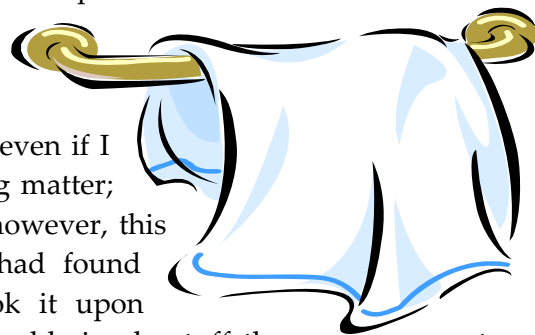
Here's a reprint from one of my late 20th Century zines, Bangweulu #3 (January, 1987), which falls under the thematic purview of this 21st-Century zine, namely World Convention tales. This one is definitely a bit different. When originally published, it ran under the title of "The Towel Goes Stateside... (with apologies to Walt Willis)" , and the really neat thing about it all is that Walt Willis himself sent a loc to me which was pubbed in Bangweulu #4 (June, 1987); at the end of this article, I am reprinting one paragraph of Walt's loc to kind of tie it all together. Therefore, I am keeping it pretty much as it first appeared, with a couple fix-ups here and there.

The towel goes stateside

For reasons now unknown to me, although I do believe it was because my mom packed it in my suitcase, when I attended MidAmeriCon in 1976, I brought along a blue-and-white striped towel. I guess I was going to use it as some sort of a beach towel, since the Hotel Muehlebach had a swimming pool. Be that as it may, I brought this towel to the '76 worldcon.

I remember MAC with fondness – first worldcon, y'know – and had a terrific time. Dennis Jarog, a Chicago fan, and I shared a room, and we chummed around with lots of fannish friends we had known for a few years. One of the people we knew was David K.M. Klaus, who was working concom as a gopher, badger, and whatever other type of ground rodent he could be. By the end of the convention Klaus was fit for burial, and Dennis and I let him crash in our room on the last day. By the time we had left, though, Dave was still crashed out – some 11 hours after his head first hit the pillow. When he awoke I was long gone, but Dave discovered something I had inadvertently left behind: a slightly used, and quite lonely, blue-and-white striped towel.

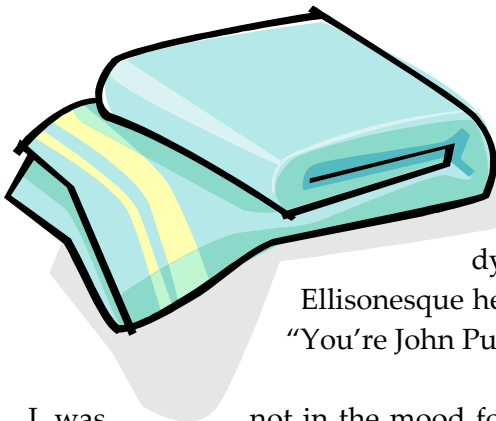
I was unaware of leaving it behind. Besides, even if I *had* remembered, it wasn't an earth-shattering matter; just a little ol' towel to me. To Dave Klaus, however, this was now of monumental importance. He had found something that was my property, and took it upon himself to return it. Now, normal people would simply stuff the towel into an over-sized envelope and shove it in the mail. Not Dave Klaus. Oh, no. He had to *personally* deliver it into my hands. And this coming from a fan who liked to attend conventions – plus the fact that I knew nothing of what he was doing.



Keep in mind that I, too, attend conventions. And therein lay the problem which Klaus had to solve: which cons would I most likely attend? Answer: Midwestern cons. SO off he went to con after con after con. . . I-cons, Windycons, Archcons, Byobcons, and also Constellation, Denvention II , Chicon IV, and LACon II. Klaus started this odd-yssey in the fall of 1976. With him always, tucked neatly away in his suitcase, was that lonely ol' blue-and-white striped towel.

We kept missing each other, though. We had near-misses at Iguanacon and Windycon, of the other cons he and my towel attended, I never went to any! Naturally, I would love to attend just a smattering of them, but I could never afford such a schedule. So, it turned out that while I attended some cons, the team of Klaus & Towel went to scads of them.

His big mistake was in never attending the one convention where he simply could not miss me – MINICON. I have been to every Minicon (except 1982) since 1973. To make a long, dumb, and ridiculous story mercifully short, Dave finally managed to attend Minicon 20. Easter weekend of 1985. *Nine years* after it began, it looked as if his journey was coming to an end.



It almost didn't. Last issue I told about working the Minicon 20 concommittee as a sub-department head, which does not leave much time for traipsing around the hotel for parties. At the Dead Dog Party Sunday night, while I lay dying in a consuite chair, this bearded guy of Ellisonsque height came up to me, read my namebadge, and said, "You're John Purcell, right?"

I was not in the mood for banter. "So?" was my response. "Wait here!" this guy commanded and vanished. Befuddled and uncaring, I resumed my dying. A half-hour passed. And then this bearded mystery man reappeared before me.

In his hands was a clean, neatly folded, blue-and-white striped towel. I recognized it as a match to a set my parents once owned years before, and made the comment that it looked familiar.

"Well, it *should* look familiar, " he said, finally introducing himself as David K.M. Klaus. "It's yours."

"Hanh?"

“You left it in your room at MidAmeriCon, John. I figured it had to be yours, since I called Dennis and he said it wasn’t his. I’m returning it to you.” With that, he thrust the towel into my grasp.

By sheer coincidence, Minicon’s roving reporter, John Stanley, was johnny-on-the-spot with his camera. Another Minneapolis fan, Jeanne Mealy, was with him as a witness to this historic (or is that histrionic?) moment. Here is the photograph John Stanley took of the momentous presentation:



The thing that kills me is the thought that this blue-and-white towel – this insignificant piece of terry-cloth – has been to more conventions than I have! Not only that, but it’s been at cons that I have always *wanted* to attend but could never afford them.

This was a truly mind-blowing experience. All of the most bizarre combinations of fate swirled in my brain:

- The towel went to Boston in 1980. So did lots of Minn-stfers. Klaus knew that, too. Now in the frigging hell didn’t he simply give the towel to, say, Dean Gahlon? It would have perfect sense. Of course, Dean never knew about the towel, so he might have left it at the Noreascon II hotel, leaving it for some other fan to find thinking that *Dean* was the towel’s rightful owner, and so... I don’t want to think about this anymore...
- Instead of ChiCon IV – a mere 8-hour;s drive from Minneapolis – in 1982, I went on a fishing trip in Northern Minnesota. The Fates are cruel, I tell you...

- By my calculations, since 1973 I have attended 42 conventions. From August, 1976 to April, 1985, my stupid, blue-and-white striped towel attended *47 conventions*. Disgusting. My mind boggles every time I think about it. And believe me, I try not to think along those lines. It gets me very depressed.

And so ended the incredible odd-yssey of David K.M. Klaus and his quest to return John Purcell's towel. I have no intention of elevating Klaus' foolhardiness to the stature of fannish legend, but serve this up as a fine example of how totally warped-out a fan can get over something as trifling as a forgotten towel left in a hotel room at some long ago convention.

How I wish that towel could talk, though. Think of the tales it could tell of bygone Windycons, Archcons, and assorted WorldCons. Ah, me. I guess I will never fully comprehend the mind of a fan.

If anything, now I have something to take with me to conventions from now on. Maybe I'll pre-register my towel for the next WorldCon.



The happy couple, reunited at last!

A little over a month later, I got a letter in the mail:

Many thanks for *Bangweulu* #3. I liked the friendly and informative editorials and the towel thing was nice. It reminded me that I brought my Swingrite practice golf club to the Leeds Convention in 1985 to lend to Chuck Harris and he says he's going to return at the Brighton Worldcon this year. Obviously with the growth of conventions, this sort of thing is increasing all the time. Do you suppose already there is a whole lifestyle swirling around in space-time like a sort of mobile Sargasso Sea?

WALT WILLIS

A final editorial word here: That towel is long gone now, ratted and torn over the years. But I did actually bring it to a couple more Minicons before retiring it once and for all with a proper fannish burial:

*I burned it in my grill while a cassette tape played "Amazing Grace" by the famed Black Watch. Bagpipes and everything. It was touching. So long, thy faithful terry-cloth companion. We shall be reunited at that great con suite in the sky some day. *sniff* I'm getting a bit verklempt... Talk amongst yourselves...*

EDITORIAL NOTE: I apologize for the graininess of those two old photographs. I no longer have the original pictures to scan and import, so I had to resort to scanning the pages of *Bangweulu* #3 and attempt to adjust the original xeroxed images to improve their clarity. My efforts seemed to help a little bit. In fact, the aged-look and ghostly images of Dave Klaus and myself from nearly 20 years ago might even be considered appropriate.



From *The Fan Art of 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*

Retrieved from Internet on 30 March 2006. www.cylon.org/images/stuff/xtra-ca01.jpg

Special Worldcon 2006 Section

What follows are contributions from two of the many folks who actually attended LA Con IV last month, and a brief Not-WorldCon Report from yours truly. Let's start things off with a collage of impressions collected in Anaheim by one of contemporary fandom's premier loc-writers, Mr. Lloyd Penney, of Toronto, Canada.

IMPRESSIONS OF A WORLDCON

By Lloyd Penney

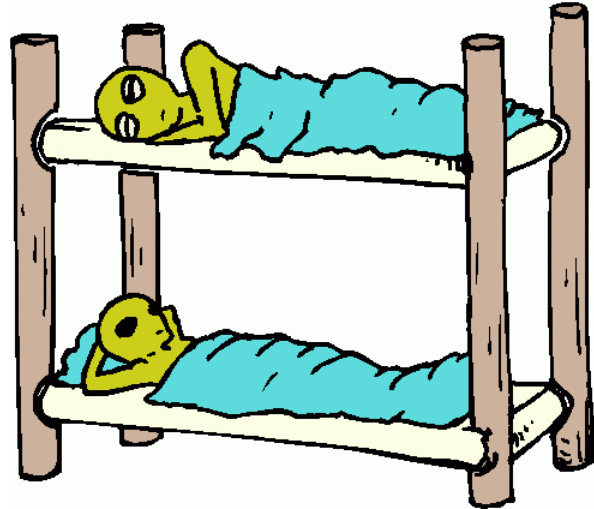
music by Claude Deglerssy: *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faunch*

I suppose I could give you the usual Worldcon report, as in I did this, then I went to this panel, and then I met this person, etc., but I am certain that if you really want one of those, I'm sure the Internet is full of them already. I'm going to try something different, and not entirely subjective, and try to give you my impressions of the Worldcon, and they come through the people who attended and ran the event.

My subjectivity here comes from the fact that I worked with a lot of the committee (Yvonne and I were the Canadian agents for the con), and I got to know some of the people who worked on the con. Many are acquaintances now, and some are friends. Also, my subjectivity comes from the fact that my previous Worldcon was Torcon 3. I shall say no more... Still, impressions are what's wanted here, empathic, empathetic, emotional, whatever you wish to call them, and here they are.

LAcon IV seemed quiet, yet full of energy. Almost every aspect I saw ran smoothly. There were a few cranky faces here and there, stressed from months or years of work finally coming to a head, but for the most part, smiling faces greeted all who arrived to enjoy their convention. Best of all, for those who had just arrived, the LAcon staffers we first met were patient, and that ability can be rare. The people involved, cranky or otherwise, issued a quiet competence, one that gave everyone the impression that everything was going well, all was smooth, and welcome to our convention. The busy fans, those in charge and making the convention work, are perhaps the best-adjusted, and the friendliest. They exuded a professional attitude in a fan setting. There was no panic from realizing that the con's here, and geez, I hope everything works. That competence and confidence reflected the anticipation of the attendees who perhaps may have not been able to get to a Worldcon in a while (couldn't get to the UK for Interaction), or regret of those who knew that this would be a good Worldcon because they wouldn't be able to get

to the next one. (It's in Yokohama, Japan, and as good as it is to have the Japanese bidding and winning, it is entirely outside my ability to save enough money in one year and go. I can't be the only one in that boat.)



Every Worldcon has it, I see it in the faces of those who arrive...the happiness of being in the heart of Fandom, the annual fannish family reunion, the joy and relief of being able to be yourself in an appreciative crowd.

The smiles of those who meet friends they haven't seen in ages, the slightly overwhelmed feeling of being at the biggest convention you've been at in a while, or maybe ever. There's also the challenge of cramming as much fun, party, junk food, alcohol, etc. into five days as you can. Even the pros I saw seemed excited or proud or just satisfied to be there. It was just plain the best place to be to get your dose of skiffy.

As the convention entered its first few days, there was the excitement of planning dinner expeditions, planning and scheming for parties, either going to or running. There were smiling faces going to special events, seeing the special exhibits, looking forward to the masquerade or Hugos or other special get-together. Yet, there were the usual faces I saw, and see every Worldcon I go to, who cast a minor pallor on the proceedings. Some attendees project an air of loneliness in a crowd, as if they are unable to reach out, make friends or become part of any group. They look as if they didn't want to be there, yet there they are, vaguely unsettled. Some of them are in costume, providing local color, and providing something interesting to see for a few seconds, and not much more.

Other fans stand around looking distant or stern, perhaps trying in vain to look important, or hoping in vain that someone will want to talk to them. Maybe they're just spoiling for an argument or looking for someone to insult, I don't know. They seem unhappy, with never a smile on their lips. I always wonder why they're there. Maybe their self-esteem is so low, they need someone to verbally attack, Ghu knows there's plenty of them online. Maybe the truly brave ones would rather abuse others to their faces. There's also the few who feel they're at the centre of the convention, and really have no clue about what's going on around them. Then again, there's the working staff in the surrounding hotel, convention centre and other stores and shops. There's the painted-on smiles of the front desk staff, the askance looks of the convention centre staff, and the incompetence of service workers. They're bored, and they don't care, and if I had their jobs, I'm sure I'd be the same.

But...the service workers, the staff, the unhappy and distant fans, they were visible, but they did not detract from the convention. It was busy, happily frantic, constructive and fun for the vast majority. If there were crises, and I'm sure there were a few, they were

taken care of, and no one bothered to pay attention to the men behind the curtain. It was a great show for me, and part of my own happiness was a reflection of interacting with so many other happy people around me. Great Worldcon, folks!

Lloyd Penney

One of the best things about fandom – if not the absolute greatest thing about being involved in fandom – is going to a convention to make new friends, reacquaint yourself with old friends, and connect with people you’ve corresponded with for a long time. The following is a first-hand account of one such LACon IV moment: when Lloyd Penney and Chris Garcia met in person for the very first time.

It needs to be mentioned here that Lloyd sent in this piece the night before the Crocodile Hunter, Steve Irwin, was tragically killed by a stingray while filming an episode for one of his shows. In honor of Mr. Irwin’s sense of humor, I over-rode Lloyd’s request to rewrite it because Lloyd felt that he was responsible for the fatal accident. Well, I think that the best tributes are those which emulate a person’s character and sense of humor. So that being said, here is

STALKING THE WILD GARCIA

BY LLOYD PENNEY

After more than a year of frantic fanzines and lengthy locs, after round-robins of regular repartee, after promises to meet somewhere at the Worldcon - a nebulous location to begin with - Christopher J. Garcia and I had a date with fate. Where to find him, I wondered...I’ve got to track him down, Steve Irwin-style. Crikey!



First when tracking your prey, as in stalking the wild Garcia, you have to know what he looks like. Hmmm, from the few pics we could find, “he looks an extra large hobbit”, my wife Yvonne observed. “Well, I’m not about to ask him to remove his shoes,” I responded. There are fleeting pictures of the wild Garcia on the Internet, but CNN, of all networks, came to my rescue with footage of the elusive Garcia as the

self-styled media whore, yakking about the anniversary of the personal computer. Aha, said I, there he be! I’ve got him in my sights! Crikey!

But now that I know who to look for, where might he be? Worldcon is a big place to look, needles and haystacks coming to mind. But once again, I had help. The great folks running LAcon IV did me, and so many more, a huge favour by printing the programme on their website so we could do some early pre-convention programme planning. Hmmm, finding the wild Garcia was first and foremost in my mind; the helpful programme book listed this panel:

13 Blogs & E-Fanzines CC-207C

...and among the panelists, Christopher J. Garcia. I decided I would track him down on his home turf, the fanzine panel. He had challenged me in a previous Drink Tank, and I knew I would have to go fully armed and ready for battle.

From our home base of Toronto, we were off to the balmy climes of Anaheim. After a couple of days of touristy stuff to relax and acclimatize, I prepared for Chris' challenge. It was - a tacky-off. I packed a bright lime green t-shirt, and my favorite red, yellow and green Hawaiian, amongst other brightly-coloured items from my tacky arsenal. I knew I'd win this ultimate match.

And then, off to the first day of Worldcon. I knew who to look for, what he looked like, and where to look. As long as he wasn't an alligator, I would prevail victorious. I walked into room 207C at the convention centre, and spotted a hobbitish figure at the head table. My prey was in sight. He spotted me, in return, and he smiled. "That could only be one person!" he announced, and without pause, he pounced on me!

And he hugged stuffing out of me. And I hugged him back. And, he returned to the head table to carry on with his panel. Well, what would you do? I was perplexed. He wasn't even dressed in tacky clothes! My challenge had been rebuffed, or even ignored, but I decided to change my tack.

I tracked the wild Garcia through most of his panels over the next few days, and the halls echoed with his territorial call, "Chris for TAFF! Chris for TAFF!", all the time hoisting a similarly-lettered sign. I broached his every encounter with humour and as smart a mouth as I could muster. Yet, I reluctantly admitted defeat. I could barely keep up with this wild hairy beast as he roamed the halls, issuing his primal cries. Besides, if I had caught him, I'd have to clean him, and there simply wouldn't be room in my check-in luggage on the trip home.



We feted him, we heckled him at every turn, we even bought him one of the fabled red TAFF t-shirts at the fan fund auction in the fanzine lounge, and nothing fazed him. What did we have to do to best him? There was nothing that we could do; he was a feisty one!

However, I was yet claiming some measure of victory. I had encountered the Garcia, and I had been assimilated. And enjoyed every minute of it. My time at the Worldcon was a great time, worth every second and cent, and memorable because of many events, the best of which was at the happy hands of Christopher J. Garcia. Until next we meet, Mr. Garcia. . .

Crikey!

Lloyd Penney



In the interest of fairness, I offered Chris the chance for rebuttal, to set the story straight, to really tell the honest, unadulterated tale of

The Meeting between Lloyd Penney and Chris Garcia: The Real Story

I'm not sure what you've heard, but here's the straight dope on the meeting between me and Lloyd Penney as it happened on August 23rd, 2006 at the Anaheim Convention Center.

There I was about to start my panel on Blogs & eZines. James Bacon was there, fuming and mumbling in a language that resembled English only angrier and faster. Andy Trembley was there, scheming for his next evil, Hollister in 2008-like concept while

twirling his mustache. Teresa Neilsen-Hayden was there, making light of the all the non-sense that flowed around her.

And there I was, laptop in front of me working on the *Giant-Sized Annual Drink Tank with Action Foldout*. I had just laid out the page of two large breasted Pirate Wenches getting' it on when I saw something at the end of the hall. It was a towering force of nature that I could not define. I knew he was an important person because he had a notebook and a pencil and had been scribbling furiously. As soon as he came into the light, I could tell who he was...The Canadian Wild Man, Lloyd Penney.

As he walked the aisle, everyone seemed to pause and stare. That was THE Lloyd Penney. There were tales told about how he once managed to LoC 73 issues of a zine in one letter! There, standing before us was the man Harry Warner himself would have told to send fewer LoCs. He took a seat and the panel began.

We were talking about things dealing with blogs and a flame war broke out. I simply finished off my ish and then started in on the next issue of *Claims Department* when I saw that Lloyd was walking towards me with a crazed look in his eyes. I didn't know if this was a Canadian thing, but he dropped a piece of paper in front of me that had been folded in half. When I opened it, it was a LoC on the issue I had just finished...plus six others I had done in the hallway while waiting for the previous panel to finish.

Truly, this was the Messiah of eLoCution that had been foretold.

That was the real way I met Mr. Lloyd Penney. Any other version you'll hear is a damned lie.

Chris Garcia

In my previous lifetime as a fanzine fan – gee, wonder where I got the idea for naming this zine? – one of the things that I used to do was write up reports of trips that I had taken at the same time the World Science Fiction Convention was going on. For example, in 1981 instead of going to Denvention II, which was not too far from Minneapolis, I went to Richmond, Virginia to visit Leslie David, eventually meeting up with Mike Wallis and Susan Madison, who were down from Toronto instead of going to the worldcon. Then, in 1982 when ChiCon IV was a mere 7 hour drive from Minneapolis, I went up to the wilds of Northern Minnesota – the Boundary Waters, to be exact – on an 11-day fishing trip. In both cases, I wrote up these trips in true fannish



con-report fashion. Well, once again in the spirit of reviving the past, here's my latest installment of my Not-Worldcon travels. This time, I traveled all the way to Brenham, Texas! Whow! The journey must have been exhausting. . .

My Not-Worldcon 2006 Report

While everyone – well, alright, not really everyone, but it sure felt like it from *my* point of view way the hell and gone here in SouthCentralEastern Texas - was gadding about



L.A. Con IV and having a really good time, I was in departmental meetings preparing for Fall Semester, 2006 classes at Blinn College.

How can I possibly make this interesting? Oh, I know:

I'll lie about it. Maybe not completely, but exaggerating the truth wouldn't be lying, would it? Well, maybe that's true. . .

This is not me in my classroom, but an unreasonable facsimile thereof.

The truth of the matter is two-fold. One, I couldn't afford going

to the worldcon, and Two, my responsibilities were here; I had to get ready for the four sections of English 1301 (Composition and Rhetoric I) assigned to me for Fall Semester. So be it. This meant that on Monday, August 21st, I needed to be at Blinn's main campus in Brenham, Texas by 8:30 AM. This was not a problem by my standards; Brenham is only 42 miles from College Station, and I knew a route that was fairly easy to follow. Besides, a free Continental Breakfast was provided for everyone (donuts, bagels, fruit, coffee, juice, milk... You know the deal if you've stayed at most hotels and motels in America).

The dual theme for Blinn College this year is "Success depends on your next step" and "Engaging the Student." The morning was taken up by 3 blocks of workshops of 45 minutes each; there were quite a few interesting topics to choose from, and I chose three

that fit in with my area: “How to Get Your Students to Read Their Textbooks,” “Language and Motivation,” and “WebCT Update.” I won’t bore you with all the sordid details, but the first one deserves special mention.

The Brenham campus professor conducting the workshop opened by posing the question, “Why don’t students read their textbooks before coming to class?” The first response from one of the teachers was, “Because they don’t want to!” Another said that it was because kids figure if they at least just go to class, the teacher’s going to talk about the text anyway, so they’ll take notes and all will be right in the world. In my mind the simple answer was, “Because they’re a bunch of lazy bastards who just want to get this bullshit core requirement class out of the way and get on with their lives.” Believe me, I toyed with the idea of voicing this opinion, but I value my job, so I didn’t.

The upshot of this particular workshop was to make assigned readings from the texts an active part of their course grade. In other words, give reading comprehension quizzes each week, start a class with a writing prompt based on the assigned reading for the day, and so on like this. In short, quiz and test the living piss out of these kids! It’s their money they’re blowing if they don’t show up for class, or fail exams, or write horrendous papers. We were being given *carte blanche* to “engage the students” by giving them more stress in their lives. Nice, huh?



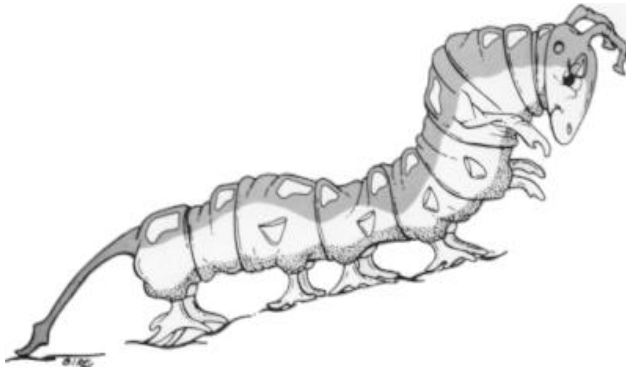
Old Main, Blinn College, Brenham, TX

So I walked out of that workshop planning to implement changes in my classroom to increase class participation and attendance, but decidedly against giving myself a whole shit-load of more papers to grade. Time to set up little 10 to 15 - question multiple choice Scantron quizzes. Easy for me to grade, and an easy way to make sure they’re reading the most boring book – with the possible exception of *The Many Lives and Loves of Ray Palmer* – known to mankind. Besides, I always try to use humor, videos, powerpoints, and discussion to get students involved, which can be a real challenge two times a week at 7:45 in the morning.

I have to admit, this year’s faculty/staff workshop was a little bit like attending programming at a crowded science fiction convention. Most of the workshops were held in the Academic Classroom building, so the changing of room to room was like wending your way through a mass of people in the hallway outside either the consuite or the huckster room; next door, for the whole kit and kaboodle of us (approximately 220 administrators, teachers, and support staff), the Performing Arts Building had an auditorium easily big enough to accommodate everyone; and the Student Center was

directly across the street from both of these buildings, where everyone descended on the cafeteria for a free lunch. (See? There *is too* such a thing as a free lunch! You just have to get somebody else to pay for it. In my case, Blinn College footed the bill.)

After a deli-style lunch – ham & swiss or turkey sandwiches, chips, kosher dills, a can of Pepsi or whatever (pulled out of an over-sized cooler filled with ice and assorted soft drinks: sound familiar?) – everyone trooped back across the street to the auditorium to hear about the new attendance policy Blinn was instituting this year. Nothing of supreme note there, but it was interesting to learn the enrollment numbers were up – again – and the 2006-2007 school year was a “numbers year”, meaning we had to really keep track of our attendance records because the Texas state legislature (bunch of bush-whacked pole-sitters, but I won’t get political here) is to re-consider and re-do the state education budget. (Once again, I won’t go there. Suffice to say it’s really screwed up.)



There really isn’t much else to report from the academic front over WorldCon weekend. I retooled my syllabi from last semester, amended dates, dropped old readings, added new readings, made notes here and there for videos and other goodies to keep the kiddies interested in an otherwise dull subject matter.

Teaching Comp and Rhetoric is a challenge, but I enjoy it. It’s so much more liberating than when I taught for two years at Willis High School; yes, there’s a curriculum agenda to meet, but for the most part, department heads trust their instructors to get the job done and don’t meddle in your instructional methodology. At Willis, I always had to worry about “meeting the TEKS” (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) and “teaching to the test” because of that damnable TAKS Test given every year to teenagers.

Uh, oh. I’m wandering dangerously close to talking about that dreaded legislative boondoggle known as the No Child Left Behind Act. This is where I shall stop.

But since you ask, I can’t stand it. In college, I don’t have to worry about TEKS, TAKS, or other nonsense like that as much. All I have to do is meet my adjunct faculty obligations and teach my classes the way that I love to teach them.

Yeah, I really do love teaching at my community college. Besides, every so often you really *do* get a free lunch! TANSTAAFL, my ass. . .

FROM THE HINTERLANDS

Thanks to the overlap of the WorldCon and the date that the previous issue came out, locs trickled in a bit slowly, so I'll start off with a brief correction sent by Marty Cantor regarding the review I wrote about his zine, No Award #16, last issue:

27 August 2006

I just read your review of my zine and I must say that I like it - except for something which puzzled me. *No Award* has **always** been a genzine and has **never** been my zine in FAPA. The title I used for my FAPazine was "The Lime Jello Gazette." In my second stint in FAPA, **all** of my zine titles were some smartass title including the word "Fishwrap" somewhere.

Marty

My apologies about confusing No Award with your apa work. It had been such a long time since I've seen a genzine from you that I must have made the apa connection somewhere down the line. My bad. Thank you for the correction, and I have to admit, I like the idea of the word "Fishwrap" in an apa title. That's fun stuff.

And now Chris Garcia checks in with some commentary about my bemused natterings regarding my future WorldCon attendance possibilities, among other things, of course:

21 August 2006

Here I am, I think almost 24 hours late with this LoC. I feel a sort of shame over that fact, but I was out and about all this weekend. *You are such a social scalawag!*



You mention WorldCon, which I head off to tomorrow. It's actually the 5th or sixth time LA has held it. The first two weren't called LACon (I think they were Pacificon and Solacon) and they picked it up in the 1970s. I've been to the last two LACons (1984, when I was ten, and 1996 when I spent a day on a forged badge...sorry LACon III runners!) They've all been good times, with a lot of people saying that the 1984 WorldCon was one of the best. I liked it, I met Bjo Trimble and had a blast. I think that was where I first saw *Buckaroo Bonzai*.

It's a shame you'll never make another WorldCon, but it could also be a lie! They've been experimenting with other time periods for the con and I'm betting they'll go deep into the month of August, possibly even the first week, like the British WorldCons tend to be. *So I've noticed. If the Denvention 3 dates are correct, I could very well be at that one. Same thing if Kansas City wins the 2009 bid. Oh, brother...I can't believe I'm saying this...*

Teaching is a rough job, but it's also one that gets under your skin. I was briefly a teacher (young kids) and I liked it a lot. I'd totally do it again, given the chance.

I too am excited for CorFlu. I've got a place to stay (my cousins live about ten minutes from the hotel) and I'm planning on driving out. It should be a bunch of fun. I'm betting things will be plenty entertaining down in Austin. I'll probably be running a TAFF auction (even if I don't win) and making a general pest of myself. *Situation normal, eh?*

I don't think that LACon will be over-run with fringe fans. In fact, sales are lower than expected (though not by much). I'm thinking they'll make it up in single day and at-door sales, but I'm still thinking it'll be about 4-5k instead of the 7-8K that I've heard people complaining about. To me, it's not the number of people going, it's the number of participants. There are so many people I've been wanting to meet that are going to be there. Guy Lillian, Lloyd, the great Ed Meskeys, Mr. James Bacon, etc, etc, and there are folks who I see all the time but who make cons a blast, like Andy Trembley, Frank Wu, and all those BASFAns.

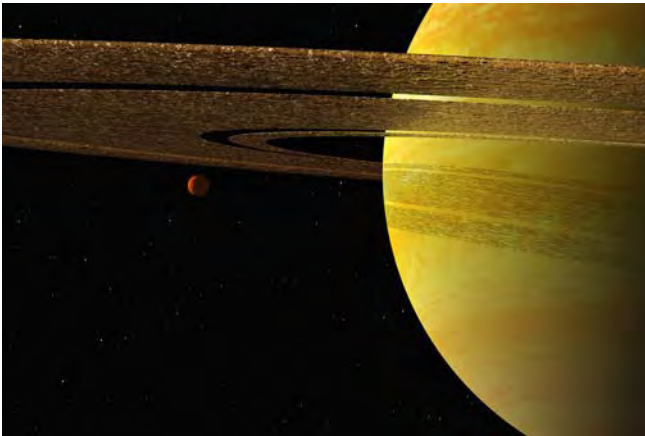
Yep, busy times on eFanzines.com. I'm up to date with LoCs, now that I've gotten this very late one off to you, and I'm even up to date on my LJ reviews (once I get a IAPL review up later today). Marty actually dropped from FAPA right as I joined, so I think No Award is just a genzine now. I could be wrong about that. I really like *Littlebrook*, though I wish it was pubbed on Internet Time. I must accept that not everyone has an internal clock that ticks as fast as mine.

Ewwwwwwwww...old people dating.

Chris

One fun thing my wife and I occasionally do to annoy the kids is suck face in front of them and make quick comments like, "do we have any K-Y Jelly left?" That sort of thing. You should see the faces our girls make!

Opening his loc with brief commentary on the American League pennant races is our favorite Yankee fan, Eric Mayer, who likewise has interesting comments to make on my Worldcon vs. Job editorializing last issue:



21 August 2006

Funny you should note, in the loccol, that I'm coming in to relieve Pedro Borbon. A few years ago I was glancing at the boxscores and saw "Pedro Borbon" and I thought, didn't he used to pitch for the Reds? Is he still around? Then I remembered he'd pitched for the Reds thirty years ago. It didn't seem that long. This was his son. I find myself doing that sort of thing all the time. The past always

seems nearer than it is but especially so in baseball where every season is frozen in the amber of statistics and as accessible, to that extent, today as it was the moment it ended.

As I write this, I expect Twins fans to be thanking the Yankees for putting them ahead of Boston in the wildcard race. What's weird -- it's suddenly possible Detroit could fall out of the postseason.

Great story about getting the book signed by Phyllis Eisenstein. I recall reading that piece but did I LoC that issue? What did I say, if anything? Now I could go and look it up on eFanzines, and avoid repeating myself, but I'm lazy, and on dial-up. So let me say, I can understand her kissing you. Early on I did a few book signings at the behest of our publisher, because that's the way it's always been done (or so I gather). But no one wants to meet a writer they never heard of. Why would they? So I would sit at a table in a bookstore and customers would give me peculiar looks. Being the introvert I am it was sheer torment being on public display like that. Of course no one needed any books signed. Cripes, if you'd approached me, I probably would've kissed you. Well, OK...no offense but probably not...I'm an introvert, like I said.

You should value your job more than your hobby. I doubt anyone would dispute that. What might be disputed is whether Fandom is just a hobby! When I was first, naively involved in fandom and fanning at a distance, it took me a long time to grasp the extent to which what I considered a mere hobby seemed to dominate some fan's lives. At first I thought by writing LoCs and articles and pubbing my ish I was participating in a fairly big way, but I came to see that my level of involvement was really rather insignificant and that no contribution I could make to fandom, as a hobbyist, could approach the contributions made by those to whom fandom was a far more important activity.

In the past year, having returned to some extent after a couple of decades, I am struck even more by the vastness of the gulf between dabblers like myself and faanish lifers. Now I read older fans

recounting whole lifetimes immersed in fandom -- friends, family, where they live, how they live, how they make a living, what they have striven for -- to a large measure has been bound inextricably with fandom. Theirs is a club I could not join, even if I wished, because I would have to go back and relive my whole life in a more faanish way to be at all a fan equal.

I am not saying this is a bad thing. You are fortunate to love your job. Many of us don't. My years working for a corporation were hellish. My first marriage wasn't so hot either. It's not a bad idea to build one's life around activities and people one chooses rather than around the often incompatible jobs, co-workers, neighbors etc fate happens to present. Indeed, I wised up and married a fan.

Anyway thanks for another fine issue and now I shall return to making notes on insurance cases...

Eric

Sounds like a rousing good time at the Mayer abode. () Funny thing, my first marriage was to a fan; didn't work out. Then I married a non-fan – Valerie – and we're still going strong. In fact, Valerie has a much more fannish attitude than I ever expected, and she enjoys discussing SF from a sociological standpoint. We're a good match, despite the assorted problems married couples always have.*

Here's a new voice to be added to the lettercolumn. Andrew Trembley joins us with some commentary about academics, the WorldCon, and the Fan Hugo awards:

5 Sept. 2006

I sympathize with your academic schedule. Fortunately I work in administration, not with students, so "first week of instruction" doesn't impact me like it does faculty members. Still, those bastards in Denver... er... our gracious opponents will be running Denvention 3 in the beginning of August, so you may find yourself able to go to another Worldcon. Next year's NASFiC in St. Louis is also the beginning of August.



*Gordon R. Dickson on the guitar, folks!
Photo ©1976 by David Dyer-Bennett*

I was actually talking with Frank Wu about the "Fan Artist" category just last night. The rules defining "Fan Artist" are no longer appropriate to the sfnal art field. The Hugo wonks know it, the artists know it, the business meeting folks know it. Frank has sold art, but nothing that's had a print run or circulation high enough to qualify as a "professional publication." I don't believe

anybody has yet come up with a satisfactory (and more importantly, sensible) update to the rules to suggest. Perhaps the "Professional Artist" category just needs a bit more wiggle-room in its definition.

Plokta only published one issue last year. I don't think that's a reason to exclude them from nomination. Think of all the 'zines that only publish an annual issue, such as *Bento*, or 'zines with even longer schedules like *Science Fiction Five-Yearly* (a 'zine that took 20 years to achieve eligibility). Surely they should be eligible for nomination. Thinking it over, it's actually kind of a shame that one-shot 'zines are excluded; there have been some really fabulous one-shots. Our own *Pacheco Progress* (edited by Chris for TAFF and a fabulous parody-zine if I do say so myself) published 6 issues, so it's eligible for Hugo nomination next year.

As for website vs. fanzine, I would love to see the "Best Website" category added permanently. It's been a reasonable success the two years it's been a special award. That said, I think we can learn from the "Best Dramatic Presentation" split. If there are both "Best Fanzine" and "Best Website" I think the administrator needs to be asked to exercise discretion in assigning nominating ballots to the appropriate category. HTML 'zines are still 'zines as much as PDF 'zines and print 'zines, but different people may nominate them in different (and possibly inappropriate) categories.

Andy Trembley, Bull-in-Drag

As it turns out, Ted White and I have done a bit of e-mailing back and forth on the subject of Fan Hugo eligibility rules in the last week or so, the end result being an article that I will put together based off these e-mails. This will be in my next issue.



And thus ends the lettercolumn. The reason why it's a bit shorter than usual is probably due to WorldCon burnout. That's okay. In the meantime, I thank all of the folks above for writing in, and also those listed below.

I Also Heard From:

Leslie David, Mark Leeper, Arnie Katz (regarding the Las Vegants webcam broadcast of their August 19th meeting), Hope Leibowitz, Janine Stinson (late loc on *IAPL* #12), Sally Syrjala (on *IAPL* #13), John Thiel, R Laurraine Tutihasi.

Cubist Self-Portrait

ONE FANZINE REVIEW

Just got this in the mail two days ago, and I really, really gotta give a quick review of this, the 27th issue of *Banana Wings* from our good, fannish friends from across the Pond, Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer.



As a matter of fact, allow me to go out on a limb here and describe this fanzine as one of the best being produced today, either electronically or traditionally. This is simply filled with fine fan writing. Like a typical British fanzine, there is very little interior artwork. But that lack is more than made up for by the content. The editorials and other contributions by Claire and Mark reveal why they have both been nominated for Best Fan Writer Hugo Awards; Claire's opening schtick about not being a collector of sheep-type miniatures and assorted items was delightful reading, and made me want to ship a pocksarcd to her with sheep pictured on it. She's actually into otters lately, Mark informs us deeper in the zine. Something along this line might be harder to find. On to Internet a-hunting we go...

Anyway. Mark's article about buying books in the 21st century is another fine piece from his gifted pen. The article delivers exactly what the title proclaims, and I love the way Mark debates with himself in here. More fun reading.

The main article in the issue is "Into a Red Hole" by Taral Wayne, which is a meticulously researched, noted, and detailed recounting of the great BBC-TV show, *Red Dwarf*, which I personally believe is the best science fiction comedy television series ever created. The article is not as funny as the show, but if you have seen the show (usually

shown on PBS stations across America on Friday nights; this is where my wife and I discovered it up in Iowa in the late 90's) and even read the eponymous book by Doug Naylor and Rob Grant, you will definitely enjoy this article. Even if you haven't seen the show, Taral's article will probably send you off to bookstores, video stores, and the Internet in search of the entire 8-year series of DVDs. The cover of this issue of *Banana Wings* was drawn by Taral, and captures the essence of the show very well. We are teased by the news that there may yet be a feature film version of *Red Dwarf*, but warned of the various rumours that have been bandied about for the past five years regarding this. I won't hold my breath, by Taral reports that "A good adaptation...to the Big Screen is surely possible. (Doug Naylor swears it will be so.)" I am definitely keeping my eyes and ears open for this one.

Even the more serious article by Tony Keen, "The Use and Abuse of Ancient History – Dan Simmons style," is fun reading. Complete with footnotes and web addresses to check out sources used in Tony's article, this is a fine piece of academic writing. I am not going to pretend that I understand it, but I actually do know the historical background of what Tony is writing about. Even so, it's excellent writing, and provides a nice counterpoint to the fanish contributions in this issue.

Other things of note herein: lots of them! Nic Farey has 6 short pieces written from the prison in Maryland where he is temporarily residing courtesy of the Maryland State Police. Reading these make me feel bad for the poor bloke, and I'll probably send him a copy of this issue to show my support for him. Also, the lettercolumn is tersely edited by Mark this time around, and is yet another highlight of the zine.

Banana Wings #27
edited by Claire Brialey & Mark Plummer
59 Shirley Road
Croydon, Surrey
CR0 7ES UNITED KINGDOM

available for the usual.
e-mail: banana@fishlifter.demon.co.uk

This zine is *not* hosted at efanzines.com

All in all, a fine, fine issue of *Banana Wings*. After reading this, it makes me wonder why it lost out to *Plokta* in the Best Fanzine Fan Hugo category, but I'm not going to go there right now. (Go to *And Furthermores* #15 – 16 for that discussion.) Support Claire and Mark in their endeavours by requesting a copy from them; it is not available at

efanzines.com like many other fanzines. This one must be earned the hard way: by request or loccing. You will not be disappointed.

Fanzines received/reviewed:

Vegas Fandom Weekly #83 - 84; *The Banksoniain* #10; *PrintZine* #1; *Drink Tank* #95 - 97; *Surprising Stories* #12; *MT Void* #1348 - 1350; *Science Fiction in San Francisco* #29; *Vanamonde* #648 - 652; *Get Harry Fan Fund Folio*; *Corflu Quire PR* #1;

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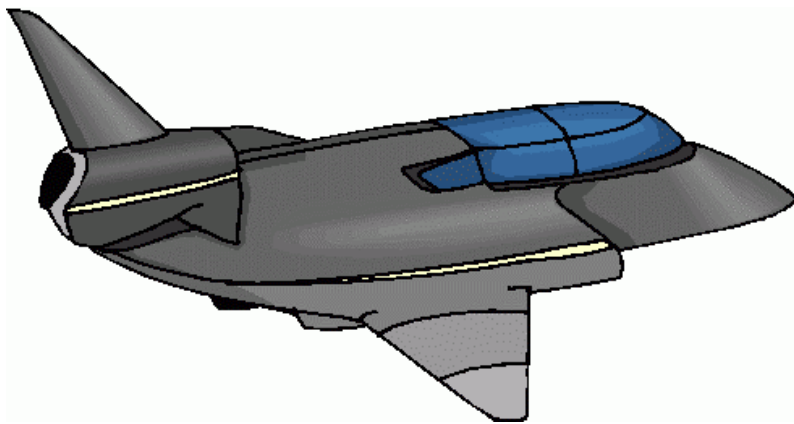
The Obscurato

reviews of books and other sundries

Recently, while reorganizing the garage and sifting through boxes of books and stuff accumulated down the years, I ran across the cassette-tape set, case and all, which is reviewed below. This review comes from This House #15 (Spring, 1989), so once again, here's some fun stuff from my past fanzine efforts. It may seem dated, but wotthell; that's to be expected.

The Secret of Dominion, by Susan Bayer and Richard Teneau. Cygnus Productions Ltd., 1984. 4 cassette package, 5 hour playing time. \$19.95 with case, \$11.95 without case. {1987 prices}

This radio series came to me completely out of the blue. I guess this just proves that if you write and publish a fanzine for x-number of years, somebody somewhere is going to notice you and, as a result, oddball things are going to come your way. This "radio" series is one such example.



At first I didn't know what to think, since it came with a cover sheet and questionnaire. See, I received a pre-release review copy of the series; Cygnus Productions plans on marketing this series, and I think they have got something pretty damn good going

here. I plan on returning their survey and letting them know that this is top quality dramatic radio theater.

As far as its science fictional content, *The Secret of Dominion* is pure, shoot-'em-up, hokey, space opera. Translation: this is a lot of fun. The plot-line is easy to follow; the characters

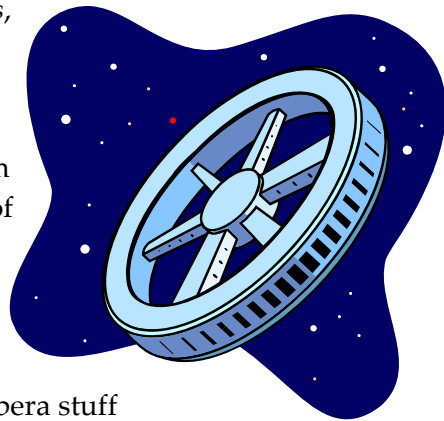
are, at first, rather wooden, but after a few episodes you get used to them and accept the characters for what they are: Good Guys vs. the Bad Guys.

The basic premise is similar to that of Lucas' *Star Wars* saga. Dominion is the "evil and awesome Power which has brutally conquered and enslaved Earth and its Galaxy." Naturally, the Dominion – shades of the Empire and the Dark Side of the Force – is being fought by rebels, in the case the rebels of Cygnus III: "A courageous band of Freedom Fighters, struggling valiantly against impossible odds to destroy Dominion and restore Freedom and Justice." Ghosh-whow! Of such stuff are great space operas made... Naturally, there is a "secret" that can destroy Dominion, and it lies with the Emerald Tree.

Major Richards defects from Dominion and joins the rebel cause (his parents were rebels, as it turns out), and the efforts of Dominion's Major Connors and General Derrick (a woman) are meant to stop Richards' efforts. Eventually Richards latches onto what could be a significant clue towards deciphering the Emerald Tree, and off he goes with a rebel landing force on Dominion's home turn to learn how to destroy the Dominion. Of course, Dominion has hired a ruthless bounty hunter to track down Major Richards, one nasty old bugger named Vishaya. And let me tell you, the chase is a merry one that tracks the galaxy like a cosmic roller coaster ride.

A few special comments about the technology of this radio production: the SFX are very good, and the soundtrack provides some excellent electronic music. Also, the acting is of fine quality, despite the obvious lack of any notable actors in the credits (Chuck Connors is the only name actor). It is easy to tell that the actors involved start having fun getting into their characters, because by the time of Episode 5 the main characters (Richards, Vishaya, Derrick and some rebel leaders) are well-established and have attained a definite presence in the series. I particularly liked the Dominion character of Major Connors, a humanoid with a very dry sense of humor and a touch of very human cynicism. Nicely done.

Overall, despite the obvious similarities to *Star Wars*, which are many, I recommend this series to all serious fans of radio drama. It is reminiscent of high radio drama broadcasts of the thirties and forties, and performed with a reverence for the genre. I am very impressed with the overall production value of the series. It is crisp, clean radio theater, and a very enjoyable addition to any serious radio collector's tape library.



For those of you who enjoy broad, sweeping Space Opera stuff *a la* Doc Smith, I suggest that you buy this set (*Ed. Note: it is available on the Internet –*

eBay and Amazon.com – for as low as \$0.99 starting bids). It may bug you at first, but give it a fair, open-minded hearing. I found this to be a fun, enjoyable romp through intergalactic space. It is grand fun on a grand scale. I hope some of you will discover this program and enjoy it as much as I have.

*{Editorial update (September, 2006): The tapes are definitely dated, the plot-line extremely derivative of **Star Wars**, and thanks to the Internet, this series has not faded gently into that good night. In fact, it can be had very cheaply, as noted above. I wouldn't get this now unless you're a completist collector or simply enjoy stuff like this. It is fun when taken on its own level.}*

Some Closing Thoughts

This has been a very fun issue to put together. The WorldCon reports, the bit of personal fan history, some fun old reviews (I want *new* ones, people, so get writing!), and good locs have made this particular issue one of my personal favorites of this series. Thank you so much for the contributions.

As a result, this has also been a bit longer of an issue, but that's alright by me. My goal has been to keep it right around 20 pages per issue, but like Arnie Katz has had to do a couple times with *Vegas Fandom Weekly*, once in a while you really can't help but make an issue a bit longer because there's been such a wealthy influx of fine material and letters of comment.

Something else, too, I'd like to mention at this time. With this, the fifteenth issue of *IAPL*, I have equaled the total number of issues of *This House* that I pubbed from 1976 to 1989. Well, do the math, and you will see that *This House* averaged 1.15 issues a year. Thanks to modern technology, I have been able to maintain a monthly schedule with *In A Prior Lifetime* without ever breaking a sweat. Add in the 16 issues of *And Furthermore* I've produced so far this year, and I have cranked out 25 full-blown fanzines in the first nine months of 2006. Not only that, but I've written almost 120 locs already this year. Sonuvabitch, but I didn't realize that I was being this prolific until a couple weeks ago! So, yes, Virginia, the technology does indeed exert a strong influence on a person's fanac if that person wants to use it.

Which, once again, is a familiar refrain in these pages: fanac is a personal thing. You get out what you put into it. Yes, I'm having fun. What more could I ask for?

Certainly not fan awards. In a recent e-mail, Ted White told me that he thinks Dave Langford is probably the best fan writer right now, and I do have to agree. Dave is a very funny and insightful fan writer, and I have always enjoyed his work. I think it's obvious that Mr. Langford feels the same way I do: he's having fun doing what he's doing, and that's all that really matters.



So with all that being said, until Marvin and I meet with you fine folks again, I remain just another whacked-out science fiction fanzine fan,

John Purcell

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